

THE RENAISSANCE RAPIER: HISTORY AND USE

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report

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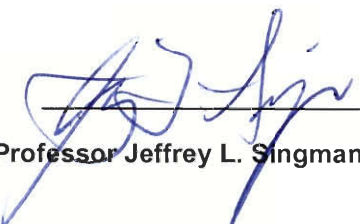
  
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## **Abstract**

This project analyzed the fencing techniques of the rapier as taught by five different fencing masters from Renaissance Europe. A web page was then constructed which incorporated the analyses, a basic history of the rapier and rapier techniques, and animations of different attacks and defenses. The user-friendly website can be used as a basis for studying rapier techniques, or one of the individual masters, by people around the world.

## **Acknowledgements**

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# 1. Introduction

## **Introduction**

Historical rapier fencing has become a popular topic, capturing the interest of many individuals and groups. A large part of historical rapier swordplay is based on the teachings of European rapier masters during the Renaissance. Many of these masters composed manuals revealing their rapier practices; however, since some of these manuals have not been translated into English or have not been completely analyzed, there is still some unknown and unclear information about historical rapier swordplay. Additionally, information regarding the actual evolution of the rapier itself, both physical and technical, has been subject to much debate.

This project examined certain historic rapier manuals in order to discern the techniques used by various European rapier masters, and subsequently contributes to a more lucid understanding of rapier combat, and the rapier itself, in the Renaissance era. There are no existing public analyses of the manuals investigated by the project group, only unpublished works. Therefore, the work completed by the group represents a useful contribution to the general public for further research on historical rapier swordplay.

The project explored the fencing manuals of five rapier masters, expounding on the various techniques of each master, and noting any similarities between the masters. Also, surviving artifacts of the same period were examined and compared to the rapier analyses, where appropriate. All of this work resulted in a web page encompassing all of the information and analyses that have been collected and created, including the rapier analyses, the historic artifacts, and links to further research on the rapier. Thus, any individual interested in this topic will easily have access to the project.

For the first phase of this project, the group conducted a feasibility analysis of three different weapon types to determine which would be the most plausible to pursue studying. The three weapons under consideration consisted of the long sword, the rapier, and the sword and buckler. In order to determine the feasibility of each weapon, the group relied on a variety of sources; the group reviewed historic fencing manuals, secondary sources of literature, information available on the Internet, and contemporary groups who practice historical fencing.

The group then weighed the relevance and availability of the information, and composed a feasibility analysis for each particular weapon. The feasibility analyses were eventually combined and represented the final product of the first phase of the project, where the rapier was finally determined to be the weapon of choice. Thus, all of the group's future efforts would be focused on examining the rapier.

For the second phase of the project, each of the group members chose a historic rapier manual to examine. These five manuals consisted of *Fencing: On the Science of Arms* by Salvator Fabris (1606), *The Private Schoole of Defence* by George Halle (1614), *Tract Containing the Secrets of the First Book on the Single Sword* by Henry Saint Didier (1573), *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence* by Joseph Swetnam (1617), and *Academy of the Sword* (1630) by Gerard Thibault. Studying these manuals allowed the group to become familiar with rapier combat in a range of European cultures, specifically French, English, and Italian.

After choosing a manual, analyses were developed following a basic composition guideline. Please refer to the Appendix A to view the entire template. Specifically, the technique analysis focused on rapier attacks, defenses, guards, stances, and footwork. In some of the analyses, the dagger was also examined when used in conjunction with the rapier, as in Halle and Swetnam. These analyses showed both unique and shared methods of rapier play amongst the masters, thus illustrating the versatile nature of historical rapier combat. Each of the complete individual analyses is available on the web page, along with brief synopses of the analyses. The completed, or nearly completed, analyses of each manual signified the end of the second phase of the project.

The third and last phase of the project concentrated on putting all of the information the group had obtained and produced into a central location, a web page. This is the most critical stage of the project, because all of the information had to be organized and presented in an attractive and appropriate format. During this stage, one group member was responsible for the overall design of the web page, including design, navigation, and content. Various prototypes of the web site's appearance were developed, until the group decided on a final acceptable layout. Another group member took on the responsibility of composing a set of animations and graphic

stills from each rapier analysis. These graphics and animations convey the most important techniques taught by each master in visual form, which in many cases is easier to understand than a basic written description. Also, two group members concentrated on gaining information about the historical rapier itself, specifically the actual history and evolution of the rapier, and the evolution of the techniques of rapier masters. The final group member created a full bibliography containing all the sources used throughout the project, a list of contact groups and societies who currently practice historical fencing, especially with the rapier, and a list of web sites pertaining to the rapier, all of which can be utilized for further rapier research.

In order to obtain more than just written information on historical artifacts, the group took some pictures of an assortment of ancient rapiers located in the Higgins Armory Museum's collection in Worcester, MA. These pictures will be placed on the web page, along with a brief description of each. The historic rapiers will provide quantitative information, such as blade length, which can be integrated into the rapier analyses. They ultimately provide visual examples of the spectrum of rapiers that were used in combat during the Renaissance period.



## 2. History

## **The History of the Rapier**

The term rapier has been used very loosely over the ages. This perhaps is largely due to the fact that a weapon called a rapier evolved over several centuries of use. The modern and most widely recognized version of the rapier is a long dual-edged, fairly narrow blade, with a short grip and a complex guard (Blair, 1962: 7). However, during the Renaissance time period any weapon that was lighter than a military weapon and designed for civilian use was considered a rapier (Norman, 1980: 19).

Because of the ambiguity between countries and languages, finding the root from which rapier was derived is rather difficult. Some researchers believe that the stem comes from the Spanish term *espada robada*, meaning “sword of the robes”. This definition reinforces the image of the non-militaristic weapon the rapier was believed to be. The Italians simply used the general word for sword, *spada*. The fencing master Giacomo di Grassi used this term throughout his works to refer to many different types of swords, including the rapier.

Early 13<sup>th</sup> century German texts make mention of a *Rappier*, which translates literally into a “rapper” or “beater”. It’s believed that this is slang derived from the word *rappen*, or the later word *raffen*, meaning “to tear out”. Nearer the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the French and Spanish began to distinguish the rapier in their manuals from other swords, using terms such as *la raspere* or *raspar* respectively (Castle, 1892).

The earliest predecessor to the rapier was called an *estoc* or *tuck*. These were cut-and-thrust weapons used in battle, but the thrusting ability of the weapon made them especially good for piercing armor gaps or splitting links in chain mail. It was also found that a thrusting weapon was more effective against plate style armors than a cutting sword. These weapons would not often be used in ground combat, but rather were mounted on the sides of saddles while the rider would carry a slashing sword on his belt (Sword and Hilt Weapons, 1989: 45).

At the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the standard cross-hilt began to change and was slowly becoming a more defensive tool. Parts of the crossguard were curved outwards or up towards the blade. These were called *quillons* and often had flattened spatulate ends. It wasn’t

until later in the 15<sup>th</sup> century that the quillon block or écusson became popular but there was evidence of a widening guard that would later lead to more changes to the rapier hilt (45).

The first true sign of the evolving rapier hilt was the forefinger hook. This was most often created from the forward quillon by elongating it forward and bending it upward in front of the ricasso, the unsharpened base of the blade also called the shoulder. The ricasso was seen as early as the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but after the advent of the forefinger hook it became more common to have a crescent cutout from the shoulder (Sword and Hilt Weapons, 1989: 46).

Most of the hilt remained the same during this period. Commonly pommels were made from beveled discs or wheels, a common attribute up through the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but some were also seen to be more squared or pyramidal. Grips were basic and easy to add. Generally they were made from two pieces of wood that were carved and fitted to the tang then secured with twisted wire or leather straps. To date a rapier by the make of its grip would prove difficult. With much use the grips tended to wear out and were replaced, throwing off the date of origin significantly in some instances (46).

By the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century rapier hilts were changing and becoming more and more complex. The quillons were growing more extreme in their arching and their ends were tapering off to be smaller. This gave rise to the popularity of the quillon block and by 1450 the knuckleguard and forefinger rings were being combined on the same hilt. Soon a second finger ring was added in parallel to the first, flanking the shoulders. These attributes came to be known as the “arms of the hilt” (46).

Generally sword makers would set a metal bar on the arms called the side bar. Later in the century a second bar would be set on the opposite side to guard the back of the hand. This new developed hilt style became the favorite for civilians who had no armor for their hands as normal foot soldier or Cavalry soldiers had (Sword and Hilt Weapons, 1989: 47).

As the 15<sup>th</sup> century ended more and more civilians were carrying weapons and the rapier became a staple of everyday dress. As more men began carrying swords on a regular basis the rapier began to change. With more fighting being done in less armor, the blade became thinner, the tip less rounded, to make a deadly attack on an unarmored opponent. Rapiers were lighter

and attacks could be made much more quickly. Thrusting was dominating over the old slashing attacks that in turn gave a higher demand for the thinner, longer blades. Not only was the thrusting attack more effective against an opponent's body, but the attacks could come from farther away, needing only the point of the blade to inflict damage rather than the whole or part of the blade.

Stemming from the developed hilt came a complex style of traversing bars that swept in the opposite direction of the hilt. This diagonal direction of the quillons came to be known as the "swept hilt". This breed of hilt began to emerge all over Europe at about the same time making it hard to localize where it originated (Sword and Hilt Weapons, 1989: 65). Researchers sometimes disagree on what is considered a swept hilt because of the different areas where they were created. Also, what is believed to be the original swept hilt was found on blades that were much too broad to be considered rapiers (Norman, 1980: 20).

Other manners of hilts were developed, but none so widely used as the swept hilt. There was the basket hilted rapier, with a metal cup inverted over the grip to protect the hand. The English were often fond of this design and used a saucer-like hilt well into the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A variant of this fashion was the boat-hull hilt. This particular style used two pieces of hardened leather or metal plates bent into a heart shape to cover the knuckles. Though these hilts could be finely decorated they were never much protection (Blair, 1962: 8).

Despite the various differences, it was at this point that the rapier achieved its fully evolved form. The blade was long, thin and deadly accurate with thrusting attacks. The sweeping hilts, most often beautifully detailed and revered as a status symbol, had become a very versatile defense system used for turning away or catching the opponent's weapon within the quillons and sidebars.

## **History of the Rapier Technique**

The rapier was one of the most prominent swords that were used in Renaissance Europe for duels, swordplay, and to some extent on the battlefield. While George Silver considered the rapier “imperfect” because of its ineffectiveness in battles and brawls, the rapier was thought of highly by many fencing masters (Anglo, 2000: 37). Joseph Swetnam thought very highly of the rapier, declaring that the short sword and dagger is far inferior to the rapier (Swetnam, 1617:171-173, 184). The rapier was “deadly in formal single combat between men” and was used mainly for duels and swordplay (Anglo, 2000: 37). Some considered the rapier a “weapon more usual for Gentlemen’s wearing, and fittest for causes of offence and defence” according to di Grassi (Anglo, 2000: 100).

From the thirteenth century up until about the middle of the sixteenth century manuals written by fencing masters were very rare. During this period the popular belief was that most murders, and lots of injuries occurred due to people being taught how to use a sword by the masters (Anglo, 2000: 7-9). Because of this there were many attempts to stop sword making, close fencing schools, and jail anyone caught trying to teach fencing. Another reason for the scarcity of fencing manuals during this period was the belief that fencing was something that could be learned through observation and practice, not through writing (Anglo, 2000: 30). In the mid-1500’s this belief declined, and manuals giving the different perspectives of each master sprang up all over Europe. The new belief was a student could be taught through practice and observation while using a manual as an aid (Anglo, 2000: 30). This philosophy took a few years to catch on with the people. After George Halle’s manual was published he was laughed at and ridiculed. This was not because the text was poorly written but simply because the people in England did not think that anyone could be taught the art of fencing through a book.

Some of the masters who wrote about the technique of the rapier in their manuals include Giacomo di Grassi (1570, English version 1594), Henry Saint Didier (1573), Vincentio Saviolo (1595), Salvator Fabris (1606), Nicoletto Giganti (1606), Ridolfo Capoferro (1610), George Halle (1614), Joseph Swetnam (1617), and Gerard Thibault (1630). The fencing manual of Henry Saint

Didier, a French fencing master, was the “first substantial fencing material to come out of France” (Anglo, 2000: 22). Saint Didier relied heavily on his illustrations to do his teaching. Saint Didier was a pioneer when it came to the way he diagramed the geometrical shapes, and numbered footprints in the illustrations of his manual. Saint Didier used the illustrations to clarify the text rather than to simply illustrate.

Fabris was an Italian fencing master who wrote one of the more popular rapier fencing manuals, based upon reproduction. Unlike the English fencing masters, who were somewhat disorganized, and not very technical, Fabris wrote a highly organized, extremely technical manual. Fabris explains in great detail numerous situations that a fencer might be in and explains what to do in each situation. Fabris wrote his manual in such a way so that it would be easy to learn from for almost anyone who was able to read. Fabris has some illustrations in his manuals, but relies more on the text just as the English masters, Halle and Swetnam do.

Halle’s short, but very useful manual gives objections about the current teachings of the time, and then gives a resolution to the problem. Halle gives instruction on how to defend against attacks, and also how to make an attack. Halle strongly believes in the principle that “there is no good defense without offense: neither good offense without defending” (Anglo, 2000: 114). Halle focuses mainly on the rapier alone, but does describe some techniques with the rapier and dagger. Halle’s manual was one of the earlier manuals to come out of England, along with Swetnam’s, which came out a few years later.

Another English fencing master, Joseph Swetnam, shows many similarities to Halle, not only in beliefs, and ways of teaching, but they also teach many similar techniques. Swetnam’s also believes in the philosophy of having a good defense. In his manual Swetnam gives seven basic principles that he believes every student should follow. The very first principle is “to have a good guard” (Swetnam, 1617: 82). Swetnam believes that offensive moves are important, but if you can defend yourself, it doesn’t matter how good you are on the offensive, you’re still going to lose. Swetnam tried to teach his students how to disable their opponents, rather than killing them. Though Swetnam wanted his students to be skilled in the use of all weapons, he chiefly

focused on the rapier, and the rapier and dagger. With a rapier and dagger, a person can defend against any other type of weapon, according to Swetnam.

Gerard Thibault followed the French tradition started by Saint Didier. Thibault relied heavily upon the illustrations that he created in his manual. Using Euclidean Geometry and Divine Numbers Thibault developed his own “hermetic style of swordsmanship” (Thibault, 1628). He believed in nature and spirituality and based all of his teachings upon these beliefs. Thibault developed a “Mysterious Circle” which was used to show students the proportions of the human body in relation to the position of the rapier. The Mysterious Circle was a diagram that was drawn on the floor of the training room, and was sufficiently labeled to help the students practice their techniques.

These five masters all helped to pave the way for the writing of rapier fencing manuals that helped to teach students proper fighting techniques. Halle and Swetnam wrote some of the first rapier manuals to come out of England. Fabris’ very technical, descriptive manual helped Italians, and other Europeans to learn the techniques of the rapier for more than a hundred years. Thibault and Saint Didier both relied upon their illustrations to teach their techniques. Both Thibault and Saint Didier were innovative in designing their elaborate illustrations for their manuals, which led the way for later fencing manuals to do the same. All five of these masters imparted their knowledge upon their pupils, and left their legacies for future generations to gain experience from.

# 3. Technique Analysis



# Henry Saint Didier's

## *Tract Containing the Secrets of the First Book on the Single*

### *Sword, 1573*

#### Background to the Text

- This text was published in Paris by Henry de Saint Didier in 1573, and translated by Laura Angotti in 1997. The original work was in French.
- From his introduction, it appears that St. Didier was acquainted with a swordsman by the name of Fabris. Though the dates are a little ambiguous this could be the same Fabris who also wrote manuals in the middle ages. In this introduction St. Didier recalls having asked Fabris to state how many hits he thinks there are. Fabris responds with five: right hand, reverse, cleaving, thrust, and pass. St. Dider removes Cleaving from the list of hits because it will end up as a right hand. Passing, says Didier, is the same as a thrust. He talks here of Fabris being a master, but this passage sounds suspiciously sarcastic (Saint Didier, 1997: 6).
- According to Sydney Anglo's book, *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, this text was the first substantial fencing material to come out of France (22). Saint Didier and Viggiani were the first masters to write only about single sword combat (Anglo, 2000: 102).
- St. Didier was a pioneer in how he used illustrations that were designed to "elucidate, and not merely illustrate the text". Some historians say that his style was archaic, and just an adapted version of di Grassi, but he was definitely unique in his use of illustrations, with numbered footprints and geometrical shapes drawn on the ground (Anglo, 2000: 65-67).

#### Bibliography

Anglo, Sydney. *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press,  
2000

Saint Didier, Henry. *Traicte Contenant Les Secrets Du Premier Livre sur L'espee*. Paris. 1573.

Saint Dider, Henry. *Tract Containing the Secrets of the First Book on the Single Sword*.

Translated by Laura Angotti. 1997.

## The Text and Illustrations

This manual consists of a series of pictures, with small text references for each one. There is one woodcut for each of the actions and stances that he describes, and within the text specific reference is made to these pictures. This suggests that Saint Didier intends the use of the illustrations just as much as the text he writes.

Anglo mentions Saint Didier's use of tufts of grass and foot numbering in his illustrations is unique, and also states that his portrayal of weapons was accurate for that time period in shape and style (see *The Weapons*)(Anglo, 2000: 10).

## The Weapons

The weapon used is a simple single sword. No explicit reference to weapon type, or specifics is given in this text. The illustrations within the text show long swords, which seem to be approximately 3-4 feet in length. They have simple, straight cross guards, small pommels, and a knuckle guard.

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79-86	“Subtleties of the Sword”
87-89	How to Play Tennis to learn to Sword Fight
90-91	Closing to the Reader
91-98	Table of Contents*
98-99	Closing to the King

\* This Table of contents is not broken down into sections. It is for the most part unhelpful because it lists every page, and does not organize the text into any specific groups.

## **Overview of Text**

This work seems to be a manual explaining basic concepts in using the sword (as described under The Weapons section). There is a brief introduction in which St. Didier explains how his style of fighting is different from other masters. After the introduction there is a play-by-play description of a fight between a “Lieutenant” and a “Provost” that consists of numerous sequences.

Saint Didier introduces the manual by stating what one should know about fencing. He gives a brief overview of his “6 points”:

1. The first point is how many foot placements, or as he says “postures”, there are (see technique analysis) – Left Foot, Right Foot
2. Guards (see technique analysis) – High, Middle, Low
3. Attacks (see technique analysis) – Right Hand, Reverse, Thrust

4. Multiplied Attacks (see vocabulary)– This meaning that the above-mentioned attacks can each be done in multiple manners.
5. Saint Didier’s fifth point is that the defense and offence at the time of these hits must be known. This is necessary to adapt and “draw” positions.
6. You must judge the hit that you want to place. It is necessary to watch the point of your opponent’s sword at all times, and if this is done it will be easy to judge your opponents next move.

Examples and explanation of these points can be found within the fight sequences that follow his introduction. After the introduction he explains briefly how his style is different from other masters. One he mentions specifically is Fabris (see Background Information).

## **Technique Analysis**

### Attacks:

1. Right Hand - The only description he makes of these is in comparison to a game of tennis. From this comparison, I come to believe that this said Right Hand is a forehand lateral cut or blow.
  - A. Right Hand in Low – This would be a right hand cut to any part of the legs. Only one example is given of this (pg 30). The guard of the sword should start at shoulder level, and the point of the sword is aimed towards the legs of the opponent. The sword is brought down lower to make a cut at the target leg.
  - B. Right Hand in High – This seems to be a cut that is directed towards either the face or the shoulders of the opponent.
2. Reverse – As with the Right Hand the only description given for this hit is through a tennis analogy. I interpret this as a backhand cut.

- A. Reverse in Low – From what I can tell this is a reverse cut that is aimed at the legs of an opponent. Again there is only one example of this type of strike (pg. 34).
  - B. Reverse in High – This is a backhand cut to the higher parts of the body (e.g. face, throat, chest, shoulders).
3. Thrust - . This would be the movement of the sword arm straight in front of the body to deliver an attack with the point of the sword. It seems this strike is always made in a 'high' manner (e.g. at the head or shoulders), because no mention is made of a low thrust to the legs.

### Guards

- 1. Low - In this guard the sword is held at lap or chest level, with the point of the sword aiming to the arm of opponent
  - A. Left – pointing at left arm
  - B. Right – pointing at right arm
- 2. Middle – The sword hilt is held at shoulder level. There is a discrepancy in what Saint Didier says about the middle guard. In the preface he states the middle guard is with the point of the sword aiming at the left eye of the opponent, however in all the illustrations and examples throughout the text, the middle guard is shown and described as pointing the sword at the chest of the opponent.
- 3. High – In this guard, one holds the hilt of the sword just above shoulder level, with the point of the sword aiming for the face or eyes.

### Foot placement:

Here is the guide that Saint Didier gives for basic foot placement:

	Left	Right
Front	1	2
Back	4	3

It is used by stating which numbers the feet should be placed. For example, right foot forward would be with the left foot on 4 and the right foot on 2.

Didier states there are two postures. Throughout the text he never uses anything but these, except for the triangle and quadrangle hits which have very specific foot placement:

1. left – with the left foot forward, weight on left foot.
2. right – with the right foot forward, weight on right foot

### Unsheatheing

All unsheatheings start with the right hand grasping the hilt of the sword, which is in a scabbard attached to the belt of the combatant. The left hand is firmly holding the scabbard. Each of the unsheatheings start in a “right foot 2”, “left foot 1” foot posture. Here are the three that Saint Didier describes:

1. This unsheatheing is done by drawing the right foot back into the 3 placement, while keeping the left foot on the 1. At the same time the foot is drawn back, one is to lift the hilt of the sword to shoulder level and situate the point at the chest of the opponent, which ends in being in the middle guard.
2. This unsheatheing is identical to the first, with the difference that the point of the sword is drawn up over the head of the opponent, ending with it resting pointed at the chest as in the first.
3. To do this unsheatheing, one must take the right foot off the 2 position and hold it in front a bit and in the air. While keeping the foot in the air, will take the sword from the sheath and assume a low guard, with the hilt being at chest level and the point aiming at the stomach of the opponent. The right foot is then brought down and placed on the 3 position, and the sword is raised to a high guard.

## Sequences

Please refer to above Technique Analysis for an explanation of each of these shorthand moves. Foot placement and stance (bearing & guard) are described at the beginning of each sequence. And moves follow down, with the counter strike to the right under the Provost column for each offensive strike given. Items marked with a “?” were assumed from the woodcuts, while all other moves and targets were explicitly stated in the text.

### Sequence Example

Bearing & Guard: Foot placement for Lieutenant Guard for Lieutenant to assume	Foot placement for Provost Guard for Provost to assume
Action 1 for Lieutenant at Provost - Target	The Provost's counter to Action 1 - Target

#### Lieutenant's Attack

#### Provost's Defense & Counter

### Sequence 1

Bearings & Guard: Left foot forward Mid. Guard? -- hilt at shoulder level, pointed at chest	Left foot forward High Guard -- hilt higher than shoulder level, pointed at chin
Right in Low – Left Shin	Draw left foot back, Right (in Middle)? – Sword Arm
Reverse high – Right Shoulder	Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) - Face
Right in High – (Face?)	Thrust (in High) - Face

### Sequence 2

Bearing & Guard: Left foot forward High Guard – higher than shoulder, pointed at the eye of the opponent	Left foot forward Low Guard – hilt just under chest level point at right arm of opponent
Reverse (in Low?)– Right Shin	Reverse (in Middle?) – Elbow of Sword Arm
Right Hand or Thrust in High – (Face?)	Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) – Face
Reverse or Thrust in High – (Face?)	Forte to the Foible, Thrust in Low – Left Breast

### Sequence 3

Bearing & Guard: Left foot forward Low Guard – pointed at arm of opponent	Left foot forward High Guard – pointed at eye of opponent
Right Hand in High – Left Shoulder	Forte to the Foible, Thrust in High – Chin
Reverse in High – Left Shoulder	Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in Middle?) – Stomach

(Right Hand in High?) – Shoulder

Forte to the Foible, Thrust in High – Face

**Sequence 4**

Bearing & Guard:  
Right foot forward  
Low Guard – Hilt at lap level  
Pointing at lap of opponent

Right foot forward  
Middle Guard – hilt at shoulder level, pointing  
at the chest of opponent

Feign to Thrust (in High) – Face,  
Reverse (in High) – Right Shoulder

Forte to the Foible, Thrust in High – (Left Shoulder?)

Right Hand in High – (Face?)

Forte to the Foible, Thrust in High – Throat

Reverse in High – (Face?)

Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) – Throat

**Sequence 5**

Bearing & Guard:  
Left foot forward  
Low Guard – hilt at chest level  
Pointed at right arm of opponent

Left foot forward  
High Guard – hilt higher than shoulder  
Pointed at mouth of opponent

Thrust (in Middle?) – Left Nipple

Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) – Face

Thrust (in Middle?) – Right Side

Forte to the Foible, Thrust in High – Throat

Thrust/Right Hand in High – Left Side

Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) – Throat

**Sequence 6**

Bearing & Guards:  
Right foot forward  
Middle Guard

Right foot forward  
Low Guard – pointing at stomach

Feign to Thrust in High – Left Shoulder,  
Thrust (in High?) – Right Shoulder

Forte to the Foible, Thrust in High – Chest

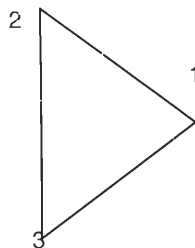
Thrust in High – (Face?)

Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) – Face

Thrust in High – (Face?)

Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in Middle?) – Left Nipple

**Triangle Hit**



Bearings: Left foot at 1, body facing 2-3  
Advance right foot to 2, left foot to 1

Bearings: Left foot at 1, right foot at 3, facing 1  
Move left foot to 2, and right foot to 1

Thrust (in High?) – Face  
Move right foot to 3

Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High) – Face  
Move right foot to 3

Thrust in High – Right shoulder

Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High) – Face



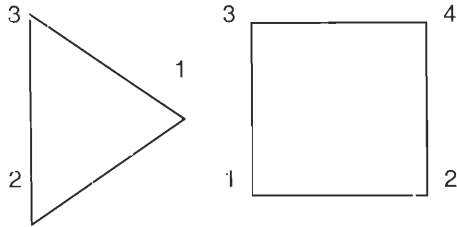
Keep foot posture

Move right foot to 1

Reverse (in Low?) – Thigh  
Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High) – Face

Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) - Face  
Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) – Face

Quadrangle Hit



Bearings: left foot on 1 of the square, Right foot on 2 of triangle (for both L. & P.)

Advance Right foot to 2 of square  
Thrust in High – (Face?)

Bring back left foot to 3 of triangle  
Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) – Left Eye

Move right foot to 4  
Right hand (in High?) – (Face?)

Maintain foot posture  
Forte to the Foible, Thrust (in High?) – Face

Move left foot to 3  
Right Hand in High – (Face?)

Maintain foot posture  
Forte to the Foible, Thrust in High – Left Eye

First Grasping

Bearings: left foot forward, middle guard  
Right Hand/Thrust in High – (Face?)

Bearings: left foot forward, guard in high  
Forte to the Foible, Point Sword High

Advance Right foot  
Thrust in High – (Face?)

Bring left foot behind, then after FF advance left foot  
Forte to the Foible, grasp guard of L with left hand

Withdraw right foot

Take opponents sword pointing back, under you arm

Counter Grasping

Advance left foot  
Thrust in High – Left Side  
Take guard of Provost's sword

Bring Left foot back  
Forte to the Foible, advance left foot  
Take guard of L.'s sword

Return sword to position by taking the hilt in the right hand, and removing it from the underarm

Second Grasping

Bearings: left foot forward, Low guard  
Advance right foot, Feign RH/Thrust High  
After FF upon him will advance left foot  
Take the guard of the P.'s sword

Bearings: Left foot forward, in Middle guard  
Forte to the Foible  
Turn down the point of the sword when it is taken

Third Grasping

Bearings: Middle Guard, left foot forward  
Thrust in High – Left Shoulder

Bearings: High Guard, left foot forward  
Forte to the Foible, Pointing at forehead  
Using the left hand, grasps the blade of the L.

## **Salvator Fabris'**

### ***Fencing: On the Science of Arms, 1606***

*Translated by A.F. Johnson and Edited by Joshua Pendragon*

#### **Background to the Text**

This text, published in Copenhagen in 1606, gives very practical instruction on the art of rapier fighting. Although Fabris agrees with most of his contemporaries in stating that rapier fighting is an art based on geometric principles, he takes a different approach to teaching fencing. He attempts to teach a fighter what to do in a given situation, rather than explaining the basic geometric principles behind fencing. Since there are many situations which may arise in a rapier fight, his writing style makes the text longer than most of the fencing manuals of his time. However, this style allows the text to be much more clear, and easily understandable to those who have little or no real-life experience with a rapier.

The manual was originally written in Italian (Fabris' native tongue), and he dispenses with the elegant and formal writing style of his contemporaries. He wrote the book in such a way that the common man could easily understand it, and it contains more useful information than elegant language (Fabris, 1606: ii). As a result, this manual was so popular that six more editions (to my knowledge) were published over a span of more than 100 years. This is a very impressive run for a publication in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and is an indication of its usefulness. Of these known later editions, three were in German, two appear to be bilingual (German and Italian) and another is in Italian. It should be noted that this manual, though in my opinion very useful, is not perfect. Fabris mentions himself that the illustrations may appear strained, and the positions a bit unnatural. This was a problem with the medium that was used to create the illustrations, as it was difficult at that time to make accurate reproductions of figures. Also, Fabris states that he "allowed it to be printed and to remain as it is", indicating the work was not fully perfected (Fabris, 1606: 256).

The author, Salvator Fabris, was born in Bologna, Italy in 1544. During his lifetime he traveled to Spain, France and Germany to study fencing (Wilson, 2000). In 1590, Fabris attained a position in the court of King Christian IV of Denmark. He dedicates this manual to Christian IV.

The text used in writing this analysis is an unpublished English translation of Fabris' original. It appears to be translated fairly literally (I have the original Italian text for comparison). For example, Fabris uses the term *spada sola*, which is translated in the English version as "sword alone". This might not be how we would express the concept of fighting with a sword in one hand and nothing in the other in modern English. We might say the "single sword" or fighting with "a sword" (implying that no other weapon is present). Though this method of translation can be a bit hard to read, it is very useful, as it gives insight into the original terminology that Fabris used. For example, Fabris uses the term *passare* (to pass) in a way that describes all manners in which a pass may be made. He does not distinguish between a normal passage, cross passage and so on.

## Publication History

Fabris, Salvator. *De lo schermo overo scienza d'Arme di Salvator Fabris capo dell'Ordinae dei Sette Cori*, (Copenhagen, Denmark: 1606). (Italian)

Fabris, Salvator. *Des kunstreichene und weitberümenten fechtmeisters Salvator Fabris Italiänische fechtkunst*, (Leiden, Netherlands: 1619). (German)

Fabris, Salvator. *Künstliches Fechtbuch Darinen Etlich hundertstück im Einfachen wie auch in dolchen und Rappier auß dem Fundament der Fechtkunst*, (Nuremburg, Germany: nd, c. 1605). (German)

Fabris, Salvator. *De lo schermo overo scienza d'Arme di Salvator Fabris capo dell'Ordinae dei Sette Cori*, (Padua, Italy: 1624). (Italian)

Fabris, Salvator. *Scienza e practica d'Arme*, (Leipzig, Germany: 1677). (Italian and German)

Fabris, Salvator. *Italiänische fechtkunst*, (Leipzig, Germany: 1712). (German)

Fabris, Salvator. *Scienza e practica d'Arme di Salvatore Fabris*, (Leipzig, Germany: 1713). (Italian)

and German)

Fabris, Salvator. *De Lo Schermo overo Scienza d'Arme*, (Medford, MA. USA: nd, c. 1999).

(Italian)

Fabris, Salvator. *Fencing: On the Science of Arms*. Edited by J. Pendragon and translated from the Italian by A.F. Johnson, privately published [c. 1999]. Not yet available.

## **Outline of the Text** (Page / Plate numbers are taken from the original manual in Italian)

- I. **Introduction** (Pages not numbered, located at the beginning of the manual)
  - A. *Note to Christian IV, King of Denmark*
  - B. *Note to the reader*
  
- II. **General Principles of the Sword Alone** (Pages 1-27)
  - A. *The four principle guards*
  - B. *Divisions of the sword: Debile and Forte*
  - C. *The method of forming counter-positions*
  - D. *Explanation of wide and close distance*
  - E. *On rushing in with the sword extended*
  - F. *On cutting*
  - G. *On how to parry*
  - H. *On engaging the sword*
  - I. *On disengagement, counter-disengagement, double disengagement, half disengagement, and re-engagement*
  - J. *On the feint*
  - K. *On lunging and passing*
  - L. *On holding the sword extended, straight, at and angle and withdrawn*
  - M. *On how to carry the body*
  - N. *How to proceed against tall, short, weak, and strong opponents, and against the choleric and the phlegmatic*
  - O. *On cuts and where they hit (Including an unnumbered plate)*
  
- III. **Plates Illustrating the use of the Sword Alone** (Pages 28-76)
  - A. *Guards formed with the sword alone (Plates 1-6, 9-16)*
  - B. *Extensions in Quarta (Plates 7-8, 17-20)*
  - C. *Hits with the sword alone (Plates 21-48)*
  
- IV. **General Principles of the Sword and Dagger** (Pages 76-84)
  - A. *Positioning of the weapons*
  - B. *Counter-positions*
  - C. *Engaging the Sword*
  - D. *How to proceed against and opponent on guard on the left foot*
  - E. *When on guard on the left foot, how to proceed against and opponent on the right foot*
  - F. *General discussion on the use of the dagger*

**V. Plates Illustrating the use of the Sword and Dagger** (Pages 85-113)

- A. *Guards and Extensions using these weapons (Plates 49-69)*
- B. *Hits using these weapons (Plates 70-96)*

**VI. Use of the Sword and Cloak** (Pages 134-149)

- A. *General discussion*
- B. *Guards using the sword and cloak (Plates 97-101)*
- C. *Hits using the sword and cloak (Plates 102-108)*

**VII. Discourse on Attacking with Resolution with the Sword Alone (Meaning attacking without ever standing still in a guard position)** (Pages 153-212)

- A. *The advantage of attacking without ever being steady on guard*
- B. *How to work with the feet, sword and body when attacking with resolution*
- C. *Six methods of attacking without a pause (Plates 109-116)*

**VIII. Attacking with resolution with sword and dagger** (Pages 213-242)

- A. *Four methods of attacking with resolution with the sword and dagger (Plates 117-178)*

**IX. Discussion of coming to grips, seizing the sword, throwing the cloak, principles of the dagger, and defending against the pike with the sword alone** (Pages 243-256)

- A. *Coming to grips (Plates 1-4) (Fabris Starts the numbering at 1 again here)*
- B. *Throwing the cloak (Plates 5,6)*
- C. *Defense against a dagger with bare hands (Plates 7-11)*
- D. *Defending with the sword alone against a pike (Plate 12)*

**X. Conclusion**

**The Weapons**

Fabris speaks of the sword alone (*spada sola* in Italian), the sword and dagger, and the sword and cloak in this manual. Sword can be taken to mean rapier here, as the plates distinctly show a thin-bladed weapon with a swept hilt. For each weapon or set of weapons he first speaks generally of the methods used when fighting, and then describes and illustrates several guards. He explains the types of situations in which each guard would be useful, and how to approach the enemy in each guard. He then discusses extensions, or lunges, that can be used with each type of weapon. Finally, Fabris describes many types of hits that can be made, when they can be made, and how the opportunity might arise. Most of these hits involve simultaneous parries so that the hit can be made with no risk of being hit at the same time.

Fabris begrudgingly touches on several oddities such as fighting unarmed against an opponent with a dagger and defending against a pike with the sword alone. He states at the beginning of this chapter that he did not wish to discuss these topics at length, but to simply make

the reader aware of situations that might arise. Also, he originally set out to make a manual on instruction in the sword alone, the sword and dagger, and the sword and cloak. Since he had already completed this, he didn't see the need to go on any further. Also, Fabris did not want to discuss defending unarmed against the dagger as this situation, or any other where one fighter has an advantage in weapon, should never arise among gentlemen. He states that he did not discuss the use of shields and bucklers in defense, because one who understands the concepts of defending with the cloak or dagger can apply them to defending with anything else on the left arm (Fabris, 1606: 243-256).

## **Technique Analysis**

### *Goals of the Fight*

In reading this manual, one comes to the conclusion that the desired result is the death or mortal wounding of the opponent. Some masters favor methods that will not be fatal to the adversary, but Fabris does not. The majority of Fabris' plates show fighters striking in the neck, chest and stomach areas, which are certainly aimed at killing. The strikes that are not in these areas tend to hit the inner thigh (where the femoral artery is located) or the sword arm's shoulder (which would disable the opponent, at which time he could be dealt with). Another indication of the goal of killing the adversary is Fabris' statement that a cut is "less deadly" than a thrust (Fabris, 1606: 8), and therefore less desirable. Fabris describes a particular hit, which results in the attacker's sword protruding from the adversary's back, as "disconcerting" to the adversary. Obviously if being run through is "disconcerting" and not something that ends the fight, then the fight is to the death.

The other primary goal of a rapier fight is to preserve honor. Based on indications throughout the text, it can be concluded Fabris speaks primarily of situations that would be considered judicial duels. That is to say that a formal challenge was presented, and permission to duel was granted by the king or leader of the state. In this case, the death of an adversary will not bring punishment against a fighter. It is implied that this type of fight involves a choice of weapons, as he states that the cloak or dagger (in conjunction with the rapier) are widely used,

unless “its use is forbidden by the ruling princes” (Fabris, 1606: 134). The fact that certain weapons were prohibited in certain places is a good indication that the duels themselves were allowed. Fabris mentions that an advantage of arms (having better or more weapons than your opponent) should never be sought. Fabris believes that fighting with a rapier is an art, and should not be marked with dishonor.

#### *Evaluating the Adversary*

It is always advantageous to evaluate your adversary before and during a fight. Before the fight, you can size up a fighter based on his strength, size and demeanor. During the fight, you should always know what guard your adversary is in, and at what distance he is. If you have a substantial height advantage over your adversary, you should be inclined to attack rather than defend. You must keep your sword free, in order to be able to hit when the adversary approaches. Due to your advantage in reach, your opponent will come within striking distance before he is able to strike. However, the shorter man has the advantage of being able to cover more of his body with his sword. His movements are usually quicker as well, allowing him to defend better.

If you have the advantage of strength, you should always seek to engage the weaker man's sword. When you decide to hit, you can more easily push the adversary's sword aside. Also, if you pass and end up coming to grips with your opponent, you have an advantage there. Likewise, if you are the weaker fighter, you should avoid your adversary's sword. You should try to entice your opponent into attacking, then step back a bit (so his attack misses) and try to attack as he is withdrawing from his attack.

A choleric opponent's fury should be encouraged. You should try to get him to strike, then parry and strike in the same motion. By encouraging his anger, you will cause him to make mistakes in judgment to your advantage. A phlegmatic opponent is careful, and waits for you to attack. You must attack, but be careful not to be tricked by a false invitation, or other such maneuver. A phlegmatic opponent will give you the time to assess the situation, and you should do that, and always proceed with caution.

Knowing the distance from yourself to your adversary is also critical. You must know how far you can reach, and the reach of your adversary. If you are within your opponent's lunging distance (close distance) and believe that your adversary can only hit by taking a step first, you will be surprised when he lunges and hits you.

### *Guards*

Fabris' style arises from the four basic guards: prima, seconda, terza, and quarta. Prima is the position in which the hand draws the sword from the scabbard, that is, with the point facing the adversary, the hand high, and the front edge of the sword facing upwards. Seconda has the hand held palm down, with the sword's right side facing upwards. Terza has the hand in a natural position, palm facing to the left and the back of the hand facing right. The front edge of the sword is facing downward and the tip is facing the adversary. Finally, quarta has the hand turned with the palm facing up, and the left surface of the sword also facing up. Fabris also briefly touches on three hybrid guards, which fall between the four basic guards. He doesn't bother to name the guards, but simply describes them to make the reader aware of them. These hybrid guards can be easily described in terms of the basic guards. The first is halfway between prima and seconda, the second halfway between seconda and terza, and the third halfway between terza and quarta. They are necessary because of the large amount of space between each of the basic guards, but he doesn't discuss them at all in his discussion of the more complex guards, the hits, and the extensions. It is interesting to note that all of these guards (as well as the rest of the text) are described for a right-handed fighter. It can be concluded that either the vast majority of fighters were right handed, or that a left-handed person could easily adapt the guards using with the opposite hand.

### *Grip and Stance*

How to grip the sword is a topic not discussed by Fabris. Since all the plates in Fabris' manual show the fighters holding their sword with all four fingers on the handle of the sword, one would assume that this is the grip he prefers, though he never explicitly says this. Fabris' principles could be applied to different grips, and this is one possible explanation for his omission



of a discussion on this topic. Another is that he simply did not have time. As his manual indicates, he was rushed to publish before he felt his work was truly complete.

As for stance, Fabris preaches the merits of carrying the body low. Although advocates of a high body position say that the upright position is “more natural, not so dangerous to the head, quicker for movement, less fatiguing and less restricted” (Fabris, 1606: 22), he argues that a bent body position is more secure on the feet, with less area of the body exposed, and can be defended with less movement of the weapons. Since the sword is much too small a weapon to defend the whole body at all times, Fabris states that it is advantageous to make the exposed parts of the body as small as possible to aid in defending. Also, a low body position allows one to extend and attack without having to first bend the body. This allows a person to attack and retire more quickly than someone with an upright body position.

Fabris' illustrations are a very useful tool in gaining a better understanding of the stance he teaches. However, useful as the plates are, they cannot be relied upon entirely. Fabris himself admits that in some of the plates, the figures appear strained. The positions shown in the plates should always be formed in a manner that is non-straining and comfortable, as to do otherwise will not allow for the quick movements necessary to be successful in a rapier fight. The plates are to give a general idea of how the position is taken. It is very important to understand both the plate and text accompanying it to fully comprehend the purpose of a certain position (Fabris, 1606: 256).

### *Footwork*

Fabris discusses footwork briefly at the beginning of the book, and slightly throughout the rest of the book. He describes where the feet should be when on guard, and how to move them to parry or avoid the enemy's sword when attacking. Generally speaking, Fabris appears to favor having the front foot facing the adversary, with the back foot at a right angle to the front foot. This observation comes from viewing the plates and reading the accompanying text, rather than an explicit statement from the author. Since foot position depends greatly on the situation, Fabris' manual cannot be easily generalized into any one kind of footwork, except that he mentions throughout the manual that the foot, body and sword must move in union. Therefore, certain

guards, hits and extensions will have certain foot positions, and others will have completely different foot positions. Fabris uses whatever positioning is most natural and advantageous to the fighter. I will discuss the foot positions used in various guards, extensions, and hits in more detail when I summarize the plates in this manual.

### *Attacks*

Fabris teaches both how to attack, and how not to attack. First, I will describe the method that Fabris believes is best, then a similar method or methods which are generally disadvantageous and may get an inexperienced fighter into trouble.

The most basic of the principles that Fabris believes in is the thrust. He states that it is more deadly, can reach further and have more accuracy than a cut. A thrust, if employed properly, allows a fighter to attack and defend at the same time. Cuts are generally less effective than thrusts due to the lengthy recovery time needed after an unsuccessful cut. A missed cut will give any adversary plenty of time to thrust before the sword is in position to defend. Cuts also tend to be less damaging than thrusts, so that a fighter who employs cuts will put himself at greater risk to deliver a less damaging blow (Fabris, 1606: 8). For the most part, Fabris only discusses how to defend against cuts, not how to deliver them.

Though the thrust is the preferred method of attack, it must be done properly. People who thrust their arm forward violently to give the tip of the sword greater force will find themselves in trouble. An adversary who anticipates this will defend easily, and counterattack successfully. This is due partly to the fact that a thrust such as this can be easily guided to miss, even with the debile of the adversary's sword (Fabris, 1606: 18). When a fighter thrusts so forcefully, the defending fighter can beat the sword at a right angle to the direction of the thrust, and the thrust will miss easily. The fighter's own momentum can work against him in this way. Thus, the adversary can parry without effort, and attack as the thrusting fighter is withdrawing his sword. Aside from the fact that this type of attack can be defended easily, there are three other reasons not to thrust violently. First, the attacker who does this has committed himself to one line, and cannot change if the defender moves in time to parry in that line. Second, the sword is no more deadly when it is thrust violently at the opponent than when it is thrust less violently. Third,

thrusting less violently allows for more control over the sword, so that it will the point will not drop during the thrust because of the weight of the sword.

Fabris greatly approves of the method of attacking and defending at the same time. All of the plates in the manual show this method being used. A fighter must never attack if there is a great risk of being hit. Attacking and defending at the same time reduce this risk. Also, a fighter who can attack and defend at the same time can surprise an attacker with a quick counter-attack. Employing this method successfully is simply a matter of having the correct sword position to counter your enemy's.

Fabris disapproves of what he calls "the principles of the two times" (Fabris, 1606: 5). A fighter who uses these principles generally first attempts to beat the adversary's sword out of line with his own sword, and then proceeds to attack. A fighter who tries this will be at a great disadvantage compared to one who can attack and defend at the same time, simply because it takes him twice as long to attack. Also, if his attempt to beat the sword misses, his sword will be out of line to defend, and he will have essentially beaten himself.

Another basic principle of attacking that Fabris discusses is the feint. A true feint is defined by Fabris as "feigning to hit in one line, and when the adversary is defending that line, hit in another" (Fabris, 1606: 16). The true way to make a feint, according to Fabris, is to thrust, and while thrusting, observe the adversary's reaction. If he does not move to parry, one should continue the thrust in that line, and make a hit. If he does move to parry, one should change the line of attack and continue the thrust. This should be done as one fluid motion, never withdrawing the sword. A true feint will be a single thrust in which a quick change of arm position changes the line of attack. Fabris observes that even this method of employing the feint can be dangerous, as it allows the adversary to parry and thrust at the same time, thus hitting you undefended.

There are several methods in which a fighter may make a feint that will be ineffective, and possibly even put that fighter in danger. Feints made by thrusting, pulling the sword back when the adversary tries to parry, then thrusting again in a new line are not good. A person who does this makes three motions, giving an adversary enough time to parry the feint and the second attack and perhaps to counter-attack. Also, feints made by beating the foot on the ground in order

to frighten an adversary are ineffective against any but the most inexperienced of fighters, and will only work effectively when the floor is of wood, and not at all in a street (Fabris, 1606: 16). If this type of false feint is made within distance, the adversary may hit in the part of the body that you have exposed in making the motion to stamp your foot.

Fabris also discusses how to attack without pause, even when your adversary has not given you an opportunity to attack. This means to attack without waiting for the adversary to offer a time, and without ever being steady on guard within distance. The movements of this type of attack carry the attacker from a distance in which neither fighter can reach the other, all the way to the adversary to make a hit. The body is never still throughout the attack. Fabris stresses the necessity of the foot, body and sword moving in union in order for this type of attack to be successful. He also states that most manuals teach that the only way to win a rapier fight is to wait for your adversary to move, and thus give you the opportunity to hit while he is moving. Fabris agrees that one must recognize when the adversary has given them an opportunity and be able to strike. However, he states that if both adversaries are waiting for the other to make a mistake, then there is no advantage, and either fighter could win the fight (Fabris, 1606: 153). He shows ways in which by attacking without pause a fighter can make his own opportunities. Attacking without pause is something that most manuals do not teach.

When attacking someone who relies on his bare left hand to defend, Fabris states that one must not attack in a straight line. By this, I assume that Fabris means to attack so that your sword is coming from either the right or left, with the blade of sword at an angle so as to hit the opponent. This attack will have shorter range (since the shortest distance between two points is a straight line), but that is unimportant. This is because a fighter who parries primarily with his left arm usually doesn't defend with his sword (relying solely on the hand for defense), and withdraws the sword so that it will not be engaged. Attacking at an angle will force the adversary to move his hand much further to hit your sword, and will not allow him enough time to defend if done properly. In my opinion, attacks on a lunge or pass in seconda or quarta (especially quarta) would be best in situations when the adversary parries with the left arm or hand. This is because these basic guards allow for attacks at angles, and quarta would have you striking far from the

adversary's hand, near his sword. If his sword is indeed withdrawn, he will have no chance to defend in time.

Fabris talks briefly about some attacks that he does not approve of, but mentions to make the reader aware of their existence. These include methods of coming to grips with one's adversary, disarming the adversary, and throwing the cloak. He did not originally wish to talk about these topics, due to many reasons. For example, he states that the manual is sufficiently long without it, and that the original purpose of the manual was to discuss how to defend and attack with the sword alone, sword and dagger, and sword and cloak. Coming to grips and disarming were not discussed in detail because one who understands the concepts of cutting, thrusting and observing time should never have to come to grips, and therefore never have the opportunity to disarm his opponent. He discusses these topics simply because it was recommended by many of his friends, and he wished to please them.

#### *Defenses*

Fabris discusses defense by way of positioning, that is, which positions should be used against your adversary at what times, and which guards defend against which. By explaining defense in these terms, he ensures that a fighter following his methods will always be able to parry in less time than it takes for the adversary's sword to arrive. Parrying in less time than it takes for the adversary to strike is achieved by forming a counter-position. For every position that an opponent can form, there is a counter-position which you can take. This counter-position will not allow your opponent to hit any unguarded area of your body, because you will have enough time to move your sword in order to parry. Therefore, the adversary cannot hit without changing his position. This is the most important aspect of Fabris' defensive principles.

Another main principle is never to attack if by attacking, you are putting yourself in danger. When attacking, sound positioning will assure the safety of a fighter. Likewise, Fabris observes that if a fighter forms his guards well, he will never have to parry without having an opportunity to hit the adversary at the same time.

Fabris discusses parrying with the sword alone, and parrying with the cloak or the dagger. When using the sword alone, he does not encourage parrying with the left arm. By

“parrying with the left arm” in this context, he means to push the opponent’s sword aside with the bare hand or arm. He feels that this method should only be used in time of need, because the sword is much better for defending than the bare hand. When fighting against an adversary who relies on his left hand to engage the sword, one must hold the sword pointing slightly upwards, so as to make it harder for the adversary to grasp it. This assures that your sword cannot be engaged when your adversary is on guard and makes your defense much more sound (Fabris, 10). Using these principles, someone who parries with the left hand can be easily defeated.

When the rapier and dagger are being used, Fabris favors using both weapons in union to defend oneself. Some say that since they are two weapons, one should always be defending, and one always attacking. Fabris argues that a defense formed by the union of the rapier and dagger is much more sound (Fabris, 1606: 79). If the adversary attacks in the line you are defending in, you can easily defend with the two weapons, and hit if the opportunity arises. If the adversary realizes the soundness of your defense, and tries to change to another line to hit, you can separate your weapons and use one to attack and one to defend.

When using the cloak with the rapier, one should use the cloak primarily for defense, and the sword for offense. The sword should be used to defend only against cuts, as defending against a cut with the cloak could result in the cut penetrating the cloak and cutting the arm. The cloak should be held high, so that it hangs down and defends more of the body. The cloak should be used to push the adversary’s sword aside when he attacks, and a counter attack can then be made above the adversary’s cloak, where he cannot defend with it.

## **Combat Sequences from the Text**

Fabris’ approach to teaching makes it difficult to put together extended combat sequences. Most of the plates and descriptions are action-reaction or action-reaction-reaction sequences. For example, Fabris will show a hit that can be made, and state several of the ways in which this situation may have arisen. The more lengthy plate sequences are on attacking without pause. He shows how one would attack, how the adversary might also try to attack, or

perhaps defend, or even both simultaneously. He then shows how one should react to his opponent's reaction.

It is also important to mention the computer renderings I have made of Fabris' original plates are to be used as an aid in better understanding those plates. They were made to resemble the originals as closely as possible, but hopefully allow the reader to better understand the purpose of each plate. The following is a brief summary of each of the plates describing guards, extensions and hits, organized by plate number.

Plate 1, Sword Alone. Guard in Prima formed in drawing the sword. Summary: This is the guard formed immediately after drawing the sword. It isn't very secure, as the forte is withdrawn, and the sword is held too high. The only advantage is that the head is well defended.

Plate 2, Sword Alone. A well-formed guard in Prima. Summary: This guard allows you to defend well, especially against cuts. The body is bent so that only the head and upper chest need to be defended. This position is difficult to maintain however, as it is straining on the body and the sword arm.

Plate 3, Sword Alone. A guard in Seconda (based on Plate 1's guard). Summary: in this guard, the forte is forward, allowing you to parry easily. However, the hand must be turned to Quarta in order to parry attacks that come from the inside (left side in this case).

Plate 4, Sword Alone. A well-formed guard in Seconda. Summary: This guard is similar to the one before it, except that the arm is lower and slightly more extended. This exposes a small part of the head, but allows a better all-around defense. The weak point of this guard is that you are not well defended if the adversary is allowed to come to the outside. Thus, you must keep him from moving there.

Plate 5, Sword Alone. A guard in Seconda with the arm shortened. Summary: This guard should be formed when planning to attack. It is very strained, but as soon as the point of the adversary's sword nears your point, you must change to Quarta and lunge. This lunge will have long distance and will be in an unexpected line. If it appears that the adversary is defended against this, you must disengage, and abandon the plan of lunging.

Plate 6, Sword Alone. Guard in Seconda with the sword shortened. Summary: This guard is formed to allow the adversary to approach. The sword is directed to the left, and not facing the adversary. If he attacks, you must parry with the left hand and strike. This is one of the situations that Fabris describes where parrying with the left arm is necessary. If he advances without attacking, you can change to Quarta and strike.

Plate 21, Sword Alone. First hit in Quarta. Summary: Both you and your opponent are in guard in terza. He comes forward to attempt to force you to parry. You take the time he needs to step forward in order to change to quarta, engage his sword, advance the right foot, and make a hit.



## George Halle's

### *The Private Schoole of Defence, 1614*

#### **About the Author**

Obtaining biographical information on George Halle and information on any others works he may have created is extremely difficult. There are sporadic mentions of him in Sydney Anglo's *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, but nothing helpful regarding background information. There is no entry for George Halle in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Egerton Castle's *School and Masters of Fence* contains this excerpt in the bibliography: "HALES. *The Private School of Defence*. 1640? Mentioned on p. 3, Walton's 'Compleat Angler,' 1653 edition." The 1640 date from Castle's bibliography may be erroneous because no other bibliographies appear to mention this date. Besides the bibliographic entry, there are no other references to George Halle in Castle's book.

The passage on Halle from the "Compleat Angler":

"...Mr. Hales, a most valiant and excellent fencer, who in a printed book called A Private Schoole of Defence, undertook to teach that art or science, and was laughed at for his labour. Not that many useful things might be learned from that book, but he was laughed at, because that art was not to be taught by words but by practice." (Walton, 1909)

This short excerpt suggests that many people during Walton's era did not see Halle's work as particularly helpful.

#### **Background to the Text**

##### **Full Bibliography**

H[ale], G[eorge]. *The Private Schoole of Defence*. London: J. Helme, 1614.

## Bibliography Source

Pollard, A.W., and G.R. Redgrave. *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640*. London: The Bibliographical Society, 1969.

## Online Bibliography

Hale, George. *The Private Schoole of Defence*. (1999). The Historical Armed Combat Association, <<http://www.thehaca.com/pdf/FullPSoDtext.htm>>.

## Manual Overview

This manual encapsulates an English view on rapier practice. George Halle speaks of his preferred art of sword fighting, which he coins the “Science of Defence”. He criticizes the contemporary English public teachers who educate students on swordsmanship, pointing out flaws in their teachings. Halle then offers brief yet practical recommendations for rapier practice. Halle does so by stating a series of objections on the current teachings of sword practice; and in turn presents a resolution for each problem. Towards the end of the manual, he presents specific offensive and defensive measures for the rapier. He also mentions some uses of the dagger.

Halle’s manual contains material relating to Joseph Swetnam’s manual *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence* (1617), which is also an English publication. Both manuals discuss similar techniques and use similar terminology, as they were published only three years apart from each other.

## Manual Structure

The manual is divided into five sections:

- 1) Dedication & Note to Prince Charles (pp. 1-2)
- 2) The Induction (pp. 3-4)
- 3) The Definition of the “Science of Defence” (pp. 4-5)
- 4) The Defects of the “Teachers of Defence” (pp. 6-8)
- 5) Brief Advice on Fighting (with Rapier...) (pp. 8-11)

All page references are with respect to the online version of George Halle’s manual.

## The Text and Illustrations

There are no illustrations in this manual, only text. The original manual is written in early modern English and is not paginated, and the text is hard to read because of letter discrepancies. Certain letters of the alphabet in the original manual, such as the letter “s”, appear differently than their contemporary alphabet letters, thus making it harder to read the sentences.

## The Weapons

### *The Rapier*

Halle mainly concentrates on rapier offensive and defensive techniques. He also makes brief references to the long sword, the short sword, and the backsword. However, he does not discuss the differences between the weapons.

Halle does, however, talk about a dull rapier versus a sharp rapier. When students practice a fight, they use blunt rapiers, so that a student has little fear of getting seriously injured. In a real fight, the rapiers are sharp and can cause serious harm. An individual may suffer a disadvantage if he acclimates himself to blunt rapier practice. However, it seems that Halle believes an individual may fight equally well with a sharp or blunt rapier as long as he is properly trained and prepared. (p. 3)

### *The Dagger*

Halle mentions the dagger when primarily used in conjunction with the rapier. The only section where the dagger is briefly mentioned alone is when Halle states it should be used chiefly as an offensive weapon. The dagger used defensively by itself cannot be used to offend at the same time, which the sword can do; thus the sword will do most of the offense and defense. Halle's conviction “The best defense is a good offense,” suggests that the dagger is more appropriate for offensive techniques. (p. 6)

### *Turkish Scimitar*

In one section discussing the weapons an individual should choose, Halle mentions the Turkish Scimitar. The following is an excerpt from the manual concerning the scimitar:

“Or likewise [choose] a Turkey Samatorie, for his is crooked, and hath a broad point that will not enter, and therein is the least danger of all; and is much available for a strong man for the close of advantage to disarm.” (p. 8)

The scimitar’s shape is “crooked”, meaning curved, and it also has a dull point that cannot pierce the opponent. Therefore, the opponent is in less jeopardy of being seriously harmed. However, a strong individual can utilize the scimitar to disarm the opponent. This would be in contrast to actually physically harming the opponent with a rapier attack, such as the thrust. Halle’s reference to the scimitar may illustrate how a dull-pointed weapon can still be utilized appropriately in a fight. Furthermore, it may suggest the pursuit of non-lethal techniques, which can also be seen in Joseph Swetnam’s *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence* (1617).

## **Introductory Information In Text**

### **General Introduction**

Halle’s “Science of Defense” has yet to be introduced to English sword fighting practice. Halle does not approve of contemporary public teachers of swordsmanship, declaring that they have not established any solid principles of sword fighting in their teachings. He also notes that this Science worked well with the Romans, supported by the fact that the Romans erected such statues to show their appreciation for the Science. (pp. 1-2)

### *Reasons to Implement the Science of Defense*

1. To offer a better defense against outside invasion and protect the innocent at home.
2. To improve offensive measures abroad and reduce fatalities during war.
3. The teachings of the Science are good for the body and mind, providing both physical and mental exercise. It teaches coordination between the feet and the hands, and also allows the eye to function with quicker judgment. (p. 2)

Hale apologizes to Prince Charles for sounding so anxious to introduce his Science, but he looks forward to the Prince accepting his proposal.

## **Galenic Physiology**

At one point in the manual, Halle speaks of the effects of “heat or cold”, which he believes “may some what distract a fighter.” Although not explicitly stated, this is most likely a reference to Galenic physiology, which deals with the characteristics of an individual. Halle is noting how certain attributes can affect a fighter.

Galen, a renowned ancient Greek physician, believed that human health requires equilibrium between the four main bodily fluids (also known as humours): blood (sanguine), yellow bile (cholera), black bile (melancholy), and phlegm. Each of the humours displays two of the four primary qualities: hot, cold, wet, and dry. The predominant humour in the body was thought to determine a person’s temperament and features (Britannica, 2001).

Halle believes certain characteristics can put a person at a disadvantage in a fight. For instance, an individual with heat attributes may “caste himself too forwardly upon a danger”, and an individual with cold attributes is “not prepared to follow an advantage of offence.” (p. 3)

Based on the previous interpretation, a choleric or sanguine man, becomes angry very easily, and relates to Halle’s “heat” term. This type of person would fight aggressively, and his belligerent traits could undermine his true sword skills and ultimately serve as a disadvantage in the fight. A phlegmatic or melancholic man is uneasy, perhaps apprehensive in battle, and relates to Halle’s “cold” term. In this case, the individual becomes nervous and experiences trepidation during a fight; the individual may revert to instinctive measures, and his learned sword skills may be diluted. Halle is demonstrating how impetuous emotions like anger and fear shroud the mental abilities and learned expertise in a fight, and can cause one to react without reason.

In fact, Halle declares that skill is a “friend” to every reasonable man. An individual with the proper fighting skills will not bring irrational behavior into a fight, but will instead bring a great deal of assurance of victory. (p. 3)

Salvator Fabris also makes references to “choleric” and “phlegmatic” individuals in his work *De lo Schermo, overo Scienza d’Arme* (1606).

## Technique Analysis

### General Advice on the Fight

#### *Dueling Code*

If an individual becomes involved in a fight, he should assume the position of the defender so he can choose the weapons. (p. 8)

#### *Weapon Choice*

Weapon choice depends on an individual’s abilities and physical attributes. This is in accord with Halle’s criticism that teachers demonstrate only one fighting method to students, regardless of individual characteristics. To correct this pedagogical mistake, the student’s individual traits should determine their fighting methods, which are closely related to weapon choice. (pp. 6, 8)

#### *Advice to a Weak Person with Short Reach*

A weak individual should choose the rapier and dagger, or short sword and dagger. Both weapon combinations can be used to keep the opponent from coming in close, which would prevent the opponent from using his strength advantage. (p. 8)

#### *Advice to Strong Person with Short Reach*

A strong individual with short reach should choose the single rapier. Halle notes that this type of person can utilize the rapier to disarm the opponent. (p. 9)

#### *Keeping Distance*

“Stay no longer within the reach of your enemy than you are offending.” In other words, an individual should stay out of the opponent’s attack range unless he is

executing attacks. This way, the opponent has to come to the individual to perform any attacks, and the individual will have more time to make counter measures. (p. 9)

### *Importance of Judgment*

Judgment includes time, place, and distance. All are important factors that must be considered when engaged in battle. *Time* is the ability to execute moves at the precise moment. *Place* probably refers to the positioning of the body. At one point Halle mentions “the uncertainty of footing”, which suggests that place is indeed how the body is positioned, including arms and legs. The body must be in a correct position to execute certain offensive and defensive measures properly. *Distance* is the space between the fighter and the opponent. In order to successfully perform certain attacks, accurate distance is required. One must successfully balance the three elements of judgment in order to gain dexterity and ability in a fight. (pp. 4-5)

### *Importance of Strength*

Strength encompasses agility and quickness of the eye, which constitute two important elements in a fight. One must be able to think and move quickly in order to succeed in a fight. (p. 4)

### *Significance of Skill*

Skill is essential to win a fight, and only by sufficient practice will one teach the body to endure during a fight and achieve victory. An inexperienced individual has little chance against a learned swordsman in a real fight. (p. 3)

### *Practice Fighting*

#### **Keep Practice Hidden**

The students watch each other practice and gain insight on each other’s fighting styles, which could ultimately be detrimental to the students in an actual fight. Therefore, students should keep their practice hidden from the view of others in order to keep their fighting style secret. This way, the opponent will have a much harder time anticipating the student’s moves in an actual fight. The

whole concept of keeping one's practice hidden suggests that Halle's manual title "The Private Schoole of Defense" has its roots in this concept of secret practice. (p. 7)

### **Weapon Consistency**

The best way for a man to obtain proper practice is to utilize a single weapon in all fight scenarios. It is a good idea to have the man use a single rapier against an opponent with a single rapier, and then move on to fighting an opponent bearing a rapier and dagger, and finally onto one bearing a sword and dagger. The man would eventually accustom himself to a gamut of fights and be more prepared for future encounters. (p. 10)

### **Directed Towards a Universal Audience**

The Science of Defense can be applied to everyone; individuals with weak sword skills can learn the Science and make improvements, and individuals who already have substantial sword skills can still learn about the Science to empower themselves even more. With appropriate techniques and persistent practice, the rapier can overcome other weapons such as the halberd and the half pike. (pp. 10-11)

## **Guards**

### *Guard Consistency*

Contemporary teachers do not train students to use consistent guards. In order to rectify this, one should always practice a consistent guard in order to become deft in it. Inconsistent guards promote an erratic defense. (p. 8)



*Point of the Sword*

**Point Position**

The point of the sword should be no higher than the shoulder. Halle does not expound on this suggestion, but it is implied that by keeping the point of the sword no higher than the shoulder, a thrust or other type of attack can be performed quickly. (p. 9)

**Point Consistency**

The individual should not move his sword around when keeping guard, but rather maintain a steady point. Otherwise, the individual's defense becomes weak and unreliable. An unsteady guard creates vulnerability. (p. 9)

*The Body*

**The Body as a Circle**

Halle refers to the "Science of Defense" as an "Art Geometricall", where either one or two weapons guard the body. The arms and legs can be extended in "just proportion", and they can be used to guard the circumference of the body. Thus, the body is identical to a point in a circle and is virtually impenetrable due to the range of guarding available by the arms and legs. (p. 4)

**Body Position**

Contemporary public teachers demonstrate guards that leave too much of the chest exposed, so Halle corrects this error by offering a guard where a minimum portion of the upper torso is exposed. One's right side of the body should always face the opponent; this is presumably the position for a right-handed swordsman. This way, one has less area to defend and the opponent has less area to strike. (p. 6)

### *Grips, Footwork, and Stances*

Halle does not talk about any specific types of grips, footwork, or stances in this manual. It would be difficult to extrapolate such information.

## **Defenses**

In the section of Halle's manual titled "Rules of Practise", he indicates three defenses possible with a single rapier:

1. The lunge.
2. The passage.
3. Change backe and binde, and then backe to your guard.

The first two are normally considered offensive attacks; Halle does not give any explicit reasoning for classifying them as defensive techniques. Halle's belief that the "best defense is a good offense" may explain why he considers the lunge and the passage as defensive techniques.

### *Single Rapier Defense*

#### **The Lunge**

This will be discussed in the attacks section.

#### **The Passage**

This will be discussed in the attacks section.

#### **Change backe and binde, and then back to your guard**

Even though Halle states this as one of three possible defenses with a single weapon, but does not expound on the details of the defense. Based on the context within the sentence, this defensive measure probably means that the individual should first take a step back, implying a change of the forefoot, to gain some distance from the opponent. Then, the individual should knock the opponent's sword out of its current position so he cannot execute an attack. Finally, the individual should revert to his original guard position. (p. 9)

*Dagger Defense with Rapier*

When the rapier is defending the upper body, the dagger can be used to parry an opponent's low attack. Conversely, when the rapier is defending the lower body, the dagger can be used to parry an opponent's high attack. (p. 10)

*Defense for a Weak Person with Short Reach*

If the opponent is strong and comes in close, execute a passage or a cross passage as a defensive maneuver. The individual also needs to shift his body to evade the opponent's attack. (p. 8)

*Defense for a Weak Person with Long Reach*

If the opponent comes in close, the individual should attack the nearest target within his reach. The individual should try to keep the opponent from getting too close and gaining the strength advantage; it's best to keep him at distance, because the individual can still reach him. (p. 8)

*Defense for a Weak Person with Short or Long Reach: (p. 9)*

Halle notes three possible defensive measures to assist a weak person with a short or long reach:

1. "Change your point when the adverse seeks to take it."

Halle does not explain this tactic. However, it appears to mean that if the opponent tries to hit or force the individual's sword out of its current position (via binding), the individual should move his sword's point. The best way to accomplish this would be to quickly drop the sword and bring it to a level below the opponent's sword. This should obviously be done right before the opponent tries to bind. That way, when the opponent tries to swat at the individual's sword, he would miss because the sword is quickly moved to a lower position. If the individual fails to change his point, then the opponent has a good chance of knocking his sword away because of his strength, and then attacking the individual.

2. "Change backe to recover it."

Again, Halle does not elucidate this tactic. It seems to mean that if the opponent tries to hit the individual's sword out of the way, then the individual should take a step back, implying a change of forefoot. This distances the individual from the opponent so he cannot knock the individual's sword away.

3. The final option is to "Leave open your side, and then it is not well to be taken."

Apparently, the individual places his sword's point to the side, instead of in front of him. This way, it is impossible for the opponent to bind. However, it is important to note that this probably should not be done when the individual is close to the opponent, because the sword is at a position where it is not guarding the body.

## **Attacks**

### *General Attack Comments*

#### **Learn Many Attacks**

Contemporary teachers demonstrate only the basic sword blow, limiting the techniques the students can learn. Ideally, the students should be taught a range of attacks. (p. 7)

#### **Be Ready To Attack**

"Offend always upon the adverse coming forward." Whenever the opponent approaches the individual, the individual should be prepared perform an attack. This reinforces Halle's belief that a good defense is a good offense. (p. 9)

### *Attack Tips for a Weak Person with Short Reach*

This type of individual should perform a thrust, and afterwards evade by changing body position as much as possible. Thus, the individual makes close attacks because of his short reach, and then avoids the opponent so he cannot gain a strength advantage. (p. 8)

*Attack Tips for a Strong Person with Long Reach*

When the individual is relatively far from the opponent, he should attack the nearest target area on the opponent within his reach. This way, the individual will maintain a reach advantage where he can hit the opponent and he cannot hit you. (p. 10)

*Attack Tips for a Strong Person with Long or Short Reach*

The individual should try to execute attacks close to opponent instead of evading and keeping distance; this way the individual can utilize strength as an advantage in close combat and has a better chance of overtaking the opponent's point by binding and making him susceptible to further attacks. If possible, the individual can even disarm the opponent and put him at an extreme disadvantage. (p. 6)

*Attacking a Guarding Opponent*

If the opponent is in a guard stance, attack the target area on the opponent that is the closest to reach, because if the attack fails, a quick retreat is possible. Any attempts to attack a target area further within the opponent's guard may be detrimental, because even if you do penetrate the opponent's guard, you will still be susceptible to an attack from the opponent's weapon. (p. 9)

*Attacks with the Rapier*

**The Basic Lunge**

The first possible technique is the basic lunge. As previously stated, Halle categorizes the lunge as the first of three defensive measures with a single weapon, but the lunge is by definition a form of attack. Halle does not explicitly define how a lunge should be performed; the definition used in this analysis is based upon the universally accepted meaning of the lunge in fencing terminology. To execute a lunge, a thrust is performed while extending the rear leg and landing on the bent front leg. (p. 9)

### **The Basic Passage**

Another type of rapier technique is the basic passage. Halle categorizes the passage as the second of three defensive measures with a single weapon, but the passage is also a form of attack. Halle does not explicitly define how a passage should be performed; the definition used in this analysis is based upon the universally accepted meaning of the passage in fencing terminology. To execute a passage, a thrust is performed while advancing the back foot and making it become the forefoot. (p. 9)

### **The Disorder Lunge**

There is also the disorder lunge; Halle considers this the first of three possible offensive measures with a single weapon. First, the basic lunge is performed, and then followed up with an evasive move to avoid the opponent's counterattack. (p. 9)

The disorder lunge goes along with one of Halle's objections of contemporary teachers. The teachers show students how to perform lunge attacks, but do not prepare them for evasion of the opponent's counterstrike. Halle insists that any offensive measure, such as the lunge, should be coupled with an evasive technique to avoid the opponent's retaliation. (p. 7)

### **The Disorder Passage**

The next possible attack is the disorder passage. The disorder passage is the second of three possible offensive measures with a single weapon. In the disorder passage, the basic passage is followed up with an evasive move to avoid the opponent's counterattack. (p. 9)

### **The Binding Passage**

The third possible offensive maneuver with a single weapon is a "binding passage for the close of advantage." Again, there is no explicit definition on how

this should be performed. Presumably, the basic passage is performed while using the sword to knock the opponent's sword aside. The individual would be able to execute his attack after knocking the opponent's sword out of place. (p. 10)

#### *Attacks with the Rapier and the Dagger*

##### **The Passage**

The first possible attack is the passage. Halle only states "passage" in the manual as one of two possible rapier and dagger techniques, without any further explanation. Joseph Swetnam's *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence* (1617) mentions a passage with the rapier and dagger, so presumably Halle is referring to the same tactic. Thus, the individual executes the basic passage while using the dagger to force the opponent's sword out of the way. Since the opponent's sword is out of the way due to binding with the dagger, the rapier thrust should easily hit the opponent. (p. 10)

##### **The Cross Passage**

The second possible offensive maneuver with the rapier and dagger is the cross passage. Again, Halle does not give detail on this move, however an interpretation can be suggested. Apparently, the individual executes the cross passage by performing a forward diagonal sidestepping movement while using the dagger to force the opponent's sword out of the way, and makes an attack with the rapier. The sidestepping movement is probably performed to make it easier to avoid the opponent's counterattack. (p. 10)

## Joseph Swetnam's

### ***The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence, 1617***

#### **Background to the Text**

This book was printed in London in 1617, which appears to be the only printing of it. Swetnam dedicated the book to Prince Charles. According to his introduction, he did this because of Prince Charles' desire to gain experience in the art of fighting, and because of his own duty to serve the Prince and to pass under the protection of the Prince, meaning Swetnam wants to protect against critics scrutinizing and bad mouthing his work. In this book, Swetnam mostly describes how a right-handed fighter would perform all of the defenses, attacks, and all other moves. Therefore this analysis will do the same unless otherwise noted.

In Swetnam's closing remarks he apologizes for the mistakes that he made in the book. He explains that he was never a scholar and never spent more than six months in school. Swetnam also says that he took significant breaks, sometimes of months, when writing the book, which explains why he sometimes repeated the same subject material in different parts of the book, and he quite often forgot what he was writing about so he moved on and wrote about a different subject. This can also explain the many errors that were made in the pagination throughout the book. Where there are errors, I will put the correct page number followed by Swetnam's original number in brackets.

Both Swetnam and George Halle, who wrote *The Private Schoole of Defence*, are English fencing masters from the early 1600's. Because of this their teaching styles are similar to each other, and both describe attacks, and other techniques that are very similar to each other. Swetnam appears to have been either taught or trained using the Italian philosophy of fencing, which is evident from the similarities of this book, and Salvator Fabris' *Fencing: On the Science of Arms*. Swetnam and Fabris share common ideas when talking about their principles of fencing.

Swetnam's most famous book was *The Arraignement of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women; or the Vanitie of them, Choose You Whether*, which had five different



reprintings. Because of this book Swetnam was called a woman-hater. He kept a fencing school in Bristol, which is the reason for him writing this book. All of the biographical information was taken from the Dictionary of National Biography.

## Bibliography

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## The Text and Illustrations

The text is written in blackletter, which makes for difficult reading due to the resemblance of some letters to others. Swetnam likes to write in long drawn-out sentences, which also makes it difficult to read. There are seven illustrations in the book showing different guards and stances. They are on pages 86, 118, 124, 135, 139 [137], 139, 154, and 174. Since the illustrations are woodcuts, they are not as clear as other types of illustrations. The illustrations are somewhat deceiving due to lack of liveliness in the people, and the neglect of three-dimensional consideration. This makes it difficult to see exactly where one's sword should be in respect to the enemy's sword. Swetnam refers to the illustrations every once in a

while, but on page 86 he advises the reader to “regard chiefly the words rather than the picture.”

## **The Weapons**

Swetnam discusses all of the following weapons in this book, but the main focus of this analysis will be upon the rapier, and the rapier and dagger. Swetnam states that the rapier and dagger, and staff are the two main weapons that you should be skillful with. He says, “For those which have the skill of these two weapons may safely encounter against any man having any other weapon.” (Swetnam, 1617: 1) Swetnam’s main focus of the book is on these two weapons, but the others are discussed.

- Rapier and dagger (pp. 85-117)

One of the two main weapons Swetnam believes a man should be skilled with. Swetnam thinks so highly of this weapon that he says, “note it well, for it is the finest and comeliest weapon that ever was used in England.” (Swetnam, p. 2) He says that the rapier should be at least four feet long, and it is better to have it longer rather than shorter.

- Sword and dagger (pp. 154-166)

The sword differs from the rapier in size. The blade of a regular sword is wider than that of a rapier. Swetnam says that the hilt of the sword, because of the closeness to the hand, will shorten your reach. However the lengths of the two different swords are close in size.

- Short sword and dagger (pp. 171-177)

The short sword has the same features as a regular sword, except that it is much shorter. It is usually about three and a half feet long.

- Rapier (pp. 117-124)

Swetnam prefers the rapier and dagger as opposed to the rapier alone, but he does teach how to use a single rapier. The major details of the rapier have been spoken of above.

- Backsword, or Sword (pp. 124-134)

In general the term backsword means a sword that only has one edge. Swetnam uses the term to mean a heavy sword that is used when fighting against a left handed man, because you are using the opposite side of the blade, or "back."

- Staff (pp. 134-140, 148-154)

The staff is the other main weapon that Swetnam believes somebody should be skilled with. He says that the staff works well against long weapons.

## Principles

Swetnam has seven principles that he believes are the key to winning a fight. Swetnam believes that these are the rules that true defense is based on, and only those people that observe these rules will be truly ready to defend themselves.

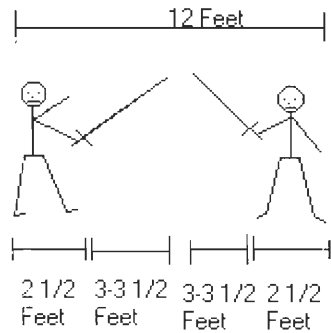
1. *A good guard (p. 82)*

Learn, and know a good and sure guard so that you can keep it as long as you are in danger by the enemy.

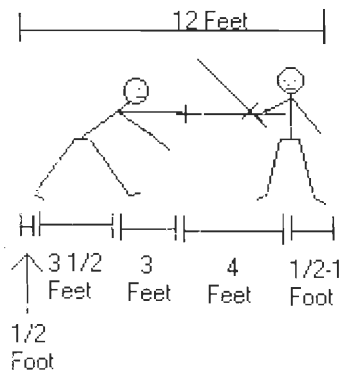
2. *True observing of distance (pp. 82-83)*

Stand as far from the enemy as possible while still being able to reach him when stepping forward with a thrust. Swetnam says twelve feet should be kept between the enemy's back foot and your back foot. This is a very long distance, but can possibly be explained by considering that you and your opponent are at such a distance so that the points of each other's swords are very close. Now considering that each sword is approximately four feet long and the stance of you and your enemy are approximately two and a half to three feet long, the twelve feet still may seem unreasonable because it would be very hard to hit your opponent with an attack without stepping forward. A hypothesis for this situation is Swetnam wants you to keep that distance so that you are not close enough to your opponent so that he may attack you without having to either lunge at you or make a passage. It may be that Swetnam believes that this way you

will have time to see what your opponent is doing and will have time to react. The diagram provided below may be helpful in picturing this distance.



The outside distances are measured from the back heel to the hand. The inside distances are measured from the hand to the point of the rapier.



The left most distance occurs from the back foot sliding forward a little bit when the lunge is made. The 3 1/2 feet is from the back foot to the shoulder. The next 3 feet is from the shoulder to the hand. The 4 feet is the length of the sword. Then the 1/2-1 foot is from the other person's back foot to his body, where the other man's point strikes his body.

Another possibility is that the length of a foot that was used to measure in the 1600's is different from what is used today.

3. *To know the place (p. 83)*

This has three categories: the place of the weapons, the place of defense and the place of offense. By place of the weapons Swetnam means that you must know where your enemy's weapon and your weapon are in relation to each other. By place of offense Swetnam refers to recognizing the closest vulnerable part of the enemy's body and knowing when to attack. Swetnam does not give any details about the place of

defense, but perhaps Swetnam means you need to know the appropriate time to defend as opposed to attacking.

4. *To take time (p. 83)*

If the enemy leaves a part unguarded or makes an attack you must react as quickly as possible. If the enemy attacks you must defend and react with an offensive move, while he is vulnerable, all at once. If you react too slowly and the enemy has recovered his guard you have given your enemy the advantage that you could have had if you had seized the opportunity. Swetnam doesn't use "time" in the normal sense here. When he says time he's talking about reaction, and realizing when you have an opportunity to make an attack. This is very similar to the way Salvator Fabris uses the term.

5. *To keep space (p. 83)*

You must keep a certain amount of time in between each assault so that you may recover your guard, prepare to defend and prepare your next assault. This way you can make a fresh assault and not attack the enemy rashly or recklessly thereby endangering yourself. Swetnam doesn't use the word "space" in a modern sense here. He is actually referring to an amount of time in between each move.

6. *Patience (p. 84)*

Patience is one of the greatest virtues a man can have. Any man who cannot govern himself is a fool. By having patience you do not allow anger or hasty decisions take over.

7. *Often practice (pp. 84-85)*

Swetnam says, "Practice is the healthiest thing in the world for the body." Skill is a friend to all reasonable men, and skill can only be achieved by practice. An unskillful man is uncertain of their offense and their defense and this allows a skillful man to defeat them.

## Technique Analysis

### Grips

A good grip is important when making an attack or defending against an attack because you don't want your sword to waver or wobble due to a weak or incorrect grip.

*Three ways of holding the rapier pp. 92-93*

The first way is to hold the rapier with the thumb pointing forward, or on the blade, which Swetnam calls the natural fashion. The second way is to have the whole hand on the handle of the sword, or as Swetnam puts it, within the pommel, while the thumb locks with the forefinger. The third way Swetnam calls the Stokata fashion. In this grip only the thumb and the forefinger are on the handle, while the other three fingers are on the pommel. The last two ways are the "surest and strongest ways" to hold a rapier, according to Swetnam.

### Stances

If you want to have a good offense you need to be in a strong defense. You should be strong on your back foot so that you can draw back fast enough to stay out of danger by observing the correct distance talked about in the second principle. If you charge the enemy then your back foot must drag forward thereby endangering your body, because you are no longer strong on your back foot. Once you have finished an attack you should return to the above-mentioned stance.

Swetnam talks infrequently about the positioning of the feet, or how the fencer should be standing. From the illustrations located in the book, mainly on page 86 and 188, Swetnam thinks that the front foot should be pointed forward, while the back foot is pointing slightly to the side. In the illustrations the students are standing fairly upright with their knees slightly bent, and it appears that the feet are approximately two and a half to three feet apart.

## Guards

Swetnam's first principle says that it's important to have a good guard. Listed below are some good guards that can be used. The grip that is used for some of these guards, as well as some defenses, are discussed here because I feel it is necessary in order to fully understand how the guard should be performed.

### Guards for multiple weapons

#### *Main guard for rapier and dagger, or sword and dagger (p. 85)*

The rapier should be held down by the pants pocket and pointing up towards the tip of the dagger, which should be held with the opposite hand straight out and level with the cheek. The dagger should lean towards the opposite shoulder and the tips of the rapier and the dagger should be within two to three inches of each other.

#### *The cross guard (pp. 105-108)*

The point of the dagger should be upright with the hilt a little lower than the belt. This should be done without putting the thumb on the blade of the dagger. The rapier point should be kept lower than the dagger hand, but further away from the body. Your rapier hand is on the right side of your body, while the point of the rapier is on the lower left side of your body. Therefore the blade is going across your body, and if the same thing was done with another rapier in the other hand at the same time the two swords would form an "x" in front of your body.

#### *The Stokata guard (pp. 108-110)*

The feet should be at least three feet apart, while the dagger is pointed straight out at cheek level. The rapier hand should be as far back and as low as possible. Swetnam says that your feet should be at least three feet apart, but it can only be assumed that the right foot should be out in front of the body. Many professors taught this as the chief and master guard because the face is back and away from danger. Swetnam disagrees because it puts the upper legs and lower stomach in

danger, and to be hurt in the stomach is more dangerous than being hurt in the face.

*The careless or lazy guard* (pp. 110-111)

The point of the rapier should be on the ground a foot to the left of the left foot, while the hilt is resting on the right thigh. The dagger should be kept under the rapier about a foot lower than the hilt. This makes your upper body appear to be open and defenseless. When your enemy tries to thrust at you, you should knock away his rapier by lifting up your rapier with the dagger. This should be done with both the rapier and dagger, because using two weapons is a stronger defense than a single weapon would be for knocking away a thrust.

*The fore-hand guard at Rapier and Dagger* (p. 112)

Put the rapier hand under the hilt of the dagger and keep the point slightly moving around the enemy's thigh area. The dagger should be held either upright or slightly leaning towards the left side.

*The broad ward* (p. 112)

Hold both the rapier and the dagger straight out towards the enemy, and keep at least chest-level or higher.

**Guards for single weapons**

*True guard for the single rapier* (p. 117)

Keep the point leaning a little towards the left shoulder, while the hand is as low as the thighs. Always keep the rapier on the outside of the enemy's rapier, and keep a distance from the enemy's rapier.

*Guard for Back-sword* (pp. 124-125)

This guard is similar to the true guard for a single rapier. Swetnam advises that at least a three-foot distance be kept between swords in this guard. I believe that he means the three-foot distance should be kept in a direction perpendicular to the bodies, rather than being in a parallel direction with the bodies. This three-foot distance between swords seems rather large, so this could be another case of



Swetnam using a different length for the measurement of a foot. If the enemy attacks, sweep your sword across your body, blocking off the enemy's sword.

*Unicorn or fore-hand guard* (pp. 126-127)

Hold your arm straight out with the sword pointing straight towards the enemy's face. Your arm should be kept at eye level. The knuckles of the hand holding the sword should be pointing upward, so that if the enemy attacks to the right side of your face all you have to do is turn the knuckles outward.

## **Attacks**

### **Thrusts**

A thrust is delivered with the point of the sword straight on, while the blow is delivered with the edge of the sword.

*Chief thrusts* (p.113)

Swetnam gives three chief thrusts to be used with a rapier and dagger.

1. The Right Stock or Stokata is made with strength and quickness. It is a thrust that is made by thrusting your sword upwards into your enemy's chest area. Swetnam describes the guard that you should be in before you perform this attack, which is the Stokata guard. This is a good guard to be in for this attack, because the thrust is made in an upward motion, which is easy to do coming out of a Stokata guard.
2. A Slope Stock should be made towards the enemy's breast or his rapier shoulder. Swetnam says that the thrust is put in "slopewise." This means that the sword does not enter the enemy's body straight, but rather is at an angle or slope. Swetnam means that the sword is at angle like the slope of a mountain, thus it is called a Slope Stock. When performing this thrust you bring your rapier hand towards your left breast, and turn your knuckles inward toward your body. This thrust should be used when the enemy is in a Cross Guard, Careless Guard or Broad Ward and a Right Stock will not work. This is

because the enemy's sword will not be in the way when you perform this thrust. This thrust is normally referred to as a reverse thrust, which is delivered from the left side of the body.

3. The last thrust is called an Imbrokata, which Swetnam calls a "falsifying thrust." By "falsifying" Swetnam means that you are showing your opponent one thing, when you are actually going to be doing something else; the usual modern term would be a feint. At first the rapier should be brought down towards the ground, as low as the enemy's knee, and then bring the rapier back up and drive it into the enemy's dagger shoulder, or any part of the dagger arm. Imbrokata usually refers to a pass or thrust that is made above the opponent's blade (Hutton, 1890). Swetnam doesn't quite use it this way. I believe the reason he refers to this thrust as an Imbrokata is because after the feint the attack is made into the enemy's dagger arm, which means that the rapier will most likely pass over the dagger on its way to the dagger shoulder.

*Mountanto* (p.114)

When performing this thrust you must bend your left knee, and keep it as low to the ground as possible. Then strike the enemy's rapier point towards your right side with your dagger so that it clears your rapier arm. As you do this suddenly raise your rapier hand up above your head, turn your knuckles upward, and turn the point downward over his rapier arm and strike his chest or shoulder. This thrust should be performed very quickly, and you should retreat to a good guard as soon as you're done with the thrust so that you don't leave yourself vulnerable. This is done because it will surprise the opponent, who won't be expecting an attack like this from such an unusual angle. The Italian word "mountante" means a vertical cut upwards (Hutton, 1890), which is completely opposite from what Swetnam describes. So once again Swetnam has not used the general meaning of the word.

*A dazzling thrust at single rapier or back-sword* (p. 123)

You must fake a thrust toward one side of your enemy's body, and then very quickly thrust your sword toward the other side of his body. Continue doing this changing three or four times, and then suddenly drive home the rapier into an unguarded part of your enemy's body. This will work because a part of his body will be unguarded because he will be busy trying to defend your false thrusts, which he does not know are false.

### **Passages**

A passage is an attack that is made by bringing the back foot to the front while attacking with your sword. Swetnam advises that passages should be done very quickly. A passage is difficult to perform against a skilled opponent, so you must have "great skill, much practice and good judgment" as Swetnam says on page 97.

*The manners of a passage* (pp. 97-99)

Swetnam discusses several different passages:

1. If the enemy has his point high then suddenly jump in with your left foot, and with your dagger push his rapier up above his head. At the same time that you perform this move you should attack the enemy's body with your rapier. (p. 97-98)
2. If the enemy has his point around your thigh area, then step in with your left foot and strike away the point of the enemy's rapier to the side, with your dagger. At the same time attack his body with your rapier. This is similar to the first passage, but differs because of the location of your enemy's rapier at the onset of the passage. (p. 98)
3. If the opponent has the point of his rapier on the ground or near it step in with your left foot while you cross your dagger over his rapier so that he can not raise it. Again, you must attack his body with your rapier while you are doing this. (p. 98)

4. When you and your enemy are both in a guard fake a thrust towards the enemy's knee, then raise your point and jump four feet sideways towards the left side of the enemy. After doing this immediately thrust your sword into the dagger shoulder of your opponent, and then recover into your original guard while observing a safe distance. (p 98-99)
5. If your enemy thrusts at you defend it by knocking his point down with your dagger. At the same time step in with your left foot and thrust your sword at the enemy's body so strongly, that it will be hard to defend. Swetnam calls this a passage, but it resembles a defense of a thrust followed by a lunge and thrust. I believe that Swetnam has a general definition of a passage, which includes any attack where the feet are moved either forward, or to the side when the attack is made. This passage is similar to a defensive passage described in Halle's manual. (p. 99)

## **Defenses**

This is a list of different ways to defend against the attack of your enemy. The different defenses will be classified by what type of attacks they defend against.

### **Defenses Against Thrusts**

#### *Four ways to defend a thrust*

1. The first way to defend a thrust is by turning the dagger point downward, knocking away the point of the enemy's sword. This should be done by turning the wrist and hand, but without bending your elbow. The dagger moves in a circular motion. (p. 91)
2. The second defense of a thrust is done when your dagger is as low as your thigh, and is pointed upward. When your enemy makes the thrust you keep your dagger hand stiff and move it across your body, knocking the sword away from your body. (p. 91)

3. The third way to defend a thrust is with the rapier alone, when you are in the true guard for a single rapier. You break the opponent's thrust by using the edge of your rapier to knock your opponent's sword away. (p. 91)

4. The fourth way to defend a thrust is by using both the rapier and dagger.

There are three ways to do this:

a) Both of your weapons are pointed upwards with the points being close together so that when your enemy thrusts you can knock away his thrust by moving both of your weapons to the left side. (p. 92)

b) The second way is to have your dagger over your rapier at the midsection of the sword so that it makes a cross. Both points should be upward, and they should be held at chest level. When your enemy thrusts at you, you defend by turning your rapier point downward, using your dagger to help push it down. Swetnam says that by doing this you can defend a thrust before it comes too close to your body. Swetnam also mentions that this will work against an attack by a staff, but doesn't give a reason why. Therefore, it can only be assumed that this will work because the defense is designed to stop an attack before the enemy's sword gets close to the body and the same theory should apply to defending against a staff. (p. 92)

c) Swetnam mentions a third way where both of the points are pointed downward, but he never explains how to defend a thrust this way. (p. 92)

*Defense of a thrust or blow (p. 116)*

This defense is performed with the dagger alone while the dagger is held at cheek level with your arm is straight out. The point of the dagger should be leaning toward your rapier shoulder. When the enemy thrusts, or makes a blow you turn your dagger hand inward and down so that you knock away the enemy's sword. You should keep your arm stiff and straight out when doing

this because you can continue to defend the same way as many times as you need to. If you drop your arm you make yourself susceptible to a thrust or blow. This appears to be the same thing as the first defense on page 13. This is one of the cases where Swetnam probably took a break from writing, and had forgotten that he had already written about this defense.

### **Defenses of a Passage**

#### *Three ways to prevent a passage (p. 100)*

1. The first way to prevent a passage is by an “active and nimble” shift of your body, by bringing your right foot back.
2. The second way is done when you are in a true guard for the rapier and dagger. When the enemy goes to do a passage, you should drop the point of your rapier and defend the passage with just your dagger. If the passage is made at your body you defend by turning the dagger point downward.
3. Swetnam says the third way is by “bearing them both together.” He doesn’t say anything more than this, so what he means by this can only be speculated. I think that he means the passage can be defended using the rapier and dagger together, which are probably crossed like in the cross guard, and the passage is defended by either raising or lowering the two weapons together.

#### *Defense of a passage (pp.100-101)*

This defense is with a rapier alone. When the enemy tries to take control of your point and is successful, you will still have two feet of your rapier and the hilt to defend with. When the passage is made you should force your rapier to the left side of your body, and at the same time you turn your body by falling back with your front foot.

## Defense followed by an Attack

*Reverse* (p. 114)

A reverse is performed when the enemy has caused you to step backward, bringing your front foot to the back. Using your dagger to defend, after having stopped an attack by your enemy, bring your original front foot forward again, and keeping your hand coming forward with the foot attack the enemy with your rapier in any part of the body that is open. Swetnam's definition of "reverse" is quite different from the normal meaning of reverse, which is a backhanded attack. This is probably similar to the "change back" described by Halle.

**Gerard Thibault's**  
***Academy of the Sword***  
***A Renaissance Manual of Hermetic Swordsmanship***  
***Part One: Philosophy and Practice, 1628***

**Background to the Text**

As well as being a painter and a physician, Thibault was a master of the Spanish style of fencing. In 1611, he took first place in a tournament in Antwerp, and was invited to display his skill before Prince Maurice of Nassau in a celebrated exhibition. This gave Thibault the encouragement to write a manual on the style of fencing that he used.

During this time period the occult was much in vogue. Thibault, in accordance with the times, based much of his teachings on what he considered the “unknown”, phenomena that could not always be explained in terms of physical proof.

Taking into account both Euclidean Geometry and Divine Numbers, numbers that appear throughout the Bible that are mirrored in nature, Thibault developed a hermetic style of swordsmanship. Thibault tried to explain the perfection of sword fighting on the basis of spirituality and Nature. Every angle, stance, posture and attack was based on the proportions of the human body in relation to its parts and the rapier. This is shown in what Thibault calls the “Mysterious Circle”, a large diagram drawn on the floor of the training room and labeled to provide proper training in this art of swordplay.

The manual was originally written and printed in French. Thibault had intended for this manual to be the beginning for a set of four manuals that detailed different, more unconventional, aspects of fencing. The first was scheduled for a release in 1628, but was not completed in time and was released in 1630. Thibault died shortly before the completion of his first manual.



Michael Greer did a partial translation of Thibault's first manual in 1998 but at this time it is still incomplete. The Fir Mountain press has said that the next three manuals are still forthcoming.

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## Mysterious Circles and Basic Techniques

The key to understanding the work of Gerard Thibault is to know that the shortest distance between two points in a single straight line. That is the first rule learned when studying geometry, and Thibault believed that this should also be one of the first rules when learning how to fence. Thibault's style, a variation of the traditional Spanish style, tended to shy away from long, arc-like attacks and instead favored a straight stabbing/thrusting approach. By removing these flashier moves, it was easy to focus on a strong method of attack. After all, the point of a duel is to win, usually as quickly as possible. With wide sweeping attacks, one is left vulnerable to counter attacks.

In Thibault's idea of fencing, perfection was the key to every stroke and cut. To make his fencing teaching more perfect he used Euclidean geometry to describe each step, cut, thrust and

position. Using the idea of a “Mysterious Circle”, whose dimensions coincide with the proportions of a man, Thibault developed an efficient (if not somewhat confusing) method of teaching.

Before each practice session Thibault would require that his students draw the training circles using their own bodies and swords as guide pieces. In doing so, the students would be more familiar with where each step and strike would place them as well as have a better understanding of the relationship between the nature of the body and the nature of the fight.

In trying to decipher Thibault’s methods one comes across two things: poorly rendered images of the training circles and difficult to understand French labels for these. The manual’s reproductions of the images are not very well created so it requires much guesswork to study them. Thibault gives descriptions of how to stand and move inside these circles, just as he made his students move when he first created them.

The circle itself, through which Thibault based all his teachings, was derived and drawn from the proportions of the human body. In what is called the First Circle, Thibault shows the relation between the body and the circle, but also a detailed drawing of a man. The drawing cuts away from skin, to muscle, to bone and is labeled clearly (in French) with all the vital parts of the human body.

The Second Circle is merely to show the training circle as it would be seen on the ground after completion. Each line and intersection is labeled but due to the quality of the reproduction it is extremely difficult to read the names. As above, the names of the lines here are also in French.

The Third Circle serves two purposes. One, to prove again the perfection of the math and geometry involved in creating the circle. The circumference of the circle will fit exactly with the paces of a walking man, and each line crossing anywhere through it will be an exact number of paces.

The second purpose is to show the proper foot placement on the outside of the circle when entering into a duel. These steps can be seen on the left and right corners of the surrounding square.

The Fourth Circle describes the Three Instances. These stances are the beginnings of a duel, as they would be seen on the Mysterious Circles.

The First Instance is the opening stance from which the duel will be conducted. At this point the combatants are the farthest from each other while still able to strike one another. The space between the two fighters is called middle time.

According to the circle diagram and the explanation, the duelists stand with one foot on the edge of the circle (the outer side of quadrangle ZX) and the other goes to the foot line that lies on the perimeter of the square.

There are two ways to enter the Second Instance, either by moving straight across the circle or moving to the left or right along the quadrants. Direction is chosen by watching which way your opponent will move and compensating to gain the most advantage.

The Third Instance is not as much of a stance as it is a moment in the duel. Here, a fighter can strike his opponent with merely an extension of his arm. This action puts the attacker in danger of being counterattacked due to the close proximity the fighters must be in for this move to work successfully.

The Fifth and final circle reiterates the proportions of the body versus the proportions of the circle; the diameter of the circle is the length of a man with arm extended. Also, it shows that the proper foot placements for each of the Three Instances are derived from other lengths of the body.

The First Instance is the entire length of the body with arm extended. The Second Instance is the distance from the soles of the foot to the crown of the head. The Third Instance is the length of the body from the soles of the feet to the height of the chest. Corresponding lines and intersections are drawn in the circle to show where the feet should be placed for these positions.

## **Sword Manipulations**

### *Wearing the Sword*

**Figure A** – This figure shows how one would stand at ease with his sword still sheathed. The position of the body is called non-offensive, and I believe it is called this because at such a position it would be hard to convey any type of aggressive attitude.

**Figure B** – The second figure describes the position of the belt and hanger to allow for the quickest and easiest unsheathing of the sword. By grasping the scabbard with your right hand and angling the hilt upwards, one is able to easily grab the sword free, swinging it past cape, cloak or coat.

### *Drawing the Sword*

**Figure C** – Here the figure shows that pulling the sword at an angle from the scabbard provides the quickest method for unsheathing. If drawn at an angle, away from the body, the sword will come out quickly and cleanly.

### *Measuring the Sword*

**Figure D** – The measure of the blade should be equal to precisely half of the extended length of the body, and were two swords stood end to end they would equal the extended length for the diameter of the circle, with the navel as the center point.

**Figure E** – The proper length of the blade should be such that no matter in which direction the sword is pointed, the length of the sword from tip back to the elbow of the person will be equal to the stature of that person.

**Figure F** - The longest reach one can get while standing straight up will be with the arm full extended with sword pointing outwards.

### *General Strikes*

**Figure G** – This figure shows a close range fighting technique used when there is not much room to fight in. This is done by bringing the elbow close to the body to give range for wider cuts while taking into account the shortness of space.

**Figure H** – One can shorten the length of the strike when in close by placing a hand on the opponent's shoulder and position the sword against your own hip. At this vantage point, neither fencer can move away and a strike against either could be made easily.

*Proportions of the Sword Related to the Mysterious Circle*

**Figure I** – This figure shows that the length of the sword is also the length of a double pace, the greatest that a person could make with all his strength. This double pace seems similar to a lunge, but not as quick or vicious.

(Note no Figure J)

**Figure K** – Again Thibault shows the perfection of his circle and the geometry involved in making it. Here he shows that if one stands upright in the center of the circle with arm and sword extended to the ground, the point of the sword will run along the edge of the circle much like a compass. This position will fit exactly the circumference of the diagram, proving again how important Thibault feels the Euclidean math is to fencing.

**Offensive Maneuvers on the First Instance**

As discussed earlier, Thibault mentions that the key to fencing is to learn to fight from one of Three Instances. The manual deals only with the First and Second Instances, but it is at these two ranges that most fencing will take place.

At the First Instance, the fighters will want to take advantage of the posture of the straight line. To Thibault, all the motions of the sword and body will rely on this technique. From here the fencer can move into a series of feints or attacks, shifting the distance between the two adversaries according to his preference.

To begin a duel Thibault suggests that a fighter use a feint to distinguish the manner of his opponent. Dependent on the advancement of the foot and body, four manners of feints can be derived. It is stressed that one must know how to use these feints as well as be able to counter them.

## **Feints and Counters from the First Instance**

The first feint discussed is a simple ruse in which the fighter will raise his right foot and shift the weight of his body onto his left, making no noticeable forward movement. The sword's point will not pass the guard of his opponent. To counter this, Thibault suggests that one just ignore the move entirely, as it takes the fighter no nearer or farther away, and remain in an opening stance.

The next feint is to begin by leaning forward, aiming for the enemy's wrist while shifting to the left or right. The counter to this is to straighten and lift the body onto the toes of the left foot so that you are free to move quickly if the circumstances require it. The sword should be brought to the side of the feint, above the sword of the feinting enemy, to gain a small amount of superiority.

The third kind of feint begins as in the last one, but instead of aiming for the wrists aims for the opponent's forearm. This feint is much more obvious than the above because it requires a larger amount of movement. To counter this one would not have to do more than stated above, however to gain an advantage from this counter one could raise the right foot and right arm with sword to the sword. While turning the outside of the wrist higher than the enemy's, and changing the point of the sword so that it forms an obtuse angle with the opposing sword, the counter gains some superiority.

Thibault suggests that here a counter attack be made to the aggressor. Dependent on the side the attacker chooses to feint to, the opponent may dodge to one side and wound the body of the attacker, or hit on the inside or outside of the opponent's sword arm. The attacker's sword may also be struck to lower or raise the point and push it out of dangerous range.

The fourth feint is very risky because the attacker advances so far with his feint that the point of the sword reaches the opponent's elbow, the greatest reach one is able to have at the First Instance without moving his feet. It is suggested that the best counter to this feint is to not allow it to be completed at all. By making a small side step along the diameter of the circle the counter can be made while holding arm and sword extended, so that the point hits the opponent's face before the feint is completed.

### **Attacks from the First Instance**

Because the First Instance is the distance at which the two opponents are farthest from each other, it is safe to assume that most attacks made from this distance will use only the point of the sword. This is to reinforce the belief that the Posture of the Straight Line is the most perfect form of attack, and should be adhered to unless absolutely necessary to break from. Not only is the Posture of the Straight Line the most sensible position to make attacks from, it is also the most defensible position a fencer can take, according to Thibault.

Thibault's method of attack is not to merely wound the enemy and end the fight but to end the enemy's life. Most of the attacks, if not aimed directly at the head, face or neck, hit in a general region that will completely incapacitate one's foe.

In essence the duel would be finished perfectly if a winner prevails within the first few moves. To demonstrate the above discussions of feints and counters, Thibault provided some examples as to how the duel could be completed quickly. Usually these duels are ended just after a counter, stressing again the importance that duelers understand the feints that will be used against him.

In the first example, the attacker makes a feint of the third type, aiming for the outside of the defender's left arm, raising his right foot and leaning towards the defender's elbow. The feint is that the attacker is trying to convince the defender that the attack is being directed at the face in the hopes that the defender will parry the blow, moving his sword into an indefensible position. The feint would continue with the step of the right foot followed by the left foot stepping in proportion, the estocade being directed at the inside of the right arm of the defender.

Recognizing the feint the defender steps aside, bringing his sword up against the feint. Turning his wrist so that the quillon goes diagonally upward and the point raises beside the feint without touching blades the defender counters the feint. From this angle if the attacker continues with the feint the defender may then strike the attacker through the head, ending the duel.

If the attacker sees the counter and halts the feint it is possible for the feint to be reversed into an estocade upon the defender in his new position. Here the defender must make a side step, putting full weight on his right leg, knee bent, while extending his left leg out behind him as

far as the circumference of the circle. As the estocade passes, the defender brings his sword up beneath his attacks and continues forward until the two hilts connect. At this point the defender gives a strong push so forcefully that it causes the attacker to bend his arm and draw his sword up into an obtuse angle. Here the defender is then under the blade of the attacker, neutralizing the ability for another counter by the attacker.

It is here that Thibault mentions that much criticism is given to his work for calling for more lengthened thrusts that guarantee that the opponents are no longer a threat. He says that rather than to run away or jump back after a strike, it is better to enter so far forward that the enemy's weapons are rendered useless. "One must become the absolute master and lord of the enemy."

After the two have separated some the attacker may then have another chance to perform an estocade, feinting either low or high. At the moment that the attack comes past the elbow the point is immediately aimed at the face. It is at this point that the defender will try to catch the attack on the inside quillon, shifting weight onto his right foot and leaning forward, driving the thrust into the attacker's head.

Provided the attacker did not make the previous estocade, he could have instead made a similar estocade aimed in a straight line outside of the defender's arm and against the face. Rather than flee the attack, the defender would maintain the Posture of the Straight Line. He would then receive the sword on the forte of his own and by raising his body onto his toes, gaining a superiority, be able to redirect the attack to the side, giving leave to strike the attacker in the face. As the strike passes he is able to regain the Posture of the Straight line.

It is good to note here that Thibault feels that height is an influencing factor in a duel. To raise oneself up onto their toes is to gain advantage over your opponent. By bringing your sword above your opponent's you may gain a leverage against them, leaving you the ability to direct their sword out and away from the body, opening any vulnerable areas to attack.

Because of Thibault's philosophy that an opponent should be finished and not just wounded, after the strike to the face the defender would then lean forward onto his right foot, placing all weight upon his bent knee. By graduating the attacker's blade the defender is able to



forcefully push at the attacker's sword until their guards come together with an impact that causes the attacker's arm to bend. When this happens, the defender is able to further the thrust so that it continues through the attacker's head.

With both opponents in the Posture of the Straight Line at the fullest distance of the First Instance the defender will hold his sword parallel to the attacker's, only slightly higher, another example of the height superiority. The attacker may attempt an estocade at this distance, beginning first with a feint of the second kind. Bringing the foot and body together with the extended arm he can reach only the defender's wrist.

At this point he will then break to the outside of the defender's extended arm to swing with a bent elbow at the defender's face. With a slight sidestep of the right foot and shifting his weight forward onto his bent right knee, the attacker brings his sword around in a curved line while letting his left foot follow proportionately behind.

To ready against the attack the defender extends his body and raises his right foot, bringing up his point to the side of the feint. When he perceives that the attacked is curved towards his face the defender catches the attacker's blade with the lower edge of his sword and with a bent knee moves circularly to the left, degrading his opponent's sword by bracing his elbow against his side and lowering his hand. As he continues to advance to his left until his left foot comes to the diameter of the circle, the defender directs the attacker's sword away from his body. As the strike passes away from him, the defender is able to lean back and let the strike pass away from him. Continuing with his own sword, the defender proceeds to thrust the tip at the attacker's side below the right arm. With a strong step forward onto the right leg, the defender places all his weight on to his bent right knee and forces his sword into the attacker's side.

Resuming the Posture of the Straight Line, the attacker can make a quick estocade to the stomach of the defender, advancing on his right foot quickly to his opponent. The defender shows the superiority of the Posture by turning away his right side while keeping his right arm and sword extended. As the attacker passes by with this estocade the defender may then make an attack into his opponent's right shoulder.

As the attacker realizes that if he continues with his straightforward attack he will be countered on his right side he may attempt to curve the attack so that it will find the defender on his right side. At this point the attacker has come so far forward that it is no longer possible for him to stop without interrupting his step. To do this would throw him off balance and he would become enfeebled, left to the mercy of his opponent.

Here the distance is a great advantage to the defender, for working in a straight line and at the height superiority, it is but a simple lean forward with the foible of his sword that the defender may overcome his opponent. The attack is made in a straight line at an acute angle, and because the attacker has advanced so far forward he has no reserve of force for his defense.

A variation of this would be for the attacker to have gone not for the stomach of the defender but the shoulder. The proper counter for this method would be not to strike the defender in the shoulder but in the face.

Thibault felt that it might be necessary to not kill or cripple your opponent too badly so he gave attacks that would be useful in disarming your opponent. It seemed that these methods would only be used at specific times for they require precise attacks to be made against them to use, namely when your opponent is not using the Posture of the Straight Line.

Here the attacker strikes low on the body with the point while hand held high and even with the face of the defender. By turning aside to the right the defender can use his arm and sword to degraduate the attacker's weapon by crossing his blade over the attacker's. While bending the upper part of his body the defender lowers his hilt onto the opposing sword to dominate it.

As the defender draws back, bending his body more forward and turning the sword so the quillons point diagonally, the defender gains superiority over the attacker's weapon. This maneuver is difficult to perform because you must allow the attacker's weapon to come very close to your body to dominate it fully. As the attacker's weapon becomes closer, he loses his reserve for defense, otherwise he'd be able to make a new plan to pull away.

While lowering the arm and bending his body forward the defender moves his wrist slightly, turning the outside quillon diagonally upwards towards the right side. The point crosses

toward the left side and this allows the defender to degraduate his opponent's sword and avoid the danger of a cut under the blade.

## 4. Further Information

## Contemporary Groups & Contact Information

*Name:* **Academy of European Medieval Martial Arts (AEMMA)**

*Location:* There are various chapters worldwide.

*Information:* The objective of AEMMA is to not only achieve realism in the discipline of unarmored and armored combat, but also the philosophy, principles and ritual that surrounds this form of martial art skill as they relate to the "true fight". AEMMA's reconstructionist efforts, along with affiliates form a growing "fechtbuch" community of organizations, work towards the common goal of developing viable European/Western martial arts programs.

*Web Site:* <http://www.aemma.org>

*Contact:* Academy of European Medieval Martial Arts

401 - 159 Frederick Street

Toronto, ON Canada M5A 4P1

Phone: +1 416 366 1243

Fax: +1 416 366 7448

*Name:* **Association For Historical Fencing**

*Location:* Secaucus, NJ

*Information:* The Association for Historical Fencing is a nonprofit corporation founded to meet the needs of the classical and historical-oriented fencing community. The AHF exists to encourage and preserve the arts of classical and historical fencing. To these ends, the AHF is organizing seminars, lectures, workshops and similar programs, and disseminating knowledge and basic factual material to its members.

*Web Site:* <http://www.ahfi.org>

*Contact:* Jana Umbs

Email: [jumbs@ahfi.org](mailto:jumbs@ahfi.org)

Association for Historical Fencing

P.O. Box 2013

Secaucus, NJ 07096-2013

*Name:* **Bankeside Schole of Defense**

*Location:* Southern California

*Information:* The Bankeside Schole of Defense is a historical stage combat school that is dedicated to the study of European swordsmanship with an emphasis on Italian 16th century rapier fighting. Members of Bankeside are involved with the Renaissance Pleasure Faire in Southern California each spring, and bring to life a different aspect of renaissance living by staging daily fights and bouts on the streets of the faire. They train in regular classes using replica weapons and techniques learned from existing 16th century manuals to further their knowledge and expertise in this almost forgotten art.

*Web Site:* <http://www.bankeside.org>

*Contact:* General Info Email: [info@Bankside.org](mailto:info@Bankside.org)

*Name:* **Chicago Swordplay Guild**

*Location:* Chicago, IL

*Information:* CSG is currently concerned with two courses of weapon instruction. The first is Medieval Combat, and focuses on the weapons of the European 'knightly class' used during the High and Late Middle Ages (roughly 1100 - 1500 AD). The second course is Renaissance Combat, and focuses primarily on civilian weapons used from roughly the mid-16th through mid-17th centuries.

*Web Site:* <http://www.chicagoswordplayguild.com>

*Contact:* Email: [csginfo@chicagoswordplayguild.com](mailto:csginfo@chicagoswordplayguild.com)

*Name:* **Fencing Society at Saint Louis University**

*Location:* St. Louis, MO.

*Information:* Classical Italian and French, method and weapons; interest in small sword & rapier.

*Web Site:* <http://www.slu.edu/organizations/tfs/>

*Contact:* David Achilleus

Email: [akilles@gtw.net](mailto:akilles@gtw.net)

Phone: (314) 351-3821

*Name:* **Historical Armed Combat Association (HACA)**

*Location:* Various locations (including U.S. & Europe)

*Information:* HACA is an informal club of arms and armor enthusiasts and practitioners dedicated to exploring Medieval & Renaissance martial arts and reconstructing the Western martial heritage. HACA was established to promote the study of historical European martial arts and arms and armor from the perspective of their historic function and use.

*Web Site:* <http://www.thehaca.com>

*Contact:* Email: [HACAdirctr@aol.com](mailto:HACAdirctr@aol.com)

*Name:* **La Spada Nimica**

*Location:* Marin County, CA

*Information:* La Spada Nimica, located in Marin County, California, is a fencing school for both competitive and recreational fencers. Pedagogy, theory, and technique governing instruction are Italian. The school is operated by a professionally trained, fully certified fencing master.

*Web Site:* <http://home.pacbell.net/parsec-e/>

*Contact:* Email: [stoccata@pacbell.net](mailto:stoccata@pacbell.net)

Phone: (415) 388-8939

*Name:* **Martinez Academy of Arms**

*Location:* New York, NY and Jersey City, NJ

*Information:* The Martinez Academy of Arms is a unique school that preserves the tradition of fencing as the study of the sword in its realistic application in personal combat. The structure of the school is based on that of the fencing academies of the past. Rapier fighting is of Italian & Spanish styles, and includes single rapier, rapier & dagger, and rapier & cloak.

*Web Site:* <http://www.martinez-destreza.com>

*Contact:* Maestro Ramón Martínez

Email: [martinez@martinez-destreza.com](mailto:martinez@martinez-destreza.com)

Phone: (201) 330-8670

*Name:* **Mid-Atlantic Society for Historic Swordsmanship (MASHS)**

*Location:* Annapolis, MD

*Information:* This is a society of dedicated martial artists studying Historic European Martial Arts, based in Maryland. Weapon systems include long sword, sword and buckler, rapier, small sword, dueling sabres, and pole arms. Members include practitioners from Maryland, the DC area, and Northern Virginia.

*Web Site:* <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HistoricalSwordsmanship>

*Contact:* Larry Tom, Administrator

Email: [LVITOM@aol.com](mailto:LVITOM@aol.com)

Phone: (410) 263-0203 (evenings)

Mail: MASHS, 1116 Tyler Avenue, Annapolis, Maryland 21403



*Name:* **Moser Classical Fencing**

*Location:* Palm Beach Gardens, FL

*Information:* Classical fencing focuses on the practical application of the sword and its use in preparation for self-defense and personal combat. It differs from modern fencing in which the martial aspects of the weapon have been largely forgotten. Classical fencing stresses control, both of yourself and of your weapon, and it is this focus on self-discipline and awareness that makes it similar to Eastern martial arts.

*Web Site:* <http://www.classicalfencing.org>

*Contact:* Mr. Kim Moser

Email: [kmoser@kmoser.com](mailto:kmoser@kmoser.com).

Phone: (561) 630-3688

*Name:* **New Dawn Duellists Society**

*Location:* Minneapolis, MN

*Information:* The New Dawn Duellists Society is a non-profit organization devoted to the study, revival, and practice of Historic European Martial Arts. In particular, the group focuses on civilian combat and the art of fence from the 14th century through the 18th century. Toward this end, it studies period texts and fight treatises written by or about the historic Masters and incorporate that knowledge into contact-sparing with historical replica weapons.

*Web Site:* <http://tndds.org>

*Contact:* Email: [MNDDES@hotmail.com](mailto:MNDDES@hotmail.com)

Phone: (651) 261-5279

*Name:* **Rapier Fencing Club**

*Location:* Manitoba, Canada

*Information:* Part of the Manitoba Fencing Association.

*Web Site:* <http://www.fencing.mb.ca/rfcinf.html>

*Contact:* Guy Stearns

Email: [gstearns@escape.ca](mailto:gstearns@escape.ca)

Phone: 475-7158

*Name:* **The Finesse Academy of Fence**

*Location:* Canberra, ACT, Australia.

*Information:* The Academie is the only fencing club in Australia to be a Recognized Active Australia Provider (ACT Sports Bureau standards), and to offer coaching both in classical foil (sabre just started, épée coming soon) and in rapier (c.1550 - 1600 English, Italian: Spanish in prospect) and smallsword (c. 1765). Julian and his three companion coaches are all trained by the Oceania Fencing Masters' Academy in modern weapons (Julian, Level 2, Melissa Level 1, Jason & Anthea completing Level 1 now). All study primary sources and teach with high-quality copies of historic weapons.

*Web Site:* <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~farclar>

*Contact:* Julian Clark

Email: [farclar@alphalink.com.au](mailto:farclar@alphalink.com.au)

Phone: (02) 6251 1737

Fax: (02) 6253 3284

Mail: 1 Araba Street, Aranda, ACT, 2614, Australia

*Name:* **The Heren Sindaril**

*Location:* Coeur d'Alene, ID

*Information:* Full contact skirmishing with rapier (42" Del Tins and 34" heavy schlager blades) and most of the typical off-hand weapons (i.e. no targes with rattan spikes), 44" hand-and-a-half sword, and bow and quarter-staff. This is non-aggressive skirmishing, with a focus on safety and form, fun and friendship.

*Web Site:* None

*Contact:* Monte Thompson

Email: tripcat@kitegravity.com

Phone (208) 264-5186 or

or Michael Koep

Phone: (208) 667-1597

*Name:* **The Order of The Silver Rose School of Defence**

*Location:* So. Lake Tahoe, CA

*Information:* This group practices rapier combat by using the teachings of Giacomo Di Grassi, Camillo Agrippa, and others of this time frame.

*Web Site:* None

*Contact:* Mark Eldred

Email: rodelli@worldnet.att.net

Phone: (775) 246-5628 (evenings are best)

Mail: 257 Miriam Way, Carson City, NV 89706

*Name:* **The Stoccata School of Defence**

*Location:* Sydney, Australia

*Information:* The school is dedicated to the study of European swordsmanship using replicas of historic weapons, and techniques drawn from manuals of the period. It conducts regular classes in rapier and sword, including the use of companion weapons.

*Web Site:* <http://mgw.com.au>

*Contact:* Stephen Hand

Email: shand@ssg.com.au

Phone: 612 98736034

Mail: 27 Keats Street, Carlingford, NSW, 2118, Australia

*Name:* **Stowmarket Fencing Club**

*Location:* Suffolk, England

*Information:* The Fencing Club is a relatively new organization based in Suffolk, England. Now in its third year, it has been supported well by good coaching and now its second successful sports council grant award.

*Web Site:* <http://www.stowmarketfencingclub.org.uk/index.html>

*Contact:* General email: [club@stowmarketfencingclub.org.uk](mailto:club@stowmarketfencingclub.org.uk)

*or* Stephen Morley (chairman)

Email: [sgm@grelanfar.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:sgm@grelanfar.freeserve.co.uk)

Telephone: +44 (0)1449 711 698

*Name:* **Sussex Rapier Society**

*Location:* United Kingdom

*Information:* The Sussex Rapier Society exists in order to pursue a vigorously historical interest in study and practice of Renaissance rapier fighting.

*Web Site:* <http://www.hadesign.co.uk/SRS/>

*Contact:* Email: [andrew@hadesign.co.uk](mailto:andrew@hadesign.co.uk)

*Name:* **Swordplay Symposium International**

*Location:* Chicago, IL

*Information:* Swordplay Symposium International (SSI) is an interdisciplinary colloquium of historical fencing specialists dedicated to promoting and advancing the martial study of Western swords and swordsmanship. The Advisory Council consists of some of the most eminent historians, scholars, researchers, sword smiths, armourers, practitioners, Western martial artists, and fencing masters in the world today. Their expertise covers the area of military and civilian blades from ancient Greco-Roman, to Medieval, Renaissance, and 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

*Web Site:* <http://www.swordplay-symposium.com>

*Contact:*        Swordplay Symposium International  
                      2657 Medill Ave.  
                      Chicago, IL 60647  
                      Email: [swordplay@angelfire.com](mailto:swordplay@angelfire.com)

## Contact Information for Privately Published Literature

### **Henry Saint Didier Translation:**

Laura Angotti

76 Westmoreland Ave

Arlington, MA 02174

Phone: (781) 643-6867

### **Gerard Thibault Translation:**

Fir Mountain Press

P.O. Box 95674

Seattle, Washington 98145

URL: <http://www.angelfire.com/wa/firmountain/>

### **Salvator Fabris Translation:**

Not currently available to the public.

### **Various Combat Manuals:**

Patri J. Pugliese

39 Capen Street

Medford, MA 02155

Phone: (781) 396-2870

URL: <http://www.latourdulac.com/fencing/patri.html>

## World Wide Web Links

*Name:* **Academy of European Medieval Martial Arts**

*Location:* <http://www.aemma.org/index2.htm>

*Information:* The goal of this organization is to resurrect European medieval martial arts to the same level as today's Oriental martial arts schools and academies, and to establish that which was lost of the medieval ages art of combat into an established 21st century martial art alternative. Contains information on and illustrations of rapiers.

*Contact:* General Information Email: [info@aemma.org](mailto:info@aemma.org)

*Name:* **Classical Fencing and Historical Swordsmanship Resources**

*Location:* <http://www.kmoser.com/classicalfencing.htm>

*Information:* Provides a listing of schools, organizations, weapons suppliers, literature, and frequently asked questions about classical fencing and historical swordsmanship

*Contact:* Kim Moser

Email: [kmoser@kmoser.com](mailto:kmoser@kmoser.com)

*Name:* **Classical Fencing Mailing List**

*Location:* <http://www.kmoser.com/cflist.htm>

*Information:* The Classical Fencing Mailing List is an e-mail list for the discussion of classical fencing and historical swordsmanship. Styles and periods discussed include any established European school (usually, but not necessarily French, Italian, or Spanish) of civilian swordsmanship from the 15th-19th Centuries. Weapons include the foil, épée, sabre, smallsword, and rapier & dagger.

*Contact:* To subscribe to the mailing list send a blank email to [classicalfencing-subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:classicalfencing-subscribe@egroups.com)

*Name:* **Classical Fencing: The Martial Art of Incurable Romantics**

*Location:* <http://www.classicalfencing.com>

*Information:* The web site is dedicated to preserving and promoting in classical fencing and historical swordplay, the true art, science and spirit of the sword. Contains various articles about swordplay.

*Contact:* Email: [webmaster@classicalfencing.com](mailto:webmaster@classicalfencing.com)

*Name:* **Don Danulf's Academy of Defence**

*Location:* <http://www.musketeer.org>

*Information:* The site offers multiple curriculums for those learning and advancing their knowledge of rapier and small-sword play. There is something for everyone here: from the knowledge of the Elizabethan masters, to blade and footwork drills you can do it home, to the resources necessary to be a Fencing Marshal in the Eastern Kingdom. There is a link to some examples of rapier sizes in the Wallace Collection (London); i.e. the date, size, origin, etc.

*Contact:* Dana Groff  
Email: [dana@tla.mv.com](mailto:dana@tla.mv.com)

*Name:* **Dylan's Fencing Page**

*Location:* <http://www.iceweasel.org/fencing.html>

*Information:* This site contains some historical/material resources for period rapier combat. There are also some other links to other information regarding the rapier, such as blade specifications.

*Contact:* Email: [dylan@iceweasel.org](mailto:dylan@iceweasel.org)



**Name:** **Electronic Journals of Martial Arts and Sciences**

**Location:** <http://www.ejmas.com>

**Information:** EJMAS is a project to bring academic and popular e-journals concerning various aspects of the martial arts, both east and west, to the web.

**Contact:** EJMAS  
PO Box 1694  
Lynnwood, WA 98046-1694 USA  
Email: [editor@ejmas.com](mailto:editor@ejmas.com)

**Name:** **Historical Armed Combat Association**

**Location:** <http://www.thehaca.com>

**Information:** HACA is an informal club of arms and armor enthusiasts and practitioners dedicated to exploring Medieval & Renaissance martial arts and reconstructing our Western martial heritage. The site is organized by John Clements (long-time sword enthusiast and practitioner) around 1993, web site developed circa 1996. It contains links to various rapier manuals, including George Halle's *The Private Schoole of Defense* and Joseph Swetnam's *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence*.

**Contact:** John Clements  
Email: [webmaster@thehaca.com](mailto:webmaster@thehaca.com)

**Name:** **Martinez Academy of Arms**

**Location:** <http://www.martinez-destreza.com>

**Information:** The Martinez Academy of Arms is a unique school that preserves the tradition of fencing as the study of the sword in its realistic application in personal combat. The structure of the school is based on that of the fencing academies of the past. The site discusses the various fencing styles and weapons the school teaches, and also includes articles by Maestro Martinez.

*Contact:* Maestro Ramón Martínez  
Email: martinez@martinez-destreza.com  
Phone: (201) 330-8670 (call between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET)

*Name:* **NetSword: The Internet Sword and Medieval Weapons Discussion Group**

*Location* <http://www.netsword.com>

*Information:* NetSword is an Internet discussion group for medieval and renaissance swords, daggers and associated weapons of war. In this series of forums, individuals discuss modern replicas of historical swords along with many other types of weapons and their related fighting techniques. Individuals also discuss all types of historical swords, and the artifacts and events surrounding weapons and warfare from medieval and renaissance times

*Contact:* Email: info@netsword.com

*Name:* **Rapier and Smallsword: The Art of the Sword in the 17th Century**

*Location:* <http://www.kismeta.com/rapier.html>

*Information:* The translated work of Giacomo Di Grassi's swordplay techniques from *His True Art of Defense* are here, but there is also useful additional commentary throughout the site with the respect to the rapier and the different techniques. The site also contains links to translated works of other fencing masters.

*Contact:* Rick (full name not given)

Email: rick@kismeta.com

*Name:* **Silvermane Limited**

*Location:* <http://www.silvermane.com>

*Information:* The site is dedicated to bringing the most complete and comprehensive on-line catalog of Medieval and Renaissance arms, armor and accessories found anywhere on the web. There are numerous rapiers available here.

*Contact:* General info email: info@silvermane.com  
Phone: 978-521-8074  
Fax: 978-374-7635  
45 Talmuth Avenue  
Haverhill, MA 01830

*Name:* **The Arte of Defense**

*Location:* <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~wew/rapier.htm>

*Information:* This web site is basically a manual that gives the information necessary to begin the study of the Art of Defense with rapier. The manual is the culmination of nineteen years of fencing experience and the study of period texts in English, Italian and French.

*Contact:* William E. Wilson  
Email: [william.wilson@nau.edu](mailto:william.wilson@nau.edu)

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Fabris, Salvator. *Fencing: On the Science of Arms*. Edited by J. Pendragon and translated from the Italian by A.F. Johnson, privately published [c. 1999]. Not yet available.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional bibliographic information on an original manual, please refer to the individual analyses.

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# Appendices

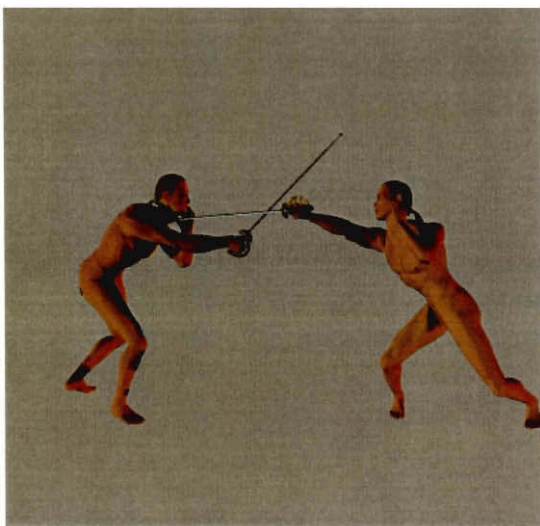


## Analysis Template

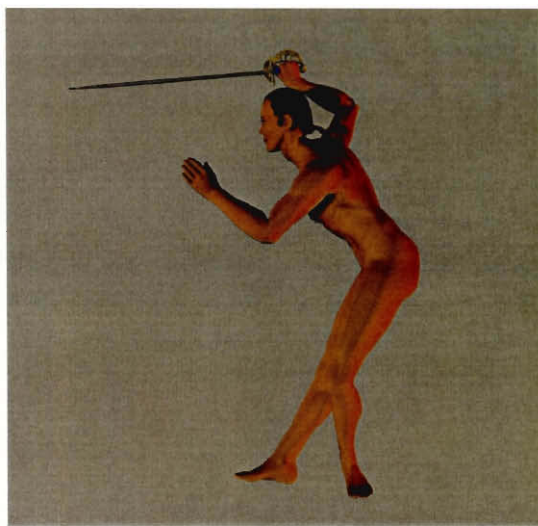
- Information on the Author (where applicable)
- Background to the Text
- Bibliography
- The Text and Illustrations
- The Weapons
- Technique Analysis, including:
  - Stance, Grip, etc.
  - Wards
  - Footwork
  - Attacks
  - Defenses
- Any Combat Sequences from the Text
- Where necessary, constructed sequences to give a picture of how the technique would work.
- Vocabulary

## Animation Stills

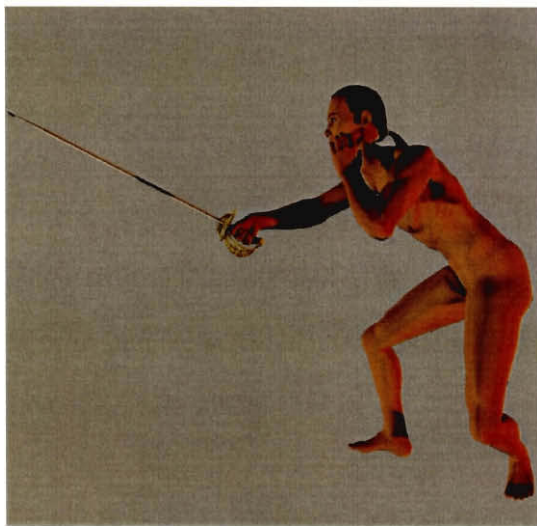
The next few pages are sample frames taken from the animations and stills used for the project. The animations and stills that were created helped to explain the key points of each masters' technique. The techniques are listed underneath each picture by the fencing master for whom they were made.



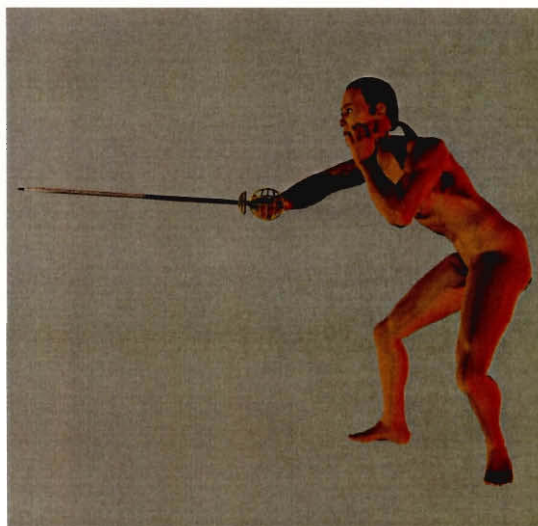
Fabris – Hit in Quarta



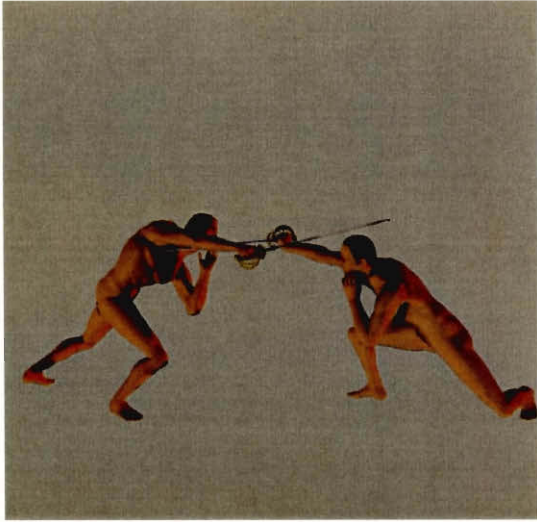
Fabris – Guard in Prima



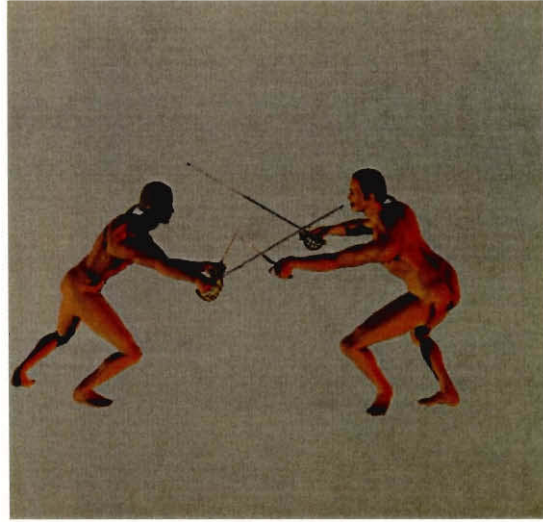
Fabris – Guard in Terza



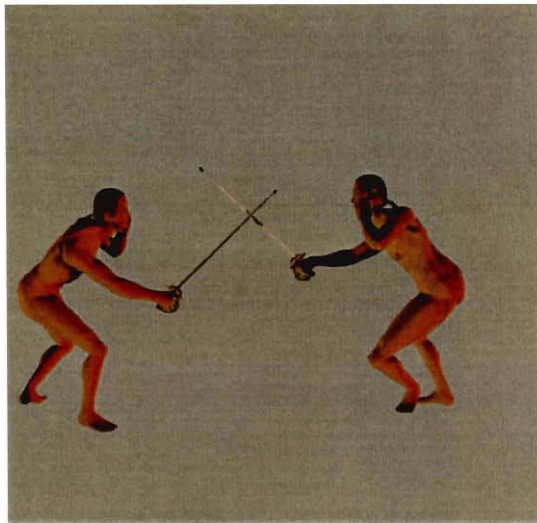
Fabris – Guard in Quarta



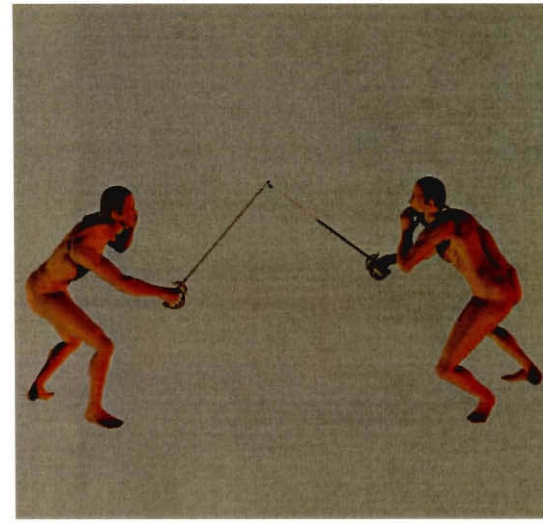
Fabris – Hit in Prima



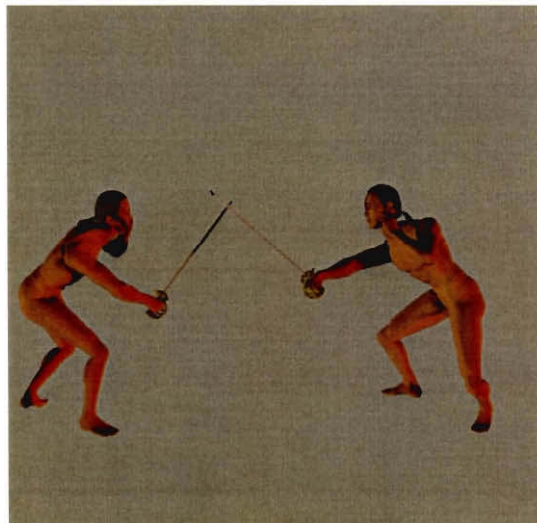
Halle – Passage with Rapier and Dagger



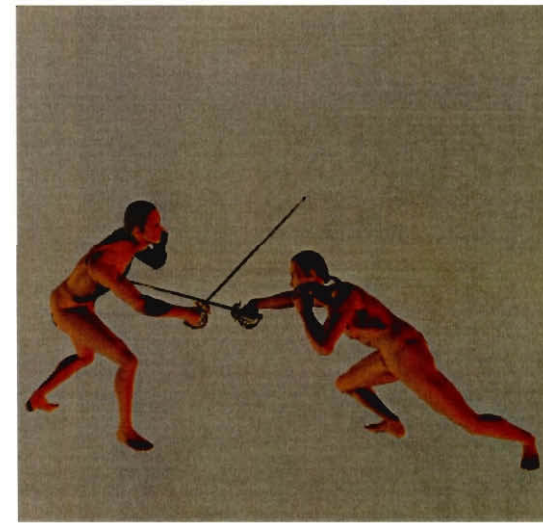
Halle – Binding Passage



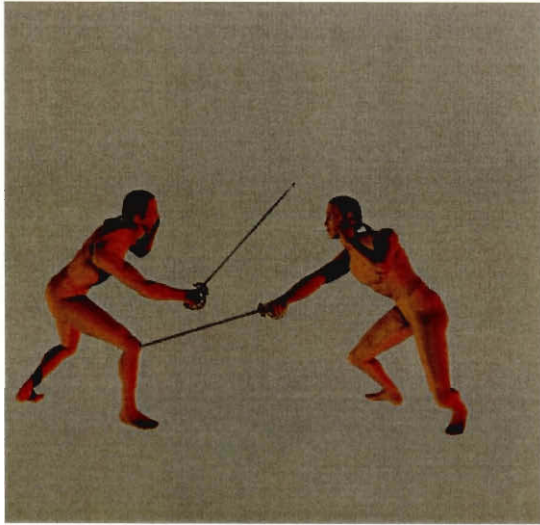
Halle – Change Back and Bind (frame 5)



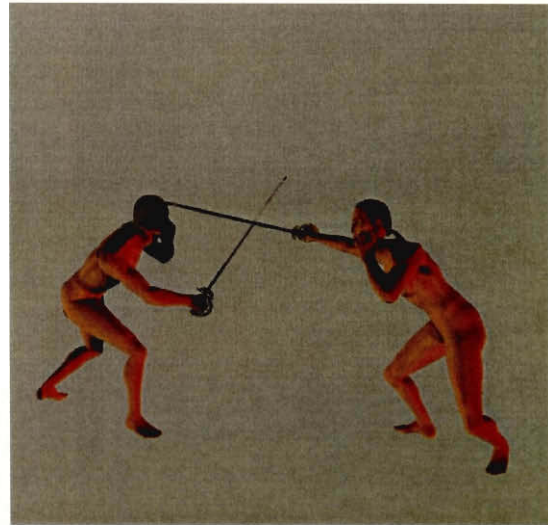
Halle – Change Back and Bind



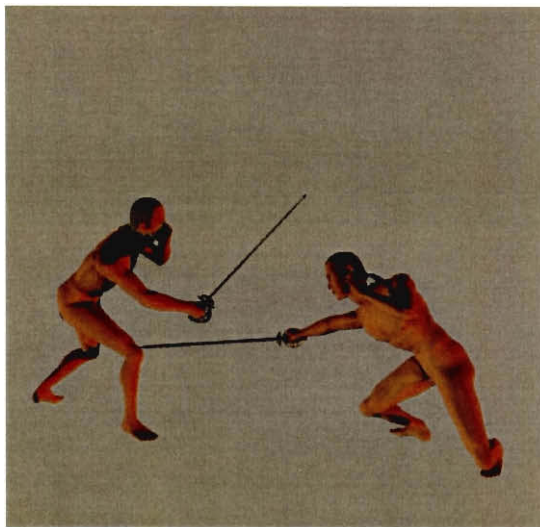
St. Didier – Thrust



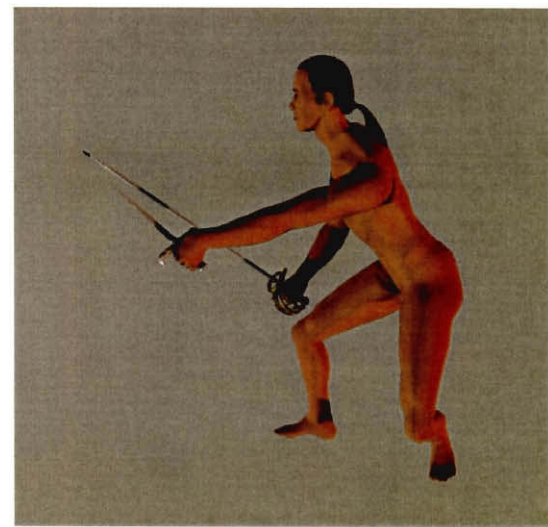
St. Didier – Right Hand in Low



St. Didier – Reverse in High



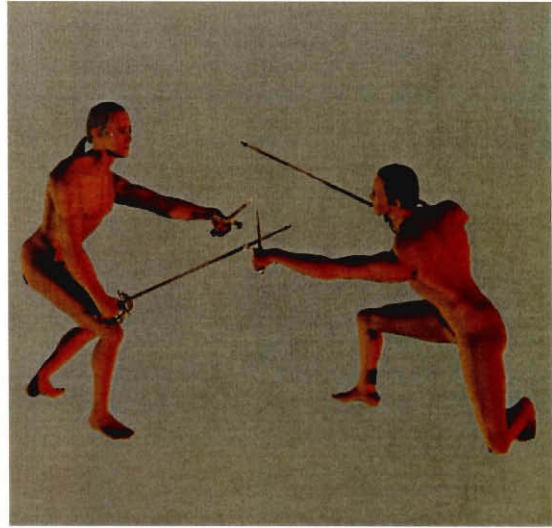
St. Didier – Reverse in Low



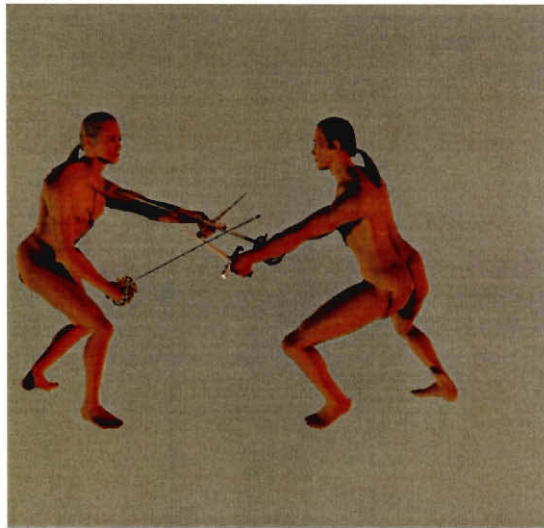
Swetnam – Main Guard for Rapier and Dagger



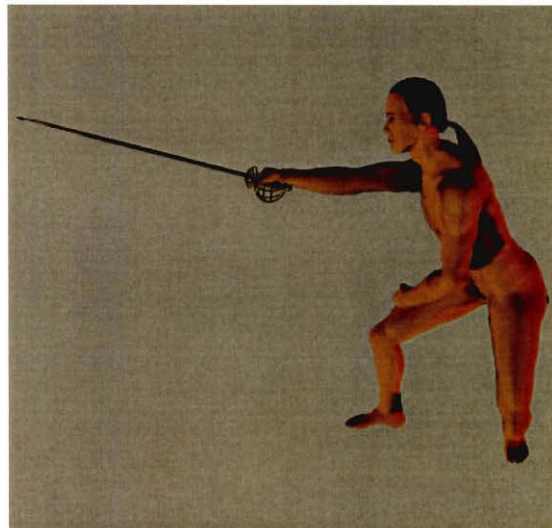
Swetnam – Stokata Guard



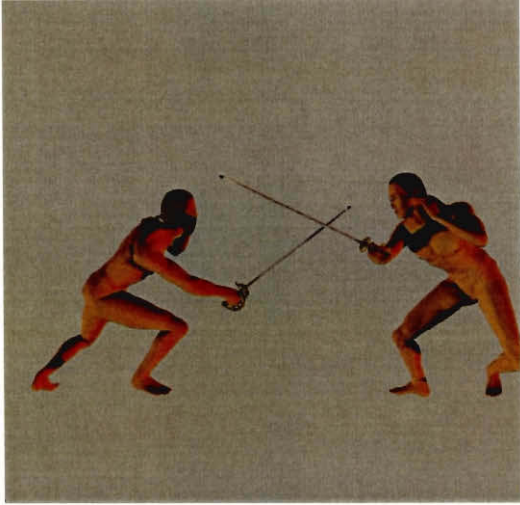
Swetnam - Mountanto



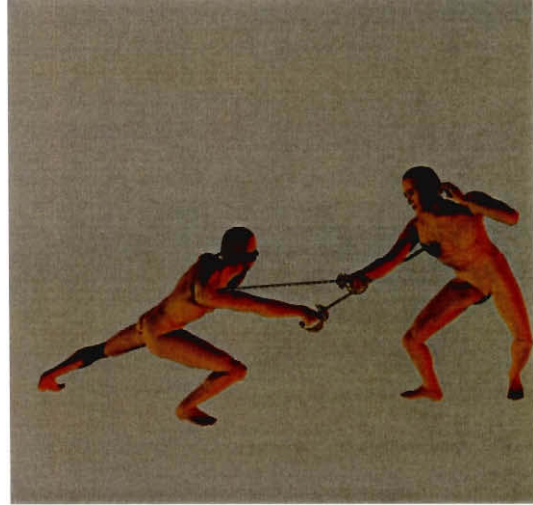
Swetnam – Passage



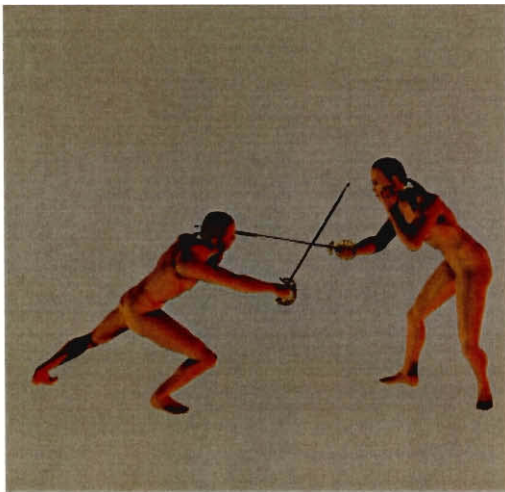
Swetnam – Unicorn Guard



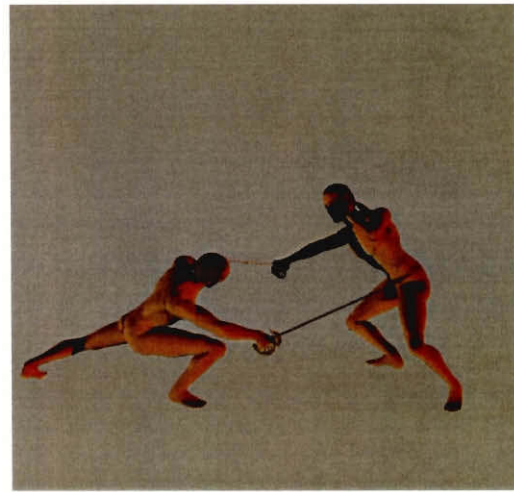
Thibault – Avoiding the Blow to Strike From Behind



Thibault – Avoiding the Blow to Strike from Behind



Thibault – Using the Height Advantage



Thibault – Countering the Second Feint

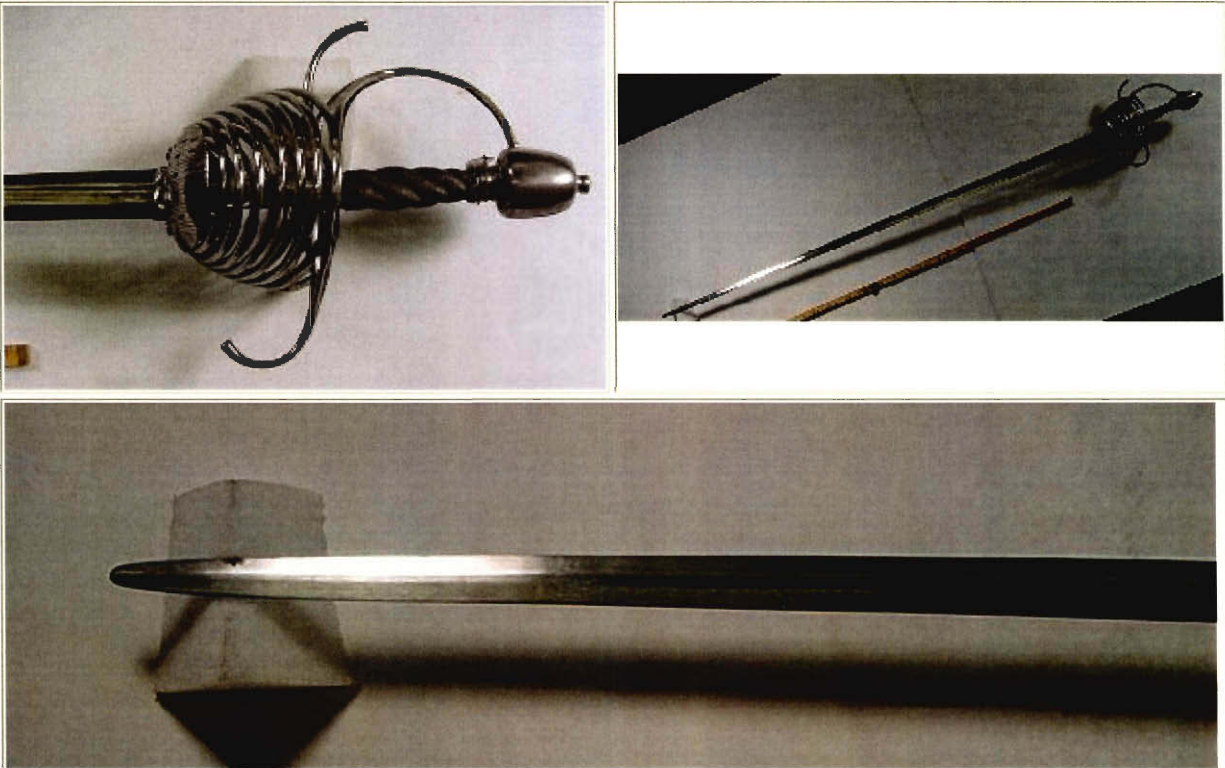
## Artifact Photographs

The following are a collection of historical rapiers preserved at the Higgins Armory museum.

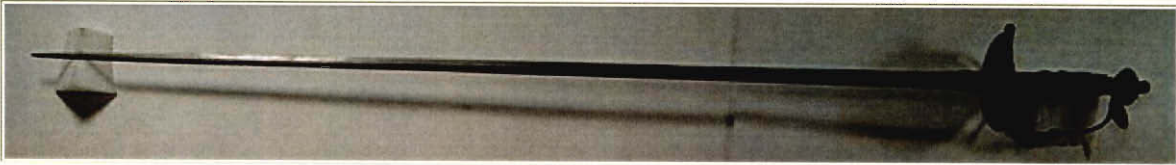
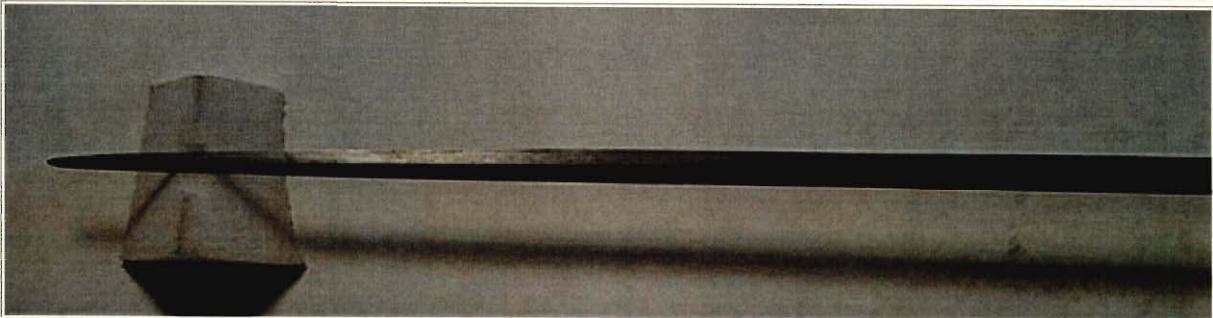
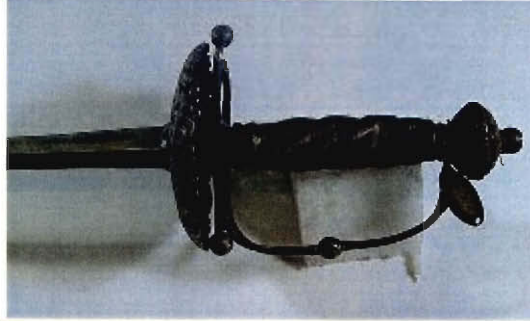
16-17th century, Europe (cat. 1785.2, OSB16)



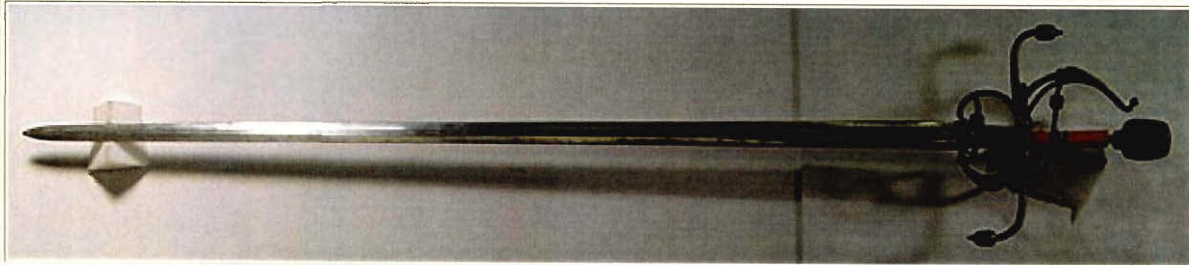
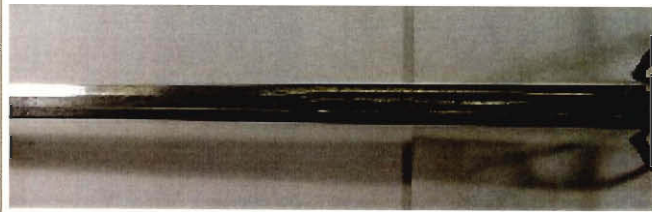
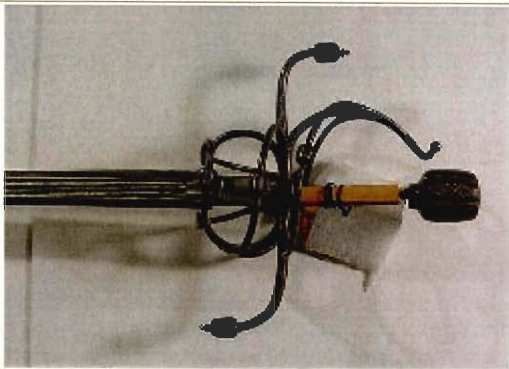
Mid 17th century, Germany (cat. 1786.1, OSB8)



Mid 17th century, Germany (cat. 1786.2, OSB8)



16-17th century, Germany (cat. 1786.2, OSB5)

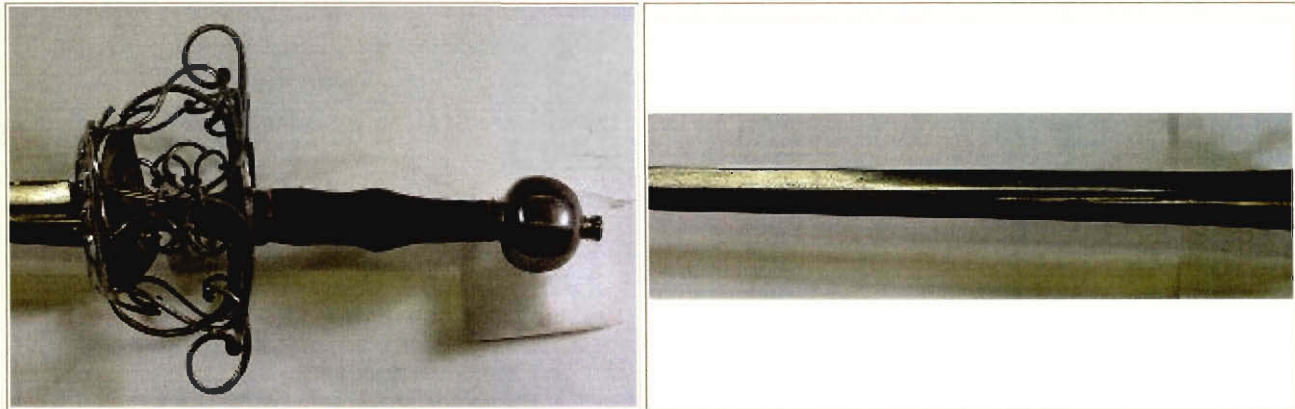




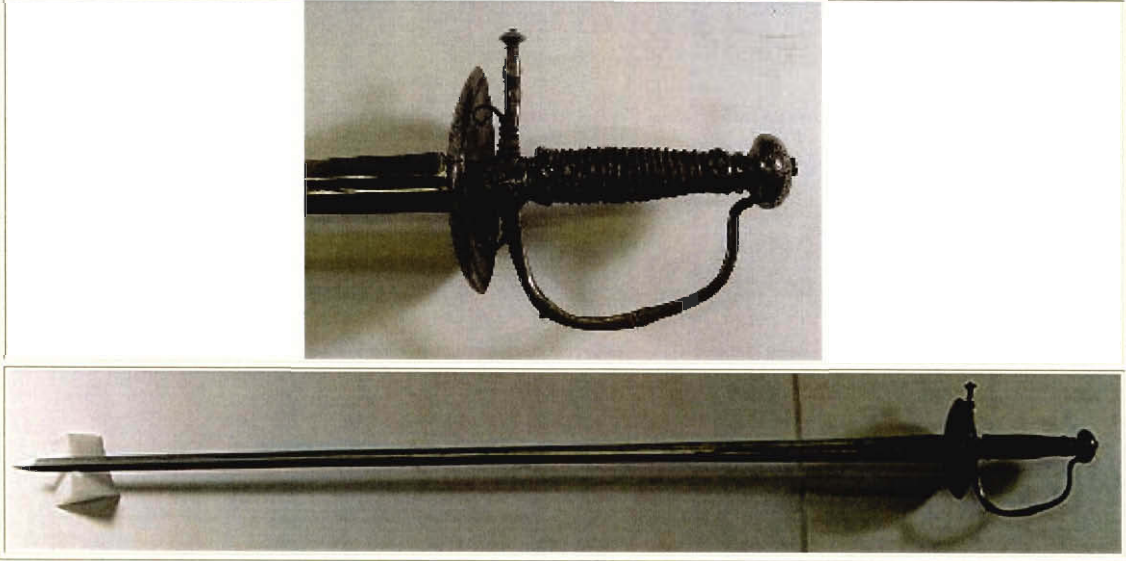
First half 17th century, Germany (cat. 3060, OSD7)



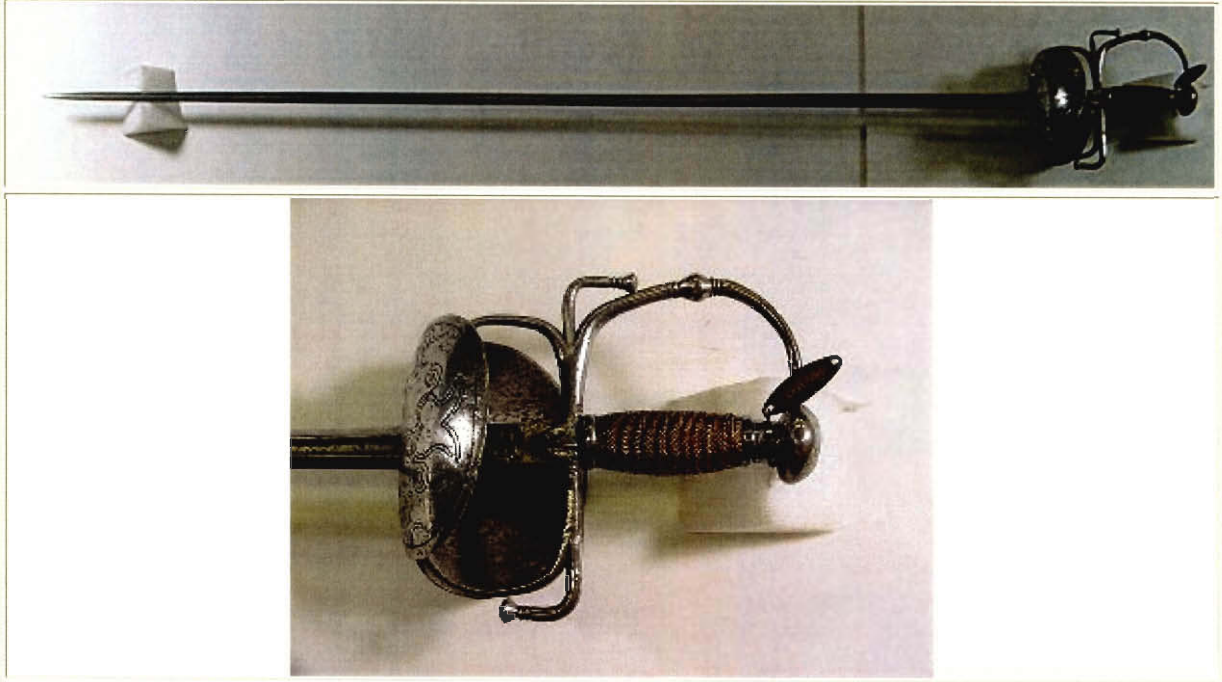
First half 17th century, Germany (cat. 1804.2, OSB15)



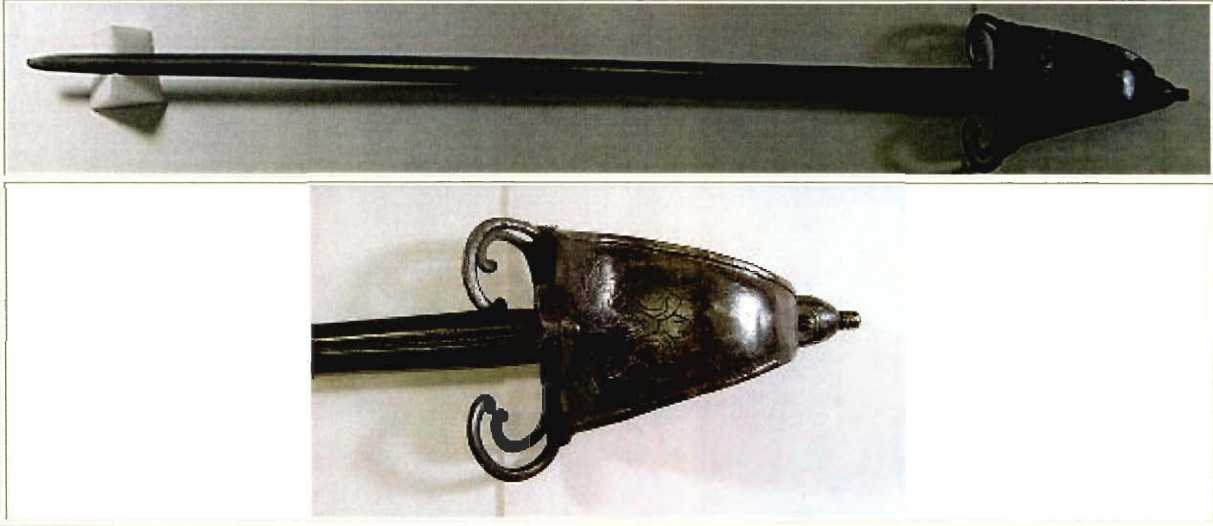
First half 17th century, Germany (cat. 1804.1, OSB15)



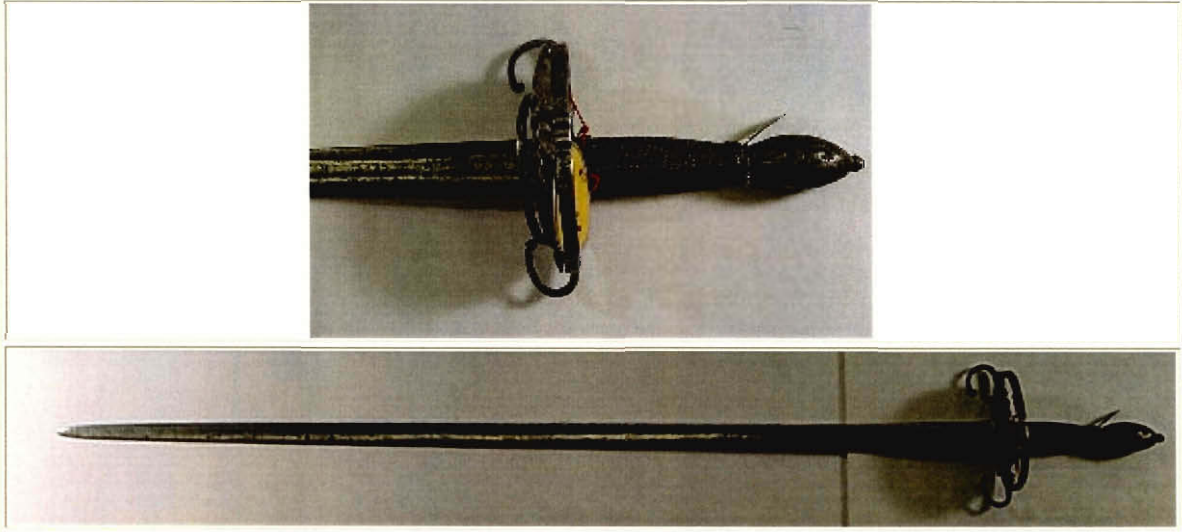
Mid 17th century, Germany (cat. 1803.1, OSB15) Made for left-hand



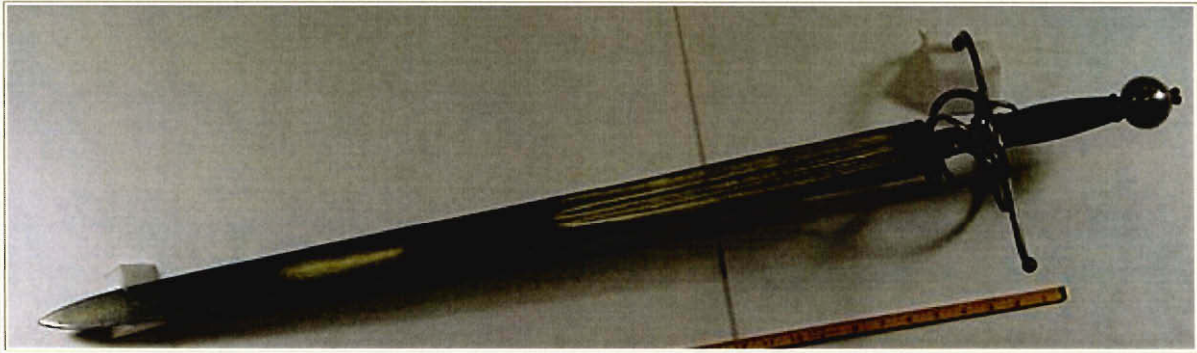
Circa 1620-1630, Italy (cat.3058, OSC16)



First quarter 17th century, Germany (cat. 634, OSA15)



16th century, Germany (cat. 3846, OS14) originally two-handed



Circa 1590-1610, German with Spanish hilt (on display)



Circa 1470-90, Europe (on display)



## Feasibility Analysis of the Longsword

The longsword can be classified as any long bladed sword that has a handle long enough for two hands, but doesn't necessarily have to be used with two hands. While not the longest sword known, true two-handed swords are longer, it is longer than standard swords used for fighting, such as the rapier. Longswords are also known as war-swords, great-swords, and bastard-swords. Longswords are believed to have first appeared around 1300, but new evidence suggests that it's possible they were around as early as 1150, while the term longsword was first recorded in English around 1450. Longswords are generally between 40 and 48 inches long, while 7 to 9 inches of this is the hilt. The longer hilt allowed for stronger blows by using two hands.

Many longswords still exist today in museums and armories all over the world. Most of them are catalogued into books. One of these books that best represent the longsword is *Wallace Collection – European Arms and Armor: Volume II, Arms* by Sir James Mann, 1962. This book contains descriptions of about 20 longswords, 6 of which were photographed in the back of the book. The book includes maker's marks and maker's names wherever possible. Another book that would be useful is *The Armouries of the Tower of London – Inventory of the Armouries: Volume II*, 1915. This book has brief descriptions of 2 longswords, along with length and width of the blade, as well as grip dimensions. They also included a sketch of the maker's mark on the blade.

As far as manuals or books that deal with the sword itself along with the techniques of it, these can be classified into two different categories: modern and period sources. A couple of books from the modern era could be used for this study. One of these books is *Medieval Swordsmanship* by John Clements, 1997. This book would be very useful for the study of the longsword. It has a good listing of the manuals from the medieval time and a brief description about each. Clements also gives descriptions of the longsword and each variation, war-swords, great-swords, and bastard-swords. It also has a brief section on the making of swords, and also briefly describes how useful the sword is against different types of armor. Clements also included

a section showing good illustrations of all the different parts of the sword, such as the hilt, pommel, handle, guard and the different parts of the blade. Clements also has a very long section, including detailed illustrations about the different grips, stances, cutting attacks, and defenses of the longsword. This would be useful in comparing to manuals from the medieval period. Another useful book would be *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* by Sydney Anglo, 2000. This book contains great illustrations from older texts and contains lots of history about the longsword. This would be useful to compare the illustrations to those from the period manuals.

The period sources are those manuals that were written during the medieval age. There are a few of these that deal with the longsword. Some of these sources are also available online. One of these manuals that would be useful is Fiore Dei Liberi's *Flos Duellatorum*, translated as "The Flower of Battle", which was written in 1410. He was an Italian master of the longsword, and his techniques show specific point attacks, and methods of disarming the opponent. This book offers a contrast to the German style manuals and teachings. Another manual is Albrecht Duerer's *Fechtbuch Art*, written in 1520, which is also available online. This manual contains only illustrations of medieval longsword use, but could be useful by comparing it to other German sword-fighting manuals, techniques, etc.

Another valuable manual would be *The Solothurner Fechtbuch*, which is believed to be from 1423, and its author is unknown. This manual is also available online. Its contents include the standard combat arts of both armored and unarmored longsword. There is no text available, but the illustrations show familiar guards and stances of the German style along with specific techniques, cuts, thrusts, slices and deflecting actions, which can be compared to other German and longsword fighting techniques. Talhoffers' *Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre*, written in 1467, would also be a useful resource. This book contains a great deal of text and illustrations on longsword techniques, and the captions have been translated into English, making the pictures relatively easy to understand. Talhoffers' manual is also available via the World Wide Web.

Joachim Meyer's book, which was written in 1600, could prove very useful. It is a book exclusively about the longsword. This book goes into great depth in describing the stances that should be used, as well as the different attacks that are available. It then describes which attacks

to use from which stances, depending on the stance of the opponent. It talks about the different attack zones on the opponent, as well as the different divisions of the longsword itself. It also describes parries, handwork (different grips of the sword for different attacks, and defenses), footwork and the withdrawal after the attack in pretty good detail. Meyer also describes all different kinds of trick moves that could be used as well as counter moves for different kinds of attacks from the opponent.

There are quite a few resources that are available dealing with the topic of the longsword. However, only a few of these are dedicated solely to the longsword, while most of them only have short sections about the longsword. Therefore, these resources may not be sufficient for the purpose of our project. While there are more resources available dealing with the longsword rather than the sword and buckler, the rapier has the most abundant amount of resources available. In conclusion, the longsword would probably not be the wisest choice for the project topic.



## Longsword Bibliography

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- Clements, John. *Medieval Swordsmanship*. Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1998.
- dei Liberi, Fiore. *Flos Duellatorum*. 1410.
- Duere, Albert. *Fechtbuch Art*. 1520.
- Mann, Sir James. *Wallace Collection – European Arms and Armor: Volume II, Arms* 1962.
- Meyer, Joachim. *Book 1*. 1600.
- The Armouries of the Tower of London – Inventory of the Armouries: Volume II*, 1915.
- The Solothurner Fechtbuch*. 1423.
- Talhoffer, Hans. *Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre*. 1467.

## **Feasibility Analysis of the Medieval Sword and Buckler**

During the first phase of this project several styles of medieval fencing were closely examined to determine how feasible it would be to take one form and recreate it today. Sword and buckler style fencing became a prevalent topic and with the help of both period and modern resources, along with Internet materials, an analysis was made of the ease and ability of creating this form.

Information on period sword and buckler techniques is sometimes difficult to find. While they offer a good amount of knowledge that accurately depicted what sword and buckler fighting but one must work with translations of the original texts, often written in old forms of modern languages, and decipher the moves and forms from often times less than well drawn panels and diagrams. Modern sources take those period materials and rewrite them into a form that can be easily understood.

Before one begins to learn to fight with a sword and buckler, one must understand the weapons being used. The armed sword is not a general rapier-like weapon but resembles a short sword in that it is used for both cutting and thrusting. The blade is light enough that moves with it can be dexterous for the sword is designed to be offensive and defensive, able to parry a thrust and immediately counter with its own attack.

Medieval bucklers were a small shield, made primarily of wood wrapped in leather, but some have been seen to be made of metal or wood covered in metal. A typical size for a buckler would be anywhere from 8 to 18 inches in diameter and would weigh fewer 4 pounds. Bucklers would have a single fist grip, made of leather, in the center of the backside. This would allow for the shield to be parried with, giving it movement around the entire fist.

Rarely did a buckler have just a rounded face on it. Many were adorned with curved ridges or a single sharp spike protruding from the center to serve as a vicious and deadly weapon. Some bucklers were even given metal rings or catches on the face to capture an opponent's sword tip in an effort to bend or break the sword. Most had hooks with which to suspend the buckler from a belt or baldric (Masters of Defense, 1990).

Video references seemed to have the most abundant and highest quality modern information. Two videos that were looked at are Masters of Defense by the Royal Armouries and The Blow by Blow Guide to Sword Fighting by Mike Loades. Both dealt with period techniques and the teaching and reenacting of these forms in a modern setting.

In The Blow by Blow Guide to Sword Fighting, Loades and his assistant run through some specific wards and blows. These forms, though not attributed to any particular style, resembled the Germanic style shown in Hans Talhoffer's *Medieval Combat* written in 1467. Loades describes the buckler as an equal offensive weapon to the sword in its ability to cripple the opponent with a series of vicious distracting blows. In plates 231-239 in Talhoffer's *Fechtbuch*, figures are shown using the buckler in this same manner, often times turning a well placed block with the buckler into a direct counter attack onto the opponent. With the help of Loades' video reenactments, the ability to visualize the fight scenes in *Medieval Combat* is much more established and a basic practice could be easily learned.

Masters of Defense gave background history on the use and development of sword and buckler technique as well as some of the speculated origins of the buckler style. The video went on to say that a buckler was used most often by common peoples of the era, corresponding with the short section of sword and buckler fighting described in *The Teachings of G.A. Lovino* (Lovino, 18-19). According to the video, a buckler could be seen dangling from the belts atop the swords of the servant classes and it is speculated that this is most likely what coined the phrase 'swashbuckler', for the sound the buckler made against the leather of the belt (Masters of Defense, 1990).

Lovino's manual, written in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, describes the sword and buckler style as a combat form used primarily for fencibles of honor in the Italian tradition. This reinforces the video's claim that the buckler was not an immediate form in duels. Lovino's teachings also give quick mention to the sword and buckler as means of judiciary combat in the line 'Lauro attore et Aquilo reo, con spada et brocchiero', Lauro plaintiff and Aquilo defender, with sword and buckler (Lovino, 19).

The content of Masters of Defense also showed general combat with the sword and buckler as it is reproduced for theatrical purposes, specifically sighting how to face the audience and particular positions on the stage. Though our reproduction would not be very theatrical in nature, being able to view the movement of a body holding both a sword and buckler is a great basis for our models when recreating fighting forms. Live-action combat sequences can give us insight into reproducing period drawings and woodcuts into actual forms.

A great modern reference pertaining to sword & buckler combat is *English Martial Arts*. In this book, the author, Terry Brown, displays his rendition of period sword and buckler techniques through photographs. Pages 168 – 174 specifically display how a buckler and sword were used together against a rapier and dagger. Brown does not mention the specific sources he used to recreate these stances, but these pictures give good basic examples, without taking on a specific style. These photographs could be a great basis on which to recreate the sword and buckler forms using a live model or computer generated images.

In the book *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals*, James L. Jackson has combined three works from the different masters of English fencing all written from the period of time. Only one of these manuals highlights the sword and buckler with any amount of detail and that is Giacomo di Grassi's *His True Arte of Defence*, written in 1594. The manual was written to be a teaching guide for one who did not have a teacher in the art of fencing but wanted to learn both the offensive and defensive nature of this style of fence.

It is interesting to note that Di Grassi, as well as another author within the book, Saviolo, are both Italian masters of English style fencing. From the discussions within Di Grassi's manual compared to the portrayal in Lovino's teachings, it can be seen that the Italian and English styles of sword and buckler fence are very similar. The buckler is used mainly for the warding of blows and distraction from the sword (Jackson, 1972). It is very different from the Germanic style, where the buckler is used as much a weapon as the sword.

A thorough description of a 13<sup>th</sup> century sword & buckler style can be viewed at the HACA web-site, "Anonymous Fechtbuch: Manuscript I.33" 13th century German Sword & Buckler Manual. This consists of numerous pictures but few descriptive captions. However the translated

version of this fechtbuch, by the Royal Armouries, provides the captions and make the pictures more easily understood. Using these pictures and translations much information could be gathered on very early sword and buckler combat. Another online reference, Old Sword-Play, depicts Marozzo's twelve guards with a series of images, each captioned (Hutton, 1892). *Schools and Masters of Fence*, a 19<sup>th</sup> century manual by Egerton Castle, explains without much detail Marozzo's several works and mentions the inclusion of the sword and buckler only within the first two of these works. Though at the moment we have yet to find any printed versions of Marozzo's works that would be useful.

After examining the sword and buckler techniques of the different masters it was found that doing a full study of the just this style would be very difficult. Information on just the use of a buckler in addition to a single weapon is very few and far between and often not very detailed. Though it would be fascinating to be one of the first compilers of an extended library of sword and buckler, it is not feasible to do so within the bounds of this project.

## Medieval Sword and Buckler Bibliography

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- Talhoffer, Hans. *Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre. 1467*.

## Vocabulary

*Vocabulary Format:*

**Vocabulary Term** [Original term, where applicable] (Rapier Master)

(page location of term) Definition of term.

**Acute Angle** (Thibault)

An angle of less than 90°; used by Thibault to indicate that the sword arm is sloping downward, and thus makes an acute angle with the line of the body.

**Attack with Resolution, Attack without Pause** [Andare di Risolutione, Andare Contra il Nimico Senza Fermarsi] (Fabris)

(pp. 154, 155) Fabris uses these two terms to describe a method in which you attack, moving from outside of striking distance. Without ever stopping or being still and on guard, you move into striking distance and strike. This allows you to seize an advantage in a fight rather than waiting for your adversary to give you a chance to take the advantage.

**Basic Guards** [Guardie principali] (Fabris)

(p. 1) The four basic guards describe simply ways to hold the arm, and the position of the sword. Fabris does not describe foot and body position when describing these basic guards. Other guards that describe foot and body position are formed from the basic guards.

**Bearing** [Tenue] (Saint Didier)

Foot placement assumed by a combatant.

**Bind** [Binde] (Halle)

(pp. 9, 10) the action of pressuring or enveloping the adversary's blade or point in order to carry it off line. Halle uses this term in a defensive manner.

**Blow** (Swetnam)

(pp. 85, 86, 88, 90) An attack made with the edge of the sword.

**Change Back** [Change Backe] (Halle)

(p. 9) to take a step backwards; i.e. distance oneself from the opponent. This implies a change of the forefoot.

**Choleric** [Colerici] (Fabris)

(p. 23) Those who are extremely irritable and easily angered in nature.

**Close Distance** [Misura Stretta] (Fabris)

(p. 4) Distance at which the adversary can be hit by simply bending the body.

**Closing the Straight Line** (Thibault)

Positioning the sword so that the opponent cannot enter or attack without either dealing with one's blade or being hit.

**Counter-Disengagement** [Contracavatione] (Fabris)

(p. 15) To follow the adversary's sword as he tries to disengage, engaging it in the same line as was originally intended.

**Counter-position** [Contrapostura, La Contra Postura] (Fabris)

(p. 3) A position you may take in which you are defended in a straight line from the tip of your adversary's sword to your body. That is, you and your adversary are on guard in such a way that you will have enough time to defend any attack he makes from his guard without having to change your guard. The adversary must change his basic guard in order to attack. If he does, you will have plenty of time to parry and possibly even attack.



**Counter-Time** [Contratiempo] (Fabris)

(p. 13) The act of making a movement within distance with the intent of parrying and hitting when the adversary is attempting to hit.

**Cross Passage** (Halle)

(pp. 8, 10) A forward diagonal side-stepping move employed with a passing attack.

**Cut Under the Blade** (Thibault)

A common fencing move in which the sword, engaging the opponent's blade on one side, drops under hand across to the other side to deliver an attack

**Dazel** (Halle)

(pp. 4, 8) Unsteady with the sword; constantly changing the point.

**Dazzling** (Swetnam)

(p. 123) Confusing or bewildering.

**Debile** [Debile] (Fabris)

(p. 2) The half of the blade of the sword that is further from the hilt. The debile is used solely for attacking.

**Defender** (Halle)

(p. 8) The person who accepts the challenge to combat in a duel.

**Degraduation** (Thibault)

Moving the point of contact between blades toward the point.

**Demi-Fleuret** (Thibault)

A Renaissance dance step in which the back foot is brought up to the forward one and set down and then in the same moment the forward one moves forward a step.

**Disengagement** [Cavatione] (Fabris)

(p. 15) Moving one's sword to another line when an adversary attempts to engage it.

**Disorder** (Halle)

(pp. 4, 5, 7, 9) Evasion; avoidance.

**Double Disengagement** [Ricassatione] (Fabris)

(p. 15) You and your adversary both disengage, and then you move your sword as he tries to re-engage, so as to prevent him from re-engaging.

**Engaging the Sword** [Trovare di Spada] (Fabris)

(p. 11) To gain advantage over the adversary's sword by engaging his sword as close to the tip as possible, with a part of your sword that is closer to the hilt.

**Thrust** [Estoc] (Saint Dider)

(p. 45) A hit delivered with the point of the sword in contrast to a cut delivered with the edge. See example of Lieutenant.

**Estocade** (Thibault)

Equivalent to Italian stoccata, a direct thrust made in a line that can be traced back to intersect the body of the attacker.

**Estramon** (Thibault)

Equivalent to Italian stramazzone, a fast cut made with the tip of the sword, usually aimed at the face.

**Falsifying** (Swetnam)

(p. 113) The faking of a blow; a feint.

**Feint** (Swetnam)

The faking of a thrust or blow in one direction or area, then attacking in another direction or area. Swetnam does not actually use this term, instead he uses falsifying.

**Feint** [Finta] (Fabris)

(p. 16) Feigning to hit in one line, and when the adversary is defending that line, hitting in another.

**First Instance** (Thibault)

The outermost of the three instances, in which opponents are positioned so that the point of each sword comes to the other's hilt.

**Foible** (Thibault, Saint Didier)

The weaker point of the blade, toward the point.

**Forte** (Thibault, Saint Didier)

The stronger point of the blade, toward the hilt.

**Graduation** (Thibault)

Moving the point of contact between blades toward the hilt.

**Guards** [Guardie] (Fabris)

(p. 1) This term is used to mean the manner in which the sword, body, and feet are positioned.

**Half Disengagement** [Mezzia Cavatione] (Fabris)

(p. 15) Not completing a change from one line to another, but leaving your sword under your adversary's. This is not a true disengagement, since the sword is still in the same line, but the adversary must still move for his sword to be engaged with yours.

**High** [Haute] (Saint Didier )

(p. 28) A guard in which one holds the sword a little above shoulder level and points the tip at the head of the opponent. See example on pg. 28 of Provost.

**Heat** (Halle)

(p. 3) Anger; a violent temper.

**Imbrocade** (Thibault)

Equivalent to Italian imbrocatta, an indirect thrust made in a line that cannot be traced back to intersect the body of the attacker.

**Imbrokata** (Swetnam)

(p. 113) A pass or thrust that is made above the opponent's blade. Swetnam uses the term in a slightly different manner.

**Inside the Angles** (Thibault)

A position in which one of the swordsman has slipped past the other's point and has closed to one side of another of the other's blade. Also called inside the perpendicular.

**Instance** (Thibault)

A distance at which rapier combat can take place.

**Low** [Basse] (Saint Didier)

(p. 37) A guard in which one holds the sword at chest or lap level and points the tip at the legs of the opponent. See example on pg. 37 of Provost.

**Lunge** [longe] (Halle)

(pp. 5, 7, 9) A thrust with a foil or rapier; made while extending the rear leg and landing on the bent front leg.

**Lunge** [Ferire a Piede Fermo] (Fabris)

(p. 17) A hit achieved by carrying the right foot forward toward the adversary and withdrawing it immediately after hitting, or a hit made by moving just the body. The usual definition of “lunge” usually includes only carrying the foot forward. Moving only the body is included in Fabris’ definition of a lunge.

**Right Hand** [Maindroit] (Saint Didier)

(p. 30) More commonly referred to as a cut or blow. See example of Lieutenant on pg. 30.

**Mandritto** [Mandritto] (Fabris)

(p. 7) A cut delivered from the right, which hits the adversary’s left shoulder area.

**Mayne** (Halle)

(p. 7) ?Greater part.

**Middle** [Moyenne] (Saint Didier)

(p. 41) A guard in which one holds the sword at shoulder level and points the tip at the face or neck. See example on pg. 41 of Provost.

**Multiply** [Multiplier] (Saint Didier)

By this, Saint Didier seems to mean a combination of strikes (right hand, reverse, and thrust) with guards (high, middle, low). For example a right hand can be “multiplied” three times: right hand high, right hand low, right hand middle.

**Nighest** (Halle)

(pp. 8, 9) Nearest; closest.

**Obtuse Angle** (Thibault)

An angle of more than 90°; used by Thibault to indicate that the sword arm is sloping upward, and thus makes an obtuse angle with the line of the body.

**Pass** [Passare] (Fabris)

(p. 17) “To carry both feet on right to the adversary’s body.” Fabris’ definition of a pass is a bit unclear, but he seems to mean any motion in which the back foot is moved, then the front foot. According to Fabris, this can be done by crossing the back foot behind the front foot, then stepping forward with the right foot to get back into the position you were originally in (except further forward). This is called a cross-passage by some authors of fencing manuals. He includes all types of passes in this one term.

**Passage** (Halle)

(pp. 5-10) An attack with the sword, where the back foot is advanced at the same time and becomes the forefoot.

**Passage** (Swetnam)

(pp. 97-102) An attack that is made when the rear foot is brought to the front accompanied by a thrust or blow.

**Phlegmatic** [Flammatici] (Fabris)

(p. 23) Those who are apathetic or calm in nature.

**Point** (Halle)

(pp. 5, 7-9) The piercing part of the sword, short for “point of the sword”.

**Pommel** (Swetnam)

(pp. 92-93) The knob at the end of the handle.

**Posture of the Straight Line** (Thibault)

The standard posture of Thibault’s method, with the body upright and turned sideways to the opponent, and the sword arm extended straight out toward the opponent

**Prima** [Prima] (Fabris)

(p. 1) First of the four basic guards, it is a position formed with the hand held high, with the leading edge of the sword facing upward.

**Quarta** [Quarta] (Fabris)

(p. 2) Guard in which the palm of the hand is turned upwards, with the left side of the sword facing upward.

**To Strike the Foible with the Forte** [Rabatre le foible du fort] (Saint Didier)

(p. 35) This is a defensive move where one will block the attack by catching the opponent’s sword in the corner of your cross guard and sword. Then after having ‘caught’ the opponent’s sword in

the crook of your sword you can push it forward and turn the sword slightly to push down the opponent's sword. Forte is the lower part of the sword blade used for defense, while foible is the offensive top of the sword. See example on pg. 35.

**Re-Engagement** [Commettere di Spada] (Fabris)

(p. 15) You disengage, and then engage again in the same line as before when your adversary moves to engage or make a hit.

**Reverse** [Renvers] (Saint Didier)

(p. 31) Backhand cut. See example of Lieutenant on pg. 31.

**Riverso** [Riverso] (Fabris)

(p. 7) A cut delivered from the left, which hits on the right side.

**Rude** (Halle)

(pp. 2, 4. 11) Uneducated; lacking knowledge; unlearned.

**Samatorie** (Halle)

(p. 8) A scimitar; a short, curved, single-edged sword, used in the Near East. Halle uses this sword as an example of a blunt-pointed weapon that can be used for disarming the opponent.

**Second Instance** (Thibault)

The midmost of the three Instances, in which the opponents are positioned so that the point of each sword comes to the other's elbow.

**Seconda** [Seconda] (Fabris)

(p. 2) Guard in which the hand is turned palm downward, with the right side of the sword facing upward.



**Sentimen** (Thibault)

Sensitivity to the pressure of the opponent's blade against one's own.

**Shift** (Halle)

(pp. 6-8, 10) A change in one's position; avoidance or elusion.

**Sloperwise** (Swetnam)

(p. 113) With the sword at an angle upon attack.

**Space** (Swetnam)

(pp. 83-84) Swetnam uses the term "space" to mean time.

**Stock** (Sweīnam)

(p. 113) A thrust.

**Straight Line** (Thibault)

see Posture of the Straight Line.

**Stuck** (Halle)

(p. 7) A lunge.

**Terza** [Terza] (Fabris)

(p. 2) Guard in which the hand is in a natural position, neither up nor down. The leading edge of the sword is facing downward.

**Third Instance** (Thibault)

The innermost of the three Instances, in which the opponents are positioned so that the point of each sword comes to the other's shoulder.

**Time** (Tiempo) (Fabris)

(p. 5) A movement made by the adversary within distance (wide or close), which presents an opportunity to hit or gain some advantage. This presents an opportunity because it allows you to make a motion (such as a hit, or change of guard) simultaneously to his motion.

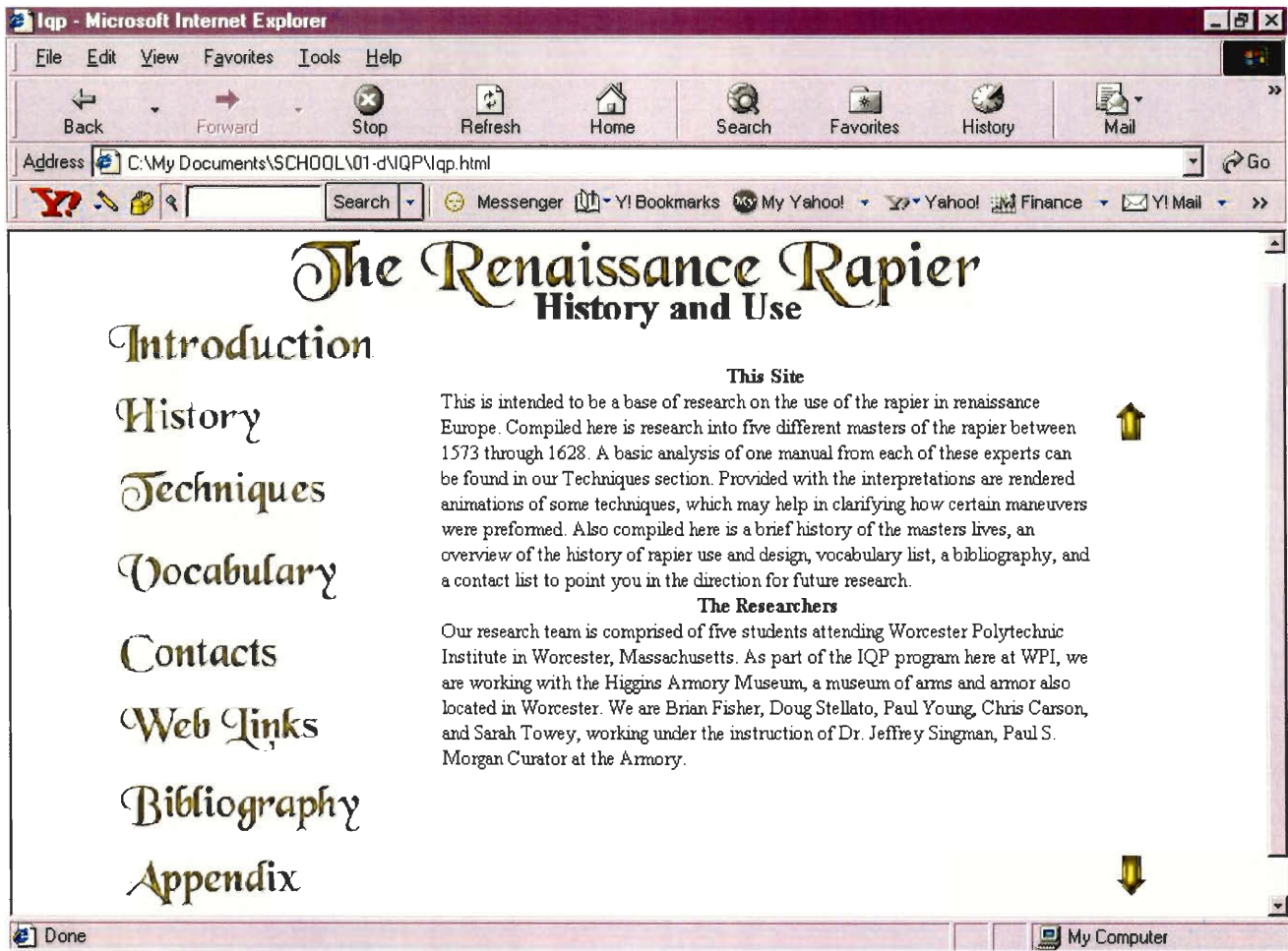
**Volte** (Thibault)

A sudden leap or jump.

**Wide Distance** [Misura Larga] (Fabris)

(p. 4) Stance at which the adversary can be hit by a movement of the body and feet. (Please note that whenever the phrase “within distance” is used, it is referring to being at least within wide distance.)

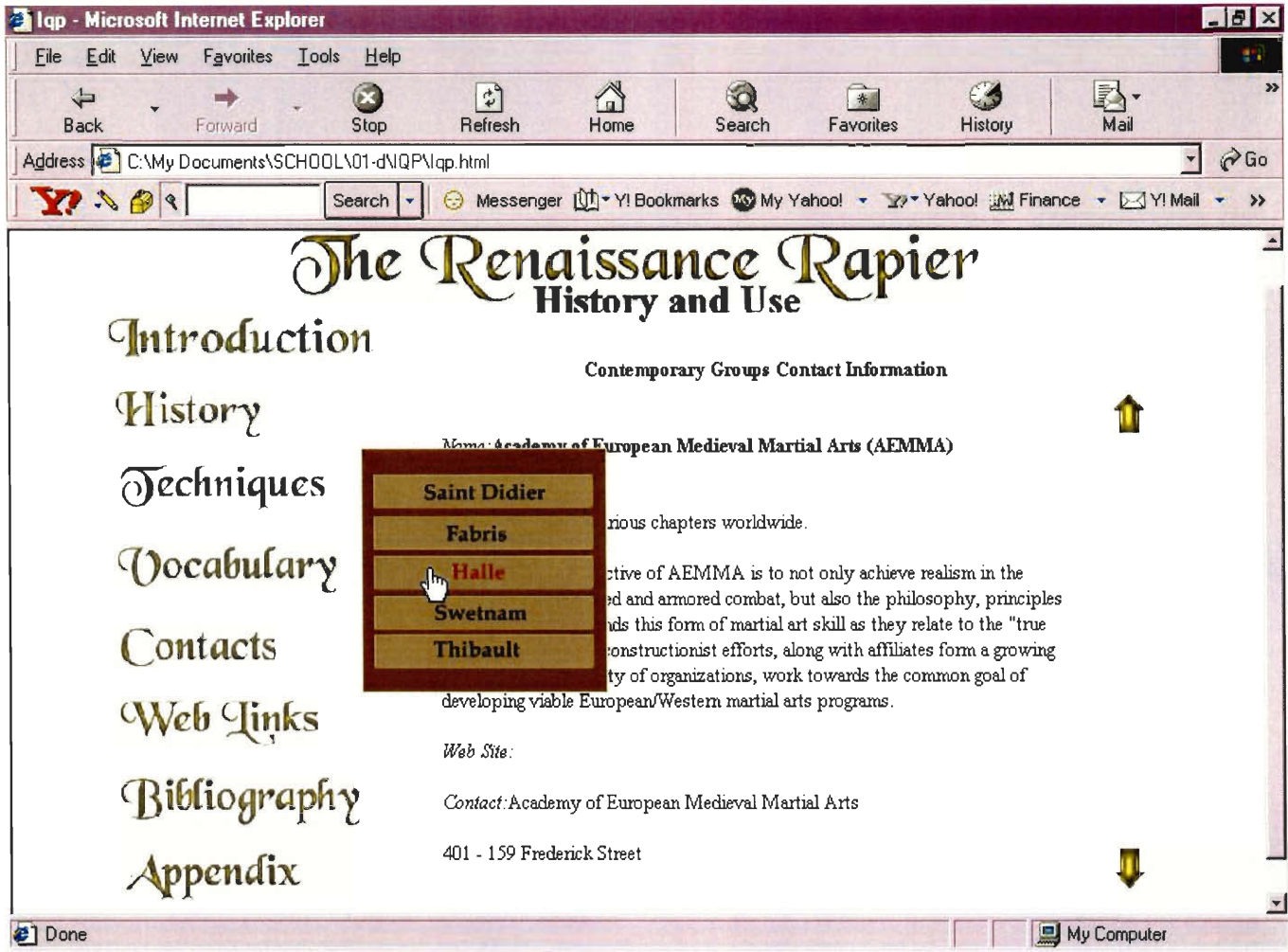
## Web Page Design



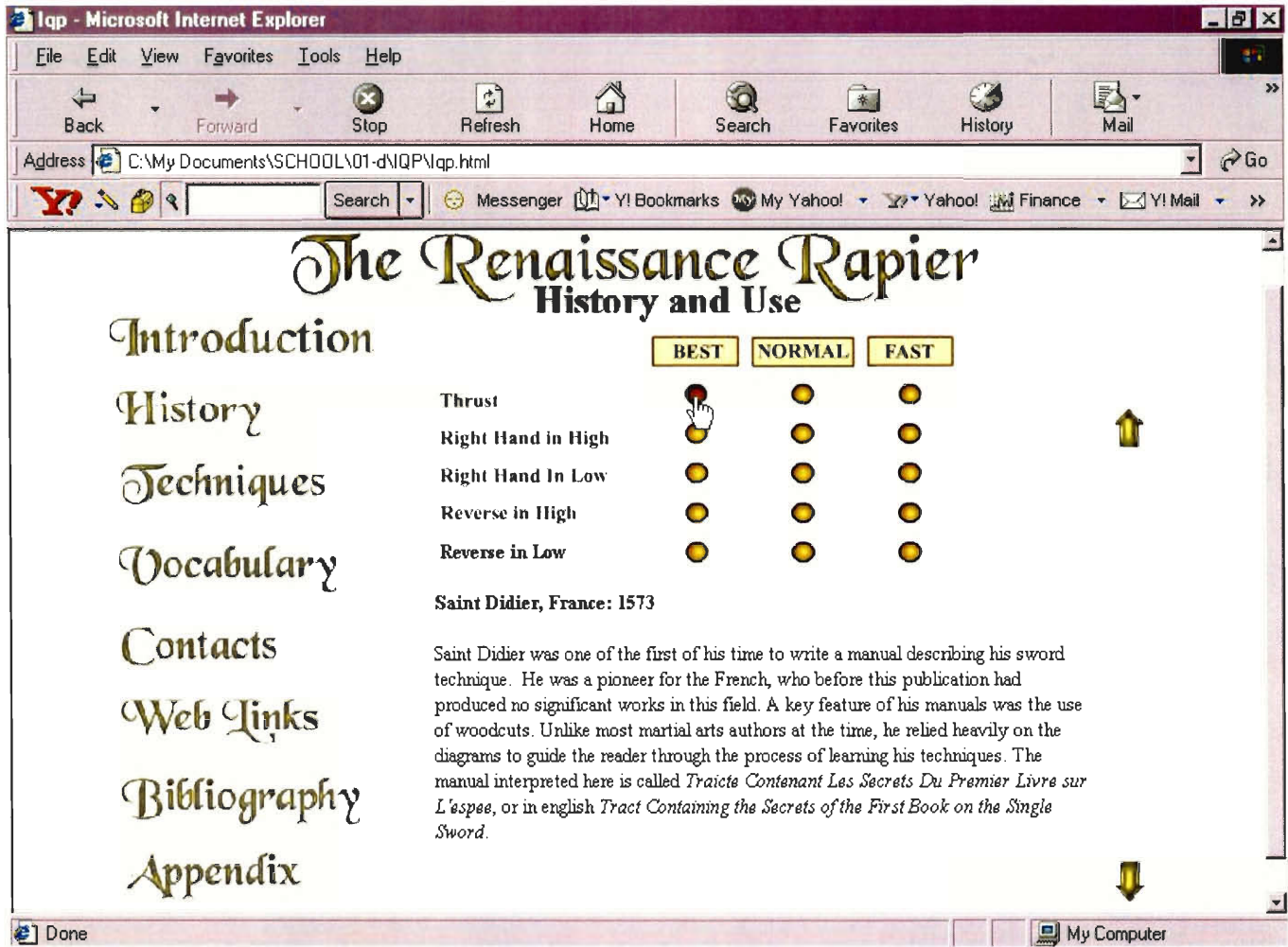
This is the home page for the Flash web site.

It is what the viewer first sees when visiting the site.

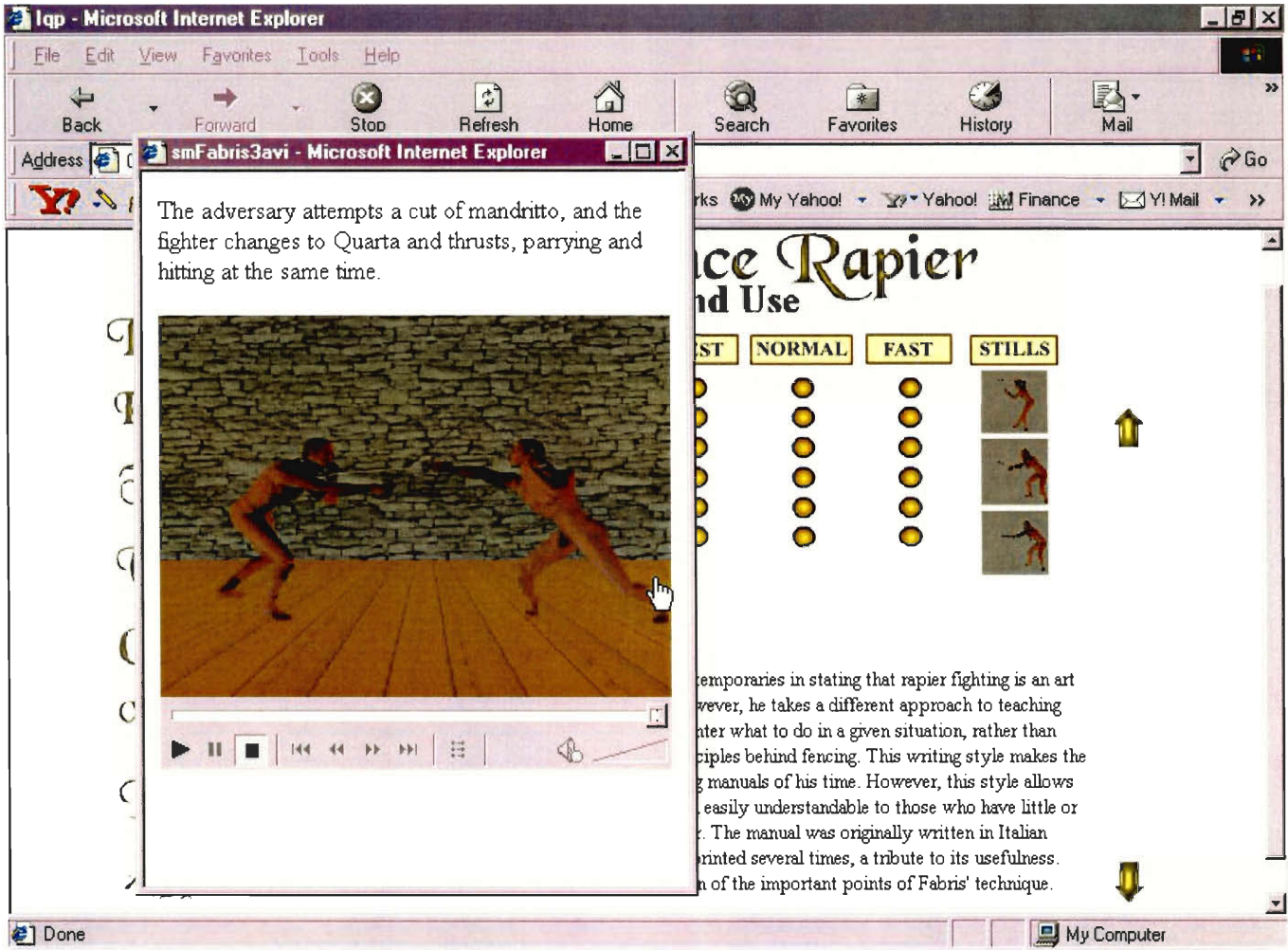
One can see all of the available options and a general introduction to the project.



When the viewer clicks on the Technique button, a submenu appears, and the viewer can select a rapier master to view the analysis of his manual.



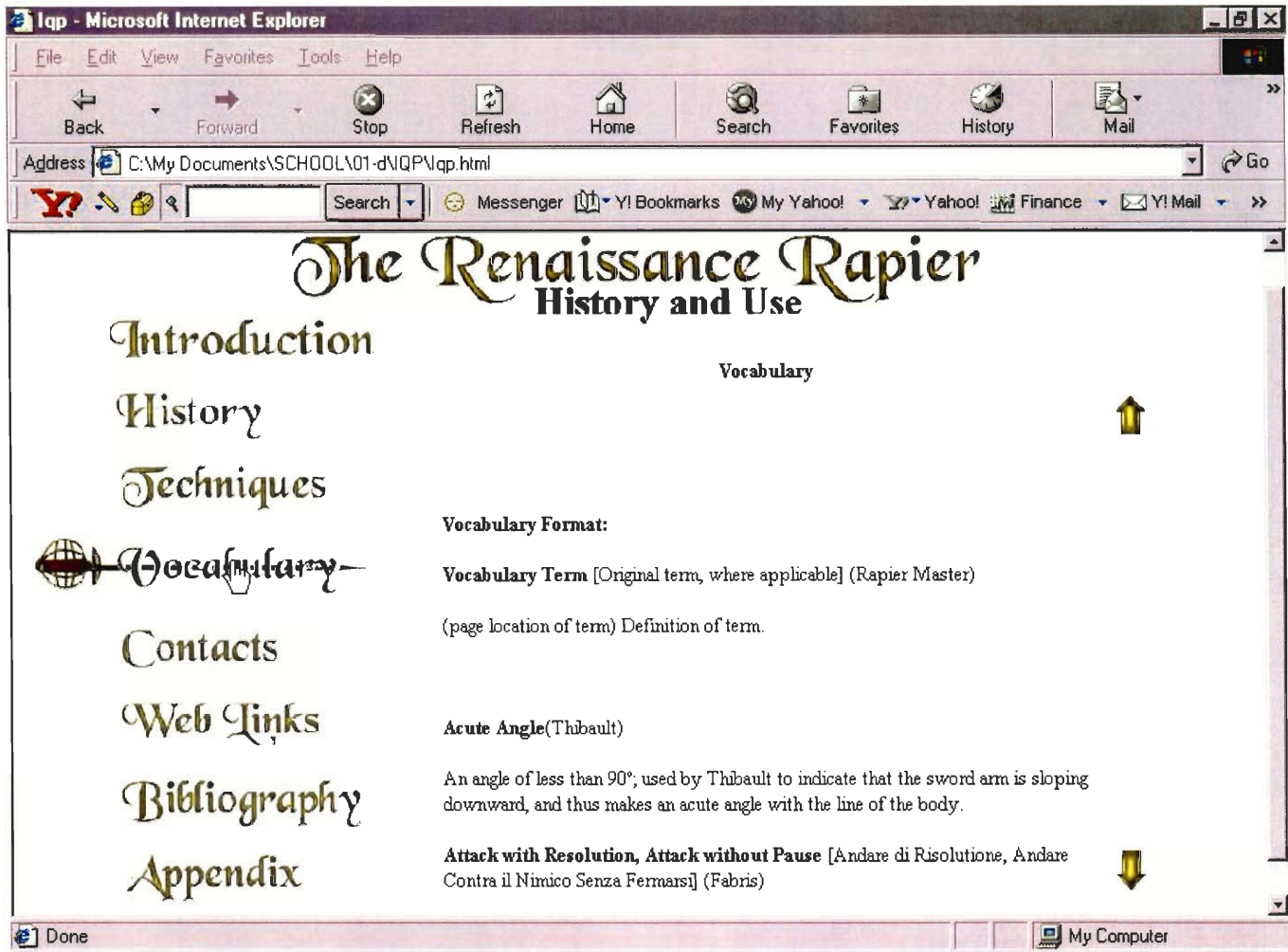
Once the viewer clicks on a master, a brief introduction to the master's manual will appear, along with a menu that allows the viewer to watch some of the master's rapier techniques. At the end of the brief introduction, the user can click on a link to bring up a new window containing the full analysis of the master's manual.



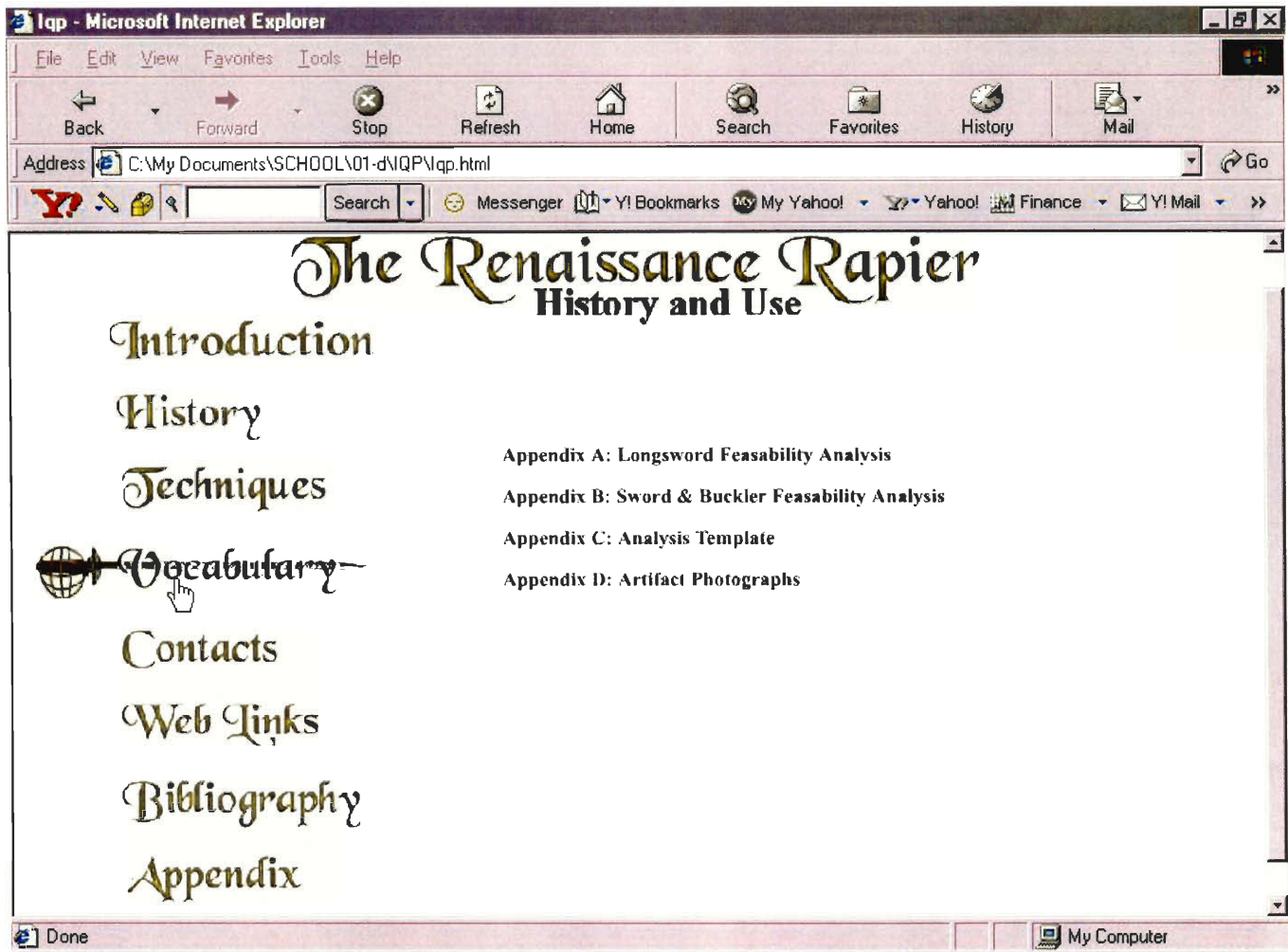
This is an instance of one of the possible animations. Once the viewer decides on the animation and its quality, a separate windows pops up and plays the animation.

the animations are available in different movie formats, which accommodates

the viewer's Internet connection speed.



This shot is an example of some of the information that the other buttons will bring up when they are clicked on. In this case, the vocabulary button has been selected, and the vocabulary list for the masters appears.



Here is the appendix section of the page. The viewer can click on any of the appendices, and a new window will pop up displaying the information on the selected appendix.