

*F*IGHTING  
WORDS



# FIGHTING WORDS

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# Fighting Words

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Essays by David Blixt, Jared Kirby, and Mike Leoni.  
Glossary based on *THE FIGHTMASTER'S COMPANION*  
by Dale Girard

Cover by David Blixt

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*For The HNS Writers*

“The pen is mightier than the sword if the sword is very short, and the pen is very sharp.”

Terry Pratchett



# INTRODUCTION

*By David Blixt*

For writers of fiction set in any era, you may not know you're writing about swordplay, but trust me, you are.

From antiquity to the late 19th Century, swordplay was at the center of the world. I don't mean just duels and warfare. I mean customs and society. The way a man bowed. Why we shake hands in greeting. The reason men's and women's shirts button differently, even to this day – all of this came from swordplay.

Dance is especially important in the history of swordplay. Or rather, swordplay is vital to understanding the history of dance. In a dangerous world, a man had to always remain in practice. So the dance of any given period reflects the fighting style of that period. In the time of longswords, with big sweeping steps and long arcs, the dance is the reel. In rapier-and-dagger fighting of the Tudor era, dance partners held up both hands and switched from one to the other, just as in a rapier duel. The delicate footwork and correct posture for smallsword fighting is exactly mirrored in the 18th century waltz.

The dance of a period comes out of the fighting style of a period. In fact, it is not until we introduce repeating guns that this trend ends (it is also the end of couples-dancing – ever since we started using automatic weapons, men and women have ceased to dance together).

This is what I mean when I say you're writing about swordplay. A woman walking on a man's left in public was to keep his sword-arm free. The length of the sword in Elizabeth's court was a strict 33-inches, because men kept wearing longer and longer swords (overcompensating?) and were constantly whacking each other when they turned.

And language! So many phrases we use today stem from violence. *Cloak and dagger. Let the cat out of the bag. Lock, stock, and barrel. Half-cocked. Flash in the pan. Fly off the handle.* Even the insult ‘gauche’ refers to left-handed men, deemed to be devilish for their unnatural way of fighting.

Because fighting was so much at the heart of society, it branched into every aspect of life. Learning the basic elements of swordsmanship is unbelievably helpful to the historical author – if only to let you know how easy it is to trip over your sword when walking up a flight of stairs. Such details are the lifeblood of our art, and are so often overlooked.

The Historical Novel Society offered me a wonderful chance to present some of this knowledge in Denver in 2015, exploring several different eras of swordfighting. For part of the time, we picked up swords and learned the basics, just as in the old fight schools and academies. For the rest of the time, I ran through a history of swordplay in Europe, from the ancient Greeks through the Napoleonic era. I talked about the evolution from cutting to thrusting, observed how the Romans were far ahead of their time, and shared stories and advice on how to write violence. Like every other element of our stories, it comes from character, and research.

This volume started as a companion to that event, and grew into something far greater. Thanks to Jared Kirby, Tom Leoni, and especially Dale Girard, I was able to compile a compendium of knowledge for historically-minded writers of every stripe. One that we are now able to share with you.

Have at, and enjoy.

# THE RULES OF VIOLENCE

*By David Blixt*

There's been a great deal of talk about violence in media (meaning film and video-games), painting all fictional violence with a damning brush. It's an important conversation, and one I'd like to have. But I'm not for toning down the violence in film. I'm for making it *better*. By which I mean, making it matter.

The trouble is not the violence. The trouble is violence without consequence.

There are many talented writers out there, writing brilliant stories. But a lot of what I see in the Action-Adventure movie world has no weight, because violence has no cost. A guy fires off a million rounds of ammo, mowing down faceless badguys. It can be visually awesome, and it's fun to watch, and you forget it ten minutes later. It has no weight.

For me, all violence should tell a story. That story should never be easy, never be comfortable. It can be enjoyable, sure. Even better, it can be inspiring, heart-pounding, and cathartic.

As my fiction writing proves, I'm a fan of Shakespeare. And Shakespeare learned the rules of his craft from Aristotle, including the importance of catharsis, the cleansing that happens through a shared trial. As an audience, we share the hero's trial. The greater the trial, the deeper the catharsis. That's the theory.

Unlike Aristotle, Shakespeare never wrote down rules, or at least he didn't pass them along to us. But reading his plays, there are some very definite rules at work:

- Instigate an act of violence, and you will receive a violent end
- There is no justification for murder. Ever.
- Justice is for the authority of King, Prince, or God, not the average man

None of this is to say that Shakespeare doesn't have his characters flout these rules. Nor do these rules apply to warfare, where armies meet. But he

is absolute in his rules for personal violence. If you commit violence, or if you take the law into your own hands, you are sowing the seeds for your own destruction.

A few examples:

- Romeo attacks Tybalt for murdering his friend, Mercutio. Though in our eyes he's justified, he is taking the law into his own hands. And by killing Tybalt, he is dooming himself and Juliet.

- Titus Andronicus, whose sons have been murdered and his daughter raped, kills the rapists and cooks them into meat dishes to serve to their mother. Revenge is achieved, and perhaps some form of justice, but he is again placing himself in the place of authority, and dies. Unlike Romeo, he accepts this as the cost of his revenge.

- Laertes agrees to kill Hamlet in revenge for the Danish Prince murdering his father Polonius behind the arras. Laertes, of course, is cut with the same poisoned blade he used to cut Hamlet, a lovely ironic touch, mirroring the old phrase 'when setting out for revenge, first dig two graves.'

- Brutus, the best example of all. He tries to save Rome from monarchy by killing his friend and mentor Caesar. He is clearly portrayed as a good and honorable man doing a terrible deed for the best of reasons. But motives cannot change the fact that it is still a terrible deed, and he pays the ultimate price for it.

Then there are those who are not even trying to justify their violent deeds – Macbeth, Iago, Richard – who commit acts of violence to satisfy their ambitions, their jealousies, and their rage at life. None of them live. In Shakespeare, the instigators of violence are always, always, consumed by violence.

In short, there is never violence without consequence. And that's what's missing today - the cost.

Making violence have meaning was much easier to achieve in a world where any gun held only one shot and most of the violence was performed with sword or dagger. In the words of Frank Miller's Batman, 'We kill too often because we've made it easy... too easy... sparing ourselves the mess and the work.' If you're going to kill someone with a sword or knife, there's a certain

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commitment to the deed, as it will take work. What a good story-teller can do is make taking a life require an effort, re-create that commitment, and never make it casual or easy.

Here's a modern example of violence with consequence – DIE HARD. Not the second, fourth, or fifth installments of the series, but definitely the original, and to some extent the third.

Most everyone agrees that the original DIE HARD is, if not the pinnacle of the Action genre, certainly a touchstone and model to be emulated. But what producers and writers mistakenly focus on is the set-up – one man against twelve villains in a high rise – and not what makes the film so compelling, which is the humanity of John McLane.

In DIE HARD, surviving hurts. The violence is messy, and has unintended consequences. John is so battered by the end that his wife doesn't recognize him. He's been shot, beaten, and had to run (or hop) across broken glass. Of course, this is Hollywood, so they didn't go the extra mile of NOTHING LASTS FOREVER, the book upon which the film is based, and have Holly go out the window with Hans, killed by that damned wrist-watch, the symbol of her success. But at the end there is a real catharsis. John suffered to do what was hard, what was right.

That he did so with grim humor makes him more heroic. His were not James Bond-like coy tag-lines after an enemy's death. McLane's humor was bravado, a way to keep up a brave face against the enemy. But we also see his guard down, in that great monologue where he asks the cop outside to apologize to his wife for him. Also in that moment of pure honesty. "Please, God, don't let me die."

Speaking of Bond, there is a reason I enjoyed CASINO ROYALE more than any other Bond film in years, perhaps ever. I am a huge Bond fan, but have cared less and less for the films over time. I'll still watch the original trio of Connery's films, OHMSS, THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS and maybe GOLD-EYE. But CASINO ROYALE was a return to the Bond of Ian Fleming, the Bond of the books, the damaged, cynical man who kills for his government and who doesn't get the girl. Twice in the books Bond fell truly in love. Both times, the woman he loved died – once by her own hand, once murdered. While the fantasy of Roger Moore's Bond was childish fun to

watch, those films have no weight. They don't matter the way that CASINO ROYALE and SKYFALL do. Because violence has consequences.

In contrast, there's the movie TAKEN. I enjoyed it, and I remember how much of a badass Liam Neeson's character was. But I don't remember his name, or much of anything but the fighting. I remember his daughter being dragged out from under the bed. That was the only human moment in that film.

The trouble with films like TAKEN or the DIE HARD knock-offs, which try to replicate the original's formula, is the indestructibility of the hero. Because the explosions have to be bigger, the violence bigger, there's less and less room for humanity. And it's humanity, not the lack of it, that makes an Action film great. Jason Bourne's search for his identity; Aragorn's reluctance to lead juxtaposed against his natural ability; Tony Stark's growth from naïve weapon-maker to arrogant protector; and of course, the greatest of all Action heroes, Indiana Jones. Remember that scene in Raiders where – well, remember all the scenes in Raiders, because it's a perfect film. But there's no point at which the violence is easy. It can be funny and still be desperate and thrilling. The giant ball at the beginning is hilarious and very scary at the same time, while the great scene on the ship with the 'years/mileage' line is a perfect example of simple humanity and the cost of these adventures.

No, we're not in the age of Shakespeare, and we don't need or want all our heroes to die if they commit an act of violence. But we do need them to be mortal, and we need their deeds to have weight.

So, to my fellow writers, I have this simple suggestion. If you write a scene of violence, don't make it bigger. Make it matter. Don't make it easy, make it hard. Look to character and motivation to root the violence in the people committing it, both for villains and heroes. Because villains are rarely villains in their own mind. Make everyone the hero of their story, make the violence matter as much to them as it should, and make it as surprising and upsetting as it is in life.

# QUICK THOUGHTS ON VIOLENCE IN STORYTELLING

*By David Blixt*

Violence is a story of desire, and denial - "I want something from you." "No, you can't have it."

Write a sex scene like a fight scene, and write a fight scene like a sex scene.

Violence is all about character.

The best attacks are linear. The best defenses are circular.

Violence should have a cost.

Fighters like to vocalize during a fight. It helps them remember to breathe.

More fights have been decided by accident than by skill.

Fighting is often like playing cards - it's dangerous to chase a bad hand, and bluff is half the game.

*“There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that of the women.”*

*Muhammad Ali Jinnah*

# PRIMARY SOURCES

Below is a list of primary sources for combat, mostly in the form of “Fight-Books”, tomes illustrated with plates of the various moves.

## PRE-1300

Viking Saga Excerpts  
Saxo the Dane (c. Early 13th Century)  
MS I.33 (c. 1295)

## 1300-1399

Manesse et al. - DIE MANESSESCHEN LIEDERHANDSCHRIFT (c. 1300-1315)  
Hanko Döbringer's Fechtbuch on the Teachings of Johannes Liechtenauer (c. 1389)

## 1400-1499

LE JEU DE LA HACHE (c. 1400)  
Fiore Dei Liberi - FLOS DUELLATORUM IN ARMIS (c. 1410)  
MS 3542 - Harleian Manuscript or “THE MAN WHO WOL” (c. 1430s)  
GLADIATORIA (c. 1430)  
Sigmund Ringeck - DIE RITTERLICH KUNST DES LANGEN SCHWERTS (c. 1440)  
Peter von Danzig Manuscript (c. 1452)  
Paulus Kal Fechtbuch (c. 1458-1467)  
Talhoffer's Fechtbuch (1459)  
Talhoffer's Fechtbuch (1467)  
CODEX WALLERSTEIN (c. 1470)  
Paulus Kal - KUNST DES FECHTENS (c. 1479)  
Fillipo Vadi - LIBER DE ARTE GLADITORIA DIMICANDI (c. 1482-1487)  
Hans Lecküchner - KUNST DES MESSERFECHTENS (c. 1482)  
Hans von Speyer - HANDSCHRIFT M I 29 (1491)  
Mertein Hündsfelder - FECHTLEHRE MIT DEM KURZEN SCHWERT (c. 1491)  
Hugues Wittenwiller (c. 1493)  
Hans Wurm (c. 1490s)

## 1500-1599

Anon Lib.pict A.83 (c. 1500)  
Marx Walther - TURNIERBUCH UND FAMILIENCHRONIK (c. 1506)  
Das Solothurner Fechtbuch (c. 1506-1514)  
DAS IST AIN HYBSH RING BYECHLIN (c. 1509)  
Albrecht Duerer's Fechtbuch (c. 1512)  
GOLIATH (c. 1510-1520)  
KUNST DES RINGEN (c. 1510)

- Jörg Wilhalm (c. 1522)  
 Jörg Wilhalm (c. 1523)  
 Ludwig von Eyb - Turnierbuch (1525)  
 Han Lechencher - DER ALTENN FECHTER ANFENGLICHE KUNST (c. 1531)  
 Christian Egenolph's Fechtbuch (c. 1531)  
 Antonio Mancilino - SE OPERA NOVA, DOUE LI SONO TUTTI LI DOCUMENTI (c. 1531)  
 Additional Manuscript 39564 (c. 1535-1550)  
 Achille Marozzo - OPERA NOVA (c. 1536)  
 Hans Czynnner - UBER DIE FECHTKUNST UND DEN RINGKAMPF (1538)  
 Hans Burgkmair - TURNIERBUCH (1540)  
 Paulus Hector Mair - OPUS AMPLISSIMUM DE ARTE ATHLETICA (1542)  
 Gaspar Lamberger - DER ROMISCHEN KHAY UNND KU (1544)  
 Roger Ascham - The Schole of Shootinge (1545)  
 Paulus Hector Mair - Geschlechterbuch der Stadt Augsburg (1550)  
 Martin Van Heemskerck - Fechter und Ringer (1550)  
 Camillo Agrippa - TRATTATO DI SCIENTIA D'ARME, CON VN DIALOGO DI FILOSOFIA (1553)  
 Hans Lebkammer - FECHTBUCH DIE RITTERLICHE (1558)  
 Achille Marozzo - ARTE DELL'ARMI (c. 1568)  
 Jeronimo de Caranza - DE LA FILOSOFIA DE LAS ARMAS (1569)  
 Joachim Meyer - KUNST DES FECHTENS (1570)  
 Giacomo Di Grassi - HIS TRUE ARTE OF DEFENCE (Italian edition) (1570)  
 Giovanni dall'Agocchie - DELL'ARTE DI SCRIMIA (1572)  
 Henri de Saint-Didier - TRACTÉ CONTENANT LES SECRETS DU PREMIER LIVRE (1573)  
 Henrici a Gunterrodt - DE VERIS PRINCIPIIS ARTIS DIMICATORIAE (c. 1579)  
 Frederico Ghisliero - REGOLE DO MOLTI CAVAGLIERESCHI ESSERCITI (c. 1587)  
 Christoff Rösener - EHREN TITTEL VND LOBSPRUCH DER RITTERLICHEN (1589)  
 Codex Guelf 83.4.Aug.8° (1591)  
 Giacomo di Grassi - HIS TRUE ARTE OF DEFENSE (1594)  
 Vincentio Saviolo - HIS PRACTICE IN TWO BOOKS (1595)  
 George Silver - PARADOXES OF DEFENCE (c. 1599)

### **1600-1699**

- Luis Pacheco de Narvaez - LIBERO DE LAS GRANDEZAS DE LA ESPADA (1600)  
 Anonymous Spanish Rapier Work (c. early 17th century)  
 Salvatore Fabris - SIENZ E PRACTICA D ARME (1606)  
 Nicoletto Giganti - SCOLA OVERO TEATRO (1606)  
 Torquato d'Alessandri - IL CAVALIER COMPITO: DIALOGO (c.1609)  
 Ridolfo Capo Ferro da Cagli - GRAN SIMULACRO DELL'ARTE E DELL'USO DELLA SCHERMA (1610)  
 Jakob Sutor - NEU KÜNSTLICHES FECHTBUCH (1612)  
 Antonio Quintino - DISCORSO or "JEWELS OF WISDOM" (1614)

- George Hale - THE PRIVATE SCHOOLE OF DEFENCE (1614)  
Hieronyme Calvacabo - TRAITE OU INSTRUCTION POUR TIRER DES ARMES (1617)  
Joseph Swetnam - SCHOOLE OF THE NOBLE AND WORTHY SCIENCE OF DEFENCE (1617)  
Salvatore Fabris - DELLA VERA PRACTICA & SCIENZA D'ARMI LIBRI (1624)  
Girard Thibault d'Anvers - ACADEMIE DE L'ESPEE or "ACADEMY OF THE SWORD" (1630)  
PALLAS ARMATA: THE GENTLEMAN'S ARMOURY (1639)  
Francesco Alfieri - L'ARTE DI BEN MANEGGIARRE LA SPADA (1653)  
Charles Besnard - LE MAISTRE D'ARME LIBERAL (1653)  
Johann Georg Passchen - VOLLSTANDIGES RING-BUCH (1659)  
John Dryden - The Conquest of Granada by the Spartans (1670-1672)  
Johannes Georges Bruchius - "OF THE SINGLE RAPIER" (1671)  
Nicolaes Petter - KLARE ONDERRICHTINGE DER VOORTREFFELIJKE WORSTEL-KONST (1674)  
Alvaro Guerra de la Vega - COMPREHENSION OF DESTREZA (1681)  
Sir William Hope - THE SCOTS FENCING MASTER (THE COMPLETE SMALLSWORDSMAN) (1687)  
Sir William Hope - ADVICE TO HIS SCHOLAR FROM THE FENCING MASTER (1692)  
Sir William Hope - COMPLEAT FENCING-MASTER (1692)  
Sir William Hope - THE SWORDSMAN'S VADE-MECUM (1694)  
Diederich Porath - PALAESTRA SVECANA (1693)  
D. Nicolas Tamariz - CARTILLA Y LUZ EN LA VERDARERA DESTREZA (1696)

### 1700-1799

- Monsieur L'Abbat - THE ART OF FENCING, OR, THE USE OF THE SMALL SWORD (1734)  
Capt. John Godfrey - A TREATISE UPON THE USEFUL SCIENCE OF DEFENCE (1747)  
Henry Angelo - HUNGARIAN & HIGHLAND BROAD SWORD (1798)

### 1800-1899

- Joseph Strutt - THE SPORTS AND PASTIMES OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND (1801)  
Col. Thomas Stephens - BROAD AND SMALL SWORD EXERCISES (1843)  
Capt. M. W. Berriman - THE MILITIAMAN'S MANUAL AND SWORD-PLAY WITHOUT A MASTER (1861)  
Richard F. Burton - A NEW SYSTEM OF SWORD EXERCISE FOR INFANTRY (1876)  
Olivier de la Marche - TRACTÉ DE LA FORME ET DEVIS COMME ON FAICT LES TOURNOIS (1878)  
Major Ben C. Truman - THE FIELD OF HONOR (1884)  
Alfred Hutton - COLD STEEL (1889)  
Alfred Hutton - OLD SWORD-PLAY (1892)  
Jolef Schmied-Kowarzik & Hans Kufahl - FECHTBUCHLEIN (1894)  
John Starkie Gardner - FOREIGN ARMOUR IN ENGLAND (1898)

*“Never give a sword to a man who can’t dance.”*

*Confucius*

## THE FIGHT MASTERS

Below are some of the Medieval and Renaissance Fight Masters. While not exhaustive, this list provides an introduction to the people who shaped fighting in Europe from about 1300 to 1900. They are listed in alphabetical order, but you refer to the Primary Sources, you can construct a timeline.

**DALL'AGOCCHIE, GIOVANNI:** This individual was from Bologna and was the fencing master of Fabio Pepoli, Count of Castiglione. The importance of this Master is in the fact that he explained the guards and blows of Marozzo. His work is dated 1572.

**AGRIPPA, CAMILLO:** (died 1595?) A famous 16th century Milanese gentleman, renowned as the author of the first treatise to introduce a desirable reduction in the vast number of fencing guards advocated by the masters of his day. Though born in Milan, Agrippa lived and worked in Rome, where he was associated with the Confraternity of St. Joseph of the Holy Land and the literary and artistic circle around Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. He is most renowned for applying geometric theory to solve problems in armed combat. In his *Treatise on the Science of Arms with Philosophical Dialogue* (published in 1553), he proposed dramatic changes in the way swordsmanship was practiced at the time. He also simplified Achille Marozzo's eleven guards down to four: prima, seconda, terza and quarta, which roughly correspond to the hand positions used today in the Italian school. He is also regarded as the man who most contributed to the development of the rapier as a primarily thrusting weapon. An architect, mathematician, and engineer, he was not primarily a Master of Fence, nor was this his livelihood. Thus he brings a very pragmatic and mathematical viewpoint to fencing that is very different from some others of his time. A contemporary of Michelangelo, the two were probably acquainted (or so Agrippa claims in his later treatise on transporting the obelisk to the Piazza San Pietro).

**ANGELO, DOMENICO:** (1717-1802) Born Domenico Angelo Malevolti Tremamondo in Leghorn, Italy, Domenico studied fencing in France. Soon after arriving in England

he established Angelo's School of Arms in Carlisle House, Soho, London. There he taught the aristocracy the fashionable art of Swordsmanship which they had previously had to go the continent to learn, and also set up a riding school in the former rear garden of the house. He was fencing instructor to the Royal Family. With the help of artist Gwyn Delin, penned the chief work in English literature concerning the use and practice of the small sword. His *School of Fencing* (1763), considered the foremost text on small sword play, contains some of the best plates on the topic and is quite straight forward in its presentation and techniques. He then handed his school over to a son and established himself at Eton, where his family continued to teach fencing for three more generations.

**BESNARD, CHARLES:** A renowned seventeenth century French teacher and master of the "Academie Royale d'Arms," best known for his introduction of the "reverence," the practice of formally saluting one's opponent before a bout. Published in 1653, he is alleged to have coined the word *fleuret*, the French word for foil. His book did so much to advance the Art of Fencing in France that it was considered by the French and English to take first place as a school for the science, a position formerly held by Italy.

**BONETTI, JERONIMO:** Not much is known of this master. He was the son of Rocco Bonetti and was killed by an Englishman named Cheese. He succeeded his father as the master of the fencing school at Blackfriars prior to it being rented to Shakespeare.

**BONETTI, ROCCO:** Master of a school of fence at Blackfriars in London during the late 1500's. At one time a Captain in the service of Venice, he came to England in 1569. There is some evidence that he was involved in low level espionage, carrying messages at some point during his stay in England. He set up a school in London in 1576, and his patrons included Sir Walter Raleigh and one of the Queen's best swordsmen, Lord Peregrin Willoughby, both men of high stature. His success was not well received by the English Masters, including George Silver. Bonetti was critically injured by Austen Bagger, an Englishman, outside of the school in 1587.

**CARRANZA, HIERONIMO DE:** (d. 1600) Deemed the father of the *Verdadera Destreza*, the Spanish science of fence, a fantastical style basing its principals on seemingly irrelevant mathematical principles (1569). It used angles, arcs and related tangents, a knowledge of geometry and natural philosophy. It was claimed that a comprehensive knowledge of his principles must infallibly lead to victory. In 1577, he published a text on the laws of injury and the proper and honorable ways to deal with insults. Carranza is also connected with the literary and artistic School of Seville.

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**CAPO FERRO, RIDOLFO:** The great sixteenth century Italian master. He appears to have hailed from Cagli in the Province of Pesaro e Urbino, but was active as a fencing master in nearby Siena, Tuscany. With the development of the *bota lunga* (“elongated blow” or the lunge), he changed the manner of fencing from the round, circling style of his predecessors to that of the direct linear style now mandated in competitive fencing. Although he wrote his theories and system of fencing in 1610, improvements were hardly made upon them by anyone until early in the eighteenth century. Capo Ferro’s works are the pinnacle of Italian theory.

**DARDI, FILIPPO DI BARTOLOMEO:** (died 1464) was a 15th century Italian fencing master. He was an expert not only on fencing, but also astrology, astronomy, geometry, and mathematics. In 1412, he was licensed as a fencing master and opened a school in Bologna (in via Pietralata). In 1434, he wrote a treatise on fencing and geometry, and was subsequently given a professorship in geometry at the University of Bologna. Though Dardi’s treatise has since been lost, he influenced a great number of prominent 15th century masters, including Antonio Manciolino, Achilles Marozzo, Angelo Viggiani, and Giovanni dall’Agocchie. Dardi is often credited as the founder of the Bolognese school of swordsmanship, though there is evidence that he was preceded by earlier masters in the late 14th century.

**ENGLISH MASTERS OF DEFENCE:** A guild of professional swordsmen established in 1540, under a patent granted by Henry VIII. Members were trained and tested in many different weapons, advancing through the ranks of *Scholar*, *Free Scholar*, and *Provost* before being tested for the degree of *Master*.

**FABRIS, SALVATOR:** (1544-1618) A celebrated Italian master of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries whose work dealt entirely with the practical application of swordsmanship in the fencing school, the duel, and the brawl. Born in or around Padua, his youth coincided with the flowering of the Italian school of swordsmanship, with early Italian masters like Achille Marozzo, Angelo Viggiani and Giacomo di Grassi still teaching. He worked as a fencing master in Italy as well as in Northern Europe. After employment with an Archbishop, Salvator entered the service of the king of Denmark, Christian IV from 1601 to 1606. It was the King himself who sponsored the publication of the treatise, putting his court painter, Jan Halbeek, as well as others like Valeggio (whose signature also appears in the book’s plates) at Fabris’ disposal to refine the drawings of the book’s handwritten edition. Fabris left the King’s employment in 1606, and after traveling across Europe, returned to Italy to teach at the University of Padua. His renown at its peak, young noblemen from all over Europe came to Padua to be taught by him. He died at the age of 74 after fighting against malignant fever. On his deathbed, he bestowed his *salle* to senior student Herman, a German, who was later assassinated

by a jealous colleague by the name of Heinrich. The chief significance of Fabris' treatise (1606) was the introduction and definition of the *contra postura*, as well as the definition and clarification of many previously half defined principles of fence, time, distance, circular parries and their deceptions, the disengagement, feints and opposition.

**GIGANTI, NICOLOETTO:** (Niccoletto, Nicolat; 1550s–after 1622) was a 16th–17th century Italian soldier and fencing master. He was likely born to a noble family in Fossombrone in central Italy, and later became a citizen of Venice. Little is known of Giganti's life, but in the dedication to his 1606 treatise he counts twenty seven years of professional experience (possibly referring to service in the Venetian military, a long tradition of the Giganti family). The preface to his 1608 treatise describes him as a *Mastro d'Arme* of the Order of St. Stephen in Pisa, giving some further clues to his career. In 1606, Giganti published a popular treatise on the use of the rapier (both single and with the dagger) titled *Scola, Overo Teatro* ("School or Fencing Hall"). This treatise is structured as a series of progressively more complex lessons, and is also the first treatise to fully articulate the principle of the *stoccata lunga* ("elongated thrust" or the lunge). In 1608, Giganti made good the promise in his first book that he would publish a second volume. Titled *Libro secondo di Niccoletto Giganti Venetiano*, it covers the same weapons as the first as well as rapier and buckler, rapier and cloak, rapier and shield, single dagger, and mixed weapon encounters. This text in turn promises two additional works, on the dagger and on cutting with the rapier, but there is no record of these books ever being published.

**GRASSI, GIACOMO DI:** One of the three premiere Elizabethan masters. A celebrated Italian master of the sixteenth century whose treatise obtained a great reputation for its clarity and simplicity (1570). Possibly his chief contribution to the science of fence was the consideration and definition of lines of attack, which became indispensable parts of later fencing treatises, modern fencing and stage combat terminology. He also favored a freer employment of the point against the older theories of swordplay. Grassi's work has been recognized as one of the systems most commonly followed in Europe during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

**HUNDFELD, MARTIN:** (also Huntzfeld, possibly from Hundsfeld, a village some 20 km east of Würzburg; d. before 1452) An early 15th-century German fencing master. His teaching is recorded by Peter von Danzig in Cod. 44 A 8 and by Hans von Speyer in M I 29. Hundfeld is numbered among the "society of Liechtenauer" by Paulus Kal.

**KAL, PAULUS:** was a 15th-century German fencing master. He wrote that he studied martial arts under Hans Stettner von Mörsheim, and was an initiate of the tradition of Johannes Liechtenauer. He was also attached as *Schirrmeister* to three different courts in his career, serving in various military capacities including commanding men in at least

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three campaigns. Perhaps his most significant legacy is an honor roll of deceased masters included in the Bologna and Munich versions of his treatise, which he styled the Society of Liechtenauer (*Gesellschaft Liechtenauers*). While several of these masters remain unknown, the majority wrote treatises of their own and Kal's list stands as an independent confirmation of their connection to the grand master. Kal's treatise is also interesting in that it represents the first attempt to illustrate parts of Liechtenauer's Record.

**LIBERI, FIORE DEI:** (*Fiore dei Liberi*, *Fiore Furlano*, *Fiore de Cividale d'Austria*; born c. 1350; died c. 1420s) was a late 14th century knight, diplomat, and itinerant fencing master. He was born in Cividale del Friuli, the son of Benedetto and scion of a Liberi house of Premariacco. He is the earliest Italian master from whom we have an extant martial arts manual. His *Flower of Battle* (*Fior di Battaglia*, *Flos Duellatorum*) is among the oldest surviving fencing manuals. Fiore wrote that he had a natural inclination to the martial arts and began training at a young age, ultimately studying with "countless" masters from both Italic and Germanic lands. Unfortunately, not all of these encounters were friendly: Fiore wrote of meeting many "false" or unworthy masters in his travels, most of whom lacked even the limited skill he'd expect in a good student. He further mentions that on five separate occasions he was forced to fight duels for his honor against certain of these masters who he described as envious because he refused to teach them his art; the duels were all fought with sharp swords, unarmored except for gambesons and chamois gloves, and he won each without injury. Based on Fiore's autobiographical account, he can tentatively be placed in Perosa (Perugia) in 1381 when Piero del Verde likely fought a duel with Pietro della Corona. That same year, the Aquileian War of Succession erupted and Fiore seems to have sided with the secular nobility against the Cardinal as in 1383 there is record of him being tasked by the grand council with inspection and maintenance on the artillery pieces defending Udine (including large crossbows and catapults). There are also records of him working variously as a magistrate, peace officer, and agent of the grand council during the course of 1384. After the war, Fiore seems to have traveled a good deal in northern Italy, teaching fencing and training men for duels. In 1395, he can be placed in Padua training the mercenary captain Galeazzo Gonzaga of Mantua for a duel with the French marshal Jean II le Maingre (who went by the war name "Boucicaut"). Fiore surfaces again in Pavia in 1399, this time training Giovannino da Baggio for a duel with a German squire named Sirano. Fiore was likely involved in at least one other duel that year, that of his final student Azzone di Castelbarco and Giovanni degli Ordellaifi, as the latter is known to have died in 1399. Sometime in the first years of the 1400s, Fiore composed a fencing treatise in Italian and Latin called *The Flower of Battle* (rendered variously as *Fior di Battaglia*, *Florius de Arte Luctandi*, and *Flos Duellatorum*). He kept expanding and revising this work, so several versions exist. The time and place of Fiore's death remain unknown.

**LEBKOMMER, HANS:** This German master wrote the earliest known extant book of fence sometime during 1529 to 1536. The title of his book is “Der Altenn Fechter an fengliche Kunst.”

**LIECHTENAUER, JOHANNES:** was a 14th-century German fencing master. No direct record of his life or teachings currently exists, and all that we know of both comes from the writings of other masters and scholars.

**LOVINO, GIOVANNI ANTONIO:** This individual wrote a treatise in Milan some time during the 16th C. In particular it appears that he wrote and possibly dedicated his work to Henry III of France. Lovino was a Milanese.

**MANCIOLINI, ANTONIO:** Bolognese. He published his book “Opera Nova” in 1531. Like Marozzo, he covered many aspects of swordplay. Unlike marozzo he did not deal as much with the concept of honor and the duel. manciolino said that honour, law, reasons for the duel, etc. are a matter for the philosopher or the student of law, not the fencer.

**MARCELLI, FRANCESCO ANTONIO:** This Italian master taught in the mid to late 17th century. He teaches in a baroque rapier style with more parries that utilize dui tempi (two tempos).

**MAROZZO, ACHILLE:** A Bolognese fencing master who presented the first sound treatise on handling the sword in personal combat (1536). The book was one of the first of its kind, and although he mentions little about the use of the point, his illustrations show that the sword was used for both cut and thrust. His treatise represents the development of double fence and the general practice of swordplay in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Marozzo’s study included single dagger, single sword, sword and buckler, case of swords, sword and cloak, sword and dagger, and other combinations. Like most early masters he also covered polearms. Marozzo included a whole chapter on dedicated to honor.

**MCBANE, DONALD:** A late seventeenth, and early eighteenth, century soldier and fencing master, author of *The Expert Swordsman’s Companion*, 1728.

**NARVAEZ, DON LUIS PACHECO DE:** A student of Carranza who became the master of the Spanish school in the later part of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. He offered his own reproduction of Carranza’s work, where he verbosely expounded the dignified, but unrealistic principles of the Spanish school, basing his system on the imaginary circle.

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**PALLADINI, ACAMILLO:** This master is a contemporary of of 16th C. Italian Masters such as Di Grassi and Saviolo. His work (*Discorso sopra l'Arte della Scherma*) is relatively unknown and unlike the works of Agrippa and Vigianni is devoid of mathematical and philosophical discussions. the primary elements that are of note in Palladini's work is the extension of the arm and the lunge.

**PETER VON DANZIG:** was a 15th-century German fencing master. He was counted among the 16 members of the "Society of Johannes Liechtenauer".

**SANCT DIDIER, HENRI DE:** Born to a noble family in Pertuis in the Provence region of France, son of Luc de Saint Didier, Saint Didier made his career in the French army, ultimately serving 25 years and seeing action in Piedmont, Italy from 1554-1555. He wrote of himself that he "lived his whole life learning to fight with the single sword" and eventually "reached a point of perfection" in his art. He published his book *Traite Contenant les Secrets du Premier Livre sur l'Espee Seule* etc. in 1573. He is the first known French master that acknowledged the supremacy of Italian theory. He taught how to hold the left hand in single sword some two years before Vigianni. However, he only taught counter attacks; no true parries. His book details how to disarm an opponent by siezing their sword.

**SAVILOLO, VINCENTIO:** (born c. 1540-1550, d. before 1599) The sixteenth century Italian fencing master who introduced the art of rapier-play to the court of Queen Elizabeth. Born in Padua, he traveled wiahdely in his youth, ultimately learning both the Italian method of rapier fencing and possibly the Spanish system of *la Verdadera Destreza*. Saviolo arrived in England in 1590, and may have taken over the school of Rocco Bonetti. An eclectic, he taught a mixture of Italian and Spanish theory and practice. His book *His Practise, in Two Bookes* in 1595 was the first text on swordplay originally written in English. His system combined many of the newer practices of both the Italian and Spanish schools. He recognized the superiority of the point and taught the use of the thrust over the cut. Teaching in England for seven or eight years, he made quite an impression on the gentlemen of court. There are a number of anecdotes about Saviolo's activities in London, but as these are largely derived from the writings of his hostile critic George Silver, it's unclear how trustworthy they are.

**SWETNAM, JOSEPH:** (d. 1621) A Seventeenth century English fencing master and (self-described) tutor to the Prince of Whales. He was, by his own word, a Plymouth man who served in the army, primarily abroad. He noted that he studied mostly in London. And, he mentions that he had instruction from English, French and Italian masters. Although his treatise *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence* (1617) provides no new or innovative developments in the science of fence, it is the first book penned

by an Englishman dealing with rapier and dagger fence. He also emphasizes the use of “feigns” (feints). His practice goes back at least twenty years prior to his publication, and it is believed that the style of swordplay presented in his text is close to what may have been used by Shakespeare’s players and their contemporaries. Called “the woman-hater”, having authored the misogynistic pamphlet *The Arraignment of Women* in 1615. Died abroad in 1621.

**TALHOFFER, HANS:** (Dalhover, Talhouer, Thalhoffer, Talhofer; b. ca. ca. 1410–15, d. after 1470) was a 15th-century German fencing master. His martial lineage is unknown, but his writings make it clear that he had some connection to the tradition of Johannes Liechtenauer, the grand master of the Medieval German school of fencing. Talhoffer was a well educated man who took interest in astrology, mathematics, onomastics, and the *auctoritas* and the *ratio*. He authored at least five fencing manuals during the course of his career, and appears to have made his living teaching, including training people for trial by combat. In 1433, Talhoffer represented Johann II von Reisberg, archbishop of Salzburg, before the Vehmic court. Talhoffer remained in the service of the archbishop for at least a few more years, and in 1437 is mentioned as serving as a bursary officer (Kastner) in Hohenburg. The 1440s saw the launch of Talhoffer’s career as a professional fencing master. His first manuscript, the MS Chart.A.558, was a personal reference book created around 1443. The fencing manual portion is largely text-less and it may have been designed as a visual aid for use in teaching; in addition to these illustrations, it also contains an astrological treatise and a copy of Konrad Kyeser’s famous war book *Bellifortis*. Serving the Königsegg family of southern Germany, some time between 1446 and 1459 he produced the MS XIX.17-3 for them. This work depicts a judicial duel being fought by Luithold von Königsegg and the training that Talhoffer gave him in preparation, but it seems that this duel never actually took place. Talhoffer’s name next appears in the records of the city of Zürich in 1454, where he was chartered to teach fencing in some capacity and to adjudicate judicial duels. The account notes that a fight broke out among his students and had to be settled in front of the city council, resulting in various fines. He seems to have passed through Emerkingen later in the 1450s, where he was contracted to train the brothers David and Buppellin vom Stain. He produced a significantly expanded version of the Königsegg manuscript for them. In 1459, Talhoffer commissioned a new personal fencing manual along the same lines as his 1443 work, but expanded with additional content and captioned throughout. He appears to have continued instructing throughout the 1460s, and in 1467 he produced his final and most extensive manuscript, Codex Icon 394a, for another of his noble clients, Eberhardt I von Württemberg.

**THIBAUT, GIRARD:** (ca. 1574–1629) was a 17th century fencing master and author of the 1630 rapier manual *Academie de l’Espée*, one of the most detailed and elaborate sources ever written on fencing. Thibault was born in or around 1574 in Antwerp, son of Hen-

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drick Thibaut and Margaretha van Nispen. Hendrick Thibaut came from a well-known family in Ypres, living in Ghent and Antwerp before going into exile in the northern Netherlands (Henrick's eldest son, Christiaen, founded the noble family Thibaut van Aegtekerke). Thibault first studied swordsmanship in Antwerp under Lambert van Someron, who taught between the years of 1564 and 1584. In 1605, Thibault was a wool merchant in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, south of Seville on the Guadalquivir river, and the hometown of Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza. There, he took an interest in swordsmanship, studying the Spanish rapier system of Destreza. Thibault died in 1629, a year before his masterpiece was finally published (despite the date on the title page of 1628, it was not published until 1630).

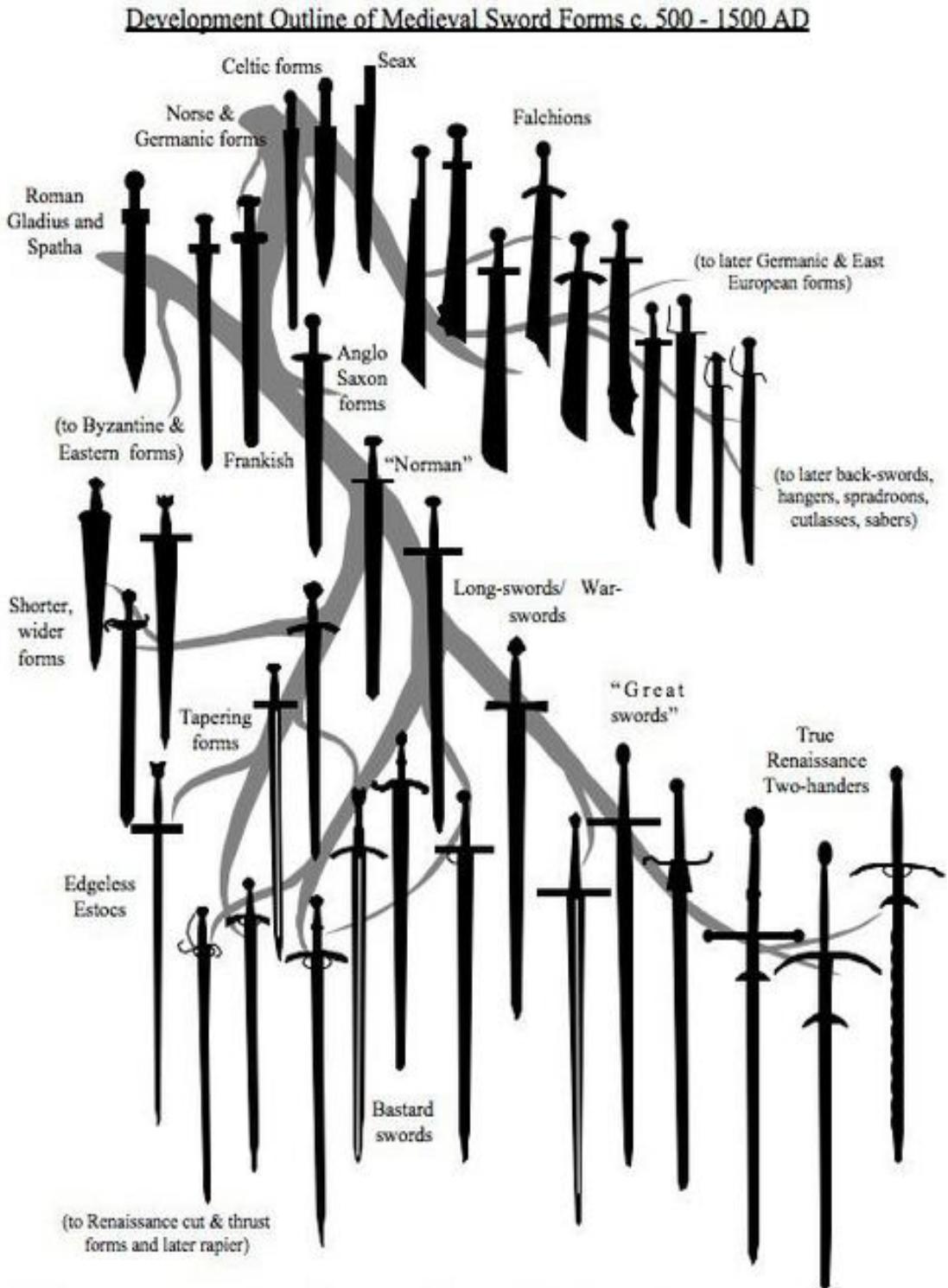
**VIGGIANI, ANGELO:** (Angelo Viziani, Angelus Viggiani; d. 1552) was a 16th century Italian fencing master. Little is known about this master's life, but he was born Bolognese by birth and seems to have been an initiate of the tradition of Filippo di Bartolomeo Dardi. He might also have been connected to the court of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. Viggiani first proclaimed the superiority of the thrust over the cut (1560). According to the preface, the Viggiani's dying wish to his brother Battista was that his treatise not be published for at least fifteen years. Thus, though it was completed in 1551, the first edition wasn't printed until 1575, when *Lo Schermo* was published, first in Venice, then the following year in Bologna (a presentation manuscript was completed in 1567 as a gift for Maximilian II, King of the Romans and later Holy Roman Emperor). Viggiani taught of the superiority of the thrust over the cut. His guard position led to further developments of using a single sword in combat by always coming on guard with the right foot forward. He is also the father of the lunge which he called the *punta sopra mano* (A "thrust over the hand" or the demi-lunge) which was an advancing of the right foot with the sword arm fully extended and the left arm lowered backward to provide a counter balance.



# THE SWORDS

*“Without a sign, his sword the brave man draws,  
and asks no omen, but his country’s cause.”*

*Homer*



An outline cannot completely show all the relationships among all sword types. Some elements cross over among different classes, such as length and hilts between tapering hexagonal or diamond blade shapes. This chart emphasizes blade function and not simply hilt design.

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## Medieval & Renaissance Sword Forms: An Evolution

Medieval swords existed in great varieties over a number of centuries. Both experimentation and specialization in design was constant. But certain common characteristics can describe the “generic” medieval sword as a long, wide, straight, double-edged blade with a simple cross-guard (or “cruciform” hilt). It might be designed for one or two-hands. The typical form was a single hand weapon used for hacking, shearing cuts and also for limited thrusting. This style developed essentially from Celtic, Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, and late Roman (the *spatha*) forms. The Viking and early Frankish forms (the “*spata*”) are also considered to be more direct ancestors. Medieval swords can be classified (typically by hilt design) into a great many categories by curators, collectors, and military historians. However, students & re-creationists today should prefer the actual historical terms. At the time, long bladed weapons were simply referred to as “swords”, or for the longer ones often a “sword of war”, “war-sword” (French *Espée du Guerre* or *Epee du Guerre*), or even a “long-sword”. Various languages might call them by *schwert*, *svard*, *suerd*, *swerd*, *espada*, *esapadon*, or *epee*. When later worn on the belt by mounted knights they might be called an Arming-sword. Arming-swords were also considered “riding-swords” (also *parva ensis* or *epee courte*). It is this single-hand form which is so closely associated with the idea of the “knightly sword” (c. 1300). The challenge of armor in the Age-of-plate, forced many blades (both single-hand and longer) to be made narrower and pointier, but also thicker and more rigid. From at least the late 1300’s in England, a single-hand blade of this form was referred as a “short swerde”. In 15th century Germany it was the *Kurczen swert*. At this same time, as a result of the increased use of thrusting techniques some blades adopted guards with knuckle-bars, finger-rings, and/or sides-rings which lead to the compound-hilt. In later Elizabethan times, older one-handed medieval type blades became known as “short-swords” while the larger variety were still referred to as “long-swords”. The term “short sword” was used later by 19th century collectors to refer to any style of “shorter” one-handed swords typically from ancient times on.

### MEDIEVAL SWORDS

#### The Broadsword

A term popularly misapplied as a generic synonym for medieval swords or any long, wide military blade. The now popular misnomer “broadsword” in reference to Medieval blades actually originated with collectors in the early 19th century -although many mis-translations and misinterpretations of Medieval literature during the 19th & 20th centuries have inserted the word broadsword in place of other terms. They described swords of earlier ages as being “broader” than their own contemporary thinner ones. Many 17th-19th century blades such as spadrons, cutlasses, and straight sabers are classed as

broadwords as are other closed hilt military swords. The weapon known as the true broadsword is in fact a form of short cutlass. The term “broadsword” does not appear in English military texts from the 1570s – 1630s and does not show up in inventories of sword types from the 1630’s, and likely came into use sometime between 1619 and 1630. Descriptions of swords as “broad” before this time are only incidental and the word “broad” is used as an adjective in the same way “sharp” or “large” would be applied. Leading arms curators almost always list the broadsword specifically as a close-hilted military sword from the second half of the 17th century. Those cage and basket hilted blades used by cavalry starting in the 1640’s were in form, “broadswords”. During this time a gentleman’s blade had become the slender small-sword, whereas the military used various cutting blades. Today, arms collectors, museum curators theatrical-fighters, and fantasy-gamers have made the word broadsword a common, albeit blatantly historically incorrect, term for the Medieval sword.

### Long-Swords

The various kinds of long bladed Medieval swords that had handles long enough to be used in two hands were deemed long-swords (German Langenschwert/ Langes Swert or Italian spada longa). Long-swords, war-swords, or great swords are characterized by having both a long grip and a long blade. We know at the time that Medieval warriors did distinguished war-swords or great-swords (“grant espees” or “grete swerdes”) from “standard” swords in general, but long-swords were really just those larger versions of typical one-handed swords, except with stouter blades. They were “longer swords”, as opposed to single-hand swords, or just “swords”. They could be used on foot or mounted and sometimes even with a shield. The term war-sword from the 1300’s referred to larger swords that were carried in battle. They were usually kept on the saddle as opposed to worn on the belt. A 15th century Burgundian manual refers to both “great and small swords”. As a convenient classification, long-swords include great-swords, bastard-swords, and estocs. In the 1200’s in England blunt swords for non-lethal tournaments were sometimes known as “arms of courtesy”. There is a reference to an English tournament of 1507 in which among the events contestants are challenged to “8 strookes with Swords rebated”. Wooden training weapons were sometimes called wasters in the 1200’s or batons in the 1300’s and 1400’s. Knightly combat with blunt or “foyled” weapons for pleasure was known as *à plaisance*, combat to the death was *à l’outrance*.

### Great-Swords

Those blades long and weighty enough to demand a double grip are great-swords. They are infantry swords which cannot be used in a single-hand. Originally the term “great-sword” (*gret sord*, *grete swerde*, or *grant espée*), only meant a war-sword (long-sword), but it has now more or less come to mean a sub-class of those larger long-swords/war-swords that are still not true two-handers. They were even known as *Grete Swerdes* of

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Warre or Grans Espees de Guerre. Although they are “two hand” swords, great-swords not are the specialized weapons of later two-handed swords. They are the swords that are antecedents to the even larger Renaissance versions. Great-swords are also the weapons often depicted in various German sword manuals. A Medieval great-sword might also be called a “twahandswerds” or “too honde swerd”. Whereas other long-swords could be used on horseback and some even with shields, great swords however were infantry weapons only. Their blades might be flat and wide or later on, more narrow and hexagonal or diamond shaped. These larger swords capable of facing heavier weapons such as pole-arms and larger axes were devastating against lighter armors. Long, two-handed swords with narrower, flat hexagonal blades and thinner tips (such as the Italian “spadone”) were a response to plate-armor. Against plate armor such rigid, narrow, and sharply pointed swords are not used in the same chop and cleave manner as with flatter, wider long-swords and great swords. Instead, they are handled with tighter movements that emphasize their thrusting points and allow for greater use of the hilt. Those of the earlier parallel-edged shape are known more as war-swords, while later the thicker, tapering, sharply pointed form were more often called bastard-swords. One type of long German sword, the “Rhenish Langenschwert”, from the Rhenish city of Cologne, had a blade of some 4 feet and an enormous grip of some 14 to 16 inches long, not including the pommel.

### Bastard Swords

In the early 1400’s (as early as 1418) a form of long-sword often with specially shaped grips for one or two hands, became known as an *Espée Bastarde* or “bastard sword”. The term may derive not from the blade length, but because bastard-swords typically had longer handles with special “half-grips” which could be used by either one or both hands. In this sense they were neither a one-handed sword nor a true great-sword/two-handed sword, and thus not a member of either “family” of sword. Evidence shows the their blade were typically tapered. Since newer types of shorter swords were coming into use, the term “bastard-sword” came to distinguish this form of long-sword. Bastard-swords typically had longer handles with special “half-grips” which could be used by either one or both hands. These handles have recognizable “waist” and “bottle” shapes (such grips were later used on the Renaissance two-handed sword). The unique bastard-sword half-grip was a versatile and practical innovation. Although, once again classification is not clear since the term “bastard-sword” appears to have not been entirely exclusive to those swords with so-called “hand-and-a-half” handles as older styles of long-sword were still in limited use. Bastard-swords varied and they might have either a flat blade or narrow hexagonal one for fighting plate-armor. Some were intended more for cutting while others were better for thrusting. Bastard swords continued to be used by knights and men-at-arms into the 1500’s. Their hilt style leads toward the shorter cut & thrust sword forms of the Renaissance. Strangely, in the early Renaissance the term bastard-sword was

also sometimes used to refer to single-hand arming-swords with compound-hilts. A form of German arming sword with a bastard-style compound hilt was called a “Reitschwert” (“cavalry sword”) or a “Degen” (“knight’s sword”). Although these might have been forms of single-hand estoc.

The familiar modern term “hand-and-a-half” was more or less coined to describe bastards swords specifically. The term “hand-and-a-half sword” is often used in reference to long-swords is not historical and is sometimes misapplied to other swords (although during the late 1500’s, long after such blades fell out of favor, some German forms of this phrase are believed to have been used). While there is no evidence of the term “hand-and-a-half” having been used during the Middle Ages, either in English or other languages, it does appear in the 16th century. In his 1904 bibliography of Spanish texts, D. Enrique de Leguina gives a 1564 reference to una espada estoque de mano y media, and a 1594 reference to una espada de mano y media. In the *Ragionamento*, the unpublished appendix to his 1580, *Traite d Escrime* (“Fencing Treatise”), Giovanni Antonio Lovino describes one sword as una spada di una mano et mana et meza (literally “hand and a half sword”) which he distinguishes from the much larger spada da due mani or two-handed sword (the immense Renaissance weapon). The term spadone was used by Fiore Dei Liberi in 1410 to refer to a tapering long-sword and Camillo Agrippa in 1550 called the spadone a war sword. Later it was defined by John Florio in his 1598 Italian-English dictionary as “a long or two-hand sword”.

### Two-handed Swords

The term “two-hander” or “two-handed sword” (*espée a deure mains* or *spada da due mani*) was in use as early as 1400 and is really a classification of sword applied both to Medieval great-swords as well Renaissance swords (the true two-handed swords). Such weapons saw more use in the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Technically, true two-handed swords (*epee’s a deux main*) were actually Renaissance, not Medieval weapons. They are really those specialized forms of the later 1500-1600’s, such as the Swiss/German *Dopplehander* (“double-hander”) or *Bidenhander* (“both-hander”) or *Zweihander* / *Zweyhander* are relatively modern not historical terms. English ones were sometimes referred to as “slaughterswords” after the German *Schlachterschwerter* (“battle swords”). These weapons were used primarily for fighting against pike-squares where they would hack paths through lobbing the tips off the poles. In Germany, England, and elsewhere schools also taught their use for single-combat. In True two-handed swords have compound-hilts with side-rings and enlarged cross-guards of up to 12 inches. Most have small, pointed lugs or flanges protruding from their blades 4-8 inches below their guard. These *parriehaken* or “parrying hooks” act almost as a secondary guard for the *ricasso* to prevent other weapons from sliding down into the hands. They make up for the weapon’s slowness on the defence and can allow another blade to be momentarily

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trapped or bound up. They can also be used to strike with. The most well-known of “*twa handit swordis*” is the Scottish Claymore (Gaelic for “*claidheamh-more*” or great-sword) which developed out of earlier Scottish great-swords with which they are often compared. They were used by the Scottish Highlanders against the English in the 1500’s. Another sword of the same name is the later Scots basket-hilt broadsword (a relative of the Renaissance Slavic-Italian *schiaivona*) whose hilt completely enclosed the hand in a cage-like guard. Both swords have come to be known by the same name since the late 1700’s. Certain wave or flame-bladed two-handed swords have come to be known by collectors as *flamberges*, although this is inaccurate. Such swords developed in the early-to-mid 1500’s and are more appropriately known as *flammards* or *flambards* (the German *Flammenschwert*). The *flamberge* was also a term later applied to certain types of rapiers. The wave-blade form is visually striking but really no more effective in its cutting than a straight one. There were also huge two-handed blades known as “bearing-swords” or “parade-swords” (*Paratschwert*), weighing up to 12 or even 15 pounds and which were intended only for carrying in ceremonial processions and parades. In the 1500’s there were also a few rare single-edged two-handers such as the Swiss-German *Grosse Messer* or later sometimes called a *Zwiehand sabel*.

### The Estoc

A form of long, rigid, pointed, triangular or square bladed and virtually edgeless sword designed for thrusting into plate-armor was the *estoc*. Called a *stocco* in Italian, *estoque* in Spanish, a *tuck* in English, *Panzerstecher* or *Dreiecker* in German, and a *kanzer* in Eastern Europe. They were used with two hands and similar to great-swords (but were unrelated to later rapiers). They were used in two hands with the second hand often gripping the blade. Some were sharpened only near the point and others might have one or two large round hand guards. Rapiers are sometimes mistakenly referred to as *tucks*, and there is evidence that during the Renaissance some rapiers may have been referred to as such by the English. In French “*estoc*” itself means to thrust.

### The Claymore

Identified with the Scot’s symbol of the warrior, the term “Claymore” is Gaelic for “*claidheamh-more*” (great sword). This two-handed broadsword was used by the Scottish Highlanders against the English in the 16th century and is often confused with a Basket-hilt “broadsword” (a relative of the Italian *schiaivona*) whose hilt completely enclosed the hand in a cage-like guard. Both swords have come to be known by the same name since the late 1700’s.

### The Falchion

A rarer form of sword that was little more than a meat cleaver, possibly even a simple

kitchen and barnyard tool adopted for war. Indeed, it may come from a French word for a sickle, “fauchon”. It can be seen in Medieval art being used against lighter armors by infidels as well as footman and even knights. The weapon is entirely European and not derived from eastern sources. More common in the Renaissance, it was considered a weapon to be proficient with in addition to the sword. The falchion is similar to the German Dusack (or Dusagge), and has been dubiously suggested as possibly related to the Dark Age long knife, “seax” (scramanseax), and even later curved blades such as sabres (or sabels). Similar to an Arabian “scimitar”, the falchion’s wide, heavy blade weighted more towards the point could deliver tremendous blows. Several varieties were known, most all with single edges and rounded points. A later Italian falchion with a slender sabre-like blade was called a “storta” or a “malchus”. Another similar weapon in German was the saber or machete-like Messer. Large two-hand versions, called Grosse Messers, with straight or curved single-edged blades were known by 1500.

## RENAISSANCE SWORDS

### Cut & Thrust Swords

The term “cut and thrust sword” is a general one which can be applied to a whole range of blade forms (field swords, side swords, arming swords). However, the Renaissance military sword is generally characterized by a swept or compound-hilt, a narrow cut-and-thrust blade with stronger cross-section, and tapering tip. A direct descendant of the medieval knightly sword, the cut and thrust sword was used by lightly armed footmen as well as civilians in the 16th and 17th centuries. During this time they were employed against a range of armored and unarmored opponents. They were popular for sword & buckler and sword & dagger fighting. They utilized an innovative one-handed grip fingering the ricasso (a dull portion of blade just above the guard). Renaissance cut & thrust swords should not be referred to as “early Renaissance swords” since they were actually in use throughout the period. Military and civilian forms of them existed before, during and after the development of the rapier. For example, similar blades (with and without ricassos and compound hilts) saw use in the English Civil War and even later. They should also not be referred to as “sword-rapiers” or “early rapiers”, although in a sense, some of them were. Renaissance cut & thrust swords were their own distinct sword type. Although sometimes considered a “transition” form, this is inaccurate as they were both the ancestor and contemporary of the rapier for which they are often misidentified. Some forms of cage & basket hilts blades are occasionally referred to as “riding swords” by collectors and curators, and sometimes even as “broadswords”. However, the 16th century Italians did sometimes distinguish between spada da cavallo, or a blade for horsemen, spada da fante, an infantry sword for foot-soldiers, and later spada da lato (side sword), a civilian cut-and-thrust sword, a form of which only later became the rapier (in

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modern times sometimes called a stricia).

### The Back-Sword

The back-sword or Backe swerd was a less-common form of single-edged renaissance military cut & thrust blade with a compound-hilt (side-rings or anneau, finger-rings, knuckle-bar, etc.). Most popular in England with a buckler or target from at least the 1520's, it was long enough for both mounted and infantry and favored because its single-edge design allowed for a superior cutting blow. It was also popular in Germany. Back-swords may be related to later single-edged European blade forms and came in a variety of hilts and lengths. They also include later Hangers and hunting swords, as well as Mortuary-hilt and Walloon-hilt broadswords.

### The Schiavona

A form of agile Renaissance cut & thrust sword with a decorative cage-hilt and distinctive "cat-head" pommel. So named for the Schiavoni or Venetian Doge's Slavonic mercenaries and guards of the 1500's who favored the weapon. They are usually single edged back-swords but may also be wide or narrow double edged blades. Some have ricasso for a fingering grip while others have thumb-rings. The Schiavona is often considered the antecedent to other cage hilt swords such as the Scottish basket-hilted "broadsword".

### The Katzbalger

A form of one-handed sword with a shorter blade and "S" shaped guard. It was favored by pikemen and the Swiss/German Landesknechts for fighting close in amidst pike-squares. Many were originally longer, wider blades which were cut down and remounted. The name likely derives from a word associated with cat-gut or cat-skin. Their lengths varied from short to mid-sized.

### The Rapier

Popular in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the rapier was a dueling weapon whose form was developed from cut and thrust swords. Its use was more brutal and forceful than the light sport fencing that we know of today. Originally, starting about 1470, any civilian sword was often referred to as simply a "rapier", but it quickly took on the meaning of a slender, civilian thrusting sword. There is also an English document from the 1500's that uses the term "rapier-sword" for advising courtiers how to be armed, indicating the understanding that there were new slender blades coming into civilian use. Eventually developing into an edgeless, ideal thrusting weapon, the quick, innovative rapier superseded the military cut & thrust sword for personal duel and urban self-defense. Being capable of making only limited lacerations, earlier varieties of rapier are still often confused with

the cut and thrust swords which gave gestation to their method. As a civilian weapon of urban self-defense, a true rapier was a tip-based thrusting sword that used stabbing and piercing, not slashing and cleaving. True rapier blades ranged from early flatter triangular blades to thicker, narrow hexagonal ones. Rapier hilts range from swept styles, to later dishes and cups. It had no true cutting edge such as with military swords for war.

### The Flamberge

An unusual waved-bladed rapier popular with officers and upper classes during the 1600s. It was considered to look both fashionable and deadly as well as erroneously believed to inflict a more deadly wound. When parrying with the flamberge, the opponent's sword was slowed slightly as it passed along the length. It also created a disconcerting vibration in the other blade. The term flamberge was also used later to describe a dish-hilted rapier with a normal straight blade. Certain wave or flame-bladed two-handed swords have also come to be known by collectors as "flamberges", although this is inaccurate. Such swords are more appropriately known as "flammards" or "flambards".

### The Small Sword

Sometimes known as a "court-sword", a "walking-sword", or "town-sword", small-swords developed in the late Renaissance as a personal dueling tool and weapon of self-defense. Most popular in the 1700's it is sometimes confused with the rapier. It consisted almost exclusively of a sharp pointed metal rod with a much smaller guard and finger-rings. Its blade was typically a hollow triangular shape and was much thicker at the hilt. Most had no edge at all, and were merely rigid, pointed, metal rods. They were popular with the upper classes especially as decorative fashion accessories, worn like jewelry. In a skilled hand the small sword was an effective and deadly instrument. Until the early 1800s it continued to be used even against older rapiers and even some cutting swords. It is the small-sword rather than the rapier which leads to the epee and foil of modern sport fencing.

### Curved Blades

While it is the straight-bladed cruciform sword style that for both war and duel was perfected in Europe as no where else, curved swords were hardly unknown. Many forms were known from the ancient convex-bladed Greek kopis and Iberian falcatta, to the laengsaex curved Viking blade, as well as the short-sword/long-knife seax or scramsax. There is also the Medieval falchion and the German curved Messer, Grossmesser, and bohemian Dusack. The Italians used the curved storta, the straight bladed but curved-edge braquemart and the curved badelair (baudelair, bazelair, or basilaire) as well as the short curved braquet. Finally, wide varieties of sabers, sabres, sabels, and cutlasses were used from at least the mid-1500's. Indigenous European curved sword forms such as the

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Czech tesak, Polish tasak, and Russian tisak were used since at least the 7th century.

### Daggers

A common long dagger, “poignard” (poniard), or “pugnale” was a favored companion, carried en-suite with a sword or rapier as a backup weapon or even on its own. The dagger was lightweight, deadly, and elegant. Used primarily as a defensive weapon, dagger fighting was an art itself. Technically, a poniard was square or triangular shaped with no edge, while a dagger had a knife-like blade. Generally, daggers in the Middle Ages were employed point down, pommel up, while those in the Renaissance were used point up with the thumb placed on the hilt. Many later daggers for use with rapiers had elaborate guards and were specially designed for trapping and parrying.

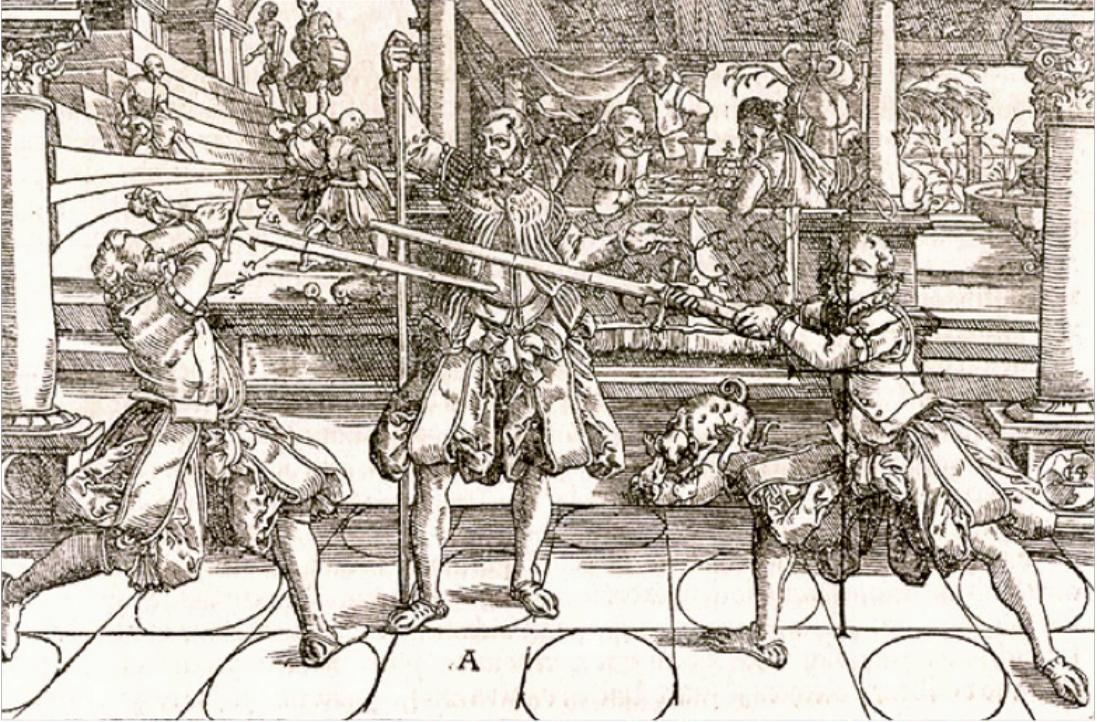
### Bucklers

The buckler (or Italian “rondash” or “bochiero”) was a small, agile hand-shield. Used since medieval times, bucklers were round or even square, approx. 8–20” and made of metal, wood, or metal trimmed wood. A single handle (or enarme) was used to hold it in a fist grip and smack, deflect or punch at blows and thrusts. The edge could also be used to strike and block. Some had long metal spikes on the front to attack with. On some later bucklers metal hooks or bars were placed on the front to trap the point of an opponent’s rapier. More popular for a method of 16th sword & buckler fighting, they declined in use during the early 17th century as they were inconvenient for urban wear and faster rapiers outmaneuvered them.

### The Targe

A targe/targa (or Italian “rondella”) was a small wooden shield with a leather cover and leather or metal trim. Some were also covered with metal studs or spikes. Unlike bucklers, targes were worn on the arm as with typical shields. They were also usually flat rather than convex. Though associated with the Scots, the word “targe” actually comes from small “targets” placed on archery practice dummies. Some forms of medium sized steel shields from the Renaissance are often classed as targes. In England in the 1500s & 1600s, “target” was a common term for any small shield.

## Longsword



### Divisions of the Sword to the Weak and Strong

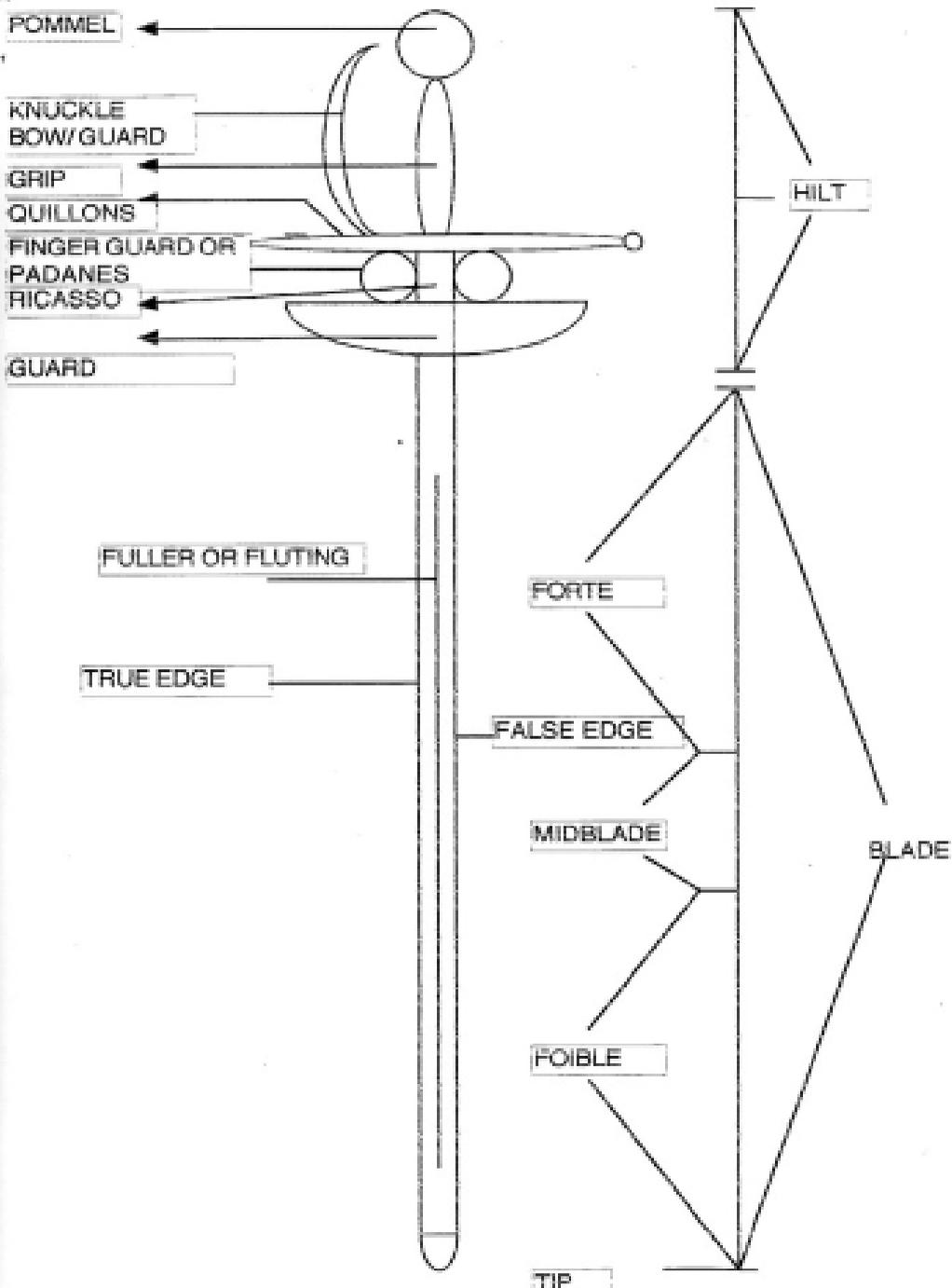
The Sword is firstly divided in two parts, namely from the grip to the middle of the Blade which is known as the Strong, from the middle to the most forward, is the Weak furthermore is the sword divided in four parts how the figure below this shows.

With the inward part, that is the haft, and (with it) the work with the pomel and cross and haft will be understood, in the next part, thereafter will the work with cutting and pushing and what belongs to the Strong be understood, to the third part of the sword should be noted the alterable work of the Weak and Strong after opportunity and liking. Which alone is extremely weak for you to work properly to the Openings. (*Meyer 1560, Maurer translation 2012*)

# THE RAPIER

*“Understanding is a three-edged sword. Your side,  
my side, and the truth.”*

*J. Michael Straczynski*



**THE RAPIER**

# A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF ITALIAN RAPIER CONCEPTS

*By Tom Leoni*

## Introductory Remarks

“Sword” or “Rapier”? Interestingly enough, the Italians, perhaps the highest exponents of the “classical” rapier, had no specific term for this kind of weapon. Continuing a tradition that had started centuries before late-16th-early17th century fencing masters such as Salvator Fabris, Francesco Alfieri and Ridolfo Capoferro, any sort of sword appearing in Italian manuals was simply called...spada (“sword”). One of the few exceptions was the Spadone, essentially a long-sword primarily for war rather than a duelling or urban self-defense tool.

So, lacking an explicit indication from the authors, what makes certain Italian sword manuals “rapier” manuals? Is it the physical style of the sword, sporting a rather long, slim, tapering blade and a complex hilt? Is it the style of swordsmanship, featuring mostly in-line, single-blow attacks? Is it that other Countries’ Maestri identified any Italian swordsman of the time as a rapierist just by virtue of being Italian?

The answer to these questions is nebulous. The original Italian edition of Di Grassi (Venice, 1570), for instance, was written in the tradition of the Bolognese *spada da filo* or *spada da lato* (side-sword or short sword). In Di Grassi’s manual, the blades are short, slender, and tapering with simple hilts of side-rings. Di Grassi’s manual was not a “rapier” text, but a fencing manual clearly in the Bolognese cut-and-thrust tradition. But when it was translated into English, it “became” a “rapier” manual. Conversely, the work of the Milanese master Camillo Agrippa a few decades earlier is decidedly rapier in style, although it features almost the same late-medieval cruciform sword.\*

I believe the correct approach, as followed by modern Renaissance martial arts revivalists, should be to take all aspect of “rapier” – the physical sword and the swordsmanship style – into consideration. As with all *post factum* definitions, we should not be too strict in our demarcation of the parameters of what, in this case, makes a rapier a rapier.

There were many types of sword and many different ways of using the same type. Perhaps my most satisfactory answer to this dilemma is this. A rapier is like the old definition of obscenity –you know it when you see it. For now, I will confine my discussion (and my terminology) to the authors that are recognized as the primary classical Italian “rapier” authors: Giganti, Capoferro, Alfieri and, above all, Fabris.

\*George Silver in 1599 lamented how a certain “Giacomo” was spreading Italian rapier fencing in England like a sort of foreign plague. If, however unlikely, he was indeed referring to an aged Giacomo Di Grassi and his “conservative” cut and thrust style, we might wonder what would he have said of Fabris?

## The Sword And Its Parts

*“The knowledge of the sword is the first half of fencing: it teaches us to become familiar with the sword in order to handle it properly.” (Capoferro, Chapter III)*

Italian rapier masters insisted that the knowledge of the sword is an essential element of successful fencing. Hence the need to name and classify its many components.

**FORTE** This is the half of the blade closer to the swordsman’s hand. It is the defensive part of the sword with which virtually all successful parries are executed. The forte has no offensive role in traditional Italian rapier theory, so much so that Capoferro states that it would not matter whether it sported an edge at all.

**DEBOLE (FOIBLE)** This is the half of the blade incorporating the tip. It is the offensive part of the sword with which all attacks are executed. According to traditional Italian rapier theory, this section of the blade should almost never be employed defensively, especially against cuts. The one exception is noted below under *terza*.

**TEMPERATO** This word is employed by Alfieri to describe the middle section of the blade.

**FILO DRITTO (TRUE EDGE)** The edge of the sword on the same side as one’s knuckles. This is the part of the blade with which most parries and cutting attacks are performed, according to virtually all classical Italian rapier masters.

**FILO FALSO (FALSE EDGE)** The edge of the sword opposite the true edge. The role of this part of the blade is somewhat more limited than that of the true edge. However, there are some cuts that are delivered with this edge, primarily ascending diagonal cuts (*falsi*, see section below on cuts). As far as defensive play, Capoferro concedes that in rare cases, the false edge may be used in parries.

**PIATTO (FLAT)** The “side” of the sword, i.e. the flat part of the blade on either side, between the two edges. This part of the sword has no active role in traditional Italian rapier play, as no offensive or defensive action involve it directly.

**FINIMENTO, FORNIMENTO, (THE GUARD OF THE HILT)** This is the part of the hilt consisting of differently-shaped bars and branches or (later) of the cup. Its role extends beyond the obvious one – the protection of the hand. Fabris makes a very successful use of the guard’s mass and width to literally shut the opponent’s blade out of line in the course of an attack.

### The sections of the blade (using Fabris’ four quarters)

**PRIMA (FIRST)** In the division of the blade, this is the quarter closest to the swordsman’s hand. It is the strongest part of the blade and, for this reason, it is the preferred part of the sword with which to execute parries. The *prima* and the *seconda* have no offensive role in traditional Italian rapier play.

**SECONDA (SECOND)** In the division of the blade, this is the quarter that goes from the end of the first part to mid-sword. This section of the sword, like the previous one, is exclusively used for defense, although it is not as strong as the prima. The reason for this is both structural and mechanical. Structurally, any well-made blade tapers progressively from the hilt to the tip, thus becoming increasingly flexible; mechanically, the greater the distance between any point along the blade and the swordsman's hand, the less the leverage when meeting another blade. The prima and the seconda together constitute the sword's forte (see definition above).

**TERZA (THIRD)** In the division of the blade, this is the quarter that goes from mid-blade to half-way to the tip. It is almost entirely useless for parries (especially against cuts), although it can be successfully opposed to the fourth part of the opponent's blade when parrying a thrust. Its primary role is an offensive one: when used together with the fourth part in adding a "slicing" motion to the percussive action of a cut, it can make such a blow very effective, as Fabris reminds us in chapter 3.

**QUARTA (FOURTH)** In the division of the blade, this is the fourth incorporating the sword's tip. Its role is essentially offensive, as it is the part responsible for delivering both thrusts and cuts (see above). The terza and quarta together constitute the sword's debole (see definition above).

### Why divide the blade in so many parts?

Although Italian masters disagree as to the exact number of parts into which to divide the blade (e.g. Capoferro = 2; Fabris = 4; Alfieri = 5), they all place an enormous emphasis on the need for the swordsman to know that each section has its own peculiar role. In other words, these masters viewed the sword as a highly sophisticated tool possessing many parts, each one of which, in turn, possessed its specific function. For instance, Fabris, who divides the blade into four sections, assigns to each a specific degree of usefulness as far as defense or offense; had he only distinguished between debole and forte, many of the subtleties inherent in his style would not be possible. Even Capoferro, who, in his usual pragmatic style states that it is enough to divide the blade between forte and debole (two sections) though later in the book finds the need to further sub-divide the debole. Alfieri, who divides the blade in five parts, de facto utilizes the sword in a similar manner to Fabris, even finding it necessary to explain how Salvator Gran Maestro divided the blade.

### The Guards

In 1553, the Milanese Camillo Agrippa did away with the myriad of fancy-named guards of *spada da lato* and codified four guards that were to remain the mainstay of fencing for at least another two centuries. For this and many other reasons, Agrippa may be considered one of the true pioneers of the rapier style.

**GUARDIE (GUARDS)** Postures of the feet, body, arm(s) and sword possessing the desired characteristics to fulfill various tactical purposes of defense and offense. Italian rapier guards derive their properties from the position of the sword-hand (*prospettiva*, or “perspective”).

**PRIMA (FIRST)** Any guard featuring the thumb-down position in the sword hand. The reason why it is called “first” is because it is the first natural position the hand assumes after pulling the sword from the sheath and pointing it towards the opponent. The *prima* is an inherently high guard, so it tends to defend the upper body and the head rather well, although it leaves the legs exposed. For this reason, Fabris prefers the *prima* in sword and dagger rather than sword alone. Defensively, this guard is particularly effective against cuts. Offensively, the *prima* is very formidable, since the thrusting attacks launched from this position proceed naturally downward, thus possessing great momentum. The *prima*’s main drawback is the fact that it tends to tire the arm.

**SECONDA (SECOND)** Any guard featuring the palm-down position in the sword hand. Since the blade’s true edge naturally faces to the outside, this guard is particularly effective to shut the opponent out of line to that side. Although not as high as the *prima*, the *seconda* provides excellent defense to the upper body without tiring the arm as much as the previous guard. Offensively, many good attacks can be performed from this guard, since it lends itself to flexibility as far as forming angles and, therefore, can take advantage of even the most unusual openings the opponent may offer. As an interesting aside, Capoferro, in Chapter X of *Gran Simulacro*, vilifies the *prima* and the *seconda* to the point that Alfieri finds himself compelled to refute him rather harshly 30 years later.

**TERZA (THIRD)** Any guard featuring the knuckles-down position in the sword hand. This is probably the preferred position in classical Italian rapier, with Capoferro going as far as to state that the *terza* is the only guard (until the last chapter of his book, which has the strong flavor of an afterthought). Although virtually no parries are executed in *terza* (as the true edge faces downwards), it is a very flexible guard since the hand is half-way between the *seconda* and the *quarta* and can therefore quickly turn to either side to fulfill most defensive requirements. Ditto for attacks, few of which are actually carried out with the hand in third. Another of the many advantages of this guard is that it is the least tiring for the sword arm.

**QUARTA (FOURTH)** Any guard featuring the palm-up position of the sword hand. Fabris prefers *quarta* over all other guards, although in virtually all his examples of attacks, the fencers start out in *terza*. The main advantage of *quarta* is that it covers the inside line splendidly. Once the arm gets used to this position, the *quarta* is indeed an excellent guard. Offensively, it is the most-used hand-position in classical Italian rapier, with the austere Capoferro stating that the hand should always be in *quarta* when performing a typical lunge. Indeed, attacks in fourth are suitable for both the inside and the outside, thanks to the ease with which angles can be formed with the hand thus situated.

**MISTA, BASTARDA (MIXED, BASTARD)** Any guard in which the hand and the arm are situated in between two (adjacent) of the above four positions. The most important mixed guard in Italian rapier is the one introduced by Alfieri, which shares of the third and the fourth.

**QUINTA, SESTA (FIFTH, SIXTH)** Guards found in Capoferro's illustrations (marked by the letters E and F, page 44), otherwise not further described or identified by him or any of the classical Italian rapier masters.

### Other terms pertaining to Guards and Posture

**DENTRO (INSIDE)** The area to the left of the sword when in guard (assuming fencer is right-handed). Thus when two fencers face each other "to the inside", it means that each will see the opponent's sword to the left of his own. Fencing to the inside is the more used method in classical Italian rapier.

**FUORI (OUTSIDE)** The opposite of inside, i.e. the area to the right of the sword when in guard (assuming fencer is right-handed).

**OVER THE RIGHT (OR LEFT) FOOT** Any guard, unless specified, is formed with the right foot forward ("over the right foot"). According to classical Italian rapier theory, placing oneself in guard over the left foot (especially without a companion weapon) is counterproductive for two reasons: 1) it places the left leg in danger, since the forte of the sword is not nearby to protect it and 2) it leads to slow attacks because the right foot has to travel a greater distance as it passes forward. Fabris states that guards over the left foot are safest in sword and cloak, as the latter hangs low to protect the whole left leg.

### Counterguards

Fencing, like chess, is not a static game, and one must adapt his play to the moves of the opponent in order to maximize effectiveness and minimize danger. Therefore, depending on what posture and strategy the opponent adopts, one should tailor his own to suit every particular situation. Hence the need of counterguards, or "counterpostures" (literally: postures to counter the opponent's guards).

Fabris devotes two whole chapters to the counterguard as one of the mainstays of his style (chapter 4 on sword alone and chapter [3-deest] of sword and dagger). According to Fabris, a counterguard (or counterposture) is a subtle adjustment of any of the main guards made to ensure that the line between the opponent's tip and one's body is completely covered by the forte of the sword. Counterpostures are to be formed outside the measure in order to ensure good defense once the "danger zone" is entered.

Nicoletto Giganti, in his Chapter 1, plainly states that while inexperienced fencers stand in guard, good ones stand in counterguard.

Some Masters' idea of a counterguard (e.g. Cavalcabo) is a guard itself rather than its adjustment. For example, he advocates using the fourth guard against a first, a second against a second, etc. By contrast, Fabris and Alfieri can tailor most guards to oppose any posture by the opponent by means of slight adjustments of the sword-arm and the angle of the wrist.

Regrettably, the concept of counterguards is one of the most overlooked in modern rapier studies.

### Measures (Misura)

**LARGA (WIDE, LARGE)** The distance where, by lunging forward with the right foot, the opponent can be reached with the tip of the sword.

**STRETTA (NARROW)** The distance where, by bending the body forward, the opponent can be reached with the tip of the sword (without moving the feet). Both the larga and the stretta are widely used in Italian rapier, with the first being a "safer" distance (albeit conducive to slower attacks) and the second possessing the opposite benefits and drawbacks.

**FUORI MISURA (OUT OF MEASURE)** The distance between two opponents where neither can reach the other in a single tempo.

**STRETTISSIMA (EXTRA-NARROW)** Identified by Capoferro as the distance where, while in the misura larga, one can wound the opponent in the sword or dagger-hand (see also *mezzo tempo*).

**PERFETTA (PERFECT)** Identified by Alfieri as a sub-species of the *misura larga* where the necessary lunge to reach the opponent is not so long as to disrupt one's form and balance.

**ROMPERE DI MISURA (BREAKING THE MEASURE)** The act of retreating from one of the measures to out of measure.

**GUADAGNARE LA MISURA, ENTRARE IN MISURA (GAINING THE MEASURE)** The act of proceeding from out of measure to the misura larga, or from the misura larga to the *misura stretta* (close).

It is important to understand that the concept of "measure" is not absolute; rather, it is relative to one's size and ability. It oftentimes happens that two fencers of different height and skill face each other at a given distance and one is in measure, the other is not. This is because the first can reach the second by lunging with the right foot (by virtue of his longer limbs and/or his more developed ability) while the other is too small or unskilled to do so from the same distance. Needless to say, the first enjoys a tremendous advantage. So, say all the Italian Masters, practicing long and accurate lunges is a vital part of the swordsman's exercises in order to "shorten the measure" for oneself.

## Advantage Of The Sword

Definition: a fencer has the advantage of the sword when his blade is situated in such a way as to enjoy the mechanical advantage of the lever when intersecting the opponent's. Key: when the two blades intersect, the one that is met closer to the hilt has the advantage. Example: if fencer A places the second part of his blade against B's third part, A enjoys the advantage of the sword.

The advantage of the sword is extremely important in classical Italian rapier, and all the attacks, defenses, guards and counterguards depend on this subtle hinge-point.

**TROVAR DI SPADA (FINDING THE SWORD)** The art of placing one's blade against the opponent's (without actual contact!) so as to enjoy the advantage of the sword. "He who has more of his sword into the opponent's (no matter by how little) will have the advantage of the sword" (Fabris, Chapter 9). Between two experienced fencers, the one who manages to find the opponent's sword usually enjoys an enormous defensive and offensive advantage.

Synonyms: *trovar di spada, occupare la spada, guadagnare la spada, acquistare, coprire, etc.*

**FREE SWORD, KEEPING THE SWORD FREE (SPADA LIBERA)** Preventing the opponent from finding one's sword. This can be accomplished by attempting to gain the advantage oneself, by keeping the sword away from the opponent's (especially feasible when fencing with a companion weapon) or by breaking the measure. Keeping the sword free is essential towards succeeding in a bout, according to Fabris.

**PERDER LA SPADA (LOSING OF THE SWORD)** If A finds B's sword, B has "lost the sword". Not a situation to find oneself in, according to classical Italian rapier theory.

## Footwork

**PIE' FERMO (FIRM-FOOT)** This term applies to all offensive footwork where at least one foot remains static (exception: the *girata*). The typical lunge with the right foot falls within this category, as the left foot remains in its place.

**PASSATA (PASS)** A series of resolute steps towards the opponent (usually starting with the left foot) in the course of an attack. One of the advantages of the *passata* is that the first step reduces the distance from the opponent considerably; another is that its momentum oftentimes unsettles the opponent. All Italian rapier Masters consider the *passata* an extremely important technique to have in one's repertoire, although Fabris tells us that the lunge "a *pie' fermo*" was the more commonly used in anger.

**PASSO GRANDE, PASSO PICCOLO (WIDE, SMALL STEP)** The distance between feet while in guard. Fabris is an advocate of the small step, since it is conducive to a longer, more explosive lunge and keeps the right leg more protected. Capoferro's guards, on the other

hand, feature a much wider step, with Alfieri being somewhere in the middle.

**PASSO STRAORDINARIO (EXTRAORDINARY STEP)** The distance between feet while performing a typical lunge – i.e. bringing one’s feet more than a wide step apart. The theory on steps and their measures is explained in great detail by Agrippa.

**GIRATA** The act of turning one’s body out of line while stepping forward in the course of an attack. Most commonly, a girata is performed by either stepping to the left with the right foot or by crossing the left foot behind the right one. The main drawback of these types of footwork is that the sword loses the “support” of the feet and body and can therefore be more easily pushed aside.

## Timing

**TEMPO** 1) A motion of the opponent within the measures that creates a momentary opportunity to attack. The concept of tempo incorporates elements of both time and motion. A tempo (Italian = time) is finite and must therefore be longer in duration than the time required for the attack. 2) The act of performing a single movement (e.g. 1-tempo parry-counterattack = the act of parrying and delivering a counterattacking blow in the same movement. Also called *un tempo*, *stesso tempo*).

**CONTRATEMPO** The art of beating the opponent as he tries to take advantage of a tempo you created. E.g.: you make a movement within the measures (= you “make a tempo”); he attacks (= “attack of tempo”), but, by doing so he himself makes a tempo; you are able to strike at him (with or without parrying) and save yourself.

**MEZZO TEMPO (HALF-TEMPO)** Identified by Capoferro as the situation when one can make a quick strike at the opponent’s sword hand. (See *Misura strettissima*).

## Attacks

**FERITA (WOUND)** Any action resulting in harming the opponent. This includes all cuts, thrusts, lunges or defensive counteractions (such as the “stop-thrust”, an action described as early as Agrippa).

**DISTESA (LUNGE)** A type of ferita a pie’ fermo (see definitions) consisting of performing an extraordinary step with the right foot. Different Maestri call it by different names, although there is little or no technical difference between them. Capoferro’s *botta lunga*, for instance, establishes some rather “fixed” canons as far as the length of the step, the placing of the limbs and the position of the hand. Fabris’ *distesa*, instead is tailored to the specific situation as far as distance, placement of the body and position of the hand.

**PASSATA (PASS)** See definition above.

**PUNTA** One of the many terms for “thrust” (see below).

**TAGLIO, ALSO “COLTELLATA”** Cut (see sub-species below).

## Thrusts

**STOCCATA (GENERIC FOR THRUST)** This term is applied rather loosely to mean a thrust or even a lunge. Fabris utilizes this term (although not exclusively) to describe all thrusts, qualifying it with the position of the hand; e.g. *stoccata di quarta* = thrust with the hand in fourth position. Another common synonym is *punta*. Some Masters (e.g. Capoferro), restrict the meaning of “*stoccata*” to a thrust delivered with the hand in third.

**IMBROCCATA (THRUST FROM THE FIRST GUARD OR POSITION)** This term is generally used to describe a thrust executed from the *prima*.

Other terms (*punta dritta, riversa*) Some Masters mention these other thrusts as sub-species proceeding, respectively, from the second and the fourth guards.

## Cuts

These are blows of the edge as opposed to stabs with the point. Depending on the circumstance and blade used, they may or may not be intended as wounding actions.

*Classification according to general direction:*

**MANDRITTO (FORE-HAND)** Any cut proceeding right-to-left (assuming the fencer is right handed).

**RIVERSO (BACK-HAND)** Any cut proceeding left-to-right (assuming the fencer is right handed). This cut is very dear to Alfieri, who employs it as an alternative tactic on most of his attacks.

*Classification according to specific direction:*

**TONDO** A cut proceeding on a perfectly horizontal plane. It can land at 3 o'clock of the target (*mandritto tondo*) or at 9 o'clock (*riverso tondo*).

**SQUALEMBRATO** A descending diagonal cut. It can land at 1-2 o'clock of the target (*mandritto squalembrato*) or at 10-11 o'clock (*riverso squalembrato*).

**FENDENTE** A descending vertical cut landing at circa 12 o'clock of the target. Depending on whether it proceeds slightly from the right or from the left, it can be *mandritto fendente* or *riverso fendente*.

**SOTTOMANO (UNDERHAND)** This is an ascending cut landing just right of 6 o'clock of the target. It is mentioned by Fabris and Alfieri.

**MONTANTE (ASCENDING)** This is the common name assigned to a vertical ascending cut. Fabris and Alfieri, who also mention the *sottomano*, classify the *montante* as a cut land-

ing just left of 6 o'clock of the target.

**RIDOPPIO (LITERALLY = REDOUBLED)** In a strictly rapier context, this cut is mentioned by Capoferro as being a rapid succession of two generic mandritti: the first one to the opponent's sword (to get it out of the way), the second to his body.

**FALSO** This is an ascending diagonal cut delivered with the false edge of the sword. It was used extensively by the 16th-Century Bolognese masters of Spada da filo such as Marozzo and Manciolino, but it makes an appearance on classical Rapier manuals. Falso dritto is the one landing at 5 o'clock of the target; falso manco the one landing at 7 o'clock.

*Classification according to delivery method:*

Dalla spalla (From the shoulder). This method of delivering any of the above cuts can be further sub-divided into two categories:

- Letting the shoulder swing the whole arm as it delivers the cut (similar to a tennis stroke). This gives the cut great momentum, but has the serious drawback of leaving the body open for a rather long time. For this reason, Fabris considers it the worst kind of cutting technique in rapier play.

- Keeping the arm and the wrist locked forward as the cut is delivered from the shoulder; in this manner, the motion of the arm (and the sword) is more controlled, although it does not give the cut quite the same impetus as the previous one. But the fact that such a cut never brings the sword completely out of line makes this delivery method one of the preferred one by Fabris and Alfieri. Also, the narrower motion is compensated by the fact that the whole weight of the arm contributes to the momentum of this cut.

**DAL GOMITO (FROM THE ELBOW)** Any of the cuts can be delivered by keeping the shoulder (and the arm) locked and by just swinging the forearm and the wrist. This type of cut, although not making as wide an arc as the first one delivered from the shoulder, still brings the sword quite far out of line. For this reason, Fabris advises against it.

**DAL POLSO, DAL NODO DELLA MANO (FROM THE WRIST)** This cut is delivered by keeping the whole arm locked forward (shoulder and wrist) and by swinging the sword in a small arc from the wrist. This type of cut is quick and does not open up the line too much; it is therefore one of Fabris' preferred methods of delivering cuts.

**STRAMAZZONE** This cut, very dear to the pre-eminent 16th-Century Bolognese Maestri, is delivered from the wrist, and it makes the sword describe a whole circle not dissimilar to that described in a modern moulinee. Although Fabris does not use the term, he would include the stramazzone in the repertoire of cuts delivered from the wrist (and therefore advisable).

In order to specifically classify a cut, Maestri tended to use all three identifying criteria: general direction, specific direction and delivery method (not unlikely biology's Family,

Genus and Species). For example, a wide swinging cut landing horizontally on the opponent's right side should be classified as a *riverso tondo* from the shoulder.

### Trading Sides

**CAVAZIONE (TRADE)** The act of “trading sides” with the opponent's sword, i.e. bringing the sword from the inside to the outside or vice-versa. This can be done both under and over the opponent's sword. It is similar (but not analogous) to the modern “disengage”. One of the main differences is that the classical Fabris trade is almost always executed in the course of a forward thrust; the motion, therefore, ends up being “corkscrew-shaped”, since it combines a forward motion and a semi-circular one.

One of the most serious modern misconceptions about the trade or *cavazione* is that of equating it with a circular parry. This idea originated in the 19th Century, when the first fencing historians such as Castle researched old martial arts texts in order to find the supposed “family tree” of contemporary fencing techniques. The classical Italian rapier *cavazione* is not a parry, although it can incorporate one if the tactical situation calls for it.

**CONTROCAVAZIONE (COUNTERTRADE)** The act of nullifying the effect of an opponent's trade by performing one of your own, thereby ending on the same side of his sword as before the whole operation started.

**RICAVAZIONE (RE-TRADE)** The act of nullifying the effect of an opponent's countertrade by performing one additional trade, thereby ending on the same side as after the first trade.

**MEZZA CAVAZIONE (HALF-TRADE)** The act of interrupting a trade in the middle, ending in most cases with the sword underneath the opponent's.

**COMMETTERE DI SPADA (COMMITMENT OF THE SWORD)** The act of performing a trade, then returning the sword on its original side.

### Other Actions

**ATTACCARE DI SPADA (ATTACHING SWORDS)** The act of pushing forcefully against each other's blade in order to – eventually – shove the opponent's sword out of the way. This, according to Fabris, is a very poor technique that can make a sword bout degenerate into a wrestling match. For this (and many other reasons), Fabris advocates never to make contact with the opponent's blade unless forced to parry.

**CEDERE DI SPADA (YIELDING OF THE SWORD)** The act of ceding to the pressure of the opponent's blade while attaching swords (see above), in order to let the opponent's sword fall out of line while your own goes to the attack. Fabris advocates this technique as the best one to adopt in the event of an attachment of swords.

**SCHIVAR DI VITA (VOIDING)** The act of voiding the opponent's sword by bringing one's body out of line (e.g. with a side-step). Knowing how to void is one of the most essential aspects of 16th-17th-Century Italian swordsmanship (not just rapier).

**FINTA (FEINT)** The act of giving the opponent the impression of attacking a part of his body in order to cause him to create an opening as he goes for the parry. A feint generally involves a "fake" target (where one initially pretends to strike) and a "real" one (where the attack eventually lands). Fabris, who perhaps has the best section on feints, admonishes us that the "fake" target should nonetheless be a realistic one, in case the opponent does not fall for the feint and fails to move for the parry.

**CHIAMATA, INVITO (INVITE)** The act of deliberately making a tempo or offering an opening to the opponent in order to lure him to attack – and then beat him with a contra-tempo (see definition). Be careful not to make too wide an opening as you perform an invite, says Fabris; otherwise, the likelihood of a "double" is very real.

**MUTAZIONE (MUTATION)** A movement or change of posture performed outside the measures. The same thing performed within the measures becomes a tempo (see definition).

## Conclusion

In this glossary, I have listed most components of classical Italian rapier play. For the sake of brevity, I have omitted their specific tactical *raison d'être* as well as the description of their proper technical execution. For a deeper insight on any of these terms and their tactical/technical context, please refer to the following primary sources:

Salvator Fabris, *Lo schermo, overo Scienza d'armi*, Copenhagen, 1606

Francesco Alfieri, *La scherma*, Padova, 1640

Ridolfo Capoferro, *Gran simulacro dell'arte e dell'uso della scherma*, Siena, 1610

Camillo Agrippa, *Trattato di scienza d'armi*, Roma, 1553

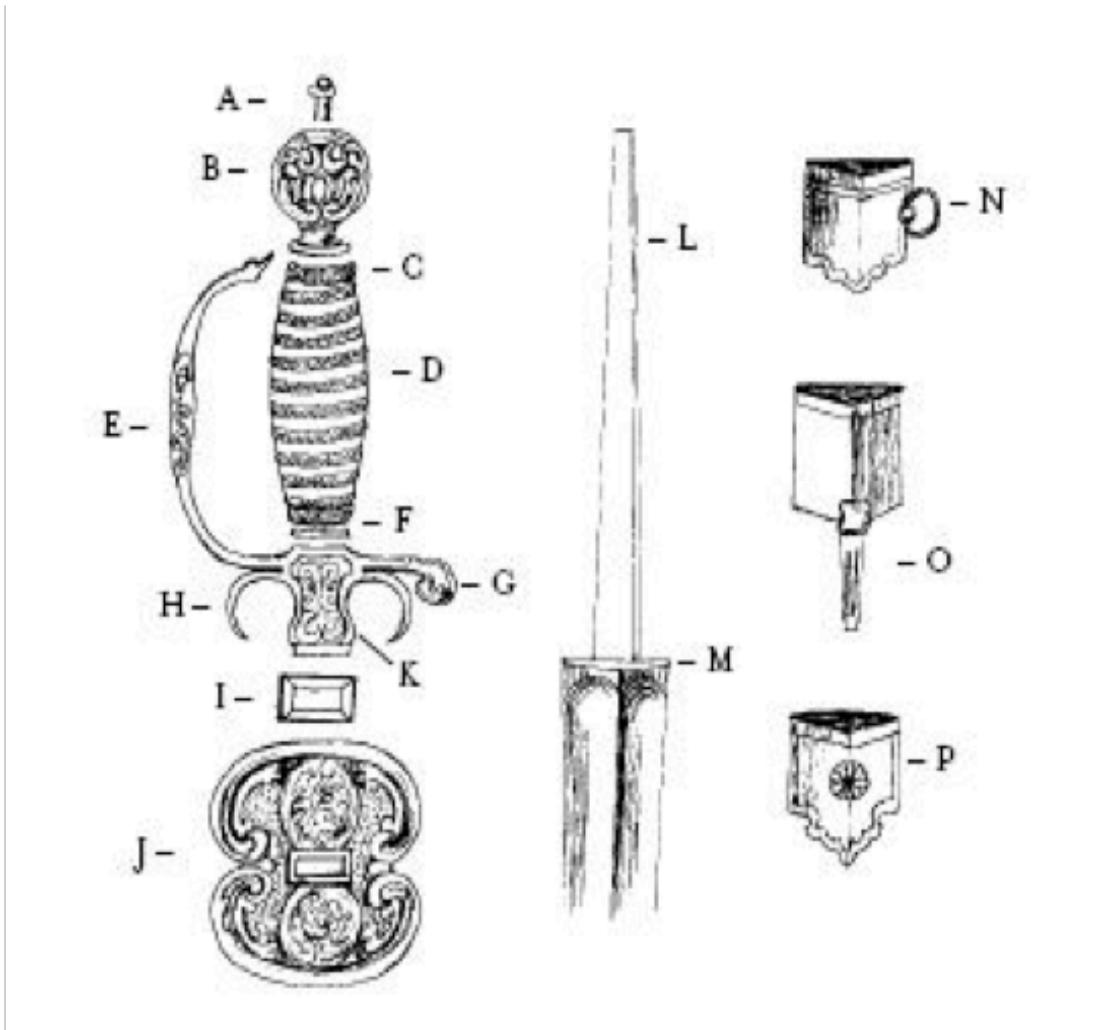
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## SMALLSWORD PARTS

*“There are only two forces in the world, the sword  
and the spirit. In the long run the sword will  
always be conquered by the spirit.”*

*Napoleon Bonaparte*

## THE SMALLSWORD



- A. Pommel nut
- B. Pommel
- C. Ferrule (Turk's head) on grip
- D. Grip
- E. Knuckle guard (knuckle bow)
- F. Grip washer
- G. Quillon connected to quillon block or cross
- H. Arms of the hilt
- I. Ricasso washer
- K. Ricasso
- J. Shell guard
- L. Tang of the blade

- M. Heel or shoulders of the blade
- N. Upper section of the furniture of the scabbard, mounted with a ring
- O. Upper section of the furniture of the scabbard, mounted with a hook
- P. Upper section of the furniture of the scabbard, mounted with a button

[Taken from "The School of Fencing"  
edited by Jared Kirby, 2005]

## The Smallsword

The weapon most linked to modern fencing, it is the deadliest of swords. Not particularly sharp along the first two-thirds of its blade, it is flexible in its upper third so it may bend and do more damage once it enters the body. A thrusting weapon.

The Smallsword is composed of two principle parts: the Blade and the Hilt.

- The Blade —made of steel with a variety of cross sections (typically triangular). The blade is divided into three distinct parts:

1. The Forte, that  $1/3$  of the blade closest to the guard which is the strongest part.

2. The Middle, the place of the blade that delineates its equal division.

3. The Foible, which is the weakest part.

- The Hilt — is composed of three parts:

1. The Guard (Coquille), can be in a variety of shapes such as round, oval, solid figure-eight or hollow figure-eight.

2. The Grip or Handle, is straight and may have a variety of wrappings (leather, wire, etc). It should be of a length to position the pommel at the wrist of the swordsman.

3. The Pommel (Pommeau), holds the weapon together and serves as a counter-weight.

Many of the terms used in Smallsword fighting can be found in the Glossary.



# THE GLOSSARY

*“The sword is the axis of the world and its power  
is absolute.”*

*Charles de Gaulle*

*A few notes on these definitions.*

*First, a massive heap of gratitude to Dale Girard, who compiled the vast majority of these terms for his marvelous *Fight Master's Companion*. His work is meant as a reference guide for theatrical fight directors. I have done my level best to remove theatrical terms from the text, but there may be a stray allusion to a John Wayne punch or Errol Flynn-style swordplay. That said, with so many years covered, the numbering system most often referenced is the modern accepted one, purely for ease of understanding.*

*Secondly, the Romans. I love Rome, and certainly I don't want to ignore the Romans. But were I to include every Roman military and gladiatorial term, this volume would be three times the size. This collection of terms is primarily focused on Medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment combat. There are a few basic words such as *Gladius* here, but for the most part I have avoided the Romans, who should (and probably do) have their own volume.*

*Thirdly, the Germans. While so many of the fightbooks we have today were written by Germans, and therefore use German terms, seldom do those terms reach the mainstream of the fighting world. Thus for this volume I have kept mostly to the language of the sword - Romance languages. We may well be forced to release a separate volume for just the Germanic terms.*

*For the rest, enjoy.*

-DB

# A

**A PROPOS:** An opportune moment to launch an attack.

**ABATE:** a.) To beat the edge or point of a blade back; to turn the edge, to take off the edge, to blunt. A dulled, blunted or rebated blade. b.) To beat down, throw down, demolish, or destroy. c.) To bring down (a person) physically, socially, or mentally; to depress, humble, degrade; to cast down, and/or deject.

**ABSENCE OF BLADES:** a.) A state in which the sword blades are not in contact. See *Free*. b.) (also *Absence of the Blade*) An event where blade contact is avoided, either deliberately by refusal to engage, or in deceiving the opponent's attempt to find the blade.

**ABUSE:** Offense, insult, injury.

**ACCOMPLICE:** (also *Complice*) Cooperator, fellow in arms.

**ACCOMPLISH:** To equip or be armed perfectly.

**ACHIEVE:** To gain or succeed; to kill, to finish.

**ACQUIRED PARRY:** Another name for the Circular or Counter Parry due to the practice necessary to master the action.

**ACROSS:** a.) The mark of an unskilled tilter who, instead of delivering a "head on" hit with the point of the lance, breaks the lance "across" his opponents breast plate. In tilting it was thought disgraceful to break the lance across the body of the adversary, instead of by the push of the point. b.) Said of any guard in swordplay that aligns the blade of the weapon across the body, directing its point to the side opposite which the hand and hilt are placed.

**ADJUDICATE:** To act as a judge, or court of judgment.

**ADJUDICATION:** The act of adjudging or determining the quality or state of something.

**ADJUDICATOR:** One who determines the quality or state of something, or awards the

prize in a competition. A judge.

**ADJUSTMENT STEP:** a.) A small step intended to correct or realign the feet. Usually done very quickly. i.e. Recovery Forward from a Wide Stance. b.) Any step that is not part of a step definition or choreography and is performed for the explicit reason to fix a problem with either distance or angle.

**ADVANCE:** (also *Fencing Step*) Footwork carrying the body forward by moving the lead foot first, followed with the lag foot (without crossing them). The opposite of *Retreat*. "The act of stepping forward toward your adversary, while on guard; the left foot instantly following the right so as that your primitive posture is still preserved."

**ADVANCE-LUNGE:** See *Patinando*.

**Adversary:** An opponent or antagonist in single combat.

**AFFONDO:** (It.) An extending step thrust. See *Lunge*.

**AFFRONT:** To face one's opponent in defiance. To stand.

**A-FIELD:** (also *Afield*) a.) On or in the field of battle. b.) To or into the field; hence, to battle.

**AFTER-CUT:** A cut on the riposte. See *Riposte*.

**AGGRESSOR:** The person who sets upon, attacks, or assails another; the one executing the violent action.

**AIDS:** (Also *Last Fingers*) The last three fingers on the sword hand which assist or aid the manipulators (thumb and forefingers).

**AIM:** a.) To point or direct a weapon. b.) The direction of a missile or of anything compared with it. c.) The point or target to which a weapon or missile is directed. d.) To cry "aim" is an expression borrowed from archery to encourage the archers by crying out aim, when they were about to shoot, and then in a general sense to applaud, to encourage with cheers.

**ALA STOCCATA:** (It.) At the thrust.

**ALARM:** (Also *Alarum*) a.) Originating from the cry of a medieval Italian sentry, who, upon spotting the approach of an enemy,

would call out *All'arme!* literally meaning "To arms!" Anglicized originally to *Alarme*, the actual cry or call to arms, finally becoming the name of the call itself. b.) A summon to arms, notice of approaching danger. c.) To call to arms, to combat. d.) A state of war, hostile attack. e.) Combat, contention.

**ALERT:** A term derived from the Italian *all'erta*, *erta* meaning watchtower, hence, on watch.

**ALIGNMENT:** Essentially good posture, where the various parts of the body - head, shoulders, arms, ribs, hips, legs, feet - are all in correct relative position to one another. Proper alignment (sitting or standing) serves as the axis from which all movement begins.

**AL LA MACCHIA:** (*ala mazza*) Renaissance term for a less-formal rough-and-tumble duel "out in the woods", often by groups as well as individuals.

**ALTA GUARDIA:** Alferi's term for *Prima Guardia*.

**ALTA LINEA:** (It.) See *High Line*.

**ALTO:** (It.) Used in reference to the target at the upper part of the opponent's body; at the shoulder or chest level.

**AMBUSCADO:** An ambush, snare, trap; a surprise attack.

**AMBUSH:** a.) A covert to surprise the enemy. b.) The troops or persons posted in a concealed place.

**ANGELO SLIP:** A Slip Right which is preceded by a small lateral step with the right foot to the right.

**ANGRIFF:** (Ger.) See *Attack*.

**ANNELETS:** A term for the "arms-of-the-hilt", protective quillons rings over the *ricasso*.

**ANNEU:** The side-ring (ring guard or "port") on a compound-hilt.

**ANSWER:** a.) A Riposte. b.) To meet an aggressor in a fight; to return a hostile action.

**ANSWERING BEAT:** See *Return Beat*.

**APPEL:** (Fr.) (Literally "a call") a.) A stamping or slapping of the floor with the sole of the lead foot generally executed immediately before an attack or feint with the blade, often

accompanied by a loud shout. The action is highly characteristic of both the historic and modern Italian school of fence. b.) (Small Sword) "A sudden beat with your right foot, by raising and letting it fall on the same spot, previous to, or at the instant of, making a feint against an adversary; thereby startling him and obtaining some opening to deliver your intended thrust."

**APPUNTATA:** (It.) A remise made in the lunge position, coordinated with a tap of the front foot on the floor.

**ARM BAR:** A type of joint lock that immobilizes the arm, by trapping the hand or wrist and applying pressure to the elbow, or shoulder joint, bending the arm backward against itself.

**ARM LOCK:** A hold applied to the arm to immobilize it, or as a lever to be used for a throw. Generally seen with the arm bent and held behind the victim's back. See *Joint Lock* and *Arm Throw*.

**ARM THROW:** a.) A wrestling or grappling technique that uses the aggressor's arm for leverage in order to take them off balance and bring them down from an erect or standing position. b.) The use of the arm or a part thereof as the fulcrum for a throw in wrestling or judo. To throw (an adversary) by a maneuver in which the arm is used. See also *Arm Bar* and *Arm Lock*. c.) See *Irish Whip*.

**ARM(S):** Equipment of war, both offensive and defensive; things used in combat. a.) "In arms" - sword in hand; ready to fight. b.) To furnish with weapons of offense or defense; to take up arms; to arm oneself. c.) The exercise or employment of arms; war; combat. d.) The statutes about the use of arms and the use of arms and the forms of dueling. e.) The practice or profession of arms. f.) An armed knight; a soldier; a knight. g.) To furnish with anything that will add strength or security. h.) Heraldic insignia, i.e. "Coat of Arms."

**ARMS-OF-THE-HILT:** The finger rings extending from the quillons to the blade, often attached to a ring guard, they are mistakenly

often called the *pas d'ane* although this has long been proved incorrect.

**ARMED:** Furnished with arms or armor; equipped for combat or war. Hence the term "Armed to the teeth" used to describe one who is fully or completely prepared for battle.

**ARM-GAUNT:** Being said of a horse that has been made lean by bearing arms in battle; hence, warlike, high-spirited.

**ARMING SWORD:** (Also *Armying Sword*) A cut and thrust fighting sword; part of a knight's equipment for war.

**ARMOR:** (U.S.) See *Armour*.

**ARMOUR:** (also *Armor*) a.) The habit worn to protect the body in battle.

b.) The whole apparatus of war, offensive as well as defensive arms.

**ARMOURER:** (also *Armorer*) a.) Manufacturer of weapons. b.) Someone who has care of the arms and dresses their master in armor.

**ARMOURY:** (Also *Armory*) Place where instruments of war are deposited.

**ARMS OF THE HILT:** See *Pas d'Ane*.

**ARNIS:** (Ph.) (also *Escrima* and *Kali*) The martial art of the Philippines. When the Philippines were invaded by the Spanish in 1521, the invaders, although armed with the sword and dagger, required guns to subdue their fierce opponents. The deadly fighting skills of Filipino warriors nearly overwhelmed them, and they dubbed the native fighting style *escrima*; meaning skirmish. *Escrima* was subsequently outlawed, but the techniques did not disappear. The conquered people disguised their art and practiced it in private and in the form of religious plays, known as *moro-moro*. The climax of these plays were often mock battles with blades of some kind. The blade fighting forms and footwork of these "mock" combats were identical to those used in *escrima*. These plays featured Filipinos, sometimes costumed as Spanish soldiers wearing *Arnes*, the harnesses worn for armor. The "*arnis de mano*" expression is said to have come from the Spanish description of this leather harnesses used by the *moro-moro* ac-

tors. The word *arnes* soon became corrupted to *arnis*, and the name stuck. "*Arnis de Mano*" now literally means "hand art." The ban on the practice of *arnis* and *escrima* has of course been lifted, and the art has flourished in its homeland. *Arnis* eventually came to the west, some of its practices introduced by Bruce Lee. Many *arnis* techniques being incorporated into his own style *Jeet kune do*. Historically, *arnis* incorporated three related methods: *espada y daga* (rapier and dagger), which employs a long blade and short dagger in the old Spanish style; *solo baston* (single stick); and *sinawali* (to weave), which uses two sticks of single length, twirled in a "weaving" fashion for blocking and striking (the term derives from *sinawali*, the bamboo matting woven in the Philippines). It is the patterns of *sinawali* that makes *arnis* different from western styles of swordplay. Like the Elizabethan form of rapier, and rapier and dagger, however, counter attacks are a general practice. The mere avoidance of an attack is seen as futile. If you avoid one attack, another is sure to follow. It is better to counter at the same time, to foil any further attacks. Unlike judo and karate, there are no fixed or exacting stances or footwork in *arnis*. The knees are slightly bent with the weight often balanced on the balls of the feet. The combatant flows from one position to another, always balanced and centered. The essence of *arnis* is not prearranged, but instant adaptation to change.

**ARREBATAR:** (Sp.) A cutting attack from the shoulder with the entire arm. See *Shoulder Cut*.

**ARRESTSTOSS:** (Ger.) See *Stop Thrust*.

**ARRET:** A *Stop Thrust* or *Stop Cut*.

**ARTICULATION OF MOVEMENT:** To form or fit individual actions into a systematic whole while maintaining the clarity of their individual purpose.

**ARTICULATION:** Specific movement created by the bending and flexible certain joints.

**ARTE DELLO SPADONE:** Fiore Dei Liberi's

name for his craft of the long-sword, symbolized by four virtues or qualities as represented by the Wolf (carefulness or prudence), the Tiger (swiftness or speed), the Lion (courage or bravery), and the Elephant (strength).

**ASCENT:** (*Small Sword*) "The act of the wrist's ascending inwards, on performing the parades of carte, semicircle, and prime."

**ASSAIL:** To attack.

**ASSALTO:** (It.) An attack.

**ASSASSIN:** a.) A term derived from the Arabic *hashishin*, literally meaning "hashish eater." During the First Crusade a band of men were brought together under the leadership of a young Iranian student, Hassan ben Sabah, who titled himself "Sheikh al Jebal," and who took it upon himself to start a holy war against the Crusaders and other Christians. The men were fanatical killers, motivated more from personal gains than religious zeal. The reward for a job well done was the administering of "a certain potion," says Marco Polo, "which cast them into a deep sleep, and when they awoke, they found themselves in a garden, all full of ladies and damsels, who dallied with them to their heart's content, so that they would have what all young men would have." The potion given to these men was hashish, hence the term hashish eaters. b.) One who undertakes to put another to death by treacherous violence. The term retains so much of its original application as to be used chiefly of the murderer of a public personage, who is generally hired or devoted to the deed, and aims purely at the death of his victim.

**ASSAULT:** a.) A violent informal bout between fencers, with the intention to injure one another. b.) (*Small Sword*) "Where you engage an adversary with foils, as is single combat with swords, using such efforts and academical rules, either offensive or defensive, as your judgment may direct, for the purpose of succeeding in the execution of your designs, or in baffling those of your adversary." c.) Attack; onset. d.) A fencing bout

(generally in an exhibition) performed without keeping score.

**ASSAY:** To test the composition of an ore or metal, hence, to try the 'metal' of anyone in a fight. a.) To assault or attack someone. b.) A challenge.

**ASSEMBLY:** The term used by Errol Flynn for the *Corps-a-Corps*, particularly the Rabbit Ears Grasp.

**ASSISTED HEAVY PARRY:** The action of a parry, joined by a second weapon into a Heavy Parry; both weapons taking the opposing blade to the floor.

**ASYMMETRY:** A lack of proportion or balance in time, space or energy, opposed to conventional balance.

**ATAJO:** (Sp.) In the Spanish schools, the idea of taking control of the opponent's blade, essentially a *prise de fer*.

**A-TILT:** To run, ride, or perform in a joust or tournament; an encounter on horseback with the thrust of a lance. "Breake a Launce, and runne a-Tilt at Death."

**ATTACK INTO THE ATTACK:** (also *Time Hit*) To attack one's opponent as they begin an attack.

**ATTACK OF FORCE:** See *Attack on the Blade*.

**ATTACK ON PREPARATION:** An offense that is made as the opponent prepares their attack, whether the preparation is made with the sword or footwork, separately or together.

**ATTACK ON THE BLADE:** (also *Attacks of Force*) a.) Actions used to remove or displace the opponent's blade before an effective offensive action can be launched. Attacks on the Blade are generally broken into three major categories; Beats, Pressures and Flowing. b.) Offensive actions made against an opponent's weapon. These may include the Beat, Bind, Coule (Glide), Croise, Envelopment, Froissement, and Press. c.) Actions used to remove or displace the opposing blade before an effective offensive action can be launched. These may include any Prises de Fer (Bind, Envelopment, and Croisé) as well as a Glissade, Beat or Press.

**ATTACK WITH OPPOSITION:** An attack maintaining a strong controlled contact with the opponent's blade which may deflect it out of line.

**ATTACK, COMPOUND:** (*Small Sword*) "The offensive attempts against an adversary, by deceiving with feints, counter disengagements, glizades and repelling every feint and thrust he may attempt against you." See also *Compound Attack*.

**ATTACK, SIMPLE:** (*Small Sword*) "The offensive attempts against your adversary, when engaged in an assault, by simple moverments." See also *Simple Attack*.

**ATTACK:** a.) A simple or compound offensive action intended to hit one's opponent. b.) The act of falling upon with force and/or arms; an onset; an assault.

**ATTACO:** (It.) See *Attack*.

**ATTAQUE SIMPLE:** (Fr.) See *Simple Attack*.

**ATTAQUE:** (Fr.) See *Attack*.

**AUSFALL:** (Ger.) see *Lunge*.

**AUSTRALIAN COUPÉ:** A movement that takes the blade around ("Down under") the partner's blade point in the Low line. Also see *Coupe*.

**AVANCÉS:** The targets of one's opponent nearest to you; the sword arm and lead leg.

**AVANTAGE:** The slight bow or bend in the foible of a fencing blade which "trains" the blade to give on a hit rather than pierce, allowing the blade to arch as denoted in the classically executed hit.

**AVOIDANCE:** A movement of the body and/or feet backward or to the side in order to dodge an attack. See also *Slipping a Punch*.

**AX KICK:** (also *Axe Kick*) A descending vertical or diagonal kick generally associated with the martial arts that strikes downward with the heel much like a blow with an ax.

**AZIONI VOLANTI:** Avoiding blade contact on the attack and instead thrusting by deceptive motion.

## B

**BACK BLOW:** (also *Backe Blow*) A backhanded cutting attack prescribed by early seventeenth century fencing master Joseph Swetnam which was delivered from the left the height of the left shoulder to either the right side of the head or the right leg. The attack could be made two ways, either as a simple straight attack ("a plaine Dunstable way") from left to right, or with a feint to the left changed to a backhanded strike with a molinello around the head. Swetnam deemed the back blow from the feint attack the best of the two. See also *Cross Blow*.

**BACK STANCE:** (also *Back-stance*) (MA) An offensive or defensive stance in which the majority of the body weight is taken on the rear foot. The front foot may lie flat, or the heel may be raised off the floor.

**BACK:** a.) The "back" or false edge of a blade. b.) The rear or dorsal part of the human body. Generally used in reference to the rear portion of the upper torso. c.) The rear of an army. d.) Said originally of a sword or knife that was of good and solid steel from its true edge to its back, hence, said of a man, true and solid, front to back. e.) To go, or cause to go, backward or in reverse. See *Backpedal*.

**BACKE PACE:** Di Grassi's term for a passing step backward. "The like is ment by the pace that is made directly backwardes: but this backe pace is framed more often streight then croked." See *Pass Back*.

**BACK-EDGE:** See *False Edge*.

**BACKPEDAL:** a.) The checking of a forward movement, the reversing of an action. b.) To travel backward from an opponent, or opponents, through passing steps or consecutive retreats, though still facing them. c.) (*Boxing*) To withdraw from conflict or combat; running or moving backward. "They sprout

bad punching habits while concentrating on blocking, parrying, back-peddalling and the like.”

**BACKSTEPPE:** In English swordplay, a simple step backward with the rear leg, sometimes followed by the lead leg.

**BACKSWORD GUARD:** a.) The guard or hilt of a back-sword. See *Backsword*. b.) An offensive/defensive posture assumed with the back-sword. A ward in back-sword play. c.) The specific ward prescribed by early seventeenth century fencing master Joseph Swetnam for back-sword play. “Carrie your Sword-hilt out at the armes end, and your point leaning or sloping toward your left shoulder, but not joyning with your enemies weapon, . . . but so long as you lie in your guard, let there be three foote distance betwixt your weapons, but if your enemy do charge you, either with blow or thrust, carrie your Sword over your bodie against your enemies assault, and so crosse with him according to the Picture, beare also your point stodie over your bodie, something sloping towards your left shoulder; I meane the point must goe so farre as the hilt . . .” d.) An alternate term for the Castle-Guard as taught by English Fight Master Joseph Swetnam. See *Castle-Guard*.

**BACKSWORD MAN:** (also *Backswordsmen*) A person who fences or fights with the back-sword; one who prefers the style or use of a backsword.

**BACKSWORD:** A popular eighteenth century contesting sword similar in style to a basket-hilted claymore, with a single cutting edge where the false or back edge is blunted except for a few inches at the tip, where it is double edged. Also sometimes referring to a stick with a basket-hilt used instead of the sword in practice.

**BACKSWORDING:** a.) The practice of the backsword. b.) Cutting attacks delivered from the elbow or wrist, made with the false or back edge of the blade.

**BACKWARD LUNGE:** (also *Echappement*) An

evasive by distance which removes the body from cutting attacks across the belly or chest with grand lunge straight backward. The action does not lower the body into a duck or surrendering ground to one’s opponent.

**BACK-WOUNDING:** Wounding in the back or from behind; back stabbing.

**BALANCE:** a.) A state of equilibrium where the combatant’s weight is equally divided between both feet. See *Center*. b.) The total composition of a scene so that it is esthetically pleasing to the observer.

**BALDRIC:** A belt or girdle of the Baroque period, usually of leather and richly ornamented, that hung from one shoulder, across the chest and under the opposite arm, usually from the right shoulder to the left hip, supporting the wearer’s sword and scabbard.

**BALESTRA:** (It.) (also *Jump-Lunge*) A compound piece of footwork designed to quickly cover a great deal of ground by combining a jump forward and the grand lunge. There are two counts in this action; one (jump), two (lunge). The first action leading instantly into the second. The Balestra is an aggressive action generally meant to end with an attack. This term suggests the historic link between fencing and the formal ballet, which is said to have been influenced by the fencing positions.

**BALISONG:** (also *Filipino Butterfly Knife* and *Butterfly Knife*) Literally translated, “bali” means to break, and “sung” means horn. The early handles were carved out of animal horns. This was the “broken horn” knife. The original knife took its name from a small barrio called Balisung, in the Batangas region of the Philippines. The people of that town are noted solely for producing this knife. The knife is one of the ancient weapons of Arnis, the ancestral art of the Malaya-Polynesian fighting systems. It is a non-typical folding knife with two half-handles that safely store the blade when closed and can be quickly pivoted around to form a sturdy grip. See *Butterfly Knife*.

**BALLESTRA LUNGE:** See *Balestra*.

**BALLOW:** A provincialism for cudgel.

**BANDEROLE:** (also *Bannerole* and *Bandarole*) A small ornamental streamer, with cleft end, that attached to the lance of a knight.

**BANDEROLE:** (Fr.) A diagonally executed chest cut.

**BANDITTO:** (also *Bandetto*) Outlaw, robber.

**BANG:** a.) A stroke or blow. b.) To beat, thump; to strike.

**BARBED:** Having the breast and flank protected by armor.

**BARD:** (also *Barbe*) a.) Full horse armor, which could include a shaffron, crinet, peytral, crupper and flankchards. b.) Armor composed of metal plates. c.) A common slang name for William Shakespeare - "The Bard."

**BARDED:** a.) To be armed, or in armor composed of metal plates. b.) A horse armed and ready for battle.

**BARGE:** To bump heavily into someone or something. To knock roughly against; to go roughly and heavily through or into someone or something.

**BARONIAL HALL:** A term for a sequence of parries and ripostes executed with restrictive footwork as if the routine were being executed atop a long narrow table like that which would be found in "Baronial Hall." The footwork consists of breaking an advance or retreat into two separate actions so that the attack and parry can be executed on the extension of one foot and the riposte on the recovery. The action is also known as the Errol Flynn "Tah-Tahs." The vocalized rhythm of the "tah-tah" indicates the count for the two actions of parry and riposte on one piece of footwork. The action is an old cinematic swashbuckling technique, but is still used at times in modern theatrical swordplay.

**BAROQUE:** a.) An excessively ornate style of architectural decoration which arose in Italy in the late Renaissance and became prevalent in Europe during the 18th century. b.)

This term and rococo are not infrequently used without distinction for styles of fight choreography characterized by excessive flourishes, oddity of combinations, or eccentric guards, parries, postures and so on.

**BARRAGE:** A succession of offensive action, with or without a weapon, by one combatant against another. Usually these actions are hard and fast.

**BASE FOOT:** The foot used for support or balance while the other is used in some technique such as a kick, flip or throw.

**BASE:** A term used for a strong placement of the feet for centered movement. See *Four-Point Stance*.

**BASKET-HILT:** (also *Basket Hilt*) a.) The most common cavalry sword of the seventeenth century consisting of narrow plates of steel curved into a shape resembling a basket, designed to provide defense for the combatant's hand. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century it was considered "crude" in form in comparison to the rapier. Thus, it was often given to comic characters on stage. The educated gentleman now accepted the rapier and by this period the broadsword was the stage weapon of oafs and clowns. In Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Faire*, the clown character of Cokes carries a basket hilt, and in *A Tale of a Tub*, Jonson has gone as far as to name one of his more doltish characters "Basket Hilts." b.) Used as a term of contempt, suggesting a swordsman whose sword, and hence style were old-fashioned. "a worn-out practicer of sword-tricks."

**BASSA LINEA:** (It.) See *Low Line*.

**BASSO:** (It.) Literally "low" or "lowered." Generally used in reference to the lowest immediate target on the opponent's body; at the thigh or knee.

**BASTARD GARDANT WARD:** George Silver's term for a ward in short sword play assumed like a low Seconda or Terza across, but with the point angled down towards the combatant's left foot. The ward is not to be used in

general blade-play, but is intended for the specific purpose of engaging the opposing blade with a parry and close for a disarm or other in fighting technique. “. . . bastard gardant fyght wch is to Carrye yor hand & hylt below yor hed, brest hye or lower wt yor poynt downward towarde yor left foote, this bastard gardant ward is not to be used in fyght, except it be to Crosse yor enemyes Ward at his comynge in to take the grype of him or such other advancement, as in divrs placs of ye sword fyght is set forth.”

**BASTARD SWORD:** (also *Hand-and-a-Half Sword*) A contemporary term, now used to describe a sword that may be wielded by one or both hands.

**BASTINADO:** To beat or cudgel.

**BATE:** a.) A quarrel or fight. b.) To beat back or blunt the edges of a blade or weapon. A blunted or dulled weapon; rebated. c.) To reduce, remit or undervalue.

**BATE-BREEDING:** (also *Breed-bate*) Occasioning quarrels.

**BATELESS:** Not to be blunted.

**BATTAILE AXE:** See *Battle Axe*.

**BATTEMENT:** (Fr.) A beat attack. See *Beat*.

**BATTER:** To beat with successive blows, and hence to bruise, to shake, to demolish.

**BATTERY:** a.) Assailing with blows. b.) Unlawful beating of another. c.) A grouping of artillery pieces for tactical purposes. d.) A term for the guns of a warship.

**BATTLE-AXE:** (also *Battle-Ax*) A heavy axe used in combat to crash and split the opponent's armor.

**BATTRE DE MAIN:** (Fr.) To parry with the hand. See *Hand Parry*.

**BATTUTA KLINGENSCHLAG:** (Ger.) See *Beat*.

**BATTUTA:** a.) (It.) A distracting smack to move the adversary's blade off line or evoke a response. See *Beat*. b.) Muslim traveler and explorer of the 14th century.

**BEAR HUG:** A grasp or hold made upon an opponent where both arms are wrapped about their torso (often pinning the victim's arms at their side), generally executed from

behind.

**BEAT ATTACK:** (also *Battrement*) A controlled tap with the forte or middle part of one's blade against the middle or weak part of the opponent's blade to remove a threat, open a line for attack, or to provoke a reaction. An action that deflects the opponent's weapon in preparation for either an offensive or defensive action. See also *Beat*.

**BEAT AWAY DISARM:** A disarm executed by using the mechanics of the beat away. The disarm may be secure or loose, but is more frequently secured.

**BEAT AWAY:** (also *Quillon Bash*) A type of beat attack that knocks the opposing blade away after the successful completion of a blocking parry. Not a beat parry, this is an aggressive action with the hilt of the sword and not the forte of the blade. After the opposing blade has been stopped by a successful parry, and while it remains engaged, the hilt of the sword is punched towards the parried blade. The marked action of the hand and hilt deflects the opposing blade by “bashing” or knocking it aside.

**BEAT OUT:** See *Beat Parry*.

**BEAT PARRY:** a.) A parry made by striking the opponent's blade sharply aside, removing the attacking blade and allowing for a immediate riposte. As the blades are about to join, the hand and wrist of the parry punches out about two to four inches, deflecting the opposing blade by “striking” it sharply aside. The beat must be executed at the last possible moment. This form of parry and immediate riposte seems to be in keeping with the references to the parry offered in period fencing manuals. b.) A defensive action of the blade that breaks an attack by knocking the opposing weapon out, away from its intended target. “Therefore all blowes shalbe beaten outwards toward that side or parte of the bodie which is leas to the end it may the sooner avoide daunger. And those blowes that come on the right side must be beaten towards the right side:

and those on the left side must in like manner be voided from the same side.”

**BEAT THROUGH:** a.) A Beat Parry executed with an Expulsion. b.) A parry in which the defending blade parries, knocks the opposing blade aside, and moves into preparation for a cutting attack in one action. c.) A *Beat Aside* or *Shunt* executed from the horizontal, high-line parry of five.

**BEAT TO THE PUNCH:** An expression in boxing and pugilism used for a form of “time,” where a combatant hits an opponent first, although the opponent’s punch started at the same time, or even before. See also *Stop-Hit* or *Counter Punch*.

**BEAT:** a.) A sharp, controlled tap against the middle or weak part of the opponent’s blade to open a line of attack or to provoke a reaction. See *Beat Attack*. b.) (*Small Sword*) “(in the French *batre*) Is particularly applied to the act of abruptly striking, with the fort of your blade, the foible of your adversary’s, so as to embarrass him and get openings to thrust.” c.) To strike, knock, or batter. d.) To drive a person back, away, off, from, to, into, or out of, a place or thing with repeated blows. e.) To drive a person back, away, off, from, to, into, or out of, a place or thing with arms or else by superior force. f.) To conquer in combat or at play.

**BEAT-ASIDE:** (also *Rising* or *Intercept Parry*) A defensive action that beats the offensive blade aside during the execution of an attack. This parry is generally used in defense against a descending vertical or diagonal cutting attack. The defending blade is brought up to intercept the attacking blade and knock it aside before it lands on its “intended” target.

**BEAT-AWAY:** A defensive action made with the sword which literally smacks into the attacking blade and knocks it away.

**BEATING THE BIND:** (also *Change Bind*) A beat attack executed by the victim of a bind by disengaging around the aggressor’s guard, in the same direction as the bind, and then

instantly snapping their blade against the middle or foible of the opponent’s blade, beating it blade aside.

**BEATING:** a.) To deliver blows; to strike repeatedly. b.) Receiving blows, a cudgeling.

**BEATS:** Attacks on the blade that utilize percussive shock to laterally remove the opposing weapon.

**BEAVER:** (also *Bevor*, *Bavier* or *Buffe*) a.) The lower portion of the face-guard of a helmet, when worn with a visor, occasionally serving the purpose of both. b.) Sometimes used as a term for the entire helmet.

**BEFORE:** Referring to the dagger placement in a cross parry where the dagger is situated to the front of the rapier, on the side towards the other combatant. Opposite of *Behind*.

**BEHIND:** Referring to the dagger placement in a cross parry where the dagger is situated to the back of the rapier, being placed on the side away from the other combatant. Opposite of *Before*.

**BELL:** a.) The body of a helmet. A possible source for the term “having one’s bell rung.” Used as an expression indicating being struck up-side the head or helmet. b.) See *Bell-Guard*.

**BELL-GUARD:** The cup or bell shaped guard of the Spanish rapier; possibly deriving its name from not only from its bell like shape, but also the bell like sound it would emit upon being hit by the opponent’s blade.

**BELLY CUT:** An attack made with the edge of a bladed weapon, intended to land on, or cross the plane of, the recipient’s stomach. b.) A term used in sabre fencing for a cutting attack made to the non-weapon bearing side of the body at roughly waist level. In a proper on guard stance the foot of the weapon bearing side is carried forward, slightly turning the belly to the inside and exposing it to the cut more than the non-weapon bearing hip. Opposite of a *Flank Cut*.

**BELT:** a.) The imaginary line about a boxer’s

waist, at the approximate level a belt would be worn, at the level of the navel. Hitting below the belt is a foul in boxing. b.) To beat with, or as with, a belt. c.) A jarring blow. d.) See *Sword Belt*. e.) A distinct ranking within the Martial Arts designated by color.

**BENT ACTION:** A term used by George Silver for the condition of activity, at work, in practical or effective operation of the body and weapon that is inclined, or turned in some direction with impetus or concentrated energy. See also *Action*.

**BERSERK:** Originally a frenzied Viking warrior who entered into battle bare of any armor, wearing only a simple shirt or bearskin coat, his aim was the killing of as many enemy as possible with little regard to personal survival.

**BERSERKER:** a.) A wild Norse warrior of great strength and ferocious courage, who fought on the battle-field with a frenzied fury known as the "berserker rage." b.) Often applied to a lawless thug or highwayman. c.) Now used to describe a frenzied, furious, or madly violent person.

**BEST:** To have the advantage; the position of superiority in combat.

**BESTED:** To have been beaten; to have lost a battle, combat or contest.

**BESTRIDE:** a.) To stand over a fallen combatant and defend them. b.) To stand over a fallen opponent as their victor.

**BETHUMP:** To cuff.

**BICORNIO:** See *Posta di Bicornio* ("Two Horned Guard").

**BILBAO:** The Spanish town famed for its immaculate sword blades, at one time rivaling even those of Toledo.

**BILBO:** A blade, originally from the Spanish town Bilbao, known for its temper and elasticity; a well tempered sword. A test to establish the quality of such a blade was to see if it could be bent from hilt to point and then return to true.

**BILL:** a.) A military weapon, dating from the thirteenth century, used chiefly by the in-

fantry. Derived from a forest clearing tool, the bill varied in form from that of a simple concave blade with a long wooden haft, to one with a kind of concave ax with a spike at the back and its shaft terminating in a spear head. During the sixteenth and seventeenth century bills were often painted or varnished in different colors- hence 'brown bill.' b.) To post or issue a public challenge. c.) a formal posted announcement of an English student's public "Playing" of his "Prize".

**BIND AWAY:** (also *Throw Off*) An active bind that throws or flings away the opposing blade, and the combatant who wields it.

**BIND OVER:** An active bind that continues its circular path down to the floor. The action generally begins with a low line parry, followed by a dynamic bind that carries the blades up, over and down to the floor on the opposite side. The objective of this action is to disarm the opponent or to pin their weapon, making its immediate use impossible.

**BIND:** a.) A *pris d'fer* that carries the opposing weapon from a high line to a low line, and vice versa, diagonally across the line of engagement. The Bind can be executed both in a passive and active form. The passive action is executed from the hand and wrist with the forte of the blade against the opposing blades foible. An active bind can use the whole arm, controlling the opposing blade with the forte or mid-blade. b.) (Small Sword) "Binding the sword is the act of crossing your adversary's blade with pressing the fort of yours on the feeble of his, and by a sudden jerk of the wrist securing or binding his blade, so as to be covered either from a time thrust or an interchanged thrust. It is generally performed from the guard or engagement of carte, when your adversary holds his wrist low on guard. A thrust thus delivered on the act of binding, is termed the thrust of flanconnade." See *Flanconnade*.

**BINDUNG:** (Ger.) See *Bind*.

**BISH-BASH-BOSH:** A vocalized rhythm for swordplay used by the late English actor Sir Laurence Olivier.

**BITE THE BULLET:** Before the use of an-esthesia the military surgeon would give a wounded soldier a leaden musket ball to bite down on to keep the soldier from screaming, as the surgeon probed the wounds for bullets, amputated limbs, etc. It is believed that soldiers who were flogged for disciplinary reasons were also given a bullet to bite, hence the modern connotation of gritting your teeth and bearing a rather unpleasant situation.

**BITING:** A pinching, ripping or cutting attack made with the teeth, usually delivered to exposed skin or other such sensitive body areas.

**BLADE:** a.) The essential part of a cut and/or thrust weapon that covers its entire expanse, running through the hilt and extending from the guard to the extreme tip of the weapon. The basic blade is broken down into the following parts: tip, foible, middle, forte, shoulders and tang. Many blades, like the rapier, have a ricasso between the forte and tang. The cutting edge is divided into the true and false edge. The blade being the primary part of a weapon, it is often used as the name for the whole weapon. "The blade of a Sword or Foil is divided into three parts, viz. the forte, the middle and the foible; or the shoulder or strength, the middle, and the feeble; the hilt is at one extremity, and the point is at the other." b.) A term for a fencer or a swordsman.

**BLANK:** (also *Blank Cartridge*) Ammunition that contains paper or plastic in place of the bullet.

**BLEAR:** To blur or blind the eyes, to hood-wink or deceive.

**BLIND SIDE PUNCH:** See *Sucker Punch*.

**BLIND:** a.) A drunken bout or orgy; a binge. b.) To act without previous investigation of the circumstances; to plunge without regard

to the risks involved; i.e. "to go it blind." c.) The unguarded, weak or assailable side of a person or thing, weakness; i.e. Blind Side.

**BLOCK:** a.) An action used to stop or deflect an oncoming attack. Such actions can be made in four ways: 1 Opposition: where the defending hand or arm is brought up as a solid wall or shield against the attack; 2 Displace: where the defending hand or arm intercepts the attack and diverts or redirects the energy of the blow away from its intended target; 3 Beat: where the defending hand or arm deflects the attack by "striking" it sharply away from its intended target; 4 Offensive: where the defending hand or arm strike into the attack intending to hit and disable rather than block or displace. Any of these defensive actions can be made on either side of the body and in all lines. b.) (also *Parry*) A defensive action made with the hand or arm intended to stop a punch or similar attack. A block can be made on either side of the body and in all lines. These may be a Circular Block, Cross Block, Descending Block, Inside Block, Opposition Block, Outside Block, Parallel Block, Redirection Block, Rising Block, Transfer Block, Wing Block, or X Block. See *Parry*.

**BLOCKED PUNCH:** A move that deliberately stops the incoming punch. It can be executed either with one arm, or both, but should avoid striking bone, or the inner elbow joint, as this could cause the fist to continue traveling forward. Usually this move is executed with open palms, but also can be effective on the major muscle groups of the forearm.

**BLOCKING PARRY:** (also *Standard Parry*, *Opposition Parry* and *Parry by Opposition*) A parry made by moving the sword to close the line in which the opponent makes an attack. Such a parry is performed in double time with the parry as one action, separate from the second action of a counter attack or riposte. The defensive action, being separate, may be performed alone, without a riposte.

**BLOCKING:** a.) Laying out of action or movement in a scene with the actors and/or camera. b.) The defensive action of stopping or deflecting an attack. See *Parry*.

**BLOOD GROOVE:** (also *Blood Gutter*) A misnomer created to explain the grooving and/or fluting of a blade, which falsely supposed these grooves were devised to allow the blood to drain from one's opponent. See *Fuller* and *Fluted Blade*.

**BLOOD GUTTER:** See *Blood Groove*.

**BLOODY MARY:** A form of spring loaded switch-blade knife where the blade is housed in the grip and can be extended or retracted, like a sewing machine needle, with the flip of a switch.

**BLOSSE:** (Ger.) See *Opening*.

**BLOW:** Violent application of the hand, fist, or an offensive weapon.

**BLUNT:** Having no edge; a bated or dulled blade.

**BLUNTS:** Dull cut & thrust practice blades which were rebated (or "bated") with rounded edges and tips (they were sometimes called "foils" or "foiled blades").

**BOAR'S THRUST:** An attack devised in the late seventeenth century by fencing master Donald McBane. The Boar's thrust was only used by McBane "when he had a mind to kill," being a thrust punched upward into the body after the sword hand was suddenly dropped to the level of his knee.

**BOAR'S TOOTH:** See *Posta di Dente Chingiale*.

**BOB AND WEAVE:** A boxing term for an evasive action that combines the techniques of a duck and a slip. The "bob" is used to avoid a head punch, and the fighter bobs forward and down, toward the aggressor. The "weave" is the circling of the body to the left or right, usually in the direction the punch. Immediately after completion the fighter should be ready to counter-punch. Such a technique can be accompanied by footwork, but it is not essential to the action.

**BOB:** a.) To drub, to thump. b.) To move up and down, jerkily or repeatedly.

**BODKIN:** a.) A short pointed weapon; a dagger, poniard, stiletto, lancet. b.) An arrow point designed for piercing armor.

**BODY BLOW:** Any attack, armed or unarmed, that is landed, or appears to land, to the body of a fighter.

**BOLT:** a.) A short arrow with a quarrel at one end. Commonly used in the cross-bow.

**BOTTA:** (It.) An attack from its beginning to its completion; a blow or thrust.

**BOTTA DRITTA:** (It.) *botta*, blow or thrust, *dritta*, right/right hand. a.) A pronated thrust from the right; the straight thrust.

**BOTTE DE PAYSAN:** A two-handed stab made by grabbing the blade near the middle with the free hand and closing-in to knock aside an opponent's weapon.

**BOTTA-IN-TEMPO:** ("attack in time") An attack while the adversary's preoccupied with a parry, bind, or feint.

**BOTTA LUNGA:** (It.) (also *Grand Lunge*) (Literally "Elongated Blow") The classical movement which replaced passing (as a means of reaching an opponent and attacking them) early in the seventeenth century. The lead foot being propelled forward (as far as the combatant can conveniently manage) by straightening the lag leg. The sword arm is thrust forward, the rear arm is snapped backward, and the trunk and pelvis are turned slightly forward. The honor of having first described the grand lunge goes to Giganti, however, Capo Ferro explained the mechanics of the lunge in greater detail, fixing the principles of the science, making him the founder of the modern school of fence.

**BOTTA SEGRETE:** (It.) The "secret attack." Most masters of the sixteenth century Italian school claimed to have developed a secret attack to which there was no possible defense. No such attack ever existed, or has hence been discovered, but much like the philosopher's stone and the fountain of

youth the secret attack was believed in, and thus these secret attacks were often sold, for a great price, to “select” students.

**BOTTE SECRETE:** See *Botta Segrete*.

**BOTTOM MAN:** See *Base Man*.

**BOUT:** a.) The spell of activity between two fencers engaged in personal combat. b.) The spell of activity between any two combatants, boxers, pugilists, etc. c.) A wrestling match ending in a decisive fall.

**BOX DRILL:** a.) A drill or exercise that takes a series of attacks through the parry pattern of the Defensive Box. See also *Offensive/Devensive Drill*. b.) A drill or exercise consisting of cutting attacks delivered to the four points of the Box Target (right and left chest, and the right and left hip or thigh.)

**BOX TARGET:** A target system in on-line swordplay with four on-line body targets that when joined with imaginary lines form a box. These targets are generally right and left chest and right and left thigh. The right chest is parried by 3 or 6 the left chest by 4, the thighs parried on the right by 2 or 8, and on the left by 1 or 7. The box target, like all on-line targets, are for point-work.

**BOX:** a.) To strike or punch with the hand; to fight with fists; a slap, strike, blow, cuff or punch with the hands or fists. b.) See *Boxing*. c.) See *Defensive Box*. d.) See *Box Target*.

**BOXER:** One who engages in boxing; a professional fighter; a pugilist.

**BOXING:** The action of fighting with fists; now usually applied to a pugilistic encounter in which the hands are covered with well-padded leather gloves. The art or sport of fist fighting; pugilism.

**BRABBLE:** To quarrel about trifles; a noisy quarrel or brawl.

**BRABBLER:** A brawler or quarreler; a noisy fellow; a ruffian.

**BRACE:** A term for a part of the suit of armor referred to as the vantbrace.

**BRAIN:** To kill a person with a blow or stroke, of the hand or with a weapon, that caves in the skull; literally beating out the

brains.

**BRANDISH:** To shake, to flourish a sword, dagger or like weapon.

**BRAQUEMAR:** A term applied to many broad bladed swords.

**BRAVAZZO:** (also *Branando*) A swashbuckler, a swaggerer, a cutter, quarreller, rostier, raffine, ruffian.

**BRAWL:** a.) A noisy quarrel; a row; a squabble. b.) Brandle, also a dance.

**BRAWLER:** a.) One who participates in a brawl. b.) A term in boxing for a fighter who uses a very physical approach that includes leaning on his opponent, muscling in, and sometimes even such illegal tactics as butting.

**BRAWLING:** (also *Brawling Style* and *Brawling Type*) A term for the hand to hand combat style which represents the actions of people who are not expert fighters or martial artists, but nonetheless are familiar with violent confrontations.

**BREACH:** a.) The gap battered in the wall of a besieged town or fortress, through which the besiegers might charge in - unless the defenders stepped into the breach to repel them. b.) The space between the several parts of a solid body parted in violence; figuratively: a wound, a hurt.

**BREAK A LEG:** Theatrical slang for good luck. It is possibly derived from a superstition that it was bad luck to wish someone good luck, so the worst possible thing is wished to avoid a jinx. But old-fashioned European bows were made by extending the front leg and bending the back one. From this position, the bowing party is able to move directing into an attacking position. Hence “Break a leg” means “take a bow”.

**BREAK THE GAME:** To interrupt the opponent’s actions by either retreating out of distance or intercepting their feinting blade prior to the finale of their attack.

**BREAK:** a.) The separation of two fighters (generally boxers or pugilists), by an official, when they are clinched together and all ac-

tion has stopped. b.) A term for the sudden or violent separation or splitting of bones. c.) A quarrel or fight.

**BREAKING GROUND:** Any action of footwork that surrenders ground to the opponent.

**BREAKING THE MEASURE:** (*rompere di misura*) Retreating from within the measure to out of measure.

**BREASTPLATE:** Armor for the front of the upper torso, the chest.

**BREED-BATE:** One who causes quarrels.

**BROACH:** A tapering pointed rod of wood or steel; a lance, spear or bodkin. To pierce, impale, to stick on a spit or such a pointed weapon.

**BROAD WARD:** (also *Broad Warde* and *Wide Ward*) a.) The second guard position dictated by Di Grassi which is assumed with the hand at chest level, arm drawn directly backward so the hand is directly outside the torso, blade parallel to the floor its point directed at the opponent or across the body to their right. "This second warde from the effecte shall be called the broad or wide warde, because the arme widening and stretching it selfe directlie as much as posible from the right side, beareth the sword so farre off from the bodie, that it seemeth to give great scope to the enimie to enter, albeit in truth it be nothing so. For although the hand & the handle of the sworde, be both farr from the bodie, and quite out of the streight line, yet the poynt of the sworde, from which principallie procedeth the offence, is not without the saide lyne: For it is borne so bending towarde the left side that it respecteth directlie to strike the enimie and being borne in that sorte, it may verie well both strike and defend. And when the poynt of the sword is borne out of the streight lyne, as the hand and handle is, then a man is in daunger to bee hurte easelie by the enimie, the which happeneth not when the poynt is bending, for in such order, it is as a barre and defence to the whole bodie." b.) A sword

and dagger guard taught by English fencing master Joseph Swetnam which parallels his Perfect Guard of rapier and dagger play. See *Perfect Guard*.

**BROADSWORD GRIP:** a.) The Broadsword is gripped firmly with the lead hand near the cross-guard and the rear hand (when being used) gripping the pommel in the middle of the hand leaving the little finger just off the pommel. This provides a levering action to control the weapon. By wringing the hands together as if wringing out a towel a controlled cut can be made that looks powerful. b.) The manner of holding a Broadsword. See *Sword Grip*. c.) The Handle of a *Broadsword*.

**BROADSWORD:** (also *Broad Sword*) A term now apply to almost all swords of the Medieval period. Most often applied to the Arming sword of the Middle Ages. The label "Broadsword," however, is only accurate when used in comparison to the narrower bladed weapons of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Historically the swords of the Middle Ages had many different names, but the term "broadsword" was not one of them.

**BROCHIERO:** (It.) A variety of hand shield or buckler.

**BROIL:** a.) Tumult, noisy quarrel, contention. b.) War, combat, battle.

**BRUISING IRONS:** A slang term for battle maces and other such weapons of weight.

**BUCKLER:** (also *Bokeler*) a.) A small round shield generally used in conjunction with the broad bladed swords of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. "As the forme of the Buckler is round and small, and ought to be a shield & safegard of the whole bodie . . ." In England the buckler was usually carried by a handle at the back and used, not so much for a shield as for a warder to catch or beat aside the blow of one's opponent. It was constructed of strong iron plate and could be round, square or occasionally trapezoidal. Its edge was further reinforced with

a strip of metal riveted all around it while a hook or spike sometimes projected from its boss. In close combat, the buckler with a spike could serve as an offensive weapon. A lantern was often suspended from the hook to help light the bearer's way at night. The buckler could range in size from ten inches to thirty inches in diameter, the larger bucklers were generally strapped to the arm (These bucklers are generally referred to as Targets). The buckler accompanied by the short sword were the national weapon of England until the late sixteenth century. b.) A shield secured to the left forearm in the manner of the target. Most sources tend to state otherwise. c.) To act as a buckler, to shield, defend, ward off blows. d.) (Shield Boss) In referring to the buckler, many fifteenth and sixteenth-century fencing manuals refer to the spike or point emitting from the center of the buckler. Such a spike proved profitable in close-quarter combat. "It shall be also verie profitable, that in the midst of the Buckler, there be a sharpe poynt or stert of Iron, to the end the enimie may be stroken therwith when occasion serveth." See *Mustachio*.

**BUFF:** Leather clothing or jerkin.

**BUFFET:** a.) A blow or stroke, now usually given with the hand. To beat, thump, cuff or knock about. "The buffeting of fists was cliché, common in the Bible, etc. In the old romances duels of strength were sometimes tried in buffets; Richard I killed Austria's son in one of these. Buffets were aimed at the head, each party having to stand still in turn." b.) To fight or contend.

**BULLDOG:** (also *Bull-Dogging*) a.) A "cow-boy" or Western term for an unarmed attack made in a manner similar to the leaping attack of a bulldog. Generally applied to an airborne attack, often from above, where one combatant leaps at the other and they collide torso against torso; where they wrestle with, and throw the victim to the floor. b.) Antiquated slang for a cannon or other

firearm. In modern use, a particular kind of revolver.

**BUM IN THE FACE:** A slang term used for the *Grand Volte*.

**BURGONET:** A close-fitting helmet.

**BUTCHER OF A SILK BUTTON:** Believed to be a reference to the well known Italian master of fence, Signior Rocco Bonetti, "who was so excellent in his fight, that he would have hit anie English man with a thrust, just upon anie button in his doublet."

**BUTT END:** The trailing end of the staff in the En Guard position.

**BUTT STRIKE:** a.) An attack or blow delivered with the butt end of the quarterstaff. Also applied to any such attack with the butt end of a rifle or gun stock. b.) An attack or blow delivered with the pommel or butt end of knife. See also *Pommel Strike*.

**BUTT:** a.) To strike with the head like a horned animal. b.) To hit an opponent with the head or shoulder. In boxing such a technique is a major foul, leading to disqualification with repeated use. See *Head-Butt*. c.) The back end of a quarter-staff or polearm. See *Butt End*. d.) An archery target. e.) The back or pommel end of a knife. See *Pommel*.

**BUTTERFLY GUARD:** A guard or shell, on certain eighteenth century small swords, consisting of two ellipsoidal parts on either side of the blade that form a shape roughly resembling a butterfly.

**BUTTERFLY KNIFE:** (also *Filipino Butterfly Knife* and *Balisong*) One of the ancient weapons of Arnis, the ancestral art of the Malaya-Polynesian fighting systems. A non-typical folding knife as it has two half-handles that safely store the blade when closed as well as quickly pivoting around to form a sturdy grip. Because the two half-handles operate independently, the knife can be opened quickly with one hand without the use of springs. The term "butterfly" is a reference to both the wing-like independence of the half-handles and the flashy way that the wings can be displayed when opening

the knife.

**BUTTOCK:** (also *Buttocking*) The use of the hip or buttock as the fulcrum for a throw in wrestling. To throw (an adversary) by a maneuver in which the buttock or hip is used.

**BUTTON:** a.) The round flat metal disk used to blunt the tip of the competitive fencing blades of the foil and epee. Historically the resemblance of this protective device to a bud or the protuberant receptacle of the rose lead to the fencing foil to be called a “fleuret” by the French. b.) A term sometimes used for the capstan rivet. c.) The pay-off or climax of a piece of business or a gag that ties the whole piece together and closes the bit.



## C

**CUSHION:** A small circular pad of foam, leather or felt placed on the inside some sword hilts to prevent the fingers from jamming against the guard.

**CADENCE:** a.) The rhythm of a sequence of interrelated movement that has a definite beginning and comes to a definite end or point of rest and gives the sense of harmonic completion. A fencing tempo. b.) The rhythm of a series of fencing movements.

**CAGE:** To corner or trap an opponent as if in a cage.

**CALIVER:** A light kind of musket or harquebus, introduced during the sixteenth century. The lightest portable fire-arm, excepting the pistol, fired without a rest.

**CAMBIAMENTO:** (It.) See *Change of Engagement*.

**CAMINEERING:** A change of engagement or in the line of threat/attack.

**CAPA:** See *Cloak*.

**CAP-A-PE:** (also *Cap-a-Pie*) Literally “from head to foot.”

**CAPSTAN RIVET:** A small rivet forged from the tang of the blade, capping or crowning the top of the pommel, joining and locking the hilt of the sword to its blade.

**CAPULUS:** The Latin name for the hilt of the Roman sword. Often ornate.

**CARBONADO:** Originally applied to meat cut for broiling. The term was then applied to anything cut or hacked like broiling meat.

**CARELESSE GUARD:** (also *Lazie Guard*): A deceptive looking guard in rapier and dagger play, taught by seventeenth century English Fight Master Joseph Swetnam, assumed with the sword bearing hand and hilt resting upon the thigh with the blade across the body to the inside, its point resting on the ground. The dagger hand and arm hang

limp at the side, its blade positioned behind the rapier blade. In such a guard the combatant looks careless or lazy, leaving what appears to be the whole body wide open. In reality, however, it is a viable guard with a strong defensive action.

**CARRIAGE:** a.) The manner of carrying one's body, bearing, mien. b.) The sword carriage. The complicated waist belt and suspension rigging for the Elizabethan rapier. c.) The loop attached to the sword- belt, through which one passes their sword.

**CARTE GUARD:** (also *Quarte*) (Small Sword) "Anciently the fourth, is now one of the principal guard-postures (the other is called Tierce Guard). The greatest elevation of the point on guard should be nearly fifteen degrees; if the polint is elevated more, it will make too great a cross in the juncture of the blades. The greater the cross of the blades, the more easily are thrusts parried, as the curves formed by the point in parrying will be greater; but it will at the same time impede the approach towards the body- Hence the smaller the cross of the blades, when in contact or guard, the more dextrous should the movements be, to render thrusts effectual."

**CARTE PARADE:** (also *Quarte*) (Small Sword) "Anciently the fourth, is now the first of the upper parades. It throws off all simple thrusts made inwards to the upper part of the body. It is performed from the medium guard, by a gradual turn of the wrist ascending inwards- the point receding to its original direction."

**CARTE THRUST INSIDE:** (Small Sword) "The natural thrust corresponding to the parade of carte. It is an upper thrust, and the opposition to your adversary's blade is inwards, so as to be covered on the longe by seeing the point over your arm."

**CARTE THRUST OVER THE ARM:** (Small Sword) "The natural thrust corresponding to the parade of tierce: it is the opposite thrust to carte inside; for the opposition

to your adversary's blade is outwards- This thrust is a good substitute for tierce thrust, it being rather awkward in execution, and as such is seldom or never practiced."

**CARTEL:** A hand delivered written notice of challenge describing the cause of the offence that provoked a duel of honor.

**CARTOCCIO:** (It.) The *Passata Sotto*.

**CARVE:** a.) A deep and severe cutting stroke delivered by pushing the edge of the knife into the flesh and cutting loose a piece of flesh by turning the edge of the knife and usually letting the flat of the blade travel down the length of a bone. b.) To cut; to hew.

**CASE OF RAPIERS:** Two rapiers or swords used together in double fence, each weapon serving both offensive and defensive actions. "There are also used now adays, aswell in the scholles, as in the lists, two Swordes or Rapiers, admitted, and approved both by Princes, and the professors of this art, for honourable and knightlie weapons, albeit they be not used in the warres." The case of rapiers were generally of a special design so they could be carried in the same scabbard.

**CASE:** A set of something; a matched pair; two of something; twins.

**CASQUE:** A head-piece, a helmet.

**CASTLE-GUARD:** (also *Back-Sword-Guard*) A sword and dagger guard placement, taught by English Fight Master Joseph Swetnam, assumed with the sword hand and hilt at roughly waist level on the sword-bearing side of the body (in a placement similar to *Terza Guardia*), its blade angled up and across the body at roughly 45°. The dagger is held forward at arms length its hand and hilt at cheek level, the blade directed up and across the body at roughly 45°. The dagger blade is placed in front of the rapier's, with both blades forming an inverted "V" (like a roof above the head and body) closing the high lines to attack.

**CAT IS OUT OF THE BAG:** The "cat," cat-o'-nine-tails, used to punish and discipline sail-

**WALK:** Generally used of a tour in dancing (at a masquerade). The term is applied to the footwork in fencing, hence the reference to a fight or bout of swordplay.

**WALKING FOOT:** a.) An exercise designed to help the combatant develop fluid horizontal movement in footwork by moving the initiating foot with a walking or “rocking” action. b.) The foot in motion during a step or piece of footwork.

**WALKING SWORD:** A civilian sword; a sword to be worn with civilian dress in contrast with the heavier swords of war; a sword to be worn while walking.

**WALKING THE LINE:** An exercise designed to help the combatant keep their feet on track while traversing linear footwork by following actual lines on the floor.

**WALKING THE PLANK:** a.) A form of torture associated with pirates where a prisoner (usually bound and tied) was forced to walk a gangplank off the ship and over the open sea. b.) An exercise designed to help the combatant keep their feet on track while traversing linear footwork by having them perform linear footwork on two 2x4 planks.

**WALL BOUND:** A blade-play exercise that helps maintain measure and places the combatant’s focus on the management of the point by working a series of stationary drills with their back up against a wall.

**WALL OF STEEL:** A term used for the protective barrier created by a parry with the sword. See also *Defensive Box*.

**WALL-HANGER:** A decorative sword, available at most knife shops and costume houses, that is made only as ornamentation and is in no way designed, engineered, or constructed for combat. A sword meant only to hang on the wall.

**WARD:** a.) An archaic term for the guard when it was as much an offensive position as defensive. The ward was a position of observation for the purpose of discovering the approach of danger and effectively launching a counter attack. b.) A defensive posture or

movement; to parry, repel, fend off, turn aside a stroke or thrust, blow, attack, weapon. c.) The part of a hilt of a sword that protects the hand; the guard.

**WARDER:** a.) A ceremonial symbol of office, command or authority, in early use, a staff or wand, and later a baton or truncheon, used to give the signal of commencement or cessation of hostilities in a battle or tournament. b.) One who wards off blows, a person on the defensive; one who parries. c.) A guard, a keeper, a sentinel.

**WAR-MAN:** A professional soldier or warrior.

**WAR-PROOF:** a.) Said of soldier or combatant whose skill and valor has been tried and proven in war. b.) Unable to be damaged or destroyed by the actions or effects of war.

**WARRIOR:** A soldier.

**WASHING BLOW:** See *Swashing Blow*.

**WASTER:** A wooden stick used as a practice sword, also called a *bavin*, later a *wiffle*.

**WATCH PARRY:** Slang for the parry of High One and sometimes the standard parry of one; where the hand and wrist are placed as if the combatant was looking at their watch.

**WATER WORKS:** An exercise designed to help the combatant develop fluid horizontal movement in footwork by carrying a full glass of water in the sword hand.

**WATERFALL PARRY:** See *Hanging Parry*.

**WAYLAY:** To lie in wait for; to ambush.

**WEAPON:** Any part of the body, extension thereof, or object that can be used for offensive purposes.

**WEAPON BEARING SIDE:** The side of the body that brandishes or carries the weapon. 1.) A weapon carried in the right hand makes the right side the weapon bearing side and a weapon carried in the left hand makes the left side the weapon bearing side. 2.) In Double Fence the weapon indicates its side (i.e. a rapier in the right hand makes the right side of the body the Rapier Bearing Side, a dagger in the left hand makes the left side of the body the Dagger Bearing Side, and so

on). 3.) In two-hand play (i.e. Broadsword) the hand nearest the guard is considered the lead or weapon bearing hand, and thus the weapon bearing side of the body.

**WEAPON-BEARING LINES:** a.) Lines of attack as determined by the weapon-bearing side of the body. b.) In double fence techniques lines are determined by the sword-bearing and dagger-bearing side. Lines are to the inside and outside of the weapon, not to its right or left. Hence those parts above or below the specific weapon bearing hand and on the inside or the outside of that hand define their lines of attack. An attack coming above either hand is still in the “high line”; and below, in the “low line”; but now the area between the two hands, is the “inside line”; and the exterior of the hands, is the “outside line.” See *Lines of Attack*.

**WEAPONED:** Provided with a weapon (a sword).

**WELL-ARMED:** (also *Well Armed*) Well furnished with weapons of offense and defense.

**WELSH HOOK:** A weapon with a curved or hooked blade; a bill-hook.

**WHETSTONE:** A stone on which a thing is sharpened.

**WHIP:** a.) An instrument for flogging or beating, consisting either of a rigid rod or stick with a lash of cord, leather, etc. attached, or of a flexible switch with or without a lash. b.) Such an instrument used for driving horses, chastising human beings, and other purposes. c.) To strike suddenly with a lash; to punish with a whip. A blow or stroke with, or as with, a whip; a lash, stripe, a flogging. d.) To drive by lashes of a whip. e.) To move suddenly and quickly like the lash of a whip.

**WHIPPER:** One who whips another.

**WHIPSTOCK:** The handle of a whip.

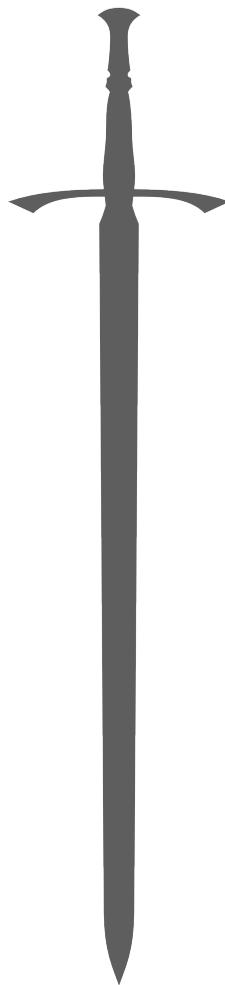
**WIDE EPÉE BLADE:** See *Giant Epée Blade*.

**WIDE PARRY:** a) A parry made, by accident or by device, outside the regular perimeters of proper defense. Such actions are generally made with an extended or straight arm. Such extended defensive actions also make it easier

## X

**X BLOCK:** a.) A block where both hands/arms are used together and are crossed, the one over the other, catching the attacking limb in the open “V” between the hands. b.) Another term for the *Cross Parry*.

**X PARRY:** See *Cross Parry*



## Y

## Z

**YERK:** To thrust or strike with a sudden and quick motion. A smart blow or stroke; to strike smartly, as with a whip or rod. The sound of such a blow; the crack of a whip, a thud.

**YIELD PARRY:** (also *Ceding Parry* and *Yielding Parry*) a.) A parry executed against a flowing attack without separating the blades. The ceding or yielding parry is a particular method of execution used against thrusts and cuts off a *Froissement*. The yield consists of not resisting the pressure, but waiting to parry until the final stage of the attack when the focus shifts from the pressure to the attack. At that time, without losing contact, the pressured blade is quickly drawn back, pressing its forte against the offending blade's foible. b.) (also *Ceding Parry*) A parry executed against the cut or thrust made at the end of a successful glissade. To distinguish a yield parry from a normal parry, both the offensive and defensive blades remain engaged from the initial attack on the blade through the successful parry. c.) A technique of parrying using the force of the opponent's pressure on the defending blade, to divert the defending and attacking blades into another line, while closing that line.

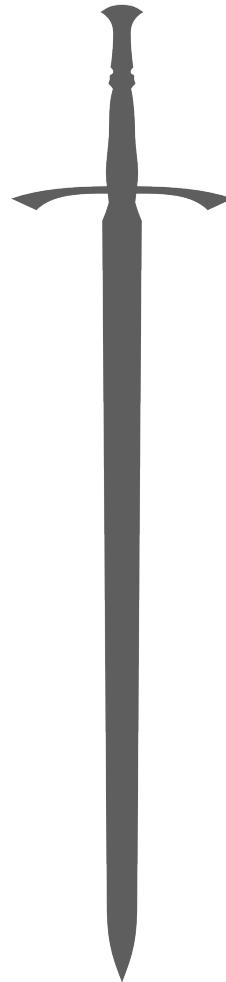
**YIELD:** a.) To give up or surrender; the action of giving in; submission. b.) To deliver, to render, to give up, to surrender. c.) To give way, to succumb.

**YIELDER:** a.) One who surrenders. b.) One who gives up.

**ZONE:** (also *Close to the Oblique*) Footwork that takes the body diagonally off-line (45° to either the right or left) and inside measure, ending with the legs open. The technique is usually in response to an offensive action, to gain tactical advantage for both defensive and offensive purposes.

**ZWAGGERER:** See *Swaggerer*.

**ZWEITE INTENTION:** (Ger.) See *Second Intention*.



“Beauty is power; a smile is its sword.”

John Ray

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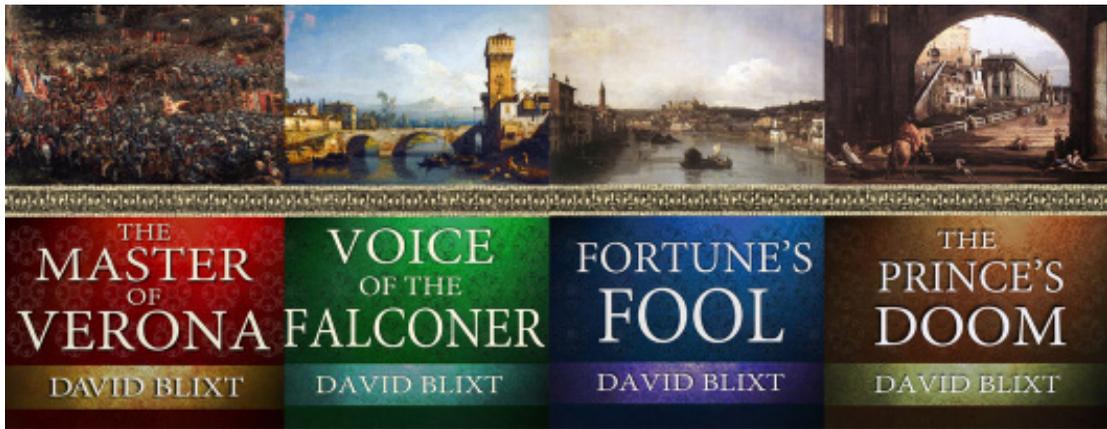
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## DAVID BLIXT - EDITOR

DAVID IS AN AUTHOR, ACTOR, AND FIGHT DIRECTOR LIVING IN CHICAGO. HAVING TRAINED WITH THE SAFD AND IOSP, HE APPLIES HIS KNOWLEDGE OF SWORDPLAY TO BOTH THE STAGE AND THE PAGE. HIS JEFF-NOMINATED FIGHT DIRECTION IS REGULARLY SEEN AT THE MICHIGAN SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL, WHERE HE IS AN ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE AND RESIDENT FIGHT DIRECTOR.

DAVID'S FIRST NOVEL, *THE MASTER OF VERONA*, WAS PUBLISHED BY ST. MARTIN'S PRESS IN 2007. A TALE OF THE ORIGIN OF SHAKESPEARE'S FAMOUS FEUD IN *ROMEO & JULIET*, IT RECEIVED PARTICULAR PRAISE FOR ITS DUELS AND BATTLES. THAT PRAISE CONTINUED TO MOUNT OVER HIS NEXT SIX NOVELS, AND IN 2013 DAVID WAS INVITED TO INSTRUCT HISTORICAL AUTHORS IN COMBAT AT THE BI-ANNUAL HISTORICAL NOVEL SOCIETY CONFERENCE. HIS 90-MINUTE LECTURE AND HANDS-ON CLASS WAS SUCH A HIT THAT HE WAS ASKED TO EXPAND IT TO A FULL DAY FOR 2015. IT WAS FOR THAT HNS CONFERENCE IN DENVER THAT DAVID COMPILED THIS VOLUME, AS AN AID TO AUTHORS OF HISTORICAL FICTION. AFTER GREAT DEMAND, AND WITH THE CONSENT OF MSSRS GIRARD, KIRBY, AND LEONI, DAVID MADE FIGHTING WORDS AVAILABLE TO ANYONE INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY OF COMBAT AND ITS EVER-EVOLVING LANGUAGE.



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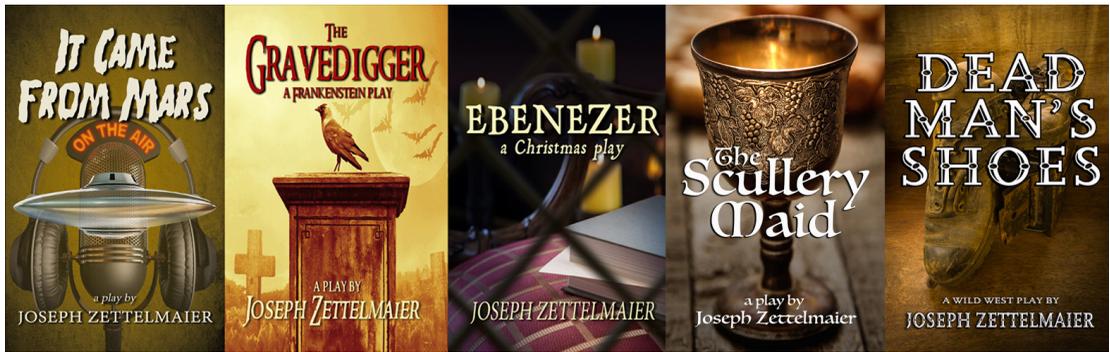
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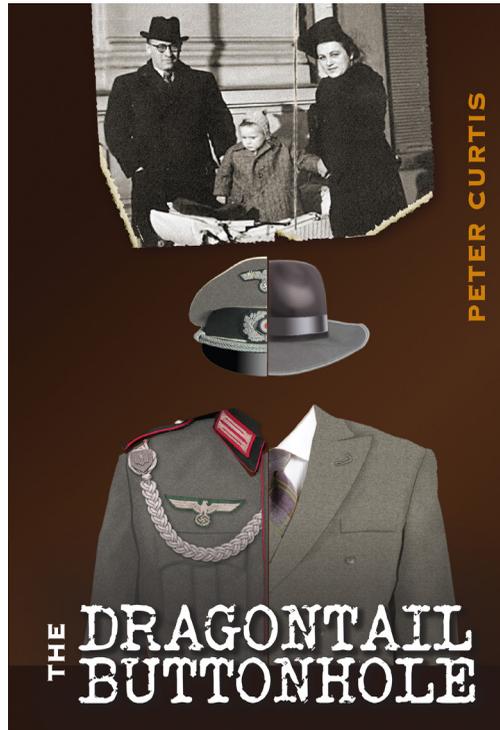
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