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a cura di
MARCO BETTALLI, ELENA FRANCHI E GIOACCHINO STRANO



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Bronze statue (2nd/3rd century AD) of the genius of a legion.
Enns (Upper Austria). Museum Lauriacum.
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Present and Past Approaches to the Ancient Military History

A Short Bibliographical Survey of the Current Studies

di VIRGILIO ILARI

“How deceitful are those who attach the Romans to every word! They should have a city conditioned as they were, and then govern themselves according to that example; which to those who have the disproportionate qualities is as disproportionate, as it would be to want a donkey to do the course of a horse.”

Francesco Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, n. 110.¹

SUMMARY. The current history boom as a fallout of the End of history. “Old” and “New” perspectives in military history. Presentism in military history. a) Classicism in Early-Modern Europe. b) The History of the Art of War (1848-1914). Ancient Wars in contemporary strategic studies and war decision-making. Past and Present in Ancient Military History. Purpose and criteria of this bibliographic selection.

The current history boom as a fallout of the End of history

In March 2024 a Roman military history specialist wrote on *Foreign Policy* that the decades-long trend of de-funding history courses in American universities was endangering national security because it threatened “to produce a generation of politicians and consultants whose worldview is increasingly, and dangerously, superficial”.² Historiographical production (academic, indepen-

1 In Id., *Opere* a cura di V. De Caprariis, Milano-Napoli, Ricciardi, 1953, p. 120.

2 Brett Devereaux, «The History Crisis Is a National Security Problem. As universities shed scholars key learning disappears», *Foreign Policy*, March 10, 2024.

dent, amateur, popular), however, is bucking the trend. Not only is it not in decline, but thanks to the Internet, it is growing exponentially. Between 2002 and 2013 in the United States alone, 12 to 15 thousand history books were printed annually.

³ The phenomenon also affects military history, another field generally considered in crisis by specialists: and ancient military history is – along with the history of the Napoleonic wars and the two world wars – the most successful subgenre. And even the negative bias that limits academic recognition of military history seems to except Greek, Roman, and Byzantine history.

Paradoxically, the growing popular, media, editorial, and academic interest in military history in general, and ancient warfare in particular, is also a fallout of the crisis of military history as a critical function of the science and art of war. The post-historical, post-political, and post-heroic thirty years following the Cold War removed not the use of force, but the science and historical and political consciousness of war. As during the *Pax Augusta*, to write today on history of war is rather “an object of delight (ἀνάθημα) for retired commanders” than “a school (ἄσκησις) for good generals.”⁴ It was the “end of history” that made possible the “appearance of war as a historical object in itself in the first 2000 issue of the *Annales*,” the previously “unthinkable” symptomatic event in the “historiographic landscape” captured by Luigi Loreto.⁵

“Old” and “New” perspectives in military history

In fact, despite the misunderstood *histoire-bataille* controversy,⁶ the occasional *Annales* interest in military history had illustrious precedents: apart from the

3 Number of new books and editions published in the United States in the category ‘history’ from 2002 to 2013, *Statista*,

4 Onas. pr. 4: παλαιῶν τε ἡγεμόνων κατὰ τὴν σεβαστὴν εἰρήνην ἀνάθημα - στρατηγῶν τε ἀγαθῶν ἄσκησις (trad. Oldfather, p. 371).

5 Luigi Loreto, *Per la storia militare del mondo antico. Prospettive retrospettive*, Napoli, Jovene, 2006, p. 1. See «La Guerre. Comptes-rendus» (*Annales*, ÉSC, 55, 2000, pp. 153-197).

6 The epithet, coined in 1841 by Amans-Alexis Monteil, the most famous among the “fore-runners” and inspirers of the *Annales*, was in fact about the reduction of national history to a chronicle and monumental history, punctuated on the pomp and nefariousness of rulers and courts (Monteil, *Influence de l'histoire des divers états: ou comment fut allée la France si elle eut eu cette histoire*, Paris, W. Coquebert, 1840, pp. 8, 74, 86ss., 93-94, 118ss.). V. Ilari, «Storia delle battaglie fra storia militare e histoire-bataille», in Id., *Clausewitz in Italia e altri scritti di storia militare*, Roma, Aracne, 2019, pp. 45-47.

journal itself [a Piero Pieri's essay on military history,⁷ a deep review of *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce*⁸] one need only think of *L'étrange défaite*⁹ or *La dimanche de Bouvines*.¹⁰ But, from the old-fashion point of view, the suspicious article on the *Annales* 2000 heralded barbarian incursions *ultra crepidam*, threatening the sovereignty of political, legal, economic and military sciences over the study of war. Indeed, this *quadrivium*, or constellation of disciplines encompassed all that needed to be known to wage and understand war. An *epistème* made up of codifications of Western experience sanitized by critical history. Whose task was to intellectualize (*intellegere*) experience in order to review (*recensire*) the genesis, variations, and relativity of codifications, according to the dichotomy between "external" history (*necessaria ad intelligendum*) and "internal" history (*quae variationes recensit*) intuited in 1668 by Leibniz regarding the history of law.¹¹ This task cannot be accomplished in an interdisciplinary way: it is not a matter of comparing the two perspectives, historical and scientific, in parallel, but of historicizing science and therefore seriously mastering both perspectives. Which requires the formation of special Centaur disciplines, such as precisely the history of law and other sciences, including the military.

In the perspective of this Apollonian *epistème*, the contribution of social history to the study of war could be – at best – a Dionysian dumping ground from which to laboriously filter some useful revision of external history. And at worst, a deafening babel of neologisms and pseudo-concepts forged by the ignorance and prosopopoeia of the parvenu. With the not unfounded fear that, in a society convinced of the war's extinction, study would be reduced to commemoration, erudition and entertainment, becoming increasingly ancillary to the needs and rules of the publishing market, social communication and institutional and ideo-

7 Piero Pieri, «Sur les dimensions de l'histoire militaire», *Annales, ÉSC*, 18, N. 4, 1963, pp. 625-638.

8 Jean-Pierre Darmon, «Problèmes de la guerre dans la Grèce ancienne», *Annales.ÉSC*, 25, N. 5, 1970, pp. 1298-1308.

9 Marc Bloch, *L'étrange défaite. Témoignage écrit en 1940*.

10 Georges Duby, *La dimanche de Bouvines*, 1973.

11 *Nova Methodus discendae docendaeque iurisprudentiae* (1668), Pars II, 29-30 (W. G. Leibniti, *Opera Omnia*, Genevae, apud Fratres de Tournes, 1768, t. IV, pars III *Iurisprudentia*, pp. 191-92). F. Taranowsky, «Leibniz und die sogenannte äußere Rechtsgeschichte», *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, Germanistische Abteilung 27 = 40, 1906, pp. 190-233.

logical identities, punctuated by anniversaries and the monumentalization of the past. And it would also lose the epistemic heritage and practical purpose of military history, denying it the specialized status accorded instead to other historical disciplines such as legal and economic history, and so on.

Effects that in various ways and measures have weighed on the social perception and scientific study of warfare in the first quarter of this century, with emblematic events such as the merger (2013) of the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (FMGA) with the Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut (SoWI) of the Bundeswehr,¹² or the centenary of 1914 celebrated by the European Parliament as the definitive pacification of a reconciliated continent, just as the “man of another century”¹³ reopened the old Eastern and Middle Eastern fronts of 1914 frozen by the Cold War.

But the obliteration of scientific military history was temporary and confined to continental Europe, while the irruption of social history into war studies has not merely enriched “external” history; in fact, it has extraordinarily broadened the methods and research horizon, including, and especially, in the study of the Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Medieval war experience. About methods, the current studies strongly stimulated and refined the interdisciplinary interaction between philology, archaeology, opology, geosciences, cartography, iconography, statistics, computer science, artistic, literary and film reconstruction and representation. It went beyond the classicist and Occidentalist canon based on

12 See the *de.wikipedia* entries «Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsamt», «Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut», «Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr» and «Militärgeschichte». Contrary to Loreto's expectations (cit. pp.) the beginning of the sociological trend and academic “civilization” of military history in Germany also dates back to the fateful 2000s, with the essays by Thomas Kühne and Benjamin Ziemann, (Hrsg.), *Was ist Militärgeschichte?*, In Verbindung mit dem Arbeitskreis Militärgeschichte e. V. und dem Institut für soziale Bewegungen der Ruhr-Universität Bochum [Tagung in November 1998 in Bochum], Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich, Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2000 (= *Krieg in der Geschichte*, Bd. 6). See here Kühne/Ziemann, «Militärgeschichte in der Erweiterung» (pp. 9-46) and Bernd WEGNER, «Wozu Operationsgeschichte?» (pp. 105-114). See too G Krumeich, «Militärgeschichte für eine zivile Gesellschaft», in Christian Cornelissen, *Geschichtswissenschaften. Eine Einführung*, Frankfurt/M., 2000, pp. 178-93; Jutta Novosadtko, *Krieg, Gewalt und Ordnung. Einführung in die*

13 Angela Merkel, in a phone call with President Obama (March 3, 2014) said that Putin lived «in another world» (Natalie Villacorta, «20 great quotes on Putin, Obama», *Politico*, May 3, 2014).

Greek and Roman literature, both integrating Byzantine and Medieval sources and exploring connections and comparisons with the war experiences of other ancient Mediterranean civilizations, predating or contemporary to the Roman-Hellenistic world. Finally, it opened new perspectives and proposed new paradigms, essentially applying contemporary perspectives, themes and categories. For example, in the application to the ancient world of frontier, gender and memory studies, of themes such as “armée et fiscalité,” “defeat,” “logistics,” “intelligence,” and of descriptive/interpretive categories such as “strategy (in practice),” “generalship,” “grand strategy,” “seapower,” “guerrilla,” “military revolution,” and “geopolitics.” [See the selected bibliography, §.2].

The horizon of the “old”, scientific military history, on the other hand, was much narrower, because it wanted to frame the present, and the method consisted of purposive selection, which we find applied in Clausewitzian studies of the Italian or Russian campaigns and theorized by Mahan in his prologue to the American Association of Historians.¹⁴ Both disregarded ancient military history, because in history they did not look for examples¹⁵ or “parallels” between past and modern strategies, but the diagnosis and framework of the present. The only ancient reference found in Mahan is a comparison between the role of Tarentum in the Athenian expedition to Sicily and that of Santiago de Cuba for the 1898 Spanish squadron and Port Arthur for the 1904 Russian Empire.¹⁶ In an 1809 letter to Fichte, Clausewitz criticized Machiavelli’s *Art of War*, because it was “too much taken” from the “spirit” and “forms” “of the art of war of the Ancients”, and lacking the “free and independent judgment” he valued in Machiavelli’s political writings.¹⁷ And von Hoyer too excluded from his research the era before

14 A. T. Mahan, *Subordination in Historical Treatment*, Presidential address delivered December 26, 1902 at the Philadelphia meeting of the American Historical Association (Annual Report of the AHA, 1902, pp. 49–63). Online. See Ilari, «Nota sulla prolusione di Mahan all’American Historical Association», in Id., *Clausewitz*, cit., pp. 157–161.

15 See the Clausewitz’s caveat on the examples (*Vom Kriege*, II, 6).

16 Ilari, «Thucydides’ Traps. The Peloponnesian War in America Political Rhetoric and in Senior Military Education», in Luca Iori, Ivan Matijašić (Eds.), *Thucydides in the Age of Extremes and Beyond. Academia and Politics*, Newcastle upon Tyne and Venice: History of Classical Scholarship, Supplementary Volume 5, 2022, pp. 270–71.

17 Hans Schulz, *Machiavell. Nebst einem Briefe Carls von Clausewitz an Fichte, kritische Ausgabe*, Leipzig, Verlag von Felix Meier, 1918; 1925² [G. F. Frigo (cur.), *Fichte-Clausewitz Sul principe di Machiavelli*, Gallo, Ferrara, 1990, p. 123] Quot. by Immacolata Eramo, «Disegni di guerra. La tradizione dei diagrammi tattici greci nell’Arte della guerra di Niccolò

the gunpowder revolution.¹⁸

The broadening of the horizon pursued by the “new”, social military history presupposes precisely the rejection of “presentism”¹⁹ and the recontextualization of war in the history of the past, including that of the ancient and medieval world. Ultimately, the historian’s job is to reconstruct the past and its documentation in a rigorous and controllable manner. And the more freely he or she can do this, the more he or she can go into the “pathless wilderness” (ἀμέθοδος ὄλη), as a critical philologist contemporary with Polybius called history (while stressing the need to bring order to it).²⁰ Military historiography, especially of ancient warfare, is thus experiencing an exciting and flourishing “Herodotean moment,” breaking out of the otherwise controversial Thucydides canons,²¹ and leaving it to the social sciences to extract generalizations, judgments and anticipations.

Presentism in military history. a) Classicism in Early-Modern Europe

Mind, however, that the modern study of ancient military history has experienced three other forms of “presentism,” very different from the post-Clausewitzian “presentism” focused on modern and contemporary warfare. The first form of military-historical “presentism” was, from Machiavelli to Guischart, Classicism

Machiavelli», in Vanna Maraglino (cur.), *Scienza antica in età moderna, Teoria e immagini*, Bari, Cacucci, 2012, p. 36.

18 Johann Gottfried von Hoyer, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst: seit der erster Anwendung des Schiesspulvers zum Kriegsgebrauch bis an das Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, in *Geschichte der Künste und Wissenschaften*, von einer Gesellschaft gelehrter Männer, Göttingen, bey Johann Georg Rosenbusch, 1799-1800.

19 Adrian Wilson and T. G. Ashplant, «Whig History and Present-centred History», *The Historical Journal*, 31, 1988, pp 1-16. Lynn Hunt [President of the American Historical Association, AHA], «Against Presentism», *Perspectives in History*, May 1, 2002. David Armitage, «In defense of presentism», in D. M. MacMahon (Ed.), *History and Human Flourishing*, OUP, 2023, pp. 44-69.

20 The grammarian Tauriscus, disciple of Crates of Mallo (Sesto Empirico, *Contra Mathematicos*, 249). S. Mazzarino, *Il pensiero storico classico*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1974, A, pp. 485 ss.

21 Plutarch, *The Malice of Herodotus*, ed. by A. J. Bowen, Liverpool U.P., 1992. J. Marincola, *On Writing History from Herodotus to Herodian*, Penguin Books, 2017. Matthew Fox, «Dionysius, Lucian, and the Prejudice against Rhetoric in History», *The Journal of Roman History*, Vol. 91, Nov. 2001, pp. 76-93. Ugo Fantasia, «The Long Shadow of Thucydides», *Incidence of the Ancient*, 10, 2012, pp. 209-222 and Id., «Afterword», in Dino Piovan, *Thucydides in Europe. Greek Historians and Historiography in the Age of Historicism*, Milan and Udine, Mimesis, 2018..

applied to the art of war, which precisely through the humanistic *restitutio* of the ancient *scientia* and *disciplina militaris* constructed the modern military vocabulary, literature and science. As indeed happened in parallel in every other field of knowledge – not only politics and law, but also art, architecture, mechanics, mathematics, medicine – in a constant dialogue between Ancients and Moderns.

The *restitutio* of the ancient knowledge was also a cultural revolution equal in importance to the eighteenth-century encyclopedism that founded contemporary culture. This revolution founded the modern state on the widespread removal of medieval Christendom, and also provided the blueprint for the Spanish conquest of the New World²². Furthermore, Classics widespread military culture, still exhibited by the *Thucydides Anglicus* and Clark's *Vegetius* carried with by the British officers during the American War of Independence.²³ The *bibliothèque portative* that in June 1809, from Schoenbrunn, Napoleon commissioned from his librarian, was made up of three thousand pocket volumes in 30 cases, two fifths of which are “histoire ancienne” and “histoire du bas-Empire”, each comprising [volumes] “par les originaux” and [volumes] “par les modernes”.²⁴

b) *The History of the Art of War (1848-1914)*

A new form of “presentism” was the “History of the Art of War” (*Geschichte der Kriegskunst*) flourished between 1848 and 1914. This new approach to military history grafted the scientific and academic historiography into the practical study of the art (*Kriegskunst*) and the science of war (*Kriegs-Wissenschaft*). This crossed fertilization was favored by the fact that academic historians belonged to the political and military elite of their nations and many also had political commitments. An intimacy very rare today. This is another reason why the studies produced in this era still remain fundamental and indispensable, and it's unfortunate that they were later so neglected, not so much because the vast majority

22 David A. Lupher, *Romans in a New World. Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003; 2016.

23 Ira D. Gruber, *Books and the British Army in the age of American Revolution*, University of North Carolina Press, 2010, pp. 233-34.

24 Charles-Éloi Vial, «Les livres à la guerre: les bibliothèques portatives de Napoléon I^{er}», *Varia. Bulletin de bibliographie*, 2012, pp. 305-341. «Napoléon et ses bibliothèques portatives (extrait des *Souvenirs sur le Bibliothécaire de l'Empereur*)», Extrait du *Spectateur militaire*, Cahier de Septembre 1843.

of them are in German, but mostly because there is not a full awareness of the treasures to be found there. However the recovery of this tradition has already begun, as demonstrated by the recent pioneering studies of Roel Konijnendijk²⁵ and Michał-Norbert Faszczka.²⁶

The Clausewitzian prejudice about the practical irrelevance of ancient and medieval military history was not entirely overcome in the pre-1914 military science, but the study of the pre-gunpowder warfare was justified and encouraged by the then current view of history as a “process” and the present as its “culmination.” Indeed the History of the Art of War was fully imbued with French and German positivism and British “Whig interpretation of history.”²⁷ Delbrück – now claimed as a forerunner by the “new” German military history²⁸ – argued that “the history of the art of war is a continuous strand (*ein einzelner Faden*) in the context of universal history and begins with it.”²⁹

Ancient Wars in contemporary strategic studies and war decision-making

This evolutionary interpretation of history was obviously discredited by the catastrophe of 1914, so much so that it was ridiculed in 1930 by a witty parody of British imperial history schoolbooks entitled *1066 and All That*,³⁰ from which

25 Roel Konijnendijk, *Between Miltiades and Moltke: Early German Studies in Greek Military History*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2023.

26 Michał-Norbert Faszczka, *Hans Delbrück i Narodziny Nowoczesnej Historii Wojskowosci. Tworczosc Koncepcje Recepcja* [Hans Delbrück and the Birth of Modern Military History: Creation, Concepts, Reception], Europejskie Miasto Nauki, Katowice, 2024.

27 Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig interpretation of history*, London, G. Bell & sons, 1931. Jeremy Black, «Military History and the Whig Interpretation. In memoriam Dennis Showalter», *Nuova Antologia Militare*, Vol. 1, issue 1, February 2020, pp. 3-26. (U. S. Military History Review, 6, 1, 2019, pp. 1-16). Cfr. Ilari, review of J. Black, *Military Strategy: A Global History* (2020) and *Plotting Power: Strategy in the Eighteenth Century* (2017), NAM, 1, 2020, Supplemento Recensioni /Reviews, pp. 5-22. Cristopher Torr, «The Whig interpretation of history», *South African Journal of Economy and Management Sciences*, NS, 3, 1, pp. 52-58.

28 See «Militärgeschichte» entry, *de.wikipedia*.

29 “The history of the art of war is a single thread in the context of universal history and begins with it.” (Hans Delbrück, «Ausgangspunkt», in Id., *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, Berlin, 1920³, Teil 1).

30 W. C. Sellar / R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That: A Memorable History of England, Comprising All the Parts You Can Remember*, London, Methuen & Co., 1930 (formerly serialised in *Punch*).

Arnold J. Toynbee drew in 1934 this splendid tautology: “History is now at an end: therefore this history is final”. But the pregnancy of Ancient history in military and strategic thought survived in multiple fields and in multiple forms, as an inexhaustible source of analogies, parallels and lessons. Unlike Military Classicism and the *Geschichte der Kriegskunst*, the reception of ancient military history in contemporary military-strategic studies is mostly what Mearsheimer called – with reference to the historical essays and journalistic interventions of Sir Basil H. Liddell Hart – ‘*omnipresent history*’, that is, a «forcing of the present to conform it to a specific interpretation of the past». ³¹

Writing in 1981, in an age of relative *Realpolitik*, Mearsheimer believed that ancient history, like hyper-specialized histories (‘*selective history*’), had little influence on the political decision-making, unlike histories truly dedicated to the *consilium principis* (‘*analytic history*’). But *omnipresent history* (and therefore ancient history) exerts a particular fascination in periods of ‘liberal peace’ and ‘end of history’, such as the two last globalizations of 1870-1914 and 1991-2014. Thus Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War had their quarter of an hour of political-media fame during the little neo-Victorian wars of 2003-2014, also skyrocketing ancient and byzantine military scholarship in academy and popular publishing. ³² While the failure of the ‘long’/‘forever’ war for exporting democracy rekindles interest in a forgotten Marxist interpretation of the origins of the Peloponnesian War. ³³

But the Roman imprint connotes the entire political and war culture of transatlantic civilization. Not only did the Catholic Church and the Ottoman and Russian empires see themselves as direct heirs of Rome, but also all European and American political identities forged themselves on the Roman example (while celebrating Greek, Jewish, Iberian, Gallic, Celtic, and Germanic resistance to Romanization). The same was true of contemporary “Carthaginian” thalassocracies

31 John J. Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History*, Cornell University, 1988, Oxford, Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988, pp. 218-19 («The policy makers behave like the classic rational actor; he consciously turns to the past for help in understanding present»). Id., «The False Promise of International Institutions», *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1994, pp. 5–49. Id. & Sebastian Rosato, *How States Think: The Rationality of Foreign Policy*, Yale U. P. 2023.

32 Luca Iori, «Usi e abusi di Tuciddide», *Limes*, 12, 2024, pp. 133-148.

33 Nino Luraghi (ed.), *Geoffrey de Ste. Croix and the Peloponnesian War*, Special Issue of *Polis, The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought*, 41, 2024, Issue 1.

such as the British Empire and American hegemony, although in both cases Pericles' Athens offered the possibility of combining democracy and imperialism.³⁴

It is interesting to compare the two different readings Raymond Aron and Edward Luttwak gave of the American Roman comparison in mid-1970s. For Aron, the Cold War United States was a '*république impériale*,'³⁵ as for Machiavelli Florence was the Roman Republic of Livian *Prima Deca*. For Luttwak, however, the American-led West had already reached, at least in terms of territorial expansion, the 3rd century CE, and thus the analogy rested on an incumbent security dilemma, risking – «we, like the Romans»³⁶ – overextension, barbarization of the defence, proxy wars and an Adrianople fateful turning point. The title of this book gave rise to a (rather pedantic) controversy over the applicability of the Liddellhartian concept of 'grand strategy'³⁷ to the Roman empire (without considering possible Roman corresponding concepts, such as *arcana imperii*). And thus missing the most interesting aspect of Luttwak's essay, namely that he reintroduced, albeit unknowingly, one of the political, legal and historical topics addressed by Alberigo Gentili's *de armis Romanis* (1599), that of the (*fraudolenta sed iusta*) *sociorum defensio* as *arcanum imperii*.³⁸

Past and Present in Ancient Military History

The problem is that to free the study of the past from the tyranny of the present is not enough to ban "presentism." The main reason is that historical-archaeological reconstruction dangerously panders to the social perception of history as a

34 V. Ilari, «We, like the Romans? Per lo studio del paradigma romano nella rappresentazione e nell'interpretazione della Pax Americana», *Civiltà Romana*, II, 2015, pp. 313-340.

35 Raymond Aron, *République impériale. Les États-Unis dans le monde (1945-1972)*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1973.

36 Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire. From the First Century A.D. to the Third*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, p. xii: «We, like the Romans, face the prospect not of decisive conflict, but of a permanent state of war, albeit limited»..

37 Lukas Milewski, «Liddell Hart's Impact on the Study of Grand Strategy», in Theodor Balzacq / R. K. Krebs (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 73-88.

38 A. Gentili, *de armis Romanis*, *Actio* I, X, p. 62; II, p. 116, Diego Panizza, «Alberigo Gentili's De Armis Romanis: The Roman Model of the Just Empire», in Benedict Kingsbury, Benjamin Straumann, *The Roman Foundations of the Law of Nations: Alberico Gentili and the Justice of Empire*, 2010, pp. 68-69.

time machine. The emphasis and precision of details, especially technical-military ones, triggers self-identification, generating the extremely attractive illusion that we can “see” and “re-live” the “real” past through spectacle and reenactment. Indeed, without the mediation of critical presentism, the social history of war, and especially of ancient war, paradoxically risks fueling the vituperative *histoire-bataille*, the “monumental” history that “ushers” the past into the future³⁹ and nurtures the analogies and Athenian / Roman ancestry or imprinting of modern empires.⁴⁰

One does not need to know Gramsci⁴¹ to realise that our knowledge of the past is also, inevitably, a *trompe-l’oeil*, a mirroring, a projection of the present. In a certain sense, it is also true that we know the ancient world better than the Ancients: and not only for the ‘Thucydidesque’ reason that we know its entire historical development, but also for the ‘Herodotean’ sophistication of our systems of investigation. But the consoling ‘intimacy’ with the Ancients, the ‘transferring into them’,⁴² must not make us forget that the most precious fruit of the study of the past is to grasp how far from it we actually are. For what we see of it is only a firmament immersed in a dark matter of known unknowns, unknown knowns and unknown unknowns.⁴³

But there are also forgotten or removed knowns, such as the famous *quincunx* – Lipsio’s pedantic hypothesis to solve the enigma of the *triplex acies* repeated to the point of believing it to be a Livian ‘technical term’.⁴⁴ Attempts to derive a history of the evolution of the republican legion’s tactics from classical sources is not idle, because it demonstrates the impossibility, already admitted by Ma-

39 F. Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen. Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, Leipzig, Fritzsche, 1874.

40 Ilari, «We, like the Romans», cit. Luciano Canfora, *L’uso politico dei paradigmi storici*, Roma-Bari, Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, 2010.

41 Luciano Canfora, *Il presente come storia. Perché il passato ci chiarisce le idee*, Milano, Rcs, 2015.

42 Machiavelli, Letter XI to Francesco Vettori, 10 December 1513 (*Opere*, II, p. 295). William J. Connell, “La Lettera Di Machiavelli a Vettori Del 10 Dicembre 1513.” *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. 171, no. 4 (638), 2013, pp. 665–724.

43 Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, New York, Penguin Group, 2011, p. xiii.

44 Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte*, 1, p. 491 (on Georg Veith).

chiavelli himself,⁴⁵ mindful of Phormio, the rhetorician who wanted to teach Hannibal tactics.⁴⁶ The practical experimentation with Roman armament and discipline, apparently attempted in Venice under the Duke of Urbino, was a failure: the Roman model did not affect the Florentine *ordinanza*⁴⁷ and the French provincial legions (1534), like the Urbino's *Feltria* legion (1533), were Roman in name only.

Purpose and criteria of this bibliographic selection

This bibliography includes just a thousand titles (mainly collections and monographs, mostly post-1970), selected from the ten thousand or so known to me. It does not include Byzantine military history, opology, military archaeology, land and naval architecture, navigation, and the more specialized contributions on individual wars, campaigns, battles, biographies, land and naval components and units, and a host of valuable works.

It's thus a purely subjective, tentative, and even hasty selection from a random sample determined by my personal experience and eclectic research interests, fished out of a sea in which sail perhaps millions of potentially relevant books and articles. Well aware that I cannot map such a pathless wilderness, I have not given up trying to get some idea of the *Biblioteca de Babel*. The benevolent reader should know that the tour I intend to show him is not William of Baskerville's ingenious route to the *secretum finis Africae*, but rather the scribbling of any Adso of Melk in an attempt to get out of the labyrinth and try to look at it from the outside and possibly even from a higher point.

The purpose is to capture the epistemic sense of contemporary research by placing it in a historical perspective. For this reason, the texts are cited in chronological order, separating those devoted to the history of ancient military historiography (§. 1) and the history of proto-modern military Classicism (§. 4) from the two main strands of research, respectively devoted to facts and structures (§. 2) and to the edition and interpretation of literary sources (§. 3). To these I have

45 Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, II, 16.

46 Ilari, *Clausewitz*, p. 89 ntt. 5 e 6 (Cic., *De or.* II. 18.75-76 e II. 19.77, 254, 256. Machiavelli, lettera XII a F. Guicciardini, 4 aprile 1526. Matteo Bandello, *Novella*, I, 40).

47 Mikael Hörnqvist, «Perché non si usa allegare i Romani: Machiavelli and the Florentine Militia of 1506», *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 55, Issue 1, Spring 2002, pp. 148-191.

added two more selections, one relating to ancient military history as part of the history of the art of war (§. 5 and Appendix) and one relating to ancient military history as a paradigm for contemporary military and strategic studies (§. 6).

The chronological order, focused on context and trends, doesn't do justice to the authors, not only because of the omissions of many of their contributions but because the sense of individual paths is lost. But my purpose was precisely to bring out the art we profess, and the contribution it makes not only to ourselves but especially to the collective perception of the time we are given to live in. And how, conversely, this collective perception is reflected in our art.

Moreover, the chronological perspective corrects and rescales the subjective perception of sharp turns, such as the one reported by Loreto from which this reflection of mine was inspired. Nevertheless, at the length the shifts are profound, as much in research approaches and interests as in literary form. Striking, for example, is the increasing prevalence of thematic collections (conference proceedings, companions) over individual monographs. An effect certainly of feverish academic and editorial urgencies (publish or perish), but perhaps also of a certain overabundance of innovations and contributions that complicates their 'digestion' by individual authors.

Another interesting observation, is that few authors appear in two or more sections of this bibliography. They seem almost like parallel brotherhoods, with little contact or knowledge of each other. But we all belong, even if we do not realize it, to the same tribe: or rather to two closely related by exogamous exchanges, that of military history and that of ancient history. So we are all a little cousins and a little half-breed, and we would all gain by increasing mutual knowledge and cooperation. And even more so by rediscovering the cult of ancestors. For ultimately no historical issue can be truly mastered unless it is also, at the same time, a history of relative historiography.



Gerard de Laireesse (1640-1711) *Clio Taking Dictation from Minerva*, design for title-page. Courtesy of Art Institute Chicago, CC0.

A Selected Bibliography¹

(Most of the texts listed can be read online.)

SUMMARY. §.1 History and Epistemology of the Ancient Military Studies [p. 23]. §.2 The Rediscovery of Ancient Military History (A Taste of New Approaches, Directions, Paradigms in Journals, Bibliographies & Collections) [p. 26]. 2 a. *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Battles* [ed. by Michael Whitby / Harry Sidebottom, Hoboken, Wiley Blackwell, 2017, 3 vols.] [p. 65]. 2 b. *Warfare in the Ancient Mediterranean World* [a series in the Brill's Companions in Classical Studies, edited by Lee L. Brice] [p. 67]. 2 c. *International Ancient Warfare Conference* (IAWC 2023) [p. 72]. §.3 *Militaris Scientia* (Studies on literary sources for Ancient Military History) [p. 74]. §.4 *Militaris Prudentia* (History and Epistemology of Military Classicism, 15th-18th cent.) [p. 88]. 4a) Machiavelli and the Ancients [p. 96]. §.5 History of the Art of War (The Wigh Interpretation of Ancient Warfare) [p. 97]. §.6 *Exempla Historica* (Ancient Military History in Contemporary Strategic Rhetoric). [p. 102]. Appendix: German *Dissertationes* on Ancient Military History from the 1894 Fock Catalogus [p. 107].

§. 1

History and Epistemology of the Ancient Military Studies

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¹ I warmly thank Prof. Luca Iori and the library service of the University of Parma (NILDE) for kindly allowing me access (precluded to me, having retired since 2010) to some texts not available on the online scientific sharing sites.

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§. 2

The Rediscovery of Ancient Military History

A Taste of New Approaches, Directions, Paradigms
in Journals, Bibliographies & Collections

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2 b. *Warfare in the Ancient Mediterranean World*

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2 c. *International Ancient Warfare Conference (IAWC)*

[in H-Soz-Kult, 22-24 June 2023, organised by Dr. Lennart Gilhaus,
Department of Ancient History, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn,
Institut für Geschichtswissenschaft]

Warfare in the Greek World. Ignacio Jesus Alvarez Soria (An Easy Victory. The Athenian Expedition in Aetolia in 426 BC), Lennart Gilhaus (City assaults and unbounded violence – The destruction of Motye as a model for the capture of cities in the Greek World). Ole Sebastian Siems (The last journey of the Argyraspids – a case study on the political role of Alexander's veterans in the early wars of the Diadochoi).

The Roman Civil Wars: Carlos Espí Forcén (Caesar's Elephant: A Powerful Icon in Time of War). David Hack (A Land of Confusion? – Irregular and personal power versus state control of military forces in Archaic Etruria and Rome). *Keynote Lecture*: Fernando Echeverría (Translations, analogies and metaphors. Interpreting ancient warfare in the 21st century)

- Women and Warfare:* Marco Almansa Fernandez (Mulierum Agmen. Women and Roman Army: Making the Invisible Visible). Pedro D. Conesa Navarro / Carlos Espí Forcén (The Fulvia-Victory Bust: A Female Image for the Wars of the Second Triumvirate). Amanthee Pussepitiya ("Women's Invisibility" in Military History. A case-by-case analysis of reasons for the female erasure from the historical narrative).
- Greeks and the Others:* Tatiana Tereshchenko (Military Theme in the Images of the Others in Greek Vase Painting of the Middle of the 6th–Early 4th Centuries BC). Daniel Emmelius (Insane undertakings? Cambyses and the crossing of deserts with armies in Herodotus). Florian Feil (Scythian lancers and their influence on fourth-century Persian, Thracian and Macedonian cavalry).
- Rome and the Others:* Peter Freiherr von Danckelman (Steppe Warfare and a Palmyrene Militia?). Julian Gieseke (At the emperor's service: The armies of dependent states and peoples as a military factor in the early imperial period). Alastair Lumsden (What it means to be a Man: Elite Masculinity and Military Development in Cisalpine Gaul c.400–50).
- Home and Away in Classical Greece:* Phyllis Brighthouse (War and Greek old comedy: A dialogue between past and present in Aristophanes' knights). Ioannis Mitsios (Sacrificial virgins in Athens and Boeotia: A comparative study). Michael Zerjadtke (Disarming and rearming citizens: The social and political relevance of weapon possession in classical Greece).
- Assassinations: The Greek World:* Fiona Phillips (Carian Conflict! The failed assassination of Mausolus). Julius Guthrie (The assassination of Dion). Ömer Güngörmüş (Sealing the fate of a dynasty: Assassinations of the late Argead royals of Macedonia).
- Assassinations: The Roman World* Alexander Thein (Political assassinations in the Sullan period: c. 90–70 BC). Jurriaan Gouw (The role of the Praetorian Guard in the assassination of Domitian and the rise of Trajan). Silvio Roggo (An unsuccessful assassin's career in Constantinople).
- The Roman Imperial Army:* Joanna Ball (Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself? Combat Disintegration and the Roman Army). Anna Busetto (Not so elementary, my dear Arrian! Tackling a locus desperatus in Arrian's *Tactica*). Hanna Fritz (Grain supply in Roman frontier zones: a comparison of the Vindolanda tablets and the Bu Njem Ostraca). Korneel van Lommel (How to seize power? Political violence during the Year of the Five Emperors).
- Greek Tactics:* Natasha Bershadsky (The death of Patroklos and the beginning of the phalanx). Raimon Graells i Fabregat / Alessandro Pace (Weapons and Hoplites. A Critical Discourse from Vases, Texts, and Realia). Isabell Tscheing (Social aspects of the lightly armed troops in the classical period). Georgio Tsiakalos (Inglorious Warriors: the Aetolian elite fighters and their controversial tactics).
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§. 3

Militaris Scientia

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§. 4

*Militaris Prudentia*History and Epistemology of
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§. 5

History of the Art of War

The Wigh Interpretation of Ancient Warfare

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§. 6

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