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SHAM FIGHTS AND MOCK SIEGES: AN ENDURING ANTIQUITY IN THE MEDIEVAL AND PRE-MODERN REPRESENTATION OF WAR[*]

La guerre est, sans conteste, le plus violemment
spectaculaire d'entre tous les phénomènes sociaux.[1]

Since the nineteenth century, the study of medieval and pre-modern aristocratic festivals has enjoyed great success and involved a vast multitude of scholars from the most disparate fields: not only historians of art, theatre and dance; medieval and pre-modern literature scholars; historians of sports and games; specialists in heraldry, martial arts and armour; but also sociologists and historians of law, anthropologists, and human ethnologists. Nonetheless, even today the influence of the purely military component of this particular expression of the medieval and pre-modern aristocratic ethos has been misunderstood or undervalued in the study of theatre history. In recent years, a vast number of publications devoted to these issues have replaced the fundamental, but limited contributions of nineteenth and early twentieth century history. All the same, despite some fecund yet partial studies of a semi-interdisciplinary nature,[2] these topics have actually never been subject to a com-

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1. «War is undoubtedly the most violently spectacular of all social phenomena» (G. BOUTHOUL, *Le phénomène-guerre: méthode de la polémologie, morphologie des guerres, leurs infrastructures*, Paris, Payot, 1962, p. 6).

2. See especially the international conferences and related proceedings promoted and edited by Jean Jacquot under the title *Le Fêtes de la Renaissance* (1956, 1964, and 1975). Despite the decades that have passed, we consider these contributions to be fundamental, especially given their multidisciplinary approach, which ultimately faded away among the countless subsequent studies of medieval and premodern chivalric festivals. Even recent studies in the field generally

prehensive approach capable of giving shape to a convincing historiographical model. Chivalric fêtes, in other words, have for the most part been interpreted solely as events of a performative nature or in any case bound to court ceremony, with no deeper understanding of their inner relationship to the chivalric ideal and the military model implicit in it. The reasons are to be found in the fact that, from a historiographical perspective, military history has often been considered a secondary discipline.[3] This prejudice is further reinforced by the fact that war manifests the highest expression of the organised exercise of violence. The protean nature of the concept of violence often translates into an omissive approach on the part of scholars, with many «understatements, and half-truths, a lot of embarrassed silence and other signs of shamefacedness» as Zygmunt Bauman writes.[4] Historical studies have been conditioned by this

leave the reader struck by the substantial lack of reference to the contribution of the art of fencing, duelling, and military practices, despite several notable exceptions, particularly regarding studies on the art of equitation in the Renaissance such as *Les arts de l'équitation dans l'Europe de la Renaissance*. VIe Colloque de l'Ecole nationale d'équitation au Château d'Oiron (4-5 October 2002), edited by P. FRANCHET D'ESPÈREY, Arles, Actes Sud, 2009.

3. In recent decades, however, scholars of a rather different bent have repudiated this reductive approach to the study of past military events – read as *historie-bataille* according to the successful but overly restrictive formula fashioned by the *Annales* school – and have devoted greater attention to the role of war and conflict as a specific cultural object that shaped (and unfortunately still conditions) the very roots of civilizations and peoples; see, among others, M. FORMISANO-H. BÖHME, *War in Words: Transformations of War from Antiquity to Clausewitz*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 2011. A fruitful interdisciplinary approach on these topics recurs in *War as Spectacle: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Display of Armed Conflict*, edited by M. HOPE and A. BAKOGIANNI, London, Bloomsbury, 2015. A significant survey that runs against the grain from the specific perspective of theatre history studies is the essay by Patricia A. Cahill on the relations between Elizabethan theatrical production and concurrent theories of warfare: *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2008; see also G. ADAMI, *Tra guerra e teatro: scienza e tecnologia militare al servizio dello spettacolo nell'Europa di Antico Regime*, «Biblioteca teatrale», n.s., 2009, 89-90, pp. 13-45. Similar considerations of these issues already appear in C. EDELMAN, *Brawl Ridiculous: Swordfighting in Shakespeare's Plays*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992; N. DE SOMOGYI, *Shakespeare's Theatre of War*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998; H. WATANABE-O'KELLY, *Tournaments and Their Relevance for Warfare in the Early Modern Period*, «European History Quarterly», XX, 1990, 4, pp. 451-463; ID., *Early Modern Tournaments and Their Relationship to Warfare: France and the Empire Compared*, in *Festive Culture in Germany and Europe from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, edited by K. FRIEDRICH, Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000, pp. 233-244; N. TAUNTON, *1590s Drama and Militarism: Portrayals of War in Marlowe, Chapman and Shakespeare's 'Henry V'*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001; S. BARKER, *War and Nation in the Theatre of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

4. Z. BAUMAN, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995, p. 139. It is almost impossible to arrive at a shared and convincing definition of violence here,

bias, analysing specific case studies, but staying away from a comprehensive anthropological model which could have created a framework for taking into consideration the deeper motives behind outbursts of violence and its social, cultural, and artistic effects.

In commenting on several well-known examples of faux battles and mock sieges from the Roman, medieval, and pre-modern eras, this study has two main objectives.[5] Firstly, to identify the similarities and the exchanges between these military events and some aspects of contemporary spectacles, but also to underline the continuity in the representation of war in the ancient world and analogous forms of military simulation in chivalric culture during the middle ages and the pre-modern world. Central to this is the contribution that military history can provide to the study of chivalric spectacles. One can observe how the simulation of battles and sieges acts as evidence of a more general «enduring antiquity» of the common principles of war, to quote Luigi Loreto.[6] Within this tradition one can find the same ideological framework and military practices spanning centuries, assimilating strategic innovations and the evolution of military technology over time. Beyond the need to keep troops trained, these martial exhibitions continued to act as a manifestation of the power of generals, princes, and rulers, both ancient and modern. These lavish drills and parades – which included significant dramaturgical elements – achieved a full celebration of their military accomplishments, as well as intimidating present and future enemies and acting as a warning against internal revolts which might subvert the principle of sovereignty and the state's public order. This aspect goes hand in hand with the psychological impact of the

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especially in philosophical, anthropological, and sociological terms. Ultimately, studies on violence have proliferated around the world. Among others see: F. Dei-T. Asad, *Antropologia della violenza*, Roma, Meltemi, 2006 and especially W. Schinkel, *Aspects of Violence: A Critical Theory*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. For a historiographical perspective see R. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002; R. Muchembled-J. Birrell, *A History of Violence: From the End of the Middle Ages to the Present*, Cambridge-Malden, Polity, 2012; and M.C. Pimentel-N. Simões Rodrigues, *Violence in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, Leuven, Peeters, 2018. For the use of violence in the chivalric era see J. Vale, *Violence and the Tournament*, in *Violence in Medieval Society*, edited by R. Kaeuper, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2000, pp. 143-158; M. Vale, *Aristocratic Violence: Trial by Battles in the Later Middle Ages*, in ivi, pp. 159-182. On violence as spectacle in medieval theatre, and its connections with ancient rhetoric, see J. Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence*, Ithaca (New York), Cornell University Press, 1999.

5. For brevity, Greek and Byzantine military celebrations, which merit separate treatment, have not been taken into account in this study, if not incidentally.

6. L. Loreto, *Per la storia militare del mondo antico: prospettive retrospettive*, Napoli, Jovene, 2006, p. 47.

exhibition of military apparatus in the field and in siege warfare where splendour of armour and the demonstration of an army's technological supremacy were recognised to be crucial factors in conditioning the outcome of conflicts.[7]

However, to fully understand the context within which such events find their meaning, one cannot only analyse the collective dimension of conflict: the need to train soldiers and glorify their leaders. One also must look at the individual nature of organised violence, denoted by the hero cult and the ideology of honour, both of which have always had close ties to western warfare. Hero cults have survived the passage of time, starting in Antiquity and reaching the beginning of modern times almost intact.[8] It is a well-documented case of ideological resilience which survives religious prohibition and countless political, cultural, and technological upheavals occurring in medieval and pre-modern Europe. From this perspective, Isidore of Seville's testimony (c. 560-636 CE) is particularly meaningful. The eighteenth volume of his famous *Etymologiae*, which will enjoy great success during the Middle Ages, is dedicated to the relationship between war and agonal games (*De bello et ludis*). Here Isidore explicitly collects the heritage of ancient thought in which war («bellum») is compared to the duel («duellum»):

Formerly a war was called a duel («duellum»), because there are two («duo») factions in combat, or because war makes one the victor, the other the defeated. Later, with one letter changed and another deleted, it becomes the word «bellum». Others think it is so called by antiphrasis – because it is horrid, whence the verse (Verg. *Aen*. 6, 86): 'Wars («bella»), horrid wars' – for 'lovely' («bellum») is the contrary of a very bad thing.[9]

It should be noted that etymologies by antiphrasis, such as the one here deriving from Vergil, were common in the ancient world. Not coincidentally, in the encyclopedic treatise *De verborum significatione*, Sextus Pompeius Festus (second century CE), following Quintilianus' example, uses the term *ludus* in an antiphrastic way, comparing it to a term coming from military vocabulary such as *miles*. Referring to an example by Lucius Aelius Stilo Praeconinus (c.

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7. On this topic, see, among others, K. GILLIVER, *Display in Roman Warfare: The Appearance of Armies and Individuals on the Battlefield*, «War in History», XIV, 2007, 1, pp. 2-3.

8. An effective summary of the issue can be found in A. SCURATI, *Guerra: narrazioni e culture nella tradizione occidentale*, Roma, Donzelli, 2003, pp. 109-210.

9. «Bellum antea duellum vocatum eo quod duae sint partes dimicantium, vel quod alterum faciat victorem, alterum victum. Postea mutata et detracta littera dictum est bellum. Alii per antiphrasin putant dictum (eo quod sit horridum); unde illud (VERG. *Aen*. 6, 86): 'Bella, horrida bella' cum bellum contra sit pessimum» (ISID. *Etym*. XVIII, 9, English trans. by S.A. BARNEY et al., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 359). The antiphrastic derivation of «bellum» also has a precedent in SER. *Aen*. I, 22.

154-174 BCE) who identified by opposition the term *miles* ('soldier') as deriving from *mollitia* ('softness', 'weakness'), Festus uses the same process of opposition to explain the etymology of *ludus*, intended as a serious activity, completely antithetical to the ordinary meaning of 'play' or 'game'.[10]

The theoretical connection between the ancient dimension of Roman *munera gladiatoria* ('gladiatorial games') and *ludi* and the medieval and pre-modern world of chivalric combats occurs most probably from definitions just like the one used by Isidore in this book. In fact, he assigns an excessively important role to a specific gladiatorial genre: that of *equites*, gladiators on horseback. He goes to the point of discussing them before all other much better known gladiatorial *armaturae* (types of gladiatorial combat), giving more attention and emphasis to this relatively obscure class of gladiators.[11]

Significantly, Isidore establishes a direct relationship between *equites* and the military sphere. The fact is confirmed by the few epigraphic inscriptions that exist in this regard, which associate the *equites* to the *hoplomachiae* (military exhibitions in heavy armour) which took place in the arenas.[12] This ref-

10. «Soldier: According to Aelius this word stems from 'mollitia' [pliability] with an antiphrastic meaning insofar as men-at-arms are not pliant but cold-blooded; likewise we define 'ludus' [play, game] as something which in no way represents a ludic activity – Militem: Aelius a mollitia κατὰ ἀντίφρασιν dictum putat eo, quod nihil molle, sed potius asperum quid gerat; sic ludum dicimus, in quo minime luditur» (Sextus Pompeius Festus *De verborum significatione* XI, s.v.).

11. As is known, the most important gladiatorial *armaturae* are six: the *provocator*, the *thraex*, the *murmillo*, the *hoplomacus*, the *secutor* and the *retiarius*. The *armatura* of the *equites* is an old one, yet relevant iconographic evidence is scarce, and more so epigraphical or literary references. The most renowned images of them come from the period between the first century BCE, in a fresco in the house of Sacerdos Amandus in Pompeii, and the third century CE, in a mosaic from Rome which is preserved today in the National Archaeological Museum of Madrid. The *equites*, often depicted on foot, only fought amongst each other, wearing a tunic which might have represented their elevated status, different from other gladiators. They appear equipped with helmets with flat brims and feathers on the sides, a flat round shield (*parma equestris*), a sword, a lance and some javelins. It is likely that they came from the higher echelons of Roman society, even though their activity was judged to be foolish by Artem. *Oneirocritica* II, 33, as it was not appropriate for their social status, see, among others, E. Teyssier, *La mort en face: le dossier gladiateurs*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2009, pp. 146-150, 174-175, 286-290.

12. See M.G. Mosci Sassi, *Il linguaggio gladiatorio*, Bologna, Patron, 1992, pp. 100-101. The term *armatura*, shared with the military sphere (see below), seems to have a specific meaning in amphitheatrical events. According to Eric Teyssier an 'ethnic' component of the *armaturae* was present at the start, tied to the different origins of the duellers' arms (Samnite, Gaulish, Thracian) and subsequently, in early imperial times, a component tied to combat techniques, which produced categories such as the *equites* (those who fought on horseback) and the *secutores* (those who pursue). The use of the horse was also reserved for another less known category of gladiator who fought on a chariot: the *essedarius*; see Teyssier, *La mort en face*, cit., pp. 19-20.

erence to the Roman army was not missed by the medieval author when he affirms that the entrance of these gladiators in the amphitheatre was preceded by the exhibition of military banners («praecedentibus prius signis militaribus»):

The equestrian game («De ludo equestri»). There are several kinds of gladiatorial games, of which the first is the equestrian game. In it, after military standards had first entered, two horsemen would come out, one from the east side and the other from the west, on white horses, bearing small gilded helmets and light weapons. In this way, with fierce perseverance, they would bravely enter combat, fighting until one of them should spring forward upon the death of the other, so that the one who fell would have defeat, the one who slew, glory. People armed like this used to fight for the sake of Mars Duellius.[13]

Isidore's is therefore a significant innovation, especially considering the capillary diffusion throughout Europe of the *Etymologiae*. Here we find an affinity perceived as 'real' between late ancient arena games and medieval chivalric festivals. Starting with him, this interpretation of Roman gladiatorial *munera* provided an important theoretical precedent to Franco-Germanic chivalric games which took hold in feudal Europe between the eleventh and twelfth century. In other words, a phenomenon such as that of equestrian exhibitions, which had become an integral part of Roman Imperial cavalry thanks to the incorporation in its ranks of Celts and other barbarian populations, could be interpreted by medieval intellectuals as a 'natural' evolution of ancient Roman gladiatorial games, in the specific meaning suggested by Isidore.

Thus, a dualistic vision of conflict emerges, in which there are only two champions, each representing one of the two sides in conflict, instead of a multitude of men. They constitute an anthropological model, that of the duellist, that shows many affinities with the hero.[14] It is up to them to resolve the conflict in the name of the doctrine of *bellum iustum piumque* ('just and pious war'), aimed toward the restoration of justice and peace on earth thanks to the use of weapons.[15] As Isidore's work attests, in medieval thought the ex-

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13. «De ludo equestri. Genera gladiatorum plura, quorum primus ludus equestrium. Duo enim equites praecedentibus prius signis militaribus, unus a parte orientis, alter ab occidentis procedebant in equis albis cum aureis galeis minoribus et habilioribus armis; sicque atroci perseverantia pro virtute sua iniebant pugnam, dimicantes quousque alter in alterius morte prosiliret, ut haberet qui caderet casum, gloriam qui perimeret. Quae armatura pugnabat Martis Duellii causa» (Isid. *Etym.* xviii, 53, ed. cit., p. 370).

14. See F. Billacois, *Le duel dans la société française des XVIᵉ-XVIIᵉ siècles: essai de psychosociologie historique*, Paris, Éditions de l'EHESS, 1986, p. 400.

15. See, among others, F. Zuccotti, *'Bellum iustum', o del buon uso del diritto romano*, «Rivista di diritto romano», iv, 2004, pp. 1-58.

emplary use of organised violence in war as ritualised in the duel is reflected in the agonal component of ancient games. Within this whole context, the hero's affirmation of self usually manifests in the recognition of his deeds (and often in a precocious death in combat) — be he a valiant warrior, a gladiator, a duellist, or a knight — in a marked trans-historical symbolism. This entails the powerful individual affirmation of the subject, aimed at immortalising his name in spite of the ordinary course of his biological existence. Ultimately, however varied the contexts, an ideological continuity can be traced between ancient agonal games, duelling, war and chivalric games all the way to modern times. In looking at the Middle Ages in particular, one sees that deeds of arms, tournaments, and jousts held so ambiguous a status that it is difficult to say whether they fall into the category of duel, war, or aristocratic feast (fig. 1). Contemporaries were equally uncertain about the significance of the actions outside of a defining context, to the extent that during the second half of the fourteenth century, knights in opposing armies engaged in an *emprise* ('challenge') at a tournament or joust might be simultaneously *compaignons* ('companions'), because of their common status of noble combatants, and *ennemis* ('foes').[16] Tournaments, regulated by unwritten *droits d'armes* ('laws of arms'), were recorded and celebrated in contemporary chronicles and other literary outpourings as *faits d'armes* ('deeds or feats of arms'), that signalled their importance as *chevalerie* ('knighthood'). The enactment of *faits d'armes* at all sorts of aristocratic festivities (baptisms, weddings, victory or peace celebrations, religious feasts etc.) showed that they were the very essence of knighthood. Thus, tournaments were not simply replicas of warfare but 'another form of warfare' besides 'real' warfare, a cultural dimension conceived *iuxta propria principia* by and for an aristocratic audience.[17]

It must be specified that this is the ideology of a military caste, one which did not always coincide with warfare on the field, since in both the ancient Greek and the medieval world, warfare usually manifested itself in the form of limited conflicts, sometimes improvised and predatory: more similar to guerrilla warfare than to war on a large scale, with a prevalence of ambushes, raids, and lootings of single urban centres or battles between opposing factions within the same community. In the same way the heroic inclination had to come to terms with the discipline and the strategic necessities in planning for conflict belonging to the state or imperial nature of Hellenistic and Roman

16. See S. Muhlberger, *Deeds of Arms: Formal Combats in the Late Fourteenth Century*, Highland Village (Texas), Chivalry Bookshelf, 2005, pp. 70 ff.
17. See D. Balestracci, *La festa in armi: giostre, tornei e giochi del Medioevo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2001, p. 16.

armies, as well as to the national monarchies that formed in Europe between the fifteenth and sixteenth century. With the passing of the centuries this profound gap between the more common expressions of war and the aristocratic chivalric ethos will tend to deepen further. This is not only due to the professionalization of warfare – which had in fact already started in the Hellenistic and Roman world and which inspired pre-modern military Humanism –[18] but also following the introduction of new military technologies such as the evolution of artillery, which came after the introduction of gunpowder, in the beginning of the modern age. This is the only explanation for the widespread prejudice against firearms belonging to Renaissance intellectuals, a prejudice which reflects an ancient paradigm which must be read in the key of the ideology of honour tied to the exaltation of the ἀρετή/*virtus* ('virtue') of the noble warrior.[19] The possibility that one might kill or be killed by concealed or unseen means implied the risk of being invisible and anonymous to posterity, further vitiated by the fact that stealth weapons had no honourable place in the martial valour of either victim or aggressor.[20] Meanwhile, the more that

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18. On military humanism see F. Verrier, *Les armes de Minerve: l'humanisme militaire dans l'Italie du XVIᵉ siècle*, Paris, Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1997.

19. Among the most well-known examples of such prejudice one can cite Ariosto's invective against the Cimosco arquebus in the IX canto of the *Orlando Furioso*, where Orlando curses the weapon, defining it an «abominoso ordigno» ('abominable contraption') created by «Belzebù maligno» ('evil Beelzebub'). The real impact of firearms on the battlefield, however, should be reconsidered. The so-called theory of Military Revolution of 1550-1660, conceived by Michael Roberts in 1956 to indicate a radical transformation in modern warfare based on the widespread introduction of firearms in siege and field warfare, have been largely downsized in more recent studies which have demonstrated that the impact of such firearms was much less than initially thought, at least until the second half of the eighteenth century. Luigi Loreto briefly summarises the complex issue: *Per la storia militare*, cit., pp. 41-46. If one must discuss revolution, observe Virgilio Ilari, it is a revolution in the art of war which passes from the «imitatio» of ancient Roman warfare «to the innovative «restitutio» of Hellenistic and Byzantine military science»; V. Ilari, *Imitatio, restitutio, utopia: la storia militare antica nel pensiero strategico moderno*, in *Guerra e diritto nel mondo greco e romano*, edited by M. Sordi, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2002, p. 274.

20. The best-known treatise on the limitations of missile weapons mentioned by Polybius, Strabus, and Archilochos dates, according to certain scholars, to the Lelantine War (c. 700 BCE). Edgar L. Wheeler maintains instead that it might have been composed by the historian Ephorus of Cyme (c. 400-330 BCE) taking as example Isocrates in the framework of pan-hellenic propaganda against conflict among Greeks. For Wheeler, the introduction of torsion artillery in conflicts of his time might have justified Ephorus' condemnation of this type of weapon, which being able to inflict damage from afar would have distorted the idealised world of the «areté» (virtue) belonging to ancient warfare, exemplified by the Homeric heroes; see E.L. Wheeler, *Ephorus and the Prohibition of Missiles*, «Transactions of the American Philological Association», CXVII, 1987, pp. 157-182.

weapons became long-range and stratagems covert, the less soldiers were even capable of recounting what had actually happened in the thick of battle, let alone of sustaining the heroic paradigm of individual combat between equals. On the one hand, chivalric literature became a pure fiction of battlefield experience, on the other, the soldier lost his individuality, becoming a cog in the vast machine of a professionalized army.[21]

1. *The Representation of War in Antiquity and Late Antiquity*

In a strictly military context, various sorts of equestrian and athletic games were widely recommended by Greek and Latin military authors to improve the morale of the troops and the skills of the combatants in the field.[22] Everett L. Wheeler notes how after its institutionalization, the *hoplomachia* (fighting in heavy armour) was widely regarded as a kind of sport practised in Hellenistic games and festivals as attested in Sparta possibly from the first century BCE until the second or third century CE.[23] Gladiatorial and circensian techniques in the Roman army are attested by various sources. Describing the *testudo* ('tortoise') formation to shield soldiers from missiles employed in the capture of Heracleum by the troops of the consul Gaius Popilius Laenas during the third Macedonian War (169 BCE), Livy explicitly underscores the fact that this technique, originally conceived for the *ludi circenses* ('circus games'), went on to be used for martial purposes: «A party of Roman youths actually gained possession of the lowest part of the wall, by turning to the purposes of

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21. On the disillusioning experience of war that emerges from the comparison of twentieth century and Renaissance military memoirs of soldiers see in partic. Y.N. HARARI, *Martial Illusions: War and Disillusionment in Twentieth-Century and Renaissance Military Memoirs*, «The Journal of Military History», LXIX, 2005, 1, pp. 43-72.

22. On Greek military training methods, see XEN. *Hipp.* I, 26; ID. *Cyr.* I, 6, 18; II, 1, 23; VI, 2, 6; ID. *Hier.* 8; see also AEL. *Tact.*, chs. 21 ff. On Rome, see VEG. *Mil.* 2, XXIII–XXIV. Among the surveys on Roman military training methods, see in partic. Y. LE BOHEC, *L'exercice militaire et l'armée romaine*, in *Les discours d'Hadrien à l'armée d'Afrique: exercitatio*, edited by Y. L. B. and J.F. BERTHET, Paris, De Boccard, 2003, pp. 123-132.

23. «Several inscriptions refer to contests in *hoplomachia* at games and festivals, and it is in this regard that the first evidence for *hoplomachoi* at Sparta is found. Gythium honoured Spartan *hoplomachos* Laidas for his excellent instruction of its citizens, perhaps in the first century BCE. Spartan contests involving hoplomachoi continued in the second or third century» (E.L. WHEELER, *The Hoplomachoi and Vegetius' Spartan Drillmasters*, «Chiron», XIII, 1983, p. 10). Hoplomachoi were military sophists who operated in Athens during the course of the Peloponnesian War and for the entirety of the fourth century BCE. Later they operated in the gymnasia of Hellenistic cities.

war, a kind of sport which they were accustomed to practise in the circus».[24]

After the catastrophic rout of four legions defeated by German tribes at Arausio in 105 BCE – and in the same critical context as the military reform of Marius two years earlier – the gladiatorial techniques and combat skills of *doctores gladiatorum* ('gladiatorial trainers') were openly used under the consulship of P. Rutilius Rufus for teaching the techniques of hand-to-hand combat to Roman legionaries.[25] Most probably these same skills were continually employed even later. Sometimes these kinds of *ludi militares* ('military games') were held for the glorification of Roman emperors.[26] As noted by Katherine E. Welch, an elaborate passage in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* seems to suggest that Roman emperors could sponsor gladiatorial games even before a military campaign with the aim of preparing soldiers for real combat. On the other hand, the presence of many military amphitheatres – often actual legionary amphitheatres, not only in Rome (fig. 2) but throughout the provinces of the empire – attests to a practice widely diffused since the late Republican period. Originally conceived as simple structures in wood, and placed in the proximity of encampments or fortresses, they were probably used for military festivals (*ludi castrenses*) as well as for gladiatorial games.[27] According to Welch, although some authors suggest that they were conceived likewise

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24. «Iuuenes etiam quidam Romani ludicro circensi ad usum belli uerso partem humillimam muri ceperunt» (Livy 44, 9, English trans. by D. Spillan et al., *The History of Rome*, London, H.G. Bohn, 1850). Interpreting the same episode Polyb. *Hist*. 28, 11 is vaguer but does note: «Κεραμωτόν, τακτικὴ διάταξις: ὅπερ ἐποίουν Ῥωμαῖοι ἐν παιδιᾶς μέρει. The Romans used this manœuvre also in mock fights» (*The Histories of Polybius*, English trans. by F. Hultsch, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1962). For a modern interpretation of these sources, see P. Rance, *'Simulacra Pugnae'. The Literary and Historical Tradition of Mock Battles in the Roman and Early Byzantine Army*, «Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies», xli, 2000, p. 259. Down the centuries this tactic evolved into the so-called Latin *fulcum* (Greek: φοῦλκον): «First attested in the sixth century *Strategikon* of the Emperor Maurice to designate a compact, well-shielded infantry formation reminiscent of both the *testudo* of earlier Roman warfare and the hoplite phalanx of Classical Greece» (Id., *The 'Fulcum', the Late Roman and Byzantine 'Testudo': The Germanization of Roman Infantry Tactics?*, ivi, xliv, 2004, p. 265).

25. «Gladiatorial influence on Roman military training goes back to P. Rutilius Rufus, who as consul in 105 BCE called upon the 'doctores gladiatorum' of C. Aurelius Scaurus' school to teach the legions the basic means of individual attack and defence. Hadrian also concerned himself with the application of gladiatorial techniques, but perhaps more interesting is Pliny' reference [*Pan*. 13, 1] that Trajan brought in a 'graeculus magister' to train Roman troops […] to perform a military exercise defined 'meditatio campestris' perhaps a sort of 'armatura'» (Wheeler, *The Hoplomachoi*, cit., p. 11). See also K.E. Welch, *The Roman Amphitheatre: From Its Origins to the Colosseum*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 79-82.

26. On the cavalry exercises described in Arr. *Tact*. 34-43, see E.L. Wheeler, *The Occasion of Arrian's Tactica*, «Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies», xix, 1978, p. 256 and passim.

27. As for instance, the military games enacted to entertain Emperor Tiberius convalescent at the Cerceios, see Suet. *Tib*. 72.

for military training, it is more likely practiced on the so-called *campus* (i.e. parade ground)[28] though there is some evidence that weapons training also occurred in military amphitheatres.[29] The gladiatorial techniques were anyway very similar to one of the most important if least known Roman drills: the *armatura*. Vegetius tells us that although this drill was once widely used by the Roman army, by his day (early fifth century CE) it had become a festive practice performed in the circus by special light troops specifically trained for the purpose, the so-called *armaturae*:

The armatura, which is displayed on festal days in the Circus, used to be learned not just by armaturae under the drillmaster [«campidoctor»] but by all ordinary soldiers alike in daily practice. For speed is acquired through bodily exercise itself, and also the skill to strike the enemy whilst covering oneself, especially in close-quarter sword fighting. What is more, they learn how to keep ranks and follow their ensign through such complicated evolutions in the mock-battle itself. No deviation arises among trained men, however great the confusion of numbers.[30]

It is therefore entirely plausible that the aforementioned passage in which Livy mentions the *testudo* refers to the same practice. Vegetius notes that even if in his day the *armatura* survived only in parts («ex parte servatur»), its practice was still widely encouraged because its practitioners were counted among the best soldiers in the Roman army.[31] Contemporary sources attest that Ro-

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28. «It is well known that in the imperial period, amphitheatres were often built outside of legionary fortresses. Inside these amphitheatres soldiers celebrated festivals and watched gladiatorial games for entertainment. Since they appreciated the combat as connoisseurs, soldiers would have been an exacting audience. There is even evidence that army units under principate included soldiers who doubled as arena combatants. It is often said that legionary amphitheatres were constructed specifically for military training and exercises. But evidence suggests that this activity probably more often took places in the campus, or parade ground of the legionary camp» (Welch, *The Roman Amphitheatre*, cit., p. 81).

29. See ivi, p. 293, n. 46.

30. Veg. *Mil.* ii, 23, English trans. by N.P. Milner, *Vegetius, Epitome of Military Science*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1996, p. 57. According to Philip Rance: «Vegetius typically bemoans the demise of armatura, an advanced exercise combining tactical drill with controlled close-quarters combat. Previously a universal requirement, by Vegetius' day armatura was a purely festive display by specialists (1, 13; 2, 23). This was due to its tactical redundancy, however, rather than reprehensible neglect and relates to long-term changes in which individual weapons skills and the operations of tactical sub-units became less significant. In contrast the [Maurice's] outlines contemporary close-order infantry drills conducted by campidoctores, which continued to distinguish Roman from barbarian» (Id., *The Date of the Military Compendium of Syrianus Magister*, «Byzantinische Zeitschrift», c, 2007, 2, p. 372).

31. Veg. *Mil.* i, 13.

man legionaries engaged in the *armatura* all over the Empire.[32] It was sometimes compared with the so-called *pyrricha militaris*, an infantry drill performed with music (which Ammianus Marcellinus mentions in his life of the emperor Julian)[33] (fig. 3) or the gladiatorial practice known as the *prolusio*[34] which was also performed to musical accompaniment.[35] The exact nature of the term *armatura* in all its various permutations – *armatura pedestris* ('infantry drill'); *armatura equestris* ('cavalry drill'), etc. – remains obscure, and the only reliable mention of an *armatura equestris* (or ἱππικὰ γυμνάσια) appears in Arrian's *Tactica*, 34-43 (136 CE),[36] describing some equestrian drills that were most likely conceived by the Cappadocian army to celebrate Hadrian's *vicennalia* (the twentieth anniversary of the emperor's reign).[37] However, Arrian's description, inspired by Xenophon's *Hipparchicus*, is supported by numerous archaeological discoveries, dating from the first through the third century CE and from

32. According to Wheeler: «All units of the Roman army practiced the *armatura* and all soldiers learned a form of *armatura*, although the festive performances were reserved for a special unit, also called *armaturae*, under a *decurio* or *duplicarius* if cavalry, and probably under an *exercitator armaturarum*, often an *evocatus*, if infantry. This special unit consisted of the most efficient performers and received special training as well as higher pay. An *armatura* was intended to create an image of Roman military capability which could never be achieved throughout the whole army» (Wheeler, *The Occasion*, cit., pp. 357 ff.). See also M.P.S. Gomez, *La 'armatura': un ejercicio militar desde la perspectiva del siglo IV*, «Myrtia», xxv, 2010, pp. 337-346.

33. Amm. marc. *Res Gestae a fine Corneli Taciti* xvi, 5, 9-10. See also an Ammianus' hint to the «armatura pedestris» practised by the emperor Constatius II: ivi xxi, 16, 7.

34. See M. Carter, *Livy, Titus Manlius Torquatus and the Gladiatorial 'Prolusio'*, «Rheinisches Museum für Philologie», cli, 2008, 3-4, pp. 219 ff.

35. For further investigation into the pivotal role of dance and music in the greek military world one can refer, among others, to P. Ceccarelli, *La pirrica nell'antichità greco romana: studi sulla danza armata*, Pisa, Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 1998. It is a well-known fact also that Pyrrhic dance had a substantial influence on Renaissance warfare; see K. van Orden, *Music, Discipline, and Arms in Early Modern France*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2005 and J. Herczog, *Marte armonioso: trionfo della battaglia musicale nel Rinascimento*, Galatina, M. Congedo, 2005.

36. See Wheeler, *The Occasion*, cit., pp. 354 ff. Vegetius himself: «does not gloss armatura and says nothing about the actual exercises involved. So problematic was the term that, in 1524, Tizzone Gaetano di Posi translated it as 'the art of fencing' – '*la arte del schermire*' – which is wildly inaccurate. Lipsius discussed the term learnedly but inconclusively and suggested that it was an exercise primarily concerned with missile weaponry […]. He was, however, quite certain that Lipsius's interpretation was wrong and should be ranked among the number of his speculative mistakes in military matters» (S. Anglo, *Vegetius's 'De re militari': The Triumph of Mediocrity*, «The Antiquaries Journal», lxxxii, 2002, p. 261). Wheeler also notes a possible relation between the «armatura» and the art of «hoplomachoi»: *The Hoplomachoi*, cit., p. 11. On the subject see also G.H. Orsmann, *Untersuchungen zur militärischen Ausbildung im republikanischen und kaiserzeitlichen Rom*, Boppard am Rhein, Boldt, 1991 and Le Bohec, *L'exercice militaire*, cit., pp. 123-132.

37. See Wheeler, *The Occasion*, cit., p. 360.

all over the Roman empire and especially its frontiers. Best known are several examples of very elaborate helmets with face-masks, which were worn by cavalry officers during the competitions that were held on the parade ground of the legionary campus. Manufactured with iron, bronze, or another alloy, and originally adorned with yellow plumes, they could be gilded and silvered and decorated with fabric, leather, and coloured glass (fig. 4). The chromatic effect created by the contrast between the officers' face masks and the dark blue or red Cimmerian tunics of the horsemen, wearing tight trousers in the style of the Parthians and Armenians, must have been surprising. According to Arrian, these specialised sub-units of the Roman cavalry appeared in full sight of the presiding authorities seated on a raised viewing-stand ('tribunal') wearing particularly elaborate parade armour, greaves, and shields, riding richly decorated horses. The two opposing parties, attackers and defenders, each armed with various kinds of tipped or blunt weapons[38] and colourful standards, engaged, individually or collectively, in different manoeuvres. Scholars are split over whether these exhibitions were simple mythological retellings or were meant to simulate the manoeuvres of real battles, showing off the horsemanship and weapons skills of the riders.[39] It is certain, however, that they presented a strong dramaturgical element, together with a marked antiquarian taste. This is attested by the fact that the face-masks which were found represented characters of both genders, which could be inspired by mythological figures such as Medusa or the Amazons, or by famous historical figures, as attested by the type with ἀναστολή ('cowlick'), a hairstyle, deriving from the iconography of Alexander the Great.[40] One can hypothesise that all the elements alluded to here, which can be traced to the ἱππικὰ γυμνάσια of Hellenistic, Oriental or Barbarian origin, can have in some way constituted an important precedent for the armour and accoutrements of medieval and pre-modern knightly competitions. What is certain however, is that the origin of the drills of the mounted troops of the Carolingian army lies in the sequence of movements of the Celtic

38.   «The riders carry a form of scutum but lighter in weight and painted. Their weapons are small javelins without iron heads (ἀκόντια), which in later exercises are replaced by ξυϛτὰ δόρατα (Arr. *Tact.* 40, 4), heavier javelins, and by lanceae (Arr. *Tact.* 41, 2). For protection from errant missiles the horses also wear armour, frontlets for the eyes (προμετωπίδια) and flank covers (παραπλευρίδια) in addition to saddle cloths» (ivi, p. 359).

39.   For more on the subject, see A. Busetto, *War as Training, War as Spectacle: The Hippika Gymnasia from Xenophon to Arrian*, in *Ancient Warfare. i. Introducing Current Research*, edited by H. Whittaker, G. Lee and G. Wrightson, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, pp. 147-171.

40.   See J.E. Lendon, *Soldiers & Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 268-277. See also E. Bartman, *The Mock Face of Battle*, «Journal of Roman Archaeology», xviii, 2005, pp. 99-119.

cavalry, the so-called *toloutegon* described by Arrian as integrating part of the equestrian exhibitions of the Roman Imperial cavalry.[41] The chronicler Nithard (b. c. 800–d. 844–845 or 858–859), grandson of Charlemagne, observed that it was common to see Frankish army competitions where two units of mounted troops faced off with heavy spear shafts from which the metal tip had been removed (*hastilia*). Both units were trained in the difficult and risky move of rolling back and raising their shields (*umbones*) as cover, simulating a retreat just moments before crashing into the opposing unit, only to then counterattack. At this point the other unit would repeat the manoeuvre, pretending to retreat and then in turn counterattacking, in an exercise that would be repeated many times in a single day of training.[42] These are the same manoeuvres, indicating a revolution, that came to give its name to the tournament, the very successful aristocratic martial game originating with the Franks which started in the eleventh century and became the emblem of European chivalric tradition itself. In fact, the term *torneamentum*, and rarer *torneatio* in Barbaric Latin, is derived from the Old French verb *tornoïer* ('to revolve') from which *tourneiment*, *tournoi*, Italian *torneamento*, *torneo*, Spanish *torneo*, Middle High German *turnei* and later *turnier*. As is known, the principal technical innovation in the tournament, compared to previous corresponding equestrian exhibitions, was the coordinated use of the couched lance as deployed by mounted troops in the battlefields. Previously the lance had been employed as a javelin, thrown overarm, or as a spear to be used either overarm or underarm to thrust the opponent.[43] An important improvement to balance on horseback and to the impact of medieval heavy cavalry was also due to the use of stirrups. Probably conceived by the nomadic tribes of Central Asia and diffused by Avars, stirrups had gained widespread use thanks to the Byzantine army by the time of the Emperor Maurice.[44] Aside from the tournament itself, further affinities between the Roman cavalry tradition and later chivalric practice can also be found in other equestrian exercises like that of whirling a lance at a target, which recurs in early tournaments as the quintain (tilting post).[45]

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41. ARR. *Tact*. 43.

42. See NITHARD *Hist*. III, 6; see in partic. B.S. BACHRACH, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001, pp. 124-131.

43. See R.W. BARBER-J.R.V. BARKER, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry, and Pageants in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2000, p. 14.

44. See S. LAZARIS, *Considérations sur l'apparition de l'étrier: contribution à l'histoire du cheval dans l'Antiquité tardive*, in *Les équidés dans le monde méditerranéen antique*. Actes du colloque organisé par l'Ecole française d'Athènes, le Centre Camille Jullian et l'UMR 5140 du CNRS (Athens, 26-28 November 2003), edited by A. GARDEISEN, Lattes, Ed. de l'Association pour le développement de l'archéologie en Languedoc-Roussillon, 2005, pp. 275-288.

45. See ARR. *Tact*. 41.

It must be specified that beside the *armatura*, other Roman infantry and cavalry drills are partially known: the field training manoeuvres called «ambulatura»,[46] the «decursio» or «decursus» (fig. 5), as well as entire «simulacra pugnae» ('mock battles'), were all part of the tactical training of Roman troops, as Polybius and Livy, amongst others, attest.[47] Philip Rance has underlined the important role that such sham mass engagements, which can be dated back at least to the third century BCE, played in the peacetime preparations of the Roman army. The «simulacra pugnae» described by Onasander (*Strategicus* 10, 4-6, 50s. CE) and later by the Emperor Maurice (r. 582–602 CE) were carefully devised by senior officers and scrupulously organized by their troops.[48] These large-scale ground manoeuvres (for both infantry and cavalry) and naval operations (*simulacra navalis pugnae*) were again fought with blunted, sometimes double-weighted, weapons or wooden swords like those used by gladiators (*rudes*) and practice javelins tipped with buttons (*praepilati*).[49] All in all, the simulacra undoubtedly constituted one of the more spectacular circumstances in which separate units or an entire army could simulate the effective conditions of the real battlefield,[50] and among the most revealing ex-

46. «According to Vegetius, *ambulatura*, was a thrice-monthly twenty-miles route march for both infantry and cavalry in fully kit, apparently in accordance with both ancient custom ('vetus consuetudo') and as laid down by the constitutiones of Augustus and Hadrian» (Rance, *'Simulacra Pugnae'*, cit., p. 245).

47. «There is evidence for continuity field training, previously called ambulatio, *decursio* or *decursus*, equating to 'manoeuvres' in modern military parlance. These large-scale exercises combined route marches over different types of terrain with tactical deployment for both infantry and cavalry. They might also be the occasion for large-scale mock battles, which trained units to cooperate in a battle line, offered a psychological taste of combat, and tested officers' skills of command» (P. Rance, *Battle*, in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, edited by P. Sabin, H. van Wees and M. Whitby, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 373).

48. «The importance of the [Maurice's] *Strategikon* in particular for Roman historians lies in the fact that it is in large part a compendium of earlier documentary material […]. Several recent studies have shown that the *Strategikon* exhibits a very considerable degree of continuity in content and terminology with military methods dating back to at least the third century CE, and in some instances much earlier» (P. Rance, *Drungus, Δρουγγος, and Δρουγγιστί: A Gallicism and Continuity in Late Roman Cavalry Tactics*, «Phoenix», LVIII, 2004, 1-2, p. 96).

49. See K.E. Welkch, *Roman Amphitheaters Revived*, «Journal of Roman Archaeology», IV, 1991, pp. 277-279 and M.J. Carter, *Buttons and Wooden Swords: Polybius 10.20.3, Livy 26.51, and the Rudis*, «Classical Philology», CI, 2006, 2, pp. 153-160.

50. «In order to break an enemy infantry assault the Romans settled upon a combination of fire and shock […]. The fire being a single volley of javelins followed by the shock, the charge with swords. This system is a move away from the phalanx's pure shock tactics and for it to be effective the 'fire', the volley of javelins, must not be premature. The best environment in which to practice and ensure that the volley and charge are correctly charged, is not during individual

amples is the four-day ground and naval manoeuvres conceived by Scipio after the conquest of Carthago Nova in Spain (210 BCE):

He himself spent the few days during which he had decided to remain at [New] Carthage in drilling his naval and land forces [«exercendis navalibus pedestribusque copiis»]. On the first day the legions would run under arms for four miles; on the second they were ordered to take care of their arms and clean them in front of their tents; on the third day with wooden foils they encountered each other after the manner of a regular battle and hurled missile weapons provided with a button at the end; on the fourth day they were given a rest; on the fifth they again ran quickly under arms [«in armis decursum est»]. [...] *T*he oarsmen and marines, when the sea was calm, would sail out into open water and test the mobility of their ships in sham naval battles [«simulacris navalis pugnae»]. Such training outside the city by land and sea steeled both bodies and minds for war in the city.[51]

Such laborious methods justified the later comment on the Roman army of Josephus writing about 75 CE, that «their drills are bloodless battles and their battles bloody drills».[52] In this case once again, there is a prominent performative function beside the purely military training functionality, one which comes to light during periods of inactivity of imperial armies with the aim of recruiting forces and reinforcing soldier morale. Over the centuries similar training procedures evolved according to the changing requirements of warfare and the changing face of the enemy, gaining particular momentum in the Eastern Empire, as we know from the praise poured by George of Pisida on a sham fight organized by the Emperor Heraclius during his first campaign against the Sasanian Persians (622 CE). The imitation of a real battle was so accurate and realistic that the swords were even dipped in fake blood:

When they had been drawn up as enemies, they closed securely their respective ranks, and they appeared like the walls of armored ramparts. And then, when all the forces rushed together, sword and shield upon sword and shield everywhere pressed with violent blows. The simulation of battle displayed swords drenched with blood, and

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practice against a post, but rather in a unit or army, level mock battle» (I.P. Stephenson, *Roman Republican Training Equipment: Form, Function and the Mock Battle*, «Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies», VIII, 1997, p. 314).

51. Livy 26, 51, 3-6, English trans. by F. Gardner Moore, *History of Rome*, Cambridge (Massachussetts), Harvard University Press, 1943, voll. XXVI-XXVII; see also Polyb. *Hist.* 10, 20. Six years later Scipio conceived another sham naval battle in the harbour of Syracuse before the conquest of Nova Carthago; see Livy 29, 22, 1-2.

52. «καὶ οὐκ ἂν ἁμάρτοι τις εἰπὼν τὰς μὲν μελέτας αὐτῶν χωρὶς αἵματος παρατάξεις, τὰς παρατάξεις δὲ μεθ᾽ αἵματος μελέτας» (Joseph. *BJ* 3, 75).

all the frightful spectacles and fear and confusion and murderous intent, but without bloodshed.[53]

The boundaries between practical training methods, formal reviews of the troops, and mere martial performances conceived as part of religious or civic festivals or during the triumphs, were more blurred than one might expect. In addition, terms such *naumachia* ('naval battles') or *simulacrum pugnae* ('sham battle') are not unequivocal and often referred to very different forms of display. In other words, even in these ancient military drills and manoeuvres, as would be the case for medieval tournaments, there existed a sort of continuity between re-enacting the conditions of a real battle and the appearance of a competitive exhibition. Thus Appian (*De bellis civilibus* 3, 48) describes how Octavian was so delighted by the spectacle (θέα) of a mock battle held in 44 BCE by two legions that had deserted Antony, that he lavished the soldiers with gifts.[54] Mock battles could take on a more performative dimension however, as in the feigned engagement held during one of Julius Caesar's four triumphs of 46 BCE. The dramatic component of the event organised at the Circus Maximus is remarkable. According to Suetonius (*Iul.* 39, 3), after several *venationes* ('wild animal hunts') the arena hosted clashes between two opposing forces, each formed by five hundred footmen, twenty elephants, and thirty cavalrymen. The staging of the event was openly theatrical, with the turning points of the Circus set up as full stage sets representing the enemy encampments. Theatrical performance also permeated triumphal processions closely connected to this type of military representations. The Romans were keen on maintaining this theatricality in peacetime as well as in war. In certain circumstances the celebratory function of the cavalry exercises prevailed, as in the equestrian game known as the *lusus* (or *ludus*) *Troiae* (or *Troia*) (the 'Trojan game'). Halfway between the equestrian parade and the mock battle the *lusus* was reserved to young Roman noblemen. Described by Vergil (*Aen.* 5, 545-603), this ludus started in Rome under Sulla. In his commentaries on Vergil, Servius compares this ceremony to the ancient Pyrrhic dances, quoting Suetonius.[55] From a strictly military perspective the desire of individual units

53. George of Pisidia *Exp. Pers.* 2, 150, English trans. by Rance, *'Simulacra Pugnae'*, cit., p. 225.

54. According to Rance this simulated battle would possibly also include an element of «lustratio» ('purification' or 'expiation') as was in use among the Macedonians (ibid.).

55. The same association is made by the grammarian Plotius Sacerdos, vi, 497.16 Keil; see E.K. Borthwick, *Trojan Leap and Pyrrhic Dance in Euripides' 'Andromache' 1129-41*, «The Journal of Hellenic Studies», lxxxvii, 1967, p. 20, n. 13. A known Etruscan oenochoe from Tragliatella, near Caere, dating back to the seventh century BCE, seems to feature a repre-

for distinction within the army as a whole was expressed through their choice of clothing and military equipment. Indeed, modern scholars have often discussed legionary display in terms of similarity rather than plain uniformity. As Kate Gilliver has pointed out, despite the apparent homogeneity that historical sources or monuments like Trajan's Column suggest, there was a constant search for variety in the appearance of different units within the Roman army. Thus, at least in the Republican era and in the early empire, we find a smooth continuity between parade and battle equipment.[56] Furthermore, occasionally gladiatorial mass combats also assumed the form of *naumachiae*, accompanied by some pseudo-historical narrative, and these mock sea-battles were also fought by condemned criminals and prisoners of war (fig. 6).[57] Nonetheless when Servius traces the origins of the *naumachia* to the period of the Punic Wars (beginning in 264 BCE), he asserts the exclusively military origins of these exercises: «Since the first Punic war the Romans started practicing naumachies after they showed the world that they could be dominant also in the naval war».[58]

sentation of this exhibition associated with the labyrinth of Crete, echoing the *Aeneid*, where Vergil draws a connection between the complex patterns of the young Roman horsemen under Ascanius and the labyrinth itself. The vase also presents the inscription «truia», an ancient form of *Troia*, which according to certain scholars also has an association with the verb *redantruare*, which derives from the Pyrrhic dances of the Salii, the *leaping priests*.

56.   See Gilliver, *Display in Roman Warfare*, cit., p. 9

57.   «Since the participants in these occasional spectacles were usually prisoners-of-war and *damnati*, naumachiae were effectively an extension en masse of the gladiatorial duel, and thus a form of 'indirect' death penalty. These battles were staged in a quasi-historical setting: under Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. 4,000 oarsmen and 2,000 soldiers fought as 'Tyrians' and 'Egyptians', clearly a fictitious engagement designed to accommodate an exotic scenario. The spectator appeal must have been immense, since the occasion attracted numerous visitors to Rome. Under Augustus in 2 B.C. 3,000 soldiers participated in a battle between 'Athenians' and 'Persians', won (as at the historical Salamis) by the 'Athenians' […]. A naval battle was staged between the Persians and the Athenians; these, of course, were the names given to the combatants, and on this occasion, as originally, the Athenians won. If so, we have the possibility that 'staged' versions may turn out to contradict the historical fact. The most spectacular naumachia recorded was fought under Claudius in CE 52 in the fictitious context of Sicilians against Rhodians; 19,000, destined to die, participated on the Fucine Lake» (K.M. Coleman, *Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments*, «The Journal of Roman Studies», lxxx, 1990, pp. 70 ff.).

58.   «Punico bello primum naumachiam ad exercitium instituere Romani coeperunt, postquam probarunt gentes etiam navali certamine plurimum posse» (Serv. *Aen.* 5, 114). Scholars disagree in this respect: Jean-Claude Golvin, Michel Reddé and Katherine Welch cautiously support the hypothesis of a connection between *naumachiae* and the military world: see J.C. Golvin-M. Reddé, *Naumachies, Jeux Nautiques et Amphithéâtres*, in *Spectacula*, i. *Gladiateurs et amphithéâtres*. Actes du colloque (Toulouse-Lattes, 26-29 May 1987), edited by C. Domergue,

In other circumstances a gladiatorial mass engagement (the *gregatim*) could simulate mass infantry combat, as happened at the inauguration of the amphitheatre of Berytus, built by Herod Agrippa I (10 BCE-44 CE). Flavius Josephus, in what appears to us a somewhat tragic and involuntary irony, assimilates this «operation of war», in which all the prisoners – seven hundred gladiators per side – were all «destroyed at once» as «a recreation in peace» (τὸ πολέμου δ᾿ ἔργον γένηται τέρψις εἰρήνης).[59] Furthermore, sham battles sometimes also included mock sieges aimed at re-enacting a victorious campaign of an emperor *pars pro toto*, with the conquest of a single town representing the capitulation of a nation. Thus the troops of the emperor Claudius stormed a replica of a British town on the Campus Martius and re-enacted the surrender of the British kings:

On the Campus Martius too he staged the storming and sacking of a town in an imitation of real warfare [«expugnationem direptionemque oppidi ad imaginem bellicam»], culminating in the surrender of the British kings, and he presided in his campaigning cloak.[60]

Sometimes the mock engagements staged joint forces, amphibious assaults on a defended position, as in the aquatic display Titus mounted at the *stagnum Augusti* ('Augustus' basin') as part of the lavish celebrations held to inaugurate the Flavian Amphitheatre (80 CE):[61]

[At the stagnum Augusti] large numbers of individuals fought in single combat, whereas others competed against each other in groups in infantry and naval battles. For Titus had suddenly filled this same theatre with water, and he had brought in horses and bulls and other domesticated animals that had been taught to do in water everything that they could do on land. He also brought in people on ships; they engaged in a naval battle there representing the Corcyreans versus the Corinthians. Others gave a similar display outside the city in the grove of Gaius and Lucius,

C. Landes and J.M. Pailler, Lattes, Imago, 1990, p. 166; and Welch, *Roman Amphitheaters*, cit., p. 279. Anne Berlan-Bajard rejects this argument arguing that the Servian etymology seems isolated and dubious: *Les spectacles aquatiques romains*, Rome, École française de Rome, 2006, p. 282.

59. Joseph. *AJ* 19, 335-337, English trans. by W. Whiston, *The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus* […], Chicago, Henneberry & Co., 1895.

60. Suet. *Claud.* 21, 6, translated and commented by K.M. Coleman, *Launching into History: Aquatic Displays in the Early Empire*, «The Journal of Roman Studies», LXXXIII, 1993, p. 49.

61. According to Filippo Coarelli this large artificial basin was excavated in the area of Trastevere, not far of the church of S. Cosimato: *Aedes Fortis Fortunae, Naumachia Augusti, Castra Ravennatium. La Via Campana Portuensis e alcuni edifici adiacenti nella pianta marmorea severiana*, «Ostraka. Rivista di antichità», I, 1992, pp. 46-51.

which Augustus had once excavated for this purpose. There, too, on the first day – once the lake in front of the images had been covered with a platform of planks and wooden stands had been erected around it – there was a gladiatorial display and a slaughter of wild beasts; on the second day there was a horse-race, and on the third day a naval battle involving three thousand men, followed by an infantry battle: the 'Athenians' conquered the 'Syracusans' (these being the designations the men fought under), landed on the island, and stormed and captured a wall that had been built around the monument.[62]

It must be admitted that no explicit mention of sham or practice sieges in Roman legionary training has been ever found. Certain scholars, including Kenneth A. Steer, have hypothesised that the Scottish site at Burnswark was an area where the Roman army practiced siege operations. More recent studies have however contested this proposition, but it cannot be excluded that those activities might have been undertaken as training, especially considering the fact that the Romans put extraordinary care towards planning siege warfare, both tactically and technologically.[63]

2. *Medieval and Pre-modern Martial Spectacles*

If it is a game, it is too much, if it is a war it is not enough![64]

The concurrence of military training, competition, and display survived the fall of the Roman Empire, and devolved into a rich spectrum of medieval and pre-modern martial events as the apanage of an aristocratic (and sometimes burgherly) audience. The same chivalric impetus that resulted in grand tournaments and jousts also produced a multitude of more obscure chivalric festivals, such as

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62.   Dio Cass. 66, 25, 2-4, English trans. by E. Cary and H.B. Foster, *Dio's Roman History* […], London, Heinemann, 1914; on this interesting Dio's passage, see in partic. the comment of Katheleen M. Coleman in Martial, *Liber Spectaculorum*, edited by K.M. C., Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 196 ff.

63.   See contra D.B. Campbell, *The Roman Siege of Burnswark*, «Britannia», xxxiv, 2003, pp. 19-33 and pro K.A. Steer, *John Horsley and the Antonine Wall*, «Archaeologia Aeliana», xlii, 1964, p. 24 but also R.W. Davies, *The Romans at Burnswark*, «Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte», xxi, 1972, 1, p. 107.

64.   «Si c'est un jeu, c'est trop, si c'est la guerre ce n'est pas assez!». These reflections on pre-modern martial games pronounced by a Sultan envoy in France are mentioned in a study by Charles Aubertin dedicated to the royal entry of Henry II in Beaune in 1548: *Le roi Henri II à Beaune en 1548 et la cavalcade historique en 1888*, Beaune, Batault, 1888, p. 20.

the *feat* or *deeds of arms*,[65] *jousts of war*,[66] the *tupineis*,[67] the *bohort*[68] the *tyrocinium*,[69] the *pas d'armes*,[70] the *round table* and its German variations (*forest*, *gralsfest*),[71] the

65.   «In the twelfth century Flanders, Picardy, Brabant and Hainault […] war was endemic […] but there were also robust and persistent attempts by princes and bishops to contain it. These attempts are called by historians, the Peace Movement […] in the twelfth century it was the custom to hold French tournaments on the borders of lordship and counties. This traditional choice of site may very well have been the result of eleventh-century knights and their master to live up the letter of the Peace, but also to maintain their skills and continue their perpetual competition for status and physical excellence. By tourneying on borders where no prince ruled, they could pretend to themselves that they were not technically breaking the oaths they had sworn» (D. CROUCH, *Tournament*, London-New York, Hambledon and London, 2006, p. 6).

66.   «The first manifestation of this [i.e. of the border feat of arms] occurred as a consequence of the flare-up of hostilities between England and Scotland. Jousts of war between English and Scottish knights were fought during the siege of Cupar, Pertj and Alnwick Castle. On the last occasion they were described as 'great jousts of war on agreed terms'» (BARBER-BARKER, *Tournament*, cit., p. 34).

67.   Also known as *toupiniez* or *topineures*. In medieval France these were a particular kind of joust, sometimes a joust of war. As pointed out by Walter Clifford Meller, they were also imitated by the burgher classes: «Under different cognomens such as 'The Lion', etc., the townsfolk held martial games where they practised with the weapons allowed to their rank, and endeavoured to copy the jousts and the military engagements of the Round Table [and] […] in an Ordinance of King Louis le Hutin (1312) they are prohibited in the same *Proclamation* as the knightly tournaments were» (W.C. MELLER, *A Knight's Life in the Days of Chivalry* [1924], Kila, Kessinger Publishing, 2005, pp. 148 ff.).

68.   «One of the most intriguing of these […] horseback amusement, participated in by urban youths and noble squires, was the one called the 'bohort' by the mid twelfth century. This obscure word is rendered variously (bohort, behordicium, buhurdicium, boherd, béhourd etc.) and there is no standard spelling for it […]. Bohorts were the spontaneous amusement of the young» (CROUCH, *Tournament*, cit., p. 113).

69.   Sometimes medieval interpreters specify the military training component implied in the tournament. The term *tyrocinium*, considered as the first military service and campaign, was, in fact, another expression for a former type of tournament: «literally a tournament for newly-created knights («tirones»), is equated to béhourd by thirteenth century commentators» (BARBER-BARKER, *Tournament*, cit., p. 165).

70.   The protagonist of the *pas d'armes* ('passage of arms'), inspired by courtly literature, was a knight who defends a passage against all opponents; see recently, among others, G. BUREAUX, *Pas d'armes, littérature et théâtre à la cour du Saint-Empire: l'exemple de la tournée d'abdication de Charles Quint et des festivités de Binche (25-26 août 1549)*, «Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco», XXIV, 2018, pp. 1-8.

71.   See BARBER-BARKER, *Tournament*, cit., pp. 50, 54, 56, 165. The so-called «round table» was a «courtly festival celebrated by [King] Arhur on some great feast day, usually Pentecost […]. The popularity of the Romances, the heroes of which became models of chivalry, undoubtedly had a leading parte in the establishment of these imitations of Arthur's court, yet there may have been in their origin also elements derived from folk custom» (L.F. MOTT, *The Round Table*, «PMLA», XX, 1905, 2, p. 237). See also R. HUFF CLINE, *The Influence of Romances on Tournaments of the Middle Ages*, «Speculum», XX, 1945, 2, pp. 204-211.

Spanish *juego de cañas* ('game of canes')[72] and *morismas*,[73] the Catalan tradition of *taulat*[74] and *juntes de relló*,[75] the *barrier*,[76] the *carousel* ('equestrian ballets'), as well as various *naumachiae* and mock sieges. These, in turn, complemented other types of ritualized training combat activity, often conceived as drills for the 'popular' armies scattered across the continent throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period, and related to various violent sports of a paramilitary nature, such as the Florentine *calcio* ('soccer').[77] Some of these sports were again ancient

72.   «The regulation of this sport indicates that it was an activity realized in teams, every warrior riding a horse and dressed with an *adarga*, that is, with a shield of oval leather and with canes. All the warriors acted simultaneously, using the former for defending themselves from the warriors' shots of the other team, and the latter, the canes, to attack the opposite team shooting them» (G. Ramirez Macías, *Preparation for War and Sports in the Kingdom of Castile during the 15th Century. A Specific Study of the City of Seville*, «Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis. Gymnica», xxxvi, 2006, 3, p. 15).

73.   These complex popular festivals also known as *moros y cristianos*, first appeared in Spain starting in the middle of the twelfth century. In them 'Moors' and 'Christians' faced off in feigned battles, assaults, sham sieges, and so on. The sources of their inspiration are various and multi-layered, incorporating new elements over time: the crusades, the medieval recapture of Spain between the eighth and sixteenth century, the revolt of the Spanish moriscos up to their expulsion in 1609, the fight against the Turks, with a reference to the battle of Lepanto in 1571, etc. Later they were also exported to the Spanish colonies. See D.E. Brisset, *Representaciones rituales hispánicas de conquista*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1988 and M. Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain*, Austin (Texas), University of Texas Press, 2000, pp. 54-60.

74.   In Catalan courts, the taulat was «an enormous game of outdoor darts, requiring both skilful aim and physical strength» (L.M. Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c. 1100-c. 1300*, Cambridge–New York–Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 119).

75.   Fought by knights errant, they were a kind of «jousts possibly burlesque with iron bars, sometimes associated also with other popular games as the battle of oranges» (L.M. Paterson, *Tournaments and Knightly Sports in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Occitania*, «Medium aevum», lv, 1986, p. 81, n. 6).

76.   The «barrier is a heavy but portable spiked wooden obstacle and is recommended as a cheap, easy to make, and very effective in defending narrow passes or gateways. The genesis of the sport is sometimes said to be a subterranean combat fought over a fence when English and French soldiers met in the mines at the siege of Melun in 1420. But it is impossible to link this isolated episode to the first tournament (thus far identified) where there is evidence for such a contest – la *Barrière perilleuse* at Sandricourt in 1493. The knights were all fully armed but could only thrust at each other over the height of the bar which separated them» (S. Anglo, *The Barriers: From Combat to Dance [Almost]*, «Dance Research», xxv, 2007, 2, pp. 93 ff.).

77.   This was «a violent form of soccer practised by Florentine nobles, arrayed in military order on the square of Santa Croce. Moving the ball to the opposite end of the square was accomplished primarily by assault and battery on the opposite players» (G. Hanlon, *Glorifying War in a Peaceful City: Festive Representation of Combat in Baroque Siena*, «War in History», xi, 2004, 3, p. 255).

in origin, such as the sword dances no doubt descended from either Greek pyrrhic dances or from those ancestral pagan rituals in Northern Europe that celebrated the renewal of light and the rebirth of the earth.[78] Other martial games, such as the *ludi militari* of the Italian urban militias, ritual battles called *battagliole* (or *battaglie dei giovani* or simply *battaglie*, *guerra*, *pugna*, etc.), *sassaiole* ('stone-fights'),[79] bridge battles like the *gioco del Ponte* in Pisa,[80] but also mock plunders (*saccomanni* and *gualdane*),[81] were derived from or simulated outright the tactics of contemporary warfare. When these gory games spread to the towns and cities of central and northern Italy, civil and ecclesiastical authorities, wary of their risk to life and limb, reacted with a constant stream of prohibitions.[82] Nonetheless, these *battaglie* ('battles') and mock sieges became so common amongst the youth that the poet Teofilo Folengo noted, in 1517: «it is a common practice in every town that opposing teams of youngsters throw stones at each other».[83]

78.   Sword dances were part of the wider universe of weapon dances widely diffused in classical Antiquity; see most recently, among others, F.L. Spaltro, *Why Should I Dance for Athena? Pyrrhic Dance and the Choral World of Plato's 'Laws'*, Ph.D. Diss. in Philosophy, The University of Chicago, 2011, tutor: prof. Elizabeth Asmis. For the North-European tradition of these weapon dances see, among others, M. Inglehearn, *Swedish Sword Dances in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, «Early Music», xiv, 1986, 3, p. 367.

79.   «These games – if one can properly call them that – seem to have been peculiar to Italy, and have arisen out of local social conditions, particularly the nature of the civic militias and the absence of a feudal military organization» (Barber-Barker, *Tournament*, cit., p. 84). See also, among others, A.A. Settia, *La 'battaglia': un gioco violento fra permissività e interdizione*, in *Gioco e giustizia nell'Italia di Comune*, edited by G. Ortalli, Treviso-Roma, Fondazione Benetton-Viella, 1993, pp. 121-132.

80.   Derived from the more ancient «pugna del mazzascudo» (fighting with cane and shield); see W.W. Heywood, *Palio and Ponte; an Account of the Sports of Central Italy from the Age of Dante to the XXth Century*, London, Metheun & co., 1904, pp. 93 ff. Other kind of bridge battles, such as the *verra antiga* ('ancient war') at Servi Bridge in Venice, originated instead in brawls among medieval urban workers. See R.C. Davis, *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.

81.   As is known, looting and pillaging was an almost ever present aspect of medieval warfare; see in partic. A.A. Settia, *Rapine, assedi, battaglie: la guerra nel Medioevo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2009, pp. 3-76. Besides their primary acceptance in real warfare, these mock plunders also included a sort of feigned ransacking during a more complex series of municipal or court festivities.

82.   See G. Ciappelli, *Carnevale e Quaresima: comportamenti sociali e cultura a Firenze nel Rinascimento*, Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1997, p. 123.

83.   «Est quasi communis totas usanza per urbes / ut contrari agitent saxorum bella citelli» (Teofilo Folengo *Baldus* 3, 122, quoted by A.A. Settia, *Comuni in guerra: armi ed eserciti nell'Italia delle città*, Bologna, Clueb, 1993, p. 38). See also the study by Alberto di Santo, which analyses these kind of paramilitary games in Rome between the thirteenth and sixteenth century: *Guerre di torri: violenza e conflitto a Roma tra 1200 e 1500*, Roma, Viella, 2016.

Undoubtedly, in their non-aristocratic component the *battaglie* also represented a sort of compensation of disputes between urban factions of Italian municipal society, especially in central and northern Italy.[84] Not by chance such faux combats, generally coincided with the Carnival (*carnisprivium*), a time of temporary reversal of social and ethical norms.[85]

The popular, ritualized violence that arose from contemporary war thus appears to have traversed nearly every social segment of European society, surviving into the seventeenth century. This composite and, above all, loose mosaic of para-military and semi-dramatic combats and games is of particular interest because some of these events were dramaturgic in conception and execution, albeit retaining, at least in principle, not only an intimidatory and feudlike component but also a clear martial component. It is also worth noting that these feigned battles co-existed with the most common forms of tournaments and jousts, of which they were sometimes historical precursors.[86] Among the most intriguing examples of this tradition were the mock sieges (fig. 7). The memory of sieges and their often terrible consequences upon civilians had been a perennial theme since Antiquity not only in the visual and dramatic arts, but also in siege reports, military treatises, and memoirs. Generally speaking, the custom of building scaled-down castles and fortifications, with the aim of simulating sieges, often conducted with artillery, covered a broad spectrum of different cultural, religious, political, and military situations.[87] Semi-dramatic sieges and mock naval battles were held to celebrate royal entries, triumphs, baptisms, and marriages, or to re-enact biblical episodes and historical events in Christian terms, as with the fifteenth century *Mystère du siège d'Orléans*.[88]

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84. See Settia, *La 'battaglia'*, cit., p. 122.

85. Such events occurred also in Antiquity and late Antiquity. In 418 CE Augustine of Hippo *De doctrina christiana* IV, XXIV, 53, still reminds us of the ritualized combat known as *pugna civilis* or *caterva* held in the city of Cesarea in Mauritania; see Settia, *Comuni*, cit., p. 45.

86. Thus the *buhurt* ('bohort') is mentioned in Middle German some decades before *turnei*, which first appears in the *Kaiserchronik* of 1150. See W.H. Jackson, *Das Turnier in der deutschen Dichtung des Mittelalters*, in *Das Ritterliche Turnier im Mittelalter: Beiträge zu einer vergleichenden Formen - und Verhaltensgeschichte des Rittertums*, edited by J. Fleckenstein, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985, p. 264.

87. Studying the Early Tudor festivities, Sydney Anglo furnishes a partial list of different kinds of medieval and pre-modern faux sieges: *The Evolution of the Early Tudor Disguising, Pageant, and Mask*, «Renaissance Drama», I, 1968, p. 13, note 20; other later examples are discussed by M.D. Pollak, *Cities at War in Early Modern Europe*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 277-279. For mock sieges conceived as allegorical representations, see in partic. R.S. Loomis, *The Allegorical Siege in the Art of the Middle Ages*, «American Journal of Archaeology», XXIII, 1919, 3, pp. 255-269.

88. See V.L. Hamblin, *Le mistere du siege d'Orleans*, Genève, Librairie Droz, 2002.

They were also staged to commemorate the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants, or between Christians and Moslems, as when the victory over the Turks at Belgrade or the siege of Granada were represented in Rome's Piazza Navona (Carnival, 1457 and 1492),[89] or the *pugna umbratilis* (sciomachy-fighting against one's own shadow) staged in the Jesuit theatre.[90] Sham battles followed by assaults on faux castles also followed models provided in courtly literature or were inspired by allegorical constructs, such as the *Castle of Love*[91] or the virtues that battle vices in the renowned Middle English morality play *The Castle of Perseverance* (first half of the fifteenth century).[92] Furthermore,

89. «*T*he custom is maintained of putting on a representation of a victory ['victoriae simulacrum faciendi'] in keeping with Livy's assertion that they [that is the 'ludi Apollinares'] were begun on account of victory, just as in recent days there was a spectacle that pleased all those of us who as members of the Roman church-state attend the Roman Curia, when in the Agone of the Circus Flaminius a reenactment took place of the celebrated battle, worthy of eternal remembrance, which was waged last summer beside the Danube at its confluence with the river Sava, when Mehmed, emperor of the Turks, having over 100,000 men in his army, and having besieged the city of Belgrade for some time and almost razed it to the ground with his siege-engines and cannon ['oppugnatum machinisque et bombardis'], was routed there, and put to flight, with the loss of up to 16,000 of his best men, and he lost his cannons and an almost infinite quantity of military engines and weapons on water and land» (Biondo Flavio, *Blondi Flavii forliviensis 'De Roma trivmphante' libri decem* […], Basileae, In officina Frobeniana, 1531, vol. ii, p. 22, quoted and commented by F. Muecke, *'Ante oculos ponere': Vision and Imagination in Flavio Biondo's 'Roma Triumphans'*, «Papers of the British School at Rome», lxxix, 2011, pp. 280-282). On the carnival celebrations of the siege of Granada (2 January 1492) sponsored by the King of Spain, which included a faux assault on a wooden castle erected in the middle of Piazza Navona, see in partic. F. Cruciani, *Teatro nel Rinascimento, Roma 1450-1550*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1983, pp. 228-239.

90. See in partic. B. Filippi, *Il teatro degli argomenti: gli scenari seicenteschi del teatro gesuitico romano: catalogo analitico*, Roma, Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 2001, pp. 52 ff.

91. «The first evidence we have for this is the full-fledged *Siege of the Castle of Love* acted out as part of a festival at Treviso in 1214. Rolandino of Padua relates that to this Court of Solace and Mirth were invited many gentlemen and twelve of the fairest and gayest ladies of Padua: 'A fantastic castle was built and garrisoned with dames and damsels and their waiting women, who without help of man defended it with all possible prudence. Now this castle was fortified on all sides with skins of vair and sable, sendals, purple cloths, samites, precious tissues, scarlet, brocade of Bagdad, and ermine […]. For the castle itself must needs be assaulted; and the arms and engines wherewith men fought against it were apples and dates and muscat-nuts, tarts and pears and quinces, roses and lilies and violets, and vases of balsam or ambergris or rosewater, amber, camphor, cardamoms, cinnamon, cloves, pomegranates, and all manner of flowers or spices that are fragment to smell or fair to see'» (Loomis, *The Allegorical Siege*, cit., pp. 255 ff.).

92. «The background to these plays lies in part in the allegorization of good and evil which found its earliest expression in the *Psychomachia* of the late fourth century poet Aurelius Clemens Prudentius. This poem describes a battle for the soul of man in which seven evil characteristics (Idolatry, Lust, Wrath, Pride, Indulgence, Greed, Discord) are pitted against seven virtues (Faith, Chastity, Patience, Humility, Sobriety, Good Works, Concord). Since the battle

the siege constantly recurred on the Renaissance and Baroque stage, in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, as well as in comic and tragic theatre, and in masques, the so-called opera-tournaments, and ballets.

Built of wood and earth, or from wood, plaster, and painted cardboard, the miniaturized castles used for these occasions were ephemeral, and sometimes appeared on pageant floats (fig. 8).[93] Besieged castles and fortifications may have been represented on a still smaller scale in fireworks and table settings, fountains, automata, and military models themselves used in the military academies that began to emerge in the second half of the sixteenth century.[94] Just as in Antiquity, the different types of faux sieges described below demonstrate the substantial permeability between the reasons for war and those for its representation between the late middle ages and early modern times. First, it had been relatively common since ancient times to hold parades, drill troops, and display siege trains outside the walls of a besieged town or fortress with the obvious purpose of frightening the inhabitants, as Sempronius Gracchus had already done at the siege of Certina in Spain (179 BCE).[95] The concurrence between *Deeds of Arms* and warfare itself fed other festivities throughout medieval and early modern Europe, as attested, for instance, by the chivalric games held under the walls of the besieged town of Sens on 3 June 1420, during the Armagnac-Burgundian civil war, to honour the marriage of the English sovereign, Henry V to Catherine of Valois, daughter of Charles VI of France.[96] In

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takes place within the mind of man, there is no representative human figure» (D.N. Klausner, *Introduction* to Id., *Two Moral Interludes: The Pride of Life and Wisdom*, Kalamazoo [Michigan], Medieval Institute Publications, 2009, p. 1). Some allegorical sieges occur also in Gregory's *Moralia* in a comment on *Job* xxii, 25 *PL* lxxv, 1131, in *The Parables of Bernard*, *PL* clxxxiii, pp. 757 ff. and in Grosseteste's *Château d'amour* (c. 1230). See R.D. Cornelius, *Le songe du castel*, «PMLA», xlvi, 1931, 2, p. 331, n. 31.

93.   Of particular interest is the pageant cart representing a besieged castle used at the Banquet Hall in the context of the civil pageantry devised for the wedding of Catharine of Aragon with Henry VII's elder son, Prince Arthur, on 19 November 1501. See Anglo, *The Evolution of the Early Tudor Disguising*, cit., pp. 8 ff.

94.   See J.R. Hale, *Renaissance War Studies*, London, Hambledon Press, 1983, pp. 227 ff.

95.   See Livy 40, 47, English trans. by E.T. Sage and A.C. Schlesinger, London, Heinemann, 1938, voll. xl-xlii. See also a similar example mentioned by Caesar in reference to the Gallic tribe of the Aduatici: *B Gall.* ii, xxx ff. and the four days parade of Titus' Roman troops outside the walls of Jerusalem (70 CE).

96.   As an anonymous writer puts it: «Et la pourra chascun de nous jouxter [et] tournoier, et monstrer sa proesse et son hardiment – And there each of us will be jousting and tourneying and everyone will show his bravery and boldness» (*Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris 1405-1449*, publié d'après les manuscrits de Rome et de Paris par A. Tuetey, Paris, Champion, 1881, quoted and commented by P. Contamine, *Les tournois en France à la fin du Moyen Âge*, in *Das ritterliche Turnier*, cit., p. 426).

the sixteenth century, jousts were sometimes also held between besieged and besiegers, as at Mézières on October 1521, in the middle of the gory Italian Wars of 1521-26.[97] According to Joachim Bumke, this practice was relatively frequent because it had been customary in ancient mass tournaments to create two safety zones known as *fride* ('zones of peace'), *hamît* ('barricades'), or *litze* ('cords', 'barriers') that were used both to accommodate prisoners and protect knights.[98] Often one of these areas was designated inside a city or castle while the other was set outside the walls in a camp. Thus, we often find in courtly literature expressions such as *ceux du château* ('the clan of the castle') juxtaposed with *ceaux du dehors* ('the clan of outside').[99]

One of the first examples of a mock siege conceived for a specific military context is a *tornerium in armis a batalea* (literally 'tourney with weapons of war') fought in the stage-like Piazzetta of San Marco in Venice on 30 May 1458. This chivalric festival, together with an *armilustro seu jostra* ('joust') held two days earlier, was promoted by the Paduan Council nominally to accompany the celebrations for the nomination of Pasquale Malipiero as Doge of Venice on 30 October 1457. There are multiple clues, however, that both spectacles actually celebrated the re-appointment of the renowned «condottiere» Bartolomeo Colleoni (1395-1475) as Captain General of the Republic of Venice.[100] The *tornerium*, fought by seventy soldiers and officers of the Venetian army, simulated a fierce assault (*pugna atrocissima*) on a wooden ravelin (*revelinum*) with a little tower (*rocheta*) at its centre. After its capture, the besieged garrison inside the tower had to be rescued by an external force led by two other officers, in an engagement fought with untipped lances and blunted swords.[101]

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97.   «At Mézières in October 1521, jousts were held between 'champions' on horseback and on foot between the French garrison and the besieging force under Nassau. Yet within weeks, both sides were carrying out 'guerre à feu et à sang' along the borders of the Ardennes which du Bellay thought were the origin of 'les grandes cruautez qui ont esté faictes aux guerres trente ans après'. Similarly, serious skirmishing at Thérouanne in 1543 was accompanied by an invitation from Sir John Wallop to the sieur de Villebon that 'if he had any gentlemen under his charge that would break any staves for their lady's sake' he would appoint champions» (D. POTTER, *Renaissance France at War: Armies, Culture and Society, c. 1480-1560*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2008, p. 92).

98.   J. BUMKE, *Courtly Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, p. 254.

99.   In the *Cligès* (c. 1176), Chrétien de Troyes defines the two groups as «Les genz del chastel» ('The clan of the castle'), v. 1833, and «Li Greu defors et cil dedanz» ('The Greeks of outside and those of inside') v. 2113, quoted and commented by M. PARISSE, *Le tournoi en France, des origines à la fin du XIIIᵉ siècle*, in *Das ritterliche Turnier*, cit., p. 195.

100.   A. ANGELUCCI, *Armilustre e torneo con armi da battaglia tenuti a Venezia addì XXVIII e XXX maggio MCCCCLVIIII* […], Torino, Cassone, 1866, pp. 10 ff.

101.   «Inside the ravelin, a group of soldiers will act as defendants; outside, other men-at-arms will try to conquer the fortification. A fierce battle will follow. After the capture of the ravelin,

Robert III de La Marck (1491-1536), lord of Floranges and Marshal of France, who was taken prisoner at the Battle of Pavia along with King Francis I, offers other revealing examples of the martial tradition of faux sieges. His own life testifies to the new type of aristocratic warrior, one who upheld the traditional values of medieval chivalry and complied with the new «métier» or «profession des armes».[102] In his *Mémoires*, written in captivity in the castle of *L'Écluse* in Flanders, La Marck describes a series of chivalric spectacles held on behalf of Louis XII and Francis I respectively, strikingly using the same expressions and terminology to describe the chivalric performances as he does for real combat. This was not simply literary posturing, as the title he gave himself (*Le Jeune Adventureaux*, 'The Young Adventurer') in his memoirs might suggest, because Le Marck pursued the same ideal combination of arms and letters that Baldassarre Castiglione had commended in *The Book of the Courtier* describing the Duke of Angoulême (later Francis I).[103] Among the knightly festivals narrated by La Marck, a series of mock sieges held in 1507 and 1509 assume particular importance, as the knight shared a passion for these events with the future king and they both whiled away the time playing siege games while at the Royal Castle of Amboise:

How the Sieur d'Angoulesme and the Young Adventurer constructed small castles or «bastillons»[104] and fought each other to the point that they often came to blows. How the Sieur d'Angoulesme, the Young Adventurer and other young gentlemen made some «bastillons», and assaulted them in full armour and at the same time they defended these forts brandishing swords […]. How […] having become more adult they started to embrace the arms practising any sort of jousts and tournaments.[105]

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a fire asking for help will be lit in the garrison inside the little tower; on seeing it, two officers with their troops will rescue the besieged. Two other officers and their men will oppose them, to prevent the rescue. A furious battle among them will follow, with lances with heads without iron and swords used for cutting and not as pointy weapons» (ANGELUCCI, *Armilustre e torneo*, cit., p. 22).

102. D. POTTER, *Chivalry and Professionalism in the French Royal Army of the Renaissance*, in *The Chivalric Ethos and the Development of Military Professionalism*, edited by D.J.B TRIM, Leiden–Boston, Brill, 2003, p. 152.

103. B. CASTIGLIONE, *Il cortegiano*, Venezia, Aldo Romano-Andrea D'Asola, 1528, vol. I, ch. XLII.

104. «Petite bastille, ouvrage construit pour attaquer ou défendre une place» ('Small bastille, defensive work conceived for attacking or defending a fort'): *Dictionnaire du moyen français* (DMF 2015), http://www.atilf.fr/dmf, ATILF – CNRS & Université de Lorraine, s.v. «bastillon» (last access: 3 September 2019).

105. R. DE LA MARCK et al., *Histoire des choses mémorables advenues du reigne de Louis XII et François Iᵉʳ, en France, Italie, Allemagne et les Pays-Bas, depuis l'an 1499 jusques en l'an 1521*, edited by J.F. MICHAUD and J.J.F. POUJOULAT, Paris, Ed. du commentaire analytique du Code civil, 1838, chap. III, p. 7.

This was not a simple childish pastime, as is evident from the *festes et esbatte-ments* ('pageants and martial games') held in Milan many years later for the solemn entry of Louis XII (July 1509) after the victory over the Venetians at Agnadello (14th May 1509). La Marck's characterisation of the event as *merveil-leux desordre* ('awesome disorder') embodies to perfection the degree of violence these games entailed and their unpredictable consequences:

And among [other festivities] there was a «bastillon» in which there occurred awesome disorder because over forty gentlemen fell dead and others were wounded. Monsieur Chaumont d'Amboise with three hundred men at arms and two hundred archers de-fended the «bastillon»; and the King and others nobles had it assailed; and this assault was conducted by a thousand men at arms who were driven back, and the «bastillon» was not conquered; and so much the better, for otherwise there would have been a massacre, given the presence of siege ladders and wood forks; and it took great ef-forts to separate them. And if the king had not personally intervened, a terrible mess would have ensued [«il y eut eu de grant follie»].[106]

The event was part of the cultural euphoria that surrounded the conquests of the French king, who was regarded as «Père de la France» or «Père du peuple» ('Father of France' or 'Father of the people'), and whose victories through siege warfare were lauded by an anonymous panegyrist.[107]

Charles II d'Amboise de Chaumont (1473–1511), Marshal of France and Governor of Paris and Milan, was among the knights that participated in the Milanese celebrations of 1509. His command of the cavalry had been decisive at Agnadello, a battle so bloody that one «saw only the sky and the bones of dead men»,[108] and who had organized a similar mock siege,

106. R. de La Marck, *Mémoires du maréchal de Florange, dit le Jeune adventureux*, edited by R. Goubaux and P.A. Lemoisne, Paris, Renouard H. Laurens, 1913, to. i, pp. 41 ff. Here, as also in other authors, it seems that the term *bastillon*, *bastyon* or *bastion* was used by La Marck in a synedochical way, to mean a martial game representing a mock siege of a fortified place.

107. «You fought personally and not by means of your lieutenants or captains and strove against mountains and places well shielded by nature and art, you assaulted the fortress («prin-stes d'assault le bastillon») which was impregnable by nature and art, threw out and defeated the enemy and overcome the asperity of the sites» (R. de Maulde, *Éloge de Louis XII, 'Père de la France' en 1509*, «Revue Historique», xliii, 1890, 1, p. 55. The anonymous manuscript kept in the Bibliothèque national de France and entitled *Panegirica in laudem Ludovici XII^{mi}* was written in Milan in the same period, just around July 1509, after the French victory of Agnadello.

108. «A' no vi se no çielo e uossi de muorti»: A. Beolco called Ruzante, *Primo dialogo. Parlamento de Ruzante che iera vegnù de campo* also known as *Il reduce* (about 1529), in Id., *Due dialoghi in lingua rustica, sententiosi, arguti, et ridiculosissimi*, Venezia, Stefano Alessi, 1557, p. 6*v*.

called the *bastion*, in Milan two years earlier (June 1507).[109] This pageant was regulated by *juges de combats* ('combat judges') seated on a high scaffold, and entailed an assault on a miniature fortress that d'Amboise and 100 noble men-at-arms defended against all comers («contre tous venans»).[110] The 400 assailants included Louys de Brézé, Great Seneschal de Normandie, and Robert Stuart d'Aubigny at the head of a hundred Scottish combatants in the service of the French king. Although the sham fortification, endowed with two defensible towers with between 25 and 30 defendants as well as a ditch, were apparently built for the amusement of the king and noble ladies, and despite the use of non-lethal arms, such as padded canes, blunt swords, fork perches and a curious arsenal of mock weapons consisting of large barrels and syringes filled with water for drenching assailants and paper artillery,[111] combat was particularly rough as the bastion – as Jean d'Auton relates – «assailly moult rudement et deffendu a toute force» ('was very roughly attacked and strongly defended').[112] The battle, in which a Scottish soldier lost his life after being severely wounded by a blow of a defendant's large club, was so fierce that the king was forced to intervene in person on the field multiple times in order to separate the two sides, as the royal archers were unable to execute his order.

As in many similar episodes, it is clear that the French attitude to war, particularly in the Italian wars, was still a «guerre de magnificence» rather than a «guerre commune» – a distinction the French herald firmly maintained in *Le débat des hérauts d'armes de France et d'Angleterre* composed between 1453 and 1461:

You know, Sire Herald, that I make a strong distinction between common war and war of magnificence. Because I say that a common war is a civil war or a conflict conducted against neighbours and relatives while a war of magnificence is a war in

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109. See J. D'Auton, *Chroniques de Louis XII*, edited by R. de Maulde La Clavière, Paris, H. Laurens, 1895, vol. iv, pp. 313 ff.

110. As reported by Jeahn d'Auton (c. 1466-1527), Charles d'Amboise «instead of the dances he made a bastion which defended him together with his men-at-arms against all comers. The bastion, placed in a garden not far from his Milanese residence, was surrounded by a ditch and enclosed by a palisade; the entire front was fortified with large planks, firmly fastened with strong nails and well tied dowels. On both sides of the foreground he made two defensible towers, each of which could contain 25 or 30 men-at-arms» (ivi, p. 313).

111. According to d'Auton, the defendants were equipped with «big clubs pampered («bastons embourez») and blunt swords («espée tranchant sans poincte») and […] long pitchforks («grandes perches fourchées») to drive back the assailants who tried to escalade the walls with ladders and mobile bridges. The besieged were equipped with large barrels full of water, syringes and paper artillery («artillerye a papier»)» (ivi, p. 314).

112. Ivi, p. 315.

which princes with all their armies march to a distant and foreign country or fight to defend or extend the Catholic faith.[113]

Between May 14th and 15th 1518, Leonardo da Vinci, who might have participated in the creation of Milan's 1507 military exhibitions, realized a faux siege for the castle of Amboise in celebration of the dauphin's baptism and the marriage of Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, nephew of Pope Leo X. The «bataglia del castello» ('battle of the castle'), to use the expression of Stazio Gadio, ambassador to the duke of Mantua, was inspired by the battle of Marignano. The wooden-framed castle, with painted cloths for walls, was built to scale so its defensive turrets were the height of a man on horseback. Several siege mortars placed on a rampart facing the castle were set off, with «baloni sgonfiati in aere» ('air-inflated balls'), which caused astonishment and wonder without causing any damage, while falconets responded from the fort, shooting rags and paper to ceremonially represent defensive fire. The highly festive dimension of the assault however did not exclude simulated combat between besieging and besieged, in the presence of king Francis I himself, fully armed and surrounded by a large battalion of footmen.[114]

In general, it is difficult to establish a firm boundary between the different kinds of faux sieges because hybrids were always possible, but on the whole they did significantly resemble actual fortress warfare, a resemblance that scholars have underestimated. For instance, in Martha Pollak's survey of cities at war in early modern Europe (2010), sham sieges are marginalized parades of «theatrical choreography», performed «in a manner untenable in real-life siege, which was about spade and trench work carried out by the humblest soldiers».[115] In addition to the already noted examples, the martial festival de-

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113. «Item, sachez, sire herault, que je faiz grant différence entre guerre commune et guerre de magnificence. Car je dis que guerre commune est en soy mesmes ou contre ses voysins et lignagiers, et guerre de magnificence est quant princes vont en ost conquérir en loingtaing et estrange païs, ou soy combatre pour la foy catholique deffendre ou eslargir»: CHARLES DUKE OF ORLEANS (attr.)-JOHN COKE, *Le débat des hérauts d'armes de France et d'Angleterre, suivi de The Debate between the Heralds of England and France by John Coke*, edited by L. PANNIER and M.P. MEYER, Paris, Didot, 1877, p. 12, sect. 33.

114. These quotations refer to the original letter of Stazio Gadio to the Duke of Mantua, send from Amboise the 16 May 1518, preserved in Mantova, Archivio di Stato, *Archivio Gonzaga, Esteri (Francia)*, XV, 3, 634. The document was originally published by E. SOLMI, *Documenti inediti sulla dimora di Leonardo da Vinci in Francia nel 1517 e 1518*, «Archivio storico lombardo», XXXI, 1994, 4, pp. 389-410. The faux siege was studied by L. GARAI, *The Staging of the Besieged Fortress*, in *Leonard de Vinci & la France: Château du Clos Lucé, Amboise, Parc Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by C. PEDRETTI with the assistance of M. MELANI, Campi Bisenzio, Cartei & Bianchi, 2009, pp. 127 ff.

115. POLLAK, *Cities at War*, cit., pp. 277 ff.

scribed in the *Relazione d'uno spettacolo militare fatto in un prato del palazzo di Pitti* (1606)[116] further contradicts this claim (fig. 9). This impressive Florentine mock battle, halfway between a princely fête and a simulation of a real siege, was staged by the same author of the *Relazione*, the Florentine stage-designer Giulio Parigi (1571-1635). Renowned painter but also grand ducal «ingegnere e architetto» ('engineer and architect'),[117] Parigi proved his talent not only as a prolific scenographer but also as a high-ranking military engineer. Near his home on Via Maggio in Florence he established an academy of design that was frequented by influential artists and stage designers such as Inigo Jones, Jacques Callot, and Joseph Furttenbach, among others, as well as illustrious exponents of the European nobility, who came there explicitly to learn the art of fortification, so highly esteemed among the other 'mathematical' disciplines.[118] The future Grand Duke Cosimo II de Medici, son of Ferdinando I, who attended Parigi's academy of design, traced a model of a fortified square in a meadow at the rear of the Pitti Palace, in the area where the Boboli's amphitheatre was eventually constructed.[119] Parigi was appointed to raise the elevation of the fort – conceived as a provisional structure –[120] according to an ideal fortification model was quite common and that had already been depicted by him in the vault of the *Stanza dell'Architettura Militare* ('Military Architecture Room'), better known as the *Stanzino delle Matematiche* ('Mathematics Room') created in 1599 by Filippo Pigafetta in the Uffizi Palace. Worth noting too is that the fort depicted in the Uffizi fresco is framed by Albrecht Dürer's perspective machine, which was almost certainly included among the instruments for drawing in perspective that had been used to trace the plan of the provisional fort.

116. G. Parigi, *Relazione d'uno spettacolo militare fatto in un prato del Palazzo de' Pitti*, Firenze, Volcmar Timan, 1606.

117. Firenze, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, ms. II, IV, 307 (Magl. Cl. XXV, 198), f. 391.

118. In 1596 François de Bassompierre and his brother came to Florence to frequent the academy of «Julio Parigy [sic] pour les fortifications»: F. de Bassompierre, *Mémoires du Mareschal de Bassompierre*, Cologne, P. du Marteau, 1665, vol. I, pp. 38 ff.

119. «Since his Serene Highness and my Lord the Prince takes great delight in mathematical studies, and not only in theory but also in practice, many days ago he wanted to trace a fortified square with the help of [perspective] instruments and ropes in a meadow of his Palace of Pitti ['tirare con gli strumenti in pianta, le corde d'un forte di quattro baluardi']; then wishing to complete its creation, he imposed on me the task to raise the elevation of the fort» (Parigi, *Relazione*, cit., p. n.n.).

120. According to Parigi, the «Turkish» fortress was made of «legnami e graticci intessuti all'usanza Barbara» ('wood and hurdles fixed in the barbaric custom') (ivi, p. n.n.). Perhaps the fort was also covered with sods; if true, this ephemeral structure was comparable to the earthworks commonly used as temporary fortifications since ancient times.

Soon after erecting a model of a Turkish fortress belonging to the Ottoman Sultan Selim called «Selina»,[121] the same Cosimo held a minor faux assault to practice the theoretical principles studied in Parigi's academy. Afterwards, wishing «to give a bit of pleasure to his sons and to Madame [Christine] and to his people of Florence», the Grand Duke Ferdinando I de Medici appointed Silvio Piccolomini, «Maestro di Campo» and «Generale» (Quarter-Master general) of the grand duchy to arrange all the necessary preparations for a greater mock siege of the «Turkish» stronghold, which was to be defended by Filippo Rinuccini, «Sergente Maggiore» ('Field Officer') of the Florentine army.[122] The explicit aim of the young Cosimo was to stage an accurate imitation with blunt weapons of «gli ordini soliti a' tenersi in simili espugnationi» ('the customary manoeuvres held in similar sieges'). Held on 25 August 1606, the «spettacolo militare» ('military fête'), fought by Parigi as «Ingegniere Generale» ('General Engineer') and aided by his pupils, including Cosimo as «Generalissimo» ('Commander') of the besiegers' army, was a sort of manifesto for the siege warfare of the time, which included mounted arquebusiers, artillery and entrenchments, mantelets and sappers to dig mines for breaching the bastion, and all the other most relevant features of contemporary sieges.[123] The use of firearms and artillery, as well as all the other features of coeval warfare, were openly reflected in these sorts of chivalric festivals, which represented a peculiar pre-modern juxtaposition of ancient aristocratic ideals with the innovations of a new model of warfare. Indeed, these sham battles point to the active role played by the aristocracy and chivalric institutions in the promotion of the modern form of military professionalism.[124] Here there is a strict

121. Ibid.
122. C. Tinghi, *Diario*, in Firenze, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, mss. Capponi, 261, vol. I, ff. 162*v.*–163*r.*, quoted and translated by A.R. Blumenthal, *Giulio Parigi's Stage Designs: Florence and the Early Baroque Spectacle*, New York, Garland, 1986, p. 45.
123. «Si piantarono i mantelletti per assicurarsi de' sassi di sopra, e per tentare di poi con le zappe di fare una mina acciò si rovinasse tanta muraglia – […] the mantelets were fixed to protect [the assailants] from the stones which were thrown from above, and also to let the sappers dig a mine so that the huge rampart would collapse» (Parigi, *Relazione*, cit., p. n.n.).
124. «What emerges is that 'chivalry' and 'military professionalism' are not necessarily dichotomous. […] The process of professionalization, at least in the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, was not a clear-cut struggle between the attitudes of modernity and a medieval world-view. Instead, the development of military professionalism was often an ambivalent process, founded in the texts of classical antiquity and frequently promoted by nobles who fully subscribed to the cult of chivalry and its values. The two ideologies overlapped in many armies and societies at many times in the past; attitudes deriving from the chivalric ideal still greatly influence the conduct and ethics of professional military personnel today. Even though the professionalization process would, in the end, kill off chivalry (in the original sense), military

continuum between the neo-feudal credo of the political elites and their cour-
tier ethos, genuinely inspired by the principles of humanist ideology and the
achievements of the scientific and technological revolution of the Renaissance,
as conveyed in the new political and social framework of centralised states.

As is evident from the Florentine faux siege of 1606, the transformation of
the medieval *miles* into the courtier and the consequent central role assumed
by military ideologies in the system of Italian provincial courts explain the
genuine adhesion of even those elites not directly engaged in military pro-
fessions to these precepts. Military humanism, which became established in
the Italian peninsula between the second half of the fifteenth and the six-
teenth century with the rediscovery of the theoretical principles of ancient
warfare in their application to modern war, had given an ideological legiti-
macy to Renaissance armies from the start. The subsequent establishment
of European national armies was on the other hand a sign of the subversion
of the supremacy of the ancient over the modern, correlating with an ever
increasing professionalization of military society. The need to create state
armies from scratch and to establish a class of army officers fostered however
the creation of military academies which, in turn, promoted a rich mutual
exchange not only between the cutting-edge civil technologies and sciences
of the period, but also between those and the techniques closely bound to
the ancient chivalric and humanistic values in which warfare assumes highly
ritualised and formalised values, to the point where in military academies
the masters of arms were considered as important as dance teachers, as re-
corded by Sidney Anglo.[125]

In the battlefield as well as in these semi-dramatic events, the military con-
duct of the knights was heavily conditioned by chivalric ethos and a persistent
pursuit of glory and fame. It was the same desire for individual distinction in
the thick of battle, the same search for visibility that derived from a long he-
roic tradition and which determined this intimate connection between real
and simulated warfare. As Braden Friederer has noted, «the comparative safety
of later medieval and Renaissance tournaments has probably been exagger-
ated by modern historians, and it is important to note that tournaments were
still considered training for war in some parts of Europe until well into the

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professionalism nevertheless could and did develop in societies that adhered to the chivalric
ethos» (D.J.B. Trim, *Introduction* to *The Chivalric Ethos*, cit., p. 3).

125. S. Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, New Haven, Yale University Press,
2000, pp. 282 ff. On the military education of the officer class in early modern Europe, see also
Hale, *Renaissance War Studies*, cit., pp. 225-246. As regards the complex concept of military
humanism as a transposition of humanist values into a military context one can refer particularly
to the aforementioned studies of Verrier, *Les armes de Minerve*, and Ilari, *Imitatio*.

seventeenth century», and only this explains the high number of casualties at these 'festive' events.[126]

These games continued even later, for example in the mock sieges organized in the late seventeenth century by General Franz Lefort on behalf of Tsar Peter the Great, a sovereign notoriously keen on military games.[127] Not surprisingly, even in the mid-seventeenth century faux sieges were considered «assez ordinaires» ('rather frequent') by the Jesuit Claude-François Ménestrier (1631-1705) and they were still the best occasions for noble protagonists to display «toutes les ruses» ('all the stratagems') and «tous les artifices des veritables combats» ('all the artifices of real battles') (fig. 10). They were the most desirable occasions in which to learn the art of war whilst entertaining an experienced and accomplished audience:

Among the drills and the public festivals, the mock battles and the faux sieges of sites, cities and castles are very common. In no other circumstance could skills and bravery be better displayed. They require all the stratagems and artifices of real combat, and one learns to win while entertaining the spectators.[128]

After a cursory investigation spanning centuries and covering different aspects from ancient *ludi*, to the chivalric pageantries of the medieval tournaments and jousts, from sham battles to mock sieges, it is essential to reconnect to the main theses presented at the outset of the study. The wide-ranging expression of the manifestations of organised violence, both individual and collective, the constant exchanges between a more strictly festive and ludic dimension and a military one, took form through a rich sequence of martial exhibitions and celebrations from ancient times to the pre-modern era. The elusive boundary between war and cruel games, between the expression of the state's collec-

126. B.K. Frieder, *Chivalry & the Perfect Prince: Tournaments, Art, and Armor at the Spanish Habsburg Court*, Kirksville, Truman State University Press, 2008, p. 5.

127. «The Tzar was thus enabled […] to raise, in a very short space of time, a corps of five thousand disciplined troops in whom he could confide; trained, mostly, by General Patrick Gordon, and composed, for the most part, of foreigners. […] He caused them to be frequently exercised in mock sieges and sham engagements; and, it is said, such was their ardour and desire of distinction, that they sometimes fought a real battle, when a sham-fight only was intended, in which several of the men were killed and wounded; and that in one of these Le Fort received a considerable wound» (J. Barrow, *A Memoir of the Life of Peter the Great*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1834, pp. 41 ff.).

128. «Entre les exercices militaires et le spectacles publics, les combats, et les attaques feintes de places, villes et chasteaux sont assez ordinaires il n'est rien où l'adresse, et le courage paroisse plus on s'y sert de totues les ruses, et de tous les artifices des veritables combats, et l'on y apprend à vaincre en divertissant les spectateurs» (C.F. Menestrier, *Traité des tournois, ioustes, carrousels: et autres spectacles publics*, Lyon, Iacques Muguet, 1669, p. 321).

tive violence and private individual or factional violence, showcases two sides which are connected, often linked by unseen threads to the world of contemporary performances. On one hand we find the necessity of generals and rules of the ostentation of the exercise of power, in order to guarantee their armies' military efficiency. On the other, an ideology of honour emerges belonging to the medieval chivalric ethos, borrowing much from the hero ideology of ancient times. Up to the dawn of the modern age, this ideology has revealed itself able not only to challenge limits and bans imposed on the use of arms by secular and religious authorities, but also to integrate the most advanced technological innovations, which might have tainted its strength and corrupted its fierce vitality.

Fig. 1. The Leverzep tournament, first quarter of the 15th century, miniature (in *L'un des quatre volumes de l'Istoire de la Table Ronde, nommé le Livre de Tristan*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Français 97, f. 343*r*.).
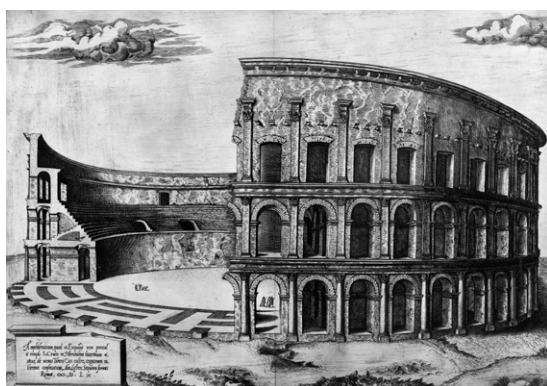
Fig. 2. Amphitheatrum Castrense in Rome, 1560, engraving (in A. Lafréry, *Speculum Romanae magnificentiae* […], Roma, exc. Lafreri, s.a., p. n.n.).
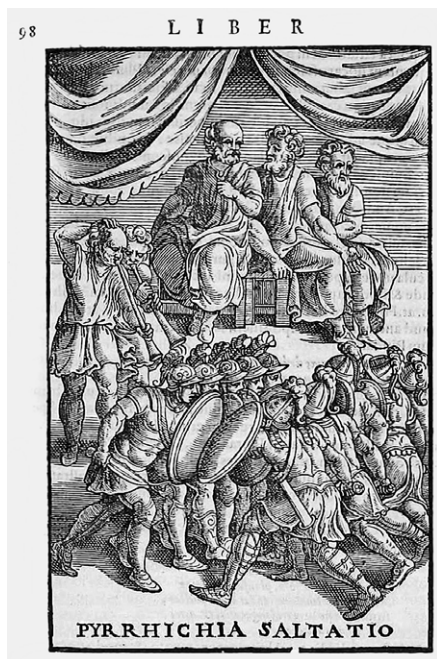
Fig. 3. Pyrrhic dance, 1601, woodcut (in G. Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica libri sex*, Venezia, Giunta, 1601, p. 98).

Fig. 4. Ribechester Helmet, Copper alloy cavalry helmet with face–mask visor, late I and early II centuries CE (London, British Museum, photo by Rex Harris [CC BY 2.0]).

Fig. 5. *Decursio* at base of the Antonine Column, 161-162 CE, relief (Città del Vaticano, Musei Vaticani, photo by Miguel Hermoso [CC BY-SA 3.0]).
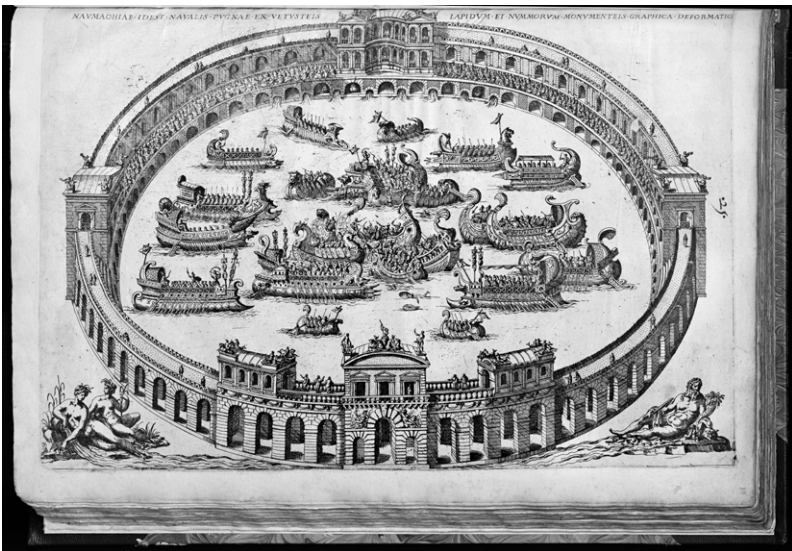

Fig. 6. Étienne Dupérac, A Roman Naumachy, etching (in *Speculum Romanae*, Roma, s.e., s.a., p. n.n. [copy preserved at Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstge-schichte, MPI-BH Digital Library Dm505-1740 gr raro, CC BY-NC 4.0]).
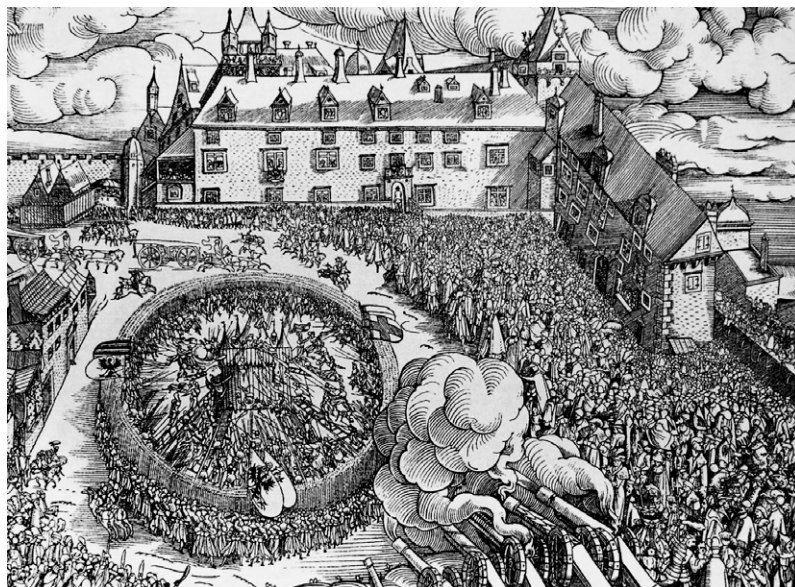
Fig. 7. Donat Hübschmann, Mock siege held in the Burgplatz of Vienna for the entry of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II on 16 March 1563, s.d., woodcut.
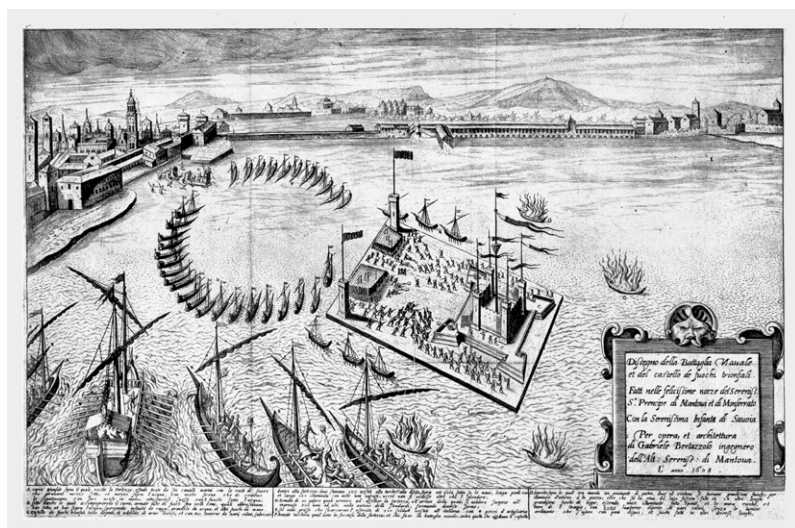

Fig. 8. Gabriele Bertazzolo, *Disegno della battaglia navale et del castello de fuochi trionfali fatti nelle felicissime nozze del sereniss. s. prencipe di Mantova et Monferrato con la serenissima Infante di Savoia* [...], 1608, etching (in F. Follino, *Compendio delle sontuose feste fatte l'anno MDCVIII nella città di Mantova per le reali nozze del serenissimo prencipe d. Francesco Gonzaga con la serenissima Infante Margherita di Savoia*, Mantova, Aurelio e Ludovico Osanna, 1608, p. n.n.).
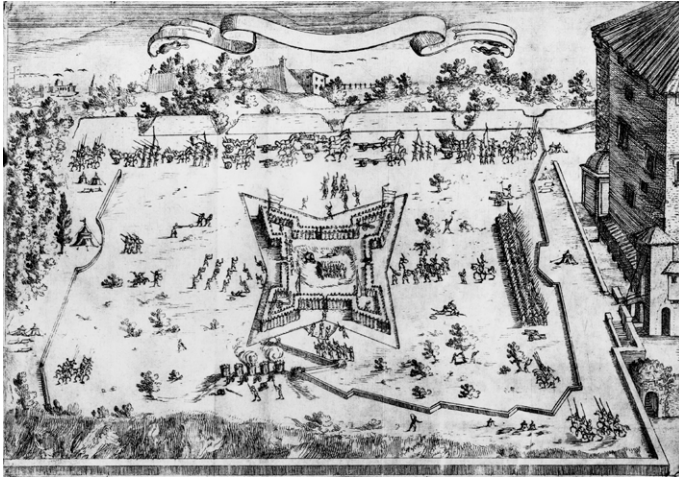
Fig. 9. Mock siege held in the new meadow at the rear of the Pitti Palace in Florence on 25 July 1606, 1606, etching (in G. Parigi, *Relazione d'uno spettacolo militare fatto in un prato del Palazzo de' Pitti*, Firenze, Volcmar Timan, 1606, p. n.n.).

Fig. 10. *Des combats et des feintes attaques de places, villes, chasteaux &c.*, 1669, engraving (in C.-F. Ménestrier, *Traité des tournois, ioustes, carrousels: et autres spectacles publics*, Lyon, Jacques Muguet, 1669, p. 321).