

# Neapolitan Fencing

By Francesco Antonio Mattei

1669

Translated by Jeff Vansteenkiste

(rev. 2023-01-17)

# Copyright

The document is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.



The plates were produced using digital images of books found in the Corble collection (<https://bib.kuleuven.be/english/special-collections/collecties/erfgoedcollecties-1/herkomst/corble>), held in the KU Leuven Libraries Special Collections and generously digitized and made available to the public (<https://expo.bib.kuleuven.be/en/copyright>).

The Fell Types are digitally reproduced by Iginio Marini.

# Translator's Introduction

Francesco Antonio Mattei's *Neapolitan Fencing* is a 1669 work in which he details the fencing system he attributes to Giovanni Battista Marcelli and which he learned from his own brother, Giovanni Mattei. It appears to be the first book published on what contemporary and later sources identify as a distinctive fencing style associated with Naples in general and Giovanni Battista Marcelli specifically. Francesco Antonio Marcelli, son of Giovanni Battista, would publish a book on the system in 1686 in which he describes *Neapolitan Fencing* as a "most ingenious book" and spends quite a bit of ink defending it from criticisms levelled by the Palermitan Giuseppe Morsicato Pallavicini in his 1670 book *Fencing Illustrated*. As is typical for Italian fencing treatises of the time, apart from the usual floweriness found in the front matter, *Neapolitan Fencing* is written in simple Italian relatively light on regional quirks. It does not dive deeply into theory and is well-organized and clear despite an unfortunate lack of illustrations.

The work seems to have had an interesting publication history. Although Mattei himself only alludes to this, his printer's foreword indicates that a manuscript copy of the first half was loaned to an unnamed individual who subsequently had it printed without the author's permission. No copies of this first edition appear to have survived, and in this version any reader who possesses a copy is advised to "condemn it to the flames for good and politely pity the author".

Mattei divides *Neapolitan Fencing* into two Discourses. The First contains the rules applicable to the sword and dagger, the Second to the single sword. Both are further split into actions of proposal, which either exploit a tempo made by the opponent or force them to produce one that can be exploited, and those of response, which defend against said actions of proposal. Each Discourse also ends with some general advice for the fencer.

The original text includes sixteen Petrarchan sonnets written in Italian and five poems written in Latin, authored by Mattei and others. These have been omitted from this release. Latin quotations, which appear throughout the text, have also been left untranslated. A published translation is forthcoming, and will include not just this missing material, but also extensive annotations explaining and expanding on the many references to historical, mythological, and contemporary events and figures. For those with an interest in the content directly applicable to historical fencing, however, this version will be perfectly useful in the meantime.

Jeff Vansteenkiste  
<https://labirinto.ca/>  
2023-01-17

## Notes on the Translation

As Italian is a gendered language, the original text can sometimes be clearer than its direct English translation. Insertions and replacements have been made where the loss of gendered parts of speech negatively impacted the translated text.

Original copies of *Neapolitan Fencing* have a page of errata included at the end of the Second Discourse. These corrections have been incorporated into the translation. Descriptions of other omitted material are provided where it appears in the original.

Finally, although Mattei covers subjects in a clear and systematic way, beyond differentiating between each Discourse and their actions of proposal and response, the text is simply a long series of paragraphs. Section headings have been added to this translation for the modern reader's convenience.

## Glossary of Italian Terms

Some technical terms have been left in their original language, as they are either used in ways that do not neatly correspond to their English translations or are commonly left untranslated by modern writers on historical fencing. The following glossary provides definitions according to Mattei's usage of the terms, but complete descriptions of most are provided in the text. As noted by Mattei's printer, capitalization is used to differentiate between some tempo-related terms. Plural forms that appear in the text are provided.

### *cavatione (pl. cavationi)*

An action performed in order to free one's sword from the opponent's constraint or prevent it from occurring by moving it to the other side of the opponent's. Unlike other contemporary authors on fencing, Mattei does not differentiate between various types of cavatione e.g., cavatione vs. ricavatione, using the terms interchangeably. Therefore, all have been rendered as "cavatione" for purposes of this translation.

### *contratempo*

Literally, "counter time". When a fencer attacks during their opponent's Tempo, this attack is said to take place "in contratempo".

### *Contratempo*

An attack in contratempo.

### *debole*

Literally, "weak". The third of the sword's blade closest to the point.

### *forte*

Literally, "strong". The third of the sword's blade closest to the hilt.

### *half-quarta (pl. half-quarte)*

Mattei uses the term in two ways. A "half-quarta of the sword" indicates a position of the sword hand such that the edge of the blade is oriented halfway between what other contemporary authors call terza and quarta. A "half-quarta of the body" is a type of void. See 'quarta'.

### *imbroccata (pl. imbroccate)*

A straight stoccata performed with the fist pronated, bringing the true edge of the sword to face the outside.

***incontro***

Literally, “encounter”. A situation in which both fencers attempt to wound each other in the same tempo, resulting in both being struck.

***intrecciata (pl. intrecciate)***

A type of attack made on the inside of the opponent’s weapon with one’s fist supinated as in the imbrocata.

***quarta (pl. quarte)***

Although his usage of the term “half-quarta of the sword” indicates Mattei is aware of and accepts the use of the term to mean a position of the sword hand when it is turned outward (supinated), bringing the right edge of the sword to the inside, Mattei only uses the term in isolation to mean a void of the body by which one pivots on the lead foot and brings the rear foot to the outside, removing oneself from the straight line toward one’s opponent. Commonly called an “inquartata” by other authors. Mattei often advises the use of a “half-quarta of the body”, which is quicker but does not move the rear foot as much.

***sottobotta (pl. sottobotte)***

Literally, “under blow”. A void of the body underneath the opponent’s sword while striking.

***scommossa (pl. scommosse)***

A type of action used to remove the opponent from their proper guard.

***stoccata (pl. stoccate)***

The stoccata, or straight stoccata, is the main attack described by Mattei, and is made with the fist supinated, bringing the true edge of the sword to face the inside.

***tempo (pl. tempi)***

Literally, “time”. A stretch of time during which a fencer can be wounded, generally because they are occupied in a movement which prevents them from attacking or defending themselves.

***Tempo (pl. Tempi)***

An attack which takes advantage of a tempo made by one’s opponent.

***terzo***

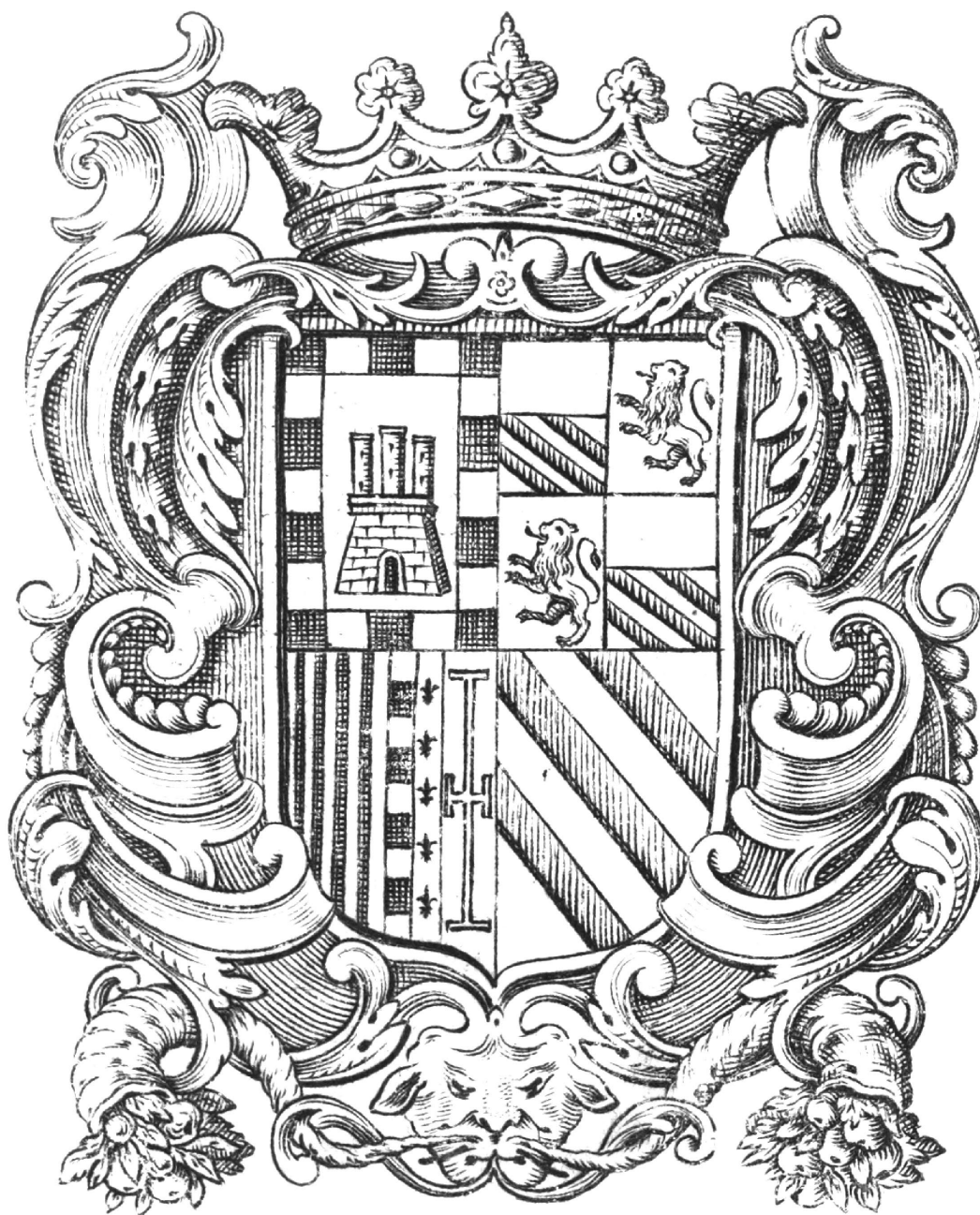
The middle third of the sword's blade, located between the forte and debole.

***vita***

The band of the body above the waist and to the armpits, i.e., one's core.







# NEAPOLITAN FENCING

*FIRST DISCOURSE*

Wherein  
UNDER THE TITLE “POSSIBLE IMPOSSIBLE”  
IT IS PROVED THAT FENCING  
*is science and not art.*

The true rules of the sword and dagger are given

BY LORD  
FRANCESCO ANTONIO MATTEI

*SECOND PRINTING*



IN FOGGIA

Through Novello de Bonis. M.DC.LXIX.

---

*With license of the Most Saintly Superiors*

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND MOST EXCELLENT LORD,  
LORD DON GIOVANNI D'AVALOS  
PRINCE OF TROIA

Composing a sentence (however small) on the most noble exercise of our Neapolitan Fencing was always deemed impossible by all. Not because the material was in and of itself excessively difficult and intricate, but only because fencing essentially consists entirely in actions. By such derived evidence, many believed, in my opinion, that nothing other than the practice alone was valid for describing it. I, however, quite horrified by my idea to meet with such believed to be impossible, gave flight to my pen. Turned about in those so disastrous labyrinths, at the end, after various perils, it managed to ease the way of it. So it is, that the *Possible Impossible* carried at the front of my Discourses is not meaningless, and they come to be enclosed under so beautiful a title. Therefore, as it is, I dedicated it to Your Excellence as a guarantee on those obligations that I profess are unbreakable. I know that the style of these is most base in comparison to Your genius, but I also know well that, given that Your august House of Avalos (which is saying the same), whose pedestal is the centre, alone gives flight also to the heaviest boulders, it will give them some relief by appreciating them. And, if I was unable to reach, like a generous eagle, the sphere of more learned scholarship, I attribute it to my lack of ability, not of will, becoming audacious Icarus falling into the immense sea of Your applause. For now, be pleased to accept the gift that is truly quite small compared to Your greatness. Accepted with the hand of Your usual gratitude, it will be deemed the equal of any other due to how great You are. Lastly, if it was the custom of the royals of Persia at the offering of a flower, though frail, to welcome it with serene eyes, and Your Excellency's no less than those, just as I see in the roots and tree of Your lineage, as a symbol of my observance of the same manner You will deign to enjoy, not a rotting flower, but a bouquet which will encamp with green eternity in the hands of Your Excellency, to whom I bow with deep reverence.

Troia, July 16, 1669

a Most Devoted and Indebted True Servant of Your Excellency,

*Francesco Antonio Mattei*

## FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE READER

As far as fame, my ear can be tuned to it, and I was able to secretly gather that my First Discourse on Neapolitan Fencing was excessively appreciated by you (most courteous reader) when it was published against my wishes, completely broken and deformed. Wherefore, being honoured by so kindly an appreciation, I energetically strain not only to clean and purify it, but also to combine it with the Second as a display of the obligations to you that I profess. Showing you in the First (as is certainly understood) that fencing is science and not art (as some vainly imagine), I describe to you the true rules of the sword and dagger. In the Second, crudely alluding to the nobility of the sword, I illuminate the true rules of the single sword for you. Therefore, accept both with the affection with which I offer them to you, and, before sampling them, dispose your courteousness to a most noble reception. Writers rack their brains for no other purpose than to derive praises and palms. I, on the other hand (dearest friend), intend no more than to obey whom I must, and to please your tastes. I do not ask more of you than that you enjoy and stay silent. If, during the reading of these, then, you do not continuously find energy to your satisfaction in the words, do not be quick in quibbling with me, given that I saw myself necessitated to avail myself of those that are made more useful for the clarity of the actions. And, if there you encounter some defect (as I presume), correct it with kindness. Lastly, be aware that in the statements you will read of offending and defending. Above all, by “defending” on its own, I mean to suggest that it is the act of a just sword, as through this the offence of the enemy or assailant is achieved. As for my intention, it is not *se non per accidens, & non per se primò intentum, nec volitum*, keeping in accordance with divine will and ecclesiastical axioms. This is likewise the goal of the profession of fencing that I write of, doing so with Christian feeling and subordinate to the Sacred Church and its correction. As you will be able to understand from the final advice at the end of the First Discourse, piety moves the pens of doctors of the church no less than the swords of true knights. Be happy.

## FROM THE PRINTER TO THE READER

As for that (my most friendly reader), by placing in your hands such diverse works of most famous talents, I presumed to satisfy your longing for some sign. Now indeed, I do not doubt having fully enriched it with rejoicing, given that I am to present you with a priceless joy. This is certainly not conspicuously crammed with Mughal diamonds, nor encrusted with Erythraean pearls. Rather, it is entirely adorned and interwoven with two Discourses on Neapolitan fencing. As nothing similar has been printed until now, these are more likely to be enjoyed.

Therefore, read them with sincere affection and undivided attention. Admire and learn from them so that, beyond my opinion, you will be a good deal instructed from it. I see that you are especially well-supported in this since I know that, much more for your satisfaction than at my insistence, the author strained to purify his First Discourse and send it to the press with the amendment of errors which occurred in printing, with the correction of various words and the improvement of many sentences. This has been done in such a way that if the mentioned Discourse remains in your care separate from the Second, you will content yourself to condemn it to the flames for good and politely pity the author, being that he gave its draft to someone who requested it and, like a miscarriage of genius, it was thereafter released to the world against his wishes by the same requester. As a gesture of mutual affection, I ask no more than to be permitted the mentioned excuses by your courtesy, which I beseechingly pray for in the name of the author, and for you to be a little reluctant in swiftly criticizing me if you chance to stumble upon some printing error. Such occurring, the payment will compensate for my failings.

Do not be confused if in reading these you repeatedly find the word “tempo”, since printed with the large “T” it denotes a constitutive action in fencing, and with the small “t” instant, action, stretch, etc.

As for the rest, live with me in salvation. However, I wish you all that you desire.

[After the forewords, Mattei has placed fifteen Petrarchan sonnets written in Italian and five pieces of Latin poetry. Some he has written himself and dedicated to his patron and his patron's children. The rest are written by others and extol Mattei's virtues as a writer and fencing master.]

## **MOST EXCELLENT LORD**

As required, Francesco Antonio Mattei presents Your Excellency with a book on fencing entitled *Neapolitan Fencing*. He therefore beseeches Your Excellency to command the review, and will be obligated to give thanks to God, etc.

Magnificus V.I.D. Dominicus de Rubeis Videat & Referat S.E.

*Galeota R. Carrillus Reg.*

*Capiblanco R. Ortiz Cortez R.*

Prouisum per S.E. Neap. die 28. Maij 1669.

*Villanus*



## EXCELLENTISSIME DOMINE

Recognoui librum, cui titulus: *Neapolitan Fencing*, auctore Francisco Antonio Mathæi. Nihil havet, quod Regiæ jurisdictioni aduersetur, vmbratiliq̃ue pugnæ non minimum, puto, lucis est allaturus. Vale.

Neap. kal. Iul. M.DC.LXIX.

Tibi

Addictissimus Cliens  
Dominicus de Rubeis.

Visa retrospectiva relatione imprimatur, & in publicatione, servetur Regia Prag.

*Galeota R. Carrillus Reg.*

*Capiblanco R. Ortiz Cortez R.*

Prouisum per S. E. Neap. die 12. Iulij 1669.

*Villanus*

Admodum Illustr. D. Ignatius Fuscus Archipresbyter Diui Thomæ videat, & referat.

Datum Foggiae die 26 Iulij 1669.

*D. Io: Baptista de Angelis Vic. Generalis.*

## REVERENDISSIME DOMINE

Opus à Francisco Antonio Mathæi æditum & inscriptum *Neapolitan Fencing with Sword and Dagger*, in prima parte, & in Secunda *The Single Sword*, Typis iunctim, & denuò cum dicta secunda parte mandandum hic fogiæ. Si aliàs Dominationi Tuæ Reuerendissimę placuerit ædi posse, cum nil contineat quod fidei Orthodoxę, & Bonis moribus aduersetur attestor; nisi quantum ingeniosa non minus, quàm erudita Theorica ad detestabilem duellorum usum praxim accomodata S.M.E. anathematizet, in cuius rei testimonium.

Fogiæ die 29. Iulij 1669.

D. Tuæ Reu.

Visa relatione Imprimatur

*D. Io: Baptista de Angelis V. Gen.*

Deuotiss. Seruus  
V.I.D. Ignatius Fuschus  
Archipresb. S. Thomæ

# NEAPOLITAN FENCING

## FIRST DISCOURSE

### INTRODUCTION

Square and master of the sciences, first and last of the learned, who crossed the sea of all the most sophist arguments (I'm speaking of Aristotle), that general of philosophy happily arrived in order to gloriously communicate his goals to you much better than the mythical Hercules. Now, quite desirous to define science, I remember that Saint Thomas said (according to the ancient translation): *Scire autem opinamur unum quodq; simpliciter, & non sophistico modo (quod est secundem accidens) cum causam arbitramur cognoscere per quam res est: & quoniam illius est causa, & non est contingere, hoc aliter se habere.* And, according to another translation: *Scire autem unamquamque rem simpliciter, sed non ut sophistè per accidens arbitramur cum causam ob quam res est, illius causam esse, & fieri non posse, ut res aliter sese habeat cognoscere arbitramur.* In the definition finally executed with greatest clarity by dialecticians, *Primo Posterior: Scientia est habitus certus, & evidens rei necessariæ, per demonstrationem acquisitus.* These three (and all) definitions now put into play, I hurriedly prepare to show you what fencing is.

As far as this, some ingenious people say that fencing is a quick, regulated action consisting in offending and defending, for which quickness the enemy does not notice the motion. Others learnedly say that it is a speedy and regulated deception. I, however, (applauding all, and not condemning any of their opinions) am of the opinion (as shall be seen from the proofs) that fencing is nothing more than a *Regulated habit, so intrinsically swift due to its repeated actions that it becomes almost invisible in its operations.* So, fencing thus defined based on Aristotle's final definition (always employed by dialecticians as more laconic than the others, and more appropriate to my project), I return to my line of thinking.

Firstly, I assert that, as given by Aristotle, science is a habit. According to my reasoning, fencing is also a habit, given that *ex iteratis actibus fit habitus (Scotus quæst. 4. Prolog. lit. B. 6.).* And, if science is a certain habit, that the habit of fencing is equally so is certain, this habit having become quite swift from the recognition of the tempo and regulated measure and through its repeated actions. I will say that, due to being regulated and swift, it is made almost invisible, and reaching that point it comes to be perfect. Being perfect, it cannot fail. Not being able to fail, I am logically forced to admit that fencing is a certain habit.

And if, by chance, some sophist or person with little understanding of this science were to disagree with me by using such an argument—that sometimes fencing fails and therefore the habit is not certain—then I would respond without fear, acknowledging the antecedent but entirely refuting the consequent. I concede that fencing sometimes fails due to the efforts of the person who employs it. It fails through his efforts, and therefore I deny the assertion that the habit is not certain—the consequent is quite false. To explain myself more clearly, it is known that if at times one fails in fencing, the flaw

never derives from fencing. For fencing, as it is a most perfect habit, comes to be perfected to the degree that three essential requisites (which are speed, tempo, and measure) are perfect. As such, it is always infallible. If it sometimes fails, the shortcoming certainly never derives from itself, but only from the person who employs it. Which is to say that, if a person battles with his adversary and, wishing to perform some offensive or defensive action, does not have speed in that action or, if he has it, does not employ it in the proper tempo or, instead, employing it, does not terminate at measure, there is no doubt at all that that action fails. The failing is his own, however, and does not originate from fencing.

Since science is evidently a habit, fencing is necessarily the same. Meanwhile, it is clearly known that one studies and labours in acquiring this habit for no other reason than the conservation of the individual, given that *Nemo appetit destructionem sui ipsius*. (*S. August.*)

Finally, as science is a habit acquired *per demonstrationem*, I would not be able to say anything significant if not through discussion. This is entirely suited to my proposition, since it is not possible to acquire any action in fencing without the demonstrative act. All this is confirmed (if I am even permitted to say) in the eloquent discourse of my master and brother *Lord Giovanni Mattei*, from whose communication my insensate self learns to comprehend the motion.

And when have I ever said that such does not suffice? I even recall that in 6. *Æthicor. cap. 4*. Aristotle certified that *scientia est Habitus quo determinatè verum dicimus*. What greater truth and evidence could ever be found in any of the sciences that is not had in fencing? Every action in this is always founded on the basis of reason and, continuously assigning it its principal and ancillary cause—that is, whence it originates, for what purpose, and for what tempo—it is discussed determinately. In fact, to add to this, when Aristotle said in *Posterior Analytics. cap. 2. Scire est rem per causam agnoscere*, he did not intend to exclude fencing from the other sciences in any way. For, if the reasonings are clearly given in all the sciences, they are very clearly cited in fencing. Thus, this science is shown to be subalternate to all the sciences.

And what is found that has more beauty and usefulness for negotiators than war? There, ruins are also precious. Conquest of the golden fleece, you will have more worth in the red sea and from rubies of Mars' blood than in the tides of Colchis.

Like grammarians reciting well the verb *Do, das*, it teaches its students with a great prodigiousness, who, defending themselves and giving, never wish to practise the *meus mea meum* by receiving, but always through the use of knightly accomplishments, giving.

Like rhetoric, it defines the topoi and persuades with force.

Like logic, it does not show you the abstract entity. Rather, the concrete and real reasoning stands in defence before your eyes. As far as what is taught and practised, all is an abstract entity. The chimeras are thus dispelled by the real flashes of the sword, and a beautiful figure is seen in *Barbara* that, just as much more lazily as it is shown

with the *Celerant*, that much better it concludes in the figure of *Ferio*. It is so exact in its aims that abandoning or leaving them at all carries a death sentence. The manoeuvrability of its operations, leading the demonstration well, directs you to properly completing the outcomes of survival.

Like physics, it therefore physically considers the tempo and measures the location so that, infringing on these, it forms an essence without action, only susceptible to experiencing pain.

Having become well-practised medicine, it draws ill-humours from your innards with a prescription, and by fixing your almost sporadic pulse it is recognized that the remedy has performed a good operation. And if some lack of spirit is perceived in your heartbeat, it is brought about by desperation and the wavering of your feet on the terrain of the path.

The scientist of fencing therefore made a subtle mathematician, he attends to the equality of the terrain and the position of the sun, and his bounds are established with the point of the sword. He terminates the bounds with lines extended and thrown at the chest as if they were punctures of the heart.

Additionally, the porticoes of the wise of Athens and Greece (who produced clear demonstrations with every statement and inscription) surrender to the siege trenches of Alexander and the fencers who made more evident and practical demonstrations with military weapons. Practising and arguing like philosophers whether the feint and the defence are the same action, or whether it is possible with the parry in tempo to wound and defend in the same instant, also awaiting the tempo's measure like very subtle mathematicians, they regulate the steps and motions with the measure of the feet more happily than Phaethon the sun's steps. In other words, following sublime triumphs with victories.

Fencing is science, where disorderings are the same as order and arrangement. Where even feints are clarities, and feigning is an act of a true gentleman with a fine sword. Science, in which the discoveries are more beautiful than the concealed. Making war with an uncovered chest, in that nude impoverishment the rich joys of valour and the rubies of a Mars are discovered. A pure scarcity is shown to be richly satisfied and noble of blood. Science, in which the half-quarte and the imbroccate are the complete measure of the tempo. Where a well-defended parry makes you valorous without equal, and where an error of *Festino* or *Ferio* counter to the rules of measure and tempo committed in *Dabitis* is condemned to death in the court of this practice.

Behold, the gentleman! Or, in other words, in the field of fencing: Resolute, but regulated. Regulated, but discomposed. Cruel, but compassionate. Deceptive, but unconcealed. Restrained in guard, but on the lists in public. Withdrawn, yet generous to the end of his life. It seems he does not value his own life, and he continuously appreciatively holds the guards in the palm of his hand for it. It seems he cares not for his soul, and is wholly intent on his spirit. Like a good Animastico well-versed in the treatise *de anima*, he is therefore meticulous on the lists so that, even though things are given publicly, his reputation has no issue with errors or mortal blows from them.

Finally, if all that I have said so far is insufficient, notwithstanding that the arguments put forward are not fanciful imaginings of exaggerated fantasy, but woven from the thread of evidence and warped by the truth of their being, I seize hold of the definition of art, also availing myself of the aforecited Aristotle, who at 6. *Æthicorum capit. 3.* established that *Ars est recta ratio rerum à nobis factibilium operatione transeunte in materiam exteriorem, ut Ars construendi Nauim, vel Domum.* If it is so that fencing does not have exterior material as its end, it therefore can on no account be called art. Rather, it is called by its proper and true name, *Practical Science*.

In order to verify what I demonstrated with Peripatetic arguments, this single, unique proof will suffice: Fencing being a legitimate aspect of mathematics, given that line and measure attest to it, it is with good reason and by necessity it is called *Practical Science* by all.

## ACTIONS OF PROPOSAL

### *The Stance*

The arguments ended for now, the controversies overcome, and the false opinions of disbelievers defeated not by my reasoning, but by Aristotelean and certain mathematical authority, I beseech Your Excellence to defend what I have clearly proved from today forward with the flashes of your most famous sword. Meanwhile, in order to fulfil my duty, I will pass from the calm to the tempest. So that the vessel of my intention need not be wrecked amongst the rocks of confusions, before launching it into the waves of so vast a sea (which is exactly what fencing is), in order to avoid the perils that loom over it, and in order to be able to safely traverse the collisions within such difficult material, it is necessary to prepare it quite well by anchoring its supports. Though constant in their trusted retention, due to being most trustworthy in the northerly depths, these should always be embraced like foundations. And, even if they are devoid of reason, by reason it seems that they should converse, them assuredly knowing that *ruit machina sine fundamento*. Ruin now being discussed, in imitation of these I (not safe from danger) strongly take hold of the stance of this science and, unfurling the sails of my stammering Discourses with it, will say that the stance of sword and dagger must be established in this manner exactly:

A gentleman who wishes to profit in this science first must take his weapons in hand, whence put forward his right foot a distance of not more than a pace from the left according to the equality of man. I say a proportionate pace, which is neither long nor short, given that being too wide it will be disunited in force, and too narrow it will be improper, confirming that maxim *Omne nimium naturæ inimicum*: (Valles. 2. aph. comm. 4.) He takes care, however, that his right foot sits along the straight line to his left heel. He must bend the left knee enough to bow the leg, and the thigh, so that said bent knee aims at the toes of its foot along a right line, the sole of which, completely stable on the ground, he must keep in mind is to completely support the machine of his body. He must similarly bend the left shoulder over the same back-turned knee, but not in a way that it carries the body back, as this must not lean in any direction, nor be flung forward, nor to either side, but remain straight and firm in itself facing the enemy. The skull elevated at its centre, that being the neck, which is naturally loose. Then, he must extend the sword arm to the beginning of his thigh, but with the hand a little removed from it so that the hilt does not hitch on his clothing or its edges in the operations. Holding the point of the sword toward his adversary's chest, he takes care that his hand does not greatly squeeze the weapon—only enough to easily control it. Squeezing greatly causes motion and slowness.

### *Guards*

Three guards are then bestowed upon this stance for the individual's defence. The first is called the Guard Outside the Weapons, the second Under the Weapons, and the third Inside the Weapons, which are no less under the guidance of the dagger, and subordinate to its dominion, than always necessary for the gentleman's safety so that he



can guard and defend himself from all the adversarial blows that could result in harm to him.

Beginning with the Guard Outside the Weapons (maintaining the stance in the position I mentioned), the dagger must be united with the sword in the manner of shears. Not to the point, however, that said weapons are so joined that they come to be totally attached. United, yes, but not bound.

In the Guard Under the Weapons, the dagger arm must be raised to the point that its fist is along a straight line to its shoulder, and it must be seen that the points of both weapons are joined. It is alert to the defence and exposes a place no other side than underneath.

Finally, in the Guard Inside the Weapons, it is necessary that the dagger fist be lowered to the proper line of the belt, almost toward the left flank, its point raised not entirely along a straight line to the heavens, but a little agitated within the middle ground. The dagger is always held ready to defend against those stoccate that could easily offend the entire visible space from the face to the belt. In order to keep the stomach and lower parts guarded and unharmed, it is possible for the sword to be joined under the dagger, by which, if the adversary's blow were to unadvisedly come in toward said parts, it is possible to defend oneself from it quite easily.

### *The Straight Stoccata and Imbroccata*

The guards, or defences, which they are, now described, my pen leaps forward in order to explain the actions of proposal pertinent to the gentleman, and although I should discuss leaps, I do not intend to pull myself away from the aforesaid stance. Pausing there, I first of all establish that above all the extant actions of proposal in this exercise, just two extremely fast and principal stoccate are found. One is called "straight stoccata", the other "imbroccata". I admit (verified by experience), and bear witness against all conflicting opinion, that all fencing is supported and based on these. It is no marvel if they are praised for their speed by masters, since they trace their origin to that which bears the name *The Sea*, says *Marcelli*.

To perfectly achieve them, then, in planting himself in guard (that being the best guard, in which the spirit is most disposed) the gentleman must unite himself with all quickness. This consists in nothing more than the union of the stance, which is in being fortified over the left knee, the breath retained in the pit of the stomach, the middle reinforced through the back, and the right thigh innervated to the greatest degree. He takes care, of course, not to keep the sole of his right foot elevated, but only the tips of the toes of said foot, so that the leg is completely stiff, more ready and fast in moving, and any stumbling is avoided during its movement. All the parts from the belt downward are held no less firm than the remainder of the body above is mobile and loose, with the shoulders and arm easy and free in their readiness. Whence, the sword lightly commanded in the palm of the hand just enough to unburden the arm, the mentioned circumstances observed, the left foot firmed in stance, he gives the hand immeasurable speed in extending the stoccata at his enemy's chest, thrusting out the tip

of the right foot not with a leap, but almost nibbling the ground, vehemently turning his body together with the dagger, which goes backward along the straight line in which it is found. In terminating it, he ensures that both legs end up innervated, he looses his breath, and at his centre he innervates his chest so that such vigorous impetus adds greater spirit to recovering into guard. Above all, he needs to pay attention and ensure that his thoughts focus entirely on pushing the hand before any other motion. Having to create an advantageous path for all the limbs, this must necessarily precede them.

He is further advised that, even though various motions are necessary in thrusting the straight stoccata, they must be entirely confined to an instant so that, all joined together and ready, they produce a single action in one motion. Otherwise, another motion preceding will cause slowness and, as soon as this appears, the other's defences will be put into effect, whence he will (undoubtedly) become an offender mocked by the fortunate actor.

Similarly, he knows that the imbroccata differs from the straight stoccata only in a turn of the fist to the inside. Even though it is also a straight stoccata, it comes to be called "imbroccata" because it is carried over the enemy's arm when he stands in the Guard Outside the Weapons, in which, if one were to throw the straight stoccata, he would easily defend himself. With this turn of the fist to the inside, however, greater opportunity to wound is found and the strength of the aforesaid enemy's dagger is removed. In either method (the outlined requisites being necessary to these two stoccate, both of them terminating extremely quickly in the space of the chest), it is necessary that I say that they are divergent in name, but only one straight stoccata in substance.

Of course, so that the mentioned gentleman is better habituated to taking advantage of this straight stoccata, I must explain to him what kind of thing this straight stoccata is, why it is so named, and in what tempo it must be employed.

As to this, I will firstly say that (in my opinion) the straight stoccata is an extremely fast action, and due to being such becomes almost invisible and unstoppable.

I do not believe there is better proof that it is an extremely fast action, and almost invisible, than what is seen from daily experience in academies. Knowing quite well, however, that its speed fundamentally derives from the union of the limbs and from the brevity of the motions, it would not be strange were I to say that it is the same speed that a bolt carries when loosed from a crossbow. The union of the limbs the bow, and the arm the bolt, I will be able to reasonably say and be forced to concede that it is almost invisible.

That it is unstoppable is not difficult then, as it would have to be opposed while fencing has given the principal actions no less than the ancillary exactly three necessary and essential requisites, which are speed, tempo, and measure. Therefore, this stoccata, principal action of fencing, always carries the aforesaid requisites, and its being unstoppable is proved. That given, any action of fencing executed with such requisites comes to be perfect and, being perfect, is not refuted by opposition. Opposition desisting, defence does not prevail. And, if defence has no place there, it is therefore

irreparable, otherwise it would reach infinity.

Why is it called “straight stoccata”? I myself would not know other reasons to assign if not these: Because all the body’s limbs, united in stance, are moved along a straight line in offending, or because the stoccata travels along a straight line on the inside of the adversary’s weapons, or, in conclusion, because my first masters baptized it with such a name.

Finally, in what tempo must it be employed? It should be known that (not only in order to not be defended by the enemy, but also to evade the incontro, which is *an action conceived by two contraries in the same tempo, so that one does not know what the other wishes to do*) it will be necessary that it be thrust boldly in the instant that the enemy wavers in stance, while he moves his right foot, or, alternatively, is bringing in his left, or, instead, at that point the aforesaid attempts to move backward, or, finally, in that tempo he, standing at measure, makes some unregulated motion—that is, of the body, eyes, or weapons. In order for it truly to be executed more safely, however, the scommosse, which are fervent and menacing motions regulated by a single motion of the hand reciprocal with the feet, can be practised in approaching measure. The adversary is easily shaken and disunited by these scommosse, and in the same tempo that he is disunited it would be possible to launch said stoccata. Do not wonder at me being so wide-ranging on this stoccata since, among all the actions of fencing, though there is no action faster or safer than this straight stoccata, none, however, requires as refined a tempo as it. In fact, I will say that it is no less subject to great peril than it is valued for its safety.

Having hitherto sufficiently discussed the straight stoccata and its requisites, I see myself forced to advise that, for the acquisition of said stoccata just as for all the other actions, three circumstances are necessary to the mentioned gentleman: An expert master to teach him, love in enduring so long and unbearable a labour, and no less good a disposition of the intellect than of the body. Even if he prides himself on having excellent disposition and better love, not learning from a skilled master, what that poet said in another sense will happen to them:

*He ploughs the waves and sows the sands. (Sanaz. Nell’Arcad)*

Such is said with good reason, since none of the actions relevant to fencing can be learned without the living voice of a master (as I mentioned at the outset), who firstly must think to place the gentleman in stance in the described manner, and teach him to understand everything with repeated communication (the love of the master in teaching needing to be no less than that of the gentleman in learning). Whence, said master being watchful for any emergent defects in it (however small), he does not grow tired of loosening and unburdening him, as the agility of the body depends on the looseness of the limbs, and that produces the speed of the arm. If this is not possessed, any deception will be lacking and defective.

Now that I have spoken a good deal about the master (assuming he is quite skilled), I can do no less than describe how and in what manner the subsequent actions must be employed, all the more because, the theory not sufficing for these, the practise is always

required. In any case, I will exert myself and even attempt the impossible with the possible, all in order to distill them to perfect intelligibility.

### *The Parry in Tempo*

Weaving the present discourse with the thread of the actions employed in this exercise nowadays, I will warp the finest wool of my fundamentals with the parry in tempo, which is to say, wounding and parrying in a single tempo. This action is practised by the adversary in the Guard Under or Outside the Weapons when the gentleman thrusts the stoccata or imboccata against him. How it could be said with good intelligibility: At the same point that the gentleman extends his stoccata, the adversary will be able to drive another stoccata at him and, driving it, defend himself with the dagger. This parry in tempo, executed in the proper tempo, comes to produce almost two actions in one instant. But somehow, I suddenly feel my pen shudder, and my ears ring with a philosophical maxim which, shouting, appears to entirely repudiate this parry in tempo as never being possible: *possint fieri due actiones in eodem instanti* (Arist. 8. phis. tex. 61.). Whence I, not one bit dismayed by a proposal so audacious (though otherwise adequate), know to say to them that, even though the adversary's intention consists entirely in seizing upon the gentleman's Tempo, pushing his dagger at the same time in meeting the other's sword, they almost always come to be (as I said) two actions in the same instant. This occurs *non per se primo intentum, sed per accidens*. Otherwise, if the adversary attempts to parry first, then wound, it will no longer be a parry in tempo but would come to be the response in tempo, which action is continuously employed in the Guard Inside the Weapons, as well as in different actions which I will give knowledge of in the proper place.

### *Redoubles*

I could expand briefly on redoubles, very effective means of limbering up the chest and habituating the dagger arm to the defences, but demonstrating them being the concern of a wise master, I move on to other actions suitable to me.

### *Moving in Stance*

Therefore, I am brought to moving in stance. I will say that in placing himself in guard either Under or Outside the Weapons (whichever pleases him more), firstly the gentleman must move his right foot with just a single motion of the foot. When this is done with two motions it will (without fail) also end up useful in reinforcing the stance. Whence, he simply brings in his left foot along a straight line in proportion to the other. The enemy's measure reached, and recognizing an opportune tempo to thrust the straight stoccata, he should not pass up the occasion, but see to launching it at the part where the enemy is closest and seen to be less defended against its entrance. He sees to withdrawing with the same speed contained in offending—not undefended, however. He always attempts to defend himself with the dagger or instead the sword when it is found free from the other's constraint. I further add that in the act of attempting to break away from his adversary, he must (first moving the head backward, due to it being the rudder of the body) withdraw the right foot and, in the same instant breaking the measure with

the left foot, withdraw the right foot again, whence there comes to be two withdrawals of the right foot and one of the left. Replacing himself with all quickness in his guards, he is careful to resolve himself to the Tempo if the enemy were to launch himself toward him in this. If the aforesaid does not expose himself in any courageous act, though, reunited in his posture (as I said), the gentleman waits for the actions regarding which I will give him plenty of information shortly. In this moving in stance, he is above all advised not to waver with the body in the motions, which will be of the hand and feet, but to with uninterrupted care keep it quite stable but not stiff in its position.

### *Flowing Feints*

The firm-footed actions ended on this, and the firm-footed feints and beats set aside as improper and not very useful in assaults, I move on to those actions from a distance. Whence, for the first foundations of these, I plan (for good reason) to bring forward the flowing feints which, due to being mistresses of the deceptions, in continuously battling with the defences they do not fail to obtain victorious palms from them. In fact, the more the enemy relies on defence, the more they safely enter the stockade of his chest. Even though they are called flowing feints, they are converted to a straight stoccata or imbroccata in terminating. But what I should deal with first: The gentleman should know that three movements are established in this exercise which are feints: the flowing feint, the repeated feint, and the feint and parry with the sword.

For now, to begin I will say that, the flowing feint being an action from a distance consisting of two steps of the feet, the gentleman must not initiate it from the measure required by the straight stoccata, but about a palmo more distant than that. To that end (the chest held loose and not stiff in its centre, the rest of the body hardened in stance), in the first motion he will be able to thrust the sword hand almost half the travel of its arm, together with the well-innervated right leg, and in the same tempo bring in the bent left in proportion to the other. At the second motion, following up with only the right leg and holding the left foot still where it was brought in, he violently turns the vita and terminates this feint in his enemy's chest. This is with no less speed of the hand and feet than was necessary in the hint, however. The gentleman is advised that if his enemy stands defended in the Guard Under or Inside the Weapons, in the first motion he must boldly feign with the point of the sword at the forte of the other's dagger, and in the second motion terminate the feint with the imbroccata. And, if the same enemy is in the Guard Outside the Weapons, the gentleman can hint at wounding along the outside just as much as toward the left shoulder, and follow it with the straight stoccata along the inside. He is further advised to not employ said feint when his enemy stands still and united in stance, but amongst the fervours of the assaults—that is to say, either in the tempo the aforesaid is bringing in his left foot, or at the point he wishes to retreat, or instead in the act of him being about to finish some provocative motion such as the discovery of intention, provocation, or scommossa (which methods will be learned in their time). Additionally, he will be able to thrust it in the instant the enemy replaces himself in guard after having thrown some stoccata since, him not being able to resolve to the Tempo in similar tempi, he infallibly rushes to the defence. Nor must the gentleman cease taking care not to launch the sword so much in the first motion that it lingers constrained by the mentioned enemy's dagger. Finally, he should be careful not

to move the dagger from its guard until the second motion, not only in order to acquire greater union, but also to defend from the Tempo in case the adversary were to resolve himself to such.

### *Repeated Feints*

The repeated feint, then, does not differ from the flowing feint other than in a single repeated motion of the hand and an extra step of the feet. I would say that not only does this derive from the flowing feint, but without that it has no beginning or end. This is reasonable, given that even though the repeated feint may be formed as a result of accidents, it always comes to be regulated by the flowing feint—that is, if at that first motion of the flowing feint or, to say it better, at that first accent of the sword, the enemy, focused on his defences, gives way backward, either by chance or because he deems withdrawing safe, it is certain that said action being executed in this kind of tempo would find itself lacking measure in the termination, and would come to be faulty and insufficient. Whence, in order for the offence to not be left imperfect, the repeated feint is formed in that instant. So, as I said, it comes to be formed through accidents. It comes, then, to be regulated by the flowing feint, as the union of the stance, the speed of the arm, the rapidity of the feet, the justness of the dagger, and the solidity of the body are obtained from that same action. This feint initiated, the gentleman must, therefore, repeat the gesture of the sword toward the side defended by the adversary's dagger, accompanied by another compass of the feet equal to the first, and with uninterrupted speed execute it at the chest of the mentioned adversary, along that path where the opening closest to the other's dagger is found. He is advised that if, at the beginning of this feint, said adversary is found in the Guard Under the Weapons, he will be able to thrust the first accent of the sword under the adversary's dagger, the second on the outside, and terminate the feint in the third motion with the straight stoccata. If, then, he is in the Guard Inside the Weapons, the first accent of the sword is along the inside and toward the face, the second on the outside, the third completing it similarly with the straight stoccata. Additionally, if he stands planted in the Guard Outside the Weapons, the gentleman thrusts the first accent on the outside toward the enemy's left shoulder, the second on the inside, and the third is executed with the imbroccata. Also, if his enemy were to continue withdrawing during this, the gentleman does not stop continuing with similar feigned gestures of the sword, so that when he reaches measure he is able to put said feint into effect.

### *The Feint and Parry with the Sword*

Lastly, the feint and parry with the sword differing little and almost not at all from the first motion of the flowing feint, I could reasonably say that both are effected with the same beginning. This is because this feint necessarily seeks no less than the same union of the stance, speed of the arm, and stillness of the dagger that the flowing feint requires in its first motion. Truly, the slight difference is that in employment of the flowing feint against any guard the adversary defends himself in, one feigns arrogantly with the point of the sword at the forte of his dagger, and in doing this, with the same point of the sword one gestures not at the forte of the dagger, but at the aforesaid enemy's face. Therefore, the gentleman feigning (as I said) with the point of his sword toward the

mentioned adversary's face, he must be vigilant in observing whether the enemy, forced by that so vigorous accent, resolves himself to the Tempo. This occurring, he is quite ready to parry it with the forte of the same sword and to advance the union of the feet in the same instant with another step, in order to be able to terminate this feint in the enemy's chest with such quickness that the parry is not one bit different from the wound. Whence, as soon as said action is finished, with the same sword he is newly prompt to subject that of his enemy, and if he has a new opportunity to wound in the meantime, nothing stops him from alternately repeating the offences. Otherwise, conquering both weapons of the mentioned competitor with the same sword, the gentleman could leap forward as he replaces himself in guard.

### *Beats of the Sword*

Moving from feints to beats of the sword, I advise that only two main beats are taught by our exercise—one on the inside of the weapons, and the other on the outside. They do not differ from each other in more than a turn of the fist (as will be heard of in time), so that in the rest they are not only the same in quickness, but also every other motion. In fact, were the measure no different there, they could be compared to the straight stoccata, since the beats of the sword are nothing more in substance than a mere straight stoccata executed along the edge of the adversary's sword. So I do not ramble on at great length, then, on the method of employing them the gentleman should know that these beats are always initiated and carried out with the same compass of the feet, union of the stance, and firmness of the body with which the flowing feint is practised—although in flowing feints (as learned) one gestures with the point of the sword toward the enemy's defence, while in these one never gestures, but leaps with the sword's forte onto the debole of the other's sword. I say onto the debole since, being given a greater leap, it will be difficult to send away the aforesaid sword due to the greater strength found in the second case's terzo than the first case. Therefore, noting that the mentioned enemy is about a palmo outside of measure (the opportunity to beat the enemy's sword on the inside of the weapons), the gentleman must (his own sword kept in half-quarta, and the mentioned requisites of the flowing feint observed) leap out with the edge of the sword taking flight and shooting at the debole of the other's sword, and in the same half-quarta terminate it in the right side of the mentioned enemy. If the opportunity is on the outside of the weapons, he also gives the sword a leap, also straight toward other's debole, and terminates it with an imbroccata. This is because, the adversary coming to meet his motion, with that half-quarta of the sword or imbroccata the gentleman can defend himself from the incontro that could occur there. He also sees to performing said beats in the middle of assaults when the adversary, separating his sword from his dagger, plays with it in motion, or when he is recognized to be diverted by the gentleman's cavationi.

### *Predations of the Sword*

Likewise, two predations of the sword are taught in this exercise. One is called the predation of the advanced sword, the other the predation of the withdrawn sword, and both are also performed with the same compass of the feet and union of the limbs I mentioned in regard to the flowing feints.

### *The Predation of the Advanced Sword*

Commencing with the predation of the advanced sword, I urge the gentleman to employ it when he sees that his enemy, planted outside of measure, plays with his sword advanced and slightly separated from his dagger. Therefore, so great a quickness is recognized in the first motion (as long as that same enemy is not placed there deceptively) that, rapidly leaping with the feet, it will be possible for him (without moving the body or sword from their places) to throw the dagger over the aforesaid enemy's sword as if he wished to steal it from his control. In the second motion, not holding back the flight of his right foot or sword hand at all, he follows the predation with the straight stoccata to the chest of the mentioned enemy and in the same tempo turns his vita in place. However, noting the aforesaid sword to be high, low, inside, or outside, he is advised to see to taking it with a single motion of the dagger from the same guard he is found in. Him changing the dagger to other guards, there will be no small difficulty in performing the predation.

### *The Predation of the Withdrawn Sword*

In the predation of the withdrawn sword, then (the sword and vita likewise kept in the same position), let the gentleman, outside of measure, endeavour to make a provocative motion with the dagger in contempt of the enemy, combined with a single step of the feet, well-united in themselves. This is so that the same enemy seeing it, incited by that so resolute and contemptuous a motion, exposes himself in order to bring the Tempo. This occurring, the gentleman should then be very quick to defend himself with the same provocative dagger, and with a single step of the right foot follow the action with the straight stoccata. In the case that the enemy were not to come to the Tempo at such a provocative motion, the gentleman should not allow him to reach measure so defended and fixed in guard, and execute his predation with all quickness in a way that, whether the enemy comes or not at that inciting motion, he never stops himself from completing the aforesaid action. In order to free himself from similar such doubts, though, the gentleman should see to employing it in the midst of the assaults at the point he recognizes that his adversary is completely intent on and disposed to the Tempo, so that his predation will then proceed more safely.

### *Disorderings*

There is no doubt that I praised all the actions of proposal from a distance. In my opinion, however, the disordering is superior to all, for the reason that the enemy is not more easily shaken by any action than this. So then, without fail the actions become safest when they are employed in the tempo the mentioned enemy is removed from his stance. Notwithstanding that all the actions are subject to being offended by the Tempo, I believe that, although the disordering is also susceptible to the Tempo, in defending itself from the Tempo with greater ease than the other actions (not disparaging any of them) it must be deemed the best of all. And, as the disordering is different from the aforesaid actions, not only in the compass of the feet but also the motion of the hand, I recognize no small difficulty in fully explaining it. Nevertheless, I will not stop myself from saying that, planted and united in guard, his body kept firm in its position so as not



to waver in the motions, the gentleman must leap out with the sword with an accent in half-quarta half the extension of his arm. This should be done with a single motion of the hand reciprocal to the right foot. Thence, returning the sword to its place, he brings in the left foot in proportion to the other. Given that the motion of the sword brings along the right foot when it goes forward, it likewise draws in the left foot when it returns. Properly iterating said accent at the adversary's dagger, he must concentrate on withdrawing the sword along the same path he brings it forward, so that the motions are always made equal. He should further see to never moving the dagger from its guard, with which he is continuously vigilant to defend himself from the Tempo when the adversary resolves himself to such. As much as the same adversary, now uncovered by those regulated and spirited motions, gives way backward, the gentleman fervently continues the accents of the sword until he reaches the perfect measure to offend him. Having arrived there, he can terminate the disordering with all boldness on the side the aforesaid enemy is seen to be undefended from it. Not being able to know for certain at which motion of the disordering the gentleman will arrive at measure, I cannot definitively establish whether it must terminate with a straight stoccata or an imbroccata, either. True, I will say that if the adversary is defended in the Guard Under or Inside the Weapons at the point the gentleman commences the disordering, reaching him at measure in the second motion, it is terminated with the straight stoccata, and if in the third, it is finished with the imbroccata. Him being in the Guard Outside the Weapons, then, if the gentleman arrives in the second motion, he brings the imbroccata, and if in the third, the straight stoccata is executed. But (as I said), he will be able to execute it on the side he sees the nearest undefended place. Finally, I add for the gentleman that the best tempo to employ this disordering is at the point his adversary commences the withdrawal, or instead while he is retreating. This is for the reason that, performing the disordering against him in those tempi, he will be unable to resolve himself to the Tempo and, doing such not being possible, unfailingly rushes to the defence. The more he seeks to defend himself from those gestures of the sword, the more easily the disordering will succeed.

### *Methods of Discomposing the Enemy*

Finally, I am left to mention that five methods to discompose the enemy are found in fencing. These are advancing in motion, the discovery of intention, the scommossa, the provocation with the dagger, and the provocation with the sword.

### *Advancing in Motion*

Advancing in motion can be practised by the gentleman when, advancing in stance, he sees his enemy quite firm and arranged in guard, totally intent on the defence. Assured by this recognition, therefore, in approaching the measure he can proceed one turn in motion, and another still. This is all employed not only in order to uncover the enemy's intention, but also to separate him from his stubborn pretension in some way—no action, however minimal, ever being employed by a good expert of fencing without the proper recognition of what the adversary has in mind. Thus, I advise that if within that advancing in motion or, to say it better, temporizing of the weapons and feet, he sees that his enemy is wavering or separated in some way from his weapons, in entering

measure with the same temporizings he can boldly execute the straight stoccata. Otherwise, he must never risk throwing it, but continue observing the other's movements with sharp attention. In order not to go on at length about the advantage in the expression of this advancing in motion, it will suffice to say that it is the same motion, of the hand no less than the feet, that I extensively outlined regarding the disordering. Truly, the slight difference is that, due to their nature, the motions of the disordering are always continued, and the motions of this are certainly not entirely continuous, but intermittently executed. Also, I dare say that many times, and almost always, among those intermittent motions they become continuous.

### *The Discovery of Intention*

The discovery of intention: Were it not to differ by a single motion of the left foot, I would say that it is the same method as the disordering. For the understanding of this (the body always kept firm in its centre, the dagger comfortably gripped in its guard so that it is more deft in the defences), the gentleman will be able to thrust the sword toward the other's defence with an accent in half-quarta half the length of his arm, accompanied by two short motions of the right foot. Thence, he does not draw in the left foot as the disordering requires, but, together with the sword, withdraws the same right foot to its first state. This should be done with such vehemence and rapidity that there is no pause from hand to foot. He should likewise understand that this discovery of intention can be employed in different actions of proposal, given that its own name teaches so. But, for the most part, it is usual according to the daily use of the exercise in the use of the flowing feints, in order to recognize and ascertain whether the enemy is disposed to the defence or the Tempo. In such a way, the gentleman recognizing that his enemy is completely intent on the defence, he can deceive him at the end of the discovery with the flowing feints. If his enemy is prepared to offend with the Tempo, the gentleman does not make use of feints, but with full attentiveness of his limbs avails himself of the predation of the withdrawn sword.

### *The Scommossa*

Similarly deriving from the method of the disordering, the scommossa is employed with almost the same motion. For clarification of this: The aforesaid gentleman (the body secure in its place, and the dagger well-arranged in guard) sees to sticking out the sword with that same accent of the hand and the same two movements of the right foot, in accordance with what I advised on the disordering, and, bringing in the left foot a little in almost the same act, violently returns the sword and withdraws his right foot to its first state, not in two motions like he sent it out, but in a single motion. The scommossa differs from the disordering in this withdrawal. He further sees not only to employing this scommossa with speed and fervour of the arm and feet, but to doing so outside of measure, and at the point he sees that his enemy is in complete anticipation. He should also be vigilant to whether the aforesaid enemy resolves himself to the Tempo at his violent and threatening action, since he employs this scommossa for no other purpose than to force the adversary to bring the Tempo. This occurring, he is quick to parry it with the dagger and slip in with the responses.

### *The Provocation with the Dagger*

I maintain that the provocation with the dagger is almost the same first motion of the predation of the withdrawn sword. That being said, the gentleman must (persisting in guard, as usual) show a violent and threatening accent toward the enemy with his dagger. This is regulated by a single motion of the right foot outside of measure, so that said enemy, compelled by such a furious accent, comes to bring the Tempo. That occurring, the gentleman should be extremely swift to defend against it with the same provocative dagger and without hesitation offend the enemy with the firm-footed responses.

### *The Provocation with the Sword*

Finally, the provocation with the sword. In any case, it is not dissimilar to the feint and parry beyond a small accent of the sword, and I will say that between this and that there is no difference beyond an almost nothingness. Since if, in the feint and parry, one gestures vigorously with the point of the sword toward the enemy's face, in this provocation one violently threatens with its forte toward the same's weapons. Therefore, I reasonably said that their difference is almost nothing. In every method (in order not to pass over any of them abruptly), I urge the gentleman to make use of this provocation not only amongst the fervours of the assaults, but also even at their onset, particularly in the occasion of brawls. As for the rest, then, in regulating oneself in defending as much as in bringing the offences upon the enemy, I refer to what I said regarding the feint and parry.

## ACTIONS OF RESPONSE

*The actions of proposal suitable and relevant to the gentleman now explained and finished, I am duty bound to produce from the beginning such that by reason and my own estimation is necessary around those of response in defence of the adversary, it not being reasonable and just to discuss the advantage of the offences when the defences are always more necessary to the individual.*

### *A gainst the Straight Stoccata*

To begin, beyond the parry in tempo, the adversary can make use of three actions against the straight stoccata: The simple parry and charge, the disordering parry and charge, and the parry with the sword.

Founding my principles upon the simple parry and charge, I advise the adversary that if, at thrusting his stoccata, the gentleman immediately breaks away from measure, in that instant the adversary can accomplish the offences not by responding firm-footed, because he does not reach measure, but with this simple parry and charge. That is to say, at the same point he parries the other's stoccata with the dagger, he should be quick in advancing a step of the feet, united in stance, and, turning his body at the second step of just the right foot, bring the response with the imbroccata. I say with the imbroccata so that it finds a greater opportunity in the mentioned gentleman's chest. If the adversary is slow in advancing his feet at parrying the other's stoccata, though, having to receive the other's offence from the Tempo is assured. And, so that there is no difficulty around this compass of the feet, let him know that it is the same as that of the flowing feint.

The disordering parry and charge must also be employed by the adversary while the gentleman who throws the stoccata gives way backward. In other words, in the same instant he parries the other's stoccata with the dagger, he is quick to subjugate the sword with the same dagger and, continuously toying with it using the same in order to keep it more oppressed, continues advancing the compass of the feet, one in proportion to the other, but in this the body always stays stable in its arrangement. The more the mentioned gentleman gives way backward, the more the adversary, well-united in stance, follows in advancing upon him. While he approaches him, he should not cease dismaying him with threatening accents of the sword toward his face and defence and, provided that he arrives at measure, wound him not only in the chest, but also any part of the body he sees is closest and most undefended. If, then, the adversary desires greater safety for his person, in the second motion of the feet while advancing he can place his sword over the other's sword, already defended against by the dagger in the first motion, and with both hampering it, give a blow to the aforesaid gentleman's sword, and another to his chest. In the case that the gentleman were to perform a cavatione of the sword to the inside or outside while withdrawing in order to free himself from that subjugation, or instead to offend with the Tempo, the adversary should be extremely quick to retake and subjugate it anew with the sword. Otherwise, he could be offended by those unexpected cavationi.

Additionally, the competitor can avail himself of the same parry with the sword regardless of whether he employs the dagger. That is to say, while the gentleman extends the stoccata, instead of parrying it with the dagger, he defends against it with the forte of his sword—in defending against it, it assists similarly to the dagger on the defended sword. Whence, if the aforesaid gentleman withdraws, the adversary can advance on the same compass of the feet, union of the stance, and firmness of the body that I explained at the disordering parry and charge. The more the same gentleman gives way backward, the more he should charge onto him. Provided he reaches him at measure without withdrawing his dagger from the already defended and subjugated sword, with a motion of the hand and foot he brings a blow to the adversary's chest, and another onto the same's sword. He should also be aware that if, in withdrawing, the gentleman were to perform a cavatione with his sword to the inside or outside, high or low, he must not stop himself from retaking it in the same way I clearly advised on the beating parry and charge.

### *Against Feints*

I also add that against all feints the adversary can boldly make use of the Tempo, which, due to being a most perfect action, is praised as safe by all. He must take care, however, to execute it at the same first motion of the feints, provided that the gentleman enters measure in thrusting them. Therefore, this occurring, he brings the Tempo in that action, as I said, together with the right foot, and opens the vita wide in place. Otherwise, bringing the Tempo in the second motion of the feints, he will not strike, or, even if he does, the incontro will result from it. Happening in this moment that the gentleman, moved by excessive resolution, were to enter too far into measure in executing his feints, the adversary will be able to thrust said tempo with a half-quarta of the body. That is to say, voiding the left leg outside the straight line in extending the Tempo, to the point that the body does not rest along the straight line, but is profiled toward the gentleman. In fact, if the gentleman also launches the sword in half-quarta toward the mentioned adversary's right side in this situation, the Tempo will strike (in my judgement) with more certainty given that, the edge of his own sword easily meeting that of the gentleman, the Tempo succeeds more assuredly through both half-quarte. I said a half, not complete, quarta of the body, for the reason that him employing the entire quarta of the body, he would not only remain defenceless in stance but, by excessively drawing near the gentleman with his shoulder, could receive sure offences from his dagger.

### *Against Beats*

For defence against the beats of the sword, the adversary can make use of the cavationi, which do not consist in more than a movement of the fist inside or outside. In employment of these, at the same time that the gentleman leaps out with his beat, the adversary must perform a cavatione contrary to it with the point of his own sword and, performing the cavatione, offend with the Tempo. However, this is done with the consideration that if the aforesaid gentleman wishes to beat his sword on the inside of his weapons, the adversary will be able (quickly performing a cavatione with the point of the sword and thrusting out the right foot) to execute the Tempo with an imbrocata on

the outside of the other's sword, so that he can defend himself with this imbroccata from the incontro that could occur from it. If, then, he wishes to beat it on the outside (the adversary also performing a cavatione with the sword contrary to it and sticking out his right foot) the adversary will have to bring the Tempo along the inside of the weapons with a half-quarta of the sword, given that its edge can also protect him from the incontro.

But, in order never to be subjected to the aforesaid beats or predations of the advanced sword, the adversary sees to playing skillfully with the point of his sword well-united and collected under his own dagger. He does not always hold it still, though, nor continuously in motion, since excessive solidity makes the arm stiff and uncertain, and excessive motion hinders and weakens the arm in its operations. The sword held where I said, it will therefore not only be immune to the gentleman's beats and predations, but also any action that he must thrust out will find, leaping out, greater space in the mentioned gentleman's chest. Finding greater space, the action will not be so easily defended.

### *Against Predations of the Withdrawn Sword*

As for the predations of the withdrawn sword, against all these I urge the adversary to make use of the Tempo—when, however, the gentleman enters measure in the first motion of his predation. If he does not enter measure (as he has good reason not to), the adversary is advised to persist in his defences and not to be careless in bringing the Tempo, since, the Tempo thrust outside of measure, the other's predation will become an action of contratempo. In such a case, the adversary will surely end up offended. Indeed, the defect derives from he who employs the Tempo outside of measure and not from the Tempo, given that the Tempo, being a perfect and regal action in of itself, can never fail and, being unable to fail, has no opposition, while the Tempo sometimes comes to be defended by the Contratempo insofar as the Tempo was either brought outside of its tempo, or not thrust with the necessary speed.

### *Against Disorderings*

In order to avoid the other's disorderings, the adversary can likewise make use of the Tempo. Inclined toward this, he must therefore thrust it either while the gentleman, beginning the disordering, enters measure, or instead while he is disordering. If he executes the Tempo while the aforesaid disorders, it is quite true that he is advised to bring it with a half-quarta of the body so that he more surely avoids the incontro that could arise in such fierce motions. Occurring that he, either due to mere negligence or due to his own unfitness, were found unready to thrust the Tempo in those mentioned instants, he should properly and skillfully seek to defend himself with the sword. This is because if he attempts to defend himself from those violent motions with the dagger, this not being at all useful for them, he will clearly end up wounded.

Finally, I will say that the adversary can also avail himself of the Tempo in affront to all five discomposing methods—when, however, they are hatched and initiated at the measure of the mentioned gentleman. If they were to be employed outside of measure,

as is reasonable, the adversary does not make use of the Tempo, but in the same act they are begun can avail himself of the flowing feints, or instead the disordering. Occurring that he is not prompt in employing them in that first action, he is not slow, however, in putting them into operation in the second action—that is, while the gentleman reunites in guard. How to recognize when said methods are truly offensive and when they are deceptive, then? I can tell you that they can never be recognized from my pen, but the recognition of them is easily acquired from the continuous practice of assaults.

Now, since the Tempo, (as you have learned up to this point) commands fencing almost as a ruler, it is no marvel if I say that the actions, the principal no less than ancillary, are always subject to the Tempo.

## GENERAL ADVICE

Therefore, first of all I advise the gentleman that, having to perform some action, whether it is offensive or defensive, he see to putting it into operation it in the proper tempo the action requires. Recognizing now is the opportune tempo of executing it, he should not hold back at all in employing it. All this is done with uninterrupted celerity of the arm and feet, as fencing assuredly teaches that someone who has tempo must not wait for another tempo. If he loses that tempo, he will no longer be in tempo.

Secondly, I advise him to not practise any action of proposal at placing himself in guard—that is, at the beginning of assaults—but to skillfully employ it amongst their fervours so that his competitor cannot notice the deception. In fact, he should attempt and ensure with various strategies to show something different to that which he has in mind. For, the enemy being astute to his deceptions, he will easily defend against them, and defending against them, respond with greater trickery.

Third, I advise not becoming dismayed in unforeseen circumstances—that is, in brawls. Rather, in the first fervent and bilious motions, the sword drawn courageously, he puts it forward in the air in the manner of the single sword so that the competitor is kept far from measure and his own defences become safer in those first unregulated motions. Thence, fortified, he should draw the dagger and unite in guard where it most pleases him, and not esteeming the ability and pride of his enemy (or rather, only enough to conserve the individual) see to managing himself according to the opportunities the enemy presents to him.

Fourthly, I advise that he never send out any action of proposal if he has not first assuredly recognized what his enemy's intention is based on. Instead, he can employ scommosse or provocations of the sword outside of measure, by which threatening methods his enemy is easily either removed from his stance or resolved to the Tempo. If he resolves to the Tempo, the gentleman can comfortably defend himself against it with the dagger or instead with the sword, given that the defence will be more prompt in those present conjunctures if he is removed from stance, dexterously bringing in the left foot, and in the same act he can thrust the straight stoccata or disorder him with ease.

Fifth, I advise that, being in the assigned place (the equality of weapons, terrain, and distribution of the sun recognized first) he place himself in guard, where the spirit is more disposed, but distant from the enemy. Whence, with a spirit no less secure than calm, the sword does not differ one bit from the practice sword, and he should proceed lynx-like in approaching the measure, always cautious and watchful of the defences and the Tempo. During this, recognizing a stubborn posture in the aforementioned enemy, he should not neglect to avail himself of scommosse and provocations.

Sixth, I advise that he must always be resolute but regulated in all the operations of this science. I said regulated because most of the time excess resolution causes notable harm. In the other sciences, if one fails once, the failure is mild. In this, one loses one's life and perhaps one's soul. This belonging to God, it is necessary that every man keeps good custody of and cares for it more than any other thing, as it is precious.



Seventh, I advise that, having to dispute with a person less practised in and ignorant of fencing, the gentleman must not mock him for it, but respect him as if he were an expert. For, in the end he is a man, and this man is his equal—especially since humans are not measured by the palmo, and it sometimes occurs that great valour in one overruns and surpasses the knowledge of another.

Lastly, I advise that any person who is an expert in this science must not provoke anyone to struggle with him, nor draw the sword for every minimal caprice or quibble that he encounters. Moved by a capricious quibble or some carelessness or presumption? These were never the causes that the sword requires in order to return a victory. Rather, he must show his valour and grip it with equal courage when, assaulted by his enemy, he justly kills him in order to defend himself.

Schools of fencing are opened at midday in the foremost cities of the world for such an effect: So that everyone learns with sword in hand to defend himself from the cruel assaults of his competitor, as vicious and irrational as he is enemy of human nature. Otherwise, our just Lord God, equalizer of all, will cause it to occur differently than how one imagines.

*END OF THE FIRST DISCOURSE*

# NEAPOLITAN FENCING

*SECOND DISCOURSE*

Wherein  
THE TRUE RULES  
OF THE SINGLE SWORD ARE GIVEN

BY LORD  
FRANCESCO ANTONIO MATTEI



IN FOGGIA  
Through Novello de Bonis. M.DC.LXIX.

---

*With license of the Most Saintly Superiors*

# NEAPOLITAN FENCING

## *SECOND DISCOURSE*

### INTRODUCTION

Stop! You are attempting too much, o my thinking. Where does ambition spur you? You trust too much in my weaknesses. How is it possible for me ever to explain how the sword is noblest of all weapons? To express its merits and weave its praises to the heights of its privileges? Stop! Check your audaciousness! I see that you are already near the precipices of Icaruses and Phaethons, the maxim being unfortunately higher: He who does not have the feathers of an eagle cannot perch atop globes, and he who holds wax wings ought not approach the sun with his flight. By what are you urged to ruin? The undertaking abandons wisdom. Be satisfied that the same sword appears in the field to divulge its glories. The sun has no better praise than that of its radiance. It demonstrates with its own flashes how it is the terror of armies, conquest of kingdoms, safeguard of royalty, trophy of valour, spirit of a warlike heart, and soul of pride. It is the ecliptic along which the sun of honour rushes most luminously. It is the axis on which the fame and esteem of a hero, like two poles, rotate eternally. It is the most severe tribunal, where the most elevated causes are examined. It is the Ariadne who with her thread guides additional Theseuses in the labyrinth of the most tangled quarrels. Finally, it is the most frequent forum where the glories of the bravest and most courageous are traded.

If you seek its origin: It is the firstborn of weapons, and I swear that it was first worked by the Cyclopes, as they had the ability to fabricate a weapon of great illumination in the perpetual smog of their forge. If the material: It is steel, but radiant, precious, in front of which gold pales and lacks its esteem. So it is. Riches are excavated and gathered; all will serve the strength of this iron. Great understanding caused (to my thinking) someone to imprint money with the sword, highlighting, like a hieroglyphic, that the fortunes of the great lie more in the sword than in riches, or that the gold that conquers all is entirely subject to valour.

If you ask its form: It seems to me to be that of a ray or a tongue. Of a ray, because the fame of someone who knows how to illustriously take up the sword is surrounded by soaring radiance. Of a tongue, because nought but a language of steel suffices to praise its glories. Of a ray, in order to highlight that the valorous know how to clear every cloud of sinister fortune. Of a tongue, in order to express that it is not silent, speaking of its triumphs through as many mouths as wounds it by reason opens on other people. Of a ray, that is never seen gripped when not radiant. Of a tongue, that to the immortality of its praises, the hecatombs of a hundred bleeding eagles are not at all appropriate, but rather, the applause of a thousand eloquent swans. In sum: Of a ray by which valour is illustrated, and of a tongue whence others' names become famous.

But what should I have said of works now famous and eternal? Who can in complete number ever distill them? Steel without prodigious equal? Sword truly destined by fate to palms and glories? This taught Roman consuls and dictators how one passes from

military culture to the dominion of the universe when it armed their right hands, already strengthened on ploughshares and coulter. Come now, we admire it in the hand of Caesar! The Alps and Pyrenees shudder at the injuries of this thunderbolt. The highest summits are humbled to the victorious sword of this Mars. The Rhone and Seine in Gaul and the Danube and Rhine in Germania ran frightened, carrying bloody tidings of Roman valour to the ocean. Once, at the necessitated crossing of a large river, in order to defend himself from that perilous current, he took himself to swimming and abandoned all apart from his Commentaries and the sword. Always carrying it afloat, he wished to (I believe) command the arrogance of the water with it, and to mount that rapid horse. What marvel, then, if it was carved together with the pen (with the motto) *Ex utroque Cæsar* on the base of his pedestals, given that the glories of his name were known from his sword no less than his pen. And who would know if he had not desired to mention, having crushed provinces, subjugated kingdoms, and attained the empire of the world with the sword? He made use of the pen to safeguard the memory and record it in the annals. Here the challenges are ended, and the disputes eternally roused in so many academies are decided: Which of the two obtains greater privilege? The sword, or the pen? Like that sweats in operation, this carries its story and preserves the only record of it. That should merit the accolades, this should bring its tributes. And if this, having sipped ink, forms characters for eternity, that, at times immersed in blood, also knows how to properly portray the immortality of its glories.

Two Scipios grip it, and they are thunderbolts in African battles, as the poet eulogizes them:

*Duo fulmina Belli scipiades. (Virg. Eneid. lib. 6)*

With undaunted virtue it is wielded by that famous Cocles, who, losing an eye for his nation, earned a hundred spotlights on his valour's fame, and, with the ruins of a bridge, erected a levy of terror against the enemy army's attacks.

If it is gripped by that Great Macedonian, what does it not then do? What does it not dare? It overthrows, conquers, and consumes all. After the conquest of many kingdoms the greed of that triumphant steel feels overly confined, however vast the land. What more? If spirits are ignited by the turns of the sword, they will trespass the bounds of humanity. Hence, he then came to be foolishly tempted to imagine divine prerogative. True, that time it was the famous Oracle at Delphi who prophesied to Alexander the uncountable palms (that he retrieved). When he had entered the temple in order to sacrifice, he had the sense to make better use of the sword than of his fingers in order to untie that tangle which was previously indissoluble to all others where the reins hung, vacated there by Gordium. However, at that fateful cut, he turned to say that the conquest of crowns is the destiny of the ingeniously handled sword. But who knows whether he had not wanted to better obscure the tying of that mysterious knot—that knightly issues are not resolved with anything other than thrusts of the sword? Doubtless it is so. Daily experience certainly confirms it in excommunicated duellists. A demon could not counsel abuse so detestable and hideous. Here I feel myself provoked to great invectives, but they are not useful to my purpose or the weaving thread of my discourse. Therefore, I return to the furrow.

There is no need of foreign evidence to show you the nobility and privileges of the sword, as they are infinite in number and singular in quality. Nor is it appropriate for me to beg for proof of those from afar when I can have them, familiar and effective, in the generous virtue of Neapolitan gentlemen. Where does the proclamation of their great valour not reach? What farthest corner of the world has remained unfamiliar with the fame of such gallant gentlemen? It was always their noble challenge to freely sacrifice their blood in service to our Catholic King, and in the bloodiest battles death has not had the visage to terrify that unbeaten, undaunted courage. Their feats forced the truth of the histories, so that I do not exaggerate or give in to hyperbole when I say that the sword was never brandished with greater spirit or applause by others. They played in schools of fencing in order to make sense of it on the field. With gym exercise, they completed an apprenticeship in military endeavours. They came into disgrace, so that the victorious swords of their forebears stayed in armouries, prey to rust—to the point that, having equally inherited them and valour not their own, racing along those glorious paths their same ancestors have beaten is difficult. They thus sold esteem at the cost of their own effort. That benefit is appropriate to cowardice—to someone who begs for luster on his fame using the hazy images of his ancestors.

*Nam genus, & proavos, & quæ non fecimus ipsi.  
Vix ea nostra voco. (Metam. lib. 13.)*

said that great person of Ithaca, according to Ovid. That ancient documentation of nobility, if it does not incite a generous spirit, is a reprimand of disrepute to degenerating souls. Now, as it instead passes with its own virtue to the succession of their ancient nobility, the sword is an adviser in whose temper the constellations of their fortune are continually reflecting. Therefore, a colossus is raised to all, and will touch the stars when it matches the greatness of their valour. I do not list them one by one so that I am not ridiculed, and so that I do not set about emptying the ocean with a nutshell. It is enough to say that under this sky Neapolitan nobility causes warrior heroes to sprout much better than in the legends recounted of Cadmus in the countryside of Thebes. It does not make the virtue of Hercules and Achilles enviable to our century. I would even speak of Hercules, but I will not dishearten myself by comparing a club to the thunderbolts of the sword.

Nevertheless, I have said little. Now I lead you into the palace of glory to admire this weapon at the apogee of honours. Was this place forgotten until now?

*Unfortunately accustomed to the shadows is he  
Who, amongst rays by which the land is lit by the heavens,  
Praises the stars and pays no heed to the sun.*

This cannot be rediscovered elsewhere than in the most powerful, Always August House of Austria, palace of glory (I did say), where palms are grafted to compassion, triumphs to religion. Where many kings have gone to war with no other avarice than to depopulate the kingdom of heresy and propagate it with Catholicism. Where the glory of Christ, not of the world, was the main concern of those royal weapons and the golden fleece of those crowned Argonauts. Turn to their annals, the sequence of which I myself dare not follow so as not to lose myself in infinity. Would not only the deeds of Charles

V, given that they have exhausted the most glorious flights of fame, confound the pens of more famous speakers? By his valour, making war and achieving victory were one and the same, hence it is possible that his victories number equal to his battles. Suleiman, that living terror and animate torment of the Catholic world, once feared to challenge Charles with weapons even though Charles had few soldiers and he had a significant army of mastiffs. They were frightened by the thunderbolts of that sword, which to the valorous emperor is worth as much as the golden fortune the ancient Caesars vainly guarded in cabinets like an omen of prosperity. On the contrary, him threatening the Ottoman throne with ruin, it aspired to stain its vestments in barbarian blood in order to make itself more precious. The armies did not, however, lack God's assistance to that zealous steel to which the dignity of the Christian name was entrusted like a tutelary deity, and without conserving blood it was committed and gripped for the Catholic faith. What marvel, then, if it seemed victory marched at the blast of those trumpets? If he can annihilate peoples, capture kings, stabilize a monarchy, and measure the vastness of his kingdoms with journeys of the sun? If it rises or sets, it must always revere the majesty of this sceptre. But neither annihilated peoples, nor captured kings, nor even stabilized monarchies or expanded kingdoms were the purpose of that victorious brand. Nor are these the undertakings that make him celebrated over all and considered praiseworthy by everyone—rather, it was him having been the cherub who with an entirely shining sword of zeal drove and kept (as if from Paradise) the monsters of schism and serpents of heresy from his realms, having maintained the jurisdiction of Heaven with force of arms, and having deemed conquests without triumph of the cross vile. These drops of sweat are the gems that enrich his crown. These the victories made praiseworthy to indifferent peoples. These the palms that, watered by celestial blessings, will never rot. Finally, in order to tame the arrogance of pride he lay the sword at the feet of the crucifix, now more triumphant, given that it served as nail to spike down the fickle wheel of its fortune.

Now we leave it in the care of fame's immortality until, adult in his years and virtue, Charles II brandishes it—the monarch given by divine providence to equal him in majesty of name and quality of valour. He knows well these feed high hopes, and that he must be the true Hercules of Spain. Hercules still had the strength to strangle serpents in the cradle. He, who still totters tenderly, can yet well-impress terror on the Barbarian of Thrace and Tyrant of the East.

But what do the illustrious deeds of such heroes produce evidence of? Even in the right hand of a woman, the sword is no less prodigious. I omit the Semiramises and Tomyris, though they are of incomparable valour. That virtue is not to be praised, as in one it was contaminated by barbarism and in the other by dishonesty. I do not pause to commemorate Zenobias, Artemises, Hypsicrateas, or a thousand others who, brandishing the sword at more powerful warriors, astonished their fame and made it understood that denouncements of feminine weakness sometimes lie, and that women and valour are also known to be wed.

Among them all I select the most beautiful Wanda. Worthily, I choose her, glorious scion of that great Jagiellonian lineage and unforgettable name of the royal splendours of Poland. It was this virgin, last of that blood, who revived her paternal glories when

most had prepared funerals for them. The princes who aspired to those nuptials were infinite. Love linked with benefit, they coveted her beauty as much as her reign. More than anyone, German Prince Rytigier was fiercely infatuated with her and, having been rejected by her along with the others, his torment increased as much as his resolve, and he set about conquering that heart with threats. The Maiden Queen, who loved neither consort in her reign nor companion in her bed, was infuriated. Thus, coupling daring with beauty, she gripped the sword, came to war, defeated the hostilities of her suitor, and taught the ill-advised that love arises from enticements and is not generated by fear.

Further boasts of the sword pass. Does it not symbolize justice in the hands of Astraea? The severed heads of martyrs leaped at a single triumphant blow of the sword and, conversely, when axes and scimitars did not have a cut to injure them, the sharpest arrows that served the tyranny of the Praetors fell trimmed.

If, however, I imagine it in the right hand of an angel who holds in custody the entrance to the Paradise of Delights, it blazes crowned entirely in celestial radiance. Thus, I am forced to stop here, my pen singed and my intellect dazzled.

Did I did not properly say that, I lacking the wit, the sword must be equally lacking in praises? Now I move on to its rules. This endeavour would nonetheless be more suited to the coryphaeus of Neapolitan fencing and the great virtue of *Lord Giovanni Battista Marcelli*. He had the talent to teach the first foundations and make it understood in the schools of Mars that its rules are the greatest solemnity of valour.

Otherwise famous is *Lord Onofrio della Corte* who with the two swords he crosses in the undertakings of his family shows the virtue with which one is made admirable in this profession to be innate in them.

Next I will speak of *Lord Giovanni Mattei*, who seems to have reached the final shores of the sea of fencing! He well-earns all his praises, but do not expect them from my pen. Carried to a brother, they would have been excessively involved. Their proofs are the same rules and, whatever I may be, I take courage to explain them, trusting that the gentleman with whom I speak must be benefited by them, though I am no expert.

*...fungar vice cotis: acutum Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exors ipsa secandi. (Horace, Ars Poetica)*

## ACTIONS OF PROPOSAL

### *The Stance*

Him having gripped the sword courageously, then, he must: Put it forward in the air or, to say it better, on a straight line with the arm in an obtuse angle, given that the mathematics are clearly prescribed in the school of *Lord Captain Carlo Gentile*. In the same instant plant the right foot with the leg well innervated, but at a distance from the left foot that does not exceed a proportionate pace, and with both firm on the ground see that they are not uneven in a straight line from each other. Bend the left knee to the point that its thigh is recognized to be sufficiently curved. The body, not squared but profiled toward the enemy, is forced to rest over the curved knee in order to obtain from this the union of the stance. Although the left arm is curved a little in the air, the hand can play at its leisure. The head is high in its usual position, eyes entirely intent on the actions and motions of the adversary's sword. The aforesaid gentleman should precisely employ the rules given to him for his place and tempo.

### *The Straight Stoccata*

The stance ended here, it is appropriate that I commence from the straight stoccata, principal foundation of fencing. So that he does not fall into Daedalian labyrinths, the mentioned gentleman, almost a new Proteus, changing his mannerisms, skillfully adapts himself not only in this stoccata, but also in all subsequent actions. As for myself, however rough (as I said) in expressing them, I will attempt to become an ingenious Arachne in order to weave the thread of so intricate a discourse with clarity.

First of all, I say that in order to employ this stoccata, he must: Launch the sword at his competitor's chest along the same line on which he stands planted. Stick out the right leg well-stiffened, neither more nor less than the measure requires. Turn the body together with the left arm, whether or not that controls the dagger, and, terminating it, innervate the sword arm, stiffen both legs, and boldly halt the vita at its centre. Even though it consists in different motions, it is driven by all, and with all it is necessary that it is resolved in a single extremely fast action. In the tempo it must be employed, then, he remembers all such that I mentioned in regard to the straight stoccata of the sword and dagger and should attentively observe those requisites, as almost all are necessary in this. Indeed, with these differences: In that, the sword lightly controlled in the palm of the hand, it is always launched with looseness. In this, not light and loose, but held and executed with some force. That is ordinarily brought toward the parts least defended by the dagger. This is necessarily thrust along the *debole* of the other's sword in a way that, if the gentleman notices an opportunity from the enemy to execute said stoccata on the inside of the weapon, his sword kept in half-quarta (given that this is always necessary), he forcefully extends it along the other's *debole* in the same half-quarta and thus finishes it, so that he can defend himself from the *incontro* that could occur with the edge of his sword, thrust along the *debole* of the adversary's sword. If he sees an opportunity on the outside, he similarly pushes it straight along the *debole* of the other's sword and proceeds to terminate it with an *imbroccata* so that the aforesaid's



sword remains oppressed by that turn of the fist to the inside and so that he keeps himself safer from the responses.

### *Moving in Stance*

Thus, well-united in his posture, he can move on to advancing in stance. This will be: First advancing the right foot, thrust out with a single motion toward the adversary. After, in a straight line, bringing in the left foot in proportion to the other, taking care that the motions of the feet are moderated so that the advancing does not become very hurried or very sluggish. Having reached measure, if he sees a place and recognizes an ideal tempo to offend with the straight stoccate, he should not hesitate in the occasion but quickly execute them in the mentioned way and withdraw with equal quickness in imitation of the verse:

*Departure and return, never slow. (Giuseppe Artale, Encyclopedia of Poetry)*

### *Withdrawals*

Withdrawals being in the same manner as with sword and dagger, then, the recounting of them does not occur. I will only say that at the same moment the gentleman offends, with the same sword he ardently seeks to subjugate that of his enemy and returns along the edge of the same to unite in his guard. He also ensures that he resolves himself to the Tempo as quickly in withdrawing as in setting upon the aforesaid adversary. Followed by the quarta or the passes, this Tempo will undoubtedly succeed more assuredly. Otherwise, reunited, he attends to those actions that could be proposed by the other in those instances.

### *Firm-Footed Feints and Beats*

At this step I should speak of firm-footed feints and beats but, recognizing them to be of small viability in assaults, I intend to put off extensively discussing them for those from a distance. Such because these are very useful, and also to more extensively scrutinize the experience that condemns those.

### *Gains*

In order not to remove myself from the purpose of the exercise, I continue to draw near the gains of the sword. In the employment of these, I say that if, in approaching the measure toward his enemy, the aforesaid gentleman is presented with the opportunity no less safe than quick to take the enemy's sword, without moving his body from its position he will be able to launch his sword over the other's and subject its debole with his forte, both feet likewise accompanying it in the same instant, well-united in their positioning. Occurring from here that the adversary were to perform a cavatione to the inside or outside, the gentleman does not at all hold himself back from retaking it with a movement of his fist. As much as the same enemy gives way backward, that much further the gentleman should continue the commenced gain until he reaches the proper point to strike. He must also take care that if in performing the cavatione of the sword

the enemy were to resolve himself to the Tempo (which could easily occur), he is not sluggish in defending against it with the forte of his sword, and should be quite quick to slip inside with firm-footed responses—when, however, the mentioned enemy remains at measure. Otherwise, the aforesaid agilely drawing back as he performs the cavatione and brings the Tempo, the gentleman achieves the offences not with firm-footed responses, but with responses from a distance. I will give a complete account on these responses (here not being the opportune time to discuss them) in a better place. Last, and above all, the gentleman is advised that if the enemy were to perform a cavatione (as he would have to) in the tempo that he launches his sword in order to gain the adversary's, either inside or outside, in that same action he can resolve to the contrary with beats of the sword from a distance. These beats, according to what is seen from continuous experience, turn out quite safe in such circumstances.

### *Beats from a Distance*

Now that I have encountered these beats from a distance amongst the gains of the sword, not at all postponing the occasion for it, I quench my pen and prepare myself to explain them. Although they are of some number and dissimilar from each other in practice, I will strain my wit so that they do not end up deprived of extensive clarity.

As such, I submit that, the adversary's sword being located along a straight line about a palmo outside of measure, the gentleman will be able to make use of direct beats. In the employment of these, without moving his body from its position, in the first motion he attends in a single act to shooting out the first third of his sword onto the debole of the other's sword, sticking out his right leg innervated, only the necessary distance, while the left enters bent in proportion to the same. From here, in the second motion, halting the left foot where it is brought in, the right leg continuing with another step, equally stiffened, he finishes the beat in the adversary's chest along the same edge of the sword it was commenced. All this is done with such quickness of the arm and feet that the first motion is almost indistinguishable from the other. In terminating it, he should boldly turn his vita in its place and quite well stiffen both legs. This is in order for the action to void better and to make him more prompt and swift in his withdrawals. If the beat is on the inside, then, he sticks out the sword in half-quarta, given that he always plays in it, and should similarly terminate it in half-quarta. If on the outside, he pushes it straight and follows it with the imbroccata. If he desires the reasons for this, let him turn his eyes toward the straight stoccata, where he will find them sufficiently produced.

Before I venture into the demonstration of the other beats of the sword, however, it is necessary it be understood that, all being actions from a distance, all are necessarily with two steps of the feet and the same arrangement of the stance.

The sword of the mentioned adversary not being located along the straight line, then, but with its point a little low, the aforesaid requisites observed, the gentleman sees to making use of the same direct beats, truly with so small a difference that, beating on the inside he must terminate the stoccata with a quarta of the body, and beating on the outside he finishes it with a pass on the outside. The reason for this is established: Not being able to subjugate the enemy's sword at the termination in the same way as when it

is subjugated with its point in mid-air, the incontro could easily occur, or, at the very least, a response could be received. Executed in accordance with what I said, though, I believe he will stay safe from any peril.

I also say that, seeing his enemy's sword completely low, the gentleman is advised not to beat it in the aforesaid manner. Rather, showing a different action than the other's position and even playing with the sword tantalizingly in mid-air, with easy movement of the hand and strength of the arm, in the first motion he will be able to cross the point of the sword inside and, with the first third of it, vigorously depress the enemy's debole from above. All this is done in a single instant, not delaying the undertaken force at all in the second motion, and he follows the action with an imbroccata in the mentioned enemy's chest. An imbroccata, I said, so that the other's sword is more hampered. Thus hampered, it is not useful for the offences at that time. And, if the gentleman has an opportunity to come to grips with the aforesaid's sword during this, there is nothing foolish about employing the outside pass with quickness of the hand and feet.

I further add that, the competitor playing with his sword high, which is saying the same thing as along a continuously straight line, with all safety the gentleman must avail himself of the beat and pass below. In employment of this, in the first motion he sees to launching the forte of the sword upward, a little crossed toward the inside, with strength of the arm and great ease of the fist sending the debole of the other's sword into the air. This too is executed in a single action. In the second motion, lowering his body as much as possible and curving the right knee, not delaying the next step, he should terminate the action in the right side of the mentioned enemy. This is done with such speed of the arm and feet that the first motion cannot be told from the second.

### *The Intrecciata*

Finally, the gentleman observing that his adversary is playing with his sword on a diagonal line, which is to say, with his arm extended forward and the point of the sword low, he must not stop himself from putting into effect the intrecciate of the sword in this circumstance. As these intrecciate can be practised in two ways—from above and from below the other's sword—it is necessary he be advised that, if in the aforesaid adversary he sees an opportune chance to perform the beat of the sword from above, in the first motion he will be able to shoot out and drop the first third of his sword over the debole of the other's sword, and, in the second, lifting the point of his sword and lowering its hilt with an imbroccata, terminate the intrecciata toward the right side of the adversary. If he sees an opportunity to beat the other's sword from underneath (which would be better), he is advised to play with the sword such that it is below that of the adversary, but with skill such that he does not give him an understanding of what he has in mind. Thus, unseriously playing with it low, in the first motion he sees to sending the debole of the other's sword flying away into the air with the terzo of his own. In the second motion, not ceasing at all, he follows the action with an imbroccata over the aforesaid's sword. He is sure, though, that the hand and feet do not lack in speed in these intrecciate, so that the first motion is almost equal to the second in speed. Further, having opportunity in both these actions to come to the grips with the enemy's sword (or instead, recognizing it as needful), he does not neglect to make use of the pass on the

outside.

Additionally, if his enemy were to play with his sword in any other way different than that which I have demonstrated up to this point, this would not be strange, since (not all practising this modern play) various methods of turning the sword are often seen in academies, particularly in those of the *Most Illustrious Lord Don Gioseppe Caetano*, where I can honestly say that all the virtues have established their seat. In similar cases, not departing at all from terms established (or to be established), the gentleman will be able, fortified in his defences and shrewdly observing the other's bearing, to pay heed to the Tempi and cavationi and ultimately avail himself of those deceptions that he deems most suitable among those conjunctures. Above all, he is always resolute but regulated in his operations. Tasso said:

*Rapid, yes, but rapid according to law.*

### *Flowing Feints*

Having already discussed beats of the sword, if not sufficiently, at least as much as I was able, I move on to the flowing feints. Even though they are employed in various manners and in different tempi, they are restricted to one end alone. Not differing at all in the union of the stance and compass of the feet from the aforesaid beats, I take hold of the expression of them.

Therefore, in seeing his adversary planted with his sword in mid-air, intent on nothing but defence (which is seen from his external actions and motions, and with frequency of assaults the recognition fully arrives), I advise the gentleman that he can boldly deceive him not with beats of the sword, but with flowing feints. Of the method with which he will have to put them into operation, then: In the first motion, sticking out the right leg innervated and at the same time bringing in the left bent, he must gesture as if wounding with the point of the sword toward the other's defence with such an accent that the sword does not end up impeded in that of the adversary. In the second motion (halting the left foot where it is brought in, the right leg continuing innervated), executing said feint in the chest of the mentioned enemy with no less speed of the hand and right foot than was necessary in gesturing. Yet, with this care: The aforesaid competitor standing ready to defend himself inside the weapon, the gentleman should fervently gesture to wound him in the same place and then wound on the outside with an imbroccata. And, if the competitor is guarded outside the weapons, the gentleman should gesture on the outside and finish with equal quickness on the inside with a half-quarta of the sword. In fact, if he adds a half-quarta of the body there in terminating it, he will find a more than safe escape from the incontro.

If the same then, also established in his defences, plays with the sword high or, to say it better, along a continuously straight line, in the first motion the gentleman should strain (keeping his body in its arrangement and thrusting out the feet vigorously) to gesture as if to wound him in the face with the point of the sword. In the second motion, lowering the vita as much as possible over the forward knee with skill and speed, followed by a new step, not hardened but curved, he extremely quickly executes the feint with a pass

on the outside, in the right flank of the cited enemy. This feint is commonly baptized the “gesture toward the face and pass below”.

### *Disorderings*

Occurring that the same competitor, planted with the sword in mid-air, or high, or also low, were to persist in defending himself, beyond feints I recommend the gentleman deceive him with disorderings. In employing these, he attentively observes that tempo in the midst of assaults in which the aforesaid gives way backward or in which he begins to withdraw, and in that same tempo feigns bravely wounding him with an accent of the sword controlled by a motion of the fist and accompanied by a step with both feet. Said accent (the body stilled) does not cease alternating between the inside and outside of his sword, so that the aforesaid, forced by those fervent motions and threatened by the gentleman’s posture, is discomposed and remains in disarray. This occurring, if the withdrawals were to continue, firm in his guard, the gentleman increasingly redoubles the gestures of the sword until he reaches the just measure to offend him. I even add that if, at the moment he disorders or while he is disordering, his competitor were to resolve himself to the Tempo (as infrequently occurs), the gentleman defends against him with the forte of the sword and the usual positioning of the arm, and in the same instant follows it with the responses from a distance with promptness of the hand and rapidity of the feet.

### *The Provocation of the Sword*

Lastly, three other deceptive methods, consisting in two provocations and one scommossa, are defined. Although these provocations differ from each other in their motions and are two distinct actions, one being named “provocation of the sword” and the other “provocation of the body”, both are ultimately intended for use when the enemy is prepared not for the defence, but for the Tempo. Therefore, noticing that his competitor plays with the sword in mid-air as I said, focused on the Tempo (which, according to that maxim of philosophy, *ex extrinsecis cognoscuntur intrinseca*, will be easily recognized by his external actions and motions), outside of measure the gentleman can boldly act as if to wound him in the face with a threatening accent of the sword accompanied by a vigorous but restrained step of the feet so that the aforesaid adversary, so fiercely incited from seeing it, must resolve himself to the Tempo. This occurring, the gentleman is quick to defend himself from it with the forte of his sword and, with speed of the hand and feet, enter to strike him with the firm-footed responses or those from a distance, according to the measure found. I further add that if at the point he parries said Tempo the mentioned adversary were to give way backward, either to avoid the offences or due to cowardice (although this never reigns in a noble heart), staying well-regulated, he does not cease hurling them at him. Continuously subjugating the sword with them, with a movement of the fist he gives a blow onto the defending sword and another to the chest. And, even when the same adversary performs a cavatione while withdrawing, either to the inside, outside, high, or instead low, in order to free it from that continual subjugation or in order to offend with another Tempo, the gentleman never ceases retaking it with the promptness of the arm the necessity requires.

### *The Provocation of the Body*

If the same adversary then, still intent and disposed to offend with the Tempo, were to play with the sword not in mid-air, but high, at that conjuncture the gentleman must avail himself of the provocation of the body. Which is to say, at the point this is recognized, with careful movement of the chest and sword accompanied by a very brief step of the feet, he should furiously show he wishes to wound the adversary so that he, believing so furious a movement to be offensive, resolves himself to the Tempo. Such occurring, the gentleman defends against it not with the sword but, lowering the entire body extremely quickly, follows the action with the pass underneath toward the right flank of the same enemy. He takes care, it is quite true, not to enter measure, however united, in the accent he performs with this provocation. This is because, entering measure, he can end up offended by the already mentioned Tempo.

### *The Scommossa*

Lastly, the scommossa. I will say that in my opinion it is the best of the deceptive methods, as all the enemy's secrets are clearly revealed with it. As such an action is a fervent and threatening gesture of the sword controlled by a single movement of the hand and a tiny motion of the feet, I do not see my pen as very useful in putting the proper method of how it must be employed to the page. Therefore, I cannot say more than that this is easily learned from the demonstration of a skilled master, and with frequent practice of the assaults it will be completely trained by him. Nevertheless, I will also say that it must be employed when the adversary stands still in stance without giving any sign as to what he has in mind. This action violently practised there, outside of measure, said adversary either resolves himself to the Tempo, rushes to the defence, or instead remains in stance, intimidated. If he resolves himself to the Tempo, the gentleman can parry it with the forte of his sword and guide himself in offending according to what I said regarding the provocation of the sword. If he shows himself to be prepared for the defence, the gentleman does not cease deceiving him with disorderings or flowing feints, given that they are quite convenient in that action. Lastly, if he is intimidated, in the same instant the gentleman can either avail himself of the beats of the sword or, the left foot skilfully drawn into measure, make use of the straight stoccate with agility and vigour.

## ACTIONS OF RESPONSE

*If the mentioned gentleman wishes always to end up the victor and not the vanquished in adverse occasions, with boldness and judicious resolution he sees to practising what I have crudely shown on these pages up to this point. In the meantime, I have moved on to the actions of response relevant to the adversary. Explaining these in the best way I know, I not only intend to satisfy the commitment that rushes me to the defence of that same adversary, but also to make the gentleman more cautious in employing his actions.*

### *A gainst the Straight Stoccata*

First of all, I say that in order for the adversary to escape the other's straight stoccate, he can make use of the firm-footed parries. Which is to say, when the gentleman thrusts out the stoccata at him, he is quick to parry it with the terzo of the sword, certainly not moved with the entire arm, but with only a motion of the fist. With the same quickness that he defends, the adversary follows it with the offence from the same stance he is found in, taking care that when he parries said stoccata he keeps his vita stable and his feet still. Then, in bringing the response, he thrusts out only the right foot and voids the body around its centre. Furthermore, if the parry is inside the weapon, he executes the response with the same half-quarta of the sword with which he defends, and maintains it. If it is outside the weapon, he finishes the response with an imbroccata. But, if the gentleman immediately breaks measure at the launching of the adversary's stoccata, he can in such a case attempt the offences with responses from a distance or instead with the beating parry and charge, according to what I advised regarding the provocation of the sword. If, while he withdraws, the gentleman were to perform a cavatione with the sword, either to liberate it from constraint or in order to offend with the Tempo, the adversary is never slow to retake it and guide himself in pouncing upon it with the same rule, union of the stance, and method that I clearly outlined for the same provocation. In addition to this, he can avail himself of the sottobotte and the Tempi and quarta, but it is necessary to execute them in the very act the gentleman attempts to move to throw the stoccata. Otherwise, delaying one instant, either the incontro will occur or he alone will end up wounded.

### *A gainst Gains*

Against gains of the sword, the adversary can make use of cavationi, which, being nothing more than an extremely precise Tempo, all arise from an instant and are always employed with a quick motion of the fist. For clarification of this, he should know that if the gentleman enters measure with his body while he attempts to gain with his sword, in that same action the adversary must perform a cavatione contrary to it with his point and, performing the cavatione, offend with the Tempo, thrusting his right foot together with an avoidance of the vita mostly in place. If the mentioned gentleman attempts to gain with his sword on the inside of the weapon, then, the adversary, performing a cavatione and offending as I described, wounds with an imbroccata on the outside. If he comes on the outside of the weapon, the adversary executes it on the inside with a half-

quarta of the sword. In order to nearly always avoid the aforesaid gains, however, he takes care to play with the point of the sword in regulated motion and in a different manner than the gentleman is playing. Which is exactly the same as saying that if the gentleman plays with it high, the adversary plays with it in mid-air. If he in mid-air, the adversary a little lower or higher. And, even though he plays with the sword in a so different a way, he should not depart from the aforesaid cavationi.

### *Against Beats*

The adversary can avail himself of the same cavationi against all the beats of the sword. These cavationi (as I just said) must be employed while the gentleman attempts to take his sword. Otherwise, delaying at all, the cavationi would no longer be in tempo. He should therefore attend to making use of them with judgement and safety, and ensure he practises them in that form however he finds himself playing with the sword. Which is to say, whether it is playing in mid-air, or high, or instead low, he should always perform the cavatione of the point with an action of the fist, accompany the Tempo with the right foot, and void the vita in place quite well. If he yearns to know the method with which this Tempo must be terminated, let him turn his gaze upon what I said for against the gains, and there he will find the fulfilment of his desires. Further to this, occurring in beating the sword that the gentleman comes so furiously that the adversary deems the simple cavatione of the sword and void of the body insufficient to escape the incontro, he can execute said Tempo according to the manner he holds his sword with either a quarta of the body or instead with the passata sotto, the inside pass, or, additionally, the outside pass. Finally, I can also add that the adversary, at times desiring to hatch a deception during the gentleman's deception, could put his sword forward in the midst of the assaults with great disposition to being beaten and even showing himself to be totally unwilling to use the cavationi in those stretches, so that the aforesaid gentleman, tempted by that generosity of the sword, comes to execute his beats with greater boldness. There, already prepared to perform the cavatione, the adversary will be able to achieve the offences more safely. But, because I am totally dedicated to discussing defences, it is necessary that I discuss these and be entirely mute on the offences.

### *Against Flowing Feints*

When the gentleman advances seeking to offend with flowing feints, then, the adversary is intent on making use of the Tempo—every time said gentleman enters measure in the first accent of the feint, that is. All that given, therefore, in the same act the adversary can thrust out the Tempo with all speed and well void the body in place. But, if the mentioned gentleman does not enter measure (as is required) not only does the adversary not bring the Tempo, but he does not believe any gesture of the sword, either. Thus, if the accent of the other's feint is on the inside of the weapon, the adversary extends the tempo on the same inside with a half-quarta of the sword and a complete void of the vita. Actually, if he follows it with the quarta of the body, not only is the Tempo more certain to succeed, but he will escape the incontro that could easily occur there. Further, he can make use of the sottobotta in this same instant. That, practised with speed of the arm and dexterity of the body in this sort of action, is always no less



safe than it is laughable for me to ever condemn it. If the accent of the feint is outside the weapons, the adversary brings the Tempo on the outside as well and terminates it with an imbroccata. Lastly, being able in this occasion to execute said Tempo with the outside pass, or instead with the same sottobotta, he should never be late in employing them. However, if the agility of the vita does not accompany it, he should entirely stop himself from putting them into operation. This is because instead of him offending with, or escaping from, a blow, he will doubtless end up wounded by more blows.

### *Against Disorderings*

I extol that the adversary likewise makes use of the same Tempo against the disordering. This will be done either while the gentleman commences it at measure, or instead while he is disordering. The adversary can launch said Tempo at the side where the closest and most opportune chance is presented to him. However, if he sees an opportunity inside the weapon, he ensures he always thrusts it with a half-quarta of the sword and of the body in order to meet the edge of the other's sword as much as to avoid the incontro. If he sees an opportunity on the outside, he executes it with an imbroccata. But, in my opinion and according to what is seen daily, in similar conjunctures the sottobotta succeeds most perfectly—practised, however, with resolution, agility, and looseness of the vita. Lastly, against said disordering, the mentioned competitor should draw upon what I have described up to this point, or instead seek to defend himself with the sword in the best way he can given the contingencies that occur in those instants.

### *Against Provocations and Scommosse*

Additionally, against the provocations and scommosse (as long as they are commenced at measure), I encourage the mentioned adversary to avail himself of the Tempo. Otherwise, those begun outside of measure (given that this is necessary), he should never resolve himself to the Tempo because the same gentleman could come to obtain the offences by bringing the Tempo. Rather, staying quite firm and united in his posture, he does not believe those motions at all, even if they appear threatening and offensive, since that the gentleman employs them for no other effect than to discompose him and compel him to bring the Tempo. In the instant the gentleman performs the provocation or scommossa, the adversary could quite well deceive him with the flowing feints or disorderings. These actions are almost always deemed safe when employed in that tempo.

### *Against the Quarta, Sottobotta, and Pass*

Lastly, the quarte, sottobotte, and passes remain to be explained. I do not reach beyond describing the method with which they are employed, which was my original intention, only discussing this with gentlemen learned in this science. But, if at the end there is a gentleman who does not have any understanding of these (which I cannot bring myself to believe, knowing quite well that turning the sword is the signature of a true gentleman from birth), I leave the thought of supplementing my shortcomings by demonstrating them with a living voice to the wise master. I, amongst so many actions pertinent to this exercise placed here, move my pen in order to discuss some very

admirable pieces of advice, and spur my wit onward.

## GENERAL ADVICE

Therefore, I first advise the gentleman that, having to take hold of the sword in the occasion of brawls, he must not be at all confused in those first furies, nor operate at random, hauled along by the irascible passions. Though some say that the first motions are not under our control, I tell them that such knightly conduct in those people either lacks reason or is deprived of courage—whereas being a prudent, reasonable, and valourous man consists in nothing more than knowing how to conduct oneself in situations where anger holds sway. In gripping the sword, therefore, he should place it in mid-air and, uniting quite well in stance with a pace a little more narrow than usual because of the unevenness of the terrain, stand completely intent on defending himself. Being vigilant to the motions and tendencies of his competitor, he is also prompt to the Tempo—when, however, the measure permits him to execute it. Thence, seeing that the aforesaid competitor does not resolve himself to any action, employing provocations of the sword or scommosse, he does not permit him to. Forced by these, the aforesaid either comes to the Tempo, is disunited from his posture, gives way backward, or, instead, greatly fortifies his defence. If the competitor resolves himself to the Tempo, the gentleman should parry said Tempo with speed and not delay in offending with the responses, either firm-footed or from a distance. If the competitor lingers in measure, disunited, the gentleman executes the straight stoccate along the edge of the other's sword, but quickly and safely. If the competitor withdraws, the gentleman should continue fervently redoubling the accents of the sword or disordering him. Lastly, if the competitor establishes himself in the defence, the gentleman can avail himself of flowing feints, gains of the sword, or even beats.

Secondly, having to contend in the appointed place, I advise that he should strain with all of his power to calm his spirit, since he exercises his operations with difficulty amongst the clouds. I apprise him of the eloquence of Appian: *Conturbatus animus non est aptus ad exequendum munus suum* (Cic. Tusc. lib. 5.) Thence, he places himself in guard outside of measure and, approaching it well-united, playing with regulated motion of the sword, he proceeds attentively noticing all the tendencies of his adversary, at times also (distant from measure) making use of provocations of the sword and scommosse. Being continuously vigilant to his own defence, and to the cavatione and the Tempo, he sees to operating according to the opportunities he is presented with.

Third, I advise him never to execute any action of proposal at the onset of the assault, even if the opportunity for them appears safe. Rather, he sees to employing any action that he intends amongst the fervours of the assaults so that the adversary, surprised by the other's motions, cannot resolve to the action counter to it.

Fourth, having to employ whatever action that may be, I advise that he see to always displaying the completely opposite of what he intends to do. Fencing being trickery, it is necessary it be employed with deception.

Fifth, having to make use of the beats of the sword, I advise the gentleman that he avail himself of them when he sees his adversary's sword in motion or notices the same is disinclined to the cavationi, which is almost the same as saying in the midst of the

assaults. Happening that the aforesaid enemy presents him with his sword, apt and ready to be beaten, the gentleman should see to beating it in such a tempo. In these cases, he can certainly try gaining it with a vigorous and considered gesture of the sword and, if the adversary performs a cavatione in that violent motion, vehemently execute the beat contrary to it (just as I said in its place).

6: Finding himself in some conjuncture with a smallsword in hand and his competitor with sword and dagger, I advise the gentleman not to be at all dismayed at seeing him with such advantageous weapons, since, according to *Tasso*:

*To valour, every risk is always safe:  
All paths are level to the daring.*

Therefore, with warlike courage there, he unites himself in guard in mid-air and, intent on his own defences, skillfully proceeds to avail himself of provocations of the sword and scommosse so that his aforesaid assailant, incited by those threatening gestures, must resolve himself to the Tempo. This occurring, the gentleman should be extremely quick to defend himself from it and slip in with the responses, either firm-footed or from a distance, or instead with the beating parry and charges. Further, noticing in the midst of the assaults some disunity of the mentioned enemy's weapons to the degree that he could enter there with some ease with the beats of the sword, he does not neglect the opportunity at all. If he recognizes that the adversary is unsure in his posture, he can also avail himself of the disorderings, but in those motions is always, however, as a many-eyed Argus, vigilant in defence. Additionally, if the mentioned adversary were to assail the gentleman with actions from a distance or some unregulated motion begun at measure, beyond the defences, he can avail himself of the Tempo with a half-quarta of the body and execute it either at the other's face or along the edge of his sword.

Lastly, in accordance with what I advised at the beginning, I advise that the gentleman must be resolute but regulated in all his actions. Stirred by some frivolity, he must not draw the sword unless forced to by a very sufficient reason. That eagle of genius, the Lord Gentleman Artale, said:

*I often see someone armed with great courage  
Gather wounds in the chest and scars,  
So that there the sword and death together  
Are servants of reason and fate.*

This would reasonably be in defence of his own honour, life without honour not being esteemed, as the Ferrarese highlights:

*Honour is placed before life.  
Outside of honour, there is nothing.  
Before letting one's honour be removed  
One should lose one's life a thousand times, not just once.*

Heroically, in the same canto by Tasso:

*I also have a heart that scorns death, and believes  
That life is exchanged for honour.*

Arrived here, Most Invincible Prince, I am to cut the warp of my badly woven discourses on Neapolitan Fencing. Certainly not in order to end my service to You, but only because I know quite well that, just as all the sciences move into infinity, fencing being a practical science (as I proved at the beginning), it also rushes on into infinity. This is because the more one studies and labours in it, the more greatly it is advanced toward perfection. I therefore beseech Your Excellence to honour them with Your most powerful protection, so that in Your hands they can encamp quite safely from naysayers. In the meantime, paying homage to You as long as I live, I remain praying Heaven grants you Nestorean years as payment and exaltation of Your house.

*END OF THE SECOND AND FINAL DISCOURSE*

## Bibliography

Marcelli, Francesco Antonio. 1686. Regole Della Scherma Insegnate Da Lelio e Titta Marcelli. Rome: Dominicus Antonius Hercules.

Mattei, Francesco Antonio. 1669. Della Scherma Napoletana. 2nd Print. Foggia: Novello de Bonis.

Pallavicini, Giuseppe Morsicato. 1670. La Scherma Illustrata. Palermo: Domenico d'Anselmo.