



# Late Medieval and Early Modern Fight Books

Transmission and Tradition of Martial  
Arts in Europe (14th-17th Centuries)

*Edited by Daniel Jaquet, Karin Verelst  
and Timothy Dawson*

## Late Medieval and Early Modern Fight Books

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(14th–17th Centuries)*

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## List of Contributors

(in order of appearance)

### *Timothy Dawson*

Being drawn into the dawn of historical re-enactment in Australia in the late nineteen seventies from prior participation in modern fencing, Timothy Dawson presumed that medieval combat could not have been an unstructured affair. Initially reverse engineering sword technique from sabre, and spear from foil, he soon moved on to considering what could be inferred from historical art sources, rapidly finding an array of functional techniques. From being the primary trainer in the re-enactment group the New Varangian Guard in Melbourne, Timothy set up his first dedicated HEMA school, called *Amyna* (Greek for Defence), in Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains East of Sydney, in 1984. Since then he has continued his research and teaching in various locations in Australia and Europe. Timothy has an Honours degree and PhD in Classical Studies and has published frequently on aspects of material culture and daily life in the Middle Ages.

### *Matthias Johannes Bauer*

M.A. MBA, lecturer for medieval studies and Higher Educational and Research Manager. He specializes on editing vernacular texts, such as Fight Books, chronicles, and codes of law.

### *Rachel E. Kellet*

specializes in depictions of combat in Middle High German literature and the early German Fight Books. Her doctoral thesis (King's College, London) was published in 2008, and she is currently an independent researcher. Her recent and forthcoming publications focus on Royal Armouries MS I.33 and the work of Sigmund Ringeck, as well as on medieval literary works.

### *Jens Peter Kleinau*

is an independent researcher and prominent blogger. His work focuses on the pragmatic literature in high medieval and renaissance manuscripts on military and martial arts.

### *Karin Verelst*

is a researcher and lecturer in history and philosophy of science at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Her research focuses on the period between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century, with a particular interest in the interrelation

between the cultural and scientific changes over that period. Her interest in Historical European Martial Arts stems originally from her intense practice of this fascinating discipline, but the evident relevance of this new field for her academic interests encouraged her to devote a substantial part of her research to contributing to the disclosure of this incredibly rich new sources for the study of European history.

*John Clements*

is a recognized international expert and foremost instructor of Medieval and Renaissance fighting arts. As pioneering researcher, he has pursued the subject since 1980 and taught in 17 countries. His writings have been featured world wide and he has appeared in numerous television programs. He works professionally on the subject and consults for the entertainment industry.

*Daniel Jaquet*

is senior Teaching and Research assistant at the University of Geneva, Department of History. His dissertation is entitled “Fighting in armour in the light of the Fight Books (late 14.–early 16)”. He is specialised in HEMA studies and is co-editor of the Journal *Acta Periodica Duellatorum*. He has written or edited several publications in the field, lately *L’art chevaleresque du combat* and *Expérimenter le maniement des armes à la fin du Moyen Âge*.

*Dierk Hagedorn*

is senior instructor for the long sword at Hammaborg—Historischer Schwertkampf, Hamburg, Germany and works as a web developer and graphic designer. He specializes in the German mediaeval fechtbücher and has published several editions, e.g. about the Peter von Danzig manuscript, the Gladiatoria codex from New Haven and Hans Talhoffer.

*Ken Mondschein*

PhD, Maître d’Armes Historique, earned his doctorate from Fordham University and was a Research Fellow at the Higgins Armory Museum. He teaches history and fencing at several institutions in Massachusetts, and is actively looking for a full-time academic position. His publications include a translation of Camillo Agrippa’s *Trattato di Scienza d’Arme* and *The Knightly Art of Battle*, on the Getty example of the *Fior di Battaglia*.

*Manuel Valle Ortiz*

is an independent researcher from Santiago de Compostela. He specialises in *Destreza* bibliography and his recent publications include *Nueva bibliografía de la antigua Esgrima y Destreza de las Armas, Modo fácil y nuevo de Luis Pacheco de Narváez* (critical ed.), *Principios de Miguel Pérez de Mendoza* (critical ed.), *Las cien conclusiones de Luis Pacheco de Narváez* (critical ed.), *Tratado das lições da Espada preta de Thomas Luis* (critical ed.).

*Olivier Dupuis*

is an independent researcher. He specializes in the history of fencing and socialization of fencing masters.

*Reinier van Noort*

is an instructor and researcher focussing on rapier fencing according to Bruchius, and other 17th century self-defence arts practiced in the Low Countries.

*Bert Gevaert*

(Ph.D. Classical Philology) is member of the Order of Saint Michael in Bruges and mainly studies longsword fencing according to the writings of 16th century masters.

*Paul Wagner*

is an instructor with the Stoccata School of Defence in Sydney, Australia. He specialises primarily in British weapon systems, including Silver's backsword, English quarterstaff, English longsword, English rapier, Highland Broadsword and Scottish Smallsword. He published several books and papers related to HEMA studies, including: *Master of Defence: The Works of George Silver* (2003); *Medieval Sword and Shield according to I.33* (2003) and "Hawks, Rabbits and Tumbling Cats: An Analysis of English Longsword Terminology" (2010).

*Eric Burkart*

(M.A.) is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in medieval history at the University of Trier. From 2013 to 2015 he has also been research assistant in a DFG-financed project on ritualized combat in the Middle Ages ("Der mittelalterliche Zweikampf als agonale Praktik zwischen Recht, Ritual und Leibesübung")

at Technische Universität Dresden. In July 2015 he defended his PhD thesis on crusading discourses in late medieval Burgundy at Goethe-University Frankfurt. He specialises in cultural history, symbolic communication and propaganda in 15th century Burgundy and European martial arts traditions.

*Franck Cinato*

(PhD. EPHE—École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, Sorbonne), researcher at CNRS (in HTL Laboratory, *Histoire des Théories Linguistiques* / History of Linguistic Theories), works mainly on Early Middle Ages Manuscripts, with a particular interest in transmission and receipt of glossaries and grammatical texts in the Carolingian period, especially those concerning the *Liber glossarum* and the grammarian Priscian.

*B. Ann Thusty*

is Professor of History and Associate Dean of Faculty at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, USA. She specializes in gendered behaviors in Early Modern Germany and her publications include *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany: Civic Duty and the Right of Arms* (2011) and *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (2001).

*Marco Cavina*

is a full professor (professore ordinario) of the history of medieval and modern law in the faculty of law at the University of Bologna. First and foremost he is interested in the history of domestic powers and institutions (paternal authority, marital coercion, adoption), and in the history of criminal justice and duels. He's author of several books and essays in Italy and abroad. He's director of the "History of Criminal Justice. Centre of study and research" (University of Bologna). Prof. Marco Cavina, fully-qualified Professor of medieval and modern History of Law.

## Foreword

*Sydney Anglo*

*Fechtbücher*—as will be readily apparent from the wide-ranging essays in this volume—are a good deal more than what the generic term seems to imply. They are not invariably books dealing exclusively with fencing—although they often are. They are manuals professing to teach, describe, or sometimes merely to display, various forms of personal combat. Thus they might deal with fighting on foot with swords, daggers, axes or other weapons; they might describe the techniques of unarmed combat or wrestling; they might discuss fighting on horseback with swords or lances. Or they might deal with several or even, occasionally, all of these skills: and in this respect the most striking example of the genre is the Emperor Maximilian I's manuscript, *Freydal*, which has never even been considered as a *Fechtbuch* by those few specialists who have written about such things. It is always categorised as a *Turnierbuch*, but it certainly does show every type of combat, on foot or on horse, in which Maximilian is supposed to have participated. The 255 surviving illustrations are grouped in sequences of three (a joust in the open field, a tilt, and a foot combat) and each group ends with a fourth depicting a dance or masque at court. This prominence given to dances and masques within a combative context is important—*echt Fechtbuch* or not—and it is worth bearing in mind when considering the *Fechtbucher* in general.

The term has been most commonly applied to the German combat manuals (both in manuscript and in print) which proliferated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But to adopt so narrow a definition is not helpful because, in the first place, these manuals were a European phenomenon and comprise works not only in German but also in Latin, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, English, and Swedish. Secondly, although the majority appear to be didactic in purpose, they were sometimes conceived more as a record of different types of combat than as *instruction* in any one of them. And thirdly, they have continued to flourish, in one form or another, up to the present day. A few of the Fight Books have no written commentary: but the great majority of them combine text and pictures, and they constitute probably the longest series of secular, figurative, illustrated manuals now available to us. Yet they have received scarcely any attention either from art historians or from historians of ideas. And this is a great mistake because it is too vast a corpus of material



to ignore, especially since it offers rich scope for a very wide range of scholars: those, for example, who are interested in attempts to depict movement; or in the ways whereby movement may be analysed and even choreographed; or in the evolution of diagrammatic notation and especially its relationship to the history of dancing; or in the application of mathematics and engineering principles to elucidate complex human activity; or in the history of costume; or in Renaissance epistemological debates about the relationship between theory and practice; or in the methods by which well-known (but still obscure) humanist ideas about physical training were actually taught and by whom; and finally—because many of these texts are in verse and are sometimes accompanied by gnomic emblematic devices—there is even something for the historian of mnemonic systems and codes.

This is the potential harvest which *could* be gathered from the *Fechtbücher*: and one can only wonder at scholarly indifference of those who, no doubt, consider themselves to be *serious* cultural historians. I do not know why this has been so. Perhaps it is simply because the material systematises personal violence. Whatever the reason, I do sense a certain academic squeamishness at work here. I also sense something similar in the writings of humanist educationalists in the Renaissance itself, despite the fact that they professed themselves to be concerned with the civic benefits to be derived from physical education and military training. This much has been widely known since William Woodward discussed the matter at the end of the nineteenth century. But we do not know a great deal more. Vergerio devoted some space to bodily exercise and especially to training in the art of war for, just as the Romans had insisted on “systematic and scientific training in arms”, so, too, should contemporary youth “learn the art of the sword, the cut, the thrust and the parry; the use of shield, of the spear, of the club, training either hand to wield the weapon”. The notion that skill in arms was conducive to good citizenship derived ultimately from Vegetius’s *De re militari* and it became a pedagogic commonplace. One author after another dutifully declared the social and political importance of such training; and the idea was reiterated through the sixteenth century and long after.

However, humanist educationalists did not explain how instruction in the handling of weapons should be given and by whom. The problem had evidently occurred to Vergerio who came up with a typically donnish evasion. He refers to Publius Rutilius who, according to Valerius Maximus, had been the first person to institute regular lessons for the Roman soldiery on the handling of arms by calling together the “Teachers of the Gladiators” to demonstrate “the way of shunning and giving blows, according to the reasons of Art”. Vergerio approved the story but did not explain how those who had instructed Roman

gladiators were going to apply their skills in a fifteenth-century school for young boys. An obvious solution would have been to recruit the services of the men who operated fencing schools—that is the masters of arms. Indeed, this may have been what happened; but we know nothing about how this might have been arranged or administered. None the less, thanks to the *Fechtbücher*, we do know a good deal about the techniques which *could* have been taught.

In fact we know that this pragmatic approach was suggested in the 1570s by Sir Humphrey Gilbert who hoped that an academy might be established in London for the education “of her Majesties Wardes and others the youth of nobility and gentlemen”. His scheme made provision that physical training should be fully catered for—with a riding master, a soldier to teach military science, and a “Master of Defence, who shall be principally expert in the Rapier and dagger, the Sworde and terget, the grype of the dagger, the battaile axe and the pike, and shall theare publiquely teach”. This teacher would, presumably, have been one of the “Masters of Defence of London” which, while never formally incorporated as a guild, certainly acted like one. However, Gilbert’s idea never came to fruition and in 1581 we still find a stereotyped discussion of physical exercise provided by the English pedagogue Richard Mulcaster who recommended fencing as practised, inevitably, by the ancients: for it is beneficial, “both for the health of our bodies, and the helpe of our countries”. Mulcaster even devotes a chapter to the “training master”, but merely argues that, since soul and body are inseparable, the trainer of the one should also be the trainer of the other. Yet where would one have found a ready supply of such universally-gifted men?

There was, in fact, a serious mismatch between, on the one hand, educational theorists and, on the other, the masters of arms who were, initially, of low social status and whose schools were commonly regarded as a breeding ground of immorality and civil disorder—encouraging “Bruisers and misdoers walking by night”. Initially, it would not have been easy for academe to harness the skills of professional fighting masters: but the situation slowly changed—especially with the increasing tendency from the fifteenth century for the masters to band themselves together in guilds and even, in varying degrees, to receive official recognition—and eventually we find the martial arts being seriously taught in universities.

Long before this time, however, the masters of arms had started to write books of their own and, although benefitting the common weal was not normally their principal purpose, they did make a reality (of sorts) out of the idealised union of arms and letters about which so many humanists liked to prattle. Most masters of arms—with a few eccentric and unconvincing exceptions—recognised that it was well-nigh impossible to teach practical

physical skills such as fencing, wrestling, and mounted combat, by books alone. Yet an increasing number still felt the urge to clarify their teaching by means of written manuals because, as Fiore de' Liberi asserted at the beginning of the fifteenth century, combat techniques, "without books and writing can only be badly retained in the mind". And he added that "there will never be a good scholar without books". Two hundred years later (in 1606) Salvator Fabris told his readers not to marvel that a man of the sword should presume to write a book, or that the "practical knowledge of the sword" should be reduced to rules and precepts for, just as the learned have transferred their theoretical arts into practice, so the professor of arms converts his practice into a *vera theorica*. Eight years further on, George Hale challenged his unlettered English colleagues by asserting that "The Science of Defence, not unworthily stiled Noble . . . was never before in any Language brought to any Method". This was quite untrue, and Hale would surely have known it to be so, but his principal point was that the Professors of fencing in England were "so ignorant, that they could rather doe, than make demonstration, or reduce their doing to any certainty of principle".

We have here (strange as it may seem) stumbled into a byeway of some of the most intense epistemological conflicts of the Renaissance—Theory *versus* Practice. It was a secular counterpart to the theological conflict between Geneva and Basel. To what extent should activities such as fencing and wrestling be based upon general principles, or how far should their general principles derive from an observation of the activities? Should precepts be laid down by established authority or should they be based upon the empirical experience of practitioners? The masters of arms had, perforce, to combine both roles; and their attitude was well-expressed in 1676 by Jean-Baptiste Le Perche who still felt, like Fiore, that "in all those arts where one has need to use the hand, it is not enough to have knowledge of the principles, it is also necessary to join with it a long experience"; and he argued that, without the help of an excellent master, pupils could not learn how to use weapons simply by reading a book—not even his own which was, he declared significantly, written only "to aid the memory and ease the master's burden".

The attitude of those masters who took pains to write about their art was distilled into a punning aphorism by Morsicato Pallavicini who wrote in 1670, *Chi non legge non può dar legge*. By his time the masters had, for several centuries, felt the need to set forth their own systems (or the systems they had adapted from other masters) as an aid to, or record of, the ways in which the martial arts could be both understood and practised. The methods employed by these masters were all basically similar: that is the provision of pictorial representations of movement often arranged into sequences, and usually

with some verbal description. The combination of the two elements was intended to maximize the information conveyed to readers and to ensure (as far as possible) clarity of exposition. Initially the illustrations were wholly representational and depicted combatants in various isolated postures and were usually accompanied by very brief texts, often in verse. From the late thirteenth century onwards, several masters tried to perpetuate their skills by using pictures and words as in the well-known sword and buckler manuscript now preserved in the Royal Armouries. More famous still is the work of Fiore dei Liberi da Premariacco, whose treatise survives in a number of variant versions, all well illustrated and arranged in short logical sequences glossed with brief descriptive comments—a method not improved upon until well into the sixteenth century. By defining, depicting, and *naming* individual strokes and postures these early masters provided a visual and verbal vocabulary which could then be used as a shorthand to permutate and summarize a whole complex of linked movements.

Subsequently there also developed more sophisticated techniques seeking to notate sequences of movement rather than simply to depict isolated postures. In 1553, for example, a much wider range of possibilities was opened up when Camillo Agrippa—who was not a fencing master, but a mathematician, architect and engineer—experimented with ways to enhance the usefulness of purely figurative representation. One was to suggest the unfolding of a single movement by using composite images, augmented by a simple system identifying the basic fencing positions by letter, which made it far easier to relate words and pictures precisely. However, it was not until 1600 that a truly diagrammatic approach to fencing movements was developed by the Spanish master Luys Pacheco de Narvaez who was obsessed with mathematics. Throughout his life he produced treatises filled with geometrical and philosophical speculation on movement notation illustrated with diagrams enhanced with directional lines, key letters, and labels to help relate them to a full textual description of what is supposed to be happening. All this would enable the reader “to teach himself, and learn without the necessity of a master to direct him”. Narvaez was an optimist but hardly realistic.

For more than a century geometry absorbed the attention of Spanish masters who saw fencing as a rational sequence of movements which were susceptible to analysis and to diagrammatic representation. They believed that it was possible to notate the intricacies of sword combat in the same way that one could notate music. Combat was, unfortunately, not a dance although the Spanish tradition led to the work of Girard Thibault, a Dutch fencing master who had served his apprenticeship in Madrid and whose *Académie de l'espée* (published posthumously in 1630) took movement notation to a remarkable

level of complexity and sophistication. Its forty-six illustrations, showing multiple postures enhanced by geometrical demonstrations of foot and sword movements, are of an unprecedented exactitude. They indicate several things simultaneously, in different ways, and even in different planes and, as Thibault himself tells us, they are pedagogical in purpose, not fantasy.

Whatever the illustrative system adopted, the masters were always trying to clarify movement and, to achieve this end, they had to rely upon artists and we may infer a close working relationship from overwhelming circumstantial evidence. It is not merely that a majority of Fight Books include figures, and that some masters specifically acknowledged their utility. What we must realise is that illustrations were far more than an adornment to, or even a clarification of, the written texts. They were frequently obliged to carry the main burden of exposition and it would be no exaggeration to say that, often, without the pictures there would be no manual at all. Among many examples demonstrating the partnership between fighting master and artist is the wrestling treatise of Nicolaes Petter. Petter's intention to compile his manual must have been carefully planned because he engaged the services of Romayn de Hooghe who actually visited the school where the master was teaching, to make drawings of a wide variety of wrestling postures which he ultimately turned into etchings. Petter died before the work could be completed although—according to the anonymous Preface—it had already been provided with its explanatory text. In any case, the book was published, translated, and republished with De Hooghe's energetic and accurate illustrations bearing witness to what must have been a close, but by no means unusual, collaboration between the author and his artist.

Of course, a fundamental question still remains. Was the theoretical elaboration which so many masters adopted really necessary for the practice of combat? Or was it mere window-dressing by educated and sophisticated authors such as Agrippa, Narvaez, and Thibault to give their work the intellectual status which perhaps they felt it lacked? Whatever the answer to that particular conundrum, the fact remains that the careful combination of illustrations and written words, the attempts to synthesize these into a system, and then to show how the system could be applied in action constitute an almost perfect conceptual framework—image, word, orientation, and action—a sequence which should be familiar to many students of intellectual history. It is a paradigm of the Warburg Institute Library in London; and those “Bruisers and misdoers walking by night” really should be allowed through the grand portals of Cultural History and granted the space and attention they deserve.

# Introduction

*Karin Verelst, in collaboration with Timothy Dawson and Daniel Jaquet*

## 1 A Forgotten Aspect of European History Restored

The history of European warfare has been and continues to be the subject of a vivid scholarly attention. Studies of history of medieval and Renaissance warfare focus on large scale military practices, on technological developments, and on military biographies. Studies on chivalry offer in depth analyses of codes of conduct and social status of the chivalric institution, or of its role in literary imagination. What seems to be missing, however, is the systematic treatment of the specific skills or competences required of the individual combatant.<sup>1</sup> A remarkable corpus of source-texts concerning this topic does exist, however, and has gained growing scholarly interest over the past decades. Nevertheless, the feeling remains that this extremely rich and in many ways surprising corpus deserves to become the focus of much more academic attention. By presenting a compendium of papers dealing with a wide variety of topics related to the corpus and relevant to the historian, the editors of the present volume hope to contribute to this desired increase in visibility. In this sense the book is an outgrowth of a two panels held at the International Medieval Congress held at Leeds, in 2012, where the corpus of European Fight Books was presented to a wider academic audience. With this volume, our basic aim is thus to bring state of the art research with respect to this extremely rich and in many aspects stunning literature in a handsome format to a wider academic readership, in the hope and expectation that Historical European Martial Arts Studies will inform new research, e.g., within the domains of history, cultural studies, sociology and literature, as well as in many other domains.

The corpus deals with what the medieval sources call the “Art of Fighting”, the *ars dimicatoria* or *Kunst des Fechtens*, in the sense of an individual competence, not in the sense of a large scale tactical or strategic quality. A later development in the literature stresses the prestigious social stratum in which this art was supposed to be practiced in the past by referring explicitly to its

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1 “Eine regelhafte und durch waffentechn[ischen] Voraussetzungen bedingte Kampfkunst wurde während des ganzen M[ittel]A[lters] von allen waffenfähigen Männern geübt.” Hils, “Fechten, Fechtwesen”, pp. 324–340.

knightly connotation: the *Ritterliche kunst des Fechtens*.<sup>2</sup> References to its *alte* (of old) origin testify for this desire to connect to a distant and presumably glorious past.<sup>3</sup> These references evidently point in the direction of sociologically relevant changes in the social strata concerned with either the practice, or the intellectual interest in these disciplines.<sup>4</sup> One of the intriguing aspects of the study of this corpus is precisely the new light it sheds on those socio-cultural evolutions known to have taken place but not always as clearly mapped out as one would wish.<sup>5</sup> The material is present in dozens, or even, depending on the criteria, up to hundreds of manuscripts, incunabula and printed works stemming from in origin mainly German and Italian traditions and schools, as far as present knowledge goes at least from the 14th century onwards.<sup>6</sup>

The specific corpus of literature discussed in this volume will be referred to as “Fight Books”. We prefer this term, widely used in either its English, or its original German variant, not only because it is historically rooted, but also because it avoids some of the drawbacks and limitations of other potential candidates, like the too narrow concept of “fencing manual”. Indeed, the historical

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- 2 Attributed to the semi-legendary founder of the German school of fencing, Meister Johannes Liechtenauer: See for instance M53: *Hie hept sich an die vßlegung der zedel, in der geschriben stett die ritterlich kunst des langen schwerts* [...]. Quoted after Bauer, “Ein Zedel Fechter ich mich ruem”, p. 314. For further discussion see *ibid.* and Jaquet, *L'art chevaleresque du combat*, introduction. Another term, *ars martis*, gained currency only in the later literature.
  - 3 See, e.g. P4, the treatise published by Christian Egenolff, *Der Altenn Fechter anffengliche Kunst* (1531).
  - 4 An interesting case is P13, Joachim Meyer's 1570 *Grundliche Beschreibung der freyen Ritterlichen und Adelichen kunst des Fechtens*. Indeed, the reference to *freyen* (free) in the title constitutes a plain reversal of the traditional qualification of martial art as (*unfrey*), that is, labour related and therefore destined to be practised by the social underclasses. See the discussion in Bauer, “Ein Zedel Fechter ich mich ruem”.
  - 5 A subject taken up in, e.g., Tlusty's excellent book on martial traditions in German cities: Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany*. Hils, in his groundbreaking work on the Liechtenauer tradition, comments on this as well. See Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, pp. 207–250.
  - 6 Wierschin's German manuscript catalogue contains 47 items. Twenty years later, Hils was able to offer a description of 63 source texts, 55 Mss. and 8 prints. Bodemer in her dissertation mentions 330 Fight Books, although we have to admit that she takes into account both Mss. and prints from all over Europe up to the 19th c. The at present final catalogue of manuscripts for the German speaking world, which has been compiled by Leng, *Fecht- und Ringbücher*, mentions 48 manuscripts and 10 prints (p. 1), but he limits himself to illustrated sources only, and is not strictly consistent with respect to languages used. Its undeniable value notwithstanding, even his work cannot be considered as the final catalogue of the (German) sources, as has been pointed out by Welle in his careful review. See Welle, “Ordnung als Prinzip”.

use of the word *fechten*, like English “to fight”, Dutch “vechten”, was very large and encompassed all kinds of combat, armed and unarmed, and way more than merely “to fence”, which originally means “to defend”.<sup>7</sup> But can we define formally the notion of “Fight Book” and determine its place within the fabric of literary genres, so that we have a tool to decide what counts as one in specific cases. The question seems daunting, given the sheer number, variety and heterogeneity of the sources concerned, and since in reality many cross-overs between genres exist.<sup>8</sup> There are, however, a few characteristics that stand out generally and which may be useful.

Fight Books, *Fechtbücher*, then, is the *terminus technicus* used to indicate a vast and heterogeneous collection of manuscripts and printed books, destined to transmit on paper (or parchment) in a systematised way a highly complex system of gestures or bodily actions, often, but not always, involving the use of weapons of different sorts. The system represents a body of experience-based oral knowledge<sup>9</sup> concerning all aspects of individual combat, both armed and unarmed, and taking place in different socio-cultural contexts and material situations, and thus throws a whole new light on the fundamental question of the relation between action and communication.<sup>10</sup> The group comprises fencing manuals in the classical sense, but also works on unarmed combat, mounted combat, combat in armour,<sup>11</sup> combat against multiple opponents, and combinations of those. Situations envisaged comprise primarily forms of normed or ritualised civilian combat like judicial duels, duels of honour or competition, as well as self-defense. The fact that military usage, although not absent, is rather marginal may come in as a surprise,<sup>12</sup> but it is clear from the material

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7 Hils offers a hypothesis with respect to this change, namely the gradual replacement of sword and shield by the two-handed sword in individual combat; *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 248. Kellet also discusses the terminological distinction in the study of German literary sources: *Single Combat and Warfare in German Literature*.

8 Boffa, *Les Manuels de Combat ('Fechtbücher' et 'Ringbücher')*, pp. 63–70.

9 This was discussed extensively by Müller, in an important paper “Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar”, p. 251. See also Wierschin, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, pp. 5–7.

10 The connection of two different standards of communication (orality and literacy) to two different categories of action (process-oriented and goal-oriented) has been analysed in another setting by Kleinschmidt, *Perception and Action in Medieval Europe*, pp. 95–96.

11 Jaquet dedicated his PhD to the subject, see *Combattre en armure à la fin du Moyen Age*.

12 Cfr. Anglo on this issue, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 271.



that focuses almost exclusively on combat in pairs<sup>13</sup> and in circumstances subject to rules and normed behaviour.<sup>14</sup>

The period from which the presently known treatises stem ranges from the early 14th c., well into the 17th c., and thus spans the historical shift from the European middle ages through the Renaissance and into the Early Modern era, a period of profound cultural transformation at least according to conventional historical wisdom. Sources moreover can be found in many different cultural and linguistic realms. In their material appearance, the works confront us with an equally resplendent variety of codicological and iconographical approaches, clearly connected to the didactical and rhetorical means, aims and audiences pursued and addressed in every single one of them.<sup>15</sup> Examples range from private text-only notebooks to works combining illustrations and text in all possible combinations of richness and sparsity, as well as printed works featuring a similar spectrum of textual and illustrative exuberance.<sup>16</sup> As indicated above, the *raison d'être* of these works always implies some form of transmission of a highly complex system of gestures or bodily actions, often, but not always, involving the use of edged weapons of different sorts. This gestural system is referred to in the older sources as an art, a “knightly art”, and codified in different ways which are meaningful to the public intended and to the type of combat the author had in mind. From the earliest sources on, we find a differentiation between fighting *in schimpfe* (mock fighting, i.e., fighting for demonstrations or competitions<sup>17</sup>) or fighting *in ernste*

13 Hüber, “Seul contre tous: le combat à plus de deux adversaires”, pp. 103–116.

14 Clements, “Manuals, military”, pp. 569–571.

15 Detailed codicological analysis is a work that for the largest part of the corpus still has to begin. Forgeng comments on this situation: “The first stage would be to document the history of each codex as an object so that we may better understand its provenance—how it was made and when, whose hands it passed through, and how it may have been altered over time.” Forgeng, “Owning the Art: The German Fechtbuch Tradition”, p. 165. For examples of such an approach, see the case studies in the chapters of Burkart (chap 16) and Cinato (chap 17).

16 Müller, “Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar”, p. 251.

17 The discussion on the relation between public, competitive or demonstrative performance and what we call “sport” is entirely another matter and outside the scope of this introduction. Suffice it to point out that, used in its contemporary meaning of mass-participation oriented measurable competition on a highly regimented field of play, it dates back to the 19th century only, so that applying it to the period that is of interest to us here is very risky at best. For a discussion of the radical transformations in bodily behaviour that turn “sport” in the older sense into what we understand by it today, see George Vigarello *Histoire du corps* (vol. 1); Merdrignac, *Le sport au Moyen Age*. Also McClelland, *Body and mind sport in Europe*.

(serious fighting, i.e., for matters of life or death), where it nevertheless is clear that the former is seen as a prerequisite to and a preparation for the latter.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Fight Books could be destined for either a very restricted audience or, in contrast, for one as wide as possible, and all nuances between these two extremes.<sup>19</sup> Addressees are peers and members of fraternities or schools, burghers or craftsmen united in guilds,<sup>20</sup> or the elites, rich and powerful, who are presented with resplendent volumes in order to instruct, flatter, indulge and seek favour from. This is not surprising when one keeps in mind that the right to keep and bear arms was a fundamental aspect of the culture of the day.<sup>21</sup> When restricted, if ever, then the restrictions applied usually to very specific circumstances and to well-defined groups, even though authorities tried regularly to extend their control. An example<sup>22</sup> of that fact is the prohibition on holding a fencing school within the walls of the city of London contained in the *Liber albus*, a common law codex dating back to 1410. The prohibition is, intriguingly enough, in the section *Of Measures and Balances*, itself preceded by a chapter on the rights and duties *Of Apprentices*, and in which the fate of people cheating and therefore abusing trust is described: “And that no person shall keep a school for fencing or for buckler-play within the city, under pain of imprisonment.”<sup>23</sup> A page further we find the context for this prohibition, and the category of people exempted from it:

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- 18 See Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 133, who discussed a quote from the M53, fol. 15. The Italians knew a similar distinction (*da ira vs. d'amore*). The boundary is a very fuzzy one, as will be clear from the fact that the difference between the two is not in the techniques applied, but in the intention that guides their application, with sometimes specific advice on how to distinguish between the two kinds of practice. See on this matter, Welle, “. . . und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen”, p. 2: “Doch das Spiel des Ritters ist, wie auch zu gewissen Zeiten sein Beruf, der Streit, der Kampf. (...) Spiel und Arbeit, unterschiedlich nur in ihren Affekt-standard, unterschieden sich nicht in ihren motorische Handlungen.”
- 19 An example of the first attitude is cited in J.-D. Müller, “Hans Lecküchner Messerfechtlehre und die Tradition”, who refers to Lecküchners remark that *die zedel wurde geschrieben mitt verborgen vnd verdeckten worten. Darumb das die kunst nicht gemein soll werden*, p. 364.
- 20 Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany*, pp. 5–10.
- 21 Wetzler, “Überlegungen zur europäischen Fechtkunst”, p. 68.
- 22 For a discussion of similar attempts at regulation in the Low Countries, see the chapter of Gevaert and Van Noort in this volume (chap 14).
- 23 *Liber Albus*, fol. 201a, ed. Riley, pp. 238–239.

### Of persons wandering by Night

It is also forbidden that any person shall be so daring as to be found going or wandering about the streets of the City after curfew rung out at Saint Martin's Le Grand and Saint Laurence, or at Berkyngchirche, with sword or buckler, or with other arm for doing mischief whereof evil suspicion may arise, or in any other manner; unless it be some great lord or other substantial person of good reputation [...].<sup>24</sup>

The complexity of the corpus, by content as much as by means of presentation, raises baffling obstacles when it comes to ordering and classifying the source-texts in a manner that is both as manageable and as non-reductive as possible. Codicological criteria and physical appearance provide an acceptable way out of this dilemma, so that schemes dividing the corpus along these lines gain currency in the recent literature.<sup>25</sup> Daniel Jaquet proposes in his dissertation<sup>26</sup> a classification that works along two main axes: material and content. The first has three subdivisions according to the codicological type of the source text concerned: books, collections and miscellanies. The other axis also has three subdivisions, this time following the internal organisation and presentation of the content of the considered source: textual, illustrated, mixture. This method allows him to order the material related to armoured combat in a satisfactory way.

## 2 A Shorthand *status quaestionis*

The historiography of the domain is intricate.<sup>27</sup> A first wave of revived interest in the ancient martial arts of Europe occurs towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Enthusiasts and researchers alike start to publish works on and editions of some of the treatises with which we are so familiar by now, such as for example the Italian works of Fiore.<sup>28</sup> In depth historical studies and first attempts at sociocultural interpretation begin to

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>25</sup> Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 33, reworks Hils' system.

<sup>26</sup> Jaquet, *Combattre en armure*, pp. 74–77.

<sup>27</sup> Overviews in Anglo, *Martial Arts*, pp. 3–4; Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, pp. 9–10; Wetzler, “Überlegungen zur europäischen Fechtkunst”, pp. 61–63; and Jaquet's dissertation, p. 26 et seq.

<sup>28</sup> Novati, *Flos duellatorum in armis, sine armis*; Zanutto, *Fiore di Premariacco*.

see the light of day.<sup>29</sup> A vivid practice of reconstitution develops concomitant to this editorial work, much like during the second pioneering phase we witnessed in the second half of the 20th century. Practitioners, often part of the military and mostly highly skilled sports fencers themselves turned out to be avid collectors.<sup>30</sup> The result of their efforts continues to benefit researches in the field of Historical European Martial Arts studies to the present day. An outstanding example that merits mention here is the Corble collection, now at Leuven University Library, in Belgium.<sup>31</sup> Corble (1883–1944) was a British olympic sabre fighter of repute, since a sabre contest named after him is held annually up to this day. His attitude towards the subject is nicely summed up in the two pictures below, featuring his copy of Dubois's *Essai sur l'Escrime*, and a newspaper picture of himself that he pasted on the inside of its frontpage, in Elizabethan outfit and demonstrating before a public a fencing bout of that period. The outbreak of the First World War and its aftermath might well be one of the reasons why this first Historical European Martial Arts-revival did not last.

The most recent chapter to this historiographical saga stems mainly from Academia and is the one we are living today. As already mentioned, the Fight Books' corpus was rediscovered a second time during the second half of the twentieth century, independently but simultaneously by scholars and practitioners alike. The German manuscript corpus attracted especially the attention of philologically and historically oriented scholars, while practitioners often focused on early books and on the later, lavishly illustrated manuscripts, which became more and more electronically available over the last two decades, as facsimiles, transcriptions and translations of wildly diverging quality. However, scientific editions in the strict sense are non-existent up to today, while good academic editions of single works remain rare.<sup>32</sup> Pragmatic interpretations and experimentation of gestures are nonetheless objects of ongoing experimentation and proof of concepts on a scholarly level, but have not yet found solid methodological ground. Pragmatism is the rule. As the reader will notice,

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29 Wassmannsdorf, *Sechs Fechtschulen*; Letainturier-Fradin, *Les joueurs d'épée*; Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence*; Gelli, J., *L'arte dell'armi in italia*.

30 This would represent an area for further research, as pointed out by Anglo in his paper "Beyond connoisseurship. R.L. Scott and creative collecting", given at the conference *The Real Fighting Stuff* (Glasgow 2012).

31 See Peeters, *Archibald Harrison Corble, 1883–1944*.

32 Cfr. Cinato and Surprenant's edition of I.33 Cfr. ft 36. Some more good editions: Bauer, *Langes Schwert und Schweinespiess*; Bergner and Giessauf, *Würgegriff und Mordschlag*; Welle, . . . *vnd mit der rechten faust ein mordstück*.

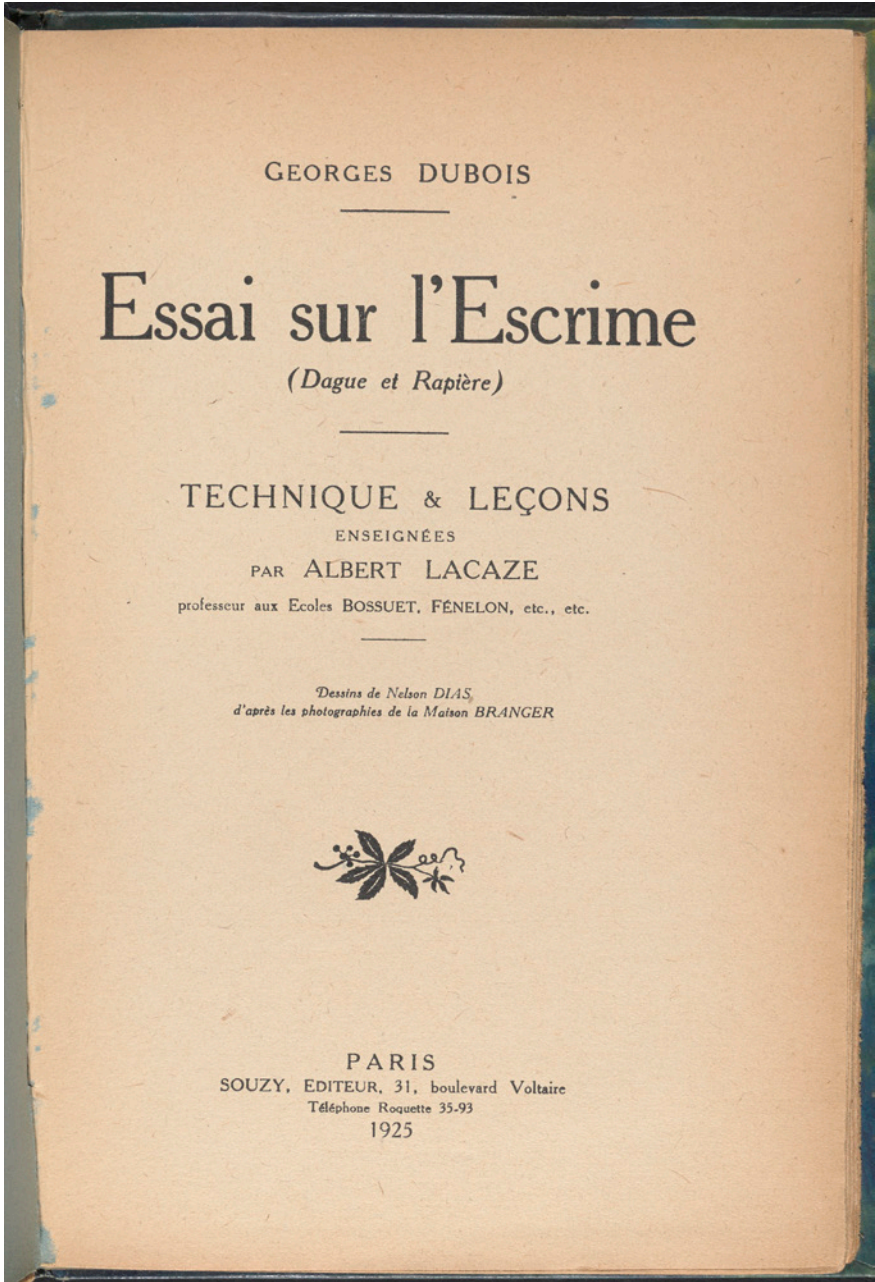


FIGURE 2.1 *Corble's copy of Dubois's Essai sur l'Escrime.*  
COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, LEUVEN.



FIGURE 2.2 Newspaper picture pasted in Corble's copy of *Dubois*, showing him while demonstrating "Elizabethan fencing".

COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, LEUVEN.

this volume bears the traces of this state of affairs in the field, in that researchers from different types of backgrounds contribute to it.<sup>33</sup>

A second, and lasting, attempt started during the second half of the 20th century. The pioneering work venturing into this new research domain is Martin Wierschin's study of the German Fight Book literature related to the school of the semi-legendary figure Meister Johannes Liechtenauer,<sup>34</sup> His work coincides with the renewed interest in technical literature (Fachliteratur) in general sparked by the work of Eis.<sup>35</sup> Wierschin's attempt to characterise and categorise the corpus was, as mentioned before, pushed further by Hils,<sup>36</sup> who added considerably to the list of sources available and made a first attempt at outlining their mutual interrelations by means of stemmatical analysis. Although the subject was taken up by a few dedicated scholars like Anglo and pioneering researchers like Clements<sup>37</sup> afterwards, interest for these sources in the Anglo-Saxon world was sparked primarily by enthusiasts and martial arts practitioners, who were and are interested in them from a mainly empirical point of view. No doubt that their work has much merit in itself, but it often falls short when put to the test of academic research and publishing criteria. In the German-, French-, Italian-, and Spanish speaking world, the Fight Book literature has been the subject of academic research in which specific aspects of the corpus, like its communicative strategies,<sup>38</sup> its sociological role or its iconography<sup>39</sup> have been the focus of attention, but its accessibility and resonance into other fields remains relatively limited.<sup>40</sup> An interesting and quickly

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33 See Jaquet (chap 9) and Clements (chap 8) in this volume. An approach combining field work and scholarly study is well known within the study of other martial traditions. A good example with respect to the Japanese martial tradition is Friday, *Legacies of the Sword*.

34 Wierschin, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 55.

35 Eis, "die sieben Eigenkünste und ihre altdeutsche Literaturdenkmäler", pp. 269–271. Id., *Mittelalterliche Fachliteratur*. See on this matter, the chapter of Bauer in this volume (chap 4).

36 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, pp. 144 et seq.

37 Clements, *Masters of Medieval and Renaissance Martial Arts*.

38 Müller published a fundamental series of three papers, each dealing in depth with an aspect of this question: Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar"; id., "Zwischen mündlicher Anweisung und schriftlicher Sicherung von Tradition." and id., "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre und die Tradition."

39 Burkart, "Die Aufzeichnung des Nicht-Sagbaren". See on this matter, the chapter of Kleinau in this volume (chap 6).

40 An exception is Cinato's and Surprenant's admirable edition of I.33: Cinato/Surprenant, *Le livre de l'art du combat*. Another attempt worth mentioning is Welle's well researched dissertation on *ringen*, in which for the first time a connection is made between the

developing meeting point between the earlier empirical approach and a plethora of scholarly disciplines including “hard” science is presented by recent work in the field of experimentation, for which the Fight Books evidently constitute a gratifying study-object, but also here a lot of work still remains to be done in order to get the results more widely known.<sup>41</sup>

The principal aim of the present volume is to open the field to the academic community at large. In our compendium, we shall present a *status quaestionis* to this amazing corpus, that reveals the existence of a European martial arts tradition in the proper sense of the word, as well as offering the reader some of the most state-of-the-art research going on in the field. This volume therefore serves both as an introduction and as a research tool, intended to guide both the novice historian and the interested specialist into broader and deeper levels of encounter and understanding. The aim of the editors is, in other words, to foster further research in the new field of Historical European Martial Arts Studies by bringing it to a wide international academic audience, to open up sources to historians hitherto unaware of them, as well as to specialists in other fields of cultural and humanist study,<sup>42</sup> like comparative literature,<sup>43</sup> sociology,<sup>44</sup> archaeology<sup>45</sup> and so on, so that specialist cross-overs and interdisciplinary approaches needed to do justice to this unique material may be facilitated and bring new insights to the field. Given the astonishing number of sources and the variety of the material at hand, the question how the Fight Books could escape notice for so long itself merits attention as it concerns the sociology of history as a science. Suffice it here to say that we owe to the 19th century a common prejudice that medieval combat was unmethodical and merely based on strength,<sup>46</sup> a prejudice that has taken foothold in popular imagination by way of contemporary fiction and cinematography. Indeed, sophisticated individual combat skills are something we spontaneously associate with the East.

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techniques as testified by the sources and the sociocultural contexts of the practice and its practitioners. Welle, “. . . und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen”, pp. 197–238. The field slowly creeps towards academic acceptance, as witnessed by the fact that it became a subject for several doctoral dissertations, e.g. *ibidem*; Jaquet, *Combattre en armure*, Bodemer, *Das Fechtbuch*; Cognot, *L'armement médiéval*; etc.

41 See the chapter of Jaquet in this volume (chap 9).

42 Following the work already done by Anglo, *Martial Arts and Tlusty, Martial Ethics*. See also the chapters of Tlusty (chap 18) and Cavina (chap 19).

43 See Kellet, *Single Combat and Warfare in German Literature* and her chapter in this volume (chap 5).

44 Tuailleon Demésy, *La Re-création du passé*.

45 See Cognot's dissertation, *L'armement médiéval*.

46 Cfr. Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence*, p. 5.



But there are laudable attempts by more and more scholars, museum curators and independent researchers to rectify persistent erroneous images about the European martial traditions by organising dedicated exhibitions,<sup>47</sup> public conferences<sup>48</sup> or publishing their work with pragmatic insights.<sup>49</sup> It would please the editors if the publication of this volume could contribute to the rectification of this misguided view of our own cultural heritage.

### 3 Fight Books as a Literary Genre

In order to avoid confusion, it makes sense to point out the difference between the Fight Book corpus and the more commonly known “art of war” literature, which is associated with large scale warfare, tactics and strategy. In military history, such treatises on the art of war are well known, at least when compared to our corpus.<sup>50</sup> Many examples from Antiquity onwards survive, most famously Vegetius’ *Epitoma Rei Militaris (De Re Militari)*,<sup>51</sup> a theoretical treatise on the technical aspects as well as the principles of warfare (4th C. AD), but also texts on more technical aspects of military campaigns, like e.g., *De Rebus Bellicis*, on the construction of war machines, or *De Munitionibus Castrorum*, on the organisation of military camps (3rd C. AD).<sup>52</sup> We pointed out earlier that the interconnections between the Fight Book literature and military practice in its different aspects are complex and far from self-evident.<sup>53</sup> The construction of war machines, however, provides a cross-over into the genre of literature that concerns us here.<sup>54</sup> This raises the question of the specific place of the corpus in the larger context of period non-fictional literature.

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47 Among those: the exhibition in Paris in 2011 (l'épée: usages et mythes et symboles); the exhibition in London in 2012 (The Noble Art of the Sword).

48 E.g., 2009: *Die Kunst des Fechtens. Forschungsstand und -perspektiven frühneuhochdeutscher Ring- und Fechtlehren* (Universität Salzburg); 2011–2012–2013 Conferences at the University of Lille and Geneva; 2012 et 2015 Conference in Glasgow, organised by Keith Farrell. See the review in Jaquet, “Les savoirs gestuels investigués”, pp. 119–122.

49 Among those: Breiding, “Arms and armor”, pp. 167–186; Capwell, *The Real Fighting Stuff*.

50 E.g., Petersen, *The Strategikon. A forgotten Military Classic*.

51 Allmand, *The ‘De Re Militari’ of Vegetius*.

52 See for instance Leng, *Ars Belli*.

53 Jaquet, “Ecrire la chose militaire à la fin du Moyen Age”.

54 A nice example is M29, Talhoffer’s 1459 Fight Book, wherein many pictures that can be traced back to Konrad Kyeser’s *Bellifortis* (c. 1405). On the problematic articulation in general between those who make and those who fight, see Long, *Artisan/practitioners and the Rise of the New Sciences*.

As noted previously, according to the sources, fighting is seen by their authors as an *art* in the traditional sense, a body of knowledge and practices that has to be diligently practiced, developed and transmitted through individual apprenticeship under the guidance of a competent master. It can be shown, demonstrated, understood and broken down into pieces according to the masters' interpretation and preference, and that allow for systematic teaching and a direct didactical approach. The learning process involved is essentially based on direct sense-contact and oral communication; and operates by means of imitation.<sup>55</sup> When taking its subject matter into account it comes as no surprise that the corpus is subsumed under the category of period literature concerning the arts in general. Fight Books constitute a genre, a category in its own right within this larger corpus. They belong to the broad category of non-fictional literature and fall under the subdivision of the *artes*-literature of a period that spans, roughly, from the high middle ages to the aftermath of the renaissance. *Artes*-literature is the vast collection of written testimonia found throughout Europe and in many different vernacular languages, that deals with what we would call to-day professional or technical subjects, intended for either didactical or practical use, or both.<sup>56</sup> The distribution of this type specific of technical literature throughout the different parts of Europe is very uneven, however. While Fight Books constitute the largest subset in the *artes*-literature in the German speaking world, in the Dutch-speaking world—one of the richest when it comes to *artes*-literature per se—not a single item is listed in the monumental *repertorium* published by Jansen-Sieben in 1989.<sup>57</sup>

In order to create some order in the overwhelming chaos and heterogeneity of medieval sources dealing with knowledge transmission, Eis had the brilliant idea of using the original scholastic framework as his basic tool for classification.<sup>58</sup> Following that long-standing tradition, the martial art encoded in the Fight Books belongs to the *artes mechanicae*, and within those, to the *artes theatrales*.<sup>59</sup> But it is far from clear what this classification originally intended, so we shall discuss shortly these traditional divisions.

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55 Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosa-Kommentar", p. 251. For a more general treatment of the complex relation between *mimesis* and literature, see Auerbach, *Mimesis*.

56 Eis, *Mittelalterliche Fachliteratur*, p. 1.

57 Jansen-Sieben, *Repertorium van de Middelnederlandse artes-literatuur*. Although some mss have since been discovered. See Gevaert/Van Noort in this volume (chap 14).

58 Eis, "die sieben Eigenkünste und ihre altdeutsche Literaturdenkmäler", pp. 269–271.

59 Haage-Wegener, *Deutsche Fachliteratur der Artes*, pp. 256–259/. Bauer, "Ein Zedel Fechter ich mich ruen", p. 303. Hils was the first to point this connection out in his *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*.

#### 4 Classifications Old and New

In the tradition of the School, three different fundamental series of *artes* are distinguished: *artes liberales*, *artes mechanicae* and *artes magicae* or *incertae*.<sup>60</sup> The use of the term *artes mechanicae* is first attested in Johannes Scotus Erigena, who never lists them in full, but who distinguishes them from the liberal arts along Aristotelian lines by explaining that the liberal arts arise “naturally in the soul”, while the mechanical arts have their origin in “some imitation or human devising”.<sup>61</sup> Three centuries later, at the dawn of the 12th century Renaissance, Hugh of Saint Victor wrote his *Didascalicon*,<sup>62</sup> an encyclopedia that not only transmits, but reinterprets the ancient tradition with respect to the arts. According to Hugh of Saint Victor, the seven liberal arts of the mind, free from day-to-day cares, were complemented by seven mechanical arts depending on skill and necessary for survival. He lists them as follows: fabric-making, armament, commerce, and agriculture, hunting, medicine, theatrics.<sup>63</sup> It is in this latter category that Hugh of Saint Victor places what will be called later martial art. In the modern literature this classification is accepted<sup>64</sup> but generally taken on face value and seen as rather unproblematic, given the obvious connection to the attested German translation *Hofkünste*, French *arts de cour*, interpreted as courtly art, *ritterliche Kunst*, *arts chevaleresques*. But there is an evident tension between the lower status attributed to the art of fighting as *eygen, unfrei* (unfree), and the at least implicit claim that this art is practiced by or destined for *Ritter* (knights).<sup>65</sup> Hugh of Saint Victor is himself quite clear on this. We call these the liberal arts, he says, and the others the mechanical arts, because the first group is leisurely and practiced by the nobility only, while the second group is productive and remunerative, and that is why

60 Eis, *Mittelalterliche Fachliteratur*, p. 7 et seq.; p. 14 et seq.; p. 45 et seq. The seven *artes liberales* are familiar enough to our readership. *Artes magicae* concerned the forbidden arts, i.e., treatises on witchcraft, divination, cipher and secret writing, the preparation of potions and poisons, and so on. They were not well viewed, especially, by the clergy, although even there ambivalent attitudes existed.

61 In a comment to Martianus Capella's *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, quoted in Elspeth Restored: the mechanical arts from antiquity through the thirteenth century”, p. 70.

62 H. de Saint Victor, *Didascalicon*, ed. Migne, pl. CLXXVI, Col. 739–812.

63 Ibid., pl. CLXXVI, col. 760 A [Cap. XXI. *Divisio mechanicae in septem scientiae*].

64 An overview in Bauer, “Ein Zedel Fechter ich mich ruem”.

65 Eis, “die sieben Eigenkünste”.

commoners find their place therein.<sup>66</sup> Three centuries later exactly this distinction re-appears in a German juridical compendium, in which the *ständisch angelegten Gegensätze frei und (leib-)eigen* (the socially opposing notions free and serf) are used to characterise them.<sup>67</sup> The Aristotelian distinction between *teknē* and *epistēmē* accounts only partially for resolution of this paradox by the re-evaluation that those arts must have undergone, because the recognition of the validity of knowledge partaking in the physical realm was already plain in Johannes Erigena's original distinction.

Interestingly, the seven subcategories of Hugh of Saint Victor's *theatrica* are based on the spaces in which they are practiced. He chooses "*theatricus*" as his label for the whole kind because it used to be the place where people gathered for the purpose of playing more often than elsewhere. The examples he gives are based on a past that no longer existed in his own time, as he sadly recognises when he comments that that the ancients "counted all these diversions as legitimate activities" because in their wisdom they allowed for the healthy release of pent-up energies<sup>68</sup> in places designed for such a purpose, "lest people should go off in various groups and get up to all sorts of mischief and misbehaviour."<sup>69</sup> Clearly, a direct inference from Hugh of Saint Victor's text to contemporary medieval practice is hazardous. *Theatrum*, when translated into German, is indeed *Hof*, but just like *Hof* in its original meaning of an open air space where specific activities can take place under the eye of a gathering of people.<sup>70</sup> It is only in a later time that *Hof* in the elevated meaning of juridical court (originally held in the open air as well), and royal court gained currency in this context. A growing lexical discrepancy between Latin original and vernacular rendering might indicate some interesting, but hardly visible, sociocultural change.

The validity of Hugh of Saint Victor's original observation remains unscathed from the viewpoint of cultural history. It is in accordance with the

66 *Hae mechanicae appellantur; id est adulterinae: quia de opere artificis agunt quod a natura formam mutuatur. Sicut aliae septem liberales appellatae sunt; vel quia liberos, id est, expeditos et exercitatos animos requirunt, quia subtiliter de causis rerum disputant; vel quia liberi tantum antiquitus, id est, nobiles in eis studere consueverant: plebei vero et ignobilium filii in mechanicis propter peritiam operandi. In quo priscorum apparet diligentia, qui nihil intentatum linquere vulerunt; sed omnia sub certis regulis et praeceptis stringere. Ibid., col. 760 B (Cap. XXI. Divisio mechanicae in septem scientiae).*

67 Bauer, "Ein Zedel Fechter ich mich ruem", p. 303.

68 Symes, *A common Stage. Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras*, p. 8.

69 H. de Saint Victor, *Didascalicon*, ed. Migne, col. 762–col. 763 C (Cap. XXVIII De theatrica scientia).

70 Attested since the 9th century as meaning "eingehogter Platz, umschlossene Fläche", Pfeifer et al.: *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen*.

observation made by Huizinga in his famous work on play as a constitutive element to culture per se. At the origin of all competition or combat we find play, that means an agreement to accomplish something in a predesigned space and time environment, and according to pre-set rules.<sup>71</sup> It results in a release of tension and it does so because as an event it stands outside of the normal course of daily life. This insight, however, does not so much solve a problem as that it rather creates one. The deep interconnection between play or game and war<sup>72</sup> is rooted in originally often funeral<sup>73</sup> rites that structure reality by disrupting it, while at the same time restoring it.<sup>74</sup> Every time we think we grasp the vestiges of that reality as it presents itself to us in these enigmatic sources, by categorising it as either/or, it slips out of our hands, leaving us with the realisation of the shallowness of the mindset that forces us into such simplistic schemes. These sources speak to us from a distant past, and there is a lot we can learn from them, on condition we are prepared to listen.

## 5 Plan of the Book

PART I—Fight Books and methodological issues through disciplinary lenses  
While attempting to outline the boundaries of the heterogeneous corpus of Fight Books from 1305 to 1630, this section seeks to frame the primary sources and places their analysis within different disciplinary approaches, methods and core problematics. Dawson (chap 3) browses the previous attempts of codification of martial gesture in late Antiquity and the Byzantine world, while proposing some methods to identify such gestures in Art. Linguistics

71 “Aan het begin van allen wedkamp staat het spel, dat is een afspraak om in een perk van tijd en ruimte, naar bepaalde regels, in bepaalden vorm, iets te volbrengen, wat een oplossing van een spanning brengt, en wat buiten den gewonen loop des levens staat.” Huizinga, *Homo ludens*, p. 134. We prefer the Dutch original here, for reasons of accuracy of the wording used.

72 *Quand intervient la mort, on pourrait presque dire que jeu et rite, jouets et objets rituels, signifiants de la diachronie et signifiants de la synchronie—soigneusement distingués pendant la vie—permutent et se confondent.* Agamben, *Enfance et histoire*, p. 148.

73 Cfr. the origin of gladiatorial games in funeral rites called *munus* in Ancient Rome (from 264 BC onwards). The gladiators fighting on life and death at such occasions were called *busturarii*. See Welch, *The Roman Amphitheatre*, pp. 18–19. The practice probably stemmed from Campania or Etruria, long before it got accepted in Rome, and might have come to Italy with the Greek colonists.

74 The judicial duel is an evident case in point, as already noted by Huizinga. For a general framework, see Benveniste, “Le jeu comme structure”, p. 165.

and issues related to *termini technici* are put forward by Bauer (chap 4) with the Fight Books written in middle high German as example. Kellet (chap 5) proposes comparisons between the writing of martial gesture in literary narratives and in technical literature. The iconography of the Fight Books is appreciated through its practical purposes and its semiology by Kleinau (chap 6), who points out critical issues in the relation between text and images in the Fight Books. Verelst (chap 7) stresses some of the crucial methodological advantages of the use of sound editorial techniques and the study of textual filiation, more specifically for the middle high German corpus. Finally the benefits and limits of the modern day interpretation of the martial gesture are reviewed by Clements (chap 8), as experience, and Jaquet (chap 9), as experimentation.

#### PART II—From the Books to the Arts: The fighting arts in context

This section explores the concepts of tradition or school of fighting, incorporating chapters offering overviews of the source material sorted by language areas and cultural realms, as well as relevant contextual aspects of the fighting praxis related to specific Fight Books. Most of the chapters address general issues about authors, intended audience and reception, as well as heterogeneity of the corpus. German sources are explored by Hagedorn (chap 10); Italian by Mondschein (chap 11); Spanish by Valle (chap 12); French by Dupuis (chap 13); Dutch by Gevaert/van Noort (chap 14) and English by Wagner (chap 15).

#### PART III—Martial Arts, martial culture and case studies

This last section is composed on the one hand of two case studies based on 14th c. sources and on the other of two sociocultural contributions, analysing key elements shaping martial cultures in the late Medieval and Early Modern period. Burkart (chap 16) explores the composition modalities and the content of the first example of the Liechtenauer tradition (the German *auctoritas* for 200 years), by offering a closer look into a miscellany both typical and atypical of the corpus. Based on unsolved issues about the first known Fight Book, Cinato (chap 17) explores the iconological tradition of one specific fighting style in the corpus: the sword and buckler. Tlustý (chap 18) offers insight into the martial identities and sword culture in urban milieu of South Germany and Cavina (chap 19) delves into duelling culture from normative literature in the late and early modern Italy.

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**PART 1**

*Fight Books and Methodological Issues  
through Disciplinary Lenses*





## Before the Fight Books: Identifying Sources of Martial Techniques in Antique and Medieval Art

*Timothy Dawson*

Scenes of combat and battle in ancient and medieval art especially are often quite formulaic. Much like re-enactment battles, or, indeed, martial arts movies, they are an evocation of a sense of violence, rather than an accurate representation of the realities of violence. Never the less, individual elements can be found to be realistic, and occasionally the knowledgeable eye can find a work created by an artist sufficiently martially well informed that the technicalities of the combat depicted can be analysed. To do that requires not only martial experience, but a methodology.

Warfare, to state the obvious, has been an inescapable feature of human society recorded as far back as we have historical sources. It can fairly be said that the Romans defined organised militarism as we in the West know it today, along with laying much of the foundations of literary culture of Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> The confluence of literary culture and militarism produced a distinct genre of books on military science, a dozen or so examples of which survive from the second to the eleventh centuries.<sup>2</sup> Amongst these, the only significant volume for a discussion of individual combat skills is *Epitoma Rei Militaris* of Vegetius (also often called *de Rei Militari*), written in the fourth century. One

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1 The literature touching on this is extensive. For a compact discussion, see Sidebottom, *Ancient Warfare*, chapter five especially.

2 In chronological order, the surviving Roman military manuals are: *Taktika* of Aelianos (second century); *Epitoma Rei Militaris* of Falvius Vegetius Renatus (fourth century); *Anonymous Treatise on Strategy* (Latin, *Anonymi Peri strategias*, sixth century); *Stratêgikon* of Maurikios/Urbikios (ca. 602); *Taktika* of Emperor Leo and the anonymous *Syllogê Taktikôn* (Latin, *Sylloge Tacticorum*, c. 900); *Anonymous Campaign Organisation and Tactics* (tenth century); *Composition on Warfare* (commonly *Praecepta Militaria*) of Nikêphoros Phôkas (ca. 965); *Treatise on Skirmishing* (Latin: *De Velitatione*) attributed to Nikêphoros Phôkas (tenth century); *Taktika* of Nikêphoros Ouranos (ca. 1000).

The later military manuals may indeed be called “Byzantine”, but only in the proper sense that they were written in or around the city of Byzantium (later called Constantinople and Istanbul). There was never any such thing as a “Byzantine Empire”. That is a concept first propounded in 1556 by Hieronymus Wolff for essentially prejudicial reasons.

thing that sets *Epitoma Rei Militaris* apart is its enormous popularity in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Dozens of versions survive, ranging from plain manuscript and printed copies of the original text, to extensively and fancifully illustrated printed versions, to translations into various languages, and even vernacular verse paraphrases. A basic reason for Vegetius' popularity in Renaissance Europe is simple. It was written in Latin, whereas all the other surviving Roman military manuals are in Greek. However, another thing that is more significant for our subject distinguishes *de Rei Militari* from the the other such books. It is the only Roman military manual to touch upon the training of the individual soldier in any detail at all.<sup>4</sup> Manifestly, the Romans were generally of the opinion voiced by many later Fight Book authors, and echoed by contributors to this volume, that combat techniques are practical skills only effectively transmitted by face-to-face instruction.<sup>5</sup> Although it must be acknowledged as well that Drill Sergeant would have been a role well below the pay grade, so to speak, for men of the status to write and read the manuals. Vegetius' treatment of this subject covers four chapters of his first book. It presents a somewhat different mind set from the later Fight Books.<sup>6</sup> Vegetius begins in the manner familiar from modern martial arts practice by focussing on training for footwork and movement, a subject very often ignored, or at least taken as given, in the earlier examples of the Fight Book corpus. He declares that the recruits are to be taught "the military step" (*militarem . . . gradum*).<sup>7</sup> In the first instance this is set in the context of marching in step with the company, but he emphasised speed along with regularity. A little later Vegetius moves onto to wider details of individual training. He strongly advocates individual practice at the stake, mentioning gladiators, Rome's individualistic martial artists *par excellence*, alongside soldiers. Once again, after listing desirable targets, unsurprisingly foremost the head and face, he returns to modes of movement, mentioning tactical retreats, and swift

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3 See Allmand, *The "De re militari" of Vegetius*.

4 Some of the manuals do mention training and drill patterns and methods, but they are almost entirely devoted to formation drills to ensure the troops manoeuvre and fight cohesively as a unit.

5 See the chapter of Kleinau in this volume, pp. 88–116, for examples of the principle of fight-book authors declaring the demerits of book learning. Fiore de Liberi's declaration in the second prologue of *Flos Duellatorum* that books were necessitated by the complexity of the subject is a notable exception to the principle.

6 In contrast, S. Boffa considers Vegetius' book to be the first "manual of combat": See Boffa, *Les manuels de combat*, pp. 38–39.

7 Vegetius, *Epitoma*, book 1, chapter IX, ed. Stelten, p. 22.

advances using two different terms.<sup>8</sup> The author's only discussion of weapons technique is to inveigh against the trend that had followed from the progressive replacement of the old Roman short sword, the *gladius*, with the longer barbarian *spatha* by insisting that the men should thrust with their swords rather than cut with them. His argument is the mirror image of aspects of the rhetoric against the rapier set down by the late sixteenth-century English fight-book writer, George Silver, for Vegetius also points out that while a cut is often not lethal, a two inch puncture wound is mortal.<sup>9</sup> The Roman's other argument against cuts is similarly forward looking. He points out that making a cut is prone to expose the sword arm and side to attack. This presages the extended shield and buckler technique of the *Walpurgis Fechtbuch*<sup>10</sup> and earlier evidence, which embodies the need to prevent pre-emptive attacks to the sword arm. Finally, Vegetius recommends an exercise called *armatura*, "handed down by drill masters (*campidoctores*)".<sup>11</sup> Frustratingly for us, he leaves it with the drill masters and gives no description of the exercise, but one infers that it would be something like a *kata* used in various Eastern martial arts today. With *Epitoma Rei Militaris* having been such a popular work across the period covered by this volume, and with it having such detail, it seems a little remarkable that there is no definite evidence of it having had the slightest influence on anything within the Fight Book corpus. The parallels between passages in the *Epitoma* and Silver's comments may owe as much to the earlier source as to Silver's own observation, yet there is no acknowledgement of that if it were so. One reason lies, perhaps, in a class distinction between men of status and education to own and read classical literature or the leisure and pretension to produce translations and adaptations of it and the Renaissance and early modern "drill masters" with the ambition to set their art down on parchment

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8 Ibid., book 1, chapter XI. Stelten chooses to render these as "jumps to one side, advances with a leap" in his translation (p. 29). What distinction was intended by Vegetius must remain a matter of speculation, as both verbs, *adsulto* and *insilio*, could equally be interpreted as "advances with a leap", with neither having any clear implication of lateral movement.

9 Ibid., book 1, chapter XII. Vegetius' argument is remarkably similar to that placed by George Silver in the mouth of his Italian interlocutor: see George Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, ch. 13, par. 3, ed. Wagner, p. 217.

10 The *Walpurgis Fechtbuch*, otherwise known as I.33 from its catalogue number, is held in the Royal Armouries Museum at Leeds in the United Kingdom. It is dated to the turn of the fourteenth century. A well illustrated edition exists, see Forgeng, *Medieval Art of Swordsmanship*. Many of its pictures may also be found on the world wide web.

11 *Epitoma*, book 1, chapter XIII, ed. Stelten, p. 30.



or paper.<sup>12</sup> Another explanation may be observed in the character of the fight-book as a particular example of the trend for authors abandoning the ancient and medieval practice of citing ancient authorities, or even writing in the persona of an ancient authority, in order to write confidently, even pretentiously, as authorities in their own right.

In the fifth century, the Western provinces of the Roman Empire were assailed from the North-West, and the authorities drew back their forces to defend the heartland of Italy. In that they failed and the city of Rome fell. While reconquest from the newer capital of Constantinople recovered much of Italy for the Empire, the bulk of Europe had to fend for itself, building new societies onto such Roman vestiges as they inherited and were able to maintain. One of the losses was the mode of a large scale centrally organised military system. Yet we have noted that individual combat skills were an oral tradition, rather than a function of that top-down system. So, while the *campiductores* who were still under orders may have marched South and East, retired or demobilised drill masters and the local troops they had trained must have remained to contribute some version of technique to the new vernacular military culture.

Certainly is obvious that the earliest surviving Fight Book, I.33, in no sense represents a novel system, or even a novel part of a system.<sup>13</sup> Whether built upon foundations remaining from Late Antiquity, evolved anew after the fall of the western provinces, or passed on from the enduring Roman Empire in the East there ought to be traces through the earlier Middle Ages.

By the ninth century, the cultural vacuum left by the withdrawal of Roman hegemony was beginning to be filled, and from then on there was increasing production of visual art works. Figural carvings, frescos and manuscript illuminations to accompany biblical, historical, fictional and other texts. The primary patrons of this literary and artistic production was an aristocracy for whom warfare was a way of life and whose very identity was defined by martial skills. Thus, even when illustrating literary works with non-military elements in their text, warfare and combat is depicted disproportionately often.<sup>14</sup> I think we can be sure of one continuity in human nature applicable to this situation. Just as modern medievalists react adversely to elements in a historically themed film which seem to them implausible, unrealistic or contrary to the

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12 See, for example, Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré* and Contamine, "L'écrit et l'oral en France à la fin du Moyen Âge".

13 Noted by Forgeng, *Medieval Art*, p. 10.

14 Battle scenes might be shoe-horned into even New Testament volumes, such as Christ weeping over a war-torn Jerusalem in the *Gospel of Otto III* (Munich State Library, Clm. 4453, fol. 188v): see Mayr-Harting, *Ottonian Book Illumination*, p. 165.

historical evidence, so too, surely, aristocratic warriors would have deplored implausible elements in the artworks produced for their edification and entertainment, and would have applauded scenes which chimed with their experience of arms.<sup>15</sup> Those warrior aristocrats were often the people who directly funded the artists and artisans, and in that process there is likely to have been a pressure pushing artworks towards a great degree of realism.

The crucial issue in looking at this great accumulation of scenes of conflict is to have means of recognising when any such representation represents genuine element of combat rather than a stylised or creatively impressionistic depiction. The social history of many practical areas has been bedevilled by academic art historians making uninformed assertions about the realism or otherwise of figural art works.<sup>16</sup> Practical experience and experimentation are essential inputs to the interpretation process. A person with some physical familiarity with using a weapon, or executing martial technique will bring an additional suite of data to the analysis of an artwork or object as compared to one whose exposure is purely vicarious. The opposite effect can also be found, with people without training in the concepts and analytical methods of scholarship. Sometimes they want to find near-photographic realism in medieval art. At others, they are not equipped to step outside themselves and recognise how their modern lifestyles and life experiences can colour their perceptions and interpretations.

In setting out to analyse a representation of combat one must first consider the *artistic* imperatives and constraints of the work. How amenable is the medium to free and detailed representation? Manuscripts, frescos and the like commonly offer the artist the scope to work to the best of his skill and knowledge. Yet such scenes are also found in media like mosaic, enamel, ivory, wood, stone and ceramic, all of which are much less capable of accepting fine detail and precise rendering. These media are also very prone to being constrained by limited or oddly shaped framing, a factor which may influence the postures

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15 See the chapter of Kellett in this volume, pp. 62–87, for discussion of this in relation to literature.

16 Byzantine Studies has been particularly bedevilled by this phenomenon. For example the assertion made by one of the pre-eminent scholars of the twentieth century, Cyril Mango: “Nearly all Byzantine painting that has come down to us is religious in content and is based on the faithful reproduction of iconographic formulas that can be traced back to the early Christian period. It is worthy of note that in depicting such stereotyped compositions Byzantine artists carefully avoided any intrusion of contemporary costumes or settings: Christ, the Apostles, the prophets appear in antique garb . . .”. ‘Discontinuity in Byzantium’, in C. Mango, *Byzantium and Its Image*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1984, p. 51.

of the actors, but which also very often determine the placement, and even shape, of weapons.

Even in the less constrained media, one must acknowledge the purpose of the artist. It has been acknowledged that he was by no means setting out to instruct anyone on combat techniques. Rather, he wants to bring forth the drama, heroism or horror of battle, or perhaps the pathos of a massacre. Placing subjects in postures which evoke those responses may again take precedence over technical accuracy.

Finally, one must be aware of the level of skill of the artist within their medium. Depicting the human body is not such an easy thing. The accurate representation of hands and feet especially in certain orientations to the viewer can be quite beyond the scope of some artists.<sup>17</sup>

Fight Book authors, as well as modern observation, tell us that a person may fight effectively without the benefit of formal training and technique.<sup>18</sup> That shows that some functional combat forms must occur naturally. When in possession of a striking weapon and the will to use it, a person will adopt certain postures spontaneously. Foremost among such spontaneous positions are those above the shoulder of the arm holding a single handed weapon, or above either shoulder when the implement is held in both hands, with the point or free end projecting more or less backward. Hence, occur the likes of Second and Fourth Guards in I.33,<sup>19</sup> the “Guard of the Woman” and the “Left Guard of the True Window” in *Flos Duellatorum*,<sup>20</sup> *Von Tach* of the German tradition,<sup>21</sup> Marozzo’s *Garda Alta*,<sup>22</sup> and George Silver’s Open Fight.<sup>23</sup> These ready, or starting, positions are found amongst the techniques set out in the Fight Books precisely because they are effective as well as natural.<sup>24</sup> Yet that being so, the

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17 Forgem discusses this in relation to the sometimes spectacular failings in the *Walpurgis Fectbuch*. See *Medieval Art of Swordsmanship* p. 7.

18 George Silver is particularly forthright on this, extolling the martial virtues of English “ploughmen” and insisting that a crucial test of combat skills was that a person claiming martial knowledge could hold his own against “valiant but unskillful men”. This begins in paragraph one of the body of the *Paradoxes* (Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 205) and is a theme he returns to time and again.

19 See Forgem, p. 21.

20 See Fiore (tr. Michelini), p. 33.

21 See Talhoffer (ed. Rector), pl. 5.

22 See, for example, Marozzo (ed. Wilson), p. 59.

23 See Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 267.

24 James Hester’s counter to the present writer’s suggestion that the I.33 combat style may have been influenced from Constantinople (Dawson, “Walpurgis”) commences with this acknowledgement of natural commonalities between combat traditions across diverse

very frequent occurrence of such postures in pre-Fight Book pictorial sources cannot be taken to imply any formal technique at all, let alone any particular tradition of technique.<sup>25</sup>

I.33's Sixth Guard with the sword held by the hip or thigh with the blade horizontally forward is another example of spontaneity that is never the less effective within certain parameters. Essential to the ancient Greek hoplite with his *xiphos* and the Roman legionary with his *gladius*, it was somewhat less used in Western swordplay for over a millennium while the cut became more practiced than the thrust most styles, before it regained prominence from the late sixteenth century as thrusting increasingly dominated Western European swordsmanship. As with the two guards just discussed (Second and Fourth), the relative spontaneity of this position precludes it being taken to denote a particular technique, although it might be noted as a slightly less natural starting place than the others when used with a longer weapon, and hence indicating not a style, but a more accomplished practitioner, of the sort mentioned by the author of I.33.<sup>26</sup>

Weapons are not the limit of pre-modern Western Martial Arts, of course. Another element in the diagnostic mix must perforce be the shield. The diverse shapes and gripping methods are less significant than they might seem. The predominant spontaneous response to having a shield, especially if it a type with a forearm strap, is to bring it close and high on the centre of the chest. Occasionally, with a centrally gripped shield without a forearm strap, a neophyte will adopt a very extended position with the shield square to the arm aiming to keep any threat as far away as possible.<sup>27</sup> Once again, both of these natural responses are found in both pre-Fight Book pictures (see fig. 3.1 below)

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- cultures (Hester, "Home-Grown Fighting", p. 77) Sergio Boffa states that he disagrees with the Byzantine influence theory, but frustratingly offers no argument or evidence of his own as to why, merely mentioning Hester's article: Boffa, *Les manuels*, p. 43, footnote 26.
- 25 Beyond the simplistic observation above, the essence of the failure of Hester's attempt to refute the I.33–Constantinople connection lies in the fact that the only contrary examples Hester offers are instances of these natural ready positions. Another instance of inadequate technical discrimination in this manner is to be found in Khorasani, "Zones of Attack". Most of Khorasani's pictures show the end of a cut, which usually tells us little about how it began, and the others are once again only the natural starting positions.
- 26 The author of I.33 contrasts the "ordinary" practitioner with one who is more sophisticated: see, for example, p. 3 (Forgeng, p. 24).
- 27 These observations are based upon three decades of doing medieval re-enactment or Western Martial Arts presentations the public where members of the audiences had the opportunity to handle the equipment.

and incorporated into the systems articulated in Fight Books. And once again, such occurrences cannot be firm evidence of any formal technique at all, or any particular tradition of technique.

These observations lead to the conclusion that a person seeking persuasive evidence of martial *systems* in European art must look for postures which are unnatural or stylised. That stylisation must be physical in the warriors being depicted, not in the artistic representation, and that demands another realm of discrimination. As noted hitherto, one aspect of that realm of discrimination is to bring prior practical experience of martial training to the task. This is not enough alone, for a mindfulness of the way that the constraints and quirks of artistic production can distort the representation is also needed. This is evidently not understood even by some people setting out to reconstruct technique from Fight Books.<sup>28</sup> Hence, in terms of I.33 sword ready positions, First, Third and Fifth positions may be taken readily as being diagnostic.<sup>29</sup> The sword position of the guard called *krucke* in I.33<sup>30</sup> can further be recognised as significant, even without a buckler, as it is related to George Silver's two *guardant* positions.<sup>31</sup>

Hand and a half swords only begin to appear in European art around the end of the twelfth century, and while we must assume they grow in popularity through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they seem to be very rarely depicted in art of that period. That semblance may simply due to the fact that I, and perhaps others, have not been looking for them, so in the interests of that prospective search we can recognise some technically stylised ready positions offered to us by Fiore de Liberi: "Long Tail", of course, by clear analogy with the Fifth Guard of the *Walpurgis Fechtbuch*;<sup>32</sup> "True Window";<sup>33</sup> "Guard of the Unicorn" (which could hardly be more physically stylised!);<sup>34</sup> and "Whole Iron

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28 This was brought to my attention at the UK's premiere WMA event, SWASH, in 2009 by a presenter who wanted to take I.33's occasional impossibly rotated hand positions literally, not appreciating that they were caused by the difficulty of clearly depicting a hand grasping a hilt from some angles. Evidently that person was not working from Forngeng's volume (*Medieval Art of Swordsmanship*), as he discusses those very artistic quirks on page 7.

29 Third Guard has come to light in a couple of Byzantine examples not mentioned in the author's earlier article.

30 *Walpurgis Fechtbuch*, p. 7 (Forngeng, p. 32).

31 See Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 271.

32 See Fiore (Michelini, tr.), p. 34. Cf. Forngeng, p. 124.

33 See Fiore (Michelini, tr.), p. 32. Replicated by Talhoffer, pl. 4. (Rector, ed.).

34 See Fiore (Michelini, tr.), p. 34.

Door”.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Marozzo’s *Coda Lunga e Larga*<sup>36</sup> and *Contra Armi Inhastate*.<sup>37</sup> His *Coda Lunga e Distesa*<sup>38</sup> is a borderline case, as it is quite a relaxed posture often adopted by one who does not feel especially threatened. Needless to say, should any of Marozzo’s distinctively cross-armed parries appear, they would certainly denote clear representation of a school of technique. Talhoffer gives us the threatening sword position of Fiore’s “True Window” but with the arms not crossed.<sup>39</sup>

Stylised positions for the shield or buckler may also be sought. This is a little more complicated as the available range of techniques is dependent upon whether the implement has a forearm strap and precisely how that is orientated. In the case of shields or bucklers gripped without a forearm strap, stylised positions can be identified as those where the face of the protective device is closer to parallel to the arm, and most obviously, of course, when that is in the sort of position shown so often in I.33, crossed with the sword arm.

## 1 Case Studies of Pre-Fight Book Techniques

I originally set out to reconstruct a facsimile of medieval swordplay at the end of the 1970’s. My prior combat sport experience had been with modern fencing, and I began by reverse engineering technique from sabre, considering how the techniques I had learned in the fencing salle had been developed from heavier weapons. I then moved on to drawing upon pictorial sources. This activity took place in the context of the beginning of medieval re-enactment in Australia. My own desire was for re-enactment combat to be something which aspired to towards being a plausible Martial Art, and my lead in that was highly influential in the early development of re-enactment in Australia through the formation of the New Varangian Guard in 1981. A crucial element of the unconstrained nature of the style I promulgated was that stop cuts to the forearm were accepted as valid technique from the outset, which is not generally the case, for example, in British re-enactment. Another facet was an acceptance of robust blow-weights, the delivery of which influences how blows are launched. Insights from the latter were enhanced by participation in the combat style of the Society for Creative Anachronism, where fully

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35 See Fiore (Michelini, tr.) p. 32.

36 See Marrozo (Wilson, tr.) p. 105.

37 Marrozo (Wilson, tr.) p. 107.

38 Marrozo (Wilson, tr.) p. 105. Cf. Talhoffer, pl. 25. (Rector, ed.).

39 Talhoffer, pl. 13 (Rector, ed.) and so on.



FIGURE 3.1 *An example of "Middle-Fifth Guard" (right of centre). Besançon, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 677, fol. 96v.*

committed blows are allowed by very high level armour requirements. I claim no credit for the fact that many of the techniques I inferred have turned out to be validated in the Fight Books that are now available—the dynamics of the body and of the weapons will prevail.<sup>40</sup>

The first distinctly different ready position that came to my attention due to its exceptional frequency was that shown in Figure 3.1, right of centre. This guard is most commonly depicted on horseback, but there are plenty of pictures of men using it on foot. An unmistakably stylised position, it felt quite

40 It is notable in contrast, however, that working from very modern notions of physical dynamics people in the Society for Creative Anachronism devised a combat style for single-handed striking weapon and shield which bears no resemblance to medieval precedent. I believe that the explanation for this lies in the fact that the SCA uses facsimile weapons made from rattan, which, of course, have very different performance characteristics from metal and wood, and that they determined the effect of the blow based upon the sound that material made impacting on the armour rather than any other parameter. That combat mode has been changing over the last fifteen years as more historically-minded Scadians began importing data from the Fight Book corpus.

awkward initially. Soon, however, it revealed itself to be a very functional guard, allowing not only strong cuts to anywhere on an opponent's left side, but also low thrusts through the Sixth Guard of the *Walpurgis Fechtbuch*, and high thrusts via the higher, point forward guard. With familiarity it became a position I could relax into, with the weapon resting balanced on the cross-guard in a comfortably loose grip. It further became clear why this guard is most often shown being used by horsemen—it keeps the weapon well away from the horse. Nowadays, adapting terminology from the *Walpurgis Fechtbuch*, I refer to this as “Middle Fifth Guard” as it requires only a modest lift of the forearm and flex of the wrist from the fully trailing position of *Walpurgis Fechtbuch* Fifth Guard.<sup>41</sup>

Continuing to raise the arm from the shoulder brings the sword into another commonly illustrated guard with the blade above the head and the point directly threatening the opponent's face. (Left fighter in Figure 3.4) George Silver describes this guard and calls it *imbrocata*,<sup>42</sup> while Di Grassi employs it extensively, especially to ward off downright cuts. In addition to a high thrust, this guard yields almost a full range of cuts.

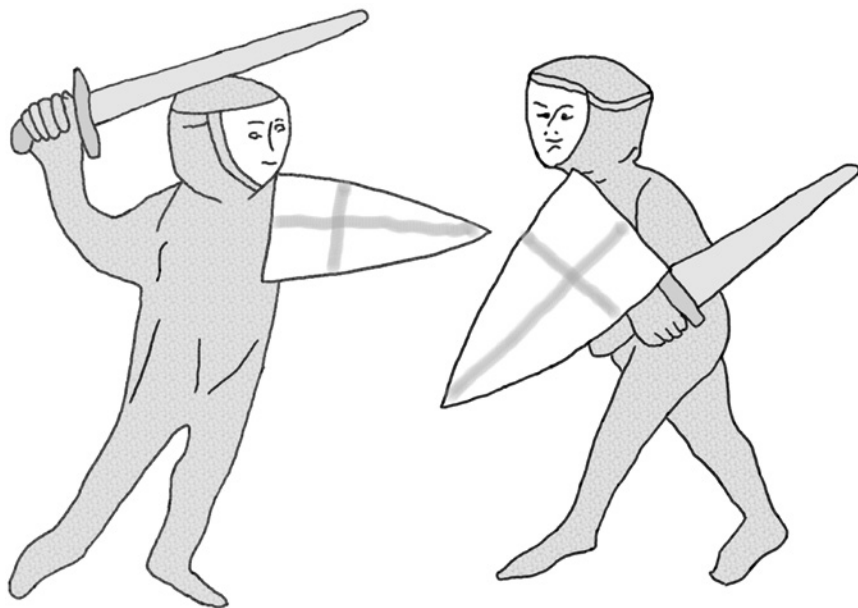


FIGURE 3.2 *Lyon, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms P.A. 57, fol. 87v, detail.*

41 Compare especially I.33, p. 54.

42 Silver, *Brief Instructions*, ch. 3, § 4.2, Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 272.



Occasionally, a duel is represented in a sufficiently informed manner that it is possible to parse the tactics. The scene in *Bibliothèque Municipale Lyon P.A.* 57, f. 87v (Fig. 3.2) is one of relatively few examples of First Guard to come to light outside I.33. Judged to have been made in France in the late thirteenth century, it does little to push back the temporal or geographical boundaries of the I.33 substrate style, but in its totality it has plenty to tell us. It is something of a surprise to find First Guard being used with a kite shield and the position of the left hand man is equally unexpected with such shield. These observations are based upon several decades of fighting with just such shields both singly and in battles in the context of relatively robust and unconstrained re-enactment fighting outlined above. Testing the encounter in practice does reveal a viable complex of tactics however. In doing so, I presume the strapping arrangement that is shown across Europe from the Bayeux Embroidery through numerous twelfth- and thirteenth-century illuminations which has the left forearm oriented diagonally upward from a forearm strap to a grip close to the top right corner, as the wielder looks at it. The man on the right takes the more cautious approach, keeping a close cover with his shield over First Guard. The left man challenges that by offering an invitation to a mid-line cut. Should the Right Man accept the invitation, it is a simple, swift response for Left Man to drop the point of his shield to his right, while thrusting over the top. Right Man might seek to forestall this defence by extending his shield further in the hope of catching the point of his opponent's shield before it reaches the properly protective placement. Pressed far enough, that obstruction of shield by shield will coincidentally interdict any counter-attack Left Man might seek to make. If Left Man chooses to take the initiative, his available attacks are a cut or thrust to his enemy's face or throat. One presumes Left Man's technique is as good as his starting point indicates, and he will not passively allow the simple counter of a flank cut under his shield. That being so, Right Man's counter to the thrust is brilliantly simple. He pushes his shield up to his right to take the point whilst allowing his upper body to rotate into a more relaxed alignment relative to the position of his feet. Raising the point of his sword slightly during that rotation brings it naturally to a position where it will strike his opponent's face without any significant movement of his right arm behind the shield. Should Left Man initiate with a cut to the head, Right Man responds with a similar shield lift and upper body rotation, of course, while drawing his sword hand up the inside of the shield which brings his point into line for a direct thrust to the face.

A carving of two warriors on the exterior of the Abbey Church at Andlau in Alsace does rather more to push back the chronological boundaries, at least, of



FIGURE 3.3 *Warriors shown on the Abbey Church, Andlau, Alsace, 1130–40.*  
 PHOTOGRAPH BY RALPH HAMMANN (CC-BY)

the I.33 style. It is dated to 1130–40, but shows equipment normally considered to be characteristic of an earlier era—large, round, centre-grip shields<sup>43</sup> and mail shirts with short sleeves. On the other hand, it is notable that medieval Germans were sometimes conservative in their military equipment, and that these men are unquestionably infantry, as denoted by their thigh-length mail shirts without slits, a category of troops whose panoply often retained older features longer than the necessarily more affluent cavalry. What is most striking about this relief is the very open shield positions. Combined with Sixth Guard on the right and Middle-Fifth Guard on the left, this picture leads to a suite of very *Walpurgis Fectbuch*-esque sequences whose permutations are too complex to be set out here in detail.

43 It may be significant that the grips shown on the shield are clearly of the Eastern style—a pair of straps gathered in the hand, rather than that typical of Western round shields of the earlier medieval period—a single, solid grip which may fork into two or three riveted bracers splaying out above and below. For a brief account of finds of the sort of shields typical of North-Western Europe in this era see Pedersen, “Scandinavian Weaponry in the Tenth Century”, in Nicolle (ed.), *Companion to Medieval Arms and Armour*, pp. 32–3.



FIGURE 3.4 *Condensed detail of the end of an eleventh-century Byzantine casket.*  
PARIS, MUSÉE NATIONAL DU MOYEN ÂGE (THERMES DE CLUNY), CL. 13075.

The encounter in Figure 3.4<sup>44</sup> can be analysed in a similar way. In this case, the left hand man is clearly taking the initiative. At first sight, the right hand man might be thought on account of the position of his shield to have been taken a little unprepared, but that is not necessarily so. From his guard the assailant can attack with either a high thrust to face or throat or circular cut. A shield is not the ideal defence for a high thrust due to its opacity, while the defender may be justified in thinking that a circular cut will allow him time to position his shield effectively. Let us assume that both these men are more accomplished than to leave a weapon arm exposed and therefore (as in the *Walpurgis Fechtbuch*) the default shield placement will be to protect the sword arm unless its safety is assured. That done, the fracas goes thus:

44 These men are set on either side of the now-missing lock plate on the end of an eleventh century Byzantine ivory casket. Musée du Moyen Age, Cluny CL13075. The intervening lock plate has been edited out of this picture for the sake of clarity.

TABLE 1

Assault	High thrust	Circular cut
Defence	Deflect thrust by cutting into the blade at an oblique angle.	Raise shield to interdict cut.
Defender's Counter	Pass in and left, maintaining the impetus of the deflecting cut, redirect it into cut to the attacker's right side.	Pass in and right with a cut to the attacker's left side below the shield.
Attacker's second intention	Drop buckler right to protect flank, accelerate the momentum imparted to sword by deflecting cut into round-house cut to right side of head.	Pass left foot back, drop shield to cover flank while rotating sword to cut sword arm or right side of head.

## 2 Conclusion

Thus we have the kernel of a methodology that will allow viable reconstructions of Western Martial Arts of the pre-Fight Book era. First, determine to what degree the overall depiction was conditioned by artistic imperatives. Second, seek the unnatural, artificial or counter-intuitive elements in the postures of the combatants. Third: test the unnatural, artificial or counter-intuitive elements in practice to assess whether they may be technically viable, and not simply quirks of representation, bearing in mind extraneous factors such as one's own fitness and physical habituation, any armour shown and so on. Fourth: re-integrate any natural elements. With the application of such a methodology, ancient and medieval art may prove to be a treasure trove for the martial history of Europe and the Near East.

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# Teaching How to Fight with Encrypted Words: Linguistic Aspects of German Fencing and Wrestling Treatises of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times

*Matthias Johannes Bauer*

In the year of 1570 Joachim Meyer, a *Freifechter* from Strasbourg published a fencing treatise with the publishing house Thiebolt Berger in Strasbourg. It includes a passage, which explains a technical fencing term—the so-called *Olber*: *Der Olber wirt meines erachtens von dem wort Alber/welches ist so vil als einfeltig genennet/sintemal auß disem Leger kein volkomlicher fertiger streich mag erlanget werden...*<sup>1</sup> This highlights that even contemporary fencers apparently did not know the meaning of their own technical terms or how the terminology was etymologically derived. This text passage is the starting point of my central questions: 1. Which specifics of specialized language use can be found in Early New High German Fight Books through a linguistic analysis on a sample basis? 2. Do the texts broach the issue of these specifics beyond the aforementioned quote by Joachim Meyer; and 3. Which problems does this pose for the research of fencing treatises in general?

## 1 References and Methodology

The group of sources of fencing and wrestling treatises (Fight Books) contains specialist literature that is concerned with the handling of different weapon classes (or unarmed fighting as in the case of wrestling). Apart from an illustrated manuscript, written in Latin but interspersed with German technical vocabulary that can be dated between 1320–30,<sup>2</sup> the German-language records begin with several texts in an extensive and thematically broad based

1 “In my view, the term ‘Olber’ derives from the word ‘Alber’, which means something like simple-minded, oafish...” (Translation by the author), Meyer 1570, fol. 7v.

2 Leeds, Royal Armouries, I.33. See the contribution of Cinato in this volume, pp. 481–548.

miscellaneous manuscript. This miscellany probably originated around 1389 and can be found in Nuremberg today.<sup>3</sup>

Parallel to a tradition of written (text only) manuscripts, a tradition of illuminated manuscripts started to develop around the year of 1430. This tradition starts with the manuscripts later called *Gladiatoria* and is chronologically followed by Hans Talhoffer's Fight Books that he began to produce shortly after 1443. This specific group of manuals stands in direct opposition to the aforementioned group of manuscripts in direct tradition of Johannes Liechtenauer, a well-known and influential fencing master in the 14th century from the Upper German region. The pictures of the illustrated manuscripts are accompanied by written explanations, which are mostly very short or are even omitted completely. Both traditions conjoin at the beginning of the 16th century and thus constitute simultaneously the appearance of the then emerging print tradition.<sup>4</sup> The traditions of hand-written manuscripts and printed texts are in part closely intertwined in their textual historical context. At this point in time, popularity of the specialist literature of Fight Books, fueled by humanist-philological interests, rises to a final highpoint.

Within the German-language *artes* literature, the fencing and wrestling treatises are counted amongst the *artes mechanicae*, arts and craftsmanship that stand in contrast to the *artes liberales*. Among the *artes mechanicae* they are not counted, as one might assume, among the *armatura*, the arts of war and weapons, but belong to the section of the *theatrica*, the court arts, where they form the biggest subgroup of texts.<sup>5</sup> Alongside the war books, they belong to the most richly illustrated manuscripts of the 15th and 16th century.<sup>6</sup>

This multitude of sources is juxtaposed by a significantly smaller number of specialized scientific editions. Through these editions at least samples of the lexis of Early New High German fencing treatises are accessible. Their glossaries and comparison serve as the focal point of my etymological analysis.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs. 3227a. See the contribution of Burkart in this volume, pp. 451–480.

4 Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosa kommentar am Beispiel von Fechtbüchern" and Müller, "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre".

5 Haage/Wegner, *Deutsche Fachliteratur der Artes*.

6 Leng, *Katalog der deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften*, p. 1.

7 Bauer "Fachsprache oder Geheimsprache?".

## 2 Specialized Language (Technolect)

The aforementioned oldest known fencing specific manual, previously stored in the state library in Gotha, was moved in 1996 to the newly founded Royal Armouries in Leeds. The manuscript with the signatory Ms I.33 contains a fencing treatise written in Latin that includes several German technical terms:<sup>8</sup> *albersleiben, krucke, vidilpoge, langort* . . .—such specialized language was used by the German medieval fencing (and wrestling)<sup>9</sup> community in the subsequent centuries. A whole specialized language was created for this purpose, which was already above translation in its oldest written record and persisted within the Latin text: German lexemes and loan-words as *Termini technici* in Latin specialized literature. But how does the picture of specialized language in the vernacular fencing manuscripts of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period look? Are there cases of vernacular texts that possibly contain Latin loan-words or lexemes or even cases where loan-language and common language are equally a vernacular language, for example German?

Founding father of the historical art of fencing in the German-speaking area is personified in the figure of Johannes Liechtenauer, even though not one single line of his writing has been passed on and his biography can only be vaguely reconstructed<sup>10</sup>—if he is in fact more than just a (specialist) literary figure.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless his teachings became constitutive for German-Language fencing literature:<sup>12</sup> The majority of German-language fencing manuscripts known today belong to this tradition, pass on his mnemonic verses, and comment on his teachings. However, the first known copy of his *Kunst des langen Schwertes* (The art of fighting with the longsword) is younger than the Leeds manuscript: It is first found in the Nuremberg manuscript miscellany that can be dated around the year 1389. One Hanko Döbringer is usually associated with this manuscript collection as the writer and commentator. His biography is just as unknown and uncertain as Johannes Liechtenauer's life<sup>13</sup> and his part in the writing and production of the manuscript is doubted.<sup>14</sup>

8 Forgeng, *The Medieval Art of Swordsmanship*, pp. 149–153.

9 Welle, “. . . und wisse das alle höbischeit”, pp. 1–23; Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, pp. 172–201.

10 Hils, “Liechtenauer, Johannes”, col. 811.

11 Bauer, “Einen Zedel fechter ich mich ruem”.

12 Hils, “Fechten, Fechtwesen”, col. 326.

13 Esp. Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 4.

14 Esp. Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers*, pp. 106–110; Müller, “Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar”, p. 263, note 59.



The specialized vocabulary found in this and similar fencing literature has been in use for centuries.<sup>15</sup> This consistency can be found in the often extensive glossaries of the sparsely edited fencing manuscripts, as well as a total increase of verifiable loan-language lexemes that was caused by the almost exponentially increasing numbers of records in the 15th and 16th century.

In his edition of the Leeds Royal Armouries Ms I.33<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey L. Forgeng contrasts the 32 Latin lemmata with ten German lemmata, some of which are hybrids; for example *contrarium*, *custodia*, *fixura*, *frustus*, *plaga* (all Latin), *durchtreten*, *halpschild*, *nucken*, *stichslach* (all German) or *superior langort* (hybrid). Quantitatively, the portion of German loan-words is not high in the Ms I.33, at least not in absolute numbers: Not even a dozen lexemes comprise the German part of the fencing treatises. However, the complete manuscript only comprises 32 folia and the Latin text including the German loan-words is limited to short inscriptions accompanying the pictures.

The included specialized language lexemes (the technolact) can usually not be solved without ambiguity. Forgeng references in his glossary for Latin lemmata partly Early New High German lemmata of later common language fencing treatises, for example regarding the Latin noun *frustus*, that he describes as “a combat sequence” and—if the glossary should stand by itself—adding a comment of only limited helpfulness: “possibly equivalent to G[erman] *Stuck* in the later *Fechtbücher*”.<sup>17</sup> The case of the Latin verb *sequi* (according to Forgeng: “to pursue”) is very similar: “This term may be equivalent to *nachreisen* in the later *Fechtbücher*”.<sup>18</sup>

The term *nachreisen*—and here we return to the subject of German-language fencing literature—is also recorded in the tradition of Liechtenauer’s teachings. Martin Wierschin—whose edition of Liechtenauer’s Fight Book, although flawed, is still valid today—verifies this lexeme in several manuscripts.<sup>19</sup> At first glance, this finding together with the occurrence in the Leeds Ms I.33 proves a usage of the lexeme as a technical term in medieval and early modern Fight Books from the late 13th or early 14th on to the 16th century. Other lexemes can be found within Liechtenauer’s records alone during these three centuries: *sprechfenster*, *vom tag(e)*, *zornhaw* and *zwerchhaw* are the only lemmata in Wierschin’s glossary that can be found in all of his manuscripts that have been studied—from a sum of over 170 lemmata. The lexeme

15 Bauer, “Fachsprache oder Geheimsprache?”

16 Forgeng, *The Medieval Art of Swordsmanship*, pp. 149–153.

17 Ibid., p. 150.

18 Ibid., p. 151.

19 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 187.

*sprechfenster* can also be found a little later (as well as *nachreissen*, here spelled with double “s”) in Hans Czynner’s fencing and wrestling treatise, which originated in the year 1538 in Passau.<sup>20</sup>

The number of continuously occurring specialized vocabulary does not seem to be especially large, even though the manuscripts stand in a “stemmatic” tradition, and thus a massive change in vocabulary is not to be expected; a change being ever more likely in the commentary than within the mnemonic verses of Johannes Liechtenauer. In the so-called Egenolff’s or Frankfurt Fight Book<sup>21</sup> for example, the term *Niederstauchen* changes within only four editions (ca. 1530 to 1558) to *Niderlauffen*, while text and pictures and thus the signified “thing” remain unchanged. Interestingly, the Fight Book itself broaches the issue of this and other changes in technical vocabulary, although the anonymous writer offers no explanation: *Nach vnserer newen art haben wir andere namen/wiewol ein bedeutung ist . . .*<sup>22</sup>

The vocabulary or lexis of specialized languages (technolects) is as much as possible subjected to a precise standardization regarding their (linguistic) reference.<sup>23</sup> Linguistically, a specialized term is a sign defined or created through agreement or understanding (of a speech community); the association between “words” and “things” is therefore only indirect. Since the manner of such a lexical specification may remain unclear, the demands and requirements for the production and reception of the respective text increase. For example, without context it is impossible to comprehend if “wood screw” means a screw for the use in wood or a screw made from wood.<sup>24</sup>

### 3 Vernacular (Regiolect/Dialect)

Since the vernacular is one of the main traits of medieval technical languages, this aspect should be considered as well in order to find an explanation for the changing of a certain technical term. Samples of dialectal variance can be found easily at first glance, for example Upper German *bruch* and *bruoch*<sup>25</sup>

20 Bergner/Giessauf, *Würgergriff und Mordschlag*.

21 Anonymus, see bibliography.

22 “According to our manner we now use other terms, yet meaning the same . . .” (translation by the author), anonymous, *Der Allten Fechter gründtliche Kunst . . .*, fol. 6v.

23 Roelcke, *Fachsprachen*; Hoffmann et al., *Fachsprachen*; Fluck, *Fachsprachen*; Hoffmann, *Kommunikationsmittel Fachsprache*.

24 Roelcke, *Fachsprachen*, p. 74 (example *Holzschraube*).

25 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 178.

compared to Middle Bavarian *pruch*<sup>26</sup> or Ripuarian *broch*,<sup>27</sup> for modern German defense, counter attack, parry.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, for a blow with the hilt of the sword, that is held with both hands at the tip of the blade,<sup>29</sup> the dialectal variance *mortschlag*<sup>30</sup> is recorded compared to *mordschlag*, *mardschlag*, *mordschrach* (assumably malapropism), *mordstrach*.<sup>31</sup> As a third example, *blösse* or *blosse*<sup>32</sup> varies from *plos* in Middle Bavarian<sup>33</sup> to Ripuarian versions like *bloyß*, *bloiß* or *bloeß*.<sup>34</sup> Within individual sources the orthographic variances additionally reinforce the observations.

The phenomenon of dialectal assimilation exists beside the dialectal variance. This phenomenon can be observed in particular in Fight Books from the Frankfurt printing office of Christian Egenolff—this Frankfurt or Egenolff Fight Book has been mentioned before regarding the changing of the technical term *Niederstauchen* to *Niderlauffen*. Time and time again the spelling of individual words change in between the four different editions (so called diachronic variance). A complete linguistic analysis of lingual variance between editions, while certainly desirable, would however exceed the scope of this paper. The analysis of these linguistic variances would have to reference all of Christian Egenolff's works. But even a few samples provide interesting and significant findings of the range of variance in Egenolff's Fight Book.

He often changes the spelling of the diphthong "ei" to "ey", for example in *Auffstreichen*<sup>35</sup> to *Auffstreychen*,<sup>36</sup> *Abreissen*<sup>37</sup> to *Abreyssen*<sup>38</sup> and so on between individual editions. These two variance phenomena occur noticeably only in the respective indexes; the actual headings in all four editions remain *Auffstreichen*<sup>39</sup> and *Abreissen*<sup>40</sup> respectively, probably due to copying of the (main) text, while the index would always be newly composed and set.

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26 Bergner/Giessauf, *Würgegriff und Mordschlag*, p. 301.

27 Bauer, *Langes Schwert und Schweinespieß*, p. 138.

28 Bergner/Giessauf, *Würgegriff und Mordschlag*, p. 301.

29 Definition according to *ibid.*, p. 301.

30 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 186.

31 All four see Bergner/Giessauf, *Würgegriff und Mordschlag*, p. 301.

32 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 177.

33 Bergner/Giessauf, *Würgegriff und Mordschlag*, p. 301.

34 Bauer, *Langes Schwert und Schweinespieß*, p. 137.

35 See bibliography, VD 16-L 876 and ZV 9515.

36 L 877 and L 878.

37 L 876, L 877 and ZV 9515.

38 L 878.

39 L 876 to L 878: fol. 9r; ZV 9515: fol. 11r.

40 L 876 to L 878: fol. 34r; ZV 9515: fol. 36v.

A similar indication can be observed in the variance of the initial sound of *Eisern port* with plosive<sup>41</sup> as opposed to *Eisern pfort* with affricate,<sup>42</sup> also in the indexes of all four editions. Interestingly, in this case the spelling of the actual headings in all four editions differs from the index as well, being spelled with the affricate: *Eisern Pforten*.<sup>43</sup>—In the Cologne Fight Book incidentally Ripuarian *yser porte*.<sup>44</sup>

The described findings in Egenolff are coherent within the respective edition, strengthening the argument of an increasing dialectal assimilation in opposition to a strictly orthographical variance. This fits the historical-biographical context as well: Christian Egenolff (1502–1555) in 1530 moved from Strasbourg to Frankfurt on the Main. His Frankfurt printing office was passed on to his heirs after his death.<sup>45</sup> An increasing dialectal assimilation of Christian Egenolff and his children can be assumed.

#### 4 Malapropism

All these examples of linguistic variance are remarkable; however, these illustrated changes are not truly significant on their own. They fail to explain the changes in terminology unless additional malapropism occurred simultaneously.

An example of such malapropism can be illustrated with the word *schilhaw*,<sup>46</sup> which is found as *schiller*, *schiel*er and *schilcher* in Wierschin.<sup>47</sup> The technical term (Modern High German: “Schielhieb”) is already subjected to malapropism in the Upper German sources within the Liechtenauer tradition (and therefore also subjected to a split in denotation) from *schilhaw* to *schiller* (as in shimmer, gleam), *schiel*er (as in squint, be cross-eyed) and *schilcher* (a type of shimmering fabric also called *scheller*). Incidentally, a term *scheller* (as in the ringing of a bell) can be found in the Cologne Fight Book,<sup>48</sup> but means a different fighting technique here than the also occurring *schilder*. This term, however, originates in the Cologne Fight Book from an inexplicable

41 L 876 to L 878.

42 ZV 9515.

43 L 876 to L 878: fol. 5v; ZV 9515: fol. 7v.

44 Bauer, *Langes Schwert und Schweinespieß*, p. 153.

45 Jäcker, “Christian Egenolff, Leben und Wirken eines Frankfurter Meisters”.

46 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 191.

47 Ibid.

48 Bauer, *Langes Schwert und Schweinespieß*, p. 148.

(apart from a possible spelling or copying error, malapropism, or ignorance/incomprehension) dissimilation from /ll/ to /ld/ from the already distorted *schiller*.<sup>49</sup> Possibly the term *Schild* (engl: shield) in the sense of cover might have been a subconscious godfather in the conception.

Malapropism as a consequence of dialectal misconceptions follows random patterns and therefore cannot be classified as a mass phenomenon and therefore cannot be viewed as an exhaustive explanation of the extensive changes in terminology.

The malapropisms, typical for Early New High German fencing and wrestling technolects, are the consequence of flawed text comprehension that, within the tradition of Liechtenauer, is caused by the use of secret language in the fencing treatises.<sup>50</sup>

## 5 Secret Language

Liechtenauer's teachings in verse form were recorded as so called *zedel* (lat.: *schedulae*)<sup>51</sup> and written down in encrypted words. But how does this manifest itself? It is passed on, as already mentioned above, only in combination of Liechtenauer's text and the interpretation of his mnemonics by later writers and commentators.

*Vor. noch. dy cwey dink. syn allen kunsten eyn orsprink [...]*<sup>52</sup> Such is the beginning of Liechtenauer's mnemonic that has been coded in a secret language, while the writer and commentator of the aforementioned Nuremberg manuscript miscellany dating from the time around 1389 gives step by step and word for word explanations: *mit deme worte. vor./meynt her das eyn itzlicher guter fechter sal alle mal den vorslag haben*<sup>53</sup> and so forth.<sup>54</sup> These and any other commentators lemmatize the text with an implicit form of catechetical

49 Bauer, *Langes Schwert und Schweinespieß*, p. 148.

50 Cf. i.a. Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 6 and Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar", passim.

51 Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar" and Müller, "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre und die Tradition".

52 "'Vor', 'nach', those two things are the origin of all arts" (translation by the author), Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs. 3227a, fol. 18v. Müller, "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre und die Tradition", p. 367.

53 "With the term 'vor' he means, that every good fighter shall have initiative" (translation by the author), Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs. 3227a, fol. 18v. Müller, "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre und die Tradition", p. 367.

54 All quotations see Müller, "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre und die Tradition", p. 367.

questions of the following schematic, what is the meaning of “xy” in the mnemonic? By “xy” Liechtenauer means “z”. The recurring structural element is: Lemma plus comment (see below).

In his 1965 edition of Liechtenauer’s teachings, Martin Wierschin has investigated and compiled the coding techniques:<sup>55</sup> specialized terminology, unusual word order, ellipsis, and occasional filler words. One example of Wierschin: The terms *alter schnitt* and *ausser nym*, universally understood expressions for something common (*schnitt*, Engl.: cut) or something specific (*ausser*, Engl.: outer) in a fencing procedure are given arbitrary nonsensical additions: *alter* (Engl.: older) and respectively *nym* (Engl.: imperative of “to take”).

Wierschin gives another example:<sup>56</sup> “*Zorn haw krump zwerch hat schiller mitt schaittler*” for the adept enumerates the five main fencing flourishes with the long sword (Modern High German: *Zornhieb*, *Krummhieb*, *Querhieb*, *Schielhieb* and *Scheitelhieb*), while in common language use they remain unintelligible (and therefore it is also not possible to translate to modern language). In each case the second part of the compound, which illustrates that flourishes are implied, are detached in spelling or left out entirely. The recipients have to make the addition themselves. An encompassing explanation as to what the enumeration exactly refers to is not included. The word classes partly remain unclear: *haw* (from *Hieb*; engl: flourish or *schlagen*; engl: to strike) could also be imperative, *krump* (*krumm*; Engl.: bent) and *zwerch* (*quer*; Engl.: cross) are initially adjectives or adverbs. *hat* (Engl.: 3. person singular of “to have”) and *mitt* (Engl.: “with”) are meaningless filler words. A significant amount of previous knowledge is required to be able to understand the meaning: *verborgenn künst* (encrypted arts), which from the start required interpretation in comments, at first in oral and later in written communication and instruction practice.

## 6 Text and Comments

The obligatory annotation of the traditional mnemonics makes Liechtenauer’s teachings into a canonical text. The culture of interpretation typical for wrestling and fencing manuals in the tradition of Liechtenauer developed. In the midst of a multitude of comments that can be ascribed to a great number of names, there is little room for interpretation: The subject is always fencing and wrestling, which are subjected to specific anatomical and physical principles.

<sup>55</sup> Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, pp. 1–11 and pp. 174–202.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

Jan Assmann differentiates between two categories of canonical texts:<sup>57</sup> Cultural texts, on the one hand, that have binding character for the whole of a society, in the sense that they are normative, formative, and provide meaning and identity; and secondly, holy texts that are connected to the belief in something holy that one does not have to understand but only must be able to reproduce or recite as accurately as possible. Exclusivity, secrecy, and rituals are attributes of holy texts, not cultural texts. In short: While the holy text is subjected to the strictest limitations on access and demands for purity, the cultural text however aims to be normatively and formatively binding for the entire society.—Liechtenauer's teachings combine attributes of both categories.

Originally only insiders belonged to the communication circle of the special language discussed here. Only when put into writing along with the discussed extensive annotation, the former secret knowledge originally meant for an oral communication and instruction practice became available for a broad public.<sup>58</sup> Even the oldest records of Liechtenauer's verses do not stand isolated but are embedded in extensive prose commentary.<sup>59</sup> A manuscript from the 15th century that is located in Rome today includes the following passage: *die selbigen verporgen vnd verdacken [!] wort der zedel die stenn her nach in der glosen Also verklert vnd ausgelegt das sy yderman wol vernemen vnd versten mag der do anders fechten kan.*<sup>60</sup> A secret knowledge for the public? This deliberate reversal of function allows us today to gain scientific insight into this type of communication practice. The secret knowledge discussed here is, ironically, not the part that remained hidden, as the term suggests. It is only the filtered part of that knowledge made public through handwritten records and interpretation, which made the secret knowledge publicly available.

The interplay of text and commentary is immanent all throughout the handwritten records Johannes Liechtenauer's fencing treatises and influences the composition and structure of the individual manuscripts: *Hie hept sich an die vßlegung der zedel, in der geschriben stett die ritterlich kunst des langen*

57 Assmann, "Text und Kommentar. Eine Einführung", p. 21 and pp. 25–27.

58 Müller, "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre und die Tradition", pp. 366–368.

59 Ibid., p. 366.

60 "The same hidden and encrypted words in the 'zedel' are explained and interpreted in the following commentary in a way everyone who is fighting otherwise can well understand them" (translation by the author), Rome, Bibl. dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, Cod. 1449 (44 A 8), fol. 9v; Müller, "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre und die Tradition", p. 366.

*schwerts, die gedicht vnd gemacht hat Johannes Liechtenawer, der ain grosser maister in der kunst gewesen ist. . .*<sup>61</sup>

The staging of Liechtenauer as the “classical” and time-honored author of a canonized text is thus completed; text and person form an inseparable entity surrounded by an aura of highest authority. The *vßlegung* (*Auslegung*; Engl.: interpretation) itself is the work of other, later masters—the creators of the numerous copies and commentaries still available today. Their knowledge and skill is based on a shared source: Liechtenauer’s mnemonics, whose verses have long become legend with inevitable authority.

At this point in the textual history, Liechtenauer’s mnemonics can be considered normatively and formatively founding, meaning that they provide behavioral guidelines (norms) for fencing and at the same time shape the community, namely of the members of this particular “school” or “tradition”. Furthermore, they are the exact opposite of an open text: Liechtenauer’s mnemonics are fixed and therefore sacrosanct, unchangeable, impossible to update but also incomprehensible; they (still!) become accessible only through interpretation.<sup>62</sup> This phenomenon of text interpretation inevitably compares to the mechanisms of catechetical bible exegesis.

## 7 Specialized Language with Aura

This poses several questions: Can the language used in Early New High German fencing treatises really be considered to be a secret language and its decoding in the strictest sense, or is it rather a hermeneutical phenomenon more closely related to text interpretation? Liechtenauer’s mnemonics have several traits of secret language, mentioned in the text itself. The room for interpretation however is much greater. Or did the secret language vocabulary only evolve into a specialized vocabulary through dialectal variance, malapropism, interpretation, and canonization? Did the secret language of the wrestling and fencing treatises become obsolete when becoming accessible to society as a whole? Presumably some of it was caused by oral use and memorization, where

61 “Here the interpretation/exegesis of the ‘zedel’ begins, in which the knightly art of fighting with the long sword is written down, which Johannes Liechtenauer composed and versified, who was a great master of this art” (translation by the author), Dresden, Sächs. Landesbibliothek, Mscr. C487, fol. 10v; Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 97.

62 Assmann, “Text und Kommentar. Eine Einführung”, Müller, “Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre”, Bauer, “Fachsprache oder Geheimsprache?”



specific phonetic elements were slurred, misheard, and changed over time. Their auratic character however remains the same. *Schiller* still points to the same movement, even when the explanatory connection with *schielhaw* is no longer apparent. Can an intersection between expressive functions and functions of secrecy be assumed here?

## 8 Problems of Present-Day Research and Outlook

Gaps in terminology caused by ambiguity that inevitably arises from present-day interpretation of sources cannot necessarily be closed with the aid of other sources. Many terms—for example in the Cologne Fight Book or in the Leeds Royal Armouries Ms I.33—are not explained in the respective source, but it is assumed that their use is known. Drawing conclusions based on the use of a term in other fencing treatises is especially problematic when such sources are isolated, stem from a different language area or system than other available sources and are possibly unrelated or very loosely related to known text traditions as far as the evidence shows.

As an example for this, the term *Olber* cited in the beginning from Joachim Meyer can be used—this time found in the Cologne Fight Book.<sup>63</sup> In Liechtenauer's tradition the term *Alber/Olber* denotes one of the lower positions (of the sword) in which one foot is in front and the tip of the blade is pointing down with almost extended arms. In the Upper German Fencing Manuscripts this position is usually called *alber*. In the Cologne Fight Book however the term *olber* means a complete fencing maneuver with the long sword, where the sword is handled in a completely different way, namely upwards *yn dy lucht* (Engl.: in the air).<sup>64</sup> The starting position for this maneuver quite certainly is the *alber*, as it is known from other sources. It can be concluded that such technical terms, although being homonyms in different sources, are not necessarily synonyms (polysemy). Several similar examples can also be found in the Cologne Fight Book.

The discussed linguistic findings show that the specialized language used in Early New High German fencing treatises is diffuse and often ambiguous in spelling and content. The linguistic features of German language fighting treatises of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times—namely use of technoelect, dialect, malapropism, and secret language use in different combinations—

63 Bauer, *Langes Schwert und Schweinespieß*, p. 146.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 134 and p. 146.

made it already difficult for contemporaries to understand their texts. For present-day access to this corpus of sources that is of interest in regard to many different scientific enquiries and the resulting work with the Early New High German Fight Books may prove difficult in specific ways.

So long as a complete linguistic analysis of the specific lexis found in the sources is not compiled the research must firstly remain immanent to one source in order to be able to make valid claims about the meaning of individual technical terms. A comparison with the lexis of additional sources can only add hypothetical interpretations that can however add to the context in most cases and certainly serve the purpose of facilitating classification.

Furthermore, Early New High German technical terms should, in my opinion, either be used in the form of a literal quotation from a single source in the original language or be continuously be translated into standard Modern High German. This is necessary to avoid further increase the malapropism that historically developed in present-day professional literature and to eliminate misunderstandings and misinterpretations, for example: *die Eisenpforte* (Engl.: iron gate) instead of *das Eisenport*, an artificial word with an incorrect gender and a misleading second constituent derived from the poetic word for *Hafen* (Engl: port); the word *Ochse* (Engl.: ox) instead of the Southern German dialect word *Ochs*; *Querhieb* (Engl.: cross-cut) instead of *Zwerchhau* and so forth. A reliable use of historical sources in my opinion requires, without any doubt, a correct and modern use of specialized language.

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## Only a Flesh-Wound? The Literary Background to Medieval German Fight Books

*Rachel E. Kellet*

Combat is one of the most important themes of the narrative literature of medieval Germany, and was clearly a matter of considerable interest to the medieval audience. This is hardly surprising, given that the earliest and possibly largest corpus of European Fight Books also comes from the German-speaking region.<sup>1</sup> Medieval German literature, however, predates the Fight Books; the earliest surviving records of German written culture, dating from c. 750 AD onwards, are in Old High German, and are often religious in character.<sup>2</sup> Some works from this period do mention combat, such as the late 9th-century *Ludwigslied* (the Song of Louis) which recounts the victory of Louis III of France over Danish raiders on 3 August 881 AD, but only briefly. More detailed descriptions of combat appear in the epics, chronicles and romances dating to c. 1050 AD onwards, written in Middle High German and usually in verse. Many of the most influential works date to between 1150 and c. 1350, a period known as the High Middle Ages; after this point, Middle High German develops gradually into Early New High German, the precursor to the modern language. Prose literature, including re-workings of earlier texts, appears from the mid-1200s onwards.<sup>3</sup>

The heroes of countless epics, chronicles and romances confront a range of human and monstrous antagonists both in single combat and in the *mêlée*, overcoming them thanks to their skill at arms. Literary works also contain numerous references to tournaments, jousts and fencing bouts, in which the protagonists' skills are displayed in a less fatal manner. Altogether these provide invaluable background for the student of medieval German Fight Books, by indicating how the medieval audience, particularly the nobility, perceived combat and its results. As is shown below, copies of the medieval literary texts

1 See Forggeng/Kiermayer, "The Chivalric Art".

2 See Kartschoke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im frühen Mittelalter*, pp. 53–55.

3 Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter*, provides a detailed history of the literature of the High Middle Ages; Hasty, *German Literature*, is a useful introduction for non-German speakers; see also Gibbs/Johnson, *Medieval German Literature*, pp. 97–223.

were commissioned by the noblemen of late medieval Germany who also acted as patrons and sponsors of the authors of the Fight Books; the literary works were a crucial part of the cultural background against which the Fight Books were written and studied.

As a brief introduction to the relevance of medieval German literature to the study of Fight Books, this chapter investigates a small number of “case studies”; works by three medieval authors: Hartmann von Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach and Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, two of whom were themselves knights, and explores their descriptions of injuries sustained in combat. Most of the works discussed are Arthurian romances, texts usually described as “courtly”, dealing with matters of chivalry and the qualities of the perfect knight. The Arthurian romance is particularly suited as a case-study, since it is one of the most significant “genres” of medieval literature, and one which had a profound impact on medieval society. It first appeared in the late 12th century, and swiftly became extremely popular across western Europe. Its influence extended beyond the literary sphere; during the later Middle Ages wealthy individuals spent large sums on Arthurian-themed tournaments in which the participants would often take on the roles of Arthur and his knights.<sup>4</sup> Other literary forms that would repay future study include the epic and the chronicle, both of which often include detailed descriptions of combat. The weapons most frequently portrayed in Arthurian romances are, as one might expect, the couched lance and the sword, and they are employed most often in single combat.

It has long been recognized that caution must be exercised when investigating medieval literary depictions of combat, particularly when considering them in the light of the Fight Book tradition. By and large, literary descriptions of battles or single combats are written to entertain the audience, not to instruct them on the finer points of swordsmanship, and at times they show little regard for realism. Hyperbole abounds; depictions of battle refer to tens of thousands of combatants, locked in a conflict that lasts for hours. Single combats also continue for hour after hour, due to the combatants’ extraordinary prowess. Not infrequently, one or the other party benefits from Divine or supernatural assistance such as a magical weapon or armour. When we consider the literary depictions of injuries sustained in combat, we find the same tendency to exaggerate, exemplified perhaps most clearly in the “epic blow”; a sword-blow to the top of the head so powerful that it splits not only the head

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4 See Anglo, “L’arbre de chevalerie”, for discussion of these instances of medieval “role-playing”. For an introduction to the Arthurian romance as a literary genre, see Jackson and Ranawake, *The Arthur of the Germans*.

but also the body in two.<sup>5</sup> The literary texts often refer to swords and lances piercing helmets and mail as if armour offered its wearer no protection at all.

Despite this, medieval literature should not be dismissed out of hand as a source of information on combat and its results. Both the authors of the literary works and their audience would have had experience of combat; if not first-hand then certainly as spectators at tournaments or judicial combats. Some authors, as discussed below, were knights with extensive knowledge of their subject, and their works reveal details of medieval combat that appear surprisingly plausible, particularly when compared with the techniques recorded in the Fight Books.<sup>6</sup>

## 1 Arthurian Literature of the High Middle Ages and its Influence on the Fight Book Audience

Although Hartmann, Wolfram and Ulrich were active during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries,<sup>7</sup> much earlier even than the anonymous author of the earliest German Fight Book, Leeds, Royal Armouries, I.33, dating to ca. 1300, their works influenced the development of German literature and culture throughout the later Middle Ages. This is particularly true of Hartmann and Wolfram, whose texts survive in manuscripts dating to the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and were clearly still well known at the time when the Fight Books were being written.<sup>8</sup>

Although no evidence has been found to date that the authors of Fight Books themselves read or wrote literary works, the *audience* for the literary

5 An epic blow can also split the horse in two as well as the rider—an instance of even more obvious exaggeration; see Kellett, “Guts, Gore and Glory”, pp. 164–65.

6 A further potential source of information to be found in the literary material is the illuminations found particularly in later manuscripts. This area would certainly repay further study; unfortunately, it falls outside the scope of this chapter.

7 See Bumke, *Der Erec Hartmanns von Aue*, p. 8; Ranawake, “The Emergence of the German Arthurian Romance”, p. 49; Schiroke, “Wolfram und seine Werke im Mittelalter”.

8 Interest in Wolfram’s works in particular seems to have waned during the course of the Middle Ages; nevertheless 8 of the 17 complete manuscript versions of his romance *Parzival* date to the 15th century, see Viehhauser, *Die “Parzival”-Überlieferung*, p. 13, and the work seems to have found readers among the later medieval nobility, see Viehhauser, *Die “Parzival”-Überlieferung*, pp. 50–52. The same is also true of Wolfram’s epic *Willehalm*, see Hennings, “Der Stoff: Vorgaben und Fortschreibungen”, pp. 607–09; most manuscripts date to the 14th century or earlier, but some survive from the 15th century. Both *Parzival* and *Willehalm* are discussed below.

works intersected with that of the Fight Books; this is certainly the case with Hartmann. His two longest works, the romances *Erec* and *Iwein*, appear in an illuminated manuscript known as the *Ambraser Heldenbuch*, created between 1504 and 1517 for the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. This collection of works from the earlier Middle Ages also contains two versions of the heroic epic the *Nibelungenlied*, as well as the fragmentary *Titurel*, an unfinished work by Wolfram, alongside other shorter works.<sup>9</sup> The early literary texts were preserved and—one assumes—read by the noble classes of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, who also often served as patrons to the authors of the Fight Books. Sigmund Ringeck, for instance, whose work dates to the late 15th or early 16th century, names his employer as Albrecht, Count Palatinate of the Rhine and Duke in Bavaria,<sup>10</sup> while Hans Talhoffer had a number of noble clients, including Leutpold of Königsegg<sup>11</sup> and Duke Eberhard I of Württemberg, who was declared duke on 21 July 1495 by none other than Maximilian I.<sup>12</sup> Maximilian himself had a keen interest in combat; he was a noted jousting and is depicted fighting with a sword in his tournament book.<sup>13</sup>

The literature of the German High Middle Ages, then, retained a significant degree of influence on readers—as well as on authors—well into the later medieval period. The themes of the Arthurian romances and epics, including the concept of chivalry and the depiction of knightly combat, were part of the culture in which the Fight Books were written, studied and understood, particularly among the nobility. The literary depictions of combat, just as much as the technical instruction offered by the Fight Books, will have contributed to the later medieval understanding of personal combat with its risks, rules and rewards.

9 Glauch, *An der Schwelle zur Literatur*, pp. 266–70, provides a brief discussion of the *Ambraser Heldenbuch*, focusing on *Mauritius von Craün*, another work included in the collection.

10 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauer*, p. 57, note 49, suggests that Albrecht III (1438–60) was Ringeck's patron, although Albrecht I (1353–1404) and Albrecht IV (1460–1508) are also possible candidates. Wierschin's edition of Ringeck's work is based on Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Mscr.Dresd. C487. Transcriptions and translations of the various manuscript versions of Sigmund Ringeck's work can be found online at <<http://www.wiktenauer.com/>> (last accessed 10 June 2014), but Wierschin's is the only critical edition published to date.

11 See Rector, *Medieval Combat*, p. 9 and Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauer*, p. 49.

12 Lorenz et al., *Das Haus Württemberg*, pp. 94–95.

13 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauer*, p. 57.



## 2 Hartmann von Aue: The Importance of Being Harnest<sup>14</sup>

Hartmann von Aue is widely credited as the author of the first Arthurian romances written in German. *Erec* and *Iwein* (written between c. 1180 and 1200 or 1210)<sup>15</sup> each describe the career of a young knight belonging to Artus's (Arthur's) court, who undertakes an *âventiure* (adventure or quest) which he completes successfully, marrying a beautiful woman. The eponymous hero then suffers disgrace and must undertake a second series of *âventiure* in order to redeem himself. Hartmann's romances are reworkings of earlier French texts; *Erec e Enide* and *Le Chevalier au Lion* by Chrétien de Troyes (written in the late 12th century),<sup>16</sup> but like many other medieval authors, Hartmann modified the stories to suit his own needs.

Not much is known of Hartmann beyond brief autobiographical details he provides in his other works; these, however, indicate that he was a knight and had taken part in a Crusade, possibly the campaign of 1197–98.<sup>17</sup> Both *Erec* and *Iwein* include numerous descriptions of single combats and combats in which the hero fights against more than one opponent, including fellow knights and noblemen with their retinues, as well as robbers and giants.<sup>18</sup> The outcomes of the single combats in *Erec* in particular are determined by the manner of opponent the hero faces, and specifically the armour the opponent wears; a subject of considerable interest to the student of medieval combat.<sup>19</sup>

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14 The author cannot take credit for this play on words; see Moffat, "The Importance of being Harnest".

15 Bumke, *Der Erec Hartmanns von Aue*, p. 8.

16 See Bumke, *Der Erec Hartmanns von Aue*, pp. 7–8; see also Ranawake, "The Emergence of German Arthurian Romance", p. 39.

17 Hartmann includes brief autobiographical details in the introduction to another of his narrative works; see *Der arme Heinrich*, 1–5; see also Bumke, *Der Erec Hartmanns von Aue*, pp. 1–3.

18 *Erec* also includes the description of a tournament (2413–851), and *Iwein* a battle (3703–61).

19 See Jones, "Schutzwaffen und Höflichkeit"; in particular p. 76: "... vieles deutet darauf hin, daß die eiserne Körperüstung und der eiserne Helm, die gut bewaffnete Ritter zu dieser Zeit trugen, einen verhältnismäßig sicheren Schutz gegen tödlichen Verwundung boten". In the late 12th century, a Western European knight would wear a mail hauberk and chausses (leg protection) as well as a helmet with some degree of face protection (Nicholson/Nicolle, *God's Warriors*, p. 46; see also Ayton, "Arms, Armour and Horses", pp. 198–99). Enclosed great helms appeared from the early 13th century onwards, and can be seen in the frescoes depicting scenes from Hartmann's *Iwein* in Rodenegg Castle in South Tyrol, Italy (Schupp and Szklenar, *Ywain auf Schloß Rodenegg*, p. 89, note 28).

During his second series of adventures, which he undertakes with his wife Enite, Erec is twice attacked by robbers. Of the first group of three robbers, he kills two with his lance,<sup>20</sup> and of the second group of five, he kills the first two with his lance, then fells the remaining three with his sword.<sup>21</sup> Hartmann devotes very little time to the description of these combats; Erec achieves easy victories in both instances. There is a practical explanation for Erec's success; Hartmann notes that the second robber's limbs are unprotected, and adds that the robbers only wear breastplates and helmets for protection; as a result, Erec is able to kill them all swiftly.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, when the second band of robbers discuss how they will divide the spoils after defeating Erec, the second robber to speak lays claim to Erec's armour, possibly for its monetary value. Nevertheless, Hartmann's previous comments on the robbers' lack of equipment suggest that the robber intends to take the armour for his own use.<sup>23</sup>

After defeating the robbers, Erec and his wife encounter an anonymous count (named Galoein by Chrétien) who attempts to abduct Enite, forcing the pair to flee. The count pursues them together with his retinue, all without armour and armed only with lances and shields.<sup>24</sup> When Galoein attacks Erec, the hero wounds him severely in the flank; "a thrust to his side that did not scar over for a long time after, because he wore no armour beneath his shield".<sup>25</sup> Galoein also breaks his arm as he falls from his horse. Some of his companions attack Erec, but he easily dispatches six before the rest flee.<sup>26</sup>

Erec later encounters a second opponent without armour; Keiû, the seneschal of Artus's court, who seizes Erec's reins, intending to claim that he has

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20 *Erec* 3216–25. All references to *Erec* are to the 2006 edition by K. Gärtner.

21 *Erec* 3386–99.

22 *Erec* 3228–34.

23 See *Erec* 3338–40. In both encounters, the robbers' primary motive for attacking Erec is to capture the beautiful Enite; this is a recurring feature of Erec's *aventure* (Bumke, *Der Erec Hartmanns von Aue*, pp. 93–94). In Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec e Enide*, the robbers encountered by the hero are called *chevaliers* (knights) and no particular reference is made to their protection (*Erec e Enide* 2807–918). This indicates that Hartmann has consciously chosen to highlight the importance of armour; see Bumke, *Der Erec Hartmanns von Aue*, pp. 38–39; Jackson, *Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Germany*, p. 110, and Jones, "Schutzwaffen und Höflichkeit", p. 78.

24 *Erec* 4107–09.

25 *Erec* 4207–13. Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are mine.

26 See *Erec* 4220–24. Jones, "Schutzwaffen und Höflichkeit", p. 78, notes that in the French version, Galoein is accompanied by his seneschal who is well-armoured although this fails to preserve him from injury (*Erec e Enide* 3583–600).

captured him.<sup>27</sup> Erec loses his temper with Keiî and strikes at his hand with his sword. Keiî draws back just in time, and rides off, pursued by the angry Erec with his lance couched:

*von Êrecke er ervolget wart,  
und als er rehte daz gesach  
—als ez im ze heile geschach—  
daz er gewaefens was blôz,  
wie wol her Keiîn genôz  
der tugent die Êrec hate.  
vil wunderlîchen drâte  
daz sper er umbe kêrte  
daz er in niht versêrte.  
er wante gegen im den schaft  
und stach in mit selher kraft  
daz Keiîn rehte sam ein sac  
under dem rosse gelac,  
nâch sînem rehte  
ungelîch einem guoten knehte<sup>28</sup>*

trans.: [Keiî] was followed by Erec, and as [Erec] saw clearly (fortunately for Keiî) that he was wearing no armour, how greatly Keiî benefited from Erec's virtuous nature! [Erec] turned his lance around remarkably swiftly so that he did not wound him. He turned the shaft towards him and thrust with such force that Keiî fell under his horse just like a sack, in a fitting manner for one who was most unlike a good knight.<sup>29</sup>

In most of these episodes, Hartmann explicitly links the wounding or death of combatants to the fact that they are wearing no armour or in the case of the robbers, minimal protection. Keiî is spared injury only as a result of Erec's forbearance.<sup>30</sup> Another feature common to all of these combats is the length;

<sup>27</sup> *Erec* 4629<sup>56</sup>–32.

<sup>28</sup> *Erec* 4719–33.

<sup>29</sup> It seems obvious that Hartmann intends this as comedy; see Jackson, *Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Germany*, p. 97, who refers to Keiî's unseating as "burlesque".

<sup>30</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach's romance *Parzival*, discussed below, also includes an instance of a knight who comes to grief as a result of his lack of armour: the knight Isenhart rides out to engage in jousts without armour, finally facing Prothizilias; both men are killed (*Parzival* 27,15–28,8). All references to *Parzival* are to the 2008 edition by J. Bumke.

Hartmann devotes no more than a few lines to each. In addition, he includes phrases such as “*vil unlange die werten*” (“they fought for a very short time”) and “*der strît unlange werte*” (“the combat lasted a short time”).<sup>31</sup> The combat is often decided with a single joust or sword-blow; it is clear that his opponents’ lack of armour is an important factor in Erec’s success.

In comparison, on four occasions Erec encounters knightly opponents wearing full armour, and these combats are depicted at considerably greater length.<sup>32</sup> In one instance he also states explicitly: “*nû schirmte in daz isenge-want/vor dem tôde dicke*” (trans.: “Now their armour protected them many times from death”).<sup>33</sup> In his initial *âventiure*, Erec faces the knight Iders; Hartmann devotes 165 lines in total to describe the joust and ensuing duel on foot.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the combat lasts so long that both men become tired and agree to a brief rest. Erec has borrowed armour for this combat, and neither he nor his horse are more than half protected.<sup>35</sup> Despite this disadvantage, however, the hero defeats Iders, who wears full armour.<sup>36</sup>

Erec also faces Guivreiz le pitîz (Guivreiz the Small) on two occasions,<sup>37</sup> and Hartmann notes that the first combat lasts “*den sumertac alsô lanc*” (“the length of the summer’s day”).<sup>38</sup> The second combat is shorter—Erec has been wounded and lacks the strength to withstand Guivreiz’s joust—but again described in some detail.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, Erec faces Mabonagrîn, the Red Knight, in the climactic combat of the text;<sup>40</sup> the combat lasts from morning to noon and is so close that Erec is eventually forced to resort to wrestling. Unsurprisingly,

31 *Erec* 4223; 3397.

32 See Jones, “Schutzwaffen und Höflichkeit”, p. 77.

33 *Erec* 9147–48. This statement comes after Hartmann describes how the two combatants destroy each other’s shields (9140–45). This is a recurrent motif in literary depictions of combat, and is usually followed by the damaging or destruction of the combatants’ armour. Pincikowski, “The Body in Pain”, p. 106, considers this damage to be symbolic: “Given the demonstrative function of the knight’s equipment, an integral part of his identity, damage to his outer self symbolizes injury or threat to his identity and social status”.

34 *Erec* 760–890, 915–49.

35 *Erec* 746–50.

36 Erec also takes part in a tournament without armour (*Erec* 2503–07); Hartmann praises his courage, although Bumke describes this as “*törichte Unbesonnenheit*” (Bumke, *Der Erec Hartmanns von Aue*, p. 33).

37 *Erec* 4378–438; 6899–936.

38 *Erec* 4460–62.

39 After the first combat, Erec and Guivreiz become friends. The second combat occurs because the two men fail to recognize each other; Enite has hidden by the side of the road but reveals herself when Guivreiz is about to kill her husband (*Erec* 6939–7002).

40 *Erec* 9070–315.

this is the longest of all the combats depicted; Hartmann devotes 245 lines to the description.<sup>41</sup>

It is clear that Hartmann has chosen to dramatize Erec's combats against fellow-knights, in particular the combats against Iders and Mabonagrín, in order to enhance the element of suspense. Nevertheless, the fact that these opponents wear armour also plays an important role. None of Erec's armoured opponents are killed, and the wounds inflicted are not comparable to those suffered (for instance) by Galoein.<sup>42</sup> In his first combat against Guivreiz, Erec is wounded in the flank and loses blood; although the injury requires medical attention it does not prevent Erec from defeating Guivreiz or from continuing his adventures. In the same combat, Erec strikes Guivreiz on the helm, but again the wound appears to have no lasting effect, since Guivreiz is in perfect health at their second encounter.<sup>43</sup>

In the encounters with Iders and Mabonagrín, the combatants seem to have even more difficulty in injuring each other through their armour. Iders is initially stunned during his joust against Erec, but only because his shield is knocked against his head during the joust.<sup>44</sup> The only sword-blows that have any particular effect on the combatants are blows to the helmet; Iders strikes Erec first, driving him to his knees, but Erec eventually repays Iders in his own coin, striking him repeatedly on the head until he falls to the ground. While fighting Mabonagrín, Erec is again struck on the helmet, this time with more serious effect:

*dirre grimmeclîche slac  
Êreke in sîn houbet erschal,  
daz er vil kûme meit den val.  
sîniu ôren und diu ougen  
begunden ir ambetes lougen,  
daz er gehôrte noch gesach.*

41 The duration of these combats is clearly exaggerated for effect, as discussed in the introduction.

42 Jackson, *Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Germany*, pp. 111–12 notes that Hartmann's descriptions of combats against non-knightly (i.e. unarmoured) opponents, are much more graphically described than in Chrétien's work, but that the opposite is true in the depiction of combat against knightly opponents.

43 Pincikowski, "The Body in Pain", p. 107, suggests that references to blood may also be symbolic: "The presence of blood also signifies two equally-matched combatants, such as Erec and Guivreiz, whose effort and sacrifice are indicated by the sweat and blood flowing from wounds that they have inflicted upon each other."

44 *Erec* 769–73.

*wan daz daz swert enzwei brach,  
ez waere gewesen sîn ende*<sup>45</sup>

trans.: This dreadful blow rang in Erec's head, so that he barely avoided falling. His ears and eyes no longer served their purpose, so that he could neither hear nor see. If [Mabonagrín's] sword had not broken in two, it would have been his end.

Erec then strikes the unarmed Mabonagrín repeatedly but is unable to do more than drive his enemy back until his sword also breaks.<sup>46</sup>

In two instances the victorious combatant removes the helmet and coif from his defeated adversary, an action which Hartmann specifically links to killing.<sup>47</sup> It has been noted that the action of uncovering the opponent's head by removing helmet and coif provides an opportunity for the defeated man to surrender, but it also demonstrates how greatly his armour protects him.<sup>48</sup>

In *Erec*, then, Hartmann makes a clear distinction between those combats his hero fights against opponents without adequate armour or without armour at all, and those that he undertakes against knightly opponents whose arms and armour are comparable to his own. In his second romance, *Iwein*, Hartmann appears less concerned—there are almost no encounters against unarmoured opponents, for instance.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, as in *Erec*, the hero does engage in a combat against a fellow knight, Gawein, which lasts all day.<sup>50</sup> Neither man is initially aware of the other's identity; during the combat, the combatants pause for rest and are then forced to halt at dusk, at which point they finally recognize each other. Iwein and Gawein both sustain bleeding wounds to

45 *Erec* 9211–18.

46 *Erec* 9311–15. The implication is that Erec is striking his opponent in the head or face.

47 See for example Erec's victory over Iders, 951–53. The second instance occurs during Erec's second encounter with Guivreiz, see 6937–38, where Erec is defeated and nearly killed in this manner.

48 See Jones, "Schutzwaffen und Höflichkeit", p. 77. It would of course be possible to finish off a fallen opponent by uncovering no more than his face—by a thrust into the eye-socket, for instance—but such brutal pragmatism does not sit particularly well with Hartmann's interest in courtly, chivalrous behaviour.

49 The giant Harpin is the sole exception (*Iwein* 4973–5074), wearing no armour and carrying only a staff as a weapon; Hartmann notes that Harpin sees no need for any further protection. Giants also appear in *Erec* (5381–5569), again, wearing no armour and armed only with whips and cudgels.

50 *Iwein* 6929–7348. The description of the combat includes lengthy digressions.

the head through their helmets.<sup>51</sup> Earlier in the text, when fighting against the knight Askalon, Iwein strikes him through the helm, but in this case the damage is fatal, since the blow penetrates “*zetal unz dâ das leben lac*” (trans.: “a blow . . . that reached down to his life-source”).<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to note that in *Erec*, Hartmann depicts blows striking the helmet but not penetrating it, whereas in *Iwein*, the blows do penetrate the metal.<sup>53</sup>

Hartmann’s preoccupation with armour is unsurprisingly mirrored in the German Fight Books of the Liechtenauer school.<sup>54</sup> In the Fight Book written by Sigmund Ringeck, for instance, Liechtenauer’s instruction attacking an armoured opponent reads as follows: “*Leder vnnd handschuch vnnd den augen: die blöß recht suoch*” (trans.: “Leather and glove and the eyes, search correctly for these openings”);<sup>55</sup> in other words, attacks should be aimed at those places not protected by armour. Ringeck’s glosses reinforce this point.<sup>56</sup> Attacks against the armour itself are futile and will only provide an opportunity for the opponent to strike in return. It should of course be noted that the armour in use in the late 15th and early 16th centuries was full plate, which would offer considerably greater protection than the mail of Hartmann’s era,<sup>57</sup> but the implications remain the same; armour offers effective protection against attack, and an unarmoured opponent is at a severe disadvantage.

## 2.2 *Ulrich von Zatzikhoven: Art and Artfulness*

Unlike Hartmann, Ulrich von Zatzikhoven is not among the most prolific authors of the German Middle Ages; his sole work, *Lanzelet*, survives in only six manuscript versions of which four are fragmentary; nevertheless, comments from his contemporaries indicate that he was well-regarded.<sup>58</sup> The extant manuscripts date to between the early 13th century and the first half of the 14th century.<sup>59</sup> Ulrich resembles Hartmann in claiming that his work is based on a French original, but since his work bears no resemblance to extant French

51 *Iwein* 7228–34. For the translation see Edwards, *Iwein*, p. 345.

52 *Iwein* 1050; Edwards, *Iwein*, p. 51.

53 See Kellett, “Guts, Gore and Glory”, 164–70, for a discussion of penetrating versus non-penetrating blows to the head.

54 See Hagedorn, “German fechtbücher from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance”.

55 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauer*, p. 150, line 1560.

56 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauer*, p. 151, lines 1609–12.

57 See for instance Hans Talhoffer’s 1467 manuscript (Rector, *Medieval Combat*).

58 Ranawake, “The Emergence of the German Arthurian Romance”, p. 49.

59 Kragl, *Lanzelet*, p. 531.

versions of the Lancelot material, his source may be fictitious.<sup>60</sup> Sadly, Ulrich provides no information at all about himself, so it is impossible to ascertain whether he would have first-hand experience of knightly combat.

The descriptions of combat in *Lanzelet* have been described as formulaic;<sup>61</sup> nevertheless, the text includes an encounter between the young hero and a more experienced opponent which provides some interesting insights into the mentality of the successful fighter. The combat comes about when Lanzelet unintentionally transgresses the laws of Linier, the ruler of Limors. After a skirmish with Linier's knights, the hero is imprisoned, but demands the right to fight Linier for his freedom. Linier agrees, but as Linier's niece Ade explains, any challenger must first defeat a giant, then two lions, before facing Linier. The combat must be concluded by *nône* (3 pm), or the challenger is beheaded. Ade adds that these elaborate arrangements serve a particular purpose: "The adventure has been so carefully designed because [Linier] wants to protect himself. He guards his life well."<sup>62</sup>

Linier has made very thorough preparations to reduce the risk he faces in undertaking this combat; a challenger is likely to die facing the giant, or failing that, the lions, without ever facing Linier himself. In the unlikely event that the challenger survives, he will be exhausted and possibly wounded, thus weighting the odds in Linier's favour. As we might expect, Lanzelet defeats the giant and the lions, although he is wounded twice in the flank by the lions' claws and loses a great deal of blood.<sup>63</sup> He is allowed no time to recover or even to dress his wounds before facing Linier (again, according to Linier's plan). Linier's fictional arrangements may be contrasted with the actual practice of the judicial combat, in which efforts were made to ensure a "fair fight"; if the defendant were lame or had poor eyesight the judges were obliged to appoint a champion with the same physical defects to face him; instructions for such

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60 According to Ulrich, the French version of the story on which he draws was first introduced to a German-speaking audience by Hugh of Morville, one of the hostages offered for the release of Richard the Lionheart, held prisoner by Duke Leopold v of Austria from late 1192 to early 1193 (*Lanzelet* 9323–41). This seems unlikely for the reasons discussed above, and it is possible that Ulrich was inspired instead by Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*; see Spiewok, *Lanzelet*, pp. xiii–xv, xxix–xxxi.

61 Spiewok, *Lanzelet*, p. xxiii.

62 *Lanzelet* 1752–55; see Meyer, *Lanzelet*, p. 89 for the translation. All citations from *Lanzelet* are from the 2013 edition by F. Kragl.

63 *Lanzelet* 1956–81.



arrangements can be found in the introduction to Hans Talhoffer's 1459 Fight Book (Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 290<sup>o</sup>2, fol. 8v).<sup>64</sup>

During the combat, Ulrich highlights another aspect of Linier's character as a swordsman in comparison with his young opponent:

*Lînier grôzer künste pflac,  
wan er niht wan ze staten sluoc,  
der junge, der den arn truoc,  
der vaht âne liste,  
wan er wol wiste  
waz im ze leide was getân*

trans.: Linier fought with great expertise, for he always struck at the right moment. The youth [Lanzelet] who carried the eagle<sup>65</sup> fought without such heed, for he knew well what injury he had suffered.<sup>66</sup>

Once again, Linier displays caution and regard for his own safety, striking blows only when it is safe for him to do so or when they are likely to land home. Lanzelet on the other hand allows his anger to overcome his tactical sense. The implication is clearly that Linier, the older and more experienced fighter, is less prone to recklessness. Linier's tactic pays off; he strikes Lanzelet so that the younger man stumbles to his knees:<sup>67</sup>

*ze jungest sluoc der wirt nider  
den gast, daz er kom ûf diu knie  
und den schilt von im lie.  
die sîten er ûf kêrte,  
da in ê der lewe sêrte.*

64 For an overview of the preparations for various forms of the judicial combat, see Fortner, "Kempflîch angesprochen" and for a thorough discussion of the judicial combat in general, see Neumann, *Der gerichtliche Zweikampf*. See also the late 13th-century law-codes included in the *Deutschespiegel*, pp. 282–89.

65 A reference to Lanzelet's heraldic arms.

66 *Lanzelet* 2034–39; Meyer, *Lanzelet*, pp. 103–05.

67 This is another motif that regularly appears in depictions of combat: see for instance *Erec* 847–49 and *Parzîval* 690, 2–8. A more unusual version of the motif appears in the epic *Nibelungenlied*, where the warrior Hagen is struck by a ferryman wielding an oar, forcing him to his knees (*Nibelungenlied* 1557, 1–4).

*dô wundet in aber Lînier in  
durch die halsperge sîn  
eine wunden tief unde wît.*

trans.: Finally the host [Linier] struck the guest down so that he went to his knees and dropped his shield. [Lanzelet's] side, where the lion had wounded him earlier, was left unprotected. Then Linier wounded him a second time through his hauberk, a deep and wide wound.<sup>68</sup>

Linier's actions are clearly those of a wily and experienced fencer: he observes his opponent, striking only when his blows will be effective, then uses force to create an opening for his final attack. Linier's tactics may be compared with those used by Hartmann's Erec in his first combat against Guivreiz; Erec, who is already tired, chooses to fight defensively, using his shield to protect himself and striking no blows himself until the opportune moment. Erec's tactic is also successful in that he defeats Guivreiz, although he suffers a wound to the flank as noted above.<sup>69</sup> Another such instance is to be found in Wirnt von Gravenberc's early 13th-century romance *Wigalois*, in which the hero faces two men, Garel of Mirmidon and Adan of Alarie, and is described as fighting "mit listen"; fighting defensively until he has the opportunity to strike a telling blow.<sup>70</sup>

As Ulrich notes, Linier is also a skilled fighter, using *künste* (arts) to choose when to strike his blows, and precision when he strikes at Lanzelet's wounded flank. Wirnt von Gravenberc's hero Gwigalois likewise uses skill and precision to overcome Garel:

*daz swert begunder sleichen  
under sînem schilte hin  
und stach im dô zem gêren in  
eine wunden, diu was wît,*

68 *Lanzelet* 2074–81; Meyer, *Lanzelet*, pp. 105–07. Lanzelet's hauberk was damaged by the lion's claws, making it possible for Linier's sword to penetrate the mail.

69 See *Erec* 4407–11. Alternatively, Jones, "Chrétien, Hartmann, and the Knight as Fighting Man", pp. 106–08, suggests that Erec, who has neglected his martial training, is not sufficiently prepared—physically or mentally—to undertake combat, hence his reluctance to take the initiative.

70 *Wigalois* 7154–56.

*daz er dar nach in kurzer zît  
tôter viel ûf daz gras*<sup>71</sup>

trans.: He slid his sword under [Garel's] shield and stabbed him through his gusset, giving him a wide wound, so that shortly after he fell dead on the grass.<sup>72</sup>

Precision is, naturally, a crucial attribute for a fencer, particularly when aiming blows at an armoured opponent, and is equally important in the joust, where the lance-point must be placed accurately in order to strike a telling blow. Medieval authors frequently refer to lance-thrusts aimed at the throat.<sup>73</sup> In Sigmund Ringeck's brief discussion of tactics to use in the joust, precision is also clearly a prerequisite.<sup>74</sup>

As well as armour, then, precision and the application of skill and tactics are crucial factors in combat, and recognized as such by medieval authors when describing such encounters. However, there is one factor which lies beyond the control of any combatant, no matter how skilled he may be or how well armoured; the element of chance. In discussing the third author and his works, we will examine the matter of luck and of accident.

### 3 Wolfram von Eschenbach: Accidents and Incidents

The third author counts among the most famous of the German medieval period, and arguably the author with the greatest experience of knightly combat. Wolfram von Eschenbach, like Hartmann, was a hugely influential writer, whose works include romance, epic and lyric poetry. His two longest works, the Arthurian romance *Parzival* and the Crusading epic *Willehalm*, survive in numerous manuscripts and inspired many "continuations" or reworkings by later authors. Wolfram is thought to have lived between c. 1170 and c. 1220, and his longest works are dated to the early 13th century.<sup>75</sup> Like Hartmann, he drew on French material in each case: *Parzival* is a reworking of another (unfinished)

71 *Wigalois* 7166–72.

72 The gusset at which Gwigalois aims is likely to be placed either under Garel's arm or in the skirt of his tunic covering his lower abdomen and upper legs.

73 See *Iwein* 5334–36; see also *Parzival* 739, 3–5.

74 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauer*, pp. 158–59, lines 1798–1803; see also Erec's joust against Keiû (*Erec* 4725–31).

75 See Schiroke, "Wolfram und seine Werke im Mittelalter", Gerhardt, *Der "Willehalm"—Zyklus*.

romance by Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval, Le Conte du Graal*, while *Willehalm* is inspired by the French epic *Aliscans*.<sup>76</sup> *Parzival*, like *Erec* and *Iwein*, tells the story of a young knight seeking recognition at Artus's court and to become worthy of inheriting the kingship of the Grail, while *Willehalm* describes a Saracen campaign against the hero in revenge for his having persuaded the Saracen noblewoman Arabel to abandon her family, convert to Christianity and marry him, taking the name Gyburc.

Wolfram also resembles Hartmann in that he too was a knight.<sup>77</sup> Wolfram's experience of knighthood influences his works in a variety of ways, from the depiction of tactic and strategy in the scenes of battle and siege in *Willehalm* down to the inclusion of minor detail such as the tendency of armour to rust and leave marks on the wearer.<sup>78</sup> One aspect of combat that Wolfram includes in many of his descriptions is the role of chance or accident. This can be seen for instance in the second battle in *Willehalm*; a Saracen nobleman named Poydwiz is killed after a sword-cut severs his bridle, leaving him unable to control his horse.<sup>79</sup>

A more dramatic example of accidental injury in *Willehalm* is found in the case of Arofel, a Persian king. After being defeated by the Saracens in his first battle, the eponymous hero flees the field alone to gather support. In his flight, he encounters Arofel and the two fight on horseback:

*daz ors mit hurte in naher truoc,  
daz die riemen vor einem knie  
brasten dort unde hie:  
ame lendenier si entstricket wart  
von der hurteclichen vart,  
Diu iserhose sanc uf den sporn:  
des wart sîn blankez bein verlorn.*

76 See Mertens, "Der Stoff: Vorgaben und Fortschreibungen", pp. 279–83, discussing the relationship between *Parzival* and *Perceval*, in particular the depiction of the Grail in Wolfram's version. See also Hennings, "Der Stoff: Vorgaben und Fortschreibungen", pp. 548–57 for a discussion of the relationship between *Aliscans* and *Willehalm*.

77 Schiroke, "Wolfram und seine Werke im Mittelalter", p. 2.

78 See for instance *Parzival* 305, 22–24. McFarland, "The Emergence of the German Grail Romance: Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*", p. 54, notes that although Wolfram never identifies himself explicitly as a knight, "his texts reveal an ability to depict the details of the world of lived knighthood equalled by no other poet of his time".

79 *Willehalm* 412, 21–30. Wolfram comments that this misfortune is compounded by Poydwiz's folly in riding too far away from his own forces in the *mêlée* (*Willehalm* 412, 10–20). All references are to the 2003 edition by W. Schröder.

*halsperges ger und kursit  
und der schilt an der selben zît  
waren drab gerucket, deiz bein stuont bloz.  
den blanken diechschenkel groz  
der marcrâve hin ab im swanc*<sup>80</sup>

trans.: [Arofel's] horse carried him onwards at the charge, so that the leather straps before one knee snapped in some places: they were detached from his belt by the swift movement, and his iron hose sank onto his spur; as a result his bare leg was doomed. The skirts of his hauberk and his surcoat together with his shield had pulled up higher at the same time so that his leg was uncovered. The margrave [Willehalm] cut [Arofel's] great bare thigh off.

The purely accidental nature of Arofel's defeat, together with the detail Wolfram includes, suggest that he may here be writing from experience. It is easy to imagine that the motion of the horse and of the rider's legs might cause friction on the leather straps holding up the chausses, weakening them until they snap. Even the injury Arofel suffers is plausibly described; we might speculate that Willehalm, riding past, delivers a downwards blow to the front or outside of Arofel's thigh which shears down through the skin and muscle, cutting off a large "fillet" of flesh. Depending on the positioning of the blow, Willehalm's blade might damage the vastus lateralis or vastus intermedius muscles (part of the quadriceps) and sever the lateral femoral circumflex artery which branches off from the main femoral artery. Arofel's injury is serious enough to oblige him to offer to surrender to Willehalm,<sup>81</sup> but Willehalm refuses and kills him on the spot. Both Ringeck and Talhoffer include cuts to the leg in their techniques for use in mounted combat, although these cuts are aimed at the back of the leg, not at the front or side.<sup>82</sup>

A second incident in *Willehalm* again depicts the role of accident in combat, as well as indicating that Wolfram, like Hartmann, understood the importance of armour only too well: during the second battle, the Christian knight Bernart encounters a Saracen named Cliboris, the king of Tananarke, and they engage in single combat. Cliboris strikes Bernart, aiming at his head:

80 *Willehalm* 78, 26–79, 7.

81 Bumke, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, p. 285, suggests that Willehalm's blow actually severs Arofel's leg, but this does not appear to be borne out by the text.

82 Rector, *Medieval Combat*, plate 253; Kellett, "... Vnnd schüß im vnder dem schwert den ort lang ein zû der brust'", pp. 176–77, note 26.

*der künec von Tananarke dranc  
an den von Brubant: hin er swanc  
ims helmes breiter danne ein hant,  
daz ez ufem herseniere erwant.  
waere der halsperc niht dublin,  
ez müese aldâ sin ende sin<sup>83</sup>*

trans.: The king of Tananarke bore down upon [Bernart] of Brubant; he cut away part of his helm broader than a hand, so that the blow caught in his coif. If the mail had not been double, this would have been his end.

Bernart responds instantly with a blow to Cliboris's head which cleaves through his decorated helm, killing him.<sup>84</sup> The implication is that Bernart uses the brief pause as Cliboris's sword catches in his mail in order to launch his counter-attack. As in the case of Arofel, sheer chance provides an opening for the fatal blow.

Accident also plays a part in the depiction of combat in *Parzival*, and illustrates the dangers involved in jousting in particular. In one scene, the hero is riding through the woods when he sees three drops of blood in the snow shed by an injured wild goose. The contrast between the red blood and the white snow reminds Parzival of the face of his wife, Condwiramurs, and he sinks into a reverie. Artus's knights see him waiting as if to joust, and he is attacked first by Segremors and then by Keie (Sir Kay). Parzival regains his senses just in time to respond to his adversary's joust in both cases, with dire consequences in particular for Keie:

*Keie, Artûs' seneschalt  
ze gegentjoste wart gevalt  
über den ronen, dâ diu gans entran,  
sô daz daz ors unt der man  
lîten beidiu samt nôt.  
der man wart wunt, daz ors lac tôt.  
zwischen dem satelbogen und eime stein  
Keie der zeswe arm und daz winster bein  
zebrach von disem gevelle.  
surzengel, satel, geschelle  
von dirre hurt gar zebrast*

83 *Willehalm* 410, 17–22.

84 *Willehalm* 410, 23–411, 10.

trans.: Kay, Arthur's seneschal, was felled by the counter-joust, thrown across the tree-trunk where the goose had escaped, so that horse and man alike suffered extremity—the man was wounded, the horse lay dead. Caught between the saddle-bow and a boulder, Kay's right arm and left leg were broken by that fall—saddle-girth, saddle, bells, all shattered by the collision.<sup>85</sup>

In this instance, Keie suffers no harm from Parzival's lance-thrust itself; his injuries are caused by his unlucky fall, in which he also suffers the misfortune of losing his horse. The implication is that the horse is thrown back on its haunches, stumbles over the fallen tree-trunk to its left and is unable to control its fall, with fatal results. Keie's left leg is crushed between the wooden saddle-bow and the stone. It is interesting that Wolfram adds that Keie also breaks his *right* arm; this detail might be included solely to fit the metre of Wolfram's verse, but it could also indicate that Keie twists as he falls, instinctively bringing his right arm round to catch his fall (his left arm being encumbered by his shield) but trapping his right arm underneath him and the saddlebow instead.

In a later joust, both Parzival and his opponent—a knight in the service of the Grail King—suffer accidents due to the terrain. The two undertake their joust near to a deep gully; when Parzival knocks his opponent from his horse, he tumbles into it and is forced to climb out, fortunately uninjured. Parzival has an even closer call:

*Parcifâl der tjoste nâch  
volgete. dem orse was ze gâch;  
ez viel hin ab, daz ez gar zebrast.  
Parcifâl eins zêders ast  
begreif mit sînen handen*

trans.: Parzival followed on in the direction of the joust. His charger was overhasty. It plunged down, shattering every bone. Parzival grasped a cedar branch with his hands.<sup>86</sup>

85 *Parzival* 295, 17–27; see Edwards, *Wolfram von Eschenbach, Parzival*, pp. 94–95 for the translation.

86 *Parzival* 444, 27–445,1; Edwards, *Wolfram von Eschenbach, Parzival*, p. 143. As with Keii's unseating in *Erec*, this seems to be an instance of deliberate humour on Wolfram's part; Bumke, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, p. 88, refers to this episode as a “komische Pantomime”.

Wolfram also makes reference on occasion to what might be described as “incidental” injuries; i.e. wounds that were inflicted at random rather than by design. In *Willehalm*, for instance, the hero succeeds in escaping the Saracens and returns to his castle at Orange, where Gyburc tends to him:

*In ein kemenaten gienc  
Gyburc, diu ez sus an vienc  
mit ir amise.  
da entwapent in diu wise.  
si schouwete an den stunden,  
ob er hete deheine wunden;  
der si von pfilen etsliche vant*<sup>87</sup>

trans.: Gyburc went to a chamber and cared for her beloved in this manner: the wise woman took off his armour and looked immediately to see if he bore any wounds; she found some caused by arrows.

Although Wolfram refers to the presence of archers in the battle,<sup>88</sup> there is no suggestion that they have aimed at Willehalm in particular; the implication is that his wounds were caused by volleys shot at the Christian army in general, and can be considered as an incidental risk of *mêlée* combat.

There is another indirect reference to an incidental injury suffered by Willehalm: when the hero arrives at Orange his wife at first mistakes him for a Saracen and demands that he remove his helmet so that she can see the scar on his nose caused when he campaigned with Charlemagne; on recognizing the injury she greets him as “*Willalm ehkurneys*” (“Willehalm of the short nose”).<sup>89</sup> The episode to which Wolfram refers appears in the Old French epic *Le Couronnement de Louis*, when Guillelme (Willehalm) fights the Saracen Corsolt; Corsolt strikes Guillelme on the front of the helmet so that the blow severs the nasal and cuts off the end of the hero’s nose.<sup>90</sup>

87 *Willehalm* 99, 15–21.

88 See for example *Willehalm* 32, 27–30.

89 *Willehalm* 91, 24–92, 18. The epithet “*ehkurneys*” is a corruption of the Old French “*al cort nez*”.

90 See *Le Couronnement de Louis* 1037–41. This appears to be an attempt by Corsolt to perform an epic blow, splitting Guillaume in half; his blow continues downwards through the neck of Guillaume’s horse, severing it. There are obvious elements of hyperbole in this description.



Another instance of an “incidental” facial injury can be found in *Lanzelet*, when the hero faces the knight Iweret:

*des wart der küene Iweret  
 geslagen durch di barbel,  
 daz der degen alsô snel  
 bluoten begunde  
 zer nasen und zem munde  
 durch die vintâlen nider*

trans.: Then brave Iweret was struck through the face guard so that the fearless knight began to bleed from the nose and mouth, down through the ventail.<sup>91</sup>

Although in these instances the face does not seem to be the actual target, attacks to the face are present in German fencing manuals, particularly in Leeds, *Royal Armouries*, I.33, in which a cut to the side of the face appears as part of one of the most frequently depicted techniques. In addition, Ringeck refers repeatedly to cuts being made “durchs maul” (“through the mouth”); the face was clearly a target for attack.<sup>92</sup> Although fencing manuals do not generally refer to accident or chance, the uncertainty of combat is implicitly acknowledged; the authors frequently suggest alternative techniques to be employed if the first attack does not succeed.<sup>93</sup> Other records indicate that accidental injury and even death could result even in friendly fencing bouts.<sup>94</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion

This brief investigation of the works of three medieval German authors demonstrates that medieval narrative texts are certainly capable of providing insights into combat and its results, and sometimes provide startlingly realistic details, particularly when compared with the evidence of the Fight Books. Two of the authors studied—Hartmann von Aue and Wolfram von Eschenbach—

91 *Lanzelet* 4528–33; Meyer, *Lanzelet*, p. 231. The possible reasons for choosing the face as a target are discussed in Kellett, “. . . Vnnd schüß im vnder dem schwert den ort lang ein zû der brust”, pp. 182–84.

92 See for instance Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauer*, p. 107, lines 404–08.

93 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauer*, p. 118, lines 703–14.

94 Amberger, “Killing Arts”, p. 184.

were themselves knights and therefore had considerable first-hand experience of combat, which can clearly be seen in their works.

In his romance *Erec*, Hartmann focuses in particular on the importance of armour, attributing the deaths of the robbers explicitly to the fact that they are inadequately protected, and including scenes in which the hero is confronted by opponents wearing no armour at all. He contrasts these encounters, brief and bloody, with Erec's combats against fully-armoured fellow knights, which are generally protracted and end with a surrender rather than fatality. Hartmann's emphasis on sparing the defeated party may indeed be attributed to the ideals of chivalry, but it is clear that it is the effective protection offered by the knights' armour that provides the opportunity for such a non-fatal outcome in these combats. The more advanced armour used in the later Middle Ages would of course offer better protection yet.

Although we know nothing of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven and hence cannot speculate as to his personal experience of combat, he demonstrates clear understanding of the importance of tactics in combat, and of precision in the aiming of blows. The wily Linier is a dangerous opponent for Ulrich's young hero, Lanzelet, because he uses his greater experience to weight the odds in his favour—firstly by “rigging” the combat such that his opponent will be exhausted and injured before ever facing him, and then by fighting with cunning and waiting for the opportune moment to strike. Linier is also quick to take advantage of the weak spot in Lanzelet's armour as soon as he has an opening to do so. Combat, for Ulrich, is clearly a matter of brain as much as of brawn.

Lastly, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* and *Willehalm*, we see that neither armour nor cunning can guard a combatant against the least quantifiable aspect of combat; chance. In *Parzival*, the author emphasizes the danger of accident in the joust, where a falling horse can cause severe injury to its rider and where the terrain itself poses a threat. In *Willehalm*, Wolfram like Hartmann considers the protection offered by armour, but also considers what might happen if the armour fails. The defeat and death of Arofel is due entirely to tragic accident. Wolfram also includes references to ‘incidental’ injuries; wounds sustained in the course of combat but which were not necessarily the result of deliberate action by the opponent. This too demonstrates Wolfram's understanding that the outcome of a combat may be determined as much by random chance as by the training or equipment of the participants, important though they are.

The works of these three authors, then, display a more sophisticated depiction of combat than is often assumed of medieval literature. This is, of course, scarcely surprising, given that the audience for which these texts were written

was familiar with the results of combat, either through first-hand experience of tournament, judicial combat or battle, or from observing as a spectator. The medieval audience would have been well able to distinguish between realism and exaggeration in the literary descriptions of combat, and medieval authors such as Hartmann, Ulrich and Wolfram were certainly aware of this when composing their works; other authors' works would repay similar study.

The popularity of Arthurian romances and other literary works in the later Middle Ages, particularly among the nobility, indicates that they formed part of the cultural background to the creation and use of the German Fight Books as well, and were read by individuals—often noble—with a technical knowledge of combat. The patrons of fencing masters such as Hans Talhoffer, Sigmund Ringeck and other adherents to the Liechtenauer “school” would very likely have had the feats of Erec, Iwein or Parzival in mind when commissioning the writing of Fight Books, and—conceivably—when practising the techniques included in them. The narrative literature of medieval Germany may not mirror the reality of medieval combat with total accuracy, but it certainly provides many details of great interest to students of German Fight Books and of historical martial arts in general.

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## Visualised Motion: Iconography of Medieval and Renaissance Fencing Books

*Jens Peter Kleinau*

The Fight Book corpus within the (German) *artes*-literature is becoming the target of an increasing scientific interest. The great number of surviving manuscripts and books offer a huge amount of information which seemed to be for a long time ignored. Martin Wierschin in 1965 and Hans Peter Hils in the 1980s were updating the late 19th-century works of Max Jähns, Gustav Hergsell, and Karl Wassmannsdorf.<sup>1</sup> Those were the pilots of a of a steadily increasing publication list on this field of research becoming divers on each special topic. A recent work to the topic of this article is the dissertation of Heidemarie Bodemer “Das Fechtbuch”.<sup>2</sup> The dissertation offers a survey of the fencing books, describes iconographically exemplary works, and presents theories on the functional purposes of the illustrations. Contemplimentary to this article, Sydney Anglo offers an insight on the relation between text and image and the practical fencing in the printed illustrated fencing books from the 16th and 17th century.<sup>3</sup>

Considerations on the pragmatic literature<sup>4</sup> in high and late medieval and renaissance manuscripts often go on the assumption that pictures are merely an illustrative supplement to the text of the historical sources, and thus to be regarded as an extension of the written content and rarely as a content of its own core value. An image may reflect or interpret the textual content, or it may be a decorative element with no connection to the text. Images in

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1 See General Bibliography.

2 Bodemer, *Das Fechtbuch, Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der bildkünstlerischen Darstellung der Fechtkunst in den Fechtbüchern...*

3 Anglo, “Sword and Pen: Fencing Masters and Artists”.

4 The term pragmatic literature describes a field of research and study based on the German term “Gebrauchsliteratur”. It was named by Kuhn, *Versuch über das 15./16. Jh.*, p. 22 and redefined as “pragmatische Schriftlichkeit” by the “Der Sonderforschungsbereich 231 (1986–1999), Träger, Felder, Formen pragmatischer Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter” at the Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Pragmatic literature serves all types of purposeful actions, requirements of practical life, information and communication, representation and transmission (see Keller/Grubmüller, “Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter”).

general add beauty and increase the value of the work piece. While the process of transcription, reading, understanding, and critical interpretation of written text is delicate and difficult, it has the favour that a text—if not only fragmentary—transports the subject matter with the surrounding context. An image that illustrates an incident in the Siege of Troy in a late medieval manuscript does this by displaying the tools and habits of the illustrator's contemporary epoch. It follows a style of a master illustrator in a workshop or school, answers the demands of the client, and often copies the visual language of a former manuscript.<sup>5</sup> Thus it is deprived of the context of the textual source. It touches the same subject matter as the text but it transports a context of its own meaning. While the image's contextual meaning is to be seen as distinct historical data, it is of less value for the subject itself as a historical source. Taking the weapons and armour of the hero Achilles in a 15th-century illustration as Greek antique fighting equipment would be utter nonsense. Furthermore it is questionable too if this equipment would fit to a typical contemporary 15th century knight.<sup>6</sup>

Extracting the historiographical data of such image needs a methodology that goes beyond the subject matter. The methods of iconography and iconology as a toolset for dealing with meaning and signification of medieval images are founded on the interpretative levels of meaning in works of art identified by Erwin Panofsky in 1939.<sup>7</sup> The three-fold analysis method was modified and extended by Rainer Wohlfeil.<sup>8</sup> It contained the acquisition of the formal data in the "Pre-iconographic Description" (*Vor-ikonographische Beschreibung*), the embedding of the image into the historical context in the "Iconographical Historical Analysis" (*Ikonographisch-historische Analyse*), and the interpretation of the "Historical Meaning of the Document" (*historischer Dokumentsinn*). Heike Talkenberger raises questions about the social structure in which the image, the artists and the client stood, about the context of the artist's social experiences, and about the social function of the image and its reception in the historical communication process.<sup>9</sup> Extending this Gabriela Signori separates layers of an image demonstrating that they could differ in meaning.<sup>10</sup> While the allegorical meaning of historical images of saints could call for modesty, the rich garments of the saints create another phenomenological

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5 Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and their Methods*, pp. 121–149.

6 Merten, "Bilder als historische Quelle".

7 Panofsky, "Ikonographie und Ikonologie", pp. 36–38.

8 Wohlfeil, "Methodische Reflexionen zur historischen Bildkunde", pp. 17–35.

9 Talkenberger, "Von der Illustration zur Interpretation", pp. 289–313.

10 Signori, "Wörter, Sachen und Bilder", p. 13.



interpretation. This leads to the identification of multiple layers within a historical image addressing the recipients or beholders. If there is a repeatedly used pattern as part of such layer it could be identified and partly verbally described.<sup>11</sup> But part of the pictorial grammar remains unspoken. The summary of all identifiable meanings that are addressing the beholder is the intention. This includes the context and process of creation.<sup>12</sup> The communication process in its psychological dimensions, or simply speaking how the historical beholder may have responded, is reflected by David Freedberg with the definition of the “response” as the “the symptoms of the relationship between image and beholder.”<sup>13</sup>

The pragmatic literature of the High and Late Middle Ages and Renaissance does not allow the question for the meaning of the content in general. The intention of writing down a cookbook or pharmacopoeia does not offer much room for educated guesses. They are collections of single items which are from the viewpoint of the collector in the same domain. They are collected because they seem to be notable as a single items or to belong to a copied collection which is in total worth-being copied. Each single item may stand for a pool of interpretations but the main intention of collecting the items, and by thus creating the collection, is simply in owning it. A collection could be unstructured or structured by several categories. A collection becomes a tool for educational purposes if the structure follows a teaching curriculum. The teaching may be included in the collection, thus creating a self-learning book, or the teaching may be given external by a master, while the pupil or the teacher himself uses the collection as an aide memoire or as a demonstration of his knowledge. A collection of images in a pragmatic domain is a collection of displayed knowledge. With a few exceptions the images in such a collection seems to have no other intention than the communication of the pragmatic content. An analysis of such images in search of meaning seems to be of little value. Objects seen worthy to analyse by that method would be the images that “fall out” of the collection, like the display of fencing virtues in the *Fiore de Liberi* manuscript MS Ludwig XV 13, fol. 32r<sup>14</sup> or the surrounding images

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11 Jaritz, “Bound Images”.

12 Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention*.

13 Freedberg, *The power of images*, p. 22.

14 The manuscript Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV 13, authored by Fiore de Liberi displays on fol. 32r a crowned master fencer as the centre of six swords surrounded by the four animals lynx, tiger, lion, and elephant as analogies for the four virtues prudence, celerity, audacity, and fortitude of a fencer.

which put the display of martial techniques into the context of a judicial duel in the books of Hans Talhoffer.

Little do we know about the authors, writers, and illustrators of the fencing manuscripts, less is known about the process of creating the volumes.<sup>15</sup> We are aware that the volumes had great value to the owners from looking at the amount of work that had been done to create them.<sup>16</sup> This article will propose an approach allowing specific understanding of the functionality of the images. It will put a light on the communication process between beholders and images by outlining a typology to categorise the interests of the owners. It will examine any coincidence between the value of the content and the production efforts. From there it will draw a relation between creation, owning, and using the books to give a short picture of the context in which the images were created and used. The context would be incomplete without an understanding of the motion and the view of the contemporary artists on the motion of the human body. The methodology of constructing such a context offers the basis of analysis and interpretation, which must be done in detail by further research.

## 1 The Functions of the Images

The process of creating a collection of fencing techniques often includes adding text to the images. But there are several image collections containing no text at all, some contain only few lines, and others complete instructions.<sup>17</sup> While the most fencing books had been created by making the images first there had been some where the complete book had been written as a text compilation first. Such is the textual fighting book Heidelberg Cod. Pal. germ. 430.<sup>18</sup> It is the prototype for the highly illustrated Munich BSB Cgm 582, both made by Hans Lecküchner. The connection of text and image depend on the structure of the collection. In most cases the images and the text follow a strict structure. Each image stands for a martial technique or part of it, and the techniques

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15 Anglo, "Sword and Pen: Fencing Masters and Artists", p. 159.

16 See below, "What is it worth?"

17 The remaining corpus contains also seemingly unfinished books in which the image stands alone on a single page with empty space to be filled with text (see below).

18 Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 430, contains Hans Lecküchners Messerfechten on 126 paper folios. The book was made 1478 according to watermark date termination and has no illustration other than in the dedication the coat of arms. See the description in Miller/Zimmermann, *Die Codices Palatini germanici*, p. 396.

are following an order of teaching. The images are created such that there is a good part of the page to fill with text (e.g. in the uncompleted Cod.Guelf.78.2 Aug.2° of the Herzog-August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel<sup>19</sup>). Text and images are following the same structure. In other books the text only comments the images which seemingly only vaguely follow any structure. The images may narrate the techniques in a single, two or more pictures, or may be put into the context of a duel, in which the weapons are used sorted by their size, starting with two handed weapons and ending with dagger bringing the death to one of the fighters. In these cases the often spare text is only loosely connected to the images and may even not follow the same structure. If there is any value in the content in form of martial knowledge it is not transported by the text.

Since Leon Battista Alberti stated that “the studious painter ought to make himself familiar with poets and orators and other men of letters, for he will not only obtain excellent ornaments from such learned minds, but he will also be assisted in those very inventions which in painting may gain him the greatest praise.”<sup>20</sup> The Horace phrase *ut pictura poesis* could be seen as an aspect not to be ignored by the illustrators of pragmatic literature of the Renaissance. The poet’s ability to paint images of nature in the imagination of the reader or listener and the painter’s ability to paint the same images on canvas most closely link the two arts, “painting, like poetry, was the imitation of human action”.<sup>21</sup> The painter’s and the poet’s purpose was assumed to be serious, for he must seek not only to delectate, but to impart wisdom.<sup>22</sup> To see the artist as a simple craftsman who puts on paper and parchment what he sees or imagines under given conditions is underestimating the studious artist who is part of a book making process. It seems to be logical to examine the images according to the rhetorical trio *docere, delectare, and movere*<sup>23</sup> as part of the intended communication process between the creator and beholder, the intention.

Heidemarie Bodemer uses the term “illustration” and states that the illustration completes the text or creates a prestigious value for the owner such that the text may become second priority.<sup>24</sup> It is the classical understanding of

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19 The Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek, Codex Guelferbytanus 78.2 Aug.2° is a German compilation of multiple collections. It contains excerpts of Konrad Kyesers Bellifortis, the Liechtenauer Verses, and a huge number of fencing techniques copied from other image collections. It is remarkable that the images only fill the upper part of each page. The colour washed drawings display fighters on a waved green ground.

20 Alberti, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist*, p. 165.

21 Lee, “Ut Pictura Poesis”, p. 261.

22 Ibid.

23 Stems from Cicero’s *De Oratore*, 27.115 (see e.g. Rackham, pp. 280–1).

24 Bodemer, H., *Das Fechtbuch*, p. 76.

the combined functions of *docere* and *delectare*. Images as illustrations shall contain educating and pleasure-giving elements at the same time. This understanding does not correspond with the value of the content in form of knowledge solely presented by image collections with no prestigious value at all as pieces of art (e.g. the first part of the compilation in the Codex I.6.4<sup>o</sup>.2,<sup>25</sup> or the Codex Vindobonensis B 11093<sup>26</sup>). The images of those collections must be seen as the elementary informational container for the value in form of martial knowledge.

Bodemer explains the function of *docere* without naming it. The images could cover the function of explaining the text making the content understandable. Text and image are working as complementary “knowledge carrier”. Text and image need each other. Already in the production process it is planned that the creation of the informational value is shared between the scribe and the artist. But looking at the contemporary psalters and book of hours it is noteworthy that the narrative iconography of the image could stand out of context of the text nearby. The image in the Christian iconography of the high and late medieval is telling a message of salvation nearly independent from the text.<sup>27</sup>

A further function of the images in fencing books is the illustration to a complete text, where the image does not add any useful informational value to the value of the text. Here the function of *delectare* is prominent. There was the defined wish of the producers to have an illustrated manuscript regardless of the fact that the text was the only necessary informational structure present. It may even be that the artist is interpreting a written instruction and may create disinformation. The latter would be the case if an enriched copy to an existing

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25 Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg, Codex I.6.4<sup>o</sup>.2, is a compilation of several German fencing books of at least three different sources/authors date terminated from the beginning of the 15th century to the middle of the 16th century. It is also called “Vom Baumans Fechtbuch” according to the first collection of the volume. The volume was probably compiled by Paulus Hector Mair (comment on 1 recto: *Über ü Khumben Im / 1556 Jar am / 26 Januari / paulus hector / mair zugehörig*, see footnote 49). The drawings in the first part are colored sketches. The outline of the sketches seems to be done in the same ink like the writing. The color washes by red, brown, green, yellow, and blue often do not match the outline.

26 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis B 11093 contains no text but 92 washed ink drawings on parchment date terminated to 1440–1460.

27 Büttner, “Das Christusbild auf niedrigster Stilhöhe”.

text was produced without the knowledge of the martial art of the original creators.<sup>28</sup> This is similar to the textual glosses to the works of an authority.

Another aspect of *delectare* and *movere* is the aesthetic aspect of the images. They give pleasure by humorous additions, nicely chosen clothes, and a beautiful environment e.g. a fantasy landscape. But they may as well transport gruesome messages of blood spraying, mutilated bodies, and dying man under brutal conditions. The aesthetic is often ignored in the classical iconological analysis but should be part of the understanding of the communication process as affections are transferred that way.<sup>29</sup> Affections are to be seen as data that is transported by the image too.

The functions of the images are: a) the transport of data as elementary part of the informational structure alone or together with a text (in connection or independently); b) the illustration of a text as the interpretation of the text and by this transporting data of its own; and c) finally adding artistic value to the product.

As a collection has no mandatory reason to be homogenous, those functions may mix and interact freely. Having a martially completely useless technique in a prestigious volume does not mean that the rest of the content is martially useless as well. And the opposite does not mean that amateurish sketch will present a perfect technique. Logically a collection could not be analysed by a general approach. To explore a collection of such books with the classical iconographic and iconological toolset will produce scientific data but will not produce iconologically satisfying results.

## 2 Beholders, Consumer, Users, Collectors, Compilers, and Owners

Following a modern approach of iconological analysis we should investigate the interactions of the consumer of the image collections. The consumer does not need to be the owner or buyer of a material thing. But the consumer is more than merely the beholder of the image or the recipient of the content as the fencing book is more than just an image collection: it is a product. Any beholder who interacts with an image might develop an interest and

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28 The *Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica* by Paulus Hector Mair was based on older manuscripts. The texts and images of the manuscripts had been interpreted by the authors and artists. The interpretations were put into new texts and images. The latter did not alter the positions depicted in the older manuscripts but updated them to display knightly arts with shiny and highly decorated armour.

29 Zöllner, "Leon Battista Albertis De pictura".

interpretation and by this becomes a recipient of the content. This content is raw data. Not only the text and the displayed objects and figures, but also the material used to create it. The material may influence the quality of the data. Coloured images of realistic drawn figures carry more information than outlined sketches. The consumer is defined as a person who interacts with an image by watching it with the declared will to take it to mind and eventually to reality. In the case of pragmatic image collections the latter is essential. The consumer consumes the raw data of the content and the material of the images. By adding what is his social and cultural background, his personal data, the consumer creates a perception and interpretation of the image. If the now compiled data is used as a tool the consumer becomes a user of the collection. By collecting, copying and adding his own context, interpretations, and techniques the collector becomes the compiler of the martial content creating a fencing book of his own. At least he becomes the owner who possesses the content in a most physical form as a book.<sup>30</sup>

In the case of fencing books the consumer does not only communicate with the single image, but with the collection. While a collection stands as a collective object for its own purpose, those pragmatic books had been used. A way of usage is illustrated in the fencing book BSB Cgm. 3711 19v.<sup>31</sup> The image on that page is done by inked outlines and multiple washed colours. Shadows, folds are added by brush strokes with the full colour. The fencer to the left is in black clothes and black shoes, his white underwear (probably his braies) are in a disorderly state and hang outside his back. The other fencer wears striped and elegantly padded clothes of red, white, yellow, and blue. An open book lies on the green symbolic ground next to the left fencer in black who is dedicated to be the victim of the displayed fencing technique. These fencers seem to execute a technique from the book. If they are learning or following a repetition curriculum is not visible to us.

## 2.1 *Unwriteable Books*

In the 14th century the anonymous author of the GMN 3227a states that the art of fighting cannot be transmitted by words spoken or written down. The art

30 Forngeng, "Owning the Art", pp. 164–175.

31 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3711 is entitled *Jörg Wilhalm Hutters kunst zu Augspurg*. Hutter was a hatter in the first quarter of the 16th century in Augsburg. Four manuscripts refer to him. The Cgm 3711 is an extended compilation of the former manuscripts München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Cgm 3711, Glasgow, R.L. Scott Collection, MS E.1939.65.354, and München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3712.

must be shown and demonstrated by the hand (of a teacher).<sup>32</sup> Demonstrable knowledge can neither be transported by word nor by images. In principle, demonstrable knowledge is potentially everything beyond the discursive and instrumental use of language, textual or visual. While images have a language of their own they can only “speak” what is visible to the beholder and can be provided by the media that carries the images.<sup>33</sup> Demonstrable, elementary aspects of the art must be experienced and learned by the physical exercise under the supervision of a teacher. But if no one can learn a martial art by a book, the effort of creating such a book seems to be useless by definition.<sup>34</sup>

The early 15th century Italian fencing master called Fiore de Liberi states in the preface of his fencing treatises that he agrees with Galeazzo de Mantova that the field of knowledge of martial art is so vast that no student or master of the art may keep it in memory. He esteems that a human could only memorise perhaps a quarter of the things needed to know to be counted as a master of the art.<sup>35</sup> Therefore a book is the tool to store information that may slip the mind. It is the book that allows a master to be one.

In summary it is impossible to put a martial art into written words (or images) but at the same time it is impossible to remember every aspect of such an art without writing it down. Joachim Meyer specified this conflicting relation between martial arts and books in his printed book of 1570.<sup>36</sup> He stated that the martial art must be learned by physical exercise under supervision of a

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32 *Auch merke das / vnd wisse das man nicht gar eygentlich vnd bedewtlich von dem fechten mag sagen vnd schreiben ader auslegen / als man is wol mag / is wol mag czeigen vnd weisen mit der hant*, Anonymous, ca. 1389. Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs 3227a, fol. 15r. Transcription and translation: *And remark and know, that clearly no one can write or give a description of fencing, as one is able to demonstrate and instruct by the hand.*

33 Scholz, *Vision revisited. Foucault und das Sichtbare.*

34 While this is still common ground up today in martial arts, the meaning of the book changed with the wide distribution of printed volumes at least in the way they were advertised. The authors of such books promised a complete compendium of fencing for which no other guide would be necessary. See Anglo, “Sword and Pen”, p. 153; and id., *L'escrime, la danse et l'art de la guerre.*

35 In the manuscript Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV 13, on folio 2r: [...] *che Misser Galeazzo da Mantua Ben ch'ello diseua che sença libri non sarà çamay nissuno bon magistro nè scolaro in questa'arte. E io fior lo confermo però che quest'arte è sì longa che lo non è al mondo homo de sì granda memoria che podesse tenere a mente sença libri la quarta parte di quest'arte. Adoncha cum la quarta parte di quest'arte non sapiando più non saria magistro.*

36 Meyer, *Gründtliche Beschreibung des Fechtens.*

master in a structured form and completeness that can only be provided by an illustrated book and never by an oral tradition.<sup>37</sup>

Even if we take in account that statements like that are made as a kind of advertisement, it throws a light at the way of the consumer is using the book, and how he communicates with it and the images within. A fencing book in that meaning is a collection of data containing what the consumer could have learned by the authority in connection with it. It is a documentation of knowledge that can be possessed by the book's owner if he had learned the content within by the authority named. From this definition we can identify three types of consumers influencing by their specific needs and expectations the images as part of a product.

## 2.2 *The Image as an aide-mémoire*

In that it is the intention of the first type of consumer to remember things he should already know and may have been educated in, he is a learned user.<sup>38</sup> Thus he communicates with the images and the text in search of keys that unlock the memory.<sup>39</sup> He does not expect a complete instruction. He receives keys that are created with the intention of helping him remember. They are not necessarily the keys to the understanding of the technique or the principles behind it, but they are connected with a certain aspect of the technique that will make him know again how it is executed and applied. Thus the images do not display the most interesting part of the technique but the most helpful for remembering it. The text to the image, if existing, may point to the same aspect or to another aspect of the technique. The text is complementary to the technique but not necessarily to the image. The collection is structured in a way that it supports the execution of exercises because the repetition is part of the remembering process. Without practice the knowledge could not be

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37 *das uhnangesehen und obgleich vilgedachte kunst fürnemlich durch die leibs übung muß erlernt werden / so seye dennoch gewiß und wahr / das sie eben als wol andere / vom lernenden vil besser / wann sie ihm neben güter anweisung / in richtiger ordnung und zusammen gesetzt / für geschrieben / und für augen gestellt / ins gedechtnis eingebildet / volgends auch vil dester ehe durch die leibs übung kann gelehrt und ergriffen werden / dann wann sie ihm also schlecht mündlich erzehlt / und stuckweise gewissen würde.* Meyer, *Gründtliche Beschreibung des Fechtens*, in the "Vorred an den Leser".

38 Joachim Meyer states that a young man shall use the fencing book to exercise the things learned in the absence of the master: *so kann sich hierraus die auffwachsent jugent / nach dem sie von einem rechten Meister gelernt / und aber denselbigen nicht alzeit bey sich hat / erinnern / und täglich zu ihrer geordneten zeit üben.*

39 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*.



preserved, the book alone is not enough.<sup>40</sup> Thus the consumer communicates with the content by repeating it. He reconstructs the images by exercising the techniques displayed. This consumer could develop into the role of replacing the authority, collecting techniques by learning and writing (and drawing) them into a compilation. He would create a new collection and take the reputation of the former authorities as a topos to his own mastership.

### 2.3 *The Image as a Teaching Image*

When the content of the collection is no (longer) part of a repeated constantly process of remembering the teaching of the authority another type of consumer communicates with the images. His intention is to gather new knowledge from the collection, he is a learning user. His expectation would be a full explanation. The images should display the key points of each technique and the structure of the collection should reflect his will to learn from the book. It would start with basics and get more difficult when the principles are supposed to be understood. Images at the beginning of the collection should be easy to understand while later images need the knowledge of correct interpretation of the previous one. In the common scenario the consumer would not use this collection directly for learning. He would choose a mediator, a teacher. This teacher may rely on the same authority as the collection does, but there is no need to. Because this consumer type is driven by the will to learn the personal interest of the consumer would be that he consumes more data than he can handle. He would prefer to own more fencing knowledge that he possible ever could use. This consumer would collect and compile fencing books with the aim to own the data within, to possess the martial art as a physical existing thing.

### 2.4 *The Image as an Owner's Object*

When owning knowledge becomes more prestigious than displaying it in person the consumer of the image collection becomes more interested in form than content, he is an owning user. Whether the content is martially sound in application is of lower priority. It should be seemingly plausible while reading even if it is not fully understandable without deeper examination. The owning user is interested in possessing the martial art, thus he would not be completely ignorant and unlearned, but if has learned the art of fighting in connection with the book or by other means is irrelevant. The consumer expects the image collection to be consistent, well executed (by a renowned artist), and if possible authorised by an authority. The outer form should match the content,

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40 Joachim Meyer recommends a daily practice.

a knightly art should be presented by knights, and the martial art and the display of it could reference classical Greek and Roman heroes.

### 3 What is it Worth?

The first collections of military technology images already followed the conceptual intention of such collections. The image collection illuminating the work of Guidone de Vigenano de Papia<sup>41</sup> seems to make the iconographic analysis irrelevant as a method to investigate the meaning of the illustrations. The display of siege engines and various machines stand next to the text to illustrate the construction and application of the described machines. The practical aspect of illuminated manuscripts of military technology is the preservation and distribution of knowledge greatly demonstrated by the nearly 60 surviving copies of the “Feuerwerksbuch” and 47 known of the “Bellifortis”.<sup>42</sup> The argumentation by Trudl and Wohlfeil goes that the desire to acquire knowledge together with the intention to transfer the expertise in the field of military technology have obviously greatly promoted the development of iconographical meaning free images.<sup>43</sup> This is entirely true for the most images in the collections of military or martial technology with few exceptions. But as Trudl and Wohlfeil say further, the state of the pragmatic image of being free of iconographical meaning does not mean that the image or the production and distribution is free of values and interests. The historical analysis as part of the process of image analysis would be enriched by a one similar to any pragmatic textual collection. This raises questions connected to the informational value of the collection. Who would profit from creating, owning, and using the content? Who makes the effort of producing such collection of knowledge, and for what reason? Is there the wish to keep the knowledge secret or to distribute it? All those questions need to answer the primary first: What is the real value of the content in the historical context?

The creation of a manuscript is an effort that takes time and material. By adding art and knowledge to the material a value is created. To own and perhaps distribute this value is the intention of the producer. Knowledge is an abstract value only getting concrete in the need to obtain it. The latter could

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41 Guidone de Vigenano de Papia, *Texaurus regis Francie adquisicionis terre sancte de ultra mare, necnon sanitatis corporis ejus et vite ipsius prolongacionis, ac eciam cum custodia propter venenum, auct.*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms Latin 11015.

42 Leng, “Ars belli. Deutsche taktische und kriegstechnische Bilderhandschriften”; Berg/ Udo, *Wissentradiierung in spätmittelalterlichen Schriften zur Kriegkunst*, pp. 169–232.

43 Wohlfeil, “Landsknechts-Bild als geschichtliche Quelle”, p. 98.

create such interesting codicological fact that a book containing more than one collection of knowledge could be rated high in value for one topic for one owner while the intention of the producer had been another. Such a volume seems to be the Nürnberg manuscript GMN 3227a which was owned by doctor Nicholas Pol in 1494 for the pharmaceutical and alchemical content<sup>44</sup> and not for its instruction on martial arts.<sup>45</sup> Other volumes like those of Hans Talhoffer where highly valued for their description of the judicial duel as a law. So the martial content was copied into the collections of law books.<sup>46</sup> The value of the content differs with the interests of the owner.

To esteem the value of the content in the interests of producers and possible distributors there is the need to analyse the content itself in its historical and social context. One approach would be to research the costs of producing and the value and quality of the material itself to see if there is a correlation between the value of the content, the costs of producing, and the product as a piece of art. This is following the thesis that a treasure is stored in a surrounding of equal value.

We could try to measure the effort and the costs of creating a volume by the quality of production, the artists involved and the number of pages and illustrations. To create a book similar to the BSB Hss. Cgm. 582<sup>47</sup> on fighting with the single edged Langes Messer of Hans Lecküchner of 1482 contained 414 illustrations would take an enormous effort. In 1467 Eberhard I, Duke of Württemberg paid *10 gulden, 3 imi rockens, 15 imi haberns Baluburrer meß* to Hans Talhoffer<sup>48</sup> probably for creating the book (or for giving instructions

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44 Ehlert/Leng, "Frühe Koch- und Pulverrezepte".

45 See Eric Burkart's contribution in this volume.

46 The manuscript Kassel, Universitätsbibliothek, 2° MS iurid. 29 is a compilation of several law collections, court rules and orders, and the copies of two Talhoffer manuscripts: a) Erfurt, Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek Erfurt/Gotha, MS Chart.A.558, and b) Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod.icon. 394a.

47 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 582, Hans Lecküchner, *Kunst des Messerfechtens*, 1482, This book contains 414 wash coloured drawings, each filling the half of the page. They show fencers in a training situation with some exclusion: in 171r the fencing masters is explaining general rules to the student. On fol. 91v the master fencer plays the game backgammon (*Wurfzabel*) while holding his opponent on the ground, on 92r the opponent is put into a sack, on fol. 161r there are two fencer pairs. The ground is a brown and flat getting darker towards the horizon; fols. 95r, 96v, 97r, 99v, 112v, 132r, 160r, 161r, 174r contains a landscape as the background of the same brown colour.

48 Stuttgart, Hauptstaatsarchiv, A 602 Nr 286 = WR 286, Württembergische Regesten / 1301–1500, Hausarchiv, Eberhard V. (als Herzog I.), 1467–1469 (1467–1469), Verzeichnis des Brauchs, daran man Abbruch tun mag, Überschlag des Brauchs (Hofverbrauchs) von 1467–68 und 1468–69.

in connection to the book). What he paid the bookmakers and artists in the workshop of Stefan Schreiber in Urach is unknown. But the production costs of those high quality books are dwarfed by the efforts to create the luxury tomes of the “Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica” produced by Paulus Hector Mair.<sup>49</sup> At the time those luxury volumes were created the value of the martial content was partly outdated. But as a piece of art displaying the knightly art of fighting it had a value of its own. Another extraordinary piece of art is the parchment fencing book of Duke Eberhard. In his last will he passed it together with a credence table to William II, the Landgrave of Lower Hesse.<sup>50</sup> Other collections of images and text seem to have no artistic value like the ones compiled by Paulus Hector Mair in the mid of the 16th century in the Codex I.6.4<sup>o</sup>.2 of the Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg. The only recognisable value is the content transported by the collections.

The historical and social analysis of the image collections in the martial arts books must recognise two kinds of added value in the production process. The value of the content as conserved knowledge and the value created by the artists, scribes, and bookmakers. The amateurishly sketched fencing technique could help a young knight to survive his dangerous journey as a pilgrim and so is of high value to him. The luxury artful illustration of a martially probably useless action (e.g. the throw of the pommel in the Ms. Germ. Quart. 16, Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Kraków<sup>51</sup>) still has a high value as a piece of art. The interest of the producer, or better the customer, of the fencing book dictates the balance of those two added values. It may even be the case that the client had no interest in the martial content but wanted to have a luxury volume of knightly tournament art in his possession. In such case the value of the

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49 Three manuscripts: Paulus Hector Mair, *Fecht-, Ring- und Turnierbuch*, Augsburg, mid. 16th century (Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek—Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Mscr.Dresd.C.93/94); Paul Hector Mair, s.t. (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod.10825/10826); Paul Hector Mair, *De arte athletica*, Augsburg, mid. 16th century (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod.icon. 393 (1 and 2)).

50 Stuttgart, Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, A 602 Nr 363 = WR 363, p. 7 (fol. 5r), Testament Graf Eberhards, Urach, 1492 December 26,

51 The named technique recommends unscrewing the pommel of the long sword and throwing it at a highly armored opponent. Beside the fact that the pommel as a projectile has probably only minor effects on a fighter in a contemporary armor (as reconstructive experiments by members of the German fencing group Hammaborg have shown), there are extremely few remaining swords of that type and period with screwed pommels known (e.g. КНМ Vienna). Thus it would have needed a custom made sword to apply a technique which had only a small effect. Even if we take into account that the context could be a knightly or judicial duel where the place is covered with sand and no stone to throw is at hand the martial value of the technique in general is to be seen as very low.

content as a martial art book would be highly questionable, the interpretation of the images would be irrelevant.

A direct correlation between the value of the content as a martially sound technique collection and the value of the book as a piece of art or even the material of the book is not covered by the findings. Both forms of value may interact but are independent. There may be good teaching found in luxury tomes and useless techniques in cheaply made notebooks but it could be the exact opposite. Therefore the value of the content and the value of the image collection and the final product must be analysed separately. The interest of creating a beautiful product by engaging the best artists and scribes could only work as an indication that the content may have some value, but it could also indicate that aim was create a prestigious object. The latter may include the engagement of a famous fencing master. The name of an authority adds value to the product and prestige to the producer/owner. It does not guarantee that the fencing master was involved in every step of the process of assuring a high quality collection of sound techniques. It just means that he lent his name as an authority to the product. Often enough the name of a famous fencing master is only borrowed to create an authority topos to the collection.<sup>52</sup>

#### 4 Author and Authority

These three consumer types are the main archetypes that interact with the image collection of a fencing book. While it is easy to think of any kind of beholders, these three consumers form the group that may become users of the book. These are the ones such a pragmatic book is made for. The role of an authority is essential for all three kinds of consumers, but the way this role could be interpreted varies enormously.<sup>53</sup> An *auctoritas* in the meaning of a name of a famous person, or a person who sounds famous enough, could be replaced by an attribute. An image collection that seems to be of a certain age suggests that it has some value. The historicism, the favour for the knightly arts would see a collection coming from the knightly period (as a glorified time) as authorised by its sheer age and value it. That way a collection of a certain age and reputation could be of higher value than a collection made by the finest contemporary artists available. In that aspect the form of the collection

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52 Burkart, "Die Aufzeichnung des Nicht-Sagbaren".

53 Scanlon, "Auctoritas and potestas", pp. 37–54.

and the images must match the expectation as a representation of age and authority.<sup>54</sup>

Personal authority in the form of a mastership, even won by an examination by one of the Renaissance fencing guilds, could be challenged by other fencers having the same trade, or training, or simply fighting experience. A veteran of the field could challenge a fencing master and by this destroy the reputation. By relying on a dead or foreign authority this is avoided. The reputation does not belong to the fencing master. If such a fencing master is beaten, he still owns the reputation of the authority. He is just the humble imperfect carrier for a greater man than he is. And he may prove that by presenting his collection of fencing techniques. So by owning and possessing the collection of several masters, he can rely on multiple authorities.<sup>55</sup>

To match the expectation the creator of the pragmatic image collection is in need of an authority. This need is answered by the following methods: having a famous master to produce an autograph, engaging such master to authorise a book, creating a copy from a collection that is defined as authorised by being old enough, or by borrowing the name of a dead master, or even inventing a master. The role of a living authority was made present by a dedication or by a special note and the display of the fencing master's arms and/or his person.<sup>56</sup>

Secrecy and exclusiveness are two other key points valued by all three consumer types. Possessing a fighting technique that may win a fight because the opponent is not aware of that trick<sup>57</sup> creates an argumentation chain that ends into the possessing of multiple collections of fighting techniques even if they would take more time to learn than a life span, or are not applicable in a period fighting situation. To answer the needs of secrecy the textual Fight Books developed a so-called hidden language. Using terms or short sentences that are not explained but associated with a technique to be remembered would be sufficient enough to work for the first customer type who uses the book as an

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54 The Codex Guelferbytanus 78.2 Aug.2° of the Herzog-August Bibliothek was later in history highly valued as *eyn allte antiquyttetyschess Vechte-, Kamppe vnde Rynggebuche* an old antique book on fencing, fighting, and wrestling as stated in the inscription.

55 Bauer, "Einen Zedel fechter ich mich ruem / Im Schwert vnd Messer vngestuem".

56 On folio 103v of the MS Thott.290.2°, Det Kongelige Bibliotek in Copenhagen: *Item Daz buoch ist Maister Hannsen Talhoferß und der ist selber gestanden mit sinem lybe biß Daz man daz buoch nach Im gemalet hat*. Or on folio 136v of the Codex Icononografico 394a, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich: *Das buch hatt angeben hans talhoffer vnd gestanden zu Mallen*.

57 Albert of Prussia insisted in the letter to the fencing master Ludwig Stolle, Actum Neuhausen, 30th June 1544: *sonder allein die sonderlichen stück die er uns bericht, bei Ime behalten haben*, even in fights against other fencing masters.

aide-mémoire. Developing a secret language in an image collection is far more challenging. One solution was not to show the key positions but start and/or end positions in which the techniques were not visible. Another solution was to show an obvious version hiding a more sophisticated such that the uneducated would not recognise the keys hidden in the image.<sup>58</sup>

## 5 Drawing the Motion of Fighting

The task of the artist is to transfer the three dimensional figures in motion in a two dimensional drawing. By doing so he had to make sure that the data he receives from the visual figures and the instructions of the master is translated correctly. In the case of combat arts this has largely been pictorial, “unlike the notation systems which have been developed for dancing”.<sup>59</sup> To a fighter there are several details that are vital, like which foot is forward, the balance of weight, what are the angles of the weapons used. The translation of motion raises further problem. A relaxed arm holding a sword does not indicate if a thrust, a cut, or a strike is going to be done next or has been executed. The language provides the author of the text with verbs indicating a motion. The artist has to create an own language or to use the patterns of his cultural background and his understanding of motion.

The historical understanding of motion was largely defined by the Aristotelean account of motion in the *Physics*.<sup>60</sup> Motion as the actuality of a potentiality is a definition that is welcomed by the thinking of a martial artist. The potential of a sharp weapon to cut, thrust, or strike is immanent as a threat. When the weapon is in the actuality of doing so the threat becomes real. The motion must be stopped by a parry. But even when parried the weapon still owns the potential to do harm. The potential did not disappear, it just changed in relation to the potential before the parry in quality. This typical fencing situation resembles very much the example St. Thomas Aquinas gives us with heating an object in the *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum*, Book III, Lectio 2.<sup>61</sup> The fencer’s perception of time and distance, and by this

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58 Hans Talhoffer insisted in secrecy especially in connection with the judicial duel, he stated *das sein heimlichait niemen erfar* (Königseggwald, Grafliche Bibliothek, Hs. XIX, 17–3).

59 Anglo, “Sword and Pen”, p. 153.

60 Aristotle, *Physics*, translated by R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, Adelaide, 2014, Book III 201a, 10f.

61 Used in the translation of Conway.

the motion, is always relative and not absolute. The high medieval German fencing terms *vor*, *nach*, and *indes* (translated by the letter as “before”, “after”, and “in between”) in relation to the fencing actions illustrate this perfectly. But as the examples of Thomas Aquinas demonstrate, the definition of motion includes more than just the change of place. Heating is no visible change of place, but an activity. In the *Metaphysics*<sup>62</sup> Aristotle teaches us another kind of potentiality that may become an actuality when someone is having a capability and another is deprived of it. In the world of martial arts this is immanent in the capability of the potentiality to reach an opening which always results in the capability of the opponent to do the same. The task is to deprive the opponent of that while at the same time the actor’s own capability should be preserved. Furthermore Aristotle defines what a state is, and from his definition of the categories and opposites the German high medieval fencing masters created the terminology. Most prominent in this terminology is the equality of *indes* (in between) and *fuehlen* (feeling). The opponents try to feel the state of each other when the blades connect. The main states are defined as weak, strong, hard, and soft. Furthermore in a fight there is always at least one attacking. In most cases there is one defending the attack by a certain movement, and often enough this is the one who is doing the technique described. Rarely there is the situation in which both attack at the same time, because it involves higher risks, but it happens.

All this data is of high value to understanding the fencing technique and is therefore to be translated to an image. But motion is not visible in an image. Motion in an image is always frozen at one time and one place, eventually followed by another image showing another scene at another time and another place. Often enough there is only one scene to each technique showing only one time and one place. The artist has the task of putting in this scene the information what kind of motion will follow the scene and/or what kind of motion had created the scene in which both fencers are at the displayed frozen time. In the 15th-century fencing treatises the time frame for each fencer of the scene was not necessarily the same. To display the key information for the first listed consumer type the artist placed each fencer in the position in which he will present the best information. Even though the fencers seem to interact they are in a different time frame.

### 5.1 *Frozen Time*

The first thing is to decide what time and place the artist will pick to transport the data. In most of the cases where weapons are part of the fighting this will

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62 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, translated by Ross, book v, 1022b.



not be a moment between start and endpoint, it will be either one of them. In fact we find those in-between-images very rarely in weapon based fighting illustrations and only as illustrations when the text names a very special movement.<sup>63</sup> Why the artist choses the start or the end point of the motion has something to do with the capabilities of transporting the data of the motion by the image using known pictorial languages without putting the fighters into a position that would not fit to the technique or to fighting at all.

The image of raising the weapon to do a mighty strike is well known and found often in the images of illuminated manuscripts. It is a pattern often transmitted. So the starting moment of a strike will be recognised easily as long as the start scene is exaggerated enough. A exaggeration will be needed because in a fencing situation the experienced fighter tries hard to avoid to “telegraph” the motion to come, and therefore a strike would not be as easily to recognise unless the fencer wants it so (to start a trick like a feint). But the unlearned may indeed be found in such a position. The endpoint of a strike, if successful would be a gruesome image, therefore this is only displayed if wanted so. If a strike is stopped and by this at an endpoint it is mostly done by a defensive action, it is the technique to illustrate, which is on the starting position of its essential motion.

The beginning of a thrust on the other hand is very difficult to display. An exaggeration would result in a position that not even the inexperienced fencer would ever be found in. Only in weapon systems like the small-sword or foil where the thrust is the prominent or only way of fencing the language of the elongated or otherwise bent arm is enough to inform the beholder of the motion. With a cut and thrust weapon there are multiple ways to interpret a non-elongated arm in front of an opponent. If the artist wants to tell the beholder that the motion is a thrust he would prefer to show the weapon in the endpoint. A thrust that ends in the body of an opponent can only be placed there in that exact way by a thrust. A weapon displayed on an elongated arm just before entering the opponent’s body by a thrust contains the same information but may be misinterpreted as the endpoint of a strike that fell short. Nevertheless the latter variation was chosen when the level of violence was chosen to be low.

In-between images are those displaying a scene at a certain time and certain place between start and endpoint. They are often found in images displaying wrestling. In wrestling other states are more prominent and should

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63 In the BSB Cgm. 582 Hans Lecküchner teaches a technique which requires to rotate the own blade over the own head. The image in a wash colored ink drawing displays the very moment of rotating.

be transported by the image. It is the balance of the fighters transporting the information. The fighter off-balance will be the victim of the technique. The key scene in which one wrestler loses his balance would contain the data the image should provide. Disarming is a special form of wrestling and again we find often in-between images. Those images concentrate at the moment when the disarming is at the state that the opponent is going to lose his weapon. Losing the weapon or the balance is an equal state to be chosen as the appropriate scene to transport the data.

## 5.2 *Cultural Limitations*

Who is or was the attacker and who the defender (if there is one) is mostly not transported in the images. The ideal posture of the fencer is an upright lower body and the front leg bend while the rear leg is nearly elongated.<sup>64</sup> Any variation from that posture may contain information. Having the rear leg bend could be interpreted as a defensive posture. If both legs are bent, the knees showing in the same direction, and the body is not in a very low posture to start a special move, an extreme defensive position is communicated. But these and other indications like an arm raised to desperately stop a final blow are rare.

The cultural limitations and style language of the contemporary époque did not give the artist the toolset to put into the image the data the fencers needed. From the high medieval époque to the Renaissance the amount of data transported in an image rises with the ability to display the human in his natural form. The wish to display a human being in the 3/4 view ignoring if the fencer is on the right or left side of the scene, created a situation where the left fencer had his left shoulder and hip forward and the right fencer his right shoulder and arm forward. This had nothing to do with the real or recommendable situation and created images in which the proportions were made unrealistic to put the hands and weapons in the correct position for the technique. Foot positions are seldom seen in the correct way. The artist was using the feet to indicate the dynamic of fencing while at the same time putting the feet (and often enough the legs too) in a nicely adequate form that was required by the aesthetic rules of the contemporary art following the given patterns. Facial expressions do not reflect the personal situation of the fencer who just experienced a suffering wound or will receive one soon. Rarely enough there are few emotions displayed seemingly characterising a certain type of fencer.

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64 Hans Czzyner, *Über die Fechtkunst und den Ringkampf*, 1538 (Graz, Universitätsbibliothek Karl-Franzens, MS 963) stated: *welcher fu vornn stedth, sey gebogen / der hynnter gestrackt, zyrt den leyb oben / hoch gefochten myt starckem leyb / gewaltig possenn aus der lenge threyb.*

### 5.3 *Copy, Transmission and Pattern*

In the illustrations of the manuscripts from the 13th to the early 16th century we find typical poses of sword fighters that stand out of the mass as they were repeated over and over again: a) the sword is raised high over the head symbolising a mighty strike; b) the sword is lifted over the right shoulder or the back for beheading as a symbol for punishing; and c) the sword is in a death stabbing thrust to a person at the ground by a reversed grip (thumb is near to the pommel). The artists of the Fight Books used the same semiotic language as in the illustrations: the mighty strike from over the head; the punishing cut from the right shoulder as the “wrath strike” (*Zornhau*) or “father’s strike” (*Vatternstreich*<sup>65</sup>); and the death stabbing thrust in the reversed grip. The latter was intentionally used in connection with the long thrusting dagger at the end of the judicial duel scenery.<sup>66</sup> The reversed grip is very rarely found in connection with the sword. The interpretation of these images does not answer the question if this is a symbol for a deadly thrust, an error by the artist, or a valid part of the fencing technique.

The combination of sword and buckler enters the complete corpus of illuminated manuscripts in a wide range in the first quarter of the 14th century. The combination became widely distributed in manuscripts in Europe.<sup>67</sup> The images were exact reflections of the guard poses of the respective fencing book(s) of which one survived.<sup>68</sup> It is plain visible that certain poses that are declared as guards in the fencing books are widely spread in the illuminated manuscripts too. This raises the question if this is based on the laws of fencing as starting and changing positions of strikes and thrusts, or if the illustrations of illuminated manuscripts were influenced by the pragmatic ones, or vice versa, the pragmatic illustrations were based on the same patterns as the illuminated manuscripts. If we look at the very early illustrated fencing books we find that the number of figures that differ greatly in posture is very low. There are certain patterns that are used over and over again. While in actual fighting the number of leg, arm positions and body postures is enormous, we find extremely few leg and feet positions in the illustrations, mostly the same upright body posture, and even very few arm positions. This may be answered

65 The term *Vatternstreich* means a father punishing his kids by a rod. The term leads back to the image of the patriarch Abraham nearly beheading his son. It is used as a synonym for the *Zornhau* by Joachim Meyer.

66 E.g. Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, KK 5013, 1430. ff. 54r–56r.

67 E.g. London, British Library, Royal MS 20 D.IV, f. 1r; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 264, f. 61v; Codex Manesse (Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848), f. 190v and 204r; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Nouvelle acquisition latine 1673, f. 93v.

68 Leeds, Royal Armouries, I.33.

with the wish of the customer to own a book that follows the aesthetic etiquette of the respective epoch, but as I stated before, this is directly conflicting with the needs and wishes of at least two consumer types interested in the martial content. The loss of data in using such patterns is immense, some images are rendered useless and not understandable at all without a textual explanation. The plausible explanation for this great loss of data is the cutting down of production cost and time. We must try to understand the production process and costs of such a book.

A school of artists would finish such a book much faster than a single painter.<sup>69</sup> A pattern book or pattern drawings of a master artist would enable others to create similar images. Stencils and tracing devices for parts of the body were the artist's tools to speed up the process as he was paid by number of images and not by the hour. The medieval artist had a toolset of labour saving devices at hand.<sup>70</sup> He was highly trained in copying while modifying. By just adding the key changes in each image the illustrations of a fencing book would be finished in very short time.<sup>71</sup> This process of production is identical for compilations in which the original is only available for a limited time, as it is for the new creation of a book in which the master artist and the fencing master are the most expensive "workers" in the production process. A copied manuscript is updated in style and fashion. It is a transmission and not a copy of the original.

#### 5.4 *Clothes and Gear in the Images*

Clothes worn at fencing need to be protective for training purposes. Creating protective gear is a logical thing. But an arming doublet or fencing doublet, an armour for fighting or training are not easily to distinguish from a normal one if at all. The surviving realia do not give us the answer and they do not provide us with a large amount of training weapons or armour.<sup>72</sup> What makes it even more difficult was the fact that fighting and sport mix as the training and the tools for both did. We find specialisation in the armour used for knightly tournaments on horse or on foot and they match the images provided in the

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69 A quick analysis by the author of this article on the surviving manuscripts of the 15th century shows that a great majority had been illustrated by at least two artists.

70 See Scheller, *Exemplum: Model-book Drawings*, pp. 70–77.

71 In an experiment done by the author of this article on figures of the Leeds, Royal Armouries, I.33, it was found that identical outlines had been used for body parts by various artists.

72 There are few fencing jackets (doublets) from the 16th and 17th century: a Fencing Doublet dating to c. 1580 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; a padded leather doublet in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (T 27) dating to c. 1620; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

tournament books. While it is not recommendable, because the metal structure suffers on each impact, a man could use a dull sword and an old armour for training, resharpen this sword, refurbish the armour and go to war with it. There is no big visual difference between training sword and a sharp one in the books and reality. There are only few images showing specialised training and sport gear.<sup>73</sup> These images mostly do not belong to the fencing book collections but to the display of fencing events like the German *Fechtschule* in the late 16th century.<sup>74</sup>

If there is no full armour involved the images of the fencing collections present mostly elegant clothes with nice variations of hats. Beside from the style transcriptions in compiled copies the clothes are contemporary. With little exclusion the clothes are mostly in a very orderly state which is, from the results of experimental reconstructions, nearly impossible.<sup>75</sup> There is no indication that there is a fight or training going on in which sweat and dirt (or sand as the dedicated ground for the judicial duels) is involved. The clothes worn in most fencing books seem to belong to a courtly surrounding or to the household of a patriciate house.

An exception to be named is the clothes used in the judicial duels as we found them in the fencing books of Hans Talhoffer or Paulus Kal. These clothes and the weapons used had been specially designed and created for the duels. The clothes served a ritual purpose and a very practical. The fighters were sewn into the clothes such way, that no additional weapon or protection could be hidden in them.

If it is suggested that the authority did participate in the production of the images, he may be placed in the image with a recognisable attribute like a hat (e.g. Paulus Kal or Hans Lecküchner). With the manifestation of the authority as part of the image the process of direct citing from the living authority is reflected. But more often hats are just decorative elements and the clothes do not indicate any helpful information on the martial content. They may even change during an ongoing technique displayed in a small series of images. The earliest surviving fencing book displays a scholar with the features of a

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73 E.g. Specialized gloves are on the woodcut by Hans Burgkmair for emperor Maximilian I, "Der junge Weißkuning erlernt das Fechten mit Schwertern und anderen Waffen", ca. 1512.

74 E.g. *Schwerttanz und Fechtspiel der Nürnberger Messerschmiede*, Nürnberg, 1570 (Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Graphische Sammlung, Inventar-Nr. HB 2286, Kapsel-Nr. 1379).

75 E.g. in 1591, the Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf 83.4 Aug. 40 displays the clothes of the longsword fencers in a disorderly state.

monk.<sup>76</sup> While this may be seen to create a direct link to the named authority *lutegerus*, it may only be a tool to separate one fencer from the other, thus making it easy to name the displayed fighters by *sacerdos* and *solaris* in the text.<sup>77</sup> The Italian masters Fiore de Liberi and Philippo Vadi<sup>78</sup> are using crowns and garters to structure the content.<sup>79</sup>

### 5.5 *Colouring*

The colouring and drawing of a fair range of the fencing manuscripts is described by Heidemarie Bodemer.<sup>80</sup> The colouring fulfils three major functions. It decorates the image, it creates light and shadow on the figures, and it separates one fighter from the other. While the decoration provides mostly no information to the specific fencing technique it may be used together with the ornaments and props to identify a certain patrician or noble house as it is done in the tournament books of the same time period.<sup>81</sup> Light and shadow, provided by the watered ink of the outline or by the colouring, help us see the fencers more realistically and in a close situation, the one standing behind the other. The colours, if used in a good contrast like green-red, are another indication to separate the two opponents. Red and green are the prominent colours, blue-red or red-yellow are used as contrasts too. Opponents in armour may wear coloured coats.<sup>82</sup> But the use of colour-contrasts is no common rule and highly coloured manuscripts like the 1415 *Florius de Arte Luctandi* by Fiore de Liberi<sup>83</sup> showing fighters in two coloured trousers put the decorative aspect in higher priority than the informative.

### 5.6 *The Violence*

The least goal of a fight is to destroy the capability of the opponent to do any harm. If weapons are involved this often means severe wounding or killing the opponent. Death was, in case of judicial duels, the defined end of at least one fighter (if not in the fight, it was done by hanging). In a knightly duel or similar

76 Leeds, Royal Armouries, MS I.33.

77 See the contribution of F. Cinato in this volume.

78 Philippo di Vadi, *De Arti Gladiatoria*, 1487 (Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Vitt. Em.1324).

79 See the contribution of K. Mondschein in this volume.

80 Bodemer, *Das Fechtbuch*, pp. 83–196.

81 The highly decorated volumes of Paulus Hector Mair, München, BSB, Cod.icon. 393, Liber II displays fighters on horses with helm decorations as they had been used in tournaments.

82 Like the *Gladiatoria* (Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, KK 5013).

83 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms Latin 11269.

duels for honour or sport this was avoided. So-called *grieswarten* jumped in with long staffs to stop the final blow or on a signal shouted by the one giving up. Duels of that kind had bilaterally agreed rules to avoid too much harm done. Agreements could be a defined number of strikes with a certain weapon. Strict rules were called out for the *Fechtschule* to see that no great harm was done. Tournaments were fought with specially designed weapons like dull swords. But wounds were to be expected, severe wounds and even death were reported on several occasions.

The amount of violence, gruesome wounds, and death differs greatly in the corpus of the fencing books. While it is hard to find a fighter wounding another in the volumes of Fiore de Liberi, this is prominent in the late books of Hans Talhoffer.<sup>84</sup> The seemingly predictable outcome of an exchange with deadly weapons is often put into the context of the judicial duel into the *Schranken* (barriers). Here, the display of gruesome wounds and death is at the “right” place. Beside the barriers the display of wounds and blood are generally avoided. If a weapon enters the body of a fencer, due to the need to display the technique, it happens mostly without showing the effects of such a wound. In the manuscripts and books from the second half of the 16th century the display of safe training weapons enters the images.<sup>85</sup> The aspect of fencing competitions seems to overcome the one of war and duels for life and death. Thus, it is more surprising to find a number of extraordinary blood spraying images in the Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod Guelf. 83.4 Aug. 40 of 1591. The book which is titled as the *Ander Theil Des Newen Kunstreichen Fechtbuches* is probably the second part of a complete volume displaying modern and knightly martial art. In this book even safe wooden training daggers create bloody wounds when stabbed into the face of the opponent. This matches the widely received Italian printed books displaying the fencing with the rapier with and without and side weapons of Nicoletto Giganti,<sup>86</sup> Salvatore Fabris,<sup>87</sup> Ridolfo Capo Ferro<sup>88</sup> in which blood indicates that a thrust is successful

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84 Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, MS Thott.290.2<sup>o</sup>, and München, BSB, Cod.icon. 394a.

85 E.g. Paulus Hector Mair, *Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica* (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Winob. 10825, 10826) contains swords without a point and daggers with safe points.

86 The book appeared in three languages: the Italian original version *Theatro* was released 1602 and a bilingual German, French edition in 1606 entitled *Fechtschul* and *Escole ou Théâtre*.

87 Fabris, S., *Lo Schermo overo Scienza D'Arme*, s.l. 1606.

88 Capo Ferro da Cagli, R., *Gran Simulacro dell'Arte e dell'Uso della Scherma*, Siena 1610.

applied.<sup>89</sup> A few years earlier the images of the manuscript authored by the Italian master Giovan Antonio Lovino were displaying rapier fencing too, but without a drop of blood.<sup>90</sup> While they were excellently and artfully done, the information who “wins” in the displayed technique is more easily understood when a wound effect is visually provided. Thus the display of violence and the effects do serve an informational purpose in those books on thrust oriented weapons. If it is avoided for cultural or aesthetic reasons (or a sportive context is given) a loss of data is present.

## 6 Conclusion

The artists of the medieval and renaissance manuscripts created a semiotic framework describing the fencing. The images do not copy the reality of the fencing situation, but the meaning of the teaching of the technique in the interpretation of the artist. Understanding the process of production helps us to see the context of creation and by this the layers of intention. We can see the difference between a product made by a medieval workshop optimised for price and speed, the sketch notebook compilation of a wandering fencing master (as talented as he may have been), and the high quality volumes made for the rich and nobles. Categorising the type of customer, his expectations at the product from the viewpoint of a learned, learning, or owning user will help us to understand another layer of intention. In depth codicological analyses and inquiries about manufacturing processes (also identifying the different roles in the process) are needed to allow this categorisation to be done. All interacting layers will enable us to decode the content, to see what data is in the picture. This will aid further research on one of the most requested pragmatic literatures during several centuries. It will help us to understand what secret knowledge glued together societies like the Marxbrüder as a large group of armed and trained burgers only responsible to the emperor, themselves training further burgers and nobles in the art. Owning the art of fighting was not only a personal question, it was a social question. Making this knowledge highly available in (printed) books had a major effect on society, it enabled the burger not only to relive the courtly arts of the medieval nobles but actually be recognised as a growing force with a martial sound background.

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89 It is to observe that the 1619 German translation of Salvatore Fabris by Isack Elzevier contains simpler drawings not displaying blood. Understanding those images, seeing who hit or not, is in fact more difficult.

90 Paris, BNF, MS italien 959.



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# Finding a Way through the Labyrinth: Some Methodological Remarks on Critically Editing the Fight Book Corpus

*Karin Verelst\**

## 1 Introduction

It has been pointed out on several occasions throughout this book and elsewhere: the quantity of material and the variety of its appearances in the Fight Book corpus is enormous. This overwhelming abundance stands in sharp contradiction to the limited number of scientifically sound, scholarly editions available. Given its complexity and recent accessibility, this state of affairs is somewhat understandable, even though the fast developments in the field of HEMA Studies and the growing interest from academia outside make the need for good scholarly editions ever sharper to be felt. Added to their vast number, the sheer variety of the sources at hand is *the* problem to be reckoned with: different languages, partially different subject matter, often illustrated with images of perplexing iconographical intricacy, marked by the different intellectual and social backgrounds of authors and/or artists; variable, interconnected and ambiguous textual traditions, with lineages of transmission which sometimes run over centuries and cut through cultural realms, and offering diverging or even conflicting interpretations of the *auctoritas* glossed or commented, if not ascribed to other authorial origins straight away.

In this paper we shall therefore give an extended overview of the different methodological options and approaches at the disposal of future editors of scientifically sound, scholarly editions of our sources. These options will be evaluated with respect to applicability of the material envisaged, work load, comparative and editorial obstacles, etc. The inevitably preliminary conclusions will then be tested by applying them to one extremely important exemplum for the whole corpus: the text tradition concerning the *Zedel*, the verses ascribed to the *auctoritas* of Master Johannes Liechtenauer, the *Urtext* of the German martial arts heritage. The paper should therefore be seen as a tool for future editors, rather than as a preliminary study for an edition in its own right, although the present author will not deny the existence of plans in that direction.

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\* Met oprechte dank aan Alwin Goethals en Rudolf De Smet

The Fight Book literature constitutes a corpus in many senses *sui generis* that poses a challenge not only to potential editors, but to the whole discipline of scholarly editing as such. If one takes a large perspective on our subject, then sources relevant to the corpus have been attested throughout Europe, from North to South and from West to East, and over a period of at least four centuries.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the works from the medieval period can be referred to the German or Italian cultural realm, in between a period of roughly two centuries, from roughly 1400 to 1600 AD. Wierschin's German manuscript catalogue<sup>2</sup> contains 47 items. Twenty years later, Hils<sup>3</sup> was able to offer a description of 63 source texts, 55 Mss. and 8 prints. Bodemer in her dissertation<sup>4</sup> mentions no less than 330 Fight Books, although she takes the overall corpus into account: both manuscripts and prints from all over Europe. The at present final catalogue of manuscripts for the German speaking world, which has been compiled by Rainer Leng,<sup>5</sup> mentions 48 manuscripts and 10 prints, but he limits himself to illustrated sources only, and is moreover not strictly consistent with either this criterion nor with respect to the languages used. Its undeniable value notwithstanding, even his work cannot be considered as the final catalogue of the (German) sources, as has been pointed out by Welle in his careful review.<sup>6</sup>

## 2 Scholarly Editions: Methods and Approaches

Editors of complex text traditions like those contained within the Fight Book corpus—traditions in which multiple variants of source-texts exist as well as transmission variants, possibly in different languages, often fragmented and dispersed throughout different witnesses and types of material bearers, provided or not with non-textual elements like illustrations—face a number of challenges. Do I want to reconstruct a lost original (an *Urtext*) from several, each for their own reasons insufficient, sources? Or do I have an in my opinion

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1 Given that manuscripts produced within the German tradition have been attested well into the nineteenth century, a case could be made for a much larger life span. But we stick to the generally accepted overall period running from the late thirteenth centuries to the early seventeenth centuries for the vast majority of the attested sources to the corpus.

2 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, pp. 12–40.

3 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, pp. 17–21.

4 Bodemer, *Das Fechtbuch*, pp. 327–366.

5 Leng, *Fecht- und Ringbücher*, p. 1.

6 See Welle, "Ordnung als Prinzip". To this also Bauer, "Recension".

trustworthy text that I want to render in print transparently in its intertextual context, and thus conserve and share it as accurately as possible? Am I interested in the variants of an *Urtext* for their own sake, since they could tell me many things about the ways in which and the reasons for which a source became a tradition? Different editorial strategies thus do not simply present themselves as the mere consequence of the nature of the material at hand, but always reflect theoretical choices and historical perspectives. Cerquiglini summarizes this situation succinctly in the adagium: *toute édition est une théorie*.<sup>7</sup> For that reason, and contrary to a more conservative viewpoint, it is impossible to say that there is an a priori best editorial practice that should be followed in any case if one wants to obtain a scientifically sound result. This freedom of choice, however, does not mean that the editorial approach does not matter at all. The way we present those variants depends on our understanding of the meaning and function of original texts, and the way of presentation in turn informs our future understanding of them.<sup>8</sup> Regrettably, there exist many misunderstandings as to what good scholarly editions are, and what are their uses. So-called “critical” editions are extremely tedious to make and most of the time do not enjoy a large readership. However, the wealth of not only linguistic, but also cultural data obtained by compiling and codicologically and philologically analyzing numerous variants is enormous, and justifies the effort in more than one sense.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, a certain confusion exists with respect to this kind of work, because not every edition with a lot of explanatory footnotes (an *apparat savant*, a scholarly apparatus) is necessarily critical. On the other hand, it is important to realize that such editions do not even aim at presenting a general readership with a faithful but readable text, although in some cases (depending on the editor’s methodological choices) this can be an interesting by-product of the editorial effort. In the ideal world, scholarly editions precede the establishment of good study-editions destined for the general public. They primarily serve the aim of providing researchers from other fields (historians, sociologists, linguists, archaeologists and experimentators, . . .) with reliable text-material for conducting their own investigations, without being obliged to turn themselves directly to the original source, which may be far away, fragile, or otherwise difficult to attain to. We shall discuss in what follows the major options an editor has at his disposal, and what basic questions determine the final choice for either one of them.

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7 Cerquiglini, *Eloge de la variante*, p. 112.

8 Dedner, “Highlighting Variants in Literary Editions”, p. 16.

9 Soler, “Editing Texts with a Multilingual Tradition”, p. 69.

The fundamental decision every editor faces is whether he goes for the reconstruction of a lost original, a so called “archetype” of the *Urtext*, or rather prefers to work from a single source which is considered superior to the other existing witnesses, and therefore serves as the basis of the entire edition. Another fundamental orientation concerns the value attested to the existing variants. Where they tended to be discarded as imperfect versions of a pursued ideal in the more classical approach, the “new philology” regards them as essential witnesses in their own right, providing invaluable information on the genesis and the cultural context of the text, as well as the informing process before, during and after its conception. There are basically two distinct, major approaches to editing a source that embody the different choices an editor wants to make: the “diplomatic” and the “historical-critical” edition.

The goal of a diplomatic<sup>10</sup> edition is to offer the reader in print a view of single manuscript that reproduces as closely as possible the experience from the page image a contemporary reader would have had before his eyes while reading. For that reason, the latest known version of a single text is chosen in principle as a starting point. Abbreviations are resolved (as a contemporary reader would do automatically in the reading process) and interventions like spelling, capitalisation, segmentation, deletions, insertions, marginal comments etc are accounted for in the text by means of lay-out format and diacritical markings.<sup>11</sup> It is as if a manuscript is made completely transparent by means of a typo-transcript resolving all its ambiguities in a traceable way.<sup>12</sup> Setting up a consistent and transparent system of sigla and markings is therefore essential to the usefulness and quality of the edition. Importantly, no critical work is done in the text, although account of existing variants can be given in an additional apparatus at the bottom of the page. The slogan here is: reproduction, not reconstruction. Theoretically, it should be possible to regenerate the original text from the printed text, the diacritical markings and the supplementary apparatus alone. A diplomatic edition is, however, not a visually as much as possible resembling copy of the original, which is what one often sees when

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10 The term “diplomatic” might be somewhat surprising in this context. The original meaning of the latin word “diploma” is a document by which a privilege is conferred, a state paper or charter. Chancelleries all over Europe were concerned with checking the genuine authenticity and therefore validity of such documents. Jean Mabillon introduced the term “diplomatic” for this type of investigation and proposed methodological principles for it in his treatise *De re diplomatica* (“The Study of Documents”) from 1681. See Roberts, *Satow’s Diplomatic Practice*, pp. 3–4.

11 Pass, *Descriptive Cataloging of Manuscripts*, p. 144.

12 Doubtful renderings are indicated as such, not in an apparatus at the bottom of the page, but in the body of the text, by means of special markings.

philologically uninformed scholars or researchers present an in their opinion “faithful” Word for Windows-facsimile typoscript of a source. Whatever it is that could be gained from such an effort can be much better accomplished by a high resolution facsimile reproduction, and indeed some specialists plead for the inclusion of a facsimile of the source-text in every diplomatic edition by principle, a laudable ambition hampered only by practical and financial constraints.

In case more copies of a single manuscript exist, an extension of the diplomatic edition, the parallel or synoptic edition allows an editor to present all, or a selection of, different versions of the source side-by-side, preferably organized on one page in a clear way, while using the tools described before. This system allow scholars to compare in detail different versions of a source-text; there even are editions that exploit this possibility up to the point of printing parallel passages line by line, so-called partition editions. They are extremely helpful in identifying textual variants and placing them in historical and linguistic context. Given the focus on highlighting the actually surviving variants,<sup>13</sup> it will be no surprise that this method is the preferred one within the “new philology” school.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, synoptic editions are an often necessary intermediary step in the preparation of a critical edition in the strict sense of the word. Needless to say that they also offer an invaluable aid to historians and other researchers in need of reliable access to relevant source material.

The second major editorial option is the historical-critical edition. A critical edition is any edition that attempts to reconstruct as closely as possible a version, the archetype, of the original text of a work that is considered lost, using in principle all the direct witnesses and surviving indirect evidence available. Systematic linguistic and codicological comparison of witnesses leads idealiter to the construction of a descendant tree, a *stemma codicum*, establishing the relations of the witnesses to the constructed archetype, and thus, supposedly, to the lost original.

The most influential systematic methodology for critically editing German medieval sources was developed in the nineteenth century by Karl Lachmann. Lachmann’s basic idea was that all witnesses are untrustworthy to a certain extend, because variants are erroneous deviations from a hypothetically “true” and lost source. The intervention of the editor in the reconstruction of the archetype is essential, and has to obey some basic rules and principles, e.g., that agreement by sources from different geographical or dialectological regions

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13 For some nice examples of this edition technique, see B. Dedner, “Highlighting Variants in Literary Editions”, pp. 21–23.

14 Bein *Textkritik*, p. 90.



validates attestation of a variant, so that the impact of outliers or discrepant readings is minimized. Lachmann also adopted the adagium *difficilior lectio potior* (“the more difficult reading is to be preferred”), i.e., simplifications of a text represent a later phase in its transmission. On this basis an existing text can be chosen as a starting point.<sup>15</sup> The process consists of the following steps:<sup>16</sup>

- heuristics: the search for sources that will serve as witnesses to the edition, preliminary codicological investigation and dating (internally or externally);
- collatio: exhaustive inventory and systematic comparison of the witnesses, preferably summed up and presented in a diplomatic edition;
- recensio: establishing the relation between the different witnesses based on linguistic and codicological arguments, and ordering them into family and time line groups. Presentation of a descendent tree or stemma codicum.
- examinatio: reconstructing the hypothetical original archetype at the root of all these surviving variants. Choice of a specific source text that will serve as starting point for the reconstruction process.
- emendatio: correction of the base text through using the results of the comparative text analysis gone before, but also by using intelligent and discriminating guessing, all the while “balancing possibilities” of potential readings of lost or unreadable passages.

Variants are attested for in a compact system of notes at the bottom of each page, based on a system of sigla and allowing intertextual references in an unambiguous way. This is the critical apparatus that in principle contains full information on the complete web of inter- and intratextual connections that constitute the historical tradition of the original source. In general, the text itself is presented plain, and a modernized orthography is used, so that even a reader who is not capable of unpacking the critical apparatus (and thus misses out on what the edition really contributes) might find the text as such more accessible than the same text in a diplomatically rendered edition.

Evidently, it is not always possible to take all examined variants into account for the actual edition, e.g., when specific scribal errors repeat themselves over and over again. They would burden the apparatus unnecessarily while others are important and reveal essential information on the history of the transmission of the sources studied. To avoid the disadvantage inherent in starting the

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15 Lachmann used his method successfully as editor of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* from 1880 onwards. Cormier, “Hermeneutics and Textual Criticism”, p. 636.

16 Kenney, “Textual Criticism”.

reconstruction on the basis of one, often incomplete, source-text, a somewhat pragmatic strategy open for a critical editor is the eclectic edition. It consists of choosing a few “good” sources, determined and chosen preferably for internal reasons. On this basis, one can attempt to reconstruct an archetype which is closer to the original than the surviving witnesses, even though the recensio on which the edition is based is not complete. According to this method, the critical edition of the New Testament by Nestlé-Aland has been realized.<sup>17</sup>

Lachmann’s approach was extremely influential, but criticised nevertheless on the grounds that it was too abstract, systematic, and predicated on certain assumptions which might not always stand the test, the most important of which is precisely that all scribes base themselves ultimately on a common and unique *Urtext*. Also, the inherent subjective nature of conjectural emendation can be taken to perilous extremes, so that the result might actually represent another version of the text rather than a lost original.<sup>18</sup> Contemporary to Lachmann, more conservative methods favouring the reproduction of existing sources of good quality above the reconstruction of an *Urtext* were developed in Germany by Hermann Paul and Gustav Roethe,<sup>19</sup> by the Bollandist Jesuits in Belgium,<sup>20</sup> and by Abbé Jacques-Paul Migne in France.<sup>21</sup> The method of the *Leithandschrift*,<sup>22</sup> the *codex optimus* was formalized by Joseph Bédier,<sup>23</sup> although it gained currency only after the publication of Cerquiglini’s already cited essay, and in the wake of the new philology movement that arose following a ground-breaking paper by S. Nichols towards the end of the last century.<sup>24</sup> Foulet and Speer put the basic idea thus: “One must conserve the most possible, repair the least, and restore in no way”.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever methodological approach is chosen, a thorough codicological analysis and detailed description of every witness separately that supports attempts at its accurate dating, as well as of its historical and socio-cultural contextualisation, is necessary. Linguistic analysis, involving palaeography,

17 Pastorelli, “Le traitement des variantes” (Chapitre 5).

18 Foulet and Speer, *On Editing Old French Texts*, p. 15. Cormier, “Hermeneutics and Textual Criticism”, p. 637.

19 Bein, *Textkritik*, pp. 86–88.

20 In the nineteenth century series of publications in the *Acta sanctorum* and the review *Analecta Bollandiana*. R.J. Cormier, “Hermeneutics and Textual Criticism”, p. 638.

21 Cfr. his monumental *Patrologia latina*, 1844–1855 and *Patrologia graeca* (1856–1861). R.J. Cormier, “Hermeneutics and Textual Criticism”, p. 638.

22 Bein, *Textkritik*, p. 87.

23 Bédier, *La tradition manuscrite du Lai de l'ombre*.

24 Nichols, “The new philology”.

25 Foulet and Speer, *On Editing Old French Texts*, p. 20.

comparative literature and dialectology, help to reconstruct the specific creation process and the later fate of the volumen or codex scrutinised. A final word should be said on the use of computers and other electronic devices for the production of critical editions of medieval texts. This is a growing field in which still much uncertainty about best practices exists, but it is clear that, e.g., the search for variant renderings and the examination of intertextual connections can profit vastly from the availability of electronic machinery. Such projects require interdisciplinary cooperation of specialists from different fields. Notwithstanding that, everybody who has ever worked with original source material will recognize that processes like collation and emendation engage much more than just the capacity to count or physically compare. Interpretation is never a merely mechanical process; one needs a fine sensitivity and a large erudition in order to make sense of what one sees or feels when studying a source. The further development of appropriate methodologies for these new editorial tools continues.<sup>26</sup>

### 3 Editorial Strategies and the Fight Books Corpus

Without any exaggeration, it can be said that the Fight Book corpus poses a new challenge to the art and science of scholarly editing.<sup>27</sup> We pointed out already the sheer abundance and variety of the material at hand;<sup>28</sup> it will be clear that no single editorial approach could do justice to the complexities this corpus presents, so that specific editorial choices and decisions, based on a careful examination of the status of the specific part of the corpus envisaged for scholarly edition, impose themselves case by case.<sup>29</sup> Many sources, even among the oldest ones, are compilations consisting of different traditions going back to their own *auctoritas*.<sup>30</sup> These different traditions might, and probably do, have

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26 Since 2002, the *École nationale de chartes* started a program for electronic edition of sources in line with its longstanding critical tradition. Attempts to translate their guiding editorial principles into program protocols are described in Glorieux, Jolivet and Visentini, “Un traitement de texte peut-il remplacer un éditeur XML pour l’édition savante?”

27 The specific problems posed by artes-related, technical literature for the application of philological methods is discussed in Welle, “... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen”, p. 27 f. For a more general discussion of the topic, see Cordoba, *Craft Treatises and Handbooks*.

28 An overview of the German corpus in Hils and Contamine, “Fechten, Fechtwesen”, pp. 324–328.

29 For an overview of the existing attempts, see Jaquet’s dissertation, pp. 67–74.

30 Jaquet and Walczak, “Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew”.

common interconnections to Liechtenauer's teachings, although there is not always proof of that. There are also traditions not or not primarily connected to Liechtenauer at all.<sup>31</sup>

The pioneering work with respect to reconstructing the filiation of the sources regarding the Liechtenauerian tradition are undoubtedly the contributions by Wierschin<sup>32</sup> and Hils.<sup>33</sup> The latter author moreover presents the first stemmatic table with respect to the major witnesses of the Liechtenauer tradition known at that time. Both Wierschin and Hils had access to an only limited part of the corpus, compared to what we know today. This explains to a certain extent some attribution errors Hils makes.<sup>34</sup> Welle nevertheless criticizes Hils for lack of precision in his method and offers an alternative table.<sup>35</sup> Even the supposedly final catalogue of manuscripts for the German speaking world by Leng<sup>36</sup> cannot be considered as the final catalogue of the (German) sources, as has been pointed out by Welle in his careful review.<sup>37</sup>

Studying the ways in which complex editorial situations have been solved with regard to other corpuses might be a fruitful approach for future editors of the Fight Book corpus. The editors of the critical edition of the collected works of Raymundus Lullus discuss the problems they encountered while dealing with independent parallel traditions stretching over long periods of time and involving different cultural realms, separate linguistic regimes and the abundant use of illustrations, as well as the growth of the corpus through

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31 E.g., the family of codices known as "Gladiatoria".

32 Wierschin, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, pp. 41–44.

33 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*. Hils' stemma is on p. 149.

34 Hils, *ibid.*, p. 106, identifies Hanko Döbringer as the author of Hs 3227a (M53), a mistake inherited from the earlier attempt at attribution by Wierschin, p. 33. The error stems from the fact that the name "Hanko Döbringer" is written on top of the page on fol. 43r. Tobler was the first to point out that Döbringer's name was added because it had been omitted by accident from a list of four "other masters" discussed on that page. Tobler, *In Saint George's Name*, p. 5. This mistake has resulted in the manuscript being also known as "Codex Döbringer". The present author sticks to that convention for practical reasons. See also Burkart, "Autograph", pp. 451–480 in this volume.

35 Welle, "... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen", pp. 50–53, 73.

36 Leng, *Fecht- und Ringbücher*.

37 Welle, "Ordnung als Prinzip". Leng claims to limit himself to illustrated sources only, but devotes a chapter to master Liegnitzer, of whom we have only unillustrated sources. He is not strictly consistent with respect to languages used either. Attribution errors include, apart from the already mentioned Döbringer, works by Paulus Kal, amongst others. See the discussion in Jaquet, *Dissertation*, pp. 38–39.

commented compilations.<sup>38</sup> They stress, among other things, the importance of the separate editorial treatment of independent traditions,<sup>39</sup> as well as of the need for critically editing local clusters or partial further developments within subsections of the larger tradition, that can be incorporated afterwards in an edition of that tradition as a whole. In general, inspiration could be drawn from the edition of alchemical and ecclesiastic liturgical works. Liturgy is an interesting subject in this context because of the high degree of *auctoritas* stability, while this literature is widespread across cultural boundaries and linguistic realms. A good example are the *Gebetbücher* (Books of hours): a transcultural phenomenon with many local variants and interpretations on the basis of a nevertheless fixed practice referred back to ecclesiastic authority. Their format consists of a lyric core text, extended with glosses and comments, very much like Liechtenauer's *Zedel*. Another potential source of editorial inspiration are editions of alchemical works. Alchemy is an interesting case because it is another example from within the category of the *artes mechanicae*, although it constitutes a subcategory on its own.<sup>40</sup> Alchemical works contain texts deliberately inaccessible to an uninitiated public, often abundantly illustrated, and destined to represent a practice to be learned and reproduced by a limited number of disciples, much like the situation of the older fencing traditions we are dealing with. The practice of glossing and commenting authorities is widespread in the alchemical world. The emblematic use of iconographic elements to represent action<sup>41</sup> is one of the core problems the researcher of alchemical works is confronted with.<sup>42</sup> It is worth mentioning that to the medieval mind an apparent familiarity between these kinds of

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38 Lullus is a thirteenth century autodidact from Cataluña, who wrote an incredible number of works exposing a particular, but highly influential system of knowledge based on his famous "Wheels", which allowed to reproduce the divine order present in the cosmos. His works have a spiritual-alchemical flavour, are written both in latin and Catalan, have been many times translated, and been the subject of commentaries for ages. Soler, "Editing Texts with a Multilingual Tradition", pp. 53–72.

39 Interestingly, precisely this point is stressed as well by Jaquet and Walczak in their paper on the fate of independent traditions present in manuscripts relating to von Danzig. Jaquet and Walczak, "Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew".

40 The so-called *artes magicae* or *incertae*. See Eis, *Mittelalterliche Fachliteratur*, p. 7 et seq.; p. 14 et seq.; p. 45 et seq. See also the introduction to this volume.

41 Kleinschmidt, *Perception and Action in Medieval Europe*, especially pp. 95–96.

42 See Kleinau's chapter on visualised motion elsewhere in this volume, pp. 88–116.

arts must have existed, because we find them often united in what we would call today technical compilations.<sup>43</sup>

The manuscript at present in the best editorial situation is probably the Tower manuscript. I.33.<sup>44</sup> Apart from a commented high resolution facsimile edition published by Forgeng,<sup>45</sup> a very thorough codicological analysis,<sup>46</sup> and an excellent scholarly edition (Cinato and Surprenant) have seen the light of day. The Cinato/Surprenant-edition is somewhat a hybrid, however. Although the codex is a relatively well-preserved unicum with a text that can be rendered without collation or emendation, the authors include what they call a critical apparatus that mostly deals with extensive data on external witnesses and the codicological state of the manuscript. Admitted that to a limited extend critical work is possible given the existence of relevant indirect testimonies, a similar ambiguity goes for the text itself, which combines elements from both the critical and the diplomatic way of presentation (largely modernized orthography vs. diacritical in textu resolution and clarification of particularities on the level of the transcription). I'd rather consider this as a diplomatic edition with a few particularities rather than as a textcritical edition in the strict sense of the word. They call their edition "critical", but, apart from the fact that the codex dealt with is a philological unicum,<sup>47</sup> it is clear from the use they make of their apparatus<sup>48</sup> that what they present us with is a diplomatic edition (and a very good one for that matter) rather than a critical one. The authors, moreover, recognize the hybrid status of their approach.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, Cinato and

43 E.g., the Döbringer codex M53. Also Talhoffer's 1443 Fight Book M22.

44 M35. Other examples of good scholarly editions of manuscripts presently available are: Bauer, *Langes Schwert und Schweinespiess*; Bergner and Giessauf, *Würgegriff und Mordschlag*; Welle, . . . *vnd mit der rechten faust ein mordstuck*.

45 Forgeng, *The Oldest Fight Book*.

46 See the contribution of Cinato, "Development", in this volume, pp. 481–548.

47 Cinato and Surprenant, *Livre*. It should be admitted, however, that their critical use of the fragment copied by Guntherrodt is entirely justifiable, therefore a certain critical value of their edition cannot be denied.

48 Rather than accounting for variants in the tradition with respect to a reconstructed text, it gives a number of relevant details with respect to the status of the codex and historiographical information with respect of later witnesses. Their apparatus thus fulfills the role of an "apparat savant" rather than that of a critical apparatus. They moreover recognize themselves that the use they make of this editorial tool deviates a bit from critical standards, precisely because there are almost no variants to account for. See Cinato and Surprenant, *Livre*, pp. 4–5.

49 Cinato and Surprenant, *Livre*, introduction.

Surprenant give the concordance with Guntherrodt and with Forgeng's modern edition, so that for all purposes (and assuming that no new witnesses are discovered) their edition can be considered as final.

Local clusters of sources of interest inviting for a specifically textcritical approach and immediately relevant to an overall editorial project concerning the Liechtenauerian legacy are, e.g., the series of manuscripts concerning Talhoffer. He started out with a private notebook (erroneously dated 1443)<sup>50</sup> and rewrote his work at different times throughout his life, so that we have at least five autographs or allographs<sup>51</sup> directly attributable to him. Furthermore he commissioned on different occasions (for private use or public dissemination), adapted copies of his own work. The group of manuscripts surrounding Talhoffer's so-called Königsegg treatise (M31) is a case in point. Talhoffer is interesting in many respects, because his case brings the typical idiosyncracies of the corpus clearly to the fore. He is one of our witnesses to Liechtenauer's original poem (the *Merkversen* or *Zedel*), in the earliest manuscript attributed to him: the Gotha (M22). The transmission of this specific lineage in the tradition lasted extraordinarily long, well into the nineteenth century, which brings the total number of manuscripts attributable to him to fifteen.<sup>52</sup>

The biggest difference between the distinct sources resides in the *glossae*, the explanatory comments on the core material much more than in the text of Liechtenauer's *Merkversen* or *Zedel*, which are transmitted surprisingly faithful throughout a number of witnesses. The *Zedel* (from the latin "schedula", sketch, notes)<sup>53</sup> are a series of verses with a clearly mnemotechnic dimension that describe in an extremely compact, and for the uninitiated completely unintelligible, way a complete system for the use of the longsword in individual combat situations, with and without armour. Even when we consider only the section on *Blossfechten* (fighting without armour), the most elaborated one, and the one we shall focus upon for our editorial analysis, we are astonished by the plethora of techniques offered therein, arcane as they may seem at first.

50 M22. Cfr. Hagedorn, "German Fechtbücher", this volume, pp. 247–279.

51 He commissioned the writing of his Thott 1459 (M29) manuscript to the scribe Michel Rotwyler, mentioned on folio 103v. Traces of Talhoffer's own corrective interventions are discernible on several locations. Burkart, "Die Aufzeichnung Des Nicht-Sagbaren". Also Hull, *Fight Earnestly*, p. 10.

52 See Hagedorn's "German Fechtbücher"-article in this volume, pp. 247–279.

53 Bauer, "Einen Zedel fechter ich mich ruem", p. 31. Müller, "Messerfechtlehre", p. 360.

This obscurantism was deliberate, if we may trust our sources.<sup>54</sup> That secrecy explains the rich culture of glosses<sup>55</sup> and comments that started to grow over the original *Merkversen*, already, in all likelihood, during Liechtenauer's own life time. On the level of the glosses, and even more of the comments and illustrations, the situation is entirely different. Glosses can be and sometimes clearly are copied from one source into the other, but they rarely are copied exactly, undergoing substantial changes most of the time. Moreover, sources do not always attribute the same material to the same master.<sup>56</sup> Things become even more complicated when compilations combine traditions of different origin, as already indicated. Connections can be very loose but very real, or on the other hand seem very narrow, but treacherous.<sup>57</sup> A final level of complication, for which appropriate new editorial tools will have to be developed, is on the level of illustrations. In what follows we shall limit our discussion to the text transmission of the *Zedel* only.

The source material thus imposes two orthogonal editorial dimensions: a horizontal and a vertical one. The horizontal one concerns the transmission of the *Zedel* throughout different authors and traditions. It can include some (relatively speaking) author-independent material on the level of the interpreters as well. This is the level on which efforts to collate and reconstruct the original archetype for Liechtenauer's *Merkversen* is to be situated. The vertical dimension concerns the other textual layers within the Liechtenauer tradition: the glosses and comments. This dimension allows a precise comparison of both textual and content related differences between individual witnesses, like, say, von Danzig and Jud Lew.

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- 54 See for a discussion on the use of secret language in artes-context, Bauer, "Fachsprache oder Geheimsprache". Wierschin was the first to discuss this topic in the context of martial arts treatises, in *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, pp. 1–22; p. 174 ff. On the "school" which seems to have been associated to Liechtenauer's name, we know more thanks to Paulus Kal's (M48) list of the members of the "Gesellschaft Liechtenauers", the Liechtenauer Fellowship. See Hagedorn, p. 253 in this volume.
- 55 On the role of glosses in texttradition, see Demarcq, "L'espace de la page, entre vide et plein".
- 56 A rather exhilarating example is Talhoffer, who in his so-called Thott-manuscript (M29) attributes Liechtenauer's *Zedel* to... himself. Other examples in Jaquet and Walczak, "Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew".
- 57 The so-called Wolfenbüttel Gladiatoria manuscript (M78) has the *Merkversen*, but the techniques it describe do not bear any direct connection to their content.



To sum up, it can be said that editorial efforts have been hampered up to now by the failure to recognize, from an editorial point of view, the necessity to clearly distinguish three fundamental levels:

- Liechtenauers *Zedel*, the original *auctoritas*<sup>58</sup> for the tradition as such
- the glosses or *Auslegung* by their different interpreters,<sup>59</sup>
- further comments by interpreters<sup>60</sup> or second order compilers.

It is important to realize that these traditions are in origin always oral. It is very probable that the *Zedel* as such never had a fixed written form as far as Liechtenauer himself is concerned, and that the variants we find in an otherwise remarkably stable text are going back to the variability which is proper to unmediated oral communication.<sup>61</sup> It is interesting in this respect that the oldest source at our disposal reflects on the impossibility to explain what can only be shown in its fullness explicitly.<sup>62</sup> This difficulty at least in part justifies the by moments widely diverging explanations of specific verses in the glosses by authors that are separated by a time span of nearly thirty years. Other explanations might include a different understanding of Liechtenauer's teachings by his different disciples, influences from other masters or fighting styles, further developments in different directions of the basic material, not to mention errors and misunderstandings on the part of the scribes involved in producing the manuscripts.

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58 “Alhÿe hebt sich an dye zedel der ritterlichen kunst dess fechtens dye do geticht und gemacht hat Johanss Liechtenauer der ain hoher meister in den kunsten gewesen ist dem gott genadig sey” says von Danzig (M57), 3v–8v. Cited in Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, pp. 72–73. On the role and function of *auctoritas* in Medieval literature, see Copeland, *Rhetoric, hermeneutics, and translation*, p. 76.

59 “Alhye hept sich an die Gloss und die auslegung der zedel dess langen swertz” von Danzig, (M57), 9v. Cfr. Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 73.

60 The long introduction in Döbringer (13v ff.) explaining the basic principles of Liechtenauer's art would fall under this category.

61 Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 79. On the intricacies of the process of “Verschriftlichung” of oral traditions, with the Liechtenauerian tradition as a case, see Müller, “Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar”. The fundamental link between conceptions of action and ways of communicating them is discussed in Kleinschmidt, *Perception and Action in Medieval Europe*, p. 95ff.

62 In the codex Döbringer (M53), 15r. Wierschin already discusses this in his *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, pp. 8–9. Also Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 133. In von Danzig, 10v, cfr. Müller, “Messerfechtlehre”, p. 364. Also Burkart, “Die Aufzeichnung Des Nicht-Sagbaren”.

#### 4 State of the Material Concerning the Liechtenauer Tradition

It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that the material from the Liechtenauer tradition invites for a critical editorial approach, at least if appropriately conceived. That means that the choice for a horizontal or a vertical approach should be made on the basis of arguments taking the nature of the material considered for edition into account. A second step in the decision process concerns the type of critical method to apply: the Lachmann type or the “Leithandschrift” type. The desirability of a diplomatic edition for its own merits as well as as a preparative step in the critical process is another important matter to consider. The present author proposes to test this stepwise methodology on a part of the sources relating to the Liechtenauer tradition, namely its core text, the *Zedel*. The focus of interest will ultimately be a critical reconstruction of the *Merkversen* as such. Apart from their evident relevance as the founding *auctoritas* for the tradition as a whole, there are some other, more practical reasons to justify this choice. The text of the *Merkversen* is transmitted with a remarkable stability for at least almost a century,<sup>63</sup> and we find relevant witnesses until long after that. Given that new manuscripts continue to be discovered regularly, the hopes for anything close to a complete critical edition are premature at best, so our strategy will be eclectic in any case, which implies that we have to select a limited number of sources which we consider as principal witnesses. With respect to the recensio of relevant sources, there seems to be a reasonable agreement among specialists in the field. Most authors accept that the manuscripts attributed (erroneously) to Döbringer,<sup>64</sup> to Ringeck,<sup>65</sup> and to von Danzig still stand somehow close in intellectual space and time to each other<sup>66</sup> and remain directly or indirectly connected to the oral tradition which is the basis of master Liechtenauer’s teachings. Beyond that, ideas on

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63 Especially if we take the potentially much more recent dating of Ringeck (M14) into account. Cfr. Hagedorn, “German Fechtbücher”, this volume, pp. 247–279.

64 Cfr. fn. 34.

65 There has been cast doubt recently on the date for Ringeck (M14), after an investigation of the watermarks on the paper used seems to date it more than half a century later than its accepted date. The handwriting is inconsistent with that finding, however, so that, whatever a deeper investigation of the state of affairs may reveal, there remains the task of reconciling its temporally older content with the potentially more recent physical properties of the codex it was discovered in. See Hagedorn, “German Fechtbücher”, in this volume, pp. 247–279, and a more detailed discussion below (ft. 124).

66 “Eine historisch überschaubare Nähe”, according to Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 57.

lineages diverge, but Jud Lew seems to be a good candidate to add,<sup>67</sup> although the exact place of the totality of the material ascribed to him remains a matter of debate: it clearly draws from different traditions simultaneously.<sup>68</sup> With respect to the stemmatic interrelations between the principal sources containing Liechtenauer's *Zedel*, however, authorities in the field contradict each other rather balatanly.<sup>69</sup> Following Hils' interpretation<sup>70</sup> von Danzig copied his *Blossfechten* section of Ringeck, while he presents Ringeck's glosses and comments as his own work. Welle, on the contrary, based on the *ringen*<sup>71</sup> section, says that von Danzig is more complete and better structured than Ringeck, and therefore, completely in Lachmannian spirit, assumes that his work has priority. Ringeck moreover never mentions the names of the masters he cites.<sup>72</sup>

The relations with Döbringer (M53) are even more complex. Welle thinks that von Danzig either copied from Döbringer, or from an hitherto unknown manuscript, which would following our hypothesis be the same as the hypothetical Archetype *L*. Döbringer's treatise is moreover differently structured, and his version of the *Zedel* is overall is much more complete than the version of the other interpreters.<sup>73</sup> Zabinski, however, remarks, in our view correctly, that Ringeck and von Danzig are in any case closer to each other than either of them is to Döbringer. An interesting example of this fact is that in the one instance where Döbringer's version of the *Merkversen* is less complete, both Ringeck and von Danzig have the more complete text.<sup>74</sup> With respect

67 Ibid., pp. 32–34; Welle, “... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen”, p. 68. Grenier nevertheless uses von Speyer in stead of Lew, although the former in all likelihood copied the latter. Hagedorn, “German Fechtbücher”, this volume, pp. 247–279.

68 Zabinski showed that parts relating to Harnischfechten and ringen might go back to von Danzig primarily. Jaquet and Walczak demonstrated in detail that important sections on Harnischfechten and Rossfechten go back to Liegnitzer and Hundsfeld. Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 112; Jaquet and Walczak, “Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew”.

69 A nice, recent overview of the different positions in the debate by Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, pp. 67–83.

70 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, pp. 111–113.

71 Welle, “... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen”, pp. 54–66. Ringen is wrestling, but in a more general sense than the contemporary one; more like an all round style of grappling.

72 Further arguments are that the teachings of Liegnitzer and Hundsfeld are present in von Danzig in a complete form, and referred to by twenty-six figures on Rossfechten, which are absent in Ringeck.

73 Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 76. Hagedorn, “German Fechtbücher”, pp. 247–279 this volume.

74 For a comparison: Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, pp. 76–77.

to Jud Lew's treatise (M8) and its connection to the other sources, Hagedorn observes, in the context of this paper very relevantly, that, when compared to Döbringer, their verses are very similar, but their glosses are far from identical, thus confirming the appropriateness of the methodological approach outlined before. According to Zabinski, Lew could have copied his verses from von Danzig, to whom he is in any case very close, but than with important changes. It is equally possible that they both had access to an unknown common source, which in our view would again be Archetype *L*.<sup>75</sup> As far as Döbringer<sup>76</sup> is concerned, I believe that the specific features indicating that this codex was clearly intended for private, though not necessarily individual, use—he wrote his treatise as a part of a commonplace book (*Hausbuch*) completely written in a single hand and destined for private use, in all likelihood as a mnemotechnical device—are not sufficiently taken into consideration.<sup>77</sup> The Döbringer codex stands on its own. Dialectical analysis shows moreover that he is from an entirely different region than the other interpretators.<sup>78</sup> He very probably had direct access to the oral tradition, i.e., he might have been a student of Liechtenauer by life.<sup>79</sup> This is not only confirmed by the fact that he speaks about Liechtenauer in the present tense, but also by the fact that many idiosyncracies in his style and orthography might well stem from a fairly literal (mnemotechnically stored) rendering of the spoken word.<sup>80</sup> Both Ringeck and von Danzig, on the contrary, drew more or less independently on a common, older source.<sup>81</sup> We equate this source to our hypothetical Archetype *L*. So Ringeck and von Danzig probably had access to the same written source, Archetype *L*, possibly sanctioned by Liechtenauer himself.

Given the apparent heterogeneity of the stemma codicum close to the tradition's origin, the Leithandschrift approach does not seem very appropriate

75 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 33; Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 549.

76 Concerning the erroneous attribution, see ft. 34.

77 Cfr. Wierschin, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 33. See also the discussion below.

78 The Döbringer is written in Eastern Franconian dialect, while the other sources are from more Southern regions. Burkart, "Autograph", this volume, pp. 451–430. Also Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 76; p. 80.

79 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 108. Also Hagedorn, pp. 247–279. For more arguments on this important point, see the discussion below.

80 This is also the viewpoint of Wierschin, pp. 5–7. For a critical discussion, see Bauer, "encrypted words", pp. 47–61 and Burkart, "Autograph", pp. 451–480 in this volume.

81 The study of the different transmission clusters shoring up the manuscript as a whole seems to point in that direction. see Jaquet and Walczak, "Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew".

for an edition of Liechtenauer's *Zedel*.<sup>82</sup> The only manuscript that comes into view as a basis for such an edition would evidently be Döbringer. But this is also the outlier source with the weakest evident interconnections to the other ones. The Lachmann approach fits better the heterogeneous stemmatic nature of the material, especially when the goal is the reconstruction of a faithful archetype as close as possible to a presumed (oral) original which might have been transmitted with inevitable variants proper to this mode of communication, even when the existence of a lost written intermediary is assumed. The overall idea shoring up our approach is that we are facing a web of interconnections, rather than a single stemmatic lineage.<sup>83</sup>

Our hypothesis with respect to stemmatic relationships can therefore be summarized as follows. The "Verschriftlichung"<sup>84</sup> starts with a hypothetical *Urtext* archetype, which we shall label *L*, for Liechtenauer. This might have been a text produced by Liechtenauer himself, or under his immediate supervision and authorisation.

This Archetype *L* stands directly at the origin of von Danzig and the later cluster of manuscripts (a subtradition on its own) ensuing from that manuscript. Archetype *L* is also the source for Ringeck and Lew, who develop their interpretations independently from Döbringer, and, as far as Ringeck is concerned, independently from von Danzig. Döbringer, on the other hand, might either have seen Archetype *L*, or have had direct access to the oral predecessor on which it was based, consistent with the fact that only Döbringer's codex might have been written during Liechtenauer's life time. It is possible that Talhoffer knew Archetype *L*, or he might have had access to the *Merkversen* through a later, but still reliable source. Von Speyer almost certainly bore on Lew for his text.<sup>85</sup> Whether this source could have been one of our four principle authors remains to be seen.<sup>86</sup>

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82 Wierschin even went so far as to deny the sense of trying to construct a stemma at all, because it would be too hypothetical, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens* p. 44. But the growing number of witnesses convinced Hils of the opposite, cfr. *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 149.

83 "Finally, we emphasise that it is not possible to ascertain the provenience of any tradition or set of teachings in any Fight Book on the basis of another tradition present therein. To fully understand the progress of transmission and accumulation of the martial knowledge it is vital to execute similarly thorough analyses for each tradition separately", Jaquet and Walczak, "Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew", p. 123.

84 Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar".

85 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 114; Welle, "... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen", p. 68.

86 A provisional stemma codicum-diagram is at the end of the last chapter.

## 5 Commentary and Scholarly Remarks to the Provisional Edition

Given the discussion above, a synoptic (and thus diplomatic) edition that allows for a detailed comparison of the different principal sources, presented in parallel, seems to be a logical and necessary preparatory step towards a critical editio princeps of both the *Zedel* and the corpus of glossae. The idea to work with a comparative approach is in itself not new, as already Grenier's 2003 electronic edition<sup>87</sup> and especially Zabinski's book on Liechtenauer's teachings demonstrate the usefulness of this methodology. The idea is taken up as an editorial tool once more in the recent Chidester/Hagedorn compilation. These efforts, however, need to be systematized, taking the editorial distinctions mentioned above into account, and using the appropriate diacritic and scholarly apparatuses. It makes perfect sense to go one step further and present the core of the *Merkversen*, the part on "Blossfechten czu fusse" (fighting without armour on foot) in a parallel partition edition, i.e., by comparing them line by line. To illustrate the point, this article concludes with a provisional presentation of four *Merkversen*-sources (from the dozens available)<sup>88</sup> using this method. To be sure, this is just a preliminary, rough presentation in preparation for an exhaustive partition or archive<sup>89</sup> edition, which should render all the available material in a diplomatic way and go with a scholarly apparatus giving a detailed codicological and dialectological description of every source used.<sup>90</sup> A full partition edition of Liechtenauer's *Zedel*—as a precursor to a critical edition—should therefore include at least also the versions of the *Merkversen* in other early sources, like Talhoffer's Gotha, Talhoffer's Thott,<sup>91</sup>

87 de Grenier, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, electronically published in 2003.

88 An up to date overview is on wiktenauer: <[http://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Johannes\\_Liechtenauer#Treatise](http://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Johannes_Liechtenauer#Treatise)> (accessed April 30, 2014).

89 As used by, e.g., Kanzog, in his edition of von Kleist: *historisch-kritischen Ausgabe der Werke Heinrich von Kleists*. See also Verduyck, "diplomatisch editeren".

90 This information can be found in Leng's catalogue, as long as one keeps in mind that it contains some inaccuracies (cfr. ft. 20). For a description of codex Döbringer, see Hagedorn, "German Fechtbücher", pp. 247–279 in this volume.

91 M22, M29. These versions has been neglected by comparative editors up to now. Apparently, they are deemed less interesting because they are transmitted with no glosses at all, illustrating the point on making the appropriate editorial distinctions between the three layers of text tradition identified before. The *Zedel's* "pure" state in these sources is precisely what makes them relevant.

the Goliath (M33) and the Wolfenbüttel Gladiatoria manuscript.<sup>92</sup> As said before, the idea to use this kind of comparative technique to edit Historical European Martial Arts treatises is not new,<sup>93</sup> although editors tend to seldomly justify or explain the methodologies they use, and if so, often in a somewhat ideosyncratic way.<sup>94</sup> They are, by the way, rarely applied or exploited to their fullest extent. This explains why the clearly insufficient stemmata presented by Hils<sup>95</sup> stand largely unchallenged.<sup>96</sup>

A partition edition is a synoptic and therefore diplomatic edition in which several variants of a text spelled out in a diacritical transcript mode are placed side by side (preferably on one page) in order to show the reader at once their mutual differences. As said before, what we present here is not yet a fully exhaustive, archive edition, because for that to be possible we should be able to evaluate *all* documents involved directly in their original state. For the preliminary set up to that final version presented here, we had access to high resolution electronic facsimile copies of Döbringer, Ringeck, von Danzig and Jud Lew. We also used Wierschin's epoch-making Ringeck-edition, and transcriptions by de Grenier, Zabinski and Hagedorn for comparison.<sup>97</sup> The specific contribution of our provisional partition edition is that it separates out carefully the first level (in the sense discussed before) of the source-material, i.e., the text of the *Zedel* and nothing but the *Zedel*, from the different source-texts it uses, and present it consistently in a line-by-line comparative way. The goal is to give the reader an impression of this fascinating material in its purest form, as well as to show the possibilities a full-fledged version of such an edition might offer future researchers. Finally, the further preparation and elaboration of the archive version of the partition edition would amount naturally into the preliminaries for a really (eclectic) critical edition, with the goal of reconstructing the hypothetic Archetype *L* of Liechtenauer's fascinating *Zedel*. From

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92 M78. In its description of techniques it is unrelated to Liechtenauer. The presence of the *Merksversen* is therefore even more remarkable. See Hagedorn, "German Fechtbücher", in this volume, pp. 247–279.

93 Already de Grenier used four sources for his Liechtenauer-edition: Ringeck (M14), von Danzig (M57), Jud Lew (M8) and Hans von Speyer M62).

94 Hull's "critical edition" of Talhoffer (*Fight earnestly*) is, although not without its own merits, not a critical edition at all.

95 Except for Welle's thorough criticism, "... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen", p. 54ff.; 66ff.; also Jaquet, *dissertation*, p. 67ff.

96 Exceptions are Welle, "... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen", and the paper by Jaquet and Walczak, "Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew".

97 Except for Hagedorn's fine paper-printed edition *Peter von Danzig*, these are all electronically-only versions, often available on unstable url's only.

the editorial point of view, the following presentation of the material constitutes but a first step into the direction of that envisaged editorial milestone.

## 6 Description of the Sources Used

For our present purposes, we had access to high level electronic facsimile versions of the four manuscripts we use. We compare our transcription with the work done Wierschin, Hagedorn, Zabinski and de Grenier. Wierschin's edition of Ringeck<sup>98</sup> remains an academic standard. Hagedorn offers in his publication a very neatly processed transcription in diplomatic style of the text of the *Zedel* in von Danzig.<sup>99</sup> This transcription reappears in Chidester's recent comparative electronic edition, where it is accompanied by the glosses by Döbringer, Ringeck and von Danzig.<sup>100</sup> There is no apparatus in this edition, however, and no clear justification of the paleographical or comparative methods used. Zabinski, on the other hand, offers only a partial rendering of Döbringer's, Ringeck's and von Danzig's text. The specific value of his edition is the learned commentary and the richness of the intertextual comparisons offered. Zabinski compares von Danzig (the core of his interpretive effort) with both Lew and Goliath, but sadly enough never on the basis of a systematic exhaustive textual analysis. De Grenier's electronically published edition,<sup>101</sup> finally, compares Ringeck, von Danzig, Jud Lew and the later text of von Speyer. It is technically speaking outdated according to present-day standards, but it pioneered the type of approach we develop here, and we shall use it regularly to resolve interpretative issues. As already pointed out, our option is to compare systematically what we consider to be the leitmanuscripts from the three clearly connected traditions to the outlier, who is our eldest and most complete source, Döbringer. Some interesting conclusions and observations, especially, but not exclusively with respect to Ringeck, are the result.

As will be clear, a hands-on codicological analysis of the material is not possible on this basis. Apart from what can be inferred from the sources at hand, I shall use mainly existing descriptions, and refer to Wierschin, Hils and

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98 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*. Realising the pioneering nature of his work, his concern is to publish for the first time a Fight Book in a scholarly form, which explains pragmatic, moderately critical editorial approach.

99 Hagedorn, *Peter von Danzig*.

100 Chidester, *Recital of the Chivalric Art*.

101 de Grenier, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*.



to Lenge's Katalog,<sup>102</sup> as well as to the up-to-date presentation and discussion of source-material as it can be found in the electronic Wiktenauer library.<sup>103</sup> Finally, some of the other contributions in this volume prove of great value especially with respect to this topic.<sup>104</sup>

Explanation of the diacritical and scholarly apparatus.

### Sigla

W	Wierschin	vD <sup>α</sup>	von Danzig's plain <i>Zedel</i> text
H	Hagedorn	vD <sup>β</sup>	von Danzig's glossed <i>Zedel</i> text
G	de Grenier	M53	"Döbringer"
Z	Zabinski	M14	Ringeck
R <sup>α</sup>	Ringeck plain <i>Zedel</i> text	M57	von Danzig
R <sup>β</sup>	Ringeck glossed <i>Zedel</i> text	M8	Jud Lew

For compact references to manuscripts in general the sigla proposed in the general bibliography to this volume will be used, often side by side with the name attributions that gained currency in the literature.

There is no universally accepted standard for the use of diacritical markings. Our choice is for rigour rather than readability, although we do hope to have produced a sufficiently accessible text. We base the system proposed for the present edition on a pragmatic compilation of technical formats used by authorities in the field of medieval texteditions from the German, French and Dutch linguistic realm. We evidently also used Cappelli's landmark *Lexicon Abbreviaturarum*.<sup>105</sup>

editorial in-line insertion	< >
interlinear addition (below, above)	≤ ≥; <̄>
marginal addition (bottom, top)	≡ ≧; ≡̄ ≧̄
marginal addition (left, right)	◀>; <↗
resolution of abbreviations	cursory font, <>
added scribal text or title <sup>106</sup>	[ + ]

102 For a detailed discussion, see below.

103 [http://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Main_Page).

104 Specifically Hagedorn, "German Fechtbücher" and Burkart, "Autograph".

105 A translated edition is available: Cappelli, *Elements of abbreviation*. Also Bowers, *Principles of bibliographical description*; Verkruyssen, "diplomatisch editeren"; Murdoch, "The production of concordances from diplomatic transcriptions"; Masai, "l'édition diplomatique"; Hellinga, "Principes linguistiques d'édition"; Hellinga, *Kopij en druk in de Nederlanden*; Woessler, *Probleme der Editionstechnik*; Hermkens, "Teksteditie"; Zeller, *Texte und Varianten*; Zeller, "komplizierte Handschriften".

106 The headings added (in red ink) by the scribes at the beginning of each new thematic *Zedel*-fragment will not be reproduced, but their presence will be indicated by [+...].

erased fragment	[ - ]
erased fragment with insertion	[ - ] ≤ ≥
replacement of a by b	[ a > b ]
unreadable	***
uncertain reading	* *
virgula, verseline ending	/, //
punctus	•, ·
punctus elevatus	,
open space	
scribal paragraph sign	¶
miscellaneous	#, &, °, ' , ' , ¯, =, -, , , ~
littera notabilior	A

Editorial additions or clarifications, as well as in line foliation, will be put between simple [ ]. Given the absence of consistency, **u** and **v** and **i** and **j** are systematically harmonised the modern way, but **w** for **u** is retained. Decorated letters are highlighted by means of a specific font. Use of capitals is respected as much as possible. Hyphenation is not observed, as it only serves to facilitate continuous reading.<sup>107</sup> therefore diacritics indicating differences in pronunciation (ü), or orthography (û<sup>108</sup>) are retained. I always resolve—in line with my diplomatic approach—abbreviations, in italics when indicated in the original by a diacritic like a macron, otherwise by means of an intercalation <>. Use of virgula is standardised throughout a single source but not overall, because it testifies, e.g., for differences in impact of oral versification between sources.

## 7 Selected Comparative Commentary

Generally, Ringeck, von Danzig and Jud Lew are considered as interconnected sources. To complicate matters, more than one manuscript can be attributed

107 Thus, rather than “irritating” or “arbitrary” elements, they constitute traces and pointers towards pathways of genesis and influence, a fact that Hagedorn, in his excellent edition of von Danzig, is a bit reluctant to take into account. See Hagedorn, Peter von Danzig, pp. xxi–xxii.

108 “In Gothic script in general, u remained difficult to recognize if it followed or preceded othjer minims such as unstroked i, m, n. For this reason, in a minority of manuscripts in Textualis a diacritical sign was added above this letter. It takes the form of a circle, a concave stroke, a v or even a double stroke comparable to an umlaut, all mostly traced in hairline, and appears from the fourteenth century in manuscripts from Germany and the Low Countries”, p. 94. The paleography of Gothic manuscript books. From the twelfth to the early sixteenth century, A. Derolez, *paleography of Gothic manuscript books*, p. 94.

with more or less certainty to all of them (except maybe Jud Lew).<sup>109</sup> At the same time, Ringeck is presented as constituting an independent line of transmission. The latter appreciation is based mainly on a comparison of the glosses, which in Ringeck's case contain interpretations of the techniques offered in the *Zedel* sometimes widely at variance with those in other sources. But when we look at the *Merkversen* only, a different picture appears. The Ringeck manuscript contains two versions of them, a continuous complete recitation at the beginning, and an articulated one, taking up individual phrases which are extensively glossed in the remainder of that section of the text. This is relevant because Ringeck's full version<sup>110</sup> features fragments attested in the outlier manuscript, Döbringer, but not in any of the other two, and which are absent as well from Ringeck's glossed version on which the modern editions are based. This again proves the importance of rigorously distinguishing the level on which every editorial effort is to be situated, as it will allow to commensurate seemingly contradictory conclusions with respect to a specific tradition's filiation (like in the case of Ringeck) when we take it into account. We take the core manuscripts of the three related authorial traditions and place them line by line to Döbringer. There is no critical apparatus in the strict sense of the word, except for an internal concordance of the two versions of the *Merkversen* within Ringeck's text. We also give variant readings in the other modern editions mentioned. So even if clearly diplomatic in its methodological approach, our edition is a bit of a hybrid nevertheless.

“**Döbringer**”<sup>111</sup> (M53).—It is a leather-bound, paper and parchment foliated book (149 pp., 14x10cm) containing different topics and several blank pages.<sup>112</sup> It is written in a single, fluent and clear hand in Bastarda script, in East Central

109 Chidester, *Recital of the Chivalric Art*, pp. 4–5. Different opinions on the nature of this relation exist, however. For a tasty overview of the debate, see Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 70; pp. 75–83. See also the discussions of von Danzig and Jud Lew below.

110 To complicate things even further, there is a third version, a long fragment with again a comment, which we do not take into consideration. See the discussion on Ringeck's manuscript, below.

111 Nürnberg, Nationalmuseum Cod. Hs. 3227a [KdiHM 1.4, H 41, W 17]. See for a detailed account Burkart, “Autograph”, pp. 451–480 in this volume.

112 169 pp. 14,5 × 10,5 cm. Empty are pp. 17, 162, 169, see Leng, *Katalog der Deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften*, p. 17. Leng discusses it in his catalogue, even though it does not contain any illustrations. On inconsistencies in Leng's (overall very useful, but incomplete) catalogue, see Welle, “Ordnung und Prinzip”, pp. 37–49. See also Burkart, “Autograph”, pp. 451–480 in this volume.

German or East Franconian dialect.<sup>113</sup> Internal datings range from c. 1389 to 1494.<sup>114</sup> The codex contains, apart from the Fight Book section, texts on medicine, alchemy, and magic. It is a common place book (Hausbuch) written for private, but not therefore strictly individual use.<sup>115</sup> Rubrication of the text is achieved generally by means of two line high, red coloured lombards,<sup>116</sup> red coloured puncti, verseline endings (//) and virgulas suspensivas (/).<sup>117</sup> The lombards or decorated letters (*litterae notabiliores*)<sup>118</sup> always come with their representant or *lettre d'attente*, indicating that, even if for private use, considerable care was taken in the manuscript's fabrication.<sup>119</sup> Some scribal particularities worth noting: use of '≡' to mark a broken word; use of a curved macron to indicate abbreviated *n* and *m*, as well as *u*. Paragraph signs, drawn as little inverted red daggers. The manuscript is erroneously attributed to the cleric Hanko Döbringer, whose name is mentioned in the text, but who almost certainly is not its author.<sup>120</sup> The authorship of this codex is unknown, but I shall stick with common practice and call it Döbringer. The texts of interest to us, Liechtenauer's *Zedel on Blossfechten*, are on fols. 18r–40r.

Some remarks on codicology and typography might be relevant. For reasons of functionality (proclamation and pronunciation, as well as mnemotechnical applications), format, page lay-out, use of caesuras and overall rubrication techniques could considerably differ for books destined to be read individually or those destined to be read out, before a public.<sup>121</sup> Sometimes books combine functional aspects of both types. Döbringer, at least as far as the *Zedel* are concerned, is primarily orally focused. The scribe, when reciting the *Merkversen*, systematically marks end-of-verseline by a double virgula. This is often accented by a capital crossed by a red line (a *littera notabilior*). Intermediate versification (caesura) is guided by rhythm and rhyme, not by grammatical or

113 According to Leng, *Katalog der Deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften*, p. 17 and Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 104, respectively.

114 See Wiktenauer, lemma "Nuremberg Hausbuch (MS 3227a)" on this topic.

115 Kleinau, "Visualised motion", pp. 88–116 in this volume.

116 Kuiper, "Lombarden, paragraaf- en semiparagraaftekens", pp. 50–85.

117 Kuiper, "Duitse komma": virgula's are used as the caesura in a line of poetry. They are a precursor to the modern comma, are popular especially in German mss. and early printed works. they can be multiplied to stress their function.

118 Alexander, *The Decorated Letter*, p. 187.

119 Although diminishing somewhat along the way. See Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, pp. 105–106.

120 The name is added in the margin to a list of masters whose techniques are to be discussed further in the text (fol. 43r). Cfr. ft. 34.

121 W. Kuiper, "Lombarden, paragraaf- en semiparagraaftekens", p. 58.

logical considerations, and indicated by a punctus, often in red ink as well. It is not clear why and when he prefers a single virgula over a punctus, since both seem to guide oral presentation and sometimes even appear jointly together. They also serve to indicate enjambment. Clear traces of repeated iterations, with on several occasions insertions of whole lines in the margin, as if something new or completely forgotten was added afterwards. The absence of illustrations (in contradistinction to many later manuscripts) may well be related to this functionality as well: visual demonstration would supposedly be present “live”.<sup>122</sup> This also fits in with the handy, easy to carry around octavo-format. The orally oriented versification, overall lay out and typographic rendering of the Döbringer constitute an additional strong argument for the case that the scribe of this codex basically heard the text of the poem rather than read it, repeatedly, in—typical for an oral setting—slightly varying versions, and that he reviewed his already existing text afterwards accordingly. This again adds weight in favour of the arguments that someone, if not necessarily the shadowy master Liechtenauer himself, was the real-life, direct source of both the scribe’s basic text and its subsequent iterations.

**Ringeck**<sup>123</sup> (M14)—A leather-bound, paper, foliated book (148 pp., 15×11.5cm) written in two different hands in Bastarda script. The dialect is Swabian-Bavarian.<sup>124</sup> Dating is uncertain; the codex might have been compiled after master Ringeck’s death.<sup>125</sup> Rubrification is less elaborate, by means of red headings and curly, red line barred slightly elongated capitals. Verse endings are indicated, interestingly enough, by what would later become the therefore sign<sup>126</sup> ∴, and are immediately followed by the word “glosa”, announcing their clarification. Paragraph endings are indicated by curly black-and-red lines. Virgula is used for versification, but not consistently, as the scribe uses both / and . to indicate in-line caesuras. Double virgula is used for word breaks, although ‘=’ as well appears. The part of interest to us is written in a somewhat

122 Kuiper, “Lombarden, paragraaf- en semiparagraaftekens”, pp. 57–60. This observation fits well into the analysis of “Verschriftlichung” in Müller, “Bild—Vers—Prosa-kommentar”.

123 Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek Mscr.Dresd. C487 [H 16, W 02]. for a description, see Wierschin’s pioneering edition of this source, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst Des Fechtens*, pp. 78–84.

124 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 54.

125 Hils dated the codex based on the dedication to Albrecht III of Bavaria to around 1450, Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, pp. 54–57. But while Ringeck’s gloss is probably old, 15th century, the codex itself is dated later (1504–1519), according to research by Hoffman, by means of studying watermarks. Hoffmann. “Ringeck, Fechtlehre”. Cfr. ft. 65.

126 Cajori, *Mathematical Notations*, pp. 282–283.

negligent and quick handwriting with many abbreviations, suspensions, superpositions and deletions. Double dots fly high above their mark for umlaut or accentuation. The overall clarity of the writing seems to deteriorate even further at some point, as if the scribe is in haste and pays less attention to detail. From fol. 27 onwards, the :: symbol to mark verse endings disappears, to come back only after fol. 39. The manuscript contains, apart from the *Zedel*, several treatises by other masters. It is attributed to Sigmund Ringeck because his gloss of Liechtenauer's *Zedel* forms the core text of the manuscript and his name is the only one explicitly mentioned (on fol. 11r). The remainder is filled with glosses on other parts of the *Zedel* (short sword, mounted combat) again by Ringeck, and treatises of other masters (not mentioned by name)<sup>127</sup> belonging to Liechtenauer's school. But since he is referred to in the third person in the introduction, it might well be the case that Ringeck is not its author at all.<sup>128</sup> It is rarely explicitly commented that the Dresden codex contains two, and actually three, versions of the *Zedel*, which exhibit some small, but significant differences,<sup>129</sup> e.g., with respect to rubrication: a red capital in R<sup>β</sup> can appear as a virgula in R<sup>α</sup>, versification caesura's can be placed differently. Also, more than once relevant terminological variants shed light on the correct interpretation of otherwise cloudy textelements in R<sup>β</sup>. At some points, R<sup>β</sup> lacks words or even parts of sentences when compared to R<sup>α</sup>. The overall impression is that R<sup>β</sup> is a hasty, basically by heart jotted down reproduction of R<sup>α</sup> that merely serves as a quick reminder to make glossation easier. Moreover, as we mentioned already, there is in fact a third, fragmented copy of the *Zedel* in this codex: a long extract from fols. 55v to 57r. Its main subject are the *meisterhauen*, and it is followed again by an extensive glossed comment (fols. 57r–59v). We might label it R<sup>γ</sup>, but since it is incomplete and seems to diverge on many points from the other two versions, we do not take it into account for our present editorial purposes.<sup>130</sup> Although the continuous version at the start of the codex gives us the most complete text, we shall use the glossed version as the basis for our edition, because this is the one used by everybody else. We shall, however, deviate somewhat from our diplomatic editorial philosophy and allow ourselves to establish in the apparatus the concordance between R<sup>α</sup> and R<sup>β</sup>.

127 Identifiable thanks to attributed passages we find in other works, written by masters like Liegnitzer or Ott on which we have further evidence thanks to Paulus Kal's (M23) roll of the Gesellschaft Liechtenauers (Liechtenauer's Fellowship).

128 Tobler, "Which Master Came First?"

129 The Merkversen on fols. 3r–9v; the glossed version on fols. 10v–48v.

130 Evidently, in an exhaustive archive edition, R<sup>γ</sup> has to be taken into account.

**Peter von Danzig** (M57)<sup>131</sup>—A foliated parchment and paper book (120 pp., 28.8×20.5cm) written in one, extremely careful, hand in Bastarda script. The dialect is Bavarian. Internal dating 1452 (fol. 113v). The codex contains a compilation of works by von Danzig,<sup>132</sup> Liegnitzer and Hundsfield, all mentioned by name,<sup>133</sup> as well as the treatise on wrestling (Ringkunst) by Ott. There are two versions of Liechtenauer's *zedel*: one a straightforward rendering of the complete poem (6r–9r), and a subsequent glossed version (9v–38v). Rubrication in version one by means of red paragraph headings; in version two both the headings and the quotes from the *zedel* are in red ink. Versification through red vertical markings on capitals and caesuras in version one; in version two moreover by means of a clever game of switching red and black ink in the handwriting. The scribe furthermore uses macrons for abbreviations and double dots as well as diacritical markings for umlaut and accentuation. The part of interest to us (containing the glossed *Zedel*) is on fols. 14r–38v; von Danzig's further glosses are on fols. 108r–113v. I shall refer von Danzig's plain and glossed versions of the *Zedel* as vD<sup>α</sup> and vD<sup>β</sup> respectively, and occasionally compare them. Interestingly, with respect to Liechtenauer's original text, the scribe instructs the reader explicitly on his use of coloured ink to discriminate between, in red, "the literally quoted secret *Zedel* on the longsword" and subsequently, in black, "glosses and explanations on these secret and encrypted *Zedel*" (fol. 13v, bottom of the page). A curious schematic overview is on fols. 10v–11r, using ink colouring, circles and page divisions, and representing stages and techniques used in combat on horseback. The book opens with three illustrations placed before the introduction to the glossed section on the *Zedel* starts: two pages each with with a pair of fighters taking up a basic stance, and one with a ceremoniously drafted portrait of an old, bearded man sitting in on a chair in a nicely decorated room. The figure holds a pointing stick in one hand and a longsword in the other, which is why some have claimed him to be the by then late master Liechtenauer himself, although there is nothing in the drawing that would allow for such explicit identification.<sup>134</sup>

131 Rome, Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana Cod. 44 A 8. [KdiHM 9.9, H 42, W 03]. A transcription is available in Hagedorn's edition *Peter von Danzig*, and in Chidester's compilation *Recital of the Chivalric Art*.

132 Chidester, *Recital of the Chivalric Art*, p. 4, discusses this attribution of authorship.

133 Jaquet and Walczak, "Liegnitzer, Hundsfield or Lew?".

134 The image could as well represent the commissioner of the manuscript, or any other worthy figure. However, the didactical elements and the weapons decorating the walls of the room do not exclude the possibility of the claim entirely.

The precise connection of this codex to other, related sources remains a matter of debate. Hils states that von Danzig simply copied not only Ringeck's version of the *Zedel*, but copied and claimed his glosses as well. Welle, however, points out that Hils fails to produce any solid proof for this allegation, and argues on the basis of an analysis of the structural articulation of the text ("Ordnungsprinzip") for a close connection between von Danzig and Talhoffer's 1443 manuscript<sup>135</sup> (M 22). Welle<sup>136</sup> in his analysis does take the two versions of the *Zedel* in Ringeck into account, points out some variant readings between the two, and stresses the difference with von Danzig, whom he claims to stay much closer to "Liechtenauer's manuscript" (i.e., Döbringer). He furthermore notes that Ringeck's rendering of the other treatises is incomplete and not attributed to any author. On this basis ("Folgendes ist denkbar") Welle concludes that Ringeck copies from von Danzig in both of his renderings of the *Zedel*, each time making another kind of mistakes. Hagedorn seems to follow Welle on this point in the annotations to his transcription.<sup>137</sup> But to me this seems a bit too hasty a conclusion on the basis of the detailed comparison of the *Zedel*-tradition within the respective source-texts alone. As I pointed out before, most differences between R<sup>α</sup> and R<sup>β</sup> seem to be due to the fact that the latter is a hasty, memory-based copy of the former. It is perfectly possible and I believe much better arguable that, as least as far as the *Zedel* are concerned, both Ringeck and von Danzig had access to some other, as yet unknown archetype *L*, which may or may not be related to Döbringer, as Hils by the way suggests.<sup>138</sup>

**Jud Lew** (M8)<sup>139</sup>—A paper, foliated book (124pp.), written in a single extremely neat and clear handwriting using Bastarda script and in Bavarian dialect. In the literature it is dated around 1450, although it is not clear on what this dating is based.<sup>140</sup> Rubrication is achieved by means of headings and text quotations in bigger font type, as well as by very large curly capitals at the beginning of each paragraph. New paragraphs or verselines are always preceded by smaller elaborated capitals, so that curly capitals clearly function

135 Welle, "... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen", p. 60.

136 Welle, "... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen", pp. 58–66.

137 Hagedorn, *Peter von Danzig* p. xxvii. See also Hagedorn, *Transcriptions: Peter von Danzig*.

138 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, pp. 54–117; pp. 110–112. Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst Des Fechtens*, p. 14, p. 81. For an overview of the different positions, see Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, pp. 75–83.

139 Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek; Cod. I.6.4.3 [H 05, W 04].

140 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 32.



as litterae notabiliores. Versification is indicated in the text of the poem by means of double virgulas; the enjambment of the *sensus* into the next line by a *punctus elevatus*, which looks like an inverted comma ('). Occasionally, enumerations are separated by triple points (:). In general, diacritics are rare and transparent ('=' for hyphenation, double dots for umlaut, abbreviations hardly occur). For our transcription,<sup>141</sup> we only had a black-and-white photofacsimile at our disposal and a single coloured print of the manuscript's first page, which makes it difficult to assess the use of red and black ink colouring for functional purposes. If this one page is anyhow representative for the bulk of the text, than the larger font types and the decorative capitals are all done in red ink, which seems to be confirmed by Hils's short description.<sup>142</sup> The handwriting is exceptionally clear and nearly flawless. The text is moreover free from corrections and deletions to the extent that this codex has to be a transcript of an earlier source. It is again a compilation, with treatises on different aspects of *Kampfkunst*, which are obviously connected to the material present in M57 (Peter von Danzig), although the different treatises are not always ascribed to the same masters. For the part of interest to us, the tradition on Liechtenauer's *Blossfechten*, the attribution remains consistent, although an intriguing new feature is the explicit attempt of the presumed author of the codex to distinguish himself from the *auctoritas*, by referring to his glosses as "der neuen zetteln", and by adding a "kunst der swertz" of his own.<sup>143</sup> With respect to the *Zedel*, Lew's text generally tends to be less complete than von Danzig's, his quotation of the verses less consistent and somewhat negligent. Furthermore, a bizarre swap of authorial attributions takes place: Lew claims the authorship for parts of treatises on armoured combat that in von Danzig are attributed to Huntfelt, while Liegnitzer is again credited with a shortened version of Huntfelt's sword-and-buckler piece.<sup>144</sup> Again it appears that a systematic comparison and analysis of the tradition on each of the three editorial levels defined before is indispensable before the outline of the wider web of interconnections can even be started.

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141 See also Hagedorn, *Transcriptions: Jud Lew*.

142 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, pp. 32–33.

143 Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 32.

144 For more on this, Hils, *Meister Johannes Liechtenauers Kunst des Langen Schwertes*, p. 33, and Hagedorn's introduction to his transcription of Jud Lew. On the complex tradition of the treatises of Hundsfeld and Liegnitzer, see Jaquet and Walczak, "Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew?".

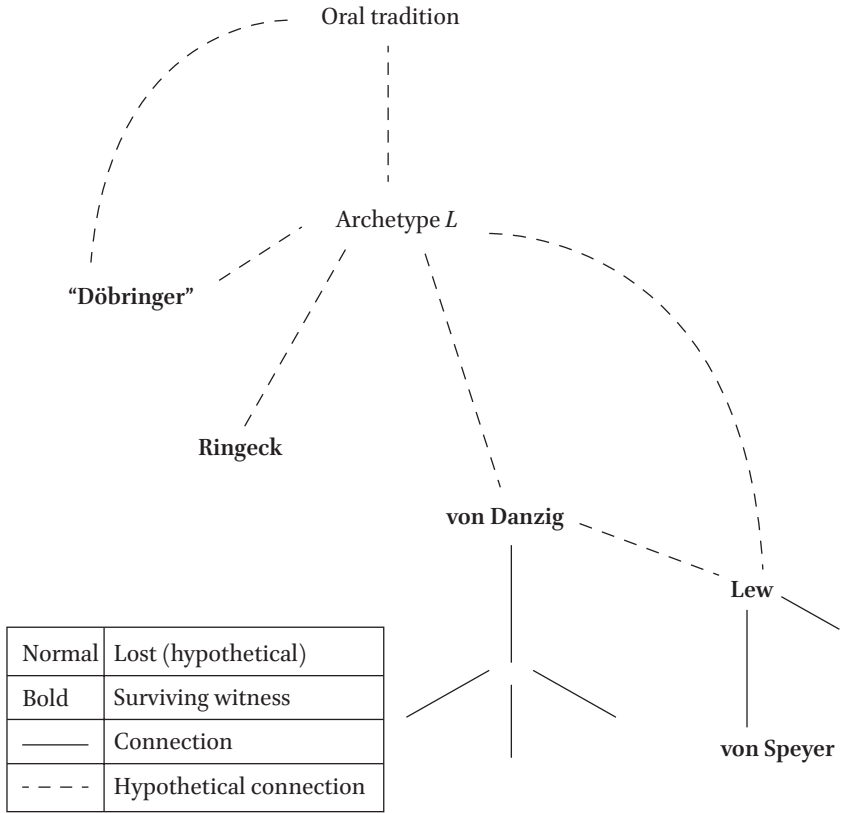


FIGURE 7.1 *Stemma codicum* (Author's diagram).

8 Provisional Concordance for a Partition Edition of  
Liechtenauer's *Zedel*

“Döbringer” (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>β</sup> (M 14)

18r

11r

[+...]

[+...]

Jung Ritter lere · got lip haben frawen iore  
ere // \So wechst dein ere · uebe  
ritterschaft · und lere // \kunst · dy dich  
zyret · und in krigen sere hofiret //

\Jungk ritter lere \Gott lieb haben fröwen  
ia ere \So wöchse dein [-ere] ere [+<sup>α</sup> übe<sup>\*b</sup>  
ritterschaft und lere]<sup>c</sup>\Kunst die dich  
ziert [+<sup>α</sup> und] In kriegem zû ern hoffiert

11v

\Ringens gut fesser · glefney sper swert  
unde messer // \menlich bederben · unde  
in anden<sup>a</sup> henden vorterbern //

\Ringes<sup>d</sup> gütt fesset \Glefen sper schwert  
und und messer / manlich bederben [+<sup>α</sup>  
und in andern henden verderben]

\Haw dreyn und hort dar · rawsche hin  
trif ader la varn / \Das in dy weisen ·  
hassen dy man siet preisen // \Dorauf dich  
zoße · alle ding haben [-\*\*\*]  
z<lenge> unde mosse //

Haw drin [+<sup>α</sup> und] hart dar \Rausch hin  
triff oder la farn<sup>e</sup> \daß in die wÿsen lassen  
die man sicht brÿsen \Daruff dich fasse  
/ alle kunst haben lenge und masse ~

\Und was du [-trei]<sup>b</sup> wilt treiben · by guter  
vornunft saltu bleiben // \Czu ernst ader  
czu schimpf · habe froelichen mut mit  
limpf // \So magstu achten · und mit  
gutem mute betrachten // \Was du salt  
fueren · und keyn im dich rueren // \Wen  
guter mut mit kraft · macht eyns

a H andñ Z andern followed by ‘=’ to indicate continuation of sen b Z Vbe c G completes his version of R<sup>β</sup> with fragments from R<sup>α</sup>, without giving any further notice. d W Ringet e G las farmm

---

 von Danzig<sup>g</sup> (M 57)<sup>f</sup>


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Jud Lew (M 8)

10r

1r

Junck ritter lere \Got lieb haben frawen \  
 zü<sup>g</sup> ere \So wechst dein ere \ube  
 ritterschafft \und lere \Kunst dye dich  
 zÿret \Und in kriegem / zü eren hofiret

Junck ritter lern got lieb hab / frawen vnd  
 junckfrawen ere / So wechst dein lere /  
 Und lern dinck das sich zieret / Und in  
 kriegem ser hofieret /

\Ringens güt fesser \Glefen sper swert \  
 und messer \Mandleich bederben \und in  
 anderen henden verderben /

Ringens gute fesser / Gleuen swert vnd  
 messer / Manlichen bederben / Und in  
 andern henden verderben /

\Haw drein und hürtt dar \Rausch hin trif  
 oder la faren \Das in die weysen hassen  
 \die mann sicht preÿsen \Dar auff dich  
 fasse \Alle kunzt haben leng und masse //

Hawe drein und triffe dar / lasse hengen  
 und lasse far / Das man dein weis / Müg  
 maisterlichen preis //

[+...]

[+...]

## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

wedersache czagehaft // \Dornoch dich  
 richte · gib keynem forteil mit ichte //  
 \*\Tüm\*kunheit meide · vier ader sechs  
 nicht vortreibe // \Mit deynem oebermut ·  
 bis \*sterk<sup>a</sup>\* das ist dir gut // \Der ist eyn  
 kuener man · der synem gleichen tar  
 bestan // \Is ist nicht schande vier ader  
 sechze flien von hande // [- \*\*\*] //

18v

[+...]

Wiltu kunst schawen · sich link gen und  
 recht mete hawen // \Und link mit rechten  
 · is das du stark gerest fechten //

[+...]

Willtu kunst schawen<sup>c</sup> \Sich linck gen  
 und recht mitt hawen /Und linck mitt  
 rechtem / ist d<a>z<sup>d</sup> du starck gerest  
 fechten ::

13r

[+...]

Wer noch get hewen · der darf sich kunst  
 kleyne frewen //

\Wer nach gat häwen<sup>e</sup> / der darff sich  
 Kunst wenig fröwen

\haw im was du wilt · keyn wechsler kawm  
 an dich schild // ≡\Haw nicht czu swerte /  
 sonder / stets der bloße warte≡

Haw nachent waß du wilt kain wechself  
 kumpt in dein schilt /

\Czu koppe czu leibe · dy czecken do nicht  
 vormeide // \Mit ganzem leibe<sup>b</sup> ·  
 ficht was du stark gerest treiben //

\Zü koppff zü lÿbe / die zeck nicht  
 vermÿde / mitt ganzem lÿb ficht wass du  
 starck<sup>g</sup> gerest zü trÿben

14r

a H sitik b H,Z leiben c W,G schowen d W das Wierschin systematically reads "das"  
 for "daz" e H haÿen W hawen f R<sup>z</sup> wechßler g G,H starck

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

*\Wiltu kunst schauen \Sich linck gen und  
recht mit hawen \Und linck mit rechten \Ist  
dass du starck gerest vechten<sup>h</sup>*

[+...]

*\Wer nach get hawen \der darff sich kunst  
wenig fräwen*

[+...]

*\Haw nahent was du wild \kain wechslär  
kumpt an dein schilt*

*\Zü kopff zw leib die zeck nit vermeyd \Mit  
ganzem leib vicht wass du starck gerest  
trejben ~*

11r

1v

Wiltu kunst schawen / Sich linck ganck  
recht mit haw<sup>z</sup>en<sup>s</sup> / Und linck mit  
rechten / Ob du starck gerest vechten //

2v

Wer nach get hewen Der darff sich kunst  
wenig freuen ’

3r

Haw nahent was du wilt / kein wechsel  
kum an den schilt /

Zu kopff zu leib / Die slege nit vermeid /  
Mit ganzem leibe / ficht was du starck  
gerest treibe ’

<sup>h</sup> Text in red ink is rendered in italics

## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

\Hoeer was do slecht ist · ficht nicht oben  
link zo du recht pist // \Und ob du link  
pist · ym rechten <auch> sere hinkest //  
\So vicht io liber · von oben [-recht]  
≲link≳lichen nider //

[+...]

\Höre wass du<sup>b</sup> schlecht ist / ficht nitt  
oben linck / so du recht bist *Und* ob du  
linck bist im rechten \Im rechten auch ser  
hinkest ∴

[14v]

[+...]

\Vor · Noch · dy czwey dink · syn allen  
kunsten eyn orsprink // Schwach · unde  
Sterke<sup>a</sup> · Indes · das wort mete merke //

Vor *und* nach, die zwaj dink / synd aller  
kunst am urspringg. Schwöch vnd stöck  
/ indes / daß wort domitt<sup>c</sup> mörck

So machstu *lernen* mit / [- und erb]/ kunst  
und erbeit dich weren // \Irschrikstu  
gerne · keyn fechten nymmer lerne //  
\Kunheit und rischeit · vorsichtikeit · list  
und klugheit ≅vornunft vorborgenheit  
moße bevoorbetachtungē [-hobsheit]  
≲fetikeit≳ ≧ // \\Wil fechten haben ·  
und froelichs gemuete tragen /

\So magst [15r] du *lernen* mitt kunst  
arbeiten *und* weren \Erschrickstu gern  
/ kain fechten *nimmer* *lernen* ∴

16v

23r

[+...]

[+...]

Fünf hewe lere · von der rechten hant  
were dy were //

Ffünff hewen<sup>d</sup> lere von der[17r] rechten  
hand wer d<a>z wäre<sup>e</sup> / dem wir geloben  
/ in kunsten gern zû lonen ∴<sup>f</sup>

17v

a H sterke b W, G da c W do mitt d Whew e R<sup>a</sup> wider die were f The word 'Glosa'  
should follow here in the text, but it is absorbed under the abbreviation sign "∼"

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

[+...]

3V

\Hör was da slecht ist \Vicht nicht  
oben linck \so du recht pist \Ob dw  
linck pist \Im rechten aug sere  
hinckes

Hör was do schlecht ist / ficht nit linck ob  
du recht pist / Und ob du linckest / In  
dem vechten du auch ser hinck≤est≥ //

11V

[+...]

4V

\Vor und nach dÿ zwaj dinck \Sind aller  
kunst ain urspring \Swech und sterck \  
Indes das wort do mit mit merck

Vor vnd nach die zwei dinck / Seint aller  
kunst ein ursprinck / Swech und sterck /  
Indes das wort mit merck /

\So magstu leren \mit kunst arbaitten und  
weren \Der schrickestu geren  
\kain vechten nÿmer geleren

So magstu lern / Mit kunst arbeiten vnd  
wern / Erschrickestu gern / Kein vechten  
nymmermer gelern '

12V

[+...]

6r

\Fünff häw lere von der rechten hant \wer  
die were denn wir geloben \In kunsten  
geren zû lonen

Fünff hew lern von der rechten //  
hant wider die were '  
Dann wir glauben in künsten //  
gern zu leren '



## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

Cornhaw · krump · twere · hat schiler mit  
scheitelere // Alber vorsatz · nochreist ·  
ueberlawft hewe letzt // Durchwechselt ·  
czukt · durchlawft abesneit · hende  
druckt // henge wind · mit bloeßen · slag  
vach · strich · stich mit stoeßen // <\Und  
solt auch io schreiten · eyne czu der  
rechten seiten //>

[+...]  
Zorn haw · krump · zwerch hat<sup>a</sup> \Schiller /  
mitt schaittler \Alber versetzt /  
nachräysen \Überlauff [-h\*\*] häw<sup>b</sup> setzt  
\Durch wechsel zuck durch lauff  
abschnide / hende [+ d\*\*] druck / heng  
und<sup>c</sup> mitt blößen schlach vach streych  
[- s\*h] stich mitt stossen ∴

19r

[+...]

Der dir oberhawet / czornhaw ort deme  
drewet //

[+...]

Wer dir ober häwet \Zorn haw ort im  
dröwet ∴

[+...]

\Wirt her is gewar · nym is oben ab · ane  
vaer //

Wirt er es gewar [19 v] \So nÿms oben  
ab an far ∴

[+...]

\Pis sterker · weder wint / stich // siet her  
is · nym is neder //

Biss stöcker wider / und<sup>d</sup> stich sicht  
erß so nÿm es wider ∴

[+...]

\Das eben merke · \hewe · \stiche · \leger ·  
\weich ader \herte //

Das öben mörck \Häw stich, leger  
waych oder hört

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

[+...]

6v

Zoren häw krump twer \hat schiler  
mit schaitlar \Alber vorsezt  
\Nachraisen uberlauff haw seczt \  
Durchwechsel zuck \durchlauf  
\abschneid hende druck \heng wind  
mit plössen \Slach vach streich stich  
mit stössen ~

Zorn hawe krump zwer / Hat schiler mit  
scheitteler / Alber ∴ versatz ∴ nachreissen  
/ Uberlauff ∴ absetzen ∴ durch//wechsel  
∴ zuck ∴ durchlauf ∴ abschneid ∴  
hendruck ∴ heng ∴ wind Mit plossen slag  
vach streich // stich mit stössen '

13r

[+...]

7v

Wer dir aberhawt \Zorenhaw ort dem drawt

Wer dir über hewet / Zorn haw ort dem  
drewet /

13v

[+...]

\Wirt er es gewar \So nym oben ab  
ane far

Wirt ers gewor / Nym oben ab on  
for '

[+...]

8v

\Pis stercker wider \wind stich sieht ers \so  
nym es nyder

Bis stercker wider wind / Stich sicht e  
rs so nym es nider //

[14r]

[9r]

[+...]

\Das eben merck \haw stich leger waich  
oder hert

Das eben merck / Haw stich leger waich  
oder hertt

## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

\Indes · und \vor · \noch · ane hurt deme  
krige sey nicht goch //

[\In des und fär nach / on hurt dein krieg  
sich [21r] nicht gäch

\Wes der krig remet · oben / neder wirt her  
beschemet //

\Weß der krieg [\*] riempt oben nyder  
wirt er beschämt ::

22r

[+...]

\In allen winden · \hewe · \stiche · \snete  
· lere finden // \Auch saltu mete · pruefen \  
hewe \stiche ader \snete //

In allen winden hew stich recht lern  
finden \Auch soltdu mit [- brüch]  
brüffen<sup>a</sup> / hew stich oder schnitt

\In allen treffen · den meistern wiltu sie  
effen // \Haw nicht czum swerte · zonder  
stets der bloeßen warte //

In allen treffen den maistern wilt du sy  
effen ::

\Czu koppe czu leibe · wiltu an schaden  
bleyben // \Du trefts [- ader] ader velest ·  
zo trachte das du der blossen remest //

≅\In aller lere · den ort keyn den  
bloeßen kere // \Wer weit umme hewet ·  
der wirt oft sere bescheme<sup>\*t\*</sup> // \Off das  
aller neste · brenge hewe stiche dar  
ge<sup>\*w\*</sup>≧

22v

25r

[+...]

a R<sup>α</sup> [- briesen] briessen. This reading in my opinion clarifies Ringeck's intention here.

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

\Inndess und var nach \an hürt \Dem  
krieg sey nicht gach

Indes vor und nach / Und hüt dein  
krieg sei nit gach '

14 v

9v

[+...]

\Wes der krieg rempt \Oben nyden  
\wirt er beschempt

Wes der krieg oben rempt / Niden  
wirt er beschempt //

10r

[+...]

\In allen winden \haw stich schnýt  
lere vinden \Auch soltu nit<sup>b</sup> prüfen  
\haw stich oder schnit

In allen winden / Hew stich snid lern  
finden / Auch soltu mit prüfen / Hew stich  
oder schnid /

10v

\In allen treffen \den maisteren wil tu  
sÿ effen

In allen treffen / Den maistern wiltu sie  
effen'

15r

[+...]

11r

b vD<sup>α</sup> mit

## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

[+...]

Vier bloeßen wisse · remen zo slestu  
gewisse // \An alle var an zweifel wy her  
gebar

Vier bloß wisse / ram<sup>b</sup> so schlechstu  
gewisse an alle for<sup>c</sup> / on zwifel, wie er  
gebar ∴  
[+...]

23v

Wiltu dich rechnen · vier bloessen  
kunstlichen brechen // \Oben duplire ·  
do neden rechte<sup>a</sup> mutire

Wilt du<sup>d</sup> rechnen \Die vier blossen  
künstlich brechen \Oben duplir / unden  
recht mutier

\Ich sage vor ware · sich schoetzt keyn  
man ꝛaneꝝ vare // Hastu vornomen ·  
czu slage mag her kleyne komen ~

\Ich sag dir für war: sich [- scu] schücz<sup>e</sup>  
kain maister an far \Hastu es recht  
vernommen, zů schlage mag er klain  
kommen ∴

25v

24v

[+...]

[+...]

Krump auf / behende · wirf deynen ort  
auf dy hende //

Krump uff behende / wirff den ort uff die  
hende ∴

25r

\krump wer wol setczet · mit schreten vil  
hewe letczet //

Krump wer wol seczet<sup>f</sup> mitt schrÿtten er  
vil hewe leczet<sup>g</sup> ∴

25v

\haw krump czum flechen · den meistern  
wiltu sie swechen /

[+...]  
Haw krump zu den flochen<sup>a</sup> / den  
maistern wiltu sÿ swechen ∴

a H rechtē b H rem c R<sup>α</sup> far d W du dich, G dich e W schütz f W setzet  
g W hew letzet

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

\Vier plossen wisse \Reme so schlestu  
gewisse \In alle var \An cweifel wie er  
gepar  
[+...]

15V

Wiltu dich rechen \Dye vier plöss  
kunstlich prechen \Oben duplier \Niden  
recht mutir

\Ich sag dir für wär \Sich schuczt kain man  
ane far \Hastu vernomen \zû slag mag er  
klain kümen

16v

[+...]

\krump auff behende \wirff dein ort auff  
die hende

\krump wer wol seczet \Mit schritten vil häw  
leczet

17V

[+...]

\Haw krump zw flechen \den maisteren  
wiltu sy swechen

Vier plösse wiß / So slechstu gar gewiß /  
On alle vor / On zweifel wie er gebor '

11V

Wiltu rechen dich / Vier plösse prechen  
maisterlich / Oben duplir Untten recht  
mutir /

Ich s[\*\*\*] / [12r] kein man schützet sich  
on for / Hastu vernommen / Zu slag mag  
er klein kommen '

13v

Krump auf behende / Würff den ort auf  
die hende /

Krump wer wol versetzt / Mit schritten  
vil hew letzet '

14v

Haw krump zu den flechen / Den  
maistern wiltu sie swechen /

---

 "Döbringer" (M 53)
 

---

 Ringekê (M 14)
 

---

[+...]

\Wen is klitzt oben · stant abe das wil ich  
loben //

Wenn es klutzt oben / so stand ab das will  
ich loben ::

26r

[+...]

\krump nicht kurz hawe · durchwechsel  
do mete schawe ¶

Krum nicht kurz<sup>b</sup> häw<sup>c</sup> / durch wechsel  
dar mitt schow ::

26 v

[+...]

\krump wer dich irret · der edele krig den  
vor virret // Das her nicht vorwar · weis wo  
her sye ane var

Krump wer dich \Irret / der edel krieg in  
verwürret<sup>d</sup> \Daß er fürwar nicht wajst wo  
sÿ one far ::

27r

27r

[+...]

[+...]

Twere benymet · was von dem tage dar  
kuemmet //

Zwerch benymp was vom<sup>e</sup> tag her  
kümpft ::

27v

[+...]

a R<sup>z</sup> flöchen W schlechen b W kurtz c H haw d R<sup>z</sup> verwirret e W von

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

\Wenn es klitzt oben \So stand ab das wil  
ich loben

18r

[+...]

\Krump nicht kurtzhaw  
\Durchwechsel do mit schaw

18v

[+...]

\Krump wer dich irret \Der edel krieg in  
verwirret \Das er fur war \Nicht wais wo er  
sey ane far<sup>f</sup>

[+...]

\Twer benjympt \wass vom tag her chumpt

20r

Wann es glitzend oben / So stand ab das  
wil ich loben '

15v

Krump nicht kurtz haw / Durchwechsel  
damit schaw '

16r

Krump wer dich yrret / Der edel krieg In  
verirret / Das er nicht wais für wor / Wo er  
sei one vor '

16v

Zwer benjymet / Was vom tag her  
kommet '

17v

f vD<sup>z</sup> \Das er nicht weiß vor war \wo er sey ane far



"Döbringer" (M 53)	Ringeck <sup>6</sup> (M 14)
\Twere mit der sterke · deyn arbeit do mete merke //	Zwer mit der stoerck: dein ar bait do mit moerck ∴  28v  [+...]
\Twere czu dem pfluge · czu den ochsen herte gefuge // \Was sich wol tweret · mit spruengen dem <hew> geferet //¶ <sup>a</sup> -----	Zwer zu dem pflueg, zu dem ochsen hart gefuege <sup>c</sup> ∴ [29v] Waß sich wol zwerch mit springen dem haupt geferet ∴  [+...]
¶Veller wer fueret · von unden noch [-wonch <sup>b</sup> ] wonsche her [-*] rueret //	Feler wer wol furet, von unden nach wünsch er ruret <sup>d</sup> 30r  [+...]
\Vorkerer twinget · durchlawfer auch mete ringet // \Den ellenbogen · gewis nym · sprink yn den wogen //	Verkerer zwinget \Durch lauffer auch mit ringet \Den elenbogen gewisse nym spring im in die wage  30v  [+...]
\Veller czwefache · trifft man den snet mete mache //	Feler zwýfach trifft man den schnit mit macht [+...]

a Additional separation of paragraphs by means of an intersecting page-wide line. b The word is erased and underlined by dots. c W pflug, gefuge d R<sup>2</sup> Welcher vor füret W drops 'er'

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

\Twer mit der sterck \Dein arbeit do mit  
schreck<sup>e</sup>

Zwer mit der sterck / Dein arbeit damit  
vermerck //

21r

18r

[+...]

\Twer zw dem phlueg \zû dem oxsen hart  
gefueg \was sich wol twert \Mit springen  
dem haubt ge vêr<sup>f</sup>

Zwer zu dem pflug / Zu dem oxsen  
hart gefug / Was sich wol zweret / Mit  
sprûngen dem haubt gefere<sup>\*t\*</sup> //

22r

[+...]

19v

\Veler verfüreret \Von unden nach wünsch er  
rurret

Feler werer füreret / Von unden nach  
wunsch rûret //

[+...]

20r

\Vor kerer twinget \durchlauffer auch mit  
ringet \Den elpogen gewiû nym spring jym  
in die wage

Verkeret zwinget / Durchlauffen auch mit  
ringet / Den elenpogen nym gewiû /  
Spring im yn die wege '

22v

21r

[+...]

\Veler zwifach \Trift mann den schnidt mit  
mach

Feler zwifach / trifft man den snidt mit  
mach /

"Döbringer" (M 53)	Ringeck <sup>8</sup> (M 14)
<p>\Czwefaches vorpas · schreit yn link · und weze nicht las // \Wen alles vechten wil rischheit haben von rechte // \Dorc zu auch kunheit · vorsichtikeit · list unde klugheit //</p> <p>28v</p>	<p>Zwyfach es fyrbas schryt<sup>b</sup> in linck und biß nit laß.</p> <p>31r</p>
<p>[+...]</p> <p>Schiler in bricht · was pueffel nue slet ader sticht // \Wer wechsel drawet · schiler dor aus in berawbet ¶</p>	<p>[+...]</p> <p>Schiller ein<sup>e</sup> bricht waß bufler<sup>d</sup> schlecht<sup>e</sup> oder stÿcht / Wer wechsel trawet<sup>f</sup> schiller in dar uß beraubet</p> <p>31v</p>
<p>\Schil kuerczt her dich an · [-das] durchwechsel das sigt ym an //</p>	<p>Schill kurfst<sup>g</sup> er dich an durch wechsel er sigt im an</p> <p>32r</p>
<p>\Schil zu dem orte · und nym den hals anevorchte //<sup>a</sup></p>	<p>Schill zu dem ort und <i>nymm</i> den halß on forcht</p> <p>32v</p>
<p>\Schil in dem oebem hawpte · hende wiltu bedoebem //</p>	<p>[+...]</p> <p>Schill zu dem oberen / haupt hende wilt dü bedobren<sup>h</sup></p>

a H has an additional sentence here, of which the origin is not quite clear. b R<sup>z</sup> fürbaß schreyt  
c R<sup>z</sup> in d R<sup>z</sup> buffel e R<sup>z</sup> schlöcht f R<sup>z</sup> drawet g R<sup>z</sup> körczt h R<sup>z</sup> bedebem W bedebren

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

\Zwifach es für pas \Schreit in linck und pis  
nicht las

Zwifach fürpas / Schreitt ein linck und pis  
nit las'

23r

[+...]

22r

\Schilär ain pricht \was püffel schlecht oder  
sticht \wer wechsel draut \Schilär dar aus  
in beraubt

Schiler ein bricht / Was puffel slecht oder  
sticht / Wer wechsel draut / Schiler yn  
daraus beraubt'

24r

[+...]

23v

\Schil kürzt er dich an \Durch wechsel  
gesigt ym an

Schil kurtz er dich an / Durch wechsel  
gesigt im an'

[+...]

24v

\Schül zw dem ort \und nym den hals ane  
vorcht

Schil zu dem ortt / Nym den hals on  
forcht'

24v

[+...]

25r

\Schil zw dem oberen \haubt hend wild du  
bedöberen

Schil zu dem obern / Haubt hend wiltu  
bedobern'

25v

## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

ΞSchil ken dem rechten · is das du wol  
gerest vechten // \Den schilhaw ich preize  
· kumpt her dar nicht czu leizeΞ

30r

[+...]

[+...]

Der scheidlere · deyn antlitz ist ym  
gefere //

Der schaytler / dem antlytz ist gefere

[33r]

[+...]

\mit seinem karen · der broste vaste  
gewaren

Mit siner ker / der Brust fast gefere<sup>a</sup>

[+...]

¶Was von ym kummet / dy crone das abe  
nymmet ¶

\Waß von im komp<sup>b</sup> / die kron daß  
abnymmt

33v

[+...]

\Sneyt durch dy krone · zo brichstu sie  
harte schone // \Dy striche druecke · mit  
sneten sie abe ruecke //

Schnid durch<sup>c</sup> die krone / \So brichest dü  
sÿ hart schon Die strich<sup>d</sup> drucke mit  
schnitten sÿ ab zuecke<sup>e</sup>

\Den scheidlhaw ich preize · \kummp  
her dar · nicht czu leize //

32r

[+...]

[+...]

a R<sup>α</sup> Der schitler ist dem anlitz ge/fere mitt seinen kere \Der Brust fast gewär b R<sup>α</sup> kummp  
c R<sup>α</sup> Schnÿde der doch d W,G stuck e R<sup>α</sup> zeuck

von Danzig<sup>g</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

[+...]

[Feler zwifach / trifft man den snid mit  
macht Zwifach es fürpas Schreitt ein linck  
und pis nit la\*s\*s\*]<sup>g</sup>

26v

\Dê[-m]<sup>f</sup> schaitlär dem anlützt ist gevär

Der scheitteler mit seiner kor

\Mit seiner kar \Der prust vast geuer

Ist dem anlützt und der prust vast  
≤gevor≥<sup>'</sup>\wass von ym kumpt \Die kron das [25r] ab  
nÿmptWas von im komet / Die kron das ab  
nÿmet\Schneidt durch die kron \So prichstu sy  
hart schon \Die striche druck \Mit schniten  
sy ab zuckSchneid durch die kron / So prichstu sie  
schon / Die strich die truck / Mit schniden  
sie ab zuck<sup>'</sup>

25v

[+...]

27v

f vD<sup>z</sup> Der g [sentence] is an exact but nonfunctional repetition of [21r]

## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Vier leger alleyne · do von halt und flewg  
dy gemeyne // \Ochse · \pflug · \alber · \  
vom tage nicht sy dir vemmer //

32v

[+...]

Vier sint vorsetczen · dy dy leger auch sere  
letczen ¶ \Vorsetczen huet dich · geschiet  
das auch sere muet dich //

\Ab dir vorsatz ist · und wy das dar  
komen ist // \hoere was ich rate / streich  
abe haw snel mete drate //

\Setzt an vier enden · bleib droffe kere  
wiltu enden ≡ \Wer wol vorsetczit · der  
vechte\**n*\*<sup>a</sup> vil hewe letczit · \wen yn dÿ  
hengen · kumpstu mit vorsetczen  
behende ≡ //

33r

[+...]

Ringeck<sup>8</sup> (M 14)

Vier leger allain \Da von halt und flüch<sup>b</sup>  
die gemain<sup>c</sup> [34r] Ochs pflug / alber vom  
tag / sy dir nit unmer

34v

[+...]

Vier sind versetzen \Die die leger aüch ser  
letzen vor versetzen hiet dich / geschicht  
es ser es [35 r] myt dich

35v

[+...]

Ob dir<sup>d</sup> versetzt ist / und wie das dar  
komen ist / hoere was ich rate / rays abe<sup>e</sup> /  
haw<sup>f</sup> schnell mit dratte

36r

[+...]

Setz an vier enden / blieb dar uff<sup>g</sup> lere  
wiltu enden<sup>h</sup>

36v

[+...]

a H vechte b W fluch c H gemaim d H dier e R<sup>α</sup> raÿß abe f R<sup>α</sup> häw g R<sup>α</sup> belÿb  
daruff h R<sup>α</sup> wunden

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

\Vier leger allain \da von halt \und fleuch  
die gemain \Ochs pflueg alber \vom tag seÿ  
dir nicht un[-n] mār

26r

[+...]

\Vier sind vor setzen \Die die leger auch  
sere letzen [+...]  
\Vor Versetzen huett dich \Geschicht das  
auch sere müetzs dich

27r

[+...]

\Ob dir vor setzt ist \und wie das dar  
chömen ist \Hör \was ich dir rate \Reiß ab  
haw schnell mit drate

[+...]

\Setz an vier enden \pleib dar auf lere wildu  
enden

27v

[+...]

Jud Lew (M 8)

Vier leger allein / Davon haltu fleuch die  
gemein / Ochs pflug alber / Vom tag sein  
dir nit unmēr '

29v

Vier sein versetzen / Die die leger sere  
letzen / Versetz hüt dich / Geschicht es  
me es müt dich '

30v

Ob dir versetzt ist / Merck wie er  
darkommen ist / Hör was ich rat / Reiß  
ab snell mit drat '

31r

Setz an vier enden / Bleib darauff wiltu  
enden '

32v



## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

Nochreisen lere · czwefach [-s] ader sneit  
in dy were //

Nach rajsse lere zwyfach<sup>a</sup> oder schnyd in  
die were

37v

[+...]

\Czwey ewsere nymme · der erbeit  
dornoch begynne // und prueff dy ferte ·  
ab sye sint weich ader herte //

Zwai eussren nym Dein arbeits darnach  
beginn und brieffe die gefe<sup>\*b</sup> / ob sy sind  
waych oder hort

38r

[+...]

\Das fuelen lere · \Indes · das wort sneidet  
sere //

Das fulen lere In des das wort<sup>c</sup> schnydet<sup>d</sup>  
sere

39r

[+...]

\Reisen czwefache · den alden snet mete  
mache //

Nachreisen zwifach / trifft man den alten  
schnitt mitt macht

\Volge allen treffen · den starken wiltu sy  
effen // \In aller lere · den ort keyn eyns  
gesichte kere // \Mit ganzem leibe ·  
nochreize · deyn ort io da pleibe // \Lere  
auch behende · reizen · zo magstu wol  
enden

33v

39v

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

\Nachraisen lere \zwifach oder schneid in  
die were

Nachreissen lere / Zwifach oder sneid in  
die were

\Zway eüsserw mÿnne \Der arbeit dar nach  
begÿnne \und prüff dÿe gefert \Ob sÿ sind  
waich oder hert

Zwei eussere mÿnne / Der arbeit darnach  
begynne / Und prüff die gefert / Ob sie  
sein waich oder hert '

28v

34v

[+...]

\Das fulen lere \Inndes das wort schneidet  
sere

Das fulen lere / Indes das versneidet  
sere '

29v

36r

[+...]

\Nachraisen zwifach \trift mann den alten  
schnit mit mach

Nachreissen zwifach / Den alten schnid  
mit mach '

30r

## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

[+...]

[+...]

Wer unden remet · oeberlawf den · der  
wirt beschemet // \Wen is klitzt oben / so  
sterke das ger ich loben // \deyn erbeit  
mache · ader herte druecke czwefache //

Wer unden remet [- überlau]  
uberlauffen<sup>a</sup> den / der wirt beschemet \  
wen es kliczsch<sup>b</sup> oben / so störrck d<a>s  
will<sup>c</sup> ich loben \Dein arbeits mach / oder  
hert<sup>d</sup> druck zwifach ::

\Wer dich druekt neder / oeberlawf in ·  
slach sere weder // \Von beiden seiten /  
oeberlawf und merke dy sneiden//

34<sup>r</sup>40<sup>r</sup>

[+...]

[+...]

Lere abesetzzen · hewe stiche kuenstli-  
chen letzzen // Wer auf dich sticht · dyn  
ort trifft und seynen bricht // \Von payden  
seyten · trif allemal wiltu schreiten //  
\In aller lere · deyn ort keyn eyns gesichte  
kere //

Lern absezzen<sup>e</sup> / häw<sup>f</sup>, stich kunstlich  
leczen<sup>g</sup> Wer uff dich sticht / d<a>s din ort  
trifft / und sinen prücht<sup>h</sup> \Von baiden  
sytten / trif alle mal wiltu schrytten ::

34<sup>v</sup>41<sup>r</sup>

[+...]

[+...]

Durchwechsel lere · von payden seyten  
stich mete sere // \Wer auf dich bindet ·  
durchwechsel in schire vindet

Durchwechslen lere / von bayden sytten,  
stich mitt sere \Wer uff dich bindet /  
durchwechsel in schier [- \*\*] findet

a R<sup>α</sup>, Z,G uberlauff b Z,G klitzscht R<sup>α</sup> gliczt c R<sup>α</sup> so sterck gar ich d R<sup>α</sup> hört  
e W absetzen f W,Z,G haw g Z,G letzen h R<sup>α</sup> pricht

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

[+...]

36v

\Wer unden rempt \Uber lauf den der wirt  
 beschempt \wenn es klitzt oben \So sterck  
 das ger ich loben \Dein arbeit mache \Oder  
 herte druck zwifache

Wer überwindet / Überlauff den der wirt  
 beschemet / Wann es glitzent oben / So  
 sterck das hör ich loben / Dein arbeit  
 mach / Oder druck zwifach '

[+...]

37v

\Lere absetzen \häw stich kunstlich letzen \  
 wer auff dich sticht \Dein ort trifft \und  
 seinen pricht \Von paiden seitten \Triff  
 allemal wildu schreiten

Lere absetzen / Hew stich künstlich letzen  
 / Wer auf dich sticht / Dein ort trifft vnd  
 seinen ≤priche\*et\*≥ / Von baiden seitten /  
 Triff alle mal wiltu schreiten //

30v

38v

[+...]

\Durchwechsel lere \von paiden seitten  
 stich mit sere \wer auff dich pindet \  
 Druchwechsel \in schir vindet

Durchwechseln ler / Von baiden seitten  
 stich mit ser / Wer auff dich pindet  
 Durchwechseln in schier sneit ≤oder  
 findet≥ //

## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

≡\Wen du durchwechselt hast · slach ·  
stich · ader winde ≤nicht laz≥ \haw nicht  
czum swerte durchwechsel do mete  
≤warte≥ ≡ //

35r

[+...]

Trit nue in buende / das czuecken gibt  
gute fuende //

\Czuek · trift her · czucke me · erbeit her ·  
wind · das tut im we //

\Czuek alle treffen · den meistern wiltu sye  
effen //

\Czuk · ab vom swerte · und gedenke io  
deyner ferte //[-Durchlawf//]

35v

[+...]

Durchlawff loz hangen mit dem knawf ·  
greif wiltu rangen //

\Wer gegen der sterke / durchlawf ir do  
mete merke // \Durchlawf und stos ·  
vorkere · greift her noch dem klos //

36r

[+...]

Tritt nahend<sup>a</sup> in binden daß zucken git  
güt fünden

Zuck<sup>b</sup> trifft er [41 v] zuck mer / arbat  
erfinde<sup>c</sup> d<a>s tüt we<sup>d</sup>

\Zuck in allen treffen / den maistern wiltu  
sy effen ~ ::

42r

[+...]

Durchlauff lauß<sup>e</sup> hangen mitt dem  
knopffe grýff<sup>f</sup> wilt du<sup>g</sup> rangen

Wer gegen dir störcke / durchlauff damit  
mörcke ::

44v

a R<sup>α</sup> nahent b R<sup>α</sup> zeuck c R<sup>α</sup> wind d R<sup>α</sup> d<a>s tüt im we e R<sup>α</sup> laß f R<sup>α</sup> greýff g R<sup>α</sup>  
unreadable

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

31v

40r

[+...]

\Tritt nahent in pünden \das zucken gibt  
güte fünde

Tritt nahent In pünden<sup>h</sup> Das zucken gibt  
gut fünde /

\Zuck trifft er \zuck mer Arbeit erfinde \Das  
thuet ym we

Zuck trifft er zuck me / Er befindet arbeit  
die im tut we

\Zuck allen treffen \den maisteren wiltu sy  
effen

Und zuck alle treffen / Den maistern wiltu  
sie effen '

32r

41r

[+...]

\Durchlauff lass hangen \Mit dem knopf  
greif wiltu rangen

Durch lauffen las hangen / Mit dem  
knauff wiltu rangen /

\Wer gegen dir sterck \durchläüf do mit  
merck

Wer gegen dir sterck / Durchlauf damit  
merck '

34r

44v

h H pinden

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 "Döbringer" (M 53)
 

---

 Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)
 

---

[+...]

[+...]

 Sneit abe dy herten · von unden in beiden  
 ferten //

 Schnÿde ab die hörten<sup>a</sup> / von unden in<sup>b</sup>  
 bayden geferten

 \Vier sint der snete / czwene unden /  
 czwene oben mete //

 Vier sind der schnitt / zwen unden zwen  
 oben mit ::

 \Czwir wer wol sneidet · den schaden her  
 gene meidet //

 \Sneit nicht in vreize · betrachte io vor dy  
 reize //

 \Du magst wol sneiden · alle krewtz · nuer  
 reisen vormeiden // \Wiltu ane schaden  
 bleiben // zo bis nicht gee mit dem  
 <sneiden> //

36v

46r

[+...]

[+...]

 Deyn sneide wende / czum flechen  
 druecke dy hende //

 Die schnÿde wende / zu flechen<sup>c</sup> druck  
 die hende ::

 \Ein anders · ist wenden · eyns winden ·  
 das dritte hengen //

\Wiltu machen vordrossen · dy fechter /

 a R<sup>z</sup> hertte b R<sup>z</sup> von c R<sup>z</sup> Flechem, W,G schlechen d vD<sup>z</sup> zw flechen

---

 von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

[+...]

\Schneid ab die herten \Von unden \in  
paiden gefertten

Schneid ab die herten / Von unden in  
baiden geferten '

34V

45V

[+...]

\Vier sind der schnit \Zwen unden \zwen  
oben mit

Vier sein der snid / Zwen unden zwen  
oben mit '

35r

47r

[+...]

\Dein schnidt wende \zwflechen<sup>d</sup> druck die  
hende

Dein sneiden wend / Zu fliehen druck  
dein hend '

d vD<sup>α</sup> zwflechen



## "Döbringer" (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

zo drucke mit stoessen // \Ober dy hende  
 [-hewstu] · hewet man snete behende // \  
 Czewch och dyn snete / obe aus ober dem  
 hewpte // \Wer hende drueckt · ane  
 schaden · vor finger czueckt

| |

37<sup>r</sup>

[+...]

Czwey hengen werden · aus eyner hant  
 von der erden // \In allen z̄gēferten · \  
 hewe \stiche \leger · \weich ader \herte //

[+...]

Zwaÿ hengen werden / uß ainer hand<sup>a</sup>  
 von der erden \In allem [46 v] gefert<sup>b</sup> /  
 hew stich leger [- oder] waich oder  
 hert<sup>c</sup> ::

47<sup>r</sup>

[+...]

\Sprechfenster mache · stant froelich sich  
 syne sache //

Sprechfenster mach stand frÿlich<sup>d</sup>  
 be/siche sin sach

[-Das] \Slach das her snabe · wer von dir  
 zich czewt abe // \Ich sage vorware · sich  
 schuezt keyn man ane vare // \Hastu  
 vornommen / czu slage mag her kleyne  
 kommen //

\Schlage in d<a>z<sup>e</sup> er schnappe  
 wer sich vor dir zÿhet<sup>f</sup> abe \Ich  
 sag dir für ware / \Sich schÿzt kain  
 man one fare Haustu recht vornommen  
 zu schlage mag er klain kummen ::

\Is das du bleibest · am swerte da mete  
 äüch treibest · \hewe · \stiche ader

von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

35v

47v

[+...]

*\Zway hengen werden \Aus einer hant von  
der erden \In allem gefert \Haw stich leger  
waich oder hert*

Zwei hengen werden / aus einer hant von  
der erden / In allem gefert / Haw stich  
leger waich oder hert '

36r

48v

[+...]

*\Sprechfenster mache \Stant freyleich  
besich sein sache*

Sprechfenster mach /  
Stant frölich besich sein sach /  
Wer sich vor dir zeuget ab /

*\Schlach in das er schnabe \Wer sich fur  
dir zeuchet abe \Ich sag dir fur war \Sich  
schützet kain man ane var \Hastu  
vernomen zw schlag mag er klein chumen*

Schlag in schnell das er snab /  
Ich sage für war / Kein man schützt sich  
on far / Hastu vernommen /  
Zu slag mag er clein kommen '

“Döbringer” (M 53)

Ringeck<sup>6</sup> (M 14)

snete · das \\fuehen merke mete // an alles  
vor [-gh]czihen // vom swerte du <auch>  
nicht salt flien /

\\Wen meister gefechte · ist am swerte  
vonrechte<sup>a</sup> //

\\Wer an dich bindet · \\der krik mit im sere  
ringet // \\Das edle winden / kan in auch  
schire vinden // Mit hewen mit \\stichen  
mit \\sneten vindest in werlichen //

\\In allen winden \\hewe \\stiche / \\snete  
saltu vinden //

\\Das edle hengen · wil nicht syn an dy  
winden \\wen aus deyn hengen · saltu dy  
winden brengen //

39v<sup>b</sup>

Von beiden seiten · ler acht winden mit  
schreiten // \\Und io ir eyne · der winden  
mit dreyn stoecken meyne // \\So synt ir  
czwenzik // und vier · czele sy enczik //  
\\Fechter<sup>c</sup> das achte · und dy winden rechte  
betrachte // \\Und lere sy wol furen // zo  
magst du dy vier bloeßen rüen // \\Wen  
itzliche blösse · hat sechs ruren gewisse //

a H von rechte

b A new thematic verse, indicated by a littera notabilior (and elaborated in its own glosa) is introduced, but without scribal heading.

c H Ffechter

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von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

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 “Döbringer” (M 53)

 Ringeck<sup>8</sup> (M 14)
 

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123v

[+...]

\Wer wol fürett<sup>a</sup> / und recht bricht  
 und entlich garbericht und bricht  
 besunder ygelichs im drëw\* wunder<sup>b</sup>  
 Wer recht wol henget /und winden<sup>c</sup>  
 domitt brenget \Und winden<sup>d</sup> acht / mitt  
 rechten wegen tracht<sup>e</sup> / \Und io ir aÿne  
 / \Der winden selb dritt ich maÿne<sup>f</sup>[\*]  
 \\So sind ir zwinczig / und fürzel sÿ  
 einzigen \Von bayden sÿttenn / acht  
 winden ler mit schritten \Unnd brieff  
 [- der] die gefert<sup>g</sup> / nicht mer dann waich  
 oder hert//

---

a R<sup>α</sup> Füret b R<sup>α</sup> jegerlicheß in drÿ wunder c R<sup>α</sup> windet d R<sup>α</sup> winde[- t]n e R<sup>α</sup> mitt  
 rechten weg betrachten, Z betracht f R<sup>α</sup> Und iz aine der \Winde selb drette ich gemaine g R<sup>α</sup>  
 gefört

---

 von Danzig<sup>6</sup> (M 57)

Jud Lew (M 8)

37<sup>r</sup>51<sup>r</sup>

[+...]

\Wer wol furet und recht pricht \und  
 endlich gar bericht \Und prich besunder \  
 Jeglichs in dreÿ wunder \wer recht wol  
 henget \Und winden do mit pringet \und  
 winden acht \Mit rechten wegen betracht \  
 Und zw ir eine \Der winden selb dritt ich  
 meine \So sind ir zwainczigk \Und vier zell  
 si enczigk \von paiden seiten \Acht winden  
 lere mit schreiten \Und pruf die gefert \  
 Nicht mer nür waich oder hert

Wer wol füret vnd wol pricht / Und  
 endelich gar bericht / Und pricht besun-  
 der / Jeglichs in drei wunder / Wer recht  
 wol henget / Und winden damit prengt /  
 Und der winden acht / Mit rechten wegen  
 betracht / Und ir einer der winde salßdrit  
 / Zweintzigk und vier / Zele sie einzigk  
 von beiden setiite\*n\* / Acht winden lern  
 mit schreiten / Und prüff die gefert /  
 Nicht mee dann waich oder hert '

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# Problems of Interpretation and Application in Fight Book Studies

*John Clements*

*He which is not much practiced and exercised therein, ought not to make profession of this Art; for he shall find himself to be utterly deceived.*

MAESTRO GIACOMO DI GRASSI, 1570<sup>1</sup>



## 1 Perspective and Process

In the exploration and study of the corpus of literature called the “Fight Books”, we are involved in a problematic recovery process. Reviving the physical exercise and pedagogical knowledge of these “combatives” (i.e. close combat training and techniques) presents a considerable though not insurmountable challenge. Addressing these issues critically is not without difficulty. The central purpose of this paper is to consider problematic areas affecting Fight Book study from the perspective of their general content as martial arts teachings.<sup>2</sup> In doing so we may defer to the words of Francois Dancie from the first chapter of his 1623, *L’Espee De Combat*, in that, “a profession like this one which is all in the sword and wounds, should not be treated with delicacy, neither with

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<sup>1</sup> Di Grassi, *His True Art of Defense*, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> There has been a lack of useful prior work on problems of interpretation and application largely for the very reasons examined in this paper. In my opinion, there are no significant published works addressing in a practical way the issues which I’ve encountered and observed over the past 36 years. This is especially true with regard to recognizing reoccurring patterns of adversarial movement within the Fight Books and its associated combat iconography. (Clements, “Form From Function”, p. 42). For this reason, the perspective and conceptualization described here originate with and are a largely product of my own experience; the combination of my observations, efforts and personal study from a particular vantage point as a professional researcher-practitioner. The context for this focus has been on training mechanisms associated with earnest self-defense in relation to recorded instances of violent injury and death. Section 5 of this paper addresses this aspect.

soft words and other titillations of the ears . . .”<sup>3</sup> This subject is in its infancy in terms of scholarship as well as mastery of its physical application. Recent efforts have been a revelation; releasing submerged wisdom while resurrecting forgotten truths about indigenous Western European self-defense knowledge dormant for generations. While substantial discoveries have been made, because of the very nature of martial arts many factors will continue to inhibit conclusive knowledge. Whatever physical training regimen we construct, employing whatever drills and exercises we discern, will be derived from what is, by default, an ongoing reconstructive investigation. In turn, whatever conclusions we develop from this process will be colored to one degree or another by what we know and think we know. It is therefore essential that students of the Fight Books acknowledge inherent problems while remaining conscious of their effects.

As the Fight Books served pragmatic self-defense needs they often read in terms of “what can happen in combat” more often than “what to do in class” to prepare for it. We must therefore learn how to practice these teachings at nearly the same time we figure out just what the teachings are. What modern practitioners are in effect doing is trying to raise our understanding by, as it were, matching practicum with principia. In this regard, it is important to remember that this revolves around two simultaneous things: first, trying to reconstruct extinct combative methods from literary and iconographic sources, and second, to create a modern means of practicing application of them through some form of training program or exercise curriculum. Both of these activities are synergistic. They inform and augment one another, though the latter by necessity cannot be implemented without material from the former, and yet, to conduct the former—interpret the original teachings as close-combat instruction—requires some prerequisite structure for understanding their martial arts content.<sup>4</sup> In simplest form, it demands that knowledge of historical arms and armor be joined with substantive appreciation for the physicality

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3 Dancie, *L'Espee De Combat*, p. 4.

4 It should not be necessary to stipulate that the corpus of Fight Book teachings largely, though not entirely, constitute *Arts of Defence* (i.e., “self-defense” methods) in that they essentially existed out of the need to convey skills for physical protection, even when said skills function recreationally, whether in part or whole, of a larger contemporary body of combat knowledge. It can be acknowledged that today an interdisciplinary effort is a necessity for the student-practitioner. Whether as recreational combatant, anthropologist, or experimental archaeologist, they ideally take on roles associated with historian and philologist as much as martial artist. In the case of the later, we may certainly permit the broadest definition.

and the emotionality of preparing someone to engage in and survive incidents of personal violence. In doing this there will be gaps produced by the intrinsic limitations involved in the original efforts to compile and present martial arts through words or pictures; as well as incongruities resulting from subjectivity and inexperience. There are several major problems the Fight Books (presumably) leave unanswered. Taken in the aggregate, they do not fully tell us how to teach their material nor do they even tell us about how exactly to train in their methods. They do not tell us, for example, at what speed they practiced attacks and counter-attacks, or what level of force and degree of contact was commonly used when doing so. They also cannot easily convey the understanding of timing or shifting leverage and balance required in executing movements. The source texts certainly reveal systematic teachings, but not actually how to learn them. Rather, they more or less just convey portions of how to do it. Given the diversity of combat threats, to describe in pictorial and textual form all possible variations of every technique for all circumstances would certainly be impractical. As S. Anglo noted, the master Marco Doccini in 1611,

... expressed the misgivings of many when he explained that while, in his own book, he had tried to describe as clearly as was within his power the rules and methods necessary for the exercise of the sword alone or accompanied by some other arm, he knew that 'having to describe many minutiae and many particular things concerning this art, it is almost impossible to represent it with the clarity that it perhaps demands.'<sup>5</sup>

Being the product of human minds and human hands the sources are by no means flawless. The very nature of communicating dynamic physical actions in the medium of words and pictures is after all fraught with difficulty. Again, as Anglo aptly posed the question, "since all treatises had to be studied by their readers without benefit of the authors' 'motions', how was comprehensibility to be achieved?"<sup>6</sup> Modern practitioner-researchers have to answer this question on the basis of their own experiences, insights, and preconceptions. Yet where do students get the knowledge to fill it in? How does a modern student "interpret" an extinct fighting style if their own martial experience is largely a blank slate? The student can soundly interpret but only when they have first been provided the proper tools by which to conduct such analysis: a firm comprehension of fighting principles and the core concepts of swordsmanship

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5 Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 122.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

and grappling. The natural course so far may be described as having taken a “vivocentric” approach—retracing techniques and elements from today’s limited sport fencing and folk wrestling styles back to earlier more inclusive martial art systems. However, reconstructions will inevitably be incomplete as we cannot know from the source teachings and related historical materials alone the exact totality of any lost fighting art or forgotten combative system. The Fight Books do not generally appear to divide up their content into “beginner, intermediate, and advanced” material but can be read as presenting it more holistically within a commonality of recognizable core stances and motions. That is, examples or lessons emphasizing principles of timing, distance, and leverage for the vigorous striking and warding of fundamental attacks. The essential function of these martial arts was to enable a fighting man to better deal with the chaos of combat situations by preparing himself with an understanding of what was possible. Therefore, students must seek the meaning behind passages and example techniques, that is, not just the linguistic meanings of terminology, but what the author was trying to convey and why they saw it as something necessary to describe in their teachings. We must remain ever cognizant of the “real life” situations for which these methods were devised and preserved as part of an effort to explain and convey simple self-defense necessities not isolated technical actions.<sup>7</sup>

## 2 Problems of Core Assumptions

Scholarly research into the Fight Books reasonably proceeds by iconographic, codicological, linguistic, and paleographical analysis, followed by cross-comparison of thematic and contextual structure, aim, and origin. Exploration of the hopological or martial function of the Fight Books consists in identifying the biomechanical principles, concepts, and techniques of their teachings

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7 We are restricted in application of fighting actions to the limitations of modern class-room replication explored as modern curiosity even as we know this represents only a facet of what constituted historical combat activities. A recognizable and significant disconnect therefore exists. That is, “given the distance from which the subject must now be approached in comparison to the time when those fighting men wrote about and practiced it, there is an extraordinary cultural gulf”. Clements, “The Literary Tradition”, p. 1. In this sense, study of Fight Book teachings means “practice” and the practice itself also acts to “teach us”. A question for further investigation is when “reconstruction” transitions from interpretation to “re”-interpretation and becomes “re”-invention rather than “reconstruction”?

then actively exercising in them as combative skills. However, this process of hypothesis, experiment, and analysis is considerably susceptible to subjective factors: methodology of approach and intensity of effort, preconceptions about the function and nature of weapons and personal violence, physical conditioning and athleticism of the student, the intentions and motives of the practitioners along with their equipment choices. These factors, which can differ significantly from individual to individual, will decidedly color expectations let alone conclusions.

As the Fight Books teachings are investigated the student necessarily acts upon a set of their own core assumptions: about how real weapons worked and armor functioned, what wounds could be caused, how people reacted to physical injury and responded psychologically to personal violence, and how the human body performed in close combat including its capacity to continue fighting while injured. To be sure, the sources for these core assumptions differ widely among students and scholars. The Fight Books themselves and narrative sources from the era also differ in the value they offer our understanding about these matters. Therefore, a good portion of our initial knowledge of these combat skills must first come from outside the source literature. Different practitioners can each have diverging perspectives as to how to proceed in studying historical fighting. The situation is made more complicated by preconceived notions and habits derived from modern martial sports, recreational combat games, and stunt-fencing theories with limited understanding of violent personal combat and insufficient experience with genuine historical arms. More importantly, we must consider the consequences of proceeding from faulty core assumptions and what influence they can have on attempts at understanding these martial art teachings. Compiling a set of core assumptions thus requires that we first develop a sense of where we are historically, theoretically, and practically in the study of the Fight Books.

The Fight Books are reflective of the incontrovertible fact that the men who developed and refined these skills for violent personal encounters (regardless of occasions for non-lethal use) did so by training to be strong, quick, unpredictable and fluid in the application of their fighting techniques. Therefore, in our present exploration we must reasonably emulate as much as possible both their physicality and their mindset. If we do otherwise we must recognize that it significantly alters our perspective. Logically, the more substantiated our core assumptions are the better able we are to adapt and process information. In that regard, we must be "originalists" seeking to understand as best we can the teachings as they were at the time they were recorded. However, we must also be to an extent "textualists" in that we look to the plain language



of the teachings in order to reproduce them as physically repeatable actions. During exploration of the Fight Books we build a certain “model” of underlying concepts based on empirical evidence collected through experimental practice and determined from non-lethal application. This model of how fighting principles and techniques work is refined as we learn more about physical application of key elements and become more adept in their application. In historical combat there was a simple truth at work: When people are actually trying to kill or injure you, things are evaluated differently than in classroom practice or sport. Trying to make ourselves better aware of these differences is necessarily part of our task. We therefore must keep our core-assumptions flexible and open to continuous revision, especially when it comes to the experimental application of what generally are lethal or injurious actions.

The end objective of study can be conceived as reproducing physical performance of the material—in safe athletic exercise and mock-combat practice. Central to this, and arguably the greater part of the interpretation and application of extinct combative disciplines, is to follow their original structure rather than attempt to reformulate or re-systematize the teachings. In this there are essentially two kinds of primary mistakes that can occur. Identifiable mistakes of execution result from insufficient physical or academic preparation by the student (and are easier to correct), while errors of conception, which derive from poor appreciation of the biomechanics of techniques and fighting principles, are more subtle and detrimental. In each case ways of misreading and then performing a description of physical action incorrectly are nearly infinite and may vary considerably from practitioner to practitioner. A major complication in interpretation of Fight Books is the natural subjectivity that invariably plays a part. Different readers examining the same material might infer very different meanings. If varied practitioners studying the same source content have distinct and seemingly mutually exclusive experiences as to the applications or effectiveness of a certain action, then it is reasonable to determine it to be a result of differences in their approach to training, their methodologies of practice, their physicality, their choice of training equipment, or their experience of personal violence. In any case, this subject by necessity contains a strong autodidactic component, in that, not being able to call upon extant teaching lineages of surviving pedagogical traditions, modern practitioners are essentially self-taught. We come to our skills by virtue of whatever level of physical work we put into developing our understanding of the teachings and it is inescapable that the credible recovery of these teachings employ hands-on experimental application proceeding as a vigorous athletic activity. Given that theorizing on the hypothetical meaning of source teachings does not equate

with the viability of competent performance in them, this kind of knowledge can reasonably come only from long-term experience training with the armaments or techniques in question following the manner which the Fight Books and their associated historical sources convey.

As modern students we can seek to continually improve the accuracy of our core assumptions and our comprehension of their impact on the process. When trying to understand the Fight Book teachings it becomes imperative we do not de-emphasize either the violence or athleticism of the subject nor the intensity necessary to practice of the material. The ideal goal can be to reduce subjective impressions by relying on more pragmatic and empirical views of what the sources meant by their original instructions. To aid in addressing the problem of core assumptions in the evaluation of Fight Book instructions three important guiding considerations can be involved: adherence to textual description, adherence to illustrated images (when available), and functionality in test performance—i.e., application. Yet, a chief concern in studying the Fight Books (or any self-defense method) is how to determine if what we are practicing or functionally expressing would really be “combat effective”.

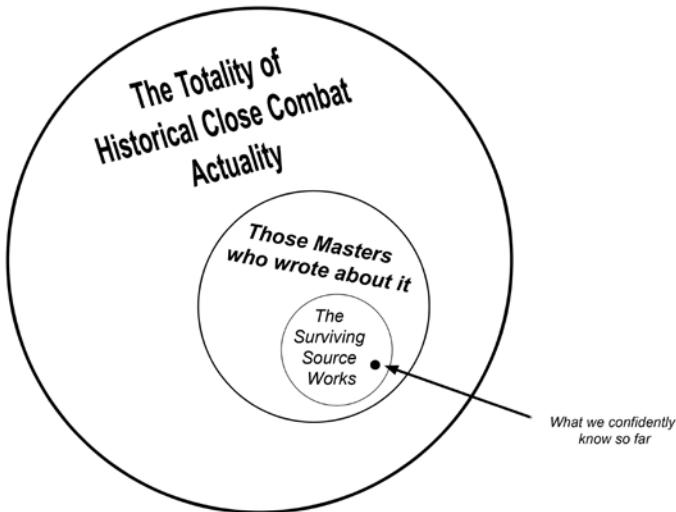


FIGURE 8.1 *Current Knowledge of Fight Book Teachings as Comparative Spheres.*  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

### 3 Problems of Equipment

A central problem of reconstructing these fighting arts is the most obvious: any approach to interpreting the Fight Book teachings by necessity must itself be processed through experience acquired via vigorous physical experiment with accurate reproductions of historical arms and armor. This is a continuous dynamic process whereby insights in one area are recycled back to offer insights into the other so that greater understanding of their use comes about through application of the genuine methods devised for them. There is therefore an ongoing relationship between research and practice.

The weapons or armor used are critical. Weapons and simulators must be robust and sturdy and be able to be used as closely as possible to the originals. The subtleties involved in actions of striking and countering, of impeding or warding and leveraging, are simply lost without an implement that handles and functions as an original. When using an alternative, selected for reasons of convenient sporting play or artificial contests, the result (not surprisingly) is a distorted understanding of the historical teachings. A weapon that is not closely balanced and weighted like the original, that does not respond to impacts with either the same resilience of flexibility or stiffness, will naturally encourage certain actions while discouraging (or even preventing) others. This unquestionably produces idiosyncratic habits of practice leading to distortions of understanding key concepts, that in turn, affect assumptions about combat, which then result in a “style” of fighting outside of the authentic methods. The more training equipment reflects the historical versions, logically, the more authentic skill in manipulating them may be. This difference in behavior between actual and theoretical is best understood by virtue of first already knowing the dynamics of genuine specimens of historical weapons—and something of how sharp versions perform in cutting experiments on realistic target materials. However, if learning only via training tools that do not permit or encourage the true range of actions of the originals, lack their centers of gravity and percussion, then such an accurate understanding is not achieved. Similarly, our physical exercises with these weapons and training tools must resemble as closely as possible those that were conducted historically to prepare fighting men for the actualities of real self-defense encounters. When this is not the case, prejudice and misunderstandings will invariably result.

The practice and investigation of armored personal combat especially requires properly made and fitted accurate armors matched to correct undergarments otherwise mobility, agility, ventilation, and freedom of movement are considerably distorted which in turn leads to false conclusions. The problem of equipment also extends beyond arms and armor to modern training

gear that was not historically used, and which alters the approach to and performance of the source teachings in subtle and significant ways. For example, modern footwear, padded gloves, specialized masks, and protective garments can influence everything from the attitude of practitioners to the manipulation of weapons and the level of exertion or physical contact employed.

Equipment that does not match the performance of its original historical model will invariably introduce foreign elements into practice while at the same time inhibiting more intrinsic elements. It is the very nature of fighting arts that if equipment does not accurately reflect the performance traits of originals then techniques and actions employed with them will be employed incorrectly. If techniques and actions are employed incorrectly then underlying principles and concepts will not be properly applied. If underlying principles and concepts are not properly applied then understanding and interpretation of the original teachings will be flawed. The importance of accurate training equipment cannot be overstated.

#### 4 Problems of Physicality

Interpreted analysis of armed or unarmed historical fighting skills flows from the fact that application of martial instruction is a talent as well as a skill acquired (as such physical abilities are) by years of practice sustained by intense interest. But if fighting skills rely upon (and demand) a certain minimal prerequisite physicality, then any credible analytical interpretation, let alone application, cannot even begin without some minimal understanding of the inherent body mechanics of close combat. As interpreters of what are essentially extinct combatives that no one has practiced for centuries, students of the Fight Books need core fighting skills based upon understanding of sound adversarial movements and self-defense principles. Without the athletic capacity to demonstrate attacks, wards, and counters with the necessary coordination, power and violence integral to the physicality of their function, one cannot theorize authoritatively about real world application. The underlying principles and concepts are after all intended for combative use not choreographed stunt, slow dance-like routines, or the artificial restrictions of scoring points in sporting contests and pretend play fighting. They demand application with the requisite energy, speed, and force that displays firm understanding of their underlying biomechanics and innate athleticism. There are considerable subtleties and nuances critical to understanding and replicating the Fight Book teachings which can only be properly appreciated (if not comprehended) once a certain degree of adeptness is acquired by the

practitioner in conjunction with a requisite level of dexterity, conditioning, and coordination. This is certainly not to suggest that they cannot be practiced recreationally and non-lethally, as obviously that was the historical condition under which both training and public displays were conducted. Nonetheless, it is an observable fact that such capacity differs to substantial degrees among practitioners. We are dealing not only with a “science” (of defense) but with “arts” after all and the “human factor” involved is paramount.

While the Fight Books do often proceed with difficulty in showing through words and pictures alone the complexities of adversarial human movement, much of our present lack of knowledge as to the viability of their content surely stems from modern ignorance of the dynamics of archaic personal combat, not necessarily the failings of the Fight Books to “speak” to us now. However, other issues of physicality can complicate things for the modern student as well. Crucial body postures and critical foot positions within the teachings might be ignored unless the practitioner is actively compelled to perform actions at realistic speed and force, while certain subtle ways of gripping weapons might seem nonsensical until the student eventually becomes adept enough in their adroit handling. Additionally, obscure yet vital body contact integral to employing some actions might be overlooked until high-level ability in perceiving leverage and balance is acquired by the practitioner. Reasonably, the more athletically one pursues the functional dimension of Fight Book study, the more actualized will be one’s physical understanding of the material as they eventually come to deeper appreciation as to how these actions could and would be performed in earnest. Of course, logically if one does not train with the minimal requisite speed and force inherent to effective execution of the material then one cannot fully understand the operative application of these very factors.

It should be self-evident that someone less athletically prepared is going to have a different take on what the source teachings present and how they can be performed than will someone more physically vigorous. How personal fitness limitations affect the conceptualization of historical combat methods is a problem that cannot be ignored without repercussions to the integrity of interpretations. There are undeniably a set of necessary physical skills required to do adequate reconstructive interpretation of the Fight Books—a sense of range, timing, leverage, and perception, as well as the strength and speed to act with or control the requisite martial energy involved. Yet these skills themselves do not spontaneously result from the process of attempting to do interpretive reconstruction. Just as studying classical music compositions doesn’t make one a musician, so too does historical martial arts require considerable hands-on practice with the proper instruments and exercises if confident

performance is the objective. The simple fact is, the more profound the understanding of historical arms and armor and the physicality of fighting, the more insightful interpretations can be. The interpretative process of practicing the content of the Fight Books as martial arts cannot properly proceed with the absence of physical aptitude nor neglect for the central axioms of adversarial human movement. Key to any confident reconstruction of these martial teachings then, is avoiding the potential phenomenon of substituting the scholarly interpretation process itself for the act of developing the required physicality of interpretive application.

## 5 Problems of Inexperience

There is an obvious difference between displaying idealized actions in theory and effectively applying them in the chaos of combat situations. In words and pictures a teacher can describe situations, offer illustrations, explain details, and give examples, but cannot convey the reality and the physical violence of techniques. As Anglo observed on the matter, “Certainly all those masters who chose to write down their views were obliged, consciously or unconsciously, to consider the relationships not only between the theory and practice of fencing but also between the language and content of their works”.<sup>8</sup> The master Joachim Meyer, who in his grand treatise of 1570 acknowledged that “the Craft is very difficult to write about”, sensibly declared that, “every art can be shown with less trouble, and may also be grasped by the learner with the hand through practice of the body”.<sup>9</sup> Meyer was surely echoing the wisdom of master Liechtenauer from 1389, expressing that

it is not possible to explain swordsmanship in a complete and clear manner by speaking or writing, in this way as it can be shown with hand. That is why you should consider and debate the matter in your mind, and practice it more in exercise combat, so that you could consider it better in real fighting. This is due to the fact that exercises are better than art, since exercises do well without the art, but the art does nothing without exercises.<sup>10</sup>

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8 Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 122.

9 Forngeng, *The Art of Combat*, pp. 45 and 41.

10 *Liechtenauer*, 151, ed. as cited in Zabinski, p. 133.

Thus, we are advised we should contemplate the meaning of the teachings, train in them, and reflect on the actuality of their use.

Because practitioners (and scholars) can each have markedly different motives, objectives, and methods for their study of fighting, each individual can vary widely in their degree of “settled order of learning”. Their focus may be on different primary sources and different weapons which they pursue with differing degrees of effort and athleticism as well as dissimilar training standards and procedures. There is also no question that not all martial artists are created equal. They simply do not all have equivalent understanding of bio-mechanics nor the same repertoire of effective techniques let alone the same mindset or mental discipline. We may consider for instance the admonition of master Joachim Meyer, which though not nearly as grave a matter for modern students, is even truer today regardless:

For daily experience shows that for many a man his armor, weaponry, and arms are more detrimental than helpful in protecting his body and life, no matter how well equipped he is, if he does not know how to conduct himself in it, nor to defend himself judiciously with it.<sup>11</sup>

From the 1594 English edition of Giacomo Di Grassi’s book we also find this enlightening statement on the matter:

... the end and scope of this Art consists not in reasoning, but in doing: Therefore to him that is desirous to prove so cunning in this Art, as is needful, it is requisite not only that he be able to judge, but also that he be strong and active to put in execution all that which his judgement comprehends and sees. And this may not be done without strength and activity of body: The which if happily it be feeble, slow, or not of power to sustain the weight of blows, or if it take not advantage to strike when time requires, it utterly remains overtaken with disgrace and danger: the which faults (as appears) proceed not from the Art, but from the Instrument badly handled in the action. Therefore let every man that is desirous to practice this Art, endeavor himself to get strength and agility of body assuring himself, that judgment without this activity and force, avails little or nothing: Yea, happily giveth occasion of hurt and spoil. For men being blinded in their own judgements, and presuming thereon,

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11 Forging, *The Art of Combat*, p. 3. In other words, bad training can be worse than no training.

because they know how, and what they ought to do, give many times the onset and enterprise, but yet, never perform it in act.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, to Di Grassi, who emphasized the necessity of vigorous physical exercise, one may know many techniques and be well-versed in theory, but not have the physical attributes or necessary fitness to fight well. One needs clear theory and sound technique combined with physical capacity to appropriately execute movements. This is because martial skill requires the balance, coordination and strength that comes as result. Vincentio Saviolo, in his 1595 book on rapier fencing expressed a similar element this way:

But to perform these matters, you must be nimble of body and much practiced: for although a man have the skill, and understand the whole circumstance of this play, yet if he have not taken pains to get use and readiness therein by exercise (as in all other arts the speculation without practice is imperfect) so in this, when he comes to performance, he shall perceive his want . . .<sup>13</sup>

To underscore the problematic matter of novices, amateurs and inexperienced practitioners presenting less competent techniques or inferior martial theories, we need only consider examples of historical masters themselves warning about this. For example, from Di Grassi we also read:

He that persuades himself that he can learn this Art by the exercise of a few particular strokes of the point and edge is utterly deceived. For besides, that by those particular tricks, there is small knowledge gotten: So the chances in this Art are so dangerous and sundry, that it is impossible to deliberate suddenly, except he have the universal knowledge and understanding of all the rules and principals hereof, being grounded upon offending and defending.<sup>14</sup>

The master Joseph Swetnam in his 1617 book on the craft stated that skill in the art of fencing could not be attained by reading about it alone but by practicing and then applying it against various opponents:

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12 Di Grassi, *His True Art of Defense*, p. A1r–A1v.

13 Saviolo, *His Practice in Two Bookes*, p. H3.

14 Di Grassi, *His True Art of Defense*, p. 42.



he that doth but read of the art . . . yet without practice and by experience in trial, it will be imperfect . . . therefore it behooves thee to use practice with sundry men, and so to make use of the diversity of each man's skill . . .<sup>15</sup>

Writing in 1610 on who you should learn the art from, master Ridolfo Capo Ferro stated it in this manner:

You have to know that there are some who quickly, when they have learned a little and yet having little practice of it, place themselves to teach others. They teach without foundation nor rules that are true, nor understand that the knowledge is very different from teaching and that this way of teaching is acquired with length of time . . . and one must be warned of learning from them.

He further noted,

The truth is arranged in the precepts of fencing. They should not be measured according to the ignorance of some, who teach and write from the long use of weapons that they have and not through the science. Therefore most of the time they make a reasoned case from an inkling of substance . . .<sup>16</sup>

Francois Dancie, from the foreword of his 1623 work, also expressed,

I complain above all, and not without reason, of a bunch of runners, who, professing some mastery in this art, and being simply ignorant of it, deserve to be called Clercs d'Armes, or even something worse. For, besides doing wrong to men of honor, who know better, they are a disgrace to the profession by their incapacity.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Worthy and Noble Science of Defense*, 1617. p. C3v.

16 Kirby, *Italian Rapier Combat*, pp. 52–53.

17 Dancie, *L'Espee De Combat*, Chapter 1, p. 4. His remark calls to mind the complaint by Master Liechtenauer on the “dance-masters” or stage-fighters with their stiff “cued-fighting” made up of broad unnecessary parries and exaggerated strikes. (Zabinski, pp. 131–132) Similarly, Joachim Meyer warned of the different between the “art” and useless “sword mummery”. (Forgeng, *The Art of Combat*, p. 49)

However, nowhere is this sentiment of warning against the inexperienced perhaps so brutally stated as with Girard Thibault d'Anvers in his 1630 work:

[...] it will be entirely different for those ignorant and foolhardy would-be swordsmen who rashly imitate everything they have seen practiced three or four times by a man who is adroit and well trained. From this they will gain nothing but shame and confusion; when it comes to making proofs, they will find themselves frustrated in their intentions at every moment, because they do not understand the breadth of this science, nor how difficult it is, the time which it requires and deserves to be learned, nor the study which must be brought to bear on the subtlety of its demonstrations. Presumptuous and ridiculous people, who have learned no more than two or three small points, convince themselves that they lack nothing, being certain that the little that they know can be made to serve on all occasions, without considering the great extent, nay, the infinity of variations, which present themselves every day in practice, of which each one has its proper manner of use differing from the others, and indeed, which change themselves by the hour, the minute, and the instant.<sup>18</sup>

Even Johannes Georgius Bruchius as late as 1671 complained in the foreword of his book that,

It has now come so far with the Art, that no distinction is made between good and bad teachings, that are done to the young men, who, because they are still inexperienced in it, are easily taken in by such, who have this Art more from talking, than acquired by experience, which is not all too common...<sup>19</sup>

There are certainly further examples within the Fight Books which can be cited.<sup>20</sup> We may note that Joachim Meyer did wisely attest that, “everyone

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18 Greer, *Academy of the Sword*, p. 129.

19 Bruchius, *Thorough Description of the Noble and Knightly Fencing*, p. 3.

20 Consider the critical view of George Silver from his 1599, *Paradoxes of Defence*, citing what he saw as the imperfections and limitations of the rapier for “this excellent science”. Silver complained that people were being deceived because its fighting method was “both true and false.” Of Italian rapier teachers in London he asserted that “whatsoever they teach” was “true in their demonstrations, according with their force and time in gentle play, but false in their actions according with the force and time in rough play or fight.” In other words, he thought their theories worked while going slowly and carefully in lessons or casual bouts but failed against skilled fighters when practiced realistically or attempted

thinks differently from everyone else, so he behaves differently in combat". He also then later stated, "For as we are not all of a single nature, so we also cannot have a single style in combat, yet all must nonetheless arise and be derived from a single basis".<sup>21</sup> However, that considerable complaint was registered by masters of defense on the matter of physical ineptitude and martial inexperience in an age of constant necessity to prepare oneself to encounter personal violence, speaks volumes about persistence of the problem. Throughout history there have always been some men who have written weakly on subjects they knew little about but held strong opinions upon nonetheless. As Joseph Swetnam declared,

As men of all arts, trades, and sciences, differ in art and workmanship . . . so in this art of defense . . . the number which are experienced in it are infinite . . . Every man holds his opinion to be best in that fashion which he hath been most used unto; although a man show many errors by good judgement, yet it is hard to withdraw them from their own will . . .<sup>22</sup>

In his 1670 fencing text the later French master, Philibert de la Touche, even dismissed all earlier books because the styles of arms and armor had changed so much.<sup>23</sup> This alone is good reason to give modern students considerable pause. Arguing against "erroneous opinions", Baroque fencing master, Monsieur L'Abbat, echoed the thought in chapter 31 of his fencing treatise of 1734 by writing: "Though there are people of a bad taste in every art or science, there are more in that of fencing than in others, as well by Reason of little Understanding . . . argue so weakly on this Exercise".<sup>24</sup>

The observation can be made that these very same problems and attitudes, which found no agreement among the historical sources, continue today among fledgling explorers of the Fight Books.

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in earnest combat. This phenomenon, of a new unproven self-defense method having inherent flaws is hardly unknown in martial arts today. As Silver, to whom no fighting art is "perfect that is not done in force and true time", expressed it, "none can judge of the craft but the craftsman." (Silver, *Paradox of defence*, pp. 6–7.)

21 Forggeng, *The Art of Combat*, pp. 45 and 137.

22 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Worthy and Noble Science of Defence*, p. 16.

23 Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 341 note 83.

24 L'Abbat, *The Art of Fencing*, p. 121. Even more, Joseph Roland expressed almost the very same sentiment much later in the opening of his 1809, *Amateur of Fencing*, noting: "That there are persons of mistaken ideas in almost every Art or Science, is what few will deny. Yet I am inclined to believe there are more erroneous opinions entertained with regard to the *Art of using the Sword* than on most other subjects". (Roland, *The Amateur of Fencing*, p. ix.)

## 6 Problems of Conceptualization

In the course of working out these teachings an awareness should be maintained of one very important aspect of the process: At one time the art existed in reality. A “version” of it was then put into words or images. Now we try to take a version back out and make it exist again. Yet, what we are producing is not the “original” itself, but rather a new version by way of what we can discern from the records. We should remain aware that the “real art” was filtered through what they at the time could fit into text and images; while modern conception of it is then filtered back out through what we can discover now by interpretative analysis. Ideally then we should not proceed by working as if the whole art itself originated “from a text” in the first place, instead of elements of the art having at a later time merely been put “into a text”. In doing so the tendency must be resisted to esotericize and become so intertwined with overly technical explanations of a text that we forget the simple violent physical nature of the acts they were attempting to express.

Despite the wealth of historical resources at our disposal, interpretation and application of Medieval and Renaissance combat systems is a decidedly problematic activity. Interpretation is not a matter of simply reading a translation of a text or conducting analysis of images then attempting to work out how the moves and techniques “would have been really used”. One cannot just “go through the motions” as it were and expect to truly recover and comprehend real self-defense skills. It stands to reason that a person no more acquires working ability of fighting techniques through the act of translating a source than does someone become a skillful surgeon after translating a medical text. In one regard, what we know is only an “interpretation,” a composite approximation, and not a true reconstitution since we do not use it “for real” nor have we ever seen it taught “for real”. To be accurate, we certainly are not “recreating” these extinct arts, despite the frequent use of the word. Although, this recovery process can be classified as a “revival” since, after all, we are indeed rebuilding and resurrecting knowledge which they recorded and non-lethally practiced themselves as part of their own training.<sup>25</sup> The structures that the Fight Books ended up creating—in order to practice fighting as preparation for surviving the dangers of personal combat—resulted in varying degrees of systematic representation. Simply put, these “representational systems” were never attempts to “model” the actual unpredictability of combat or to explain

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25 It is experiencing a revival in that, after an extended period of inactivity and loss, appreciation for the martial culture of the Fight Books is seeing increased interest among a niche community seeking restoration of its practices.

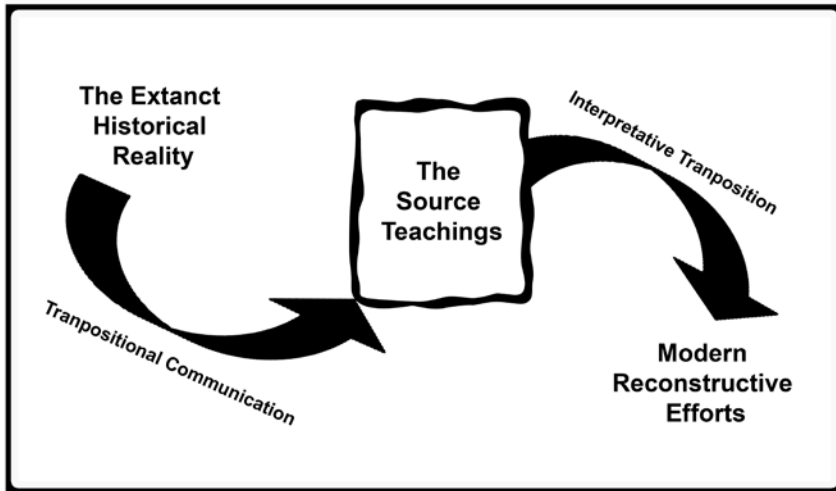


FIGURE 8.2 *Entraction/Extraction Process.*  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

every conceivable possibility, but only to aid the combatant in successfully getting through it.

Fundamentally, the material presented in the Fight Books can often be viewed as example sequences of exchanges action and counter-action. They are simple examples of core offensive and defensive techniques that can be practiced—such a method of transmission underlies the heart of most any historical fighting method. Subsequently, in reassembling martial arts we run the twin risks of reductionism and distortion. In other words, it is possible to either miss the sophistication and richness of the Fight Books (as has occurred in the recent past) or misinterpret them out of ignorance and misconception. Ability to learn from the source texts today is directly related to our means to understand and interpret what an author was trying to convey, as well as the author's own ability to convey it in a concise and understandable manner.<sup>26</sup> As Anglo has observed:

A great many problems are involved here: the influence of historical, military and civil fashion; the definition of what precisely constitutes

26 For example, Sigmund Ringeck begins his early 15th century teachings on the method of Johannes Liechtenauer by expressing: *stät das sy ain yeder fechter wol verömen vnd vestan mag der da anderst fechten kan*). Lindholm, *Sigmund Ringeck's Knightly Art of the Longsword*, p. 17. A possible meaning of this is, "He that knows how to fight will understand these teachings"; or that anyone who already grasps the underlying precepts of fighting will recognize the instructions presented within are sound and effective.

fencing; and debate concerning the use of point and edge, general principles of fighting, the mechanics of movement, and the psychology of combat.<sup>27</sup>

The teachings found in many of the Fight Books are fairly simple. Its “craft” is a “fighting art.” Vicious, even if elegant, action is its essence. For the large part they either present or express certain precepts and fundamentals from which basic techniques derive. From these numerous variations follow. We can discern a variety of core elements at work as well as a “chain of techniques” or interrelated actions of offense and defense. Yet a danger here is the student falling prey to any “system bias” that can occur as they focus more on “interpretation” than on “application”. This necessitates approaching techniques or actions not in a purely mechanical way, (e.g., in terms of left or right, above or below, short or long, etc.), but in rather from the perspective of their violent motionalty for either causing or preventing immediate harm. The texts and illustrations must of course also be examined in the context of how they were intended: as a means of transmission of knowledge of movement for dealing with violence. They could certainly serve as memory aid to those who already knew the essential postures and strikes. Yet because the use of perspective was limited when it came to artwork, depiction of human combative action is often representational more than literal. That is, vague perspective points causing distortion and equivocation in regard to depth and placement of limbs or the angulation of weapon positions are common. Interpreting fighting imagery with regard to ergonomic and spatial particulars concerning artistic conventions is obviously essential. But again, the ability to do this is frequently dependent upon experience in the physical dimensions of vigorously exercising in the teachings. In displaying physical action the artists and illustrators were clearly limited in their “visual vocabulary” yet it has been noted that, “The medieval artist when illustrating was expected to remain relatively faithful to the events that he was depicting and to capture the ‘spirit’ of the fight”.<sup>28</sup> The Middle Ages has been described as being a highly visual period in which images, objects, and performance played a dominant representative and communicative role in secular and religious society. This was reflected in relations between text and image, vocal performance and visual presentation in manuscript, and

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27 Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 4.

28 See: Hooper in “The ‘Rows of the Battle-Swan’: The Aftermath of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Art 82–99”, p. 82. For more on considerations for interpreting depictions of fighting and arms and armor in Medieval artwork see: Porter, “The Ways of War in Medieval Manuscript Illuminations: Tracing and Assessing the Evidence”, pp. 100–114.

between devotional visualization and vernacular reading.<sup>29</sup> As is often noted among scholars and students of the Fight Books, the problem of “reading” Fight Book illustrations concerns the question of how three-dimensional violent movement and timed motion is being recorded. The images typically present only one phase of mutual actions that have a start and finish even as they flow together. In studying them we may regularly take their samples of particular techniques as isolated “snapshots” and then attempt to integrate them into a sequence. Often these images can seem simplistic but at other times cryptic and convoluted. However, again, the more physically inclined and the more physically experienced one becomes at the underlying principles of self-defense and energetic weapon manipulation, the more it becomes clear what portion or time of an action or a technique is being presented. Within artwork depicting figures practicing or fighting there is revealed a consistency among several key elements: the fighting postures, the range between the combatants, the width of their stances, the reach of their stepping, the placement of feet and hands, and the motions of the arms. Similar aspects are revealed from 15th and 16th century artworks of battlefield combat. When combined with hands-on modern experiment using replica weaponry, we can deduce from this a reliable estimate of how historical combatants performed fighting actions. Aspects which once seemed unintelligible or even physically impossible may then be perceived as quite reasonable and subtleties and nuances which were previously overlooked may become readily executable.

Certainly, what experience has been lost of these fighting arts, besides the understanding of the reality of personal violence, can be viewed as being tribal memory or the group recollection that makes up tradition, the subtleties of how and why things were done the way they were, and how they were transferred from one generation to another. These skills, after all, are perishable, since they will deteriorate or be forgotten if not regularly practiced as originally conceived (for whatever context intended) and necessitated by their original conditions. Since skill in fighting with (or even unarmed against) historical weaponry is no longer a life and death necessity of genuine self-defense, there is no environmental pressure to prove their combat viability, no earnest natural selection at work to filter less effective teachings. In other words, inexperience with the source material affects application of any interpretation.

As it has been noted about recovery efforts on forgotten combative knowledge: “physical experience offers kinesthetic insight, which informs the intel-

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29 See: Starkey/Wenzel. “Visual Culture and the German Middle Ages. Series: The New Middle Ages”.

lectual analysis".<sup>30</sup> The significance of this is debatable. However, what is not debatable is that it affects manners of practice and training which in turn affect interpretation. What core movements the Fight Book teachings were conveying is contentious and conjectural. They must therefore be approximated through physical exercise combined with non-lethal experimental application. The two are symbiotically dependent. The more adept we become practicing with accurate arms and applying essential self-defense concepts the more insight we have into executing the techniques and elements described. In this regard, students of the Fight Books must work to offer competent examples of martial prowess in order to present greater avenues of collaboration between academics and practitioners. Each of these will assist in diminishing problem areas affecting the subject. Otherwise, inaccuracies, and false assumptions will emerge to adversely influence conclusions. The practice of every traditional martial art around the globe faces such problematic areas, whether they are extant preserved teachings or extinct and being revived.<sup>31</sup> Without the obvious natural control provided by the necessity of real life application in lethal encounters martial arts are an activity highly susceptible to misinterpretation, meritless distraction, and wishful self deception. Absent any survival pressures necessitating a combative system prove its viability, all manner of interpretation is free to emerge on Fight Book teachings unrestricted by any real-world experience. This subject is after all arguably as much intangible as material culture, in that its study is about both the skills and the artifacts once used by people proficient in dealing with real-world violence. This appreciation is necessary to avoid interpretations being reduced to mere suppositional discourse enhanced by recreational combat-sport.<sup>32</sup>

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30 Peatfield, "Reliving Greek personal combat", p. 24.

31 It can be a daunting task for the professional fight instructor to bring any martial arts practitioner of any style to the realization that their ideas on fighting may be flawed or that their personal self-defense ability possibly deficient. The same can be said within the realm of scholarly dissertation and disagreements among historians. Combining the two as must occur in study of the Fight Books can be even more challenging. Modern academic scholarship and modern martial arts practice are neither entirely harmonious nor faultless. The former has the tendency toward insularity, specialized jargon, and irrelevance to real world needs, while the latter is replete with theatricality, affectation, and impracticality regardless of whether pursued for self-development or self-protection.

32 Caution must therefore be taken that the theoretical reach of artificial recreational or sportification efforts does not exceed the evidential grasp of their proponents. Modern competitive contests and regulated fighting games can supplement understanding of a self-defense system but they do not substitute for its study.



## 7 Inconclusive Conclusions

Interpretative study of Fight Book teachings is both an athletic and academic endeavor following a sound method that respects the nature of the material as self-defense discipline. Such reconstructive-interpretation requires continually reexamining presumptions about both the tentative nature of our knowledge and the process by which it was accumulated. Of chief concern here is the classic dilemma: understanding the “difference between fighting and practicing fighting”—or between the practical use of arms and their use in preparatory exercise. There is an undeniable challenge here facing every student of this subject: How do we respect its historic gravity and utility as well as make it a worthwhile endeavor relevant to our modern age when it is no longer of everyday survival necessity? How do we, on the one hand, celebrate genuine martial spirit and appreciate it with sincerity, without on the other, trivializing it into confected versions or escapist role-play? Both scholars and practitioners face obstacles and conditions within this craft that our forebears did not. We simply do not have the same necessity to do it with the same intensity, let alone have access to the same resources for learning it. The problem of having an incomplete historical curriculum as well as inauthentic ad hoc amateur training programs is tangential to this. Correspondingly, two simultaneous interdependent pursuits are underway: the academic exploration of the original close-combat teachings and their establishment as a modern martial discipline—before it has even been properly reconstructed or substantially recovered.<sup>33</sup> The latter takes place despite the complete absence of any opportunity or necessity to ever employ these skills in their original role as systems for dealing with personal violence. Where then to draw the lines between what is genuine self-defense preparation, what is earnest practice of a historical

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33 It is understandable that modern students should be concerned with not wanting to proceed either blindly or prematurely in their efforts. A reasonable precaution is to consider that before proposing a possible “method” for reconstructing Fight Book teachings the developer offer up demonstrable examples of impressive fighting ability and credible self-defense expertise acquired from significant time spent using the very proposed method. It also should not be too much to expect the developer be able to point to students with impressive skill sets obtained as a direct result of following said method. It should not be unusual to expect that any hypothesized means for reconstructing come from experimenting in specific activities found within the source teachings themselves as well as associated military accounts and martial literature from the era. Absent this, suggestions for exercises, drills, or practice routines developed for any method must, at best, be viewed as having questionable utility for regaining martial arts knowledge which is more or less vestigial.

discipline, what is recreational sport, what is purely academic investigation, and what is mere exercising a hobby?

It should be no surprise that efforts to recover these forgotten self-defense teachings is a problematic endeavor plagued by all manner of subjective and experiential limitations. The primary challenge facing the increasing popularity of historical European fighting arts study is neither lack of authentic source material nor contamination of its integrity by other better established and widely known martial art styles from other cultures. Rather, both the virtue and bane of Fight Book studies today is that it has no authoritative standards of authentic demonstration, application, or physical performance. As a result, almost any practice effort can be argued to be as ostensibly viable as another as there is no accepted means to judge accuracy, credibility, effectiveness or quality of reclaimed skill sets.<sup>34</sup> While the pedagogical examples of extant Asian fighting traditions and combat sports as well as modern combative programs can all serve as some guide, they cannot be emulated nor adopted without profoundly corrupting both the integrity of our source teachings and the authenticity of the reconstruction process itself. An issue facing attempts at standardization and experimentation in the realm of application, is that there is a natural bell curve at work. When we consider the question of what the authors of the Fight Books were communicating as simply being the presentation of what they believed worked in combat and trying to explain it to the degree they were capable, we are faced with an assessment of how well they succeeded that is subjectively reliant directly upon our own experiential ability to grasp the very motions and actions which they attempted to record.<sup>35</sup> The majority of investigation will fall within the center with both less capable and more capable individuals each falling toward the ends. Thus, despite the richness and diversity of the Fight Books, exploration and investigation of this literature and restoration of its teachings will continue to face fundamental challenges.

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34 This question of authenticity and efficacy within historical close-combat teachings is by no means exclusive to any style of martial art in the modern world. In our case however, absent surviving guilds or schools and lineages of "Masters of Defense" representing the original methods, there are simply no historical examples of expert prowess nor intact curricula to which we might defer as reference points. Perhaps all that can be said is logic informs us that the more modern research corresponds to the historical illustrations and descriptions, the more confidence can be had in interpreting their teachings.

35 We might heed that Joachim Meyer did not resist observing that: "the Art depends upon the person, so that a poor move will be executed by an ingenious mindful person much more usefully in the action, than the best one will be executed by a fool". (Forgeng, *The Art of Combat*, p. 45)

The failure to realize that interpretation really means “interpretative-application” lies at the center of many problems in studying the Fight Book teachings as martial disciplines today. This problem is far more than a theoretical one. Regardless of the accuracy of translations and transcriptions, understanding of the Fight Books is ultimately dependent upon interpretative-application for the simple reason that words and pictures cannot convey the interconnected elements of movement and energy so critical to understanding close-combat skills. Controlled observable experimental studies are therefore not possible beyond achieving certain subjective understandings of biomechanics, limits of materials, and anecdotal impressions of tactical advantage. Study of the Fight Books is at its heart about violent athletic application of combative action, not mere interpretive textual analysis of theoretical issues. Application is both the origin and the roles of these teachings. Its investigation ultimately begins and ends with vigorous physical exercise of the craft. From all the possible hypothetical ways for interpreting techniques and actions how can we know with any confidence that an application is valid? How do we filter out all the other alternatives to reach the most credible understanding? The best we can perhaps achieve with application of interpreted material is a modern (though authentically referenced) composite of the historical practice actualized through realistic training and practice.

The response to the central problems of interpretation and application of Fight Book teachings considered in this paper lies in evaluating what interpretations are demonstrable by the most effective biomechanics. This can be considered by three chief means whenever possible: through energetic physical performance with a partner, through application in vigorous free-play, and through experimental striking against mock-targets with accurate reproduction weaponry. Without this we can never go beyond the artificialities formed through either conjecture or comparative play-fighting. Finally, if we consider the totality of combat within the Medieval and Renaissance periods, those masters who wrote manuals or study guides surely represent a smaller fraction of what occurred. Of those works which have survived to our present time, they represent only a fraction still. Of these, only a portion has yet been accurately transcribed or translated. And of those, only a minute number are understood well enough for modern practitioners now to confidently demonstrate effective techniques and concepts from them. This knowledge at present is but a minuscule segment of an immense cultural heritage. Despite great progress in study of the Fight Books compared to what there is to learn, we still know next to nothing.

The exercise of independently verifying an interpretative reading is partially a subjective interpolation of physical actions in support of transcribed

and or translated instructions. Yet, no one truly approaches study of the Fight Books in a vacuum. We “interpret” it by processing it through “what we know”. Our readings are colored by our own aptitude, experience, and intuition. To a skillful modern fighter, a great deal in the Fight Books comes across intuitively. Knowledgeable martial artists can often read between the lines to discern the general principles of fighting at work and perceive an awareness of them by the original author. Perhaps the single most significant problem facing interpretation and application of the Fight Books is not the overwhelming amount of rich source material to explore, but the danger of limited and idiosyncratic misinterpretations becoming ossified as orthodoxy among less experienced practitioners while the crucial element of practical application based on intrinsic motions and martial effectiveness is not given proper due. The essence of the problem can be surmised by considering the following: For any given Fight Book teachings, when interpreting the craft today’s student is essentially stating: “Here is what I think the source is saying to do and here is how I think you are to do it”. But following from this must come the confident results of having applied these two things together in practice over time. These results then have to be evaluated and judged not for just their adherence to the source but for the physicality of their execution. They must be considered bio-mechanically for their martial utility or self-defense value. How to proceed with that analysis without the experiential efficacy of actual combat is the challenge for there is no escaping the fact that different practitioners implement it with substantially different degrees of effort, insight, and athleticism.

In the modern study of historical close combat teachings there are fundamental subjective issues at work—core assumptions, physicality, equipment, inexperience, conceptualization—regardless of the individual’s goals or personal objectives and that may be set within it. Given the problems of interpretation and application there is ultimately a necessity to proceed with continual reference back to the reality of historical violence and for this we may again consider the wisdom of the English master Joseph Swetnam from 1617:

The best remedy is daily exercise and practice one with another, and to play with more then one, otherwise thou wilt never come unto true defense for it is good to be acquainted with every mans fashion, for that trick which will hit one will not hit another, and therefore be well experienced not only in the true play but in the false.<sup>36</sup>

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36 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Worthy and Noble Science of Defence*, p. 36.



**Our objective must be to expand and merge these two spheres through continual research and training.**

FIGURE 8.3 *The Challenge of Expanding Knowledge of Fight Book Teachings.*  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

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## Experimenting Historical European Martial Arts, a Scientific Method?

*Daniel Jaquet*

The first glossator of the Liechtenauer Epitome explains: “Also notice and know that one may not speak about, write about or explain the art of combat, as it can be shown and demonstrated with the hand.”<sup>1</sup> This matter is also to be found in the discourse of later glossators throughout the 15th century, but without them altering or developing the content. We have to wait up to the end of the century to have more detailed developments, for example by Pietro del Monte in 1509: “Regarding this capacity of exercising oneself, it is known that we cannot explain it with speech only, but indeed with speech and demonstration by the hand. Operating an exercise with the body consists of an action that must be felt tangibly.”<sup>2</sup> Finally, Joachim Meyer states in 1570: “[...] this knightly art is grasped with the fist and practiced with the application of the entire body, and so must be learned more through experience than out of books.”<sup>3</sup> He notes nevertheless that reading his book would allow the students to:

conceive it [the art of combat] in their memory much better when it is assembled, written out, and placed before their eyes in a proper

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1 *Auch merke das / und wisse das man nicht gar eygentlich und bedewtlich von dem fechten mag sagen und schreiben ader aus legen / als man is wol mag / is wol mag czeigen und weisen mit der hant /*. Anonymous, ca. 1389. (M53) Nurnberg, Nationalmuseum, Cod. 3227a, fol. 15r. Quoted after Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer*, p. 133. English translation by the author.

2 *In hac facultate exercitiorum advertendum est quod non solum per sermonem adiscere possumus nisi in sermone simul cum demonstratione manuum non* [sic. T.N.: *nam* instead of *non*, the latter leading to mistranslation] *operatio exercendi corpora in opere tangibili sensuum consisitit*. Pietro Monte, *Exercitiorum Atque Artis Militaris Collectanea*, Milan, Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzler, 1509, lib. I, cap. 2.

3 [...] *das solche Ritterliche kunst mit der fauste angegriffen und mit zühün des ganzen leibs erübt und also mehr durch erfahrung danns ausz den Büchern müsz gelehrt werden*. Joachim Meyer, *Gründliche Beschreibung der freyen Ritterlichen und Adelichen kunst des Fechtens*, Straßburg, Thiebolt Berger, 1570, fol. B1r. Trans 1. Forgeng, *The art of combat*, p. 41.

pedagogical order, and afterwards it can also be more readily learned and grasped through the practice of the body, than when it is recounted to them only by mouth and presented in piecemeal fashion.<sup>4</sup>

On the one hand, the author details the weaknesses of written media to transmit an embodied knowledge, while, as noted by J.-D. Müller, the usual channel is oral with demonstration, imitation and correction,<sup>5</sup> as still is today. On the other hand he insists on the need of a written media as mnemonic device, but also to supersede the absence of a master by regular practice, provided that the embodied knowledge has been properly instructed at least once.<sup>6</sup>

The work of Joachim Meyer is a good example of a trend identified by scholars<sup>7</sup> as *ad artem reducere*, consisting of the pre-Modern re-actualization of the Antique authorial project of collecting, ordaining and spreading knowledge about arts. This trend can be easily recognised with some authors or compilers of Medieval Fight Books, but it is not possible to ascertain it for all of them.<sup>8</sup> It is nevertheless noteworthy to investigate with this perspective the works of Joachim Meyer, Paulus Hector Mair or Camillo Agrippa, amongst others.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that the technical and/or figured discourse of the Fight Books cannot be strictly considered as a mirror image of actual praxis and that the modern reader is left to study the art of combat from an imperfect media for transmitting an embodied knowledge is of central concern to the scholars investigating the Fight Books. As highlighted by the previous chapter,<sup>10</sup> this

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4 *So sehe dennoch gewisz vnd wahr das sie eben als wol als andere vom lernenden vil besser wann sie ihme neben güter anweisung in richtiger ordnung zúsamén gesetzzt für-geschrieben vnd für augen gestelt ins gedechtnus eingebildet volgends auch so vil dester ehe durch die leibs úbung fan gelehrt vnd ergriffen werden dann wann sie ihm also schlecht mündlich erzehlt vnd stuckweise gewiesen wúrdé. Ibid.*

5 Müller, “Bild—Vers—Prosa-kommentar am Beispiel von Fechtbüchern.”, p. 251.

6 *Zúm dritten so kan sich hierausz die auffwachsént jugent nachdem si von einem rechten Meister gelernt vnd aber denselbigen nicht alzeit ben sich hat errinern [...]. Joachim Meyer, Gründliche Beschreibung der freyen Ritterlichen und Adelichen kunst des Fechtens, Straßburg, Thiebolt Berger, 1570, fol. B1r.*

7 Vérin/Dubourg Glatigny, *Réduire en art: la technologie de la Renaissance aux Lumières*.

8 See on the matter Forgeng, “Owning the Art: The German Fechtbuch Tradition”.

9 Many paths of research on the matter to be found in Brioiest, “La réduction en art de l’escrime au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, pp. 293–316.

10 See Clements in this volume, pp. 189–215. For an introduction on some steps for interpretation of a Medieval document intended for interpreters and practitioners, see also Alderson, “The Art of Reading: an introduction to using the Medieval German Fightbooks”, pp. 251–286.



issue also lead the interpreters and practitioners to face difficulties when it comes to replicate and embody these movements.

This chapter proposes a method to reduce these issues including experimentation to reconstruct parts of the missing information, borrowing methodologies from different disciplinary approaches. Numerous are the limits of such a project, including the need to “historicize” the body of the experimenters and to re-create parts of the wholeness of the potential preliminary “sensorimotor knowledge” of the Fight Books’ readership. These matters will be placed in the epistemology of the history of body and gesture, as well as in the map of science concerning experimentation. A method will then be outlined and illustrated by a case study in order to ascertain benefits and limits of such approach to gain positive knowledge regarding the arts of combat.

## 1 Epistemology of the History of the Body and the Gesture

The gesture, component part of arts and behavioural sign, has long been an object of research belonging to anthropology and ethnography.<sup>11</sup> The impact of the lectures and ideas of M. Mauss<sup>12</sup> in 1930s on this field of study is sizeable. The conceptions around “technique du corps” and their epistemological evolutions have been well studied, notably by J.-F. Bert,<sup>13</sup> who offers a very good historiographical survey on the subject, including recent developments. M. Mauss and his followers aside, the works of C. Geertz<sup>14</sup> and M. Douglas<sup>15</sup> in the 1970s, but especially those of T.-W. Laqueur and C. Gallagher<sup>16</sup> in the 1980s must be taken into account, since they propose the first pragmatic bridges between anthropology and history by notably developing fine analyses of body representation and its manifestation as sociocultural elements to be studied with the tools of historians. However, until the last decade of the 20th century, this subject was broadly neglected by historians, as noted by J.-N. Bremmer and

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11 According to the ISGS (International Society for Gesture Studies, founded 2002), the following academic and “creative” disciplines are concerned: anthropology, ethnography, linguistic, psychology, history, communication, neuroscience, history of art, performance studies, information science, music, theatre and dance. A good review of disciplinary stakes in the introduction of Kendon, *Gesture: visible action as utterance*, pp. 1–17.

12 Lecture in 1934, its publication in 1936: Mauss, “Les techniques du corps”, pp. 271–293.

13 Bert, *Les « Techniques du corps » de Marcel Mauss: dossier critique*.

14 Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*.

15 Douglas, *Implicit meanings: essays in anthropology*.

16 Gallagher and Laqueur, *The making of the modern body: sexuality and society in the nineteenth century*.

H. Roodenburg<sup>17</sup> in their pioneer collective book, highlighting potential interests of the subject and the need of an interdisciplinary approach to it.

Above the anthropologist's or linguist's interest for the gesture allowing communication, or the archaeologist or the historian of science and technology for the gesture transforming material, it is the sociocultural dimension of the gesture which is placed in the centre of the discourse. Thus following one of the paradigm highlighted by N. Elias<sup>18</sup> in the 1970s (the "new" importance of the body and its representation in the Renaissance) and revised through the notions of M. Foucault in the 1980s, the historiographical discourse on the body gained new impetus in the last decade of the 20th century.

This impulsion, diffracted in numerous fields and disciplines, led the historian of medicine R. Porter ten years later to sustain that the history of the body has become "the historiographical dish of the day",<sup>19</sup> pointing out several weaknesses, echoing previous critical papers.<sup>20</sup> One amongst the other is the concept of "historicizing the body", as put by R. Porter: "the body cannot be treated by the historian as a biological given, but must be regarded as mediated through cultural sign system".<sup>21</sup> This statement is a key element, either allowing bridges between disciplinary approaches, or to the opposite leading to strong disciplinary compartmentalization.

R. Cooter<sup>22</sup> offers a very comprehensive survey of the different historiographical trends from M. Foucault up to the first decade of the 21st century. Amongst different intellectual constructs developed around the body, he observes a recent drawback to "essentialist" theories. He distinguishes three recent trends concerned with the historicized body (biology, politic and history), all three based on the notion of "presence" (from Merleau-Ponty 1945: the fact of feeling its own existence), thus allowing to conceptualize new bridges between humanities and natural sciences, especially history and neuroscience. The dissertation of A. Bencard, *History in the flesh—investigating the historicized body*, problematizes amongst other things the distance between the discursive construction of the body and its experience.<sup>23</sup> As pointed

17 Bremmer/Roodenburg, *A cultural history of gesture*.

18 Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*.

19 Porter, "History of the Body Reconsidered".

20 One of the first (1995) being Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective".

21 Porter, "History of the Body Reconsidered", p. 242.

22 Cooter, "The turn of the body: history and the politics of the corporeal".

23 See also his paper "Life beyond Information: Contesting life and the body in History and Molecular Biology", where he refers to concepts from Michael Feher's concepts

out by R. Cooter: “Of central concern to these scholars was the question of how to make the lived experience of the past a part of the living present, or how to put the experiential sense of presence into history writing.”<sup>24</sup> This issue is critical for our matter and I will propose below a methodological approach to reduce the discrimination of actual (diachronic) performance of martial gesture based on the study of the Fight Books in order to gain positive knowledge and to collect scientifically valuable data.

## 2 Experimentation in the Map of Science

Experimental methods are usually considered to be one of the main achievements of the scientific revolution started during the 16th century,<sup>25</sup> though derived from Aristotle’s principles. The first layout of the method is traditionally placed in the middle of the 19th century,<sup>26</sup> consisting of characterising the threefold scheme of inference (abduction, deduction, induction) and modelling the scientific process (observation, hypothesis, experiment). This “new” approach has been adopted and developed mainly by Natural Sciences such as medicine, biology, physics, mathematics, etc., but also later employed in Humanities, for example in anthropology, ethnology, experimental psychology, archaeology, etc. Of course, experimental methods are multiplied, confronted and are still objects of improvement, discussion and debate.<sup>27</sup> The exact processes varies between disciplines, but they all follow the cycle: observe—predict—test—generalize (see Fig. 9.1).

It is not my purpose to enter this debate, nor to survey the genesis and development of the experimental methods. The matter is to propose a genuine, or at least scientifically recognised method including experimentation adapted for the study of the Historical European Martial Arts. It is noteworthy that all scientific inquiry processes are non-linear and that the experimental—or trial—phases in most of the cases lead the researchers to perform circular drawbacks

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from his 1989 publications (*Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, 3 vol., see vol. 1, introduction).

24 Cooter, “The turn of the body . . .”, p. 399. Issue also addressed by Kleinschmidt, *Perception and Action*.

25 See on the concept of scientific revolution the historiographical survey by Kindi, Kuhn’s *The structure of scientific revolutions revisited*.

26 For French historiography Claude Bernard (1865), for English historiography Charles Sanders Peirce (1877).

27 See the recent survey in Jongwon/Kyoung-Ae/Ikgyun, “An Analysis of the Actual Processes of Physicists’ Research . . .”, pp. 111–129.

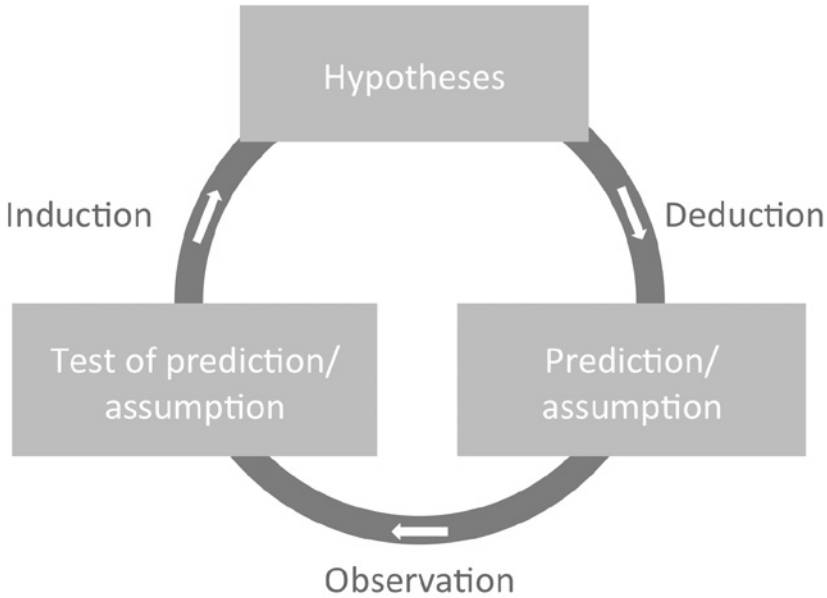


FIGURE 9.1 *General process of scientific inquiry.*  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

in their processes. This general diagram (see Fig. 9.2) can be declined and adapted for both Natural Sciences and Humanities and it highlights that the experimental phase is a minor stage in the scientific inquiry. Both the results and the experiments may lead to loops in the processes as far back as the establishment of hypotheses, but also and foremost in the evaluation phase directly linked with the interpretation of the sources (or here “data”).

It is however impossible to transpose existing experimental methods used in Humanities’ fields as they stand, to the study of the fighting arts based on the investigation of the Fight Book, mainly because of the nature of the object (representation or technical description of a gesture based on an embodied knowledge), but above all because of the assessment phases. For experimental archaeological methods,<sup>28</sup> the assessments are mainly based on the analyses on remaining objects; for experimental psychological<sup>29</sup> or ethnological

28 See Lammers-Keijsers, “Scientific experiments: a possibility? Presenting a general cyclical script for experiments in archaeology”, p. 18. For a more comprehensive and comparative survey of experimental archaeological methods, see Millson, *Experimentation and interpretation the use of experimental archaeology in the study of the past*.

29 For example, see Myers/Hansen, *Experimental Psychology*, chap. 6.

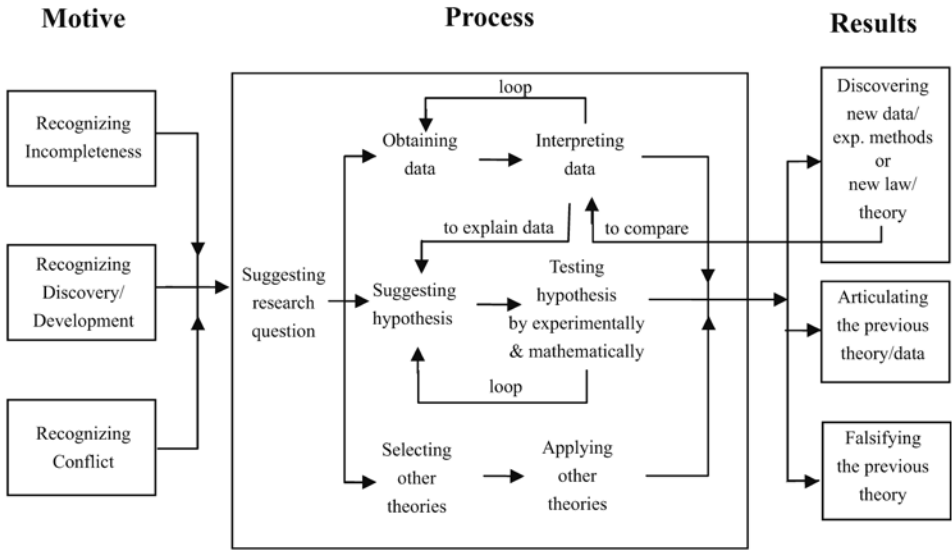


FIGURE 9.2 *A model of a scientific inquiry process (Jongwon/Kyoung-Ae/Ikgyun, "An Analysis of the Actual Processes of Physicists' Research...," p. 127).*

methods, it is based on analyses of actual performances or observation of actual behaviours. For the case of the study of an historical gesture, there are no archaeological remains<sup>30</sup> to assess, nor is observance of diachronic performances strictly scientifically valid.

"Trying out" these gestures for the scholar investigating the Fight Books is as legitimate as the historian of Medieval cuisine trying out recipes or as the historian of science replicating 16th-century medical recipes or 19th-century laboratory reports of experiments. However "trying out" or performing a gesture is not experimenting it, it is experiencing it.<sup>31</sup> R. Halleux, renowned specialist of history of science and technology, demonstrated in the case of investigation of recipes (alchemy, metallurgy, medicine), that an interpretation of such text leading to a failed try-out must not compel the scholar to

30 If there are fields of research that would study the impact or trace of a gesture with an edge weapon on biologic or material remains (paleopathology or use-wear analysis), it is almost impossible, or at least highly disputable, to connect a trace with a specific technical gesture such as those codified in the Fight Books.

31 About the difference between experimenting and experiencing, see our review of the historiography and some thoughts applied to the study of the arts of fighting in Jaquet/Sorenson/Cognot, "Historical European Martial Arts".

consider his source as discriminatory or to conclude that the technical literature was not meant to be applied.<sup>32</sup>

Investigating an embodied knowledge without experiencing it is a paradox, recognised by several scholars. As the archaeologist of Bronze Age weaponry B. Molloy states: “The use of weaponry engages the physical body as much as (if not more than) the intellect, and it is therefore essential for us to investigate them through bodily experience”.<sup>33</sup> In his collective book, he gathered several interesting approaches including experimentation to investigate both material culture and embodied knowledge. R. Welle, in his study of medieval wrestling acknowledged the necessity of both examining and practicing motor skills for the investigation of Fight Books,<sup>34</sup> but without including a description of his method. However, they are amongst the few who openly stated having integrated experimentation phases in their studies or at least noting that the experience of these gestures are relevant for the researcher. Various scholars nevertheless seem to agree on the concept, but avoid the question in their publication.<sup>35</sup> Several reasons could be pointed to explain that fact. First, the experimentation of gesture is not yet broadly recognised as a proper method for a field of Humanities, such as history. Moreover it is also often confused with other approaches which may look alike, but do not fulfil a scientific goal (re-enactment, demonstrations, martial sports and so on),<sup>36</sup> or at least do not apply the same methods. Lastly, every experimental approach is impaired with several limits; one of those being the necessity to identify and reconstruct the sensorimotor knowledge of the Fight Books readership in order for the experimenters to produce less limited or discriminatory diachronic performances of martial gestures.

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32 Halleux, “Recettes d’artisan, recette d’alchimiste”, p. 33. For a more general approach to this issue, see Long, *Openness, Secrecy, Authorship*.

33 Molloy, “The Cutting Edge: Studies in Ancient and Medieval Combat”, 2007, p. 12. See also the different contribution in Jaquet/Baptiste (eds.), *Expérimenter le maniement des armes*.

34 Welle, ‘... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen’: *der Ringkampf als adelige Kunst im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, pp. 23–25. See also his chapter about gesture interpretation on his edition of the Baumann’s Fight Book (... vnd mit der rechten faust, pp. 108–131).

35 Numerous examples. Amongst others, neither Anglo, nor Forgeng, nor Cinato or Zabinski addressed this issue in their publication even if at least the last two are also known interpreters.

36 See Jaquet/Sorenson/Cognot, “Historical European Martial Art—a crossroad between academic research, martial heritage re-creation and martial sport practices”.

### 3 A Sensorimotor Knowledge to be Identified and Re-built

In fact, in order to perform (replicate) a gesture codified in the Fight Books, an experimenter needs to be “trained” and to have an experience of such technical skillset, since motor skills are highly complicated and since the majority of the Fight Books were intended for practitioners (trained readers or initiates).<sup>37</sup>

The how and why is critical and it goes beyond the issue of the corporality (distance between actual body and medieval one), further into the concept of sensorimotor knowledge.<sup>38</sup> Several notions need to be clarified here. A distinction has to be made between performance, experience and experimentation. A performance is an operation of gesture or series of gesture, while an experimentation is an analysed set of performances. Experience is a mnemonic and kinaesthetic repertoire composed amongst other factors—in the case of a martial gesture—, of previous performances. The acquisition processes of motor skills implies exchanges between immediate perception of sensory stimuli, short and long-term memory, and the role played by performances (experience) is at this point critical.<sup>39</sup> As highlighted on the simplified diagram below (Fig. 9.3), the sensorimotor knowledge allows one to perform a technical gesture by referencing its mnemonic repertoire where memory and kinaesthetic dimensions play a major role. The sensorimotor knowledge is mainly composed by the habitus (as defined by P. Bourdieu, in the sense of “action mode” and their influence on the behaviour, depending on social status, way of living, environment) and education, in our case martial education, as well as by experience (based on regular or exceptional practice of martial gestures).

This concept has to be applied to identify skill sets of a reader of a medieval Fight Book, as well as to re-build this identified knowledge for the experimenters. Of course, this process lead to several important issues. A contemporary parallel could be found with a sensorimotor knowledge familiar for most car drivers: operating a shift of gear. How would you technically put that knowledge

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37 Müller, “Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar am Beispiel von Fechtbüchern. Probleme der Verschriftlichung einer schriftlosen Praxis”, p. 255. About social status of the addressee, see for instance these articles with latest developments and short survey of previous scholarship on the matter: Forgeng, “Owning the Art . . .”, p. 172 and Wetzler, “Überlegungen zur europäischen Fechtkunst”, p. 68.

38 For a neurologic definition and interdisciplinary developments on the concept, see Gangopadhyay/Madary/Spicer, *Perception, Action, and Consciousness: Sensorimotor Dynamics and Two Visual Systems*.

39 On the processes of learning and the implication of experience in the different type of memory, see Schmidt/Lee, *Motor learning and performance*.

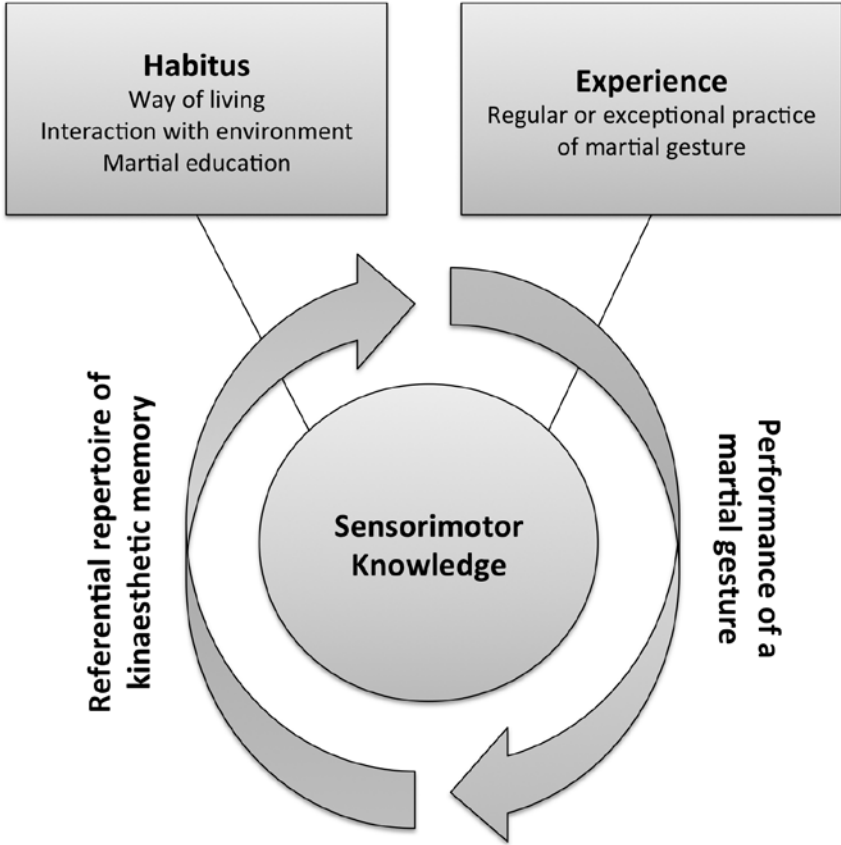


FIGURE 9.3 *Components of the sensorimotor knowledge (simplified).*  
 AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

on paper? Would you even need to bother to write it down, since most of car drivers already master it? During the learning phase of driving a car, this motor skill is transmitted by oral explanation, demonstration, imitation and correction by someone who possesses the knowledge. This would represent a major issue for a 25th-century archaeologist or historian of technology trying to understand this sensorimotor knowledge and replicate it, when on the one hand the technology has disappeared or been extensively modified and on the other hand when every possessor of this embodied knowledge is long dead without having bothered to write it down in a meaningful way.

This example illustrates well three major issues faced by scholars researching and/or interpreting Fight Books. Firstly, as noted by historians specialized in Medieval warfare or Chivalry, very few sources allow the researcher to



picture the training of combatants.<sup>40</sup> Moreover the sensible issue about the readership of the Fight Books or the representative value of its content regarding the “art of combat” in the late Middle Ages, early Modern Period must also be addressed on the matter. It is not an aim of this chapter to consider such issues. It suffices to say that we have almost no written material to address the question of training or martial education on the level of the motor skills, nor is it possible to picture one specific and representative character that would encompass the potential readership of Fight Books. As with the intellectual and material journey of each Fight Book, the sensorimotor knowledge of each fighter needs to be studied as case studies. The latter would also depend not only on his martial education, but on a constellation of different factors (see Fig. 9.2), that would also have left very few meaningful traces in written sources.

Secondly, any inquiry about embodied knowledge and martial training would be of no value if the material culture and technology, as well as the context of the application of the gesture were not being investigated in parallel. For our case, the martial gesture need to be studied at least with its weaponry, clothing and context (single combat with either a ludic or a serious dimension).<sup>41</sup>

Thirdly and most importantly, the main source for the study of the martial gesture is the corpus of Fight Books, which are written media to be considered as exceptions to the traditional channel for transmitting motor skills. For most of them, they are intended for already initiated readers and were made by initiates or even masters. Information for a neophyte trying to replicate skillsets he cannot even picture, is not written down. Critical data is missing, hidden or encrypted between lines or in images. Willingly or unwillingly, these technical texts and/or figures cause abstractions for a reader who was not taught by a person in possession of this embodied knowledge. In that sense, there is little arguments here to postulate that these sources are to be considered as didactic literature.

In the end, most of these issues cannot be solved or reduced with the tools and methodologies of History. An interdisciplinary path must be taken and experimentation as a tool—not as a goal or as an end—must be taken in consideration. Already in 1952, the famous historian L. Febvre suggested such

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40 See the historiographical survey in Malszecki, “The armoured body: Knightly Training and Techniques for Combative Sports in the High Middle Ages”. On aristocratic training in the Early Modern Period, see the recent chapter of Edouard, *Les devoirs du prince*, pp. 313–370. For a more general approach on physical exercises, see McClelland, *Body and Mind*.

41 See Tlusty in this volume, pp. 549–572.

ideas: “History is made with documents, when there are such. It can—must—however be done without written documents, but with anything that would allow the historian’s ingenuity to make his honey, instead of the usual flowers.”<sup>42</sup>

#### 4 Experimentation of Historical European Martial Arts—A Method for the Reduction of the Technical Discourse’s Abstractions

During my researches, I’ve established several methods including experimentation and conducted proof of concepts.<sup>43</sup> Experimentation processes, realized with scientific rigour and implemented into a valuable inquiry, are a very powerful tool.<sup>44</sup> Not to mention that if it allows the experimenter to confirm or refute hypotheses on issues previously raised by historiography or put forward by researchers, it also allocates new insights during analyses of sources, since it can reveal issues impossible to see during reading phases. This benefit is coined “attention” by A. Robinet.<sup>45</sup> This also means that if the researcher is at the same time experimenter, performing and experimenting will develop new tools and perspectives even during the reading of technical texts codifying gestures. This echoes what is named “perceptual simulation” by G. Bolens,<sup>46</sup> who uses this tool to analyse literary narrative texts evoking performances of gestures.

The horizon of aspirations and the potential of such methods are enormous, but so are the limits and the scientific value of the results must always be confronted to the limits mentioned above. I will outline one method to reduce issues about abstractions of the Fight Books’ technical discourse (phraseology,

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42 Febvre, *Combat pour l’Histoire*, p. 412.

43 Jaquet, *Combattre en armure à la fin du Moyen Âge et au début de la Renaissance d’après les livres de combat*. See also for a broader approach on methodology and epistemology, as well as case studies, the proceedings of 2012 and 2013 conferences: Jaquet/Kiss, “L’expérimentation du geste martial et artistique: regards croisés” and Baptiste/Jaquet, *Expérimenter le maniement des armes à la fin du Moyen Âge*.

44 As example, Jaquet/Bonnefoy-Mazure/Armand et al., “Range of motion and energy cost of locomotion of the late medieval armoured fighter”.

45 “L’attention’ n’est pas une ‘activité’ générale et formelle, mais une manifestation de l’actualité perceptive qui s’oriente dans son propre espace expérimental, qui réalise de nouvelles articulations, découpant l’horizon de monde et constituant des régions neuves. La vraie théorie de l’attention n’est donc pas au terme de l’emploi de l’induction ou de la déduction, mais de la mise en présence du principe du réfléchissant et de l’irréfléchi, dans l’éveil du sujet à sa propre histoire qu’il oublie.” Robinet, *Merleau-Ponty, sa vie, son œuvre*, p. 20.

46 Bolens, *The Style of Gestures. Embodiment and Cognition in Literary Narrative*, chap. 2.

missing informations, technical lexis), but it could also be used to deal with abstraction of illustration or due to the relation between text and images (see Fig. 9.4). The type of inquiry, all major steps of the processes and the potential limits will be discussed and a case study will illustrate the method.

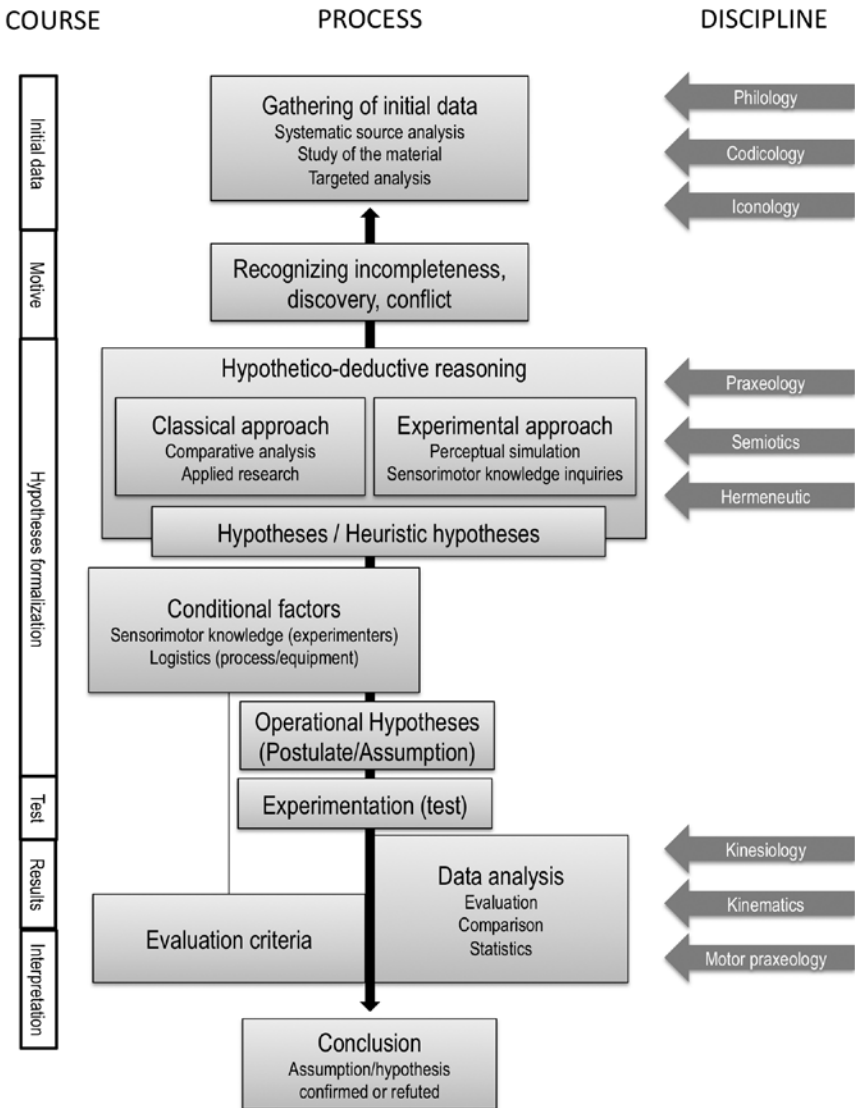


FIGURE 9.4 *Diagram of experimental process (methodology).*

AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

This scheme is presented in a linear layout, whereas the whole process is circular as suggested by the central arrow.

#### 4.1 *Initial Data and Motive (See Fig. 9.4)*

The initial phase is of course dependent on a well-formulated motive and will lead to the gathering of initial data, in our case, mainly Fight Books. The methodology allow one single source to be studied and experimented as well as cross-textual or iconographic enquiries on a larger corpus of Fight Books (as in the case study presented below), or even with other type of sources if needed for the inquiry.<sup>47</sup> Since the greater majority of our primary sources are not scientifically edited, the researcher has to work from manuscripts and ancient prints, thus implying the need for additional auxiliary disciplines (palaeography, philology, iconology, codicology, etc.). In our case, this suggests great amount of work prior to experimentation phases, but allows key issues to be sorted out, especially regarding such an heterogeneous corpus and its nature as technical literature. This procedure presuppose that the information about the technical gestures codified in the Fight Books is positive—reliable, genuine. However, for each source, the following elements must at least be considered: studying the physical material support (and its conservation history), establishing the auctorial intent (and evaluating its achievement), ascertaining in which realisation's phase the source is left (is the manuscript achieved or left unachieved) and place the text in its philological tradition. So, even the gathering of initial data already involve subjective choices and interpretation. It is also noteworthy that including source material with images implies further research endeavours and issues, since in our technical literature, image bear as much—even more for some cases—sense than text<sup>48</sup> and that the relation between both media must be studied independently for each source.

#### 4.2 *Hypotheses Formalization (See Fig. 9.4)*

This second phase follows the principles of hypothetico-deductive reasoning. Abstraction (caused by technical lexis, phraseology, relation between text and

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47 For example, I have used this methodology to measure the movement's limitation imposed by the wearing of armour. The "initial data" included archaeological sources as well as narrative and normative literature. These experiments implied 3D motion capture, models for kinematics such as gait analysis und functional movements. See Jaquet, *Combattre en armure . . .*, pp. 514–54; idem, "Les apports de la cinésiologie dans l'approche expérimentale pluridisciplinaire de l'étude du geste historique . . ."; and idem et al., "Range of motion and energy cost of locomotion of the late medieval armoured fighter.

48 See on the matter Kleinau in this volume, pp. 88–116.

image, processes of codification used by the author, etc.) or lack of information lead to pragmatic issues that could be resolved by experiments, but should be reduced by a more “classical” approach beforehand. In fact, several steps must be differentiated. Firstly, the analysis of the initial data could be performed inductively or deductively, depending on the motive and the nature of initial data. Then, the analysis must be turned or problematized in hypotheses. This process could follow a “classical” approach, including comparative analysis, qualitative comparative analysis or applied researches. Depending on the skillsets of the researcher, it could also follow in parallel an “experimental” approach, as described above, including perceptual simulation. This whole process would then include at least praxeology, semiotics and hermeneutics’ approaches.

The hypotheses are usually heuristic, because the source material do not allow by itself to resolve the issue. It could also be “creative”,<sup>49</sup> as dance or performance researchers would put it, but it should not be understood as being “inventive”. In dance or performance studies, abstraction or lack of information could lead interpreters to use their contemporary sensorimotor knowledge to puzzle back the holes. This should not happen here for martial art researchers working on technical issues. Let us not forget that the purpose of this method is not an artistic creation or a performance, but a test of hypotheses.

Once the hypotheses are formalized, a last task has to be undertaken: turning it into an operational hypotheses (assumption/postulate) ready to be tested. The issue of the sensorimotor knowledge of experimenters mentioned above put aside, one of the main limits of the experiment of a martial gesture is of logistical and ethical dimension. Assuming that some of these actions are meant to be lethal, it cannot be performed on human beings as is. Safety of the experimenters is of primary concern, but implies several limits to the scientific value of the experimentation.

However, not all actions have to be lethal and the technical discourse of a considerable number of Fight books can be linked with playful contexts. For civil fencing repertoire, it was also performed in a competitive manner with blunted weapons in the 15th and especially in the 16th centuries.<sup>50</sup> For the armoured fencing repertoire as well, competition with specific rule sets and

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49 For a comparison between dance and martial arts research, Jaquet/Kiss, “L’expérimentation du geste martial et artistique: regards croisés”.

50 Jaquet, “Fighting in the Fightschools” and idem, “Die Kunst des Fechtens in den Fechtschulen”.

weapon's simulators are attested for the same period and before.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the technical discourse bears a double dimension (ludic and serious; *schimpf* and *ernst*; *da ira* and *da cortesia*)<sup>52</sup> and R. Welle ascertained that this distinction cannot be distinguished in motor skills (and therefore in its writing), only by its finality.<sup>53</sup> The issue of the intended context of application of a technical repertoire has to be addressed for each Fight Book, even if, in the end, it is mainly based on assumptions.

The finality of the gesture or the technique as written down in the Fight books is nonetheless of crucial importance when it comes to establish an evaluation grid for the results of experimentation. Two different factors can reduce the risks of experimenting martial gestures: rule sets and logistic, thus insuring relative safety for experimenters. These are described below and are taken into consideration as "conditional factors" that would influence the results, as for the sensorimotor knowledge of each experimenters. For methodologies in experimental psychology, the same process is operated: turning a theoretical hypothesis into an operational hypothesis ready to be tested. This process also includes the conditional factors (dependent and independent variables)<sup>54</sup> of the tests to be abridged either by applying specific criteria in the result's evaluation phase or by reducing the potentially discriminatory factors by increasing the number of tests and studying it statistically.

#### 4.3 *Test and Results (See Fig. 9.4)*

Usually, the tests consist of observed performance of a technique (set of gestures) with a pair of experimenters. It is crucial to develop a protocol recording, for instance, how the gestures would be performed (by who, how, why) and what is to be observed during these performances (evaluation grid, observation criteria). To allow those tests to be studied, analysed or replicated, the

51 See bibliographical survey on the matter by Jaquet/Schmuziger, "Harnischfechten, une approche du duel en armure à pied d'après les traités de combat (XV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles)".

52 Issue broadly addressed by scholars, see Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, pp. 271–290. Also recognised and studied outside the corpus of Fight books, see for instance Hempfer, "Ernst und Spiel oder die Ambivalenz des Rittertums um 1500".

53 "In diesem Sinne dient das Spiel u.a. der Einübung und Demonstration ritterlicher Kulturtechniken. Spiel und Arbeit, unterschiedlich nur in ihrem Affektstandard, unterscheiden sich nicht in ihren motorischen Handlungen." Welle, "... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen": *der Ringkampf als adelige Kunst im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, p. 2. On the matter, see also one technique of Hans Lecküchner mentioning three different ways to end the same stück, quoted in Jaquet, "Die Kunst des Fechtens in den Fechtschulen. Der Fall des Peter Schwyzer von Bern".

54 See Myers/Hansen, *Experimental Psychology*, pp. 189–345.

protocols should be made available as well as a video footage (raw, unedited) of each test.

In order to lower the impact of discriminatory sensorimotor knowledge (contemporary martial experience or education of the experimenters) on the tests, these must be performed by a great number of martial artists, interpreters and researchers, of different level of practice of Historical European Martial Arts. Each experimenter must maintain a file and the researcher should be able to link the fact sheets of the experimenters with their performances to take into consideration the factor of experience during the analysis of the data (consulting protocols and video footages).

To proceed the conditional factors, I propose to conduct each test on three different levels of performance that would vary on both protection gear and dynamical/tactical involvement of the experimenters:

- Mechanical: the set of gestures is performed with almost no dynamic (intensity), but with hitting management, on a collaborative partner without protective gear. (slow to medium speed)
- Dynamic: the set of gesture is performed on a collaborative partner with protective equipment and dynamic. The bodyweight is brought into the gesture performance and the technique is performed up to the finality ascribed. (medium to fast speed)
- Simulation: The set of gesture is performed on a less collaborative partner (restricted sets of response or unexpected technique setting off) with protective equipment and dynamic. The bodyweight is dynamically involved, as well as tactical choices (without sparring). (medium to fast speed).

By applying these levels, the fact that the replicated gesture is awaited by the partner and the lack of tactical dimension in the performance are both relatively lowered.

The protective gear should be kept as minimal as possible in order to avoid discriminatory limitations of movement or extreme safety feelings which would lead the experimenter to take risks that a medieval practitioner would not have taken. The weapon simulator must be as close as possible as original weaponry, not only in visual aspects but also in ergonomic and mechanical aspects. Performing the tests in modern clothing is acceptable. The tests could be performed in period clothing, but only if they have been correctly tailored and manufactured, thus replicating the original restraint and freedom of movement as well as protective quality of the clothing. Both weaponry and clothing should be researched in an experimental archaeological approach beforehand separately if they are integrated in the protocols.

#### 4.4 *Interpretation and Conclusion (See Fig. 9.4)*

All these tests would produce an important set of data to be analysed and compared with initial data. Each experiment is observed and evaluated, then compiled and analysed by the researcher, one by one for a smaller amount of experiments or statistically for a larger one. I propose simplified criteria in accordance with each level of experimentation (conditional factors), but they have to be established for each inquiry, since they depend on what is to be observed. These are usually divided between objective and subjective criteria. Objective criteria are evaluated by an observer, for example: the correspondence between the performance and the technical discourse (or image); the realization or non-realization of the finality of the technique; the operational transition between the written down sequences of gestures. Subjective criteria can be evaluated by the observer or given to the researcher directly by the experimenters after the performance. They can include: feasibility of the technique, correspondence with martial principles (out of the study of Fight Books), preference between different hypotheses on a personal or physical level, etc.

The use of statistical tools is recommended to analyse such an amount of data, since it can allocate index-value depending on the fact-sheets of the experimenters and on the level of experimentation (conditional factors). In this way, the above mentioned issue about sensorimotor knowledge and the potentially discriminatory influence of a contemporary motor skill used to fill in the blanks is reduced. A greater number of experimenters would also help to diminish the personal factors and question of the quality of the skill sets while performing complex motor skills.

This process works especially well to compare two opposed hypotheses about one specific gesture or technique, as shown for example by the experimentation to investigate the meaning of a technical locution pointing to an area on the body of the opponent. In this case, the abstract locution “inside the sword” or “outside the sword” was investigated with a double hypothesis (right or left of the point) and experimentation allowed to establish that for the armoured fighting teachings of the corpus of Fight books known as *Gladiatoria*, “inside the sword” meant right of the point of the opponent from the perspective of the actor of the technique, contrary to the assumption issued from 17th century manuals used by some interpreters to ascertain the meaning of this locution.<sup>55</sup> However, this method can also allow to ascertain single or multiple hypotheses on several types of inquiry.

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55 See Jaquet, *Combattre en armure...*, pp. 496–513 and summarised in idem/Kiss, “L’expérimentation du geste martial et artistique : regards croisés”.



## 5 The *flügelhau*—A Case Study

For this case study, the motive came out of the analysis of a secondary source. In 1545, the Meistersinger Hans Sachs, shoemaker and a member of the Brotherhood of Saint-Mark<sup>56</sup> in Augsburg, composed a song (*Meisterlied*) about the art of fighting,<sup>57</sup> where a dialog between a beginner and a master of arms takes place. To the question about what is taught to the novice in the beginning, the answer is: “the strike from above, middle, below and the *flügelhau*”.<sup>58</sup> If the first three strikes are mostly familiar for scholars acquainted with Fight Books, the last one is less so; moreover it is not part of the technical repertoire of the so-called Liechtenauer tradition in the 15th century.<sup>59</sup> If this technique is considered basic by Hans Sachs, Christoff Rösener and Johann Fischart in his 1572 German translation of *Gargantua*,<sup>60</sup> how is it dealt with in the technical discourse of the Fight Books? The same question could be addressed concerning the “middle” and “below” strikes that are less discussed in the repertoire.<sup>61</sup>

The technique named *flügel*<sup>62</sup> (*fligell, flygell, flvgel, flogel*) and its extension *flügelhau* (*haww, haulb, haw, hew*) appears first in an anonymous poem

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- 56 About the guilds, see the contribution of Gevaert/van Noort in this volume, pp. 376–409.
- 57 *Der Fechtspruch. Ankunfft unnd freyheytt der kunst*. In 1548 the same text is erroneously named *anfang des olimpischen kampff* in a 1548 compilation and a 1555 version is named *olympisch kampff*. See Ellis, “Der olimpisch Kampff” A Meisterlied of Hans Sachs.
- 58 *Er sprach, der kunst zu ein eingang / lert man ober und unterhaw, / mittel und flügelhaw*. Hans Sachs, ed. Keller, vol. 4, p. 209. Also to be found in the partly copied from Hans Sachs Bericht vom Fechten in the book of Christoff Rösener, a Dresden burgher and a master of arms, member of the Brotherhood of Saint-Marc: *Er sprach / der Kunst / zu dem eingang / Lert man öber und unter Hau / Mittel und Flügel Hau / genau*. Christoff Rösener, *Ehren Tittel vnd Lobspruch Der Ritterlichen Freyen Kunst der Fechter*, Dresden, 1589.
- 59 This issue has been researched and brought forward by Dieter Bachmann. Unpublished paper, but lecture given in Leyden and Schönbühl in 2013.
- 60 [...] *den ober vnd vnderhaw, mittel vnd flugelhaw, im tritt mit kurtzer vnd langer schneid*, [...] Johann Fischart’s *Geschichtklitterung*, ed. Scheible, p. 348. I thank Olivier Dupuis who pointed out this reference to me.
- 61 *Unter- and Oberhaw (haw)* are classical strikes mentioned in the German Fight Books in the 15th and 16th c. (strike from below and strike from above). The strike from above is more common than the strike from below. The *mittelhaw (haw)* is common in the 16th c. sources, but less in the 15th c. (only the Fight Book of Hugo Wittenwiller mention it, see Jaquet, “Item wiltu lernen hoflich . . .” and Hull, “The Fight Book of Hugues Wittenwiller”).
- 62 I left it untranslated because translation of specific words from common language entered in technical lexis may lead to misunderstandings, especially if there is little evidence to ascertain a translation. *Flügel* may come from the mhd. *vlygel* meaning “wing” (BMZ, vol. 4, col. 344b) or from mhd. *flegel*, meaning “flail” (DWB, vol. 3, col. 1748).

following the “new epitome” (*newe zettel*) from Martin Siber in the 1491 compilation of Hans von Speyer.<sup>63</sup> This anonymous source also mentions as first techniques the “above”, “middle” and “below” strike. It stays in a cryptic form since no Fight Books contain any glosses and only two versions<sup>64</sup> of this text are known on the whole corpus.

In the beginning of the 16th century, Andre Paurnefeindt<sup>65</sup> and an anonymous author<sup>66</sup> wrote the first explicit contents about the technique. It is noteworthy that the *flügel* is for both cases the first technique presented after preliminary technical principles, guards or strikes. It is then to be found in the copies or translation of Paurnefeindt's text<sup>67</sup> and in the repertoire of Paulus Hector Mair<sup>68</sup> and Joachim Meyer.<sup>69</sup>

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- 63 *Fechtlere / Ober haülb ist für stich / Vnter haulb schlecht bricht / Mittel haulb in die weÿtte / [...] Schilt haulb mit trifft / Flügell oren gift / Wecker will ston / Triben strichen wil gañ / Salzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.I.29, fol. 3r. Transcription D. Hagedorn. On the epitome of Martin Siber, including the above mentioned passage, see Hull, “The Longsword Fight Lore of Mertin Siber”.*
- 64 The other altered but similar version of this text is to be found in the 1459 compilation of Hans Talhoffer (København, Det Koneglige Bibliothek, Thott 290 2°, fol. 1r.), but does not mention *flügel*.
- 65 “The Winger is taken from the High Guard or High-Point: the first, strike from the Roof to his left ear, the second from under with a step to your left side, the third strike after to the head.” *Flugel nym aus der ob<e>r<e>n hut oder hochort den ersten straych von dach zu dem lincken or / den ander<e>n von vnd<e>n mit dem trit deiner linck<e>n seyten / den dritt<e>n straych hindersych auf den kopff.* Andre Paurnefeindt, *Ergründung Ritterlicher kunst der Fechtereÿ*, Wien, Hieronymos Vietor, 1516. Translation K. Mauer. This technique is mentioned two times in the longsword section, including one counter technique.
- 66 “A play is called the flogel: bind him above with the short edge and strike him towards the right lower opening with the long edge and immediately with the short edge to the upper opening and strike through from the man into the left lower leger.” *Item eyn stuck heyst der flogel bynde ym ouen mit der kortzen snyden vnd slage ym nach der rechten vnder bloyß mit langer snyden. vnd bald myt der kortzen nach der ouer bloyß vnd hewe durch van dem man yn das lyncke vnder leger.* Anonymous, [Kölner Fechtbuch], ed. Bauer, p. 120. Translation D. Bachmann. The technique is used three times in the longsword section and two times in the Messer section.
- 67 Anonymous, *Der Altenn Fechter anfengliche kunst*, Frankfurt am Main, Christian Egenolff, 1530/1531; Anonymous, *La noble science des ioueurs despee*, Anvers, Guillaume Vorsterman, 1538 and a manuscript copy of the print in the Lienhart Sollinger Fight Book, 1564 in Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. I.6.2°.2.
- 68 Mentioned four times in the longsword section of 1542 *Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica* (archetype Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Mscr. Dresd. C93).
- 69 Mentioned five times in the longsword section of *Gründliche Beschreibung der freyen Ritterlichen und Adelichen kunst des Fechtens*, Straßburg, Thiebolt Berger, 1570.

To illustrate the method of experimentation, I will outline only the process on the work of Andre Paurneindt. The results of these experiments have to be compared with the other results of the processes operated on all known sources of this technique, but will not be integrated in this chapter because of lack of space.

It is crucial to study each technique within the whole source first before attempting comparative studies, since the same lexis could be used in a different manner by each author and may change meaning throughout time. For the *flügel* in Paurneindt, there is only two mentions—one being a counter-technique—and the philological tradition in the copies and the French translation is straightforward. It consists of a set of three offensive actions to opposite openings. There is no illustration for this specific technique. In the reading phase (see footnote 46), there is some information missing, mainly: the actions of the opponent as usual, the stepping for the first and the third strike, but more importantly, there is no indication about the edges used to strike. The use of short edge is common in the technical repertoire of Paurneindt and striking with one or the other edge would change the mechanic and the speed of the actions.

The hypotheses formalization is simple, it deals with different stepping possibilities, different edges for strikes and their sequence. Out of 12 possible combinations, 4 have been kept after the perceptual simulation and analysis phase according to the technical principles stated or implicitly enunciated in the source. Out of these 4 hypotheses, 2 have been withdrawn after the first test phases, since they did not match with the counter technique that follows.<sup>70</sup> Below are the two hypotheses (in a standardised descriptive form) kept for the test phase:

- Hypothesis 1: Fighter L engages with a strike from above (long edge), Fighter R defends. Fighter L continue with a strike from below (long edge) from the bind with a step to the left, Fighter R defends. Fighter L strike around from the bind to the head (short edge) with a step to the left.

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70 "Break. If one Wings to you, displace the first from the Roof, the second strongly from below with your long edge, and grab with your left hand to his sword's pommel, thus will you be in over his Sword." *PRVCH. Flugelt dir ayner zu / versecz den erst<e>n von dach / den ander<e>n steck von vnden mit deiner langen schneydt vnd greyff mit deyner lincken handt anseyn schwertzknopff / so virfstu yn vber seyn schwert.* Andre Paurneindt, *Ergründung Ritterscher kunst der Fechterey*, Wien, Hieronymos Vietor, 1516. Translation K. Mauer.

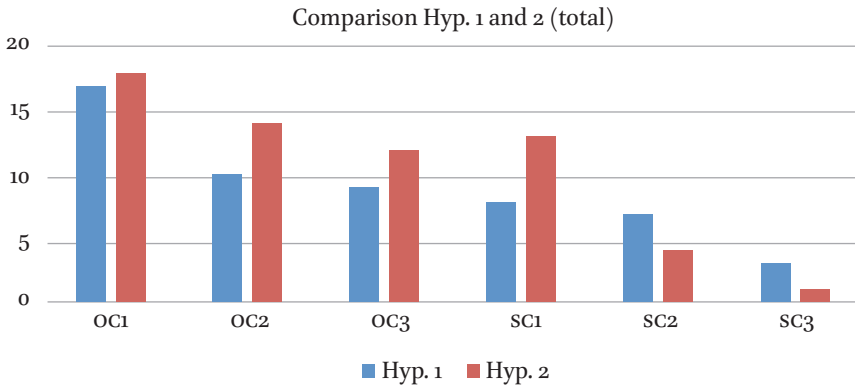
- Hypothesis 2: Fighter L engages with a strike from above (long edge), Fighter R defends. Fighter L continue with a strike from below (short edge) from the bind with a step to the left, Fighter R defends. Fighter L strike around from the bind to the head (short edge) with a step to the right.

These hypotheses have been tested by 6 different pairs of experimenters, in the 3 different levels of experimentation mentioned above, with a five time repetition for each experiment. In total, the technique has been performed 180 times regrouped in 36 experiments, each of them being recorded with a protocol and a video footage. The results of this experimentation have been evaluated by objective and subjective criteria (see Fig. 9.5).

The interpretation of the results lead to validate both hypotheses, even if hypothesis 2 prevailed during the tests, especially according to the subjective criteria given by the experimenters. As previously noted, this methodology works best to confirm or refute opposed hypotheses, but can be used to compare credible and un-opposed hypotheses. In this case study, the same processes have been conducted for each sources, allowing the researcher to have a better picture of this technique, from its first mention in a cryptic writing of 1491 (not enough data to experiment with) to its later development up to 1570 (where its use shifted). Furthermore, this example amongst other showed that the same word referring to one technique can be written down or used in different ways depending on the author—sometimes even depending on the different versions attributed to the same author—, implied very different actions. For example, in the anonymous Fight Book of Köln, this technique is included in sequence as much as four time in one piece<sup>71</sup> or can be used as a transition from one technique to another in one piece.<sup>72</sup> It is one more example pointing out that one must be especially cautious when interpreting technical sources and that it must always be done extensively on a one-by-one basis before attempting comparative analysis between Fight Books.

71 [ ... ]eyn stuck heyst das relyn bruch den flogell hawe iiij mayl an eym stuck. Anonymous, [Kölner Fechtbuch], ed. Bauer, p. 128.

72 *Item eyn stuck dy yser porte geheysen. lege dich yn das lynck vnder leger vnd layß den ort synckenn vff dy erde vnd hewe den flogell vnd strych vß der rechten syten vur yn schylt vnd vß der lincker syten widder vff yn stortz so komstu vß der ysern porten yn den gassenhewe.* Ibid. p. 120.



Objective criteria evaluated by an observer (multiple choice)

OC1 (Connection between performance and description of the source)

OC2 (Connection between performance and martial principles)

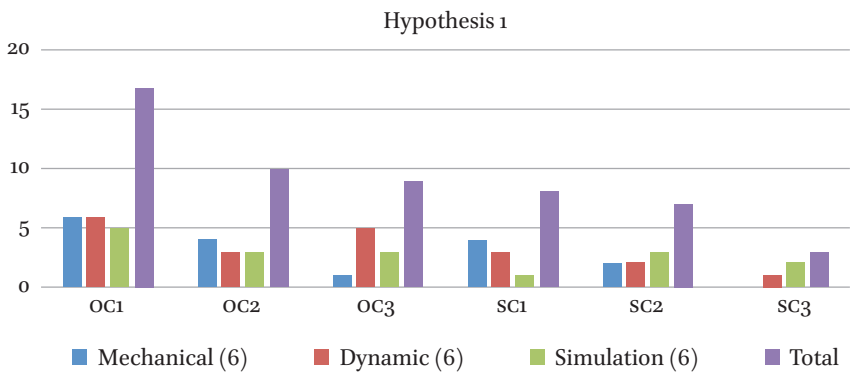
OC3 (The performance is fluid and seems effective)

Subjective criteria evaluated by the experimenter (single choice)

SC1 (The sequence is fluid and effective)

SC2 (The sequence is feasible, but not fluid or uncomfortable to perform)

SC3 (The sequence is almost not feasible)



Level and number of set	OC1	OC2	OC3	SC1	SC2	SC3
Mechanical (6)	6	4	1	4	2	0
Dynamic (6)	6	3	5	3	2	1
Simulation (6)	5	3	3	1	3	2
Total	17	10	9	8	7	3

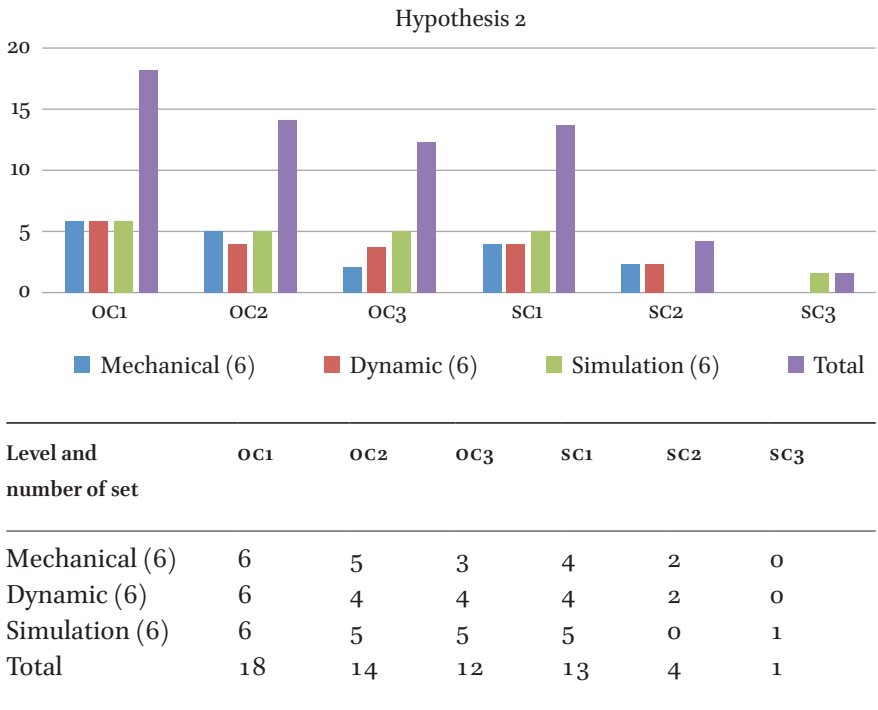


FIGURE 9.5 Experimentation of the flügel—Table and graph.  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

## 6 Conclusion

The achievements outlined, like ascertaining whether a strike is performed with the short or the long edge or whether a strike is aiming right or left of the point of the opponent or the potential achievements of the method, like ascertaining an error in an illustration in its connection with the text, may look like details. They are not. As for the experimental archaeologist trying to understand the sleight of hand of the prehistoric potter from a partial remain of a pot, for the codicologist attempting to picture whether the quire is sewn upside down or downside up in a Carolingian manuscript or for the anthropologist investigating the way of holding the pen of elder people while writing on their knees, details matter. Experimental methods have proven to be successful in many fields according to various disciplinary approach to issues where written sources are non-existent or difficult to interpret.

However, there are important generic limits to an experimental method, mainly connected with the scientific quality of the inquiry, but moreover based

on the status of the initial data (how were they gathered, are they disputable or representative?) and on the experimental processes operated to interpret those data (how, why, when, by whom?).

For our case, the specific issues of diachronic performances of gesture (sensorimotor knowledge, logistic dimension) and of the imperfect nature of written media to transmit an embodied knowledge have been addressed and renders of course any result from an experimental process disputable. Nonetheless, after having briefly surveyed the recent trends in historiography of the body and the gesture and having pointed out the broad use of experimental methods in various discipline, the use of such approach for the studies of Historical European Martial Arts based on the technical discourse and figuration of the Fight books are more than justifiable.

The goal of an experimental method is to gain positive knowledge about issues that cannot be resolved by a classical approach. Rigorously operated with written protocol and video footage, these processes can be replicated by other researchers for validation and they would stay valid as long as they are considered for what they are: a mean, not an end.

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**PART 2**

*From the Books to the Arts: The Fighting  
Arts in Context*





# German Fechtbücher from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance

*Dierk Hagedorn*

In this paper I will offer a brief overview of the abundant German manuscript sources for medieval combat. I will discuss the current state of our knowledge regarding dating techniques, address the interrelationships between the manuscripts, discuss the problems of establishing authorship, and conclude with a timeline and family-tree of them, which will assist the interested reader in putting each manuscript into its historical and intertextual contexts.

## 1 Of Paper and Parchment

The two doyens of research as far as the German sources are concerned, Martin Wierschin<sup>1</sup> and Hans-Peter Hils,<sup>2</sup> have both published extensive volumes about the over-shadowing figure of German medieval fencing, Johannes Liechtenauer. In their works they list and describe a considerable number of fencing manuscripts, called fight books (*fechtbücher*, in German). Martin Wierschin listed 47 manuscripts in 1965, and twenty years later we find 55 treatises in Hans-Peter Hils' catalogue. Speaking of catalogues, the *Katalog der deutschsprachigen Handschriften des Mittelalters*<sup>3</sup> from 2009 offers 47 again—but these are only the illustrated ones. At the time of writing we have more than 80 fight books from the German speaking regions.

In this essay I refer to numerous manuscripts, and therefore I make extensive use of the bibliography. I refer to these manuscripts by the abbreviated form (e.g. M20), referring to the volume general bibliography and not by the accession or inventory number (e.g. E.1939.65.354). Since both methods are unfortunately a bit cumbersome, I occasionally add a shortened, simplified (sometimes admittedly over-simplified) name to the abbreviated form, for

1 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst Des Fechtens*. Hereafter referred to as [W].

2 Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes*. Hereafter referred to as [H].

3 Leng/Frühmorgen-Voss/Ott [et al.], *Katalog der deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters*, hereafter referred to as [KdiHM].

instance *M20 Erhart*, so that it may be a bit more clearly related to the Gregor Erhart codex from Glasgow. This procedure may still be unwieldy, and I apologise for any inconvenience.

We will deal almost exclusively with hand-written books from the German speaking areas; printed ones will be touched on only superficially. The majority of the former is written in an old form of German, known as Early High German (*Frühneuhochdeutsch*). Only three and a half of them are in Latin.

Allow me a brief detour, right at the beginning: The earliest known fight book worldwide is German, known by its signature *I.33*,<sup>4</sup> which dates to the beginning of the 14th century. It is kept in the Royal Armouries in Leeds and is—despite its origin—written in Latin, the language of scholarship of the time, the language of the church. And indeed in this book we meet a priest who teaches his student the art of fencing. Admittedly, there is another manuscript that predates this one considerably. The *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus*<sup>5</sup> from Greece deals with wrestling techniques and dates to the 2nd century AD. This manuscript however consists of just one single page of papyrus. The codex from Leeds on the other hand shows distinct sword and buckler instructions on 34 leaves. Another codex in Latin was written by Heinrich von Gunterrodt in 1579,<sup>6</sup> well after the advent of print. The other one and a half Latin manuscripts appear also rather late in the history of manuscripts, more than a century after Johannes Gutenberg printed his Bible with reusable, movable type. They were commissioned by Paulus Hector Mair, who compiled three extraordinary fight books, each divided into two volumes. All three compilations are luxurious volumes with an abundance of the finest illustrations and had cost a fortune—not Paulus Hector Mair’s though: As the City Treasurer of Augsburg he misappropriated enormous amounts of city funds. Paulus Hector Mair, avid collector of fight books, author of fabulous books, was hanged as a thief in 1579.<sup>7</sup> The text of one of these compilations is in *Frühneuhochdeutsch*,<sup>8</sup> another one is in Latin,<sup>9</sup> and the third one has both German and Latin text.<sup>10</sup>

After Hans-Peter Hils’ influential work was published in 1985, at least an additional 20 fight books have been discovered that were slumbering in the vaults of various libraries or museums. Sometimes it was only by sheer chance

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4 M35.

5 New York City, Columbia University Library, ms P.Oxy.III.466.

6 Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Mscr.Dresd. C.15.

7 [KdiHM], p. 91.

8 M15.

9 M42.

10 M75.

that a librarian remembered some badly catalogued items upon a casual inquiry, and was able to re-discover it in the shelves. In 2012 for instance, Heiko Meckbach and his team discovered three formerly completely unknown manuscripts in the Landesbibliothek in Kassel.<sup>11</sup>

For this essay, I restrict my scope to the fencing manuscripts from the 14th to the 16th century. Before, there are none at all, and after that time the so-called knightly arts were more or less pursued in a combative, sports-like environment. While the older fight books do have an occasional reference to ludic swordplay, the overall focus is on serious combat—taking severe incapacitation of the opponent freely into account. The year of 1600 sees the second printed edition of Joachim Meyer's magnum opus<sup>12</sup> which already prominently features a new weapon, the rapier. Very few manuscripts were produced after the turn of the century, and though the signatory art of the longsword, as taught by Master Johannes Liechtenauer and others, was still held in some esteem, its dominance was gradually superseded by the rapier. Also, wrestling was no longer seen as a necessity for understanding the core principles of fencing.

We have a certain transitional period from the handwritten codices to printed volumes. The development is a slow but steady process. For more information, Jan-Dirk Müller's article about the fixation of a formerly oral tradition in the written word offers valuable insight.<sup>13</sup> When we consider the starting point of the printing craft, the black art, in the year of 1452, when Johannes Gutenberg began to work on his Bible (coincidentally the very same year one of the most extensive German manuscripts was completed, M57, the so-called Peter von Danzig manuscript), we still have a long way to go until print finally takes over. The first German printed fight book appears almost three quarters of a century later (Andre Paurmfeindt's book, published in 1516);<sup>14</sup> followed by about a dozen printed volumes by the end of the century, of which the finest example is perhaps the first edition of Joachim Meyer's substantial volume from 1570 (which was reprinted 30 years later, after Meyer's death). So in the 16th century only about a dozen fight books were printed, but still some 30 manuscripts were produced. At the turn of the 17th century, the production

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11 Hans Talhoffer: 2° Ms. iurid. 29; Hans Wilhelm Schöffler von Dietz: 4° Ms. Math. 038; and Anonymous: 2° Ms. Math. 7.

12 P13.

13 Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosa—Kommentar am Beispiel von Fechtbüchern. Probleme der Verschriftlichung einer schriftlosen Praxis".

14 P3.



of fight books in print took off. Though the print runs were small by modern standards, there was clearly an avid audience for them.

One might assume that with the ability to produce fencing treatises with considerably less effort and in much larger quantities than before, the irrevocable decline of the manuscript was at hand. But that was not so.

In fact, manuscripts were produced up until the beginning of the 19th century. In Munich for instance, there are two copies of manuscripts by Hans Talhoffer that were produced in or around 1820.<sup>15</sup> These two however were collector's items for a connoisseur.

In this article I want to touch two major subjects: number one is an attempt to put the bulk of the fencing treatises from the 14th to the end of the 16th century in a timely order; number two is to point out some inter-codical connections, since the names of certain masters appear repeatedly throughout the entire corpus, and sometimes authors' names were left out—either by accident or deliberately. In any case, one cannot write about German fight books without paying tribute to the grandmaster Johannes Liechtenauer.

## 2 250 Years of Fame

Much ink—real and digital—has been spent on the shadowy figure of the medieval fencing master Johannes Liechtenauer, yet still we know virtually nothing about the man. We can obtain only very scarce biographical data from the anonymous M<sub>53</sub> from Nuremberg, that mentions him (presumably for the first time). On fol. 13v we learn that Master Liechtenauer did not in fact invent the art of swordsmanship, but he travelled far and wide in order to further his knowledge:

And above all things shall you note and know that there is only one art of the sword which may have been invented and devised many hundred years ago. It is a foundation and core of the entire art of fencing, and Master Liechtenauer knew it entirely and perfectly and was wholly capable of it. However, he did not invent it himself, as is written above, instead he has travelled and visited many a country because of that true and sincere art, since he wanted to experience and to get to know it thoroughly.<sup>16</sup>

15 M<sub>43</sub> and M<sub>45</sub>.

16 *Vnd vor allen dingen vnd sachen / saltu merkē vnd wissen / das nür eyne kunst ist des swertes / vnd dy mag vor manchē hundert Jarē seyn fynden vnd irdocht / vnd dy ist eyn grunt vnd kern aller künsten des fechtens / vnd dy hat meist<sup>o</sup> lichtnaw<sup>o</sup> gancz vertik vnd gerecht*

Aside from that, the unknown author (or the one he copied from) seems to have had a close relationship to Liechtenauer himself, since he repeatedly writes sentences like “Thus speaks Liechtenauer”, or “Liechtenauer has a proverb”, and so forth.<sup>17</sup> However, the codex does not provide us with certain dates from Master Liechtenauer’s life. So far no reliable biographical evidence whatsoever has been found. His origin remains mysterious, only the name itself *may* refer to the birthplace. Unfortunately, there are too many towns called Liechtenau or Lichtenau for this to narrow it down much.

Although the person himself remains in the dark, Liechtenauer’s influence was quite long-lasting. M53 probably offers us the first encounter with the art according to Liechtenauer. A tradition of roughly 250 years ensues.

The afore-mentioned fencing master Joachim Meyer, *Freifechter*<sup>18</sup> (free fencer) in Strasbourg still mentions Liechtenauer’s name:

But if you were forced to such a displacement with force and overrunning, then see to it that you can rid yourself with stepping back so that you can regain your advantage in the *Vor*. Liechtenauer also mentions this parry when he says: Beware of parrying; if it happens it troubles you.<sup>19</sup>

Or: “Therefore Liechtenauer says rightfully in his hidden verses: *Zwirch* takes what comes from above.”<sup>20</sup>

Although Liechtenauer’s influence was (and among modern practitioners still is) huge, his teachings are actually fairly limited in scope. He has only left us a couple of verses that rhyme more or less elegantly. These verses are obscure and elusive; and without proper explanation they remain almost opaque gibberish, and are thus next to useless for any practical application. Luckily, we gain much more insight into Liechtenauer’s teachings through secondary

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*gehabt vnd gekunst / Nicht das her sy selber habē fynden vnd irdocht / als vor ist geschreben / Sonder / her hat manche lant / durchfaren vnd gesucht / durch der selbñ rechtvertigen vnd warhaftigē kunst wille / das her dy io irvarē vnd wissen welde.*

17 M53, i.a. fols. 20v, 21v, 22r, 22v, 23v, 25r, 32r, 38r, 64v, 65r.

18 The *Freifechter von der Feder zum Greifenfels* was a fencing guild founded around the year 1570 in Prague.

19 *Wenn du aber zu disem versetzen mit gewalt vnnnd vberleiden getrungen wurdest / so sihe doch das du dich mit abtritten endtledigest / und mit vorthail zum Vor wider kommen mögest / Von diser versatzung nun / thut auch Lichtenawer meldung da er spricht. Vor versetzen hüt dich / Geschichts dir not es mühet dich.* P13, fol. xv.

20 *Darumb spricht Lichtenawer recht in seinen verborgenen Reimen / Zwirch benimbt / Was von oben kümpt.* P13, fol. LVV.

sources. The master has bequeathed his obscure poems to his pupils and thus to posterity—possibly only orally, possibly already in written form. After all, there may be a reason why they are called *zedel* in the old sources: “*Zedel*, Latin *schedula*, usually signifies an ephemeral way of notation on single leaves—in contrast to the more durable form of books.”<sup>21</sup> Without comments, these verses are hard or even impossible to understand. Liechtenauer has done so, according to the writings of his successors and/or students, in order to avoid that all the world may be able to understand these skills:

Therefore he had them written down in hidden and secret words so that not everybody shall hear and understand them. He has done so because of the careless fencing masters who don't value their art. Thus he wants to avoid that these masters either make his art public or spread it.<sup>22</sup>

Fortunately for us, Liechtenauer's students didn't care about that very much; for in the very next sentence of these introductory words it says: “And these very same hidden and secret words of the notes (*zedel*) are written hereafter in the commentaries explained and interpreted so that everybody, who already is able to fence, can read and understand them.”<sup>23</sup> So although Master Liechtenauer himself wished to hide his knowledge from a broader audience, his disobedient pupils did not share his methods—or rather, they did. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the books that contain Liechtenauer's knowledge are manuscripts after all—single items that were not at all open to everybody's eyes but rather aimed at a single client in order to serve as a memory aid. Even with the best of training, one can hardly remember each and every single technique described in such an extensive volume as, for instance, the afore-mentioned M57 (von Danzig). In this context, the Italian master Fiore dei Liberi, whose written works are dated to the beginning of the 15th century, states:

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21 “[...] *zedel*, lateinisch *schedula*, meint in der Regel eine flüchtige Art der Aufzeichnung auf Einzelblättern, im Gegensatz zur dauerhafteren Buchform.” Müller, “Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar”, p. 256.

22 *Dar vmb hat er sÿ lassn schreiben mit verporgen | vnd verdachten worten das sÿ yeder man nicht vernemen | vnd versten sol | vnd hat das getan durch der leichtfertigen schirmaister willen die ir kunst gering wegen das von den selbigen maisterñ sein kunst nicht geoffenwart noch gemein solt werden.* M57, fol. 9v.

23 *vnd die selbigen verporgen | vnd verdackten wort der zedel die stenn hernach in der glosen | Also verklert | vnd aus gelegt das sÿ ydermann wol vernemen | vnd versten mag der do anders fechten kan.* M57, fol. 9v.

There is so much to this art that even the man with the keenest memory in the world will be unable to learn more than a fourth of it without books. And a fourth of this art is not good enough to make someone a Master.<sup>24</sup>

Master Liechtenauer has spawned at least one follow-up generation of masters. These are known as the *Gesellschaft Liechtenauers* (Liechtenauer's society) as it appears in Paulus Kal's manuscripts, as codified for instance in his manuscript from Munich:<sup>25</sup>

Master Johannes Liechtenauer, Master Peter Wildigans from Glaz,  
 Master Peter from Danzig [Gdansk], Master Hans Spindler from Znaim,  
 Master Lamprecht from Prague, Master Hans Seidenfaden from Erfurt,  
 Master Andre Liegnitzer, Master Jacob Liegnitzer (brothers),  
 Master Sigmund Amring, Master Hartmann from Nuremberg,  
 Master Martin Huntfelt, Master Hans Pegnitzer,  
 Master Philip Perger, Master Virgili from Cracow,  
 Master Dietrich, dagger fencer from Brunswick,  
 Master Ott, the jew, who was the wrestler of the lords of Austria,  
 the noble and strong Stettner, who above all was the master of all pupils,  
 and I, Master Paulus Kal, was his pupil, and God may have mercy  
 upon him.

This is not necessarily a formal society of individuals that met on a regular basis; it can rather be seen as a couple of masters that are in one way or the other associated to Liechtenauer, the grandmaster. Paulus Kal lists many masters we have references to in other manuscripts, such as Peter von Danzig, Andre Lignitzer and others; some on the list have left no trace, like Peter Wildigans; some may be identical to authors that have bequeathed material to us: Sigmund Amring for instance is certainly identical to Sigmund Emring<sup>26</sup> and Sigmund ain Ringeck;<sup>27</sup> but it is a curious circumstance that there is at least one master contemporary to Kal who is not mentioned: Hans Talhoffer, the fencing master from whom we have the most surviving fight books by far. Hans-Peter Hils suggested that this omission from Kal's list was inspired by

24 M40, fol. 3v. Translation by Leoni, *Fiore de' Liberi's Fior di Battaglia*, p. 8.

25 M48, fol. 2r.

26 M19.

27 M14.

envy on Kal's side.<sup>28</sup> I find this unlikely:<sup>29</sup> It was Paulus Kal who found himself in frequent employment by dukes and other noblemen, whereas Talhoffer seems to have been more or less a journeyman in fencing affairs.

So Liechtenauer obviously inspired quite a few pupils, be they directly or indirectly linked to him. Some follow Liechtenauer closely (Peter von Danzig in his harness fencing section), some loosely (Paulus Kal, Peter Falkner), some even more loosely (Hans Talhoffer), and some have no perceivable connection whatsoever (Ott, Martin Huntfelt, Andre Lignitzer). Nevertheless, through a couple of codices, notably the so-called Peter von Danzig manuscript, they are chained to each other for eternity.

Apart from that, Liechtenauer's most outstanding achievement is that he actually named certain techniques. Most authors contented themselves with a simple enumeration of techniques, for instance Lignitzer, Huntfelt, or the anonymous author of the *Gladiatoria* group. In these teachings it just says: The first piece; the second piece, and so on. There is only a handful of exceptions that a technique bears a specific name, such as the "straß der glider" (way of the joints),<sup>30</sup> the "wechselhaw" (changing strike),<sup>31</sup> or the "pfobenzagel" (peacock's tail).<sup>32</sup> What sets master Liechtenauer apart is that he invented more catchy names that allow the student of the art to memorise his teachings more easily. After all, the term "krumphaw" is more telling than, for instance, "the 17th piece".

### 3 Care For a Date?

Internal dating is the safest way to date a manuscript. Fortunately, we do have several examples such as Johannes Lecküchner,<sup>33</sup> Hans Talhoffer,<sup>34</sup> Peter von Danzig,<sup>35</sup> and Jörg Wilhalm.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, these dates are not certain. After all, we cannot know how long it actually took to write a specific codex. It certainly took a considerable time to execute the artistic illustrations of Talhoffer's

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28 [H], pp. 179/180.

29 Müller, 1992. p. 262.

30 See for instance M32 (*Gladiatoria*), fols. 13r/v.

31 M57, fol. 8or.

32 M53, fol. 48v.

33 M47.

34 M22, M29, and M44.

35 M57.

36 M4, M9, M49.

codices; so M44, although dated to 1467 on folio 16v, certainly needed at least a couple of weeks or more likely months for its completion with its 331 immaculate pen drawings and watercolour washes. Even treatises that contain only text were quite unlikely to be written in a single day. So the year of 1452, as stated on fol. 113v, helps us to pin down the so-called Peter von Danzig manuscript (M57) in history, but we cannot know the year of its inception. And since a lot of manuscripts were copied, we do not know how old the original may have been.

But coming back to Master Hans Talhoffer and his earliest known manuscript: it is commonly dated to 1443. This date only refers to the first part of the manuscript, which does not deal with fencing but is the *Onomatomanthia* by a completely different author, Johannes Hartlieb.<sup>37</sup> In this part we learn when the best day for a fight may be, or which of two spouses is destined to die first—all based on the magical behaviour of the single letters in the context of their name or in juxtaposition to each other. The *real* fencing stuff, a couple of pages later, is dated to 1448.

Or let's look at the Codex Wallerstein<sup>38</sup> as an example. This volume consists of three individual parts, the first two clearly of a later date than the last one. A common procedure was to take individual books and re-bind them into a single volume, for whatever reason, possibly because they dealt with a related topic. Often this entailed a loss of material: in order to fit different individual manuscripts under one cover, parts that were the wrong size had to be cropped, clipped, or cut. For example, when we compare the *Gladiatoria* version from New Haven<sup>39</sup> to the one in Vienna,<sup>40</sup> we see that the same scribe was responsible for writing the majority of both manuscripts, and the illustrations are very similar in size (although not at all in style): but the pages of the New Haven text are smaller by one centimetre or even more, and that sometimes portions of the text are cut off at the margins. The manuscript from New Haven had become part of a compendium that at one time consisted of three individual volumes: the *Gladiatoria* fight book itself; a comedy by the Spanish author Lope de Vega; and a collection of Spanish poems and other texts.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, we have to be aware of false friends. A prime example of this is M53—and doubly so. For one, it was (and still is) known as the “Döbringer”

37 See for instance: Fürbeth, *Johannes Hartlieb*.

38 M7.

39 M51.

40 M69.

41 For a description of the original collocation of the manuscript see Hagedorn/Walczak: *Gladiatoria. New Haven—MS U860.F46 1450*, pp. 160–161.

codex. It is hard to establish were that error appeared for the first time—possibly in Martin Wierschin’s examination of the so-called Sigmund Ringeck manuscript<sup>42</sup> in 1965<sup>43</sup>—but it has been repeated ever since over and over again, and even prolific authors have seldom undertaken the effort to actually *read* the passage in question. How else can it be explained that this error has been around for at least five decades? The correct rendering of the passage in question on fol. 43r should read as follow: “Hie hebt sich an · der ander meist<sup>o</sup> gefechte / Hanco pfaffen döbringers ·:~ Andres Juden · Josts von der nyssen · Niclas preußsen / etc.” (Here commence the fighting techniques of the other masters:<sup>44</sup> the priest Hanco Döbringer’s, the jew Andre’s, Jost’s from the Neisse, Niclas’ from Prussia.) In front of the name “Andres Juden” there is a plus-sign that marks—as we can see repeatedly in other places in the manuscript—a passage in which the scribe has forgotten to write something. A corresponding plus-sign is right above the very first line, followed by the name “hanco pfaffen döbringers”. So Hanco’s name was initially left out, and had to be inserted afterwards. But not even the discovery of another fight book in Glasgow,<sup>45</sup> in which the same text appears, was able to get rid of this misconception. Admittedly, “Döbringer manuscript” is a bit more catchy than “Cod. Hs. 3227a”. After all, a lot of other manuscripts are referred to by a name that is not necessarily the real author’s. (I am guilty of the same thing here.)

The other matter is a bit more tricky and it deals with the actual dating of the manuscript. As I said earlier, it surely is a great asset if we can find a dating in the text. In the case of M<sub>53</sub> however, we *apparently* have a dating to 1389. But on closer inspection, this dating becomes rather vague. It relies solely on a calendar on fol. 83v that begins around *Estomihi* in the year of 1390 (Sunday, 21st February) and ends in 1495. Scholars have always assumed that the initial date must be the *terminus ante quem*. But is that necessarily so? A scribe in 1350 may have looked ahead in order to be prepared for the future; or somebody at the end of the 15th century looked back into history. But then again, why would anybody in their right mind note something as trivial as a mere calendar going back in time? In any case, the calendar must have had some relevance to the scribe when he penned it.

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42 M<sub>14</sub>.

43 [W], p. 33.

44 “Other” in this context means that the main part of the manuscript deals with Master Johannes Liechtenauer’s teachings. However, there were other masters as well, and we are being introduced to them in this section.

45 M<sub>19</sub>.

Interestingly, on the inside of the front cover there is a note which states that Nicolaus Pol, personal doctor of the emperors Maximilian and Ferdinand, owned this book in the year of 1494.

But Pol's entry is written in a hand that is entirely different from the otherwise absolutely homogenous writing of the whole codex. The style of this handwriting however does point to the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century. Just recently Eric Burkart has examined this manuscript very thoroughly, and his essay in this very volume should shed some more light on this matter.

In addition, we sometimes find false datings. The Paulus Kal codex from Solothurn<sup>46</sup> for instance has a note from a previous owner on the first page that states the date as 1423—almost certainly in a kind of writing that tries to imitate older sources but does betray its later origin by its ornamental, calligraphic *Fraktur* style that was not known to early 15th century scribes but only became fashionable about a hundred years later.

Therefore we cannot rely on internal dating alone. Watermarks are very useful in this regard. Since the screens used for the production of paper were worn out after approximately two years, we can date paper due to the slight irregularities that occurred in the process of manufacturing the wires that were attached to the screens and that created characteristic patterns. But watermarks themselves are dated on datings in other manuscripts, which can lead to circular arguments.

Charles-Moïse Briquet<sup>47</sup> and Gerhard Piccard<sup>48</sup> have gathered a vast amount of watermarks, and their works serve as a base for dating old paper manuscripts (not parchment, of course).

In order to study those watermarks thoroughly, in most cases one has to actually handle the manuscript. This may prove difficult to do. It requires a fair deal of travelling, and not every library or museum is willing to grant access to their precious manuscripts. Only on rare occasions do the watermarks show up on digital scans. So we must rely mostly on scarce descriptions of watermarks other researchers such as Martin Wierschin, Hans-Peter Hils, or the *Katalog der deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters* have provided us

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46 M64.

47 The first edition of Briquet's *Dictionnaire des filigranes* with the reproductions of 16.12 watermarks was published as a set of four volumes in 1907 in Geneva.

48 The watermark collection *Piccard* is kept in the Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart under the accession number J 340. Gerhard Piccard (1909–1989) worked for more than four decades on a vast compilation of watermarks which he committed to the Hauptstaatsarchiv in 1951. After that time he continued to work on the project on a freelance basis.



with. Even if a manuscript contains pages with watermarks, it may still be hard to distinguish and analyze them since rather frequently these watermarks are hidden in the binding—small codices are particularly notorious for this.

Orthography as we know it today did not exist in the same way back then—although there were guidelines that were accepted in various chancelleries. To complicate matters, different chancelleries used different guidelines.<sup>49</sup> So while a certain variety to spelling was prevalent, the overall impression is more or less homogenous. The German language developed in the course of time, and thus we see fads, fashions, styles, or rules in texts from the early 15th century that differ from those we find in later texts from the end of the 16th century. Palaeography helps us to relate the way a certain letter is written in one manuscript to another one; it helps us to compare a certain spelling to another one. For instance it became a mannerism in the middle of the 16th century to load words with an abundance of consonants: When early on, around 1400, “fünf”<sup>50</sup> was sufficient, we later, 1520, may encounter something like “funnff”.<sup>51</sup>

Writing itself changed. Today, we write differently than our grandparents did; and in the same way people from the middle of the 15th century wrote differently than those from the late 16th. A more edgy and rather geometric textualis-like form developed into a more fluent *Fraktur*; the more casual *bastarda* evolved, and even more fluent *cursiva* styles appeared.

Both watermarks and palaeography offer only some help in establishing a precise date. As a last resort we can now turn to logical assumptions and educated guesses, based on the contents of the various manuscripts. In a number of treatises, some masters are referred to as being dead by means of the formula “may God have mercy upon him.” M53 for instance is the only fight book that speaks of Johannes Liechtenauer in the present tense. The next source that can be reliably dated—apart from Talhoffer’s codex from Gotha<sup>52</sup> from 1448 that presents Liechtenauer’s verses but no glosses—is the so-called von Danzig manuscript<sup>53</sup> from 1452. In this codex Master Liechtenauer is already referred to in the past tense—and God is requested to have mercy upon him. So we *may* reason that Liechtenauer was still alive when M53 was written down—or the source it was copied from.

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49 Hartweg/Wegera: Frühneuhochdeutsch, passim.

50 M53, fol. 23r.

51 M3, fol. 42r.

52 M22.

53 M57.

Some manuscripts are dedicated to a noble patron whose biography is known which allows us to put the codex in question in a timely order. Paulus Kal for instance refers to Ludwig IX “the Rich” of the House of Wittelsbach (1417–1479), who was Duke of Bavaria-Landshut from 1450 until 1479,<sup>54</sup> and Hans Talhoffer claims to have served Luithold III von Königeseegg whose life dates can be traced to some time between 1440 and 1459.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4 Alike as Two Peas in a Pod

Multiple copies are also an issue: quite frequently the same text appears in a number of sources. Establishing a connection might help to determine which treatise came first and which one is the copy. Obviously, a more thorough manuscript can't be the copy of a less complete one. Or can it? The von Speyer scribe<sup>56</sup> apparently copied after Lew,<sup>57</sup> but then again, in Lew's manuscript a couple of Ott's wrestling pieces are missing that do appear (or reappear?) in von Speyer. Did he copy after another source then? But possibly the remaining eleven pieces were simply lost and originally *did* belong to the Lew manuscript. Nevertheless, what we today call the Jude Lew manuscript is not necessarily the original version—it may very well be a copy itself—and quite likely so. Nevertheless, it is the first version we know of so far. Apart from that there are a number of additional manuscripts that refer to Master Lew the Jew: M26, M50, M60, and M62.

Both M53 and the Jude Lew manuscript are based on the teachings of Master Liechtenauer. Both manuscripts present the elusive verses. Both present extensive glosses that explain these verses so that the curious student can learn from the book. The glosses however are far from identical. While M53 offers rather lengthy comments on some of the verses, it is surprisingly silent on others. The Jude Lew manuscript on the other hand has thorough explanations throughout.

Apart from these two versions of glosses we find at least two more threads of tradition: one related to “Sigmund Ringeck”—in quotes for a reason—and another one to the so-called Peter von Danzig manuscript, M57. In the specialised literature we are occasionally confronted with the opinion that von

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54 M48, fol. 2r.

55 M31, p. 2.

56 M62.

57 M8.

Danzig copied from Ringeck.<sup>58</sup> Rainer Welle<sup>59</sup> proved that this was certainly not the case. Although both manuscripts are in large parts next to identical to each other, the von Danzig fight book offers much more information on various kinds of combat techniques that are absent from Ringeck; and it calls the individual authors of the compendium by their proper names, something the Ringeck manuscript silently withholds. So a copy in all likelihood would not invent and incorporate names that were not included in an otherwise identical source.

The following table exemplarily shows the substantial difference of the comments to the same set of verses in two different sources.

TABLE 10.1 *Concordance M57 (fol. 15r<sup>v</sup>) and M53 (fol. 25r)*

44 A 8, Peter von Danzig M57, fol. 15r/v	Cod. Hs. 3227a M53, fol. 25r
<p><b>Vier plossen wisse Reme so slechstu gewisse In alle far An zweifel wie er gepar</b>   Glosa   Merck wer ein maister des swertz sein wil   Der sol wissen wie man die vier plöss mit kunst suechen sol   wil er anders gerecht vnd gewis vechten   Die erst plöss ist die recht seit   die ander die linck oberhalb der gürtel   des mans   die anderñ zwo plöss das sind auch die recht vnd linck seÿtt vnderhalb der gürtel   Nu sind zwaÿ gefert dar aus man die plössen suechen sol   Zw dem ersten sol man sÿ suechen aus dem zw fechten mit nach raÿsen   vnd mit ein schiessen des langen ortes   Zw dem anderñ mal sol man sÿ suechen mit den acht winden   wenn einer dem anderñ an das swert gepunden hat   Das soltu also ver sten   wenn du mit dem zw vechten zÿ ÿm kumst das</p>	<p><b>Vler blößen wisse / remen zo slestu gewisse / An alle var / an zweifel wy her gebar</b>   Glosa   Hie merke / daz lichtnaw<sup>o</sup> / der teilt eyn menschen yn vier teil / recht zam das her eym von der scheidel / eyn strich vorne gleich neder machte an sym leybe / bis her neder czwischẽ syne beyne / Vnd dẽ and<sup>o</sup>n strich by der görtel dy czwere öber dẽ / leib / zo werdẽ vier vierteil eÿ rechtes vnd eÿ links öber der görtel / vnd alzo auch vnd<sup>o</sup> der görtel / das sint dy vier bloßẽ / der hat itzlichs syñ sonder gefechte / der reme vnd nümer keyns swertes / zonder der bloßen</p>

58 See for instance [H], p. 112.

59 Welle: »... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen«, passim.

44 A 8, Peter von Danzig  
M57, fol. 15r/v

Cod. Hs. 3227a  
M53, fol. 25r

dw albeg mit einem haw oder mit  
einem stich kunleich an alle vorcht  
solt remē der vier plössen eine | zu  
welicher dw am pesten kumen magst |  
vnd acht nicht was er gegen dir treibt  
oder vicht | Do mit twingstu den man  
das er dir vor seczen mues | vnd wenn  
er hat verseczt | so suech pald in der  
versaczüg mit den winden an seinem  
swert aber die nagst plöss | vnd also  
rem albeg der plössen des mans | vnd  
vicht nicht zw dem swert | In dem  
stuck das da also spricht | Secz an vier  
enden pleib dar auff lere wiltu enden

**Know four openings; aim, thus you will strike surely. Strive into all of them, without any doubt, howsoever he moves.**

Gloss: Note, one who wants to be a master of the sword shall know how to artfully look for the four openings if he wants to fence correctly and securely. The first opening is the right side, the second one the left side above the belt of the opponent. The other two openings are also the right and the left side, below the belt. There are two attacks with which one shall look for the openings: Firstly, you shall look for them in the *Zufechten* (coming to the opponent) with *Nachreisen* (travelling after) and with shooting forward the long point; secondly you shall look for them with the eight windings when one has bound to the other one's

**Know four openings to aim to, thus you will strike surely. Strive at all of them, without any doubt, howsoever he moves.**

Gloss: Note now that Liechtenauer divides the man in four parts, like if he would draw a line from someone's top of the head downwards on the front of his body to his groin; and the other line at the belt across his body. So you get four quarters: one on the right and one on the left side above the belt; and likewise below the belt. These are the four openings each of which has its particular attacks. These you have to aim for; never for the sword but for the openings.

TABLE 10.1 *Concordance M57 (fol. 15r/v) and M53 (fol. 25r) (cont.)*

44 A 8, Peter von Danzig M57, fol. 15r/v	Cod. Hs. 3227a M53, fol. 25r
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sword. You shall understand this:  
When you come with the *Zufechten* to  
your opponent, you always have to  
aim bravely and without fear with a  
strike or a thrust for one of the four  
openings, whichever you can reach  
best. Don't pay attention to what he  
does against you or what he fences.  
Thus you force him to *versetzen* (parry).  
If he has parried, immediately—  
in the parry—look for the next  
opening with winding on his sword.  
Always aim to the openings of the  
opponent and don't fence towards the  
sword as in the technique that says:  
“Set on four ends. Learn to stay upon if  
you want to make an end.”

## 5 A Good Book is My Nearest Relation

It's a cliché to say that everything is linked to everything, yet the entirety of the fight books forms one gigantic web. We encounter a lot of difficulties in putting the fight books in proper relationships with each other. Furthermore, we can follow different approaches: do we want to emphasize the time in which the manuscripts were actually written? Do we want to follow the trail of the masters that are mentioned in the manuscripts? Do we want to spot a pedagogical line in the teachings and find out whether there were direct connections between the teachings of various masters, or whether there were independent lines of the art? Or do we want to track down the ultimate source, the possibly lost very first rendition of the respective treatise? Certainly, our best option is to follow all of these.

For this paper I have concentrated on textual evidence only. A thorough examination that also takes iconography into consideration is beyond the

scope of this brief article and has yet to be undertaken in the future. The [KdiHM] has indeed tried to bring some kind of order into the illustrated manuscripts. But apart from even adding completely non-illustrated volumes—e.g. M53—the organisation of the book is occasionally strikingly odd: The Solothurn manuscript M64 is listed among Talhoffer's works (p. 57) although it clearly is related to Paulus Kal as an even superficial comparison of the images reveals; M72 is erroneously counted among the *Gladiatoria codices* (p. 31); and most surprisingly, master Andre Lignitzer, whose teachings are nowhere to be found illustrated at all, receives the honour of an entire chapter (pp. 62–63). So the attempt of the [KdiHM] to sort illustrated manuscripts by their authors seems to have gone somewhat awry.<sup>60</sup>

Most fight books are compendia with various sections, sometimes written by a single person, such as Hans Talhoffer, Paulus Kal, or Jörg Wilhalm; sometimes a compilation of works from various masters. These anthologies differ in extent, and the individual components are not identical from one volume to another, as we have seen. A question will remain, which source influenced which author, what codex was written when.

Sometimes individual treatises of single authors or even entire codices were copied and re-copied time and again. As a side effect, occasionally the original author's name got mixed up with another one, or was dropped entirely. Thus, we find virtually the same text repeatedly, sometimes attributed, for instance, to a certain Andre Lignitzer, sometimes to Martin Huntfelt, and sometimes it appears completely uncredited. Establishing true authorship under these circumstances can be a challenge.<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand we have masters such as Hans Talhoffer or Paulus Kal who commissioned copies of their own works—at times more or less unaltered, at times with considerable changes. Hans Talhoffer was particularly productive in this manner. We have five archetypical manuscripts that stem from his lifetime, plus at least one contemporary copy, plus some nine later copies—among them the aforementioned ones from the 19th century. This makes a total of fifteen Talhoffer manuscripts. The reason why there are so many is a question beyond the scope of this paper to answer.

To complicate matters even further, scribes copied from whatever sources they could lay their hands on. Thus we have—in later manuscripts from the second half of the 16th century—sudden connections we did not see before. Most noteworthy is a link from Master Liechtenauer to the otherwise unrelated

60 Welle, "Ordnung als Prinzip".

61 A thorough examination of this question can be found in: Jaquet/Walczak, Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew?

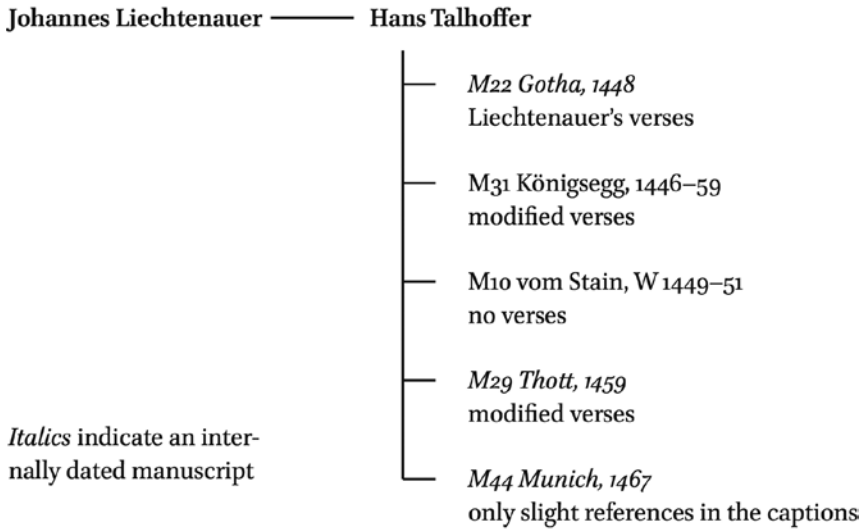


FIGURE 10.1 *Liechtenauer and Talhoffer.*  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

so-called *Gladiatoria* group of manuscripts. In the *Gladiatoria* manuscript from Wolfenbüttel<sup>62</sup> that bears no further resemblance to his teachings, we find Liechtenauer's verses on the first pages—interestingly, the only Low German (*niederdeutsch*) version from Northern Germany that we know of. All other versions are from the Bavarian area in Southern Germany.

Another manuscript from Wolfenbüttel,<sup>63</sup> a copy of one of Hans Talhoffer's codices and dated to the 17th century, clearly shows on fol. 45r a quite precise copy of an image with sword and buckler fencers from M35 (fol. 26r) the very first German fight book.

There are very few manuscripts that deal with one discipline alone, or are written by a single person. Fencing, after all, was not restricted to one aspect alone: a thorough understanding of a variety of weapons was considered to be essential. The German fight books however don't offer a concise fighting system from one master that covers everything (or at least the majority of fighting techniques) as we see laid out by the Italian master Fiore dei Liberi. This master presents an entire system, starting unarmed with wrestling, developing into armed forms with the dagger, the sword held in one hand or two;

62 M78.

63 M77.

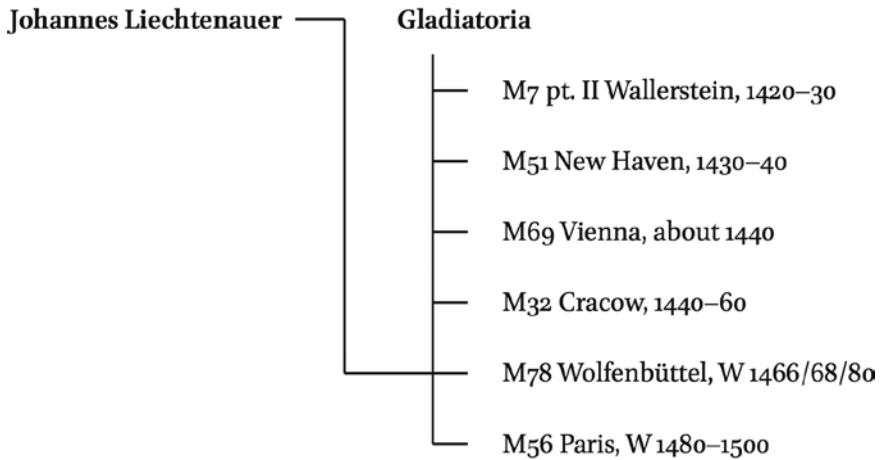


FIGURE 10.2 *Liechtenauer and Gladiatoria.*  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

the sword in armour; pollaxe; spear; and mounted combat with the lance, the sword, and unarmed.

Some of the German masters such as Ott only deal with a single aspect (wrestling in this case); others offer verbose material on a couple of disciplines (Lignitzer, Huntfelt); some masters like Falkner, Kal, or Talhoffer present an entire system similar to Fiore's—but sadly they provide us only with very little text that seldom offers more than a brief caption for an image.

There are a number of names that appear again and again through the centuries.

Among the German masters there is a strange discrepancy between the names, which often stemmed from the Baltic region, and the manuscripts that were mostly written in Bavarian scriptoria. Apparently, Bavaria was, so to speak, the Silicon Valley of medieval swordplay literature. Some of the masters are credited as being the authors, sometimes only the name of a compiler is recorded, sometimes we only get to know the name of the person who copied a passage from another source. The following list shows the names of the masters whose works have survived, at least partially, and the manuscripts their texts appear in. Editors or copyists are set in italics, also those we cannot be certain to have written independent texts. Since, as mentioned above, some authors were not always given their proper credit, this list must be seen as a preliminary attempt. The names appear in alphabetical order, following the first names:



<i>Albrecht Dürer</i>	M67
Andre Lignitzer	M19, M26, M33, M57, M60, M67
Andre Paurnefeindt	P3
Andreas (the Jew)	M19, M53
Andreas (Magister)	M62
<i>Antonius Rast</i>	M1
Fabian von Auerswald	M25
<i>Gregor Erhart</i>	M20
Hans Czynnner	M26
Hans Döbringer	M19, M53
Hans Folz	M66
Hans Medel/Niedel <sup>64</sup>	M6
Hans Seidenfaden	M6
Hans Talhoffer	M2, M10, M22, M29, M31, M43, M44, M45, M71, M80
<i>Hans von Speyer</i>	M62
Hugo Wittenwiler	M46
Hugold Behr	M61
Joachim Meyer	M41, M60, P13
<i>Jobst von Württemberg</i>	M50
Johannes Lecküchner	M27, M47, M50, M62, M67, M68
Johannes Liechtenauer	M2, M6, M8, M10, M12, M14, M15, M19, M20, M22, M26, M29, M31, M33, M42, M49, M50, M53, M57, M60, M62, M67, M68, M70, M71, M75, M78
Jörg Wilhalm	M3, M4, M9, M20, M49, M50
Jost von der Neiße	M19, M53
<i>Lew</i>	M8, M26, M50, M60, M62
<i>Lienhart Sollinger</i>	M3, M50
Ludwig VI von Eyb	M16
Martin Heemskerck	M6
Martin Huntfeldt	M8, M19, M26, M33, M50, M57, M60, M62, M70

64 Due to the either missing or only very delicately written titles in this manuscript, either variant is reasonable. See also the next footnote.

Martin Siber	M19, M60, M62
Niklas Preußen	M19, M53
Ott	M8, M12, M14, M19, M22, M33, M42, M48, M57, M62, M67, M70
Paulus Kal	M12, M23, M48, M64, M70
<i>Paulus Hector Mair</i>	M15, M42, M75
Peter von Danzig	M57
Peter Falkner	M68
Sigmung ain Ringeck/Amring/Schining <sup>65</sup>	M6, M14, M19, M60

Among the German manuscripts, we find both absolute devotion to a certain master (like Johannes Liechtenauer); and also absolute ignorance, where the name of a master, as recorded in quite a number of manuscripts, is omitted here or there (like for instance Andre Lignitzer). Sometimes things become even more complex when they get mixed up. Lignitzer, for instance, is mentioned as the author of sword and buckler as well as wrestling techniques, of dagger and of harness fencing material in M57 (von Danzig). The same manuscript provides us with the techniques of Martin Huntfelt in harness fencing, wrestling, groundfighting and dagger, and also for combat on horseback. Sometimes the techniques of both masters appear in other manuscripts, that unfortunately neglect to mention their names (the so-called Sigmund Ringeck manuscript (M15) is particularly notorious in this matter), and sometimes the techniques are credited, but with deviant names. The so-called Jude Lew manuscript (M8) for example mixes the names of Lignitzer, Huntfelt and Lew the Jew rather randomly—if we take the attributions as they appear in the von Danzig fight book as gospel truth. Nevertheless, the overall impression of M57 is very clean and clear and thus I am inclined to accept it as the most credible in regard to the attribution of the individual masters. Each author has their own section, each of which consists of several sub-sections.

For example, let us have a brief look at the first technique in harness fencing that appears both in M8 (Lew) codex and in M57 (von Danzig). Curiously, Martin Huntfelt's text about fencing in harness is attributed verbatim to Master Lew; and even more curiously, Lew's version starts with some introductory verses by Johannes Liechtenauer whose harness fencing section is missing from the codex apart from those few lines. It appears as if the scribes of old

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65 Unfortunately the name "Schining" in M6 is not written entirely unambiguous. Other credible reading variants are Schninig or Schming.

have looked at the treatises as some kind of open source material—after all, a proper copyright did not exist back then.

TABLE 10.2 *Concordance M57 (fol. 87r), M8 (fol. 54rv) and M57 (fol. 8v)*

Martin Huntfelt M57, fol. 87r	Jude Lew M8, fol. 54r/v	Johannes Liechtenauer M57, fol. 8v
<p><b>Hie hebt sich an Maister Marteins Hundtfeltz kunst Dem got genädig seÿ Mit dem kurtzen swert zû champf In harnasch aus vier hûten</b>   Merck das ist die erst hût   Nÿm das swert in paid hend vnd schüt das krefftigleich   vnd kum in den hangenden ort zw dem rechten ör   vnd stich ÿm zw dem gesicht   vnd setz ÿm an in das gesicht oder wo das ist   Wert ers so zuck   vnd gee durch mit dem stich   vnd setz Im an als vor   vñ wenn du ÿm hast an gesetzt   So schlach dein swert vnder dein rechtzs ÿchsen   vnd dring ÿn also von dir hÿn</p>	<p><b>Hie hebt sich an meister lewen kunst fechtens In harnasch auß den vier hutten zu fus vnd zu kampffe</b> WER ab synnet fechtês zu fus begÿnnet Der schick sein sper Zu yeglichem anheben recht wer Nym den vor stich on forcht Spring vnd setz Im an Wiltu vor stechen Mit zucken wer ler prechen Mer will er ziehen Von scheiden wil fliehen So solt Im nahen Vnd weislichen wart des vahan ~ Item das ist die erst hut Nÿm dein swert In baide hende vnd schütt das krefftiglichen vnd kom~e In den hangenden ort zum rechten or vnd stich In zum gesicht vnd setze Im an das gesicht oder wo das ist Wert ers so zuck vnd gee durch mit dem stich vnd setze Im an hals vor vnd wenn du</p>	<p><b>Hye hebt sich an Maister Johansen Liechtenawers kunst Dem got genädig sey mit dem kurczen swert zû kampff</b>   Wer absynt   ffechtens zû fuess begint   Der schick sein sper zway sten   An heben recht wer   Sper vnd ort   den vorstich stich an vorcht   Spring wind secz recht an   wert er zuckt das gesigt im an   wiltu vor stechen   mit zucken lere wer prechen   Merck wil er zÿhen   von schaiden vnd wil er er fliechen   So soltu im nahen   zû weißleich wart des vahan</p>

Martin Huntfelt  
M57, fol. 87r

Jude Lew  
M8, fol. 54r/v

Johannes Liechtenauer  
M57, fol. 8v

Im hast angesetzt so  
slach dein swert vntter  
dein rechte üchsen vnd  
dring In also von dir hin

**Here begins Master Martin Huntfelt's art with the short sword for the (judicial) duel in harness with four *Huten* (guards)—God have mercy upon him**

Note: This is the first *Hut* (guard). Take the sword in both hands and shake it powerfully. Get into the hanging point next to the right ear and thrust to his face. Set onto the face or wherever. If he defends, so twitch and go through with the thrust. Set on like before. Once you have set on him, push your sword under your right armpit and edge him away in front of you.

**Here begins Master Lew's art of harness fencing with four *Huten* (guards) on foot and for the (judicial) duel**

Who dismounts begins to fence on foot. He shall hold his spear in every beginning for a good defence. Take the first thrust without fear. Jump and set upon. If you want to thrust first, learn how to counter defences with twitching. Also if he wants to pull from the scabbard or to flee, then you shall approach him, and skilfully look for capturing.

This is the first *Hut* (guard). Take your sword in both hands and shake it powerfully. Get into the hanging point next to the right ear and thrust to his face. Set onto the face or wherever. If he defends,

**Here begins Master Johannes Liechtenauer's art with the short sword for the (judicial) duel—God have mercy upon him**

Who dismounts begins to fence on foot. He shall hold his spear in two stances. Defend the beginning well. Spear and point, make the first thrust without fear. Jump and strongly set upon. If he defends then twitch, that beats him. If you want to thrust first, learn how to counter defences with twitching. Note if he wants to pull from the scabbard or to flee, then you shall approach him, and skillfully look for capturing.

TABLE 10.2 *Concordance M57 (fol. 87r), M8 (fol. 54rv) and M57 (fol. 8v) (cont.)*

Martin Huntfelt M57, fol. 87r	Jude Lew M8, fol. 54r/v	Johannes Liechtenauer M57, fol. 8v
	<p>so twitch and go through with the thrust. Set onto the throat forwards. Once you have set on him, push your sword under your right armpit and edge him away in front of you.</p>	

A second example, which points out the similarities between texts attributed to different authors.

TABLE 10.3 *Concordance M57 (fol. 73r) and M8 (fol. 70rv)*

Andre Lignitzer M57 Peter von Danzig, fol. 73r	Martin Huntfelt M8 Jude Lew, fol. 70r/v
<p><b>Hÿe hebt sich an Maister Andres Kunst genant der lignitzer Dem got genadig seÿ Das kurz swert Zw gewappenter hant zũ gleicher ritterlicher were</b>   Item nÿm das swert mit der rechten hant peÿ dem pint   vnd mit der lincken greif mitten in die klingen   vnd gee vast in man   So mues er stechen oder slahen   Doch kum vor piß rasch greif färlich vnd pleib nahent</p>	<p><b>Hie hebt sich an das kurtz swert zum kampff als es meister mertein hundsfelder gesatz hat ~</b> Item nÿm das swert pej der rechtẽ hant pej dem pind vnd mit der lincken greiff mit mitten In die clingen Vnd gee fast zum man So muß er slagen oder stechen · da kum~ vor pis resch greiff frölichẽ vnd pleib nahent</p>
<p>Here begins Master Andre's art who was called the Lignitzer, God have mercy upon him: the short sword</p>	<p>Here begins the short sword for the (judicial) duel as Master Martin Huntfelt has composed it</p>

Andre Lignitzer  
M57 Peter von Danzig, fol. 73r

Martin Huntfelt  
M8 Jude Lew, fol. 70r/v

**with the armoured hand against  
equal knighly weapons**

Take the sword with the right hand at the grip, and with the left one grasp the middle of the blade. Go strongly to the opponent, so he has to thrust or strike. Nevertheless, come forward, be quick, attack dangerously and stay close.

Take the sword with the right hand at the grip, and with the left one grasp the middle of the blade. Go strongly to the opponent, so he has to strike or thrust. Then come forward, be quick, attack happily and stay close.

In order to give a brief example of how different manuscripts approach the same verses by Master Liechtenauer I want to present a technique from the Krumphau. Clearly, the so-called Ringeck manuscript is the least verbose.

TABLE 10.4 Concordance M57 (fol. 18r), M8 (fol. 15v) and M14 (fol. 26r)

Peter von Danzig M57, fol. 18r	Jude Lew M8, fol. 15v	Sigmund Ringeck M14, fol. 26r
<p><b>krump nicht kurtzhaw Durchwechsel do mit schaw</b>   Glosa   merck das ist wenn er dir von sein<sup>o</sup> rechten seitten oben ein wil hauen   So var hoch auff mit den henden   vnd thue als dw ym mit dem krump haw an sein swert wellest pinden   vnd var mit dem ort   vnd seinẽ swert durch   vnd stich ym zw der anderñ seitten zũ dem</p>	<p><b>Krump nicht kurtz haw Durchwechsel damit schaw</b> Das ist ein pruch wider die hut auß dem ochsen Den treib also wann du mit dem zufechten zu dem mann geest Steet er dann In der hut vnd helt sein swertt In seiner lincken seitten vor dem haubt So würff dein swert an dein rechte achseln vnd</p>	<p><b>Krum nicht kurz haw / durch wechsel dar mitt schow</b> Glosa Das ist wenn er dir von siner rechten achseln oben ein will howen So tũ alß ob du mitt dem krumphaw an sin schwert wöllest binden Vnnd kurcz vnd far mitt dem ort vndẽ sinẽ schwert durch vnd wind vff din rechte sýttenn dein gehülcz über din höpvt vnd stich im zũ dem gesicht</p>

TABLE 10.4 *Concordance M57 (fol. 18r), M8 (fol. 15v) and M14 (fol. 26r) (cont.)*

Peter von Danzig M57, fol. 18r	Jude Lew M8, fol. 15v	Sigmund Ringeck M14, fol. 26r
<p>gesicht oder der prust   vnd wart Das dw oben vor dem haubt mit dem gehülcz wol gedackt seist   Auch prichstu mit dem stuck die hût des ochsen   Den treib also   Wenn dw mit dem zw vechten zw ÿm gest stet er denn gegen dir vnd heltt sein swert mit dem gehülcz auff seiner lincken seitten vor dem haupt   So wurff dein swert an dein rechte achsel   vnd thue als du im mit dem krump haw an sein swert wöllest pinden   vnd haw kurz   vnd wechsel do mit vnden durch sein swert   vnd schewss im deñ ort zû der anderñ seitten lanck vnder seinẽ swert ein zû dem hals   So mües er vor seczen   Do mit kumpstu zw schlegen   vnd zw ander ar bait mit dem swert</p>	<p>thue als du Im mit dem krumphaw wöllest an sein swert pinden vnd haw kurtz vnd wechsel damit vndẽ durch Vnd scheuß Im den ort zu der andern seitten langk ein zu der plösse so muß er versetzen Damit kōpstu zu slegen vnd zu ander arbaitt mit dem swert</p>	<p>Don't strike the Krump short. Look for changing through with this. Gloss. Note: When he wants to strike to you</p>
<p>Don't strike the Krump short. Look for changing through with this. Gloss. Note: When he wants to strike to you</p>	<p>Don't strike the Krump short. Look for changing through with this. This is a counter against the <i>Hut Ochs</i>.</p>	<p>Don't strike the Krump short. Look for changing through with this. Gloss. When he wants to strike to you from above</p>

Peter von Danzig  
M57, fol. 18r

from above on his right side then go high up with your hands and pretend to bind with a *Krumphau* on his sword. But go through with your point under his sword and thrust to his other side towards his face or the chest. Take care that you are well protected above and in front of the head with the hilt. You also break the *Hut Ochs* with this technique. Do it thus: When you approach him with the *Zufechten* and he opposes you while holding his sword with the hilt on his left side in front of the head, then throw your sword to your right shoulder and pretend to bind with a *Krumphau* on his sword. Instead, strike short and with this change through beneath his sword. Shoot your point long towards his other side underneath his sword to the throat. So he must parry. With this you can come to strikes and other attacks with the sword.

Jude Lew  
M8, fol. 15v

Do it thus: When you approach the opponent with the *Zufechten* and he stands in the *Hut* and holds his sword on his left side in front of the head, then throw your sword to your right shoulder and pretend to bind with a *Krumphau* on his sword. Instead, strike short and with this change through below. Shoot your point long towards his other side to the opening. So he must parry. With this you can come to strikes and other attacks with the sword.

Sigmund Ringeck  
M14, fol. 26r

from his right shoulder then pretend to bind with a *Krumphau* on his sword. But [strike] short and go through with your point under his sword and wind your hilt towards your right side over your head. Thrust to his face.



The Ringeck manuscript M14 is one of the most sloppily written sources we have; an abundance of corrections, deletions or omissions that is almost unique to the German fencing material; the editor and/or writer has worked rather hurriedly and carelessly, it seems. This may also apply to the name of the alleged author. The following table juxtaposes the passage that mentions Sigmund's name in four different manuscripts.

TABLE 10.5 *Concordance M6 (fol. 21r), M14 (fol. 10v/11r), M19 (fol. 22r) and M60 (fol. 6r)*

M6 (Augsburg), fol. 21r	M14 (Dresden), fol. 10v/11r	M19 (Glasgow), fol. 22r	M60 (Rostock), fol. 6r
Vnd die selben verporgen vnd verdeckten wort der zetl hat maister Sigmund Schining der diser zeit des hochgeboren fürsten und herren Herrn Albrechtz pfaltzgraue bey Rein und hertzog in Baiern schirmmaister gewesen ist Also glosirt und ausgelegt Als dann in disem bûch hernach geschriben steet	Vnd die selbige~ v <sup>o</sup> borgneñ vñ verdeckte wort hatt maister Sigmund ain ringeck der zýt des hochgeborne~ fürsten vñ herreñ herñ aulbrecht pfalczgrauen bÿ Rin vñ herczog in bayern schirmaiste~ Glosieret vñ außgelegt alß hie in disem biechlin her nach geschryben stät	die selbigñ wort hat Maist~ Sigmund Emring verklert vnd aus gelegt / als In diessem puech geschribñ stett vnd gemalt	vnd dieselbigen verborgen vnd verdagkten worten der Zedtel / Die hat meister Sigmunnt Einring zu derselbigen zeit des hochgeboren fursten vnd herren herrn Albrechts Pfaltzgrauff bey Rein vnd hertzog in Baijern schirrmeister gewesen ist / also glossirt vnnd ausgeleggt / als sie dan in diesem buchlein hernach geschrieben / vnd gemalt stehnn
And Master Sigmund Schining, who was at this time fencing master of the highborn prince and lord, Lord Albrecht, Count Palatine of Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, had these same hidden and	And Master Sigmund ain Ringeck, at the time fencing master of the highborn prince and lord, Lord Albrecht, Count Palatine of Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, had these same hidden	Master Sigmund Emring has commented and explained these same words as it is written and painted in this book.	And Master Sigmund Einring, at the same time fencing master of the highborn prince and lord, Lord Albrecht, Count Palatine of Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, had these same hidden

M6 (Augsburg), fol. 21r	M14 (Dresden), fol. 10v/11r	M19 (Glasgow), fol. 22r	M60 (Rostock), fol. 6r
concealed words of the <i>Zettel</i> commented on and explained as it is written hereafter in this book.	and concealed words of the <i>Zettel</i> commented on and explained as written hereafter in this little book.		and concealed words of the <i>Zettel</i> commented on and explained as they are written and painted hereafter in this little book.

Particularly interesting is that both manuscripts from Glasgow and Rostock mention pictures, but only the Glasgow version in fact *has* images. Furthermore, when we consider that Master Paulus Kal has a certain master Sigmund Amring among Liechtenauer’s society, we might want to ask ourselves whether the scribe of the so-called Ringeck manuscript put down the name correctly at all. So we may surmise that the “Ringeck” codex is incorrectly named, since it is probable that there has never been a “Master Ringeck” but rather a “Master Sigmund” with the last name being Amring, Emring, or Einring. The dot on the letter “i” in the word “ain” in the codex from Dresden is not that clear as others (which makes reading it as “am” possible), but unfortunately, neither is the dot over “ringeck”. The origin of the dubious suffix “eck” remains unclear for the time being—as well as the completely different rendition as “Schining”.

## 6 Time and Time Again

For us modern people, time is certainly an important issue, and we have a strong tendency to impose a chronological order onto things and processes. Today, almost everything is dated; magazines, newspapers, blog entries. It is important to know your date of birth so you know when you are allowed to drive a car or drink alcoholic beverages. It is important to know the construction date of your car or your house in order to get a good price once you decide to resell either item. Back then, dates were important too, but not everybody knew their exact date of birth for instance; and not everything was dated consistently.

To establish a correct timeline is therefore most difficult. It certainly is not a goal in its own right, but it can help us to figure out logical relationships and

cross-references between the manuscripts. In this, we must keep in mind that a lot of codices are compendia whose parts may have been written by different authors at different times.

Additionally, there is no linear development. After all, a lot of manuscripts have evolved simultaneously and independently.

In 1985, Hans-Peter Hils created a stemma of the most important manuscripts<sup>66</sup> that clarified their relations with each other. This stemma has become somewhat outdated; new manuscripts have been found, and not all relations were recognised properly. Hils had started off with partial stemmata which led to an overall stemma.<sup>67</sup> He points out that it has to be taken into consideration that the textual tradition has only been conducted by visual appearances and not necessarily by means of a text-critical apparatus. He focusses on Johannes Liechtenauer, but also points out cross-references to Huntfelt and Lignitzer “although there are no known manuscripts authored by them.”<sup>68</sup>

In the following table I want to offer a renewed attempt at putting important manuscripts (not all of them) in correlation. Further research is clearly needed, particularly having a closer look at all the individual parts of the fight book anthologies and their relation to each other, which might shed more light on the correct timeline of the fight books. The table consists of 29 fight books—a little more than a third of the extant German manuscripts. These are the ones that are in one way or another related to master Liechtenauer. Other distinct examples such as the Codex Wallerstein (M7) or the manuscripts from the Gladiatoria group (apart from the Wolfenbüttel version M78 that presents at least Liechtenauer’s verses) are therefore not included.

The column on the far left points to years to which manuscripts can be dated more or less reliably. The next column lists manuscripts with an internal dating, and the right-hand column represents my attempt to put various additional manuscripts in a credible chronological order. Several manuscripts have a narrower, others a much wider timeframe from which they may have originated. Particularly remarkable in this respect is M14, the so-called Ringeck manuscript: palaeography hints at the first half of the 15th century; the watermarks however at the beginning of the 16th.<sup>69</sup>

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66 [H], p. 149.

67 [H], pp. 147–150.

68 [H], p. 148.

69 According to Werner J. Hoffmann, academic advisor of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek—Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek (SLUB) Dresden, Wierschin’s dating to the beginning of the 15th or even the end of the 14th century has to be revised due to the evidence based on the watermarks.

Liechtenauer's Verses and Glosses: A Timeline

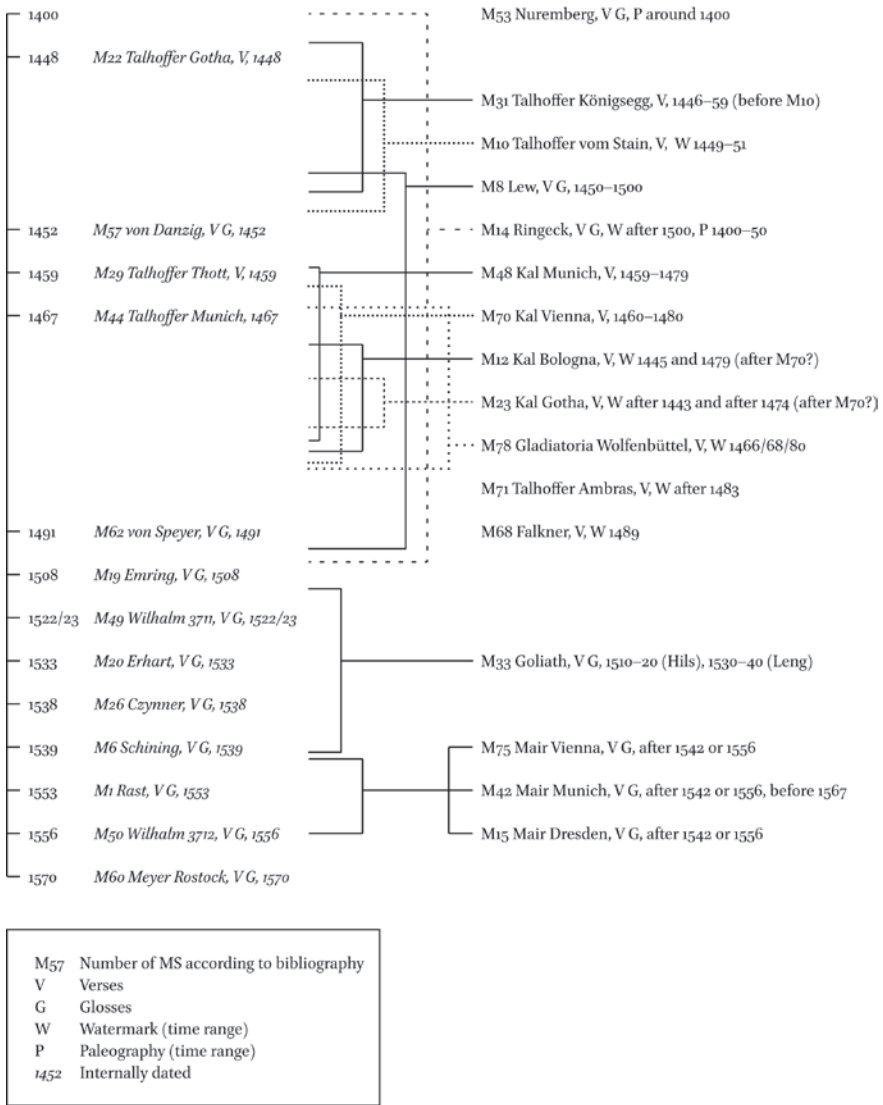


FIGURE 10.3 *Liechtenauer's Verses and Glosses: A Timeline.*  
 AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

In order to create a plausible pattern or scheme, we have to look thoroughly at the sources again and again; at the same time, we have to be aware that we cannot trust them entirely. So in closing I want to establish the necessity for further scrutiny of what we have already achieved, in order to create a convincing and steadily developing picture of the complex structure of our German fight books legacy.

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## The Italian Schools of Fencing: Art, Science, and Pedagogy

*Ken Mondschein*

To speak of a singular Italian “school” of fencing is to gloss over six centuries of diverse practices and purposes—from the first surviving written treatise by Fiore dei Liberi in the early fifteenth century to the formation of the *Scuola Magistrale* in the late nineteenth and the adoption of the modern “international” style in the twentieth—and to press them into the service of a nineteenth-century nationalistic construct. Rather than there being a singular, unifying, and eternal national character or even a uniquely peninsular approach to personal combat, we rather see individual, local strains and approaches, each a product of its own era, and each reflecting contemporary ideas of education, fashion, science, and conflict. This is especially true when speaking of our focal period, the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries.

All such sources nonetheless share certain necessary similarities. Fencing (like fighting) is what is called an “open” (as opposed to a “closed”) motor skill. In other words, actions are not pre-choreographed, as in a dance, but change in response to a dynamic environment. The concern of fencing masters has ever been to teach their students how to act in such a situation in a manner concordant with their sociocultural environment—the rules, written and unwritten, of how the encounter should proceed. Looking at such sources in this light, we can identify the sixteenth century, and particularly the Milanese engineer Camillo Agrippa’s *Trattato di Scientia d’Arme* of 1553, as a time of sea change. Whereas earlier authors have their students follow patterns, much as medieval artists copied models or writers copied letters; later authors, influenced by humanist ideas, emphasize a deductive approach to fencing pedagogy. With an increasing emphasis on fencing as a “science” and the realization of the necessities of print medium, masters presented their works as “discourses” or “reasonings” (*ragiomento* or *ragione*) intended to present a method of operating to a reader not personally acquainted with the author and his teachings. Such works, following Agrippa, often utilized contemporary ideas of the structure of the universe, such as number linking the macrocosm and microcosm.

Influencing the changes in these scientific-aesthetic systems were changes in the socio-cultural environment. With the rise of centralized states and their

concomitant court culture, what had been a multi-purpose martial art equally suited to the battlefield, the dueling-ground, or a self-defense scenario increasingly funneled into a specialized art intended for an encounter between equals on a level playing field, be it an (ostensibly) friendly fencing bout or a potentially lethal encounter. In other words, paralleling dancing and riding, the handling of weapons became a courtly phenomenon, a way to display class and breeding. The art and science of arms thus participated in the overall cultural changes taking place in the early modern world.

## 1 Historiography of Fencing

Modern writing on fencing, both that of Italian scholars and that of scholars of other nations, cannot be separated from its nationalist and scientific-positivist roots. The nineteenth century's concerns were those of the struggle against absolutism, justified by an ideology that included a strong belief in both what Herbert Spencer called "the law of progress" and in the nation-state—the flowering of a timeless national character into a sovereign political entity—as both the inevitable and most perfect mode of human social organization. Risorgimento Italy was fertile ground for these ideas, which are most evident in the writings of Jacopo Gelli (1858–1935). Gelli, a historian, military officer, and (ironically) advocate for the abolition of the duel, wrote several works on dueling and code of honor, as well as traced the development of fencing, in his *L'arte delle armi in Italia*. Like his English contemporary Egerton Castle,<sup>1</sup> Gelli was of the opinion that fencing, like all human endeavors, shows development from a primitive state to a more advanced and "scientific" one.<sup>2</sup> His chief concern is thus how closely previous authors presaged his own modern style of fencing; unfortunately, he not only viewed the past through this positivist lens, but also completely misunderstood the idiom of previous authors. For instance, Gelli believed that medieval modes of fencing remained unchanged through the eighteenth century and groundlessly accuses several authors of plagiarism. Similarly, he summarily dismissed the German medieval school of fencing and devoted many pages to refuting the opinions of both Castle and the sixteenth-century English critic of Italian fencing, George Silver.

This nationalistic concern is also seen in Francesco Novati's facsimile of the Pisani-Dossi manuscript of *Fiore dei Liberi*. Why did Novati, a renowned

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1 Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence*.

2 For a full treatment of historical positivism in fencing history, see my essay "Daggers of the Mind, Towards a Historiography of Fencing."



scholar of medieval literature, turn his attention to an obscure work of some artistic and historical merit, but dubious literary quality? The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a time of considerable nationalistic competition, and the realm of sport was no exception. In particular, the two great European fencing nations, France and Italy, both sought prestige in a series of well-publicized contests. Duels even occurred between representatives of the two countries, and the conflict was continued in the pages of journals and fencing books.<sup>3</sup> The French might have argued their fencing was the most modern, perfected, and advanced, and, politically, their school may have been on the ascendency (culminating in the formation of the *Fédération Internationale d'Escrime* in 1913), but the Italians, possessing the oldest didactic works known at the time, were able to claim primacy in the invention of “scientific” swordsmanship.

In this essay, I will employ the lessons of physical interpretation in the service of describing Italian fencing literature and practices as artifacts of socially contingent cultural practices. In so doing, I hope to show this subject’s relevance not just to those interested in the history of swordplay, but to historians of medieval and early modern Europe in general.

## 2 The Social Context

The Italian verb, *schermire*, “to fence,” is ultimately derived from the Germanic *schirmjan* or *skirman*, and is of considerable antiquity—besides being Latinized into *escrimar*, it has cognates in Spanish, Portuguese, Provençal, Bavarian, and Middle English.<sup>4</sup> The culture of *la scherma* in premodern Italy, however, has two important elements that must be accounted for in any treatment of violence and its performance, the urban nature of Italian society, and Mediterranean honor culture.

Regarding the first criterion, the professional teaching of fencing, as with any martial art, is necessarily an urban phenomenon drawing on a population with both the desire and spare cash to acquire these skills. Italy certainly provided this environment, and ownership of weapons in medieval Italian towns

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3 On this, see Gaugler, “Epic Encounters Between Italian and French Fencing Masters 1881–1911,” p. 13. Though it does not really bear on the subject of this essay, I should also note that there were also considerable controversies between Italian masters over whose method was better, such as the Roman-Neapolitan critique of the Milanese Giuseppe Radaelli’s supposedly less “pure” northern method of sabre.

4 Diez, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Romance Languages, Chiefly from the German*, p. 390.

seems to have been at least as ubiquitous as in the north.<sup>5</sup> For instance, in Bologna, arms societies—confraternities for civic defense formed during the communal movement of the thirteenth century—were integral to the city's political structure,<sup>6</sup> while Milan was, of course, the armory of Europe.

Insofar as participation in socially sanctioned violence goes, Italian burghers exhibited an interesting duality. On the one hand, they seem to have been less personally bellicose than their northern contemporaries and made greater use of mercenaries; Machiavelli's idea of a citizen-militia was dead on arrival.<sup>7</sup> On the other, jousts and civic festivals-cum-brutal war-games such as the battles held on bridges and town squares in numerous cities were a vibrant part of civic life. Likewise, a martial ethic certainly existed in Italy amongst the aristocracy. "I judge that the principal and true profession of the courtier ought to be that of arms," as Castiglione has Ludovico da Canossa say,<sup>8</sup> and military service, even if in the service of foreign princes, remained an ideal amongst the Italian aristocracy through the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, the Italians had acquired the reputation as the tutors of Europe and the Delian Academy, founded in Padua in 1608, was an international center where youth from many nations came for instruction in the arts of fencing, riding, and mathematics.<sup>10</sup> Francesco Alfieri, the fencing master there, mentions teaching "Italian, Polish, French, and German gentlemen" in his work on the

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5 On arms in German towns, see especially Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany: Civic Duty and the Right of Arms*. On the keeping of weapons in sixteenth-century France, see, for instance, Marie-Anne Michaux's MA thesis, "Private Armouries, Arms and Armour in the Parisian Domestic Interior (1515–1547)." The best comparable work on Italy is Blastenbrei, "Violence, arms and criminal justice in papal Rome, 1560–1600."

6 Blanshei, *Politics and Justice in Late Medieval Bologna*.

7 The Italian lack of valor became something of an object of perverse pride, The fourteenth-century Florentine writer Franco Sacchetti (in story 150) tells a tale of a meek knight who is chosen *podestà* of Padua: To make himself seem fiercer, he has a crest of a ferocious bear made for his helmet, but, on the way to Padua has been elected to govern, he encounters a huge and somewhat inebriated German knight who claims the same arms, Rather than contest the matter, the Italian sells his crest at a profit, and each man departs thinking he got the better deal.

8 Baldassare Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, ed. Carnazzi, p. 72.

9 See, for instance, Hanlon, "The Decline of a Provincial Military Aristocracy: Siena 1560–1740" and Claudio Donati, *L'idea di nobiltà in Italia*.

10 See *Drévilion*, "L'escrime italienne et l'éducation de la noblesse française"; and Del Negro, "L'Accademia Delia e gli esercizi cavallereschi della nobiltà padovana nel Seicento e Settecento." Galileo apparently argued of the necessity of mathematics to military science in his application letter to the Academy seeking the post of mathematician; it was

two-handed sword.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, we have several treatises from Italian fencing masters serving at noble courts in northern Europe, and Shakespeare's audiences understood Mercutio's calling Tybalt "the very butcher of a silk button" was a reference to the Italian fencing master Rocco Bonetti, who claimed to be able to hit an Englishman upon any button of his doublet.<sup>12</sup>

The teaching of fencing in Italy seems not to have been universally and strictly subject to a formal guild, patronage, or regulatory system, as were established in northern Europe and Spain in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> While Francesco Marcelli states in his treatise of 1686 that formerly masters had to be approved by a committee (citing the Bolognese masters Marozzo and dall'Agocchie, as well as the Spaniard Narvaez, as his sources),<sup>14</sup> I am personally unaware of any surviving licenses, charters, or regulations from the early modern era. As for the social aspects of such organizations, while we find one Cosimo Paradisi recorded as a fencing master in the necrology of the Florentine *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* at the turn of the seventeenth century,<sup>15</sup> Silvio Longhi, in his 2003 edition of Marco Doccini's 1601 *Trattato di Scherma*, states that Doccini was not inscribed in this guild, as he should have been.<sup>16</sup> Three anecdotes bear this impression out: Vincent Saviolo, writing in England in the mid-1590s, relates the story of a master named Angelo of "Alezza" (Arezzo?) whose nephew, after years of apprenticeship, decided to set up shop on his own. This led to a duel between the nephew and a mutual

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at Padua that he invented his compass to determine proportional divisions. See Favero, "Le matematiche nell'arte militare, secondo un autografo di Galileo Galilei," pp. 16–17.

- 11 Francesco Alfieri, *Lo Spadone*, p. 6; trans. by the present author as *The Art of the Two-Handed Sword*, p. 28. On fencing as part of humanist education, see Grendler's essay on Annibale Roero's *Lo scolare*, "Fencing, Playing Ball, and Dancing in Italian Renaissance Universities." Note that Salvator Fabris (q.v.) was also Paduan and returned to his native city before dying in 1618.
- 12 William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* Act 2, Scene 4, line 23. See also Holmer's " 'Draw if ye be Men': Saviolo's Significance for *Romeo and Juliet*." The "silk button" claim is recorded by George Silver in his *Paradoxes of Defence*, p. 65.
- 13 See my introduction to *Fencing, A Renaissance Treatise*, xxv–xxvii. We do have some Venetian regulations saying that masters should not teach in private, for fear that they would sodomize their students. See Murray, *Homosexualities*, p. 149. On accusations of homosexuality made against Florentine masters, see Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, pp. 140, 158–59.
- 14 Francesco Marcelli, *Regole della Scherma*, p. 13. Dall'Agocchie discusses the process in his *Dell'Arte di Scrimia Libri Tre*, p. 8; exhortations not to teach without permission are found in several places in the first chapters of Marozzo's first book.
- 15 Tommaso Rimbotti, *Rime*, ed. del Puppo and Fabbri, p. 51 n. 6.
- 16 Marco Doccini, *Trattato di Scherma*, ed. Longhi, p. 78.

friend who sought to avenge the old master's loss of income.<sup>17</sup> This resort to an extrajudicial challenge seems to imply a lack of a legal means of resolving this dispute.

A century earlier, in a case from 1474, Johannes Angellus, Captain of Milan, reported to Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza that a "Master Ferando" from Spain had challenged local masters to a fencing contest in a public square. Two Italians appeared, a Master Zentille, "son of the deceased Master Pagano," and a Master Ferando from Capua. Angellus' concern was more for the unlawful public assembly than for the Spaniard's abrogating some sort of monopoly (in free cities of the Holy Roman Empire, the town council was usually petitioned for the right to hold a public competition, and Angellus is mainly concerned that they had not asked for such permission). The fact that two masters felt that they had to respond to a foreigner's challenge might mean that they did not enjoy a legally sanctioned monopoly and had to defend their prerogative, though they might have equally taken up the gauntlet for the pleasure of a public contest—albeit at great risk to their reputations. Teaching fencing could apparently be a family business, as is seen by Zentille's father, Pagano, also having been a fencing master, and would be exemplified in the seventeenth century by the Marcelli family.<sup>18</sup> The document also details where the local masters held their schools.<sup>19</sup> Finally, earlier in the early fifteenth century, Fiore dei Liberi (q.v.) relates in his autobiographies that he had to fight five duels with masters jealous of his teaching. Again, no legal method of conflict-resolution seemed to exist; it was entirely up to Fiore to defend his right to teach. So, while guild structures certainly did exist in Italy (especially in the Bolognese tradition), they seem to have been far from universally potent. Further research is needed in this area.

Regarding the second criterion mentioned above, "honor culture," while hardly unique to Italy or the medieval and early modern eras, did affect the particular forms interpersonal violence took.<sup>20</sup> Honor is both individual and collective: it involves one's own self-respect, of course, but also the community's acknowledgement of one's right to that self-respect. It is personal, yet

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17 Vincent Saviolo, *His Practice*, 1.13.

18 Marcelli gives the portraits of himself and eight of his relatives in the frontispiece to his book, labeling them "fencing masters of the Casa Marcelli."

19 "Scuole di scherma in Milano nel 1474."

20 It has been incorporated into two notable works on dueling in northern Europe in the modern era, McAleer, *Dueling: The Cult of Honor in Fin de Siècle Germany*, and Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*. On the origins of dueling in Italy, see Cavina's "Science of Duel and Science of Honour" in this volume.

something that also reflects the status of one's family or clan. It is the highest value in an honor-based society; its opposite is shame. Any insults must be requited, or status is lost. Such insults are categorized in a strict hierarchy, with physical assault and attacks against the virtue of the women of one's family perhaps the most infamous and worthy of the most serious requiting—by violence.<sup>21</sup> Such could go so far as to take the form of private warfare between clans and patronage networks. For instance, Edward Muir recounts in his *Mad Blood Stirring* the vendetta between the Savorgnan, Zambarlani, and Strumieri factions in sixteenth-century Friuli—a feud that resulted in murders, dismemberments, and ambushes.<sup>22</sup>

Over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the performance of honor took a new form as the vendetta transformed into the duel.<sup>23</sup> This was directly connected with new codes of the rise of centralized powers and court culture. As Muir states, “courtliness erected rigid barriers between the human and the animal, condemning all animal-like behavior in men and women.... Thus good manners repressed emotions. The courteous denied or delayed all impulses, never admitted fear, controlled and channeled anger into the duel, and sublimated sexual appetites through elaborate flirtations.”<sup>24</sup> I should also note that it also coincided with the ability of newly potent rulers to suppress feuding clans.

The literature on the duel is voluminous, and I can only give a short précis here, but in general, we can say two things about it: The duel, at least before the 1560s, involved submission to a central authority whose task it was to grant the field and supervise the combat; and it involved conventional rules and a legal process. It was, in other words, a channeling of violence into a more socially acceptable means. While origins of this ritual begin with ancient Lombard law, the duel for point of honor—the type of duel that Italian fencing masters concern themselves with in their works—first began to assume its ritualized

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21 The idea of a “Mediterranean honor culture” was first popularized in Peristainy (ed.) *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* and most famously articulated by Julian Pitt-Rivers, especially in his *The fate of Shechem, or: The politics of sex, essays in the anthropology of the Mediterranean*.

22 Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*.

23 Notable works include Angelozzi, *La nobiltà disciplinata*, Bryson, *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Duel*, Cavina, *Il duello giudiziario per punto d'onore*, Donati, *L'idea di nobiltà in Italia*, Hughes, “Soldiers and Gentlemen: The Rise of the Duel in Renaissance Italy,” Kiernan, *The Duel in European History: Honour and the Reign of Aristocracy*, and Quint, “Duelling and Civility in Sixteenth-Century Italy.”

24 Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, pp. 163–64. See also his *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* pp. 149–151.

form in the late fourteenth century. In Naples, Baldo di Ubaldi (1327–1400) and Paris de Puteo (1410–1493) both popularized and elaborated upon the foundations laid by Giovanni da Legnano (c. 1320–1383).<sup>25</sup> It was in the early sixteenth century that the duel for the point of honor became the subject of a prescriptive literature, with writers such as Girolamo Muzio (1496–1576) codifying the procedure; fencing masters such as Achille Marozzo and Vincent Saviolo also appended lengthy works on the duel to their writings (the latter of which is almost wholly drawn from Muzio). A duel could only be legitimately called for when a “hidden truth”—particularly an accusation of lying—needed to be discovered. Anything else was more properly a subject for the courts. What was at risk, therefore, was one’s honor—shorthand for face, social credit, standing amongst one’s peers, etc.

We can see as an early example the combats that Fiore dei Liberi’s student Galeazzo da Mantova undertook against the French knight Jehan le Meingre (called Boucicault) in 1395 and 1406—the former undertaken because of the latter’s comment on the Italian lack of courage, the latter to avenge his earlier loss. The 1395 fight took place in Padua before that city’s lord, Francesco Novello di Carrara and Francesco Gonzaga, lord of Mantua and Galeazzo’s kinsman, and was stopped before serious harm came to either. Similarly, in 1392, Galeazzo had defeated an English champion before the King of France. Much like the tournament, the duel thus became an arena in which centralized authority could exert itself.<sup>26</sup>

In both earlier and later periods the format was roughly the same. The wronged party would have a *cartello*—a signed, notarized, and often published challenge—drawn up, stating what the accused had done. The recipient could then agree to meet them on the field of battle, or else draw up a reply of their own, typically accusing the plaintiff of lying—in which case, the plaintiff became the defendant. This maneuvering was often strategic, since the challenged party had the choice of weapons.

The duel itself was a ritualized combat, conducted before witnesses in a closed field granted by a ruler, and in a predetermined period of time—the contest would be ended by sunset. If one party touched their back to the palisade surrounding the field, their case was lost. The right of the first attack went to the accuser, which is why so much of early modern fencing literature concerns “agent” and “patient” swordsmen. Other stipulations, such as a prohibition against grappling or striking the opponent’s horse or (in earlier periods) a

25 Cavina, *Il duello*, pp. 90–91.

26 For more on royal sponsorship of deeds of arms in the context of the growth of centralized power during the Hundred Years’ War, see Muhlberger, *Deeds of Arms*.

specified number of passes, might also apply. At first, the expectation was that such duels would use normal military equipment, and even be fought on horseback, but by the close of the fifteenth century, Castiglione mocks those who “am themselves for cannonades.”<sup>27</sup> Conversely, his contemporary in Urbino, the Spanish master-at-arms Pietro (Pedro) Monte, deplored the “duel fought in shirtsleeves (*en camisa*)” on the grounds it did not conform to military usage.<sup>28</sup> Fashion, however, did not heed Monte’s complaints, and, though some challenged duelists called for armor or even bizarre equipment such as swords that would shatter if employed improperly, it was considered the best display of *virtù* to use the sidearms in common use—the sword alone or accompanied by a dagger—on foot and without defensive armament.

For all of this, the duel quickly passed out of the reach of rulers, even as fencing books continued to be dedicated to noble patrons. In 1549, the Council of Trent renewed the ecclesiastical prohibition against dueling, and in 1563, it specifically called upon rulers to prohibit the practice (The La Chataigneraie-Jarnac debacle had already taken place in Paris in 1547). The legal recognition of the duel of honor thus ended. However, the legalistic elements, such as the *cartelli* and treatises on how to conduct such affairs honorably, remained in place until the First World War.

We must not invest too much in the image of the Italian bravo eager to avenge any *punctilio* with blood. In fact, there is a certain irony that at the moment when Italianate fencing began to become fashionable in Europe, interpersonal violence was actually on the decline. Donald Weinstein has claimed that duels were rare in Italy, especially after the seventeenth century, and that *cartelli* often came to naught.<sup>29</sup> The record on rates of interpersonal violence in premodern Europe is spotty at best, but Pieter Spirenborg, in his synthesis *A History of Murder*, has redacted various studies and highlighted some trends.<sup>30</sup> Foremost amongst these is that violence seems to have been most common in urban areas and in times of economic stress. Studies of murder rates collated by Spirenborg from various studies range from 9–25 per 100,000 inhabitants in thirteenth-century Kent, to a high of 110 in pre-Black Death 1340s Oxford and a similar amount in late fourteenth century

27 Baldassare Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, ed. Giulio Carnazzi, p. 76.

28 Anglo, “The Man who Taught Leonardo Darts,” p. 266.

29 Weinstein, “Fighting or flyting: Verbal duelling in mid-sixteenth-century Italy.” On martial performance in general, see the essays in Del Negro and Ortalli (eds.), *Il gioco e la guerra nel secondo millennio*.

30 Spirenborg, *A History of Murder: Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present*.

Florence, to 47 for mid-fifteenth century Amsterdam and 38 in 1470s and '80s Stockholm.<sup>31</sup> The early modern era finds a less sanguineous situation, 5 per 100,000 in late sixteenth-century Kent, 23 for Amsterdam between 1560 and 1590, between 20 and 36 in Stockholm from 1545–1625. However, some cities were safer than others. As anyone who has read Cellini's memoirs is no doubt aware, violence was endemic in Renaissance Rome (Camillo Agrippa's adopted home), with a high of 47.3 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in Rome from 1560–1585.<sup>32</sup> Despite numerous decrees against the carrying of weapons, Romans commonly went about armed, with swords being the most popular weapons. Blastenbrei, in his study of Roman barber-surgeons' mandatory reports on injuries caused by assault, relates that the seasonal occurrence of violence in late sixteenth-century Rome strongly corresponded to both how effectively a particular pope could impose peace on the population and with the season—violence was higher both in papal interregnums and in times of want.<sup>33</sup>

However, overall, we can say that, even as the level of state violence increased, civil society became a safer place in early modern Europe. The reason why was similar to that for the rise of the duel: a decline in violence was correlated with both the increased reach of justice and the internalization of codes of conduct. Similarly, the fashionableness of the rapier was associated with the growth of the state, or more, accurately, the culture of the court. Even the duel, which at its worst was socially sanctioned murder, actually represented a decline in violence. Better to have one or two or (as in the *duel des mignons*) four dead, than a private war between powerful families or magnates.<sup>34</sup> We must therefore see fencing as a distinct phenomenon from actual violence.

31 Ibid., pp. 15–16, 70–71.

32 Ibid., pp. 70–71; on Rome, see Blastenbrei, "Violence, arms and criminal justice", pp. 71–73.

33 Ibid., p. 77.

34 As with most Italian history, studies tend to be highly regional. For an excellent (if now somewhat dated) review article on violence, see Smail, "Factions and Vengeance in Renaissance Italy: A Review Article." More recent works include Angelozzi, "Il duello dopo il duello: il caso Bolognese"; Angelozzi and Casanova, *La nobiltà disciplinata*; Cohn and Ricciardelli (eds.), *The Culture of Violence in Renaissance Italy: Proceedings of the International Conference*; Thomas V. Cohen and Elizabeth S. Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome: Trials before the Papal Magistrates* and his wonderfully entertaining microhistory *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy*; Dean and Lowe (eds.), *Crime, Society, and the Law in Renaissance*; and Weinstein, *The Captain's Concubine: Love, Honor, and Violence in Renaissance Tuscany*. For a pan-European and cross-chronological perspective, see Muchembled, *A History of Violence: From the End of the Middle Ages to the Present*, especially chapters 4–7. For the situation in France, see Billacois, *Le Duel dans la société française des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles: Essai de psycho-sociologie historique*.



However, even if death by the sword was becoming more uncommon, fencing remained an important performance. The wearing of swords was still a symbol of social class, and fencing was part of an elite education. In the age of courts and courtliness, Italian (and afterwards, French) fencing masters came to be the arbiters of taste. Italian masters taught a skill that was valuable to those who wished to fit into the *habitus* of this new world, and printers and masters alike recognized that fencing-books could be a profitable venture. (This is why the German written fencing tradition is by and large a manuscript tradition—it was an orally transmitted culture and a martial method that was not as fashionable in the age of print.) The sanguineous illustrations therein must not be taken literally; they served not only to educate the reader, but, as with the statistically rare self-defense and home-invasion scenarios so often cited by American firearms-rights advocates, also titillate him with the spectacle of idealized combats—a sort of martial pornography.<sup>35</sup>

### 3 Terms of Art

Though the following discussion is intended for the non-specialist, fencing literature, like all bodies of technical knowledge, has its own vocabulary intended to explain in a few words what would ordinarily take many. Therefore, before proceeding, it is necessary to explain a few terms of art necessary to the discussion. Rather than explaining the various disparate terminologies used by master of the medieval and early modern periods—which all explain the same phenomena in slightly different terms, all similarly derived from Aristotle—I will use the unified language of modern fencing, which, besides being descended from the early modern Italian terms, explains the same physical realities in a convenient shorthand.<sup>36</sup>

*Tempo* is the way in which the duration of fencing actions are compared. One discrete action of the body or weapon, whether circular or rectilinear, is one tempo. Obviously, one tempo may be shorter or longer than another—for instance, making a large, slow circle with the point will be a larger tempo than a small, fast semicircle. The term is, of course, derived from the Aristotelian

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35 For instance, the rapier through the eye in Capoferro Plate 7 or the transfixing fencer in Fabris Plate 178.

36 A full account of the technical development of the Italian school (albeit one much geared towards the bias implied by its subtitle) may be gleaned from Gaugler's *History of Fencing*.

dictum of time being the “number of the motion with respect to the before and the after” in his *Physics*.<sup>37</sup>

An *attack* is the initial offensive movement made by one or the other of the fencers, and is defined by the extension of the weapon towards the adversary. An attack made in one movement is a *simple attack*. A simple attack may be direct—in a straight line—or indirect—that is, moving around the adversary’s weapon (termed a *cavazione* in the literature).<sup>38</sup> The attack may be preceded by one or several *preparatory* actions. Chief amongst these in post-Agrippa, thrust-oriented fencing are the *stringere* in early modern works or *legamento* (engagement) in modern works, which place one’s own blade in such a manner that the adversary is simultaneously threatened and obliged to move his own blade, thus creating a tempo in which he may be hit. As a preparatory action, one can also make one or more *feints*, drawing a parry or parries, followed by the attack itself. This is termed a *compound attack* and is perforce made in two or more movements, and thus two or more tempi.

A *parry* (*parata*) is the act of defending oneself by diverting the opposing steel with one’s own weapon or weapons. A *riposte* (*riposta*) is the defender’s offensive action following their parry. A response by parry and riposte is thus two tempi. A *counterattack* (known as *controtempo* or *contratempo* in early modern fencing literature)<sup>39</sup> is to respond to an attack with an offensive action of one’s own—hopefully in such a manner that either the adversary’s steel is simultaneously diverted, or by moving so that his attack misses entirely. Finally, *measure* is the relative distance between the two opponents. These terms are the sum total of the fencing knowledge the reader will require to follow the discussion.

#### 4 The Medieval Tradition

The earliest supposed fencing literature in Italy is a tradition of a manuscript supposedly written by a “del Serpente” and dating to the last decade of the thirteenth century. The most detailed reference to this is by Karl E. Lochner

37 *Physics* IV.11, 220a24.

38 This is not universal; Giganti (q.v.), for instance, considers the *cavazione* as two tempi. We may see the early modern *cavazione* contextually as not necessarily an attack, but any circular action.

39 Note that in modern fencing terminology, countertime is an action against a counterattack.

in his 1953 *Die Entwicklungsphasen der europäischen Fechtkunst*.<sup>40</sup> Ada Bruhn-Hoffmeyer, in her 1979 essay “From Medieval Sword to Renaissance Rapier,” likewise makes reference to a del Serpente writing a book in 1295.<sup>41</sup> David Nicolle, in the text of *French Medieval Armies 1000–1300* (1991), part of the popular-audience Osprey series on military history, claims that this was written before 1280, and that it showed the Italian habit of using a lighter weapon and hooking one finger over the quillon—clearly an influence from Bruhn-Hoffmeyer’s racialist ideas of martial practice being cognate with ethnic identity.<sup>42</sup> The ur-source of the del Serpente citation is the Italian fencing master Blengini di Torricella’s 1907 “Handbook of Fencing with the Foil,” who claimed that “François” (Francesco) Novati and [Paolo] Gaffuri, Director of the Istituto Grafico in Bergamo, published in 1904 a description of the career of brothers Guillaume, Jacques, Thomas and Phillipe del Serpente, who supposedly taught fighting on horseback and on foot with sword, dagger, and lance in Milan in 1292 and then in Paris from 1293 to 1296, later moving to Iberia. Guillaume del Serpente supposedly wrote a book in 1295 whose title Blengini reported as “Fencing Rules, Rules concerning ways to attack and defend oneself with white arms.”<sup>43</sup> However, no such article, chapter, or book by Novati is known, and nothing in Cochin’s complete bibliography of Novati’s work suggests a candidate.<sup>44</sup> Sydney Anglo has suggested the misapprehension may come from the mention of Phelippe, a fencing master living on the “rue de la Serpente” in Paris in the 1292 tax-roll of Phillip IV,<sup>45</sup> Following Anglo, we must

40 Lochner, *Die Entwicklungsphasen der europäischen Fechtkunst*, p. 14: “Es hat sicherlich bereits früher Handschriften gegeben, die sich mit dem Probleme der Blankwaffenführung befaßten, wie beispielsweise jene Dal Serpentes aus dem Jahre 1295, doch sind wir nicht im Stande, aus der Existenz solcher Versuche auf irgend ein tatsächliches System, eine wenn auch noch so dürftige Volkstümlichkeit wie irgend einen Zusammenhang mit bleibenden Erkenntnissen oder Fortschritten zu schließen, Zu dauerhaften Fortschritten auf diesem engeren Gebiete waren ja auch noch die primitivsten Voraussetzungen nicht gegeben und der Mangel einer verständnisvollen wie begabtesten Neuerungsbestrebungen zum Scheitern verurteilen.”

41 Bruhn Hoffmeyer, “From Medieval Sword to Renaissance Rapier: The Evolution of Straight Bladed Thrusting Weapons,” pp. 52–79.

42 Nicolle, *French Medieval Armies 1000–1300*, p. 40.

43 *Fagterejler, Regler angaaende Maadet at angribe og forsvare sig med blanke Vaaben*. Quoted in Torricella, *Haandbog i Fægtning med Floret, Kaarde, Sabel, Forsvar med Sabel mod Bajonet og Sabelhugning tilhest, Med forklarende Tegninger og en Oversigt over Fægtekunstens Historie og Udvikling*, p. 28. The book was also published in German in 1909, though Blengini was himself Italian.

44 Cochin, *Bibliografia degli scritti di Francesco Novati, 1878–1908*.

45 Anglo, *Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 322 n. 64.

take this tradition as spurious, perhaps a conflation of the French Phelippe and Novati's edition of the Pisani-Dossi manuscript of *Fiore dei Liberi*, which was published in 1902 by the Istituto Grafico.

Thus, pride of place for writing the first Italian fencing treatise to survive must go to the Friulian master *Fiore dei Liberi*, who taught a versatile art that included wrestling, self-defense against the dagger, sword, polearms, and fighting in armor on foot and on horseback with various weapons. *Fiore's* work comes down to us in four contemporary manuscripts—Morgan Library MS M.383, Getty MS Ludwig xv 13, the copy privately held by the Pisani-Dossi family, and one posthumous Latin translation, Bibliothèque National de France MS Latin 11269.<sup>46</sup> Two other *Fiore* manuscripts attested in the Estense library from 1436 to 1508, MS LXXXIV and MS CX, are currently unknown and presumed lost.<sup>47</sup> *Fiore* has been a major fixture in Italian fencing scholarship, beginning with Novati's 1902 edition of the Pisani-Dossi manuscript and Luigi Zanutto's 1907 *Fiore dei Liberi da Premariacco e i ludi e le festi marziali in Friuli nel Medio-evo*.<sup>48</sup> There have also been several recent editions and translations.<sup>49</sup>

Most of our information on *Fiore* comes from his own writings. Judging from the length of time he claims to have studying arms in the introductions to his manuscripts, and the average age at which such study would have begun, *Fiore* was probably born c. 1350; he died sometime between 1409 and the 1420s. His father was a knight named Benedetto, lord of the town of Premariacco, which

46 On my discovery of this in the BnF, see my article, "Notes on Bibliothèque Nationale MS Lat, 11269, Florius de Arte Lutandi." There is also the poet and librettist Apostolo Zeno's copy of the introduction to Ms xv 13 in San Daniele del Friuli, Biblioteca Guarneriana Ms xxiv ff. 83–84.

47 Novati, *Flos duellatorum*, pp. 29–30.

48 Novati, *Flos duellatorum*; Zanutto, *Fiore dei Liberi da Premariacco e i ludi e le festi marziali in Friuli nel Medio-evo*.

49 Malipiero has published the Getty manuscript as *Il Fior di battaglia di Fiore dei Liberi da Cividale: Il Codice Ludwig xv 13 del J. Paul Getty Museum*, while an edition of all three Italian manuscripts was published by Rubboli and Cesari as *Flos Duellatorum: Manuale di Arte del Combattimento del xv secolo*. Leoni has also published a translation of the Getty as *Fior di Battaglia*. The Pisani-Dossi was republished by Rapisardi as *Flos Duellatorum in armis, sine armis, equester et pedester*. Synthetic treatments by recreationists include Galvani, Girlanda, and Enrico's *Flos Duellatorum 1409–2002: La pietra miliare della scuola marziale Italiana* (Rome, Libri del Circolo, 2002). See also my *Knightly Art of Battle* (Los Angeles, Getty Publications, 2011) and Martinez, "La Fleur des guerriers: métier des armes et art martial chez Fiore dei Liberi" in Jaquet (ed.), *L'art chevaleresque*, pp. 63–80. Francesco Lodà and I both have forthcoming translations of the Florius into our respective native tongues.

is located in the duchy of Friuli in the diocese of the Patriarch of Aquileia. The derivation of his surname is unknown, but may have originated with a Cristallo dei Liberi of Premariacco, who was elevated in rank by the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V in the twelfth century.<sup>50</sup> Fiore enjoyed popularity as a master of arms to the nobility, particularly amongst those of Visconti allegiance, and trained Galeazzo di Mantua for his combat with the French knight Boucicault in 1395.<sup>51</sup>

Since the Getty and Pisani-Dossi manuscripts are dedicated Niccolò III d'Este, Marquis of Ferrara and a noted literary patron, historians have tended to place Fiore as Niccolò's master-at-arms. However, there is no evidence of Fiore as actually having received payment for any services.<sup>52</sup> As salaries of household members were not written down in the account books, Fiore was either very close to the Marquis, or, more likely, his manuscripts were diplomatic presents commissioned by the Visconti.<sup>53</sup> However, the posthumous MS 11269 is probably a Ferrarese production that incorporates very d'Este references to the Matter of France to the text, even as it reified Fiore's gruff soldierly voice into educated Latin verses. (Like Fiore's, the vast majority of later works would also be dedicated to a ruler—a topic that could fill pages by itself.)

The ambiguity with which Fiore describes his art underscores its manuscript context. Though he does mention some footwork movements (mainly turns and steps) and the use of the various postures and guards, he does not give detailed instructions, and how to perform these techniques must be deduced from context. Even in the Getty, the most verbose of the four manuscripts, Fiore does not describe how to cut or parry, though he does name the cuts and show some techniques involving parrying; nor does he give any explanation of tactics, timing, or any of the other things that are in a complete fencing

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50 Novati, *Flos duellatorum*, pp. 15–16.

51 The last two students Fiore mentions in his autobiographies in the Getty and Morgan manuscripts, Giovannino da Baio and Azzo da Castelbarco, were either Milanese or fought combats sanctioned and presided over by Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan and also a noted patron of learning. Since Gian Galeazzo was not named duke until 1395, we can tentatively date Fiore's tutoring Giovannino and Azzo to after this date. Fiore also mentions training Giovannino da Baggio for a combat in Pavia in 1399, which at that time was a Milanese possession and home to the Visconti library. For more information, see my article, "Notes on Bibliothèque Nationale MS Lat, 11269."

52 Numerous English-language works on Estense Ferrara exist, of which the most notable are Dean, *Land and Power in Late Medieval Ferrara* and Gundersheimer, *Ferrara: The Style of a Renaissance Depotism*. Notable scholars associated with the mid-fifteenth century Estense court included Giovanni di Michele Savonarola and Guarino Veronese.

53 Trevor Dean, private correspondence with Greg Mele.

system. His techniques begin with the swords already crossed at long or short measure, but he does not tell us how to arrive there safely, or which figure was the initial attacker and which the defender. Techniques are cross-referenced back and forth in a manner that requires several readings to fully appreciate, with the same movements reoccurring in dagger, sword, and pole weapons. (See figures 11.1–3.)

This organization is fitting with the pedagogy of Fiore's time. Since the audience of a manuscript is by nature more limited than that of a printed book, we must see these works more as *aide-mémoires* than as instructional texts; the reader would have already have received physical instruction in the pattern of movement that was to be replicated. This instruction would presumably be given by Fiore himself or by one of his successors. Fiore, realizing the transitory nature of this sort of knowledge, explicitly says in his prologues that he wishes to be remembered for his art, and so (despite having taught in secrecy in his lifetime), he is setting down his knowledge in a book.<sup>54</sup>

Other works derived from the Fiore manuscript tradition exist, including several German manuscripts and Filippo Vadi's *De Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi*.<sup>55</sup> The manuscripts in the so-called *Blume des Kampfs* group—the anonymous, textless Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 5278 (after 1428), Ludwig VI von Eyb's *Kriegsbuch* (c. 1500),<sup>56</sup> and Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 10799 (composed 1623)—all contain considerable stylistic and technical overlap with Fiore's manuscripts. The first two of these manuscripts also contain Konrad Kyeser's treatise on siege warfare *Bellifortis* (composed c. 1405). There are several possibilities here. First, Fiore, who mentions studying with a master "Johannes Suveno" ("the Swabian"), student of "Nicholai de Toblem," may have drawn on German models; in other words Fiore's own work may represent a now-lost transalpine literary and martial tradition. Second, one of Fiore's books may have served as a template for Cod. 5278, which seems to be the ur-text in the *Blume des Kampfs* tradition. Third, these may represent derivative works stemming from one of Fiore's

54 Morgan MS M.383 folio 2r: *Considerando io preditto che in questa arte pochi al mondo sen trovano magistri e vogliando che de mi sia fatta memoria in questa arte io farò uno libro . . .*; Getty MS Ludwig xv 13 folio 1v: *Considerando io predetto fiore che in quest'arte pochi al mondo sen trovano magistri e vogliando che di mi sia fatta memoria in ella io farò un libro in tuta l'arte e de tutte chose . . .*

55 Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma Ms 1342, Filippo Vadi, *Liber de Arte gladiatoria dimicandi*; translated by Porzio and Mele as *Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi: 15th Century Swordsmanship of Master Fillipo Vadi*.

56 Nürnberg, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg Ms B.26.



FIGURE 11.1 Dagger “masters” from Getty MS Ludwig XV 13 fol. 10r. Each has a mnemonic device to show the sequence of actions when defending oneself from a dagger attack: Take away the dagger, break the arm, put them in a joint lock (the key), and cast them down. Also notice that the ages of the masters increases as one progresses in the sequence of actions.



FIGURE 11.2 The “master of the seven swords” from Getty folio 32r. Besides naming the directions of sword cuts, the diagram shows the four qualities a good fencer should possessed personified as animals: A lynx with dividers for vision and judgment; a tiger with an arrow for speed; a lion with a heart for courage; and an elephant with a tower on its back for strength.



students. In any case, the *Blume des Kampfs* manuscripts show that martial teaching on the Italian peninsula was not by any means a hermetically closed vessel.

Vadi, who identifies himself as Pisan, might be the same Filippo Vadi who served Leonello d'Este as governor of Reggio and, later, as counselor to Borso d'Este—which would have given him ample opportunity to become familiar with Fiore's manuscripts in the Estense library. However, though *De Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi* was clearly modeled on one of the manuscripts of Fiore dei Liberi, and the organization of its longsword, poleax, armored fighting, staff weapons, dagger-defense, and wrestling are similar to BnF MS Latin 11269, it is not solely a Ferrarese creation—it was originally owned by Duke Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, to whom it is dedicated, and thus reflects the milieu of the influential court of Urbino. Accordingly, it develops its subject matter in new directions. Further, though the structure by which Vadi composed his book may borrow from Fiore's organizational schema, his fencing is not the same: He uses a longer sword, and changes some guards, as well much of the footwork. Like their modern counterparts, medieval and early modern masters were always aware that swordsmanship is not a static thing or that the methods of an idealized past might not be the most suited to today, but rather that fencing changed in response to a dynamic social, cultural, and material environment.

Quite aptly for the milieu of Urbino, which hosted luminaries such as Francesco di Giorgio Martini and Luca Pacioli, Vadi is notable for including a verse introduction presenting an overall theorization of fencing that incorporates a number of scientific ideas. For instance, Vadi presents the argument that fencing, like music, is a science, since the sword is subject to Euclidian geometry:

Geometry divides and separates  
 with infinite numbers and measures  
 that fill pages with knowledge.  
 The sword is under its purview  
 since it is useful to measure blows and steps  
 in order to make the science more secure,  
 Fencing is born from geometry  
 [...]
 Music adorns this subject  
 song and sound together in art  
 to make it more perfect by science,  
 Geometry and music together

combine their scientific virtue in the sword  
to adorn the great light of Mars.<sup>57</sup>

The idea of the relationship between fencing and geometry is not unique to Vadi: In a 1443 petition to the of Bologna, Filippo di Bartolomeo Dardi (died c. 1464) says that geometry “matches the art of fencing because in this there is nothing other than just measure, as I can demonstrate by lecture;” likewise, he says that he merited a post in astronomy because “astronomy . . . is by its nature geometrical.”<sup>58</sup>

As with space, time. Building on the idea of astronomy as number in space and time, and a sole reference in the Paris manuscript of *The Flower of Battle*,<sup>59</sup> Vadi is the first writer to elaborate on ideas of *tempo*—an expression of timing that is quite different from the German ideas of *vor* and *nach*, though similarly rooted in Aristotelian physics. In keeping with the Scholastic philosophy on time laid down by Jean Buridan, Nicholas Oresme, and other thinkers in their commentaries on the *Physics*, time—*tempo*—can only be measured relatively, against other quantities, such as the movements of one’s adversary; thus, in his *segno*, or mnemonic diagram illustrating the qualities a swordsman must possess, Vadi places a pair of dividers over the head of his ideal fencer: “I am a sextant that can divide | O Fencer, heed my reasoning | since you will similarly measure time.”<sup>60</sup> (The master-at-arms whom Castiglione documented as serving in Urbino, Pietro Monte (q.v.), was also notable for his interest in natural philosophy.)<sup>61</sup> This proportional division of time is evident in Vadi’s idea of *mezzo tempo*, a counterattack that interrupts the adversary’s action with a smaller, quicker movement. Similar conceptions of time—and the device of the dividers—reoccur in fencing books throughout our period. As in so much

57 Ms 1342, fol. 4r, trans. Mele and Porzio pp. 42–43: *La geometria che divide e parte / Per infiniti numeri emisure / Che impie di scientia le sue carte, / La spada e sotto posta a le sue cure / Convien che si mesuri i colpi e i passi / Acio che la scientia tasecure / Da geometria lo scrimir se nasce / . . . / La musica ladorna esa sugetto, / Chel canto elsono senframette in larte, / Per farlo di scientia piu perfecto / La geometria e musica comparte / Le loro virtu scientifiche in la spada / Per adornare el gran lume de Marte*

58 *la quale e conforma al arte del scrimere perche in quella non e altro che misura propria la quale posso per lectura dimostrare. . . . de quella si fo per meritarme dele fatiche passate in astrologia, la quale / e di natura geumetrale.* Archivio di Stato, Bologna, Comune, Governo, busta 318, Riformagioni e provvigioni, Serie miscellanea, busta 5. Thanks to Trevor Dean.

59 BnF MS 11269 f14v.

60 Ms 1324, fol. 15r, trans. Mele and Porzio pp. 88–89: *Io sono un sexto che fo partimenti / O scritore ascolta mia ragione / Cusi misura el tempo simelmente*

61 Anglo, “The Man Who Taught Leonardo Darts.”

else, by unifying the intellectual and the martial, the Court of Urbino pointed the way forwards in fashion.

Besides the Fiore/Vadi tradition, two other manuscripts must be included in any accounting of fifteenth-century Italian fencing works. The first is an anonymous, undated, French work on poleax fighting known as *Le Jeu de la Hache*, which may be a record of the teachings of a Milanese master named Ambrose.<sup>62</sup> In 1440, Phillip the Good of Burgundy paid 12 *livres* to Ambrose, who had been his master of sword and axe for at least six years (calculating from a stated pay rate of 40 *deniers* per month).<sup>63</sup> This would make sense, as there was apparently a literary-martial tradition in northern Italy, whereas we have no other surviving French documents and, to judge from the fine presentation of the manuscript, *Le Jeu* was a *de luxe* copy prepared for a wealthy patron to commemorate his master's tuition.<sup>64</sup>

The final fifteenth-century Italian manuscript on fencing is a short text contained on folio 105r of the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room MS 1020, known by its incipit "Hec Sunt Guardiae in Dimicatione Videlicet." This work gives a series of wards and counter-wards for master and student similar to those in Royal Armouries MS I.33—though whether the weapon is sword and buckler, or sword alone, is impossible to tell from context.<sup>65</sup> Judging by the calendar on folio 6r of the manuscript, this work dates to c. 1424. This is the only fencing work from Italy in *hausbuch* form,<sup>66</sup> the only solely in Latin, and the only to possibly concern itself with sword and buckler, a weapons form that, to judge from depictions in art, was common in medieval Italy as in the rest of Europe. The book's other pages contain a T-O map, a calendar, notabilia from the Bible arranged according to occasion, psalms, lists of unlucky "Egyptian days," and forms of addressing the nobility. The book was probably the property of a notary or scribe from Florence, as there are mentions of the Albizzi family and a Florentine church canon.<sup>67</sup>

62 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France Ms français 1996, translated by Anglo in his article "*Le jeu de la hache*."

63 *Archives historiques et littéraires du Nord de la France et du Midi de la Belgique* Vol. 3, p. 186.

64 See also Olivier Dupuis' contribution in this volume.

65 Toronto, University of Toronto Ms 1020. On Leeds, Ms I.33, see Forgeng, ed. and trans., *The Medieval Art of Swordsmanship: A Facsimile and Translation of Europe's Oldest Personal Combat Treatise*.

66 A *hausbuch*, or commonplace book, is a personal notebook, as opposed to a presentation manuscript.

67 Les Enluminures (corporate author), [http://www.textmanuscripts.com/manuscript\\_description.php?id=2999&%20ocat=p2&](http://www.textmanuscripts.com/manuscript_description.php?id=2999&%20ocat=p2&), accessed March 21, 2014.

What all these medieval works have in common is their pedagogical model—the medieval idea of education as copying patterns. Much as artists' apprentices copied the master's works or aspiring literati copied the letters of Cicero, fencing students followed forms that, like *kata* in Japanese martial arts, were intended to work the correct techniques and tactical responses into their muscle memory. The Paduan humanist Gasparino Barzizza (1360–1431) even compared learning to write literature to learning to paint from following a master's model.<sup>68</sup> The written record reflects this, Fiore's works give a sequence of plays, or actions, to serve as exemplars; Vadi begins to strive for a theory of fencing with his verses, but ultimately falls back on the same teaching system that Fiore employed. In Fiore's own manuscripts, the system had been taken even further, a complex hierarchy of figures wearing crowns, garters, and both crowns and garters denotes techniques, counter-techniques, and counters to the counters. Similarly, *Le Jeu de la Hache* gives various paradigmatic "plays," or actions. "Hec Sunt Guardiae in Dimicatione Videlicet" simply gives formulaic sets opposing postures—if the master is in the guard of the long tail (*cauda lunga*), the student is in the cross (*cruce*), much as is illustrated at the beginning of Fiore and Vadi's sections introducing the guards used in the various weapons they teach. The teacher's voice, as it comes across in the text, does not justify or equivocate. There is no need to justify the model, which speaks with the authority of tradition—only to emulate it.

## 5 The First Half of the Sixteenth Century: A Transitional Period

If the medieval Italian tradition is somewhat scanty, this is made up for by the richness of incunabula and post-incunabula. The first of these is Pietro Monte's *De Dignoscendis Hominibus*, printed in Milan in 1492 by Antonio Zaroto Parmenion. This is not strictly a fencing treatise, but it is first surviving printed work dealing with personal combat and the first to be printed in Italy.<sup>69</sup> *De Dignoscendis* is rather something of a miscellany; it talks about psychology, humoral theory, and religious matters, as well as exercise (especially wrestling) and nutrition. A Spanish copy is Escorial MS a.IV.23; the section on wrestling also exists in Italian translation as Codex Estense T.VII.25 (again, as with the

68 *Gasparini Barzizii Bergomatis et Guiniforti Filii Opera*, ed. J. Furiettus, Vol. 1, p. 180. See Baxandall, "Guarino, Pisanello, and Manuel Chrysoloras."

69 The first printed books were by the Spanish masters Jaime Pons (1474) and Pedro de la Torre (1474), mentioned by Pacheco de Narvaez in his *Nueva ciencia y filosofia de la destreza de las armas*. No surviving examples are known.

Fiore-Vadi connection, pointing to some exchange of martial-arts writing between the courts of Ferrara and Urbino).<sup>70</sup> Monte's last works are more explicitly martial. These are *Exercitiorum Atque Artis Militaris Collectanea* and *De Singulari Certamine Sive Dissentione*, both published in Milan in 1509, the year of Monte's death, by Giovanni Angelo Scinzenzler. This first is, as its name implies, a collection of techniques for various weapons, both military and civilian, mounted and on foot; the other is a treatise on the duel.<sup>71</sup>

The richest and most important source of early printed Italian fencing books is the so-called Bolognese school. The authors in this tradition include Antonio Manciolino, who published the now-lost first edition of his *Opera Nova* c. 1523 and a revised version in Venice in 1531;<sup>72</sup> the work of Achille Marozzo (1484–1553), also titled *Opera Nova*, printed in Modena in 1536 (with reprints in Bologna in 1546, Venice in 1550 and 1568, and Verona in 1615);<sup>73</sup> Giovanni dall'Agocchie, who published *Dell'Arte di Scrima Libri Tre* in Venice in 1572; Angelo Viggiani (d. 1552)'s *Lo Schermo*, published posthumously in Venice in 1575 and reprinted in Bologna in 1588; and Mercurio Spetoli's brief *Capitolo di M, Mercvrio Spetoli da Fermo, nel quale si mostra il modo di saper bene schermire, & caualcare*, published in Bologna in 1577. Viggiani also exists as a decorated manuscript, created in 1567, that was presented as a gift to Maximilian II; the other notable manuscript from this tradition is the Anonimo Bolognese, which likely precedes any of the aforementioned works.<sup>74</sup>

70 For a transcription and analysis of Codex Estense T.VII.25, see "Il primo manuale italiano di lotta: testo anonimo del sec. XV con introduzione e note," ed. Carlo Bascetta in *Annali della Facolta di lettere e filosofia*, Università di Macerata, 7 (1974): 403–454.

71 See Anglo, "The man who taught Leonardo darts" and *Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, especially pp. 236–238, as well as Fontaine, "L'athlète et l'homme moyen: le nouveau regard de la Renaissance."

72 Edited by Rubboli and Battistini as *Opera Nova di Antonio Manciolino* and translated by Leoni as *The Complete Renaissance Swordsman: Antonio Manciolino's Opera Nova*.

73 Edited by Giovanni Rapisardi as *Achille Marozzo: Opera Nova dell'Arte delle Armi*.

74 Viggiani's manuscript is Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Codex 10723; the Anonimo MSS are Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Ravenna Ms M345 and M346. I do not include in this list of the Bolognese tradition the 23-year-old Torquato d'Alessandri's *Il Cavaliere Compito*, which is less a fencing book and more a pedagogical dialogue between Braccioforte and his student Achille encompassing all the things a young nobleman embarking on a military career would need to know—similar to the *hausbuch* Nürnberger Cod. Hs. 3227a or the *Blume des Kampfs/Bellifortis* tradition. Only about a tenth of Alessandri's 108 pages (pp. 67–88, and then a last word on pp. 107–108) deals with the actual practice of swordplay. Like Viggiani, Alessandri (p. 67) exhorts his reader to practice with a sharp sword (*spada da filo*) instead of a foil (*spada di marra*). His fencing, especially his use of reverse cuts and the names of his guards, is reminiscent of Viggiani's.

The Bolognese school represented a common pedagogical and tactical model, with a common vocabulary and, one would assume, orthopraxy for guards and various other actions. It is concerned not only with the duel—Marozzo has a treatise on dueling, dall'Agocchie discusses how to train for a duel in thirty days, and Viggiani advises his student to practice with sharp weapons—but also with self-defense and with weapons one might wield in times of civil unrest or defense of the commune, such as polearms, Dall'Agocchie also has a book on jousting. The Anonimo differs from the rest of the Bolognese tradition in not only treating with the sword used alone against another sword or a pole weapon, or in conjunction with a gauntlet or various sorts of shield, as well as with the two-handed sword, but also uniquely in the Bolognese tradition giving instructions for poleaxe in full armor—all of which points to an earlier date of origin.<sup>75</sup> We have evidence of a continuity of teaching in Bologna going back to the fifteenth century: Filippo di Bartolomeo Dardi began to teach fencing about 1413, afterwards became in addition a professor of geometry and astronomy at the University of Bologna, as well as an astrologer for the commune; he, in turn, taught Marozzo's master, Guid'Antonio di Luca (died c. 1514).<sup>76</sup>

The Florentine tradition comes down to us in several manuscripts. The first Francesco di Sandro Altoni's *Monomachia ovvero Arte di Scherma*, which survives in two copies as Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze MS 11.iii.315 and Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati di Siena MS L.v.23.<sup>77</sup> Altoni was possibly fencing master to Cosimo I de'Medici, to whom he dedicated his work. Since he used Cosimo's title as "Duke of Florence," the manuscripts are dated to between 1537–69. There is also the Anonimo Riccardiano,<sup>78</sup> which shows some similarity of techniques from the Bolognese school (for instance, false-edge parries that beat attacks away to the right side). The Riccardiano deals

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What he teaches is mostly practical self-defense with sword and cape, though he speaks of teaching all weapons. On pp. 90–95, he also speaks of self-defense, including against dagger and pistol before concluding with some final philosophies concerning the study of arms.

75 Published by Rubboli and Cesari as *L'Arte della Spada, Trattato di scherma dell'inizio del XVI secolo*.

76 See Novati's notes to *Flos duellatorum*, p. 108, n. 179; Orioli's article in *Il Resto del Carlino*; and Pantanelli, "Scherma e maestri di scherma Bolognesi [sic]," pp. 45–49; Repertorio di tutti i professori antichi, e moderni, della famosa università, e del celebre Istituto delle scienze di Bologna : con in fine Università, pp. 56–57; Archivio di Stato, Bologna, Comune, Governo, busta 318, Riformagioni e provvigioni, Serie miscellanea, busta 5.

77 Altoni, *Monomachia: Trattato dell'arte di scherma*, ed. Battistini, Rubboli, and Venni.

78 Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana Ms Ricc. 2541.

with sword alone, sword used with cape and dagger, pike, and two-handed sword (*spadone*). It also contains excerpts from Francesco Guicciardini's *History of Italy*, which would tend to point towards a Florentine origin. We may also tentatively add British Library Add. MS 23223 to this group; Piermarco Terminiello has noted some similarities with Altoni, pointing to a Tuscan, or at least central Italian, origin.<sup>79</sup> (A fourth author, Marco Docciolini, definitely hailed from Florence, but his printed treatise of 1601 is clearly a rapier work, and thus does not belong to this transitional period.)<sup>80</sup>

The last transitional work needing discussion is the Neapolitan Marcantonio Pagano, who published his *Narratione di Marcantonio Pagano sopra le Tre Giornate della Disciplina del'Arme* in 1553. This, as the title implies, is a dialogue not just on fencing, but on the art of arms in general, taking place in the home of a nobleman. It is not really a fencing treatise in the proper sense, as it is as much literary as technical and more conforms to Monte's early work. The action, as it were, takes place in a series of breathlessly described fencing matches that take place every evening between Mutio and Gerolamo. (Cesare Pagano, a relative of Marcantonio's who described himself as a "Neapolitan knight," wrote a similarly literary work in 1592, which was dedicated to Ferdinand, Archduke of Tuscany, and survives in the National Library of Florence.)<sup>81</sup>

However, despite the use of print, the rhetoric of instruction in the books of this transitional period is not much different from medieval models. Fencing, to Marozzo, Viggiani, and others of this tradition, is taught through forms and mock combats. While the *context* has changed to a civilian form of defense, the *pedagogical model* is still firmly rooted in medieval traditions of pattern-copying. To learn to fence from Achille Marozzo, for instance, was similar to being inducted into a craft-guild or *mestiero*, involving swearing oaths to God, the Virgin, and St. George. After the swearing-in, Marozzo has his students run through a series of guards with mnemonic names, such as the "guard of the long and extended tail," "head guard," "face guard," and "iron door guard of the boar," and then put them together into a series of one- or two-person lessons or *assalti*.<sup>82</sup> His book, which gives only the student's role in these *assalti* and the barest hint of the master's part, is very much written for the teacher who already knows his art.

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79 Piermarco Terminiello, personal correspondence.

80 Docciolini, *Trattato in Materia di Scherma*.

81 Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Magliabecchiana XIX 194.

82 Mondschein, *Fencing: A Renaissance Treatise*, p. xvii.

However, despite its pedagogical conservatism, the fencing of this period shows some important differences from the earlier era. Unlike Fiore and Vadi, the art shown in the fencing books of this period is a purely civilian one, making use of common sidearms—most frequently, the single-handed sword, used alone or in conjunction with auxiliary weapons—and not presuming the use of armor. Like their art, it is versatile: scenarios include both monomachia and defense against impromptu attacks with such weapons as daggers, as well as the use of hafted weapons. Italian fencing writers were beginning to explore the possibilities of the printed text, but had not yet realized its full implications for the transformation of knowledge. Learning was done by following a pattern—which is still true of teaching fencing motor skills today, but unquestioningly copying models was not an approach that appealed to the intellectual milieu of the later sixteenth century. It was Camillo Agrippa who would realize the revolutionary possibilities text brought to the codification of a physical art.

## 6 Camillo Agrippa and the Advent of the Rapier<sup>83</sup>

To be sure, the term “rapier” is an anachronism when applied to Italian fencing: the weapon was always known as the *spada* (or *spada da filo* for a sharp-edged sword; *spada di marra* was used for a practice sword. The more recent terms, *spada da lato*, or “sidesword,” and *striscia*, a “long and narrow” sword, are neologisms that should be avoided, as must the antiquated curatorial tendency to apply the term “rapier” to any weapon with a complex hilt). Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that transformation of both weapons and the method of their employ took place in the mid-sixteenth century.

Alongside this, Agrippa represented a sea change in how fencing was expressed. His reader is not the student known personally to the master and in receipt of his teachings, but a consumer unknown to the author who has purchased this book because of a will to knowledge. Thus, while Agrippa’s system of fence—which was intended for the duel and self-defense as much as for sport—was not much of an innovation over previous masters (Altoni, for instance, also held with the primacy of the point), his method of

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83 For a full discussion of the social context of Agrippa’s writing, please see the introduction to my translation of Camillo Agrippa, *Fencing: A Renaissance Treatise*, ed. and trans. Ken Mondschein.



explaining it was.<sup>84</sup> His voice is not didactic, but argumentative. To Agrippa and his followers, fencing was a science subject to reasoned analysis, or *ragionamento*; the fencer-operator should train himself to perform the right action at the right time based on this analysis (see figures 11.3–5). Further, he deals with the sword alone, or in conjunction with a dagger, cloak, or another swords; hafted weapons and two-handed swords receive only the barest mention.

Whereas earlier masters employed cutting weapons and seemed to expect a certain order of play—attacks and feints followed by parries and ripostes, with the occasional counterattack where the opportunity presented itself—the conclusion Agrippa's analysis inevitably arrived at was the superiority of the thrusting attack on the opponent's preparation and the counterattack by time thrust, both of which made the smallest possible tempo. This was a method optimized for civilian combat out of armor, whereas the earlier systems were able to be deployed in a variety of scenarios, from sport to duels to warfare. In explaining this methodology, Agrippa self-consciously employed fashionable ideas of geometry, perspective, and science, all of which derived from a common belief of the importance of number linking the microcosm and macrocosm. While the idea of "improving" fencing was new—it arguably began with Vadi, who differentiates his play from that of his ancestors—Agrippa applies to it a steadfast confidence in his own reason and the new mentality of the Renaissance. He has made his fencing-book into a literary work that touches on many of the concerns shared by his contemporaries.

This was reflected in the structure of the treatise. Whereas previous authors were working within the paradigm of a medieval memory-book, either speaking in a voice of instruction to a presumed master or else simply listing techniques, Agrippa's is the first *treatise*, speaking directly to the swordsman-operator, basing his arguments on elementary principles and not presupposing prior knowledge of any particular fencing tradition. In the first part, he dismisses the multiplicity of guards used by earlier authors, as well as the practice of holding the weapon chambered over one's shoulder, and explains that four basic guards that keep the point in line are all that are needed. These four positions would become the basis for the guard positions used in fencing to this day. He then gives a geometrical demonstration of the superiority of the lunge. Following this, Agrippa then goes on to give a number of positions and actions derived from his first four guards, many of which are

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84 My characterization of the rapier as a sporting implement might surprise some readers, but fencing was a courtly art form, previous and contemporary writers dealt with agonistic combat, and foils for thrust-oriented fencing were being made within two decades of Agrippa's writing. See *Fencing: A Renaissance Treatise* p. xxv n. 24.

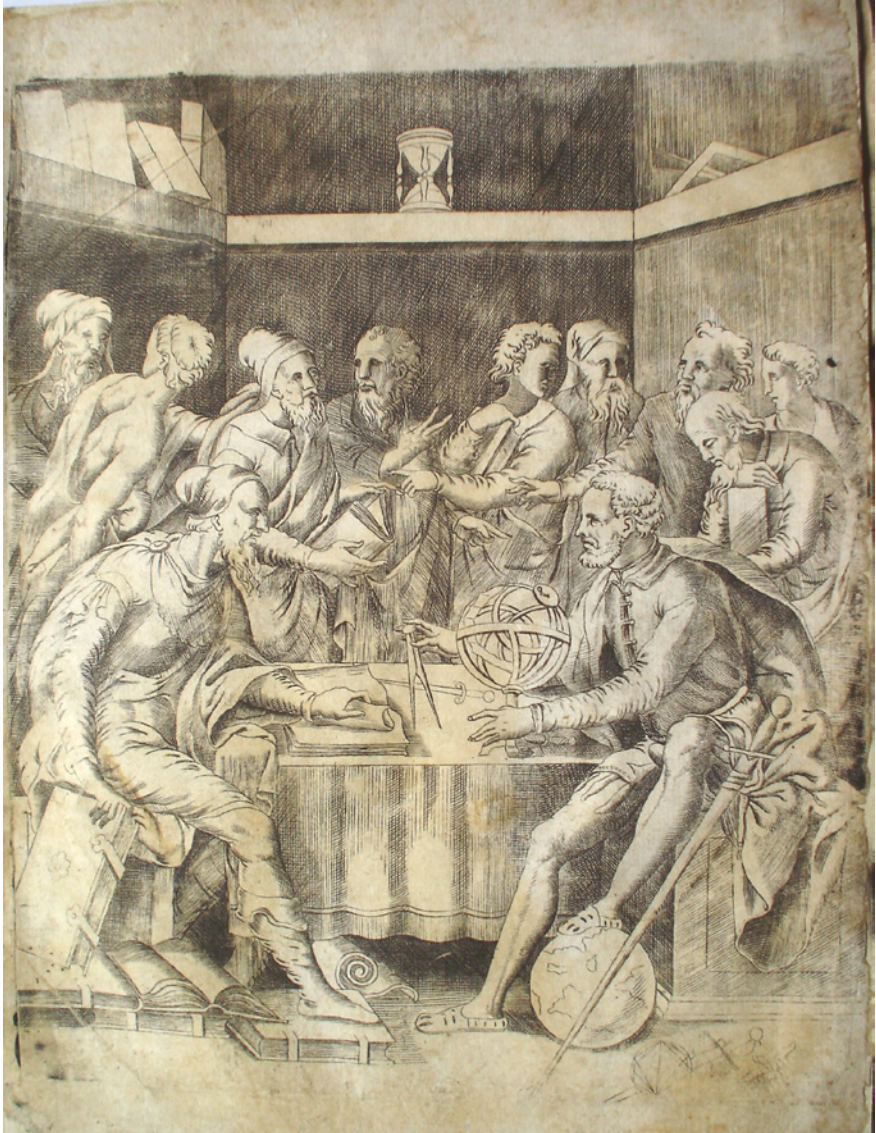


FIGURE 11.3 *Agrippa disputing with the philosophers. The author holds a dividers and an armillary sphere, suggesting his mastery of both practical and theoretical knowledge of the natural world. He is dressed fashionably and wears a sword. The globe is under his foot; near it are a geometrical diagram and a sword. The dagger on the table is pointing at the ludicrously dressed philosophers who are able to support their statements only with books. Measuring devices—a divider and square—are placed over Agrippa; dusty tomes over the proponents of traditional knowledge. Between the two is an hourglass representing the measurement of time.*

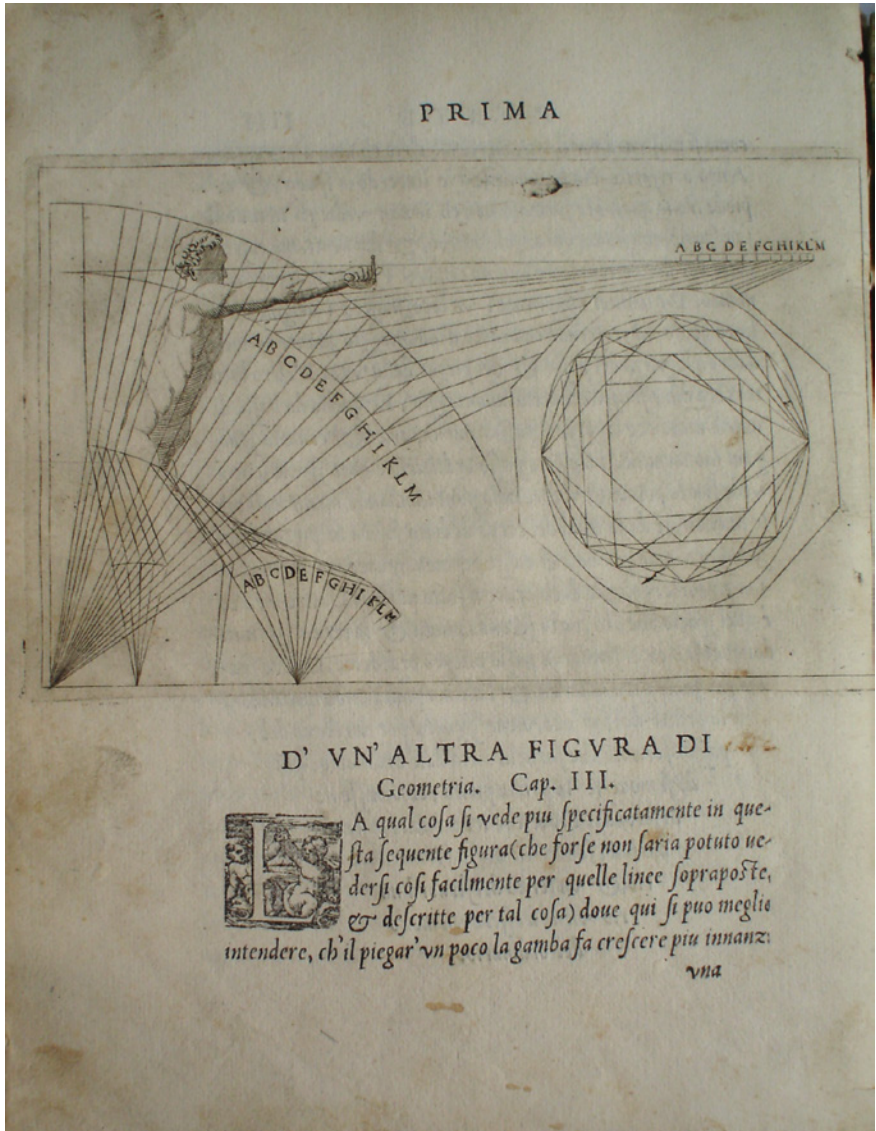


FIGURE 11.4 *Agrippa's geometrical diagram demonstrating the superiority of the lunge. The more the knee is bent, and the straighter the arm is extended, the further the sword's point reaches. Taking the Vitruvian scheme for building a temple according to the dimensions of the human body and turning it into a technology that can be used for any purpose, Agrippa has decomposed the human body into its geometrical possibilities and then used these ideas to show how best to achieve the practical end of skewering one's adversary.*



FIGURE 11.5 *The significance of the geometrical diagram, Agrippa tells us, is that just as a forked stick taken straight from a tree can be used as a compass to draw any number of figures—an action that mirrors the divine power of creation—so, too, can the human body, by its own nature, perform all the actions necessary to fencing. The human body is not only a metric, but a microcosm.*

accompanied by theoretical discussions and diagrams utilizing ideas of optics and art—especially likening the human body, as Vitruvius did, to a sphere. The second part of the book is composed of exempla that show these techniques in a tactical context. Finally, he ends with a dialogue on geometry and astronomy—which, like the entire work, is permeated with hermetic references—in order to demonstrate his mastery over concepts of time and space.

Agrippa's immense influence shows in the works that followed.<sup>85</sup> Alfonso Falloppia's *Nuovo et breve modo di Schermire* of 1584 is just what its title implies, a 35-page précis of fencing on the Agrippine plan, advocating guards that menace the adversary with the point and thrusts made in the tempo of his action. Girolamo Lucino, in his treatise of 1589, explicitly references Agrippa's work several times, even as he politely disagrees with some of his methods.<sup>86</sup> The Bolognese Camillo Palladini, who, like Agrippa, was an emigrant to Rome, in his manuscript *Discorso sopra l'arte della scherma* (after 1553 and before 1609), follows Agrippa's ideas rather closely, gives a geometrical demonstration of how to void the body, and names, amongst others, Agrippa's first four guards.<sup>87</sup> Docciolini takes things to the opposite extreme in his treatise of 1601, greatly simplifying fencing to the point of only using one high guard and one low guard and four counter-guards; his diagrams, reminiscent of the Spanish school, make use only of geometry.<sup>88</sup> (Docciolini, however, teaches a fairly standard form of Italian rapier.) Even amongst those who maintained an older style of fencing, we see an increased use of both reasoned explanation and of geometry; for instance, Giacomo Di Grassi, who published his *Ragione di adoprare sicuramente l'Arme, si da offesa come da difesa* in Venice in 1570, makes use of such diagrams in explaining his system, which places heavy emphasis on rather non-Agrippene withdrawn guards and feints. Similarly, though Giganti does not discuss geometrical conceits, Almorò Lombardo's preface to his work cites Agrippa in his discussion of how fencing is a science.

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85 The Bolognese, notably, remained a distinct and coexisting tradition; the new did not shut out the old overnight!

86 Lucino, *Dialogo di Girolamo Lucino del uso della Spada*.

87 Palladini's manuscript, which had been in the collection of Arsène Vigeant, is currently held by the Vigeant/De Walden Library at the Wallace Collection. D'Alessandri, on p. 107 of his *Cavaliere Compito*, describes Palladino, "called the Bolognese," with two otherwise unattested teachers named Oratio and Cesare Cavalca Bo, as "Roman masters" and implies that he was still practicing by saying that these men "mettono l'armi in mano alli loro scolare" in the present tense.

88 Docciolini, *Tratatto in Materia di Scherma*.

Most notable is Agrippa's fellow northerner, the nobleman and soldier Frederico Ghisliero, whose beautifully executed *Regole di molti cavagliereschi esserciti*, written "for the instruction of the most illustrious lord Antonio Pio Bonello," was printed at Parma by Erasmo Viotto by 1587.<sup>89</sup> Like Euclid—or Agrippa—Ghisliero first gives theory, and then practice, before going on to explain things such as equestrian combat and fighting at the barriers. The first part, "On Theory" (*della theorica*) gives physical basis for the art, including the four humours and the Vitruvian plan of the human body. He also presents his theorems, such as the disposition of the human body in various stances and perspectives. He then gives his "practice"—how to actually fence using his principles. In short, like Agrippa, Ghisliero takes a human activity—fencing—and applies contemporary ideas of science to analysing it deductively; his book is thus not only literary, invoking as many ancient authorities as he possibly can, but also significant to the history of science as an illustrated book that attempted to reduce a physical phenomenon to its theoretical components. Certainly, Ghisliero was interested enough in natural philosophy that, later in life, he hosted Galileo during his period of Copernican crusading.<sup>90</sup>

In keeping with the Europe-wide fashionableness of all things Italian, many surviving treatises were written by masters teaching in other countries; others were translated into other languages. The dukes of Saxony owned several copies of Agrippa,<sup>91</sup> and Di Grassi was translated into English by one "I.G., Gentleman" for Thomas Churchyard and published in London in 1594 by I. Iaggard.<sup>92</sup> Vincent Saviolo's *His Practice* was also printed in that city in the following year by John Wolff; the fact that Saviolo, who, with Bonetti, is one of two Italian masters we know of working in London in the Elizabethan era, had much of the earlier school in his teaching such as an emphasis on cuts and on left-hand parries, as well as in his authorial voice, which gives a didactic lesson plan in dialogue form, did not diminish his popularity. In France, Giovanni Antonio Lovino dedicated his 1580 *Modo di cacciare mano all spada* to

89 Ghisliero was born in the Piedmont c. 1560, died in Turin c. 1622, and wrote many other works on military science, unfortunately destroyed in a fire at the Biblioteca nazionale torinese in 1904. According to Anglo, *Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* p. 68, only two surviving copies of his fencing treatise survive with hand-drawn illustrations; the one I examined is in the Scott Collection in Glasgow.

90 See Antonio Querengo's letter to Alessandro d'Este, 20 January 1616 in Galileo Galilei, *Opere*, ed. Antonio Favaro vol. 12 p. 243.

91 Von Bloh, "Treasure Rapiers in the Armoury of the Electors of Saxony at Dresden," in Capwell (ed.) *The Noble Art of the Sword*, p. 207.

92 The standard English edition is Jackson, *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals*.

Henri II.<sup>93</sup> Likewise, Girolamo Cavalcabo produced *Nobilissimo discorso intorno il schermo* (BnF MS Italien 1527), perhaps in the 1580s; it was later translated into French by “*le deffunct Paternostier*” and published in Rouen in 1597, and later re-translated by the Seigneur de Villamont and published in 1609; there was also a 1612 German translation by a young nobleman named Conrad von Einsiedell.<sup>94</sup> André des Bordes’ 1610 *Discours de la théorie de la pratique et de l'excellence des armes* is also clearly a translation of Palladini. In Denmark, Salvator Fabris, who was renowned in his own lifetime and who published his famous *Lo Schermo, overo Scienza d'Arme* in 1606, served King Christian IV; his work, which was reprinted in German into the eighteenth century, also exists as a presentation manuscript.<sup>95</sup> Viggiani’s presentation manuscript to Maximilian II has already been mentioned; also in Austria, Giovanni Battista Maffani dedicated his 1629 *Compendio e discorso di tutto quello, in che consiste la virtù delle spada con tutt'i modi è termini, che deve havere, tener' e possieder un professore di questa virtù* to his patron Archduke Wilhelm Leopold.<sup>96</sup> Of course far more teachers did not leave writings—Rocco Bonetti has already been mentioned; likewise, Jarnac’s tutor 1547 duel with Châtaigneraie had been an Italian named Caizo; Fabris’ students taught in Germany. The list goes on; suffice it to say that by the turn of the seventeenth century, fencing in the style begun by Agrippa had become the *de rigueur* form amongst the European fashionable classes.

## 7 Performance of Rapier Fencing

What the rapier masters of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—including the luminaries Capoferro, Giganti, and Fabris—all shared in common with Agrippa are, first, the organization of their works; and, second,

93 Paris, Bibliothèque National Ms Italien 959.

94 The 1597 edition is titled *Traicté ou instruction pour tirer des armes*; the 1609 *Le Guidon des Capitaines*; the 1612 *Neues Kunstliches Fechtbuch* (Leipzig, H, Grossii, 1612). See Anglo, *Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* p. 336, n. 86.

95 Fabris’ work was translated and printed in German four times by his students and others; reprinted in Italian twice; one Italian-German parallel text edition in 1676; and translated into English by Leoni as *Art of Dueling: Salvator Fabris’ Rapier Fencing Treatise of 1606*. See trans. Leoni pp. xiii–xiv for a full bibliography. The manuscript *Scientia e Pratica dell'Arme*, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek GKS 1868.4040 is a richly produced early version intended as a presentation copy; *La Scientia della Spada*, Koninklijke Bibliotheek MS KB.73.J.38, is either a manuscript version or an abridged copy.

96 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 10784.

the realization of a fully theorized mode of fencing, with a technical vocabulary readily available to explain their tactical choices. An introductory section first explains principles—tempo, measure, blade opposition, etc., as well as philosophical concerns, such as if fencing is an art or a science.<sup>97</sup> These examples are then applied in illustrated plays, which both delight the reader with its many, varied, and bloody techniques and show the application of Art to Science in an elegant Mannerist gestural language. Even those such as Fabris, who disdained such ideas, were nonetheless beholden to their audience's expectations.<sup>98</sup>

The basic scenario is this: The fencers begin out of measure. One fencer seeks to close the measure, positioning his blade (*stringere* or *guardagnare di spada*) relative to the other's without touching it in such a way that the second fencer is both threatened and unable to perform any action without first freeing his blade with a movement (a *cavazione*) that will create a tempo. The first fencer then uses the tempo of this *cavazione* to strike the second. From here, infinite variations suggest themselves: The second fencer may counterattack; he may attack the first fencer as he steps into distance; we may add different sorts of footwork (and associated elegant and athletic bodily contortions) on attack, defense, or counteroffense, etc.

While all masters following Agrippa would agree as to the superiority of the attack on preparation and the counterattack (as opposed to the parry-riposte, which makes a tempo in which the adversary can renew his attack), and most

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97 Giganti, *Scola, ovvero, teatro, nel qual sono rappresentate diverse maniere, e modi di parare et di ferire di spada sola, e di spada e pugnale*, printed in Venice by Giovanni Antonio and Giacomo de Franceschi in 1606, reprinted at Padua in 1628 and French and German parallel translations at Frankfort in 1619, 1622, and 1644, translated by Leoni as *Venetian Rapier: The School, or Salle*; Capoferro, *Gran Simulacro dell'Arte e dell'Uso della Scherma*, printed by Salvestro Marchetti e Camillo Turi in Siena in 1610 and translated by Leoni as *Ridolfo Capoferro's The Art and Practice of Fencing*; Giganti's second book, aptly titled the *Libro Secondo* and dealing with the use of auxiliary weapons, long considered "lost," was published by Giovanni Fontani in Pisa in 1608; though mentioned by Alberto Marchionni in his 1847 fencing treatise, it was not brought to light until a copy was discovered in the holdings of the Vigeant/De Walden Library at the Wallace and published by Terminiello and Pendragon as *The 'Lost' Second Book of Nicoletto Giganti: A Rapier Treatise Rediscovered and Translated*. Note that in his 1676 German-Italian parallel text edition of Fabris, the former's student Johann Joachim Hynitzsch claimed Giganti plagiarized Fabris in the 1622 German edition and demanded the work's recall, but it is more likely that the publisher, De Zetter, included the extra material on his own volition.

98 Joachim Koppe, in his 1619 *Newer Discurs der Rittermeßigen und Weitberümbten Künst des Fechtens* quotes Salvator Fabris as spurning those who fence with ink and chalk lines.



used Agrippa's system for numbering guards and hand positions (Giganti, notably, did not), different masters still had distinct technical, tactical, and aesthetic variations. Some (such as Giganti) include compound actions such as feints, some (such as Capoferro) warned against them—though both made use of them; all preferred thrusts over cuts, though some (such as Capoferro) discuss cuts more extensively than others; some showed more athletic movement, such as Fabris' low evasions, while others (such as Giganti) kept to what would be more easily accomplished by the average fencer. This also suited different sorts of play: Feints, spectacular dodges, and athletic contortions work much better in a conventional bout, while a serious encounter would likely have more conservative play, and cuts, especially to the hands, are better suited to an encounter in earnest or dealing with an unskilled and brutish opponent than to a polite fencing match. (Interestingly, this debate is mirrored in nineteenth-century French works on the dueling sword, brought about in part by the encounter with the Italian school, which had retained much of the technical approach of the dueling ground.)<sup>99</sup>

TABLE 11.1 *Classifications of Concluding Actions in Single-Rapier Exempla in Treatises by Notable Rapier Masters*

	Agrippa (1553)	Giganti (1606)	Fabris (1606) <sup>a</sup>	Capoferro (1610)
Simple Attack				
• Direct	3	3	7	1
• Indirect	2	2	1	5
Feint Attack	1	4	5	4
Riposte (cut or thrust)	2	1	2	4
Counterattack				
• Time Thrust	6	8	23	10
• Stop-Hit	1	1	—	1
Countertime	2	2	6	8
Feint in Time	1	—	1	
Renewed Attack	—	1	—	2
Total	18	22	45	35

a Book 1 only, which forms the basis for Fabris' art while omitting some of his more spectacular techniques.

99 Gaugler, "Epic Encounters."

In the preceding table, I classified the concluding actions in the single-rapier sequences given as exempla by some early rapier masters according to modern fencing theory. Note that the number of actions exceeds the number of illustrations, as the authors often explain more one possible action for a given illustration. It shows, by sheer weight of numbers, a clear preference for actions executed in a single tempo, such as simple indirect attacks and counterattacks. While these exempla are, of course, idealized depictions, they do give us an idea of the tactical emphases of rapier masters.

These suited the sorts of fencing performance then in vogue. The early Bolognese rules as recorded by Manciolino in 1531 describe fencing for points, with rules for grappling (one lifted off his feet is defeated), different points for hitting different targets (three for the head, and two for the foot, as it is the hardest to hit), and blows to the hands not admitted,<sup>100</sup> and allowing for a sort of “after-blow”: After first attempting unsuccessfully to defend himself (considered a characteristic of good fencing), a fencer who has been struck is allowed to show his undiminished valor to strike a blow in reply and “recoup honor,” so long as it can be done with a single step.<sup>101</sup> (Marozzo also gives some rules in the first chapters of his first book, though his have more of the air of safety regulations such as prohibiting new students from fencing and grappling.)

Compare this to the rules of fencing as a courtly phenomenon as described by the master and scholar in Battista Gaiani’s dialogue of 1619.<sup>102</sup> Gaiani’s master states that a master always works to one of two ends—utility (that is, to teach his students), or to defend his honor—and describes several sorts of *assalto d’honore* in this latter case: First, there is the courteous bout, undertaken before a ruler, to show his skill and honor. Second, there is the courteous bout to satisfy a gentleman who wishes to test himself (in which case the master must use all his knowledge and ingenuity, since it would not be seemly for the master to be overcome by the non-master). Finally, there is

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100 This fencing convention of not allowing hand hits as too easy is also mentioned by Giovanni Battista della Valle in the section on dueling (specifically on whether someone wounded in the head should be considered the victor over someone wounded in the hand) in his *Il Vallo, Libro continente appartenente à Capitaniij, retenerne efortificare una Città con bastioni, con novi artificij de fuoco aggiunti, come nella Tabola appare, et de diverse sorte polvere, et de espugnare una Città con ponti, scale, argani, trombe, trenciere, artiglierie, cave, dare avisamenti senza messo allo amico, fare ordinanze, battaglioni, et ponti de disfida con lo pingere, opera molto utile con la esperientia del arte militare*, first published prior to 1521 and reprinted in Venice nine times (here citing the fourth edition of 1535, p. 58).

101 [R]icuperar l’honore. Manciolino, *Opera Nova*, pp. 3–6 at 6v.

102 Battista Gaiani, *Arte di Maneggiar la Spada a Piedi et a Cavallo*, pp. 5–8. See also Terminello, “Giovanni Battista Gaiani (1619)—An Italian Perspective on Competitive Fencing.”

the third and gravest sort of *assalto d'honore*, which takes almost the form of a duel, with an assigned time and place and chosen seconds. It also has conventional rules: Only the first attack and riposte or counterattack (*riposta di quel tempo*) are admissible; only thrusts may be made; and all hits must land on the body above the belt, since these are most conducive to the principles of *stringere* and *cavazione*. The seconds are to separate the fencers if they come too close, since this can lead to grappling, and is extraneous what the fencers are trying to accomplish. All of these assume a skilled and polite adversary; against someone who does not treat the master respectfully, but seeks to defeat him in any way possible, all bets were off. Gaiani also says that cuts were not suited to a polite match, since, unlike thrusting with foils, they can cause injury.

While there is a difference of context here—Manciolino is speaking of students, Gaiani the conduct of teachers—I wish to call attention to the subtext: Manciolino democratically allows his fencer to strike after being struck to “recoup honor,” while Gaiani is foremost about maintenance of unequal status. The master is elevated by being the client of princes and sought out by well-heeled amateurs; he must maintain his reputation, and thus his income, above all else. Accordingly, Gaiani’s contest is more abstracted and genteel; it disallows wrestling, and the first thrust landed ends the pass. This mirrors the class structure of the absolutist society of early modern Europe in which Gaiani’s master operated. Both provide for a somewhat conventional contest, but Gaiani’s is far more controlled.

In short, rapier fencing gave its adherents a form of martial training and performance that was both realistic preparation for armed conflict and wholly in keeping with contemporary ideas of art, science, and etiquette. (Giganti even calls his book “The School, or Theatre.”) From an urban pastime played between equals, fencing had become a courtly act, on par with dancing or riding, all the while maintaining at least a pretense of training for actual fighting. At least a passing familiarity with its tenets was an expected part of a young man’s education, not just in Italy, but also throughout Europe.

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# The *Destreza Verdadera*: A Global Phenomenon

*Manuel Valle Ortiz*

## 1 The Origins of the *Destreza*

The origins of the *Verdadera Destreza* are clearly Hispanic although it is possible to make out influences from the Italian masters in some of the concepts initially present. It was conceived as a complete and closed system that poses and resolves the situations that can arise during a combat, based on established scientific principles. Furthermore, it includes an important philosophical component. We should not overlook the fact that philosophy occupies the first place in the title of Carranza's work, and that Carranza himself was known and esteemed in his lifetime for his knowledge and skills in legal matters and negotiations, able to discuss intricate matters of honor that might have otherwise ended as duels if not resolved satisfactorily through peaceful means. Hence, the insistence on defending one's own life as a fundamental principle, on avoiding situations that might put us at risk, and moreover the concern over the life of our enemy, and trying to achieve victory without necessarily having to eliminate him.

Although the *Destreza* might appear to be a well-established discipline, it is in fact the sum of different contributions with a common language, which today leads us to recognise the different texts as forming part of the *Destreza*. However, this language did not belong exclusively to the *Verdadera Destreza*, since the vulgar *Destreza* or common fencing (present from the outset as a counterpoint to the *Verdadera Destreza*, as a paradigm to be avoided and counteracted), also shared much of this language with *La Destreza*. Unfortunately, very few testimonies of common fencing have survived, yet from those few surviving texts we can glimpse a type of expression shared by the different fencing practices. Before the *Destreza* was officially initiated by Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza, we have evidence of the existence of several books that have not survived. Jayme Pons de Perpinyà<sup>1</sup> published one in 1474, possibly in Catalan. Pedro de la Torre<sup>2</sup> also published in 1474, and Francisco Román,<sup>3</sup> Grand Master

1 Pons de Perpinyà, J. [...], Perpinyà 1474 [V.374].

2 Torre, P. [...], s.l. 1474 [V.446].

3 Román, F. *Libro de Esgrima con figuras*, Seville 1532 [V.400].

of the *Destreza*, who was published in Seville in 1532. These books were known and quoted extensively by the authors of the *Destreza*, especially by Sánchez de Carranza and Pacheco de Narváez but currently the only things remaining from those lost books are the quotations. Tim Rivera<sup>4</sup> rebuilt the structure of the books compiling and ordering the extant quotations, so that although we now have but a shadow of what the books once were, we know approximately the chapters, topics and number of pages it comprised. In any case, if we someday reach an understanding of these books, they will reveal the substrate upon which the *Destreza* was built and quite possibly many shared forms of expression that were later taken as characteristics of the *Destreza*.

## 2 The Weapons of the *Destreza*

Although the *Destreza* has been linked to the typical cup hilt rapier of the late seventeenth century, in fact it could be applied to any type of weapon since it is a universal system. When the *Destreza* was developing, the most utilised arms were the sword by itself,<sup>5</sup> or the sword together with the dagger, buckler, shield, cloak, or second swords. Also the longsword (for use with two hands, with specific characteristics in the Iberian Peninsula), and other weapons such as the flail. In the active period of the *Destreza*, the type of swords used underwent an evolution from the swords of the sixteenth century, which were heavier and with simple fittings,<sup>6</sup> to models with increasingly complex fittings culminating in the cup hilt, while the blade itself became lighter.<sup>7</sup>

The right of free men to bear and use arms was deeply rooted in the centuries-old Iberian culture, possibly as a legacy of many centuries of fighting against the Islamic states on the Peninsula (the Reconquest) with borders where the defense of life and property was often in the hands of the citizens themselves. After the Reconquest, the use of the sword in civilian life became a status symbol to which anyone of a non-servile standing could aspire.

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4 Rivera, T. online: <<http://www.spanishsword.org/files/references.pons.pdf>; <http://www.spanishsword.org/files/references.delatorre.pdf>; <http://www.spanishsword.org/files/references.roman.pdf>> (accessed April 30, 2014).

5 Nowadays known as rapier.

6 The swords appearing in the works of Carranza and Pacheco.

7 The swords shown in the books by Ettenhard, and Lorenz de Rada.

### 3 *Destreza* as Science

From the very beginning the intention was that the *Destreza* be considered one among the sciences. Pacheco thus stated it in his aphorisms: “Life pleasant, the enemy a strong man, danger ordinary, defence natural, the science to achieve it infallible, its study obligatory, and practice necessary.”<sup>8</sup> However, if we are to decide on a founder of the science of the *Destreza* with arms, it would undoubtedly be Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza.

Recent works of Mary Curtis<sup>9</sup> and Manuel Valle<sup>10</sup> brought to light previously unknown aspects of the biography of Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza, also known by his second surname. He was born in Seville (although the exact date is not known, it is estimated to be around 1645) to a noble family from La Montaña.<sup>11</sup> This place name designates a territory of the Crown of Castile that covered the mountainous part of the current provinces of Santander and Burgos. His mother María had another illustrious surname typical of the mountainous region, Ortiz. He was baptised in the parish church of San Román, in Seville.

He studied at the University of Osuna, obtaining a degree in Law, although it must be said that the University of Osuna was not among the most prestigious in Spain, as reflected in the popular saying: “En Osuna y Orihuela todo cuela,” that is, “In Osuna and Orihuela anything goes.”

In Seville he associated with the cream of society. There is evidence of his relationship with the sons of the Duke of Béjar, don Alvaro Diego, and don Pedro Zúñiga, as well as with the Marquis of Ayamonte, the Marquis of Villamanrique and the Count of Gelves. He did not associate only with the nobility, however, he also participated in the intellectual circles of Seville, which included personages such as Juan de Mal Lara, Fernando de Herrera, Cristobal Mosquera de Figueroa, Francisco Pacheco, and Cristobal de Zayas.<sup>12</sup> Some of these would figure as characters in his work on the *Destreza*.

8 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Nueva Ciencia*, Madrid 1672 [V.345] p. 732.

9 Curtis, M.D. and Curtis, R.E. (Puck) “The circle and the sword: a focus on Carranza and Pacheco in Renaissance Spain” in Hand, S. (ed.) *Spada 2 Anthology of swordmanship*. Highland Village 2005, pp. 69–75. Also Curtis, M.D. “Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza: a man of arms and letters” in Mele, G. (ed.) *In the service of Mars*, Wheaton 2010, pp. 163–180.

10 Valle Ortiz, M. *Nueva Bibliografía*, Santiago de Compostela 2012, pp. 258–267.

11 Place of birth of the ancestors of many famous figures of the “Golden Century”: Francisco de Quevedo, Félix Lope de Vega, Pedro Calderón de la Barca.

12 Author of a lost *Destreza* treatise.

Thereafter Carranza would serve the Duke of Medina Sidonia, Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, who belonged to one of the oldest and richest families of Andalusia, and was a prominent member of Andalusian nobility. It is not clear what his role was within the ducal house. While Carranza claims to have taught fencing to the young Duke, his function seems to have been rather those of counsellor or adviser. It must be remembered that at this time the highest nobility maintained palatial courts rivaling in splendour those of the Royal Court itself. Abandoning Seville to serve the Duke was felt as a great loss, so much so that the town council approved a resolution in 1576 asking Master Carranza to stay in Seville for the usefulness of his teachings, although it seems that he had already moved to Sanlúcar de Barrameda some months before. There, in Sanlúcar, seat of the House of Medina Sidonia, there is evidence of the presence of Carranza in the notarised registries of his properties: several homes; a winery; a vineyard; slaves; mules and horses. In Sanlúcar, Jerónimo would enter a relationship with Catalina Pérez de Aguilar, and although they would never marry, it seems they led a family life, giving birth to several children, Gil in 1576, Jerónimo in 1578, María in 1579 and Sancho in 1580. Carranza recognised them as his natural children and saw to it that they were accepted as “hijosdalgo”<sup>13</sup>, to which end he duly initiated procedures at the Royal Chancellery of Granada.

In 1582 he participated in the military operations on the occasion of the annexation of Portugal by Philip II. As Captain-General of the Cavalry he took part in the occupation of the Algarve, quite successfully and more for his diplomatic than his martial skills, as the annexation took place in a rather peaceful manner. From then on, we see him using the title of Commander of Christ Order,<sup>14</sup> although we do not know if the title was in compensation for his performance in the campaign in Portugal or for teaching King don Sebastião. In 1582 he published his book, *Philosophia de la Armas y de su Destreza*, in a printing house built to that end in Sanlúcar. He moved to Madrid in 1584 as his relationship to the Duke seems to have deteriorated. He made himself known in the social circles close to the royal court through his knowledge in matters of honour, although he also mastered several other sciences, theology, mathematics, military training. He participated in the debates that took place in the patios of the Royal Palace. At this time he began to prepare his request for a royal intervention, gathering favourable reports until he could submit his request for an official post in compensation for his merits and abilities. If we are to believe what is said in the documents submitted by Carranza

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13 Hidalgo. Member of Hispanic low nobility. Literally it means “son of something”.

14 Portuguese military and honorific Order.

along with his application, it seems clear that he was a popular figure, well known and acknowledged as an authority in fencing and conflict resolution. His notoriety as a skilled swordsman would be long-lasting, with many references made to him in literary works. There are also testimonies indicating that Carranza's fame went beyond the borders of Iberia, with his name appearing in the works of Ben Jonson. Carranza succeeds in being appointed governor of Honduras, at the time a faraway province belonging to the Audiencia of Guatemala, which in turn was part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. The governor was the highest representative of the Crown and held civilian as well as military responsibilities. Carranza prepared for the voyage to America in 1589, drew up his testament in Seville, and took with him his male children and some servants from his household, including the old housekeeper. Upon arriving in America he would tour the province, inspecting the state of the fortifications and the defensive needs. In dealing with civil matters he issued rules that recommended the use of swords instead of canes to promote the martial spirit and to prevent cases of duels (to be hit by a cane was insulting whereas wounds from swords were honourable and did not tarnish one's reputation). Soon Carranza came into conflict with the local clergy and had problems with the royal treasurer, discovering his embezzling and corrupt practices. He also confronted the settlers demanding they comply with the laws that protected the natives from abuse. The following years would be a succession of clashes with domestic enemies, to the point that he was excommunicated by the bishop (Friar Gaspar de Andrada) and initiated a lawsuit against the treasurer in the audience of Guatemala, which he eventually won although the corrupt official only received a fine and a mild punishment. In addition he suffered a series of attacks by English and French pirates. He could not prevent them from disembarking, but acted with notable heroism and with the help of a small troop of loyal Spaniards, joined by blacks, mulattos and "Indios," he harried them and succeeded in making them retreat without having the settlers participate in any significant way. At the end of his appointment he was granted an *encomienda*<sup>15</sup> and retired to Iztapa in Guatemala, where he died poverty-stricken possibly around 1607. Already in the prologue of Carranza's work, the physician to the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, Diego de Peramato, had heralded the novelty of the *Destreza* of arms as a science, Jerónimo Sanchez de Carranza as its founder, and the introduction of new words and terminology adapted to this new discipline. Another physician to the Duke, Juan Jimenez, pointed out Carranza's originality as there were no precedents to this new science and he was its sole creator and inventor,

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15 Royal Charter to settle and exploit a land property.

resorting to the authority of classical authors such as Aristotle and Galen. In the prologue<sup>16</sup> Jerónimo Sanchez de Carranza himself attributes the originality of his invention to himself, since, as he said, he acquired it alone, “with no guidance from a teacher,” and he repeats this in the text.<sup>17</sup> He admits to following Plato and Tulio’s method. In various places of this work he mentions the opinions of Plato,<sup>18</sup> Aristotle,<sup>19</sup> Quintilian,<sup>20</sup> Aristarchus, Anacharsis,<sup>21</sup> Hippocrates,<sup>22</sup> Tullius (Cicero),<sup>23</sup> Galen,<sup>24</sup> Pliny,<sup>25</sup> Philo,<sup>26</sup> Demosthenes,<sup>27</sup> St. Paul,<sup>28</sup> St. Isidore,<sup>29</sup> Marcus Manilius,<sup>30</sup> Avicenna,<sup>31</sup> St. Augustine,<sup>32</sup> and St. John of Damascus.<sup>33</sup> In the first book he spends a considerable amount of space developing the concepts of truth, intelligence, power, understanding, the senses, and another series of concepts following Aristotelian principles, asserting that the *Destreza* consists of one part that is art and another that is experience. More than a century later, all these ideas were collected and expanded upon by Lorenz de Rada in the first volume of his *Nobleza de la Espada*. At the end of the first book he sums up that “due to the subject matter involved, the *Destreza* follows the path of science and is the only one of all things invented that had yet to be reduced to it.”<sup>34</sup>

In the preliminaries<sup>35</sup> of Pacheco de Narváez’s work, *Grandezas de la Espada*, published in 1600, Jerónimo Sanchez de Carranza is recognised as the first inventor of this science of the *Destreza*. Already in the heading of the

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- 16 Sánchez de Carranza, J. *Filosofía de las Armas y de su Destreza*, San Lúcar 1582, fol. [A4v].  
 17 Ibid. fol. 23.  
 18 Ibid. fol. 12v, fol. 14v, fol. 52, fol. 54, fol. 56v.  
 19 Ibid. fol. 14, fol. 51, fol. 53v, fol. 61v, fol. 63.  
 20 Ibid. fol. 16v.  
 21 Ibid. fol. 17.  
 22 Ibid. fol. 43v.  
 23 Ibid. fol. 44, fol. 54.  
 24 Ibid. fol. 44, fol. 51, fol. 52v, fol. 56.  
 25 Ibid. fol. 52, fol. 54, fol. 56.  
 26 Ibid. fol. 52.  
 27 Ibid. fol. 54.  
 28 Ibid. fol. 55.  
 29 Ibid. fol. 56.  
 30 Ibid. fol. 56v.  
 31 Ibid. fol. 57v.  
 32 Ibid. fol. 58.  
 33 Ibid. fol. 59.  
 34 Ibid. fol. 64.  
 35 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Grandezas de la Espada*, Madrid 1600, fol. [†3].



prologue<sup>36</sup> Luis Pacheco de Narváez is unambiguous: “Prologue for the reader, in which it is proven that the *Destreza* in arms here dealt with is a science.”

After recognising the preeminence of Carranza, Aristotle is invoked as the authority to argue what science is, and how the *Destreza* fits in with the Aristotelian definition of science as knowledge of things through their causes. In the recently republished<sup>37</sup> *Cien conclusiones* by Pacheco from 1608, the first one already asserts that the *Verdadera Destreza* is based on science “as it shows the true knowledge of the thing through its cause.”<sup>38</sup> He asserts this again in *Modo fácil* and completes the definition: “It is a habit of understanding acquired by demonstration” and “a genuine knowledge of the thing by its cause.”<sup>39</sup> *Nueva Ciencia*<sup>40</sup> begins by proclaiming the *Destreza* as science already in the very title of the work, takes Euclid<sup>41</sup> as a model and thus offers some chapters entitled: “Petitions, axioms, postulates, and maxims or common sentences” in which various assertions are made that are useful to the science of the *Destreza*. Luis Méndez de Carmona was born in Écija before 1574. He learned and taught *Destreza* in Seville and was able to meet and maintain a friendship with Gerard Thibault.<sup>42</sup> He may be considered a follower of Carranza, like many of the Sevillian swordsmen. He initiated a long-lasting controversy with Pacheco de Narváez, a clear example of the Pachequista-Carrancista differences. It began with Pacheco and his *Carta al duque de Cea*,<sup>43</sup> a small pamphlet published between 1618 and 1621<sup>44</sup> in which he criticised various aspects of Carranza’s work. Méndez de Carmona<sup>45</sup> replied with a letter, *Carta a don Fadrique Portocarrero Fernandez de Cordoba*,<sup>46</sup> rejecting Pacheco’s criticism of Carranza and reproached him having accepted Carranza’s doctrine initially only to criticise it later. Pacheco countered with another

36 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Grandezas de la Espada*, Madrid 1600, fol. [††6].

37 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Cien conclusiones*, ed. Valle, M. Santiago de Compostela 2010.

38 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Cien conclusiones*, Madrid 1608, fol. 3v.

39 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Modo fácil y nuevo*, Madrid 1625, fol. 2v.

40 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Nueva Ciencia*, Madrid 1672 [V.345].

41 Pacheco de Naaváez, L. *Nueva Ciencia*, Madrid 1672, p. 17.

42 De la Fontaine Vervey, H. “Gerald Thibault and his Academie de l’espée”. *Quaerendo* (1978) 8:283–319, p. 295.

43 Dedication to a high court person was a way to avoid criticism and censorship.

44 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Carta al duque de Cea*, [Madrid 1618] [V.334].

45 Méndez de Carmona, L. *Carta a don Fadrique Portocarrero Fernández de Córdoba*, [Seville 1622] [V.262].

46 Dean and canon of Sevilla Cathedral, member of a most prominent family.

letter,<sup>47</sup> *Defensa de su apología contra Luis Méndez de Carmona*, addressed to don Fadrique Portocarrero Fernandez de Cordoba himself, and, although it appears as printed in Trujillo and is attributed to Juan Fernando Pizarro, a relative of the Conquistador of Peru and member of the group of followers of Pacheco, it was probably not printed in Trujillo (there is no evidence of active printing presses in the city at that time). In this work Pacheco raised the tone of his critique, reaching in many cases the level of personal attacks and insults. We do not know why Pacheco hid behind the name of Pizarro; perhaps he sought greater social repercussion, or to avoid a direct confrontation with Carranza followers, although Pacheco would later claim authorship over this work. The controversy did not end there, however, and Luis Mendez de Carmona<sup>48</sup> published as his response the *Compendio en defensa de la doctrina y Destreza del comendador Jerónimo de Carranza* in 1632. The imprint reads Lisbon, possibly to evade censorship, but Pacheco and later other bibliographers<sup>49</sup> asserted that it was in fact published in Seville. The dispute continued as Pacheco<sup>50</sup> replied in turn with *Engaño y desengaño de los errores que se han querido introducir en la Destreza de las Armas*, published in Madrid in 1635. In the prologue he summarises the development of the controversy and escalates the dialectical virulence against his opponents, developing extensively (over more than 400 pages) all the arguments against the opinions and objections of Mendez de Carmona. In several places the claim is also reiterated that the *Destreza* is a science<sup>51</sup> based on Aristotelian principles.

Mendez de Carmona wrote another two books that would not be published in his lifetime, the first being *Avisos importantes para el diestro*,<sup>52</sup> an edition of which came out in 1899,<sup>53</sup> devoting many of its few pages to demonstrating the scientific nature of the *Destreza*, and the second, *Libro de la Destreza Verdadera de las Armas*,<sup>54</sup> written in 1640, which is still unpublished.

47 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Defensa de su apología contra Luis Méndez de Carmona*, [Trujillo? 1623] [V.335].

48 Méndez de Carmona, L. *Compendio en defensa de la doctrina y Destreza del comendador Jerónimo de Carranza*, [Lisbon 1632] [V.263].

49 Valle Ortiz, M. *Nueva bibliografía de la antigua Esgrima y Destreza de las Armas*, Santiago de Compostela 2012, p. 166.

50 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Engaño y desengaño*, Madrid 1635, [V.337].

51 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Engaño y desengaño*, Madrid 1635, [V.337] fol. 58v–59v.

52 Méndez de Carmona, L. *Avisos importantes para el diestro*. MS. Scott E.139.65.398 [V.264].

53 Méndez de Carmona, L. *Avisos importantes para el diestro*, Madrid 1899 [V.265].

54 Méndez de Carmona, L. *Libro de la Destreza Verdadera de las Armas*, MS 1640. [V.266].

In 1630 Diogo Gomes de Figueiredo,<sup>55</sup> in his manuscript *Oplosophia e verdadeira Destreza das Armas*, also devotes an entire section to commenting on the history of the *Destreza* and its characterisation as a scientific discipline.

Already in the title of their works many authors make a reference to the *Destreza* as a science. Luis Diaz de Viedma published in 1639 his *Método de enseñanza de maestros en la Ciencia filosófica de la Verdadera Destreza matemática de las Armas*. Iñigo Fernandez de Cordoba Ponce de Leon published *Principios de la Ciencia y matemática de la Destreza de las Armas*, in Cordoba in 1651. Salvador Jacinto de Garay in Cadiz published the *Tratado de los principios de la Filosofía de las Armas para que se pueda entrar en los fundamentos de esta Ciencia*. José Mateo de Garaillana in Guatemala published *Conclusiones filosóficas en la Ciencia y Destreza Verdadera de las Armas* in 1684. Nicolás Tamariz in his *Copia de carta escrita por un maestro* from 1693 also refers to the science of arms. Diego Rejón de Silva in 1697 published the *Compendio de las definiciones y principios de la Ciencia de las Armas*.

Jerónimo Salvador de Araujo Salgado<sup>56</sup> published a short brochure, *Argumento con que se intenta probar que la Filosofía y Destreza de las Armas es Ciencia*, without imprint, possibly in the second half of the seventeenth century, dedicated to the Marquises of Ayamonte, in which he defends Carranza and justifies the *Destreza* as one of the sciences.

Ettenhard,<sup>57</sup> in the *Compendio de los fundamentos de la Verdadera Destreza*, begins by explaining the geometric and mathematical concepts that are fundamental to explain and understand the *Destreza*.

Lorenz de Rada<sup>58</sup> in *Promptuario* speaks of the “logic of science and of the sword” and a bit later devotes one of the three volumes, the first of the monumental *Nobleza de la Espada*,<sup>59</sup> to presenting the *Destreza* as a true science. Also in the eighteenth century, Santiago González de Villambrosa,<sup>60</sup> in his *Destierro vulgar y compendio sucinto* references Aristotle in the section that deals with philosophy, and Euclid for mathematics.

On the other hand, many of the authors of the *Destreza* devote considerable space to describing the physiognomic characteristics required for its

55 Figueiredo, D. Gomes de. *Oplosophia e verdadeyra Destreza das Armas*, ms 1630, B.Academ. Ciencias Lisboa ms.vermelho 91 [V.159].

56 Araujo Salgado, J.S. *Argumento con que se intenta probar que la Filosofía y Destreza de las Armas es Ciencia*, s.l. seventeenth century [V.19].

57 Ettenhard, F. *Compendio de los fundamentos de la Verdadera Destreza*, Madrid 1675 [V.152].

58 Lorenz de Rada, F. *Promptuario*, Mexico 1702 [V.238].

59 Lorenz de Rada, F. *Nobleza de la Espada*, Madrid 1705 [V.240].

60 González de Villambrosa, S. *Destierro vulgar y compendio sucinto*, Madrid 1724 [V.191].

practice, resorting also to the theory of the bodily temperaments to justify certain behaviours or characteristics, in accordance with the state of science in their time. This was the case of Pacheco in the first part of *Grandezas de la Espada* or Pérez de Mendoza in *Principios*. These are the parts that most quickly lost their validity as such concepts would be substituted by the advances made in Physiology and Medicine.

Some later authors in the eighteenth century, under the influence of the Enlightenment, began to depart from this vision of the *Destreza* as science and presented fencing as Art, as may be seen in the Spanish translation of the French *Encyclopedie* by Gregorio Sanz<sup>61</sup> in 1791 or in the work of Juan Nicolás Perinat<sup>62</sup> *Arte de Esgrimir florete y sable* from 1757. The traditionalists, however, would continue considering the *Destreza* as science, such as Diego Rodriguez del Canto,<sup>63</sup> who was Grand Master of the *Destreza*, in *El discípulo instruido y diestro aprovechado en la Ciencia filosófica y matemática de la Destreza de las Armas*.

We find also in the nineteenth century many examples of this concept of fencing as Art, for instance *Manual del baratero o Arte de manejar la navaja* by Mariano de Rementería y Fica<sup>64</sup> and *Nuevo Arte de Esgrima* by Guzmán Rolando.<sup>65</sup> Mariano Sabat y Fargas<sup>66</sup> combines in the title of his work some old concepts with more modern ones, *Filosofía del Arte de la Esgrima*. Liborio Vendrell y Eduart wrote *Arte de Esgrimir el sable*<sup>67</sup> and *Arte de Esgrimir el palo*,<sup>68</sup> Antonio Alvarez Garcia wrote *Grandezas del Arte de la Esgrima*,<sup>69</sup> and C. Leon Broutin, *El Arte de la Esgrima*.<sup>70</sup>

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61 Sanz y Chanas, G. (trad.), *Encyclopedia Metódica. Artes Académicos*, Madrid 1791 [V.421].

62 Perinat, J.N. *Arte de Esgrimir florete y sable*, Cadiz 1758 [V.365].

63 Rodríguez del Canto, D. *El discípulo instruido y diestro aprovechado en la Ciencia filosófica y matemática de la Destreza de las Armas*, MS 1735, Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Mss 26-IV-28/31.

64 Rementería y Fica, M. *Manual del baratero o Arte de manejar la navaja*, Madrid 1849 [V.390].

65 Rolando, G. *Nuevo Arte de Esgrima*, London 1826 [V.399].

66 Sábat y Fargas, M. *Filosofía del Arte de la Esgrima*, Montevideo 1883 [V.407].

67 Vendrell y Eduart, G. *Arte de Esgrimir el sable*, Vitoria 1879 [V.458].

68 Vendrell y Eduart, G. *Arte de Esgrimir el palo*, Vitoria 1881 [V.460].

69 Álvarez García, A. *Grandezas del Arte de la Esgrima*, Habana 1892 [V.10].

70 Broutin, C.L. *El Arte de la Esgrima*, Madrid 1893 [V.41].

#### 4 Sociocultural Standing of the *Destreza*

The *Destreza* had always claimed a greater social consideration than the common or vulgar fencing. Already in the preliminaries to Carranza's work, Doctor Juan Jimenez<sup>71</sup> describes vulgar fencing as "mockery, in the hands of low people, falsehood and deception, plebeian" and its practitioners as "low and vile people," in contrast to the author, "a noble man, of pure lineage, honest life and customs, discrete and erudite, fervently Christian and enemy of appearances, ally of knowledge, and endeavouring to be strong rather than merely to seem so." In the first dialogue<sup>72</sup> Carranza admits having abandoned the practice of the *Destreza* on the advice of the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, who deemed it unworthy as compared to the profession of better qualified subjects.

In the first part of his book *Grandezas de la Espada*,<sup>73</sup> Pacheco de Narváez addresses the characteristics needed by those who wish to devote themselves to the *Destreza*, and recommends them to "not trust low men, nor mechanical officials, nor men of little self-respect, but *hidalgos*<sup>74</sup> and men known for their virtue and effort." Elsewhere he says that "he who would profess this science must be a noble man."<sup>75</sup> It must have carried very little prestige to devote oneself to the teaching of fencing, as Méndez de Carmona, in the preface to his work *Compendio en defensa de la doctrina y Destreza del comendador Jerónimo de Carranza*<sup>76</sup> asserts that he "is not, has not been, nor has the intention of being that" (a teacher of fencing).

In the *Defensa de la Verdadera Destreza de las Armas*<sup>77</sup> Lorenz de Rada comments on a paragraph from *Carta apologética* that Diego Rodríguez de Guzman had sent him, in which the latter says that he had not engaged in the mechanical exercise<sup>78</sup> one is obliged to with the title of "Master." Lorenz de Rada replies that the degree of Master is nothing that obliges anyone to mechanical exercise, the title only confers the ability to teach, without forcing anyone to teach, with or without interest.

71 Sánchez de Carranza, J. *Filosofía de las Armas y de su Destreza*, San Lúcar 1582 [V.411] fol. [A2v].

72 Sánchez de Carranza, J. *Filosofía de las Armas y de su Destreza*, San Lúcar 1582 [V.411] fol. 9.

73 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Grandezas de la Espada*, Madrid 1600 [V.329] fol. 4v.

74 Member of the low nobility.

75 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Grandezas de la Espada*, Madrid 1600 [V.329] fol. 20.

76 Méndez de Carmona, L. *Compendio en defensa de la doctrina y Destreza del comendador Jerónimo de Carranza*, [Lisbon 1632] [V.263] fol. 2.

77 Lorenz de Rada, F. *Defensa de la Verdadera Destreza*, Mexico 1712 [V.242] p. 24.

78 To perform mechanical or manual activities for a pay was unacceptable for a gentleman.

## 5 The *Verdadera Destreza* as Official Doctrine

Originally, the true *Destreza* was nothing but a new way of understanding and practising fencing, and it had an institution, the Grand Master, in charge of examining the candidates to Master level, that is, individuals with theoretical and practical knowledge and the aptitude to teach others, basing this activity on the traditional teachings, of which there are hardly any records left, with the exception of Godinho's book. Although there are precedents in the courts of the medieval kings, the figure of Grand Master was established officially in the Spanish kingdoms during the reign of Isabella and Ferdinand by means of a royal decree in Zaragoza on June 4th, 1478. Although the original document is lost, there are references to it in documents of subsequent Grand Masters.<sup>79</sup> From this period is Master Francisco Roman, author of a book now lost,<sup>80</sup> who exercised his functions in Seville. Possibly, the fundamental reform of the royal court that the Habsburgs would see through, mainly by Philip II, would define the characteristics of this post. Documents attest to several of them, for example, Pablo de Paredes,<sup>81</sup> Master of Pages in the court of Philip II and Philip III, who taught Jehan l'Hermite, a Flemish gentleman in whose autobiographical work, *Le passetemp*,<sup>82</sup> we find evidence of the rules of the long sword taught by Paredes. An example of the fencing practised by these masters can be seen in the work of Godinho<sup>83</sup> *Arte de Esgrima*, which seems to have been created as a text for the Master examination in Portugal, since each reign of the Hispanic monarchy retained its own institutions.

The doctrines of Carranza enjoyed wide acceptance and general approval in his time and, although his departure to America interrupted his teaching in Spain, and moreover he himself stated in his work that he had abandoned the practise of the *Destreza*, it was possibly in Seville that his legacy was preserved most intensely, or at least a claim was made to his figure as a teacher and founder of that school.

Don Luis Pacheco de Narváez,<sup>84</sup> born in Baeza in the second half of the sixteenth century, held military posts on the Canary Islands. In 1599 he

79 Cea y Carrillo, D. *Titulo de Maestro de la Ciencia filosófica y matemática de la Destreza*. Madrid 1687 [V.64].

80 Román, F. *Libro de Esgrima con figuras*, Seville 1532 [V.400].

81 Paredes, P. *El montante*, MS 1599 [V.347].

82 Lhermite, J. *Le passetemp*, MS Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België. Brusel. MS II.1028.

83 Godinho D.L. *Arte de Esgrima*, MS 1599. Bib. Nacional Lisboa PBA 58.

84 Valle Ortiz, M. *Nueva bibliografía de la antigua Esgrima y Destreza de las Armas*, Santiago de Compostela 2012, p. 193.

moved to Madrid, where he published in 1600 his first work, *Grandezas de la Espada*,<sup>85</sup> adopted the principles of the *Verdadera Destreza* and developed the theory to a very high theoretical and practical level. Initially he declared himself a follower of Carranza for the great prestige it entailed, and he began to formulate the opposition to the vulgar or common *Destreza*. In the first part of *Grandezas* Pacheco devotes a chapter<sup>86</sup> to describing the characteristics that a master must have and distinguishes between the master of arms who teaches the *Verdadera Destreza*, and the master of fencing who practises the common *Destreza*.<sup>87</sup> He believes that public authorities should guarantee that the masters are examined and that a system is in place to guarantee adequate preparation. He recommends starting the *Destreza* learning process at the age of 18 to 25, although it could begin at the age of 15 given the right conditions, and it may even be learned at the age of 40 or 50.<sup>88</sup> As regards the physical condition needed, he recommends exercise such as running, jumping, bar pulling, playing ball, bell tolling and dancing. This is followed by various sorts of pedagogical advice.

All this he was able to put into practice later, but not before being named Grand Master in 1624, when he initiated a lawsuit against the old masters, demanding they re-take the exam using the *Verdadera Destreza* method. He also began to distance himself openly from Carranza, claiming the originality of his system, although he had already done that previously in an anonymous manner or under assumed names. Shortly afterwards in 1625 he published the book *Modo fácil y nuevo para examinarse los Maestros*<sup>89</sup> which would become the official program for the master's exam for a long time, as it continued to be published and utilised even after the author's death. In the end Pacheco was able to impose the *Verdadera Destreza* as the official teaching method and doctrine, although his influence did not reach all corners of Spain, for in Seville, a school calling itself successors of Carranza and opposed to Pacheco's teaching method persisted. This led to a lawsuit in Seville in 1675 in which Piña and Reyes, followers of Carranza, were arrested for continuing their teachings. Thus, the model envisioned by Pacheco was gradually achieved, building a homogeneous system for the entire territory.

85 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Grandezas de la Espada*, Madrid 1600 [V.329].

86 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Grandezas de la Espada*, Madrid 1600 [V.329] fol. 22.

87 Fallows, N. *Masters of Fear or Masters of Arms?* ed. Capwell, T. *The noble art of the sword*. London 2012. Cp. 221.

88 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Grandezas de la Espada*, Madrid 1600 [V.329] fol. 30.

89 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Modo fácil y nuevo para examinarse los maestros*, Madrid 1625 [V.336].

It is a difficult task, and few have ventured to define the differences between the followers of Pacheco and Carranza, as they often consist only of differences in nuance or in the interpretation of some precepts, which, however, if inflamed with passion, can grow until they seem insurmountable obstacles. Abstracting from various works we can identify a characteristic that Pacheco defenders emphasise repeatedly, that the *atajo*<sup>90</sup> (bind) is not a universal technique. This we can interpret knowing that Pacheco's system introduced the general techniques (*linea en cruz*, *estrechar* and *ambas flaquezas*), which the Carranza followers did not consider valid,<sup>91</sup> possibly as they insisted on the primacy of the *atajo* (bind) as a means to deter the opponent's action or to initiate one's own. In any case, a task that remains to be undertaken is to clarify, based on the many sources, what common points and discrepancies existed between the two schools.

In Portugal, in his work *Oplosophia*, Gomes de Figueiredo<sup>92</sup> deals extensively with matters related to the teaching of the *Destreza*. He proposes a system of official exams designed to prevent the certification of incompetent or ignorant masters. He devotes an entire section, the fourth book, to describing the qualities of the master, the way of teaching, he even shows sample exams with theoretical questions (to which he supplies the answers) and describes the course of the practical part of the exam.

In spite of the great extension and preeminent position achieved by the *Destreza* among its contemporaries, the practice was not universal. In other places such as Navarre, beyond the jurisdiction of Madrid, Pérez de Mendoza published his works which, while following for the most part the *Destreza* of Pacheco, thus avoid the control and censorship of the Grand Master of Madrid and his entourage.

Besides the Grand Masters and the Masters of Pages, posts that were often associated, there were the private masters of some of the Princes, such as the above-mentioned Pérez de Mendoza, who obtained the post of Master of Prince Balthasar Charles, heir to the throne of Philip IV. Unlike what occurred in the usual system for the provision of these posts, based on a bureaucratic system of reports and merits, Pérez de Mendoza obtained his through a public competitive examination in the gardens of the Retiro Palace before the entire

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90 Characteristic technique of *Destreza*, it includes binding, deflection and control of the opponents blade.

91 Méndez de Carmona, L. *Carta a don Fadrique Portocarrero Fernández de Córdoba* [Seville 1622] [V.262] fol. 5v.

92 Figueiredo, D Gomes de. *Oplosophia e verdadeyra Destreza das Armas*, Valle, M. (ed.) Santiago Compostela 2013.



court and populace, pitched against many opponents whom he defeated sword in hand. With the premature death of Prince Balthasar Charles, Pérez de Mendoza became redundant in his post, entering thereafter into the service of Don Juan de Austria, bastard son of Philip IV and later pretender to the throne. Pérez de Mendoza tried to obtain the title of Grand Master, requesting it on the occasion of the publication of one of his books, the *Resumen de la Verdadera Destreza*. He even had it printed on the captions of the engravings accompanying the work. Upon his request being rejected, however, he was forced to amend the engravings, with new slips of paper correcting the text pasted over the originals, eliminating any reference to the Grand Master title.

Díaz de Viedma<sup>93</sup> also published his work in Barcelona, according to him because of the better technical resources available in those printing shops, but possibly to elude the control of the Grand Master. His minor work, the *Epítome*,<sup>94</sup> was published in Cadiz because as a pamphlet it did not need to pass the more demanding controls that books of a larger format had to undergo.<sup>95</sup> Even Ettenhard, who did not stray from the orthodox doctrine, had to suffer the critique of Grand Master Juan Caro de Montenegro, and use almost half of the pages of his book<sup>96</sup> to reply to the objections the latter raised in his criticism.

Francisco Lorenz de Rada did not become Grand Master as has been claimed elsewhere, however, his work *Nobleza de la Espada*<sup>97</sup> is imbued with didactic methodology, proposing practical and scaled exercises to facilitate comprehension of the concepts developed. He was already considered an authority on the *Destreza* by his contemporaries.

On the other hand, the vulgar *Destreza* must have continued to have been practiced for a long time afterwards because, although we are lacking direct evidence, many recommendations exist from the authors of the *Verdadera Destreza* against its practice, and we even have the appearance in 1702 of a work devoted specifically to opposing vulgar fencing, *Las tretas de la vulgar y común Esgrima*, written by Manuel Cruzado y Peralta,<sup>98</sup> in which, through Pacheco's method, the doctrine published in his previous books is revised, analysed, and supplemented with new scenarios.

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93 Díaz de Viedma, L. *Método de enseñanza de maestros*, Barcelona 1639 [V.96].

94 Díaz de Viedma, L. *Epítome de la enseñanza de la Filosofía y Destreza matemática de las Armas*, Cadiz 1639 [V.95].

95 Simon Díaz, J. *El libro español antiguo, análisis de su estructura*, Kassel 1983.

96 Ettenhard, F. *Compendio de los fundamentos de la Verdadera Destreza*, Madrid 1675 [V.152].

97 Lorenz de Rada, F. *Nobleza de la Espada*, Madrid 1705 [V.240].

98 Cruzado y Peralta, M. *Las tretas de la vulgar y común Esgrima*, Zaragoza 1702 [V.84].

In the absence of texts in which the skilled swordsmen of common fencing may present their method, the techniques of the common *Destreza* have been currently reconstructed based on the descriptions that the real swordsmen made in their day.

During the eighteenth century the institution of the Grand Master is maintained, with the added functions of the Master of Pages and the Master Examiner, as Diego Rodríguez del Canto<sup>99</sup> recounts in his manuscript. At the end of the century in 1782 Diego de Cea, who was already Master of Pages, is appointed Grand Master, a post that would later be held by several members of his family. Although both posts were connected, very frequently the Grand Master would request that the post of Master of Pages be ceded to someone he trusted.

At the end of the eighteenth century another period of conflict arose when Manuel Antonio de Brea was appointed Grand Master Examiner, and not given additionally the post of Master of Pages, which went to Pio de Cea, son of Diego. By that time there was already an Imperial College and a Royal Seminary for Noblemen controlled by the Jesuits who were in charge of the education of the children from noble families, who sent them to be educated in Madrid in a boarding school system, and would later make up the elites of the government and the militia. This seminary was an educational institution organized in accordance with modern principles, with a body of select teachers and a curriculum of subjects corresponding to the education of a nobleman of the time, which included fencing, horsemanship, and dance. Brea was in charge of the teaching of fencing and his work<sup>100</sup> became the textbook used by the institution. During the Napoleonic era Brea remained in the capital, while Pio de Cea joined the forces fighting against the French invasion. After the conflict Pio returned to Madrid and, upon Brea's death in 1810, he claimed the post of Grand Master, which was granted him in 1814, allowing him to jointly hold once more the titles of Grand Master and Master of Pages. In 1835 the House of Knightly Pages was eliminated, and with it the title also disappeared. At the same time the Royal Seminary and the Imperial College were eliminated.<sup>101</sup>

99 Rodríguez del Canto, D. *El discípulo instruido y diestro aprovechado en la Ciencia filosófica y matemática de la Destreza de las Armas*, ms 1735?, Instituto Valencia D Juan Mss 26-IV-28/31[V.394].

100 Brea, M.A. *Principios universales y Reglas Generales de la Verdadera Destreza del espadín*, Madrid 1805 [V.39].

101 Ceballos-Escalera Gila, A. Sanchez de Lollano Prieto, J. "El Maestro mayor de la *Destreza* de las Armas. Un oficio bajomedieval en los orígenes de la Esgrima española", *Colaboraciones* (1997) 6: 77–108.

In the nineteenth century the title of Grand Master was primarily held by several members of the Cea (or Zea) family, Pio and Faustino, and their relative Francisco Gálvez de Cea as lieutenant; they recaptured control of the office of the Grand Master. In the mid-nineteenth century, with the renewed interest in romantic and chivalrous matters, there was a resurgence in the issuing of Master titles, as evidenced in several of the specimens that have survived until today. Later José Cucala y Bruñó would obtain the Grand Master title in 1858. The revolution of 1868, which dethroned Isabella II, also definitively eliminated many palatial functions, this title among them, although there were many Masters who later preserved and continued using the title, until the lineage was extinguished with the disappearance of the last Masters and Lieutenant Masters, as no new appointments were made. One of the last ones was D. Antonio Merino, who was Lieutenant Master of the last Cea and was able to teach the group lead by Cruzada Villaamil<sup>102</sup> in Madrid in the mid-nineteenth century in his reconstruction of the *Destreza Verdadera*.<sup>103</sup>

## 6 International Expansion of the *Destreza*

The *Destreza* is not an exclusively Spanish phenomenon, and, although its origins are centered in the Kingdom of Castile, it would soon manifest itself in other kingdoms belonging or related to the Hispanic Monarchy.<sup>104</sup>

In Portugal there is evidence of the presence of the *Destreza* in the work titled *Oplosophia e Verdadeira Destreza das Armas*, written in 1628 but never published.<sup>105</sup> This work is a complete treatise on fencing, including several chapters on the single sword, double weapons, and a very interesting chapter on the masters, the teaching methods and examinations, including sample questions and answers. The *Destreza* presented in this work is very similar to what can be found in other contemporary Spanish treatises.

102 Gregorio Cruzada Villaamil: Post office general director, art critic, museum director, these are some of the activities of this multifaceted man. With a group of friends he founded the "Sala de Rada," devoted to *Destreza Verdadera*.

103 Wolf, T. *Ancient sword play*, Wheaton 2012, pp. 24–25.

104 During the XVI and XVII centuries the Hispanic monarchy was a conflation of different political entities, from Spain and Portugal, to the Americas, the Netherlands and Italy.

105 Figueiredo, D Gomes de. *Oplosophia e verdadeyra Destreza das Armas*, MS 1630, B. Academ. Ciencias Lisboa, MS.vermelho 91 [V.159].

Diogo Gomes de Figueiredo<sup>106</sup> is author of this work, as well as of *Memorial da prattica do Montante*,<sup>107</sup> which is also preserved in manuscript form, although modern editions have been produced.<sup>108</sup> He was born in Lisbon and in his youth set off as an *aventureiro*<sup>109</sup> on a maritime expedition that would end tragically wrecked on the coasts of Gascony in 1627. He participated very actively in the *Restauração*<sup>110</sup> war in various commanding posts and demonstrated his personal valor in combat on occasions such as the Battle of the Lines of Elvas and the Siege of Almeida. He was an avowed follower of Carranza and a critic of Pacheco.

In Portugal the works of Pacheco de Narváez and Luis Diez de Viedma were translated and are preserved as manuscripts.<sup>111</sup> These works on the *Destreza* translated from Spanish into Portuguese show that in Portugal a distinct specific language had developed for the *Destreza*, with adaptations and loan words from Spanish, but with original solutions and the use of some terms that are exclusive to it.

However, the publication of the first work on the *Destreza* in Portuguese would have to wait until 1685, *Lições da Espada preta* by Thomas Luiz,<sup>112</sup> which, although it is not *Destreza Verdadera*, it is very much related.

From the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century we have the anonymous works *Lições de Marte* and *Manuscrito da Espada*, preserved in the same manuscript in the Biblioteca da Ajuda;<sup>113</sup> the first is a translation and summary of Pacheco de Narváez's *Nueva Ciencia*, while in the second one the *Destreza Verdadera* is intermingled with techniques of common fencing, some

106 Figueiredo, D. Gomes de, *Oplosophia e verdadeira Destreza das Armas*, Valle M. (ed.), Santiago Compostela 2013, p. 11.

107 Figueiredo, d. Gomes de. *Memorial da prattica do montante*, MS 1651, Bib. da Ajuda 49-III-20(21).

108 Figueiredo, D. Gomes de. *Memorial da prattica do montante*, in Vitervo, FM Sousa. *A Esgrima em Portugal*, Lisboa 1897, p. 79–96. See also the translation by Myers and Hick 2009, online: <[http://oakeshott.org/Figueiredo\\_Montante\\_Translation\\_Myers\\_and\\_Hick\\_v2.pdf](http://oakeshott.org/Figueiredo_Montante_Translation_Myers_and_Hick_v2.pdf)> (accessed April 30, 2014).

109 Gentleman serving voluntarily in the army without pay.

110 War for the independence of Portugal from Spain. It lasted from 1640 to 1668.

111 Fonseca, L. de Seixas da. *Destreza das Armas*, MS eighteenth century, B.Univ. Coimbra Ms.208.

112 Luiz, T. *Tratado das liçoens da Espada preta*. Lisboa 1685 [V.243 .244 .245].

113 *Lições de Marte/ Manuscrito da Espada*, MS 17-eighteenth century, Bib. da Ajuda 49-III-6 [V. 223].

of them unprecedented. This last one was published recently.<sup>114</sup> Already in the eighteenth century, a manuscript containing a translation of Ettenhard's *Compendio de los Fundamentos de la Verdadera Destreza* into Portuguese was presented for approval to the censoring body (Real Mesa Censoria),<sup>115</sup> although José de Barros Paiva e Moraes Pona<sup>116</sup> claims authorship. And, although it is not *Destreza*, in the nineteenth century there appears published in Lisbon (1842) the *Tractado de Esgrima a pé e a cavallo*,<sup>117</sup> which is a translation of the *Tratado de Esgrima a Pie y a Caballo* by Eudaldo Thomase.

An immense work by Gerard Thibault<sup>118</sup> (or Geraldo, as he liked to call himself) was published his immense work posthumously in Leiden in 1630,<sup>119</sup> Thibault's fencing, although not orthodox, undoubtedly had an enormous influence on the *Destreza*, and there are testimonies linking him to Spain and to the masters of Carranza's *Destreza*.<sup>120</sup>

Also from the Netherlands is a manuscript of which only two copies survive, one in Glasgow, the other in Stockholm. It has been attributed to Pedro de Heredia,<sup>121</sup> a Spanish soldier stationed in Flanders in the first half of the seventeenth century, based on a manuscript note, although the note in fact is of a much later date. In any case, it is without a doubt the work of a French speaking author. It contains one part dedicated to dealing with the "mathematical game",<sup>122</sup> in a clear allusion to the true swordsmen (*diestros verdaderos*), and also several techniques of common fencing, although the treatise is also influenced by Italian fencing, from which it borrowed several terms.<sup>123</sup>

114 *Manuscrito da Espada, Biblioteca da Ajuda 49-III-6(2)* Valle, M. Puey, T. (eds.) Santiago Compostela 2013.

115 Portuguese council issuing printing authorization for books.

116 Pona, J de Barros Paiva e Moraes, *Compendio dos fundamentos da verdadeira Destreza*. Ms 1768, Torre do Tombo Ms.Livr.750.

117 Osorio y Gómez, P. *Tractado de Esgrima a pé e a cavallo*, Lisboa 1842 [V. 313].

118 Thibault, G. *Academie de l'espée*, Leiden 1630 [V.444] [Pard. 2598.01].

119 In most of the extant exemplars the date at the frontpage can be read 1628 (MDCXXVIII), although the actual printing is 1626 (MDCXXVI), two "I" were added by hand to complete the date.

120 Herman Fontaine de la Verwey, "Gerard Thibault and his Academie de l'Espée", *Quaerendo* (1978) 8: 289.

121 Heredia, P. *Livre des leçons*, MS seventeenth century, Scott E.1939.65.359/360, Kungl Bib. Ms x 911 [V.198].

122 *Destreza* was considered (even by its opponents) a system heavily based upon mathematics and geometry.

123 There is an modernized edition by Olivier Dupuis, Lionel Lauverney, Philippe Errard Didier de Grenier, 2011, online: <<http://ardamhe.free.fr/biblio/pdf/LdL.pdf>> (accessed April 30, 2014).

Also in Naples in 1678 we find the *Destreza* in the work of Pedro Tejedó Sicilia de Teruel, *Escuela de Principiantes*,<sup>124</sup> published as a Spanish-Italian bilingual edition.

In America it seems that the seed left by Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza bore fruit in Guatemala. The first book on *Destreza* in America was published there in 1684, the *Conclusiones Philosophicas en la Ciencia y Destreza Verdadera de las Armas* by José Mateo de Garaillana.<sup>125</sup> A short work which summarises the principles of the *Destreza* in 12 conclusions, it is nevertheless very interesting because it constitutes a declaration of principles of the Carranza school.

At the end of the seventeenth century a controversy took place between, on the one hand, some swordsmen who had settled in Peru and defended the Indian stance, and on the other, Francisco Lorenz de Rada, then resident of Ciudad de México. Through several works there was an exchange of mutual criticism in a great display of passion and acrimony. Lorenz de Rada had already criticised this particular version of *Destreza* known as Indian *Destreza* in his work from 1705, *Nobleza de la Espada*.<sup>126</sup> Captain Diego Rodríguez de Guzmán began the controversy with his *Carta Apologética*,<sup>127</sup> written possibly in 1707, which has come down to us only through the reply made by Francisco Lorenz de Rada in his *Defensa de la Verdadera Destreza*<sup>128</sup> (México, 1712). Rodríguez de Guzmán in turn replies immediately with *Ilustración de la Destreza Indiana*<sup>129</sup> (Lima, 1712) which he attributes to Francisco Santos de la Paz, although there are some doubts as to its authorship. The controversy could not be continued as Lorenz de Rada died in 1713.

Finally, a treatise on sabres applying the principles of the *Destreza* was published in Mexico in the early nineteenth century, written by Simón de Frias,<sup>130</sup> Certified Master of the *Destreza* in the Kingdoms of New Spain.

The *Destreza* was seen by contemporary foreigners as a highly dangerous and efficient system against which it was necessary to be vigilant, as expressed by Silver in England:<sup>131</sup>

124 Tejedó Sicilia de Teruel, P. *Escuela de principiantes*, Naples 1678 [V.443].

125 Garaillana, J.M. *Conclusiones filosóficas en la Ciencia y Destreza Verdadera de las Armas*, Guatemala 1684 [V.170].

126 Lorenz de Rada, F. *Nobleza de la Espada*, Madrid 1705 [V.240] t. 3, p. 263.

127 Rodríguez de Guzmán, D. *Carta apologética* en Lorenz de Rada, F. *Defensa de la Verdadera Destreza*, Mexico 1712 [V.242].

128 Lorenz de Rada, F. *Defensa de la Verdadera Destreza*, Mexico 1712 [V.242].

129 Santos de la Paz, F. *Ilustración de la Destreza indiana*, Lima 1712 [V.418].

130 Frias, S. *Tratado elemental de la Destreza del sable*, Mexico 1809 [V.165].

131 Silver, G. *Paradoxes of defence*, London 1599. [Pard. 2447.01] p. 9.

This is the manner of the Spanish fight. They stand as brave as they can with their bodies straight upright, narrow spaced, with their feet continually moving, as if they were in a dance, holding forth their arms and rapiers very straight against the face or bodies of their enemies, and this is the only lying to accomplish that kind of fight. And this note, that as long as any man shall lie in that manner with his arm, and the point of his rapier straight, it shall be impossible for his adversary to hurt him, because in that straight holding forth of his arm, which way so ever a blow shall be made against him, by reason that his rapier hilt lies so far before him, he has but a very little way to move, to make his ward perfect, in this manner. If a blow is made at the right side of the head, a very little moving of the hand with the knuckles upward defends that side of the head or body, and the point being still out straight, greatly endangers the striker. And so likewise, if a blow is made at the left side of the head, a very small turning of the wrist with the knuckles downward, defends that side of the head and body, and the point of rapier much endangers the hand, arm, face or body of the striker. And if any thrust is made, the wards, by reason of the indirections in moving the feet in manner of dancing, as aforesaid, makes a perfect ward, and still withal the point greatly endangers the other. And thus is the Spanish fight perfect: so long as you can keep that order, and soon learned, and therefore to be accounted the best fight with the rapier of all other. But note how the Spanish fight is perfect, and you shall see no longer than you can keep your point straight against your adversary.

There was an interrelationship between the *Destreza* and the Italian styles, as Pacheco, who knew the Italian authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, mentions them profusely in order to criticise their postures and actions. Generally he only describes the Italian postures or techniques in disparaging terms, asserting that they are incorrect or bad without going into any deep explanation. Ettenhart delves into the difference, although he continues proposing the classic theory of the *Destreza* as the way to counteract Italian fencing. Possibly making use of already existing elements, as can be seen in the work by Guerra de la Vega<sup>132</sup> which presents the opposition of the Italian posture and the Spanish one, Lorenz de Rada defines a new foot positioning or posture called “bella española” (Spanish beauty), the objective of which is to counteract the efficacy of Italian fencing in the late seventeenth century.

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132 Guerra de la Vega, A. *Comprehensión de la Destreza*. MS 1681, B. Nac. España Mss/10868 [V.193].

Martin Ceron<sup>133</sup> in the early eighteenth century with his work *Fiel Despertador* also recognises the danger of the Italian blow<sup>134</sup> and the existence of the Italian school,<sup>135</sup> and recommends following the advice<sup>136</sup> of Ettenhard in the book *Diestro Italiano*.<sup>137</sup>

During the eighteenth century an author of Italian origin, Nicolás Rodrigo Noveli,<sup>138</sup> converted to the *Destreza* and even wrote a treatise, and, in addition, in order to complete his immersion into the Spanish traditions, he had published a book on bullfighting on horseback,<sup>139</sup> and another on dance.<sup>140</sup>

In *Grandezas de la Espada* Pacheco<sup>141</sup> presents a Turk with his cutlass in high guard, prepared to strike down with it and recommends various techniques to counter that, warning that this knowledge is of great use to the Kingdom, in permanent war as it was against the Ottoman Empire.

Pérez de Mendoza,<sup>142</sup> in the great folding plate at the end of the *Resumen de la Verdadera Destreza* from 1675 also depicts an African in this posture, as well as a Frenchman and an Italian in wards that are typical of their schools.

In a manuscript from 1727,<sup>143</sup> *Reglas para la Destreza de las Armas*, alongside the Spanish foot positions are also presented the French and Italian ones. From the mid-eighteenth century on, French influence is increasingly important, with the works of authors such as Perinat and Demeuse being translated, as is the *Encyclopedie* in 1791. In the French edition there are reproductions of the plates from the treatise by Domenico Angelo from 1763, *L'Ecole des Armes*, in which it is shown how to confront a Spanish swordsman, armed with a large rapier and in a right angle guard, with a light rapier, illustrated

133 Cerón Mancha y Giron, M. *Fiel despertador*, Jaen 1708 [V.67].

134 Ibid. fol. 27–27v, fol. 39v.

135 Ibid. fol. 38.

136 Ibid. fol. 40.

137 Ettenhard, F. *Diestro italiano y español*, Madrid 1697, [V.153].

138 Noveli, N.R. *Crisol especulativo, demostrativo, práctico, matemático de la Destreza*, Madrid 1731 [V.305].

139 Noveli, N.R. *Cartilla en que se proponen las Reglas para torear a Caballo*. Madrid: Angel Pasqual Rubio, 1726.

140 Noveli, N.R. *Choreografía figurativa y demostrativa del Arte de danzar en la forma española*. 1708.

141 Pacheco de Narváez, L. *Grandezas de la Espada*, Madrid 1600 [V.329] fol. 233–242.

142 Pérez de Mendoza y Quijada, M. *Resumen de la Verdadera Destreza de las Armas*, Madrid 1675 [V.358].

143 *Reglas para la Destreza de las Armas*, MS 1727, Scott E.139.65.597 [V.387].



in several engravings.<sup>144</sup> The Spanish ward is also mentioned in the work of Girard,<sup>145</sup> along with some characteristic blows such as the thrust to the eyes, or the *estramazón* (blow to the face).

## 7 Temporal Scope of the *Destreza*

The majority of books on the *Destreza* were published in the seventeenth century. Still, the influence of the *Destreza Verdadera* persisted in Spain until the late nineteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, although the *Destreza* was still dominant, at the beginning of the century the monumental work by Lorenz de Rada<sup>146</sup> was published, as well as other minor works, such as *El Fiel Despertador* by Martin Cerón,<sup>147</sup> a dialogue between truth and malice. *Carta a un Amigo* by Aznar de Polanco,<sup>148</sup> was published in 1724, whose only copy known was destroyed in Berlin during the Second World War. The *Destierro Vulgar y Compendio Sucinto* by Santiago González de Villaumbrosa,<sup>149</sup> was also published in 1724 and included an Encomium by Ettenhard.

A manuscript by Diego Rodríguez del Canto<sup>150</sup> presents the author's doctrine based on the *Destreza* and on the French and Italian schools; we see how there is already an advance in the foreign fencing theories. In the anonymous manuscript A.C.O.<sup>151</sup> (copies of which exist in the Biblioteca Nacional of Madrid and in the Victoria & Albert Museum),<sup>152</sup> one can observe the persistence of the *Destreza* with respect to the introduction of new weapons, shorter and lighter, and the influence of other European schools.

144 Bomprezzi, A. "Breve comentario sobre la Esgrima Española en el tratado de Doménico Angelo", online: <<http://www.Esgrimaantigua.com/EsgrimaAngelo.php>> (accessed April 30, 2014).

145 Girard, P.J.F. *Nouveau traité de la perfection sur la fait des armes*. Paris 1736 [Pard. 1112.01] p. 9, p. 90–92.

146 Lorenz de Rada, F. *Nobleza de la Espada*, Madrid 1705 [V.240].

147 Cerón Mancha y Giron, M. *Fiel despertador*, Jaen 1708 [V.67].

148 Aznar de Polanco, J.C. *Carta a un amigo*, Madrid 1724 [V.29].

149 González de Villaumbrosa, S. *Destierro vulgar y compendio sucinto*, Madrid, 1724 [V.191].

150 Rodríguez del Canto, D. *El discípulo instruido y diestro aprovechado en la Ciencia filosófica y matemática de la Destreza de las Armas*, MS 1735?, Instituto Valencia D Juan Mss 26-IV-28/31 [V.394].

151 Libro de Armas y dotrina para el resguardo, MS 1743, Bib. Nacional España Mss/18287, Victoria & Albert 275.C.7, Scott E.1939.65.478 [V.222].

152 Only the front page and plates were printed, the text remains manuscript.

The Spanish navy from the time of the Enlightenment was an organisation with a strong innovative drive<sup>153</sup> (unlike the army which was more conservative). Some characters like Jorge Juan<sup>154</sup> tried to modernise the training of the midshipmen in accordance with the then relevant scientific principles, and we thus have the edition of *Tratado de Esgrimir florete y sable* by Don Juan Nicolás Perinat,<sup>155</sup> printed in Cadiz in 1758. Several copies of this work are currently available, which shows how wide its distribution must have been in its time. Also preserved is a manuscript with the translation of the original French annotated by Jorge Juan himself,<sup>156</sup> searching for the proper translation into Spanish of innovative terms derived from French fencing.

We thus observe an opposition between the new practise of fencing, based on the teachings of foreign schools and the traditional Spanish method based on the *Destreza*, perhaps through the association of the latter with old scholastic and speculative theories. The categorisation of *Destreza* is also lowered, from science to art, possibly because during the Enlightenment physics, chemistry and the natural sciences gained in preeminence over other disciplines that had previously enjoyed equal esteem in the world heir to the Aristotelian legacy.

Portugal began to distance itself from the canons of the *Destreza*, and thus in the eighteenth century *Espada firme* by Martin Firme<sup>157</sup> was published, advocating an eclectic theory with traits from the *Destreza*, but also with other influences.

In the nineteenth century, although the *Destreza* persisted and works were published recognising French and Italian influences, such as *Principios Generales y Reglas Universales de la Verdadera Destreza* by Manuel Antonio de Brea,<sup>158</sup> we already see works appearing that are clearly inspired in foreign fencing, especially French, predominant at that time, in which all references to the *Destreza* have disappeared. Thus also the work of Eudaldo Thomase<sup>159</sup> *Tratado de Esgrima a Pie y a Caballo*, published in 1823, a translation of which was published in Portugal in 1842 (attributed to Pedro Osorio y Gómez).<sup>160</sup>

153 Even preserving the “clean blood” principle beyond many other countries.

154 Notorious Spanish seaman from XVIIIth century.

155 Perinat, J.N. *Arte de Esgrimir florete y sable*, Cadiz 1758 [V.365].

156 Perinat, J.N. *Arte de Esgrimir florete y sable*, MS 1758, Bib. Lazaro Galdiano M 6-2-20 [V.360].

157 Firme, M.M. *Espada firme*, Evora 1774 [V.161].

158 Brea, M.A. *Principios Universales y Reglas Generales de la Verdadera Destreza del Espadin*, Madrid 1805 [V.39].

159 Thomase, E. *Tratado de Esgrima a Pie y a Caballo*, Barcelona 1823 [V.445].

160 Osorio y Gómez, P. *Tractado de Esgrima a Pé e a cavallo*, Lisboa 1842 [V. 313].

The influence of the *Destreza* was best preserved during the nineteenth century in some of the works on sabres such as the *Tratado Elemental de la Destreza del Sable* by Simon de Frias,<sup>161</sup> published in Mexico in 1809, or in the work of Jaime Merelo y Casademunt<sup>162</sup> *Tratado Completo de la Esgrima del Sable Español*, or that of his brother José, *Manual de Esgrima, recopilación de las tretas mas principales que constituyen la Verdadera Esgrima del sable español y del florete*.<sup>163</sup> Also in the work published in Cuba by Antonio Álvarez García,<sup>164</sup> *Nociones de Esgrima del sable español* (Remedios, 1882). We could probably speak of a Spanish school of the sabre based on the *Destreza*.

In many different works mention is made of the *Destreza* with the bayonet, an infantry weapon prevalent in the nineteenth century, for which each national army<sup>165</sup> developed its own methods. In Spain systems emerged based on the French<sup>166</sup> or Italian<sup>167</sup> ones, although those based on the *Destreza* are the ones that spread more widely.<sup>168</sup>

Since its beginnings the *Destreza* was a practice of the intellectual and social elites, opposed to the common fencing practiced by ordinary folk. During the second half of the seventeenth century the *Destreza Verdadera* became the

161 Frias, S. *Tratado Elemental de la Destreza del Sable*, Mexico 1809 [V.165].

162 Merelo y Casademunt, Jaime, *Tratado completo de la Esgrima del sable español*, Toledo 1862 [V.269].

163 Merelo y Casademunt, Jose, *Manual de Esgrima, recopilación de las tretas mas principales que constituyen la Verdadera Esgrima del sable español*, Madrid 1878 [V.281].

164 Álvarez García, A. *Nociones de Esgrima del sable español*, Remedios 1882 [V.6].

165 Portugal, Ejercito. *Esgrima de bayoneta*. Lisboa 1856 [V.376]. Colombia, Ejercito. *Tratado de Esgrima de fusil con bayoneta*. Bogotá 1874 [V.78]; Narciso Campero. *Compendio de la Esgrima de la bayoneta*. La Paz, 1881 [V.45]; Anacleto Valenzuela. *Manejo de Armas terciado*. Santiago de Chile, 1884 [V.451]; Barón von Bischoffshausen. *Reglamento de Esgrima de bayoneta*. Santiago de Chile, 1895 [V.3]; Ecuador. Ejercito. *Instrucción militar. Esgrima de bayoneta*. Guayaquil, 1894 [V.107].

166 Miguel de Orús. *Esgrima de bayoneta, arreglada de la que usa el ejercito francés*. Madrid, 1861 [V.312]; Enrique de Parga (trad.) *Apuntes sobre la Esgrima de la bayoneta traducidas del francés*. Burgos, 1860 [V.348]; Joseph Pinette. *Escuela del cazador o manejo de la bayoneta*. México, 1844 [V.366]; Joseph Pinette. *Esgrima a la bayoneta*. San Fernando, 1850. Cadiz, 1859 [V.367].

167 Joseph J. Ozaeta. *Instrucción de bayoneta traducida del italiano*. MS, (ca. 1815) [V.315]; Giuseppe Rosaroll Scorza. *La Esgrima de la bayoneta armada traducida del italiano*. Madrid, 1830 [V.402].

168 Jaime Merelo y Casademunt. *Elementos de Esgrima para instruir al soldado de infantería en la Verdadera Destreza del fusil o carabina armados de bayoneta*. Toledo. 1861 [V.268]; José Cucala y Bruñó. *Tratado de la Esgrima del fusil o carabina armada de la bayoneta*. Habana, 1861 [V.86].

standard practice, although it continued to compete against common fencing and against other heterodox currents of the *Destreza*. It remained predominant during the eighteenth century, although some foreign influences began to appear, especially French ones (A.C.O.),<sup>169</sup> that were of particular significance in certain environments, such as the Navy (Perinat).<sup>170</sup> During the nineteenth century the changes brought on by the French invasions and the various alternating political regimes meant that although the *Destreza* was maintained in certain sectors, there was regression in relation to the new currents coming from France. We would have then the *Destreza* as an option in some way associated with the more traditional values, while French fencing would bring together the more renovating or progressive social segments. Although it exerted an influence in some military works, the *Destreza* gradually decreased in importance until it was practically exhausted at the end of the nineteenth century, and was saved only through the determination of a few enthusiasts.<sup>171</sup>

## 8 Conclusions

The *Destreza* was (and even now challenges us to design) a comprehensive system for the use of bladed weapons based on scientific principles according to the Aristotelian concept of science as a method of knowledge, rather than a discipline devoted to a specific field of knowledge. It is also imbued with humanistic concepts closely related to those principles in that man is the measure of all things and the agent and subject of them. Finally, the Christian imprint introduces some concepts such as the priority of self-defense as the obligation to preserve one's own body, as well as the need to preserve the life of our adversary as the precious legacy of God, authorising us to take a life only in defense of our own, and granting our adversary whenever possible the possibility to surrender, or at least offering him sufficient time for repentance.

169 A.C.O. *Libro de Armas y doctrina para el resguardo de los aficionados* . . . MS. 1743? [V.222].

170 Perinat JN, *Arte de Esgrimir florete y sable*. Cadiz, 1748 [V.365].

171 Wolf, T. *Ancient swordplay*. Wheaton, 2012. pp. 24–5.

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# The French Fencing Traditions, from the 14th Century to 1630 through Fight Books

*Olivier Dupuis*

The practice of fencing is well-documented across the three main social groups: the nobility, the clergy and the peasantry, whether in preparation for the duel of honor, as a game or for sport. In the first instance, it is worth remembering the great passion of the French nobility for duels that began in the mid-16th century,<sup>1</sup> to the point that historians of the duel consider that of all European nations, dueling was most popular in France.<sup>2</sup> In the second instance, there is a great deal of archival evidence that attests to a deeply rooted practice of fencing as a recreational activity,<sup>3</sup> to the point of having relatively uniform rules for fencing tournaments in the territory during the 16th century.<sup>4</sup>

However, there are few technical books that can testify to this craze for fencing in the Kingdom of France, and with one exception, all focus on the last 60 years of the period studied. The proximity in the publication dates necessarily presents some similarities, however, a detailed study of these sources reveals a particularly wide variation in form and in relation to fencing.

## 1 French Fight Books

### 1.1 *Le jeu de la hache* (M55)

This is the oldest known fight book written in French and, for the period studied, the only treatise dedicated solely to the use of a polearm. For these reasons, it is an exceptional witness. The ax in question is a polearm the height of a man with a tip at the end and at both sides of the shaft two of the three common offensive heads: axe, hammer or spike. These three combinations are well-documented in the iconography of the 15th century.<sup>5</sup> The tip at the

1 Billacois, *Le Duel dans la société française des XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles*.

2 Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France*, pp. 152–153.

3 Mehl, *Les jeux au royaume de France*, pp. 63–64.

4 Dupuis, “Organization and Regulation of Fencing in the Realm of France in the Renaissance”.

5 Anglo, “Le Jeu de la Hache: A 15th-Century Treatise”, p. 144.

opposite end was named the tail. It is therefore important to understand that this weapon designated as an axe may not have a cutting edge, and as noted by Anglo, this is precisely the case in the *jeu de la hache* which mentions only the hammer and the spike.

This manuscript takes the form of a small book of ten pages of parchment written in a beautiful cursive script. The work as it was transmitted to us appears to be incomplete in that it lacks the typical embellishments, including the dedicatory pieces, many capitals and probably thumbnails, which would normally be expected of a properly finished manuscript. The text is divided into three parts containing 73 paragraphs. The first part is a short prologue of three paragraphs. The second part is a chapter dedicated to the fight between two right-handed fighters. This is the larger of the two chapters with 48 paragraphs. The third part is a chapter consisting of 22 paragraphs opposing a right-handed fighter against a left-handed. The third level of organization is less obvious; Anglo has identified that certain paragraphs are linked together, while Raynaud went further by offering 26 logical sets while setting aside many paragraphs.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the study of the manuscript shows 27 spaces left blank extending across the text. Cognot and Jaquet both believe that these spaces are not dedicated to receive decorated initials but rather miniatures illustrating the techniques.<sup>7</sup> This is a very appealing idea, although no mention in the text makes it possible to confirm the existence of associated illustrations. All these spaces organize the text into as many sections, including the 26 already identified by Raynaud, which must involve the prologue, at the beginning of which an empty space was also left free to receive a miniature.<sup>8</sup> The text is then divided into three sections and 27 logical sections made from 1 to 6 paragraphs each.

As explained in the introduction, the purpose is to describe the use of the ax in armor in the context of duels for pleasure or for honor.<sup>9</sup> It is also one of the few technical sources to corroborate the use of armored combat techniques outside of lethal combat.<sup>10</sup>

The content is itself extremely complete even if its organization is a bit confusing. The author has established a strict and fairly simple typology of the

6 Raynaud, *À la hache!*, p. 507.

7 Cognot, *L'armement médiéval*, p. 623. Jaquet, *Combattre en armure*, p. 119.

8 There is an exception, the fifth section that begins on a paragraph following the previous; it should be an error of positioning of the free space which would probably have been placed on the following paragraph.

9 Jaquet, "Combattre à plaisance ou à outrage ?".

10 Jaquet, *Combattre en armure*, pp. 58–59.

initial situations and gives the impression of having studied most combinations. Although he does not give explicit strategies, he has logically separated those where the protagonist has to react to a situation and those where he takes the initiative. For example, in the chapter for a right-handed against a right-handed, the only tactic proposed is to defend oneself against a swinging blow and never to begin with this offensive action,<sup>11</sup> while in the second chapter the author presents both how to defend but also to initiate the engagement with a swinging blow.<sup>12</sup> It is thus possible that the author chose this method to separate the situations you need to know to face to those he recommends to initiate, allowing a glimpse of the tactical elements.

The author gives also an interesting indication of the classification of combatants: the experienced fighter, called ax player, could be recognized by the fact he is coming with the tail in front.<sup>13</sup> This shows, if necessary, a sufficient variety of practitioners to make it possible to distinguish this characteristic. In this perspective the work shows an extraordinary educational maturity, and if it does not address all of the motor behavior associated with the weapon,<sup>14</sup> it remains very accomplished and autonomous.

Anglo summed it up perfectly in his notes accompanying his transcription, “this manuscript could scarcely be more anonymous”. In addition to not carrying any information about the author, the document bears no indication about his dating or origin, which explains why the catalog of the French National Library dated it to the 15th century without elaborating. The fact that several narrative works depicting scenes of the poleaxe are of Burgundian origin seems to have led some authors to see an influence,<sup>15</sup> or a Burgundian origin,<sup>16</sup> in the *jeu de la hache* without any real argument. Among chronicles identified by Raynaud involving ax fighting, many are not Burgundian. The script of this manuscript was a cursive script, which differs from the typical script in fashion at the court of the Dukes of Burgundy, the “bastard burgundian” which is a semihybrida script. The difference is found in the lack of loops on the upward bars of the letters b, l and h<sup>17</sup> in the bastard burgundian; this would indicate a possible composition outside the territories of the Duchy of Burgundy, but does not necessarily forbid a Burgundian origin.

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11 M55, fol. 3r–3v.

12 M55, fol. 8r.

13 M55, fol. 4v.

14 Cognot, *L'armement médiéval*, p. 620 and p. 625.

15 Raynaud, *À la hache!*, p. 495.

16 Mondschein, *The Knightly Art of Battle*, p. 15.

17 Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books*, p. 24 and pp. 142–162.

The first reference to the manuscript is in the inventory of 1544 of the Royal Library of Blois,<sup>18</sup> stored in a wooden box alongside lavish illuminated manuscripts. It is absent from the previous inventory of 1518,<sup>19</sup> which contains about 200 fewer works. This difference in volume is explained by a few purchases in the interim period, either through negligence of the first inventory or by a late transfer of books of the previous kings which remained at Amboise castle or other reserves.<sup>20</sup> This latter scenario is plausible because under Charles VIII several campaigns for refreshing the books of the Amboise library are identified, including the purchase of black velvet for the binding as seen on the *jeu de la hache* in the inventory in 1544. In any case, this book is not mentioned in any of the previous inventories of the funds that supplied the library of Blois,<sup>21</sup> but the small size of this manuscript may have slipped the attention of people who made these inventories. Its unfinished state may also justify the absence of any mark of ownership on both the pages and the edge. Its origin remains at present entirely uncertain, nothing in particular could prove a Burgundian origin.

The best source of dating could be the fact that the weapon used in the technical treatise has no cutting edge but only a hammer and a spike as discussed before. It seems that until the mid-15th century, a clear distinction is still made between these two forms to cause dissent when a participant brings a hawk-like beak instead of an ax.<sup>22</sup> This could argue for a composition in the second half of the 15th century, but this would require further study.

Another means to assess the dating is the analysis of the technical vocabulary. Cognot shows a large overlap between the *Jeu de la Hache* and descriptions of ax fighting from the chronicles of Olivier de la Marche;<sup>23</sup> this could again argue for a text dating to the mid-15th century.

## 1.2 *Saint-Didier (P15)*

Saint-Didier was likely familiar with the French king's court, for he dedicated his book, printed in 1573, to Charles IX. He even affirms having fenced with the king himself. A few of his many dedicatees were key figures of the literary domain, and it is impossible to know whether his position in the gentry allowed him into court, or on the contrary, his habits at court made his way to

18 Omont, *Anciens inventaires et catalogues de la Bibliothèque nationale*, p. 258, number 1846.

19 Ibid., pp. 1–58 for the books in French.

20 Baurmeister/Laffitte, *Des livres et des rois, la bibliothèque royale de Blois*, pp. 223–224 and p. 174 for the example of a book missing in 1518 but acquired before.

21 Delisle, *Le Cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque impériale*, pp. 72–150.

22 Raynaud, *À la hache!*, p. 534.

23 Cognot, *L'armement médiéval*, pp. 629–633.

his status. In spite of this proximity to the higher circles, the main biographical elements about him come from his own treatise, written directly by himself, or in the verse of the preliminary pieces. In his sonnet, Jean Emery indicates that Saint-Didier was the son of a so-called Luc de Pertuis, from a little town in Vaucluse; later, he mentioned a military experience: "Saint Didier experienced with weapons, noble warrior, after being involved in many fights,"<sup>24</sup> confirming what lays in his epistle to the king: "as I served your Majesty as well as your predecessors as soldier for 25 years in Piedmont and elsewhere."<sup>25</sup> The Piémont was indeed the scene of many military conflicts, during the reigns of François I from 1542 to 1546, and Henri II from 1552 to 1556, and it is likely that Saint-Didier took part in one or both of these campaigns. A few years later, on 15 July 1562, his name is mentioned in Burgundy among several gentlemen accompanying the army of Maugiron, governor of the Dauphiné.<sup>26</sup> Apart from these elements, only one other fragment of biographical information about Saint-Didier was found. La Croix du Maine indicates that Henri de Saint-Didier was still alive in 1584 and "about to print some other books about his science in Fencing, and some more about other secrets of nature, in which he found his pleasure."<sup>27</sup> This new book may be the one he writes about in the following text: "There are others but at the second book nothing will be omitted nor kept on the side."<sup>28</sup>

Saint-Didier's treatise was the first conceived, written and printed in French, and was surprisingly disavowed for a long time by fencing historians. For example, Gelli wrote that its content is only an adaptation of Marozzo's, Agrippa's and De Grassi's books.<sup>29</sup> In 1918, Dubois responded to his contemporaries' criticism who, blocked in their vision of continuous progress, despised the work of Saint-Didier as a childish babbling.<sup>30</sup> These critical reviews are certainly based on the quite unusual content of this treatise, corresponding perfectly to Bascetta's definition of didactic works,<sup>31</sup> since it presents the basis of his fencing with a lot of repetitions. This differs particularly from other contemporary works by the slowness of its progression, the simplicity of the situations, but also a real clarity in its teachings. More recently, Anglo also

24 [...] *saint Didier aux armes esprouvé / Noble guerrier apres s'estre trouvé*, P15, p. 15.

25 [...] *car ayant fait service au fait des armes, tant à voz ayeux, comme aussi à vostre Majesté, par l'espace de vingtcing ans en Piedmont & ailleurs*, P15 p. 2.

26 Lot, *Recherche sur les effectifs des armées de France des Guerres d'Italie*, p. 261.

27 Rigoley de Juvigny, *Les bibliothèques françaises de La Croix du Maine*, vol. 1, p. 370.

28 *Il en y a d'autres mais à l'autre impression ne sera rien omis ne laissé*, P15, p. 74.

29 Gelli, *Bibliografia generale della scherma*, p. 118 et pp. 481–486.

30 Dubois, *Essai sur le traité d'escrime de Saint-Didier*.

31 Bascetta, "Les codes verbaux de jeu", pp. 95–104.

took the side of Saint-Didier by showing that his work was innovative in many respects, when it tells how to draw the sword, in the fact that it is limited to only one weapon, the single sword,<sup>32</sup> and also in the relation between the text and the illustrations. It establishes the presence of geometrical ground plans, and for some plates specifies foot positions to indicate the correct sequence of displacements, and uses it as reference in the text, to move forward and step on the sides with displacements in the shape of triangles or squares. In addition, the plates were executed in a coherent way, conceived not only to illustrate but also understand the text better. Saint-Didier quotes explicitly the contents of the illustrations, and uses only two characters, systematically named and numbered (odd numbers for the lieutenant, even for the provost) so that the characters are consistently referenced in the text to associate it with the drawings.<sup>33</sup> Thus the teaching is not aimed directly at the reader, but is made between the depicted characters, from master to student, lieutenant to provost, reproducing in this way individual lessons, which is also a defining feature of this treatise.

The last peculiarity of this book is that it ends with a chapter on royal tennis,<sup>34</sup> for which people were very enthusiastic at that time. This chapter is quite curious as it was one of the few sources which compared tennis to fencing,<sup>35</sup> but it was quite important as it is the oldest technical source about this sport in French.

### 1.3 *Le cabinet d'escrime de l'épée et poignard de Péloquin (M34)*

This short manuscript was written by a single person named De La Haye who describes himself as a well-educated man.<sup>36</sup> This book is signed by De La Haye to Maurice De Nassau, the young brother of the Prince of Orange, however, as many other manuscripts, it is not dated at all. De La Haye, according to him, obtained it from a so-called *capitaine Péloquin*, a French fencing master who taught Henri De Navarre fencing before he became King of France no less!<sup>37</sup> De La Haye wrote in the present tense of the ruling King, therefore we can assume that the manuscript was written between 1589 and 1610. The praises for Maurice de Nassau's military success seem to refer to the victories against Spain and the fact that Maurice de Nassau is referred to as "governor of the

32 Anglo, *Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, pp. 144–145.

33 Ibid., pp. 65–66.

34 P15, pp. 173–178.

35 Bondt, *Royal tennis in renaissance Italy*, p. 168.

36 He may be Jean De La Haye, the French translator of a book about the history of the Low Countries written by Van Meteren. De La Haye, *L'Histoire des Pays-Bas d'Emanuel de Meteren*, La Haye, H.-J. Wou, 1618.

37 M34, fol. 2r–2v.

United Provinces” contributes to bring back the earliest date of the manuscript to 1592, when the seven Provinces had been militarily united.

There is no trace of Capitaine Péloquin to be found, which is quite puzzling for a man who is supposed to have been “one of the four first fencing masters in France, and of having trained the king of France”.<sup>38</sup> Could he be a fictional character? De La Haye hopes to be granted an office in exchange of this gift. By telling that this manuscript has been written by a fencing master with such prestigious pupils, he certainly intends to raise the worth of the manuscript itself. Péloquin was the name of a well known protestant martyr in the mid-16th century.<sup>39</sup> According to this hypothesis, the actual writer would remain unknown and might as well be De La Haye himself who wrote the manuscript.

As the title of the book suggests, the sole combination of sword and dagger is broached here with “a different method here, than that of the masters”.<sup>40</sup> As a matter of fact, this fight book is unique both in its form and content. The base is made of four guards, which are not those of Agrippa, creating a new system which divides the space in four parts: bottom, top, left, right. The sword held low constitutes the first guard, the sword held high is the second, the sword held to the left is the third and finally the sword held to the right is the fourth. The targets and the hitting areas are divided into seven levels. Those definitions are tackled in the first two chapters, the 13 chapters following explain tactical intentions and are each divided into four parts, each part dealing with a different initial sword stance. The thrust is the blow most used, but the cuts are still very present as a second intention. The most characteristic feature of the manuscript is the domination of the battering of the opponent’s sword whereas the bindings are secondary.

The illustrations associated with each action are quite unusual and are designed with a real care for abstraction. The opponent is displayed on a scaled plane with seven horizontal parts and one vertical part and is represented with only a heart and a stylized face. The fencer is only represented by his weapons, his sword and dagger, and his footwork.<sup>41</sup> Finally, for each tactical situation depicted the movements of the sword and dagger are drawn, including intermediary positions corresponding to intermediary stages broached in the

38 [ . . . ] *un des quatre premiers maîtres d'escrime de France, et d'avoir dressé aux armes le Roy de France*, M34, fol. 1r and 2v, translation by R. Van Noort.

39 Crespin, *Actes des Martyrs deduits en sept livres*, p. 303 and pp. 409–432.

40 [ . . . ] *une autre methode, que celle des maîtres de pardeça*, M34, fol. 2r, translation by R. Van Noort.

41 For a more complete description of the diagrams, see the contribution of Gevaert/van Noort in this volume.

text. This illustrating method replaces the expensive illustrations which only grasp a moment of the action and grant an incredible quality in the exchange between the text and the illustration. Unfortunately, this kind of diagram quickly reaches its limits. For example, it would have been nice to see the weapons of the opponents as well as their movements to avoid many remaining ambiguities, but this would have impeded the legibility of the diagram.

#### 1.4 *André Desbordes (P27)*

In 1610, André Desbordes had a short French fencing treatise published in Nancy, capital of the dukes of Lorraine.<sup>42</sup> This document was met with little fanfare and no later document refers to it. However, contrary to most other French authors studied, many biographical details are known to us.<sup>43</sup>

André Desbordes, real name Abraham Racinot, was born in 1582, in Lorraine. After a trip to Italy where he learned the art of fencing under the teaching of an unknown master, he came back to Lorraine and tried to enter the court of Duke Charles III.

He became close to Henri, eldest son of the Duke, and from August 1606, was granted a pension as a fencing master. This pension was confirmed as Henri became Duke of Lorraine and André Desbordes became gentleman following the Duke. He became close to the Baron Louis d'Ancerville, favorite of the prince and illegitimate child of the former cardinal Louis de Guise. He obtained from the Duke his first title of nobility in August 1609. In 1610, he had his fencing treatise printed in Nancy, signed to the Duke and with a preface by the Baron d'Ancerville, among others.

From then on, he kept on collecting favors from the Duke: annuity, estates, industry shares, hotels, ducal properties, until he entered the duchy State Council, as a squire. This was probably the most dazzling social ascension of a fencing master.

In 1621, Duke Henri II consented to marry his nephew to his eldest daughter although Louis d'Ancerville was initially chosen. It seems that André Desbordes did everything that he could to prevent this wedding. After the death of Duke Henri II in July 1624, his nephew inherited the title and, out of spite, took revenge on the fencing master for the difficulties he encountered three years before by starting a judicial inquiry for witchcraft. It was the time of the witch hunts, and the Lorraine tribunals were particularly hard on that matter.<sup>44</sup> Desbordes was imprisoned in Nancy. The acts of trials stated that

42 P27.

43 Lepage, "André des Bordes".

44 Roehrig, *À mort, la sorcière!*, pp. 179–180.



Desbordes eventually confessed and the verdict was made on 28th January 1625. On the very same day, he was strangled and his body burned to ashes, leaving a widow and five children; his properties were partly auctioned and just half of his real estate was left to his widow. Thanks to the inventory of his goods after his death, the *Guidon des Capitaines* has been discovered in his book collection:<sup>45</sup> a compilation of various books printed in 1609 including the translation by Villamont of the fencing treatises from Cavalcado and Paternostro.<sup>46</sup>

This short fencing treatise is not as exciting as the life of its author. It does not have any illustrations, except for the bust of the author. For Desbordes, fencing serves at least four purposes: physical work-out, soldiers training, entertainment and self-defense. He mainly deals with sword alone and sword and dagger which forms the main part of the technical chapters. However, he wrote three chapters on fencing with sword and cloak and dagger. The technical features seem confused—Desbordes appears more comfortable with giving advice from his own experience or logic than with didactic structures or pedagogic explanations. The sentences are often difficult to understand and a hypothesis could be that Desbordes could have plagiarize parts of its book from another document. The few extracts quoted by Gaugler of Palladini's fencing book<sup>47</sup> shared striking similarities with Desbordes. Unfortunately, Palladini's fencing book has not yet received any valuable edition to process a comprehensive check of both documents.

Both André Desbordes and his treatise are unusual in the French fencing world. Starting as a simple fencer, he reached an exceptional social status in the entourage of the duke, that did not prevent him from being one of the four most powerful personalities of the duchy to be executed for witchcraft.<sup>48</sup> Although he wrote and printed a fight book at a time when very few French fencing masters did, it is very unlikely he kept on teaching once he reached his high social situation.

### 1.5 *François Dancie (M13, P34)*

François Dancie, sir du Verdier was the author of a manuscript that was found inserted in the collection of a middle-class citizen from Bordeaux, deceased

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45 Lepage, "André des Bordes", pp. 31–34.

46 P25.

47 Gaugler, *The History of Fencing*, pp. 12–14. I must thank here Piermarco Terminiello for sharing this information.

48 Roehrig, *À mort, la sorcière!*, pp. 86–87.

in 1617.<sup>49</sup> He also wrote a book printed in Tulle in 1623, which stayed for a long time unknown from the fencing world's biographers. A few elements were to explain this feeble fame: Tulle was not a very literary city, and printing was only in its infancy there; it seems that François Dancie worked with the second printer established there.<sup>50</sup> The main consequence of this is that the product is of poor quality, small in size and without any illustration plates, and was probably little distributed.

We do not know much about François Dancie. He was probably a native of Nonards, a little village in Corrèze. His marriage with Jeanne de Linars may have allowed him to approach François Maynard, president of Aurillac's courthouse.<sup>51</sup> In his book's foreword, Dancie maintains that he was the first to write about fencing in French,<sup>52</sup> which is of course false, but possible that he did not know the others, for the previous books in French did not really achieve posterity, with the exception, maybe, of Villamont's translation.

The manuscript and the printed book share a similar structure: two chapters of similar size on the sword and dagger, then sword alone. The manuscript is an invaluable evidence of a work in progress, before completion and printing. Of course, it contains none of the regular ornaments like epistles, dedicatory poems or even a foreword. The manuscript is formed of a succession of techniques to be realized in certain conditions; the 1623 edition contains a big section with these techniques, but they are organized in clearly identified sections and completed with comments and reflections. Furthermore, it is quite difficult to find the manuscript's techniques again in the book, even when it is possible, they are partially modified. For example, the first technique against an opponent leading with the left foot<sup>53</sup> ends with a thrust in *terce*, not anymore in *seconde*. Many other techniques seems to have been modified or removed. As a result, we can consider that the manuscript is not a pre-edition version of the printed book, but an independent document, conceived earlier, from which Dancie revised, upgraded and completed the form and contents.

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49 Dupuis, "Discours des armes et methode pour bien tirer de l'espée et poignard de François Dancie", pp. 1–2.

50 Boutier, *Livres et imprimés en Limousin au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 3 and p. 15.

51 A certain François Dancie living in Nonards was married with Jeanne de Linars, related to Maynard, president of Aurillac's courthouse. This is undoubtedly the same Maynard who was the author of a small laudatory poem located in the preface of the printed book of Dancie. De Veyrières, "Incendie du château des Maniols à Tauriac", p. 388.

52 *Pour moy qui fraye le premier ce chemin d'escrire sur ce subject en nostre langue*, P34, p. 6.

53 P34 pp. 64–65, M13 fol. 360r.

The teachings of the book are presented in a pragmatic way. Dancie tried to cover most of the possible events that can happen in a serious fight. Firstly, he recommends not to despise the blows of the untrained fencers, since they allow you to know the honors of victory,<sup>54</sup> also to be careful about the opponent's fury,<sup>55</sup> and, of course, to keep regular training to maintain speed and judgment.<sup>56</sup> Dancie's teachings are also tinted with empiricism, as the author describes his successes in the use of the thrust in some circumstances.<sup>57</sup> He also advises to remain calm and avoid being injured at all cost, but to constantly try to touch since this is done by parrying. He warns of the danger of an injured enemy who can increase his speed, and act "without rule"<sup>58</sup> or "at all costs".<sup>59</sup> These thoughts about passions are interesting, since they push further than the purely mechanical theory of fencing and inscribe Dancie as one of the precursors of the Cartesian fencing, which is one of the dominant tendencies of the French treatises from the second half of the 17th century.<sup>60</sup>

### 1.6 *The Book of Lessons and its Collection of Illustrations (M21, M65)*

This work takes the form of a couple of manuscripts written in French, one containing mostly text on 210 pages, the other the associated illustrations. Only a couple of manuscripts have been completely preserved as well as an isolated book of illustrations. But none of them contained any explicit dating, this will be discussed later. To allow association between the illustrations to the technical text, figure captions refer directly to the page and paragraph: "... as was more broadly declared at the book of lessons, folio 20 Article 7",<sup>61</sup> which justifies the title given to the entire work. These three documents are strictly anonymous and the only information provided by the author is that he actually worked as a weapon master "... principles or simple lessons I was accustomed to give to young students".<sup>62</sup> A handwritten note associated with the manuscripts of Glasgow when acquired by the Scott Collection gives him the name *traité des armes* and assigns it to Don Pedro de Heredia which was

54 P34, p. 90.

55 P34, pp. 92 and 94.

56 P34, p. 103.

57 P34, p. 64.

58 P34, p. 78.

59 P34, p. 29.

60 Brioiist/Drévilion/Serna, *Croiser le fer*, pp. 166–172.

61 [...] *comme est plus amplement déclaré au livre des leçons folio 20 article 7, M65, fol. 6 or M21, fol. 4.*

62 [...] *principes ou simples leçons que j'ai accoustumé de donner pour instruction aux jeunes escolliers, M21, p. 17.*

the name used to cite it in bibliographies.<sup>63</sup> Previously, it seems to have been in the possession of the collector Henri Gallice (1853–1930) since he bears its bookplate, but it is not possible to know where he held these manuscripts nor explain the alleged ownership. Pedro de Heredia was a Spanish captain of cavalry who married the daughter of Gaspar Taye, knight and lord of Goyck<sup>64</sup> in 1618 and participated in military actions in Spanish Low Countries;<sup>65</sup> he even obtained the title of governor of Zoutleeuw from about 1640 until 1648.<sup>66</sup> He certainly spoke fluent French, but it is difficult to imagine a Spanish officer stooping to teach fencing to the gentry of Low Countries. De Heredia was probably a later owner, different to the original scribe.

The stored set of illustrations in Glasgow contains 54 folios, while the second retained in Sweden includes the same pictures but has 17 more.<sup>67</sup> The writings differ significantly between the three—the books of illustrations are of comparable style, but significantly different from the book of lessons, which is *a priori* more modern. These books containing the texts could have been copied later, perhaps to have a version in a more contemporary script and therefore more legible handwriting, while taking care to adhere strictly to the distribution of paragraphs on each page so that the references by the image collections items are always on the same page. It is possible to note two interventions at this stage. The first is destructive, since the content of the first page has been replaced by a page containing an introductory diagram on the front and the back left blank. This is deduced by the fact that the introductory section continued in the early folio 3 where the first paragraph has been carefully hatched. The second procedure was to add or modify titles to the chapters where many different handwriting styles can be found; curiously two Gallicized Spanish fencing words appear in these titles, *gannance* and *garatouces*. These two terms are completely missing in the content of the paragraphs and have no parallel in any other known French source about fencing, and were obviously added to inform the sponsor of this copy, who could then be of Spanish origin but must be able to read French, perhaps Pedro de Heredia himself.

The content follows a traditional organization and begins by definitions of technical terms and general considerations on fencing. For this section the author has largely taken and slightly adapted from the translation of Cavalcabo and Pasternostro books by Villamont. Then follow two chapters on the sword

63 Anglo, *Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 345 note 38.

64 Dumont, *Recueil généalogique*, pp. 377–380.

65 De Haynin, *Histoire générale des guerres de Savoie*, pp. 11, 87, 89 and 294.

66 Wauters, *La Belgique ancienne et moderne*, p. 40.

67 Dupuis/Errard/De Grenier/Lauvermay, “Transcription du livre des leçons”, pp. 102–118.

only and the sword and dagger; each includes a set of logical sections sometimes covering tactical advice, but mostly on sets of exercises on a specific notion of fencing: simple actions, exercises to understand the notion of times, how to use the free hand, strokes against a left-handed opponent, etc. The whole strikingly resembles a pedagogical resource offering both a collection of large and very complete exercises to apply to students, but also an analytical deconstruction of the concepts of fencing to build a lesson plan. It is worth noticing that the swords pictured do not have a bell guard, as in Saint-Didier, which could correspond to a choice to show the hand position, but also a standard training weapon, but in this case, they lack the knob set on the tip of the blade.

Among the sections inside the chapter on the sword alone, one in particular should be noted, where the student learns to oppose someone practicing the “mathematical game” style. The main feature of this game seems to be that “the opponent’s sword is always stretched out in a line”.<sup>68</sup> Figures show a fairly straight fencer, the weapon arm fully extended, in full alignment from the shoulder to the tip. This is reminiscent of the engravings of Thibaut<sup>69</sup> and in particular the form of Spanish fencing style called *destrezza*.<sup>70</sup> This set of techniques to defend themselves and to oppose against the Spanish fencing style is much more elaborate than what Girard proposed centuries later.<sup>71</sup> Could it be sufficient to prove this treatise to belong another Spanish fencing style? It is difficult to justify, firstly because there is no surviving fight book of such form of fencing, secondly because it would then be difficult to explain the use of technical words of Italian origin as *schiver*, meaning to dodge, *cortelade* for a strike,<sup>72</sup> *brocade* for a thrust with the hand in pronation, etc. To complicate matters, note the use of the term *dague* to refer to the dagger, like the use of Spanish, while in all other technical sources in French or Italian the word used is *poignard*.

The manuscripts are not only anonymous, they do not contain any evidence to establish a precise dating. The presence of *in extenso* copies of extracts from the translation of Villamont helps to date the text at least after its first

68 [ . . . ] *l'espée ennemye est toujours estendu en droite ligne*, M21, p. 80.

69 P35.

70 The reference to “the mathematical game” could also mean that variants of the “*destrezza*”-style have been more influential that have been believed at a certain point in France. For a more complete description of the *destrezza*, see the contribution of Valle in this volume.

71 Girard, *Traité des armes*, pp. 90–92.

72 The re-edition of the fencing book of Marozzo from 1568 used a similar word with the same meaning: *se tu havessi da far alle cortellate*, P6 second book, p. 98.

publication in 1595. The two collections of paintings show significant clothing, especially the shirts whose cuffs are folded over the doublet and the collar remains suspended above the shoulders. These dress features are not so common and match some characters painted by Louis de Caullery, active between 1594 and 1622, such as the musician in his painting “*The Five Senses*”.<sup>73</sup> This similarity would date approximately the completion of the couple formed by the book lessons and the paintings between 1595 and 1630.

## 2 Other Evidence

### 2.1 *Lost Books*

Beside these remaining sources a few other fight books in French are mentioned, but they are now considered as lost. There are some references to them in old books, but without enough details to determine their real content or even if they have really existed. The oldest set was three books which were named *traittie de l'Espe*, literally the treatise of the sword, listed inside the library of the kings of France in 1373 and 1411,<sup>74</sup> but disappeared in 1435 when the library was dispersed after the death of the duke of Bedford.<sup>75</sup>

Marcelli mentioned a book produced by Jacques Descars in 1568 dealing partially with fencing, but it was the only reference to it.<sup>76</sup> Finally, there are convincing records of a possible Fight Book probably written by the philosopher René Descartes between 1618 and 1630, entitled: *L'Art de l'Escrime*. It seemed to have been lost as early as 1673.<sup>77</sup> Fortunately to us, his biographer published a short overview of its content which differs from every other known treatises that have survived:<sup>78</sup>

We also find among the manuscripts of Monsieur Descartes a small treatise concerning the way to practice weapons, entitled “The Art of Fencing, where it appears that most of the lessons he gives there were based on his own experience. After having said something in general of the qualities of the sword and the manner of using it, he divides his treatise into two

73 Vlieghe, *Flemish Art and Architecture*, p. 151.

74 Van Praet, *Inventaire ou Catalogue des livres de l'ancienne bibliotheque du Louvre*, pp. 123–127, number 749, 763 and 787.

75 Delisle, *Le cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque impériale*, pp. 52–53.

76 Anglo, *Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 331 note 13.

77 Adam/Tannery, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, vol. 10, p. 533–538.

78 Baillet, “La vie de Monsieur Descartes”, 2, p. 407.

parts. In the first, he shows how one can be assured against all the efforts of the adversary, and in striking with advantage when one is in long range, and how one can place it surely in short range. In the second, he examines how when being entered in short range, one can win infallibly. And for that he supposes two men of equal size, equal strength and equal weapons, proposing to show after what to do in the case of inequality.

## 2.2 *Translations into French*

There were at least four fight books translated from foreign languages to French before 1630. The oldest was a translation from German to French of the printed book from Pauernfeindt and was published in Anvers in 1538 with the title *La noble science des joueurs d'espée*.<sup>79</sup> The second was an undated translation of Marozzo into French, *Livre d'escrime, pour apprendre à tirer de l'épée & de toutes armes*, published in Lyon by Pierre Maréchal,<sup>80</sup> a printer who started to work at the end of the 15th century;<sup>81</sup> unfortunately, no remaining version survives. The fourth was a translation done by Jacques de Zeter into French and into German in 1619 from the printed fight book of Giganti.<sup>82</sup> But the one which was the most famous was the translation by Villamont of the two fight books from Cavalcabo and Paternostro,<sup>83</sup> which were first printed in 1595 and received many other reprints in the following 20 years. An exemplar of this book was in the library of Desbordes which was praised by Dancie and even has been partially reused into the “*book of lessons*”. Their names continue to be cited in other French books until the 18th century!

## 3 A French Fencing Tradition?

The first significant characteristic of these French fight books are their lack of apparent posterity, and the fact that very little biographical data are available about the authors reinforced this impression. They all seemed to have been written without the knowledge of any other French author, or at least they simply ignored them. Whereas many works referred directly to an Italian source of influence which was confirmed by Brioist when he concludes that fencing at the court of Valois and even during Henri IV's reign is undoubtedly

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79 P7.

80 Rigoley de Juvigny, “Les bibliothèques françaises”, vol. 3, p. 8.

81 Monfalcon, “Manuel du bibliophile et de l'archéologue lyonnais”, p. 22.

82 P32.

83 P25.

marked by the Italian fencing fashion.<sup>84</sup> If necessary, one could also add that in this period there were as many translations of Italian fight books published as original French works.

Saint-Didier was certainly influenced by Italian fencing, however, he seemed to write as a reaction to it, and that was clearly enforced by reading his long preamble where he opposed himself against two Italian masters. Dancie and Desbordes assumed their own Italian references to be the origin of their fencing style using a majority of thrusts.<sup>85</sup> The anonymous *book of lessons* did not itself reference the Italian masters but used a largely Italian vocabulary. The *jeu de la hache* and the *cabinet d'escrime de Péloquin* are the only examples where no real foreign influence can be found.

Another common characteristic of all these fight books are the small number of weapons studied, mostly the ax, sword alone and sword and dagger. And three, the *jeu de la hache*, Saint-Didier and the *cabinet d'escrime de Péloquin* focused on only one, Dancie on only two, and the last two have a much broader scope and include some sections for the sword and cape and even the dagger alone, but outside the sword alone and sword and dagger, the other weapons have really the smallest share.

This small number made a strong contrast to the real variety of weapons referenced in other French sources for the same period: longsword, sword and buckler, staves were quite common in the fencing training in France until the beginning of the 17th century,<sup>86</sup> but were completely missing from the fight books produced. How could this be explained?

The author of the *jeu de la hache* gives a list of weapons to be used inside the barriers, “the axe, light lance, dagger, great sword and small sword”,<sup>87</sup> and claims that fencing with the ax was the base for all these weapons: “Axe play, from which proceed and depend several weapons above-named”.<sup>88</sup> This is really interesting as it was in line with the important place of this weapon in the armor fighting mentioned in the chronicles,<sup>89</sup> but also this justifies the

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84 Briost/Drévilion/Serna, *Croiser le fer*, pp. 63–70.

85 P27 p. 20. P34, p. 33.

86 The sources are mostly master certificates, but also regulation texts. Dupuis, “Organization and Regulation of Fencing in the Realm of France in the Renaissance”.

87 [...] *la hache, la demy lance, la dague, la grande espee et la petite*, M55 fol. 2r–2v, translation by S. Anglo.

88 *Jeu de la hache dont procedent et despendent plusieurs glaiues dessus nommez*, M55, fol. 2v, translation by S. Anglo.

89 Raynaud, *À la hache!*, pp. 519–520.



fact that this treatise presents one weapon as fencing with others could be deduced from its content.

Both Desbordes and the author of the book of lessons justify their choice to begin with the sword alone as it was the “queen of weapons”.<sup>90</sup> Desbordes argues that it was the basis for learning any other weapon even those employed by soldiers, such as the pike or the halberd.<sup>91</sup> Conversely, Dancie begins his two treatises with the sword and dagger, but does not explain his choice, as if it were natural to do so. The *cabinet d'escrime de Péloquin* even devotes all his work on sword and dagger. It was probable that this set of weapons was very popular either in a fencing salon, or on the field for a duel, perhaps it may have been considered more difficult and demanding than fencing with sword alone. It appears then that the weapons presented in the treatises are limited to those being in fashion and, even if it is not explicitly stated, the ones that could be necessary for a duel.

These very different works share a third common characteristic, the complete lack of theory or real explanation of their internal system. In fact, there were a few theoretical elements, for example the notion of time, but it was entirely imported from Italian fencing. On the other hand, they make a great use of empiricism and pragmatism. Except for Desbordes, which is a very confusing treatise, all the others have a strong interest to pedagogy, in such a way the treatise like the *jeu de la hache*, Saint-Didier's book and especially the book of lessons could be reused directly as a support of lesson. They also correlate well between text and illustrations.

The *Jeu de la Hache* should have received some miniatures but due to their absence, it is impossible to discuss their relation to the text. The printed books from Desbordes and Dancie also lack any technical illustration, and this could be explained easily by the cost of such engraving. However, both claim that it is somewhat vain to try to illustrate with static figures the wide scope of situations that could occur by reproducing the techniques exposed in their books. Desbordes concludes his argumentation by the maxim “I only speak for those who want to hear”.<sup>92</sup>

The relation between the text and illustrations into the treatises of Saint-Didier and the *Cabinet d'Escrime de Péloquin* inscribed both into the movement of reduction in art<sup>93</sup> and propose two original solutions to the problem

90 [...] *la Reyne des armes*, M21, p. 17. *Tout le monde tient que l'espee est la roine des armes*, P27, p. 23.

91 P27, pp. 24–25.

92 [...] *je ne parle qu'à ceux qui veulent entendre*, P27 p. 10.

93 Brioiist, “La réduction de l'escrime en art au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”.

exposed by Dancie and Desbordes. Saint-Didier cuts out analytically each sequence of movement and gives an illustration of each. The author of the *Cabinet de Péloquin* proposed an elegant solution and shows the complete trajectory of the sword for a specific technique.

Finally, the book of lessons has been entirely built to be able to watch the pictures separately to the text, which never refer to the picture. At first glance, it is the pictures which need the text to be understood, but it occurs that the illustration gives in the simplest way a decisive information the text does not mention. For example, in one of the techniques to catch the opponent's guard, the illustration shows that the left arm must wrapped around the opponent's blade when the text only tells to "*do the hold at his guard with the left hand*".<sup>94</sup> Unfortunately, it is impossible to know if the author evades this information deliberately.

### 3.1 *The Lack of Evidence During the Early Renaissance*

As discussed earlier, besides the known treatises, others could have existed that have since disappeared, however, it is difficult to imagine that there were much more than a handful of such missing witnesses.

The translation of foreign works has partially filled a potential emptiness, but only two translations are attested to before the book of Saint-Didier, which is ultimately very little. By contrast, translations of Calvalcabo, Paternostro and Giganti have apparently been significant successes with a large number of reprints, at a time when the French masters begin to produce fight books and to venture to print them. In the early 17th century, the demand seems well proven for such documents.

Hundreds of years before, the usual patrons did not seem interested in this type of technical document. The case of the kings of France is a good illustration, outside the intriguing *Traittié de l'Espe* discussed before; *le Jeu de Hache* is the only fencing treatise belonging to the library of the king of France in 1542! A reason for the absence of French fight books at the beginning of the Renaissance seems to be the lack of interest of the great and the good for this type of technical document.

### 3.2 *Vieille escrime*

The wording *vieille escrime* is found repeatedly in the French literature of the 16th and 17th century.<sup>95</sup> It is popularized by Rabelais who employs it in at least

94 [...] *feres la prinse à sa garde de la main gauche*, M21, pp. 69–70 article 6. For the illustrations see M65, fol. 27 or M21, fol. 12.

95 Michaux, "Glossaire des termes militaires du seizième siècle", p. 336.

three novels,<sup>96</sup> when the hero delivers large strokes with a big stick in the manner of fighting from the romances of chivalry. Quickly this phrase takes a negative sense, referring to an obsolete art that has lost its effectiveness, as in this excerpt from a letter from 1572: “attack the heart of the country, not the borders, which is the old fencing, whose targets are only the arms and legs”.<sup>97</sup> While this literary topos confirms that outside the circle of fencers, observers were well aware of a change in the forms of practices that coexisted enough that the phrase remained meaningful to readers. This certainly helped to put the old fencing style in a bad light, had a lasting impression and influenced the content of fight books produced in France. Why produce a technical treatise on a matter that is considered antiquated? The new fencing style is quite well defined in opposition to the old, at least in the spirit of the time. That is to say, it uses essentially thrusts. If it is also much less spectacular, more importantly it claims to be more efficient, more direct. All this with many ideas of mechanical progress applied to motor behavior.<sup>98</sup> This new fencing comes at the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy, and it is only gradually that the French masters gain control and sufficient know-how on to produce developed educational treatises at the end of the 16th century. This route will be monitored and strengthened and the French school of fencing will be recognized at the end of the last century for its mastery of fencing through research of fluidity of movement, the refusal of brutal actions and elegance, linking body to spirit.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4 Conclusions

The king and Great Lords of France do not seem to have been interested in sponsoring the production of such books, instead they preferred to hire Italian masters to receive up-to-date training in line with the fashion of the time for many other arts. This had at least two consequences for the production of fight books. The ancient fencing styles in fashion in the fencing rooms was categorized as old-fashioned but above all inefficient. This is not explicitly written, but the efficiency expected was probably in the duels of honor the French genteel society enjoyed so much.

96 *Pantagruel*, chap. 29, *Gargantua*, chap. 27 and *Cinquiesme livre*, chap. 40.

97 [...] *assaillir le coeur du pays, non les frontieres, qui est la vieille escrime, dont les coups ne portent que sur les bras et sur les jambes*, Duplessis-Mornay, “Mémoires et correspondance”, 2, p. 35.

98 Briost/Drévilion/Serna, “Croiser le fer”, pp. 156–166.

99 *Ibid.*, pp. 165–167.

In that context, from the 15th to the early 17th century, there were only a few fight books produced in France, and a large part of them were translations. The few which remained restricted their content to the two weapons used in the field, the sword and dagger and the sword alone. All these works are really different, but they worked into two main axes, efficiency through pragmatic advice and empirical methods, and a more didactic approach through many innovations, in particular in the link between text and illustrations. Many authors testified honestly that they were custodians of a foreign tradition and built their work thanks to them. In any case, it is not before the second half of the 17th century that the know-how of French masters allowed them to develop their own art of fencing style,<sup>100</sup> which is present in the previous works only in its beginnings.

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# Evolution of Martial Tradition in the Low Countries: Fencing Guilds and Treatises

*Bert Gevaert and Reinier van Noort*

## 1 Introduction

The intention of this contribution is to give an overview of the evolution of the martial tradition of the Low Countries, the area that is now the Netherlands and the northern part of Belgium, from the 15th to the 18th century, looking at both the arts that were practiced, and at how this practice was organised. As only a limited number of sources, in the form of martial arts treatises from the Low Countries is available, the statutes and traditions of the fencing guilds of various cities will also be included as source material.

The typical phenomenon of local fencing guilds that are named after Saint Michael is mainly found in Flanders (the northern, Flemish speaking part of Belgium).<sup>1</sup> The first half of this contribution will focus on these fencing guilds, and particularly on the well-documented guilds of Bruges and Ghent. The statutes and organisation of these guilds present the best view into the earlier development of the martial traditions in the Low Countries, as for this period martial treatises are not commonly available. Next, a discussion of the martial arts treatises that were written in Dutch and some of the treatises produced in the Low Countries in other languages will follow. Based on a comparison of these treatises with the martial traditions of surrounding European countries,

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<sup>1</sup> In France the association of fencing masters, *la communauté des maîtres parisiens*, was also placed under the patronage of Saint Michael, when it was founded in 1567. Briost/Drévilion/Serna, *Croiser le fer*, pp. 78–80. Some documents of the fencing guilds of Paris, Lille and Amiens can be found in translation Chandler, *French fencing guilds* (retrieved 15/04/2014) on <http://www.hroar.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/10/pichon-pierre-chandler-jean-french-fencing-guilds.pdf>. Viaene, “De gilde van de schermers te Brugge”, p. 105 also refers to fencing guilds in Saint Omers, Tournai and Valenciennes. Galas/Steenput, “Statutes of the fencing masters of Bruges”, p. 139 also mention guilds of Saint Michael in Reims, Bethune in France and Utrecht, 's Hertogenbosch and Maastricht in the Netherlands. The Koninklijke Nederlandse Algemene Schermbond, <http://www.knas.nl/node/1237> (retrieved 21/04/2014) claims that the oldest statutes of a fencing guild are from Bergen op Zoom, dating back from 1486, hereby neglecting the fencing guild of Bruges.

it will be discussed whether a martial tradition unique to the Low Countries may have existed between the 14th and 18th centuries.

Though the number of martial arts treatises produced in the Low Countries is small, the available works, combined with the fencing guild statutes, provide an interesting view on the evolution of the art of fencing in the Low Countries, and on what may have influenced this evolution.

## 2 Fencing Guilds in the Low Countries

### 2.1 *Introduction*

Whereas recent interest in the martial heritage of Europe has resulted in numerous publications about the evolution of this heritage, almost no attention has been given to the development of fencing guilds, and the art of fencing, in modern Belgium and the Netherlands. A possible explanation for this lack of interest is the fact that the (Southern) Netherlands were probably not very important for the evolution of the art of fencing.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, in Flanders and possibly in other parts of the Low Countries as well, fencing guilds played an active role in the development of fencing. While fencing organisations in the German cities of the Holy Roman Empire worked as *Marxbrüder* under the protection of Saint Marcus, or as *Federfechter* under the protection of Saint Vitus,<sup>3</sup> in the Low Countries the sword bearing Archangel Michael was usually chosen as patron for these guilds. In certain cities, such as Courtray, the military saint Adrian was preferred and in Mechelen the fencers opted for Saint Lambert.<sup>4</sup>

These fencing guilds have generally been neglected by almost all present day fencing historians<sup>5</sup> though some studies can be found in small Flemish

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2 Coppens, *En garde*, p. 25.

3 Coppens, *En garde*, p. 17, Jaquet, "Fighting in the fightschools", p. 55 and Schaer, *Die alt-deutschen Fechter und Spielleute*, p. 54. In the Holy Roman Empire, Saint Luke was a patron saint for the *Luxbrüder*, about whom only little information is known. They evolved into *Klopffechter* and probably had an influence on the low status of fencing throughout the Empire, see Coppens, *En garde*, p. 18.

4 Viaene, "De gilde van de schermers te Brugge", p. 105.

5 One important exception is the article written by Galas/Steenput, "Statutes of the fencing masters of Bruges (1456)", which is an important source for this chapter. The standard work on the history of European martial arts, Anglo, *The martial arts of renaissance Europe*, completely ignores the Belgian fencing guilds. In Castle, *Schools and masters of fencing*, 14 one can only find a brief reference to "fighting guilds".



folklore magazines or small press publications,<sup>6</sup> and an occasional, unpublished master thesis.<sup>7</sup> Another important source for researchers can be found in publications that focus on only one guild and are sometimes financed by present day fencing guilds, such as the *Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint-Michiel* (Royal and Knightly Main Guild of Saint Michael) in Ghent<sup>8</sup> who have continued the work of their historical predecessor.<sup>9</sup> Besides the fencing guild of Ghent, another Flemish guild predominates in secondary literature: the fencing guild of Bruges, the Order of Saint Michael also known as the *Hallebardiers*.<sup>10</sup> Because of this availability of primary sources and the limited amount of secondary literature, our focus will be on the fencing guilds of Ghent and Bruges.

## 2.2 *Origin and Development of Armed Guilds*

In medieval cities there were usually three types of guilds or fraternities. The most common were the guilds that organised people involved in certain crafts or professions, secondly guilds focussing on religious or devotional matter and thirdly guilds with specific purposes, like rhetoric chambers or military guilds.<sup>11</sup>

This last group are the so-called armed guilds or *gildes armées*, *wapengildes*, which originally evolved from organisations of merchants or craftsmen who cooperated to strengthen their economic interests. Working together made these guilds stronger and made it possible for them to receive special privileges from the cities where they were organised or even from the count or

6 Viaene, “De gilde van de schermers te Brugge” and Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengildes*, which has many references to fencing guilds in Flanders.

7 Stellamans, *Historisch-culturele schets van de schermgilden in Vlaanderen*. This short and superficial thesis was of no use for this chapter.

8 The volume by Bailleul, *En Garde! Prêts? Allez!* is the most recent publication of the Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint-Michiel. It replaces and combines several older French publications mentioned in the bibliography of this chapter. Previously the Hoofdgilde of Ghent also published on their silver collection, paintings, drawings and caricatures. See bibliography for full details.

9 The present guild from Ghent can be found at <http://confrerie.be>. The Guild practices epee, foil, and sabre and has about 300 members.

10 After an absence of about 100 year, the guild of Saint Michael was re-established in 2005 and can be found at <http://www.hallebardiers.be>. The fencers practise modern Olympic fencing (epee and foil) but also historical fencing: longsword, rapier, *Dussacken* (a sort of training cutlass, originally made out of wood) and military sabre. The guild has about 200 members.

11 Brown, *Civic ceremony and religion in medieval Bruges*, p. 134. Brown adds “The distinctions between these categories are not watertight. Individual citizens could be member of all three kinds of guild simultaneously.”

king. Amongst these guilds, the merchants were probably the first who armed themselves to protect their convoys because they could not always count on the support of local authorities. It is very likely that four armed guilds were further established, originating out of these guilds of tradesmen: the guild of longbowmen named after Saint Sebastian, the guild of crossbowmen named after Saint George (in Bruges there were even a young and an old guild),<sup>12</sup> the already mentioned fencing guild of Saint Michael, and finally the guild of hand-gunners named after Saint Barbara (in Bruges) or Saint Anthony (in Ghent).<sup>13</sup> In cooperation with the other guilds, who also had a proper patron saint, these armed guilds functioned as ‘specialists’ in the city militia. As a symbol of their military power the guilds carried banners, which had a very important symbolic value.<sup>14</sup> On occasion, these banners were the subject of controversy between the ruler and the guild: in 1407 Duke John the Fearless even put a temporary ban on the use of guild banners in Bruges.<sup>15</sup> In addition to these banners, the members of the armed guilds in Bruges also wore an official city ‘uniform’, a so-called *parure*, with annually changing colours.<sup>16</sup>

From the 11th and 12th century onwards, traces of structured and armed organisations that were in charge of the defence of their cities can be found in Flanders. The earliest of these are probably the guilds of Saint George.<sup>17</sup> The crossbow played an important role in city defence and can for instance be seen on the famous Oxford Chest, which depicts the Battle of Golden Spurs (11th of

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12 Vanhoutryve, “Waarom twee Brugse kruisbooggilden van Sint Joris?”, p. 241.

13 Bailleul, *De vier Gentse hoofdgilden*, pp. 11 and 28. A full bibliography on the four main guilds in Ghent can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 105–106. The five guilds of Bruges are discussed in De Witte, *Wapengilden te Brugge* and Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*.

14 Verbruggen, *The art of warfare in Western Europe*, pp. 174 and 183.

15 Blokman/ Donckers, “Self representation of court and city in Flanders and Brabant”, pp. 96–97.

16 De Witte, “Wapengilden te Brugge”, p. 172 and Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 34 (guild *parure* in general) and Tanghe, *De Brugse stadsmilitie in de 15de eeuw*, pp. 29 (Saint Sebastian), 32 (Saint George), 34 (Saint Barbara), and Viaene, “De gilde van de Schermers te Brugge”, p. 97 (Saint Michael). In Bruges the colours varied between combinations of red, white and blue. According to Tanghe, *De Brugse stadsmilitie in de 15de eeuw*, pp. 30 and 32 sometimes the colour was green, decorated with yellow and red, or a combination with grey and purple. An official white felt ‘city hat’ could also be a required part of the uniform.

17 Bailleul, *De vier Gentse hoofdgilden*, p. 14. Galas/Steenput, “Statutes of the fencing masters of Bruges”, p. 138 mention the guilds of Saint Michael in Ghent and in Tournai, which claimed to have their origin in 1042 and 1187, respectively. However, there is no documentary evidence to ascertain these claims.

July 1302), and on the murals of the *Leugemeete* Chapel in Ghent (1346).<sup>18</sup> The oldest statutes can be found in the guild of Saint Sebastian in Ghent, dating from the reign of Louis II, count of Flanders (1346–1384) and referring to documents for armed guilds, which were previously ratified by his father Louis I (1322–1346).<sup>19</sup> In the same city, the gunners of Saint Anthony asked official permission to start a guild in 1488, were approved in 1489 and ratified by Charles V in 1515, almost one hundred years before the guild of Saint Michael.<sup>20</sup>

In Bruges, the oldest officially recognised armed guilds were the old and young guilds of crossbowmen (1340 and 1390), then the guild of Saint Sebastian (1440), the gunners of Saint Barbara (1517) and finally, the guild of Saint Michael (1521). Each received funding from the city: in the 16th century the old guild of crossbowmen received 160 pounds a year, the gunners received 72, and the young guild of crossbowmen, the guild of Saint Sebastian and the fencers 48 pounds.<sup>21</sup> The most prestigious guild was the guild of the crossbowmen (Saint George), directly followed by the guild of archers of Saint Sebastian.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.3 *Late Appearance of Guilds of Saint Michael*

At the end of the 15th century and beginning of the 16th century, most fencing guilds of the Southern Netherlands were founded and received their official privileges from the cities in which they had their base.<sup>23</sup> Antoon Viaene provides a full list of all Belgian fencing guilds:<sup>24</sup>

Antwerp:	Guild of Saint Michael, founded on the 19th of September 1488 in honour of Emperor Frederick III and his son Maximilian of Austria.
Brussels:	Guild of Saint Michael, originated around 1480.

18 Blokman / Donckers, "Self representation of court and city in Flanders and Brabant", p. 96.

19 Bailleul, *De vier Gentse hoofdgilden*, p. 17. The guild of Saint Sebastian has its first statutes dating back to 1364, see *ibid.*, p. 17.

20 Bailleul, *De vier Gentse hoofdgilden*, p. 28.

21 De Witte, "Wapengilden te Brugge", p. 171 and Viaene, "De gilde van de Schermers te Brugge", p. 97. Unfortunately the chapel of Leugemeete, with the unique wall painting of guildsmen with banners, bows, crossbows and swords, was demolished in 1911, see Bergmans, *Middeleeuwse muurschilderingen in de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw*, p. 40.

22 Vanhoutryve, *Koninklijke hoofdgilde Sint Joris Stalen Boog Brugge*, p. 10 and Brown, *Civic ceremony and religion in medieval Bruges*, p. 146.

23 Coppens, *En garde*, p. 15.

24 Viaene, "De gilde van de schermers te Brugge", p. 105. Sometimes the dates refer to the first reference, a possible moment of founding or an official recognition.

Mechelen:	Guild of Saint Lambert, originated around 1500.
Courtray:	Guild of Saint Adrian, founded in 1541.
Oudenaarde:	reference to typical fencing guild activity in a city account of 1541.
Ieper:	Guild of Saint Michael, mentioned from 1548 to 1590.
Veurne:	reference to <i>scarmers vander stede</i> (fencers of the city) in 1548.
Menin	Guild of Saint Michael, originated in the 17th century. The members of this guild called themselves <i>ballisten</i> (ball players) and instead of fencing equipment, they preferred Frisian handball.

The last in line—with the exception of Menin—is the fencing guild of Ghent, which received an official charter from the archdukes Albrecht and Isabella on the 26th of March 1613. Though chronologically probably the last officially founded guild, references to fencing masters can already be found in 1547 and 1565.<sup>25</sup>

The fencing guild of Bruges is first mentioned in city records of 1444, where a *schole* (school) existed for *zweert van tween handen* (sword with two hands), but it probably already existed in 1430. Without any doubt the fencing guild of Bruges is the oldest fencing guild in Flanders<sup>26</sup> and probably in Europe. Proof of this can be found in the archives of the aldermen of Tournai. Here a document is found in which the longsword fencers (*joueurs de l'espée à deux mains*) of the city asked permission to go to a fencing festival in Bruges, organised on the 27th of July in 1430. The aldermen replied that they could go to the festival and upon their return the city would decide if they would compensate the fencers for the expenditures of the trip.<sup>27</sup> But it was not until 1521 that the guild of Saint Michael was officially recognised as the fifth armed guild of the city of Bruges and that they started using the name *Hallebardieren*.<sup>28</sup>

It is surprising that the guilds of Saint Michael, both in Ghent and Bruges, received their official recognition much later than other armed guilds and that they did not have the exclusive character, nor the high appreciation that for instance the guilds of Saint Sebastian or Saint George enjoyed. In Bruges,

25 Bailleul, "De Gentse Sint-Michielsgilde", p. 29 and Van Damme, *Code du duel*, p. 18.

26 Viaene, "De gilde van de schermers te Brugge", p. 105.

27 Viaene, "Schermerschool in Brugge 1430", p. 33.

28 De Poorter, *Oud Brugge*, p. 20 and Viaene, "De gilde van de schermers te Brugge", p. 97. The guild members received this name because they were equipped with halberds at processions.

during the funeral procession of Emperor Charles V in 1559, the guild of Saint Michael was only permitted to carry four torches, while the other guilds were allowed six.<sup>29</sup> The main reason for this low status is that fencing was—in the beginning—probably associated with *esbattementen* (frivolous activities) such as dancing (sometimes with the sword as done by *zweertreiers* or *zweertlieden*), acrobatic demonstrations and sketches, meant to entertain the audience on the occasion of local festivals.<sup>30</sup> Until the 17th century fencing was considered as an activity for the lower class: *al meest aerme ende schamele ambochtslieden* (for the poorest and most indigent craftsmen).<sup>31</sup> The *constenaers* (artists) of Bruges protested against the official recognition of the swordsmen, because they saw them as a threat to their own profession.<sup>32</sup>

In Ghent the fencing guild had a better reputation, though it was not officially founded until 1613. According to Viaene there is one main reason for this higher estimation: the foundation of this guild was prepared by a fencing school which in 1547 already bestowed official degrees of *maistre de la longue espee* (master of the longsword) after a test the candidate had to undergo in front of a jury of fencing masters from Bruges.<sup>33</sup>

Both in Bruges and in Ghent, despite the better reputation of the guild there, the other official guilds were not sympathetic towards a new armed

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29 Viaene, “De Gilde van de Schermers te Brugge”, p. 98.

30 De Witte, “Wapengilden te Brugge”, p. 172; Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille*, pp. 42 and 47; Viaene, “De gilde van de schermers te Brugge”, p. 99 and Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 31. See note 3 about the *Luxbrüder* who evolved into *Kloppfechter* and put an emphasis on the spectacular and acrobatic aspects of fencing.

31 Viaene, “De gilde van de schermers te Brugge”, p. 98. Also see Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 32. This expression probably refers to craftsmen with a lower status such as tanners, furriers, shoemakers, . . .

32 Viaene, “De gilde van de schermers te Brugge”, pp. 100–102. This protest forced the fencers to stay a brotherhood (*broederscip*) but without official privileges of the city. In 1462 it seems however that the *constenaers* and fencers made peace and fenced in common tournaments.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99. Viaene, also thinks that the use of the foil in the 17th century had a higher prestige than the use of the longsword. His assertion is certainly wrong because the main weapon depicted in the portraits of the fencing guild of Saint Michael in Ghent is clearly the rapier or the longsword, see Van Hyfte / Detremmerie / De Witte / Fornari, *De schilderijen, tekeningen en karikaturen uit het patrimonium van de Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint-Michiel te Gent*. In guild documents the word *slachzweirdt*, *slaghsweert*, *lanch sweert*, *zweert van tween handen* are used, without making any distinction. We have opted to use the word longsword, which has almost the same characteristics in use as the two handed sword.

guild, because a new guild also meant that the funding received from the city had to be divided amongst more members.

It is also possible that the city did not see the need for an extra guild since during the time when the guilds still had an important military role, guildsmen not only carried their long distance weapon such as the bow, crossbow or handgun but also a sword, their last resort when the enemy got too close or when they had exhausted their ammunition.<sup>34</sup> In Bruges, a final reason why the official foundation of a guild with an emphasis on the sword was delayed or perhaps obstructed might be found in its possible rivalry with the Society (or Guild) of the White Bear. This was an exclusive organisation for influential patricians, who identified themselves with the nobility and who organised jousting tournaments, but also tournaments with the sword.<sup>35</sup> They probably already existed at the end of the 13th century and the first reference to a jousting team of Bruges can be found in 1320, though it probably did not yet carry the name White Bear.<sup>36</sup> It is perhaps not unlikely that its demise in 1487, due to the high costs of tournaments,<sup>37</sup> created the opportunity for the order of Saint Michael to satisfy the need of the people in Bruges for spectacles with the sword.

#### 2.4 *Organisation of Fencing Guilds*

Because very detailed information is available about the internal structure of the *Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint Michiel in Ghent*,<sup>38</sup> this guild is taken as an example to explain the organisation of guilds of Saint Michael. However, certain aspects are typical for the fencing guild of Ghent, which was also a 'main' or chief guild, meaning that it could execute certain warrants on other guilds in the nearby areas.<sup>39</sup>

The guild consisted of three types of members, all of them catholic burghers of Ghent between 21 and 60 years old. These three types were full members, honorary members and young members (*jonckheit*). Full members were

34 Tanghe, *De Brugse stadsmilities*, pp. 29 and 32.

35 Brown, *Civic ceremony and religion in medieval Bruges*, pp. 141 and 144. Specific studies about the Society of the White Bear are Brown, "Urban jousts in the Later Middle Ages" and Vanden Abeele, *Het ridderlijk gezelschap van de Witte Beer*.

36 Brown, *Civic ceremony and religion in medieval Bruges*, pp. 136–137.

37 Brown, "Urban jousts in the Later Middle Ages", p. 324.

38 Van Hyfte/Detremmerie/De Witte/Fornari, *De schilderijen, tekeningen en karikaturen uit het patrimonium van de Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint-Michiel te Gent*, pp. 19–39. Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 34 briefly discusses the king, emperor, dean, captain and *zorghers*.

39 Bailleul, *De vier Gentse hoofdgilden*, p. 4.

a privileged group who paid a royal entrance fee to become member of the so-called *honderd keurlycke mannen* (one hundred ‘elected’ men). These hundred men were an important part of the city militia (cf. *infra*) and being a member of this corps was highly esteemed. The honorary members, who did not belong to the *honderd keurlycke mannen*, were also called ‘unfree’ brothers of the guild and the *jonckheit* were young people who received the permission to fence but were not yet full members. In Bruges in 1456 a more or less similar distinction was made between masters, provosts and pupils.<sup>40</sup> To become a member of the guild, a membership fee had to be paid as well as *doodgeld*, *dootghelt* or *doodschuld*, which was common in all guilds. This *doodgeld*, paid upon entering the guild, was to be used for the member’s funeral or annual requiem mass. In many guilds it was more or less a gift from the member to his guild upon the member’s death, so it was an important source of income for the guild.<sup>41</sup> In Bruges the *doodgeld* was equal to the price of a *zweert van twee handen weerdicht zynde 2 schellingen gr.* (a two handed sword with the value of 2 livre tournois).<sup>42</sup>

The jury or board of the guild (*Eedt*) consisted of:

The *coninck* (king) was a rotating function, obtained by the winner of the annual longsword tournament *Spel om het koningschap* (play for the king, cf. *infra*). When a king won three tournaments in a row, he became *keiser* (emperor).<sup>43</sup> On special occasions the *coninck* was obliged—or honoured—to wear the *koningsbreuk* (necklace of the king). On this necklace, decorated with swords and an image of Saint Michael, his name was engraved. The king had no responsibilities, walked in front at official processions and had many financial benefits, such as not having to pay for the guild banquets (see figure 14.1).

The *heuverdeken* or *euverdeken* (head-dean) and *deken* (dean) were actually in charge of the guild. In Ghent the head-dean was chosen for life and one of the aldermen of the city, while in other cities there is no clear

40 Viaene, “De gilde van de schermers te Brugge”, p. 101.

41 Trio, *Volksreligie als spiegel van een stedelijke samenleving*, pp. 148–150. Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 44 does not even refer to the costs of a funeral or mass, but considers it as an important gift for the guild. Vanhoutryve, *ibid.*, p. 35 mentions that in 1534 the *Eedt* complained to the city magistrate that some of their members were careless in paying their *doodgeld* and therefore they asked financial assistance.

42 Viaene, “De gilde van de schermers te Brugge”, p. 101.

43 Galas/Steenput, “Statutes of the fencing masters of Bruges”, p. 141.



FIGURE 14.1 *Joannes Fothergill (Pieter Joannes van Reysschoot 1744, oil on canvas 104,2 × 79,6 cm). Joannes Fothergill (+1754) was one of the Keurlycke Mannen of the guild of Ghent from 1724. He was an avid fencing contestant and won several tournaments, including the play for kingship. In 1730 he was even victorious with both the rapier and with the longsword. He also donated several trophies for the contests. Joannes Fothergill was proviseerder in 1724 and in 1732, captain d'Armes (1731–1734) and later he became King (1739–1754). KONINKLIJKE EN RIDDERLIJKE HOOFDGLILDE SINT-MICHEL, GHENT, PICTURE BY HUGO MAERTENS*



reference to a *heuverdeken*. All guilds did have an annually chosen dean, who carried most responsibilities in the guild for one year. His main task was to manage the finances of the guild, including collecting the *doodschuld*, or providing financial assistance in the organisation of tournaments<sup>44</sup> (see figure 14.2).

Twelve *proviseerders* (advisers) were chosen to their position for one year and one of their main tasks was to fund the guild in its expensive activities. Therefore, they needed to be wealthy citizens themselves. They gave advice to the guild and chose the dean and captain of arms.<sup>45</sup> The position of the *proviseerders* in Ghent is more or less similar to the *zorghers* (stewards) in Bruges.<sup>46</sup>

*Ouderlingen* (aldermen) were officially added to the *Eedt* in 1653, but are already mentioned in 1616. As in Bruges, they were permanent members of the *Eedt*, based on their merits for the guild. In Ghent the first *ouderlingen* were Pieter Commeluyn and Pieter van Hoorebeke, who founded the guild of Saint Michael.<sup>47</sup>

Amongst the *Eedt*, other functionaries existed in the guild of Ghent and probably in other guilds as well: a *griffier* (scribe) made the report of the meetings of the *Eedt*, a *baljuw* (bailiff) collected fines (e.g. in the case of not paying the *doodgeld*),<sup>48</sup> the *alferis* and *guidon* had the right to carry the guild banner. The *Eedt* also chose a *prost* (an official guild chaplain) who even had the right to participate in the tournaments! The *cnaepe* (boy) and his sons (called *page*), dressed in the guild uniform, distributed official messages of the guild, such as

44 Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 35.

45 Bailleul, *De vier Gentse hoofdgilden*, p. 40.

46 Viaene, "De gilde van de schermers te Brugge", pp. 101–102.

47 Van Hyfte/Detremmerie/De Witte/Fornari, *De schilderijen, tekeningen en karikaturen uit het patrimonium van de Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint-Michiel te Gent*, p. 28.

48 The statutes of 1723 by Vander Ween/Vander Ween, *Reghel ende ordonnantie van den edelen souvereynen rudderlijcken Gilde*, provide many details of fines: members could receive fines for not attending the guild mass on Sunday or other religious services (XVI), not greeting the masters (XXVIII), not using your own sword (XLV), grabbing the blade of the sword (XLVI), hitting in anger or envy (XLVIII), carrying sharp weapons (XLIX), cursing (L), making the opponent bleed (LIX), etc.



FIGURE 14.2 *Jean Baptiste du Bois (Monmorency, 1717, oil on canvas 104,3 × 79,5 cm). Jean Baptiste du Bois (+1766) was Euverdeken of the guild of Ghent from 1737 until his death in 1766.*

KONINKLIJKE EN RIDDERLIJKE HOOFDGIJLDE SINT-MICHEL, GHENT,  
PICTURE BY HUGO MAERTENS

New Year's wishes and invitations for meetings. Finally, two important functions in the guild still remain to be discussed: the *wapenkapitein* (captain of arms) and the *schermmeester* (fencing master).

### 2.5 *Fencing Instruction at the Guilds*

In 1616 the captain of arms in Ghent was responsible for ensuring that weapons were sufficiently available and in perfect condition: two pairs of longswords, rapiers, half pikes (or spontoons), daggers, armoured gloves and one pair of *slagvrije* (stroke-free, i.e. helm-like) hats.<sup>49</sup>

The guild and aldermen of the city appointed the guild's fencing master after he had shown his ability with dagger, rapier, longsword and other guild weapons in front of a committee of fencing masters and a representative of the aldermen. In the guild of Bruges not only the short sword and longsword were taught, but in 1456—for an extra supplement—"secret arts, such as armoured fighting with axes and other weapons alike" could also be learned.<sup>50</sup> Until the 18th century the by then old fashioned longsword (*slagsweert*) was in use, but from the 16th century onwards the guild members also fought with *rapier ende poignaert* (rapier and dagger) or *deghen alleen* (single rapier).<sup>51</sup> Later on, even muskets became part of the equipment.

To obtain the title of *vryen schermmeester* (free fencing master) or *meester van de edele ende ridderlycke conste van den sweerde* (master of the noble and knightly art of the sword) a similar test had to be passed by the candidate (whether he was a member of the guild or not). In Bruges the master was called *Maistre de la longue espee* or *Meister des langen Schwerts*.<sup>52</sup> As mentioned before, in the beginning fencing masters of Ghent passed their test in Bruges, but in 1750 Jean-Baptiste Fréquier from Bruges passed his test in Ghent. According to the statutes of the guild of Saint Michael in Bruges of the 28th of

49 Van Hyfte / Detremmerie / De Witte / Fornari, *De schilderijen, tekeningen en karikaturen uit het patrimonium van de Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint-Michiel te Gent*, p. 34.

50 ...*verborghen consten, te wetene ghewapent te vechtene met haecsen ende anderssins*. Quoted in Viaene, "De gilde van de schermers te Brugge", p. 101 and Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 31. There is not one reference about how the teaching in the guilds was done: There are no references about how the teaching in the guilds was done: Did guild members take fencing lessons in group or individually? Nevertheless, it is very likely that the *verborghen consten* were taught in private – and expensive – lessons.

51 Galas/Steenput, "Statutes of the fencing masters of Bruges", p. 142 and Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 60 referring to an *exercitie met het slagsweert* in 1749. Viaene, "De gilde van de schermers te Brugge", p. 104 refers to a demonstration with this sword in 1787.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

August 1456, and similar to Ghent, only the masters of the guild and provosts had the right to teach fencing in the city, so the guilds had a monopoly on the teaching of the art of fencing.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.6 *Fencing Guilds and their Role in the City*

Until the 15th century the (armed) guilds were used frequently in the city militia, but at the end of this century their role gradually diminished.<sup>54</sup> Not only were their numbers too small to be decisive on the battlefield, but they also were no match for the flexibility of professional soldiers. Wars began to last much longer, became more professional and required specific training such as fighting in pike formation.<sup>55</sup>

Besides this the distances to the battlefield were too long to engage city militia such as the guilds, which always kept the benefit of their own city in mind. After a military campaign the city militia was often very greedy and requested new rights and privileges, which undermined the power of the local ruler.<sup>56</sup> Another reason why city militia was less useful as an offensive force is the fact that a city could be seriously hindered by a significant loss of its citizens, which would not only cause economic difficulties but could also have negative consequences for the defence of the city.<sup>57</sup> Thus the military responsibilities of guilds of Saint Michael decreased, though in Ghent the guild provided an elite corps for the city militia, under the name of the *honderd keurlycke mannen* (one hundred elected men). This prestigious group was divided in ten platoons, each lead by a *thiendeman* or *dizenier* (ten man), who fell under the authority of a captain. The *Eedt* appointed both the captain and the ten *thiendemannen*, while the *provisieerders* had the duty to check twice a year if the *keurlycke mannen* had well-maintained and proper weapons at home.<sup>58</sup> These

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53 Ibid., p. 101. De statutes of the fencing masters of Bruges are transcribed and translated by Galas/Steenput, "Statutes of the fencing masters of Bruges", pp. 144–149. Unfortunately there is no information about the fencing manuals, which were used to teach fencing in the guilds; no book inventories have survived and most of the possessions of the guilds were sold or lost after the French Revolution.

54 Tanghe, *De Brugse Stadsmilities*, pp. 6 and 29–30. Because the guild of Saint Michael was not officially recognised until 1521, Tanghe did not find any reference to them in official city accounts before this date.

55 Hale, *War and society in Renaissance Europe*, pp. 65 and 202–203.

56 Tanghe, *De Brugse Stadsmilities*, pp. 20, 161–162 and 168.

57 Chandler, "A brief examination of warfare by medieval urban militias", pp. 114–115.

58 Van Hyfte / Detremmerie / De Witte / Fornari, *De schilderijen, tekeningen en karikaturen uit het patrimonium van de Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint-Michiel te Gent*, pp. 36–37.

*keurlycke mannen* were exempted from the traditional duties of guarding city walls and towers but had to protect the town hall.

Besides their small and mostly honorary part in the city militia, the main activity of ancient Flemish fencing guilds consisted of *te decorerene met huerlieder paruere* (parading with the uniforms of their members).<sup>59</sup> They participated in holy processions (in Bruges the most important is still the Procession of the Holy Blood)<sup>60</sup> or served as honorary guard for special guests.

The peak moment in the year for each guild of Saint Michael was the annual tournament to become king of the guild: the play for the king or *Spel om het koningschap*. In Bruges the first official 'prize playing' for the *koningschap van ere* (honorary kingship) happened on the 26th of May 1521.<sup>61</sup> After a solemn mass, the members of the guild were challenged to fence against the king, usually the king of last year. Drawing lots decided the order of the fights and the challengers or champions—in Ghent only the *Keurlycke mannen* could participate—were bound to fight according to certain rules: fighting happened with a blunt longsword (*schoolzwaard*), grappling and thrusting was forbidden and both hands had to be kept on the hilt of the sword, body to body contact (*oploop van lyf aen lyf*) was also forbidden. Winning was achieved by a clean hit (*toetse*) above the elbow or to the upper part of the torso, including the head. The king had the right to execute a hit after he himself was hit, called the *vry-toetse* (afterblow). If successful, the king would still win the bout despite having been hit first.<sup>62</sup> In Ghent, the city paid for a stage where the tournament could be organised and even offered beer and various silver prizes for the winners in the tournament after the *Spel om het koningschap*. The first silver prize (*prijs*) was given to the winner in the longsword tournament, the second for the winner in rapier and dagger and the third prize for the winner in single rapier. People who were not members of the guild could also fence for a tin prize.<sup>63</sup>

## 2.7 *Decline of Fencing Guilds*

At the end of the 18th century all guilds in Belgium were abolished, because they were seen as representatives of the *Ancient Régime* and became useless

59 De Witte, "Wapengilden te Brugge", p. 171 referring to City Archive Bruges, Secrete Resolutieboeken 1557–1565, folio 65r, 21st of January 1558.

60 Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, pp. 33 and 60. When the guild members did not show up they even had to pay a fine.

61 Vanhoutryve, *Zo leefden de Brugse wapengilden*, p. 31.

62 Vander Ween/Vander Ween, *Reghel ende ordonnantie van den edelen souvereynen rudderlijcken Gilde*, pp. 7 and 11. Information on the *vry-toetse*, sometimes called *naerslag*, is based on personal correspondence with Galas (22-12-2014), who is currently working on a publication titled *Fencing guilds in France and Belgium* (working title).

63 Bailleul, *De vier Gentse hoofdgilden*, pp. 42–43.

after the introduction of local police.<sup>64</sup> In Bruges the guild survived as an artillery corps of thirty men with two cannons and even at the beginning of the 19th century, tournaments were still organised.<sup>65</sup> Gradually, guild membership declined, and the remaining members mainly practised modern sport fencing. In 1905 the small guild was finally dissolved, to be founded again in 2005.<sup>66</sup>

In Ghent the interruption in the guild's existence was briefer. After having been abolished in 1794, the guild was re-established under the name *Société de l'Exercice des armes* in 1803. Some years later it received the name it still bears today and by which it is proud to call itself the oldest fencing guild in the world.<sup>67</sup>

### 3 Martial Arts Treatises from the Low Countries

Only a limited number of fencing treatises produced in the Low Countries are known to exist. In the following section, the martial treatises written in Dutch and some of the treatises in other languages produced in the Low Countries will be discussed chronologically. In discussing these treatises, the main focus will be on comparing their content to the martial traditions of surrounding European countries. The various military drilling instructions<sup>68</sup> that were created in the Netherlands in the 17th century will not be included. Based on this comparison, it will be demonstrated that the martial tradition of the Low Countries was heavily influenced by surrounding martial traditions, and that, while unique features are found in the treatises from the Low Countries, the existence of a martial tradition unique to the Low Countries cannot be proven decisively. Some of the treatises produced in the Low Countries are well-known and have been described extensively elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the main focus will be on those treatises that have not been discussed in modern literature before.

64 Bailleul, *De vier Gentse hoofdgilden*, p. 4.

65 Viaene, "De gilde van de schermers te Brugge", p. 104.

66 Galas/Steenput, "Statutes of the fencing masters of Bruges", p. 142.

67 Van Hyfte/Detremmerie/De Witte/Fornari, *De schilderijen, tekeningen en karikaturen uit het patrimonium van de Koninklijke en Ridderlijke Hoofdgilde van Sint-Michiel te Gent*, p. 17.

68 Such as: De Gheyn, *Wapenhandelinge van roers, musquetten ende spiessen achtervolgende de ordre van Sijn Excellentie Maurits Prince van Orangie*, The Hague 1607; Van Breen, *De Nassausche wapen-handelinge, van schilt, spies, rappier, ende targe*, The Hague 1618—a French edition with the title *Le Maniement d'Armes de Nassau avecq Rondelles, Piques, Espees & Targes* was also published; Van Buren, *Drilkonst of hedendaagsche Wapen Oeffening*, Utrecht 1668.

69 See Anglo, *The martial arts of Renaissance Europe*.

### 3.1 *Sources from the 16th Century*

The earliest known martial arts treatise from the Low Countries is BPL 3281, held by the Leiden University Library, and listed with the title *Vechtboek* (Fight book). This manuscript fragment consists of sixteen pages showing dagger fighting, with a short handwritten description under each illustration. It was most likely written between 1520 and 1530, in what is now Belgium.<sup>70</sup>

Artistically, the illustrations of the *Vechtboek* are very similar to a part of the *Codex Wallerstein* (marked as Part A by Zabiński and Walczak<sup>71</sup>), which also contains dagger fighting. Furthermore, the fighters in BPL 3281 wear somewhat similar clothing and hair styles, and their daggers have comparable blade lengths to the daggers illustrated in *Codex Wallerstein*. In contrast, though, the daggers in the *Vechtboek* manuscript appear to have wheel pommels, and the colours of the dagger hilts (quillons and pommels) suggest that these hilts are made of brass rather than steel.

However, the artistic similarity between these two treatises is somewhat misleading as martially they are quite different. BPL 3281 shows a strong focus on using the dagger in a forward grip, with eighteen out of thirty-two fighters using this grip, while only seven use a reverse grip (the remaining seven being unarmed defenders against an attacker with a dagger). Furthermore, BPL 3281 shows defences against hair grabs (which are not shown elsewhere in the European martial literature except in Nicolaes Petter's 1674 wrestling treatise published in Amsterdam<sup>72</sup>) and collar grabs. Furthermore, it includes a number of techniques not shown in any other treatise, such as the thumb clamp in the sixth illustration (see figure 14.3). The focus on the forward grip, as well as the collar and hair grabs and techniques such as the thumb clamp strongly imply that this treatise deals primarily, if not exclusively, with unarmoured dagger fighting. In contrast, the dagger section of *Codex Wallerstein*, as well as the dagger sections of similar German works of the same period, such as the treatises of Hans Talhoffer<sup>73</sup> and the *Gladiatoria* manuscript,<sup>74</sup> may deal with fighting both in and out of armour. Furthermore, these German treatises mainly focus on using the reverse grip rather than the forward grip. In this regard, BPL 3281 has more in common with the Italian treatises of Fiore

70 Leiden, Leiden University Libraries, BPL 3281, see also: [https://socrates.leidenuniv.nl/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=2977867](https://socrates.leidenuniv.nl/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=2977867) (retrieved 02-03-2014).

71 Zabinski /Walczak, *Codex Wallerstein: A medieval fighting book*.

72 Petter, *Klare Onderrichtinge der Voortreffelijcke Worstel-konst*.

73 Such as: München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod.icon. 394a. Transl.: Rector, *Medieval combat*.

74 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, MS KK5013.

dei Liberi,<sup>75</sup> and Filippo Vadi,<sup>76</sup> which deal more extensively with the forward grip than the German works (though they still focus primarily on the reverse grip), and include relatively large sections on unarmed defence against a dagger-wielding assailant. However, on the basis of some of the unique techniques shown in the *Vechtboek*, it appears that this treatise represents a style of dagger fighting which does not fit in with any known contemporary styles, and may thus represent a martial style unique to the Low Countries.

In 1538, the first printed martial arts treatise from the Low Countries was produced in Antwerp. *La noble science des ioueurs despee*<sup>77</sup> was an unaccredited French translation of *Ergründung Ritterlicher Kunst der Fechterey*<sup>78</sup> by the Viennese *Freifechter* Andre Paurñfeindt. This was originally published in 1516 and hence is one of the oldest surviving printed books on fencing.<sup>79</sup> That this translation of a German treatise was produced in Antwerp clearly shows that the German fencing tradition of Johannes Liechtenauer (as Paurñfeindt was an exponent of Liechtenauer's tradition) influenced the martial tradition of the Low Countries in the first half of the 16th century.

The next surviving fencing treatise produced in a Dutch language is an artfully illustrated, anonymous manuscript which is dated to 1595 on one of its pages, and is known under the title *Schermkunst* (Art of Fencing).<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, little is known about the author and artist producing the manuscript, or where it was produced. Furthermore, the manuscript is most likely incomplete, as the last page shows only half of a two-page illustration of pike fencing. Yet it provides an important view on the fencing tradition of the Low Countries.

The *Schermkunst* manuscript text describes fencing with the rapier and dagger, rapier and buckler, *Dussacken*<sup>81</sup> and shield "after the Turkish manner", halberd, and full pike. Additionally, illustrations are included that show fencing with short single swords and with longer single rapiers, but fencing with these weapons was not described in the remaining text, further strengthening the suggestion that part of the original manuscript is missing. Just as

75 Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV 13. Transl.: Leoni, *Fiore de' Liberi's Fior di battaglia*.

76 Rome, Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma, Vitt.Em.1324. Transl.: Porzio/Mele, *Arte gladiatoria dimicandi*.

77 Anonymous, *La noble science des ioueurs despee*.

78 Paurñfeindt, *Ergründung Ritterlicher Kunst der Fechterey*.

79 Anglo, *The martial arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 46.

80 Chicago, Newberry Library, MS folio U423,792. Transl.: Van Noort, *Swordplay*.

81 See n. 10 for information about the *Dussacken*.





FIGURE 14.3 *Capturing the thumb of the opponent between the blades of the daggers, as shown on Leiden University Libraries BPL 3281, fol. 6r.*

BPL 3281, *Schermkunst* shows a lot of similarity to contemporary treatises. For instance, the guard positions shown in the single sword, sword and dagger, and sword and buckler illustrations are often recognisable as similar to the guards used in the Italian “Bolognese” system of the sixteenth century (e.g. Manciolino<sup>82</sup> and Marozzo<sup>83</sup>) or to guards shown in the French treatise of Saint Didier.<sup>84</sup> However, it should be noted that as the guards in *Schermkunst* are not named, and guard positions are generally relatively universal as they follow from principles and the workings of the human body, this is no evidence of any cor-

82 Manciolino, *Opera Nova*. Transl.: Leoni, *Renaissance swordmanship*.

83 Marozzo, *Opera Nove de Achille Marozzo Bolognese*.

84 De Saint Didier, *Les secrets du premier livre sur l'espée seule*. Transl.: Hyatt / Wilson, *The single sword of Henry de Saint-Didier*.

relation to these other treatises and styles. Interestingly, Michael Hundt in his 1611 treatise<sup>85</sup> presents a *Niederlendisch Lager* (Dutch guard), which is very similar to the high guard shown in the single rapier and the rapier and dagger sections of *Schermkunst*.<sup>86</sup> Also of interest is to note that the fencers in *Schermkunst* do not appear to wrap the index finger around the forward (or long edge) quillon. Such a grip, with the index finger around the quillon, is shown in for instance the treatises written in the Bolognese style (such as those of Marozzo, and Viggiani<sup>87</sup>), whilst it is not shown in the works of Saint-Didier, Meyer<sup>88</sup> and Mair<sup>89</sup> (though the *rappiers* shown by Mair do have a ring above the quillon through which the index finger goes).

*Schermkunst* also contains certain unique aspects, which are not found in other treatises. Most striking of these is the section on “*Dussacken* and shield after the Turkish manner”, but also of interest is the hat thrown in the face of a would-be assailant armed with a sword, used as a distraction to initiate a grapple, though a distraction with a thrown hat was for instance also shown by Talhoffer.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, the use of language in the treatise, with phrases such as: *om alzo van hem te moghen eerlijk prys halen*, is reminiscent of the use of language in the fencing guild documents as discussed above.<sup>91</sup> The similarity in the use of language between the fencing guild documents and this treatise does link these various documents, perhaps supporting the existence of a martial arts tradition of the Low Countries.

### 3.2 *The Collection of Prince Maurice*

Of particular importance for studying the martial traditions of the Low Countries is a collection of treatises that once belonged to Prince Maurice of Orange (1567–1625). This collection, now held by the Royal library in The Hague, contains several unique manuscripts in different languages that show a wide influence on the Dutch martial tradition of the time. A complete overview of the fencing treatises in Prince Maurice’s collection was given by Galas and Steenput.<sup>92</sup>

85 Hundt, *Ein new künstliches Fechtbuch im Rappier*, ch. 76.

86 For instance on fol. 7r and on fol. 10v.

87 Viggiani, *Lo Schermo d'Angelo Viggiani*.

88 Meyer, *Gründtliche beschreibung der kunst des fechtens*. Transl.: Forגעng, *The art of combat*.

89 Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Mscr. Dresd.C.94, fol. 139r–146v.

90 Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 290 2°.

91 Galas, personal communication. See also note 62.

92 Galas/Steenput, “The cort bewijs of Pieter Bailly”, p. 70.

The first of these treatises is Pieter Bailly's *Cort Bewijs van t'Rapier alleen* [Short Demonstration of the Single Rapier],<sup>93</sup> the third treatise in the Dutch language to be discussed here. As indicated on the front page of this manuscript, Pieter Bailly produced this short treatise in Amsterdam when he was the city's fencing master. It can reliably be dated to between 1602, when Bailly became the fencing master of Amsterdam, and 1608, when it first appeared in a catalogue of the collection.<sup>94</sup> The treatise is quite short, containing one title page and 23 full-page illustrations with a short descriptive text (24 folios).

As the full title of Bailly's treatise, *Cort Bewijs van t'Rapier alleen. Wat veranderingen úijt het verset vanden buijten steeck connen geschieden, met de tegen-veranderinge van dien*,<sup>95</sup> suggests, after demonstrating a bind in the right posture (fol. 3v), a way to break this posture (fol. 4r) followed by a cut (fol. 5v), and a counter to that (6r), the treatise then proceeds to the thrust on the outside line (fol. 7v) and several ways to counter such a thrust. These counters are to break it (fol. 8r) and then cut (fol. 9r), to parry and thrust in the same motion (i.e. an opposition thrust—fol. 11r), to void with a left foot pass while thrusting at the same time (fol. 12r), or to parry (*verset*) the thrust (fol. 10v). It then demonstrates five changes that the attacker can make to avoid the parry, each change followed by a counter (or two counters in the case of the fourth change).

While the *Cort Bewijs* contains only minimal text, the illustrations, which were most likely made by Pieter Bailly himself,<sup>96</sup> contain a number of clues to help the reader understand the techniques shown. The main clue comes in the form of disembodied feet, or foot prints that are included in the drawings to indicate the starting position of the feet of moving fencers. For example, both fencers in the illustration on folio 12r leave behind a disembodied foot, which show that the fencer on the left stepped forward making his outside thrust, and the fencer on the right passed forward with his left foot, making a pass to void and counter with a thrust of his own. Furthermore, the initial attack, i.e. either breaking the posture (fol. 4r) and following with a cut (fol. 5v) or making the outside thrust (fol. 7v), is always performed by the fencer on the left.<sup>97</sup> Finally, when a counter to the technique shown in any illustration

93 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 72 F 37.

94 Galas/Steenput, "The cort bewijs of Pieter Bailly", p. 69.

95 Short Demonstration of the Single Rapier. What changes can occur from the parry of the outside thrust, with the counter-changes to them.

96 Galas/Steenput, "The cort bewijs of Pieter Bailly", p. 66.

97 In contrast to the interpretation given by Galas/Steenput, "The cort bewijs of Pieter Bailly", on fol. 4r, the fencer on the left is breaking the posture of the fencer on the right,

is available in the treatise, the fencers are nude. When no counter is included to the technique shown (i.e. at the end of a series of techniques and counters), the fencers are fully dressed.

While Bailly's treatise was written around the same time as several core rapier treatises, such as those of Giganti,<sup>98</sup> Capo Ferro<sup>99</sup> and, most importantly, Fabris,<sup>100</sup> Bailly's fencing style does not directly fit in with those treatises. Bailly does emphasise thrusts over cuts, makes use of voids with a counter-attack, and advocates a forward leaning pose. However, his fencers stand quite upright in all their actions, with their weight centred over both feet, or placed mostly on the front foot. In this regard, then, Bailly's treatise seems to have more in common with the treatises published in the sixteenth century (such as those of for instance Manciola, Marozzo and Saint-Didier). Based on this, Bailly's treatise is perhaps best viewed as an intermediate source between the rapier treatises of the 17th century, and those treatises on the single sword published in the sixteenth. As such, it provides a very interesting point of view on fencing in the Low Countries around the time when Fabris published his very influential work, which will also impact fencing in the Low Countries, as well as when Thibault returned to the Low Countries from Spain, around 1611,<sup>101</sup> bringing his own style of *La Verdadera Destreza*<sup>102</sup> to the Netherlands. However, while certainly interesting, the manuscript does not contain enough information to determine whether it should be considered representative of any unique style of fencing from the Low Countries.

The second treatise from Maurice's collection to be discussed here is a manuscript with the title *Cabinet d'escrime*.<sup>103</sup> I. de la Haye, the scribe producing this manuscript, stated that it is a copy of a treatise written by the French fencing master Capitaine Péloquin. This copy was specifically produced for Prince Maurice by the scribe, and is dated to the early 17th century, before 1609 (See figure 14.4).<sup>104</sup>

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binding it down, and then following up with the cut to the head (fol. 5v), as witnessed by the footprints left behind by the fencer on the left in both illustrations.

98 Giganti, *Scola, overo teatro*. Transl.: Leoni, *Venetian Rapier*.

99 Capo Ferro, *Gran Simulacro dell'Arte e dell'Uso della Scherma*. Transl.: Kirby, *Italian rapier combat*.

100 Fabris, *Lo Schermo, overo Scienza d'Arme*. Transl.: Leoni, *Art of duelling*.

101 De la Fontaine Verwey, "Gerard Thibault en zijn Academie de l'espée", p. 28.

102 See Valle Ortiz, chap. 12, pp. 324–353 in this volume.

103 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 73J 39.

104 See Dupuis, chap. 13, pp. 354–375 in this volume.

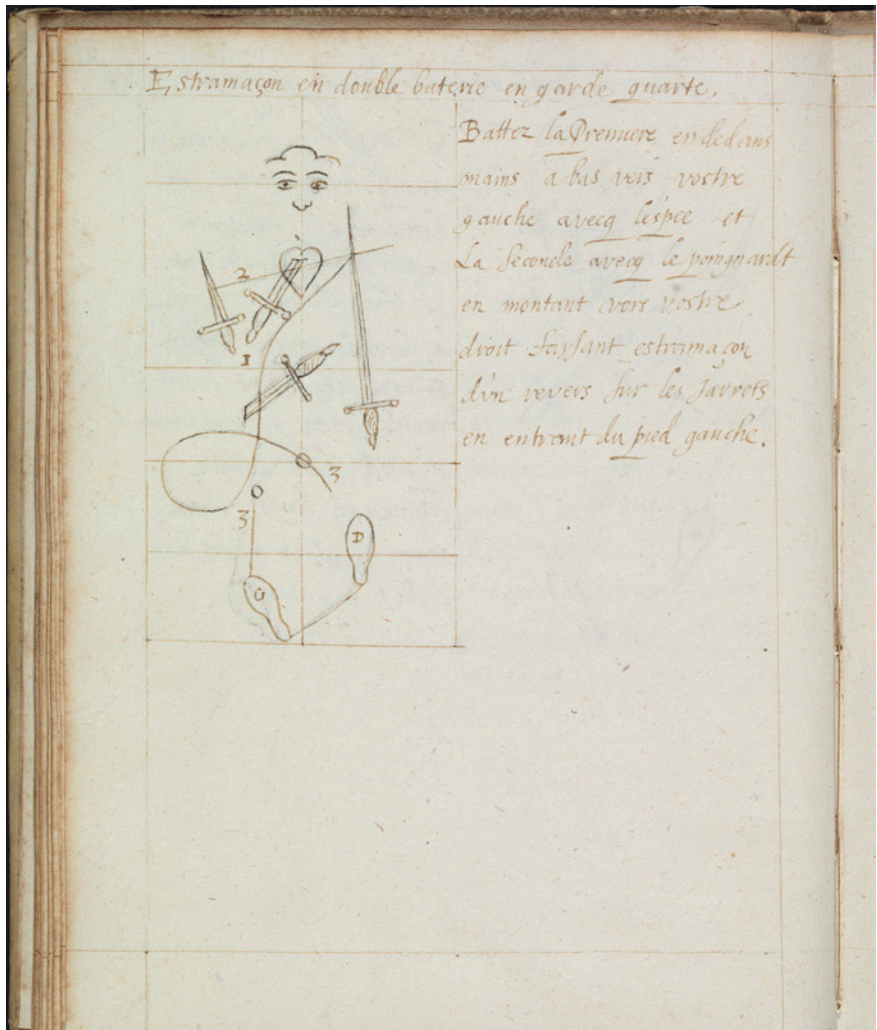


FIGURE 14.4 Estramaçon en double baterie en garde quarte (cut with double beat in fourth guard) as illustrated in *Le Cabinet d'Esgrime* (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 73.J.39, fol. 22v).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this treatise are the diagrams which Péroquin invented to show the postures and movements of his fencing. The basis of these diagrams is a vertical line diverting left from right, and a set of horizontal lines diverting this vertical line into sections of about one foot long. In each diagram, the opponent, seen from the point of view of the reader, is schematised as a face, a heart and two dots indicating the position of the

groin and roughly the height of the knees (these dots coinciding with the 4th and 3rd lines respectively). A set of feet in the lower end of the diagram indicates the starting position of the reader's feet. Lines drawn from these feet indicate movements that are made during the actions described in the text, with the numbers next to these lines indicating the timing of these movements. The horizontal lines of the diagram are now used as a floor plan, and they are again one foot apart. Finally, a sword and a dagger are seen in all diagrams, which indicate the starting position of the reader's weapons. Again, the horizontal lines of the diagram are used to indicate the height at which the sword and dagger are held, and lines drawn from the weapons indicate the movements that are made. As with the footwork, numbers next to these lines again indicate timing. These diagrams can thus be used to transmit quite complex actions or series of actions. Unfortunately, though, the counter-actions of the opponent are not indicated, leaving the system somewhat one-sided, with the reader often performing a complex series of movements, without allowing the opponent to react. The style of fencing with sword and dagger presented in the *Cabinet d'Esgrime* is not dissimilar to contemporary Italian and French styles, such as the styles of Sainct Didier and dall'Agocchie.<sup>105</sup>

Thirdly, the collection of Prince Maurice contains a manuscript with the title *La Scien della Spada*.<sup>106</sup> This anonymous Italian treatise presents a manuscript version of the single rapier sections of Salvator Fabris' 1606 treatise *Lo Schermo, overo scienza d'arme*. Like the other books in Maurice's collection of fencing treatises, this book is dated to the first decade of the 17th century. The text itself differs slightly from the printed book text, and the images in the manuscript are also somewhat different. This suggests that it is not a direct copy of the printed book, but that it may have been created prior to the final text, though further study of this interesting manuscript is required to ascertain its source. Regardless, the existence of this book within the collection of Prince Maurice is very interesting, as it not only demonstrates a wide interest in fencing styles from outside the Low Countries, but also serves as a precursor to the dominance that would be attained by the style of fencing taught by Fabris in the Holy Roman Empire and surrounding countries. Salvator Fabris was the fencing master at the Danish Royal court from 1601 to 1606, when he took leave to return to his hometown of Padua, via Paris. After his death in Padua in 1618,<sup>107</sup> his style of fencing continued to be taught by his

105 [P14] Dall'Agocchie, *Dell'Arte di Scrima Libri Tre*.

106 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 73J 38.

107 Leoni, *Art of dueling*, p. xxxv.

students. These students, such as Hans Wilhelm Schöffler, Heinrich von und zum Velde, and Hans Wulff von Mulßheim,<sup>108</sup> and in turn their students, such as Sebastian Heußler and Joachim Hynitzsch spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire, teaching their personal vision on Fabris' art of fencing, and a number of them published their own fencing treatises, which often refer to Fabris (cf. Schöffler,<sup>109</sup> Heußler,<sup>110</sup> and Köppe<sup>111</sup>), in addition to other known Italian fencing masters such as Giganti (see Schöffler) and Capo Ferro (see Heußler). Clearly then, there was an interest in Fabris' style of rapier fencing within the Low Countries even before this. This interest is further demonstrated in 1619 by the publication in Leiden by Isack Elzevier of a German copy of Fabris' treatise with the title *Des Kunstreichen und weitberümeten fechtmeisters Salvatoris Fabri Italiänische fechtkunst*.<sup>112</sup>

Taken together, these treatises from the collection of Prince Maurice show that the martial traditions practiced in the Low Countries were very open to influences from different parts of Europe. The limited number and fragmentary nature of the Dutch sources available makes it very difficult to determine whether a unique martial tradition belonging to the Low Countries existed in this era. However, the available sources do show that the martial tradition of the Low Countries likely took a pragmatic approach to fighting, in which effective traditions from surrounding countries were studied and adopted by masters who added their own personal preferences.

### 3.3 *Thibault and the Later 17th Century*

Such an approach to fighting, where various foreign traditions are studied and adopted with the addition of personal preferences and insights, is also shown by Gérard Thibault.<sup>113</sup> Originally from Antwerp, Thibault first studied fencing under the Antwerp master Lambert van Someren,<sup>114</sup> but then moved to Spain where he learned the Spanish fencing system known as *La Verdadera Destreza*,

108 Hynitzsch, *Scienza e pratica d'arme*, foreword.

109 Schöffler, *Gründtliche und eigentliche Beschreibung der freyen adelichen und ritterlichen Fechtkunst*.

110 Heußler, *Neu kunstlich Fechtbuch*.

111 Köppe, *Neuer Discurs von der rittermeßigen und weitberümbten Kunst des Fechtens*.

112 Fabri, *Des Kunstreichen und weitberümeten Fechtmeisters Salvatoris Fabri Italiänische fechtkunst*.

113 Thibault, *Academie de l'Espée*. For a more extensive discussion of Gérard Thibault and his work, De la Fontaine Verwey, "Gerard Thibault en zijn 'Academie de l'Espée'", and Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, pp. 73–82, or Greer, *Academy of the Sword*, pp. 1–4. Also cf. Anglo, "Sword and Pen: Fencing Masters and Artists" pp. 157–158.

114 De la Fontaine Verwey, "Gerard Thibault en zijn 'Academie de l'Espée'", p. 29.

possibly in the lineage of Pacheco de Narváez.<sup>115</sup> When he returned to the Low Countries, Thibault began demonstrating and eventually teaching his own personal style of fencing. This style was derived from the *Destreza* Thibault learned in Spain, bringing another influence into the martial tradition of the Low Countries. Three years after his death, Thibault's great treatise *Academie de l'Espée* was published (Thibault passed away in 1627).<sup>116</sup> This masterpiece in the art of book printing is arguably the most impressive fencing book ever produced. It contains not only an extremely detailed description of Thibault's method of fencing, but is further adorned with forty-six copper plates illustrating every action step by step, and with great sophistication. Each of these plates is a beautifully executed work of art that clearly and precisely demonstrates what the accompanying text describes.

The *Academie de l'Espée* shows that Thibault developed his knowledge of *Destreza* into a personal style which must be viewed as different from its root. For example, Thibault advocated a different, and unique, method of gripping the sword, with the index finger wrapped over the back quillon and below the ricasso. Furthermore, Thibault advocates a slightly adapted stance, with the front foot at a 45 degree angle from the centre line, rather than pointing straight at the opponent<sup>117</sup>. Interestingly, the *Academie de l'Espée* contains one chapter titled *Against the Postures of Salvatore Fabris*, which further demonstrates the prominence that Fabris's style had gained, also in the Low Countries.

The fourth fencing treatise written in Dutch before 1700 is the *Grondige Beschryvinge* (Thorough description) by German-born Johannes Georgius Bruchius.<sup>118</sup> This is also the earliest known printed fencing treatise in the Dutch language. At the time of publication, Bruchius was the fencing master of Leiden University, and as such he dedicated his treatise to the curators of that university, rather than to any one noble lord. While in his introduction Bruchius promises to publish five books, dealing with fencing with the single sword and also fencing with rapier and dagger, only the first book is known to exist, and the additional books were most likely never published. This first book deals exclusively with fencing with the single rapier *pede firmo* (with a firm foot). First the general principles of rapier fencing, such as the posture, the lunge, the division of the blade, measure and tempo are described. After that, 212 lessons are provided through which rapier fencing is taught.

115 Ibid., p. 28.

116 Ibid., p. 44.

117 Curtis and Curtis, *From the Page to the Practice: Fundamentals of Spanish swordplay*, p. 7.

118 Bruchius, *Grondige Beschryvinge van de Edele ende Ridderlijcke Scherm- ofte Wapen-konste*. Transl.: Van Noort, *Of the Single Rapier*.



Thirty five crisp copperplates support these lessons, each plate showing two pairs of fencers.

As indicated on his portrait,<sup>119</sup> Bruchius was born in Zweibrücken, likely around 1630. From 1653 to 1655 he taught fencing in Heidelberg. He then came to Utrecht in 1655, where he was allowed to teach fencing on the request of various German nobles, and he remained in Utrecht until 1660, when he went to Leiden to become the university's fencing master. In 1680, Bruchius returned to Utrecht, where he continued to teach fencing until his death in January 1718.<sup>120</sup>

The style of fencing taught by Bruchius shows great similarities to the common style of rapier fencing in German treatises from the 17th century onwards, which was based on the style taught by Salvator Fabris and had spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire and surrounding countries earlier in that century. Bruchius himself referred to the treatise written and published by "Salvatoris Fabri" (mentioning the Italian version, but none of the German translations), as well as that of Thibault, showing familiarity with both. More interestingly, in several places Bruchius' treatise shows very strong similarities to that of Köppe, suggesting that Bruchius was at least familiar with either Köppe himself or his work.<sup>121</sup>

Bruchius' *Scherme ofte Wapen-konste*, then, provides a strong confirmation that the common style of fencing in the Holy Roman Empire in the 17th century also spread to the Low Countries. It contains no indication of any special tradition of the Low Countries, except mentioning that the style of circle fencing presented by Thibault was now no longer practised. While this does not prove that a unique martial tradition did not exist at the time of publica-

119 Most copies of Bruchius' treatise contain an anonymous portrait of Bruchius, with the text "J.G. Bruch Bipontini Palastinatus A° 1671." The copy held in the Leiden University contains a different portrait by Van Somer.

120 In his dedication, Bruchius himself informs us of his coming to Utrecht in 1655, and his departure for Leiden in 1660. This information is confirmed by the resolutions of the city council of Utrecht, as presented by Kernkamp (Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta Senatus*, I, 1936, p. 314). Further information regarding his return to Utrecht in 1680 and his death in 1718 can also be found in the resolutions of the city council of Utrecht (Kernkamp, *Acta et Decreta Senatus*, II, 1938, pp. 57 and 259).

121 For example compare the chapters "*Wat Schermen ofte Vechten, ende hoe meenigerley het selve zy*" [What Fencing or Fighting is, and how manifold are the same] by Bruchius and "*Was Fechten / unnd wie mancherley dasselbe sey*" [What fencing is, and how manifold are the same] by Köppe, or Bruchius' discussion of *Tempo* with the discussion of *Tempo* given by Köppe.

tion, it does indicate that the Low Countries were very open to influences from outside regarding their martial arts.

The final Dutch martial treatise to be discussed here is the *Klare Onderrichtinge der Voortreffelijcke Worstel-konst* by Nicolaes Petter.<sup>122</sup> Published after Petter's death by his student, Robbert Cors, and beautifully illustrated by the famous artist Romeyn de Hooge, this treatise is often recognised as "the finest of all wrestling books—and deservedly the most famous".<sup>123</sup> In his treatise, Petter presents a number of scenarios and ways to deal with them. These scenarios include being pushed in the chest, being grabbed by the hair, being punched, and having a knife drawn on you. The title page of this treatise claims that the techniques shown were devised by the author himself, which may certainly be true in the case of some of the techniques shown. Petter's *Worstel-konst* does seem to represent a unique style of self-defence, which is hard to fit in with any other treatises or martial tradition.

While some of Petter's techniques seem rather outlandish, the treatise was obviously quite popular, and not just in the Netherlands, where it was re-printed twice in Amsterdam. In 1712, a French translation was published in Leiden, and German translations were for instance published by Theodori Verolini (uncredited) in his treatise printed in Würzburg in 1679,<sup>124</sup> and Karl Wassmannsdorff in 1887 in Heidelberg,<sup>125</sup> while Johann Andreas Schmidt included parts of Petter's work in the wrestling part of his 1713 treatise.<sup>126</sup>

### 3.4 *The Martial Tradition of the Low Countries as Seen through Martial Treatises*

Only a small number of martial treatises that were produced in the Low Countries are known to exist at present. Of these treatises, only five were written in the Dutch language (or a predecessor) before the 19th century, and the earliest three of these are of a fragmentary nature or very short. Based on the available source material, the existence of a unique martial tradition in the Low Countries in the period before 1800 is occasionally hinted at, but cannot be determined conclusively. However, the corpus of martial arts treatises produced or held in the Low Countries does show a wide variety in origin, showing correspondences with or even being linked to the martial traditions

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122 Petter, *Klare Onderrichtinge der Voortreffelijcke Worstel-konst*.

123 Anglo, *The martial arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 192.

124 Verolini, *Der Künstliche Fechter*.

125 Wassmannsdorff, *Nicolaes Petter's Ring-Kunst*.

126 Schmidt, *Leib-beschirmende und Feinden Trotz-bietende Fecht-Kunst*.

of Germany, Italy, Spain and France. This suggests that the martial tradition of the Low Countries was open to influence from other countries, through studying of, and adopting from these traditions. While a strong influence by other European Martial Arts traditions cannot be excluded, and would perhaps be expected, the fact that unique aspects are seen in nearly all of these existing treatises could perhaps be taken to indicate the existence of a martial tradition of the Low Countries. Unfortunately, the rather limited nature of the available source material, and the lack of correspondence between these aspects, makes it very difficult or even impossible to confirm whether these aspects should be considered part of any martial tradition unique to the Low Countries, or just individual input of the masters who produced these treatises.

#### 4 Conclusions

Although usually neglected in scholarly literature, because they were considered as unimportant for the history of martial arts, the Low Countries did have a vivid tradition in the art of fighting and fencing. Based on the limited evidence available, a view onto this tradition has been provided from the statutes of the guilds of Saint Michael from Bruges and Ghent, and from the corpus of martial arts treatises produced in the Low Countries.

In the southern part of the Low Countries well-organised guilds of Saint Michael, as the examples of Bruges and Ghent have shown, dominated the fencing scene. Within these guilds, knowledge was passed from generation to generation, in the beginning as a military and self-defence art, but gradually developing to a sport activity. Unfortunately, no information of how fencing instruction within these guilds took place was found, though an oral sharing of knowledge from master to student seems most likely. Considering the history of the Low Countries and especially Belgium as a central part of Europe, it would seem obvious, however, that the content of the fencing lessons underwent influences from all over Europe.

This image of the Low Countries' martial tradition being very open to influence from other European martial traditions is further enhanced when studying the corpus of martial arts treatises produced in the Low Countries. While some of these treatises definitely show aspects that appear to be unique to a local tradition, they all show strong similarities to specific treatises produced in the Holy Roman Empire, Italy, Spain or France. Moreover, a number of the treatises produced in the Low Countries are copies or translations of treatises from these countries. Unfortunately however, there are no fencing treatises that are directly linked to members of fencing guilds, and

the guilds' practices. It is also not clear if those books that are now found in the private collection of the guilds (e.g. the collection of the guild of Saint Michael in Ghent) were actually used in the practices of that particular guild. Here, future research into the martial teachings of the fencing guilds would be very valuable.

Based on the presented wide overview on the martial arts traditions of the Low Countries, many more questions certainly remain. Did the tradition of the guilds of Saint Michael influence the *Marxbrüder* and *Freifechter* of the Holy Roman Empire? Are there any more fencing treatises, created in the Low Countries still to be found? Additionally, research into the other Belgian fencing guilds remains to be done, and might prove very informative.

Compared to the German, English and Italian traditions, the martial arts traditions of the Low Countries are underrepresented in current research. However, study into the fencing guilds and other sources in city archives, private archives and museums will likely bring out more information to further our knowledge of Historical European Martial Arts. The question then remains, who will take up the gauntlet?

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## Common Themes in the Fighting Tradition of the British Isles

*Paul Wagner*

The fighting traditions from the British Isles are fairly sparsely recorded, at least in the medieval and Renaissance period, when compared to the plethora of German and Italian sources. Nonetheless, enough information has survived to not only reconstruct individual arts, but to get a good sense of common themes that persist throughout the tradition, from the earliest surviving sources into the 18th and 19th centuries.

Not only is there a common theoretical basis underlying the English (or more properly “British”) tradition, but there is a long standing commonality in the approach to personal combat, including tactical choices, instructional methods and practical expression of the art, despite a variety of different weapons being used in ever-changing military and social contexts.

The earliest English extant sources giving instruction in swordsmanship are handwritten manuscripts dedicated to the two-handed sword. The anonymous Harleian MS. 3542<sup>1</sup> is dated circa 1450, and comes in two parts—a descriptive series of techniques, and *The Play with the 2 Hand Sword in Verse*, colloquially known as *The Man Who Wol*. These two parts might be considered two separate documents, and may come from separate sources. The Cotton Titus MS.<sup>2</sup> is later in date, maybe late 15th century, and also comes in two parts, the *Strokez off ij hand swerde* and *Strokes atte þe ij hande staffe*. Additional MS. 39564, signed by “J. Ledall”, is later still, the script suggesting the early 16th century.

The language used in these three manuscripts is rather startling at first glance. A typical extract from the Harleian Ms., for example, reads;

[...] *a long cartar stroke smety flat doune by ye bak w a double broky spryng bak ye foete a drawyng & in w a long rake dobil, in wyth ye foete walkyng & on eche foete, ij rakys & at ye alurys ende smyte in iij rakys dou-bille born into a step [...]*

1 London, British Museum, Harleian MS. 3542, ff. 82–85.

2 London, British Museum, MS Titus A. xxv, f. 105.

By themselves, these sources are obscure to say the least. If we are to say anything sensible, then, about British “medieval” combat, it is necessary to look not just at these actual medieval sources, but at later period English and Scottish texts as well.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the relative sparsity and obscurity of this material, English fencing is also incredibly well served because of a couple of key works; George Silver’s *Paradoxes of Defence* (1599) and its sequel, *Brief Instructions Upon My Paradoxes of Defence* (c.1605), which outline the theoretical and conceptual basis of native English fencing in unequalled depth and detail. Together, these works provide the theoretical, tactical and practical principles both overtly described and implicit in works by other 17th and 18th century British texts, and clearly evident in the earlier medieval sources.

## 1 The English Tradition

When examining English fencing treatises, the first question to answer is whether England even had its own separate tradition. The English were clearly familiar with Continental traditions; even Silver, while responding to the London based Salviolo specifically, mentions of the Italians, saying *they never teach their scholers, nor set downe in their bookes anie perfect lengthes of their weapons*,<sup>4</sup> indicating he has read more than one Italian treatise.

There is ample evidence that the English absorbed and distilled other European fighting traditions. Joseph Swetnam, once the fencing instructor for Prince Henry,<sup>5</sup> describes a series of rapier-and-dagger Guards drawn

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3 As Sydney Anglo argued: “I believe that in the history of ideas there are few precise cut-off dates . . . In those earliest treatises there are techniques of exposition, as well as descriptions of modes of combat, which were to be repeated and developed by the masters of the 16th century and later . . . Similarly, some combat techniques receive their most sophisticated exposition in later works, which I use to throw retrospective light on texts which are otherwise obscure . . . (and to) demonstrate essential continuities. No master of arms woke up one morning to find that his teaching had been rendered obsolete because the Middle Ages had suddenly ended.” Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 4.

4 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 2, p. 206 in Wagner, *Master of Defence*.

5 Swetnam is best remembered for his controversial pamphlet *The arraignment of lewd, idle, forward, and unconstant women*, published in 1615 under the pseudonym Thomas Tell-Troth. His *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence* is a true fencing manual, and he confirms that it is the first complete fencing treatise by an Englishman. He describes the use of the rapier, rapier and dagger, backsword, sword and dagger, and quarterstaff, and a great detail of advice on the moral and social aspects of self defence and honour. He also promises

directly from Salvator Fabris *Lo Schermo, overo Scienza d'Arme* (1606).<sup>6</sup> The anonymous<sup>7</sup> *Pallas Armata* reads like a straight forward Italian rapier primer, devotes Chapter II to *the forreigne terms of Arte, that doe occurre in this Treatise*,<sup>8</sup> and makes overt reference to Agrippa.<sup>9</sup>

The unpublished *Truth of the Sorde* by William Cavendish, Marques of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1646) references several Spanish sword masters including Carranza, Don Lewis, "Antonio and the Moore of Spayne" and "Tibalt the Dutchman," and considers the Spanish School *absolutlye the bestte plye of all the false playes*. Less generously, he tells us:

*The Frenshe are very rare in their waye too quick and stronge, with their stocadoe with their fayntes yet hit one another familierlye, qickness or skipinge off like squirells, but if equal quicknes an equal too, for quickness is not Scill.*<sup>10</sup>

However, he then crosses out the entire section, entitled *The trewe discription of all the wayes of Scill of the Sorde by all Nations hetherto knowne*, writing instead *which scill is most eronius*.<sup>11</sup>

North of the border, Donald McBane includes specific references to the Smallsword styles of the Portuguese, French and Italians, and noting their inadequacies.<sup>12</sup> Sir William Hope does likewise,<sup>13</sup> while at the same time

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a second volume, including such weapons as the two-handed sword and halberd, but despite claiming "my seconde booke which is already in hand" (p. 188), although there is no current evidence that such a volume was ever published.

6 Although it often appears that he only looked at the pictures rather than understanding how Fabris intended them to be used.

7 According to Aylward the author, identified only as "G.A." may have been Gideon Ashwell, a fellow of King's College Cambridge. *The English Master of Arms from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1956).

8 *Pallas Armata*, Book I, Ch.2, p. 5.

9 *Pallas Armata*, Book I, Chapter 6.1, pp. 22–23.

10 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 7b.

11 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 7b.

12 "The *French Guard*, which they commonly use, and call *Quart Guard*, is our defensive Guard at the wall, so that they are obliged to cut, Disengage, or Change over the point; which I think is neither so quick nor so safe as Disengaging under the blade with our Guard. Besides, it takes more time to bring your Sword on the level on the line when they are going to thrust; and when feeble, may easily be forced; and their sword hand is more exposed to be pricked" McBane, *The Expert Sword-Man's Companion*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 53.

13 *although it be not taught perhaps with so good a grace, as abroad, yet I say, if a Man should be forced to make use of Sharps, out Scots play is, in my Opinion, farr before any I even saw*

apologising for all the foreign terms used in *The Scots Fencing Master*, where he notes:

*I can give you no other reasons then this that it is like those who brought this Art first to the Kingdom, out of other Countries, have still given the Lessons the proper names, which they had in their own country, and now those Lessons are so well known by the same names they gave them at their first coming to this Kingdom, that they need no other.*<sup>14</sup>

This observation, that fencing terms tend to be retained in their original language, offers some important insights. Silver, for example, uses a mix of plain English terminology (*Open Fight*, *Low Ward*, *Forehand Ward*) with (sometimes misused) Italian names (*Stoccata*, *Imbrocata*, *Passata*), and some linguistic oddities, such as *True Guardant*. On a linguistic basis alone, it might be speculated that “Open Fight” and “Low Ward” are native English guards, while *Guardant* was perhaps introduced by the Norman French. *Stoccata* and *Passata* are used interchangeably with “Low Ward”,<sup>15</sup> but are more specific as to which leg is forward.

When considering the medieval English material, while most of the terminology seems English, there is clear evidence of continental influence. Where Ledall has the *down rytht stroke*, the same term used by Silver, Harleian MS.3542 uses the term *hauke* as a general term for all sorts of blows from all angles. It is likely to be derived from—or a pun on—the Germanic *hau*, meaning “blow,” and the *cross hauke*, specifically described with the arms are crossed in the performance of the cut (*Smyte an hauke cros. cros our ye elbovyys wt a bak stop*) is linguistically equivalent of the German *krumphau*,<sup>16</sup> a descending blow usually aimed at an opponent’s wrists or sword, in which the arms are crossed.

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*abroad, as for security; and the Reason why I think it so, is, because all French play runneth upon Falsifying and taking of time, which appeareth to the Eyes of the Spectators to be far neatter, & Gentiler way of playing then ours but no man that understands when secure Fencing is, will ever call that kind of play sure play, because when a Man maketh use of such kind of play, he can never so secure himself; but his Adversary (if he design it) may Contretemps him every Thrust, now our Scots play is quit another thing, for it runneth all upon Binding or securing of your Adversaries Sword, beofre that you offer to Thrust, which maketh your Thrust sure, and your Adversary incapable of giving you Contre temps. Hope, *The Scots Fencing Master*, “The Epistle to the Reader”.*

14 Hope, *The Scots Fencing Master*, p. 62.

15 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 35, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 238.

16 Tobler, *Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship*, p. 39.

Likewise, the *rabet* is the English name for a rising blow from the left (e.g. *set in yore lyfte legge with a rabett fayre aboue hys hede lyghtly sett in youre ryght legge with a downe ryght stroke at hys hede*), would appear to be derived from the Italian *rebattere*,<sup>17</sup> the term used by Fiore di Liberi and Vadi to describe the action of parrying a blow using a rising cut from the left.<sup>18</sup>

With these sorts of clues, the initially bizarre language found in Harleian MS. 3542, Cotton Titus MS and Ledall can be satisfactorily deciphered. Unsurprisingly, snippets from better-presented German and Italian traditions are evident. For example, *The first flourysh* in Ledall says;

*A down rytht stroke setting forth your ryght foot as forward your lyfte with a broken foyne upon the lyfte syde an other on yore ryght syde turnyng yore sworde under yore rythe arm.*

The initial stroke is obviously a defensive counter-cut against a downright stroke attack, ending in a bind.<sup>19</sup> From this bind, the first *brokyn foyne* is a thrust on the left side, the second is a thrust to the right side, *turnyng yore sworde under yore rythe arm*. Silver talks of the “breaking of thrusts,”<sup>20</sup> meaning to ward or put aside the attack, making a *broken foign* a thrust made after an attack is *broken* or warded by the opponent, and the physical instructions make it clear this is equivalent to the most German of longsword techniques, the *winden*.<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere Ledall instructs: *bring hyt [your sword] bake with yore ryght honde fayre before yore broste redy to foyne*; holding the sword *fair before your breast ready to thrust* is immediately recognisable as an unusual ward used by

17 Thanks to Matt Easton; See Florio’s dictionaries (1598 & 1611). Also, O.E.D. “The act of beating down an opponent’s weapon.

“Forms: 5 *rabit*, 5–8 *rabet*, 6 *rabat*(e, -att, -ett, *rabbott*-, 8–9 *rabbit*, 7- *rabet*. See also REBATE. [a. OF. *rabat*, *rabbat* the act of beating down, a check, abatement in price, recess in a wall, etc., n. from *rabattre* to beat back or down: see REBATE v.] 1609 HEYWOOD Brit. Troy VI. xlvi. 124 To yeeld way, rebates the greatest stroke. 1814 SOUTHEY Roderick xxv. 493 Many a foyn and thrust Aim’d and rebated.”

18 Vadi, *Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi* (translation Porzio, Luca & Mele) p. 19.

19 Equivalent to a *zornhau* in Ringeck. See Tobler, *Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship*, pp. 22–23 and 26–27.

20 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.5 Pt. 3: *But if he thrust at your face or body, then you may out of your gardant fight break it down warde with your sword bearing your point strongly towarde your right side, from the which breaking of his thrust you may likewise strike him from the right or left side of the head, or thrust him in the bodye.* See Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 280.

21 See Tobler, Christian. *Fighting With The German Longsword*, pp. 178–179.

the Italian masters, called by Fiore di Liberi *posta bicorna*<sup>22</sup> and by Filippo Vadi *saggitaria*.<sup>23</sup> There are other examples; the aforementioned combination of “rabbit” and “downright stroke,” cutting rapidly up and down from the right shoulder to left hip and back, is called the “Weed Hoe” by Döbringer<sup>24</sup> and also recommended by Vadi.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of physical manipulation of the sword, the nearly all the identifiable examples of blows, thrusts, parries and footwork in Ledall and Harleian MS.3542 are also found in other European longsword texts. However, there are some distinct differences in emphasis, and some notable omissions, particularly grappling.<sup>26</sup> As will be argued, most of the stylistic differences that are identifiable in the English tradition as a whole can also be found within medieval longsword texts.

It is clear enough, however, that the English Medieval texts, like much of the rest of the British tradition, contains a mish-mash of native English and foreign-derived terms, indicating that the English were familiar enough with European systems to absorb and incorporate techniques, or if the techniques were independently developed, at least make fun of the funny foreign words.

It is worth noting that foreign terminology is often held up for ridicule in British texts; even while using at least some Italian names, Silver can also blast away with: *can they unlace his Helmet, unbuckle his Armour; hew asunder their Pikes with a Stocata, a reversa, a Dritta, a Stramason, or other such tempestuous termes?*<sup>27</sup> or as Archibald MacGregor put it *What a trumpery of frenchified names are here, which serves for nothing else that I know of but to stupefy and embarrass people.*<sup>28</sup>

British authors usually only mention foreign systems in order to say rude things about them; Silver’s mouth-frothing rants against the Italians are

22 Fiore dei Liberi, *Flos Duellatorum*, 1409, Carta 18b.

23 Vadi, *Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi* (translation Porzio, Luca & Mele, Greg), pp. 96–97.

24 *Cod.HS.3227a or Hanko Döbringer fechtbuch from 1389* (translation and transcription by David Lindholm), p. 47R: “One technique is called the weed hoe [Krawthacke], and it comes from the iron gate [Eiserynen pforten], with your point thrusting straight up from the ground at the opponent, and then down again. This is a strong technique when it is done correctly with a step straight forward, each time you thrust up you should step forward.”

25 Vadi, *Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi* (translation Porzio, Luca & Mele, Greg), p. 19.

26 A full analysis can be found in Wagner, “Hawks, Rabbits and Tumbling Cats”.

27 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, “The Epistle Dedicatorie”, in Wagner, *Master of Defence* pp. 203–4.

28 Macgregor, *Macgregor’s Lecture on the Art of Defence*, in Wagner/Rector, *Highland Broadsword*, p. 130.

famous, although he does not restrict himself to just the Italians, and attacks “the strange vices and devices of Italian, French and Spanish Fencers.”<sup>29</sup> Silver is clear that, whatever the origins of his “Ancient teaching”, it was a thoroughly English style, and he considered the principles on which it stood quite distinct from what he observed among the Italians, French and Spanish.

## 2 Consistency of the English Tradition

The next question to address is whether there was a consistency of the English martial tradition over time. Comparing the early 16th century Ledall to the late 16th century Silver and his near-contemporaries is justifiable enough, but with the richest of British texts dating from the 18th and early 19th centuries, can they in any way be relevant to the medieval two-handed sword of Harleian? In fact, a compelling argument for English consistency can be demonstrated fairly simply by examining the structure of the English longsword manuscripts.

The structure of Harleian Ms. 3542. is four roughly equal parts. It starts with an initial group of eight “lessons”, which conclude with the mantra: *These ben stroke & reule of ye . ij . hondswerd to make hys hond & ys foete a corde*. The second group of eleven lessons is introduced by a comment that they are: *the pley of ye . ij . hondswerd by twene . ij . bokelers*, suggesting that the first group of lessons are solo drills while the second group are designed to be an exercise between two combatants. There are then instructions *To Incounter with the Two Hand Sworde*, describing a salute when first approaching an opponent, then a series of seven *cowntrs* (probably “encounters”), also exercises for a pair. Finally, there is the *The Play with the Two Hand Sword in Verse*, an addition that may have been designed as a memory aid.

Ledall’s manuscript is arranged in a similar manner. It opens with two “flourishes”,<sup>30</sup> obviously solo drills, as in the first eight lessons in Ms. 3542. There is then an exercise for *the laying down of your sword*, followed by thirteen *chates*

29 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, “The Epistle Dedicatorie”, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 203.

30 John Florio’s Italian-English dictionary (1598) has: “Gladiatore, a fencer or flourisher with his weapon. Guizzare, to tumble, to skip, to leape, to flourish a sword in the ayre.” John Minsheu’s Spanish-English dictionary (1599) has: “Esgr[‘i]ma, [f.] fence-play, flourishing or brandishing of a weapon. Esgrimad[‘u]ra, skill in fence, flourishing of a weapon, playing at cudgels.” Thomas’s Latin-English dictionary (1587) is even more specific: “[Ludius.] [dij.] [m. g.] A player at the long sword, or a florisher with the two handed swort before a shew or triumph” Randle Cotgrave’s French-English (1611) dictionary links the “flourish” with a Moulinet with the two-handed sword; “Moulinet: [m.] [A little Mill ...]

(as in a “chat”),<sup>31</sup> suggesting that these are exercises involving a partner, just as the second group of lessons in Ms. 3542 are designed to be played between two fighters. Finally, just as Ms. 3542 finishes with seven *cownters*, Ledall concludes with a series *poyntes* or *cownters*, terms which seem to signify the same thing.

The similarity in the structure of these two manuscripts is quite remarkable, and gives an interesting insight into the methods used to teach swordsmanship in medieval England. The description of a series of *kata*-like patterns suggests the repetition of both solo “flourishes” and partnered “chates” were used as training aids, while the “counters” might best be thought of as situational drills of more complex sequences.<sup>32</sup>

Even more importantly, there are considerable similarities between the long-sword texts and much later English sources, which often used a series of “lessons” or “divisions” as set plays with which to demonstrate the principles of the art. Each Lesson is essentially a hypothetical sword fight, and the manuals start with relatively simple techniques and build up to more complex and sophisticated exchanges, and are very similar to the *kata* of Japanese tradition.<sup>33</sup> Such Lessons are the basis of the Napoleonic era Highland Broadsword manuals, such as the *Ten Divisions of the Highland Broadsword* by Harry Angelo (1800), but were also central to earlier works such as Lonnergan’s *The Fencer’s Guide* (1771) and *The Use of the Broad Sword as it is now in Use among the Highlanders* by Thomas Page (1746).

Even though they are separated by around 300 years, and detail the arts of completely different weapons, the similarities between Page and Harleian are striking.<sup>34</sup> Page starts his manual with a lengthy introduction and definitions of his terms, which is typical of many texts of his era. He then goes on to describe footwork, the guards, and how to move between them. Immediately following this, he presents a series of Lessons, of which Page says *These Lessons, when perfect, is what is call’d plain Playing*,<sup>35</sup> resembling Harleian’s *The ferste pleyng & begjnyng of the substansce of ye too honde swerde* [...]. The similarities continue

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also, [a Fencer-like round flourish with a two-hand sword.], online: <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/lorio>> (accessed March 21, 2014).

31 *Oxford English Dictionary*, online: <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>> (accessed March 23, 2014).

32 Some other sources, such as the 32 *reglas* of Don Diogo Gomes de Figueiredo, have similar solo plays, including the same standard opening and closing move, of putting the sword tip down. Thanks to Steve Hick for this information.

33 Ham, “Kata and Etudes: Pattern Drills in the History of Teaching Swordsmanship”, *Electronic Journals of Martial Arts and Sciences*.

34 Credit for this insight belongs entirely to Kyle Horn.

35 Page, *The Use of the Broad Sword as it is now in Use among the Highlanders* (1746), p. 24.



when comparing the first “Counter” of Harleian with the first Lesson of Page. First both begin their action with the student walking in boldly, and striking the enemy. Page has: *With a steady Countenance looking full in your Adversary's Eyes, meet him boldly, and throw sharply at his Inside* [...], while Harleian has: *And as for ye first contenance of ye . ij . höd swerd . thou shalt walk in wt . ij . foete to thy adursary wt a bold spyрте & a mery herte wt a sengyl qrter* [...].

Both begin with the word *countenance*, then state that the student should be bold, and then prescribe a series of strikes. The first Counter of Harleian says: [...] *make ferst a sygne to hē wt a large hauke down to ye grownde . w . ij . roll-ing strokis*, while Page's First Lesson says: [...] *throw sharply at his Inside, and immediately stop an Outside, which you have no sooner received but throw again to his Inside with the utmost Vigour and Rapidity, and with the same Swiftnes stopping an Outside.*

Page's exercise involves repeatedly striking the opponent's Inside (left side) with the equivalent of Downright strokes, then guarding his own right side. Likewise, the first set of attacks in the first Lesson in Harleian's Chases has a Hawk down to the ground (i.e. a Downright stroke), followed by a “Rolling Stroke”, that is a number of downright blows, also found in Ledall as the “Tumbling Chate.”

Given the strikingly similar beginnings, use of similar terms, and the curiously similar series of attacks, it would appear that both Harleian MS. 3542 and Page share not just a common traditional structure, but identifiable commonality in basic techniques and, by extension, principles, despite their great differences in both period and weapons.

### 3 The Old Ancient Teaching

It was not until the end of the 16th century that any “fight book” was published in England. The first was a translation of an Italian treatise, *Ragione di adoprare sicuramente l'Arme, si da offesa come da difesa* by Giacomo Di Grassi from 1570, published as *His true Arte of Defence*, translated by “I.G. Gentleman, London” in 1594. Vincentio Saviolo, an Italian rapier master working in London, followed with *His Practise* in 1595. This work prompted a reply from George Silver, who published the first true native English work on swordsmanship in 1599 as *Paradoxes of Defence*.

Of Silver himself we know very little.<sup>36</sup> He was certainly no mean Master of Defence, but a gentleman of standing, and he writes of “the warrs” with some

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36 According to Aylward, George was descended from Sir Bartholomew Silver, knighted by Edward II. His family seat was at Ropley in Hampshire. He was the eldest of four brothers,

authority, suggesting first hand experience of battle. His *Paradoxes of Defence* is not a fighting manual *per se*, and is noticeably short on specific technique, but it is incredibly useful as a text because of its overt explanation of fundamental principles. Because Silver was deliberately setting out to contrast his “ancient teaching” with the new-fangled Italian rapier, he is forced to explain the conceptual basis of his fight in a way medieval manuscripts, written as memory aids for the already trained, did not. As a result, Silver gives us not just basic principles, but an extremely rich language with which to conceptualise all imaginable aspects of the English fight.<sup>37</sup>

The reaction to Silver’s *Paradoxes* was, perhaps, not what he had hoped for, as a few years later he sat down to pen the sequel *Brief Instructions Upon My Paradoxes of Defence*. Silver himself admitted that “my paradoxes of defence is to the most sort as a dark riddle”,<sup>38</sup> and set about explaining, in a more-or-less systematic way, exactly how to fight with various weapons. The work, however, never made it to print during Silver’s lifetime, perhaps due (at least in part) to an unfortunate choice of patron.<sup>39</sup> Miraculously, however, the manuscript

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Toby, Roger, and Peter, and probably born between 1555 and 1560, as in 1580 he was married in London. In August 1604 he Silver was named in a Letter Patent issued by King James, and seems to have lived to become an elderly country gent, as Cooke, Clarenceux King-of-Arms, confirmed his pedigree in his *Visitation of Hampshire* in 1622, when Silver must have been at least 70 years of age. (Aylward, *The English Master of Arms*, pp. 62–3.)

However, much of this information is suspect, and modern researchers have failed to confirm any of Aylward’s information (incidentally, not an unusual occurrence for those relying on Aylward). Given the curious fact that in 1617 the Master of Arms to Prince Henry, Joseph Swetnam, couldn’t even get Silver’s name right, hazarding it as “George Giller,” it is possible Silver was not his family name at all, and was rather a pseudonym or nom de plume.

Further research is needed. Given that Silver speaks of “the warrs” with some authority, he is likely to have first hand experience of battle, and if he was born around 1555–60, he may well have served in the Netherlands in 1585, Normandy or Portugal in 1589, in the Azores in 1597, or in any of the campaigns in Ireland, such as the suppression of Desmond in the early 1580’s, the wars in Connaught in the mid-1580’s, or the Ulster rebellion which first flared in 1594. In particular, Silver dedicated *Paradoxes* to Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, who led the storming of Cadiz in 1596. Searching for a “George Silver” or “George Giller” (particularly if linked with a brother named Toby) among the records of these campaigns may be enlightening.

37 Eg. see Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 16, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 220.

38 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, “To The Reader” in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 257.

39 Silver addressed *Paradoxes of Defence* to Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, an up-and-coming military hero of late Elizabethan England, who had led the wildly successful storming of Cadiz in 1596. Essex was noted for his fondness for duelling, and had also

survived, and in 1898 *The Works of George Silver* were finally published in a single volume.<sup>40</sup>

There are several aspects of Silver's methods that mark him as an old-fashioned militarist and "medievalist". He strongly advocates powerful attacks or "downright blows" that *cutteth off the hand, the arme, the leg, and sometimes the head*,<sup>41</sup> and disdains the thrust for not being immediately fatal.<sup>42</sup> He supports the *naturall Fight* of simple, gross-body movements, utilising *such skill as nature yeeldeth*,<sup>43</sup> which can be performed under the adrenalin fuelled stress of actual combat. The weapons he recommends are all military weapons found on the medieval battlefield—backswords, shields, staff weapons and two-handed swords—and he presents an integrated system, applicable to all forms of weaponry and combat, saying:

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been Saviolo's patron, and we can but wonder at Silver's decision to seek his patronage. Perhaps Silver had served with Essex in Cadiz, or perhaps the Earl's experience of battle had brought him round to Silver's opinion of usefulness of Italian fencing. In any case, Essex was sent to Ireland to suppress the Earl of Tyrone's rebellion in 1600, and instead of pressing the war to the Irish, he entered into an unauthorised truce with the rebels. In reality, Essex's army had little hope of defeating Tyrone and the truce was probably a valid attempt to buy time, but his enemies in London started the rumour that he was going to join forces with the Catholic Irish and seize power in England. Essex returned to London in person to dispute the allegation, but was placed under house arrest. Desperate, he led a small uprising, hoping vainly to convince the Queen of his innocence, but was defeated and executed on the 25th of February, 1601. In the circumstances, Silver may have found it prudent to avoid attracting too much attention.

40 *Paradoxes of Defence* was first rediscovered and reprinted in 1775 by Captain Grose, in *Antiquarian Repertory*, Vol. 1.

41 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, footnote to Paradox 13, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 218.

42 "I have knowne a Gentleman hurt in Rapier fight, in nine or ten places through the bodie, armes, and legges, and yet hath continued in his fight, & afterward hath slain the other". *Ibid.*, pp. 217–8.

Although Silver has been accused of being contradictory by deploring the "the great slaughter, and sundrie hurts done by long Rapiers" (Paradox 5, *Ibid.* p. 210) while also claiming that the thrust is less deadly, this is not so. Silver actually said the rapier fight was dangerous because it has no "true defence", and the uncertainty of the thrust simply makes this more so, allowing a wounded opponent to continue fighting. Blows, however, are immediately incapacitating wherever they strike, whether they kill or not. Blows are also discretionary, and need do only as much damage to an opponent as necessary for self-defence, and Silver's grips and grapples provide non-lethal alternatives—a fact that had great practical application when there were legal and social impediments to duelling.

43 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 15, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 219.

[...] *there is no maner of teaching comparable to the old ancient teaching, that is, first their quarters, then their wardes, blowes, thrusts, and breaking of thrustes, then their Closes and Gripes, striking with the hilts, Daggers, Bucklers, Wrastlings, striking with the foote or knee in the Coddess, and all these are safely defended in learning perfectly of the Gripes. And this is the ancient teaching, the perfectest & most best teaching.*<sup>44</sup>

#### 4 The True Fight

The Principles of the True Fight as outlined by Silver sit in the centre of the British martial tradition. They clearly carry through and are reiterated, both implicitly and explicitly, over the entire length of native English fencing, though rarely with the clarity and depth that Silver provides.

Silver sums his approach up in his description of the Four Governors:

[...] *knowynge Judgment, you keepe your Distance, through Distance you take your Time, through Time you safely win or gain the Place of your adversary, the Place beinge won or gained you have time safely either to strike, thrust, ward, cloze, grip, slyp or go back, in the which time your enemye is disappointed to hurt you, or to defend himself.*<sup>45</sup>

Variations on these principles are repeated constantly through the tradition. George Hale says almost the same thing as Silver, though including a reference to power generation or “Strength”:

*The Science of Defence is an Art Geometricall, wherewith the body is guarded with a single or double weapon from wrong of the Offender, or the greatest disadvantage of his Offence. The Parts thereto required are Strength and Judgement. Under strength are comprehended swiftness of motion and quickness of eye: where abilitie is without perfection of these, it is but a supply of defects, drawne from the judicciall part or judgement. Under judgement fall the considerations of time, place, and distance.*<sup>46</sup>

44 Ibid., pp. 219–220.

45 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.1, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 263.

46 Hale, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.

Joseph Swetnam<sup>47</sup> lists his Principles as:

1. *A good gard*
2. *True observing of distance.*
3. *To know the place.*
4. *To take time.*
5. *To keepe space.*
6. *Patience.*
7. *Often practise.*<sup>48</sup>

The Marquis of Newcastle's rather rambling treatise also includes mention of these basic principles of Time, Distance and Place in particular, insisting that *two bodyes cannot be in the same place at one time*<sup>49</sup> and victory is achieved by what Silver would call "gaining the True Place":

*But here you must knowe that there can but one have the possession of one place at one time, and that place is the place of strength, power and truth, and this is the onely cause of parting with the Sorde, and so I must alwayes be right, and he alwayes wronge.*<sup>50</sup>

Newcastle is fond of Right and Wrong, and Truth and Falsehood, claiming *The Advantages Particularly, that this Play has of all other manners of Playes. Those being false, and this true.*

What made some methods of fighting "False" and others "True"? Newcastle and Silver are quite clear on this: the aim of the fight is to survive unscathed. Injuring or killing the opponent is a secondary consideration to your own

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47 Joseph Swetnam's *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence* (1617) is the first native English instructional manual. Swetnam says he was once the fencing instructor for Prince Henry, who had died 5 years previously, although he is best remembered for his controversial pamphlet *The arraignment of lewd, idle, forward, and unconstant women*, published in 1615 under the pseudonym Thomas Tell-Troth. Swetnam's work is a true fencing manual, and he confirms that it is the first complete fencing treatise by an Englishman. He describes the use of the rapier, rapier and dagger, backsword, sword and dagger, and quarterstaff, and a great detail of advice on the moral and social aspects of self defence and honour. He also promises a second volume, including such weapons as the two-handed sword and halberd, but despite claiming "my seconde booke which is already in hand", there is no current evidence that such a volume was ever published.

48 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 74.

49 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 17.

50 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 13.

survival. This approach to combat Silver calls the *True Fight*,<sup>51</sup> in contrast with the *False Fight* where both combatants could well end up dead. Newcastle writes:

*The truth off the Sorde hether to hath been like the Phelosophers Stone many pretendinge to have itt butt all fayldeyett—Butt heer you shall have the trewe Elixer off wepons off woundings your Enemie with saftye to your selfe.*<sup>52</sup>

The “keeping of distance” was the key to the True Fight. Swetnam defined it as:

*To observe distance, by which is meant that thou shouldest stand so far off from thine enemy, as thou canst, but reach him when thou dost step foorth with thy blow or thrust, and thy foremost foote and hand must goe together.*<sup>53</sup>

Distance kept you safe; as George Hale put it: *time and place may both succede to your wishes, yet distance may justly checke your resolution.*<sup>54</sup>

Further, keeping of Distance was natural and realistic, as Swetnam argued:

*I say there is great ods betwixt fighting in the field and playing in a fence-schoole, for in the field being both sober, I meane if it be in a morning upon cold blood, then every man will as much feare to kill as to be killed, againe a man shall see to defend either blow or thrust in the field then in fence-schoole, for a man will be more bold with a foile or a cudgell, because there is small danger in either of them. But when they come to tell their tale at the point of a rapier, they will stand off for their owne safety.*<sup>55</sup>

Silver’s advice on how to achieve this is clear enough: *in the fyrst motion of your Adversary towarde you, that you slyde a lyttle back.*<sup>56</sup>

One hundred and fifty years later Godfrey could still say:

51 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, “Admonitions” (p. 259) and Ch. 14 Pt. 9, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 312.

52 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 6b.

53 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 74.

54 Hale, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.

55 Joseph Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 5.

56 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.2 Pt.2, in Wagner, *Master of Defence. Brief Instructions*, p. 264.

*The common Practice in Small and Back, is to retire in the one, from your Adversary's Thrust while you parry it, and then advance with your own; in the other, to step back (which is much the same) in stopping his Blow, and then come forward with your own [...].*<sup>57</sup>

There are numerous examples in Ledall of “voiding back” while defending (eg. *voydyng bake the ryght legge folowyng in wyth the lyffte legge*), indicating that that same were true one hundred and fifty years before Silver as well.

As sensible as this sounds, many European fighting traditions emphasised the opposite, and “going backward” seems to have noted as typically English. According to Silver, Saviolo said that the English *would go backe too much in their fight, which was great disgrace unto them*.<sup>58</sup> A century later Hope was forced to affirm going backwards as *being a useful a branch of the whole Art* against the contrary view of Frenchman Montaigne.<sup>59</sup>

Another noticeable difference is in the English use of “Guards.” The German tradition, for example, emphasized constantly changing Guards:

Liechtenauer has a saying ‘he who is still, is dead, he who moves will live’. And from these guards comes the understanding that you should move in swordplay, and not wait in a guard and thus waste your chance.<sup>60</sup>

Likewise, the Italian school defined the actions of their systems as progressions through vast and ever growing numbers of *posta* (12 in Fiore, 12 in Vadi, 13 in Marozzo and 17 in the *Anonimo Bolognese*). By contrast the English were quite content to “wait in a Guard,” usually with a very limited choice. Hale quipped that: *Hee that doth practise many guards, is most commonly constant in non*.<sup>61</sup>

Silver distinguished between *Lyings* (a position you wait in) and *Wards* (positions you parry in), but reduced everything to four *fight*s: *Open, Guardant, Close* and *Variable*. The two he preferred, *Guardant* and *Open*,<sup>62</sup> only contain one *Lying* each, and he even found it necessary to point out that you should

57 Godfrey *A Treatise Upon the Useful Science of Defence*, p. 34.

58 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, “A Briefe Note of Three Italian Teachers of Offense”, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 247.

59 Hope, *New Method of Fencing*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 140. Michel Eyquem de Montaigne was a French courtier whose *Essais* (1575) were translated into English by Charles Cotton in the 1670's.

60 *Cod.HS.3227a or Hanko Döbringer fechtbuch from 1389* (translation and transcription by David Lindholm), p. 32R.

61 Hale, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.

62 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 36, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 239.

not just lie in Guardant Fight (that is, the hanging guard), as tempting as it might be, as *you have made your self a certain marke*.<sup>63</sup>

Swetnam based his system around only one *true guard for the defence, either of blowe, or thrust*<sup>64</sup> and, while describing a bunch of extra Fabris-inspired guards, seemingly only includes them in order to tell you how to defeat them.<sup>65</sup> Newcastle, likewise, bases his entire system around only one idiosyncratic Guard (not altogether dissimilar to Swetnam's).

The English medieval longsword manuscripts go even further, and do not mention any Guards at all. They describe where to hold the sword for certain actions (for example, *lyffte uppe yore sworde over yore hede, setting up a foyne by ye lyfte shulder* or *setting thy swerd by thy foete*), but there is only the barest of hints that any of these positions even have names. Only in *The Man Who Wol* is there the advice to *A byde a pon a pedant*, meaning to *lie upon a Hanging Guard*. Presumably there was no need to name various Guards because there was only "one true Guard, which was commonly understood.

The point of Lying in a Guard was defensive. Swetnam's first Principle is "A Good Gard" which he defines as *The first is to learne a good and a sure gard for the defence of thy body [...] and when thou hast thy gard it is not enough to know it, but to keep it so long as thou art within reach or danger of thy enemy*.<sup>66</sup> The Guard remained the mainstay of British fencing right through into the 19th century, one authority writing: *Strange as it might appear to our pre-conceived opinions, the English soldier is the finest broadsword artist in the world. Though the Frenchman may excel in the thrust and parry, none will excel our own nation in cuts and guards*.<sup>67</sup> A good English Guard was hard to get past, Newcastle explaining:

*Whye I begin with wardes that stande still, & not with thrustes & blowes, is because the greate difficultye is to take of wardes that stande still, because beinge both at an equal he that starts firste or removes frome that equall*

63 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.8 Pt.9, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 288.

64 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 85.

65 *A slope Stocke is to be make unto your enemies breast, or unto his Rapier shoulder, if hee doe looke over his Rapier, but in putting it in, you must wheele about your Rapier hand, towards your left side turning your knuckles inward, this thrust being put in sloopewise as aforesaid, will hit thy enemy which lieth upon the Crosse-guard, or the Carelesse-guard, or the Broadward, when a right Stocke or plaine fore right thrust will not hit*. Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 113.

66 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 74.

67 Kinsley, *Swordsmen of the British Empire*, p. 376.



*hath the worste & disadvantage & watchinge one another thaye might both stande so eternalye & doe nothinge, therefore I will sewe you heer though he doth not stur, saflye to beate him, for blowes & thruste beinge greate motions everye thinge beates them, therefore because standinge still at his warde watchinge is the moste dificulthe thinge to beate, therefore I begin with standinge still.*<sup>68</sup>

The habit of lying defensively in a static Guard and waiting for an attack is the antithesis of many other European traditions. Most famously, those of the Liechtenauer tradition “loath the one forced to defend,”<sup>69</sup> Ringeck saying in a typical example:

When you are closing to an opponent, do not watch his blows and do not wait for what he might use against you. Because all fencers who just wait for their opponent’s blows and do not do anything else other than warding them off do not succeed very often.<sup>70</sup>

I.33, the oldest fight book currently known, already possesses a proto-Liechtenauer emphasis on “initiative”; every threatening *Custodijs* or *Wards* is met by a counter-offensive *Obsesseo* or *Counter*.<sup>71</sup> Liechtenauer’s *Meisterhau* did the same tactical job, giving you a way to successfully attack an opposing Guard, and thus making lying in a Guard dangerous. But not just the Germans favoured offence over defence. The Italians Fiore, Monte, Manciolino, Altoni and di Grassi all extol the virtues of attack over defence,<sup>72</sup> and I.33’s tactical logic or Ward and Counter is neatly mirrored in Fabris’ “Counter-Postures”<sup>73</sup> with the rapier.

None of this was terribly English. Silver rants against the *great abuses of the Italian Teachers of Offence*, saying: *these Italian Fencers could not escape his censure, who teach us Offense, not Defence, and to fight, as Diogenes scholars were taught to daunce, to bring their lives to an end by Art.*<sup>74</sup>

68 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 27.

69 Tobler, *Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship*, p. 11.

70 Tobler, *Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship*, p. 14.

71 Forgeng, *The Medieval Art of Swordsmanship*, pp. 20 and 24.

72 Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 113.

73 Fabris, *Lo Schermo, overo Scienza d'Arme*, (translation Leoni, T. in *Art of Dueling*) p. 5.

74 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, “The Epistle Dedicatorie”, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 203.

To say the Europeans always “attacked” and the English always “defended” is, of course, a gross oversimplification. Yet, there is an undeniable truth at its core. Well into the 19th century the British seem bewildered at the defenceless forms of the Art of Defence they found beyond their shores. One authority wrote of Indian swordsmanship:

*But the tulwar is useless for defensive purposes, and can only be used on the principle of the old Hungarian hussar who, having taught a recruit all the regular cuts, was asked when he was going to give him instruction in parrying. ‘Parry!’ roared the veteran. ‘Parry! What the deuce do you mean? Keep on cutting, and let the enemy parry!’*<sup>75</sup>

The English seemed to take a more balanced view, Silver concluding

[...] *there is no advantage absolutely, nor disadvantage in striker, thruster, or warder: and there is great advantage in the striker thruster & warder: but in this maner, in the perfection of fight the advantage consisteth in fight between partie and partie: that is, whosoever winneth or gaineth the place in true pace, space and time, hath the advantage, whether he be striker, thruster or warder.*<sup>76</sup>

Even in offence, however, the considerations of Time and Distance and the safety of a “Good Gard” were paramount. The key tactical choice involved in the True Fight is captured by Silver’s oft-repeated mantra to “strike and fly out.”<sup>77</sup> This is universal British advice, carrying through all weapons from back-sword and quarterstaff to rapier and smallsword. Swetnam says:

*draw backe thy fore foot and body into the right place of distance againe for thou must doe upon every charge, whether thou hit thy enemy or not,*<sup>78</sup>

and again:

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75 Kinsley, *Swordsmen of the British Empire*, p. 51.

76 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 8, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 212.

77 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.8. Pt.8., in Wagner, *Master of Defence. Brief Instructions*, p. 288.

78 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 82.

[...] *if thou charge thy enemy either with blow or thrust, recover thy weapons into their place, and draw thy selfe into thy gard againe, and so preparing thy selfe for to defend, and likewise to make a fresh assault with discretion*<sup>79</sup>

This is reaffirmed by Hale:

*if you offend upon one that lies at his guard, offend to the nighest part, for then you may goe quicke off,*<sup>80</sup> and: *Stay no longer within reach of your enemy then you are offending*<sup>81</sup>

The practice is repeated by later authors:

*When you have hit him with your left legge forward [...] you must go back with your left legge behinde your right legge [...] & quickly pull away your sword.*<sup>82</sup>

*When a man attacks his adversary, he should deliver his thrusts, or blows, in the twinkling of an eye; taking care to recover immediately back to his guard.*<sup>83</sup>

[...] *When you have made a Lunge, which must be as quick as possible, make not the least halt or stop, but recover your Guard as soon as you can, or spring off to right or left, or jump back out of the reach of you adversary's Lunge, least he should Riposte you.*<sup>84</sup>

[...] *when a man frequently Redoubles his thrust, being within Distance [...] he also very much exposes himself, and runs the hazard of being caught upon Time, or by a Contre-Temps.*<sup>85</sup>

The key concept here is simple, and well explained by this last quote from Sir William Hope: having come within your opponent's distance to make an attack, you are then necessarily within your opponent's reach, and they may strike with a simple hand movement (what Silver calls "Time of the Hand"). As Silver states explicitly, being at this distance is extremely dangerous,<sup>86</sup> and the most sensible

79 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 84.

80 George Hale, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.

81 George Hale, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.

82 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 14b.

83 Macgregor, *Macgregor's Lecture on the Art of Defence*, in Wagner & Rector, *Highland Broadsword*, p. 143.

84 McBane, *The Expert Sword-Man's Companion*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 55.

85 Hope, *New Method of Fencing*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 144.

86 *Now is the hand in his owne course more swifter then the foot or eye, therefore within distance the eye is deceived, & judgement is lost*". Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 24, in Wagner,

course of action is to recover your sword into a defensive guard and retreat back to a safe distance, from where you may safely judge the effects of your attack. This approach is clearly evident in the earlier English material, with clear examples of quick attacks followed by quick retreats, such as *lythly sete in ye ryght legge with a quarter and smyte hym to ye grownde then voyde bake the same legge*.

All this is in clear contrast with the explicit tactical advice found in Continental sources. Most famously, the Liechtenauer tradition emphasises redoubling attacks rather than retreating, the theory being that if your opponent is busy defending themselves, they will have no opportunity to attack you.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Fiore's longsword plays emphasis forward motion and continual offensive reactions to the opponents defences, which quickly close the distance between the swordsmen into close combat and wrestling. Fellow Italians, and more contemporary with Silver, the Bolognese masters emphasise delivering a flurry of strikes before retreating out of distance, Manciolino claiming "the valorous player is he who redoubles his blows."<sup>88</sup>

The English longsword sources certainly contain multiple attacks, with *double haukes*, *double rakes* and *double roundys* often done in combination, moving both forwards and backwards, though whether these are intended as combinations for use in combat or simply useful practice for skilful manipulation of the sword is impossible to say. There is, however, one particularly telling combination, the *Profer Rake & Quarter*.

The combination of *profer*, *rake* and *quarter* begins most of Ledall's final lessons, which are presumably primarily offensive patterns. For example, the *The fyrste poynte of ye cownter is a profur at hys face standyng styll then sett in ye ryght legge with a rake and a quarter voydyng bake*.

The *profur* is a "provocation," an extension or feint designed to provoke a reaction, and is used by Swetnam that sense.<sup>89</sup> This feint at the face is followed by a rake, that is a rising blow with the true edge of the sword, which in this

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*Master of Defence*, pp. 227–228.

87 For example: "you with a good first strike shall close in without fear or hesitation and strike at the openings, to the head and to the body, regardless whether you hit or miss you will confuse the opponent and put fear into him, so that the he does not know what to do against you. Then before the opponent can gather himself and come back, you shall do the after strike so that he will have to defend yet again and not be able to strike himself." *Cod.HS.3227a or Hanko Döbringer fechtbuch from 1389* (translation and transcription by David Lindholm), p. 21R.

88 Manciolino, *Opera Nova*, Venezia, Introduction prior to Libro 1.

89 *An Imbrokata, is a falsifying thrust, first to proffer it towards the ground, so low as your enemies knee, and then presently put it home unto your enemye Dagger-shoulder*. Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 113.

case physically forms a hanging guard, from where it naturally flows into a “quarter blow” (also defined by Swetnam)<sup>90</sup> onto the opponent’s head.

This combination attack, if performed against someone holding *your sword over your right shoulder* results in the feinted thrust at the face drawing a defensive parry or counterstroke at the sword, from where the sword is rolled under into a Hanging Guard; this may result in a *rake* to the defender’s hands, but more importantly protects the attacker from any kind of riposte. From there, the sword is compassed around to deliver a blow to the defender’s head as the attacker retreats of Distance. The combination is much more in keeping with a defensive, “strike and fly out” mindset than “striking at the openings [...] regardless whether you hit or miss.”<sup>91</sup>

## 5 Get thou the Grip

Grips, closing and wrestling are integral parts of all medieval and renaissance fencing systems. Silver considered grips a vital part of fighting with single sword, and specifically mentions that you can “close & grip” with the two-handed sword. However, he considered attempting to come to grips to be risky against a competent swordsman.<sup>92</sup> In this Silver is supported by other English sources, for example, the Marquis of Newcastle says his method of attacking on an angle and retreating out of distance means:

*This distance makes that no man can ever Close with you for this Play never Closes, but always woundes, and no man can Close with you if you Play it*

90 Swetnam contrasts the “wrist blow, a halfe blow, and a quarter blow”, and says “everie blow exceedeth each other, in force”, the “full quarter blow” being the most powerful because “the quarter blowe doth fetch a compassse about the head, that although hee come strong, it is not so quick as many other.” Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 161.

91 It also nearly identical to some of Swetnam’s quarterstaff instructions. *If you both lie in the low gard, according unto my former direction, then proffer or faïne a thrust unto your enemies face to the fairest side of the staffe [...] but thê presently in the same motion let fall the point of your staffe so low as his girdle-sted, so that you may passe cleare under the But end of his staffe [...] then may you bring up your point on the other side of his staffe, and thrusting it home, you may hit him in the shoulder or face.* Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, pp. 148–149.

92 *If you meet with one that cannot strike from his warde, upon such a one you may both dubble and false and so deceive him, but if he is skilful you must not do.* Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.5 Pt.4, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 280.

*right, for when there is a Close all Skill at weapons is past & gon, for then ther is nothing but Cuffing & Wrasteling being past the Poynt, And the strongest is comonlye the Champion, so a stronge Clowne would be to hard for a Gentleman.*<sup>93</sup>

McBane, who includes a dozen methods of grappling, including that classic British close-combat technique *take care he does not stun you by a knock with his head to your face*, merely notes *and do not be too fond of disarming*.<sup>94</sup>

The English two-handed sword sources all seem inclined to Silver's position. Ledall seemingly contains no grips at all and Harleian MS.3542 only twice refers to grips, but only within the poem *The Man Who Wol*, and with no detail other than to: *Bere up hys harnes & gey thou ye gryth, ffal a po hys harneys yf he wole a byde*.

The English choice to "strike and fly out," rather than seeking to continue the fight after the first blow greatly reduces the opportunities for grappling. The instructions "fall upon his harness if he will abide" would indicate grappling only came into play if the opponent did not "fly out", and while grips were obviously a recognised part of English medieval swordsmanship, the style seems to have avoided close-fighting and grappling whenever possible.

Another typical, and related, aspect of English combat is the continually repeated advise to *strike or thrust at such open or weakest part that you shall find nearest*,<sup>95</sup> *thrust at the nearest place, which lieth most unguarded*,<sup>96</sup> and *you are alwayes to hit that which is nearest to you*.<sup>97</sup> The simple practical reason is expressed by Hale and McBane: *[...] offend to the nighest part, for then you may goe quicke off: and if you offend to the other parts that lyeth further off, your offence is slow, and most commonly past recovery [...]*<sup>98</sup> and *[...] for your own safety, if you do thrust, do it only at his arm or hand, by which you will be in little danger [...]*.<sup>99</sup>

Staying away from your opponent, "sniping" at extremities, and then running away again certainly it does not seem to fit with Ringeck's command to "Always fence using all your strength! When you're close, strike at his head and

93 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 19.

94 McBane, *The Expert Sword-Man's Companion*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 59.

95 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.2 Pt.4, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 265.

96 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 169.

97 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 11b.

98 Hale, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.

99 McBane, *The Expert Sword-Man's Companion*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 56.

body.”<sup>100</sup> However, the English defensive approach certainly worked, as demonstrated by this account from the Indian Mutiny:

*I went at one fellow with my sword [...] but I could not manage my chap so soon, as he was, like most of these niggers, a pretty tolerable swordsman. However, I had not quite forgot my lessons at Angelo's, and besides, these niggers can't understand the point; so I waited, not trying to hit my man, but keeping my eye on him (which, by the way, was very necessary, as he danced and jumped about like a madman, now hitting at my right side, then danc- ing round like lightning at my left).*

*I gave him a sharp jerking kind of cut on his knuckles, his sword dropped, and I was just going to give him No. 3 through his body, but he picked it up again too sharp for me, and began cutting at me again; but it was of no use, he couldn't hold it, and dropped it again, and he received the long-delayed No. 3 in his stomach. Over he went of course, and I picked up his tubwar and cut off his head very nearly with it. This is the first regular good single combat I have had, and I hope it may not be the last.*<sup>101</sup>

The ultimate expression of the English approach is to be found in probably the only unique aspect to the English school of longsword, that is in the use of single-handed attacks with the two-handed weapon. One of the great disadvantages of the two-handed sword was that the two-handed grip reduced your reach, something Newcastle points out:

*But for the nexte receyte take a good Sorde & use towe handes beinge stron- ger than one & that putte oute scill saye theye. Tis trewe as itt is stronger so it is shorter it beates thrustes & blowes inded & so will anye thinge because motion is weake & goinge frome an Equall which hee is alwayes. Att firste hees disadvantagds when he hath struck the sorde a waye & lengthens with one Arme the Enemies sorde coumes agan havinge Equall time or if hee hitt I can hitt to at the same time being longer than his towe handes or to hande for him iff I will be my left hande as a dagger.*<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Tobler, *Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship*, p. 14.

<sup>101</sup> MacGregor *The Life And Opinions of Major-General Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor: Quartermaster-general in India*, p. 79.

<sup>102</sup> Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 8.

The English solution to this was, as Silver points out, to *play upon double & single hand, at the 2 hand sword*,<sup>103</sup> in other words be able to use it in either one hand or with both hands. Because of this, Silver says;

[...] *your enemye, if he fight only upon dubble hand be driven of necessitie, seeking to win the place, to gain you the place where by you may safely hurt him, and go free yourself by reason of your distance, and when you shall seeke to win the place upon him he shall not be able to gaine the place upon you, nor keepe the place from you where by he shall either be hurt, or in great danger of hurt, by reason of your large reach, true place and distance, your fight being truly handled keeping it self from Cloze and grip.*<sup>104</sup>

In other words, a single-handed grip on the sword automatically increases your reach by a considerable degree, so much so that you can strike your opponent in the Time of the Hand even at what seems to them a safe distance. There are occasional examples of such techniques in the European sources, but they are few and far between.<sup>105</sup> To the English, however, this seems to have been a core concept for the style. Newcastle talks about those: [...] *that plays with twoe handes upon his sorde or Alters from one to twoe handes or from twoe handes to one or changes the sorde faste frome one to the other.*<sup>106</sup>

Ledall contains numerous examples of such attacks made “with one hand only,” some of which are given special names, such as *Casting a Fool*, the *Dragon’s Tail* and the *Snatch*. A thrust-single on pass backwards was called a *Back Foign*, which could be an extremely useful “catch-all” defensive technique, and a neat variation one of Silver’s described defences for both sword and staff.<sup>107</sup>

103 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.10, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 297.

104 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.11 Pt.1, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 304.

105 Eg. Talhoffer, *Medieval Combat*, (translation Rector, Mark), Plate 10.

106 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 9b.

107 *If he lye a loft and strike as aforesaid at your head, you may endanger him if you thrust at his hand, hilt, or Arme, turninge your knuckles downward, but fly back with all in the instant that you thrust.* Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.4 Pt.4, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 273.



## 6 The True Cross

In defence, the English also differed from the expressed preference of many European masters. Once again, a clear contrast can be made with Liechtenauer, who emphasised counter-attack; that is, defending with a blow that not only parries or deflects the incoming attack, but strikes the attacker as well.<sup>108</sup> This ideal is well described by Fabris: *if [...] the opponent comes forward to attack you, you can easily interrupt the forming of your counter-posture and use that tempo to wound him while parrying at the same time*<sup>109</sup>

In contrast, the British conclude that attacks should be parried with a secure defence or “true cross”, followed by an immediate riposte:

*[...] the force of a blow passeth indirectly, therefore must be directly warded in the counterchecke of his force: which cannot be done but by the convenient strength of a man, & with true crosse in true time, or else will not safely defend him [...]*<sup>110</sup>

Page's *Principle the Fourth* says much the same thing:

*The Inside Guard stops an Inside Throw in the same Direction in which the Throw is made, and with a Resistance exactly equal to the Force; for if it was less the Sword would be beat back upon the Defendant, and if it was greater the Assailant's Sword must recoil; either of which would be equally disadvantageous to the Defendant, who from the very instant of stopping his Antagonist's Sword is supposed to change, recover or throw Home.*<sup>111</sup>

Hope explained that: *[...] victory depends chiefly upon the surest and firmest Parade, and the quickest Riposte [...] there can be no certain defence from any of these Guards, but what is made by forming a true cross upon the adversary's sword in Parieing.*<sup>112</sup>

This was not just determined by the type of weapon. Swetnam differs from Fabris quite distinctly in the way the long rapier should be used. Rather than “wound him while parrying at the same time”, Swetnam recommends a simple parry and quick return:

108 Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 113.

109 Fabris, *Lo Schermo, overo Scienza d'Arme*, (translation Leoni, T. in *Art of Dueling*) p. 6.

110 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 13, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 217.

111 Page, *The Use of the Broad Sword as it is now in Use among the Highlanders*, p. 42.

112 Hope, *New Method*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, pp. 122 and 125.

*I will make it plainer by and by, because I would have thee to understand it wisely, for having with a true defence defended by your enemies blow or thrust by crossing with him, or by bearing your weapon against his assault (as beforesaid) the danger being past, then presently at the same instant, and with one motion turne downe the point of your Sword, turning your knuckles inward, and so thrusting it home to your enemies thigh.*<sup>113</sup>

The reason behind the preference for the parry was that it was simple, natural and instinctive. The precision required to land a perfectly-timed counter-attack was difficult to achieve, especially under the stress of actual combat; as one authority recorded:

*During the duel, when the bare chest suddenly is exposed to the threat of the opponent's sharply honed weapon, nature—which wild fencers or brawlers try to deny—demands its rights, so that most are induced to the instinctive parry, rather than cutting simultaneously.*<sup>114</sup>

The counter-attack, on the other hand, was difficult and insecure, Hope calling it “an uncertain, deceitful, and dangerous kind of play.”<sup>115</sup> Silver certainly understood and used the counterattack,<sup>116</sup> both with<sup>117</sup> and without<sup>118</sup> opposition, but warned it was ineffective against a skilled opponent, *saying in perfect fight two never strike or thrust together, because they never suffer place nor time to performe it.*<sup>119</sup>

Most of the defences in Ledall and Harleian ms. 3542 can be confidently identified as parries, as they involve a step back (to defend) and then forwards again (to riposte), as seen previously. However, the single most common defensive action in the sources is the “Quarter,” a blow that transitions through a

113 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 125.

114 Bartunek (1904), quoted in Amberger, *The secret history of the sword: Adventures in ancient martial arts*, p. 76.

115 Hope, *New Method*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 134.

116 “The fyrst is to strike or thrust at him, at that instant when he have gained you the place by his coming in.” Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.2 Pt.2, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 264.

117 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.4 Pt.7, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, pp. 273–4.

118 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.4 Pt.4, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 273.

119 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 8, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. George Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence* (1599), p. 212.

Hanging Guard (equivalent to Silver's "True Guardant"), the hilt rising and passing over the head as the blade is whipped around for a powerful downright blow. Hanging Guards of various kinds are central to English swordsmanship, not just with cutting weapons like Backswords but even with thrusting weapons like Smallswords.

Simple, versatile and secure, the Quarter is used throughout the English longsword system as a primary defence, performed from the left or right foot, standing still, moving in or out, or "turning," that is, shifting your weight back to pull your head and body out of the way. Most dramatically, the hanging parry can be done with both hands or single-handed: *A quarter fayre before you with bothe handys, A quarter fayre before you with wn hande standyng style, and then sett the lyfte hande uppon yore sworde smytyng a quarter fayre before you with wn hande.*

Hanging parries with one hand immediately place the English longsword into familiar Backsword territory, where the hand that has been released is available for other actions (such as checks, grapples<sup>120</sup> or counter-grappling techniques), once again encouraging an opponent to "fly out" as quickly as possible.

Another noticeable trend is for the English to avoid engaging, binding or extending their weapon towards their opponent wherever possible. Swetnam's True Guard for rapier is described as *keeping your Rapier alwaies on the outside of your enemies Rapier, but not joyning with him, for you must observe a true distance at all weapons, that is to say, three feete betwixt the points of your weapons.*<sup>121</sup> Newcastle had a similar ward ("my sword almost straight up") and is explicit that *This ward of hiding the sword from him, is to get safely into distance without his troubling the weake of yor sword.*<sup>122</sup> Silver too also abhorred the extended point. He constantly warns against allowing your opponent to cross your sword:

*The perfect is to carry your hand and hilt above your head with your point downe to wards your left knee, with your sword blade somewhat neer your bodye, not bearing out your point, but rather declynyng in a lyttle towards your said knee, that your enemye cross not your point and so hurt you [...] it is Imperfect, [...] bearing your point too farr out from your knee, so that*

120 See Hand, *English Swordsmanship*, Vol.1, p. 127–145, and Brown, *English Martial Arts*, pp. 126–137.

121 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 117.

122 Newcastle, *The Truth of the Sorde*, f. 11.

*your enemy May Cross, or strike Aside your point, and thereby endanger you.*<sup>123</sup>

And of course he recommends doing the same to your opponent should they carelessly actually extend their sword towards you, as in *sodainly if you can Cross his point with your blade put aside his point strongly with your sword and strike or thrust at him, and fly out instantly.*<sup>124</sup> This concept was used with all weapons; in his Staff section, Silver says it is far better *not to offend until you have strongly and swiftly put by his point,*<sup>125</sup> and as a general rule *If you find your self too strong for your adversary in any manner of ward, whether the same be above or belowe, put by his staff with force, and then strike or thrust from it.*<sup>126</sup> The same advice using Beats and Batters is given in other sources for both broadsword<sup>127</sup> and smallsword,<sup>128</sup> with Hope contrasting his Art with the French method by stating: *our Scots play is quit another thing, for it runneth all upon Binding or securing of your Adversaries Sword, before you offer to Thrust.*<sup>129</sup>

In contrast, Europeans sought to cross blades whenever possible, so they could judge by pressure their opponent's intentions. Döbringer writes:

When it happens that you bind with the opponent, or when you find yourself on his sword then you should remain on his sword. And you shall turn [*Winden*] and thus joyfully and without fear remain on his sword. You shall see, await and understand what it is that he intends to do against you. And to remain thus on the sword Liechtenauer calls this the talking window [*Sprechvanster*].<sup>130</sup>

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- 123 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.3 Pt.2, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 271.
- 124 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.4 Pt.21, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 277.
- 125 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.12 Pt.1, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 307.
- 126 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.11 Pt.3, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 304.
- 127 Sinclair, *Anti-Pugilism*, in Wagner & Rector, *Highland Broadsword*, p. 94.
- 128 McBane, *The Expert Sword-Man's Companion*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 52.
- 129 Hope, *Scots Fencing Master*, "The Epistle to the Reader".
- 130 *Cod.HS.3227a or Hanko Döbringer fechtbuch from 1389* (translation and transcription by David Lindholm), p. 37V–R.

The Italian Vadi also emphasises fighting from the bind,<sup>131</sup> writing “The art of the sword only consists in crossing, putting both strikes and thrusts in their rightful place, bringing war to those who oppose you”<sup>132</sup> and “Be sure to note and understand this saying: when you cross blades, cross them resolutely, to lessen risk from the enemies sword.”<sup>133</sup> The German word *fühlen* and the French term *sentiment de fer* both convey this desire for information from the cross. The English, however, preferred to deny their opponent any such assistance,<sup>134</sup> and if possible beat the opposing weapon aside rather than bind, with Silver advising;

*Keep distance and lye as you thinke best for your ease and safty [...] and when you find his poynt Certaine, then make your space narrow and cross his sword [...] Having Crossed his longe sword or rapier with your short sword blade, and put his poynt out of the strait lyne by force then strike or thrust at him with your sword and fly out instantly according to your governors.*<sup>135</sup>

As far as the English medieval sources are concerned, there is little evidence that they considered binding particularly important. The concept was certainly understood, with the *The Man Who Wol* instructing *Bynde hē to gedere &*

131 Vadi, *Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi* (translation Porzio, Luca and Mele), p. 21.

132 Ibid., p. 19.

133 Ibid., p. 20.

134 Silver considered fighting from a bind/engagement/*stringer* extremely dangerous, and the theory behind his objection is as true for longswords as it is for rapiers. Offensively, actions that controlled the opponent's sword in a cross or bind were undeniably effective, because: *the Agent hath still in true space the blade of the Patient [...] to worke upon [...] the place cannot be denied, do the patient Agent what he can for his life to the contrarie, either by blowes, thrusts, falsing or doubling of thrusts, going backe, indirections, or turnings of the bodie, or what else soever may in the highest touch of wit or strength, or agilite of bodie be devised or done, to keepe out the Agent.* Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 36, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 240. However, being in a Bind merely allows the attacker to move dangerously close to the defender, and is so effective at controlling the defender's sword they have no option but to attempt a desperate counter attack of their own. Once again, *their course is doubled, the place is wonne of both sides, and one or both of them will commonly be slaine.* Silver is quite clear that nothing the Agent can do will prevent this, saying *if both shall prese hard upon the guard, he that first thrusteth home in true place, hurteth the other: & if both thrust together, they are both hurt.* Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 6, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 210.

135 Silver, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, Ch.8 Pt.7&8, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 288.

*sey god spede*, and as previously noted, Ledall contains an identifiable English version of the German *winden*. But compared to the “Eight Windings” of the Liechtenauer tradition<sup>136</sup> the English mention only two, with no mention of “feeling.”

## 7 Unskilful Valiant Men

By denying engagement and preventing the opponent from making beats, binds or other actions upon your sword, and retreating out of distance after every attack, the English masters simplified the fight considerably. The desire for simplicity is evident in their dismissal of “fashion” and new-fangled ways, and championship of that which is simple, natural and instinctive. Newcastle says:

*In sum thinges ther is no truth as in the fation off clothes or dansinge butt as moste weares or dances at Greate Courtes which markes the fation—But in the Sorde ther is an absolute truth & though ther is in matter off truth butt right & wronge.*<sup>137</sup>

In this he is in close agreement with Silver, who opens his *Paradoxes of Defence* with: *Fencing (Right honorable) in this new fangled age, is like our fashions, everie day a change, resembling the Camelion, who altereth himselfe into all colours save white: so Fencing changeth into all wards save the right.*<sup>138</sup>

Swetnam too observes that: [...] *old weapons lyeth rusty in a corner, and every man is desirous of the newest fashion of weapons, especially if they seeme to be of more daunger to the enemy then the old.*<sup>139</sup>

This native conservatism is matched by a certain admiration for the untutored skills of English yeoman. Silver recognised that their “natural fight” was difficult to overcome,

*I thinke a downe right fellow, that never came in schoole, using such skill as nature yeeldeth out of his courage, strength, and agilitie, with good downe right blowes and thrusts among, as shall best frame in his hands, shold put*

136 Tobler, *Fighting with the German Longsword*, p. 177.

137 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 6b.

138 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, “The Epistle Dedicatorie”, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 203.

139 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, p. 1.

*one of these imperfect schollers greatly to his shifts. Besides, there are now in these days no gripes, closes, wrestlings, striking with the hilts, daggers, or bucklers, used in Fence-schooles. Our plough-men by nature wil do all these things with great strength & agility: but the Schoolemen is altogether unacquainted with these things. He being fast tyed to such school-play as he hath learned, hath lost thereby the benefite of nature, and the plowman is now by nature without art a farre better man than he.*<sup>140</sup>

Newcastle says much the same thing, noting:

*sertenlye equall courage, with the ordinarye scill to boote muste have advantage, naye did he never lerne but practise often with several handes his owne natural waye what he thinks beste, that practise will have greate advantage of one that never practises, let his courage be what it will.*<sup>141</sup>

Silver's challenge to the Italian fencers was that he wished no more proof of their ability than they could *come away unhurt from three unskilful valiant men, and [...] three resolute men half drunke.*<sup>142</sup> He noted that Italianate rapier fencers would:

*[...] to stand upon Schoole-trickes and jugling gambolds: whereby it grew to a common speech among the countrie-men, Bring me to a Fencer, I will bring him out of his fence trickes with good downe right blowes, I will make him forget his fence trickes I will warrant him.*<sup>143</sup>

Hale says nearly the same thing: *[...] for their nice trickes in Schooles, or Playerlike fights at many Weapons upon Stages, are mere shadowes without substance [...] Many tickes doe too much trouble the minde: know all, use few; three defends the whole.*<sup>144</sup>

Sir William Hope certainly appreciated the advantage of fencing with, not against, the natural instincts *when a man is really concerned to make a true*

140 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 15, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 219.

141 Newcastle, *The Truth of the Sorde*, f. 4.

142 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, "Admonitions", in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 219 George Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence* (1599), p. 206.

143 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, "Admonitions", in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 219 George Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence* (1599), p. 205.

144 Hale, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.

*defence for his Life*,<sup>145</sup> and based his *New Method* around *that Posture which I found Nature prompted most people without Art to take themselves to, upon a sudden and vigorous attack*<sup>146</sup> (i.e. the hanging guard), while dismissing *all nice breast-plate Lessons, and other such like School-Tricks*.<sup>147</sup> Hope's attitude was exactly the same as Silver's to *Schoole-play*, noting that:

*Graceful Fencing is for not other use but only [...] for divertisement, counterfeit a fight with blunt: that is, who only Assault in the Schools with foils. For in a real Occasion, all that variety and quaintness of play is so much neglected, that it is easily perceived by the eagerness of the motions, and concern for look and gesture, that it is only safety and self-preservation, not a good grace, which a man in such a case chiefly aims at, and is concerned about.*<sup>148</sup>

It was often noted that the untrained, but strong and brave, were often capable of overcoming well-trained opponents, and even the most skilled fencer was in danger of: [...] *underestimating the naturalist gifted with great physical strength, otherwise it could be the case that the fencer who is accustomed to conventional attacks will be conquered by the uninhibited attacks, the ruleless application of violence.*<sup>149</sup>

Thomas Churchyard, in the "Epistle Dedicatorie" to the English edition of di Grassi's *True Arte of Defence* (1594), also noted that *The danger is death if ignorant people procure a combate*,<sup>150</sup> and Hope said *Nothing hath been a greater reproach to the Art of Fencing than the unexpected success many Ignorants have had over such as pretended to a considerable share of skill in the Art*.<sup>151</sup> In fact, it seems to have been widely believed (at least among the "ignorants") that, as Hale says *Some hold opinion that Skill avayleth little or nothing in fight*.<sup>152</sup> Newcastle spends considerable time arguing that his sons should: [...] *dispise nott the Scill off the Sorde. Putt the case thatt a ruff stronge Country Cloune sett*

145 Hope, *New Method*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 100.

146 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

147 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

148 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

149 Hergsell, *Duell-Codex*, p. 83.

150 Di Grassi, *His True Art of Defence*, p. 4.

151 Hope, *New Method*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 105.

152 Hale, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.



*uppon a Gentleman & that cloune fights lusteleye if the Gentleman hath no Scill itt will goe harde for him.*<sup>153</sup>

Newcastle actually seems a little frightened of the untutored “country clowns” who, *scourninge Arte or Scill but to run at him as harde as hee can drive most desperatlye soffte [...] nexte cuffings that can be cudgell play more desperate for one heade may bee broke.*<sup>154</sup> He notes that the untutored but well-practiced had an advantage over the skilled-but-unpracticed:

*Naturall ways what he thinks beste that practise will have greate advantage of one that never practisses but his courage be what it will—But the dispisinge off Scill is when they doe farr off of fightinge for then everye man hath not onlye courage for himselve but a superfluetye to serve the whole Parish.*<sup>155</sup>

According to Newcastle, practice was the key to success: *not onlye the Theoreye, but the Practick for it is not talke nor knowe but to acte.*<sup>156</sup>

However, not all practice was useful. Silver complained that the Italian rapier techniques were too intricate to be performed at realistic speeds, and were: *[...] true in their demonstrations, according with their force & time in gentle play, & in their actions according with the force & time in rough play or fight, false.*<sup>157</sup>

The disdain for “gentle play” in favour of “rough play” is another common theme in the sources, with the ability to fight “with the force & time in rough play” considered vital if the swordsman’s “scill” was to be any use against the “Ignorant”. Swetnam includes Practice as among his Principles:

*Now the last thing that I will note heere, is often practise, for without practise the Proverbe sayes, a man may forget his Pater noster: for practise (with moderation) is, not onelie the healthiest thing in the world for the bodie: but it is likewise as defensive for the same. For skill to everie reasonable man is a friend, so that with moderation it be used, and so long as it remaines in those of good temper; for unto such, skill bringeth no more presumption nor furie then as if they had it not: for in the field, those which I meane will use it as if they were in a Schoole, by which meanes such have great advantage of the ignorant and unskilfull; for those which are unskilfull, are neither*

153 Newcastle, *Truth of the Sorde*, f. 4.

154 *Ibid.*, f. 8.

155 *Ibid.*, f. 4.

156 *Ibid.*, f. 2v.

157 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 3, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 208.

*certaine of their defence nor offence; but what they doe is upon a kinde of foolish bolde hardinesse, or as I may say by hap-hazzard or chance noddie.*<sup>158</sup>

Practice, with realistic speed and force, was necessary for the development of the attributes needed to face actual combat. Swetnam is explicit that:

*There is no way better to get the true observation of distance, but by often practise either with thy friend, or else privately in a chamber against a wall [...] for a good gard and distance are the maine and principal points of all.*<sup>159</sup>

He also suggested modifying your practice weapons to make them safer for striking each other:

*Let thy Staffe of practise be seaven or eight foote, and better, button both thy foiles and thy staves before the practise with them, for otherwise the unskilfull may thrust out one anothers eyes, yea although there was no harme meant, yet an eye may be lost except the occasion be prevented. To make your buttons take wooll or flocks, and wrappe it round in leather so bigge as a Tennis-ball [...]*<sup>160</sup>

Right into the 18th century, the backsword players noted that *its Necessity and Excellence can never be thoroughly known till you come to play loose*.<sup>161</sup> In other words, sparring was absolutely necessary to develop a complete understanding of the art. The results weren't always pretty; Hale mentions *our commonly applauded, rude, and buffeting play*, and Hope argued *although it be not taught perhaps with so good a grace, as abroad, yet I say, if a Man should be forced to make use of Sharps, out Scots play is, in my Opinion, farr before any I even saw abroad*.<sup>162</sup>

A century later, during the Flanders campaign of 1793–94, the commander of the British cavalry, John Gaspard Le Marchant, heard an Austrian officer dismissively describe the fencing of British soldiers as “reminiscent of a farmer chopping wood.”<sup>163</sup> Yet when it came to it Englishmen, raised on a diet of

158 Swetnam, *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*, pp. 85–6.

159 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

160 *Ibid.*, pp. 184–185.

161 Page, *The Use of the Broad Sword as it is now in Use among the Highlanders*, p. 34.

162 Hope, *Scots Fencing Master*, “The Epistle to the Reader”.

163 The French had a similar contempt for British sabre method, e.g.; “A heavy sabre deals a heavy blow that may not cut at all . . . the sabre cut sometimes wounds seriously, often

cudgelling on the village green, famously outclassed their French opponents. One authority put it:

*The French [...] were incomparably better swordsmen, but the young Englishmen, relying on their superior bodily strength, would throw themselves upon their antagonists with such a supreme disregard for the science of the thing that they not unfrequently succeeded in cutting down their bewildered opponents.*<sup>164</sup>

This is probably unfair to the underlying depth of the British military broadsword system, but the point is fair enough; simple, natural techniques, when done well with strength and vigour, were of far more use in actual combat than the intricacies of more “sophisticated” fencing systems.

## 8 Englishman Strike in Furie and Anger

When comparing martial systems and traditions, there is always the danger of exaggerating differences. Any complete system will have range of tactical choices and options and similar weapons are bound to share similar techniques. That said, the English sources are consistent in having an *attitude* to fighting that seems distinct in many ways from that found elsewhere in Europe. Why then was the English approach to swordsmanship so different to that found on the Continent?

The context of use probably had a great deal to do with it. Throughout the Renaissance and beyond, England could be a violent place.<sup>165</sup> Robbery, murder, arson, poaching, livestock-rustling, kidnapping and blackmail were endemic in certain regions; on the Anglo-Scottish Border systematic robbery and blood feud were a way of life, and in the Scottish Highlands the clans were effectively independent feudal nations. Most people carried weapons most of the time; in 1558, for example, the French ecclesiastic Stephen Perlin wrote of England;

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lightly, or not at all, and rarely kills; whereas it uncovers the body of the assailant and exposes it to the point thrust of the enemy, which latter thrust has the advantage of being easily executed in every direction without exposing the body”. Rondelle, *Foil and Sabre*. Quoted in Amberger, *The Secret History of the Sword*, p. 38.

164 Quoted in Holland, *Gentlemen's Blood: A History of Dueling*, p. 235.

165 Kiernen, *The Duel in European History*.

[...] *and it is to be noted, that the servants carry pointed bucklers, even those bishops and prelates, and the men commonly exercise themselves with a bow. The husbandmen, when they till the ground, leave their bucklers and swords, or sometimes their bows in the corner of the field, so that in this land every body bears arms.*<sup>166</sup>

The carrying of weapons, and the skill to use them, was not only necessary for the lord and yeoman alike, but socially accepted, and even encouraged. This was because the English relied for their security upon an armed population rather than a standing army. Until the very end of the 16th century English armies were raised from the estates and townships of the great lords as needed, and came armed in their traditional combination of sword, bill and bow.<sup>167</sup> However, even with the later establishment of a “professional” army, in practice, training in arms was completely ignored.<sup>168</sup> The only way the private soldier was going to learn his swordsmanship was from the Masters of Defence or other teachers in private life, and in 1614 George Hale defended the Art of Defence because;

[...] *it leads to as much use in making the person ready and daring to the warre; as Horsemanship begets dexteritie for the shocke. The Schoole of our private Practise being the same to the Battell, that the Muze is to the Troope: for with what confidence shall hee goe on upon many, that hath no knowledge to give him hope of safety from one.*<sup>169</sup>

The lack of even the most basic training is demonstrated by McBane, who recounts that when, as a new recruit in 1687, an “Old Soldier” stole his pay. McBane had to pay a Sergeant *who taught Gentlemen the use of the Small Sword* for lessons, and notes *I was taught privately so that none might know of it.*<sup>170</sup>

In a country where everyone was armed, no matter what your station, you could be set upon by a “country clown” or “downe right fellow [...] with good downe right blowes and thrusts.”<sup>171</sup> The English swordsman, therefore, had to deal not just with their highly-trained social equals, but with the random

166 Quoted in Brown, *English Martial Arts*, p. 15.

167 Fraser, *Steel Bonnets*.

168 Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's army*.

169 Hale, George, *The Private Schoole of Defence*.

170 McBane, *The Expert Sword-Man's Companion*, in Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, p. 26.

171 Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*, Paradox 15, in Wagner, *Master of Defence*, p. 219.

offerings of both drunken “Ignorants” and the martially trained lower classes. A swordsman had to expect the unexpected; or, as Swetnam puts it:

*It is the nature of an Englishman to strike with what weapon soever he fighteth with all, and not one in twenty but in furie and anger will strike unto no other place but onely to the head, therefore alwaies if you fight with rapier and dagger, yet expect a blow so well as a thrust.*<sup>172</sup>

## 9 Conclusion

In conclusion, the principles and tactical approach espoused by Silver are common throughout the British tradition. The result was a style of fighting that emphasised safety; by relying on parrying with a “True Cross” as the most secure form of defence, by “keeping distance,” and “flying out” after an attack, in accordance with Silver’s four grounds or principles of the “true fight,” Judgment, Distance, Time and Place. The techniques that can be reconstructed from the earlier English longsword manuscripts would suggest these, too, abided by such principles, making their tactical choices quite different from comparable European longsword traditions.

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**PART 3**

*Martial Arts, Martial Culture and Case Studies*







## The Autograph of an Erudite Martial Artist: A Close Reading of Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs. 3227a

*Eric Burkart*

One of the oldest surviving manuscripts in the tradition of the German martial arts teacher Johannes Liechtenauer raises more questions than an entire life of historical research can ever answer: the small codex 3227a in possession of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg is filled with notes, recipes, excerpts, rituals, technical instructions and fencing didactics written by a single anonymous scribe around the end of the fourteenth century. If we follow the vague and highly disputable dating of Lotte Kurras to “around 1389 AD”,<sup>1</sup> the manuscript would also provide the first known reference to Johannes Liechtenauer, a professional fencing instructor whose didactic approach influenced martial arts treatises until the beginning of the 17th century.<sup>2</sup>

In the following article I will discuss several questions concerning the manuscript 3227a. After a short summary of the research history of the codex, I would like to propose some thoughts on martial arts treatises, contributing to the establishment of a theoretical background for the study of medieval fight books. Texts and depictions of body techniques<sup>3</sup> face the problem of transmitting information about the practical knowledge of experienced fighters. Following the works of Michael Polanyi,<sup>4</sup> an integral part of these skills is bound to a subjective experience of movement and cannot be expressed explicitly by the use of speech or other media. The key to understanding the described body techniques rests on a form of tacit knowing that cannot be verbalised or depicted. Starting from this perspective, the studies of Jan-Dirk

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\* I would like to thank Keith Farell (Glasgow) who helped to correct my English and who provided important remarks on the discussed subject. For all translations from medieval German I have used the dictionaries digitized by the Trier Center for Digital Humanities, online: <<http://woerterbuchnetz.de>> (accessed June 11, 2014).

1 Kurras, *Die deutschen mittelalterlichen Handschriften*, pp. 15–17.

2 Anglo, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p. 129.

3 Mauss, “Les techniques du corps” and id., “Body Techniques”. See also Mallinckrodt (ed.), *Bewegtes Leben*.

4 Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* and id., *The Tacit Dimension*.

Müller<sup>5</sup> on the communication strategies of fight books gain a key relevance to understanding medieval attempts to describe body techniques and the limitations of these attempts.

In the following section I will present the results of a codicological autopsy of manuscript 3227a executed in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg.<sup>6</sup> The diagram (see figure 16.1) contains the structure of the quires, the two different foliations (modern and contemporary) as well as information about missing pages, blank space and a coloured indication of the manuscript's content.<sup>7</sup>

In a fourth section I will turn to a close reading of the manuscript while focussing on two main points: first, the distinct stages of writing and the order of the establishment of the codex; and second, the presented theorization of martial arts practice, the character of the manuscript and its intended audience.

## 1 Research History

The codex drew the attention of scholars from the outset of European martial arts historiography. Karl Wassmannsdorff<sup>8</sup> cited several paragraphs concerning Liechtenauer's grappling lore in his monograph from 1870, but it was Gustav Hergsell<sup>9</sup> who first presented a codicological description of the manuscript in 1896. He identified it as a redaction of Liechtenauer's teachings and stated that it cannot be the copy of an already-existing fight book attributed to Johannes Liechtenauer, but instead contains an unfinished adaption of his doctrine, together with the fight lore of Hanko Döbringer, various recipes and other information. After two references in the works of Eduard Gessler<sup>10</sup>

5 Müller, "Bild—Vers—ProsaKommentar"; id., "Zwischen mündlicher Anweisung und schriftlicher Sicherung von Tradition" and id., "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre".

6 I would like to thank Frank Heydecke, conservator at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, for his skilled and kind help regarding all codicological questions and for the possibility to use the restoration workshop. I am also very grateful to the staff of the library and to Lena Kleer from the department of digitalization who kindly helped me with my requests.

7 The structure of the diagram is based on the codicological description in Bergner/Giessauf, *Würgegriff und Mordschlag*, pp. 9–20.

8 Wassmannsdorff, *Die Ringkunst des deutschen Mittelalters*, pp. 159–162.

9 Hergsell, *Die Fechtkunst im XV. und XVI. Jahrhunderte*, pp. 425–429.

10 Gessler, "Lichtenauer, Johannes" with various errors and simplifications.

and Gerhard Eis,<sup>11</sup> it was Martin Wierschin<sup>12</sup> who continued to work with the manuscript in 1965 and who misinterpreted the addendum *hanko pffaffen döbringers* on fol. 43r as a self-nomination of the scribe. This error persisted in scholarly publications for many years.<sup>13</sup> But besides this misreading, Wierschin identified certain essential characteristics of the codex and was the first to summarize its content. He agreed with Hergsell and regarded it as a draft, possibly for the composition of a fight book, and as an original work that was not the copy of an already-existing treatise on martial arts. Wierschin emphasized the private character of the manuscript as a collection of information which was of interest for the scribe, and he made an important remark concerning the stages of writing that I will resume in my argument: Wierschin identified several passages written in a slightly different coloured ink as addenda.<sup>14</sup> He also referred to the large number of corrections and cancellations within the manuscript, both indicating that the text was developed in several stages and not copied from an existing original.

Lotte Kurras<sup>15</sup> later augmented the description of the manuscript 3227a and changed the dating from 1389 to the current dating to “around 1389”. The problem with all these dates is the fact that they do not consider the codicological evidence of the manuscript itself, especially the structure of the quires. The underlying assumption is that the order of the pages and paragraphs within the manuscript somehow reflects the chronological order of the writing process. I will discuss this question later on the basis of a detailed codicological description of codex 3227a but without being able to provide a more reliable dating. To anticipate my results: the importance of the qualification “around” 1389 added by Lotte Kurras cannot be stressed enough.

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11 Eis, “Bakterienlampen im Mittelalter”.

12 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, pp. 31–34.

13 For the first printed correction of this misreading see Tobler, *In Saint George's name*, p. 5. Cf. Jaquet, *Combattre en armure*, vol. 1, p. 104. Wierschin's error was based on the fact that the anonymous scribe copied the teachings of several fencing masters other than Johannes Liechtenauer on fols. 43r–48v. He mentions their names in the rubricated heading on fol. 43r. But the scribe seems to have forgotten to mention Hanko Döbringer in the first stage of writing and thus inserted a cross as an indication mark in the heading. Döbringer's name was then added above the heading with the same cross-shaped mark in front of it. Wierschin seems to have ignored this mark and therefore took the addendum for a self-nomination of the scribe.

14 Wierschin refers to fols. 32rv, 34v and 37v.

15 Kurras, *Die deutschen mittelalterlichen Handschriften*, pp. 15–17.

The manuscript was then central to the works of Hans-Peter Hils<sup>16</sup> who wrongly followed Wierschin in identifying the scribe as Hanko Döbringer, but who started to work more intensively with the text itself. Hils assumed that the scribe had the intention to write a complete fight book but then aborted this task and reused the codex as some sort of personal notebook. He also pointed out that only the verses can be ascribed to Johannes Liechtenauer and that the scribe must be regarded as author of the two prefaces (fols. 13v–16v and 64r–65r) and the glosses to Liechtenauer's didactic verses. Based on this information, he reasoned that the scribe was himself a skilled martial artist.<sup>17</sup>

Jan-Dirk Müller<sup>18</sup> worked with the manuscript 3227a in a series of three articles in which he presented an influential analysis of the communication strategies in medieval fight books. Müller's results serve as a point of departure for my reading of the codex. Therefore they will be discussed in detail in the following section.

The final stage of scholarly attention for the manuscript is marked by the works of Rainer Leng<sup>19</sup> and his revised codicological description in the "Katalog der deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters".<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately Leng adopted several misunderstandings from his precursors and he did not examine the structure of the quires. A detailed codicological autopsy of manuscript 3227a is therefore a desideratum yet to be done.

## 2 Theoretic Background: Fight Books, Martial Arts and Communication Strategies for Tacit Knowledge<sup>21</sup>

The term "fight book" constitutes a very large category and it will still take a lot of detailed case studies to fully describe the varieties within this group of medieval and renaissance treatises. According to Daniel Jaquet's definition, I designate any written account on theory and practice of armed and unarmed combat with or without depictions as a fight book.<sup>22</sup> But the contemporary

16 Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes*, pp. 104–110; id., "Liechtenauer, Johannes" and Hils, H.-P., "Reflexionen zum Stand der hauptberuflichen Fechter des Späten Mittelalters".

17 Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes*, pp. 106–107.

18 Cf. the three articles of Müller cited in footnote 6.

19 Leng, "Andreas der Jude, Jost von der Neissen und Niclas Preuß"; id., "Döbringer, Hanko" and Ehlert/Leng, "Frühe Koch- und Pulverrezepte aus der Nürnberger Handschrift GNM 3227a".

20 Leng, *Fecht- und Ringbücher*, pp. 16–18.

21 For the following cf. Burkart, "Die Aufzeichnung des Nicht-Sagbaren".

22 Jaquet, *Combattre en armure*, vol. 1, pp. 18–20.

late medieval term “*fechtbuch*”<sup>23</sup> should not hide the fact that the early 14th and 15th century fight books in particular form a very heterogeneous corpus of sources with distinct addressees and communication strategies. The bigger part has to be attributed to a pragmatic context of use but there are some surviving copies that were designed for princely courts and their demand for prestigious objects. Mere text manuscripts without any depictions like the manuscript 3227a are an exception. However, the drawings often included are generally of inferior quality, which supports the assumption of a pragmatic context of use for a large part of these manuscripts.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the situations of reception of the fight books have to be conceptualized in a very broad and open way, leaving it to a detailed dissection of the concrete evidence to determine its intended purpose(s). The spectrum encompasses combinations of a pragmatic recording of concrete body techniques for practitioners to the documentation of princely status by showing affinity to martial culture and the display of splendour through prestigious illuminations.

The contexts of use for the various described fighting techniques are also very variable. The techniques cover spontaneous fights like situations of self-defence<sup>25</sup> as well as organised and explicitly regulated fights such as judicial duels. They furthermore refer to contexts of courtly fighting in tournaments and chivalrous duels as well as fighting in an urban setting (*Fechtschulen*).

To designate these techniques in general, I use the term martial arts for certain reasons. First of all I think it is necessary to avoid the use of a modern concept of sport in connection with medieval fencing. The specific combination of physical exercise, leisure and competition central to modern sport is misleading when applied to a 14th or 15th century society and it hinders an understanding of the subject rather than stimulating it. Instead of distinguishing between martial arts and combat sports, as it is today common in German-speaking discourses,<sup>26</sup> I will solely use the term martial art as designation for any specialized practical doctrine of fighting.<sup>27</sup>

23 Cf. for example the last will of duke Eberhard the Bearded, Stuttgart, Hauptstaatsarchiv, A 602 Nr 363 = WR 363, fol. 5r, online: <<http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/plink/?f=1-23518>> (accessed March 05, 2014).

24 Leng, *Fecht- und Ringbücher*, pp. 1–5.

25 Burkart, “Die Aufzeichnung des Nicht-Sagbaren” concerning the context of use of the techniques attributed to Hans Talhofer.

26 Cf. the position paper of the committee “Kampfkunst und Kampfsport” founded in 2011 within the Deutsche Vereinigung für Sportwissenschaft, online: <[http://www.sportwissenschaft.de/fileadmin/img/gremien/kommissionen/Kampfsport\\_Kampfkunst/KommissionKuK.pdf](http://www.sportwissenschaft.de/fileadmin/img/gremien/kommissionen/Kampfsport_Kampfkunst/KommissionKuK.pdf)> (accessed March 14, 2014).

27 For further information see Vigarello, “S'exercer, jouer”; Le Goff/Truong, *Une histoire du corps au Moyen Âge*, pp. 165–170; Merdrignac, *Le sport au Moyen Âge*.

It is also necessary to justify the use of the term *art* instead of describing the teachings in question as a mere collection of fighting techniques. Firstly, the medieval German term *kunst* as nominalisation of the verb *können* and designation for some sort of knowledge or skill<sup>28</sup> is widely used within the fight books themselves.<sup>29</sup> It was also common to include fencing in the medieval systematization of arts and crafts and to attach it within the *artes mechanicae* to the *theatrica* (courtly arts).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore the process of codification and documentation of systems of body techniques attributed to specific authors such as Johannes Liechtenauer, Master Ott, Hans Talhofer or the cleric Lutegerus that can be observed from the 14th century on, justifies the use of the term *art*. This process must be seen as an indicator for the beginning professionalization of martial arts practice, leading to the establishment of schools and guild-like structures at the end of the 15th century. The textualization of a beforehand non-written fighting practice analysed by Jan-Dirk Müller furthermore emphasizes the strong links between fight books and academic culture. Beginning with the manuscript 3227a around the year 1389, Liechtenauer's mnemonic verses were copied as some sort of canonical text. The verses were then commented on by various glossators, who tried to explain their meaning and to deduce practical fencing instructions. It is this process of systematization that leads to an important change of status for the fighting techniques: the non-written practice of fighting is transformed into a theorized *ars* and becomes the object of a learned academic culture.<sup>31</sup>

The prerequisite for this development is the existence of a group of learned people who were themselves practising martial arts or who were at least interested in martial arts systems and had access to the didactics of professional teachers. A historical survey on medieval fighting systems is therefore only possible because of the intermixture of martial arts and academic culture that led to a written documentation of these systems.

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28 "Kunst", in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, online: <<http://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemma=kunst>> (accessed May 20, 2014).

29 Cf. among others the introduction to Liechtenauer's teachings in manuscript 3227a on fol. 13v: *Hie hebt sich an meister Lichtenawers kunst des fechtens mit deme swerte*. The presumably oldest surviving fight book Leeds, Royal Armouries, I.33 uses on fol. 1r the Latin term *ars dimicatoria*.

30 Bauer, "Einen Zedel fechter ich mich ruem".

31 Müller, "Bild—Vers—ProsaKommentar", p. 266; see also Chaize, "Quand la pratique est Logique" who emphasizes the connection between Aristotelian logic and the Liechtenauerian tradition.

But despite the late medieval tendencies to theorize martial arts, the communicational gap between the skilled practitioner and its audience persists, as a prominent citation from manuscript 32237a shows:

Also note this and know that one cannot truly and meaningfully speak or write about fighting. Yet you can show and demonstrate it with the hand. Therefore open up your senses and consider it even more. And practise it the more in training, so the easier you will remember it in serious fights. As practice is better than art, because practice might prove useful without art, but art will not prove useful without practice.<sup>32</sup>

To restate this problem from a point of view of modern cultural history: the fencing movements are not natural and given to every individual. As body techniques<sup>33</sup> they are socially transmitted and acquired through complex processes of learning. Martial arts are cultural techniques that are communicated and adapted by imitation, explanation, training and correction.<sup>34</sup> At the core of these processes of social learning lies the subjective knowledge and know-how of a skilled martial artist or a martial arts teacher. However, his or her skills represent a form of tacit knowing<sup>35</sup> that is bound to personal experience and cannot be fully verbalized.<sup>36</sup> Thus it is not possible to satisfactorily describe

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32 *Auch merke das / und wisse das man nicht gar eygentlich und bedewtlich von dem fechten mag sagen und schreiben ader aus legen / als man is wol mag czeigen und weisen mit der hant. Dorumme tu of dyne synnen und betrachte is deste bas. Und ube dich dorynne deste mer yn schimpfe / zo gedenkestu ir deste bas in ernste. Wen ubunge ist besser wenne kunst / denne ubunge tawg wol ane kunst aber kunst tawg nicht wol ane ubunge.* Fol. 15r. Because of the wide sense of the medieval term *fechten* I will translate it as “fighting” where this meaning seems more appropriate.

33 Cf. Mallinckrodt, “Einführung: Körpertechniken in der Frühen Neuzeit” who relies on Mauss, “Les techniques du corps”.

34 Müller, “Bild—Vers—ProsaKommentar”, p. 252.

35 The distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge was first made by the natural and social scientist Michael Polanyi. Cf. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* and id., *The Tacit Dimension*.

36 An example given by Polanyi is the skill to ride a bicycle. The capability to keep one's balance when starting represents a body technique that can only partially be explained by description or demonstration. First of all it has to be experienced with one's own body. Only through this experience the technique becomes a form of personal knowledge that is bound to the individual experience of body movement and that cannot be described by just explaining the physical mechanisms at work (as a form of explicit knowledge). Nearly all aspects of martial arts culture do face the same difficulties.



the art of fighting with written or spoken words, as the anonymous scribe of manuscript 3227a points out. Or, as Michael Polanyi puts it more generally:

Rules of an art can be useful, but they do not determine the practice of an art; they are maxims, which can serve as a guide to an art only if they can be integrated into practical knowledge of the art. They cannot replace this knowledge. (...) An art which cannot be specified in detail cannot be transmitted by prescription, since no prescription for it exists. It can be passed on only by example from master to apprentice. This restricts the range of diffusion to that of personal contacts.<sup>37</sup>

Written guidelines to a practical art can therefore only be accessory, to fully acquire the art of fighting it is necessary to understand and reproduce the techniques with one's own body through concrete practice. Although a written account on fighting techniques cannot replace personal instruction and exercise, any fight book nevertheless represents an attempt to communicate the tacit knowing of a martial arts teacher or practitioner to an intended audience.<sup>38</sup> But how do we have to conceptualize this communication process and where is the difference between the face-to-face situation of martial arts instruction and the transition to a written communication? To communicate the tacit knowledge of a martial artist successfully, his or her skills first have to be transformed into a didactic approach for the instruction of lesser skilled pupils. Among the contingent variety of movements and strategies, a specific set has to be chosen and other possible movements have to be excluded in order to establish a system of approved techniques. What follows is the translation of this normed form of "correct" fighting according to the specific system into practical exercises and explanations, first of all into spoken explanations in the context of personal instruction. Presumably it was this kind of situation in which the technical language and the metaphors of medieval fencing first evolved. Only after this evolution it is possible to use written language and drawn depictions to communicate about fencing as a system of body techniques. These considerations also point out how limited the insights are that

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37 Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, pp. 50, 53.

38 This assumption is of course an intentional simplification of the communication structures of fight books. As stated above, the technical dimension is just one among others and aspects such as princely or burgher self-fashioning (see also Forggeng, "Owning the art") and the display of splendour have to be considered as well. All media associated with martial arts practice are nodal points for the related discourses and must be analysed from this perspective.

modern historians can achieve by analysing medieval fight books. The sources do not contain information about the actual fighting practice of the era, but only give an account of the discourses on “right” and “wrong” fencing according to specific contemporary martial arts systems.

For a survey on manuscript 3227a, which contains possibly the oldest written account on the fighting system of Johannes Liechtenauer, the communication structure of martial arts treatises in the Liechtenauerian tradition is of particular importance. It was first analysed by Jan-Dirk Müller<sup>39</sup> in the aforementioned series of articles, in which he identifies three key elements: shortened and encrypted mnemonic verses, descriptions in prose and drawn depictions. According to Müller, this didactic tradition seems to have had its origin in orally transmitted mnemonic verses, that were meanwhile or afterwards secured by writing them down as *zedel* (note, derived from Latin *schedula*). These verses mainly consisted of specialized technical terms and they were intentionally shortened and encrypted to ensure that only initiates could understand them. The central part, i.e. the actual information about martial arts techniques and strategies, therefore has to be present outside of the verses in the person of an already skilled practitioner or teacher. The verses only serve as mnemonic anchors that help to memorize and organize practical knowledge.

In the medieval sources the verses only survived in combination with an interpreting glossation. In the text the glosses fulfil the function a competent martial arts teacher would have fulfilled in a face-to-face situation. Like the fencing master, the glosses interpret the encrypted verses and translate them into a concrete description of body movements in prose. While the verses only work as a reference to knowledge of movements, knowledge that they do not themselves contain, the glosses do include more detailed information about the referenced techniques.

Just as a written fixation of the didactic verses in form of a *zedel* could have preserved the text and relieved the memory of teachers and students alike, the written glossation also relieves the memory of a martial artist by linking the mnemonic anchors in the verses with textual descriptions of movements and techniques. However, as stated by the scribe of manuscript 3227a and similarly by Michael Polanyi, a written description of body techniques does not contain the central part of a tacit knowledge that is bound to subjective practice. The communicational gap between body techniques and their textual representations therefore still persists, even if the encrypted verses are explained by glosses. Another possibility to represent fencing techniques,

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39 See in general the three outstanding articles of Müller cited in footnote 6.

though not applied in manuscript 3227a, is the use of didactic images.<sup>40</sup> Like the glossation, the images do contain a lot more information on the referenced techniques than the verses. But they are still just an attempt to communicate some sort of tacit knowing about body movements that would require a situation of personal contact to transmit. The successful interpretation is therefore either bound to the possession of a prior specialized knowledge (i.e. the interpreter is already a skilled martial artist) or the presence of an expert who is able to provide the necessary explanations and to demonstrate and correct the movements.

Based on these general considerations there are some questions guiding the detailed analysis of manuscript 3227a: What information can be derived about the scribe? For which situation and which purpose of communication did he put down his thoughts on martial arts? Was it an aborted project to establish a fight book, with the intention to instruct absent third parties? Was it an attempt to secure the doctrine of Johannes Liechtenauer by writing down his verses and glossating them? Or was it a more personal approach, like the collection of notes written by a practitioner who was himself taught by the use of Liechtenauer's didactic system?

### 3 Codicological Analysis

The outlines of a codicological description of manuscript 3227a have been laid down by Wierschin, Kurras, Hils and Leng.<sup>41</sup> Instead of repeating their accounts, I will try to answer some of the residual questions. For the following description see the diagram of the quire structure (see figure 16.1).

The manuscript actually consists of 169 leaves of paper and vellum with a dimension of 140 to 100 mm. All pages are written by one hand but in distinct stages of writing and with different inks. The scribe mainly used brown ink for the text and red ink for headings, rubrics and initials, sometimes the brown ink is a bit more faint or it tends to black rather than to a brown colour. The handwriting is skilled but not calligraphic and some paragraphs are sloppier than others. The main part of the codex consists of very short texts with practical instructions, often multiple on the same page. During an uncertain period

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40 As manuscript 3227a does not contain any depictions, I will not deal with this aspect here. For a discussion of the mnemonic function of the images in the fight books attributed to Hans Talhofer, see Burkart, "Die Aufzeichnung des Nicht-Sagbaren".

41 See the section on the research history of the codex.

of time but probably over many years the anonymous scribe collected around 610<sup>42</sup> of such texts and instructions.

The pages are foliated by a modern hand in pencil in the upper right corner of the recto-pages and by a contemporary hand in red ink in the upper left corner of the verso-pages.<sup>43</sup> Only fols. 17, 162 and 169 are vellum. The contemporary foliation counts up to 186 on fol. 165v, the following four pages (fols. 166–169) are not foliated on the verso but contain a contemporary register of the manuscript's content. The contemporary foliation is often fragmented or sometimes missing, due to a cut of the pages in the process of binding or due to extensive use of the codex that led to a wear of the edges of the paper.

The codex is composed of twelve very heterogeneously structured quires. They do consist of four up to ten bifolia, though some pages are missing and other folia or bifolia are glued to the beginning or the end of a quire or even inserted elsewhere. Additionally, quire XI (fols. 141–161) seems to consist of single leafs or bifolia that were glued together without forming a sewn quire of overlapping bifolia.<sup>44</sup> The actual binding is a modern reconstruction of a medieval wooden board binding covered with decorated leather, of which only the front cover survived and was integrated in the actual binding. Unfortunately no documentation of the original binding and the performed reconstruction steps exists.

If we compare the contemporary foliation (186+4) with the modern one (169), it is obvious that 21 pages went missing since the codex was first foliated. I tried to reconstruct the contemporary foliation and have marked the missing pages in the diagram. It is however possible that some pages were already missing when the contemporary foliation was executed. An example can be found in quire VIII, where the corresponding folia to fols. 107, 114 and 116 are missing but the contemporary foliation shows no breaks. This indicates that those folia were either single folia glued into the quire (and not sewn in bifolia) or that the corresponding leafs were already missing when the codex was first foliated.

The position of the contemporary foliation furthermore indicates that the pages were already written when the contemporary foliation was added. The positioning of the numbers varies from page to page, avoiding the text, which therefore seems prior to the foliation.

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42 Ehlert/Leng, "Frühe Koch- und Pulverrezepte aus der Nürnberger Handschrift GNM 3227a", p. 295.

43 When referring to a page, I always use the modern foliation.

44 All information about the quire structure is provisional as I was only able to examine the bound codex. Especially a definitive description of the structure of quire XI would require unbinding the codex.

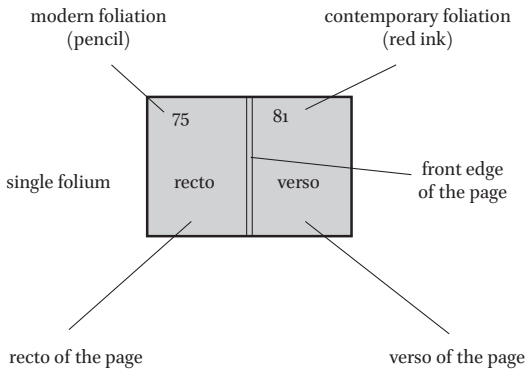


FIGURE 16.1 *General diagram of the manuscript 3227a. AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.*

Furthermore, the content of the pages must have been written down before the quires were bound together to establish the codex. The format of the codex is very small and in preparing the pages the scribe reserved only very narrow space for the margins, which he also often ignored in the process of writing. Nevertheless the handwriting shows no difficulties when it approaches the binding. This would have been impossible with a codex of 190 pages and a stiff



medieval wooden board binding. However, the codex is not a later composition of bookbinders (“Buchbindersynthese”). The register and the foliation were executed by the same hand as the rest of the texts within the codex. Thus the anonymous scribe himself established the actual order within his successively collected texts. The eleven distinct quires and the collection of single folia and bifolia, that forms quire XI, were therefore probably stored separately in a protective cover or in a box beforehand. As quire XI seems to have been established out of the necessity to integrate a collection of separate leaves, it is plausible that the other quires were already sewn together and used as small separate notebooks. The three vellum pages are a finding that supports this hypothesis. The last quire XII is enclosed by a vellum bifolium (fols. 162 and 169), while quire II is initiated by a vellum page (fol. 17). The rest of the corresponding vellum page can still be found at the end of the quire between fols. 35 and 36. It seems therefore probable that the quires were once separate notebooks and that at least some of them had a vellum cover to protect the more sensitive paper. These covers were either used to write on, as for fols. 17, 162, and 169, and were thus integrated in the codex or removed in the process of binding. Another detail in favour of the separate notebook hypothesis is the fact, that none of the small coherent texts within the codex begins in one

quire and continues in the following one. This is not surprising for the various short recipes and technical instructions in quires VIII to XII. But the same observation can be made for the paragraphs on fencing in the quires I to VII (see figure 16.1). There is no direct continuity of the texts between the quires and every quire starts either with the beginning of a coherent text, a lost page or a blank page.

Based upon these remarks, it is possible to establish a hypothesis concerning the distinct phases that led to the genesis of manuscript 3227a. The anonymous scribe seems to have kept several separate paper notebooks or small booklets of approximately the same size, possibly made from offcuts of larger sheets of paper. At least some of these notebooks had a protective vellum cover that was also used to write on. In the process of writing, the scribe seems to have added additional pages by gluing them into the booklets while other pages may have been removed or lost.

A good example of this practice are fols. 18v–22v in quire II. On fol. 18v the scribe put down Liechtenauer's verses concerning the "general lore of the sword" (*gemeyne lere des swertes*) and started to glossate them. The glosses continue in a regular sized dark brown script up to line 31 on fol. 20v. The last two lines on fol. 20v are however written in a faint brown script, that continues until the bottom of fol. 22v.<sup>45</sup> On fols. 21r–22v the scribe wrote in a narrower and smaller script and left almost no upper and lower margins on the page. While fols. 18v–20v contain 28 to 33 lines, fols. 21r–22v contain 36–40 lines per page. If we look at the detailed structure of quire II, this distribution of text on the pages becomes understandable. Fols. 21r–22v form an additional bifolium that was afterwards inserted in a regular structured quire (see the detailed diagram of quire II, figure 16.2). Several conclusions can be drawn from this fact: The scribe put down Liechtenauer's didactic verses in a first stage of writing and left several pages blank to glossate the verses later. In the following process of glossation, the scribe then noticed that he would need more space to write about the "general lore of the sword" than he had left blank. As the following unit of verses on fol. 23r was already written, he thus inserted a bifolium that does not fit in the once regular quire structure. In order to write down what he had in mind without having to add more additional pages, he continued to write in a smaller script and used the upper and lower margins of the inserted fols. 21r–22v.

After several years of writing and collecting material the notebooks were then put in an order, foliated and the register (fols. 166r–169v) was established in the second half of the thin booklet with vellum cover that later formed

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45 Additionally there is one paragraph in a faint black ink inserted on fol. 22v, showing that the glossation was written in several distinct stages.

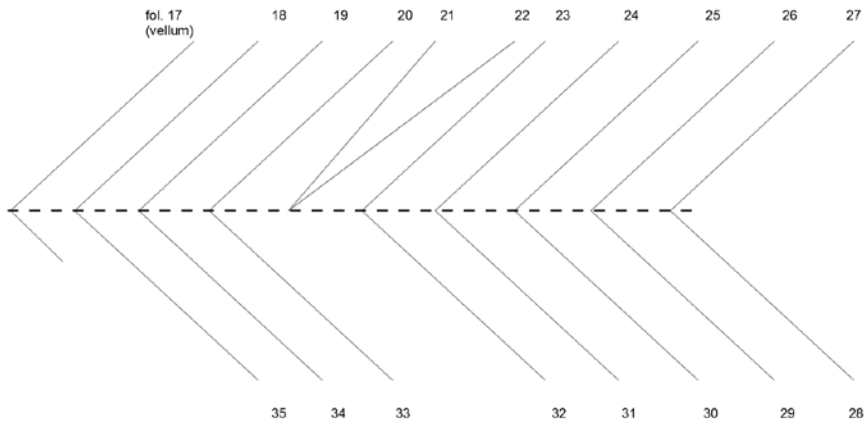


FIGURE 16.2 *Diagram of the quire structure.*  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

quire XII. As the manuscript 3227a represents a collection of notes taken by a single person and collected over many years, the very heterogeneous structure of quire XI also makes sense. This quire seems to consist entirely of single leaves and bifolia with very short texts. It is therefore plausible that fols. 141–161 represent a collection of all residual notes once taken on loose leaves instead of into a sewn notebook, which had to be glued together to be integrated into the codex.

After the establishment of an order within the notebooks and leaves, they seem to have been bound together. I would therefore argue that the order of the texts within manuscript 3227a does not necessarily reflect the chronological order in which they were written down, but the order the scribe chose when he arranged the collected material and established the register.

As for the binding, it is almost impossible to determine whether the first one was a temporary limp vellum binding or already the solid wooden board binding covered with leather of which the front cover still survives. In any case, the codex was in intensive use for some time after the first binding was executed. The paper's edges are evenly worn down on all sides which could be an indicator for a certain period in which the collection was already in the actual order but had only a less protective limp binding.

One last remark has to be made concerning watermarks. Although Ehlert and Leng state that the manuscript would contain no watermarks<sup>46</sup> at all, the upper half of an ox-head can be found on fol. 130 (see figure 16.3). Unfortunately

46 Ehlert/Leng, "Frühe Koch- und Pulverrezepte aus der Nürnberger Handschrift GNM 3227a", p. 290.



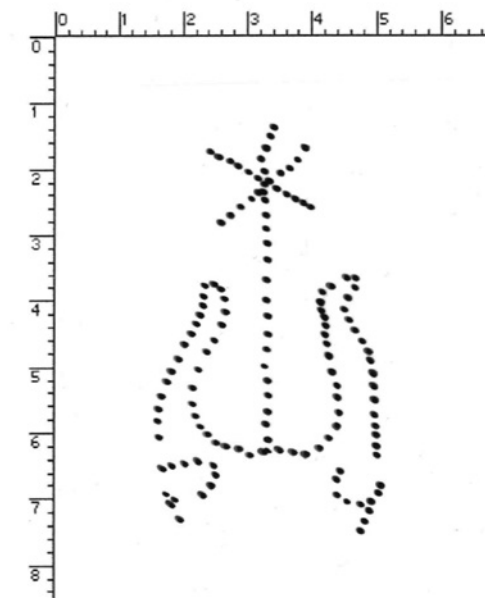


FIGURE 16.3 *Transcript of watermark (cut).*  
AUTHOR'S DIAGRAM.

this particular type of watermark was very common between 1374 and 1494 and it is cut in half.<sup>47</sup> Therefore identification and dating were not possible. Other watermarks cannot be found within the codex (except for very small fragments within the binding) which supports the assumption that the small pages were made from offcuts.

#### 4 Close Reading

Based upon this codicological analysis, it is now possible to reconstruct the distinct phases of writing of the martial arts related texts. If we examine the authorial positions within the manuscript, five kinds of texts can be distinguished:

47 See the online watermarks database, online: <<http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de>> (accessed June 04, 2014). The German categories matching the concrete watermark on fol. 130 are: "Fauna / Ochsenkopf / frei, mit Oberzeichen / mit einkonturiger Stange / Stern (einkonturig) / sechsstrahlig (Enden gerade) / ohne weiteres Beizeichen". The database contains 7737 watermarks with these specifications, the first dates from 1350 and the last from 1592.

First, a large part of the paragraphs consists of glosses, prefaces or general considerations. The narrator of these texts sometimes uses the first person singular<sup>48</sup> and seems to be identical with the scribe himself. His narrative voice often simulates oral communication and a face-to-face situation of personal instruction. He addresses an implicit counterpart in the second person singular and often uses the imperative (“Also perceive that and know . . .”<sup>49</sup>). These paragraphs are always written in prose and when they follow the didactic verses they are often introduced by the rubricated term *Glosa*<sup>50</sup> or even the Latin phrase *Glosa generalis huius sequitur*.<sup>51</sup> In the quire diagram (figure 16.1) they are marked in yellow.

Second, the narrator reproduces didactic verses that he glossates subsequently. In the rubricated headings these verses are designated as a lore or doctrine<sup>52</sup> and as “text” which is ascribed to a third person singular (“This is the text in which he mentions the five hewings”<sup>53</sup>). As the first preface introduces the following account as a description of the art of fighting of *master Liechtenauer*,<sup>54</sup> these verses must be seen as the medium of his art. Based upon later copies and glossations of the same verses<sup>55</sup> it is possible to deduce, that the verses were ascribed to the authority of a certain fencing master called Johannes Liechtenauer. However, the first name *Johannes* is never mentioned within manuscript 3227a and the name *Lichtenawer* or *Lichtnawer* appears only within the commentaries of the anonymous scribe and not within the headings or the verses. The identification of the evocated authority *Lichtenawer* behind these verses as the “author”<sup>56</sup> Johannes Liechtenauer is thus based upon knowledge exterior to the evidence of manuscript 3227a itself. It seems that the scribe did not feel the necessity to specify the identity of the authority

48 First on fol. 14r: *Aber ich wölte gerne eynen sehen der do möchte nür eyn gefechte / ader eynen haw / irdenken und tuen / der do nicht aus Lichtnawers kunst gynge.*

49 *Auch merke das und wisse . . .*, fol. 15r.

50 Fols. 23r, 25r, 25v, 27v, 28v, 32r, 32v, 34v, 37r, and 40r.

51 Fol. 18v.

52 *Das ist eyne gemeyne lere des swertes.* Fol. 18v.

53 *Das ist der text in deme her nennet dy fünff hewe und andere stöcke des fechtens.* Fol. 23r.

54 *Hie hebt sich an meister Lichtenawers kunst des fechtens mit deme swerte czu fusse und czu rosse / blos und yn harnüsche.* Fol. 13v.

55 Especially the manuscripts Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Msc. Dresd. C 487 and Roma, Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, 44A8.

56 Hils, “Liechtenauer, Johannes”. See also Leng, “Andreas der Jude, Jost von der Neißten und Niclas Preuß”, who questions the designation of Liechtenauer as an author, as only texts of his followers but not of himself survived.

behind the verses in detail though the person *Lichtenawer* is very present in the glosses.<sup>57</sup> The verses are marked in green (see figure 16.1).

Third, the second half of quire III (fols. 43r–48v) contains technical lessons in verse and in prose that are explicitly marked as teachings of other masters. The heading on fol. 43r reads: “Here begin the teachings of the other masters, Hanko the priest Döbringer, Andre the Jew, Jost von der Nyssen, Niclas Prewß etc.”<sup>58</sup> The formulation “the other master’s teachings” marks an explicit difference to the teachings of *meister Lichtenawer*.<sup>59</sup> The scribe also felt the necessity to add a short justification why he integrated these texts in his account despite of the universalistic claim<sup>60</sup> he attributes to Liechtenauer’s doctrine.<sup>61</sup> These non-Liechtenauer teachings are marked in red (see figure 16. 1).

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- 57 His name is mentioned 30 times within the glosses, often in connection with formulations that evoke direct citations and refer to a situation of personal instruction like “Lichtnawer says . . .”, “Lichtnawer means . . .” or even “Lichtnawer has a saying that goes . . .”. Cf. fols. 13v (2×), 14r, 14v, 20r (2×), 20v, 21v, 22r, 22v (4×), 23r, 23v, 25r, 25v, 32r (3×), 37v, 38r, 40r, 44r, 64r (2×), 64v, 65r (2×), 87r.
- 58 *Hie hebt sich an der ander meister gefechte / Hanko pfaffen Döbringers, Andres Juden, Josts von der Nyssen, Niclas Prewßen etc.* Fol. 43r.
- 59 Leng, “Andreas der Jude, Jost von der Neissen und Niclas Preuß”, who still attributes the manuscript 3227a to Hanko Doöbringer and who in his transcription suppresses the term “ander” within the heading as a repetition of “an der”. This misreading leads to various errors in his article including a very questionable interpretation of the role of Lichtenauer as authority of fencing didactics and a confusing view on the complex question of “ernst”, “schimpf” and “schulfechten” as interrelated contexts of martial arts practice.
- 60 See the first preface on fols. 13v–16v and its discussion below.
- 61 *Hie merke und wisse / das ich vil deser meister gefechte underwegen lasse / dorumme daz man sie gar / und auch gerecht / yn Lichtnawers kunst und fechten vor hat / noch worhafteriger kunst. Doch durch übunge und schulfechtens wille / wil ich etzliche stöcke und gesetze ired gefechtens mit schlechter und korzzer rede schriben etc.* Fol. 44r. The scribe thus states that he does not want to put down a large part of the other master’s teachings because they are comprised in Liechtenauer’s doctrine “according to real art”. However some of the teachings seem to be good enough for (additional) exercise and *schulfechten*. Therefore he wants to describe them in short. It is very difficult to interpret the term *schulfechten* and the interrelated concepts of *ernst*, *schimpf* and *übunge* in manuscript 3227a and additional research on the subject is needed. However, I would argue that the situation of *schulfechten* here is not necessarily synonymous with the context of public competitions or spectacular presentations (as Rainer Leng suggests, cf. above) that were held during a late medieval and early modern *Fechtschul*. As Daniel Jaquet and Anne Tlusty argue, the temporary institution of a *Fechtschul* is a 15th century and thus a later development that consisted of martial arts instruction, training, public competitions and demonstrations. Cf. Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany*, pp. 210–217, and Jaquet, *Combattre en armure*, vol. 1, pp. 421–432. An important part was thus even in later times the training

Fourth, the manuscript comprises teachings in prose that are not marked as teachings of other masters. These paragraphs sometimes use the specialized terminology of Liechtenauer's didactic system. Therefore it is not clear whether they do contain a description of fighting techniques that belongs to Liechtenauer's teachings but was not versified or if they represent an attempt of the anonymous glossator to describe other martial arts techniques (shield, staff, long knife, dagger and wrestling) while using Liechtenauerian terms and concepts. The characteristic style of these passages is very similar to the glosses and the differentiation between the two instances is not definite. Additionally the paragraphs are often aborted attempts that break off after several lines. They are marked in blue (see figure 16.1).

Fifth, the manuscript contains copies or excerpts of miscellaneous texts and short recipes in medieval German or in Latin that are not related to martial arts practice.<sup>62</sup> The narrative voice of these texts often also simulates oral communication and a face-to-face situation of instruction. Many recipes start with the formula "If you want to make . . ."<sup>63</sup> thus linking the desired product or effect with a description of the method to attain it. They reflect the various interests of the scribe (metallurgy, fireworks, medicine, alchemy, rituals, crafts, cooking, mirabilia) and document a somehow practical, even empirical approach: some of the recipes and rituals are marked with *probatum est*<sup>64</sup> ("it is proved"). These texts are marked in grey (see fig. 1).

As I tried to argue that the quires of manuscript 3227a were presumably once separate notebooks, I will treat their content individually. Of particular importance are the differences and connections between the content of quires I to VII, which contain the martial arts related texts.

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of martial arts techniques under the guidance of a master. In manuscript 3227a the term *schulfechten* appears only two more times on fols. 14v (*Und das gehört doch nicht czu ernstem fechten / zonder czu schulvechten durch ubunge und gebrawchunge wille mochte is wol etzwas gut seyn.*) and 52v (*Wiltu weydenlich czu eyne gehen in schulvechten zo du schimpf und hõbscheit gerest treiben . . .*) where it is opposed to serious fighting and associated with exercise and *schimpf* (meaning the opposite of seriousness, disport, game, also: dishonour). I would therefore argue that *schulfechten* would best be translated literally as school-fighting, therefore first of all referring to a non-lethal fighting exercise in a controlled environment.

62 For a general overview cf. Kurras, *Die deutschen mittelalterlichen Handschriften*, pp. 15–17; Ehlert/Leng, "Frühe Koch- und Pulverrezepte aus der Nürnberger Handschrift GNM 3227a", pp. 293–298 and Leng, *Fecht- und Ringbücher*, pp. 16–18.

63 E.g. *Wiltu machen . . .*, fol. 76v.

64 Fols. 77v, 85v, and 86r.

The most important sections for the Liechtenauerian system are the quires II, III and IV. Quire II and the first half of quire III treat the unarmoured fencing with the long sword according to Liechtenauer's didactics. Divided by the sewn binding threads the second half of quire III then contains the other master's teachings in verse and in prose. Quire IV almost entirely treats the mounted combat and the armoured fencing on foot according to the Liechtenauerian system except for a short paragraph in prose concerning the *schulfechten*.<sup>65</sup> These quires II–IV are the only ones to contain the didactic verses and they do not include any miscellaneous texts at all. They also carry the main part of the glosses although many pages were left blank. As shown above on the basis of fols. 18v–22v, the scribe copied the verses in a first stage of writing in which he reserved variable space between the units of verses for his commentaries. When he realized in the process of writing that he had not left enough space blank, he started to write in a narrower script,<sup>66</sup> inserted additional folia (fols. 21r–22v, see figure 16.2) or had to use the margins for corrections and addenda. The scribe seems to have started very enthusiastically with his project of glossation in the first half of quire II but then the extent of the glosses declines subsequently towards the second half of quire IV, where the Liechtenauerian verses are not commented at all. Many blank pages that were initially reserved for commentaries also show that the glossation was aborted at a certain point.

Martin Wierschin pointed out that some lines at the end of quire II seem to be addenda in differently coloured ink.<sup>67</sup> A change in the colour of the ink is not necessarily an indication for a temporal break in the process of writing. It is also possible that the scribe had to mix a new portion of ink that was slightly different in colour or that he had to change or resharpen his quill. However, if there are several similar addenda in a different ink (especially in the margins of the page) or if coherent paragraphs are of distinct colours, it is very plausible that they were written at a later point of time. In the following, I will only refer to some exemplary passages where the breaks in manuscript 3227a are rather obvious and where they allow us to draw further conclusions about the process of writing.

The most important finding is that there was not only one stage in which the scribe wrote the verses and a second one in which he added the glosses,<sup>68</sup>

65 Fol. 52v.

66 Fols. 21r–22v, 25r, and 32r.

67 Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens*, p. 33.

68 This conclusion, which I first based on the structure of fols. 18v–22v, is also supported by the variations in the colour of the ink. On fols. 23r, 25v, 27r, 27v, 28v, 32r, and 32v the verses and the subsequent glosses are of clearly distinguishable colours.

but that he augmented and corrected the verses in a third stage when some of the glosses were already written. On fols. 23r, 28v, 32v and 34v this process becomes obvious where he had to use the margins to add the missing lines of the verses because the glosses already occupied the rest of the page. He also seems to have omitted the last lines of the verses on fols. 33v, 35r, 35v, 36r and 36v in the first stage. But these verses were not commented in the second stage of writing and so he could easily add the missing lines in faint brown ink, which is clearly distinguishable from the dark brown ink he had used for the first part of the verses.

This finding can be interpreted in two ways. If we assume that the verses were copied from a written original (*zedel*), then these three stages would imply that the scribe used two different copies of the verses and that the first one was incomplete. Otherwise there is no plausible explanation why he did not copy the whole text in the first stage of writing but instead omitted the last lines of the verses on fols. 23r, 28v, 32v, 33v, 34v, 35r, 35v, 36r and 36v.<sup>69</sup> If we assume instead that the verses were dictated or recited, this finding could point to two different situations of recitation of which either the first one was incomplete or the scribe could not memorize all of the verses he wanted to put down. As Ehlert and Leng have argued that some of the cooking recipes in manuscript 3227a seem to have been part of an oral tradition that the anonymous scribe transferred into writing<sup>70</sup> this second reading seems more plausible. It would also match the initial purpose of the verses, which should help to structure the practical martial arts instruction through oral repetition of its contents.<sup>71</sup>

There are also many examples of distinct breaks within the glosses to each section of verses.<sup>72</sup> This points to a certain period of time in which the scribe reflected upon the verses and the corresponding techniques and in which he subsequently added new insights. It is also possible (and becomes more and more apparent) that he received some sort of martial arts formation while he wrote down these texts.

This assumption becomes even more probable when we turn to the quires I and v. These two quires share the fact that they contain two longer glosses which assume the character of a preface (fols. 13v–16v) and a summary (fols.

69 The only other possible, yet implausible option is that the verses were still in the making when the scribe first copied them from a written original. They could thus have been extended between the two stages of writing.

70 Ehlert/Leng, "Frühe Koch- und Pulverrezepte aus der Nürnberger Handschrift GNM 3227", p. 311.

71 Müller, "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre", pp. 362–364.

72 Fols. 20v, 22v, 23v, and 32v to mention just the most obvious breaks.

64r–65r) of the basic principles of Liechtenauer's art. The rest of both quires is filled with miscellaneous writings that are not related to martial arts practice. In the order of the quires (which the scribe chose when he arranged his collected material prior to the binding) these paratexts in quires I and V form a frame around the most important quires II–IV containing the verses. As the verses and the prefaces are distributed over separate quires it is probable that at least the content of quire II and the first half of quire III was written prior to these paratexts. The preface for example refers to the following texts in quire II as if they were already written<sup>73</sup> while the summary in quire V repeats and explains several lines of the antecedent verses on the unarmoured fencing with the long sword. Both paratexts were besides written in several stages as the changes in the colour of the ink of distinct paragraphs indicate.<sup>74</sup>

The first preface begins with a very remarkable passage on Liechtenauer's art of fighting:

Here begins master Lichtenauer's art of fighting with the sword, on foot and on horseback, bare and in armour. And before all things and matters, you should perceive and know that there is only one art of the sword. And this art may have been invented and conceived some hundred years ago. And this art is the base and the core of all arts of fighting. And master Lichtenauer possessed and mastered this art wholly, completely and accurately. Not that he had invented and conceived it himself, as it is written before. But he has travelled and searched many lands because of this justified and true art which he wanted to learn and know. And this art is serious, complete and justified. And it approaches the nearest and closest simply and straightforwardly.<sup>75</sup>

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73 See the passages *als du es als hernoch wirst horen yn dem texte* (fol. 14v), *als man bas hernoch wirt hören* (fol. 15v), *als du bas hernoch wirst hören yn der gemeynen lere etc.* (fol. 16r) and *als man das hernach oft wirt horen* (fol. 16v).

74 Clear breaks are on fols. 15r and 65r.

75 *Hie hebt sich an meister Lichtenawers kunst des fechtens mit deme swerte czu fusse und czu rosse / blos und yn harnüsche. Und vor allen dingen und sachen / saltu merken und wissen / das nür eyne kunst ist des swertes. Und dy mag vor manchen hundert jaren seyn funden und irdocht. Und dy ist eyn grunt und kern aller künsten des fechtens. Und dy hat meister Lichtenawer ganz vertik und gerecht gehabt und gekunst. Nicht das her sy selber habe funden und irdocht / als vor ist geschriben. Sonder / her hat manche lant durchfaren und gesucht / durch der selben rechtvertigen und worhaftigen kunst wille / das her dy io irvaren und wissen welde. Und dy selbe kunst ist ernst, ganz und rechtvertik. Und get of das aller neheste und körtzstelecht und gerade czu. Fol. 13v.*

The scribe thus starts with a justification of the described art and explains its origins. In the following paragraphs he distinguishes between Liechtenauer's art of fighting and the ineffective teachings of the so-called *leychmeistere* (best translated as "false" or "fraudulent masters"<sup>76</sup>). Those false masters would tell their students that they had invented new and better ways of fighting while their actual skills were in fact very poor and their art was useless in serious combat situations. Opposed to these frauds, Liechtenauer is described as a teacher of great experience and someone who systematized the art of fighting without claiming to have invented it. The scribe thus frames martial arts as a cultural technique that seems to be omnipresent but has to be mastered by every person through individual experience. The justification of Liechtenauer's system is therefore his personal achievement in the art of fencing and his orientation towards a serious and straightforward fighting style. After this long polemic (fols. 13v–15r) and the above cited remark that any written account on fencing is deficient, the preface then treats general technical principles like the proper gripping of a sword, footwork and several tactical considerations.

The summary in quire v was clearly written after the texts in quires II and III as it states the intention to clarify obscure passages within the glosses concerning the unarmoured fencing.

Here one repeats and recapitulates the pieces [i.e. lessons] and principles of master Lichtnauer's bare fighting in short and simple words through deeper and better understanding and because of more preoccupation. As before something, in the verses and in the glossation, is written obscure and incomprehensible, so that this shall be repeated shortly in simple words.<sup>77</sup>

This passage clearly documents the advancement of a practitioner who had martial arts training and tried to systematize the learned lessons through his written account. Another finding that supports this reading is the large

76 Bauer, "Einen Zedel fechter ich mich ruem".

77 *Hie vornewt man und voranderweit / dy stöcke und gesetze / des blozfechtens / meister Lichtnawers, mit korczer und mit schlechter rede / durch grösser und besser vorstendunge und vornemunge wille. Ab vor ichtsicht ist geschreben, in den reymen und in der glozen / unbedewtlich und unvornemlich / das daz mit schlechter rede körtzlich werde überlawfen.* Fol. 64r. I would like to thank Gabriele Annas (Frankfurt), Matthias Johannes Bauer (Krefeld) and Uwe Israel (Dresden) for their remarks on the translation of this paragraph. Cf. the use of *ichtsichtz* on fol. 28r and the entry "iht" in Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, online: <<http://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/Lexer?lemma=iht>> (accessed November 27, 2014).



number of repetitions and the redundancy in the texts. Central passages like the emphasis on the *vorslag*, a tactical concept of Liechtenauer's didactics, are repeated many times.<sup>78</sup> By reading the glosses, one gets the impression that the text is governed by the objective to codify and to secure knowledge, the repetition is thus intended and follows the guideline of *repetitio est mater studiorum*.

With this reading in mind, the remaining quires VI and VII also fit in. They contain five attempts to describe techniques with other weapons in prose (shield, staff, long knife, dagger, wrestling) that were probably conceptualized by the scribe himself. At first he left several pages blank to augment these teachings later but then he aborted this task and seems to have filled up the pages with miscellaneous texts.<sup>79</sup> The scribe treats these additional weapons as mere variations of Liechtenauer's art of fighting with the sword and evokes the basic concepts of Liechtenauer's doctrine. He refers to the similarities between the principles of the long sword on the one hand and the staff, the long knife and the principles of wrestling on the other hand.<sup>80</sup> The scribe even establishes an evolutionary hierarchy that begins with wrestling as the most important foundation for all arts of fighting, proceeds to the long knife and then finds its perfection in the art of the sword.<sup>81</sup> Only the longer text on wrestling on fols. 87r–89r mentions *Lichtnawer* as authoritative figure behind the described teachings. This section is an exceptional case as it is the only surviving text

78 Cf. the references to the "*vorslag*" on fols. 14v, 16r, 16v, 17v, 20r–21v (detailed discussion of the concept), 22v, 24r, 28r, 29v, 32r, 38r, 38v, 52v, and 64r–65r (discussed again in the summary).

79 The text on fighting with the shield on fol. 74r breaks off in the middle of a sentence. The other texts are also very short and only the teachings on the long knife (fols. 82rv) and on the dagger (fols. 84r–85r) are followed by a short comment in the style of the glosses. Especially on fols. 84r–86v it is obvious that the scribe wrote the teachings in prose first and later filled up the blank space with miscellaneous texts. Cf. also Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar", p. 264.

80 *Wer do mit der stange wil fechten lernen, der sal . . . wissen . . . das daz fechten mit der stangen ist aus dem swerte genommen. Und als eyner ficht mit dem swerte / zo fechte her och mit der stangen. Und dy principia / dy do gehoren czum swerte / als vor, noch, kunheit, rischeit, list, klukheit et c. / dy gehoren och czu der stangen.* Fol. 78r. Cf. the similiar statements on fols. 82r (long knife) and 86r (wrestling).

81 *Das ist von deme ringen. Wer do wil lernen ringen / der sal czu dem ersten merken und wissen das dy principia / vor, noch, rischeit, kunheit, list und klukheit et c. dy gehören och czu deme ringen.* [Change in the colour of the ink:] *Und wisse das alle hóbischeit kompt von deme ringen. Und alle fechten komen ursachlich und gruntlich vom ringen. Czum ersten das fechten mit dem langen messer / aus dem kumpt das fechten mit dem swerte / etc.* Fol. 86r.

that describes a wrestling doctrine directly attributed to Liechtenauer.<sup>82</sup> Later compendia containing copies of Liechtenauer's verses in combination with comments from different glossators prefer to include the wrestling doctrines of Andreas Liegnitzer and Master Ott,<sup>83</sup> or do not specify the authority behind the copied wrestling techniques.<sup>84</sup> The scribe of manuscript 3227a additionally marks the origin of this description:

Note the wrestling in approaching of many ways and actions of master Lichtnauer. And this is pretty hard and obscure as this has been his *zete* [note], so that not everyone who would read it would understand.<sup>85</sup>

He thus refers to an already written text that once belonged to master Liechtenauer and was intentionally written in an obscure way in order to protect its secrets from non-initiates. This finding suggests that the fencing masters themselves seem to have kept written accounts of their didactics. Although the text on Liechtenauer's wrestling is written in prose and not in verse, this sentence also supports the hypothesis of Jan-Dirk Müller that the verses were not only orally transmitted, but at the same time, secured by written accounts.<sup>86</sup> The structure of the following text is also noteworthy. The scribe wrote it in a very small script with very few cancellations or mistakes. At the same time no distinct breaks in the process of writing are visible. It is therefore possible, that he actually copied these paragraphs from a written original.

## 5 The Autograph of an Erudite Martial Artist

Based on these observations, the anonymous scribe of manuscript 3227a gradually gains a profile. He was very well educated and fluent in both Latin and vernacular German. The miscellaneous texts prove his wide range of interests

82 On the technical characteristics of this approach to wrestling cf. Welle, "*... und wisse das alle höbischeit kompt von deme ringen*", pp. 92–97.

83 Roma, Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, 44A8, fols. 81r–84v, 100v–107v.

84 Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Msc. Dresd. C 487, fols. 66r–86v.

85 *Merke ringen in czulawfen mancher wezen und geverte meister Lichtnawers. Und das ist gar swer und unbedewtlich / wen das ist sein zete gewest / dorum das is nicht yderman vorneme / der is wörde lezen.* Fol. 87r.

86 Müller, "Bild—Vers—Prosakommentar", p. 256 and id., "Hans Lecküchners Messerfechtlehre", pp. 362–364.

from metallurgy over fireworks, medicine, alchemy, rituals, crafts, cooking, and mirabilia to fencing didactics. He was also familiar with the techniques of written communication and the making of codices, as his rubrication practice and the initials at the beginning of more important sections show. His method of taking notes in different notebooks and later organizing this collection of practical knowledge by the use of a register—which however does not list the texts on martial arts, probably because they were already in a distinct order and easily accessible—already reminds of the early modern practice of making commonplace books.<sup>87</sup>

It also seems as if there was a certain occasion why he did start to write about martial arts systems. As shown above, some details support the hypothesis that this occasion was a period of concrete martial arts instruction by the use of the Liechtenauerian didactic system. The martial arts related sections are thus governed by the objective to codify and to secure knowledge about body techniques by the use of the written account and by the glossation of the mnemonic verses. At a certain point, this project seems to have been abandoned and the interests of the scribe seem to have changed.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless he kept the material on martial arts systems, while reusing the blank pages in quires V, VI and VII for other texts. Manuscript 3227a is therefore not a fight book in the narrower sense of the term. It was not intended to be distributed in

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87 Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*; Havens, *Commonplace Books*; Yeo, “A Philosopher and his Notebooks”.

88 At this point it seems legitimate to propose an abductive hypothesis concerning the external circumstances of the genesis of manuscript 3227a: If we assume that the scribe already had martial arts training before he came into contact with a fencing instructor using Liechtenauer’s didactic system, this could explain his polemics against other masters in the foreword and why he felt the necessity to justify the recording of the “other master’s teachings”. He could then have received an intense formation based on Liechtenauer’s system, which he tried to understand and memorize by copying the verses, glossating them and taking notes. After some time he might then have used the acquired principles of Liechtenauer’s didactics to describe the use of other weapons (shield, staff, long knife, dagger) in quire VI and VII, an attempt that was abandoned very quickly. If we ask why the scribe stopped writing about martial arts at a certain point and reused his notebooks for the collection of other material, I have a suggestion based on personal experiences: He gave up writing when he had understood the principles of Liechtenauer’s system in practice and no longer needed to rely on written reflections. The use of script to secure and organize practical knowledge on body techniques then became futile because he had acquired Liechtenauer’s style of fighting as a form of tacit knowing, a result which his comment on the insufficiency of written accounts on martial arts (fol. 15r) already anticipates.

that form and was not written to inform absent third parties.<sup>89</sup> The addressees of the text are therefore very different from those for whom the later copies of Liechtenauer's doctrine were made.

In my reading, the texts in manuscript 3227a on body techniques have to be seen in the same context as the collection of technical instructions that form the rest of the manuscript. They are part of a personal attempt to gather and to secure practical knowledge and seem to have been written by a practitioner of Liechtenauer's martial arts system. The question, whether it was Liechtenauer himself or one of his students or followers who trained the anonymous scribe, is futile. It cannot be answered and is not really of importance. What matters is the fact, that the scribe was quite convinced of the Liechtenauerian approach and that he defended it in his polemic preface and in his glosses against the teachings of other masters. The text thus gives us a glimpse on medieval martial arts discourses and the contemporary strategies of self-fashioning among teachers and students alike.

The manuscript furthermore documents the close connection between martial arts practice and academic culture. As Jan-Dirk Müller pointed out, the application of academic techniques like the glossation of canonic texts on the subject of martial arts leads to the transformation of fighting didactics into a theorized *ars*. The codex is thus an indication for a process of theorizing martial arts, which seems to have begun in the course of the 14th century.

But despite these theoretical approaches, the basic problem remains to communicate a set of complex movements. Like a competent native speaker might be able to discuss with other speakers without at the same time being able to explain the grammatical rules of his mother tongue, a competent martial artist is able to fight without necessarily being able to describe what he or she does and how others could attain these skills. Contrary to the practice of fighting, the communication of this practice requires a system that names and describes complex body techniques. These systems often assume the character of a didactic lore or a doctrine of martial arts practice. However, following the works of Michael Polanyi, the central part of this knowledge on fighting remains tacit. It represents a form of knowledge that is bound to personal experience and cannot be fully verbalized. The manuscript 3227a is thus an extraordinary example of the late medieval attempts to record concrete body techniques by the use of the book. At the same time it documents the search

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89 I already discussed the question whether fight books were written for a communication between absentees *through* the book or for a communication between attendees *about* the book in Burkart, "Die Aufzeichnung des Nicht-Sagbaren", pp. 265–267, 301–303.

for practical knowledge of an erudite scribe who took up the challenge to describe what, in the end, remains unsayable.

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# Development, Diffusion and Reception of the “Buckler Play”: A Case Study of a Fighting Art in the Making

*Franck Cinato*

## 1 A Living Tradition<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 *Origins*

This work will deal with “fencing with a buckler” or, more precisely, with the documents that provide access to what was the “buckler play.”<sup>2</sup> It is important first of all, however, to recognise that the distinction between *Schulfechten* (training combat) and *Ernstfechten* (serious combat),<sup>3</sup> is simply that the intentions and circumstances change the finality of the engagement. Technically the manner of fighting does not change. We will simply note that the word “play” has since ancient times carried a double meaning of “fighting technique” and “recreation”. We need only remember the name of the gladiatorial schools, the *ludi*, or the *clessa* of the Irish Cúchulainn. Thus, in what following we shall use the term “buckler play” in the wide sense of “fencing with a buckler,” irrespective of the context, whether as leisure or a more serious intent. This triple aspect (recreational, pedagogic, serious) is reflected in a verse of *Perceforet* (ca. 1330): “The knights, quite unarmoured, played buckler with each other to grow more skilful and to learn some new tricks.”<sup>4</sup> Any attempt to restrict I.33

1 The title of this first part is borrowed from that of the book edited by Pierre Lardet, *La tradition vive. Mélanges d'histoire des textes en l'honneur de Louis Holtz*, Turnhout, 2003 (Bibliologia, 20).

2 The oldest testimony in French appears in the *Chronique* by Godefroy, written between 1314 and 1316 (v. 7606): “Du jeu de bouclier ot retere” (Buchon, *Chronique métrique de Godefroy*, p. 278). According to Mehl, *Les Jeux*, pp. 63–64, his sources (mainly letters of remission) refer to an exclusively recreational practice, as already expressed by Du Cange, “Bouclarius” 1, col. 720b: . . . *Frequens in iis registris occurrit mentio ludicrae pugnae, quam le jeu du bouclier vocabant* “frequently mentioned in said registers [sc. Annales] is a recreational form of fighting they called the buckler play.”

3 Cf. Boffa, *Les manuels*, p. 34.

4 Perceforet V, f. 6: *Les chevaliers tous desarmez jouoyent aux escuz, les uns aux autres, pour estre plus duitz, et pour aucun tour nouvel apprendre. [. . .]*



and the teachings of the *Masters of the Buckler Play* solely to the recreational aspect of the practice would constitute a hermeneutic misunderstanding.<sup>5</sup>

The history begins with the first *Fighting Book* or *Fighting Handbook*:<sup>6</sup> the Leeds, Royal Armouries ms I.33<sup>7</sup> and deploys primarily in the south of Germany.<sup>8</sup> Describing the martial context in which I.33 was born would surpass by far the scope of the present case study; however, we should not forego a presentation, if only a brief one.

The question of origins is always the most difficult issue as it delves deeply into complex substrata.<sup>9</sup> The Leeds manuscript is the first preserved evidence, but the birth of the genre may have taken place earlier with other handbooks

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- 5 See Cinato/Surprenant, "Luitger" and Cinato/Surprenant, "L'escrime à la bocle", cf. our difference of opinion with Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, pp. 19–20 and n. 59. Although his is a dated interpretation, we can read the few lines that Siméon dedicated to buckler play in *La France pendant la guerre de cent ans*, p. 124: *Le jeu chevaleresque du "bouclier" ou des "bloquelets" était devenu à la mode depuis que, pendant l'heureuse période qui précéda la guerre de Cent Ans, les riches bourgeois des villes avaient voulu figurer eux aussi dans des tournois et se livrer aux mêmes divertissements que les nobles; et des rangs de la bourgeoisie ce jeu n'avait pas tardé à se répandre, comme il arrive d'ordinaire, dans la masse du peuple. Du reste, le jeu du bouclier pouvait être considéré comme une sorte de préparation à la vie militaire, l'ordonnance de 1369 n'avait aucune raison de l'interdire* ["The chivalrous play of the 'buckler' or of the "bloquelets" had become fashionable since, during the happy period preceding the Hundred Years War, the rich bourgeois from the cities had also wished to participate in the tournaments and to engage in the same forms of entertainment as the nobility; and, from the ranks of bourgeoisie, that play spread quickly, as tends to happen, to the common people. Moreover, the buckler play could be considered a sort of preparation for military life; there being no reason for the ordinance of 1369 to prohibit it."].
- 6 See the introduction to this volume as well as Boffa, *Les manuels*, pp. 23–24. My heartfelt thanks to Matthews Galas for his precious and so generously shared knowledge, and to Olivier Dupuis and Yann Kervan, who kindly shared their lectures with me; further to Olivier Gourdon for our joint iconographic research, as well as Stéphane Augris. This work is indebted to each of them, as well as to André Surprenant. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to the editors, Daniel Jaquet, Timothy Dawson and Karin Verelst, who greatly contributed to this study with their suggestions.
- 7 Anonymous, *Liber de Arte Dimicatoria* (see notes in the appendix). This manuscript shall henceforth be referred to by means of its familiar Royal Armouries catalogue designation of I.33.
- 8 The geographical framework of the present study is justified by the provenance of the different manuscript testimonies; cf. Boffa, *Les manuels*, pp. 43–45. A comparative study dealing with the Italian handbooks remains to be done.
- 9 See Boffa, *Les manuels*, pp. 37–39, that does not mention the Irish epic sources.

that are now lost.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, following the thread on buckler play, we see that the iconography of the manuscripts margins (*marginalia*) and the literature itself, our indirect sources, precede the apparition of the first Fencing Books.<sup>11</sup>

The oldest Medieval and Western depictions of bucklers, small round shields (ancient or Eastern matters<sup>12</sup> are of no concern now) can be found in the Irish<sup>13</sup> and Iberian<sup>14</sup> domains, where they are more often coupled with the spear. Although *marginalia* before the thirteenth century depicted round bucklers (for example, in the Bible of Saint-Sulpice de Bourges<sup>15</sup>), due to their diameter they cannot be classified as “bucklers,” in that they resemble the traditional Germanic war shield (Frankish, Saxon, or even Viking).<sup>16</sup>

It is also interesting to note that positions such as the *Prima custodia* (“first guard”) already had a long history. This can be seen in the depiction of a duel on a thirteenth century manuscript preserved in Lyon in which the characters, dressed in mail armour and carrying the shield, adopt clearly identifiable

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- 10 Cf. Forngeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, p. 15; Boffa, *Les manuels*, pp. 39–40. We hypothesised in 2009 that “von Alkerlseiben” could be an anthroponym indicating the author of a treatise referenced in a phrase of the I.33 (§ 5 *quod probat De Alkersleiben per rationes*, see pp. lxxii and lxxxv).
- 11 See the contribution by Timothy Dawson in the present volume, and Boffa, *Les manuels*, pp. 74–76, especially regarding the depiction of the London manuscript, BL, Royal 20 D IV, folio 1r, and its relationship to I.33: “In this particular case, it is our understanding of the fighting manuals which is reinforced through the study of certain miniatures.” (p. 76).
- 12 On the subject of Dawson’s hypothesis, “The Walpurgis Fechtbuch”, see Hester, “Home-Grown Fighting” and Boffa, *Les manuels*, p. 43, whose opinions we share.
- 13 See, for example, the Gospels in the Book of Kells from the early 9th century (Dublin, Trinity College, ms 58), folio 200r, where a small figure can be seen with both a short spear and a small round buckler. See also other parallels, most notably in Scotland: Hester, “Home-Grown Fighting”.
- 14 In the illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse by Beatus of Liebana; for example, Urgell, Cathedral of La Seu, Archives, 26, folio 209r, from the late 10th century (ca. 975), or also the Sermons in Paris, Bnf, NAL 235, folio 72v (10th–11th century; Castille).
- 15 Bourges, Municipal Library, 3, folio 304r and 304v, from the last quarter of the 12th century; a figure in the arches of the tables; however, shields of a considerable diameter are not bucklers.
- 16 The round shield with a central handle, in use since protohistory; Cognot, *L’armement médiéval*, passim, especially pp. 144, 317–8, 331–2, 669–670; see, for example, Dickinson/Harke, *Early Anglo-Saxon Shields*.—We can simply define shield of buckler type as a small round shield that not fit with an use in war context (however it has been later), due to its protection limited to the hands. It will be to the archaeology to determine when it appears and from what kind of shield it comes from.

guard positions,<sup>17</sup> while another manuscript from Lyon provides a beautiful illustration of a judicial duel with buckler and bludgeon<sup>18</sup> as it was possibly practiced since the Carolingian era.<sup>19</sup> These few examples show how evidence on the birth of civilian fencing is frequent and spread over time. The first true depictions of the buckler play appear in the marginalia of the late thirteenth century, drawn by French artists. The oldest currently identified illustrations showing positions that can also be found in the images of Leeds, I.33 are from a Picard psalter, ca. 1280<sup>20</sup> and the Psautier de Lusignan, ca. 1300.<sup>21</sup> Their images show a resemblance to those of a Lancelot novel.<sup>22</sup> From the fourteenth century such scenes become more common, for example, as they appear in an Alexander romance produced in France around 1340<sup>23</sup> and in the images of the Holkham Bible.<sup>24</sup>

To fully grasp this phenomenon, however, the historian of fencing must resort to all types of textual sources, not merely literary ones. From the middle of the twelfth century courtly literature bears witness to the existence of specialists in the field. The *Eneas* makes a reference to the *mestres d'escrimir* (fencing masters) knowing how to “cover” themselves (v. 9517–8).<sup>25</sup> In the *Chevalier au lion* the poet even describes what is surely the precursor of the bucklers found in the handbooks, round bucklers, solid and light, ideal for fencing.<sup>26</sup> The first mention of sword players is English, in relation to a decree promulgated in 1189, banning the fencers from keeping school within the city

17 Lyon, Municipal Library, PA 57 (Delandine, 673), folio 87v.

18 Bible, Lyon, Municipal Library, 411, folio 171v.

19 Cf. Rubellin, “Combattant de Dieu”.

20 Paris, National Library lat. 14284, folio 64v; cf. Cinato Surprenant, “L’escrime à la bocle”, pp. 251–252 and no. 7 for other early examples.

21 Private collection; Catalogue: Western Manuscripts and Miniatures, 2002 <www.sothebys.com>. Boffa, *Manuel*, pp. 75–76, has correctly noted that certain minor differences give this iconography in the margins a significant documentary value.

22 London, British Library, Royal 20 D.iv, folio 1r, from the first quarter of the fourteenth century; France (maybe from Arras?); see supra note 11.

23 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 264, folio 61v; from the workshop of the Flemish artist Jehan de Grise, 1338–44.

24 London, BL, Additional 47682, folio 40r (Bible, around 1327–1335).

25 *s’or n’iestes mestres d’escrimir/et bien ne vos savez covrir*; *Eneas* 2, published by J. Salverda de Grave, Paris, Champion, 1929. Published online by the *Base de Français Médiéval*, <<http://catalog.bfm-corpus.org/eneas2>>. Latest revision: 2003-02-28. A work created in 1155, transmitted by a manuscript ca. 1200.

26 Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion*, v. 5519, (around 1177–1181): *Et ensi armé com il vindrent/escuz reonz sor lor chiés tindrent/forz et legiers por escrimir* [“Thus armed, they advanced, bearing in their hands round shields, stout and light for fighting”

of London.<sup>27</sup> It would not be until 1554 that the same prohibition was decreed by the parliament in Paris, although *ad hoc* controls were already being applied there.<sup>28</sup> A land tax registry confirms that at the end of the thirteenth century, and perhaps prior to that, sword masters were practising in Paris.<sup>29</sup>

The letters of remission confirm that *Mestres* (Masters) were teaching the buckler play, perhaps even exclusively. One such is that of the cleric Pierre Pourcellot, who refused to pay for the lessons he had received from André Lafeene in 1394.<sup>30</sup>

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(translated by W.W. Comfort, 1999, p. 76), where “fencing” should be better than “fighting” to render *escremir*].

- 27 Anglo, *The Martial Arts*, p. 7 and no. 5, p. 318; Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter Books*, pp. 15–16 (f. 15b): “Firstly, that whereas murders, robberies, and homicides have in times past been committed in the City by night and day, it is forbidden that anyone walk the streets after curfew tolled at St. Martin le Grand with sword, buckler, or other arm unless he be a great lord or other respectable person of note (...) No is one to keep a fencing school by night or day, under pain of imprisonment for forty days.”
- 28 See Daressy, *Archives*, pp. 11–12; Anglo, *The Martial Arts*, pp. 8–9, which does not mention the sporadic prohibitions, such as that decree of Pentecost from 1288: *Ordinatum fuit in praesenti Parlamento, quod nullus portaret Parisius cultellum ad cuspidem, nec Boclerium, nec ensem, nec arma similia...* “It has been ordered by the current Parliament that no Parisian shall carry pointed knives nor bucklers or swords, nor any similar weapons...” (quoted from Du Cange, “1 buccula,” t. 1, col. 766c). See also Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, pp. 2–3.
- 29 Letainturier-Fradin, *Les joueurs d'épées*, p. 14 “In 1292, the land tax registry points out seven masters of arms in Paris” and quotes Géraud, *Paris sous Philippe-le-bel* and Daressy, *Archives*, pp. 127–128. Residing in the outskirts: the “*escremisséours* [fencing masters] Guillaume (16 sous); Richart (9 sous); Sansé (2 sous); Jaques (8 sous). Residing in the city: Nicolas (2 sous); Phelippe (12 deniers);” and finally, “*Mestre Thomas, l'escremisséour* [*Mestre Thomas, the fencing master*], 30 sous” (Géraud, *Paris sous Philippe-le-bel*, p. 141) who paid twice as much as his colleague Guillaume, who was already heavily taxed. One might ask if “Roberge, fille Mestre Thomas,” who paid a land tax of 12 sous in the same street (*ibid.* pg. 135), was practising his father's trade (?), because in that case, although this is mere speculation, the 8th master of arms in Paris might have been a woman. On the other hand, neither Daressy, nor Letainturier-Fradin point out the “champions,” whose profession is akin to that of the *fencers*. The term *campio*, *campiones*, from *cambio* [exchange], designated persons who, in exchange for a wage, would replace in judicial duels those who could not fight for themselves (cf. Géraud, *Paris sous Philippe-le-bel*, pp. 492–3). Seven “champions” are taxed in Paris (cf., for example, *ibid.* p. 112); see Du Cange, “*Campiones*”, t. 2, col. 061a; Anglo, *The Martial Arts*, pp. 6–7 and 318 n. 6–7.
- 30 *Comme je me commendis à vous pieçay pour apprendre du joul du bloquier pour le prix de ii gros et se ne men avez rien appris, que je ni ai esté que ii ou iii fois, et j'ay toujours payé à une chascune fois le vin...* [“As I had sought your instruction to learn the buckler play for the

Thus, as the iconography of the *marginalia* shows, it is within the effervescent context of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the tradition of combat with buckler is born on Carolingian and Ottonian ground. One might say that ms I.33 is the product of this martial *koinè*, even if it appears as a regional product from southern Germany, as suggested by some of its terminology.

## 1.2 *De arte dimicatoria*

The first manuscript book dealing with the Art of Combat in the West, I.33, exhibits an extraordinary creative vitality,<sup>31</sup> as much through its form of glossed image as through its doctrinal substance, the depths of which reveal an already long history. It takes into account the two poles of the martial traditions: one of war or military, stemming from the realm of the nobility, and the other a civil, commoner or clerical one, blossoming within an urban context.<sup>32</sup> Fascinating testimony of a nascent body of knowledge, it allows us to

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price of two gros, however, not having learned anything, and having been there only two or three times, and paid each time for the wine . . .” (quoted by Simonnet, *Documents inédits*, pp. 386–387). A censal account carried out in Gray-dans-le-Doubs in 1346–1347 mentions a Jew named Lyon Le Gros whose profession was “master of the buckler” (Gauthier, *Inventaire sommaire*, p. 235). Letainturier-Fradin, *ibid.*, pp. 43–44 mentions a charter from 1455 attesting to the existence of the guild that governed the practice: *Jean Taillecourt maistre joueur de l’espée à deux mains et du boucler . . . a fait . . . Jean de Beaugranz prévost desditz jeux de l’espée à deux mains et du boucler et lui a donné pouvoir et auctorité de tenir escolles desditz jeux par tous lieux en ce royaume* [“Jean Taillecourt master player of the two handed sword and the buckler . . . made . . . Jean de Beaugranz provost of said swordplays with two hands and of the buckler, and granted him the power and authority to keep school of said plays everywhere in this Kingdom”] (from the entry “jouere, joueur” in the *Dictionnaire de l’ancien langage françois* of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, VII, p. 114, quoted here).

31 See the editions of I.33 (Cinato/Surprenant, *Liber* and Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*), whose introductions spare us from recalling generalities. See also Morini/Rudilosso, *Manoscritto I.33*; Forgeng/Kiermayer, “The Chivalric Art”, pp. 153–155.

32 We have already presented the arguments that led us to the following interpretations; see Cinato/Surprenant, *Liber*, pp. LXIII–LXXX and Cinato/Surprenant, *L’escrime scolastique*. We concur with S. Boffa on the importance of the civilian context: “plusieurs indices suggèrent que l’escrime civile est la première préoccupation des auteurs” [several indices suggest that civilian fencing was the first concern for the authors] (p. 72); a third axis, situated somehow astride the two poles of tradition, should not be overlooked: the judicial duel. The ordeal of “God’s Judgement,” an institution preserved more in the Germanic countries than elsewhere, should nevertheless not be seen as the only factor related to the development of the handbooks (cf. Boffa, *Les manuels*, p. 41). Among other civilian factors we note the recreation of the city dwellers, but we must not forget student mobility; the different nations represented in the medieval universities attest to that.

directly grasp the interpretation of those two axes, not at the very moment that the phenomenon is beginning but *a posteriori*, when the buckler play reached its peak. Civilian and clerical fencing, upon which the scholastic approach of the author of I.33 is based, opened the way toward a new type of codification, contributing new momentum to age-old military traditions that were then the preserve of the aristocracy. The question arises whether in that sense the lack of any type of the body protection, so emblematic in the warrior domain, might have played an important role in the effort to rationalise practices and generate inventiveness, most notably in matters of bindings (*ligationes*) and other types of blade contacts.

This original approach, with no known or preserved precedents in the field nor any immediate contemporary parallels, relies on a broad range of solutions: which manœuvre or blow should be favoured within a specific “positional” context and its timing for realisation (conceptualised by the semantic fields of the terms *debitum—mora—omissio* [due, delay and omission]). In other words, each situation has been the subject of subtle tactical considerations, the subtlety of which only becomes evident with the frequent use of a work that none have deemed repetitive or stereotypical.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to an analytical approach, the creators of I.33 developed a narrative that was ahead of their time. It may well be that the author and artist(s) working with him were inspired by precursors,<sup>34</sup> but the artistic and doctrinal homogeneity lends author’s thinking on fencing an appearance of originality. Let us note briefly that the purport of I.33 is articulated in units forming lessons delimited by cross shaped markings (*signa crucis*) [see part I.3]. The sequencing is based on critical instances that impart rhythm to the phases of engagement. Within the units, the images appear in a sometimes non-chronological succession, implying a nonlinear lecture of the scenes, supported by the gloss. The pedagogical function is clear: the use of the image, the step backward, the mnemonic verse. The whole handbook is conceived as a didactic support that is clearly pragmatic, and true to its structure.<sup>35</sup> The author shows how he kept school, as it is his course that is illustrated in the handbook, a beautiful example of *mise en abîme*.

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33 Gombich’s concepts of norm and stereotype exert a direct and disabling effect on the intelligence of the work, especially as in the specific case of I.33, an expert on the iconography of fightbooks as is Sydney Anglo, another Warburgian, utilised them in reference to “stereotypical pictogrammes,” as combinations of some fifteen stylised positions.” See Anglo, *The Martial Arts*, pp. 44–45 and 125–128 and Anglo, *L’escrime, la dance*, p. 21.

34 See *supra* note 10.

35 In this respect, I.33 is the only corpus offering such a degree of recurrence; see Table 2.

We have shown that the creation of I.33 was complex and possibly spread over time. The first folios show that a change in orientation took place from when they began to be realised, reassigning the spots intended for the writing.<sup>36</sup> In brief, I.33 shows signs of an evolving project, testimonies of a living, dynamic and creative practice of fencing.

In the following we will frequently strive to compare images produced over a period of several centuries. Accordingly it seems essential to characterise them depending on their particularities. In this sense, we can state that I.33 transmits a corpus of images<sup>37</sup> of which the two main formal characteristics are the page layout—two superimposed images per page—and the (doctrinal) insistence on representing the fighters with both hands joined. This last point is the distinguishing feature of I.33 in relation to subsequent corpora. The positions in which the weapons are held with both hands are predominant in the corpus, and, inversely, “open” positions are rare and presented as faulty.<sup>38</sup> This general rule should be considered as a particular feature of the practice in the fourteenth century as the images from the following century show that such a “dogma” had been abandoned, giving the buckler a function that we would describe as more autonomous.

### 1.2.1 The History of the Leeds, ms I.33

The manuscript was perhaps created in Bavaria under the direction of a certain *Lutegerus* (Luitger) during the first decades of the fourteenth century,<sup>39</sup> although no objective proof has appeared (that is, other than the paleographic

36 See Cinato/Surprenant, “L’escrime scolastique”.

37 We use the term “corpus” in the sense of a coherent group of images that are connected and/or present common characteristics. In the following, as well as in the annexed inventory, the corpora are indicated by means of a capital letter (our initials) followed by an asterisk, so as to distinguish the concept of “corpus” from that of “manuscript witness.” For the sake of clarity, we shall say then that each manuscript witness transmits a collection of images and that the connected collections form a corpus. For example, the various witnesses of compilations attributed to Hans Talhoffer transmit connected collections (especially *T*<sup>4</sup> [København] and *T*<sup>5</sup> [München]); we will consider the whole as a corpus of images designated as *T*<sup>\*</sup>. The corpus sources (or ancestors) will be designated by Greek letters, to the extent that they are attested only by their descendants.—See also Chap. I.3 and *Inventaire*, 1–3, with respect to the system of reference to the corpus images in usage and for the correlation tables.

38 Cf. I.33, 12.2 (f. 3vb, p. 6B), 41 (f. 11ra, p. 21A), 94 (f. 24rb, p. 47B), 107 (f. 27va, p. 54A) and 110 (f. 28rb, p. 55B).

39 See Note n° 1; here we shall not deal with the questions concerning the name of the possible author; see Cinato/Surprenant, “Luitger”.

and artistic ones, or those of internal critique) to support such hypotheses. On the other hand, there is more certainty regarding its history after it was rediscovered in the sixteenth century. Found somewhere within a Franconian monastery, the manuscript then belonged to Johannes Herwart von Würzburg, to Friedrich Wilhelm, until it finally found a place in the library of the Dukes of Gotha, was assigned call number I.115, and would remain on the same shelf next to the 1467 Talhoffer manuscript (*T*<sup>5</sup>) until 1944–45.<sup>40</sup> Yet, what do we know about the history of I.33 before the sixteenth century? The ensuing "almost nothing" makes it nevertheless deserving of study.

The work likely benefited from a distribution that we surmise was short yet nonetheless real, although across a restricted area.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, it does not seem that the I.33 manuscript was the only book of its genre produced in the fourteenth century, yet, although not having been preserved, they are presumed to be behind the production of the following centuries, which we shall describe in terms of corpora of images [see part I.3]. We will return to this later, but let us first explain the history of I.33 after the manuscript was completed. To this end, this study has two premises as starting points. The first conjectures that the manuscript was withdrawn from circulation very soon, not long after some pages were torn from it. The second one is based on a hypothesis that only those torn folios were circulated.

In that sense, two events draw our attention: the loss of several sheets and the addition of an excerpt of a poem highlighted in the book. The first postulate on the history of I.33 ensues from the prohibitive nature<sup>42</sup> of the inscription that was added at the head of the first folio, in the upper margin: "Not even Stygian Pluto has the audacity to try/What an unrestrained monk and an old woman full of tricks will."<sup>43</sup>

40 For details, see Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, pp. 3–6 and Cinato/Surprenant, *Liber*, pp. xv–xxviii, 279–282.

41 Pinpointing its origins (southern Germany, Baviera) is based not only on linguistic criteria [See Note, n° 1], but also on the place of origin of the majority of the witnesses, which are at issue here [see Table 1].

42 See Cinato/Surprenant, *Liber*, p. xxiv, n. 42. The verses are from Énée Picollomini, who would become Pope Pius II († 1462). Although the couplet may also denote some amusement, the tone of reproach is still apparent.

43 I.33, 1r (pg.1), § 1; *Non audet Stygius Pluto tentare quod aude<t>/effrenis monachus plenaque dolis anus* [a later, more recent addition, Hand D by Forgeng]. Cf. Cinato/Surprenant, *Liber*, p. xxiii; *stygien Pluton* is a sophisticated manner of clearly designating the Ruler of the Underworld; Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, p. 47, 112, n. 2, translated as "The Devil of hell does not dare attempt that which the wanton monk dares and the old woman full of wiles" (Hand D, "Late 1400's" Forgeng).



The distich is hence a reliable *terminus post quem* because after the intervention of Hand D, I.33 is not further annotated until it came into the possession of Johannes von Würzburg (whose *ex-libris* appears on folio 7r, p. 13) in the mid-sixteenth century. When Hand D added the verses, the manuscript might have already been deficient and withdrawn from circulation because after the interventions of Hand B, the writing D is the only one to leave a mark. After that one, no one else seems to have had any interest in the book, or even access to it.<sup>44</sup> In any case, I.33 was probably in the state that we know it at the end of the fifteenth century, as it was when the young Henrich Gunterrodt came upon it.<sup>45</sup> Finally, the person responsible for the scribbles and other graffiti could not be guilty of the missing items, either, as those came too late in the history of the book. Thus, on the subject of the dismemberment of the manuscript, we shall prudently say that it might have taken place between the last interventions of Hand B and Hand D, or just after D.

We can, however, try to refine the estimation of the duration of this primitive circulation by means of two hypotheses. The first, less plausible, contemplates a long duration stretching over almost 150 years (from the first quarter of the fourteenth century to the last quarter of the fifteenth century). In the case of a shorter duration, with Hand D copying the couplet when I.33 has already been withdrawn from circulation in Franconia, its original diffusion probably did not exceed the end of the fourteenth century (that is, from 50 to 75 years).

This second hypothesis on the circulation of detached fragments of the manuscript is supported on the one hand because, without evidence to the contrary, the diffusion of the intact I.33 appears to have been weak, irrespective of its duration, and no copies seem to have been made during that time. On the other hand, the vague influence of images that we can trace, not to I.33 itself, but rather to an old contact with the lost parts, took place more durably. This series of images, which will presently be dealt with, seems to have circulated already during the fifteenth century, so that with the short duration seeming more plausible, the dismemberment of I.33, which occurred perhaps

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44 The wear and tear on the outer folios of the manuscript shows that it was kept without a cover for a long period of time, while the well preserved state of the inner folios suggests a limited use over time. If we compare the levels of wear to those of other manuscripts of the scholastic type or of a didactic nature in different fields, one must recognise that I.33 was not read very much, and that the interest of the readers lay more in the beginning of the book than in the end (cf. Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, p. 37 n.83).

45 H. v. Gunterrodt was 22 years old when he wrote his treatise (*Gunt.*<sup>1-2</sup>). He does not cite anything that does not also appear in what has been preserved.

simultaneously with its withdrawal, would have happened long before the intervention of Hand D. We will see later an indication that allows the initial period of circulation to be identified (see part I.3.2. Group 2).

Kept out of circulation in a monastery, I.33 does not seem to have been consulted again until it fell into the hands of Johannes Herwart of Würzburg and then into those of Gunterrodt.<sup>46</sup> After its rediscovery it would become hugely successful among Johannes Herwart's circle of fencers, where it would be exploited intelligently. One would think the story would end there. However, that is not the case, as several collections of images show thought-provoking parallels to those of I.33, in a period in which, at the very beginning of the sixteenth century, the manuscript had not yet been rediscovered. How can this be explained?

We now approach the second postulate of the history of I.33, according to which the folios extracted from the manuscript circulated over a period of time, unlike the rest of the book. We figure that most of the losses might have taken place at the same time and that the fragments of I.33 were displaced and preserved together [see part II.2.1]. They were then combined with other images, were probably copied again and put together into a small booklet (hereafter referred by the Greek letter λ) which circulated uninterruptedly until it reached the town of Augsburg at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>47</sup> While it may be possible to verify part of this scenario, the matter is nevertheless not simple. In order to unravel these questions, it is important to assemble

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46 In the middle of the sixteenth century (after 1552) a copy was procured (= γ) and used by Gunterrodt to write his book *Sciomachia et hoplomachia, sive De Veris Principiis Artis Dimicatoriae liber unus* (= *Gunt.*<sup>1</sup>), an abridged version of which was published in 1579 in Wittenberg, entitled *De veris principiis artis dimicatoriae, tractatus brevis* (= *Gunt.*<sup>2</sup>). See the translation (without transcription) by Gevaert, *Heinrich von Gunterrodt*, pp. 5–6 (p. 7, we do not share his mistaken interpretation of the title, "*liber unus*," as it should be understood to mean "The true foundations of art . . . in one book." If other books had been contemplated, they would have written instead, properly, "*liber primus*").

47 Cf. Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, p. 12; this is an opinion that is spreading among digital publications. There should be no mistake; in the case of P.-H. Mair it is not a matter of determining whether or not the sheets that I.33 had lost actually ended up in Augsburg, but simply of applying a methodology appropriate for philology, here namely the stemmatological method, so as to represent a genealogy of the corpora that will explain the relationships observed. From this perspective, the testimonies of manuscripts *A* and *M* are especially valuable as they guarantee the antiquity of the corpus utilised by Mair, and prove that some twenty years after the images were produced for Mair, the sources still circulated among that same group of Augsburg fencers.

the pieces of the puzzle correctly, which begins with an accurate and detailed description of our sources.<sup>48</sup>

### 1.3 *Structure and Content of the Corpus*

Within the framework of the compilations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, images dealing with fencing with buckler appear as autonomous (and minor) parts annexed to the other sections, which warrants dealing with those parts independently from the rest of the compilations. Collecting and analysing the data stemming from the context and particularities of each manual will require cross-checking, yet that is beyond the purview of this contribution.

We refer the reader to the descriptions of catalogues, publications and studies mentioned, but would like to recall for our purposes some of the particularities of I.33. Among the main characteristics, the situational context in the evolution of the characters is notably different from that of the compilations in which the enclosed field is predominant. It does not depict a “real combat” being staged, but rather describes the learning event that is the fencing course. The teaching is provided through “lessons” in the form of plays (*frustra*) marked by cross shaped markings (*signa crucis*), which are in turn inserted into a superstructure of seven wards successively opposed by a series of attacks. The preface, the first folio of the manuscript, relies on the depiction of the seven ward positions in order to provide a definition of the art of fighting.<sup>49</sup> The first four images thus constitute a veritable *catalogue* of prototypical wards that will structure the line of argument. In the subsequent folios, the characters act in situations where the reactions applied are guided by the needs that each of them have. Because, although each lesson teaches a topic concretely manifested in different initial instants, their common denominator is that they assign roles to the protagonists, determined by what might correspond an initiative. The *obsessor* (attacker) is the one who owns the *initiative* of approach which the *rector custodiae* (guardian) must confront. Their reactions are modelled as sequences (the images) which describe a limited number of critical instants.<sup>50</sup> The pedagogic function manifests itself clearly through

48 The issue of the manuscript context of works is obviously an important aspect of research (cf. Boffa, *Les manuels*, pp. 53–54).

49 § 2. “It must be noted that the art of combat is thus described: a combat is an ordered series of different blows and is divided into seven parts as here” (*Notandum quod ars dimicatoria sic describitur: dimicatio est diversarum plagarum ordinatio et dividitur in septem partes ut hic*).

50 On this important issue of the theorisations of fencing: the notion of “time,” Briost, “La réduction de l’escrime en art”, pp. 312–313, does not evoke the concept of omission

the semantic and deictic content of the images, while the text -or rather the gloss- that complements them, amplifies the understanding through a global and theoretical analysis of explicative value.<sup>51</sup> Lesson by lesson, the process is identical. Beginning with an unknown concept (depiction of a new counter position) in order to take the pupil to what he already knows (an identical circumstance already dealt with), and working back successively through a process of reduction (*reducitur*). The glosses, in turn, follow an inverse discursive procedure (explanatory), based on known concepts, so as to introduce solutions that will be addressed later. The structure of I.33 is thus marked by a high degree of recursion, indeed, yet being entirely dependent on the concept of opposition between wards and counterwards (*custodiae et obsessiones*), it engenders a falsely linear, cyclical narrative greatly sustained by internal cross-references.<sup>52</sup>

The Leeds manuscript is a model that may have inspired the entire tradition as the structure of the corpora frequently adopted by the compilations of the fifteenth century similarly included *catalogues* of positions as introductions to each new section.

In the compilations that feature plays with buckler, the catalogue performs the role of a preamble but could in no way claim to structure the layout of the plays. [see Inventory, 1.1. Typology of Images and Table 3] Shown there, are the main positions specific to the buckler, which will be exploited subsequently, and then, a series of “(secret) rapid and unexpected attacks” (french *bottes* related to italian *botta* coming from an old french *boter/bouter*), whose narration is implicit (without markings), and is realised with just one image, sometimes two, but very rarely more than that.

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developed by the author of I.33 (which in our opinion constitutes “by default” an evocation of time), nor the problems regarding the breakdown of movements (with the creation of images) related to concepts of time/subjective moment (cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 294, 301).

51 See also Jaquet, “Codifier le geste guerrier”, esp. pp. 213–215.

52 For example: I.33, § 5.1 “The attacker, on the other hand, is in a position to enter and attack him at any time, from the moment he neglects what is his, as written below” (... *Sed obsessor intrando potest eum invadere quandocumque, si obmittit quod tenetur, ut infra scriptum est*).—§ 9 “But everything taking place here before the sword change, you will find it on the first page” (... *Sed omnia que ponuntur hic invenies in primo folio usque ad mutationem gladii*).—§ 12.1 “And it is important to know that when the play presents itself in this manner, he must in that case choose the *estoc* [thrust], as the content of the book in general shows, although there is no image in it on that subject” (... *Et est sciendum quod quando ludus ita se habet ut hic, tunc debet duci stich, sicut generaliter in libro continetur, quamvis non sint ymagines de hoc*).

Whereas most combat manuals of the fifteenth century differ by their rarity from those of the preceding century, the weak role they concede to fencing with buckler itself contrasts with the richness of I.33. In order of appearance, the most important volume of images dedicated to the buckler after that of I.33 is found in a manuscript currently kept in Cluny (*C*), dating around the turn of the sixteenth century (ca. 1500) and containing 24 images. Soon thereafter, in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, Paul Hector Mair would collect 40 of them (*Pm*<sup>2</sup>). In this respect, the compiler of *C* is a precursor of Mair. He brings together two old sources and has them recopied by an artist. In no way, however, are they original creations as the contribution of the artists is limited to updating the style of the garments worn. It is important to point out another nuance related to the eventual participation of masters-at-arms when the images were created. Michel Huynh draws perhaps a hasty conclusion affirming that “a master-at-arms was definitely responsible for the corrections we can see (...) as well as for the small textual indications.”<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, we can perfectly well imagine that the sponsor, the employer of the artists, would have had an interest in the subject of the book he was helping to produce, so without being a “master,” the editor of the book, as a practicing person, must have had some right of control over the production in progress.<sup>54</sup> In this sense, although the images are copies relatively true to a model (except for the updated style of clothing), the title of “master” seems excessive given the lack of originality of *C* compared to Hans Talhoffer’s books (*T*<sup>\*</sup>) or to the one by Paulus Kal (*K*<sup>\*</sup>). The similarity of approach from the master-of-works (not of arms) underlying *C* is comparable to that of P. H. Mair, whom we cannot honestly grant the title of master, but at best that of theorist.

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53 Huynh, “Un traité de combat”, p. 269, “un maître d’armes est assurément à l’origine des corrections que l’on voit (...) autant que des petites indications textuelles”, cf. pp. 263–264. Insofar as the collation work has not been realised in full, it is difficult to provide proof of the originality of the texts or of the arrangements of *C*, whose corrections are perhaps due simply to the artists who also benefited from models (as evidenced in the examples presented), in the manner of the copyists who re-read and carried out the corrections themselves. As regards the short added texts, they are in the nature of the description, with no doctrinal significance.

54 We fully concur with Huynh on the multifactorial aspect underlying the realisation of the compilations, as intertwined “transmission channels” (*ibid.*). Having worked only on a very small part of the whole collection, I cannot extrapolate to its entirety, but the slight reorganisations of the source that I suppose have been made, suggest indeed the participation of a fencer.

### 1.3.1 Group 1

Our first group of sources consists of a unique corpus that we shall name  $\pi$ , whose preserved examples belong in their entirety to the Renaissance period (sixteenth century).

This corpus includes 30 images, which, the most complete compiler, Paul Hector Mair (*Pm*), has included in two out of three copies of his vast martial compilation.<sup>55</sup> It exhibits surprising similarities to that of I.33, with whom the relationship is all the more evident since, among the other  $\pi$  manuscript witnesses,<sup>56</sup> Jörg Breu's sketchbook (= *A*) and part of the additional pieces in the Fight Book by Jörg Wilhalm (= *M*) are purely and simply sixteenth century copies of images created in the fourteenth century.<sup>57</sup> We shall review the conclusions to be drawn from these observations with respect to Paulus Hector Mair's fencing, but for the moment let us just remark that they show a striking kinship of doctrine, even though the images in the corpus of  $\pi$  hardly have immediate parallels in I.33.

We intend to explain these similarities through their ancestry. This point ensues from our second postulate, according to which  $\pi$  goes back essentially to the booklet that reproduced the images that I.33 had lost ( $\lambda$ ), representing a fixed state of evolution prior to the fifteenth century. Due to this filiation,  $\pi$  constitutes a homogenous corpus representing fencing with buckler as it was practised in the fourteenth century but conveyed through the prism of the artists of the Renaissance. Before presenting in detail the nature of the links connecting I.33 to  $\pi$ , let us consider the content of the other corpora of images.

### 1.3.2 Group 2

This second group of images, the primary source for the Cluny manuscript, which shall be represented by the letter  $\beta$ , is preserved by another witness, an autograph manuscript by Ludwig von Eyb (ca. 1510), hereafter *E*. In it, the plays with buckler appear isolated within a disparate context, whose content

55 *Pm*<sup>1</sup> [Mair, *cod.* Dresden] (whose text is in German) and *Pm*<sup>2</sup> [Mair, *cod.* München] (in Latin); see *Notes*.—Paulus Hector Mair (1517–†1579) was a notable of Augsburg with a passion for books on fencing, who misappropriated public funds in order to finance the purchase of manuscripts and compensate the artists he required. Almost 40 years after the dissemination of his compilations, in 1579, he was judged and hanged. A depiction of his hanging was found by Eric Wiggins and Ben Floyd in a manuscript from Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, MS. F 28, folio 205r. See Anglo, *The Martial Arts*, pp. 128–129 (and no. 31 p. 338), 186.

56 Three in number, of varying scope: *B* [Berlin Sketchbook], *A* [J. Breu Sketchbook] and *M* [addition to Wilhalm].

57 See the annexed table of acronyms and the notes.

truly merits more the designation of *Book of Warfare*<sup>58</sup> than that of a combat manual.

The fencing depicted appears at odds with the period in which *E* [von Eyb] and *C* (1–16) [Cluny] were realised, as in the case of  $\pi$ .<sup>59</sup> Thus, despite an already outmoded style of clothing typical of the fifteenth century, the positions depicted are even more anachronistic. A study of the evidence shows that *E* is more complete than *C*, who has nothing over the former other than not exhibiting the corruption found in *E* 16, where the artist forgot to draw a sword. Moreover, some of those images maintain a relation with corpus  $\lambda$  as the positions depicted point back to fourteenth century fencing with both hands joined.<sup>60</sup> In this context, the bucklers are depicted frontally or from the back, rarely from the side. The nature of the corpus, which has already been the subject of renewals and contaminations in the fifteenth century, implies it is the result of a long transmission, that is, that one would have to imagine several intermediaries between the ancestor ( $\beta$ ) and its descendants, *E* and *C*. However, their proximity suggests, on the contrary, that they had perhaps access to a common source, without intermediaries.

In addition, the antiquity of corpus  $\beta$  is guaranteed by the witness of *Codex Manesse*, whose artist took image  $\beta$  10 as the model for the scene depicting Johann von Ringgenberg<sup>61</sup> (see figure 17.6). The dating of the Heidelberg manuscript at ca. 1304 means we need to see I.33 as younger because he could have copied I.33 directly while it was still complete, or from parts that had

58 On this matter, see Leng, *Ars Belli*.

59 It rarely shows certain recent characteristics such as the dissociation of arms (cf. *E* 13–14 and *E* 11–12, where the influence of our third corpus,  $\sigma$ , is discernible) and features innovations, which show, however, an evolution in line with that of I.33 (opposition ward/counter, joint-handed), intermediary between I.33 and the representations coming from  $\sigma$ .

60 Within this corpus *E* is remarkable in that it exhibits the two characteristic features of I.33—layout with two images per page and joint-handed manipulation of the buckler and sword.

61 Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 848 [http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg848], f. 190v. We should not think that it was the artist of *E* who was perhaps inspired by the *Codex Manesse*. Certainly, the *Schildslach* is abundantly represented in I.33, yet the position assumed by the figure receiving the blow is absent from the body of images, contrary to the situation illustrated in *E* f. 54rb ( $\beta$  10). The second scene of the buckler play represented in the *Codex Manesse*, folio 204r, shows more of a distant relationship with *E* folio 59ra ( $\beta$  5), regarding the figure on the left. This image as well as  $\beta$  10 are absent in *C*. Cf. Forngeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, pp. 13–14.

already been detached ( $\lambda$  or  $\beta$  at the beginning of their history), which would consequently set back the disappearance of the folios from I.33 to the very early fourteenth century. On the other hand,  $\beta$ , unlike  $\pi$ , evolved at least until the mid-fifteenth century, due to the strata that show a similarity to the positions that are characteristic of the third group.

### 1.3.3 Group 3

Let us turn now to the second part of *C* (17–28) [Cluny]. It goes back to a different source, which we shall refer to with the letter  $\sigma$ , and presents similarities with the images of our third group, particularly with the group of the anonymous *Gladiatoria* (*G*<sup>\*</sup>).<sup>62</sup> This group of manuscripts conveys a tradition of the longsword parallel to that of Liechtenauer and his commentators, and shares many points in common with it, regarding things related to fencing with buckler.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, the teachings of Liechtenauer (*floruit* in the second half of the fourteenth century), were perpetuated first of all by means of texts without images,<sup>63</sup> then through the illustrated compilations by Hans Talhoffer (*floruit* in the mid-fifteenth century) and Paulus Kal (ca. 1420–† post 1485), but dealt mostly with the longsword.<sup>64</sup> Conversely, in the case of the buckler, the manuals only conveyed, along with the images, a single and brief text. Attributed to Andreas Liegnitzer (or Liegnitzer, † before 1452)<sup>65</sup> it describes six plays, whose practice truly reflects the realities

62 See Hils, *Gladiatoria* and Knight, *The Gladiatoria*.

63 The oldest example of Liechtenauer's verses is the “Codex Dobringer,” Nurnberg, Nationalmuseum Cod. Hs. 3227a, ca. 1389; see *KdHM* 1.4, H 41, W 17; Boffa, *Les manuels*, p. 55. (see chapter 16 Eric Burkart).

64 Among the different versions of Kal's compilations, only some of them contain sections devoted to fencing with buckler, and they vary greatly in their content. See Fig. 2a and Notes *K*<sup>1-3</sup> [Kal], *G*<sup>2</sup> [*Gladiatoria*, Kraków] and *G*<sup>6</sup> [*Gladiatoria*, Wolfenbüttel]; *T*<sup>3</sup> [Talhoffer, Berlin, ante 1459], *T*<sup>4</sup> [*id.*, København 1459] and *T*<sup>5</sup> [*id.*, München, 1467].

65 See Jaquet/Walczak, “Liegnitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew?” pp. 109–110, 124–125; cf. *KdHM* 38.4. Among the eleven manuscripts known, only Rome and Glasgow (the most complete one) mention the name of the master in the incipit. Roma, Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, Cod. 44 A 8, folio 80r-v, which contains the manual of Peter von Danzig from 1452 (cf. *KdHM* 38.9.9; H 42; W 03) is the oldest example of the “six plays”—*Hie heben sich an die stuck mit dem pucklär die Maister Andre Lignitzer gesetzt hat her nach geschriben. Das erst stuck mit dem pucklär aus dem oberhaw . . .* The Glasgow manuscript, Glasgow Museums, R.L. Scott Collection, E.1939.65.341, folio 105r-v (compilation of texts, among them that by Sigmund Ringeck created in 1508; *KdHM*, pp. 9–12



of the time, attesting to the disassociation of the buckler from the manoeuvres with the sword. which is a situation which we find corroborated by the images Talhoffer added to three of his manuals ( $T^*$ ) and by those of Kal or  $G^6$  [*Gladiatoria* Wolfenbüttel]. Those compilations of images (image catalogues)<sup>66</sup> dealing with the practice of the buckler play in the fifteenth century exhibit common teachings but are not copies one of the other. Moreover, they present certain formal relations but are not slavish copies of a single source, contrary to what occurs in the first and second groups. Here we see the originality of the masters. Kal and Talhoffer proved to be more critical of their sources in the sense that they acted more freely with respect to the iconography that the tradition had bequeathed them.<sup>67</sup>

From that point of view, the images in  $T^3$  and  $T^4$  [Talhoffer 3, ante 1459; *id.* 4, 1459] show a greater conservatism drawn more from an iconographic tradition than those in  $T^5$  [Talhoffer 5, 1467], whose content underwent a significant “modernisation”. The issue of the buckler in Talhoffer and Kal would merit a long discussion by itself, yet suffice it to say, with respect to the models exploited by the artist<sup>68</sup> who carried out  $T^4$ , that they might also stem from the fourteenth century. For example, the introduction of  $T^4$  (1, redone in  $T^5$  i b and 1a) and its parallel in  $\beta$  (8), comes from a source common to an image in *der Sachsenspiegel* [Mirror of the Saxons] (see figure 17.5). The fact that the illustration in the *Mirror* is older by more than a century proves that this image

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(38.1.2), n° 13) has *Hie heben sich ann die stugk mit dem Budler die Maister Andre Lignizer gesatz hat in vi stuck alls hernach gemalt statt* . . . See also Tobler, *In Saint George's Name*. The same text was printed in a work by Pauernfeindt in 1516, then by Christian Egenolph (after 1531?), and translated into a French dialect under the title *La noble science* . . . (in 1538). We see in Talhoffer and Kal images that depict certain manoeuvres described by Liegnitzer; however, pending a critical edition of the text, we will not address these questions.

- 66 Some of the images in this group have commentaries, but they are laconic and exhibit little resemblance to the glosses of L33 or the arguments of Mair.
- 67 Paulus Kal created a book ( $K^1$ ), the only one to have benefited from commentaries, of which four copies are extant (Gotha and Solothurner do not have the section on the buckler). See Stangier, “Zweikampffrealität”, pp. 80–86; Tobler, *In Service of the Duke*, is of no help as it brushes the question of tradition into one page in the appendix (B, p. 241), and, although the manuscript is well marked, it does not appear in the list of identified Kal copies, p. 247.
- 68 Perhaps a certain Claus Pflieger, mentioned in folio 149r, accompanied by the names of the copyist, Michel Rotwyler, the author, Hans Talhoffer, and by the portrait of a certain Jewish astrologer, Ebreesch.

benefited from a tradition<sup>69</sup> as in the case of the *Codex Manesse*. And that necessarily raises the question of the notebooks of models.<sup>70</sup>

And yet corpus  $\sigma$ , whose contours appear more blurry, is much more sharply perceived in  $G^*$  [Gladiatoria] and  $C$  17–28 [Cluny], and if we trust the way in which  $C$  has recopied corpus  $\beta$ , we may postulate that he had the same respect for the model in the images going back to  $\sigma$ . Despite all this, the images of this third group constitute a homogenous whole.<sup>71</sup> They were all produced in similar environments and all show relations of order that are more doctrinal than purely iconographic. This corpus of images proves to be a reliable witness of its time. The dating of the manuscripts, the texts, the clothing style, the typology of arms and all the external criteria converge to guarantee the contemporary nature of this fencing with buckler relative to the written evidence that preserves it and attests to its live transmission.

The comparison of the images of  $\sigma$ , descendants of the buckler play of the fourteenth century, with those from I.33 (and more broadly  $\pi$  and  $\beta$ ), our direct sources, makes it possible to measure the evolution that took place throughout a century and a half. To that end, for the entire range of of the collection (I.33  $\pi$   $\beta$   $\sigma$ ), the sources studied here result in 229 images, or a total of 101 images excluding I.33, which, after collation, are reduced to approximately 85 different scenes.

## 2 Between Tradition and Innovation

The study of relationships linking the examples of the first group brings to light the double set of influences—between tradition and innovation—that the theorisations of fencing undergo.

69 The breadth of this dossier alone merits a study. The image appears in the section devoted to the judicial duels, cf. Schmidt-Wiegand, *Eike von Repgow Sachsenspiegel*; Lück, *Die Dresdner I and II*, online: <<http://www.sachsenspiegel-online.de/export/ssp/ssp.html>> (accessed March 20, 2014).

70 On this matter see Scheller/Hoyle, *Exemplum*—In our case, consider also *Tacuinus Latinitatis* (anonymous Latin transl. of Ibn Butlân, *Taqwim es Siha*). The artists took as models the traditional depictions of the buckler play to illustrate the *Luctatio*, rather than a true wrestling scene. See Touwaide/König/Garia-Tejedor, *Tacuinum Sanitatis*; there seems to have been several models, cf. for example Paris, BN, NAL 1673, folio 93v (c. 1390–1400, Pavia or Milan) different from Paris, BN, Lat. 9333, folio 93v, as well as copies kept in Vienna (ÖNB, Vind., series nova 2644, folio 96, ca. 1370–1400; etc.) and Rome.

71 Our corpus  $\sigma$  ( $G^*$   $T^*$   $K^*$  and  $C$  17–28).

### 2.1 *Particularity of Group 1 vis-a-vis the Other Two Groups*

The comparison of preparatory sketchbooks, one attributed to the workshop of Dürer (*B*), the other to the artist Jörg Breu of Augsburg (*A*), might have led to the belief that the folios of I.33 had resurfaced around 1500–1512, and that they might have been exploited there until 1556 (a late date for *M*). The clothing style and the fencing characteristics would undoubtedly make I.33 the perfect candidate for the origin of this corpus of images, yet the complexity of the testimony appears behind certain details and prevents us from seeing I.33 itself as a model.

The second source of Mair (ten supplementary images in *Pm*<sup>2</sup> [Mair, *cod. München*] and the only ones preserved in *Pm*<sup>3</sup> [*cod. Wien*]) can be quickly identified, as the images in question are faithful copies of the items by Paulus Kal (*K*<sup>\*</sup>). On the other hand, the main source for the 30 images in *Pm*<sup>1</sup> [*cod. Dresden*] et *Pm*<sup>2</sup> is of a more ambiguous nature. Besides *B* and *A*, which are partial copies, the Munich compilation keeps, among other works, the same images (*M*) annexed in the manual by Jörg Wilhalm.<sup>72</sup> After corrections and collation with other incomplete examples, *M* correlates practically all of the imaged transmitted by the first two compilations of *Pm*.<sup>73</sup> We shall designate the common source of *BA Pm M*, with the Greek letter  $\pi$ .<sup>74</sup> This group is made up of 30 images, whose arrangement varies in all the witnesses. Within the group, *M* possibly retains more exactly the order of  $\pi$ , whereas *BA* and *Pm* take

72 Jörg Wilhalm was a master swordsman and hat maker in Augsburg (*floruit* 1st quarter of the sixteenth century). Images dealing with fencing with buckler are unknown in Wilhalm's treatise written between 1522 and 1523, of which folio 89r–95v and 97r–136r (items n° 17 and 18 in *KdiHM*'s description) are a copy, probably taken from Augsburg, I.6.4 ° 3, according to *KdiHM*. We believe that the person responsible for the compendium added (or had someone add) the images showing the manoeuvres with buckler, based on the model used for the realisation of the compilations by Paulus Hector Mair, who was still in Augsburg, either with the other documents that apparently belonged to P. H. Mair, or still in the workshop of Breu the Younger († 1547).

73 *M* comprises 29 images, but 28 different ones, because the 1st image is repeated and *M* omits two of them ( $\pi$  2 and 10).

74 For the sake of clarity, the images have been numbered from 1 to 30. The reader will refer to the tables of correlations between the different sources. The numeration follows the arrangement of *M*, replacing the two gaps in those places where, according to the other witnesses they seemed to be located (Image n° 2, after the first, repeated in *M*, but 1 and 2 unanimously consecutive (*BAPm*) and n° 31 between *M* 9 and *M* 10, on the basis of *A* (f. 15r–v). This choice may be justified by the fact that the images in *M* are directly connected to Mair's preparatory work, on its "primitive" disorder, which it seems wiser to maintain to facilitate an argument based on the images as they circulated before the rearrangement by Mair, rather than in the last state of their transmission.

more liberties, all the while trying to maintain certain coherent sequences.<sup>75</sup> Still, *Pm* recasts its source completely according to its own theorisation and even tries to make any traces disappear through the rejuvenating cure applied to the characters' clothing. Were it not for the evidence of I.33, *B*, *A* or *M*, who would think that their models were more than 200 years old? The Munich images are all the more precious as they provide us with essential information on the way in which Paulus Hector Mair proceeded to create his books.<sup>76</sup>

From the point of view of the structure of the corpus [see part I.3.1], our first group  $\pi$  is a notable exception to the custom of prefacing new sections with a catalogue of wards, as it shows such positions only in places where the beginning of the plays should be and, even then, in a proportion inferior to that of I.33 (see Table 2). This observation reinforces the above-expressed hypotheses [see part I.2.1], that  $\pi$ , the source of Mair, does not transmit the preliminary catalogue for the simple reason that  $\lambda$ , its intermediary with I.33, did not have it. On the other hand, the catalogue of corpus  $\beta$  is more intriguing as it seems

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75 On this issue, let us add that the order of folios detached from I.33 was irremediably lost. In the tradition of  $\pi$ , only certain sequences retained some coherence. The disorders might have been caused by several factors, beginning with their separation from the volume. That can be surmised from the successive adaptations undergone by the corpus. Those who copied the booklet tried to reconstitute a coherence it never possessed. Besides that, the change in the layout, from two images to only one per page, was in our opinion the second factor that brought on the disruptions.

76 Despite a dating subsequent to the compilations of P.H. Mair [*Pm*], which would suggest that *M* might have been copied from a copy of *Pm*, the layout and certain elements, some not insignificant, such as the change in the style of clothing, suggest that *M* goes back rather to the common source *BAPm*, not to any particular copy of *Pm*. It may seem to hold a closer relation to the images of *Pm*<sup>2</sup> [*cod.* München]. cf.  $\pi$  1 bearded figure on the left;  $\pi$  5 weapons on the ground;  $\pi$  7 where *Pm*<sup>2</sup> and *M* omit the buckler on the ground, but not so *Pm*<sup>1</sup> [*cod.* Dresden] and *B*; yet on  $\pi$  13 the similarity is more significant between *M* and *Pm*<sup>1</sup>, while *Pm*<sup>2</sup> is closer to *B*; finally,  $\pi$  16 is remarkable, besides the fact that our five witnesses are present, *Pm*<sup>1</sup> and *A* have an interesting detail: the figures on the right are depicted, one with a cap on his head (in *A*, which copies an image from the fourteenth century) and the other baldheaded (in *Pm*<sup>1</sup>, but not in *Pm*<sup>2</sup>, nor in *M*, where the figure has recovered his hair). Through these details, and because in *A* the figure on the left is wearing a hood, we propose that  $\lambda$ , the model for  $\pi$ , depicted well and truly the *sacerdos* with his tonsure. A characteristic hairstyle which was maintained until  $\pi$  but was interpreted differently depending on the copy. From the all these observations we infer that *M* had access to images 1–16 from a copy of  $\pi$  (=  $\varphi$ ), perhaps part of the preparatory dossier of *Pm*<sup>2</sup>, insofar as the latter is not a copy of *Pm*<sup>1</sup>. Mair must have preferred to have artists work from the source, independently. Image  $\pi$  17 is eloquent in this respect, as *M* provides the copy of the models of *Pm*<sup>1</sup> and *Pm*<sup>2</sup> that each one has interpreted differently.

comprised of two strata. The older one presents the concept of opposing a ward and a counter-ward (the half-shield, cf.  $\beta$  1b, 3b, 4b), common to the corpus of I.33, and  $\pi$ , the second and more recent one is akin to group  $\sigma$ . Certain positions in this recent stratum maintain a strong kinship with those of  $G^*$  (notably the Ochs ward, cf.  $G^*$  4a;  $\beta$  7b), whereas others are present throughout the corpus, such as in I.33 the first or seventh guards. Let us bear in mind that sometimes resemblances among the corpora of images can be explained as much by the common martial substrata as by potential models of images, just as, inversely, their disparities can reveal the evolution of models suffered randomly through the copies. To close the parenthesis, it must be added that the collation of different catalogues of wards requires taking into account not the integrality of the image but of the individual depictions of the characters, as proven by the manipulations provided by Talhoffer in his volumes from 1459 to 1467.<sup>77</sup>

Let us return to the diachronic questions with a brief summary of the grappling moves carried out with the left arm. Their depictions are a reliable chronological marker. This technique is found in I.33 and the variants of its realisation appear a number of times in the corpus of later images. It should be noted that the variants at issue can be classified into two groups, depending on whether one arm is grabbed or both. On the one hand, I.33 and  $\pi$  (Groupe 1) propose a hold targeting both arms, while the members of the third group unanimously show the hold applied only to the adversary's right arm; and the grappling is absent in  $\beta$ . This example of combat illustrates perfectly the evolution of techniques discussed at the beginning. The "primitive" fencing with buckler seeks the union of arms, unlike its descendant in the late Middle Ages. Thus, when Mair uses a fourteenth century image as a model, even if adapted to the contemporary tastes in clothing, the resulting image is lagging with respect to the reality of the practice in its time. On the other hand, when Kal and Talhoffer stage the action, in the image the technique describes well the reality of the contemporary fencing. Inversely, Gunterrodt, whom I.33 had influenced the most, is inspired by the old images when dressing his characters (see figure 17.7). He portrays them in homespun habits, as he believed that I.33 was depicting monks, and one of them with a tonsure! The resemblance, however, stops there, because the postures are perfectly in keeping with the usage of the second half of the sixteenth century, if we compare them with

77 Compare, for example, Image  $T^4$  5 [Talhoffer, København, 1459] with  $T^5$  ii–iii and 2–3, 6 [Talhoffer, München, 1467] (=  $T^*$  6–7, see *Inventory*, 3. Tables of Correlations); as well as  $T^4$  6 with  $T^5$  iv–v and 4–5 (=  $T^*$  8–9); in both cases the author completed the sequences he had disaggregated into two different sections.

the figures of Joachim Meyer,<sup>78</sup> to name only one other known source of Gunterrod's.

## 2.2 *Iconographic Traditions and Missing Parts in I.33*

These observations bring us to the arguments presented in support of this case study. They are based on the recognition that, despite some variants, the majority of images in our corpora rely on previous models. Whether as sources of remote inspiration, or as *exemplars* in the strict sense, these iconographic traditions are more or less present and underly the corpora.<sup>79</sup> We must, therefore, remain cautious and distinguish two issues—the dependence of  $\pi$  with respect to  $\lambda$ , and the points of contact between  $\pi$  and  $\beta$ , which compels us to postulate a common model reaching far into the genealogy.

### 2.2.1 Argumentation

Let us now turn to the exposition of the reasoning that allows for a demonstration of the two initial premises [see part I.2.1]. Four arguments converge: 1) The type of fencing presented in corpus  $\pi$  and  $\beta$  bear the signature of I.33 (joining of arms), or at least that of a fencing at odds with the reality of contemporary practice of the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century [see parts I.3.1 and II.1]. 2) The fourteenth century style of clothing of the characters in *M* 17–30, supported by the testimony of *A*, seems similar to that of I.33 in the absence of any other known parallels (copies of I.33 or other independent manuals produced before 1400)<sup>80</sup> applying the same clothing codes to distinguish the combatants [see part I.3.1]. 3) In the case of  $\beta$ , whose layout was maintained by *E*, but not by *C*, the division of the page into two registers is akin to that of I.33. The same arrangement can be seen in *G*<sup>6</sup> [*Gladiatoria*, Wolfenbüttel], with the difference that the upper part is occupied by wrestling scenes, leaving the lower register for the buckler.<sup>81</sup> Among the examples of Group 1 it is again as with the case of *B*, but given the state of the dossier, it is impossible to tell if the images of

78 See Dupuis, “Joachim Meyer” and Anglo, *The Martial Arts*, pp. 116–117.

79 Although not addressed here, but instead in the supposed preparatory text for I.33 (our letter  $\alpha$  in Figure 2), it should be mentioned that a transfer of text to image, that is to say, a text put into image, would be observable in the case of the fight book attributed to Ott the Jew (see Welle, *Der Ringkampf*).

80 Forngeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, p. 12 refutes the possibility of linking these sources directly to I.33, but does not exclude it entirely. He prefers to hypothesise over the existence of several other manuals (“at least one or two”), based on the two parts of *M*.

81 In the case of *G*<sup>6</sup>, this disposition can also be interpreted as the result of a reallocation of the space meant for text (which the manuscript never received) in order to reduce the number of folios.

$\pi$  were arranged as single images or two images per page.<sup>82</sup> Within the landscape of books devoted to combat arts, the German compilations of the fifteenth century rarely adopted a layout of two images per page such as that in I.33, which was at the time common in Italy.<sup>83</sup> The Germans chose rather a presentation which gave more space to a single scene, reserving space for eventual commentaries. 4) Finally, several images belonging to different groups fit perfectly in the locations of the gaps in I.33. This last and most significant argument is reinforced by the three preceding ones as a body of evidence covering external elements (3, layout) and internal ones (1 and 2, doctrine and narrative code), although it is still necessary to examine in detail the matter of the gaps before identifying the relevant scenes [see II.2.4].

### 2.2.2 The Gaps in I.33

The reading problems posed by the difficult succession between certain images in I.33 can be explained in almost all cases by material gaps.<sup>84</sup> We find five places in the manuscript where there is a correlation between a problematic narrative and a codicological incident (see figure 17.1). Four of the five quires that comprise the manuscript are missing one folio or entire bifolios, while only the first quire seems to have been spared.

#### *Gaps 1 and 2*

In the second quire, the disappearance of the external bifolio created two gaps: one between folio 8 and 9 (*lac. 1*), and the other between folio 14–15 (*lac. 2*), for an estimated loss of 8 images. The first gap (*lac. 1*: 4 images?) located after folio 8 (p. 16) evidently contained the end of the “chapter” devoted to the first ward,<sup>85</sup> while the second one (*lac. 2*: 4 images?) appears after folio 14 (p. 28) in the part dealing with the topic of the 4th ward.

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82 The evidence from *B* would encourage us to favour the second solution, however, given its closeness to the *Fechtbuch* from Dürer’s workshop (cf. Note 2.1), the latter sometimes shows up to three images stacked. Since *B* is the only of the group in that situation, the argument is too weak to apply to  $\pi$ .

83 For example, Fiore de Liberi and Fillipo Vadi.

84 This description is based on that of Forgeng/Hester, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, pp. 27–29 and n. 83 p. 37; see Hester, “A Few Leaves”.

85 It is not likely to have contained the beginning of the second one, as folio 9 (§ 33) seems indeed to be the first occurrence of this ward.

*Gap 3*

The most important gap is found in the middle of the 3rd quire, which is missing its two central bifolia between folio 16 and 17 (pp. 32–33). At this point in the manuscript the loss rises to 16 images (*lac.* 3) among which the end of the combat initiated in I.33 64 (p. 32B) as well the first occurrence of the fifth<sup>86</sup> and sixth wards are expected. In the fourth quire, the reading of folio 18–20 poses no problem, which guarantees that folio 19, isolated, is in its proper place, implying the existence of a second folio to complete the bifolio and thus the quaternion, which should have contained a play dedicated to the *long point* of the priest opposing the second ward, which is missing from the inventory.

*Gaps 4 and 5*

The case of the last quire is thornier due to folio 26, which is also isolated. Its reading is questionable as it does not correspond to what it precedes or follows.<sup>87</sup> Regarding what precedes image I.33 101, gap 4 explains the hiatus, but in what follows I.33 104, two choices are given: either the reading of I.33 104 and 105 is correct and it is necessary to adapt to the difficulty, or it is not. It is certainly something obvious but important in evaluating the extent of the gap. According to the hypothesis that all the quires of the book were regular quaternions (Hypothesis 1), the fifth quire would be missing only a single folio, the one that would complete the bifolio to which 26 (*lac.* 5: 4 images) would belong. Following a second solution (Hypothesis 2), this quire could have been made up of 5 bifolios, of which 3 folios would have been removed (see figure 17.1b). To account for the isolation of folio 26, a bifolio located after folio 26 would be necessary, adding to the significance of the losses at the end (*lac.* 5 and 6: 8 images). The extent of the last gap (*lac.* 5 or 5–6), is all the more difficult to appreciate as it is a matter of determining if the work remained incomplete or if it is simply missing parts from the end. The state alone of the last folio proves that the loss at the end took place at a distant date in the past, at the earliest in the early fourteenth century, and at the latest in

86 From what has been preserved, the fifth ward does not appear before the second part of the work (I.33, 105, folio 27ra, p. 53A) where the wards are taken up systematically against the priest's *langort*. On this occasion, the text begins with "*hic iterum sumitur*" [here again we resume] and confirms that, before this image, the fifth ward had already been invoked, in its place between the fourth and sixth wards, precisely in the location of the gap.

87 I.33, 101 (p. 51A) cannot be the continuation of 100 (p. 50B), any more so than I.33, 105 (p. 53A) could be the continuation of 104 (p. 52B). We had hypothesised that folio 19 and 26 made up the bifolio at issue. Since Forgeng/Hester, *op. cit.*, had proven that folio 26 belonged to the fifth quire, we figure that the gaps were spread out in the fourth and fifth quires.



the late fifteenth century. We favour the first hypothesis for the reasons given above. Similarly, since the structure of the images point to an overall plan, it is conceivable that the end of the work was created, as with the introduction, independently from the production of the images.<sup>88</sup>

In summary, I.33 lost between 8 and 10 folios, that is, between 32 to 40 images, in 5 or 6 places, however, before addressing our fourth argument [see parts II.2.1, 2.4] we should emphasise that several signs prove that the intermediary  $\lambda$  is essential for explaining certain particularities of  $\pi$  with respect to the corpus  $\beta$ . Among the most obvious elements, the scenes depicting bearded characters,<sup>89</sup> which are “foreign” to the primitive corpus of I.33.<sup>90</sup>

The mishaps suffered by the book, considering its long history, may have occurred at different moments. Before its withdrawal from circulation, or even after that, as a result of its rediscovery in the mid-sixteenth century, or more recently, when it was taken to England at the end of the Second World War. Yet, based on the arguments made here [see part II.2.1] which allow comparison of I.33 corpus and  $\pi$ , it seems that the major gaps (lacunae 1–2 and 3) had a common origin leading to the creation of booklet  $\lambda$ . That is, however, less certain for Gaps 4 and 5 (and perhaps eventually 6), which do not appear to have had any echo. As a minimum assumption, only the two bifolios of Gap 3 would have had any posterity, namely 16 images. Such a low ratio, barely more than 50% of corpus  $\pi$ , leads us to suppose that other folios may have accompanied

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88 See Cinato/Surprenant, “L’escrime scolastique”. In our opinion the project seems to have undergone a reorientation from its inception. It seemed to us that the content of most of the glosses was written *a posteriori*, following the production of the images, whereas the beginning of the text presents the opposite relationship: the images illustrate the text that precedes them (in conception, not in realization, since images were drawn before glosses were added).

89 For example *A* 14v ( $\pi$  2) and especially  $\pi$  7, where the beard intervenes as a key element in the proposed fighting solution. The beard seems to take on the role of the tonsure in I.33, namely in distinguishing master from pupil. Not all the instances of beards appearing seem to go back to the same state of transmission, since in  $\pi$  9, the model, of which *A* is the more accurate copy, does not have one (like *B*), and unlike *M* and *Pm*<sup>L-2</sup>, where everyone goes in their own style.

90 If the losses of I.33 had to be made up for in their entirety, we would expect up to 40 images in  $\pi$  or 28 according to the hypothesis that Gap 5 was irremediably lost. However, corpus  $\pi$  comprises 30, of which several seem foreign to I.33, which are ultimately just that many indications of contamination. On the other hand, the low level of recursion in the images means that there are several transition or linking scenes missing in  $\pi$ , which suggests that abridgements took place. Finally, it must not be forgotten that other factors, such as accidental deterioration, could have affected the corpus of images in the course of its history.

this small notebook, specifically Gaps 1–2 (constituting a bifolio), as a group of images dealing with the second and third wards ( $\pi$  4, 10–11, 17–18, 20).

### 2.2.3 Genealogical Considerations

Let us address more specifically the links that unite the different corpora mentioned previously [see part I.3]. The analysis of parallels and variants shows that  $\beta$  could only be related to  $\pi$  through an intermediary going back further in the genealogy. At least three images are common to corpus  $\pi$  and  $\beta$  ( $\pi$  4 =  $\beta$  3;  $\pi$  5 =  $\beta$  12;  $\pi$  9 =  $\beta$  17) and others show more remote resemblances (cf.  $\pi$  1 and  $\beta$  13,  $\pi$  8 and  $\beta$  2,  $\pi$  28 and  $\beta$  4, etc.) [see *Inventory*, 3. Correlation Tables]. Two of the three images of undeniable similarity are found in I.33 and in the iconography of *marginalia*, so that their relationships might seem incidental and lead to an expanded notion of tradition. And yet image  $\pi$  5 =  $\beta$  12 (see figure 17.3) provides the undeniable proof of contact between the source of  $\pi$ , that is  $\lambda$ , and corpus  $\beta$ . The variants existing between both images simply highlight the affiliation to different branches.<sup>91</sup>

In this image, paying attention to the depiction of the bucklers on the ground, we see that  $Pm^1$  [Mair, *cod.* Dresden] and  $E$  opted for the same alternation with one showing the face and the other the back, and  $Pm^2$  and  $M$  follow each other (we postulate the intermediary  $\varphi$ , see Note 76). Since  $\beta$  followed a pathway independently of  $\pi$ , which ultimately leads back to I.33 (through  $\lambda$ ), we propose that an admittedly difficult to quantify part of  $\lambda$  passed into corpus  $\beta$  at some point in its history.

Moreover, two images specific to  $\beta$  suggest that  $\pi$  in turn did not retain but a portion of the fragments of I.33 that had already passed into  $\lambda$ . The question even arises whether  $\pi$  and  $\beta$  had access to the same recension of  $\lambda$ . Their relationships demand more clarification. The images in question deal, one with a characteristic bind, the other with the sixth ward. The first ( $\beta$  18) describes the down-to-right bind which is absent in I.33, although it is announced there.<sup>92</sup>

91 There is also a connection with the composition of image  $K^2$  65r [Kal, Wien] in which the figures, within the context of the longsword, enter into combat in a way similar to  $E$  4, folio 64vb.

92 The passage comes after Gap 3, I.33, 68 (f. 17vb, p. 34B): *Postquam determinatum est de omnibus custodiis supradictis, hic determinat de septima custodia que nuncupatur langort. Et notandum quod quatuor sunt ligationes que respiciunt illam custodiam, videlicet: due liguntur de dextra parte, relique vero due de sinistra parte* "Having established what pertains to all the wards already mentioned, we now do the same for what regards the seventh, called *langort*. And it should be noted that there are four binds related to this ward, namely, two binding on the right, and the other two on the left". cf. also I.33, 77 (f. 20ra, p. 39A) *Scolaris vero de hiis quatuor ligationibus ducit unam . . .* "The student executes one

It should be noted that it is also not present in  $\pi$ . The situation is slightly different for the sixth ward because it appears in two instances in I.33 (I.33, 65 and 73, cf.  $\beta$  20 and  $\pi$  2, 28<sup>93</sup>). The fact that I.33 mentions an action that is not depicted in the preserved images, is a strong argument for the claim that  $\lambda$  influenced the iconographic tradition of  $\beta$ , but also of  $\sigma$ .

#### 2.2.4 *Frangere scutum*

This contact between corpus  $\lambda$  and  $\sigma$  leads to our fourth argument. The image that captures our interest on this subject can be found in Kal ( $K^*$  7–8), and in the second part of Cluny ( $C$  25), each with some variants. On the other hand, it was not retained by Talhoffer nor by  $G^*$ , although the latter is often in agreement with  $C$  with regard to what is traceable to corpus  $\sigma$ . It involves the removal of the buckler from the hands of the adversary that is present in  $\pi$  (30), see figure 17.4. The *modus operandi* is depicted by Paulus Kal in two images, and only in one image in  $C$ .<sup>94</sup> The differences are significant and warrant the classification into several families.  $K$  is the reverse of  $\pi$  and  $C$ , but the latter is closer to  $K$  in the execution of the technique, the sword held in the left hand has its point in the air, while  $\pi$  shows the sword pointing down and involves a kick in order to take the buckler. The removal is implicit in  $\pi$  (or was not preserved) unlike in  $K$ , and yet, due to images  $\pi$  29 and 7, in which the buckler of one of the protagonists is on the ground, one must consider these images as possible outcomes of 30. From this context,  $\pi$  30, 29, 7 (5) form a coherent whole together with  $\pi$  13–15. These groups of images provide the most solid argument to trace  $\lambda$  back to the folios lost by I.33. Thus, we propose that image  $\pi$  30 is the expected follow-up of I.33, 64 (folio 16vb, p. 32B). The group  $\pi$  13–15 is akin to a resumption of the action that failed (I.33, 62–64, pièce 19), with a different outcome, as commonly occurs in I.33. Besides the convergence of the observations made above, we support this hypothesis with the aid of two arguments drawn from the text of I.33 itself in that place. First of all the phrase *infra proximum exemplum* confirms the gap (lacuna 3a), because it always refers to the next

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of those four binds"; I.33, 79 (f. 20va, p. 40A) *super quam custodiam ligat sacerdos de illis quatuor ligationibus unam*, "the priest binds over this guard with one of the four binds"; I.33, 82 (f. 21rb, p. 41B) *Et erit una ligatio de illis quatuor ligationibus...* "And that will be one of the four binds."

93 Image  $\pi$  28 (6<sup>e</sup> ward against 5<sup>e</sup>) illustrates precisely a situation induced by the commentary of I.33, 65 (f. 17ra, p. 33A).

94  $K^*$ , 7–8 (f. 55r–56v); the technique matches up with the sixth play described by Andreas Liegnitzer, see Tobler, *In Saint George's Name*.

image, which in this case is missing. The second argument has to do with the action described in the gloss, anticipating the next image: . . . *Et sic frangis scutum de manibus tui adversarii, ut patet infra proximo exemplo* “And this is how you subdue the buckler of your adversary, as shown in the example below”<sup>95</sup> If we seek to correct the text, we deny the evidence. The succession of I.33, 64, where the removal of the buckler is expected, is found in all the corpora described here, except in I.33 itself! Yet  $\pi$  30, and the series of images related to the subject of taking the adversary’s sword in one’s hand, show exactly the description of the gloss for image 64, even the need to cover oneself “with the sword and the buckler held together in the left hand”<sup>96</sup> This strategy came to be included in the corpus of  $\sigma$  under the triple influence of its living practice, the text of Liegnitzer’s sixth play, and its circulation in the books of images.

From these anchor points, which partially help to fill the third gap in I.33, we could hope to advance further in the future by proposing the reconstruction of certain plays whose structure had deteriorated through their transmission, because the topics addressed around the gaps in I.33 correlate with those distributed throughout  $\pi$  and  $\beta$ . The fragmentation of the tradition of  $\lambda$ , that is, the fact that  $\beta$  could conserve parts of  $\lambda$  that  $\pi$  did not receive (namely the case of the right under bind), can hardly be explained by the scission of  $\lambda$  due to the presence in  $E$  and  $\pi$  of the image in which the swordplayers are wrestling. Although it may not be satisfactory, it is important to contemplate that corpus  $\lambda$  lost images through its transmission, between the moment in which  $\beta$ , and then  $\pi$ , took note of it.

95 I.33, 64 (folio 16vb, p. 32B), see Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*, p. 78. Between his first and second publications, J. Forgeng did not take into account our objections to the interpretation he made of the text where this gap is located. “. . . *et sic frangis scutum* [? read: *gladium*]” and no. 52, p. 113.

96 The entire gloss is as follows: I.33, 64 *Hic relevatur gladius scolaris mediante schiltslac. Et caveat sacerdos ne scolaris ducat plagam capiti, sive fixuram generalem quam sacerdos consuevit docere discipulos suos. Preterea, scias quod si scolaris dat plagam capiti, protectionem duc gladio connexoque scuto quod habetur in sinistra manu. Et sic frangis scutum de manibus tui adversarii, ut patet infra proximo exemplo.* “The sword of the pupil is now liberated from danger, thanks to the blow with the buckler. And the priest must take care that the pupil does not aim a blow at the head, but uses the general technique that the priest customarily teaches his pupils. Notice too, that if the carries out the blow to the head, you must protect yourself with the sword and the buckler held together in the left hand. This is also how your will make the buckler fall from your adversary’s hands, as shown by the example that follows below.”

### 3 Rediscovery and Revival

At the end of the investigation, it seems likely that  $\lambda$  did not retain the totality of the folios lost by I.33 and that the layout of those preserved became scrambled in the tradition. Moreover,  $\lambda$  already showed “additional” or “adjusted” images that had appeared through contact with other booklets, because it was produced in a context in which the transmission of this mode of fencing was alive and, consequently, fully evolving.

Neither  $\pi$  nor  $\beta$  were faithful copies of  $\lambda$ . Its selective lineage can be explained in part by the different choices of the masters or compilers, partly by the possible dispersion of the images. We must therefore not imagine a linear transmission respecting every single comma, no more than it is possible to calculate the number of intermediaries between the witnesses (see figure 17.2).<sup>97</sup> And yet, in spite of the successive rearrangements, coherent series were preserved, by virtue of their narrative force.<sup>98</sup>

This brief presentation shows that the corpora were subjected to pressures from different directions. Besides the doctrinal similarities in the whole or in the details, the images show a high degree of “intertextuality” in the philological sense, of various contaminating or interpolating influences. The very nature of the documents lends this subject matter an extreme fluidity. Added to that is the specificity of the discipline which necessarily gives orality the role of principal vector of influence.

#### 3.1 *Illusion of the Sources*

The apogee of the buckler play, presumably in the fourteenth century, coincided with the appearance of the first manuals that took fencing as their subject. Yet the proliferation of “Fight Books” took place more or less when the

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97 Our Greek letters (the corpora) represent the *a minima* branchings of the stemma and consequently the hypothetical state of any corpus. They do not claim to determine the number of intermediaries nor allow for an exact estimation for dating their emergence, except on the basis of the iconography of indirect sources (*h* and *d*). Figure 2 does not, therefore, propose a *stemma codicum* in the strict sense, since it draws links between the corpora of images, not their material support. In that sense, it would be desirable to determine exactly which of Kal’s manuscripts Jörg Breu might have consulted to paint *Pm*<sup>2</sup> [Mair, *cod. München*]. The Munich manuscript [*K*<sup>7</sup>] would be a good candidate, however that remains to be proven.

98 It must be assumed that the loss of text goes back to the beginning of the first generation of copies of  $\lambda$  and therefore that the coherence of certain series that were transmitted is due solely to the narrative qualities of the images.

practice of the buckler lost vitality in the second half of the fifteenth century, superseded in popularity by the longsword or the shorter sword (*messer*, etc.) by itself, then by the rapier, the Spanish sword (*ensis hispanicus*), the *Rapir* of Meyer and Gunterrodt.<sup>99</sup> The limited space granted to the buckler in the manuals suggests that this practice had perhaps started to decline, but that temporary lack of interest contrasts with the favour accorded it by the theorists of the early Renaissance, who researched, compiled and manipulated these corpora of ancient images.

The masters that were active at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were not duped by the materials transmitted; their interest in the ancient sources shows how living and resurgent traditions intertwine in an effort of theoretical reflection. The treatment to which they subjected their sources (rearrangement of images, updating the clothing of the characters, etc.), however, had little or no effect on the positions depicted. The new images thus created have an unexpected distorting effect. The impression of anachronism is partially offset, but the whole seems out of phase.<sup>100</sup>

The few examples of parallelisms addressed here bring to light the complexity of relationships between the different corpora. They attest to the unquestionable similarities that can only be explained by the existence of real iconographic traditions. The analysis of images perpetuating the buckler play has shown that its Germanic tradition derives from at least three pools of sources ( $\pi$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\sigma$ , and others?) that had been in contact at different moments of their history. The description of these relationships brings to light different modes of transmission. According to the living ones, orality provides a kind of liberty to the corpora compared to traditional models, an elasticity that allows them to acquire, through the successive copying, the particularities representative of differentiated historical periods (cf.  $\sigma$  and  $\beta$ ). According to the others, the manuscript ones, the iconography maintains a fixed state of the practice when the images resurface at a period after their creation, with no trace of the time passed. In the case of  $\pi$ , the importance of this distance is such that the resurgent corpus refers back to the very origins of the *Fighting books*.

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99 Voir Anglo, *The Martial Arts*, p. 99 sqq.

100 Brioiist, "La réduction de l'escrime en art", does not address the issue of the sources, nor the problematic matters entailed (p. 294), except through the critiques by certain theorists of the late sixteenth century (among them Angelo Viggiani, whom he cites) in opposition to the "proliferating nomenclature" (inherited, partly, from previous Germanic treatises)" (p. 297).

### 3.2 *The Role of I.33 within the Tradition*

Regarding the reception of I.33, the assessment is mixed. We can only guess regarding its initial circulation when it was “in use” in its original environment. On the other hand, we believe that the vestiges of I.33 (through corpus  $\lambda$ ) had a long term effect on the production of several corpora of images. The relations, which cannot be coincidental, between the strictly bookish iconography and the technical manuals prove that the latter were exploited by the artists as model booklets. This is the case of the image in *Codex Manesse*, which has its parallel in *E*, but also of that in the *Mirror of the Saxons*, which can be seen in  $T^4$  [see figure 17.5]. The reverse of this situation may also be observed in the case of  $K^1$  [Kal, München] where, for the equestrian scenes, the artist presumably drew his inspiration from a work by the painter Friedrich Herlin.<sup>101</sup> These parallels prove in most cases the previous existence of models and offer reliable *termini* for the dating of the circulation of manuals whose existence is discerned by the traces they left.

Through the preserved fragments in  $\pi$  and  $\beta$  it is possible to partially fill certain gaps in I.33, but it must also be noted that certain losses in I.33 are irremediable. The reconstruction of the booklet  $\lambda$  is indeed difficult due to its high potentiality for contamination. The latter, far from being of no interest, make it possible to establish the link to fencing as practiced just before the fifteenth century, since  $\pi$  apparently evolved only through  $\lambda$ , which itself interrupted its evolution earlier than the corpora of the other groups.

It seems then that the buckler play was perpetuated in a very lively manner until the end of the fifteenth century, when its practice was modified by the effect of innovations in weaponry and changes in styles. At this time there appeared an imagery out of step with the contemporary reality of fencing, which we should consider as a hybridisation, by effect of resurgence, between the respect of an iconographic tradition and the innovations of a living discipline. In other words, when traditions that are alive in their time ( $\lambda$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\sigma$ ) are transmitted at the moment of the realisation of the compilations of Cluny and even more of P. Mair (11), a resurgent and fixed iconographic whole is formed.

## 4 Conclusion

The present study results in an attempt at a stemma (see figure 17.2) which, provisional and debatable as it may be, offers a series of reflections. Let us simply

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101 As shown by Nicolas Baptiste, “L’armure”, p. 129.

emphasise the need to set back the date of the creation of I.33 to the last years of the thirteenth century, due to the witness of *h* [codex Manesse]. Another starting point appears with the issue of the gaps in I.33 [see part II.2.2], which raises the stimulating project of reconstituting certain parts that were deemed lost. To date the question remains open.

As an early manifestation of the literature of the Fight Books,<sup>102</sup> and privileged witness of properly medieval civilian fencing, I.33 emerges as the great ancestor of Renaissance fencing, in the sense that its theorisation of civilian fencing precedes all other attempts. This long challenged filiation underwent this double transmission, one live and oral, the other fixed through the corpora of images inherited from the golden age of the buckler play.

In some ways the corpora provide snapshots whose different periods of realisation enable us to follow the evolution of fencing with buckler. We need only think of the characteristic association of the two weapons seen in I.33  $\pi$  and  $\beta$ : the separation between the sword and the buckler (*separatio*) was perceived as a mistake by the author of I.33, at a time when the positions were tight, but the rule was no longer applied in the following century, in times of P. Kal and H. Talhoffer, and all the more so when the theorists of the sixteenth century drew on traditional image.<sup>103</sup> From that perspective we can observe a practice captured by image playing a dynamic role. When Gunterrodt addresses the subject of fencing with buckler in 1579 based on I.33, we should not believe that it represented for him the expression of a conservatism of the Martial Arts. On the contrary, the input of ancient sources revitalised and inspired the theorists. The masters were driven by the same movement that drove the humanists to study the medieval manuscripts in search of the *Auctoritas* of the works of Antiquity so as to bring them to the printing shop. They were subject to the same need that drives contemporary scholars to trace the sources: ‘in them

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102 The I.33 *Liber de arte dimicatoria* differs in various points from its successors, but some of its characteristics seem to have caused echoes. While it may still be too early to truly grasp its importance within the genealogical tree of the manuals, the weight it affords images distinguishes it and makes it a model of great prescriptive value. It has succeeded in establishing standards, such as the preliminary catalogue of wards, which the epigones would conform to.

103 On this point archaeology will have plenty to say because changes in the typology of the bucklers greatly influenced the techniques. A key tracking feature will be the changes in the inclination of the flanks (concave/convex) which undoubtedly favoured the separation of the arms.



are preserved the solid and real foundations of the Art.<sup>104</sup> And because no significant hiatus intervened in the discipline between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, the stratifications of the corpora of images provide an unsurpassable observatory to measure the doctrinal variances that emerged in the course of time.

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104 See, for example, the criticisms Gunterrodt directed at Meyer (*Gunt.*<sup>1</sup>... *reperitus est ante annos aliquot Argentinensis quidam Joachimus Meier, qui conatus est firmas regulas demonstrare et volumen etiam magnum in hac ipsa de arte edidit germanico idiomate et licet aliquid intellexisse videatur, usum tamen istorum fundamentorum non commonstrauit*—"There was some years ago a certain Joachim Meyer from Strasbourg who attempted to establish specific rules, and published also a great work on this very art in German, and although he seemed to have had some understanding, he could nevertheless not attest to the use of such foundations", cf. also Gevaert, *Heinrich von Gunterrodt*, p. 20); cf. Cinato/Surprenant, *Liber*, pp. xxvii–xxviii and p. 279. Gunterrodt relies on the authority of I.33 (*liber vetustissimum*, folio 17v–18r) who, personal competences aside, demonstrates being in better position than Meyer, precisely because he has had knowledge of I.33, whose words he has made his own on several occasions, and often without making explicit reference to it. Regarding the division of the blade into weak and strong, Gunterrodt proposes a division into four parts inspired by I.33, ... *Ex his autem solidissimum fundamentum deducitur, et "totus fere nucleus artis in hoc consistit"*—"We can deduce the strongest foundation from these divisions and the core of the art consists almost entirely in that" (*Gunt.*<sup>1</sup> folio 31r, cf. I.33, 4.1). Gunterrodt then cites a rewriting of the third verse of I.33, 4.2, showing that he understood the term *medium* in its specific meaning of the middle of the blade (cf. folio 30v, plate "O": the blade is divided in the middle "*Mittel der Kling*", then the strong and the weak parts are both divided according to "*Mittel der Stercke*", and "*Mittel der Schwerke*" [middle of the strong; middle of the weak]). An other sample of its influence on Gunterrodt is terminology: ... *deinde custodiarum (ut monachorum vocabulum technicum retineam) species* ... "and then the variety of wards, whose I retain technical terms given them by the monks ..." (*Gunt.*<sup>1</sup> folio 41r; I.33 *passim*); ... *Sequuntur itaque quatuor custodiae, quarum prima, utpote "in qua omnes fere actus reliquarum et gladii determinantur, id est finem habent" praecipua et praestantissima* ... "This is why the four wards follow, of which the first is the most important one and the best, as "almost all the other actions of the other wards or of the sword are determined by it, that is to say, that they find therein their completion" (*Gunt.*<sup>1</sup> folio 44r; cf. I.33, 4.1); ... *de obsidendo uel ligando ut vocant monachi* ... "from the action of attacking or of binding, as the monks say" (*Gunt.*<sup>1</sup> folio 47r; I.33 *passim*). These few examples show how the text of I.33 exercised a considerable influence over Heinrich Gunterrodt's theorisation.

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See appendix A & B.

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### Appendix A. Table of Sigla

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| C               | Paris, musée national du Moyen Âge—Thermes de Cluny, CL23842,—fol. 118r–131v.           |
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| K <sup>1</sup>  | München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 1507,—fol. 52v–57r.                           |
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- Gunt.*<sup>1</sup> Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek—Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, Dresd. C.15 (Gunterrodt, Henricus a (von), *Sciomachia et hoplomachia, sive De Veris Principiis Artis Dimicatoriae, liber unus . . .*), 1579.
- Gunt.*<sup>2</sup> Gunterrodt, Henricus a (von), *De veris principiis artis dimicatoriae, tractatus brevis, ad illustrissimum principem Ioannem ducem Megapolensem, Witebergae (Wittenberg)*, 1579.

*Images Attributed or Added to a Manual Transmitted under the Name of an Author or of a Title*

- E* Ludwig (VI) Von Eyb, *Kriegsbuch*
- K\** Paulus Kal
- Pm* Paulus Hector Mair
- T\** Hans Talhoffer

**Appendix B. Primary Sources****B1** *Inventory*

The reader will find here a brief description of the different groups of sources as well as the synthetic notes whose purpose it is to provide an identity card of the corpora of images studied. They are supplemented by tables of correlations that facilitate the identification of images within the witnesses.

The records are classified in relation to the three groups described above [see part I.3], in which they are ordered chronologically. Appendix A lists the acronyms alphabetically; Table 1 shows, within a chronological classification, the number of notes, as well as the groups of filiation of the manuscript witnesses.

**System of Reference for the Images of the Corpora**

Each image has been numbered in order of appearance in the manuscript source (for example: *B* 9 = *B*, f. 35ra). After collation and establishment of the groups, the images were numbered within the corpus-sources ( $\pi \beta \sigma$ ): for example,  $\pi$  9 = *B* 9 (f. 35ra) = *Pm* 32 (see table) = *A* 3 (f. 15r) = *M* 9 (f. 200r). Understandably it will be easier to refer to “ $\pi$  9” than to all of the witnesses of this image.

TABLE 1 *Chronological classification of sources*

Siglum	Dating (range)	saec.	Germany	Group	Record
<i>L</i>	1320–1330 (?)	14th c. in.	South	1	1
<i>G<sup>k</sup></i>	1435–1440	15th c. med.	South	3	9
<i>T<sup>3</sup></i>	> 1459	15th c. med.	South West	3	10
<i>T<sup>4</sup></i>	1459	15th c. med.	South West	3	11
<i>K<sup>1</sup></i>	1459–1479	15th c. ex	South East	3	14
<i>K<sup>2</sup></i>	1460–1480	15th c. ex.	South	3	15
<i>K<sup>3</sup></i>	1455–1460 (?)	15th c. med. (?)	South	3	16
<i>G<sup>w</sup></i>	1465–1480	15th c. ex.	North	3	12
<i>T<sup>5</sup></i>	1467	15th c. ex.	South West	3	13
<i>C</i>	1490–1500	15th c. ex.	South	2	7
<i>B</i>	1500–1512	16th c. in.	South	1	2
<i>E</i>	1510	16th c. in.	South East	2	8
<i>A</i>	1545	16th c. in.	South	1	3
<i>Pm<sup>1</sup></i>	< 1542	16th c. med.	South	1	4
<i>Pm<sup>2</sup></i>	< 1542	16th c. med.	South	1	5
<i>Pm<sup>3</sup></i>	< 1542	16th c. med.	South	3	17
<i>M</i>	1556	16th c. med.	South	1	6
<i>W</i>	1657	17th c.	?	1	1.1

## B2 *Presentation of the Groups*

### Group 1

This corpus comprises the totality of sources connected to I.33 included [I.33 (= *L*)  $\lambda$   $\pi$  (*A B Pm M*) *W*]. The non-attested corpora  $\lambda$  and  $\pi$  are deduced from descendant of  $\pi$ , *A B Pm M*; within the group, only *W* is a direct witness of I.33.

$\lambda$  Booklet that transmits part of the images removed from I.33 (originals or copies) with additions (?) under the influence of some other non-identified work. It is the main source of  $\pi$ .—Loc.: Bavaria?

$\pi$  30 images descendant from  $\lambda$  (with proper additions ?); common source of *B A Pm M*; the numbering of the images  $\pi$  refer to *M*, corrected of its two omissions.—Loc.: Augsburg (Bavaria).

—Number of images: 128 (I.33) + 30 ( $\pi$ ) = 158

—Manuscript witnesses of  $\pi$ :

*B* 1–12; *A* 1–5; *Pm* 17–46; *Pm* 47–56 are indirect witnesses of the images of *K*\*; *M* 1–29.

## Group 2

This group corresponds to corpus  $\beta$  with two manuscript witnesses ( $E$  and  $C$  1–16).

- $\beta$  Common source for  $E$  1–20 and  $C$  1–16 (which lost four images:  $E$  2–4 and 9 with no parallels in  $C$ ). Its sources show a kinship with  $\lambda$ .—Loc.: Bavaria  
—Number of images: 20 ( $E$ )

Manuscript witnesses: Images 1–20 of  $E$  and 1–16 of  $C$ ;  $C$  17–28 belongs to group 3, related to corpus  $G^*$ .

## Group 3

This group combines several corpora, unlike the two preceding ones. More vague in its limits, it nevertheless constitutes a coherent whole, through the extant interrelation between the corpora that make it up. The corpus  $\sigma$  (a single witness:  $C$  17–28) might have exerted an influence, certainly on  $G^*$ , and probably on  $K^*$  and  $T^*$ .

- $\sigma$  Common source of  $C$  17–28 and  $G^*$  (?), more remotely for  $K^*T^*$ —Loc.: Franconia; Swabia.  
—Number of images: 9 ( $G^*$ ) + 10 ( $K^*$ ) + 20 ( $T^*$ ) + 12 ( $C$  17–28) = 51 (cumul.).  
 $\sigma$  (=  $C$  17–18). Corpus of 12 images related to the main source of  $G^6$ ; it seems unlikely that the 12 images of  $C$  (which is the most complete) would be a copy of  $G^6$ ; in this group,  $C$ ,  $G^*$  and  $K^*$  maintain a closer relation between them;  $T^*$  exhibits a marked independence vis-a-vis  $\sigma$ .

$G^*$  Corpus of 9 images from two witnesses:  $G^2$  and  $G^6$  [*Gladiatoria* 11, Kraków and VI, Wolfenbüttel]

The catalogue of wards comprises 3 images (for 6 positions, only two of which are represented in the two manuscripts ( $G^2$  1 and  $G^6$  2), the only common image ( $G^*$  2), despite light variations).

— $G^*$  2a. cf.  $K$ , 1;  $T^*$  3.a; cf.  $\beta$  7b (c-c.), close to  $G^*$  4a. Ochs (var.).

— $G^*$  2b. Form of 1st ward,  $T^*$  1b; cf.  $\beta$  6b.

— $G^*$  3a. Form of 5th ward (cf. *nebenhut*), cf.  $T^*$  3b;  $\beta$  4a.

— $G^*$  3b. Form of upper long point (cf. I.33, 81) the closest parallel is found in  $\beta$  15b.

- $K^*$  Corpus of 10 images, without significant differences between the witnesses, except that Paulus Kal himself is represented in  $K^1$  and  $K^2$ , but not in  $K^3$ , which is missing half the images.

- $T^*$  Corpus of 20 images from three witnesses of the H. Talhoffer's compilation by:  $T^3$ ,  $T^4$  and his revision,  $T^5$ .



—The two images of  $T^3$  are specific to it and go back ultimately to the tradition of I.33.

—Four images specific to  $T^4$ :  $T^*$  2a, 3b, 10–11, 13–14.

—Five are specific to  $T^5$ :  $T^*$  5, 6, 8, 15–16.

—Only two of the 18 images ( $T^*$  5 and 9) match perfectly in the three series, whereas two others ( $T^*$  17–18) find their parallels only in the plays with messer only in  $T^5$ , vi–vii.

— $T^5$ , 2 constitutes the counter-field of  $T^5$ , 6; a scene absente from  $T^4$ , although the position of defence is represented in the catalogue of wards in  $T^4$  (image 3, figure on the left).

—The introduction is shortened in  $T^5$  (the catalogue of wards is amputated of two positions): of the six wards represented in  $T^4$ , 4 appear also in  $T^5$ , spread out in the two sections.

### B2.1 Typology of the Images

From the point of view of the structure of the corpora [see part I.3], the content of the images can be described schematically by distinguishing two main categories: those that represent a technical action (t), as part of a “play,” by itself or together with other images, and those that depict positions (p), as constituent elements of the catalogue of wards or as part of the contextual setting of the beginning of plays. The scenes that represent a contextual setting in which the protagonists are already engaged do not belong to this type (p). Table 2 shows the rate of participation of the two types of representations within each corpus expressed in percentages. The number of images does not include recurrences; we will simply note the frequency of the phenomenon by means of a qualifier.

TABLE 2 *Content characterisation of the corpora*

Corpus	Number of Images	Type (p)	Type (t)	Uncertain	Recurrence
$L$ (reference)	128	30%	70%	0%	Important
Group 1					
$\pi$	30	13%	80%	7%	Weak
Group 2					
$\beta$	20	40%	55%	5%	None

Corpus	Number of Images	Type (p)	Type (t)	Uncertain	Recurrence
Group 3					
$\sigma$	12	0%	100%	0%	None
$G^*$	9	33%	67%	0%	None
$K^*$	10	0%	100%	0%	None
$T^*$	20	15%	85%	0%	None

It emerges from this analysis that the participation of type (p) represents a little more than a fourth of the total images in I.33 and  $G^*$ , increasing in  $\beta$  and inversely decreasing in the third group, with  $T^*$ . None of the individualised positions are depicted in  $\sigma$  or  $K^*$ . Finally, only I.33 and  $\pi$  exhibit recurring images.

## B2.2 Records

All records present their information in the following order:

—The shelf number of the manuscript, dating, and origin, as well as the folios in the section that deal with fencing with buckler (*Sword & Buckler section*).

Then three pieces of synthesised information by codes (typographic sign):

- a. The relation between the fencing represented and the dating of the images:
  - $\diamond$  or  $\dagger$
  - $\diamond$  Direct evidence of a fencing considered as “living”, when there is a correlation between the style of the fencing represented and the manuscript’s dating, in agreement with the typology of the weapons illustrated and the general palaeographic characteristics.
  - $\dagger$  The corpus will be characterised as “resurgent” in all other cases.
- b. Structure of the images:  $\bullet$  or  $\circ$ , two signs indicating the nature of the succession of images:
  - $\bullet$  (black dot). Indicates that the sequence (with rare exceptions) is coherent.
  - $\circ$  (white dot). Indicates that the order of the images has been disrupted/modified; or that it is a catalogue in which the images are independent of each other.

The sign is followed by the description of the layout of the images, essentially:

- 1/p. one image per page (in a full page or with a reserved space for text below the image)
  - 2/p. two superimposed images per page, never side by side.
- c. Presence or not of commentaries: T, accompanied otherwise by details on the nature of the text.

Those indications are complemented by a bibliography.

### Group 1

#### 1. *Liber de Arte Dimicatoria*

L = Leeds, Royal Armouries, I.33 (olim, Royal Library Museum, British Museum No. 14 E iii, No. 20, D. vi; olim Gotha, Membr. I, 115).

1st quarter of the fourteenth century (ca. 1320–1330, *KdiHM*) or before 1304; “Süddeutschland” (Bavaria?);<sup>105</sup> folio 1–32 (entirely dedicated to Sword & Buckler).

◇ 128 images; clerical dress style early fourteenth century.

• 2/p.

T Introduction and glossed images.

Pub.: Forgeng, *The Illuminated Fightbook*; Morini/Rudilosso, *Manoscritto* I.33; Cinato/Surprenant, *Liber*.

*KdiHM*, 38.9.8, pp. 124–126; H 30; Cinato/Surprenant, *Luitger*; Cinato/Surprenant, *L'escrime scolastique*; Cinato/Surprenant, *L'escrime à la bocle*; Hester, *Home-Grown Fighting*; Hester, *A Few Leaves*; Hester, *Real Men Read Poetry*.

—

#### 1.1. Related Copies Derived from I.33

γ = Copy (lost), made for Gunterrodt; mid-sixteenth century.

*Gunt.*<sup>1</sup> Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek—Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, Dresd. C.15 (Gunterrodt, Henricus a (von), *Sciomachia et hoplomachia, sive De Veris Principiis Artis Dimicatoriae, liber unus . . .*), 1579.

Autograph manuscript by H. Gunterrodt, basis for *Tractatus brevis*. It contains plates of illustrations, unlike the printed book. Chapter 12 is devoted to the buckler:

<sup>105</sup> *KdiHM*: “Latin text with single, untranslated “Oberdeutschen” (Bavarian?) technical terminology”.

folio 55v. Chapter 12. *Rappier und Bucklier, schildt, Tarzschen. Duodecimo: Framea coniuncta pelta, parma, clypeo . . .*; folio 56r–58r, 5 images.

*Gunt.*<sup>2</sup> Gunterrodt, Henricus a (von), *De veris principiis artis dimicatoriae, tractatus brevis, ad illustrissimum principem Ioannem ducem Megapolensem, Witebergae*: Welack, 1579 (Wittenberg).

Cf. the English translation by Gevaert, *Heinrich von Gunterrodt*.

*W* = Wolfenbüttel, Hzg. August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 125.16, Extravagantes.

Achieved in 1657; folio 45r = one copy of image I.33, 102, folio 26r., accompanied by a testimony from the compiler.<sup>106</sup>

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## 2. Anonymous “Berlin Sketchbook”

*B* = Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Libr. pict. A 83.

ca. 1500/1512 (first quarter of the sixteenth century; “Süddeutsch (Nürnberg?)”); folio 33r–36r (folio 35v blank).<sup>107</sup>

† 12 images; clothing style from the sixteenth century

° 2/p.

Achieved in the workshop of Dürer?

*KdiHM* 38.9.3, pp. 114–116.

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### 2.1. Related

Albrecht Dürer, *Oplodidaskalia sive Armorum Tractandorum Meditatio Alberti Dureri*

Wien, Albertina (Graphische Sammlung), Inv.Nr. 26232.

ca. 1512; Nuremberg; folio 61r

One image, figure on the left with a targe.

*KdiHM* 38.9.11; H 45; W 25.

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106 A copy of Talhoffer Ms Philos. 61), cf. *W* 46; *H* 55. According to *KdiHM* 38.9.8, p. 126: “In the 17th century single copies were included into Wolfenbüttel, Hzg. August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 125.16, Extravagantes, folio 41r–43v; Hils, p. 134.”

107 Four of the five images of *A* are represented in *B*; strangely, Image 15v [*Pm* 31] was omitted by *B* and *M*, but it is difficult to relate them based only on this argument.—Only in some inverted cases does the layout of *B* predate that of *Pm*.

## 3. The Jörg Breu Sketchbook

A = Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Oettingen-Wallerstein Cod.I.6.2° 4.  
1545 (f. 2r); mid-fifteenth century; "Oberdeutsch"; folio 14r–15v, 40r.<sup>108</sup>

† 5 images; clothing style from the fourteenth century.

◦ 1/p.

*KdiHM* 38.8.2, pp. 95–97 (spec. n° 4) + Abb. 46–47; H 03; W 27.

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4. Paulus Hector Mair (I), *Fechtbuch*

*Pm*<sup>1</sup> = Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. Dresd. C 94.

post 1542 (cf. ex-libris folio 196r); Augsburg (in Bavarian Swabia); Vol. II (C 94),  
folio 147r–161v.

† 30 images; numbered; the numbers are identical on *Pm*<sup>2</sup>.

◦ 1/p.

T entire commentary in German.

Painted by Jörg Breu the Younger; in 2 vol.: 244 fols. + 328 fols.

Transcription: Myers, *The Sword & Buckler*.

*KdiHM* 38.8, pp. 91–108 (especially 38.8.3, pp. 97–102).

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5. Paulus Hector Mair (II), *De Arte Athletica* [*Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica*]

*Pm*<sup>2</sup> = München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. icon 393.

post 1542; Augsburg; vol. 2, fols. 62r–81v Bocle [= 17–46 (= *Pm*<sup>1</sup>) + 47–56 (= K)]  
2 vol. = 1, 309 fols. + 2, 303 fols.; and index fols. 82r–83v; fols. 169v–170r (infantry-  
man against cavalier, see *Pm*<sup>3</sup>).

† 40 images: 30 (= *Pm*<sup>1</sup>) + 10 (= K); see Correlations.

◦ 1/p.

T entire text in Latin.

The most luxurious and complete of the three copies, made for Duke Albert v of  
Bavaria.

not described in *KdiHM* (cf. 38.8, pp. 92, 97, 107); H 34.

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<sup>108</sup> The painted images occupy the top part of the folio; only on folio 14 does a line separate the two registers of the page. The image of folio 40 is a sketch that did not benefit from colouring. Whether the order of *Pm* is restituted (A n° 1–2, 5, 4, 3), or maintains the layout of A, there is no continuity, except for the first two images.

6. Anonymous additions to the manual by Jörg Wilhalm (copy from the source of *Pm*)<sup>109</sup> *M* = München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3712.

1556 (folio 95v): “Jorgens Wilhalms huters khunst zu Augspurg des langen Schwerts 1556” [On the long sword by Jorg Wilhalm, hat maker in Augsburg],<sup>110</sup> “Südwestdeutsch (Augsburg?)”; fols. 196r–209v, 212r (*KdiHM* n° 20–21 *Bildkatalog*).<sup>111</sup>

† 29 images [28 different and one repeated, n° 2 = 1],<sup>112</sup> drawings in pen and ink by two artists (main 1: 97r–209v, + 212r; main 2: 210r–211v for the humorous drawings).<sup>113</sup>—210r-v: humorous drawings; bookbinding problem, missing folio 211; old pagination: 29.

○ 1/p. (with space reserved for text that was never added).

*KdiHM* 38.7, pp. 77–91 (; especially. 38.7.5, n° 20–21, pp. 87–91 + Abb. 42–43); H 39; W 11.

109 In a text collection from masters of the Liechtenauer tradition. The collection contains (numbers are those of *KdiHM*): long sword of Johannes Liechtenauer (N° 1 e; 8; with J. Wilhalm glosses N° 17 and 18), Martin Huntfeltz (N° 2–3) and Jobst from Württemberg (N° 9), wrestling of master Ott (N° 4 et 12), mounted fighting of master Lew (N° 5) and David Lienhart Sollinger (N° 6), messer of Hans Lecküchner (N° 7), and so on, with anonymous parts (N° 10, 13,–16) about various weapons. The N° 19 is the Fight Book ascribed to Jörg Wilhalm (f. 138–155r).

110 Of unknown origin, although presumably copied in Augsburg in 1556 (as indicated in the explicit in folio 95v). It later reappeared in the hands of a sergeant of the militia in the city of Straubing, Jean-Jacques Sponey; see the ex-libris folio 25r, 48r, 166v). In the 18th century it would be relocated to the library of the abbey of St. Emmeran of Regensburg (from where it still has a shelf number on the inside of the upper plate which reads: “quondam EM. X.7” etc.), and finally it was moved to the Hofbibliothek in Munich, where it is currently preserved.

111 The description of *KdiHM* divides the section dealing with fencing with buckler into two entries (N° 20, folio 196r–203r and 21, folio 201r–211r), and omits the image of folio 212r. In doing this, the author of the records (*KdiHM*) leads us to think that the section is not homogenous from the point of view of the sources. According to *KdiHM*, n° 20 might have been copied from woodcuts. The description of *KdiHM* speaks of I.33 as a “remote parallel,” cf. *KdiHM* p. 91 “the combatting pairs in monks” clothing show remote similarities with Leeds, Royal Armouries, I.33 (38.9.8.) (also stylistic agreement with a drawing from Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. I.6.2°4 [38.8.2.], 40r).

112 See Correlations π; *M* omits two images, *Pm* 18 and 31.

113 Two groups of images can be identified: folio 196r–203r, in which the clothing style of its characters has been updated to the fashion of the sixteenth century, whereas in folio 203v–209v + 212r they retain a clothing style typical of the fourteenth century, like *A*.

## Group 2

## 7. Anonymous compilation

C = Paris, musée national du Moyen Âge—Thermes de Cluny, CL23842 (*olim* Donaueschingen, Fürstliche Fürstenbergische Hofbibliothek, Ms. 862).

ca. 1490–1500 (*KdiHM*: “ca. 1480–1500”, according to Hils); “Oberdeutschland”; fols. folio 118r–131v.

◇/† 28 images; clothing style from the fifteenth century.<sup>114</sup>

○ 1/p. (with space reserved for text that was never added).

*KdiHM* 38.2.3, pp. 27–29 (n° 5); H 14; Barack, *Handschriften*, p. 583; Huynh, *Un traité de combat*.<sup>115</sup>

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8. Ludwig von Eyb, the Younger, *Kriegsbuch*

E Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, cod. B 26.

1510;<sup>116</sup> Bavaria (Amberg ?); fols. 54–55, 59–61.

† 20 images; clothing style from the fifteenth century.

○ 2 superimposed images/page.<sup>117</sup>

114 Two well differentiated groups, going back to at least two sources, here labelled β (C folio 118r–125v, see E) and σ (C folio 126r–131v).

115 Indebted to M. Huynh, curator of the Musée de Cluny, whom I thank sincerely for having afforded me access to the images pending the facsimile he is preparing. However, because of incomprehensible bureaucracy, we were unable to obtain the necessary reproductions for plates No 4 and 5.

116 Folio a, recto: ... *hab ich Ludwig von Eybe zum Herttenstein... das kriegsbuch gemacht*; the date is at the end of the colophon: *Anno D. XV<sup>o</sup>...* (*sic KHE*, 4, p. 39), which reads in the manuscript: *Anno D(omini) XV<sup>c</sup> und seiner g(naden) vitzdom XJ Jar gewest* “I, Ludwig von Eybe zum Hartenstein... I made this book of war... in the year of our Lord 1500, and (this year) it is 11 years that I have been Vidame of Your Grace”. I sincerely thank Elke Krotz and Christine Glassner for transcribing and translating the passage that they have rendered in modern German: *Im Jahr 1500 und (in diesem Jahr) 11 Jahre Vicedominus gewesen*. The role of Vidame (*Vitztum*, lat. *vicedominus*), a legacy from the Carolingian period, was originally the “strong arm” of the bishop. There is a chronological incoherence between his biography (see *Rep. Gesch.*) and the last phrase of his dedication, because he had left the service to Count Ottos II in 1499 to take on the post of Vidame serving Philippe: he could therefore not have been 11 years in his service in 1500, but for one year at the most. This discrepancy is the reason the work is dated ca. 1510, according to *KdiHM*.

117 A certain disorder seems to reign in the corpus of images, the cause of which is perhaps a codicological problem (cf. folio 54–55 + 56–58 + 59–61). Pending confirmation we can assume the disorder goes back not to E itself, but to the common model shared with C, which exhibits a different disorder, although also based on a multiple of four.

This manuscript on paper is considered an autograph by Ludwig (VI), *the Younger*, von Eyb (1450–1521). Dedicated to Philip *the Upright* [1448–†1508; Philippe I l’*Ingénu*; Philipp *der Aufrichtige*], Duke of Bavaria, Count palatine and Elector.<sup>118</sup>

Transcription: Kapelmayr/Meier, *Transkription*.

*KdiHM* 38.9.4, pp. 116–119; H 17, W 22; *KHE*, 4, pp. 39–40; Keunecke, *Ludwig von Eyb*; Krieb, *Schriftlichkeit*; *Rep. Gesch.*

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### Group 3

#### 9. Anonymous *Gladiatoria*, 11

G<sup>2</sup> = Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellonski, Ms. Berol. Germ. 4<sup>o</sup> 16 (*olim* Berlin, Preußische Koenigliche Staatsbibliothek).

1435–1440. [*KdiHM*: first half of the fifteenth century. After Hils; ca. 1450, according to Wegener]; “Oberdeutsch”; fols. 54v–55r.

◇ 2 images.<sup>119</sup>

• 1/p. (catalogue of wards exclusively).

T with commentaries.

Transcription: Knight, *The Gladiatoria*.

*KdiHM* 38.2, pp. 22–34 (especially 38.2.2, pp. 25–26); H 28; Hils, *Gladiatoria*; Wegener, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Miniaturen*, pp. 61–62 [ill. 52: folio 24v].

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#### 10. Hans Talhoffer [111]

T<sup>3</sup> = Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 78 A 15.

Before 1459 (or 1449–1451); “Südwestdeutsch”; folio 54r-v + folio 62r depicting swords and bucklers.

◇ 2 images;<sup>120</sup> clothing style from the fifteenth century.

• 1/p.

T commented.

118 Folio 1r...*herrn hern pfilipssen pfalzg[ra]ven bei Rhein, herzog in Bayen, des heilige romische Reichs ertzdruchsessen, kurfürsten bißthum zu Amberg*... “Prince and Lord, Sir Philipp Count Palatine of the Rhine [12 December 1476–28 February 1508], Duke of Bavaria, of the Holy Roman Empire, diocese of the Elector of Amberg.”

119 For instance, four ward positions, two of them with buckler (1, folio 54v), and two with Hungarian shield (2, folio 55r). These images show a relation with some images in the second source group.

120 They are unknown in the Talhoffer compilations that follow. Their sources would suggest a contact with the I.33 fencing (cf. Image 2).



Image 1: *Hie versetzt er mit dem meser und grift mit dem bukler* “He displaces him with the *Messer* and strikes with the buckler”.<sup>121</sup>

Image 2: *Duȝ under und duȝ ober in den rechten bunt uz(w)* “The lower and upper to right binds, etc.”<sup>122</sup>

*KdiHM* 38.3, pp. 35–62 (especially 38.3.2 pp. 40–42); H 11; W 16.

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11. Hans Talhoffer [IV]

*T*<sup>4</sup> = København, Det Kongelige Bibliothek, Thott 290 2°.

1459 (f. 103v: « schrib mich Michel Rotwyler für war »); « Südwestdeutsch »; folio 117v–123r.

- 13 images
  - 1/p.
  - T without commentary, except for a brief remark in Image 4: *T*<sup>\*</sup> 4: *Der recht notstand gen zwain* “The good forced position against two” (cf. *T*<sup>5</sup>, 240).
- KdiHM* 38.3.4, pp. 47–51 (n° 4); H 27; W 12.
- 

12. Anonymous *Gladiatoria* [VI]

*G*<sup>6</sup> = Wolfenbüttel, Hzg. August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 78.2 Aug. 2°.

1465–1480; “Norddeutschland”; folio 113rb, 113vb, 114rb, 114vb, 115rb, 115vb, 116rb, 117rb.<sup>123</sup>

- ◇ 8 images; clothing style from the fifteenth century.
  - 2/p. [The upper registries (a) are devoted to the combat, the lower ones (b) to the buckler].
- KdiHM* 38.2.6, pp. 32–34 (n° 7); H 53, W 21.
- 

121 Especially interesting; it shows a situation similar to that following the “*Plongée*” [‘fall under’] (I.33, 6 *cade sub*), in case the distance allows the attacker to give a blow with the buckler without insisting on the binding.

122 The image shows the top-right bind, in a modelling similar to the scene in I.33, 7, which Talhoffer, however, will abandon in his later versions.

123 Contains, among others, Johannes Liechtenauer “*Kunst des langen Schwertes*” (n° 1), le *Gladiatoria* (n° 5) and the treatise on the techniques of siege *Bellifortis* by Konrad Kyesser (n° 8, as in *E*).

## 13. Hans Talhoffer [v]

*T*<sup>5</sup> = München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod.icon. 394a.

1467 (f. 16v); « Südwestdeutsch »; folio 113r–116v (messer only = pl. 223–230 Hergsell); folio 117r–122r (messer and buckler = pl. 231–239 + 240–241 Hergsell).

◇ 11 images (+ 8 only with messer, n<sup>o</sup> i–viii).<sup>124</sup>

• 1/p.

T short commentaries.

*KdiHM* 38.3.6, pp. 54–56; H 35; W 13.

—

## 14. Paulus Kal [1]

*K*<sup>1</sup> München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 1507.

Second half of the fifteenth century (1459–1479); after 1473? (Stangier); « Bayern » [Bavaria]; fols. 52v–57r.

◇ 10 images

• 1/p.

T with commentaries. Dedicated (folio 2r) to Duke Louis IX of Bavaria, House of Wittelsbach (Ludwig IX der Reiche, 1445–1479).

Éd.: Tobler, *In Service of the Duke*.

*KdiHM* 38.5, pp. 63–73 (especially 38.5.3, pp. 68–70); H 32; Schneider, *Die deutschen Handschriften*, pp. 190–192; Stangier, *Zweikampffrealität*, p. 82.

—

## 15. Paulus Kal [11]

*K*<sup>2</sup> = Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Hofjagd- und Rüstkammer, KK 5126 (bisher P 51126; olim Ambras 57).

1460–1480; « Oberdeutsch »; fols. 56v–61r.

It is a copy of *K*<sup>2</sup>.

*KdiHM* 38.5.4, pp. 70–73; H 48; W 05.

—

124 The plays *T*<sup>4</sup> and *T*<sup>5</sup> do not cross-check completely; in one some are realised only with the sword (or with the messer), in the other they are carried out with the buckler.

## 16. Paulus Kal [III]

$K^3$  = Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 1825.

1455–1460 (?)<sup>125</sup> (Second half of the fifteenth century, according to *KdiHM*); Oberdeutsch; fols. 15r–17r, with gap (f. 17v blank).

◇ 5 images

• 1/p.

T without commentaries (unlike  $K^1$ ), but with the same dedication (see the transcription by Frati, p. 7).

*KdiHM* 38.5.1, pp. 65–66; Frati, *Le tavole di scherma*.

—

## 17. Paulus Hector Mair [III]

$Pm^3$  = Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod.Vindob. 10825/10826.

After 1542; Augsburg; C. Vind. 10826: folio 116r; 144r–148v (=  $K$ ); 193v–194r.<sup>126</sup>

† 10 images (=  $K$ )

• 1/p.

T Latin and German

*KdiHM* 38.8.4; H 51; W 10.

125 Like D. Hagedorn in the present volume (Chap. 10), I am inclined to see in  $K^3$  [Kal, Bologna] a copy subsequent to the one from Wien. The elucidation of the Armoiries folio 5v, will make it possible to explain who this copy was meant for.

126 Image on folio 116r is peculiar to  $Pm^3$  (n° 13 in the section of sword with “left hand”) [Mair, *cod.* Wien], corresponds in  $Pm^1$  (vol. 2, folio 145r) [*cod.* Dresden] and  $Pm^2$  (vol. 2, f. 60r) [*cod.* München] to a reverse scene in which the dagger of the figure on the right has been replaced by the buckler of the figure on the left on  $Pm^3$ . We have excluded from the study two images specific to  $Pm^2$  and  $Pm^3$ , which show the encounter of an infantryman armed with a buckler against a cavalier; cf. *KdiHM* p. 107 “Bildthemen: Insgesamt enge Übereinstimmungen der Kämpferpaare mit Dresden, C 93/94 und München Cod. icon. 393 (...) Bd. 2 193v/194r Bloßfechten mit Schwert und Buckler im Turniering als gerichtlicher Zweikampf mit Datum 1409, sämtlich Turnierszenen in freier Adaption der wesentlich einfacheren Holzschnittvorlagen Rüxners” [“Topics of the images: in general, correspondence between the combatting pairs with Dresden, C 93/94 and München Cod. icon. 393 (...) Bd. 2 193v/194r Unarmoured combat with sword and buckler in the tournament ring as a judicial duel dated 1409, all tournament scenes in free adaptation of the considerably simpler woodcuts from Rüxner”].

B3 *Tables of Concordance*Group 1:  $\pi$  (general overview)

$\pi$	<i>B</i> (n <sup>o</sup> )	<i>B</i> (c. 1512)	<i>Pm</i> (c. 1542)	<i>A</i> (n <sup>o</sup> )	<i>A</i> (c. 1545)	<i>M</i> (n <sup>o</sup> )	<i>M</i> (c. 1556)
1	11	36ra	17	1	14r	1 et 2	196r + 196v
2	12	36rb	18	2	14v	—	<i>om. M</i>
3	7	34va	28	—	—	3	197r
4	—	—	19	—	—	4	197v
5	—	—	20	—	—	5	198r
6	6	34rb	29	—	—	6	198v
7	8	34vb	30	—	—	7	199r
8	1	33ra	23	—	—	8	199v
9	9	35ra	32	3	15r	9	200r
10	—	—	31	4	15v	—	<i>om. M</i>
11	—	—	21	—	—	10	200v
12	—	—	22	—	—	11	201r
13	5	34ra	27	—	—	12	201v
14	3	33va	24	—	—	13	202r
15	2	33rb	25	—	—	14	202v
16	4	33vb	26	5	40r	15	203r
17	—	—	33	—	—	16	203v
18	—	—	36	—	—	17	204r
19	—	—	45	—	—	18	204v
20	—	—	38	—	—	19	205r
21	—	—	43	—	—	20	205v
22	—	—	44	—	—	21	206r
23	—	—	39	—	—	22	206v
24	—	—	46	—	—	23	207r
25	—	—	37	—	—	24	207v
26	10	35rb	34	—	—	25	208r
27	—	—	35	—	—	26	208v
28	—	—	40	—	—	27	209r
29	—	—	41	—	—	28	209v
30	—	—	42	—	—	29	212r

**Group 1:  $Pm^{1-3}$** 

<i>Pm</i>	<i>Pm</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Pm</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Pm</i> <sup>3</sup>
[17]	147r	62r	—
[18]	147v	62v	—
[19]	148r	63r	—
[20]	148v	63v	—
[21]	149r	64r	—
[22]	149v	64v	—
[23]	150r	65r	—
[24]	150v	65v	—
[25]	151r	66r	—
[26]	151v	66v	—
[27]	152r	67r	—
[28]	152v	67v	—
[29]	153r	68r	—
[30]	153v	68v	—
[31]	154r	69r	—
[32]	154v	69v	—
[33]	155r	70r	—
[34]	155v	70v	—
[35]	156r	71r	—
[36]	156v	71v	—
[37]	157r	72r	—
[38]	157v	72v	—
[39]	158r	73r	—
[40]	158v	73v	—
[41]	159r	74r	—
[42]	159v	74v	—
[43]	160r	75r	—
[44]	160v	75v	—
[45]	161r	76r	—
[46]	161v	76v	—
[47]	—	77r	144r
[48]	—	77v	144v
[49]	—	78r	145r
[50]	—	78v	145v

<i>Pm</i>	<i>Pm</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Pm</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Pm</i> <sup>3</sup>
[51]	—	79r	146r
[52]	—	79v	146v
[53]	—	80r	147r
[54]	—	80v	147v
[55]	—	81r	148r
[56]	—	81v	148v

**Group 2:**  $\beta$  1–20 = *EC* (123r–125v)

$\beta$	<i>C</i>	<i>fols.</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>fols.</i>	<i>Relations to the other corpora</i>
1	11	123r	5	55ra	(cf. <i>E</i> 12b, <i>L</i> 114–5?)
2	13	124r	6	55rb	cf. $\pi$ 8
3	14	124v	7	55va	= $\pi$ 4
4	15	125r	8	55vb	cf. $\pi$ 28
5	—	—	9	59ra	
6	1	118r	10	59rb	
7	12	123v	11	59va	$\beta$ 7b = <i>G</i> * 4a cf <i>G</i> * 2a, <i>K</i> * 1, cf. <i>T</i> * 3.a
8	2	118v	12	59vb	
9	16	125v	1	54ra	
10	—	—	2	54rb	
11	—	—	3	54va	
12	—	—	4	54vb	= (vix) $\pi$ 5
13	3	119r	13	60ra	
14	4	119v	14	60rb	
15	5	120r	15	60va	
16	6	120v	16*	60vb	<i>E</i> 16 corruption (missing a sword)
17	7	121r	17	61ra	
18	8	121v	18	61rb	
19	9	122r	19	61va	
20	10	122v	20	61vb	

**Group 3:**  $\sigma_{1-12}$  (= C 126r–131v)

$\sigma$	C	<i>fols.</i>	<i>Relations between the witnesses</i>
1	17	126r	$G^*$ 7; cf. $K^*$ 5
2	18	126v	?
3	19	127r	cf. $T^*$ 8; $K^*$ 6
4	20	127v	cf. $T^*$ 9
5	21	128r	C 21a, cf. $K^*$ 1; C 21b, cf. $K^*$ 3, contre-champ; cf. $G^*$ 5–6?; see also $\pi_{10}$ (et 1 ?)
6	22	128v	C 22b, cf. $K^*$ 1a, $G^*$ 2a; see also $\pi_{12}$ (et 2 ?)
7	23	129r	$G^*$ 4; $K^*$ 1
8	24	129v	cf. $G^*$ 4; cf. $K^*$ 5; see also $\pi_{19}$
9	25	130r	cf. $K^*$ 7–8; see also $\pi_{30}$
10	26	130v	$G^*$ 9; $K^*$ 9; $T^*$ 12
11	27	131r	?
12	28	131v	?

**Group 3:**  $G^*$  = Gladiatoria (II et VI)

$G^*$	$G^k$	<i>fols.</i>	$G^w$	<i>fols.</i>
1b	—	—	1b	113rb
2a	1.a	54va	2a (var.)	113va
2b	1.b	54vb	2b	113vb
3a	2.a	54ra	—	—
3b	2.b	54rb	—	—
4a	—	—	3a	114ra
4b	—	—	3b	114rb
5	—	—	4	114v
6	—	—	5	115r
7	—	—	6	115v
8	—	—	7	116r
9	—	—	8	117r

**Group 3:** *T\**: Hans Talhoffer

(a = right); (b = left); c-c. = contre-champ

<i>T*</i>	<i>T<sup>4</sup></i>	<i>fols.</i>		<i>T<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>p.</i>		<i>T<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>p.</i>
1a	1a	117va	=	1.a	231a		—	—
1b	1b	117vb	>	—	—	>	i.b	223b
2a	2a	118r	—	—	—	—	—	—
2b	2b*	118r	>	—	—	>	i.a?	223b
3a	3a	118v	>	1.b (c-c.)	231b		—	—
3b	3b	118v	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	4	119r	cf.	10	240		—	—
5	—	—	—	11	241		—	—
6	—	—	—	2, 6	232 (2), 236 (6, c-c.)	=	ii	224
7	5	119v	=	3	233	=	iii	225
8	—	—	—	4	234	=	iv	226
9	6	120r	cf.	5	235	=	v	227
10	7	120v	—	—	—		—	—
11	8	121r	—	—	—		—	—
12	9	121v	=	7	237	=	viii	230
13	10	122r	—	—	—		—	—
14	11	122v	—	—	—		—	—
15	—	—	—	8	238		—	—
16	—	—	—	9	239		—	—
17	12	123r	—	—	—	=	vi	228
18	13	123v	—	—	—	=	vii	229



Group 3: *K\**: Paulus Kal

<i>K*</i>	<i>K</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>K</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>K</i> <sup>3</sup>
1	52v	56v	—
2	53r	57r	—
3	53v	57v	—
4	54r	58r	—
5	54v	58v	—
6	55r	59r	15r
7	55v	59v	15v
8	56r	60r	16r
9	56v	60v	16v
10	57r	61r	17r

## Appendix C. Figures

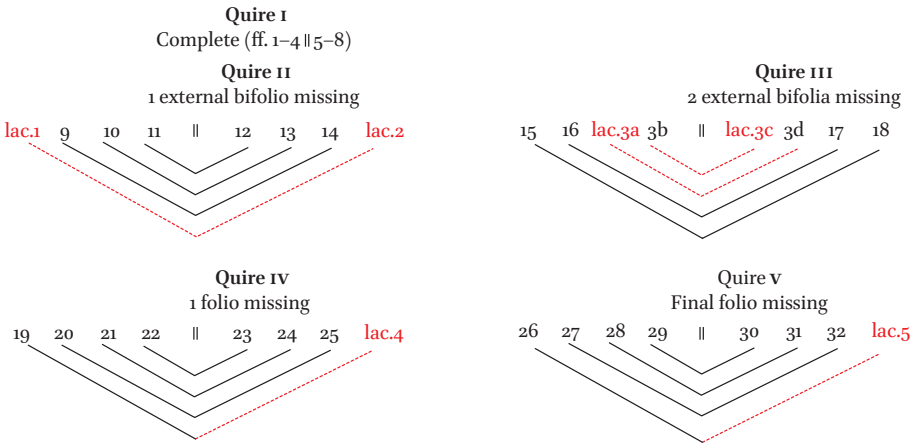


FIGURE 17.1A *Composition of quires and location of material lacuna. Hypothesis 1: one quaternion as fifth quire (5 lacuna for 8 lost folia).*

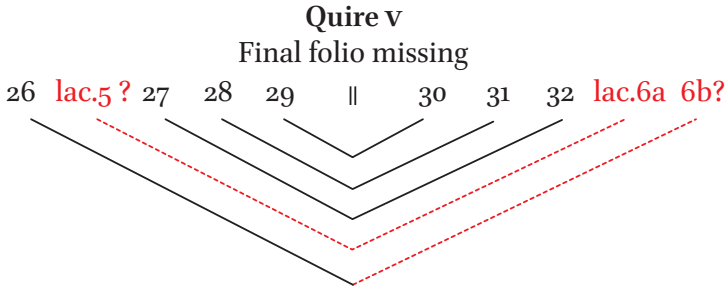


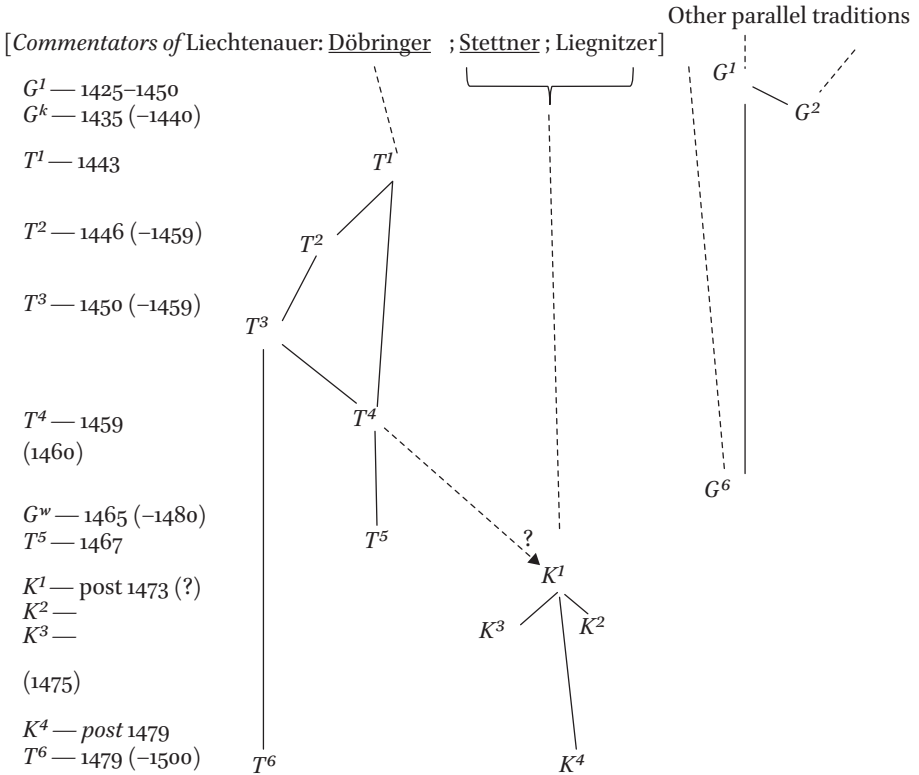
FIGURE 17.1B *Composition of quires and location of material lacuna. Hypothesis 2: one quinion as fifth quire (6 lacuna for 10 lost folia).*

Legend:

Quire	Q I	Q II	Q III	Q IV
<i>Folio</i>	1-4    5-8	lac.1   9-11    12-14   lac.2	15-16   lac.3a-b    lac.3c-d   17-18	19-22    23-25   lac.4
<i>Page</i>	1-16	... 17-28...	29-32... 33-36-	-37-50...
<i>Image</i>	1-32	... 33-56...	57-64... 65-72-	-73-100...
<i>Theme</i>	1st ward	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> w.	4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>e</sup> et 7 <sup>th</sup> w.	7 <sup>th</sup> , Lang. specif.
<i>Lacuna</i>		end 1st w. + partial 4 <sup>e</sup> w.	5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> w.	Lang. specif. vs 2 <sup>nd</sup> w.

Hypothesis 1 (quaternion)		Hypothesis 2 (quinion)	
<i>Quire</i>	Q V	<i>Quire</i>	Q V
<i>Folio</i>	26-29    30-32   lac.5	<i>Folio</i>	26   lac.5?   27-29    30-32   lac.6 a-b?
<i>Page</i>	51-64...	<i>Page</i>	51-52... 53-64...
<i>Image</i>	101-128...	<i>Image</i>	101-104... 105-128...
<i>Theme</i>	Lang. specif., 2 <sup>nd</sup> w. specif.	<i>Theme</i>	<i>id.</i>
<i>Lacuna</i>	end specif. w. + conclusion?	<i>Lacuna</i>	Lang. specif. vs 4 <sup>e</sup> w. + end w. sp. + conclusion?





### Hans Talhoffer (*T*<sup>\*</sup>)

<i>T</i> <sup>1</sup>	Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek, Ms. Chart. A 558.	— 1443	[H 20]
<i>T</i> <sup>2</sup>	Königseggwald, Gräfliche Bibliothek, Hs. XIX 17.3.	— 1446–1459	[H 26]
<i>T</i> <sup>3</sup>	Berlin, Kupf. der Stift. Preuß. Kult., 78 A 15.	— 1450–1459	[H 11]
<i>T</i> <sup>4</sup>	København, Det Kongelige Bibliothek, Thott 290 2 <sup>o</sup> .	— 1459	[H 27]
<i>T</i> <sup>5</sup>	München, BSB, Cod. icon. 394a.	— 1467	[H 35]
<i>T</i> <sup>6</sup>	Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, KK 5342.	— 1480–1500	[H 49]

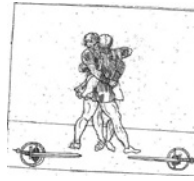
### Paulus Kal (*K*<sup>\*</sup>)

<i>K</i> <sup>1</sup>	München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 1507.	— after 1473?	[H 32]
<i>K</i> <sup>2</sup>	Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, KK 5126.	— after 1473?	[H 48] <sup>(*)</sup>
<i>K</i> <sup>3</sup>	Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, Ms. 1825.	— after 1473?	[KdiHM 5.1] <sup>(*)</sup>
<i>K</i> <sup>4</sup>	Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek Ms. Chart. B1021.	— after 1479	[H 19]

### Anonymes ‘Gladiatoria’ (*G*<sup>\*</sup>)

<i>G</i> <sup>1</sup>	Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, KK 5013.	— 1425–1450	[H 46]
<i>G</i> <sup>2</sup>	Kraków. Bibl. Jagiellonski. Ms. Berol. Germ. 4 <sup>o</sup> 16.	— 1435–1440	[H 28]

FIGURE 17.2B Relation between Fight Books of Hans Talhoffer (*T*<sup>\*</sup>), Paulus Kal (*K*<sup>\*</sup>) and the anonymous *Gladiatoria* (*G*<sup>\*</sup>). [After the stemma Hils (1984). The dating have been revised].

$Pm^1$  $Pm^2$  $M$ 

Group 1

 $\beta_{12}$ 

Group 2

 $K^2$ 

Group 3

FIGURE 17.3  $\pi 5$  image.

Legend:

Group 1

 $Pm^1$  20 Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. Dresd. C. 94, fol. 148v $Pm^2$  20 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. icon 393, fol. 63v $M$  5 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3712, fol. 198r

Group 2

 $\beta_{12}$  (=  $E$  4, fol. 54vb, *omisit C*) $E$  4 Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, cod. B 26, fol. 54vb

Group 3 (dans la section épée longue)

 $K^1$  München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 1507, fol. 65r

L



L.33 (= L)

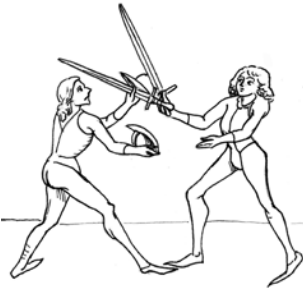
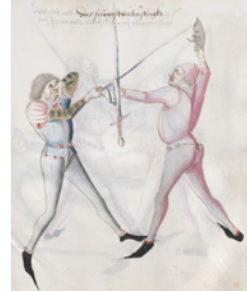
Pm<sup>1</sup>Pm<sup>2</sup>

M



Group 1

C

K<sup>1</sup>

Group 3

FIGURE 17.4 *Grappling of the buckler (L.33, nr. 64) and π 30 image.*

Legend:

L 64 Leeds, Royal Armouries, I.33, fol. 16vb (p. 32B)

Groupe 1: π 30

Pm<sup>1</sup> 42 Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. Dresd. C. 94, fol. 159vPm<sup>2</sup> 42 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. icon 393, fol. 74v

M 29 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3712, fol. 212r

Groupe 3: σ 9

C 25 Paris, musée national du Moyen Âge—Thermes de Cluny, CL23842, fol. 130r

K<sup>1</sup> 7–8 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 1507, fols. 55v–56r

*d*

*d*: Mirror of the Saxon  
(shared source)

*T\*<sub>1</sub>*

Group 3: *T\*<sub>1</sub>*

*E**C*

Group 2:  $\beta$  8 (doctrinal  
relationship)

FIGURE 17.5  $\sigma$  and  $\beta$  corpora, and the Mirror of the Saxons.

Legend:

*Shared source*

**Mirror of the Saxon**

*d* Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. M. 32, fol. 20r

**Group 3: *T\*<sub>1</sub>***

*T\*<sub>1</sub>* København, Det Kongelige Bibliothek, Thott 290 2°, fol. 117v

*Doctrinal relationship*

**Group 2:  $\beta$  8 (E and C)**

*E* Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, cod. B 26, 59vb

*C* Paris, musée national du Moyen Âge (Cluny), CL23842, fol. 118v

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*h* (c. 1304)*β* 10 (= *E* 2, c. 1500)

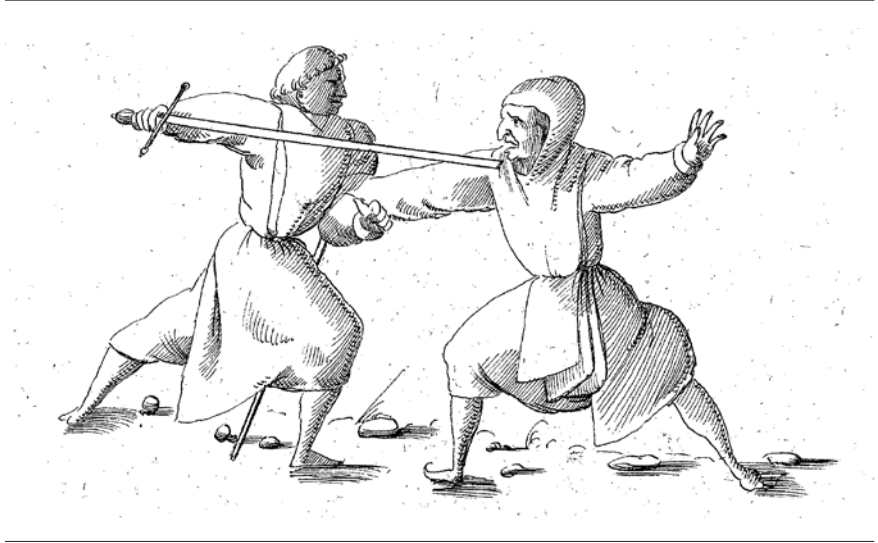

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 FIGURE 17.6 *Seniority of the β corpus.*

Legend:

*h* Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, f. 190v*β* 10 (= *E* 2; *omisit C*)*E* Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, cod. B 26, fol. 54rb





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FIGURE 17.7 *Gunterrodt and influence of I.33 (Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. Dresd. C.15, fol. 71r).*

# Martial Identity and the Culture of the Sword in Early Modern Germany

*B. Ann Thursty*

## 1 Introduction

Although the richly illustrated fighting manuals of the 14th and 15th centuries were often produced as a form of representational courtly art, the sword masters who taught martial arts came primarily from the burgher classes. In the German-speaking lands that produced the majority of these texts, the art of sword fighting was influenced early on by the strong guild culture of the German cities. Like other artisanal skills, the art of sword fighting was passed from master to apprentice through a process of hands-on training that protected the secrets of the trade from outsiders. This system served the same protectionist functions for sword fighters as it did for all guildsmen, including providing existing sword-fighting masters with a monopoly on conferring masterships to others and allowing only those who had learned their art from an accomplished expert to charge for their services.

Unlike masters in other trades, however, sword masters by the 16th century were not teaching a profession as much as they were a leisure-time activity. For all the value that venerators of the sport<sup>1</sup> placed on the practical military applications of sword fighting, most sword masters were not professional military men, and few of them were able to make a living training others to fight with swords. Nonetheless, town governments and territorial rulers encouraged and often sponsored sword-fighting competitions because they taught men skills associated with war. Based on Renaissance notions of civic republicanism associated with Niccolò Machiavelli, Leonhart Fronsberger, and others, there

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1 Although the development of “sport” as a concept has been attributed to the nineteenth century by some authors, recent work by social historians has highlighted the failure of this view to adequately consider evidence from early modern records. See Behringer, “Arena and Pall Mall”; id., *Kulturgeschichte des Sports*; Schattner, “For the Recreation of Gentlemen”; McClelland and Merilees, *Sport and Culture/ Le Sport dans la Civilisation*; Krüger and McClelland, *Die Anfänge des modernen Sports*; von Mallinckrodt and Schattner, *Sports and Physical Exercise*.

was a direct relationship between military training and good citizenship.<sup>2</sup> The sport of sword fighting thus could serve as a school of civic virtue.

This contribution explores the relationship of the fight book genre to the practice of sword fighting as a sport in early modern Germany. The early modern sport of sword fighting rose and fell with the civic militia system, flowering during the 16th century when masculine identity with the sword in the German towns was at its peak and declining with the rise of full-time, professional armies and police forces. As the territories of Germany and the states of Europe centralized power in the hands of absolute rulers, civilian militias lost their function as home guards and the relationship of martial sports to civic virtue became less apparent. Support for sword-fighting training and other martial sports thus declined. Masculine identity with the sword was not eradicated in the process, but it was redefined.

## 2 Martial Culture and the Birth of a Sport

The fight books of the 14th and 15th centuries often included descriptions and images depicting trial by combat, suggesting that those fighting to settle legal disputes in this tradition were their intended audience. Medieval forms of trial by combat were based on the assumption that God would protect the innocent party and, hopefully, provide the loser with a chance to redeem himself as well. Thus in some cases fight book images depict participants preparing for the battle in the presence of death biers and coffins, a priest, candles, shrouds, and all the other trappings necessary for a proper Christian death complete with penance and absolution.<sup>3</sup> Despite these displays of piety, the notion that God would intervene in a worldly dispute was consistently attacked by the church as a heresy, and by the 15th century, the traditional practice of trial by combat had disappeared. The related practice of settling disputes of honor by facing an opponent in a court-sanctioned battle, however, continued as the judicial duel (in German *Kampfgericht*).<sup>4</sup>

2 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Art of War*, pp. 21, 61; idem, *The Prince*, pp. 233–4; Leonhart Fronsberger, *Fünff Bücher*, fol. 117r; idem, *Von dem Lob*, fol. 1v, 184r–v, 24r–8r.

3 Schild, “Zweikampf,” pp. 1838, 1842; Matthäus Krägelius, *Duellum & Bellum*, pp. 56–7; for an example of such a picture in a fencing manual see Hans Talhoffer, *Fechtbuch*, 1467 (M44, fol. 36r).

4 Muir, *Mad Blood*, p. 261; Jost Damhouder, *Praxis rerum criminalium* fol. 78v. Despite official opposition, members of religious orders also turned to trial by combat to settle disputes:

Historians debate whether or not these customs actually had a direct influence on aristocratic dueling customs.<sup>5</sup> Neither the trial by combat of the early Middle Ages nor the later custom of the judicial duel seem to have been very common practice.<sup>6</sup> But there is certainly a great deal of continuity between late medieval fight books that appear to target judicial duelers and the sport of longsword fighting that came to dominate German martial arts of the 16th century. Along with similar fighting styles, lessons in both cases shared an emphasis on the basic concepts associated with honorable fighting. In particular, sword masters consistently stressed the “chivalric” or “knightly” (*ritterliche*) character of the sword-fighting art, although judicial dueling had theoretically been available not only to knights, but to anyone of free status, and the masters of the sword themselves came primarily from the burgher classes. By the 16th century, so did most of their students.<sup>7</sup>

The art of sword fighting as a bourgeois sport has its roots in the late Middle Ages as a natural corollary to the rise of civic defense systems in the German towns. Long before Machiavelli formulated his famous theories on the virtues of citizen soldiers, towns and cities in the German-speaking lands had been depending on their own citizens as the first line of defense. By the 16th century, good citizenship had become synonymous with an assumption of martial skill. All heads of household in early modern German and Swiss cities were required to maintain weapons, and all adult men protected their towns by serving on guard duty and appearing armed and ready in civic emergencies. Similar rules were in effect in the countryside, where villagers kept arms to protect their community and their lords. As a result, there were few households that were not stocked with weapons and few men who walked town streets without a side arm within easy reach.

The popularity of fighting not only with swords but also with pole arms, daggers, and other weapons as a martial sport in the German and Swiss towns thus grew and declined in tandem with the rise and fall of a sword-carrying culture.<sup>8</sup> This obsession with martial identity peaked during the 16th and early

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Hergenröther/Kaulen, *Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 12, pp. 2011–12; see also Neumann, *Der Gerichtliche Zweikampf*.

5 Neumann, “Vom Gottesurteil zur Ehrensache?”; Prietzel, “Schauspiele”; Israel, “Vor- und Frühgeschichte des Duells?”

6 Frevert, *Ehrenmänner*, pp. 19–23; Kelly, *That Damn'd Thing*, pp. 9–11; Peltonen, *The Duel*, pp. 4–13; Schild, “Zweikampf,” pp. 1838–42.

7 Leng, “Fecht- und Ringbücher,” pp. 1–5; Lochner, *Die Entwicklungsphasen*, p. 15; Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst*, pp. 9–11, 210–12; Stadtarchiv Nördlingen (hereafter StANö), R39 F5 no. 10, Fechtschule 1534–1618.

8 Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*, pp. 189–222.

17th centuries. Civic requirements to keep and bear arms combined with the social pressures of martial honor, so that men were acculturated to understand resort to arms as an appropriate performative act of masculine identity. It is in this context that contests of martial skill developed into organized sports. By the dawn of the 16th century, towns throughout the Holy Roman Empire were investing civic funds into the support of martial sports, especially tournament-like shooting matches and recreational sword-fighting competitions. In a world in which those in control often viewed leisure activities as suspect, representing idleness, frivolity, and disorder, martial sports were an exception, supported by local authorities as a form of political leisure.

Burger-dominated sporting events had begun much earlier, initially in the form of cross-bowmen's guilds in the 12th or 13th centuries that were created on the model of religious confraternities or brotherhoods. Influenced by the strong guild culture of the German cities, sword fighters in Germany also began by the 15th century to organize as guild-like societies in which men studied the sport under the hand of an established master sword-fighter. Townspeople throughout Europe during the late Middle Ages and early modern period, who were used to learning crafts and trades in craft and guild organizations, were socialized to a model of apprenticeship with a skilled master. Artisans first paid for a period of apprenticeship to learn the basics of their trade. Once they completed their period of apprenticeship and advanced to the status of journeymen, they normally spent up to two years wandering from town to town to hone their skills with other masters. In a similar tradition, sword-fighting masters also typically spent two to three years traveling both to learn and to teach their art in so-called "fight schools" (*Fechtschulen*). Although some towns eventually established permanent fencing grounds or halls, sword-fighting schools were not permanent institutions, but public competitions or training sessions offered by either local or traveling master swordsmen.<sup>9</sup>

When one of these traveling masters arrived in a town, his first step was to petition to local authorities for permission to offer his services. At a minimum, petitioners had to establish their credentials as qualified teachers, in some cases by demonstrating their skills in trials. If the supplication was approved, the school would be set up in an open square or, particularly in periods of inclement weather, in the local dance house, the armory, a public house, or another large indoor space.<sup>10</sup> In order to attract attention, the sword master

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9 Nuremberg, for example, opened a civic fencing hall during the Thirty Years' War in 1628.

10 Lochner, *Die Entwicklungsphasen*, pp. 13–16; Schaufelberger, *Der Wettkampf*, p. 142; Stadtarchiv Augsburg (hereafter StAA), Strafbuch 1588–96, fol. 182r (9 September 1593); Sigmund Schining, 1539/1552/1566–78 (M6).

advertised with notices hung about town. Apparently some teachers were over-zealous in their use of provocative language to encourage local men to take part in the schools; at least one late 16th-century regulation warned the swordsmen to formulate their advertisements “reasonably” and avoid promoting their schools with posters that were too “fiery.”<sup>11</sup> To ensure compliance with this rule, public notices had to be approved by the authorities prior to posting. Keeping order at the match was also a responsibility of the sword master, including paying for the services of a local guard. Participants interested in improving their sword-fighting skills then paid a fee for the training and sometimes also competed for prizes. Spectators sometimes paid admission to watch the matches as well.<sup>12</sup>

At their high point during the 16th century, larger sword-fighting competitions could be festive public events. The fights were heralded with parades and displays of weapons, attended by musicians and entertainers, and concluded with hearty drinking bouts.<sup>13</sup> They could also be preceded or followed by theatrical events including plays or elaborate sword-dances, which were highlighted by mock sword fights carried out on raised platforms made up of interlocked swords (called “roses”).<sup>14</sup> Larger competitions were sometimes arranged as part of wedding festivities or other celebrations. In the tradition of the late medieval masters whose methods were recorded in the fight books, expert sportsmen demonstrated their martial skills at these events by fighting not only with swords, but also with pikes, halberds, daggers, and knives. Descriptions of the schools survive as ballads and other celebratory rhymes.<sup>15</sup> More modest schools took place fairly regularly, in some years as often as every two to four weeks.<sup>16</sup> These, too, could apparently inspire aficionados to wax poetic, as demonstrated by a series of chronicle entries that have survived in the household papers of Augsburg weaver Simprecht Kröll. Kröll recorded a number of fight schools that took place in Augsburg during 1551 and 1552, punctuating each of his entries with a simple rhyme or “Fighter’s saying” (*Fechterspruch*). Many of these were less than chivalric; to quote an example from 1552, “I take

11 *bescheidenlich, hitzig*: Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg (hereafter SuSBA), 2<sup>o</sup>Cod. Aug.244, Bürgermeisteramt-Instruktion, 1584, pp. 89–90.

12 *Ibid.*

13 Sigmund Schining, 1539/1552/1566–78 (M6, 3v, 5r); Wassmannsdorf, *Sechs Fechtschulen*, p. 9.

14 Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main (hereafter ISGF), 19/8; Corrsin, *Sword Dancing*, p. 43; Weinitz, “Der Schwerttanz,” pp. 143–5; Liebe, “Der Schwerttanz,” pp. 252–4.

15 Wassmannsdorf, *Sechs Fechtschulen*, pp. 13–31.

16 StANö, R39F5/10, Fechtschule 1534–1618, 1598; Meyer, *Literarische Hausbücher*, vol. 1, pp. 435–49 (from Kröll’s collected notes from c.1547–1552).

joy in God, and in my art; I don't care what's in my opponent's heart. Come what may, I strike away."<sup>17</sup>

Towns and cities allowed and sometimes provided financial and other support for sword-fighting schools because, in theory, fighting with swords was a martial art with military value.<sup>18</sup> But public exhibitions of military skill provided more than just training. Both shooting and sword-fighting competitions served as arenas in which martial reputations were on display, and this was true of the town collectively as well as for individual participants. As regularly argued by sword-fighting masters, the "manly" and "chivalrous" art of sword fighting instilled men with all of the virtues of the martial ethic, including physical competence, courage, strength, and respect for law and fair play.<sup>19</sup> According to theorists of civic republicanism, these martial qualities would naturally translate into good citizenship.<sup>20</sup> Public celebrations of masculine identity with the sword thus provided towns with opportunities to self-fashion themselves as schools of civic virtue.

Ordinances that laid out the rules for organized sword-fighting schools reveal the changing notions of piety and honor associated with the sport as it developed from the fifteenth through the 17th century. Very much like early shooting societies, the 15th-century sword-fighting fraternity of the Marcus Brothers of Frankfurt was founded on the model of a religious confraternity or brotherhood. Thus its members enjoyed the protection of a patron saint (the Evangelist St. Mark, after whom the brotherhood was named) and their early bylaws included requirements for displays of piety including honoring of saints, sponsoring special masses, donating candles, etc.<sup>21</sup> Fifteenth-century sword-fighting regulations are reminiscent of typical craft guild ordinances not only in their religious overtones, but also because they included rules for electing masters and collecting fees and fines. In addition, sword-fighting

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17 Meyer, *Literarische Hausbücher*, p. 448.

18 In late 16th century Bern, the city offered the local sword-fighting master an income sufficient to live on; in other cities willingness to hold sword-fighting schools could be a path to citizenship. Schaufelberger, *Der Wettkampf*, pp. 141–43.

19 For numerous expressions by sword-fighting masters of the chivalric and military virtues of sword fighting see StANö, R39F5/10, Fechtschuele 1534–1618.

20 Machiavelli, *Art of War*, pp. 19–25, 243–57; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 201–02; Schwendi, "Diskurs," pp. 175–80; idem, "Kriegsdiskurs," pp. 192–287; Kluckhohn, "Schwendi," pp. 382–401; Fronsberger, *Von dem Lob*, fol. iv, 184r–v, 24r–8r.

21 See for example the Frankfurt ordinance from 1491, a copy of which was provided to Augsburg in response to a request in 1567: ISGF, Rep. 7 (Ugb A 69), no. 31; Sigmund Schining, 1539/1552/1566–78 (M6, fol. 7r–8r). The Marcus Brothers guild is covered in more detail below.

ordinances incorporated regulations on judging, rules for winning competitions, and clauses designed to ensure that competitions proceeded in proper order.<sup>22</sup> Concern for a fair process is evident in rules requiring multiple judges, drawing lots to determine the order of the competition, and forbidding taunting or interfering with swordsmen during matches.

By the 16th century, more overt reference to notions of martial honor and reputation begin to appear among the rules governing sword-fighting schools, while documents produced in major centers of sword-fighting such as Frankfurt, Nuremberg, and Augsburg increasingly embraced the guild-based moralist tones associated with the Protestant movement. Additions to the Frankfurt ordinance recorded between 1536 and 1544 placed greater emphasis on worldly reputation than on the afterlife, requiring sword masters to live honorable lives, to avoid contact with prostitutes or members of dishonorable trades, and to take an oath to support one another as honor dictated. Also added to the Frankfurt rules during the course of the 16th century were clauses forbidding the sharing of guild secrets, which were typical for all guild ordinances of the period.<sup>23</sup> An Augsburg ordinance probably produced in 1568 expressly forbade unfair fencing practices including interfering with an opponent's sword hand; other "dishonorable moves" known to be inappropriate to the chivalric art of sword fighting were also forbidden, but without being described. Based on other sources, such "dishonorable moves" included stabbing with the point of the sword rather than striking with the blade; hitting the opponent with the pommel; attacks on the eyes or genitals; and, of course, attacks from behind.<sup>24</sup> The Augsburg ordinance also prohibited any insults to honor or other language designed to antagonize the opponent. The implication is that swords should not be crossed in anger, but in a spirit of friendly competition and good sportsmanship.<sup>25</sup> By the 17th century, Frankfurt's requirements for the Marcus Brothers included running to help whenever a guild superior was attacked, a demand that mirrored typical civic defense ordinances requiring all townsmen to rush to the aid of local guard captains whenever they were called.

Because these masculine values were considered appropriate for civic honor as well as military virtue, town councils provided space for the training sessions and sometimes also contributed funds to pay the fencing masters and the

22 Ibid., fol. 8v–9v; Dupuis, "A fifteenth-century fencing tournament," p. 77.

23 Sigmund Schining, 1539/1552/1566–78 (M6, fol. 16r–v); ISGF, Rep. 168, no. 8.

24 StAA, Urgicht Urg. Samuel Probst, 4 December 1595; Lukas, *Geschichte der Körperkultur*, p. 101; Jaquet, "Fighting," p. 59.

25 Sigmund Schining, 1539/1552/1566–78 (M6, fol. 3v–4v).



obligatory guards and musicians, along with other expenses.<sup>26</sup> Sword-fighting competitions were also often organized to take place during major shooting competitions, which were typically accompanied by a variety of other sports including wrestling, footraces, horse races, knife-throwing, and fighting with pole arms. All of these were considered military arts and were thus encouraged by town governments.

This love affair with martial sports reached its heyday during the 16th and early 17th centuries, a period that also represents the high point in the bourgeois culture of the sword. Even during the 17th century, by which time military battles were becoming increasingly dependent on firearms, the sword remained the standard weapon of choice both for spontaneous fights and formal duels. This was not only because swords were more practical in a fight than pistols (which were complicated to load, inaccurate to aim, and less than dependable in firing), but also because of the role of the sword as a socio-political symbol. A sword at a man's side represented his status as a free and honorable citizen. Because the presence of a side arm also implied that the bearer was willing to use it at any time to protect his name, it served as a public marker of a man's honor and reputation. As such, it became an indispensable fashion accessory.

It is also no coincidence, then, that the same period saw the rise of the duel as a masculine ethic. By the later 16th century, duels were common among craftsmen and students as well as aristocrats and military men, leading both to a plethora of ordinances forbidding them and a market for new kinds of fight books. The mass-produced volumes made possible by the advancement of printing targeted men who wished to hone their martial skills both as sportsmen and to protect their reputation in duels of honor.

### 3 Organization and Training in Sword-fighting Sports

By the later 16th century, traveling sword-fighting masters in the German-speaking lands nearly all identified themselves with one of two competing fighting guilds, both of which were active throughout the Holy Roman Empire. Masters of these two schools disputed both organizational points and sword-fighting methods, regularly competing with one another to prove the superiority of their respective approaches. The oldest of them was the aforementioned

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26 SuStBA, 2°Cod.Aug.246, p. 53.

Frankfurt-based school of the “Marcus Brothers” (*Marxbrüder*).<sup>27</sup> The Marcus Brothers were incorporated at some point prior to August of 1487, when Emperor Friedrich III recognized them with an Imperial Privilege. Friedrich’s charter granted the Marcus Brothers the exclusive right to call themselves “Master of the Sword” and gave them a monopoly on holding sword-fighting schools and conferring the title of master on others. In addition, it allowed them to elect officers and to make and enforce rules. This privilege was renewed by each of the Holy Roman Emperors in turn through at least 1669.<sup>28</sup>

A rival organization organized as “Free Fencers” (*Freifechter*), also known as the “Feather Fencers” (*Federfechter*) or “Free Fencers of the Feather,” established their own sword-fighting guild at some point in the later 16th century around a school that originated in Prague. There is some debate concerning the origin of the name *Federfechter*. Theories include reference to a feather pen, representative of the many students among the ranks of the *Freifechter*, which was part of their earliest coat of arms;<sup>29</sup> a deviation from the term *Veiterfechter*, which referred to the organization’s traditional competition for award of the title of Master Fencer on the feast of St. Vitus (*Veit*), patron saint of the cathedral at Prague;<sup>30</sup> or a metaphorical association of the feather with the sword.<sup>31</sup> The establishment of the Prague school set off a period of sharp and sometimes violent competition between the two traditions, although they at times demonstrated a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect as well.

During the first half of the 16th century, the term Free Fencer appears to have referred only to sword fighters who were not yet masters or were otherwise not affiliated with the Marcus Brothers.<sup>32</sup> By the 1570s, however, the

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27 Hans Talhoffer has been credited as a founder of this organization, largely because his coat of arms shared with the Marcus Brothers the iconography of the winged Lion of St. Mark, although this connection is unclear. See for example Behringer, *Kulturgeschichte des Sports*, p. 103. The winged lion symbolizes St. Mark in Christian iconography.

28 ISGF, Rep. 7 (Ugb A 69), Fechtgesellschaft der Marxbrüder und Federfechter, Urkunden 1–32; see also Huhle and Brunck, *500 Jahre Fechtmeister*.

29 Liebe, “Die Ausgänge,” p. 134; Wassmannsdorf, *Sechs Fechtschulen*, p. 8.

30 Lochner, *Die Entwicklungsphasen*, p. 16.

31 Lukas, *Geschichte der Körperkultur*, p. 99; Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence*, p. 30.

32 Meyer, *Literarische Hausbücher*, vol. 1, pp. 435–49. An Augsburg fightschool ordinance produced before 1568 distinguishes between “Masters of the Sword,” presumably Marcus Brothers, and “Free Fencers,” with both described as having studied with qualified sword instructors and authorized to confer teaching status on another: Sigmund Schining, 1539/1552/1566–78 (M6, fol. 2r–2v). This suggests an interim phase in which Free Fencers were a recognized club, but the Marcus Brothers still retained their monopoly on the title Master of the Sword.

Prague school of Free or Feather Fencers were organized enough to provide competition to the Marcus Brothers, leading to some controversy in Frankfurt. The Marcus Brothers' attempt to protect their monopoly began with a supplication presented to the Frankfurt council in 1575, by which time the rival organization had apparently been in existence for some years. "Several years ago," the petition notes, "because of a shortage of masters of the sword among the brothers or Society of Saint Marcus in this free imperial city of Frankfurt, the Free-Fencers were allowed and permitted to announce and hold an open competition [school]." This, the Marcus Brothers insist, was a violation of their privilege as the only recognized sword-fighting guild. They thus demanded that "henceforth, no Free Fencer be permitted to announce or hold any competition." Otherwise, they suggested, they would be forced to seek redress "elsewhere," presumably by appealing directly to the Emperor.<sup>33</sup>

Apparently this demand had little effect, for a year later, the Marcus Brothers were again complaining, this time that, "for reasons we don't know," some of their number had attached themselves to the "Free or Feather Fencers" and turned against the Marcus Brothers, and were now attacking them at the fight schools and elsewhere with threatening words, even insulting them publicly in their posted competition notices. Additional petitions of a similar nature followed annually for the next few years.

By the time the controversy came to an official end in 1607, when Emperor Rudolf II finally provided the Free Fencers with an Imperial Privilege equivalent to that of the Marcus Brothers, there is evidence that the bitter rivalry between the two guilds had settled into a kind of friendly sportsmanship. The earliest known sword-fighting school regulations on record from the Free Fencers, produced in Prague in 1597, explicitly require equal treatment for Marcus Brothers and Free Fencers.<sup>34</sup> In 1608, the Free Fencers ceremoniously invited the Marcus Brothers of Frankfurt to take part in their first official master's training school in Prague, held on the feast of St. Veit, in "friendly" cooperation and "for the honor of their art, and its advancement."<sup>35</sup> The Free Fencers and the Marcus Brothers continued thereafter to hold joint fencing schools and exhibitions, cooperate on requirements for achieving the status of master

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33 ISGF, Rep. 7 (Ugb A 69), no. 19/1, also reproduced in Wassmannsdorf, *Sechs Fechtschulen*, p. 6.

34 Wassmannsdorf, *Sechs Fechtschulen*, p. 7.

35 ISGF, Rep. 7 (Ugb A 69), no. 21.

swordsman, and share experts to act as examiners, sometimes even traveling together to offer their services as wandering masters from both guilds.<sup>36</sup>

The competitive spirit between the two groups continued, however, occasionally leading to less-than-sportsmanlike fights. Locksmith and Free Fencer Andreas Kamersen, for example, after getting drunk in 1605, challenged all of the Marcus Brothers at a fight school taking place in a public house in Nuremberg to fight him with all their weapons, and then “swung a long sword about so that no one was safe from him.” Kamersen had to pay a fine and was banished from participating in sword-fighting schools.<sup>37</sup> In another case a few years later, a Catholic priest challenged two wandering journeymen locksmiths in an inn at the village of Pflaumloch in Württemberg by calling them Feather Fencers and identifying himself as a Marcus Brother. After brawling with the journeymen in the inn, the cleric followed them out of the village and attacked them on the road, wounding one of them fatally.<sup>38</sup> More often, competition between the two groups was less violent, sometimes taking the form of playful public notices in rhyme that disparaged and provoked the rival group in order to challenge them to participate in tournament-style group competitions.<sup>39</sup> Such language suggests a competitive tension not unlike modern sports leagues.

#### 4 Representation: The Case of Paulus Hector Mair

The 16th-century culture of arms encouraged men to keep and bear arms for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was that wearing and using a sword signified masculine identity and honorable status. Because displays of wealth were also important to status and identity during the early modern period, expensive weapons could do double-duty as status symbols, providing men with a potent tool in pursuit of the kind of conscious self-fashioning for which the Renaissance is known.<sup>40</sup> A particularly fascinating case study of the tension between public self-fashioning and early modern constructs of masculine

36 Lochner, *Die Entwicklungsphasen*, pp. 16–18; StANö, R39F5/10, Fechtschuele 1534–1618, c. 1600; Liebe, “Die Ausgänge,” p. 135.

37 Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, Reichstadt Nürnberg Amts- und Standbücher 199, fol. 6v–7r.

38 Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*, p. 187.

39 Wassmannsdorff, *Sechs Fechtschulen*, pp. 10, 33–45.

40 See for example Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*; Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.

honor is provided by the Augsburg apparitor,<sup>41</sup> bibliophile, and sword-fighting enthusiast Paulus Hector Mair. Mair risked everything, and lost, in a hyper-masculine attempt to become just the sort of accomplished scholar, fighter, and man of taste described in Baldassare Castiglione's popular 1528 tract *The Courtier*. His attempt to fashion himself into the ideal early modern man ultimately led to permanent infamy.

A bureaucrat of middle-class origins who had never attended university, Mair entered civil service in 1537 at the age of 20, and within five years had worked his way up the civil servant ladder to a position that was probably as high as his rank would allow. By that time he had also apparently already become obsessed with amassing objects of material and scholarly value in the tradition of the humanists. The collection that resulted included books, treasures, and exotic artifacts, among them at least half a dozen elaborate fight book manuscripts and an arsenal of weapons including around 90 swords. Mair's particular interest in swords as artifacts is underscored by the fact that he included two executioner's swords in his collection, articles which could only be understood as collector's items, since no honorable citizen would use them in a fight.<sup>42</sup>

Mair's attempts at self-fashioning, however, did not stop with collecting. Motivated to represent himself as both a practitioner of the art of sword fighting and a scholar, he put his own stamp on the sport by producing illustrated fight books of his own, the most notable of which is the lavish two-volume manuscript *De arte athletica*, for which he commissioned Augsburg's most prestigious artist, Jörg Breu the Younger, as illustrator.<sup>43</sup> Mair's goal in creating these volumes was less to establish a new school than it was to preserve the art of fighting as it had developed up until his time. Thus his manuscript represented a compilation of 200 years of fighting skills, which he gleaned both from those fight books to which he had access and from skilled sword-fighting masters active during his day. In proper humanist tradition, the book also included a forward outlining the history of the fighting arts since antiquity. Mair produced other written works as well, 41 altogether, in all of which, like his fight books, it is unclear how much of the content represented his own ideas and how much he commissioned from others.<sup>44</sup> It is also not likely that he meant his manuscripts to be printed and circulated for public consumption. Although he reportedly sold his two-volume showpiece *De arte athletica*

41 *Ratsdiener*, an officer of the civil court.

42 Mauer, "Sammeln," p. 123.

43 Paulus Hector Mair, *De arte athletica I/II*, ca. 1542 (M42).

44 Mauer, *Gemain Geschrey*, pp. 30–31.

to Duke Albrecht v of Bavaria in 1567 for the substantial sum of 800 gulden,<sup>45</sup> most of his works remained in his private collection, which according to his will was to be passed on to his heirs “undivided and intact” for the express use of future generations of men in the Mair line.<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately for Mair, the expenses associated with these endeavors far exceeded his income. This did not discourage him from continuing with his hobbies, however. As a civic employee with primary responsibility for numerous council treasuries, including the city’s large Public Building accounts, dipping into the civic till was all too easy to do and, for a man of Mair’s expensive taste, too hard to resist. By the time he was arrested for embezzlement in late 1579, Mair had misappropriated between 32,000 and 40,000 gulden from the city treasury, an amount that exceeded his annual salary (ample enough by early modern standards) by 70 times or more. Mair spent less than three weeks in prison before being executed on December 10, 1579.

Aside from his expressed hope to pass his collected treasures on to his son, there is no record of Mair’s motives for taking such incredible risks, but it is not hard to surmise what might have been at the root of his behavior. Mair’s job put him into close proximity with the town’s wealthiest merchants and patricians, men who were at the pinnacle of civic government. In daily contact with men whose status put them beyond his reach socially, Mair very likely hoped to compensate for what he lacked in rank by seeking a hyper-masculine advantage by other means. Wealth, knowledge, and martial skill were the marks of Renaissance manhood. By demonstrating his success in all of these areas, he could fashion himself into the ideal man and gain honor and reputation for himself and his heirs.

Of course, embezzling from the city treasury in order to meet his goals was predestined to have exactly the reverse effect. Execution in early modern Germany meant dishonor for Mair’s body, his name, and his family, thus the opposite of what he hoped to attain through his extravagant spending habits. Despite the infamy he brought upon himself in his own time, however, his efforts have produced a certain amount of veneration among subsequent generations of fellow sword-fighting enthusiasts. Ironically, in the long view of history, it is probably Mair’s fight books for which he is most remembered rather than his civic disloyalty.

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45 Bodemer, *Das Fechtbuch*, p. 187.

46 Mauer, *Gemain Geschrey*, pp. 30–31.

## 5 Decline of the Old Masters

Paulus Hector Mair provides a spectacular example of the attraction of weapons to many early modern men, but he was hardly the only collector. Both muster lists and probate records reveal that many wealthier citizens maintained impressive personal arsenals. The collection of weapons that Aichstetten citizen Johann Bonnenmayer left behind when he died, which included swords decorated with silver and gold, three pairs of pistols, several guns, and sword belts made of silk and satin was not likely to have been related to his profession as a bursar.<sup>47</sup> Some of the better-off citizens of Augsburg—the men whose lifestyles Mair hoped to emulate—also kept their own armory rooms, outfitted with finely decorated suits of armor, gilded and jeweled swords and knives, and enough weapons to outfit a company of soldiers, including dozens or even hundreds of firearms.<sup>48</sup>

Over the course of the 16th and 17th centuries, weapons stockpiles in burgher households reflect changing technologies that in turn affected masculine fashion. Military fighting, duels of honor, and martial sports all increasingly required new types of weapons and different sorts of martial skills. Already by the mid-16th century, the heavy long swords, pikes, and shields that were standard equipment for the early sword-fighting masters were no longer useful on the battlefield, nor were they practical for daily wear as a personal sidearm. Instead, 16th-century male fashion was dominated by the small sword and the rapier, the weapons of choice for the more elegant courtly fencing styles imported from Italy and France. These smaller swords were easy to carry, thus played an important role in increasing both the practicality and the deadliness of the duel. German sword masters initially condemned the new swords both due to their foreign origins and the style of fighting they introduced, which was based on dangerous thrusts rather than “manly” cuts. But the new style persisted, and by the later 16th century, sword masters typically provided training in both older and newer fighting styles. This trend was also reflected in printed fight books of that era.<sup>49</sup>

Despite these attempts to keep up with the times, the shift to lighter swords and imported fencing styles signaled the beginning of the end for the tradition

47 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, C3 RKG Bü 423.

48 One household was recorded as in possession of 300 muskets: Kraus, *Das Militärwesen*, 85; StAA, Schätze 37/I; StAA, Spreng'sches Notariatsarchiv 1576 no. 3 ½; 1577 no. 50 ½; 1584 no. 32; and others.

49 Joachim Meyer, *Gründliche Beschreibung* (P13, fol. 50r); Peltonen, *The Duel*, pp. 61–4; Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic*, 107–9, 133–45.

of the Masters of the Long Sword. New chapters on rapier techniques notwithstanding, German sword masters continued to depend primarily for their techniques on the longsword fighting traditions established by the late medieval masters, especially Liechtenauer. Illustrative is the popular 1570 text by sword master Joachim Meyer. Although Meyer included a chapter on the rapier, he still described skill with the long sword as the “foundation for all sword fighting” and decried the new style as foreign and less honorable.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, members of the Marcus Brothers school continued to represent themselves as Masters of the Long Sword through the later 17th century.<sup>51</sup> The particular skill set associated with longsword fighting, however, which in the late Middle Ages had been practiced as preparation for war, feuding, and judicial dueling, by Meyer’s time was not so much a military fighting technique as it was a sport.<sup>52</sup>

In light of these developments, Paulus Hector Mair’s costly masterpiece *De arte athletica* represented not only a fitting symbol of the bureaucrat’s personal investment in his own decline, but also a turning point in the history of sword fighting. Produced at the point at which masculine identity with the sword was at its height for German townsmen of middling status, it marked both the end stage of elaborately-illustrated book manuscripts and the beginning of a decline in the status of traveling sword-fighting masters. The bourgeois age of the sword was not to survive beyond the 17th century.

Particularly problematic for the sport of sword fighting was the fact that its connection to military readiness was becoming increasingly less apparent, reducing the motivation of town governments to support what had always been a dangerous exercise. As theologian Zachaus Faber reasoned in his tirade against sword fighting in 1625, the traditional sword-fighting techniques of early modern sword masters had retained little relationship to military tactics, an argument that mirrored similar views by English and French theorists.<sup>53</sup> As battlefield tactics came to be dominated by carefully drilled pike-and-shot formations, cavalry attacks, and field artillery, the lighter rapier became the side arm of choice for close combat in the field as well as in the streets. Meanwhile, household inventories from the 17th century reflect increasing numbers of guns, which by the end of the Thirty Years’ War were considered standard for militia training. Thus although military training remained a stated context

50 Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst*, 137; Leng, “Fecht- und Ringbücher,” pp. 5–6. Meyer’s text was published in five editions between 1570 and 1660 (P13).

51 ISGF, Rep. 7 (Ugb A 69), no. 13–14.

52 Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst*, pp. 9–11; Bodemer, *Das Fechtbuch*, pp. 320–3. Rapier techniques also provided training for fighting duels.

53 Zachaus Faber, *Antimonomachia*, F4r–v; Manning, *Swordsmen*, pp. 214–15.



for the production of printed fight books and the martial ethic a theoretical argument for supporting sword-fighting competitions, the techniques they propagated had lost their practical application as military training. Instead, the practice session had itself become the goal.

In fact, even at their height, sword-fighting schools never attracted as many participants or spectators as competitions with firearms. Teaching sword fighting was not very lucrative as a trade either. Some master swordsmen in larger cities managed to find permanent employment coordinating sword-fighting schools, although they were rarely paid a living wage. A few were lucky enough to find wealthy sponsors who commissioned them to help in the creation of fencing manuals, such as those employed by Paulus Hector Mair. Sponsorship could also come in the form of wealthy spectators, as for example when Duke Friedrich Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was so delighted with the “chivalrous and manly” display of martial skill provided for his entertainment as part of a civic oath ceremony in 1616 that he honored the six sword fighters with a tip of 120 Reichstaler, equivalent to about six months of wages for six common artisans.<sup>54</sup> Few sword masters could count on this kind of support, however. In most cases, once master swordsmen had completed their period of wandering, they either pursued a military career or simply continued to practice their original artisanal trade, possibly organizing an occasional sword-fighting school on the side to earn some spare change or joining competitions when another master happened to come to town.<sup>55</sup>

Those dedicated masters who permanently joined the ranks of other early modern wandering trades ended up struggling to scrape out a living. The desperate state of some of these traveling teachers is evident in supplications to hold schools submitted in Nördlingen during the later 16th century, in which artisan sword fighters stress their condition of “great need” or request a charitable contribution should they be asked to move on in order to help them on their way. Exacerbating the problems of some of these teachers was the fact that their students didn’t always follow through with the agreed-upon fees.<sup>56</sup>

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54 Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (hereafter HAB), A: 46.5.Pol (7), Von der Braunschweigischen Huldigung. One Reichstaler was equal to around 1.2 gulden. The ceremony celebrated the peace settlement that followed the siege of Brunswick, August–November 1615.

55 StANö, R39F5/10, Fechtschuele 1534–1618; Lochner, *Die Entwicklungsphasen*, p. 15.

56 “hohe notdorfft”: StANö, R39F5/10, Fechtschuele 1534–1618, Friderich Hexamer, 1587; see also *ibid.*, 9 February 1592. Frankfurt statutes required local sword masters to provide support for their traveling colleagues: ISGF, Rep. 168, nos. 8, 9, 22.

By the economically troubled 17th century, financial support for traveling sword masters was beginning to be a luxury few cities or their citizens could afford.

Contributing to the decline of longsword fighting was its character as a potentially brutal tournament-style sport. Winning generally depended on inflicting a wound on the opponent, which could be dangerous, and even fatal.<sup>57</sup> If the participants had followed the rules, however, they did not normally face punishment even when a death occurred, as long as the match was deemed to have been fought honorably and in accordance with custom.<sup>58</sup> Representative is the case made by local sword masters in support of the journeyman furrier Samuel Probst, who killed a visiting printer with a blow to the temple during a match in 1595. The sword masters based their arguments in Probst's favor on the fact that he had adhered to the rules of fair play. Probst had fought with restraint, the officials testified, and he and his victim had no known animosity for one another prior to the match. Furthermore, Probst had observed all of the standard rules of competition, using only the flat of the sword and not the point, never rushing at his opponent, and not hitting him with the pommel of the sword or using any other "dishonorable move" that would have been forbidden in a proper fight. Determining that Probst had struck the fatal blow "in the course of the free art of fencing, and not out of any ill will," the local authorities released him without prejudice.<sup>59</sup>

To many spectators, bloody incidents that were not fatal were apparently viewed simply as part of the show, as in modern boxing matches, and were common enough that some cities employed groups of barber-surgeons to stand by during sword-fighting matches in order to treat the wounded.<sup>60</sup> Incidents that may appear horrible to us were made light of in the harsh world of longsword fighting. In 1583, at a competition organized as part of Duke Hans Friedrich of Liegnitz's wedding celebration, spectators apparently had a good laugh at the sight of a powerful locksmith with an artless fighting style getting his nose split in two by a smaller opponent. In descriptions and ballads describing other official matches, the loss of an eye, a finger, or a life were treated merely as unfortunate turns of fate or even acts of God. As the Paddle-Master<sup>61</sup> Wolfgang

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57 Lukas, *Geschichte der Körperkultur*, vol. 1, p. 101; Liebe, "Die Ausgänge," p. 135.

58 StAA, Strafbuch 1608–15, 315r; Strafbuch 1588–96, 258v; Urgicht Samuel Probst, 4 December 1595.

59 StAA, Urgicht Samuel Probst, 4 December 1595.

60 Liebe, "Die Ausgänge," p. 136; Lukas, *Geschichte der Körperkultur*, p. 101.

61 *Pritschenmeister*: a combination jester and disciplinarian whose job included entertaining the crowd at sports competitions with clever rhymes and paddling those who broke

Ferber noted after the death of a fencer in Dresden in 1614, in a response tinged both by tragedy and fatalism, “as so often is the case, sorrow joy does chase.”<sup>62</sup>

Already by Ferber’s time, however, the character of fencing as a blood sport was beginning to elicit disgust among many elite spectators, which fueled a growing campaign against sword fighters primarily from the side of theologians. Anti-fencing tracts countered the military arguments of sword masters not only by pointing out that swords were no longer useful in war, but also by accusing fencers of fighting for the sake of spectacle and exploiting blood lust for income.<sup>63</sup> As the reputation of the old burgher sport of the long sword faded, it was replaced in university and aristocratic circles by the safer sport of fencing with foils introduced by the French. During the 17th century, fencing masters who taught French methods began to occupy permanent positions at court and university, while traditional sword-fighting schools were reduced to tacky side shows at markets and fairs.<sup>64</sup> Traveling sword fighters who charged fees for taking on challengers in events that resembled spectacles more than martial sports were derisively referred to as “thump-fighters” (*Klopf-Fechter*). Equally questionable in the eyes of many established sword masters were those who posted notices declaring their intention to hold independent sword-fighting schools affiliated neither with the Marcus Brothers nor with the Free-Fencers. These independent fighters, whose notices often indicated their willingness to take on all challengers, were eventually labeled Lucas Brothers (*Lux-Brüder*) and disparaged by the established sword-fighting guilds.<sup>65</sup> By the end of the 17th century, the German cities were debating whether they should allow sword-fighting schools at all, and the reputation of the traditional

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minor rules with a special paddle called a *Pritsche*. Paddle-masters often wrote verses after the fact to memorialize shooting and sword-fighting matches.

62 “Also es offtmals ergeht, Daß bey frewd auch ein Leid entsteht”: Wassmannsdorf, *Sechs Fechtschulen*, p. 31; see also *ibid.*, pp. 14–58.

63 Zachaus Faber, *Antimonomachia*, fol. F4r–v; Matthäus Krägelius, *Duellum*, pp. 49–51; Liebe, “Die Ausgänge,” p. 136.

64 Bodemer, *Das Fechtbuch*, p. 58; Liebe, “Die Ausgänge,” pp. 136–7.

65 Lucas brother matches were forbidden in a Marcus Brother ordinance of 1674, and those who were formerly members of the guild were only to be accepted back after payment of a fine and re-appointment by a high authority. The occasional appearance of the term “Lux-Brüder” in 17th century sources has caused some confusion in the literature; contrary to Castle’s oft-cited assumption, it does not refer to a third organized sword-fighting guild. See Castle, *Schools and Masters*, p. 31; also ISGF, Rep. 168, no. 22; Zedler, “Klopf-Fechter,” in *Grosses vollständiges Universallexicon* vol. 15, p. 499; *ibid.*, “Lux-Brueder,” vol. 18, p. 699.

traveling masters of the long sword had become so questionable that the German word *fechten* itself came to be associated with begging.<sup>66</sup>

It is no coincidence that this redefinition of the older sword-fighting traditions from “chivalrous” to “barbarian” coincided with the decline in the role of civic defense systems and the subsequent decline in the artisan fashion of wearing of swords. As civic militias were replaced by professional armies and military service became a temporary stage in a man’s life rather than a permanent identity, identity with the sword declined for civilian men. The process began with 17th-century attacks on the wearing of swords by young journeymen and ended with a near complete monopolization of the right to bear a side arm by elite and military men. Eventually, pistols also replaced swords as the weapon of choice for fighting duels, a logical development in light of a modern shift in emphasis away from winning the duel to simply being willing to take the risk of participating in it. The very fact that pistols were rarely dependable or accurate actually made them more attractive to duelists, for unlike a fight with swords, in which the better fencer was likely to prevail, a pistol duel left a great deal more up to fate. This seemed more appropriate for a duel in which the outcome was less important than the participants’ willingness to face death. For German townsmen, the age of the sword was over.

## 6 Conclusion

Among the lessons of the early modern experience is the evident conclusion that encouraging individual bellicosity by making a virtue out of shedding blood and venerating weapons for their own sake does not promote civic peace. Nor, for that matter, did it lead to an effective military force. That required a redirection of martial culture into a professional army. But the culture of honor and violence created by the practice of civic republicanism during the Renaissance could not be dismantled simply by passing laws against dueling and bloodshed. Rather, it had to be redefined in an extended process of negotiation. It was only with the decline of the cities in the face of rising absolutism that a segregation occurred between civilian and military life.

Interest in martial arts and civic support for them peaked during the 16th and early 17th-century age of civic militias, when all men were socialized to be soldiers. It was during this period that sword fighting reached its height in popularity as a sport, often supported by aristocratic or patrician sponsors and encouraged by town governments. Other martial sports, including target

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66 ISGF, Rep. 7 (Ugb A 69), no. 23; Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 3, p. 1387,1.

shooting competitions and sword dances, also flourished during this period. State sponsorship of martial sports declined with the rise of professional armies, a change that was also accompanied by a shift away from the often bloody, burgher-dominated sport of longsword fighting in the German style towards the more elitist and “civilized” French style of fencing with foils. This was a logical development in a culture in which weapons were not only military tools, but also important symbols of power, status, and individual sovereignty. As the real function of civic defense systems declined, the symbolic value of the weapon as an identifying sign intensified. Once responsibility for public security moved into permanent police and military forces and no longer rested with the male population at large, those at the top of the social scale increasingly worked to establish a monopoly on affairs of honor, labeling popular duels “brawls” and claiming exclusive rights to defense by the sword. In the increasingly status-conscious world of German absolutist thinking, the dress sword became a symbol of social and political power.

The privileged group among which the martial culture of the old sword masters survived longest were university students. The attachment of German academic men to the sword grew out of a tradition that originally trickled up more than down, for sword culture was a fashion that began among townsmen and only later was taken up by students. During the late Middle Ages, most universities expected students to mimic clerics in garb and behavior, which included threats of excommunication for bearing arms. Some universities also forbade students to visit sword-fighting schools.<sup>67</sup> These rules had ceased to be enforceable in Germany by the end of the 15th century. Once wearing a sword had become the norm for artisan men, students insisted on the same privilege, complaining that they were at the mercy of townsmen who made fun of them for going about unarmed.<sup>68</sup> Eventually, the sword, symbol of civic freedom for townsmen, also came to equal “academic freedom” for students.<sup>69</sup> With the subsequent decline of the culture of the sword among the burgher classes, students and professors, who had never been part of the civic militia system, clung to their right to wear a sword as a special academic privilege. Throughout the 18th century and beyond, fencing flourished as a university sport and settling disputes of honor in the fencing hall became an all-too-common feature of college life.

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67 HAB H: L312.4° Helmst., 16–17; Hofmann, *Geschichte*, pp. 572–3; Scheuer, “Das Waffentragen,” vol. 1, pp. 60–62; Meiners, “Kurze Geschichte,” pp. 281–6, 289.

68 Meiners, “Kurze Geschichte,” pp. 284–7.

69 Scheuer, “Das Waffentragen,” vol. 1, pp. 61–7; Meiners, “Kurze Geschichte,” p. 297.

These trends were reflected in bourgeois fashion as well, as can be readily observed by examining the history of dress. As artillery and musketeers were replacing pikeman and harquebusiers on the battlefield and pistols were replacing swords in bourgeois duels of honor, swords were also disappearing from the sides of well-dressed artisan men. Instead, fashionable bourgeois townsmen began to carry elegant walking sticks. By the 18th century, wearing a side arm became a marker only of military men, aristocrats, and students. For students, the fact that duels of honor remained illegal during the 18th century and most of the 19th was actually part of the appeal, for adding the threat of punishment only increased the potential risk; and the greater the danger, the greater the honor to be gained by facing a challenge.<sup>70</sup> The notion that facing a blade was character-building persisted into the modern era, with a scar from a facial injury (*Schmiss*) being worn as an academic badge of honor well into the 20th century.

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70 Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic*, pp. 110–116.

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# Science of Duel and Science of Honour in the Modern Age: The Construction of a New Science between Customs, Jurisprudence, Literature and Philosophy

*Marco Cavina*

## 1 About the “Science of Honour” in Modern Europe

The history of the Science of Honour is the history of the genesis and definition of a doctrine that takes shape in modern Europe at the confluence of different cultures: of jurists, of moral philosophers, of humanists and of courtiers. Each of these cultures has its own history, its own lexicon, its own peculiar morphology.<sup>1</sup>

The Science of Honour has its roots in the debates about the formalisation of the solutions to conflicts within the nobility in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Throughout the centuries it maintained a strong normative (and, in a broad sense, juridical) character. It was cultivated in theory, in teaching and in practice by a specific group of intellectuals, backed-up with the technical and social status of honour experts and professors.

Stately doctrine par excellence, concerning only the nobility, the Science of Honour was a key moment in a young nobleman's education and social awareness of the modern age from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Its greatly specialised literature began to disappear and faded only with the French Revolution, i.e. with the end of the social structure from which it arose. All in all, the Science of Honour during the Ancien Régime was a testing and mixing ground of various strains of humanistic culture, attaining great social, cultural and linguistic relevance.

Painstakingly, accelerating and decelerating, amidst infinite variations, the mystic trial by combat metamorphosed into the courtly duel of honour. Its

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1 About bibliography and problems about history of duelling see Cavina, *Il duello giudiziario*; id., *Il sangue dell'onore*; id., *Duel et hiérarchies d'honneur*; id., *Una scienza normativa per la nobiltà*. I'm preparing a book in English about history of duel and science of honour in medieval and modern Europe.

transfiguration unfolded through social practice. Early on, however, signs of change—faint at first, but ever stronger—made their way into doctrinal reflection. Some had already come to light in the 1200s. Ancient doctrinal problems had verged on resolution, alluding to new and diverse morphologies. The 1300s witnessed the distillation of the idea that the duel was pivotal to class-driven law. The concept of honour cast shifting shadows in the light of ever more audacious interpretations. In the 1400s, the new judicial duel of honour found *terra firma* in both institutional and doctrinal domains. An autonomous doctrinal domain and a specific juridical literature emerged in its entirety in the late fifteenth century with the work of Campania's Paride del Pozzo about duel and honour reconciliation.<sup>2</sup> After him the golden age of the Science of Honour flourished with a stream of treatises not only by jurists, but also by others of various extraction, in a crossroad of knowledge and experience.<sup>3</sup>

The judiciary honour duel was a fight between two men, who following the code of honour were evenly armed in front of a chosen judge, intended to prove and defend a truth which could not be proven otherwise.<sup>4</sup> Such is the definition of a judiciary honour duel provided by the writer of one tract on duelling, the jurist Dario Attendoli of Bagnacavallo. The complex problems which arose from the doctrine of violent judiciary duel and peaceful private reconciliation marked the beginning of the Science of Honour. They were first introduced by the Italian juridical culture of the fifteenth and sixteenth century as an accomplished formalisation of aristocratic customs to resolve frictions and conflicts within the nobility through duel or honour reconciliation: the gentleman's court.

Its judge was the liege lord, endowed with proper jurisdiction, who granted the field of honour through a patent letter and who was identified and agreed upon by both sides through formal procedures. His role was intensely debated within the honour doctrine, but he remained a judge in the true sense of the word. What took place in front of him was a real trial, with a petitioner and a respondent, with exceptions, replies, terms, juridical responses, incidental questions, interlocutory and definitive sentences.

Paride del Pozzo, a native of Castellamare di Stabia, became universally recognized in the centuries to come as the "father of Duelism". Paride wrote his masterwork in Naples at the Aragonese court, an environs suffused with chivalric airs. Here, again, we find traces of the influential legacy of Occitan customs. Nevertheless, Italian intellectuals and the Neapolitan court—the ideal

2 Puteo, *Duello*; Puteus, *Tractatus elegans*.

3 Cavina, *Il sangue dell'onore*; id., *Una scienza normativa per la nobiltà*.

4 Attendoli, *Il duello*, pp. 6–8.

*trait d'union* with the Occitan tradition—were quick to dominate the playing field of cultural scholarship. It represented a particularly propitious scenario for the promotion and evaluation of the nascent science of Duelism, no further than the myth of Alfonso I of Naples, the ‘magnanimous knight’. The Neapolitan milieu showed a unique propensity for the subtleties of honour and duelling, which led to a rich treatise literature. However, the great mid-century duelists of Northern Italy criticized the Neapolitan inclination—for certain Spanish origin—for the clandestine duel, the hidden place (*macchia*), the ambush, and the “point of camaraderie”, a duel fought without courtly refinements.

Puteo was an important and illustrious jurist. Professionally, in addition his extensive teaching, he was man of the Court, holding posts as counselor to Alfonso the Magnanimous and tutor, later counselor, to Ferrante. He presided as an equally high-ranking magistrate, a member of the Sacro Consiglio, the Commissary of the Realm, with special powers for the repression of criminality, and judge of the Vicaria. In 1472, he published the hefty treatise *De re militari*. Divided into eleven books, the work's common title was *De duello*, since Paride focused solely on the judicial duel of honour, a practice of nobles and men-at-arms. Then between 1475 and 1478, he issued a version in Italian, shortened to nine books and largely stripped of its formal citations. Furthermore, he substantially redirected its content “toward the usefulness of all nobles, and brave knights”. In Italy, a legal treatise had never before been published in the common tongue. Paride justified his choice, explaining that he aimed to write an essay on the defense of a right—honour—that pertained to class whose average member did not read Latin.<sup>5</sup>

We have already observed the problem of what type of “knowing” or discipline ought to be the frame of reference for the duel of honour. Paride ignored the armsmen (*sileant milites*) who demanded the autonomy of their customs. In his opinion their principle could be boiled down to a simple maxim: “the sword is the law” (*ius est in armis*). According to Paride, the law never lay in arms, even in the matter of a duel. Rather it must derive from jurists' rational interpretation of legal texts.

Puteo did not revolutionize the framework at its foundations, nor did he arrange a sort of mosaic from incongruous ideas and customs. He was a jurist and reasoned as such. Instead, he conducted a complete systematization of the customary practice of duel of honour via common law (*iure communi*). In so doing he followed tried-and-true analogies with trial process, war, and torture. At the root of it all lay a clear *a priori*: the essential reconfiguration of

5 Puteo, *Duello*, f. 11r–12v.

the duel of honour into a new form of judicial duel. A criterion would be necessary to winnow, rework, and reutilize the existing literature. It must not be misled, however, by any extemporaneous appeals to Divine judgment. These constituted mere pretexts for the legalization of a duel that was, in reality, morphologically identical of the laical duel of honour. Paride justified the incorporation of noble-military consuetude into common law on at least four counts: the universalism of the common law (*ius commune*), the acknowledgement *in corpore iuris* of a specific martial law (*ius militare speciale*), the necessary union of force (*arma*) and law (*leges*) for an orderly society, and the prudence of avoiding any situations outside the jurisdiction of “written” law, which would entrust the matter to the sole discretion of social factions.

This marked a considerable shift from past literature. Paride treated duellistic procedure not through few exemplary cases (*in apicibus*), but at its very heart. *De duello* broke ground for a new treatise genre, synthesizing nearly all of the technical and cultural problems of the duel. Ultimately he could not resolve every issue, but he made a valiant attempt. As in the doctrinal style of common law, he often proffered multiple formulations, expressing—though not always, and not always clearly—his preference for one over the others. The reader, especially if he or she were not versed in the epoch’s juridical language might find him or herself disoriented and unable to comprehend the author’s position on various contradictory theses. Thus along with ample praise, critics harped on Puteo’s obscurity, linguistic clumsiness, general disarray, and systematic imperfection.<sup>6</sup> These were all easily remediable shortcomings, but we must consider that this work pioneered an entire field of study. In the 1470s, the very idea of the juridical treatise took its first, unsteady steps. And moreover no exhaustive works on the duel of honour yet existed—Paride was the first to propose and execute one.

Above all, in opting for the common language, he faced immense lexical obstacles. His solution was no less than a “language” of the duel, originating from “spoken” customs an idiolect—*rechiesto/rechieditore, guagio, stomesa, stomettitori, defalta, schifare, reprozare*, etc. He adopted this vocabulary, and subsequent literature cemented its use. Paride set out to achieve a strong practical treatment of the duel, in his capacity not only as a great magistrate, but also as an esteemed chivalric counsel.<sup>7</sup> He apparently knew how to answer a deep exigency, for his treatise saw immediate, extravagant success. Europe witnessed its repeated reprinting and translation, even into Spanish. Throughout the future of Duelism, it was revered as a great, if not the greatest, *authority*.

6 Conradus, *Commentaria de duello et pace*, f. 93–97.

7 Puteo, *Duello*, f. 73rv.

Suffice it to say that by the mid-1500s, when Susio aimed to choose an exemplary scholar as the target of his anti-Duelism invective, the blow fell on Puteo.<sup>8</sup>

Just a few years after the publication of *De duello*, a contemporary and compatriot of Paride's took up the baton. We refer to the noted feudalist Matteo degli Afflitti. In writing on the duel, specifically in cases of homicide unpunishable by execution, he reminisced fondly about his friendship with Puteo. But he contested his colleague's thesis that duel should be admissible with an authority's discretion (*cum licentia principis*).<sup>9</sup> Undoubtedly more faithful to the theological ban than to Paride, Matteo resolved to add two requirements to Baldus's five. These stipulated that the parties belong to the knightly militia and, above all, that they received the Pope's express permission, for he was the only one with the power to ward off the incumbent mortal sin.<sup>10</sup> But beyond discrete technical solutions, Puteo's ponderous essay delivered an overarching message. The duel, sole right of nobles and armsmen, was a juridical institution valid only by virtue of custom and local law. However, common law would provide the only structure on which to build a harmonious, coherent system, so as to completely discipline its often violent vicissitudes and to rationally quell every question unearthed by its praxis.

Paride's premise lay in the public nature of the institution. *De duello* insisted forcefully on the duel's judiciality. It attenuated the specificity of the chivalric duel and circumscribed its contractual aspect, thus distancing it ever further from the ancient *ordalium* model. Yet another aspect permeated Paride's treatise: the aggressive limitation of the judicial duel of honour as fundamental to its legalization by *iure communi*. Jurists since the times of Roffredo had prioritized the duel's maximal restriction. Their rhetoric affirmed that it would be impossible to eradicate the 'odious matter' completely. Legal treatise literature and its 'manner' in dealing with the duel developed on the basis of these two highly correlated processes—validation and limitation.

As authors, common law jurists circumscribed noble-military practice, if only to standardize its terms, conditions, procedures, and documentation. As legal counsels they tended to promulgate themselves as experts in the "flight from a duel" (It. *fuga dal duello*). People would turn to such advisors if they found themselves mixed up in a challenge to duel by compulsion (*obtorto collo*) and intended to withdraw, without jeopardizing honour by doing so. The jurist allowed the duel only if it had been fully subsumed into the empyrean of common law, with all the corollary procedures, precautions, and 'tangles' they

8 Susio, *I tre libri della ingiustitia del duello*.

9 Afflictis, *Commentaria in libros feudorum*, f. 45.

10 Afflictis, *Commentaria in libros feudorum*, f. 45vb.

brought with them. The jurisprudence of honour by *iure communi* came across all too often, therefore, as an arsenal of subterfuges and possible escape routes from the bloody conflict.

Duelism proliferated wildly after Paride's work in the first half of the 1500s.

## 2 Honour Professors: The Controversy about the New Science between Jurists and Non-jurists

The early appearance of a non-judicial literature, meant to replace the literature written by "official" jurists, can be explained mainly as a reaction to the distortion of aristocratic ethics in the nexus of civil law. It was basically a reaction of the noblemen, who found their natural expression in the honour language and who found themselves constricted within the jurists' formal Roman-canonical framework. Such a reaction fuelled the long dispute about the best equipped and qualified cultural framework to regulate duelling, pitting the civil law, the humanistic-courtly approach (from Girolamo Muzio<sup>11</sup> to Giacomo Leonardi<sup>12</sup>) and the Aristotelian philosophical paradigm (from Antonio Bernardi<sup>13</sup> to Giambattista Possevino<sup>14</sup>) against each other. Within this context the controversy manifested itself among these disputes about different cultural approaches and doctrines that are familiar to the scholars of the early modern age.

Truth be said, the experts of aristocracy and military disputes were an old breed. Theirs, however, was mainly an oral tradition, enmeshed into the depth of the social practice. Only later it was formalised and found its expression in a specific literature, meant amongst other things to confront the jurists' hegemony which until then had remained unchallenged.

The first warnings of the nobility's rejection of the jurists' framework can be traced to the beginning of the sixteenth century. Pietro Monti, author of *De singulari certamine* printed in Milan in 1509, was the first to express it. Little is known about the author, except his bizarre wandering from theological studies to the military profession. Even his nationality, either Italian or Spanish, is uncertain. Monti targeted honour reparations through duel or reconciliation. In the jurists' treatises they appeared to him too loaded with formalisms and subtleties. Nobility, according to him, needed honour alone, without any

<sup>11</sup> Muzio, *Il duello*.

<sup>12</sup> Leonardi, *Pareri*; id., *Libro del Prin. Cavalliero*.

<sup>13</sup> Cavina, *Res diversae*.

<sup>14</sup> Possevino, *Dialogo dell'honore*.

procedural puzzle. Such artificial complexity, he claimed, was a sign of plebeian mistrust, fit for merchants, but foreign to the soul of a nobleman. The framework of the civil law appeared to him incongruous precisely because it neglected the stately nature of honour. To him, civil law was a vulgar creation by plebeian souls.<sup>15</sup>

The jurists' reply was prompt. Only a few years later Diego del Castillo lambasted Monti, guilty of trespassing into jurists' land and of questioning the juridization of honour disputes with the civil law.<sup>16</sup> After their quarrel the controversy became thicker. Fifteen years later Belisario Acquaviva recorded the great variety of opinions about stately honour among "civilian" and "military" jurists (*inter civiles ac militares iurisconsultos*<sup>17</sup>). Beside the one based on civil law, a second, heterodox and composite framework was formalised and established.

According to Giacomo Leonardi, who gravitated around the Urbino court, around the middle of the sixteenth century the equity-based doctrine of the honour teachers had finally prevailed on the quibbles and subtleties of the jurists, who had clumsily passed themselves off as noblemen. Leonardi describes them as: those make-believe knights of the bygone times of Paride dal Pozzo and of our times too, before the Duke Francesco Maria and his son Guidobaldo shed light on chivalry, which now consists more in being held than in wanting to be held. Those who practiced this profession of counsels and of writing cartels had certain subtleties, which were quarrelsome and ridiculous. A few years before, Fausto da Longiano had already touched upon the twisted ways of bygone times, when only "pure legal doctors handled the issues of duel", in contrast to the present, where "the knights have taken back the sceptre of the kingdom of honour".<sup>18</sup>

In his *Faustina*, a pamphlet polemicizing against Fausto da Longiano's publication,<sup>19</sup> Muzio proclaimed explicitly that: the true laws of honour are written in the hearts of those who know about those things [...] and who have dealt with them extensively not only in writing, but in practice. In this profession the doctors of civil laws should yield to those, in the same way as they want others to yield to them in their own profession.<sup>20</sup>

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15 Montius, *De singulari certamine*.

16 Castillo, *De duello*.

17 Aquivivus, *De venatione*, p. 14.

18 Fausto da Longiano, *Duello*, pp. 159–160.

19 Fausto da Longiano, *Discorso*.

20 Muzio, *La Faustina*, p. 45.



By nature Muzio was not keen on extreme positions. There was in him a constant tendency towards mediation, which led him to draw extensively on the civil law. On the other hand, his technical choices were fully consistent with his proposal of a model of public duel corresponding strictly to stately customs. His goal was finding a balance, a meeting point. "This matter is commonly treated by two types of people", he wrote:

That is by knights and by doctors. The former find guidance only in what they learn from experience, the latter base their opinion only on what they find in their papers. I have tried hard to create a new mix of the doctrine of these and of the experience of those, seasoning it with my own investigations. I hope the result will please those whose taste is not too fastidious.<sup>21</sup>

In this respect Muzio can be rightly regarded as the founder of an autonomous Science of Honour, distinct from the juridic doctrine which was hegemonic until then. He codified the stately customs and did not renege on their juridical heritage. He rather shaped the matter anew and moulded it into a system, using an inherently non-judicial method, searching for a rationalization within the composite culture of the Renaissance courtiers.

A typical intellectual in a time of change, between Renaissance and Counter-Reformation, opportunistic and eclectic, Muzio inveighed extensively against the evangelical Vergerio, who cursed him as a bloody duellist. He also argued with humanists who opposed duel, such as Susio, as well as with others whose enthusiasm for duel he found excessive, such as Fausto. In every situation he perceived himself as a boulder of orthodoxy against raging heresy: having extensively fought against two kinds of heretics, those who are enemies of the Holy Seat, and the others who with their false doctrines and fake examples defile the religion of chivalry.<sup>22</sup>

Stately honour, according to Fausto da Longiano, was not one among many profiles of the human condition in society. It was, on the contrary, a basic expression of humanity in its highest dimension. It was a product of Nature, which men had studiously regulated. It was pointless to resort to legal prohibitions against the "religion of honour, established by heroic and illustrious people, founded on virtue as on firm and solid rock". The civil law instead appeared to him as inherently contingent, mired in history, cultivated by malicious and venal interpreters.<sup>23</sup>

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21 Muzio, *Il duello*.

22 Muzio, *La Faustina*, p. 3.

23 Fausto da Longiano, *Duello*.

The Aristotelian philosopher Antonio Bernardi argued further that, if civil law was rooted in illustrious Roman laws, the Science of Honour was founded on the eternal laws of Nature. In the civil law, followed only in a minuscule part of the world, anything and its opposite could be maintained. The laws of honour, approved everywhere on earth, were immutable and eternal. Such an approach allowed Bernardi to develop a rather unfashionable argument, meant to legitimize honour duel within moral philosophy. The Science of Honour, on a par with jurisprudence and the art of war, existed only by accident, since men could not live virtuously unless constrained. The duel, worked out by the practitioners of the art of war, was not good in itself, but it became good in its proper historical context, since it allowed to avoid worse evils of blood and revenge. The topic of honour and injury had hence to be considered within moral philosophy, as “politics on customs”, and not within “politics on laws” i.e. juridical science.<sup>24</sup>

For sure the Science of Honour of the seventeenth century, in its full maturity, presented itself within an autonomous doctrinal framework, where the remnants of the civil law were just one, and not the most significant, among several viable conceptual blueprints. Yet the reordering of the different cultural strains within the Science of Honour involved also such promiscuous jurists as Giulio Claro<sup>25</sup> and Francesco Birago,<sup>26</sup> juggling Roman laws and the norms of modern honour.

### 3 From Italy to Europe

“Here is what I heard” wrote Brantome<sup>27</sup> “and learned from the great Italian captains, who were once the first founders of these duels and of their points of honour”. In Europe the Science of Honour was perceived essentially as a product of Italian culture, but after the end of the sixteenth century it spread like wildfire to the rest of the continent.

The culture of honour spread widely throughout Europe during the great European wars. The Italian Wars in the first decades of the sixteenth century created a uniform duelling culture along Italian guidelines out of the chivalric practices of Latin Europe, in Italy, France and Spain. The Thirty Years’ War, from 1618 to 1648, brought the normative culture of aristocracy and military honour to Central and Northern Europe, from Denmark to Sweden, from

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24 Bernardus, *Disputationes*, pp. 130–132.

25 Claro, *Trattato di duello*.

26 Birago, *Opere cavalleresche*.

27 Brantome, *Discours sur les duels*.

Poland to Hungary. Finally, through the Napoleonic Wars the language of honour was permanently settled in Russia.<sup>28</sup> Contemporaries were aware of its European and modern character. “The Turks”, wrote Brantome “sneer at our disputes, duels, private killings. They put their whole point of honour at the service of their lord and to support his cause in war. The ancient Greeks used to say that duels were for barbarians. The brave ancient Romans shared the Greeks’ and Turks’ opinion.<sup>29</sup> Reportedly the ambassador of the great Sultan Suleyman attended the ill-famed duel between Jarnac and La Châtaigneraye, expressing his surprise that a mortal combat between two gentlemen at the royal court would be permitted.

Still in the late sixteenth century the Science of Honour was largely Italian, although the works of its main authors were well-known by noblemen and soldiers in a large part of Europe, where they exerted a manifold, durable and penetrating influence, both technically and ideologically, on aristocracy and military ethos and practice. This success is testified by the indisputable editorial fortune of Italian treatises, repeatedly translated in the main national languages. Between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, however, an increasingly large literature appears especially in France, but also in Germany, in England and in the rest of Western Europe. The Science of Honour was already the normative glue of the continental ruling estate.

The words of aristocracy and military honour arose from customs. It was elaborated by the writers of tracts, expressing stately ethics and aspirations, without and against the strategies of the fledgling absolutist states. The nobleman was the bearer of arms *par excellence*, a fighter or at least someone who knew the profession of arms. He could not avoid duel by claiming incapacity, negligence or lack of interest for the military craft. The profession of arms in turn ennobled also the commoner, whose role was increasingly important in the wars of the early Modern Age.

The State should not interfere with honour. The right of the man-at-arms preceded any state law, since it was woven into the archetypal order of the world. According to Muzio, God Himself as God of armies was the “general captain of all knights”.<sup>30</sup> State authority could do nothing against the ancient and universal laws of honour. Muzio warned that even the ruler must either “not meddle” or limit himself to a strict application of the “usual style” and “usual customs” of the nobility. The rulers had no power to grant or take away honour. Even against his explicit will, even at war, even in a besieged city, the

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28 Cavina, *Il sangue dell'onore*.

29 Brantome, *Discours sur les duels*.

30 Muzio, *Il duello*, p. 167.

knight must to cross swords with whomever had insulted him. He must, Muzio exclaimed, “throw himself from the city walls, to go and defend his honour”.<sup>31</sup>

The whole ruling estate of the ancient régime expressed and perceived themselves within the honour language. The nobility regarded the court of honour as the linchpin of their very existence. The laws of honour were free from any external authority. Even the authority of the family, the most sacred of hierarchies, had to yield, together with the authority of the state. The noble or military son claimed the right to duel even against the will of his father, “one’s own honour is more compelling than paternal authority”. Paride del Pozzo stated that Nature had given man soul and body before country and family, hence it was more important to fight for one’s own honour than for one’s own country, family or parents.<sup>32</sup>

Before the Council of Trent the point of view of the nobility became visible without feigning in the works of Domenico Mora, a nobleman who practiced the profession of arms in the wars all over Europe. According to him, the knights had the full and inalienable right to decide autonomously their own disputes, according to the laws of honour and with their own specific sanctions, that is the “blame of insult and of infamy”, acknowledging as their judges only the rulers or their military leaders. The knights were the fittest and the best “makers of laws”, the only estate capable of governing equitably the society in its entirety. Their right, their equity arose from a superior sensitivity and had no need of literary or bookish culture. Mora nurtured a deep hatred against the civil law, against jurists and their doubtful, crooked and plebeian law. For him it was intolerable that in Italy, as he bitterly wrote, “in some places a shepherd turned into judge, for four letters learned by heart, pedantically, in some nobleman’s house, could let a knight be incarcerated for a quibble”. His argument culminated inevitably in a rabid and profane invective: “I swear as a Christian [...] that if I could, I would burn all the legal and theological tracts.”<sup>33</sup>

Duel went so far as questioning the religious order, blasphemically usurping divine justice. More precisely, it introduced a kind of heterodox creed, which Fausto da Longiano along with many others called “the religion of chivalry”.<sup>34</sup> The conflict between the Christian principles and the honour was obvious and irreducible. Claro wrote:

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31 Muzio, *Il duello*, pp. 32–34.

32 Puteo, *Duello*, p. 66.

33 Cavina, *Il sangue dell'onore*, p. 65.

34 Fausto da Longiano, *Duello*.

If someone will say that [duel] is inimical to Christ's law, I will not deny that it is so. I will even say that all the honour laws of the knights, observed with such diligence, are contrary to the Christian law, which orders us, when someone hits us with a slap on one cheek, to turn the other cheek so as to receive another slap. Therefore one should not think that the laws of honour are written for those who want to be perfect within the Christian religion, knowing that it is impossible to please at the same time men and Christ [...]. The honour of our times is repugnant to God.<sup>35</sup>

Claro, on his own, set honour above everything else. It was not by chance that he left his im politic treatise on duel unpublished.

For sure, there was also a copious stream of counter reformist honour treatises, piously exalting Christian forgiveness as the key to honour reconciliation. But the soul of the nobility remained entrenched on ethical positions far away from churchly teachings imbued with incense and holy water. This is revealed by recent studies on the praxis of the so-called aristocratic violence. It is testified also by a good part of the most authoritative post-tridentine Science of Honour, marked by an overall agreement on limiting, when not ruling out, the possibilities of Christian forgiveness in honour disputes. A specific normative science was built on such cultural and social specificities and on this scientific statute.

#### 4 The Debate on Method

Dialectics between jurists and honour professors developed both at the methodological and at the substantial level. As for method, the honour professors were attuned and familiar with argumentation by way of equity, precedents and customs. Every technical or practical problem must be solved not by perusing a tract, but through the intuition of a substance, of a guiding value. Such value was honour, as perceived by the estate.<sup>36</sup>

It was massively common to resort to "example", a rhetorical tool widely used within medieval and Renaissance culture. Example was an ancient argumentative tool, defined already by Aristotle and Cicero, intertwining emotivity and rationality, image creation and logical procedure.<sup>37</sup> The specific morphology of the honour laws stressed the relevance of exemplary cases even

35 Claro, *Trattato di duello*.

36 Billacois, *Le duel*; Cavina, *Il sangue dell'onore*.

37 Billacois, *Le duel*.

in the writings of the jurists. An intimately customary matter could only lead to a more generous usage of examples and precedents, even if they were not regarded as binding by the jurists. Paride dal Pozzo himself had amply resorted to examples, but in the jurists' argumentation the example usually hovered between a pedagogical and an ornamental function. The argumentative framework was structured along the scholastic tradition of the commentators of the civil law. In this perspective the jurist Giulio Ferretti of Ravenna acidly attacked the noblemen's mentality, accustomed to acknowledging the value of examples more than that of laws and reason.<sup>38</sup>

If we consider the highly authoritative opinions on honour disputes written by the nobleman Luigi Gonzaga, it is clear that every problem was solved on the basis of examples, customs of chivalric equity, with a very limited recourse to civil law. Such examples, needless to say, were drawn from the arguments of other honour professors, i.e. from other specific stately authorities, who defined the relevant customs. Such were, to name but a few among many, the "infallible" Duke of Urbino Francesco Maria I della Rovere, Antonio di Leyva, Ferrante Gonzaga, Guido Rangoni, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. When Luigi Gonzaga pointed out a thesis by Paride del Pozzo, he stated that he did not cite him "as a jurist, but only as the most ancient and approved relator of many military things". He considered Paride's treatise relevant only in as much as it recorded other honour cases, as a repository of certified experiences.

In other words, the example was the basic argumentative unit of the most ancient stately culture. It constituted its stylistic code, whose root was not a systemic theory, but the practice of honour. Stately equity could train and perform on the example. The example itself could be considered embodied equity. The argumentative framework was hence shaped as a 'chrestomathy of citations', rather than structured as an orderly system of rules. Honour disputes had to be resolved according to an ancient experiential memory and to a "wisdom" woven with personal and collective experiences. The authority of the laws of honour, stately as it was, was to be built on such experience and not on the syllogisms of the legists.<sup>39</sup>

## 5 An Example of the Code of Honour: Building the Offense

If we pass to the substantial problems, it is easy to see that such different methods and approaches led to diverging solutions in almost every honour issue,

38 Ferretti, *Consilia*, p. 13.

39 Gonzaga, *Parere*.

from insult to reparation. However in practice one finds often hybrid solutions, where juridical lexicon and conceptualization mix, more or less harmoniously, with products of humanistic and philosophical culture.

In order to exemplify such mixing, let us consider a few insult profiles. In 1555 Rinaldo Corso wrote that “there is an overall difference [...] between us and the written laws when it comes to considering insults [...] Such difference comes from the offence”.<sup>40</sup> Leonardi underscored the contempt inherent to the insult hurtful to honour, diversifying the lexicon of about the concept of insult:

*Ingiuria* is something done against reason by someone who means to do it in dishonour and contempt of the one who is injured. *Offesa* is an *ingiuria* for which a man can bring his quarrel to the court either of ordinary justice or of arms. *Contumelia* is similarly an *ingiuria*, but not such that one can always bring action. It is true that this and the expression of contempt have the same meaning and it can be taken within the same definition as *ingiuria*. *Carico* is a proper expression which presupposes resentment for received insult. *Peso* is a word which can be without manifest injury, but that one’s honour is found either in under risk or in doubt so that he has the burden of resolving, like one who has a powerful enemy offended by him, we say that he has a big weight on his shoulders.<sup>41</sup>

Both notions, inequality and contempt, were basically absent in the conceptual structure of insult in the civil law. Both implied the primary bound between insult to honour and aristocratic status. *Ingiuria* figured above all as a malicious and hostile action or message relating to another subject belonging to the same estate.

The honour offense could in fact take place only between subjects, occupying similar levels of estate and hence of social honour. The two sides, equals by estate, became unequal. The contempt expressed by the offender dishonoured the offended and made him unequal, that is inferior, since it excluded him from the civilized conversation of honourable gentlemen, short of an adequate reaction or reconciliation. In short, it excluded him from nobility and from all its privileges.

Offenses hurt honour in as much as they were signs, indicating a precise will to ginsay the honour of the offended and the legitimacy of his status within

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40 Corso, *Delle private rappacificazioni*, p. 15.

41 Leonardi, *Libro del Prin. Cavalliero*, c. 80.

the noblemen's community. The juridical figure of injury was cast into categories where the memory of civil law became inevitably vague.

Offenses were also signs impregnated with symbols, ancient as well as recent, arranged in a rigorous taxonomy, projected on customs. Such a taxonomy was further elaborated by the writers of tracts according to the models of the chivalric imagery, from a modest cuff to more extreme expressions of contempt, such as pulling the beard or bludgeoning.

The whole scenery was dominated by the cleansing of the insult by the sword, the cruciform symbol of the knight. The offender's blood, spilled through the sword of the offended, cleaned any honour stain. As Claro wrote:

The cuff is the punishment of children and servants, clubbing of donkeys and villains, hence it's no surprise if who receives them remains dishonoured. But the offense made with arms does not cause insult, since the sword is the knights' weapon, noble instrument and found only for the defense of honour and not to insult others. Hence he who is wounded is offended as a knight and as a soldier and as a nobleman.<sup>42</sup>

The slap or the beating conveyed the contempt of the offender, marking his a sense of superiority. Disputes among knights were resolved by the sword, but the same knights used the stick to deal with the artisan, the merchant or the impertinent villain. Significantly, the wounds by the sword were no longer neutral acts of justice, but became sources of insult, if they were inflicted not by cutting or piercing blows, but with the flat of the sword, that is using the sword as if it were a stick, "since he who uses his sword hitting with the flat of the blade is not using it as a sword, but as a stick".<sup>43</sup>

In such a context a crucial role continued to be played by education to injury, to the "art of the injury" and to the capacity to understand exactly the signs of injury as signs of communication and dispute within the estate, according to hermeneutical codes formalized by the professors of honour. Obviously this art was important for the passive subject in order to interpret received offenses. It was also important for the active subject in order to calibrate and tune his offense in a way consistent with his strategies. In the middle of the seventeenth century the "honour scientist" Berlingiero Gessi, who belonged to an important senatorial family of Bologna, wrote extensively stressing that it was necessary that noblemen study "on paper the value of those terms of honour, that are sure guides on the path to glory". The most successful of his essays,

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42 Claro, *Trattato di duello*.

43 Claro, *Trattato di duello*.



*Lo scettro pacifico* and *La spada di honore* became mandatory readings for any self-conscious Italian nobleman of those times.<sup>44</sup>

It was a science and a tradition that remained still fully vital in all Europe in the first half of the eighteenth century, although the rationalistic and early illuministic critiques were already spawning its crisis. A speech by the nobleman Girolamo Grassi about the “bad way to injury” enlightens the analytical subtlety and refinement of the Science of Honour around 1720. The topic was still improper injury, according to the perceptions of courtesy and kindness. Not only the injury through abuse of power, a concept developed by the Italian treatises and adopted all over Europe, but also the injury with betrayal, the hapless injury and several others, including the injury carried out in a bad way. It was essential to differentiate them in order to understand the substance carried by the offending sign. It was also necessary in order to understand the modalities of the reaction and of the possible reconciliation.<sup>45</sup>

In conclusion, in the first decades of the eighteenth century knowing how to offend and how to react to offenses was still an essential element in the education of nobility.

## 6 A Centuries-old Problem in the Honour Code: The Honour Peace

Is it ever possible to pacify Mars, the god of war? Or even only the noble soldiers, who had in war and in duel their own beloved distinctive stately symbol?

In order to answer this question we have first to address the problematic nexus between aristocratic customs, duel, civil law and religion. The specific honour literature infiltrated the ground between juridical and honour science. It did not arise as a proper emanation of that estate which had produced first duel and then honour science. It appeared rather as a gradual framing and disciplining of the original and authentic aristocratic ethos within the framework of scholarly law and of official religion.<sup>46</sup>

The first systematic studies on honour peace are those by Rinaldo Corso, who in 1555 published the treaty *Delle private rappacificazioni*, where he formalised honour peace in a juridical perspective with markedly religious undertones. His cultural code is entirely located between civil law, Humanism and a very intense religiosity. Corso wrote that “there is no doubt that discussing one and the other of these peaces and yet about war is something that con-

44 Gessi, *Lo scettro pacifico*; id., *Pareri*; id., *La spada di honore*.

45 Cavina, *Una scienza normativa per la nobiltà*.

46 Cavina, “Pacifier les dieux de la guerre”.

cerns the jurists, since they have as object the three laws: natural law, law of the nations, civil law". The peace negotiated among private actors, better defined as "reconciliation" by Corso, was perceived as rightful and Christian, in tune with public order.<sup>47</sup> Since two years before Lancellotto Corradi in Milan had titled his treaty "on duel and peace".<sup>48</sup> But, in the literature about duel, reconciliation had played until then an ancillary role, limited to a few pages at the end of honour treatises. Reconciliation had always presented itself as an exception to the rules of the arms. Corso inaugurated, on the other hand, an extensive literature, marked by a strong counter-reformist flavour, which in fact disacknowledged aristocratic ethics or, even better, disciplined and reshaped it according to the patterns of full Catholic and political orthodoxy.

The friction between authors such as Corso and aristocratic culture was obvious. The Gordian knot here was identifying forms and modalities which could be somehow shared by aristocratic-ethics, since, as Muzio wrote, "to give satisfaction is regarded as cowardice by common people".<sup>49</sup> According to aristocratic ethics, asking for reconciliation or acceding to it appeared almost inherently dishonourable. Giulio Claro was quite sceptical about the very possibility of an effective honour reparation through reconciliation:

It is very easy to make peace, be the offense as grave as it may, but to make a peace so that neither one side's honour nor on the other's remain offended is so difficult that I regard it as almost impossible, because of this I have always refrained from meddling in the specific tracts of reconciliations [...] [Whenever] I have insulted someone with mendacious words and I get involved in reconciliation, if I back off I offend my own honour and I remain forever blemished as a coward, if I do not back off and I do not retract my words in favour of my opponent he will not remain satisfied.<sup>50</sup>

In order to understand the difficulty of an honour peace one must however first understand the authentic meaning of the honour wound, which could be properly healed only by the resort to arms. As Possevino wrote, the offended's main concern is not giving proof of the truth or falsity of a defamatory accusation or of a slander. He must above all demonstrate to the world "that he

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47 Corso, *Delle private rappacificazioni*.

48 Conradus, *Commentaria de duello et pace*.

49 Muzio, *Il duello*, p. 101.

50 Claro, *Trattato di duello*.

is a honourable man and not worthy to be despised or insulted".<sup>51</sup> He must reiterate, in other words, his own extrinsic honour, the proper social honour belonging to the estate of nobleman, from which he would be excluded by the load of offense.

Through his scornful and superior attitude the offender questioned the legitimacy of the offended's status within the aristocratic estate. The offender's task was then to demonstrate to the world that he did not deserve to be insulted. From this one can deduce how difficult, if not impossible, an authentic reconciliation in this realm would be. Strictly speaking, reconciliation, according to the treatise writers, could only leave aside the actors' honour. It could work only through a more or less artificial reconstruction of the offense modalities. Therefore the handbooks for the peace-makers analysed in detail the possible objective and psychological circumstances that could nullify the offense, such as ignorance, joke, or reasons beyond one's control. If the offense was inequality, reconciliation was reduction to equality. Technically however it was the so-called 'satisfaction' that restored the offended's honour and reintegrated him into his estate. Unlike reconciliation, satisfaction led to the honour of one of the actors, but at the same time to the infamy of the other. If the offender acknowledged in some way his fault either in words or losing a duel, the offended's honour was satisfied, but the offender remained defamed.<sup>52</sup>

Outside this whole framework was adjustment by mercy or pure forgiveness, which could take place, without honour charge, only in favour of subjects belonging to a lower estate. In fact an essential condition for duel as well as for reconciliation was the estate equality of the two actors. Otherwise one could not even speak of honour charge.

For factual offenses, the most discussed and practiced statute of reconciliation was undoubtedly that of remission, which was completely foreign to the civil law. The offender, alone and disarmed had to hand himself over to the offended, who had full faculty of offending him through words and physical injuries, without any negotiation that could limit his full freedom.<sup>53</sup>

Already in the midst of the Italian wars Diego del Castillo had recalled in his *De duello* that "some people claim that it is possible to compensate for an offense, when the offender puts himself at the mercy of the offended and gives him his own sword, allowing him even to cut off his head". Castillo concluded

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51 Possevino, *Dialogo dell'honore*, pp. 244 and 296.

52 Fausto da Longiano, *Duello*, pp. 307–313.

53 Corso, *Delle private rappacificazioni*, pp. 48–49.

that such an opinion was agreeable, as long as the whole operation took place in a reasonable way.<sup>54</sup>

The supporters of remission defined it as a kind of theatre, a “fiction about the offense, introduced by equity”: a fiction thought out on the basis of equity in order to erase the offense. Remission appeared to Corso as a “theatre” of magnanimous behaviours: in the offender, who, disarmed, offered himself gallantly to revenge, in the offended, who, although he had the chance to placate his desire for retaliation, benignly granted life and respect to the man who had hurt his honour.<sup>55</sup>

On the contrary, the most authoritative doctrine, corresponding to aristocratic ethos, was always intensely sceptical when not explicitly adverse to the supposed thaumaturgic properties of remission: from Pigna<sup>56</sup> to Birago;<sup>57</sup> from Landi<sup>58</sup> to Attendoli.<sup>59</sup> Claro wrote tersely: and although this form of reconciliation is not licit on civil reason nevertheless I have often seen disputes of great importance be concluded by such simple constitution, and i mean that in many places it is regarded as very honourable satisfaction. Now I briefly resolve and say that for one of the parts it may well be honourable peace, but as for both my judgement is that it is impossible that either one or the other does not remain dishonoured.<sup>60</sup>

Remission was a customary statute of medieval mould, which the doctrine tried to discipline softening its ancient harshness, in order to limit the resort to duel. The Science of Honour condemned, for example, the offended who exploited it by maiming or wounding the offender, i.e. by inflicting upon him wounds that required a cut of the flesh. And it stigmatized its easy abuses, remembering certain bloody antecedents: by a brutal Pisan custom, for example, remission gave the offended the right to disfigure the offender’s face or hands.<sup>61</sup>

Remission was the best remedy to factual offenses, i.e. offenses carried out through actions and not by words. The offender suffered or at least put himself in the condition of suffering what he had brought upon others with his offense. The same could not be realised in verbal offenses. Regardless of the truth or

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54 Castillo, *De duello*, p. 290.

55 Corso, *Delle private rappacificazioni*.

56 Pigna, *Il duello*, pp. 243–256.

57 Birago, *Opere cavalleresche*, II, pp. 240–243.

58 Landi, *Le attioni morali*, p. 204.

59 Attendoli, *Il duello*, pp. 34–35.

60 Claro, *Trattato di duello*.

61 Conradus, *Commentaria de duello et pace*, pp. 108–109.

falsity of the charge, it was in any case impossible to restore that honour equality which was the basic premise of reconciliation. On the other hand, verbal offenses were easier to nullify, by pivoting on the underlying will, intention or malice. In this realm, the peace-maker's task was far more complicated when it came factual offenses, which could thus be nullified only when they were exceedingly light.<sup>62</sup>

Other solutions worked out in practice tended to circumvent the stately opinion's scant consideration of reconciliation. One method, among many listed by Pigna, was artfully prolonging the formalities for the duel, until, as he noted, "patching up after so much blabber, [the actors] will let a third person readjust them, which such grace that it will appear that they both did their dues".<sup>63</sup>

There was also the custom for the actors in a honour dispute to appear in front of a ruler, in order to receive some kind of ratification of honour integrity through mandatory rules of various forms and typologies. It was, according to Fausto da Longiano, a silly and vain solution, since not even the Emperor, not even the Pope had the power to give or take away honour: "honour has in this world no superior". These were not satisfactions, but vulgar concoctions, dishonourable for everyone who took part in them.<sup>64</sup> Charlatans' concoctions and no true medicines by honour professors-physicians.

In the seventeenth century also the art of dissimulation becomes present in the treatises, theorized, for example, in Agosti's *Consiglier di Pace*. Great and generous souls were those who pretended not to know the gossip of the malicious and the vices of their friends. A honest dissimulation appeared as a balanced compromise also for the aristocracy conscience. Agosti wrote that "dissimulation that pretends not to know and not to care about what actually happens, since it proceeds from magnanimity, from mansuetude, from prudence, reassures the friends and enhances reputation". He insisted: "Dissimulation is a very subtle exercise in ingenuity, having a very good effect when it is properly applied, a bad one when applied poorly". Intelligent dissimulation strengthened friendships and released from vengeance. But the Science of Honour warned against clumsy dissimulation leading the wretch to be despised and ridiculed.<sup>65</sup>

We can therefore give a partially negative answer to the question from which we started. The purest sons of Mars saw the solution of honour disputes

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62 Corso, *Delle private rappacificazioni*, pp. 73–77.

63 Pigna, *Il duello*.

64 Fausto da Longiano, *Duello*, pp. 337–340.

65 Agosti, *Il consiglier di pace*, pp. 94–97.

essentially in the resort to arms, with a quick clandestine duel or with the toilsome procedure of judiciary duel. For sure, honour reconciliation was widely practiced, but it was perceived by stately culture and ethos as a comfortable and somewhat vulgar choice, sometimes dishonourable, sometimes bearable, never truly commended.

We can devote our close to a remark contained in a short sixteenth century text written in 1565 by the nobleman Camillo Bardi da Vernio while negotiating a duel against Paolo Boniperto: “[Paolo Boniperto] has completely forgotten the resolute offers, that he made so many times, to recover from me a faith with the arms, and in this way [...] courteous and meek he *humiliated* himself to peace”. In the context of an extremely subtle social and psychological in-depth examination of honour and of its pathologies, jurists, scholars and philosophers (the “honour professors”) thus shaped new concepts, minted new words and exchanged old terms of their doctrines, which acquired new values in their different idiolects.

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## Conclusion

*Daniel Jaquet, in collaboration with Timothy Dawson and Karin Verelst*

These last fifteen years have witnessed a surge of interest in Historical European Martial Arts from Academia,<sup>1</sup> but also from large communities of practitioners.<sup>2</sup> As one of the consequences, more and more sources are being (re)discovered, each enlarging the corpus and adding their missing piece of the puzzle, validating or invalidating previous hypotheses raised by the historiography. The objectives and methodologies of those two groups (scholars and practitioners) do not always merge and their outputs do not look alike, being mutually criticised and valued at the same time by both parties. However they share their interest in the same corpus of sources and the volume editors recognise the benefits and the disadvantages of bridging the gap between them in a collective book. A third of the authors are established scholars; another third are young scholars and the last third are independent researchers. Most of them come from different disciplinary backgrounds and have experienced—or experimented with—research phases which involve work with a sword in hand. Other scholars also value such an interdisciplinary blend of approaches and the need for pragmatic, physical, approaches when studying bodily techniques in their actual or historical context, such as the “fighting scholars”<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 See: Miskolczi, “HEMA in the map of science”; Boffa, *Les manuels de combat*. A substantial number of PhD dissertations have been undertaken directly or indirectly connected with the Fight Books’ corpus since 2005 in France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and England. Several dedicated symposia took place, as well as panels in larger conferences (some of those reviewed by Jaquet, “Les savoirs gestuels investigués”) and an international peer-reviewed journal has been founded in 2013 (*Acta Periodica Duellatorum*, distributed by De Gruyter).
  - 2 Several communities all over Europe, also in the United States, Japan, South Africa and Australia. An International Federation constituted in 2012 (IFHEMA), as well as several other national and international umbrella organisations. Some of those organisations are connected with published researchers (Publishing houses and collections: Freelance Academy Press; Bibliothek der historischen Kampfkünste, Agea editora; Il Cerchio Iniziative Editoriali), but most of the research undertaken is self-published on web-based unstable platforms (blogs, wiki, forums).
  - 3 Coined in Sánchez Garcia/Spencer, *Fighting Scholars*.

networked around the concept of “martial studies” by Paul Bowman and Ben Judkins<sup>4</sup> for example.

The collection of chapters organised in three main parts therefore bring their share of new inputs, *status quaestionis* and reviews of different historiographical trends directly or indirectly connected with Fight Books. Some of those focus on case studies; others offer syntheses over larger period of time or geographical areas and others propose methodological reflections or new research directions. Several new inputs or research directions found throughout the book will be outlined below, structured by the tripartition of the book and counterbalanced by some limits. Finally, a desiderata for further research follows as final words and hopes for new developments into this emerging field, where most of the fundamental research is yet to be undertaken.

## 1 Part 1—Fight Books and Methodological Issues through Disciplinary Lenses

The need for pluridisciplinary approaches in the study of Fight Books is advocated throughout the chapters, while, at the same time, the necessity of narrowing down methods according to disciplinary school of thoughts is paramount (Bauer, chap. 4; Kleinau, chap. 6; Jaquet, chap. 9; Verelst, chap. 7). Historical sciences, such as palaeography, codicology and iconography are needed for the analysis of the materiality of the sources, especially since the corpus is highly heterogeneous (see Kleinau, chap. 6 and, outside of this section, the case study of Burkart, chap. 16 as example). Notably absent here is a chapter on typology and literary genre, situating Fight Books in the constellation of the *artes* literature (see introduction, and some of the remarks by Bauer, chap. 4).<sup>5</sup> Methods from textual philology and iconology need to be systematically applied to the study of the primary sources and their filiation, while the actual research on those matters is still in its infancy (Verelst, chap. 7; see also Kleinau, chap. 6 and, outside of the section, Cinato, chap. 17). Literary studies can offer perspective on the question of contexts of application of the content, as well as identifying lost *termini technici*, as outlined by Kellet (chap. 5) and put forward outside of the section by Dupuis (chap. 13). Methods derived from History of Art as well as Semiotics allow us to differentiate symbolic from technical (didactic?) gestures (Dawson, chap. 3) and yield crucial achievements in the analysis of the relation between text and image in

4 Bowman, *Martial Studies*.

5 A chapter covering this scope was intended, but not finalised.

the technical repertoire of illustrated Fight Books (Kleinau, chap. 6). Finally, Jaquet (chap. 9) proposes methods involving Neurology and Movement sciences in modern day experimentation of gesture, based on similar experimental endeavours in Experimental Archaeology and Psychology.

## 2 Part 2—From the Books to the Arts: The Fighting Arts in Context

In order to offer an overview of the source material, a division by language speaking areas has been chosen rather than arranging contributions by fighting styles (i.e. type of weapon used or art of fighting) or by recognisable group of sources (fighting traditions, in the philological sense of the term). This choice was on the one hand the less disputable one and on the other it allowed a more exhaustive overview. However it implied some discrepancies between chapters. For example, German sources are much more prominent than others. The fact that some Fight Books are translated or transposed into other languages entailed crossovers between chapters. All contributors provided exhaustive overviews of the source material and their filiation according to the latest stand of research. They differentiated works stemming from their geographical areas and works translated or influenced by other traditions. They also provided contextual developments depending of their source material at hand, the most relevant ones are listed below.

Hagedorn (chap. 10) offers developments on the question of *auctoritas* in the large heterogeneous German corpus and addresses the issues of dating and authorial attribution, both critical for filiation hypotheses. Mondschein (chap. 11) tackles the influence of humanistic ideas and early modern science in the writing of Fight Books, emphasising the concept of a “fencing pedagogy” as hermeneutic tool for the understanding of the authorial project. By going through the relatively scarce French material, some being previously unknown, Dupuis (chap. 13) proposes hypotheses about this apparent lack of sources and offers new prosopographic and bibliographic researches. Valle (chap. 12) gives a comprehensive summary of the Spanish tradition of *destreza*, and identifies the different conflicting schools that developed within it, over the course of a period that witnesses social changes relevant to understanding and contextualizing these at-first-sight merely subject specific developments. Gevaert and van Noort (chap. 14) focused on fencing guilds and fencing praxes in Lowland towns, as well as on the network of Fight Books’ authors and addressees. Finally, Wagner (chap. 15) presents a pragmatic interpretation of the English tradition with a focus on terminologies, while inserting the praxis in its social, urban context.

### 3 Part 3—Martial Arts, Martial Culture and Case Studies

The two case studies on 14th c. sources provide contextualised, documented and practical examples of the methodological and sometimes theoretical chapters of the first part of the book. Burkart (chap. 16) examines the materiality of the Fight Book previously attributed to Hanko Döbringer and, by investigating the realisation modalities, demonstrates the “miscellany” status of this anthology of technical texts from various origins, being more personal notes of a fencer than a didactic treatise. Cinato (chap. 17) continues his studies of the first known Fight Book I.33 by focusing on its role as a potential model in later sources addressing sword and buckler content. He therefore proposes a very detailed example of iconological investigation in the corpus.

The last two chapters encompasses the Fight Book studies within crucial sociocultural elements of the Early Modern Period. Tlustý (chap. 18) observes the development of “martial identities” with the rise of burgherly sword-carrying culture and interest in martial sports during the age of civil militias and the related guild culture. Cavina (chap. 19) carries out an examination of the normative texts on honour and its relation to duelling culture.

### 4 Desiderata for Further Research

- Scientific edition of the sources

Very few of the original sources are edited. Translations and editions which are intended for the communities of practitioners are available, but of variable quality. Trustworthy, academic level editions have appeared, but would need to be systematically undertaken in the future, preferably in a dedicated series from a renowned publishing house. This would allow, as outlined by Verelst (Chap. 7), a critical or synoptic edition of traditions, enabling us for example to update and assess Hils’ hypotheses<sup>6</sup> for the philological filiation of the German sources, or controversial authorial attributions in Leng’s catalogue.<sup>7</sup> This state of affairs and of editorial desiderata is of course valid for the whole corpus, whether in French, Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.

6 Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes*.

7 Leng/et al., *Katalog*. For a review of the controversial attribution, see Welle, “Ordnung als Prinzip”. For a case study on authorial attribution, see Jaquet/Walczak, “Lignitzer, Hundsfeld or Lew?”.

- Iconology of the Fight Books

As already noted by Anglo<sup>8</sup> and outlined by Kleinau (Chap. 6) and Cinato (Chap. 17), the lack of studies into the involvement of the artists in the realisation modalities of the Fight Books is distressing. Macro research (iconological filiation, circulation of models) as well as micro research (identification of artists, networks and workshops) on these matters would allow a better understanding of this heterogeneous corpus.<sup>9</sup> Following the methodological example of the case study of Cinato, framed into the larger problematics outlined by Kleinau, a systematic study of the iconology of Fight Books would be a relevant contribution to larger studies on movement notations and bodily technique representation.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, studies on the semiology of the technical fighting illustration would be a relevant contribution to history of art concepts such as “tacit knowledge”,<sup>11</sup> framed into the Early Modern shift of the representation of the body.<sup>12</sup>

- Inception, authorial project and reception

Some chapters stressed the need to study each sources as unicum,<sup>13</sup> since the corpus is highly heterogeneous, especially for the manuscript parts of it, although less so for the prints. The formal typology established by Jaquet<sup>14</sup> is an effective tool to classify the manuscript sources, but more case studies need to be undertaken on prosopography of the authors, authorial project, intended audience and reception. The most complete and complex group of sources, the German ones, as described by Hagedorn (Chap. 10) and addressed in most of the chapters, definitely needs more research and analyses in order to avoid biased generalisations or over-simplifications. The case study offered by Burkart (Chap. 16) demonstrates how important material analysis, doubled with textual filiation analysis is for the study of this heterogeneous corpus of sources. In addition to the need for scientific editions, more detailed studies of this sort are needed before any attempt of synthesis on the matters of inception, authorial project and reception.

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8 Anglo, *The Martial Arts* and id., “Sword and pen”.

9 Already proposed in *ibidem*. See also the current research project of Jaquet, “Drawing gestures: investigating bodily knowledge of mechanical arts encrypted in words and images”.

10 Following, for example the studies of von Mallinckrodt, *Bewegtes Leben and Sports and Physical Exercise in Early Modern Culture*.

11 From Polanyi, *Tacit dimension*. As example of application of such concept on Fight Books, see Burkart, “Die Aufzeichnung des Nicht-Sagbaren”.

12 See the works of Vigarello, e.g. *Histoire du corps*, vol. 1 and his followers. See the historiographical review on this theory in Turner, *The Body and Society*.

13 See also, Müller, “Bild- vers. Prosakommentar”, p. 252 and Bodemer, *Das Fechtbuch*, p. 65.

14 Jaquet, *Combattre en armure*, vol. 1, pp. 74–79. Publication in preparation by Brepols.

- Towards a scientific approach to gesture

If the gesture—its replication or revival—matters for the Historical Martial Arts practitioner, it must not be neglected by the scholar. As outlined by Clements (Chap. 8) and Jaquet (Chap. 9), the Fight Books repertoire is most of the time abstract for the 21st c. reader. Involvement of movement scientists and neurologists, assisted by historians of the body and specialists of material culture would allow scientific level experimentation of gesture hidden behind the words and images of the sources, based on methodologies inspired from experimental archaeology and experimental psychology. Even if the replication of gesture meant by the author is like chasing an illusion, bridging the gap between scholars, specialists and experienced martial artists allows several objectives to be pursued for deeper analysis of the content of the Fight Books. For example, the abstraction caused by lost and undefined *termini tecnici* can be reduced to some extent by establishing technical glossaries with experimentation (Jaquet, chap. 9, following issues outlined by Bauer, chap. 4). Another example is the comparison of the different movement notations with technical descriptions in order to single out redaction modalities.

- Sociology of the Fight Masters

As discussed by Tlusty (Chap. 18) and Gevaert/van Noort (Chap. 14), researches on fencing guilds and martial urban culture is fruitful for better understanding of the praxes inscribed, described or encrypted in the Fight Books. More research in archive and normative sources is needed to distinguish patterns and networks existing at the time. Most of the Fight Book authors were Fight Masters, transmitting their knowledge more in urban areas than in princely courts, and a considerable amount of those were travelling people. This social status implies that traces of their passage are often difficult to grasp and demand teams of researchers in archives on a European level in order to establish networks and comparative studies on different geographical areas and time periods. Moreover the Fight Books shed a particular light on the underlying social strata struggle between the higher and the lower classes,<sup>15</sup> as well as on the revival of the chivalric ethos in the Early Modern Period.<sup>16</sup>

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15 See the often quoted prologue of Fabian Auerswald's treatise who stresses explicitly that the art of fighting belongs to fighters of higher and lower status (*von hohen oder nidern Stand*, P8).

16 See for instance the studies in Trim, *The chivalric ethos and the development of military professionalism*.

- Fighting arts (martial arts?) in context

Without a sound understanding of the meanings—and shifts of meanings in the period—of the terms “warfare” and “military”, the “easy” deduction of a connection of the Fight Books with warfare or men-at-arms, then with soldiers’ training is misleading and should be considered as a bias.<sup>17</sup> Even though the potential usefulness of individual combat skills in battlefield situations cannot be denied, the various “purposes” of the art stated by the authors<sup>18</sup> need to be understood through the concepts of their playful (*schimpf*, Middle High German; *da cortesia*, Italian vernacular) or serious (*ernst*, Middle High German; *da ira*, Italian vernacular) dimensions, in their contemporary, but also in their modern day acceptance.<sup>19</sup> Most of the corpus is actually more concerned with ritualised forms of single combat, from the medieval tradition of judicial combat to the early Modern duel of honour (Cavina, chap. 19), or from the “playful” display of martial skills, spanning from the examination of imperial master-at-arms (Valle, Chap. 12) to the competitive *praxis* of the fighting schools (Thusty, chap. 18; Gevaert/van Noort, chap. 14). All those need to be framed in the theories of the “civilising process”<sup>20</sup> and the subtle construction of “martial ethics” in the “Age of the Sword”,<sup>21</sup> in order to gain a better understanding of the evolution and transition of this cloud of diverse and comparable forms of interpersonal violence within their societies.<sup>22</sup>

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17 As pointed out by Anglo, *Martial Arts of Renaissance*, pp. 271–290; Thusty, *Martial Ethics*, pp. 204–217 and 269–272 and Jaquet, “Fighting in the Fight Schools”.

18 See Anglo, *Martial Arts of Renaissance*, pp. 30–39; Zabinski, *The Longsword Teachings*, pp. 17–27. For example Joachim Meyer states explicitly in 1570: “The art of combat is a particular element of the art of war” (P13, transl. Forgeng, p. 18), while placing its technical content in the context of playful encounters.

19 See Wetzler, “Vergleichende Kampfkunstwissenschaft als historischkulturwissenschaftliche Disziplin”.

20 Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* and the reviewed thesis proposed by McClelland, *Body and Mind* and for a more sociological approach to this theory, see Turner, *The Body and Society*. For a more specific approach to physical exercise, see Dunning/Elias, *The quest for excitement* and the review of the historiography in the recent paper of Vaucelle, “Sans modération mais avec mesure. Jeux d’exercices et limites du jeu dans la France moderne”.

21 Thusty, *Martial Ethics*.

22 See *ibid.* and the review of the historiography on those matters by Ruff, *Violence and Civility in Early Modern Europe*.

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- Wetzler, S. "Vergleichende Kampfkunstwissenschaft als historischkulturwissenschaftliche Disziplin—Mögliche Gegenstände, nötige Quellen, anzuwendende Methoden", in S. Liebl/P. Kuhn (eds.), *Menschen im Zweikampf—Kampfkunst und Kampfsport in Forschung und Lehre*, Hamburg 2014, pp. 57–66.
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# General Bibliography

*Compiled by Daniel Jaquet*

## 1 Primary Sources

This section lists manuscripts and prints, constituting the corpus of Fight Books highlighted in this volume. The works produced after 1630 were ignored. Not all of these sources were addressed in the chapters, they are listed here to serve as a bibliographical tool. As up today, there is on the one hand no specialized bibliography, and on the other hand no catalogue, that takes all fight books into account. For works described in existing catalogues, the corresponding references are indicated in brackets at the end, abbreviated as follows:

- [W] Wierschin, M., *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst Des Fechtens*, München 1965.
- [H] Hils, H.-P., *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes* (Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 3: Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften 257), Frankfurt am Main 1985.
- [KdiHM] Leng, R./Frühmorgen-Voss, H./Ott, N.H. [et al.], *Fecht- und Ringbücher* (Katalog der deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters, 4/2, Lfg. 1/2, Stoffgr. 38), München 2008.

A large number of the Fight Books are anonymous and have no titles. Classification by author or title is therefore problematic. Similarly, chronological indexing also poses difficulties, since codicological studies necessary to ensure viable dating have not been undertaken on all of the works. The references are organized by repository and are numbered (corresponding to the sigla M and P in the chapters). Author and date (given by institutions) are indicated following the shelf mark. Alternative titles or authorial attribution found in secondary literature are given in brackets.

Regarding printed material, they are listed in a chronological order, without mention of its conservation location. The different re-editions (date) are mentioned within brackets.

### 1.1 *Manuscripts*

Augsburg, Stadtarchiv

M1. Schätze 82 Reichsstadt. Anton Rast, 1553. [KdiHM 8.1, H 01, W 28]

## Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek

- M2. Cod. I.6.2.1. Hans Talhoffer, 1555–1560. [KdiHM 3.1, H 07]  
 M3. Cod. I.6.2.2. Jörg Wilhalm, 1523/1564. [KdiHM 7.1, H 10]  
 M4. Cod. I.6.2.3. Jörg Wilhalm, 1522. [KdiHM 7.2, H 09]  
 M5. Cod. I.6.2.4. Anonymous, 1545. [KdiHM 8.2, H 03, W 27]  
 M6. Cod. I.6.2.5. Sigmund Schining, 1539/1552/1566–78. [KdiHM 1.1, H 06]  
 M7. Cod. I.6.4.2. Anonymous, [*Codex Wallerstein, Von Baumanns Fechtbuch*], ca. 1450/1470. [KdiHM 9.1, H 02, W 20]  
 M8. Cod. I.6.4.3. Jude Lew, after 1450. [H 05, W 04]  
 M9. Cod. I.6.4.5. Jörg Wilhalm, 1522. [KdiHM 7.3, H 08]

## Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

- M10. 78 A 15. Hans Talhoffer, 1450–1459. [KdiHM 3.2., H 11, W 16]  
 M11. Libr. pict. A 83. Anonymous, 1500–1525. [KdiHM 9.3, H 12]

## Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria

- M12. Ms. 1825. Paulus Kal, 1455–1460. [KdiHM 5.1]

## Bordeaux, archives municipales

- M13. 66S230. François Dancie, *Discours des armes et methode pour bien tirer de l'espée et poignard*, 1600–1617.

## Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek

- M14. Mscr.Dresd. C487. Sigmund Ringeck, 1504–1519. [H 16, W 02]  
 M15. Mscr.Dresd. C93/94. Paulus Hector Mair, after 1542. [KdiHM 8.3, H 15]

## Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek

- M16. B 26. Ludwig (vi.) von Eyb zum Hartenstein, ca. 1500. [KdiHM 9.4, H 17, W 22]

## Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale

- M17. Francesco di Sandro Altoni, *Monomachia ovvero Arte di Scherma*, 1539–1569.

## Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana

- M18. Ms Ricc. 2541. Anonymous, 16c.

## Glasgow, R.L. Scott Collection

- M19. E.1939.65.341. Anonymous, 1508. [KdiHM 1.2]  
 M20. E.1939.65.354 (olim Cod.I.6.4°.4). Gregor Erhart, 1533. [KdiHM 9.5, H 04]  
 M21. Ms E.1939.65.360 and E.1939.65.359. [Pedro de Heredia], *Le livre des leçons*, 1595–1630.

## Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek

M22. Ms. Chart. A 558. Hans Talhoffer, [*Gothaer Codex*], 1443. [KdiHM 3.3, H 20, W 01]

M23. Ms. Chart. B1021. Paulus Kal, after 1479. [KdiHM 5.2, H 19]

## Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek

M24. 2° Cod. Ms. Philos. 61. Hans Talhoffer, 17c. (Copy of Ms Chart. A 558 [M22] and Cod. icon. 394a [M44]). [H 18]

M25. 2° Cod. Ms. Philos. 62. Fabian von Auerswald/Anonymous, *Ringer kunst*, 2nd half 16c. [KdiHM 9.6]

## Graz, Universitätsbibliothek

M26. Ms. 963. Hans Czynnner, 1538. [KdiHM 9.7, H 22, W 26]

## Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek

M27. Cod. Pal. Germ. 430. Johannes Lecküchner, ca. 1478. [H 24]

## Jena, Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek

M28. Ms. G.B.f.18.a. [H. Beringer], 1416–1444.

## København, Det Kongelige Bibliothek

M29. Thott 290 2°. Hans Talhoffer, [*Alte Armatur und Ringkunst*], 1459. [KdiHM 3.4, H 27, W 12]

## Köln, Historisches Archiv der Stadt

M30. Best. 7020 (W\*) 150. Anonymous, 1500–1530. [H 25, W 23]

## Königseggwald, Gräfliche Bibliothek

M31. Hs. XIX 17.3. Hans Talhoffer, [*Königseggwalder Codex*], 1446–1459. [KdiHM 3.5, H 26, W 14]

## Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellonski

M32. Ms. Berol. Germ. quart. 16. Anonymous, [*Gladiatoria*], 1435–1440. [KdiHM 2.2, H 28]

M33. Ms. germ. Quart. 2020. Anonymous, [*Goliath*], 1510–1520. [KdiHM 1.3/4.1, H 29, W 07]

## La Haye, Koninklijke Bibliotheek

M34. 73J39 Prim 645 Olim Z58. I. de la Haye, *Le cabinet d'escrime du capitaine Péloquin*, 1589–1609.

## Leeds, Royal Armouries

M35. I.33. Anonymous, *Liber de Arte Dimicatoria* [*Tower Fechtbuch*], ca. 1300. [KdiHM 9.8, H 30]

## London, British Library

M36. Add. MS 39564. Anonymous, [*Ledall Roll*], 1535–1550.

M37. Cottonian MS Titus A.xxv. Anonymous, 1450–1465.

M38. MS Harley 3542. Anonymous, [*Man yt Wol*], ca. 1400.

M39. Sloane MS No.5229. Albrecht Dürer, 1512.

## Los Angeles, Getty Museum

M40. Ms. Ludwig XV 13. Fiore dei Liberi, [*Fior di battaglia, Getty*], ca. 1410.

## Lund, Universitätsbibliothek

M41. Msc. A.4:0 2. Joachim Meyer, ca. 1560.

## München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

M42. Cod. icon. 393 (1/2). Paulus Hector Mair, *De arte athletica I/II*, ca. 1542. [H 34]

M43. Cod. icon. 394. Hans Talhoffer, ca. 1820 (Copy of Cod. icon.394a [M44]). [H 36]

M44. Cod. icon. 394a. Hans Talhoffer, 1467. [KdiHM 3.6, H 35, W 13]

M45. Cod. icon. 395. Hans Talhoffer, ca. 1820 (Copy of Ms Chart.A.558 [M22]). [H 37]

M46. Cgm 558. Hugo Wittenwiller, 1462–1493. [H 31, W 19]

M47. Cgm 582. Johannes Lecküchner, 1482. [KdiHM 6.1, H 33]

M48. Cgm 1507. Paulus Kal, 1468–1475. [KdiHM 5.3, H 32]

M49. Cgm 3711. Jörg Wilhalm, 1522/23. [KdiHM 7.4, H 38]

M50. Cgm 3712. Jörg Wilhalm/Lienhart Sollinger, 1556. [KdiHM 7.5, H 39, W 11]

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M58. Vitt. Emm. 1342. Filippo Vadi, *Liber de Arte gladiatoria dimicandi*, 1482–1487.

M59. Ms M345/346. Anonymous, [*Anonimo Bolognese*], ca. 1510.

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M60. Mss. Var. 82. Joachim Meyer, *Fechtbuch zu Ross und zu Fuss*, 1570–71.

M61. Mss. Var. 83. Anonymous, [*Fechtbuch des Hugold Behr*], before 1573. [KdiHM 9.10]

Salzburg, Universitätsbibliothek

M62. M.I.29. Hans von Speyer, 1491. [H 43, W06]

Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati

M63. Ms II.iii.315. Francesco di Sandro Altoni, *Monomachia ovvero Arte di Scherma*, 1539–1569.

Solothurn, Zentralbibliothek

M64. S 554. Anonymous, [*Solothurner Fechtbuch*], ca. 1510. [KdiHM 3.7]

Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket

M65. X 911. [Pedro Heredia], *Le livre des leçons*, 1620–1630

Weimar, Zentralbibliothek der deutschen Klassik

M66. Q 566. Hans Folz, ca. 1480. [H 44]

Wien, Albertina (Graphische Sammlung)

M67. Inv.Nr. 26232. Albrecht Dürer, 1512. [KdiHM 9.11, H 45, W 25]

Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum

M68. KK 5012. Peter Falkner, 1480–1500. [KdiHM 1.5/4.2/6.3, H 47]

M69. KK 5013. Anonymous, [*Gladiatoria*], 1425–1450. [KdiHM 2.4, H 46]

- M70. KK 5126. Paulus Kal, 1460–1479. [KdiHM 5.4, H 48, W 05]  
 M71. KK 5342. Hans Talhoffer, [*Ambraser Codex*], 1480–1500. [KdiHM 3.8, H 49, W 15].
- Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek
- M72. Cod. 1093. Anonymous, 1440–1470. [KdiHM 2.5, H 50, W 18]  
 M73. Cod. 10723. [Angelo Viggiani dal Montone], *Trattato d'uno Schermo*, 1567.  
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