A RACIAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NUMANCIA NATIONAL MYTH IN THE WORKS OF MIGUEL DE CERVANTES AND IGNACIO LÓPEZ DE AYALA

ELENA FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ
University of California, Berkeley

It is interesting to observe the different historical moments that several Spanish thinkers have preferred to highlight in order to portray Spanish national pride throughout time. The Iberian leader Viriato and the brave tribes of Asturians, Basques and Cantabrians who fought for their freedom against the Romans; King Pelagius of Asturias, or Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, *El Cid Campeador*, both of whom fought against the Arab Invasions of the 8th century, are some of the many historic examples that can be gathered under one common feature: resistance against the enemy. However, of all of them, the one that is by far the most celebrated and that has become eventually a synecdoche of Spanishness is, without question, the downfall of Numancia. Numantians, brave Iberians, resisted Roman siege for almost two decades and when their defeat was imminent, chose suicide over surrender. Throughout the centuries, different perspectives have been taken about how to portray this underlying Iberian quality of resistance that seems to define the true nature of the Spanish people. Yet it is intriguing to observe the subtle transition that took place during the eighteenth century in the reading of this historic national myth as a result of the *Zeitgeist* of Imperial Europe. For the first time, resistance was read as a synonym of whiteness, as well as Spanish courage and bravery, which now were understood as the living proof of racial purity.

This article will describe and analyze the racial identity transformations that took place in Spain over about two hundred years by comparing two plays: *El cerco de Numancia* (1585), by Miguel de Cervantes, and *Numancia destruída* (1775), by Ignacio López de Ayala. As already mentioned, both the Roman siege of ancient Numancia and the resistance of its native Iberians have been used as literary motifs to define Spanish identity. Yet a shift in the dichotomy of colonizers versus colonized can be observed in the time that separates the two different interpretations of the same historical event, the conquest of Numancia, in both Cervantes and López de Ayala. Thus, Spanish racial purity, as a core element of national identity, is incorporated into the Enlightenment play. This article will frame these literary racial transformations by analyzing the political tensions over control of the

Atlantic among the main European Imperial powers of the time. Enlightened Spain, though maintaining its empire in terms of territory, was no longer the first power in the Western World and was the subject of attacks not only political or military, but also literary. The Spanish Black Legend, as old as the empire itself, witnessed an eighteenth-century addition to the process of international defamation that had been taking place ever since the 1300s: a racialization of the Spanish people. The creation of the concept of a white race by the British Empire and the race theories being developed all over Enlightenment Europe will be taken into account to explain the process of the racialization of Spain. Spain's own history of racial anxiety will also be understood as important to explain this apparently sudden racial awareness. Finally, the role of literature as an agglutinating force that will connect all these ideas will be discussed.

Several works have been written analyzing Cervantes's *Numancia* from different perspectives, and the aim of this article will be to engage in the ongoing critical conversation. The lack of attention that Ayala's version of the same historic event has received from an academic point of view highlights the importance of comparing the different historic treatment of the same event, the downfall of Numancia, in two different moments. To wonder why Cervantes's version of the story is internationally well known but Ayala's is hardly considered a canonical piece of literature (even in Spain) could lead to several conclusions concerning the place of the Spanish Enlightenment in the social imaginary, both in Spain and abroad.

In order to understand the semantic transitions that took place in the racial landscape of eighteenth century Europe and therefore to analyze Cervantes and Ayala's different treatment of Spanish racial identity, it is necessary to go back a couple centuries in time. Therefore, the first mandatory stop in this sequence of ideas should be fifteenth-century England and Spain. It is precisely this moment when both countries started their imperial adventures and rivalries, and also had to face their first intellectual racial obstacles. According to Reginald Horsman in *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, fifteenth-century England had to confront several political problems that ultimately could be solved under one effective solution: the intellectual fabrication of the idea of the white race. This so-called white race was used as propaganda to justify the break with the Roman Catholic Church; the intellectual and political conquest of Ireland, Wales and Scotland; and eventually, the expansion of the Anglo Empires (the British and the United States) and their racial policies.

Firstly, the break with the Roman Catholic church executed by King Henry VIII came together with an explicit propaganda that used the Anglo-

Saxon invasions of England prior to the Norman Conquest in 1066 as an example of virtue, democracy, and liberty. According to Horsman:

> The first enthusiastic English interest in Anglo-Saxon England was a product of the English Reformation. As early as the 1530s the Saxon church was studied to provide propaganda to justify Henry VIII's break with Rome. The main object of research was to show that the English church was returning to the purer practices of the period before 1066. Supposed Anglo-Saxon precedents were used to support the argument that England had cleansed the Roman Catholic Church of the abuses introduced through the centuries by papal power. (10)

Embracing the belief that Saxon systems of government and institutions were superior to the French-Norman ones, the defense of the Gothic tribes as the defining ancestors of Englishmen created a new understanding of the history of the English nation, as traditionally speaking it was the Arthurian legends and the Roman conquest of England that had been used to define Britons so far. This historical use of the invasions of the British Islands by different groups of people therefore was based on one main idea: the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon Germanic peoples over the Celtic and French-Norman ones, which at the time meant the superiority of Anglicans and Protestants over Catholics. Religion, understood as a metaphor for race, created the perfect ground where the ideas of the superiority of the Aryan race were going to mature in the following centuries.

Secondly, the rivalries within the British Islands and the expansion of the English empire during the eighteenth century fostered a nationalistic revival that praised the Germanic invasions over the Celtic presence in places like Wales, Ireland, or Scotland. And thirdly, as the nineteenth century advanced so did the power of the British Empire and its expansion around the world. Despite their war of independence, the recently created United States saw themselves as the direct descendants of the libertarian Gothics, and the expansion of the Anglo-Empires (British and North American) will link the idea of their political superiority to their racial superiority. According to Horsman:

> The contrast in expansionist rhetoric between 1800 and 1850 is striking. The debates and speeches of the early nineteenth century reveal a pervasive sense of the future destiny of the United States, but they do not have the jarring note of rampant racialism that permeates the debates of mid-century. By 1850 the emphasis was on the American Anglo-Saxons as a separate, innately superior people who were destined to bring good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the American

continents and to the world. This was a superior race, and inferior races were doomed to subordinate status or extinction. (2)

According to Thomas F. Gosset in *Race: the History of an Idea in America*, the debates about polygenesis versus monogenesis together with the creation of branches of science such as anthropology and phrenology helped to foster racism in the Western World during the nineteenth century:

> The optimism on the Enlightenment on the subject of race faded quickly in the nineteenth century. We can see the change clearly in the continuing debates over whether the human races were one or many species. Though the debate was acrimonious, the contestants do not now seem nearly as far apart as they seemed to themselves. The leading exponents of both schools of thought came more and more to believe that the Negro is innately inferior and that neither education nor environment can do much to improve him.

Therefore, the idea of a superior white race was fabricated first in the context of the wars of religion in Europe, and developed later on during the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century as political propaganda that advanced with the expansion of the Anglo-Empires. While not alone in the control of the Atlantic, Anglos saw how other rising European empires, such as France or Germany, would translate this rhetoric to their historic specificities and would embrace the idea of a superior whiteness to their own national narratives.

Spain also had to solve the intellectual problem of inventing a white race that would become a national metaphor. However, Spanish historical specificities were slightly different from the rest of Europe, and the underlying conceptual principles were somehow different. *Race and Blood in the Iberian World,* edited by Max S. Hering Torres, María Elena Martínez and David Nirenberg, explains how the idea of purity of blood can be traced back to Early Modern Spain, specifically to the fifteenth century.

First of all, it is necessary to understand that social mobility in Spain during this time was strongly linked to the idea of honor, and the idea of honor was defined mainly (although not only) by purity of blood. Yet it is interesting to note how Spain observed its own fabrication of the idea of whiteness. According to Hering Torres, as a result of the colonization of Latin America, starting in 1492, new racial categories were needed to label the new social and racial panorama.

At the same time, Spain had its own internal multicultural background that needed to be categorized under some new semantics. As a result of the expulsion of the Sephardic Jews through the Alhambra Decree from the

Iberian Peninsula and the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada (both in 1492), there was a forced assimilation of these religious groups into Catholicism. The creation of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition came together with the newly created concept of the purity of blood. After the forced conversions to Christianity, Spaniards were required to prove their pure Christian lineage through certified documents, specifically Sephardic Jews who converted to Christianity. In this way, former descendants of Jews could not access certain privileges in society, such attending the University or becoming officers of the Army or the Church (among many others). However, the concept of a pure Christian lineage was not just a socially constructed way of excluding or including certain groups of people. According to Hering Torres, it was not religious discrimination but a pure racial theory that had blood cleanliness as its main intellectual weapon. Indeed, these power-race structures had a continuity in the context of colonialism in the Spanish Empire. New groups to be racially segregated were incorporated (mainly African slaves and indigenous tribes), yet the structures of segregation can be traced to Early Modern Peninsular Spain and its own racial anxiety.

Therefore, the roots of eighteenth-century ideologies of whiteness can be traced back to England and Spain in the fifteenth century. Both England and Spain observed social changes that would uncover for the first time the power of race as an exclusionary device to control populations. Undoubtedly, Spain had its own self-esteem ethnic problems before the idea of a superior Arian white race was fully fabricated and embraced by northern European countries. That being said, it is also true that from the seventeenth century onwards, Europe produced new emerging empires whose intellectual ambitions matched their military ones. The so called *leyenda negra*, the Black Legend, consisted of a series of unfair accusations that amplified and distorted Spain's negative reputation as a result of imperial rivalries. According to García Carcel and Mateo Breto in *La leyenda negra*, Spain dealt with an international campaign of negative propaganda beginning as early as the thirteenth century, when Catalan merchants started trading in Italy. The most common topics included religious bigotry, laziness, and cruelty, as well as an emphasis on the bloodthirstiness of the conquest of the Americas, the Spanish Inquisition and the person of King Philip II as living proof of Spanish barbarity.

This Early Modern anti-Spanish propaganda, however, soon witnessed deeper accusations. Michael Iarocci discusses how political power went hand in hand with intellectual authority and how modernity was placed at different moments by different countries, Imperial power being the criteria for placement. In this way, two modernities could be identified: the first during

the fifteenth century, a moment in which Southern Europe controlled both Europe and the Atlantic; and the second during the eighteenth century, when Protestant countries started their own empires and defined their own modernity. Eighteenth-century Spain, although politically weak, still represented a big imperial threat to its neighboring empires, and their political and intellectual propaganda became more aggressive as their power increased. According to Iarocci, northern Europe consciously expelled Spain from its modernity, arguing that Spanish historic peculiarities and its status during the eighteenth century made the country barbaric and incapable of achieving the minimum requirements to be considered civilized. According to Iarocci:

> In fundamental ways, modern Europe was born out of the material and discursive defeat of early modern Spain. The "edifice of the new world" that Hegel intuited in 1807 was, as Mignolo suggests, another name for the ascent of the Kunturwelt of Britain, France, and Germany as the new European powers; these powers in turn became the new agents of universal history, the heart of modern Europe. Tellingly, only seven years after Hegel's words were first published, Spain would officially "come to be considered by the diplomats and statesmen who gathered in Paris in 1814, as *un cours secondaire*, a second-class nation" (Carr 1). (9)

Therefore, it is interesting to note how it is precisely during this time, the eighteenth century, when one element was added to the international fabrication of anti-Spanish Propaganda: race. In this way, Spain was not only expelled from intellectual modernity, but also from racial modernity. Unaccepted by white Europe as a member, Spain would be placed in a southern racial periphery at a moment when race matched power.

The racialization of Spain, however, must be understood in the context of the colonial expansion over the Atlantic of different European powers. According to Anthony Padgen, the Spanish conquest of Latin America was contemporary to the expulsion of the Arabs from the Iberian Peninsula. In this context, conquest mas was masked under the expansion of Catholicism. As Padgen writes:

> Spain also had a long, complex history of internal conquest, the Reconquista (reconquest) of the peninsula from the Moors. This, too, had been a conquest conducted under papal aegis. Many of the titles, and crucially the kinds of grant, made to the Castilian settlers had their origins in the Reconquista, even if they subsequently lost much of their original definition in adaptation to the wholly unfamiliar environment of America. (74)

Therefore, in terms of ideology, the racial principles in the Protestant and French empires would be different from the Spanish and Portuguese ones. As noted by Schmidt-Nowara and Nieto Philips, British and French colonialism would adopt a policy of racial segregation that would visibly separate colonizers from colonized subjects. According to them: "For example, in one of the most influential collections of essays on postcolonial historiography, Jorge Klor de Alva argues that Spanish rule in the Americas was not comparable to other European colonialisms because it was based on *mestizaje*, the cultural and biological assimilation of the conquered peoples of the Americas" (5). In addition, "The characteristics of Spanish rule in the Americas were thus quite different from British and French colonialism in Africa and Asia, where a clearly European conquering and governing class ruled over unassimilated, subjugated, and racially distinct indigenous masses" (5). The racial and political situation of the indigenous people in the Spanish America was far from ideal, regardless of *mestizaje* policies. However, it is also important to speculate how the underlying ideology of the racialization of Spain by northern European countries must be understood as a colonializing tool that had been designed as an intellectual device to control and discipline entire populations. To racialize Spain was to semantically conquer it, and for Spain to fight back against such an accusation was an act of self-defense and resistance. Therefore, for the first time, race was used as an accusation that would connote Spain as an inferior and weak nation, compared to its racially superior white northern neighbors. Consequently, for the first time, Spain needed to invent its own racial myths to assert that the Spanish people were ethnically equal to the rest of Europe.

It is interesting to observe the textual evidence of this sudden racial awareness in relation to nationhood and self-esteem. In order to understand the evolution of Spanish international defamation, again the first stop should be Early Modern Europe. Indeed, one of the highest peaks of anti-Spanish propaganda took place in the sixteenth-century in England. According to García Carcel and Mateo Bretos, authors such as Robert Green in his *Mascarade,* Thomas Deloney, Thomas Scott in his *Vox Coeli*, and Francis Bacon in his *Considerations Touching a War with Spain* or the Spaniard Antonio Pérez, all propagated the Black Legend. During the seventeenth century in France, anti-Spanish propaganda continued to flourish. According to *La leyenda negra*, François Bertaut de Fréauville (1621-1701), Madame d'Aulnoy (1651-1705) and Bartolomé Joly actively contributed to the process of international negative stereotyping of Spain. Michael Iarocci notices how Montesquieu embraced Spanish attacks and took them one step further in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1747), a cornerstone of geographic determinism. In it,

Montesquieu states that climate actually divides human groups into superior and inferior classes, regardless of their common ethnic backgrounds. Book XIV, "Of Laws in Relation to the Nature of the Climate," reads, "Cold air constringes the extremities of the external fibres of the body; this increases their elasticity, and favors the return of the blood from the extreme parts to the heart. It contracts those very fibres; of course it dismishes their force and elasticity" (221).

It is precisely this idea that cold weather creates superior nations that is used to racially mark Spain for the first time in history. The Gothic tribes that invaded both France and Spain upon the downfall of the Roman Empire were ethnically sisters. However, with geographic determinism, Spain will become more degenerated than France.

Montesquieu continued his Spanish attacks in his *Persian Letters* (1721), where he openly connotes Spain as dark and racially inferior. "Letter number LXXVIII" reads (found as "Letter 75" in the Oxford World's Classics translation by Margaret Mauldon):

> Those who live in continental Spain and Portugal feel enormous pride if they are what are called old Christians; that is to say, that they are not descended from those who, over the course of the last two centuries, were persuaded by the Inquisition to embrace the Christian religion. Those who live in the Indies feel no less gratification in reflecting that they can claim the sublime virtue of being, as they put it, white-skinned. No sultana living in the seraglio of the great lord has ever taken such pride in her beauty, to equal the pride that the oldest and ugliest rogue in a Mexican town takes in his olive-white skin, as he sits in his doorway with folded arms. A man of such consequence, a creature of such perfection, would not work for all the gold in the world; he would never bring himself to compromise the honour and dignity of his skin with any base, mechanical labour. (106)

 Such an intellectual action of course had a reaction, and several Spanish authors felt they had to restore the racial honor of Spain. José Cadalso, author of the famous *Cartas Marruecas* (1789), published his *Defensa de la nación española contra la "Carta Persiana LXVIII" de Montesquieu*, in which he fiercely pushed back against France. However, it is interesting to note the obvious racial anxiety in the voice of Cadalso, who seems to need to justify so-called Spanish racial purity by providing a list of all the Arian settlers who lived in Spain. Thus, when comparing the Roman invasions of both France and Spain, Cadalso praises the courage of the Spaniards by saying: "Sola la ciudad de Numancia costó más tiempo que todas las Galias" (6). And Cadalso specifically replies to the critic of the white race with the following message: "La vanidad de nuestro vulgo sobre lo de hombre blanco y Cristiano Viejo

no es tan vacía de fundamento como la pinta el Señor Presidente de Montesquieu, y lo conociera si concurriesen en su doctísima persona todas las circunstancias que he señalado como necesarias en quien se mete a censor de una nación" (19).

Montesquieu was not the only French authority to attack Spain. In 1782 Masson de Movilliers published an article about Spain in the *Encyclopedie Methodique*, although he is somewhat more moderate in his racial attacks. Using Donato and López translation, found in *Enlightenment Spain and the Encyclopédie méthodique*:

> The Spaniards are generally temperate and solem, even with regard to the most minimal trifles. They are good soldiers, faithful vassals, slow in decisión but firm in resolve, patient and constant in their trials. Their minds are profound and penetrating, but they are indont and lazy, and invest more enegery in enduring poverty than would be required of them to no longer dread it. The heat of the climate contributes significantly to infusing them with this shameful apathy. The French, even the most active, acquire the same defect after some years and get accustomed easily to this idle gravity that makes up the distinctive character of the Spaniard. (Donato 75)

> Movilliers goes even further by asking the question of what Europe owes to Spain:
> But what do we owe Spain? After two centuries, after four, after ten, what has she done for Europe? Today she resembles those weak and unfortunate colonies that always need the protective embrace of the metropolis. It is thus necessary to aid her with our arts and our discoveries. What is more, she resembles those sick, desperate people who, unaware of their disease, reject the arm that brigs them life! (Donato 77)

As with Cadalso, Masson's work prompted several Spanish heated replies. Juan Pablo Forner, in his *Oración apologética por la España y su mérito literario*, and Juan Arribas y Soria and Julian de Velasco, the Spanish translators of the *Encyclopedie Methodique*, are just some of the many offended Spaniards who replied to Movilliers. Arribas y Soria and Velasco even provided an extra epilogue to the chapter dedicated to Spain in which they launched a national defense of Spanish pride. Using again Donato and López translation: "Why do certain writers who herald themselves as philosophers act with so little philosophy toward us? Is it because we are neighbors? Or maybe all this is due to old animosities -engendered during those barbaric centuries- that continue to retain more power than the Enlightenment and its highly praised principles of humanity?" (Donato 199).

Forner also provides a similar approach in which he emphasizes the rich intellectual tradition that Spain holds (richer indeed than any other European country, according to him).

Hence, there is a European tradition of undermining Spain due to old imperial rivalries. Such an underestimation, commonly labelled as the Black Legend, can be traced back to the thirteenth century in Italy, and it increases in aggressiveness as Northern European empires rise in power. Finally, it is during the eighteenth century when for the first time the race element is added to the contempt for Spain, and its expulsion from white Europe officially takes place.

Although Spain also had its own racial anxiety problems as a result of the multicultural past of the Middle Ages, where Muslims, Sephardic Jews and Christians lived together, those problems were not strictly related to the idea of the whiteness of the nation. It is true that certain ethnic groups were excluded from power structures, and as such they were understood as subaltern subjects. Yet the problem of understanding Spain as a racially mixed country and therefore placed at the periphery of white Europe was new to the eighteenth century.

As such, it is at this moment when the racial attacks from northern Europe questioned for the first time the racial inferiority of Spain as a nation, and Spain had its first racial breakdown in respond to such accusations. Defending itself of this so called racial inferiority had a double purpose: on the one hand, to claim whiteness to its racist neighbors and therefore to claim acceptance into the new racial power structures of Northern Europe; on the other hand, to convince itself of its racial purity, and therefore to make a claim for civility and modernity.

In order to observe this racialization of Spain and the relationship between race, power and nation, I will now analyze two plays that portray the same historic foundational myth, the Roman Conquest of the Iberian town of Numancia, but separated by two hundred years. The first play is *El cerco de Numancia* (1585) by Miguel de Cervantes, and the second is *Numancia destruída* (1775) by Ignacio López de Ayala.

El cerco de Numancia was conceived three years before the disaster of the Spanish Armada in England and its content happens to foreshadow reality. Spain at the time was at the peak of its empire under the rule of King Philip II, and yet power fractures were starting to unbalance its European hegemony.

The play describes the last days of the siege of Numancia, an Iberian town that had resisted attacks by the Roman Empire for almost two decades. Rome's imperial reputation is challenged and the Roman Army has been instructed to show no mercy with the Iberians. Numantians, showing their

indomitable spirit, set all their possessions on fire and kill themselves to avoid being enslaved. The play makes a clear comparison between the Roman soldiers and British and Flemish ones, the most hated enemies of Spain at the moment. In his opening speech to the Roman army, General Scipio uses these words:

> En el fiero ademán, en los lozanos
> marciales aderezos y vistosos,
> bien os conozco, amigos, por romanos;
> romanos, digo, fuertes y animosos;
> mas en las blancas delicadas manos
> y en las teces de rosotros tan lustrosos,
> allá en Bretaña parecéis criados,
> y de padres flamentos engengrados. (41)

Ignacio López de Ayala's interpretation of the same historical fact is rather different. It is important to understand that the plays are separated by almost two hundred years (1585 vs. 1775). Spain was indeed at the peak of power in 1585, but by 1775, it was a decadent Empire, although still a threat to the rest of Europe.

There are several important plot variations between both Cervantes's and Ayala's visions of the downfall of Numancia, but the main ones are the role that General Jugurtha plays and the importance of women as bearers of the offspring of Spain. Yet the two of them are variations on the same theme of race.

Therefore, the first important difference between the plays is the description of General Jugurtha. Historically speaking, Jugurtha was King of Numidia, an ancient African kingdom that corresponds to modern Algeria. In Cervantes's play, he is just described as a Roman general, together with Scipio, Caius Marius and Quintus Fabius. In Ayala's version, however, he is described from the very beginning as a black African general, and he is constantly referred to in that way throughout the play. The role of Jugurtha is also rather different in both texts. While in Cervantes's play he barely has any relevance, in Ayala's he is indeed the plot engine of the play. Cervantes's *Numancia* bears some resemblance to a chronicle that praises the courage and strength of the Numantians, making a clear reference to the Spanish citizens of the Spanish Golden Age. Jugurtha plays a minor role in Cervantes's take on the downfall of Numancia, as the main responsibility lays with Scipio, who must save Rome's honor by capturing Numantian slaves and therefore preserve Rome's glorious history of unquestionable victories. In this way, Emilie Bergmann points out in "The Epic Vision of Cervantes in

'Numancia'", precisely how Scipio has a hard time understanding the collective suicide of the Numantians as heroic:

> The envisioned combat offered by the Numantians is rejected by Scipio because it is seen differently and interpreted differently by the two sides. The Numantians see it as a dignified conclusion to the siege, and a heroic single combat worthy of both sides; Scipio sees it as madness, an example of the enemy's misplaced pride, while he is unwilling to look at his own pride. He sees the enemy as other, as barbarian, while they see themselves as equal to the Romans. Thus, they can never become slaves of the Romans in defeat; their imagination does not admit this as a possibility and makes suicide the only solution. (91)

However, Ayala's position is rather different. Jugurtha, the African, falls in love with Olvia, a local Numantian woman, and he offers to change sides and help the Numantians defeat the Romans if Olvia consents to his affections.

The second and most significant plot difference between the two plays is the role of women as bearers of race. In Cervantes's play, women have a passive role. For example, Lira, a Numantian woman, is the lover of Marandro, another Iberian. Her role in the play is to express that she is starving, and as a consequence, Marandro feels that he has to steal some bread from the Roman camp to feed her, an action that causes his death. Other than this female character, women appear performing as allegorical characters such as Spain, Hunger or Death. Finally, four female characters simply called "four women of Numancia" are asked to declare their opinion to the local resistance leaders about a possible surrender to the Roman troops:

> ¿Qué pensáis, varones claros?
> ¿Resolvéis aún todavía
> en la triste fantasia
> de dejarnos y ausentaros?
> ¿Queréis dejar, por ventura,
> a la romana arrogancia
> las vírgenes de Numancia
> para mayor desventura,
> y a los libres hijos vuestros
> queries esclavos dejallos?
> ¿No será major ahogallos
> con los propios brazoss vuestros? (89)

As mentioned earlier, there is a clear association between the northern European enemies of Spain and the Roman soldiers. Therefore, if they

succeed in taking over Numancia, they will rape these women, meaning that Spanish progeny will be of bastard Anglo-Dutch Protestant offspring. It is therefore clear that there are no racial implications whatsoever to be found in Cervantes's reading of history. In this way, despite the racial tensions that could be found among subaltern subjects such as religious minorities or *conversos* and the new racial labels that the conquest of America brought Spain, during the sixteenth century, had no self-representation racial anxiety and understood itself as racially equal to its northern European neighbors.

However, this will change in the eighteenth century, as shown by how Ayala's position on women, the African general Yugurtha, and race, differs greatly from Cervantes's. In this way, he creates a female character, Olvia, whose decisions will determine the fate of Numancia. Olvia is the sister of Olón, a brave Iberian warrior killed by a yet unknown Roman officer. She is in love with Aluro, another warrior related to Numantian elites, but when Jugurtha proposes an alliance in exchange for her attentions, all the responsibility of the fate of Numancia falls on her. Expressing her concerns to her lover, Aluro, she says: "En el último riesgo nos hallamos: el que a Yugurta ame es solo el medio que nos salve de tantos infortunios. Mas tú has de responder: yo no resuelvo. Tuyo es mi corazón. ¿Salvo a la patria, o desprecio a Yugurtha?" (37). Aluro's answer is clear: although he is conflicted by his love for Olvia, he knows that saving Numancia is more important than their personal happiness. Olvia therefore resolves to give herself to Jugurtha in order to save Numantia. However, in a dramatic plot twist, she discovers that it is none other than Jugurtha who killed her brother Olón in battle. She then tells Aluro that she will seek revenge, and Aluro decides to kill Jugurtha. Unfortunately, in the dark of night, Aluro kills Olvia by mistake, thinking she is the African general.

This death could actually be interpreted as a termination of a multiracial couple. The union between Olvia and Jugurtha would have resulted in the surrender of Spain to the enemy and in a racially mixed offspring between Arab-Algerian and Spanish blood. However, the end of this relationship could be translated as an affirmation of a lineage of pure unmixed Spanish blood. Jean Jacques Rousseau, a contemporary author, expressed his views about the relationship between family and state in *The Social Contract*: "The family is then, if you will, the primitive model of political societies; the chief is the analogue of the father, while the people represent the children; and all, being born free and equal, alienate their liberty only for their own advantage." (6) Doris Sommer echoes a similar thought by stating that there is a clear relationship between heteronormative families and the construction of national identities in nineteenth-century Latin American novels. In her words:

> My own suggestion constitutes the second concern here. It is to locate an erotics of politics, to show how a variety of novel national ideas are all ostensibly grounded in "natural" heterosexual love and in the marriages that provided a figure for apparently nonviolent consolidation during internecine conflicts at midcentury. Romantic passion, on my reading gave a rhetoric for the hegemonic projects in Gramcis's sense of conquering the antagonist through mutual interest, or "love", rather than through cohertion. And the amorous overtones of "conquest" are quite appropriate, because it was civil society that had to be wooed and domesticated after the creoles had won their independence. (6)

The choice of death over mixing Spanish blood with Africans clearly shows a desire to define Spanish racial identity through a historic myth. The racial national foundation agenda is clear: Spanish resistance meant that their women never intermixed with foreign invaders, and therefore, their offspring were as racially pure as those who could be found in the rest of Europe.

It seems that this racial catharsis was not an isolated case during eighteenth century Spain. Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos wrote *Pelayo* (also known as *La muerte de Munuza*) in 1792, and the plotline completely mirrors Ayala's. Hormesinda, the sister of Pelayo, is alone in Asturias while her brother is battling the Arabs together with her husband-to-be Rogundo, a noble Visigoth. Munuza, the Arab leader stationed in the North, falls in love with Hormesinda and offers her the possibility of peace in exchange for her hand in marriage. Hormesinda refuses the offer and marries Rogundo after Pelayo kills Munuza. This love story is also a racial assertion of the whiteness of Spain.

Interestingly enough, both plays could be labelled as historical fictions. The idea of linking historical fiction with empire identities has already been proposed by Willard. King in "Cervantes' *Numancia* and Imperial Spain". Following this line of thought of establishing connections between foreign invasions of Spain and imperial identities, it is interesting to note that both historic episodes are by far the most iconic ones when it comes to defining the identity of resistance of Spain. Both take place during the two most important conquests of the Iberian Peninsula (the Roman and the Arab) and both stress the idea of the survival of a pure Spanish race that resists the invader. At the same time, both were conceived during the eighteenth century. It is important to note the necessity of convincing readers about the whiteness of the Spaniards that the literature of the Enlightenment seemed to have. It is also interesting to pay attention to the way in which this ideological seduction takes place in the form of narrative.

Although from a contemporary perspective literature and history are two separate branches of knowledge, there was a time when both were conceived as branches of the same tree: rhetoric. According to Lionel Gossman in "History and Literature: Reproduction or Signification": "Over a long period of time, then, it seems that the terms whose relations we have to explore are not so much literature and history –since these were not exclusive as fictional narrative ('fictional history', as Hugh Blair called it), and historical narrative, that is to say, the two terms whose relation has traditionally been of concern to rhetoricians" (231). Language constructing reality, and history being filtered by the narrative skills of the historian are ideas that have been developed by several authors such as Hayden White, Michel de Certau, and Frederick Jameson.

Literature, specifically theater, therefore uses rhetorical devices to present an historical fiction as an historic event. Through the catharsis of the main characters of Ayala's play, the receiver of the message successfully interiorizes the idea of the historic whiteness of Spain. History and fiction come together to fabricate the idea of a white nation that in a colonial context could rival the Anglo-Saxon powers and their race policies. Spain, as many other European powers of the time, is therefore interiorizing the semantics created by British thinkers in their own fabrication of their white race and claiming whiteness by using their own intellectual weapons.

It is important to understand the role of literature in the context in which these textual objects were conceived. Literature during the eighteenth century was the most common vehicle for the distribution of ideas, not only nationally, but internationally. The use of narrative as propaganda is clear, as is also the possibility of creating anti-propaganda as a tool of defense. According to Iarocci:

> In this context, Spain's ultimate defeat in its confrontation with Protestant Europe meant, among other things, a profound disminishment of its power to define itself and its history internationally. From the position of an enunciating agent of European history, Spain became the object of northern European historical enunciation. From the seventeenth century forward, it would have little or no control over its image abroad; instead, it would increasingly respond defensively to a modern Europe whose power to define Spain and Spanish history only grew stronger with time. (12)

The choice of Numancia as the foundational myth of Spain and its mutation in terms of treatment from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century highlights the importance of the Iberian town historically speaking. As Rachel Schmidt proposes in "The Development of 'Hispanistas' in Spanish Sixteenth-Century Versions of the Fall of Numancia", during the

sixteenth century Numancia became a clear choice for the representation of Spanish identity by several writers of the period, framing the idea of Numantian pride as the synecdoche of Spanishness. It could be argued, therefore, that in the eighteenth century there was an intellectual tradition of understanding Numancia as Spain, and that in the new racial *Zeitgeist* of the time, Ayala proposed a new explanation of Spain's own clean ethnic history.

After analyzing the way in which race theories were built semantically from the fifteenth century onwards and taking into account how history and literature could be understood as a same reality under the label of historical fiction, it would be interesting to relate both concepts, race and literature, to explore the underlying purpose behind these literary racial wars.

The necessity of setting the tone in terms of race in order to define how Spain would be perceived as a nation both at home and abroad is precisely what Ayala and Jovellanos are doing with their plays. The possibility of reading history in a way that would allow them to prove the whiteness of Spain as a nation is indeed the covert persuasion behind these texts. The use of literature as the vehicle for spreading those ideas merges with the possibility of understanding literature as history. Therefore, it could be said that in those times, it was possible to use fiction to create reality. And yet, such a reality was not fully accepted by all readers.

The eighteenth century saw the rise of northern European powers and the downfall of Southern European ones. However, imperial power was still balanced, and racial policies were not yet completely defined. Race as a political tool of exclusion was used by European countries in their empires as well as in their own internal fights of north versus south. However, the Age of the Enlightenment also saw for the first time the flourishment of international discussions about the natural rights of man. The French and American Revolutions destroyed feudalism and put these ideas into practice. Slavery was for the first time questioned as a moral problem, and heated debates took place about how to balance civility with colonial power. Although the eighteenth century saw the merging of race and nation as a power structure, it was a concept yet to be fully defined. As noted by Horsman, the ideals of the Enlightenment had an intellectual clash with the supremacy of the white race. Thomas Jefferson himself considered at some point a dream of a racially mixed United States: "Jefferson told the Delawere, Mohicans, and Munsees: 'You will unite yourselves with us, and we shall all be Americans'" (Horsman 15). Scientific racism, geographic determinism and phrenology were yet to be fully developed. Some authors consider that it was not until 1862 when racialism became established with the publication of *An Essay of the Inequality of the Human Races* by Joseph Arthur, Compte de Goubineau. The eighteenth century therefore was a playground where the

ideas of race that would be understood as undeniable scientific truths during the nineteenth century were still subject to debate. Racialization was used as a semantic colonization that matched political fights on both sides of the Atlantic, and the birth of modern nations offered the possibility of finding new weak intellectual points to attack enemies.

In order to conclude with this sequence of ideas, it could be said that the creation of a national identity defined by racial purity appeared as a plotting device in Spanish Enlightenment drama for the first time in history. The rise of the British and French empires and their invention of scientific racism and geographic determinism started a process of otherness and racialization that Spain, still a dangerous rival power, also suffered. Spain's own history of racial anxiety and a resistance towards an organized plot of expulsion from a new white Europe fostered the invention of a lineage of unmixed pure Spanish blood. The eighteenth century was a moment that saw the empowerment of Northern European empires and the decline of southern ones. However, northern supremacy had not yet arrived. It would not be until the mid-nineteenth century that the Anglo-Saxon countries would achieve the hegemony of the world, and it would be at this moment that their racial theories would reach their highest peak. Eighteenth-century Spain, however, witnessed the first steps of this process. And indeed, Spanish self-defense included the invention of a national identity of resistance that could be explained through an Iberian variation of the Anglo-Saxon white race anxiety.*

(* 2018 Winner of The Pilar Sáenz Annual Student Essay awarded by the Ibero-American Studies for Eighteenth-Century Studies)

WORKS CITED

Bergmann, Emilie. "The Epic Vision of Cervantes's 'Numancia'" *Theatre Journal,* 36.1 (1984): 85-96.

Cadalso, José. *Defensa de la nación española contra la Carta Persiana LXXVIII de Montesquieu.* Ed. Guy Mercadier. Toulouse,:Institut D'études Hispaniques, Hispano-Américaines et Luso-Brésiliennes, 1970.

Canary, Robert H, and Henry Kozicki, editors. *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding.* U of Wisconsin P, 1978.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Writing of History.* Columbia UP, 1988.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *El cerco de Numancia.* Ediciones Cátedra, S.A., 1990.

Donato, Clorinda, and Ricardo López, editors. *Enlightenment Spain and the Encylopédie méthodique.* Voltaire Foundation, 2015.

García Carcel, Ricardo, and Lourdes Mateo Bretos, eds. *La leyenda negra.* Anaya, 1900.

Herring Torres, Max S., et al., eds. *Race and Blood in the Iberian World.* Lit, 2012.

Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism.* Harvard UP, 1981.

Iarocci, Michael P. *Properties of Modernity: Romantic Spain, Modern Europe and the Legacies of Empire.* Vanderbilt UP, 2006.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Cornell UP, 1992.

Jovellanos, Gaspar Melchor de. *La muerte de Munuza (Pelayo).* Biblioteca Virtual Miguel De Cervantes, 1999.

King, Willard F. "Cervantes' *Numancia* and Imperial Spain." *Modern Language Notes* 94 (1979): 200-21.

López De Ayala, Ignacio. *Numancia destruída.* Madrid: Imprenta de Pantaleon Aznar, Carrera de S. Gerónimo, 1775.

Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, baron de, 1689-1755. *The Spirit of the Laws. Volume I.* Cosimo Classics, 2007.

___. *Persian Letters.* Ed. Margaret Mauldon. Oxford UP, 2008.

Padgen, Anthony. *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France C.1500-C.1800.* Yale UP, 1995.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right.* Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1998.

Schmidt, Rachel. "The Development of 'Hispanistas' in Spanish Sixteenth
        Century Versions of the Fall of Numancia." *Renaissance and Reformation*
        19.2 (1995): 27-45.

Schmidt-Nowara, Christopher, and John M. Nieto-Philips, eds. *Interpreting
        Spanish Colonialism: Empires, Nations, and Legends.* U of New Mexico P,
        2005.

Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions. The National Romances of Latin America.* U
        of California P, 1993.

Thomas F., Gosset. *Race. The History of an Idea in America.* Kindle ed. Oxford
        UP, 1997.

White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century
        Europe.* The Johns Hopkins UP, 2014.