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## Shaping the Perfect Military Commander in Early Modern Europe

Edited by
Marco Faini and Maria Elena Severini

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Marco Versiero

# "Risistere alla furia de' cavagli e degli omini d'arme"

## A Lost Book for a *condottiere* by Leonardo da Vinci *

In his *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura, Scoltura et Architectura*, first published in 1584 and again one year later, the famous Lombard collectionist and connoisseur Giovan Paolo Lomazzo wrote a quite detailed description of a lost manuscript by Leonardo da Vinci, apparently based on his reliable 'first-hand' source, Francesco Melzi, who had been Leonardo's loyal pupil and heir in his youth (**ill. 1**).[1] In Lomazzo's words,

> Leonardo da Vinci disegnò tutti gl'uomini a cavallo, in qual modo potevano l'uno dall'altro difendersi con uno a piedi, e ancora quelli ch'erano a piedi come si potevano l'uno e l'altro difendere e offendere per cagione delle diverse armi. La qual opera è stato veramente grandissimo danno che non sia stata data in luce per ornamento di questa stupendissima arte.
> *In translation:* Leonardo da Vinci sketched all the horsemen on their horses, how they could defend themselves, the one [on the horse] from the other on foot; and then the way those who were on foot could defend and offend reciprocally, by means of the different weapons. It's a great danger that such work never came to light as an ornament to this wonderful art.

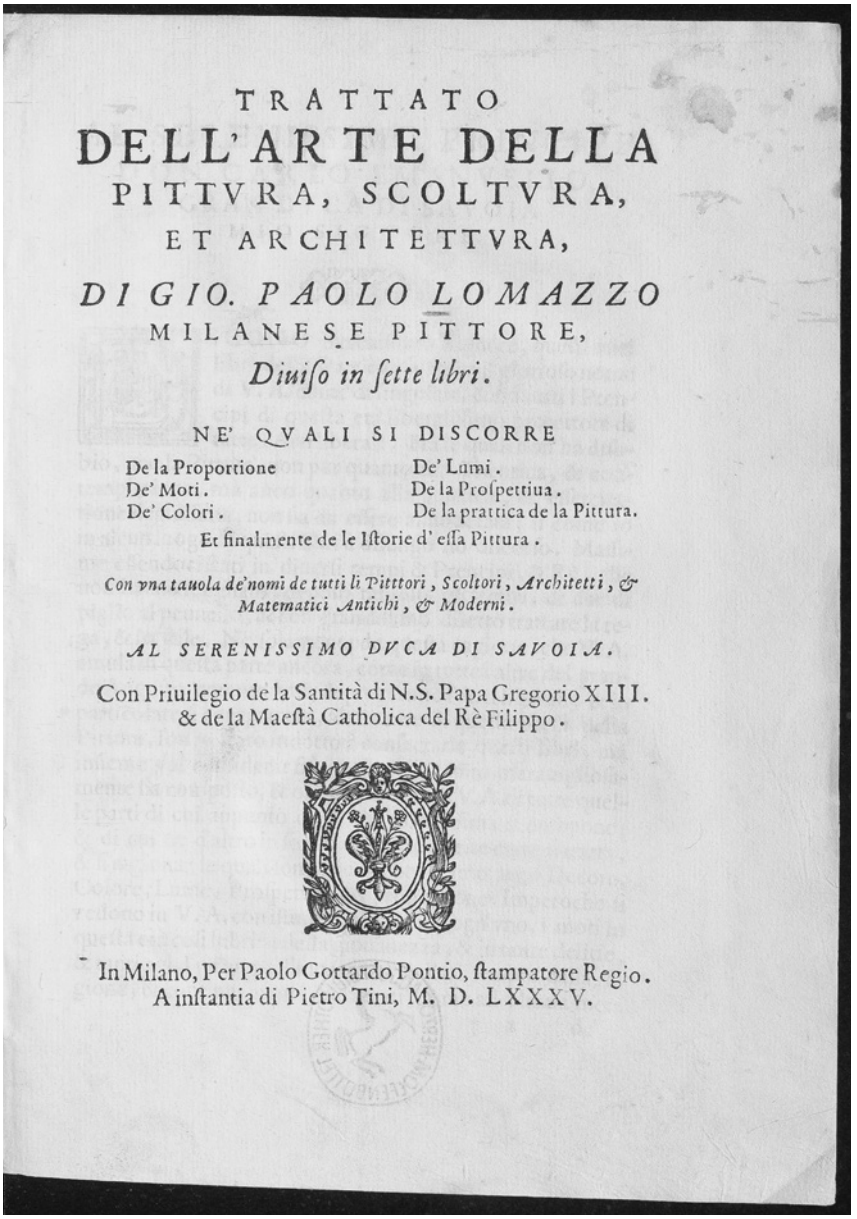
Lomazzo also specifies that this sketchbook had been compiled for a member of the Sforza court, whose name was Gentile de' Borri (documented as a fencing master, with a school at the so-called "Osteria della Balla"):[2] this statement allows us to individuate a precise chronological context for Leonardo's lost manuscript, that is his long sojourn in Milan at the end of the 15th century (1482–1499). Even though the traditional anecdote reported by Vasari in both editions of his *Vite* (1550 and 1568) refers to a hypothetical invitation Leonardo would have received to reach Milan in his quality of skilled musician, the draft of a letter of self-presentation written by an-

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* This paper focuses on a subject I firstly approached in a chapter of my book. See Marco Versiero: Il dono della libertà e l'ambizione dei tiranni. L'arte della politica nel pensiero di Leonardo da Vinci, Napoli 2012, pp. 178–189.

1 See Luca Beltrami: Documenti e memorie riguardanti la vita e le opere di Leonardo da Vinci, in ordine cronologico, Milano 1919, p. 185; Edmondo Solmi: Scritti Vinciani. Le Fonti dei Manoscritti di Leonardo da Vinci e altri studi, Firenze 1976, p. 106.

2 See Carlo Vecce: Leonardo, Roma 1998, p. 156.



TRATTATO
DELL'ARTE DELLA
PITTVRA, SCOLTVRA,
ET ARCHITETTVRA,
*DI GIO. PAOLO LOMAZZO*
MILANESE PITTORE,
*Diuiſo in ſette libri.*

NE' QVALI SI DISCORRE

De la Proportione
De' Moti.
De' Colori.
De' Lumi.
De la Proſpettiua.
De la prattica de la Pittura.

Et finalmente de le Iſtorie d' eſſa Pittura.

*Con vna tauola de' nomi de tutti li Pitttori, Scoltori, Architetti, & Matematici Antichi, & Moderni.*

*AL SERENISSIMO DVCA DI SAVOIA.*

Con Priuilegio de la Santità di N.S. Papa Gregorio XIII.
& de la Maeſtà Catholica del Rè Filippo.

In Milano, Per Paolo Gottardo Pontio, ſtampatore Regio.
A inſtantia di Pietro Tini, M. D. LXXXV.

*Ill. 1: Giovan Paolo Lomazzo: "Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura", Milano 1585, Frontispiece. HAB: A: 11 Geom.*

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other refined hand (maybe that of Bernardo Rucellai, the famous Florentine ambassador, sent by Lorenzo il Magnifico as a guest at the Sforza court the same year Leonardo moved to Milan, who has been tentatively identified in recent studies as the possible contact and introducer for the young artist in his first Milanese times)[3] clarifies that Leonardo's genuine purpose was to offer to Ludovico il Moro his intriguing competence as a master of warfare. The letter, now in the Codex Atlanticus in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana (f. 1082r), is an amazing catalogue of his military achievements and prospective inventions, cunningly proposed to the attention of one of the major belligerents on Italian and European battlefields at those times.[4] During the first years of his instalment in Ludovico's entourage, in fact, Leonardo's dealings with the military arts improved consistently: two recent exhibitions of his autograph sheets of drawings and studies, held in Milan between 2009 and 2010, have well demonstrated his increasing interest not only in military architecture and engineering (the construction of innovative fortresses, strongholds and fortifications) but also in the strengthening of the art of fighting, as concerns both the martial techniques to be followed on battlefields and the implementation of weapons.[5]

Profoundly marked by its Medieval inheritances, still at the end of the 15th century, the Dukedom of Milan offered, compared to the Republic of Florence, a peculiar variety of chivalric customs and rituals, which were a fundamental element of its cultural context, especially with reference to the training of the high-class young men. The pictorial decoration of the Visconti-Panigarola house, nearby the pivotal urban district centred on the basilica of St. Ambrogio, gives a striking illustration to this situation: painted by Donato Bramante soon after Leonardo's arrival at Milan (c. 1485–1488) for the patrician Gasparo Visconti, the frescoes still survive in their fragmentary state in the Brera Gallery.[6] Unfortunately, their detachment from the original architectural setting prevent us from a complete comprehen-

3 See Pietro Cesare Marani: Leonardo e Bernardo Rucellai fra Ludovico il Moro e Lorenzo il Magnifico sull'architettura militare: il caso della Rocca di Casalmaggiore, in: Arturo Calzona / Francesco Paolo Fiore / Alberto Tenenti / Cesare Vasoli (eds.): Il Principe architetto. Atti del Convegno (Mantova, 21–23 ottobre 1999), Firenze 2002, pp. 99–123.

4 For a convincing scenario of the historical context, see Jean Louis Fournel: La brutalisation de la guerre. Des guerres d'Italie aux guerres de religion, in: Astérion 2 (2004), pp. 105–131. See also Paolo Del Negro: Guerra ed eserciti da Machiavelli a Napoleone, Roma–Bari 2001, pp. 3, 7–8, 24, 41.

5 Pietro Cesare Marani (ed.): Fortezze, bastioni e cannoni, Novara 2009; Matthew Landrus (ed.): Le armi e le macchine da guerra: il *De re militari* di Leonardo, Novara 2010, respectively the first and fifth in the series of 24 exhibitions held in Milan on Leonardo's Codex Atlanticus, at the Ambrosiana Library.

6 See Gian Alberto dell'Acqua / Germano Mulazzani: L'opera completa di Bramantino e Bramante pittore, Milano 1978, pp. 84–85, nos. IV–XI.

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sion of the allegorical meaning of the whole decoration; however, what remains clearly suggests that a couple of ancient philosophers, Heraclitus and Democritus, chosen among Greek models for their symbolic value (fixed in neo-platonic terms by Marsilio Ficino in Florence almost a decade before),[7] would have introduced a series of standing male figures, specifically characterised by iconographic attributes alluding to both their intellectual skills – two men with branches of laurel on their heads, indicating them as poets or singers – and their military ones – many of them are in chivalric armours and martial equipments – an echo of Plato's theory of the perfect "philosopher-warrior"[8] and, at the same time, a homage to the patron Visconti, who was a man-at-arms, as well as a poet:[9] actually, Pietro Cesare Marani has recently recognized an analogy between the arms represented in these frescoes by Bramante (a halberd, a maul, a broadsword) and those drawn by Leonardo in a coeval series of sheets from his early Milanese period (c. 1485), nowadays scattered among different collections. The correspondence is quite punctual and one should take into account the familiarity existing between the two artists, confirmed by many circumstances (Leonardo explicitly mentions Bramante in his manuscripts and their common involvement in the enterprise of the achievement of the lantern of the cathedral of Milan is well known):[10] furthermore, none other than Lomazzo reports that in the pictorial decoration for Gasparo Visconti Bramante had portrayed two *magistri armorum* well known at the Sforza court, Pietro Suola and Beltramo de' Stuchis, the former being the personal trainer of Ludovico il Moro.[11] Moreover, Leonardo would certainly have met another Milanese spe-

7 Gabriella Ferri Piccaluga: Gli affreschi di casa Panigarola e la cultura milanese tra Quattro e Cinquecento, in: Arte Lombarda 86/87, 1988, pp. 14–25. On the connections with Leonardo's imagery, see Francesco Paliaga: Riflessioni a margine su Eraclito e Democrito e l'influenza di Leonardo, in: Fabio Frosini (ed.): "Tutte le opere non son per stancarmi". Raccolta di scritti per i settant'anni di Carlo Pedretti, Roma 1998, pp. 323–336.

8 See Maria Grazia Ciardi Dupré Dal Poggetto: Il Bramante pittore, da Urbino alla Lombardia, in: Urbino e le Marche prima e dopo Raffaello, Firenze 1983, pp. 101–110.

9 See Grazioso Sironi: Gli affreschi di Donato d'Angelo detto il Bramante alla Pinacoteca di Brera a Milano: chi ne fu il committente?, in: Archivio Storico Lombardo, 104 (1978), pp. 199–207.

10 See Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich: Leonardo and Bramante. Genius in Architecture, in: Charles D. O'Malley (ed.): Leonardo's Legacy, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1969, pp. 125–148.

11 See Giulio Bora: Considerazioni su Bramante pittore e la sua eredità a Milano, in: Arte Lombarda, 86/87, 1988, pp. 26–35. Specifically about Bramante and his relationship with Visconti, see Richard Schofield: Gaspare Visconti, mecenate del Bramante, in: Arte, committenza ed economia a Roma e nelle corti italiane del Rinascimento, Torino 1995, pp. 297–324. An interpretation of the allegorical meaning of the whole decoration was tentatively proposed by Luisa Giordano: "Vedendosi aver speso i giorni bene": l'espe-

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cialist of military arts, Pietro Monti, author of a treatise about bladed arms published later (1509): in Leonardo's Manuscript I at the Institut de France, f. 120v, there is a note written around 1497, which clearly alludes to a relationship with Monti ("Parla con Pietro Monti di questi tali modi di trarre i dardi" [Speak with Pietro Monti about these ways of launching arrows]).[12] It is very intriguing to notice on the verso of the sheet of studies preserved in Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia (inv. 235) the drawing of a crossbow accompanied by the word *dardj* (arrows): the recto of the same sheet, in fact, is entirely overfilled in its lower half by an accurate catalogue of blades and points for spears, while on the top of it there are two wonderful drawings of horsemen on their steeds and infantrymen attacking them with spears[13]. An interesting autograph annotation follows:

> Questo istrumento è molto al proposito della fanteria chontro a li omini d'arme. Anchora, quando que' de le lance lunghe avessino soffioni sulle punte delle lance darebbon grande spavento a' chavalli, onde li omini d'arme facilmente si rompereno; e questo si è il più util modo ch'e' fanti a pié posino usare a risistere alla furia de' cavagli e degli omini d'arme.
> *In translation:* Such tool is really appropriate to infantry against men-at-arms [cavalry]. Moreover, once endowed with a dandelion-like shape on the points of their spears, they would frighten the horses so much that men-at-arms would be thrown into disorder; this is the most helpful way for infantrymen at foot to resist to the fury of horses and men-at-arms.

A comparison of this text with Lomazzo's description of Leonardo's lost "book" for Gentile de' Borri (particularly, the reference to the different ways infantry and cavalry might adopt to offend and defend each other) seems to support the hypothesis that the sheet of studies now in Venice could be a surviving page of that manuscript: the presence of some perforations on the left margin of the recto, moreover, look like a vestige of a binding, perhaps made by Leonardo himself, to tie in a unique album of sketches and notes several sheets initially compiled separately, a tendency quite regularly followed by Leonardo, in his own attempt to re-organize and arrange his various materials. Rather than a properly "organic" book, the work accomplished for de' Borri, therefore, should have been a certain kind of infor-

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rienza di Bramante pittore, in: La pittura in Lombardia. Il Quattrocento, Milano 1993, pp. 315–328.

12 See Barbara Agosti (ed.): Leonardo da Vinci. Scritti artistici e tecnici, Milano 2002, pp. 160–168.

13 See Pietro Cesare Marani's entries in: Françoise Viatte / Varena Forcione (eds.): Léonard de Vinci. Dessins et manuscrits, Paris 2003, pp. 144–146, cat. no. 40; and C. C. Bambach (ed.): Leonardo da Vinci Master Draftsman, New York, New Haven and London 2003, pp. 383–387, cat. no. 49.

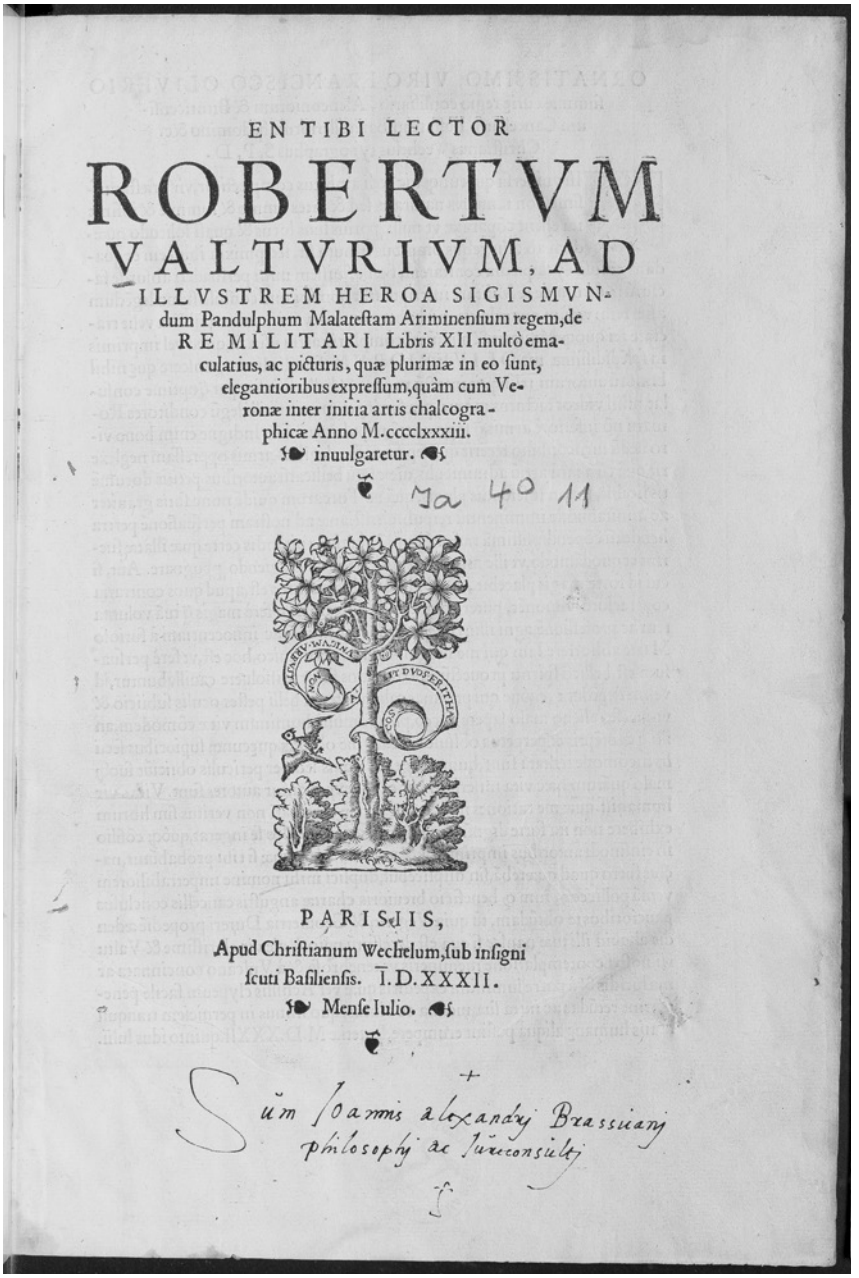
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mal though refined notebook or notepad, containing short annotated statements, illustrated by sketches and drawings: this would correspond with Lomazzo's assertion that the work never came to light, a fact that seems to imply that it was not in possession of the demanding client or, rather, it was never consigned to him by Leonardo, remaining among his personal materials of work, in the form of a handmade album or sketchbook (someone has in fact supposed that these early drawings of warriors, as the ones on the Venice sheet, might have been taken into account by Leonardo himself several years later, c. 1503, while preparing in Florence the wall painting of the *Battle of Anghiari* for Palazzo Vecchio's main public hall).

The Venice sheet is directly related to other comparable examples: a sheet of studies in the Cabinet des Dessins du Louvre (inv. 2260) and four pages of the so-called Manuscript Ashburnham 2184 in the Institut de France (formerly, the final part of the Manuscript B, c. 1482–85; improperly numbered A.1, A.2, B.1, B.2) present, in fact, some very similar series of drawings of arms and weapons, characterised, like the Venice sheet, by the same graphic refinement, as in view of a prospective presentation to the attention of someone else. The Louvre sheet, so as the pages B.1 and B.2 of Manuscript Ashburnham, are drawn in metalpoint afterwards reworked in pen and ink over a previously blue prepared paper (a typical Florentine technique, abandoned by Leonardo around 1490): in particular, the Louvre sheet has actually a double sided support, with a clearly visible vertical folding line, presenting some traces of binding. Its different size, compared to the Venice sheet's one, which furthermore does not present any blue preparation (but it is simply worked in pen and ink over white paper), makes it unlikely to recognize in it another surviving part of the same "book", even though its physical characteristics confirm it should have been detached from another similar notebook: both would have appeared not so dissimilar from the same Manuscript Ashburnham, which, nonetheless, does not deal exclusively with military matters. While the scanty annotations on the Louvre sheet have an almost exclusive descriptive aim in relation to the adjacent drawings, other pages of the Manuscript Ashburnham (f. 10r) and the Manuscript B (f. 40r) offer some perspicuous lists of words ("fulminea, tridente, fistula […] acinane, daga, gladjo, spata" and so on), which have been only in part deciphered as names of specific arms, whose antiquated and "old fashioned" titles Leonardo should have derived from an ancient source in his own possession, the *De re militari* by Roberto Valturio, an item in Leonardo's personal library in the vulgar edition edited by Paolo Ramusio a few years before, in 1483, exactly at the time of his arrival to Milan (**ill. 2**).[14]

14 See Diego Zancani: Leonardo and De re militari, in: Rosalba Campioni/Carlo Pedretti (eds.): Leonardo artista delle macchine e cartografo, Firenze 1994, pp. 29–33.

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EN TIBI LECTOR

ROBERTVM

VALTVRIVM, AD

ILLVSTREM HEROA SIGISMVN-

dum Pandulphum Malateſtam Ariminenſium regem, de

RE MILITARI Libris XII multò ema-

culatius, ac pictūris, quæ plurimæ in eo ſunt,

elegantioribus expreſſum, quàm cum Ve-

ronæ inter initia artis chalcogra-

phicæ Anno M.ccccl xxxiii.

inuulgaretur.

Ja 4° 11

PARISIIS,

Apud Chriſtianum Wechelum, ſub inſigni

ſcuti Baſilienſis. I.D.XXXII.

Menſe Iulio.

Sum Joannis Alexandri Brassiani philosophi ac Jureconsulti

*Ill. 2: Roberto Valturio: "De re militari", Parisiis 1532, Frontispiece. HAB: M: Ja 4° 11*

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Such circumstances introduce us to another fascinating theme, that is Leonardo's effort to acquire a suitable scholarly background in these military matters, in order to candidate himself to the status of an erudite expert and consultant, to be introduced and credited in the Milanese intellectual *milieu*, far beyond the mere qualification of practical master of warfare: this ideal confrontation with ancient authorities (he should certainly have read also a collection of excerpts from texts by the *scriptores rei militari*, extensively widespread in Lombardy in those times, maybe through the help or mediation of another talented Tuscan guest at the Sforza court and a colleague, so as a friend of his, Francesco di Giorgio Martini)[15] makes his initial approach to the acquisition of a military expertise more literary than practical, at least until about 1490, when his conception of war will turn towards a more profound anthropological meditation, in the context of a comprehensive consideration of the whole cosmological implications of *polemos* in philosophical terms, involving some fundamental questions, like the necessity for men to make war against the universal principle of respecting and preserving the integrity of human life, so as, consequently, Leonardo's own inner contradiction between his innate pacifism and the instrumental employment of his craftsmanship and inventiveness for cruel military purposes.[16]

No trace of these conceptual and moral preoccupations is contained, on the other hand, in his earlier military studies and projects;[17] nonetheless, a very significant witness of the above mentioned turning point of c. 1490 is contained on the same f. 10r of the Manuscript Ashburnham, where, nearby the humanistic list of names of arms derived from Valturio, Leonardo has left what sounds like the cursory draft of a proemial introduction

15 On Leonardo and Francesco di Giorgio, see Pietro Cesare Marani: Leonardiana. Studi e saggi su Leonardo da Vinci, Milano–Ginevra 2010, pp. 287–301, a chapter previously published as an independent article: Leonardo e Francesco di Giorgio. Architettura militare e territorio, in: Raccolta Vinciana 22 (1987), pp. 71–93. As concerns Leonardo's knowledge of the Scriptores Rei Militari, see also Pietro Cesare Marani: The Hammer Lecture (1994): Tivoli, Hadrian and Antinoüs. New Evidence of Leonardo's Relation to the Antique, in: Achademia Leonardi Vinci 8 (1995), pp. 207–225, particularly pp. 209–211.

16 See my extensive study, Marco Versiero: Per un lessico politico di Leonardo da Vinci. II. Indizi di polemologia: "naturalità" del conflitto e "necessarietà" della guerra, in: Bruniana & Campanelliana 15 (2009), pp. 121–134.

17 See Edward MacCurdy: Leonardo and war, in: Raccolta Vinciana 10 (1919), pp. 17–32; Martin Kemp: Leonardo da Vinci, le mirabili operazioni della natura e dell'uomo, Milano 1982, pp. 161–162; Richard A. Turner, Inventing Leonardo, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1993, pp. 210–234; Giuseppe Fornari: La bellezza e il nulla. L'antropologia cristiana di Leonardo da Vinci, Genova–Milano 2005, pp. 481–484.

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to a prospective military treatise or book, which he obviously never accomplished at all:

> Per mantenere il dono principal di natura, cioè libertà, trovo modo da offendere et difendere, in stando assediati dalli ambiziosi tiranni. E prima dirò del sito murale e poi come i popoli possino mantenere i loro boni e giusti signori.
> *In translation:* In order to preserve the main gift of nature, that is liberty, I will find the way to offend and defend, when being besieged by the ambitious tyrants. And firstly I will speak about the positioning of the walls and then how people could maintain their good and just lords.

This short text is otherwise endowed with a powerful conceptual substance: apparently similar in its literary form to the descriptive annotation on the Venice sheet and with some paragraphs of the letter of self presentation to Ludovico il Moro (especially as concerns the expression "trovo modo da offendere et difendere"), it is more profound in its inner implications from a strictly political point of view, because the recourse to arms and making war are considered an inevitable consequence of the necessity of protecting what is defined the "main gift of nature, that is liberty", in other words the essential condition of autonomy which safeguards a political rule from the menace of "ambitious tyrants". A subtle allusion to the traditional distinction between good and bad forms of government, established by Aristotle, is resolved in a juxtaposition between rulers who act as good and just governors, by assuring to their states the condition of liberty, and the ones who make themselves heralds of tyrannical and oppressive lordships: in order to prevent the supremacy of these latter, the recourse to arms is invoked as a legitimate prerogative and right of the former.

Nevertheless, it is possible to individuate and discuss some interesting and stimulating conceptual contents in the text from the likely surviving page of de' Borri's 'book', in terms of military approaches in battle, as influenced by a peculiar anthropological vision: not by chance, such perspective results quite similar to Machiavelli's one, as exposed in his later *Arte della guerra* dialogues.[18] In fact, Leonardo's assumption in the Venice sheet, about the risk or opportunity to frighten the horses with special kinds of weapons, should have been derived from the direct knowledge of an ancient source he probably had in common with Machiavelli: the *Etymologiae* by Isidoro da Siviglia, listed in Leonardo's own inventory of his personal library since the mid-1490s under the item "Clonica d'Esidero", alluding to a vulgar ver-

18 See Vassilj P. Zubov: Leonardo da Vinci, Cambridge (Mass.) 1968, pp. 219–220. For a more detailed comparison, see Marco Versiero: "Il duca [ha] perso lo stato…": Niccolò Machiavelli, Leonardo da Vinci e l'idea di stato, in: Filosofia Politica 21 (2007), pp. 85–105.

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sion,[19] a book whose possible influence on Machiavelli has been highlighted by some scholars,[20] explicitly deal with horses' supposed natural tendency to follow human behaviours, especially with reference to their riders on battlefields. In the second book of the *Art of War*, Machiavelli declares that "il cavallo è uno animale *sensato*"[21] (i. e.: "the horse is a *sensitive* animal"), almost referring to a precise psychic ability by these creatures to equal human sensations of pleasure and pain, especially once exposed to both positive and negative traumatic events or experiences, such as a combat or battle. Machiavelli also specifies a particular strategic implication which follows directly, after this conceptual statement: in "combining" horsemen with their steeds, one (i. e. a military leader, a captain or *condottiere*, whom the *Art of War* is ideally addressed to) should be careful and avoid putting a brave man (*uno omo animoso*) over a cowardly horse (*uno cavallo vile*), so as, on the contrary, a cowardly man over a brave horse, because the inevitable consequence in the practice of warfare would ever be that "conviene che queste disparitadi d'animo facciano disordine"[22] (i. e.: "these discrepancies in sensitivity would necessarily produce a disorder"). Another passage from his *Discourses on Livy* (book II, chapter 18, paragraph 7) insists on the idea that it is very difficult to train horses in "fare servare l'ordine" (i. e.: "retaining their order", in the sense of military "rank"), because it is "impossibile, turbati che sono, riordinargli"[23] (i. e.: "impossible to re-arrange them, once they have been thrown into disorder"): through such tactical piece of advice, Machiavelli clearly hints at his own motivated conviction about the superiority of infantry compared to cavalry on battlefields, a theoretical issue commonly recognized as the ideological foundation of his military conception, especially as manifested in the *Art of War*.

Among Leonardo's sheets containing military studies and projects from his early Milanese period, the famous one now in Turin (Biblioteca Reale, inv. 15583, c. 1485–90) has been often discussed in connection with the series possibly related to de' Borri's "book", examined before. It has a ver-

19 See Domenico Laurenza: De figura humana. Fisiognomica, anatomia e arte in Leonardo, Firenze 2001, pp. 182.

20 See Vittorio Dini: La prudenza da virtù a regola di comportamento: tra ricerca del fondamento razionale ed osservazione empirica, in: Vittorio Dini / Giampiero Stabile: Saggezza e prudenza. Studi per la ricostruzione di un'antropologia in prima età moderna, Napoli 1983, pp. 13–123, particularly p. 71; Domenico Taranto: Le virtù della politica. Civismo e prudenza, tra Machiavelli e gli antichi, Napoli 2003, p. 68.

21 Nino Borsellino / Alessandro Capata (eds.): Niccolò Machiavelli. Tutte le opere storiche, politiche e letterarie, Roma 1998, p. 292.

22 Ibid.

23 Giorgio Inglese / Gennaro Sasso (eds.): Niccolò Machiavelli. Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio, Milano 1984, p. 340.

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sion (actually, two figurative attempts) of the spectacular military projects of the so-called *carri falcianti* (i. e.: "scything tanks"), certainly derived and "adapted" from the already mentioned source of Valturio-Ramusio's *De re militari*: this is perhaps the most amazing and astonishing drawing depicting such tremendous war machine (other comparable versions are in the British Museum in London and in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle), with the horrific detail of the dismembered corpses of the victims, cut down by the scythes or sickles assembled on its wheels.[24] If the meticulous text on this Turin sheet, supplied with the refined drawings, is fully devoted to illustrate the technical and mechanical details and measures of the device, consisting apparently in a sort of indirect self denunciation of his own indifference to the deplorable consequences of using such destructive tool in terms of inhuman cruelty, another related piece of writing, in Manuscript B, f. 10r (which has some simplified sketches of similar "tanks", as well), develops a coherent criticism of his own "invention", dealing with both technical perplexities and precise ethical beliefs.[25] First of all, as regards its actual functionality, Leonardo resorts the same "tactical" argument of the Venice sheet, focusing on the inability and unlikelihood of keeping a control over the horses, once they have been terrorized by the enemies: "isfrenati si volteranno infra sua, a dispetto de' governatori loro, e fieno di grande impedimento e danno a sua medesimi" (i. e.: "under an unbridled frenzy, they will rise and revolt against themselves, despite their riders, and they will be a great obstacle and danger to these latter"). It is possible to observe, again, a consistent analogy with Machiavelli's statements on the subject, almost the same preoccupation about the unstable and changeable sensitivity of horses. As concerns the moral point of view, Leonardo fairly declares his abomination of such pitiless and ferocious device: "furono non meno dannosi agli amici, che a' nimici" (i. e.: "[these tanks] were as dangerous to friends, as to enemies"). A paragraph in the letter of self presentation to Ludovico il Moro appears directly related to this point: "carri coperti, securi e inoffensibili, i quali entrando intra li inimici cum sua artigliarie, non è sì gran numero di gente d'arme che non rompessino" (i. e.: "these very secure and unassailable tanks will pierce through the ranks of enemies with their artillery, provoking a lot of victims among the men-at-arms").

24 The Turin sheet has been recently exhibited together with its companions in Venice and Paris collections. See Martin Kemp / Jane Roberts (eds.): Leonardo da Vinci, London 1989, pp. 137–139, cat. nos. 67 and 68; Annalisa Perissa Torrini (ed.): Leonardo da Vinci, l'uomo universale, Firenze 2013, pp. 119–125, cat. nos. IV_01, IV_02, IV_3.

25 See Pietro Cesare Marani: Arte militare, in: Pietro Cesare Marani / Giovanna Nepi Sciré (eds.): Leonardo & Venezia, Milano 1992, pp. 206–207.

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A plausible connection with Leonardo's approach might find a supporting circumstance in his mutual involvement with Machiavelli in the famous enterprise of the pictorial decoration of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Palazzo Vecchio, already mentioned above:[26] the 1504 contract for the assignment of the task to Leonardo, still preserved in the Archivio di Stato in Florence, has, in fact, the signature of Machiavelli, in his quality of legal witness.[27] Such document offers a culminating confirmation to the hypothesis of a certain acquaintance they should have started a couple of years before, in 1502, while spending a common time in Cesare Borgia's entourage: not by chance, Leonardo had been nominated in that occasion the main military expert and consultant of the Duke, whose astonishing example, furthermore, was to become, a bit later, the notorious model of Machiavelli's *Prince*. I have already observed, in other contributions of mine, that the same iconography of the lost painting of the *Battle of Anghiari*, known through ancient copies, shows a powerful visual representation of the centaur-like essence of the Machiavellian ideal of political and military virtue: the characterisation of the first warrior from left, because of his unnatural twisted position that makes him appear as if hiding the upper part of his horse,[28] together with the peculiar eccentricity of the zoomorphic details of his own martial equipment (Ammon's horns on the helmet, a head of Aries in the middle of his chest, the pieces of armour over his shoulders shaped

26 On what follows, see a first draft in Marco Versiero: L'arte militare, tra virtù e bestialità. La concezione della guerra e la figura del guerriero nell'opera di Leonardo da Vinci, in: Cahiers de la Méditerranée 83 (2011), pp. 79–85; Id.: "La piccola certezza e la gran bugia": l'uomo e la bestia secondo Leonardo e Machiavelli, tra dualismo e dissimulazione, in: Luisa Secchi Tarugi (ed.): *Feritas*, *Humanitas* e *Divinitas* come aspetti del vivere nel Rinascimento. Atti del Convegno di Chianciano-Pienza (19–22 luglio 2010), Firenze 2012, pp. 447–459. On Leonardo's pictorial representation of war combats and battlefields see now the updated study by Carlo Vecce: Le battaglie di Leonardo. LI. Lettura Vinciana (16 aprile 2011), Firenze 2012, particularly p. 29.

27 See the entries by Vanna Arrighi, in: Vanna Arrighi / Arturo Bellinazzi / Edoardo Villata (eds.): Leonardo da Vinci, la vera immagine. Documenti e testimonianze sulla vita e l'opera, Firenze 2005, pp. 171–174, cat. nos. VI_73 and VI_74, with previous bibliography. See also the updated report by Patrick Boucheron: Leonardo e Machiavelli. Vite incrociate, 2nd rev. ed., Roma 2014, pp. 91–127.

28 Such characterisation had been already observed before, see Carlo Pedretti: Leonardo. A Study in Chronology and Style, London 1973, p. 87; Domenico Laurenza: Uomini bestiali. Leonardo da Vinci e le sue fonti, in: Micrologus. Natura, Scienze e Società Medievali 8 (2000), pp. 581–598. On the best copy after Leonardo's lost painting, recently rediscovered in a private collection, see now Pietro Cesare Marani: La Tavola Doria dalla Battaglia d'Anghiari di Leonardo: un riesame, in: Raccolta Vinciana 35 (2013), pp. 69–85.

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like giant shells and a hilt sword in the form of a lion-paw),[29] seem to validate the impression that such figurative invention by Leonardo parallels Machiavelli's re-interpretation of the hybridization of the human and animal identities in a new semantic and conceptual compound, symbolically crystallized in the mythic image of the half-human and half-beastly hero, so as also depicted by an assistant of Leonardo, after a lost sketch by the master, in a faint black chalk drawing I have re-discovered in the Codex Atlanticus, which I could exhibit in Milan in 2010.[30]

Moreover, Vasari's assertion, in Leonardo's biography, that his representation of horses in that painting was characterised by the same rage and furor as those displayed by their riders ("non si conosce meno la rabbia, lo sdegno e la vendetta negli uomini che ne' cavalli […], [che] non fanno men guerra coi denti, che si faccia chi gli cavalca nel combattere"), finds a punctual correspondence with both the copies of the painting and, above all, some amazing autograph preparatory drawings, with horses cruelly snapping one at each other. This observation suggests that the metamorphosis invoked by both authors, as a sort of new anthropological "substratum" of the modern *condottiere*, works also in the inverted direction of a "beastly" transfiguration of animals, in the specific sense of their degradation and corruption to human (or, rather, inhuman) behaviours of reciprocal rapaciousness and violence. That is an incredibly eloquent demonstration, in a visual extent, of what I have previously discussed as Leonardo's and Machiavelli's common belief that, among animal species, the horses are the ones endowed with the most developed sensitivity, in terms of their potential of imitating even the worst attitudes of human beings.[31]

29 These elements have been analysed and commented by Gigetta Dalli Regoli: Riflessioni intorno alla Battaglia di Anghiari: una nota sui nichi di Leonardo, in: Carlo Pedretti (ed.): La mente di Leonardo. Al tempo della Battaglia di Anghiari, Firenze 2006, pp. 80–89.

30 See Marco Versiero: Leonardo, la politica e le allegorie / Leonardo, politics and allegories, Novara 2010, pp. 126–128, cat. no. 33. The sketch had been already interpreted as the representation of a centaur by Carlo Pedretti: The Codex Atlanticus of Leonardo da Vinci. A Catalogue of its Newly Restored Sheets, New York 1978–79, vol. 2, 1979, p. 81.

31 Such interpretation of mine has received an authoritative consent by Roberto Esposito: Pensiero vivente. Origine e attualità della filosofia italiana, Torino 2010, pp. 85–98.