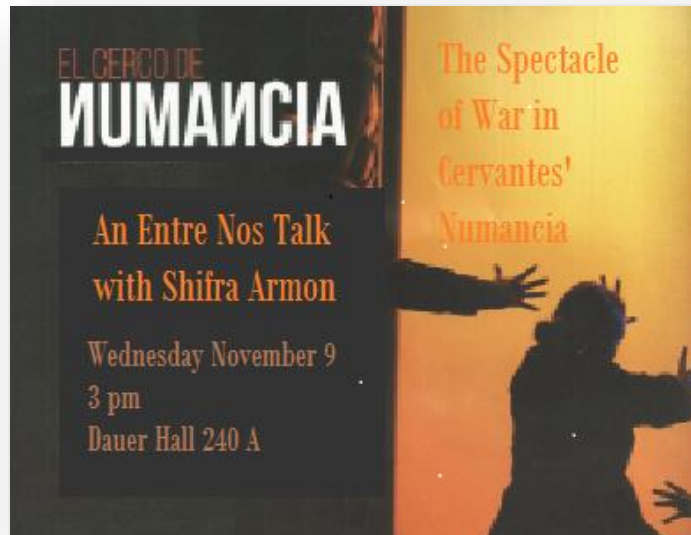


## ‘The Spectacle of War in Cervantes’ *La Numancia*’

--When you resorted to force, ...you didn't know where you were going. If you got deeper and deeper, there was just no limit except...the limitations of force itself.<sup>1</sup>



In this paper my objective is to map transformations of military *techné* into tropes of entertainment in Cervantes’ *La destrucción de la Numancia* (c. 1582). Cervantes’s *La Numancia* dramatizes the consequences of the Roman general Scipio’s decision in 131 BCE to conquer an iron-age encampment of Celtiberan insurgents, not by the sword, but by the spade. Cervantes’ (and his contemporaries’) fascination with siege-works comes to the fore not only in the famous “Captive’s Tale” episode of *Don Quijote*, which details the successful Ottoman naval assault on the Spanish-held Tunisian fortress of La Goleta in 1574, but also in *La Numancia*, penned shortly after Cervantes returned from captivity in Algiers.

During Cervantes’ lifetime, fortification innovations—visible to us at the Castillo de San Marcos in Saint Augustine--produced a shift away from offensive combat and toward defensive military strategies. *La Numancia* exposed audiences to the novel materiality and gruesome consequences of protracted siege warfare, promising to beguile them with “the pleasure of the siege.”

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<sup>1</sup> General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jan 12, 1955. In Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 23. Cited in James Hillman *A Terrible Love of War* (NY: Penguin, 2004), 55.