LA NUMANCIA WITHIN STRUCTURAL PATTERNS OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY SPANISH TRAGEDY

In his study *Lope de Vega y la formación de la comedia*, Rinaldo Froldi offers the thesis that Lope’s *comedia* derives from a preexisting tradition with its bases in Valencia, and not, as critics have often supposed, from inspiration independent of precedents. Lope’s formula for drama represents, as it were, the finalization of a vision incomplete before the Valencian exile of 1588–89. The movement toward the *comedia* of Lope may be evidenced in sixteenth-century attempts to recreate classical tragedy and in the developing popular drama. As always, the playwright’s problem with respect to antecedents was one of selection, and precisely this selective process accounts for varying tendencies in the transitional period prior to Lope.

Dramatic structure depends to a large extent on the author’s conception of unity, and consequently on the treatment of episode and subplot. Alfredo Hermenegildo, considering Pinciano’s qualifications for the five-act tragedy, notes a possibility for amplification in the central portions of the play: “El episodio, que abarca los actos segundo, tercero y cuarto, es donde se pueden introducir sucesos, que adornen y ’diviertan’ la acción principal. En el prólogo y épodo no caben, porque siendo los centros del planteamiento y solución del nudo trágico, no se admiten en ellos divagaciones de ningún tipo.” Eduardo Juliá Martínez finds in the so-called Valencian school a general abuse of this artistic liberty in “el empleo de lo incidental hasta con profusión para complicar la acción despertando el interés.” An opposing structure may also be seen, however, and the tragedies of late sixteenth-century Spain tend to reflect one of two positions: the use of events only indirectly related to the main action, as Juliá Martínez indicates, to prolong the denouement; or a single action with minimal use of subplot.

Jerónimo Bermúdez’ *Nise lastimosa* and *Nise laureada*, published in 1577 and modeled after the Portuguese tragedy *Dona Ignez de Castro* by Antonio Ferreira, trace the murder and posthumous coronation of Inés de Castro and the vengeance of Don Pedro de Portugal. The first of the plays illustrates perhaps most clearly of the works of this period a structural plan free of extraneous elements. In Act I of *Nise lastimosa*, the prince and his secretary discuss the pressures brought upon Don Pedro by his father and the kingdom as a whole to give up Dona Inés. Don Pedro argues his case, and the act ends with a lyrical passage on love delivered by two choruses. The advisors of the king Don Alonso urge him to have Dona Inés killed. The king is reluctant, and speaks of himself as a captive, a motif repeated in the choruses’ discourse on freedom which ends the second act. Act III deals with an ill-omened dream of Dona Inés, a warning of impending death by a chorus, and a final choral recitation on the theme of death. In Act IV, Dona Inés pleads for mercy from the king, who is willing to allow
her to flee until dissuaded by his advisors. The men perpetrate their scheme, and the choruses lament the death. The fifth act opens with Don Pedro’s grief on the absence of his beloved, intensified by a messenger’s announcement of her death. In the last speech of the play, the prince swears to avenge the crime, and fulfilment of this oath is the subject of *Nise laureada*.

The use of a specific motif in each act, denoted by the action and reexpression in lyrical terms, may be judged a stage in dramatic development toward the interpolation of episodes and subplots into the main action. The simple, balanced form of *Nise lastimosa* leads to a distinct analogical relationship between dramatic events and sensory evocation of these events. Bermúdez converts history (the case of Inés de Castro) into poetry, both by systematic arrangement of incidents and by the literal creation of poetical analogues in the lyrical passages. Subsequent playwrights proceed from this technique to greater complexity by seeking analogy through episodes complementary to the main action and by incorporating pertinent material in an artistic but increasingly less obvious fashion.

Andrés Rey de Artieda’s *Los amantes* (c. 1578) and Juan de la Cueva’s *Tragedia de la muerte de Ayax Telamon sobre las armas de Aquiles* (1579) exemplify the insertion of secondary action presumably for the sole purpose of amplification. The plot of *Los amantes* concerns the ironically tragic love of Diego Marcilla and Isabel de Sigura and their union in death. Rey de Artieda interrupts the progress of the main plot at several points (I, iii; II, i; III, iii) to treat the courtship of Doña Elvira by Don Juan and Doña Inés by the Conde de Fuentes. With reference to this secondary action, Hermenegildo states: “Contiene la obra algunas escenas totalmente alejadas de la acción principal. Ciertos críticos (Merimée [sic], Juliá Martínez) han visto en la [sic] escenas de Doña Elvira y Doña Inés una aportación realista que suaviza el ambiente de la tragedía, sin llegar a conseguir el equilibrio del drama. La intriga secundaria me parece inaceptable. Sólo merece cierta consideración como pintura de costumbres de la sociedad de su tiempo.” The comic scene (III, i) in which Marcilla’s servant Perafán mistakenly pairs tragic lovers of history and drama seems more a violation of decorum than an effective parody of the central plot of *Los amantes*.

*Ayax Telamon* deals with the debate between Ajax and Ulysses over the arms of Achilles, the defeat of Ajax, and his resulting suicide. Although a declamatory style marks the work in general, Cueva avoids superfluous episodes in his account of the conflict between the two heroes of the Trojan War. Nevertheless, he does not introduce the primary plot line until the second of the play’s four acts. The irrelevance of the first act appears evident from a comparison of the author’s argument of the entire play with that of the first act:
Edward H. Friedman – “La Numancia”

(Argumento)
Dexando los Griegos destruida la ciudad de Troya, y queriendo se embarcar para bolverse a Grecia, Ayax Telamon pidio al Príncipe Agamenon que le diessse y remunersse de los trabajos que en aquella guerra avia sufrido con las armas que de Aquiles avian quedado: con la misma demanda llego Viisles. Agamenon viendo lo que estos dos Príncipes demandaban, mandó que cesasse el embarcarse, y sentados todos los Príncipes griegos en la ribera del mar, oydas las causas del uno y del otro, y las razones por donde cada uno de los dos pretendia que se le diessen las armas, fue acordado que se le diessen a Viisses. Ayax, arrebatado de ira, puesto en medio del ayuntamiento de los Griegos, aviendoles dicho la injusticia que le hazian, sacó su espada y arrojandose sobre la punta se dio la muerte. 6

(Argumento de la primera jornada)
Eneas pide a su padre Anchises que huyan de Troya, pues ya está destruida. Anchises, aunque al principio no quiere, viene en hazelo; cargase Eneas del, toma a su hijo Ascanio de la mano, pide a su muger Creusa que lo siga, y dexando a Troya, por entre enemigos y armas llegaron al monte Ida, donde hallando Eneas menos a su muger Creusa, que se avia perdido por la oscuridad, da la vuelta a buscarla. Venus se le aparece a su hijo Eneas y haze dexar el camino y bolverse a donde su padre y hijo estaba con mucha gente que se le avia llegado. Cuentale lo que en su viaje le sucederá. 7

There seems to be no thematic link between these two parts of Ayax Telamon; the only unifying factor is the linguistic similarity between the first act and the final three, in which Cueva sustains the use of words relating to fate and the gods.

Gradually dramatic composition becomes more sophisticated with respect to plot and episode, and secondary actions not only expand but enrich the main action. In its definitive form, Lope’s comedia works to achieve a total unity between plot and subplot by linking multiple events according to a preconceived structural scheme. Complication of the action for purposes of suspense remains fundamental, but the subplots have progressively closer ties with the major plot as elements of the single action which Lope propounds. Cervantes, on the other hand, creates a thematic structure which unites motifs through an internal point of reference rather than incidents and characters in an external framework. This is not to imply, of course, that Cervantes’ plays are lacking in form and those of Lope in meaning, but to call attention to different focal points concerning the question of unity. Further clarification of this distinction, as well as a sense of progression in drama, may be shown by examining selected sixteenth-century plays and their respective approaches to dramatic unity.

Cristóbal de Villués classifies his Elisa Dido, written between 1580 and 1586, as a “tragedia conforme al arte antiguo,” and Hermenegildo calls it “la última tragedia española escrita al estilo antiguo.” The play won the fervent admiration of eighteenth-century critics because of its adherence to the three unities of the neo-Aristotelian preceptists, but later critics have been less complimentary. Froldi judges the work, detached from Virués’ Senecan tragedies, as an “experimento académico,” and Angel Valbuena Prat states that “con su aparente perfección, el resultado es más bien negativo. Dido, con coros y todo, es una tragedia fría, sin interés verdadero.” Hermenegildo attributes this failure to lack of dramatic dynamism and overemphasis on spectacle: “Virués no supo transportar la vida. A Elisa Dido le falta alma para vivir auténticamente. Uno de los
sustitutos, ya utilizados en Grecia, que empleó nuestro autor para remplazar la falta de vida, fue la preocupación por las puestas en escena grandiosas. En *Dido* hay un decidido interés por el espectáculo, sobre todo en el acto quinto.**

*Elisa Dido* es de especial interés en el contexto de disposición porque de múltiples recursos y la incorporación de acción secundaria que se relaciona con los métodos de ambos Lope y Cervantes. Virués proporciona una sensación de orden dentro del esqueleto de la pieza a través de la repetición y la equilibrio. Este método es más obvio en el rol de la coro y su resumen lírico de los eventos anteriores en el cierre de cada acto, y en las largas exposiciones de la criada Ismeria a Delbora en los primeros cuatro actos y su finalización en la acción del quinto. Dido’s initial speeches to the ambassador Albenamida reveal the principal issue of the play: the projected marriage of Dido and King Iarbas of Mauritania. Virués choose to base his work on Dido’s decision and the consequences of her decision, thus dealing with a relatively static set of circumstances on which he further imposes the unities. The infrequent intervention of Dido (**... no intervenga en más de 170 versos,** según Hermenegildo)** and the appearance of Iarbas only in Act V necessitate additional sources of content for the five-act structure. Virués answers this problem by introducing a love intrigue of a type commonly associated with la *comedia de capa y espada*. Ismeria and Delbora love, respectively, the governor Seleuco and the captain general Carquedonio, both of whom have pretensions of marrying Dido. The four characters have contact with Dido, yet none figures in the queen’s resolution of the marriage conflict. Dido’s fulfillment of her vow to Siqueo is, in fact, extra-dramatic, since the conditions which motivate her suicide are explained only in Ismeria’s accounts of Dido’s past and in the suicide note.

Julia Martínez cita como un modelo para *Elisa Dido* Trissino’s *Sofonisba* “y de modo mediato las tragedias de Séneca.”** Agreeing about the marked impact of the “Grecian” Trissino, Hermenegildo believes further that the inclusion of secondary actions and the moralizing tendency of the Spanish play derive from Seneca via Giraldi Cinthio, whose influence is more apparent in Virués’ other tragedies. The critic continues his discussion with the statement that Virués elaborated the action, “creyendo erróneamente que podría mezclar una intriga amorosa con una maquinación política.”** It seems evident, however, that the combination of love and politics *per se* in no way detracts from the tragic situation and that in all aspects of the play, love plays the dominant role; Dido considers marriage to Iarbas for the political well-being of the state, and recognizing this, Seleuco and Carquedonio oppose the army of Iarbas to prevent the impending marriage. The weakness of *Elisa Dido* lies not so much in the sublot as in the major plot, which includes no development on the part of Dido (to some extent attributable to the unity of time) and slight expression of the tension which the queen suffers. As a means of establishing a
multiple plot framework, Virués uses Dido in the subplot as catalyst for the actions and emotions of the four minor characters. This method is acceptable in theory, and yet the secondary action results disproportionately long and ultimately inconsequential because of subdued treatment of the Dido-Iarbas plot. Lope would later modify this basic pattern to attain proportion between plot and subplot.

The subplot of Elisa Dido represents a comic analogue of the central plot, resembling the technique developed more fully by Cervantes. Dido’s vow of faith to her husband Siqueo and her wish for peace for her people provide a clash of interests – the tragic conflict –, mirrored on the secondary level by the selfish love of Seleuco and Carquedonio for Dido and the battle they wage for purely personal reasons. The courtly language of the two men (for example, Seleuco’s “adiértote que es muerte darme vida / adiértote que es vida darme muerte”) proves doubly ironic when they actually die for love and when Dido’s predetermined death annuls any positive effect the attempts of her suitors may have produced.

Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola’s Isabela, dated between 1580 and 1581, contains a complex love plot and interrelated actions which suggest analogical reference to elements of an abstract nature, a means of adding universal proportions to the dramatic events. The unifying theme of the play is love as a determinant of political and religious acts; what initially seem to be personal emotions have far-reaching consequences. Alboacén, the king of Zaragoza, forces Isabela to choose between marriage to him or destruction of the Christian community. Argensola adds to this action the love of the advisor Audalla and the Christian convert Muley (Lupercio) for Isabela; and that of Adulce, the king of Valencia, for Alboacén’s sister Aja (who in turn loves Muley). Isabela’s father Lamberto typifies the Christian spirit and accentuates the motif of sacrifice prevalent throughout the work. For indeed, the strength of Isabela’s character lies in her willingness to suffer abuse in this life by feigning affection for Alboacén (“... por procurar nuestro sociego, / Al fiero rey daré de amor señales / Fingidas”) or martyr herself for the sake of the other Christians (“... por el bien común de nuestra gente, / Y dano de la perdida contraria, / Una muerte, mil muertes, y si puedo, / Muchas más pasaré sin algún miedo,” p. 514).

Argensola merges the love-war dichotomy by joining the two motifs through linguistic recourses. Alboacén describes his love for Isabela in courtly terms and with respect to his literal foes, the Christians:

Ya yo dije

Que no tengo temor al rey cristiano,
Ni la propincua perdida me aflige;
Mas miro mi contrario tan cercano,
Que en cualquiera remedio que provea,
El fin de mi trabajo sera vano.
Un muro comunmente nos rodea
A mi y á mi enemigo poderoso,
The Moslem king becomes enraged by Isabela’s attentions to Muley, at once his rival in love and (as a convert to Christianity) in war. Similarly, Muley’s proposal of war against Alboacén with the aid of King Pedro of Aragón (I, iv) reflects both spiritual and carnal interests, since a Christian victory would reunite him with Isabela. Muley provides, as well, a link between the main plot and the subplot involving Aja, who like Isabela attempts to appease one man (Adulce) to save another (Muley) and whose love for Muley moves her to avenge his death.

Hermenegildo views Isabela as a basically political statement, reflecting a preoccupation with the plight of the moriscos in the Spain of Argensola’s day. This interpretation presupposes an inversion of Christian-Moslem roles in the drama and the use of the love plot as a means toward didactic ends. According to Hermenegildo,

J. P. Wickersham Crawford maintains that Argensola observes theunities of time and place, but not that of action, because the protagonist dies in the third scene (of eight) of Act III. Nevertheless, within a total perspective the series of deaths which follow seems inevitable. Argensola’s final vision is one of annihilation paired with hope. In the third act, Alboacén has Isabela’s parents and sister, Muley, Isabela, and Audalla killed, and is himself murdered by Aja. Adulce and later Aja commit suicide. In the last scene of the play, the spirit of Isabela alludes to the phoenix as the symbol of rebirth: “Cual fénix, Isabela, me consu- mo, / Pero con vivas alas y colores / Renazco para dar eterno vuelo” (p. 530). With this succession of deaths reminiscent of Senecan tragedy, Argensola does not exploit horror, but instead appears to equate the protagonist on an individual level with society on a more comprehensive level. The idea of inversion essential to Hermenegildo’s conception of the play may be replaced by the strict contrast between Moslem and Christian
seen in Cervantes’ dramas of captivity. The morally superior, martyred Christian dies at the hands of the infidel, who eventually suffers for his atrocities. The concluding scenes are necessary for the sake of poetic justice, to show the punishment as well as the crime. Thus, the secondary actions serve the dual function of verifying the resoluteness of Isabela and of justifying causally the deaths at the end of the play.

Cervantes’ *La Numancia*, written during the same period as the tragedies under consideration, exhibits a carefully controlled balance between concrete and abstract reality. Cervantes constructs *La Numancia* around the essential paradox of the historical situation, the concept of victory in defeat. He stresses the antithetical nature of the subject matter through parallel focus on the Romans and the Numantians and through linguistic emphasis on antitheses. In addition to shifts in place, the temporal scope of the play transcends the present to include the future and the eternal; time and place are made to comprehend both the literal and the figurative aspects of the dramatic material, its immediate and universal significance. By working with an historical event of common knowledge, Cervantes allows himself greater freedom to represent the irony implicit in the destruction of Numancia. Without sacrificing movement or chronological progression, he maintains a continual cross-reference to the implications of the Numantians’ act. This literary equivalent of variations on a theme provides the unity – a conceptual unity – of *La Numancia*.

The opening section of *La Numancia* (11. 1-352) centers on Cipión’s alarm at the condition of his soldiers and his efforts to encourage them, their pledge of loyalty, Cipión’s denial of peace terms to Numantine ambassadors, and preparations to build a moat around the besieged town. From the start, Cervantes’ line of progress contains a multiple perspective. Cipión’s attempt to dissuade his troops from their licentious habits subtly points to the final solution of the Numantians. The general warns that the irresponsibility of the Roman soldiers must be curtailed: “Si este daño común no se previene, / y se deja arraigar su ardiente llama / el vicio solo puede hacernos guerra / más que los enemigos de esta tierra.” The idea of a common risk suggests the sense of community fundamental to *La Numancia* and restated in Cipión’s address concerning equality and unity in time of war (“trabaje el dicurión como el soldado, / y no se muestre en esto diferente. / Yo mismo tomaré el hierro pesado,” 11. 331-33). The use of fire imagery foreshadows the suicidal fire of the Numantians.

Cipión’s speech of admonition contains inadvertent (though certainly deliberate on Cervantes’ part) praise of the strength of the enemy:

Avergonzaos, varones esforzados,  
porque a nuestro pesar, con arrogancia  
tan pocos españoles, y encerrados  
defiendan este nido de Numancia.  
Diez y seis años son, y más, pasados,  
que mantienen la guerra, y la jactancia  
de haber vencido con feroces manos
He characterizes the Spanish town in terms appropriate in that context and more so at the denouement ("cuando más rendido, más ofenda," 1. 128), and by the consummate irony of Cervantes, is made to declare: "No quiero otro primor ni otra fragancia/en tanto que español viva en Numancia" (11. 143-44). At the end of the play, Cipión must plead with the last survivor of Numancia not to kill himself and thus eliminate the hope of Roman glory. The Romans' search for glory at the expense of the Numantians ("la gloria nuestra, y vuestra sepultura," 1. 272; "nuestra gloria y vuestra muerte," 1. 308) fails to materialize, even with military triumph, because the ruins of the town serve jointly as grave and site of eternal glory. The victors realize that the key to their goal lies in conquering the pride of their enemies ("vencer la soberbia de esta gente," 1. 352), an act which they cannot accomplish.

Cervantes complements the opposing elements of the plot with extensive use of antonyms: amigo-enemigo (11. 23-24; 73, 75; 287-88; 327-28); "mis nuevas trazas y sus viejos modos" (1. 32); justicia-injusticia (11. 60, 62); "La blanda Venus con el duro Marte" (1. 89); "del viejo vivir nueva mudanza" (1. 204); verdad-falsedad (11. 217-18); noche-día (1. 235). The second Numantian's assertion that "guerras ama el numantino pecho" (1. 304) extends the Venus-Mars allusion and leads into the speech of España on the paradox of war as a means of retaining liberty.

The personified figures España and Duero speak principally of the future glory of Numancia and Spain in the remaining section of Act I (11. 353-536). Either by fate or as punishment for sins ("porque tu [sic] has querido / o porque mi maldad lo ha merecido," 11. 367-68), Spain will temporarily become the slave of other nations. Her eventual dominance is exemplified by the resistance of Numancia, which has retained freedom by bloody sacrifice ("a costa de su sangre ha mantenido / la amada libertad," 11. 387-88) and will be reborn ("acabará su vida y no su fama, / cual fénix, renovándose en la llama," 11. 391-92). The common death by fire makes the phoenix an especially meaningful symbol of the Numantian triumph. The Duero reaffirms the lasting effect of the Numantians' act: "... no podrán las sombras del olvido / escurecer el sol de sus hazañas" (11. 462-63). Nothing can be done to change the destiny of the town ("... no puede faltar lo que ordenado / ya tiene de Numancia el duro hado," 11. 527-28), but the future success of Spain has been prophesied: the Romans will be defeated by the Goths, from whom the Catholics will proceed, and the Catholic monarchs will unite divided empires. The present unity of Spain under Felipe II is represented on a smaller scale by the joint action of the Numantians.

The plot line of Act I ends, then, with the projected construction of a moat around Numancia, while conceptually, Cervantes confirms the defeat of the Spanish town, its subsequent glory and that of imperial Spain.
Awareness of the solution of the Numantians relegates the confident attitude of the Romans to ironic purposes. España and the Duero, symbols of perpetual continuity, function as a type of chorus by giving abstract significance to events of the play and prophesying in grandiose terms the repercussions of the Numantian solidarity.

Through the prophecy of the Duero, Cervantes relates the Numantians and their Gothic successors to the Catholic tradition ("católicos serán llamados todos, / sucesión digna de los fuertes godos," 11. 503-04), presumably to justify the pagan rituals of Act II. Júpiter the father replaces España the mother as the source of insight. As a result of the spiritual incantations, the Numantians are made to realize the irreconcilability of their fate. Recognizable types emerge from the nameless Numantians, and the imminent death becomes less of an abstraction. The antithesis life-death becomes especially prominent, beginning with the *autorrima* of Numantino 10:

O sea por el foso o por la muerte,
de abrir tenemos paso a nuestra vida,
que es dolor insufrible el de la muerte,
si llega cuando más vive la vida.
Remedio a las miserias es la muerte,
si se acrecientan ellas con la vida
y suele tanto más ser excelente
cuanto se muere más honradamente.

(11. 585-92.)

The Numantians hope to end the struggle with a single combat, and echoing Cipión’s description of the Numantians, one of the townsmen states: "Son los romanos tan soberbia gente, / que luego acetarán este partido, / y si lo acetan, creo firmemente / que nuestro amargo daño ha fenecido" (11. 617-20). He continues with the further ironic comment: "mire qué estrella, o qué planeta o signo / nos amenaza muerte, o fin honroso, / . . . / saldremos vencedores o vencidos" (11. 627-28, 632). Each of the alternatives materializes; the Numantians die an honorable death and become both the conquered and—in the universal scope of the play—the conquerors. Because the Duero has already spoken of the futility of man before fate, the intended sacrifice to Júpiter ("quizá con esto mudará de intento / el hado esquivo y dos dará contento," 11. 639-40) has no chance of success. The Numantians themselves will be the sacrificial victims.

The dialogue of Marandro and Leoncio (11. 681-788) sustains the interplay between love and war. Leoncio berates his friend for thinking of love during wartime: "Al tiempo que del dios Marte / has de pedir el favor, / ¿te entretienes con amor, / quien mil blanduras reparte?" (11. 713-16). Marandro counters, "Hizo el amor, por ventura, / a ningún pecho cobarde?" (11. 723-24), and he will prove this claim in Act III. Once again employing the motif of sacrifice in an ironic sense, Cervantes prefigures the common death by having Leoncio discuss love in terms of
fire:

Y en dulce paz y sosiego
de tu esposa gozarás,
y la llama templarás
de aquese amoroso fuego;
que para tener propicio
al gran Júpiter tonante,
hoy Numancia en este instante,
le quiere hacer sacrificio.

(11. 777-84.)

Numancia's sacrifice will ultimately be its people, but the fire which consumes them will be loving, as a source of their glory and their spiritual victory over the Romans.

The sacrifice of the ram by the Numantine priests serves as a ritual reenactment of the death of the townspeople. An air of doom accompanies the offering. As they enter, the two priests speak of "señales ciertas de dolores ciertos" (1. 789) and the "desdichado pueblo numantino" (1. 794). From the beginning the fire will not burn, a bad omen; yet despite the obvious signs of destruction, the first priest accurately foresees death as triumph: "Aunque lleven romanos la vitoría / de nuestra muerte, en humo
ha de tornarse / y en llamas vivas nuestra muerte y gloria" (11. 822-24). He calls the ram an innocent victim, and as he is about to complete the sacrifice, a demon enters and carries off the ram. One man, resigned to his fate, hopes for remembrance from posterity: "Lloremos, pues es fin tan
lamentable / nuestra desdicha; que en la edad postrera / de él y de nuestro
esfuerzo siempre se hable" (11. 900-02). This view of life as a basis for history, and by extension dramatic treatment of history, forms part of the multi-leveled structure of La Numancia, as a simultaneous representation of history in the making and history exalted.

Within this framework, the scene of Marquino's resurrection of the shrouded corpse has special significance. The Cuerpo rejects life on earth ("Engáñaste si piensas que recibo / contento de volver a esta penosa / misera y corta vida que ahora vivo," 11. 1057-59), the life for which the Numantians are fighting. He predicts the outcome of the war and its ambivalent victory:

No llevarán romanos la vitoría
de la fuerte Numancia, ni ella menos
tendrá del enemigo triunfo o gloria,

el amigo cuchillo, el homicida
de Numancia será, y será su vida.

(11. 1073-75, 1079-80.)

The foreshadowing device receives further amplification as Marquino himself converts word into deed by committing suicide. Leoncio acts as spokesman against black magic, in what may be understood anachronistically as the Christian position, but he argues against what has been visually
represented. His rationalization corresponds to the *vida-muerte* dichotomy of the opening section of Act 11: "No muestres que tienes poca / ciencia en creer desconciertos, / que poco cuidan los muertos / de lo que a vivos toca" (11. 1101-04). In the next act, the Numantians will propose a means of ending the war, disregarding for a time the decree of fate.

In Act III, Cervantes concentrates on the movement toward the communal suicide. The Numantians present the proposal of singular combat to the Romans, who reject this idea. After considering the possibility of entering battle with the Romans, the Numantians resolve to destroy all of their possessions and finally themselves to prevent the glory of their enemies. The concern with history is evident from Teógenes’ wish that the Numantians’ deed be eternalized ("que eternice nuestra historia," 1. 1421). The playwright focuses on individual members of the community without detracting from the sense of community vital to the work. He uses types (the community leader, the young lovers, the two friends, the faithful mother), but gives them emotional depth, so that the human aspect of the historical event may be seen.

Cipión reacts favorably to the apparent success of his strategy, with no loss of soldiers ("En forma estoy contento en mirar cómo / corresponde a mi gusto la ventura, / y esta libre nación soberbia domo / sin fuerzas, solamente con cordura," 11. 1113-16), and foresees this as a means of attaining the highest form of glory ("gloria... mils levantada," 1. 1129). He is adamant – and militarily prudent – in his dismissal of the Numantine delegates who wish to end the war with a one-to-one battle. The general compares the Numantians to encaged beasts:

La fiera en la jaula está encerrada
por su salvatoquez y fuerza dura,
si puede allí con mana ser domada
y con el tiempo y medios de cordura,
quien la dejasse libre y desatada
daría grandes muestras de locura.
Bestias sois, y por tales encerradas
os tengo, donde habeís de ser domadas.

(11. 1185-92.)

The obvious irony lies in the fact that the Romans will lose no soldiers in armed combat and yet will still see their plans unfulfilled.

The first alternative which the Numantians consider, that of a forced battle, would allow the Roman troops an easy victory, as well as the opportunity to take the women and children prisoners. At the women’s objections, the Numantians decide on death by burning to give the Romans no spoils. The language of this section (11. 1233-1457) repeats motifs used earlier. Cervantes sustains the life-death antithesis in Teógenes’ speech to the women:

jamás en muerte o vida os dejaremos,
antes en muerte o vida os serviremos.
Pensábamos salir al foso, ciertos
antes de allí morir que de escaparnos,
pues fuera quedar vivos aunque muertos,
si muriendo pudiéramos vengarnos.

(11. 1408-13.)

Among the other groups of opposites are *ventura-desventura* (11. 1234, 1236; 1310, 1313); *libres-esclavos* (11. 1314-15); *defensa-ofensa* (11. 1371-72; 1395-96); ‘*breve muerte y larga gloria*’ (1. 1381). At this point the fire imagery becomes literal. Teógenes says, ‘‘Vamos a ser ministros todos luego / de encender el ardiente y rico fuego’’ (11. 1448-49).

Directly following the demonstration of group courage, Cervantes offers an analogue on the individual level. Marandro will enter the Roman camp to steal bread for the starving Lira. The abstraction of imminent death blends with the physical cause of death, hunger:

Lira. Que me tiene tal la hambre,
que de mi vital estambre
llevará presto la palma.
¿Qué tálamo has de esperar
de quien está en tal estremo,
que te aseguro que temo
antes de un hora espirar?
Mi hermano ayer espiró
de la hambre la acabó.
Y si la hambre y su fuerza
no ha rendido mi salud,
es porque la juventud
contra su rigor se esfuerza.

(11. 1479-93.)

Leoncio judges his friend’s willingness to venture into the enemy camp in terms of sacrifice (“Terrible ofrecimiento es el que has hecho, / y en él, Marandro, se nos muestra claro, / que no hay cobarde enamorado pecho,” 11. 1574-76), and yet volunteers to accompany him. In the next scene, the speeches of two Numantians further underline the motif of sacrifice: “acuden todos, como santa ofrenda / a sustentar las llamas con su hacienda” (11. 1654-55). A mother with her two dying children illustrates the physical reality of impending death, the suffering which precedes the Numantians’ glory.

In the opening section of Act IV, the scene changes to the Roman camp, after the entry of Marandro and Leoncio. Fabio reports to his general the death of Leoncio (“mil espadas le acabaron,” 1. 1785) and the escape of Marandro. As in the first act, Cipión expresses his surprise in the form of praise of the Numantians: “Si estando deshambrados y encerrados / muestran tan demasiado atrevimiento, / ¿qué hicieran siendo libres . . . ?” (11. 1788-90). He repeats the allusion to the enemy as wild beasts which must be tamed: “... la industria nuestra... /... de domar soberbios es maestra” (11. 1794-95).
Edward H. Friedman — "La Numancia"

Marandro delivers the bread to Lira, and then collapses. Lira experiences this loss together with the death of her brother from starvation ("mi esposo feneció por darme vida; / de mi hermano la hambre fue homicida," 11. 1966-67). She wishes to join them in death, but a soldier refuses to be the one to kill her. Death here becomes an emotional situation, a source of pain for the moment detached from the communal resolution.

Consistent with the juxtaposition of the abstract and the concrete, Cervantes presents the three personifications Guerra, Enfermedad, and Hambre. Guerra repeats the prophecy of the Duero, speaking of the future glory of the Numantians and of the Spanish people, and of a corresponding decline in the power of the Romans:

\[
\text{Ellos serán un tiempo levantados} \\
\text{y abatidos también estos hispanos.} \\
\text{Pero también vendrá en que yo me mude} \\
\text{y dañe al alto, y al pequeño ayude.} \\
\ldots \\
\text{seré llevada del valor hispano,} \\
\text{en la dulce ocasión que estén reinando} \\
\text{un Carlos, y un Filipo y un Fernando.} \\
(11. 1988-91, 1997-99.)
\]

Enfermedad echoes that the purpose of the act is to deprive the Romans of moral victory ("por quitar el triunfo a los romanos," 11. 2022). Hambre describes the activities of the Numantians in metaphorical terms, as sheep pursued by a wolf:

\[
\text{Cual suelen las ovejas descuidadas,} \\
\text{siendo del fiero lobo acometidas,} \\
\text{andar aquí y allí descarriadas} \\
\text{con temor de perder las simples vidas,} \\
\text{tal niños y mujeres desdichadas,} \\
\text{viendo ya las espadas homicidas} \\
\text{andan de calle en calle. . . .} \\
(11. 2032-38.)
\]

This comparison reverses the symbol of the sacrificial ram in Act II. The Numantians, defenseless at the hands of the Romans, become the sacrificial victims and thereby verify the omens of the pagan ritual.

The immediate action continues with Teógenes preparing to kill his wife and children. Cervantes introduces two young boys, Servio and Bariato, who flee from the crowd. Servio collapses from fatigue, and Bariato takes refuge in a tower. Teógenes reenters after having killed his family, and leaves with a fellow townsman to commit himself to the fire. The Romans discover the plan of the Numantians and realize that the prospect of glory has been dimmed. They try to convince Bariato to remain alive. When the youth leaps from the tower, Cipión understands the implication of the final death (and employs the antitheses rise-fall and victory-defeat): "Tú con esta caída levantaste / tu fama, y mis vitorias derribaste" (11. 2407-08).
The personified Fama gives a concluding laudatory address, a choral tribute to the Numantians.

The course of events of *La Numancia* is controlled by two agents, fate and history, each establishing a predetermined structure. The nucleus of the play depends on self-destruction as a source of spiritual survival and the realization on the part of the Numantians that death is ineludible, but that glory may be attained. In the retrospective vision, the historical record dominates and limits the action in a manner analogous to that of fate in the dramatic present.

Like the four Spanish-Moslem plays, *La Numancia* is structured according to a multi-leveled frame of reference, but with increased emphasis on abstraction and formal representation of the abstract. In *La Numancia* Cervantes creates a temporal pattern in which he manipulates history to emphasize the historicity of a dual present, that of the siege of Numancia (pre-Christian Spain) and that of the time of composition (Habsburg Spain). Both historical moments merge, perhaps paradoxically, into the timeless sphere of eternal glory, which serves as motivation for all action. The ambivalent present of *La Numancia* effects a consequent dualism in the perspectives of the past and future, marked by an awareness of history in the making and references to coetaneous history (Felipe II and the annexation of Portugal). The characters are *dramatis personae* and *historiae personae* as well, conscious of their roles as creators of history.

Cervantes uses audience familiarity with the history of Numancia to involve the spectator in the dramatic action and to give him a comprehensive view of the evolving story line and its repercussions. Language assumes special importance because speeches apply both to the immediate action and to future events, adding a further dimension to the traditional ironic role of fate. Antitheses convey a sense of struggle implicit in *La Numancia*, and continuity of antitheses throughout the work suggests the relative similarity of the opposing sides from a human point of view. Since the play is directed toward the transcendence of the collective act, allegorical figures are proper as a means of underscoring its universality.

Cervantes’ dramatic conception proves more complex and more polished than the tragedies of his contemporaries because he manages to synthesize seemingly disparate elements into a unified whole. Each episode, each character, and each speech has a thematic relation to the comprehensive framework of the play: the idea of Numancia, in representational and connotational terms. Unlike the superfluous episodes of Rey de Artieda’s *Los amantes* or the thematically disconnected opening section of Cueva’s *Ayax Telamon*, every facet of Cervantes’ work has a validity within the complete perspective. Bermúdez in *Nise lastimosa* and Virués in *Elisa Dido* use choral repetition as lyrical restatement of action; Cervantes, on the other hand, creates allegorical figures to elevate the action of *La Numancia* to its historical and eternal planes. Argensola
establishes linguistic parallels between plot and subplot in *Isabela* in fundamentally the same manner as Cervantes, but in *La Numancia* the recourse is sustained to form a distinct level of correspondence between the various divisions of the work. Cervantes’ commitment to the central concept is total, and demonstrable through dramatic actions, figurative episodes, and language.

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Notes

16. Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola, *Isabela*, in *Orígenes del teatro español*, I, 515. For the complete text, see pp. 506-30. All subsequent quotations from *Isabela* will refer to this edition, and the page number will follow the passage cited.
17. Sustaining the courtly mode, Alboacén interjects, “... tú, la más cruel de las mugeres, / Correspondes mal a mis servicios” (p. 508).
20. Cervantes achieves unity not by developing complications around a single action as do Lope de Vega and his followers, but through parallel events (or episodes) which form a conceptual unity. The individual episodes, analogically related, reinforce or complement an idea rather than expand an action. In the *comedias* of Cervantes, the presentation of a world
view through analogy may be seen most clearly in the plays dealing with captivity and the struggles between Spaniards and Moslems (Los tratos de Argel, Los baños de Argel, El gallardo español, La gran sultana).


23. In the plays of captivity, the very nature of the subject matter leads to an ordering based on antitheses, in religious, political, and moral terms. The "little world," the immediate action of the play, never loses touch with a "great world" of correspondingly greater universal significance.