



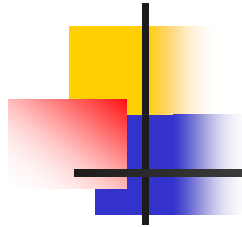
Playing war – playing with fire. About dark games

Henning Eichberg
University of Southern Denmark
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Harmless play?

- Play is normally regarded as a matter of pleasure, as being a free, creative and harmless activity
- Mainly related to **children** and their positive **development** , **creativity** and innocent **laughter**
- But this is only one part of the story



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Uncle Toby in Laurence Sterne: *The Life & Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. 1773



1. Civilians playing war – 18th century

- German boys' game 19th century
- Helmet,
- weapon,
- drum,
- flag,
- hobby horse



"Soldier's play" 20th century



Soldiers as playtoy

- From Hans Christian Andersen's tin soldier to 20th century's plastic



Reenactment as role play

- Reenacting the battle of Gettisburg, USA



Computer games



Parkour: from military parkour to youth culture



Funkenmariechen in German Rhenanian Carnival

- Military uniform from 18th century
- Originally danced by men





2. Between civil society and military

- Playing war as youth movement from around 1900
- Britain: Boys' Brigade, Denmark: FDF
- Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts: Parade, uniform, and terrain games
- German "Spielbewegung" around 1900
- Near to "Wehrkraft"

Boy Scouts: paramilitary games and parades





Political use of military role play and games

- Paramilitary corps between the world wars:
 - Italian fascists (designed by Gabriele d'Annunzio)
 - German corps from Stahlhelm and SA to Reichsbanner and Roter Frontkämpferbund
- Wehrsportgruppen in Germany 1970s

Racist Afrikaaner camp for teenagers

- Leader: "We train them playfully..."



Historical remnants: Rifle associations as folkloric display

- Danish and German rifle associations
- South Tyrol:





3. Military service as play and game?

- **Eksercise**: playing forms of 18th century social geometrical war, now interpreted as pedagogical for educating manliness
- **March and song**: relics from social geometrical war, used aesthetically and psychologically for inner encouragement and outward representation
- **Role game**: mask play by uniform and ranking signs
- **Plan exercises** (*Planspiel*, *Sandkastenspiel*), used especially in officers' schools
- **Manoeuvre**: playing simulations of more actual war by games in the open terrain (*Geländenspiel*)



March and song



The parade game – playtoy soldiers?

- German chancellor Merkel in Indonesia 2012



Sandtable exercise ("Sandkastenspiel") as officer training

- Canadian soldiers playing the invasion during WW 2





4. War as play and game?

- **Johan Huizinga** about Medieval and Renaissance warfare as play – idealized?
- **Friedrich Nietzsche** about the warrior as player – poetical phenomenology
- Richard Schechner and Brian Sutton-Smith about **Dark play**
- Connection between Dark play and Black pedagogics – in actual military exercise?

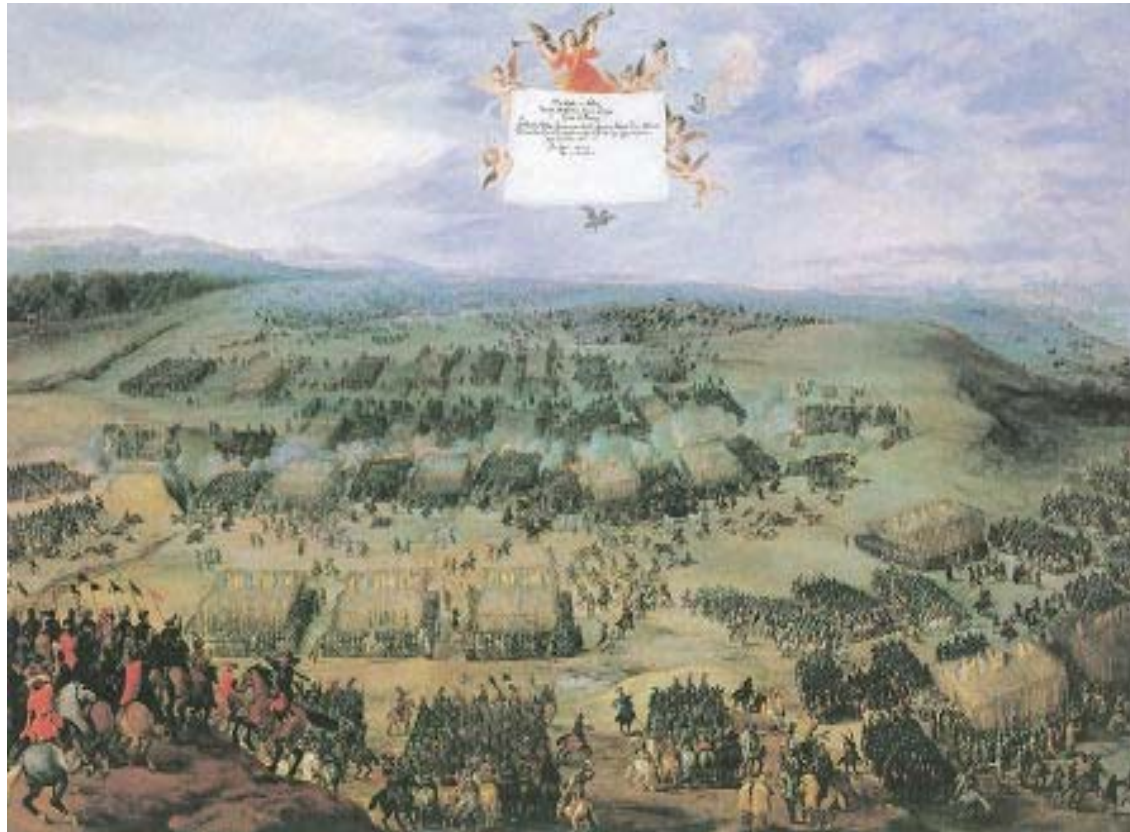
Medieval warfare and tournament

- Codex Manesse, 1300-1340



War as geometrical chess game, 17-18th centuries

- Battle at Weissenberg, Prague 1620





American high tech war in Iraq 1992

- Precision bombing in the media as a sort of computer game
- Jean Baudrillard's playful philosophy about war as play: *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, 1995

Squad of precision bombers – remember the playtoy figures



Funny torture play in Abu Graib



Children soldiers

- Hisbollah militia in Beirut



Otherwise, war is not
funny play for children





5. Philosophy of Dark play

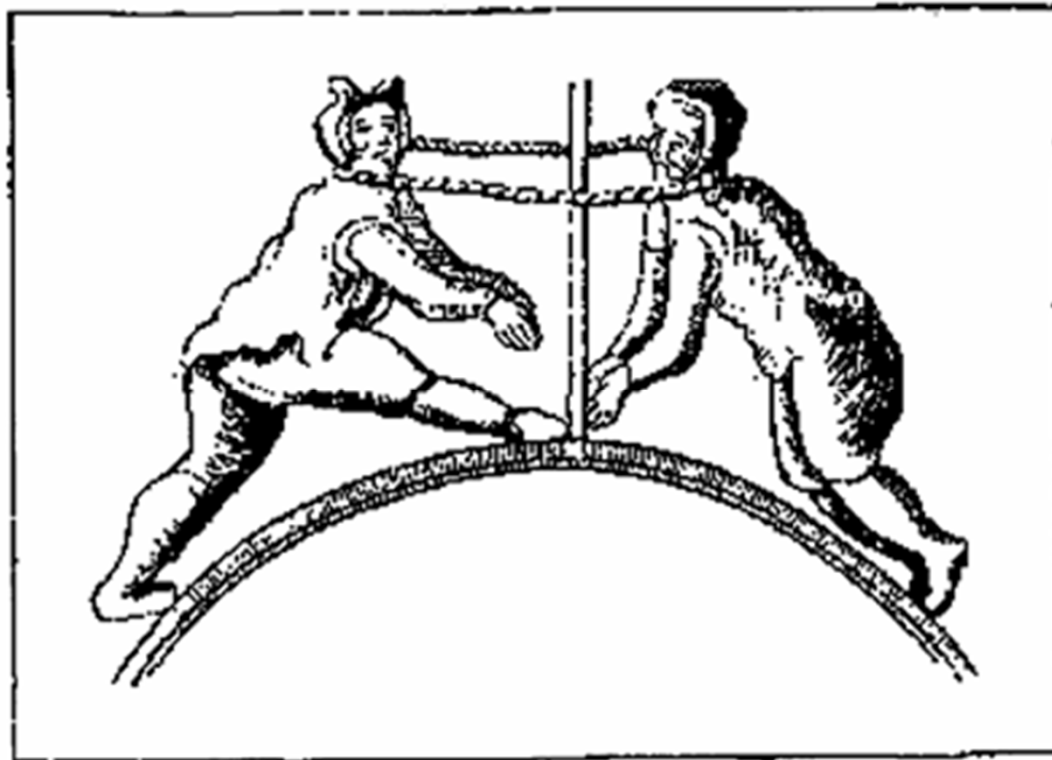
Is there any deeper connection of war with play?

- games including killing of animals
- bullying as play
- fascination of horror movies
- play with fire

Dark games

– Playing with fire

- Dangerous game in Medieval Danish church wall painting (Jørn Møller)





Typology and configurations of military Dark play

Among the play types of Roger Caillois,
war games touch different categories:

- **Agon**: blue party against red
- **Mimikry**: role play, mask play
- **Ilinx**: frenzy play, connected with play of imitation (exercise, march, song)



Different dynamics from play to war

- **Imitative:** Childrens games imitate war
- **Play as way away from war and killing:** from antagonism to agon, from war to sport competition – and further to popular bout (dyst) or to parkour
- **Play as way to war and killing:** military plan game and manœuvre, from agon to antagonisme – The adversary becomes enemy



"Evil" playful philosophy?

- Play is neither just for fun and pleasure nor just for leisure
- Play contributes in a shocking way to the anthropological understanding of war
- **From out dark play, philosophy may have to rethink the question of, what play is**
- And: The critique of war and military receives a new depth?



Methodological point

- Laying distance towards the **monolithic phenomenology** of play as good play
- We may have to consider a **differential phenomenology** of play
 - taking inner differentiations and contradictions seriously