

LO SCHERMO  
D'ANGELO VIGGIANI  
DAL MONTONE  
DA BOLOGNA:

Nel quale per uia di Dialogo si discorre intorno all'eccellenza dell'armi, & delle lettere: intorno all'offesa & alla difesa: & s'insegna uno schermo di spada sola da filo, co'l quale può l'huomo non pure difendersi da qual si uoglia colpo del nimico; ma anchora offender lui non poco.

*Con una copiosissima Tauola di tutte le cose principali, che nell'Opera si contengono.*

CON PRIVILEGIO.



IN VINETIA, APPRESSO GIORGIO  
ANGELIERI. M D LXXV.

## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The following is a translation of the introductory portions and Part Three (of three) of *Lo Schermo d'Angelo Viggiani...* into English. I have worked chiefly from a facsimile of the 1575 edition, obtained from Dr. Patri Pugliese, with reference to a copy in the Royal Swedish Armoury to provide legibility for page 66R. As is stated in the second dedication of the text, Angelo Viggiani entrusted the book to his brother Battista with the stipulation that it not be presented until 15 years after Angelo's death. Dr. Sydney Anglo notes in *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe*, p.332, n.19, that a copy exists of the manuscript in which Battista's dedication is dated Oct. 10, 1567, and Angelo's May 15, 1551.

As has been claimed often, and, in my opinion, justifiably, Parts One and Two contain relatively little of interest to the practical student of historical fence. Rather, they consist of lengthy discourses over philosophical points surrounding topics such as the relative merits of arms and letters, and the primacy of offense or defense based upon observation of natural phenomena and theological metaphors. I will confess that I have not made more than a token effort to read these sections (that is, only what was required to confirm for myself the nature thereof). I am sure there is much there to merit scholarly attention; my interest, however is solely in "the *schermo*", that is, the system of swordplay advocated by Viggiani, and so it is to Part Three that I have directed my efforts.

The present translation should not be regarded as authoritative. I would do a disservice to the reader were I to claim to be fluent in Italian; I taught myself to read the language from a textbook, expressly for the purpose of translation of manuals of fence. I have been aided in this endeavor by the use of John Florio's *A Worlde of Wordes, or Most copious and exact Dictionarie in Italian and English* (1598), which has clarified several phrases and words which would have otherwise remained impenetrable. It must be borne in mind that this translation is the work of an amateur. While I have labored to convey Viggiani's meanings correctly throughout, it seems unavoidable that I have in places failed. Thankfully, the descriptions of action and motion (in which Viggiani is often remarkably detailed) are the syntactically simplest portions of the text, and I hold hope that if I have failed to properly convey some nuance of meaning, that I have nonetheless rendered the *schermo* uncorrupted.

Before turning to the text of the translation, I must explain the structure of the notation and conventions of translation that I have used.

1) Italian vocabulary has been presented in italics. I have been somewhat (perhaps unavoidably) arbitrary in my choice of words left in the original. Names of guards and blows I have left in the original, as they are effectively technical terminology. In regards of blows, I have chosen to render "*intiero*" into English as "full" (e.g. a "full *mandritto*") while leaving "*mezo*" (e.g. a "*mezo mandritto*") in the original, as the former term is used

mainly for emphasis or clarification, as it is a default, while half blows constitute a peculiar and distinct subspecies. “*Scherma*” has been left as is (except when Viggiani clearly uses the modern meaning of “protection”), as no good English equivalent suggests itself; “system of fence” seemed too awkward, and Florio’s “a fence” sounds too curt to the modern ear in context. Likewise, although I have translated “*da filo*” as “edged” I have chosen to leave “*spada da filo*” in the original, rather than literally render it as “edged sword” or “edge sword”, which does not reflect the weapon as a type, nor as the *en vogue* “sidesword”, which is no more precise. I choose to side with caution, rather than invite comparison to di Grassi’s “I.G. gentleman”.

2) Superscript numbers at the beginning of lines refer to the corresponding marginalia. These are no more than subject headings or summaries of the body of the text, and are useful chiefly as an index. In the original, Viggiani restates the entire collection of marginalia (of all three Parts) in alphabetical order (the “*copiosissima Tavola*” referred to on the title page), a system which I have found approximately useless. In this translation, I have provided only the marginalia of Part Three, in numerical order as they occur, in the place of the “*copiosissima Tavola*”; it is hoped that these will prove of utility to the modern reader.

3) Bold numbers in brackets refer to the leaf number of the original text, to which is appended “R” or “V”, referring to the recto or verso page of the said leaf, respectively.

4) Superscript lowercase letters refer to endnotes.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people without whom this translation would have never occurred, or been far more difficult. First, I am indebted to those long gone, namely Battista Viggiani, for saving his brother's work and seeing it to print; and John Florio, a lexicographer of impressive skills, the more so for his day. I most gratefully acknowledge Dr. Patri Pugliese, who has done the western martial arts community such an enormous service, through making available facsimiles of this and many other period manuals. Among my contemporary colleagues, the lion's share of thanks must go to my fellow members of the Tattershall School of Defense, Gary Chelak, Roger Siggs, and most especially William Wilson. I had the pleasure of meeting these three gentlemen in October 2000 where I first saw them present reconstructions from 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian fencing manuals, something that I had always intended to get around to "some day". When I asked Roger how they had proceeded, he told me in essence "First we learned Italian, then we started reading, and then we started working through it". At that point I realized that I had wasted enough time, and that "some day" had come. So to these three, my thanks for the initial inspiration by way of example, and for sharing scholarship since that day, without which understanding the material at hand would have been far rougher going. In addition, I thank them, and Nathan Barnett, for helpful comments and questions on this translation. Vern Corson and Henrik Andersson have my gratitude for providing me with a second copy of page 66R, which was partially illegible in the copy from which I mainly worked. Finally, my deepest gratitude is due to my wife, Kirsti: for tolerating a husband who spends most of his free time researching antiquated means of depriving others of breath; for finding it charming when he is enthralled by all manner of complete esoterica; and who manages to find it amusing when he yells in foreign languages at men who have been dead for four centuries. Truly, I am blessed.

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## **The *Scherma* of Angelo Viggiani dal Montone of Bologna:**

in which, by means of a dialogue, is discussed the excellence of arms and of letters, of offense and of defense, and is taught a *schermo* of the unaccompanied *spada da filo*, with which a man can not only defend himself from whatsoever blow his enemy wills, but also offend him not a little.

With an extensive table of all the principal things which this work contains.

WITH PRIVILEGE.

PRINTED IN VINETIA BY GIORGIO ANGELIERI, MDLXXV.

TO THE MOST UNVANQUISHED AND SERENE MAXIMILLIAN,  
KING OF BOHEMIA.

Many have already wearied themselves, Most Unvanquished King, through praising those who, possessing some particular virtue, appear to them deserving of eternal fame, judging a single virtue to be (as is true) most worthy of praise. But if through a single attribute they deserved being thus praised, how then will Your Majesty deserve, in whom appear so many of them, and so perfect? I will not mention the liberality and the renowned magnificence miraculously present in you, knowing the most generous breeding that you bring along from the maternal womb. I will not mention your humanity and magnanimity, knowing that to you nature was a most abundant donor, and speak particularly of so many other infinite virtues you acquire through your own studies, and of most knowledgeable counsels, that in this, your most esteemed age, are a sign of such profound discourse, and judgment. Accordingly, if those ancient excellent writers found themselves in these times, I am certain, that regarding such high wisdom, to you alone they would dedicate their intellects, secure that praising you they would acquire more glory than if they did not give thereof to you; although I maintain it firmly to be not through the lack of elevated wits that, excited by such laudable desire, they will display your clear and worthy merits to the ages that are to come. I am for my part so greatly inspired by the virtuous works of Your Majesty, that (if I might know myself to be in part worthy of it) I would seek to celebrate them with all of my power. But since my faculties are disproportionate to this grave burden, may I at least, in order to show you part of my devotion, present to you this little work, unworthy in and of itself, but made worthy by the name of Your Majesty, supplicating you to accept it as a sign of the servitude already dedicated to you. In the first part of which is treated, how arms are not less worthy than the sciences; then in the second is reasoned which came first, either offense or defense; and in the third and last is chosen a single *schermo* composed of

offense, and of guards of greater perfection than all others, and done with the *spada da filo* (because it is my intention to discuss thereof), wherein I reduce under several few headings all the perfect art of the sword, it seeming to me that with a most perfect Prince, one must not deal with things imperfect; which I will show to you in facts when in the proper place; where I hope to provide you explanation, recognizing how different it is to express similar things to you in deeds, and in writing; with which I bow to you with every humility, and dedicate myself to you, remaining desirous of your grace, and of your felicity. From Bologna.

Unto Your Most Serene Majesty,  
Most humbly S. Angelo Viggiani del Montone.

## TO THE MOST HOLY MAXIMILLIAN II, EMPEROR, ETC.

Not many years have passed since my brother, who had served long under the Imperial banner and was always the humble servant of the happy memory of Charles V, composed a treatise on combat, and finishing it, approached death, asking that this, his composition, not be published until the fifteenth year had passed; and that I, at that time a lad, had as soon as that time came, to offer it to Your Most Holy Majesty, at that time King of Bohemia; which prescription of time I must imagine that he made as a result of the infinite valor that was resplendent in Your Imperial Majesty, by which he was well able to foresee that you would have arrived at such highness, that but little more would remain to pass, in order to bring you unto the Monarchy. And I must also believe, that he did thus, knowing that by this time I would be of an age to apprehend military discipline. But being brought to the hour of discharging my obligation to him, which my brother left me, and to the desire to make known to Your Most Holy Majesty the devotion that I pay to you; I come to offer to you this brief treatise in the name of my brother, and with servitude, and in supplication that you give regard, not to the small value of two petty change gifts, but to our spirits which are to you devoted. With which reverently I bow to you, and pray you that joy which I deem universal.

Your Most Holy Imperial Majesty's  
Most devoted servant  
Battista Viggiani.

## PRETEXT OF THE ENTIRE WORK

The intention of the author of the present treatise is to demonstrate a *schermo* which is particularly his own; and because unto this end are things designated, it is reasonably written in a treatise of a *schermo* of the unaccompanied *spada da filo*, etc., and is divided into three parts, as three in number are the things with which it treats: in the first it disputes the excellence of arms and of letters; in the second, of offense and defense, seeking to determine which came first, and is more natural, and more chivalric; and in the third, it speaks of the same combat, since combat being an action of offense and defense between two knights, it was proper to discourse upon the perfection of chivalry, and of the dignity of offense, and defense, and of the excellence of combat. He teaches combat in the last part, because this proposal being his aim, he must be teaching it in the final place; and discussing in the first part the excellence of the knight, as a thing directed to that aim, and as offense and defense are more universal than not, he follows the order of that doctrine that one is to proceed from the more to the less universal. Discussing of these three things under the form of a dialogue will render facility, because dialogue lends itself to debate, and to teaching, and learning, and he introduces in the first and second parts two of the more excellent of their age in their professions, the Most Illustrious Signor Aluigi Gonzaga, called “Rodomonte<sup>a</sup>,” and the Most Excellent Messer Lodovico Bocadoferro<sup>b</sup> Bolognese; because debate of questions of such difficulty required being treated of by worthy personages, and particularly by a valorous and erudite knight; which, for the same reason, they are also introduced in the second part, and in the third part unto them is joined the Most Illustrious Signor Conte d’Agomonte, himself a famous knight as well, and deservedly praised.

## TABLE OF THE MORE NOTABLE THINGS WHICH ARE CONTAINED IN THE PRESENT WORK

- 1) Fury is of use to the lettered, and to soldiers, although it arises from choler.
- 2) Objection that choler hinders the soldier from perturbing the enemy.
- 3) Response to the objection, to wit, that intemperate choler hinders, and the temperate is of use.
- 4) Difficulty of doing two *mandritti ton-di* without pause, such that one lands no higher than the other.
- 5) With practice weapons, it is not possible to acquire valor nor to learn a perfect *schermo*.
- 6) Why one cannot learn a perfect blow with practice weapons, but only with those which are edged.
- 7) It is necessary that the warrior remain intent on the point of the weapon of his enemy.
- 8) Proposition of a *schermo* which is of a single strike, and a single parry, of a single guard, and in a single time.
- 9) Prerogatives and praises of the sword.
- 10) Why the Emperors had the unsheathed sword carried before them.
- 11) The sword was the first among arms to be discovered.
- 12) Inventor of the sword.
- 13) Judgment of the ancient single-edged sword.
- 14) Judgment of the ancient swords with a dull edge on a side of the half adjacent to the hilt.
- 15) Antiquity of the sword with two edges from the hilt to the point.
- 16) Ancient and modern styles of using the hilts.
- 17) Why the sword is carried at the left side.
- 18) Position of the heart in the human body.
- 19) On the fancy handling of the sword.
- 20) With the sense of hearing one can recognize that a blow goes flat, although otherwise it is not possible to recognize it.
- 21) Three types of strikes: *mandritto*, *rovescio*, and *punta*.
- 22) Which is the true and the false edge.
- 23) Why they are called the true and the false edge.
- 24) Which are *rovesci*.
- 25) It appears that the *fendente* and the *montante* should differ from the *rovescio*.
- 26) Three types of strikes derived from three dimensions of continuous quantity.
- 27) Regarding nature there may be four kinds of strikes.
- 28) There are only three kinds of strikes, considering those had by the sword at the hip.
- 29) Which is *punta dritta*, and which *rovescia*.
- 30) Whosoever would derive the types of blows from the dimensions and ends thereof, sets there to be three or six in number.
- 31) Division of the family of strikes into types according to their differences.

- 32) There are as many types of strikes with the true edge as there are with the false.
- 33) Types of strikes with the point.
- 34) Objection as to whether there should be only two principal strikes: cut and thrust.
- 35) Refutation of the objection.
- 36) Ranking of nobility among the types of strikes.
- 37) Praise of the strike of the *punta* and how it takes precedence over the others.
- 38) Why the *rovescio* is more worthy than the *mandritto*.
- 39) The *mandritto* is superior to the *rovescio* naturally.
- 40) Distinction that the *mandritto* may be more, and less noble than the *rovescio*.
- 41) Only seven guards are necessary for this proposition.
- 42) Novel names imposed on the seven guards.
- 43) What a guard may be.
- 44) There can be nearly an infinity of guards.
- 45) The names of the seven guards are taken both from their form and from their purpose.
- 46) Advisement should the enemy not allow one to place oneself in guard with advantage.
- 47) That which would have to be done if the enemy wearies one with feints and half-blows.
- 48) What would be advantageous in the strike from its perspective.
- 49) When one strikes, one must not regard his own point, but that of his enemy.
- 50) Advantage in the strike from the perspective of the enemy.
- 51) Advantage in the stepping from the perspective of the enemy.
- 52) Advantage in the stepping from one's own perspective.
- 53) Which is the greater advantage: to go to encounter the enemy or to wait for him.
- 54) Which is better, either to be the first to strike, or to wait for the enemy to strike.
- 55) Definition by the philosophers of "tempo", and its manifestation.
- 56) Why during sleep tempo is not recognized.
- 57) When in dreams it is possible to understand tempo.
- 58) Chivalric declaration of what tempo is in strikes.
- 59) Between two blows lies a guard, and between two guards, a blow.
- 60) What is a full tempo and *mezo tempo* in striking.
- 61) One does not always strike in *mezo tempo*, but does so the majority of times.
- 62) A blow gives rise to a guard, and a guard to a blow.
- 63) From a particular guard is commodiously generated a particular blow, and not another.
- 64) First guard, called "*difensiva imperfetta*", derives from having the sword girded at the hip.
- 65) Why it is named "*guardia difensiva imperfetta*".
- 66) Advice that all the guards be done with the right foot, and with the right side, toward the enemy.
- 67) The *rovescio ascendente* originates from the first guard.
- 68) How one must hold the hand during the unsheathing of the sword, and how the body is to be moved in order to execute the *rovescio ascendente*.
- 69) Second guard, called "*alta, offensiva, perfetta*".

- 70) Rules to recognize which guards are defensive and which offensive.
- 71) Why the second guard is called “*offensiva*” and “*perfetta*”.
- 72) What must be done coming to blows with the enemy, either at close range or at a distance.
- 73) It is better to present the point of the sword to the eyes of the enemy than elsewhere.
- 74) Advisement that one strike with the point into the depth of the nobler parts.
- 75) Praise for the Most Illustrious Signor Duca Hercole IV di Ferrara.
- 76) Third guard, called “*guardia alta offensiva imperfetta*”.
- 77) The third guard gives rise to a *mandritto discendente*.
- 78) Why the third guard is called “*imperfetta*” and “*offensiva*”.
- 79) How one must reset and move the body in order to make the fourth guard.
- 80) Why the fourth guard is called “*larga difensiva, imperfetta*”.
- 81) The fourth guard takes form from the *punta sopra mano offensiva*.
- 82) How one must do the fifth guard.
- 83) Why the fifth guard is called “*stretta, difensiva perfetta*”.
- 84) Praise of the S. Giovanni de Medici, and of the Sig. Conte Guido Rangone.
- 85) From the *guardia alta, offensiva, imperfetta* originates a full *mandritto, offensivo, imperfetto*.
- 86) Why the mandritto is called “full, *offensiva, imperfetta*”.
- 87) From *guardia alta offensiva imperfetta* can originate a *mezo mandritto offensivo, imperfetto*.
- 88) Why it is called a *mezo mandritto offensivo, imperfetto*.
- 89) How one must do the sixth guard, called “*larga offensiva imperfetta*”.
- 90) Why the sixth guard is called “*larga, offensiva*”.
- 91) How one must do the seventh guard, named “*stretta offensiva, perfetta*”.
- 92) Why the seventh guard is called “*stretta, offensiva*”.
- 93) Praise of the Most Excellent S. Francesco Maria, Duca d’Urbino.
- 94) Epilogue of the seven guards with proper names.
- 95) Division of the classes of guards into seven kinds named according to their differences.
- 96) The *guardia difensiva imperfetta, larga* is called “*imperfetta*” even though it produces a thrust.
- 97) The most excellent guard is the *alta, offensiva, perfetta*.
- 98) Praise of the *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*.
- 99) Requirement that a knight consider well the equality or inequality of his adversary.
- 100) Praise of the Illustrious Signor Conte Ugo Pepoli.
- 101) Who knows how to do the *punta sopra mano* well, knows that which matters more in employing one’s hands, either suddenly or thoughtfully.
- 102) Way of doing the proposed *schermo*.
- 103) How from *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta* one must execute the *punta sopra mano*.
- 104) How one can do the *punta sopra mano* perfectly.
- 105) How from the *punta sopra mano* one must go into *guardia difensiva, larga, imperfetta*.

- 106) Advisement that one not rest much in some defensive guard in this *schermo*.
- 107) How one must do the *rovescio tondo* from the *guardia difensiva, larga, imperfetta*.
- 108) How from the *rovescio tondo* one turns into *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*.
- 109) How, having done the *schermo* once in order to address the enemy, one must then repeat it in order to strike.
- 110) Praise of the Most Illustrious S. Duca Ottavio Farnese.
- 111) Praise of the Most Illustrious House of Farnese.
- 112) What entirely comprises this *schermo*.
- 113) Although it does well appear that this *schermo* is not done in one tempo, nonetheless by the speed of defending and offending it is in a single tempo.
- 114) One should always use the *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*, appropriate to defend oneself in every case.
- 115) In order to defend the head from a *mandritto, discendente*.
- 116) One defending oneself from a *mandritto discendente* with a *mandritto ascendente* cannot in any way offend his enemy without great danger.
- 117) Various feints against he who wished to defend himself from a *mandritto discendente* with a *mandritto ascendente*.
- 118) A better defense to all the enemy's blows is to beat aside with a *mezo rovescio tondo* and in one tempo offend, thrusting the *punta sopra mano*.
- 119) When it is possible to break the enemy's sword.
- 120) The *punta sopra mano* is called "Great blow".
- 121) This *schermo* can be reduced to a perfect guard and offense.
- 122) Why he who does this *schermo* more, often fares worse in the quarreling.
- 123) Luck most often aids the ignorant.
- 124) Although luck is the enemy of virtue, one must not, however, remain without learning.

## [51V] THIRD PART

Persons introduced in this discussion:

THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS SIGNOR ALUIGI GONZAGA, CALLED  
RODOMONTE,

THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS SIGNOR CONTE D'AGOMONTE,  
AND THE MOST EXCELLENT MESSER LODOVICO BOCADIFERRO,  
PHILOSOPHER.

ROD: Since we want to exercise ourselves for half an hour, Signor Conte, first I would<sup>1</sup> desire that we were seized by that fury, which took Homer, Virgil, l' Ariosto, and every other most excellent poet: they said supernatural things; and by which are moved all those lettered men, discussing or writing, that say things rare and excellent; and by which we others accordingly are accustomed to make blows worthy of Mars, whose fury is born of choler.

CON: How is not better to find oneself without choler? Because as the spirit that is [52R] quiet speaks better, and succeeds better in letters, thus also is it in the handling of arms: the spirit being more reposed, the knight is able to better put in execution<sup>2</sup> thoughtful and learned blows, while choler instead impairs reason, taking the same from man, causing him to function without knowing the why and the how.

ROD: If you propose to me a furious choler, that deprives one of intellect and speech, I<sup>3</sup> would not differentiate among a choleric, and a furious, and an unreasoning animal, and then I would say that it would be detrimental, and that it would not suit our proposition. But if it were to be a temperate choler such as completely obscures reason, I tell you that it would be very useful; because choler is a fire of the blood around the heart, which, being temperate, temperately ignites the heart, and in consequence the ignited humors are temperately elevated, so that they give superior agility and force to the motive spirit, and they work more quickly in the function of every sense, and ultimately the speech, and therefore I must say that a little bit of choler is of use to the soldier, as well to whomever would practice in arms.

CON: This is certainly the cause that one day, while exercising with the Conte di Mega,<sup>4</sup> rather moved by the fury of choler, I performed two *mandritti tondi*, the one after the other without any pause, so that I did not elevate one above the other (and indeed you know, Rodomonte, how hard it would be to do it) whereat the Conte was amazed, saying that he had never been able to do it, although he had studied all of the strokes of the sword.

ROD: The Conte di Mega marveled at it; still others would be able to marvel well thereat, he being a knight the peer of any other of valor.

CON: And more still I say to you, that I wish to do it again; I never knew how to find [52V] the path to the way to do it one more time; nevertheless much have I wearied myself, much have I thought thereupon, so that I indeed discovered the way of doing it twice successively, but now the cut is not flat.

ROD: I would do a hundred of them, not two, in that way; the difficulty is to do them edge on; but now it is time that we begin to practice, before the hour grows later: take up your sword, Conte.

CON: How so, my sword? Isn't it better to take one meant for practice?

<sup>5</sup>ROD: Not now, because with those practice weapons it is not possible to acquire valor or prowess of the heart, nor ever to learn a perfect *schermo*.

CON: I believe the former, but the latter I doubt. What is the reason, Rodomonte, that it is not possible to learn (so you say) a perfect *schermo* with that sort of weapon? Can't you deliver the same blows with that, as with one which is edged?

ROD: I would not say now that you cannot do all those ways of striking, of warding, <sup>6</sup>and of guards, with those weapons, and equally with these, but you will do them imperfectly with those, and most perfectly with these edged ones, because if (for example) you ward a thrust put to you by the enemy, beating aside his sword with a *mandritto*, so that that thrust did not face your breast, while playing with *spade da marra*, it will suffice you to beat it only a little, indeed, for you to learn the *schermo*; but if they were *spade da filo*, you would drive that *mandritto* with all of your strength in order to push well aside the enemy's thrust. Behold that this would be a perfect blow, done with wisdom, and with promptness, unleashed with more length, and thrown with more force, that it would have been with those other arms. How will you fare, Conte, if you take perfect arms in your hand, and not stand with all your spirit, and with all your intent judgment?

[53R] CON: Yes, but it is a great danger to train with arms that puncture; if I were to make the slightest mistake, I could do enormous harm. Nonetheless we will indeed do as is more pleasing to you, because you will be on guard not to harm me, and I will be <sup>7</sup>certain to parry, and I will pay constant attention to your point in order to know which blow may come forth from your hand, which is necessary in a good warrior.

<sup>8</sup>ROD: Well now, I want to teach to you today a *schermo* I have never seen to be done by others, and of which I was simultaneously my own tutor and student, which is not to be done otherwise than with good swords, and a single strike, and a single parry, and a single guard; and each of these three things together in a single tempo; with which parry you will be able to ward every sort of blow and offense; and this strike is superior to every other sort of strike, and from this guard every other guard proceeds.

CON: If thus it is, this seems to me the foundation and base of all this art; indeed the sword has among all the arms the grandest privileges.

<sup>9</sup>ROD: Of its prerogatives I will leave you to judge, Conte. Which is that weapon that can withstand the blows of the sword? What things would you be able to do with any other arm, that you could do with the sword; on the contrary, many parries, and protections, and sorts of strikes you will discover in it, which you cannot easily find in any others; from which it is to be recognized that all of the art consists perfectly in the <sup>10</sup>sword; from whence springs the practice that Emperors had borne before them an unsheathed sword, as an emblem of justice, by which they administered, as much as saying that there is no other fitter medium or instrument by which justice may punish the wicked, and defend the good, than by the sword, truly copious in every defense, and in

[53V] every offense, fine, proper, and an ornament to man. King and Prophet David says in his Psalms, “Gird your sword over your thigh, O Baron, and that will be your ornament, and your splendor.<sup>d</sup>” Did God not have in His hand a sword with which to punish the kings, as is to be read in many places in the Holy Scripture? Did the Angel of the Lord not appear with unsheathed sword in hand to Joshua in Jericho? I would say that in sum the sword is the most perfect, the most agile, the most worthy arm that is to be found, and of greater honor and ornament to the knight, and I believe it may be said that it is the beginning and end of all arms, both offensive and defensive.

CON: Do you believe that it was the first discovered?

<sup>11</sup>ROD: It was certainly the first, and never since abandoned by man; I believe that it had <sup>12</sup>its origin from the first blacksmith, Tubal Cain, son of Lamech by his wife Zilla; will you not observe how many times the sword is named in the Holy Scripture? The sword is the most ancient, Conte, and most modern.

<sup>13</sup>CON: I liked well that ancient sword, to which was given a dull edge<sup>e</sup> on one side, so that it was stronger and safer: you could push the single-edged sword with your left hand also, to deliver the blow more firmly, and if the enemy were to beat it back toward your face, in order to offend you, at least it would not cut your face; if we say, Rodomonte, that it is both to offend and defend, then it may better perform these two tasks if it is of that form.

ROD: You do not know, Conte, of how much importance the edge of the sword is, and if the enemy then beats back your sword toward your face, it is not a defect of the sword, but of you, that you do not know the art, or that you have too little strength in you; it was indeed safer, but also less able to offend.

<sup>14</sup>CON: It was possible to do so in the form of many swords that I have seen, in which the dull edge extends through the entire *forte* of the sword, which is the half adjacent to [54R] the hilt, while the *debole* of it, which is the half adjacent to the point, has a false and a true edge.

ROD: It was certainly possible to do it, but the modern usage has rediscovered the most offensive way to be having the entire length of both sides to be sharp edges; because when one comes to the half sword in combat, the false edge of the *forte* of the sword is quite opportune; think of it, Conte: it is very modern to have two edges from the hilt to the <sup>15</sup>point; I would rule that in the time of David they were of this fashion. He says in the Psalms these words: “The highness of God in their mouths, and a double-edged sword in their hand, to inflict vengeance on the nations;<sup>f</sup>” and I discussed with a Hebrew friend of mine in Mantua, that they are understood in the Hebrew language to be written thus as I have said.

CON: I have indeed seen that swords have had dull edges for but few days.

ROD: It is not a long time that those of that style were being used for the most part; also the rediscovery of this sort in these times was but recent; it is the manner in our days that little do we spy of the dull edge.

CON: Were the ancients using, perhaps, hilts with grips like we use?

<sup>16</sup>ROD: They certainly used them, except that to them have been joined all the garnishment that you see from pommel to cross, and provide marvelous defense to the hand; some improvement is constantly discovered by modern men.

CON: Why is the sword carried at the left side?

<sup>17</sup>ROD: I don't know in what other place you would be able to carry it from which you could draw it with less trouble, and in which you would be more prepared if you had need. It does not impede the hands; in that place you are able to promptly place your right hand in order to draw it out; and finally I do not find any site more convenient, and commodious, and that leaves you free and loose of the entire body, than the left side.

CON: I have understood some to say that one carries it on that side out of respect that the left side, where the heart lies, is more worthy, and has greater need of defense.

[54V] ROD: This is not a good reason, Conte, in my opinion. Firstly, I have seen in <sup>18</sup>anatomy, that the heart does not rest on the left side more so than on the right, but rather in the center of the chest; it is indeed true that the tip leans a little to the left side; but if this were the true reason then left-handed people would also gird it on that side; but that defense of the left side is the reason to carry it on that side? The real reason I believe to be that which I have said, Conte, and left-handed people are an indication thereof, that in order to accommodate themselves to draw it forth from their right hand side, they do gird it on their right.

CON: I well believe this to be the actual reason.

ROD: You would be well resolved, my Conte, to pass this little time in discussions of some small use to us.

CON: You speak the truth; it is better to turn to actions, because even if these discussions are indeed useful, they may nonetheless be conducted at other times; now wield your sword fancily a bit, please, Rodomonte.

ROD: Here you are; I do so willingly.

<sup>19</sup>CON: Lovely! But how do you accomplish the settling of the sword in your hand after so much, and so many flourishes?

ROD: I cannot describe it to you, Conte, but open your eyes well, and pay diligent attention to my wrist, and foremost to the dexterity of the manner of resettling it. Do you see how I do it? Similar actions are to be demonstrated, and to be learned, more and better in proof, and with the sense of sight, than with words; and whoever wanted to express them in words would be in need of that which I know well-- all the muscles of the hand, and the fingers; and I will tell you, that you need to do such and such motion, with this and that muscle, and relax the hand thus, and grip it thus; and he would serve in the role of a good doctor, and a professor of anatomy; because another would not [55R] understand it; do these two successive *mandritti tondi* of yours a bit, Conte.

CON: Here they are.

<sup>20</sup>ROD: From the whistle of the sword I hear that they went flat; if they are not good the ear is quick in discerning by the speed of the stroke; don't you hear the big percussion, and the big reverberation you make in the air, taking a great abundance of it with the flat of the sword? You hear a little less loud, but sharper, whistle, when you do it with the true edge.

CON: You have great judgment, Rodomonte.

ROD: It is of some use to have somewhat of letters along with this exercise of ours.

CON: How many strikes do you make?

<sup>21</sup>ROD: I make three of them: *mandritto*, *rovescio*, and *punta*.

CON: Isn't there a *falso*?

ROD: There is, and it is called "*falso*" only through being of little moment.

CON: Do all three of them a bit, please, Rodomonte.

ROD: Watch: this is a *mandritto*, this other is a *rovescio*, and this is a *punta*.

CON: Where do you leave the *fendenti dritti* and *rovesci*, the *montante*, the *mandritto* and *rovescio sgualebrato*, the *falso manco* and *dritto*? Where do you leave the *stoccata* and the *imbroccata*? You have also not done the *mandritto tondo* and the *rovescio tondo*.

<sup>22</sup>ROD: You know well what is the true and the false edge, that having the double-edged sword by your hip, that edge which is facing more toward the ground is called the true edge, and that which is toward your upper body, facing the sky, is called the false; and <sup>23</sup>the reason is this: that throwing a *mandritto*, or a *rovescio*, the sword always falls naturally with that edge. I say therefore that there are no other types of strikes than these said three, that can not be classified as one of them; because all those blows that initiate from the right side of the body, both with the right forward and with the left, are [55V] all to be called *mandritti*, having their origin from the right side, whether from top to bottom, or bottom to top; and these blows have their endings on the left side. See you, Conte, that the *tondo mandritto*, as well as the *sgualebrato*, together with the *falso dritto*, should be included under the name of "*dritto*"; and all those blows that originate <sup>24</sup>from the left side of the body and terminate on the right side, both from high to low as well as from low to high, should be called "*rovesci*". Under the *rovescio* therefore are classified the *rovescio tondo*, the *sgualebrato*, and the *falso manco*; and it is called "*rovescio*" because it springs from the corner opposite from the *dritto*.

CON: Where do you place the *fendenti dritti* and *rovesci*, and the *montante*?

<sup>25</sup>ROD: I do not differentiate them from *mandritti* and *rovesci*.

CON: How not? Tell me: are the *mandritti* not begun on the right side, and the *rovesci* on the left? And the *fendenti* from high to low with the true edge, or alternately from low to high?

ROD: You maintain that I do not know that obvious argument, Conte, for although the *fendenti* descend or ascend through a straight line, it appears possible to denominate them as being more from the right than the left side; and in addition, there is this more forceful <sup>26</sup>argument: that there are three dimensions: height, width, and depth; it appears that the *mandritti* and *rovesci* terminate in width; the thrust of the point, and its withdrawal, terminate in depth; it is accordingly just that the *fendenti*, and those that you call *montanti*, terminate in height; and that as these differences of position are varied, thus are <sup>27</sup>these blows also varied; whence, my Conte, regarding nature there may be four types of blows: *mandritto*, *rovescio*, *fendente*, and *punta*; but we are not considering blows other than those of the sword worn at the hip; we discover therein but those three.

CON: How?

<sup>28</sup>[56R] ROD: I will explain it: if you find for yourself your sword at your hip, laying hand to sword teaches you the *mandritto*, moving your hand from your right, located on the grip of the sword, toward your left side; unsheathing the sword teaches you the *rovescio*, drawing it from the left to the right side. Seeing that you have fury, make it to be that the point of your sword is aimed at the breast or the face of your enemy; whereupon from putting your hand to your sword, and drawing it, and setting yourself in place against your enemy, you derive these three natural blows; from here you cannot, Conte, derive the high to low *fendente*, or the low to high. Concerning the third strike, <sup>29</sup>called “*punta*”, if the *punta* issues from the right side, it will be called *punta rovescia*<sup>g</sup>, and if it issues then from high to low, or from low to high, and thus whether its ending is on the left side or the right, all will be under the name of “*punta*”; it appears to me that having demonstrated to you in full through such reasons, there are only three main types of blows in our art; yet placing the *mandritto fendente* under the *mandritto*, and the *fendente rovescio* under the *rovescio*, gives force that each blow originates from the right or from the left side.

CON: I prefer that argument of yours, according to which the *fendenti* naturally form another major and distinct type.

<sup>30</sup>ROD: Returning to that argument, either there would be three types or six; because if you would consider only the three dimensions, there would be three: *dritto*, *fendente*, and *punta*; but if you consider the six ends of the three dimensions of space, there would be six: *mandritto* and *rovescio*, *fendente descendente* and *fendente ascendente*, and thrusting the *punta* and withdrawing it.

CON: No, no, let us follow the common way: you know what I want from you, Rodomonte: that you make me something like a tree of all these general and particular blows, and make of them an orderly division.

<sup>31</sup>[56V] I am happy to do this welcome thing for you; accordingly I tell you that the first family will be the strike. The strike can be of two sorts, either the cut or the thrust. The cut is either with the true edge of the sword or with the false edge. The blows with the true edge are of two types, *mandritto* and *rovescio*; the *mandritto* can be *tondo*, *fendente*, and *sgualebrato*, depending on how the edge falls; if simply from high to low, it will be called “*fendente discendente dritto*”; if it rises from low to high, it will be called “*fendente ascendente dritto*”; if the true edge cut goes from the right to the left side, it will be called “*mandritto tondo*”; if it should go *sgualembro*, that is, that it begins high and ends low, and simultaneously from the right to the left side, they will call it “*mandritto sgualebrato*”; if, on the other hand, it goes from low to high, it will be a “*sgualebrato ascendente*”, which, however, is composed of the *tondo* and of the *fendente*. These are <sup>32</sup>the types of the *mandritto*. The *rovescio* has as many other types, and not more; and if one would strike with the false edge, there are born therefrom as many kinds of strikes as with the true edge, except that you need to add the designation of “*falso*” to all the particular names, saying “*falso mandritto*”, “*falso rovescio*”, “*falso mandritto tondo*”, “*falso mandritto sgualebrato*”, “*falso fendente*”, and thus with all the others from side <sup>33</sup>to side, adding to each this designation of “*falso*”. If one would strike with the point, either it will begin from the right side, and will be called “*punta diritta*”, or from the left

side, and will be called "*punta rovescia*"<sup>h</sup>; the *punta diritta* either drops from high to low, and will be called "*punta diritta discendente*", or goes from low to high, and will be called "*punta diritta ascendente*", or alternately "*stoccata*", terminating then on either the right side or the left; or it will go straight ahead, and is called "*punta ferma diritta*"; of the [57R] *punta rovescia*, there are as many others that can be spoken of. However, if you mix together these types, there are born thereof other imperfect blows, made up of these, such as *mezi mandritti*, *tramazzoni*, false feints, jabs, and plenty of other blows, reducible nonetheless to this Tree, which I now present to you for your gratification.



<sup>34</sup>[58R] CON: According to this profound distinction of yours, it appears to me that this first division of the three types, namely, *mandritto*, *rovescio*, and *punta*, is not convenient; because the *mandritto* and *rovescio* are two prime types derived from the straight edge; and the thrust, which you have divided, contrasts the cut, so that it appears that there are only two principals: thrust, and cut.

<sup>35</sup>ROD: This is a most lovely objection, to which I respond, that I made those three types (*mandritto*, *rovescio*, and *punta*) the principal ones, making such divisions from putting the hand to the sword (as I told you), and not according to the nature of the blows, or of the sword, or of the location, or dimensions.

CON: Tell me a bit, which of these three types of blows of yours holds the first place?

<sup>36</sup>ROD: I believe that the first would be the *punta*, and after that the *rovescio*, and then the *mandritto*.

CON: And I maintain the exact opposite. Because it seems to me that the *mandritto* is more noble, more natural, and more proper, and after that its opposite, the *rovescio*, and finally the *punta*; and for what reason do you assign your order?

ROD: I will tell you; we must say without fail that among the offensive blows, those which have more offense are of greater perfection, and to them must be the first place.

<sup>37</sup>And because the thrust is of the greatest offense, and more fatal, doing damage and detriment in the depth of the body (a place more perilous, and less apt to be healed or tended) because of this we say that the *punta* deserves the first place; of which relates Vegetius that the Romans, when training their youths in arms, wanted them to strike more with the point than the edge, and thus doing, were more times victorious; but throwing with the edge, they remained cheated of victory on many occasions; the point therefore offers to the enemy greater terror, since that stroke is more fatal, and also offends more [58V] easily, and requires less force to drive it forward, than to throw a blow with the edge.

CON: Why then do you deem the *rovescio* more worthy than the *mandritto*?

<sup>38</sup>ROD: For the same reason, for being of greater offense; you see, this *mandritto* that I deliver to you, offends you in principle, but goes falling every time, and taking less distance from the body. Behold, how my arm goes falling just now; but, I ask of you, regard this *rovescio* a bit, how on the contrary it goes on an entirely rising path; don't you see how much the arm and the shoulder lengthen themselves just now, completely elevating themselves, continuously augmenting the strike, and doing greater effect?

CON: I see it.

ROD: In the *mandritto*, as you throw the right arm straight, the sword goes falling, and returning to you, and covers less ground in order to offend your adversary; but the *rovescio* does just the opposite. Look how it goes continuously, taking greater distance, and augmenting, how it prepares itself for the enemy; if therefore the *rovescio* covers greater ground in order to offend the enemy than does the *mandritto*, and if the blow that does thus must deserve precedence, then rationally the *rovescio* will precede the *mandritto*. But I give to you another reason: the *rovescio* commences from the right side

of the enemy, which is more noble; and that blow is more offensive that offends the nobler parts; hence the *rovescio* would be more noble.

CON: Didn't you say to me, that a man's heart lies in the middle, and is inclined toward the left side? How then are wounds in the left side not more fatal than in the right?

ROD: I did tell you that the tip of the heart is inclined a little toward the left side, but do I not now assign the reason, saying that the right side is more noble, and of greater vivacity, and those offenses deprive it of vivacity and vigor?

CON: I understand you, but in fact I concede begrudgingly that the *rovescio* should be [59R] placed before the *mandritto*, and be of greater valor; it appears to me, rather, that the *mandritto* must have preceded the *rovescio*, because nature seems to offer it.

ROD: I, too, know well that naturally the *mandritto* is superior, and more worthy than <sup>39</sup>the sinister; the philosophers prove it, they place rather the East of the World, more noble than the West (being the right part), where they wish, as the Eastern heavenly influences have more strength than the Western; of the animals as well, the right sides are always more lively, and vigorous, and noble; but in the case of arms, the *rovescio* (as I told you) increases more, goes with greater vigor, offers more terror to the enemy, offends the nobler parts, and finally is more offensive.

CON: It appears also that the *mandritto* goes to discover first the left side of the adversary, which is more mortal, and wounds it; and it seems to me also that it is propelled with greater force than is the *rovescio*, going through a more natural path, and in accord with the natural mode of the arm, and it is for many other additional reasons, Rodomonte, that I do not thus readily subscribe to this opinion of yours.

<sup>40</sup>ROD: To the end that it will be conveyed to you, Conte, I will say to you, making another distinction, that you can consider the blow in two ways: from the perspective of he who gives it, and from the perspective of he who receives it. If you consider from the perspective of the agent, the *mandritto* proceeds more naturally from the right side, and for this reason it will be nobler; if you consider it from the perspective of he who receives it, to him it will offend the more mortal parts, and thus you can call it your more worthy way; but we do not deal with this difficulty, and proceed otherwise I pray you; indeed I will also give you this reason, which I had not previously remembered: the *rovescio*, moreso than the offensive *mandritto*, offends the enemy in the right side, whereby it aids [59V] and defends one, and for this reason: it comes to pass that the *mandritto* offends the more mortal and weaker parts; it can be said to be more offensive; tell me, if with a *rovescio* you sever your enemy's right arm, then what a defense it would be?

CON: I do not want to disagree with you anymore, Rodomonte; you indeed fashion your *schermo* with full valor and art.

ROD: Open well your ears, and watch how I do: place yourself, Conte, in whatever guard you wish.

CON: Look, I place myself in *cinghiara porta di ferro*.

ROD: Oh, by your faith, Conte, don't give me these bizarre names of guards of yours, please abandon calling them your *code lunghe distese*, your *falconi*, *porte de ferro larghe*, *o strette*, and such strange fantasies, because as we make three main types of strikes, thus

<sup>41</sup>we discover only three main offensive guards, and three defensive ones, and one general one.

CON: And how are they called?

<sup>42</sup>ROD: The first is called “*guardia difensiva, imperfetta*”;

The second, “*guardia alta, perfetta, offensiva*”;

The third, “*guardia alta, imperfetta, offensiva*”;

The fourth, “*guardia larga, imperfetta, difensiva*”;

The fifth, “*guardia stretta, perfetta, difensiva*”;

The sixth, “*guardia larga, imperfetta, offensiva*”;

The seventh, “*guardia stretta, offensiva, perfetta*”.

CON: I don’t understand you, you seem to me to use some terms, and some names that are so outlandish, that I don’t believe they are of the art.

ROD: This too I knew, Conte, but did I not say to you, that for fighting between man and man, that this, my new imagination, and this, my *schermo*, would suffice you, in order to offend the enemy, as well as to defend yourself from him?

CON: You certainly did say it, but it will be necessary, Rodomonte, since you change the names used by so many Masters of Arms, first to begin to teach the significance of the [60R] terms. What do you mean by “guard”? Do you want perhaps to mean that which is meant by others?

<sup>43</sup>ROD: Know you well, that lying calm and settled in some form with arms, either in order to offend or defend, that settlement, and that position, and that composition of the body in that guise, in that form, I call “guard”.

CON: Can you not settle yourself with your right foot and with your right side advanced, more exposed to the enemy, and thus with the left foot and with the left side? And can you not form all those guards named by our Masters, and by the common school, and “*guardia da entrare*”, and “*guardia di testa*”, and “*guardia stretta*”, and “*guardia larga*”, and “*becca cesa*”, and all the others?

<sup>44</sup>ROD: I can; rather there are an infinity of guards, Conte, as there can be an infinity of settlements and positions; and it is true that each increment of space that you move the sword from high to low, or from low to high, from the forward to the rear, and the contrary, and from the right side to the left, and the contrary, and each little bit that you retire your foot from place to place, and in sum every infinitesimal movement forms diverse guards, which movements are without number or end. These Masters have, rather, placed names to those more necessary in order to have a way to be able to teach to their disciples with more facility, and having taken such names from some similarity or effect, from which whomever has well considered the semblances of the animals perhaps may have been able more appropriately to say “guard of the Unicorn”, “guard of the Lion”, and other such; but I, who am not a Master of a school, to you, who are not now my disciple, do not intend to give you to understand today all our exercises entirely for practice, but I will select only a *schermo* (as I said) with which, coming to blows with [60V] your enemy, or assaulted by him, or assaulting him, you can perfectly and preparedly strike him mortal wounds, and make a most secure defense from his; hence I

<sup>45</sup>set only seven guards, and these in order to name them conveniently are placed

according to the form and the purpose of the guard; I designate *offensive* or *difensive*, according to the purpose; *larghe*, *strette*, or *alte*, according to the form; *perfette* or *imperfette* according to their perfection or imperfection. And if I wanted to show you today the entire art and the entirety of the mastery of arms, stating what are tempo, and *mezo tempo*, and *contratempo*; what are guards and how many there are, and how to form them all; how many ways of striking there are, and all the blows, which ones offending and which defending; with how many kinds of arms one can combat, and the protections and advantages that are in each one of them, when one is on foot and on horseback; how many *prese* there are, and how to form them; and in sum all the military exercises, not only would I not know how to do so easily, but moreover I could not do it in the space of a year.

CON: At least tell me now what advantage is, and what tempo is.

ROD: You have to know, Conte, the advantage now can be considered to be in settling yourself in guard, in the striking, and in the stepping. Accordingly it may be said that you settle yourself in guard with advantage when the point of your enemy's sword is outside your body and not aimed at you, and when the point of your sword is aimed at the body of your enemy in order to offend him, so that you may, in such fashion, easily offend him, and it will be difficult for him to defend himself from you; consequently you will be able to strike him in little time, and in order to defend himself, he will require more time; and conversely, he will find it difficult to offend you, and you will be able to easily [61R] defend yourself from him for the selfsame reason, he having need of much, and you of little time.

CON: This (I believe) one could quite well do, if the enemy were not intent upon this exercise. But if he shrewdly did not allow me to place myself in guard with advantage, what would I have to do?

<sup>46</sup>ROD: I would like you to step, vaulting at him diagonally, and wearying him continuously, now with a *mezo mandritto*, and now with a *mezo rovescio*, and often with a variety of feints, taking heed nonetheless always to keep your body away from the point of his sword, because he could easily give you the time and the occasion to seize the advantage of placing yourself in guard.

CON: And if he were to weary me with similar feints and half blows, what would I have to do?

<sup>47</sup>ROD: You would have to retire backwards one or two steps; as a result, he would not be able to strike you, being thus unable to reach you, and you would have to step so that the mind of the adversary would be baited by the proposition that he might accomplish the striking of you, and the way that it were determined; because at all times the variation of your body with the stepping also causes a change in the thought and the plan. But always remain attentive in the stepping to seize the opportunity to place yourself in guard with the advantage of the sword.

CON: What, then, is the advantage in the strike?

<sup>48</sup>ROD: Bear in mind to never try to strike unless when you throw the blow you can reach the enemy with a half step, or at most a step.

CON: And why is that? Could I not still try although I could reach him in two steps? It seems to me that it still wounds, that it doesn't have to lose time.

ROD: If you always want to attempt to throw blows when you still cannot reach your enemy without more steps, then you will spend too much time in throwing them, and give too much of it to the enemy in order to be able to shun your blow, and [61V] simultaneously to strike you, because you would overly disconcert yourself needing to move yourself from that distance between you. But when you can close with a step, and with half of one, you will not disconcert yourself, and you will strike quickly, without giving the enemy time to protect himself. Then you will have to pay attention <sup>49</sup>that when you strike, you do not look to the point of your own sword, but rather to that of your enemy.

CON: It seems to me that if I want to strike it is necessary that I look to the place where the enemy is exposed, otherwise I would throw the blow without doing him any harm, and that if I have to look to where I must thrust the point of my sword, it is necessary that I regard it as well.

ROD: It is indeed necessary to look to where the enemy is exposed, because it is to there that the blow must be thrown; but it is necessary to throw the blow without looking to one's own sword; and with the speed of eye necessary to a good warrior, one can in the selfsame time see the place where the enemy is exposed, and regard the point of the enemy's sword. Know you well, then, that greater damage can come to you from being offended than can easily come to you from being on the offense, and therefore it is necessary to pay attention to the sword of your enemy in order to be able to defend, reserving yourself for a better time to offend him. Therefore, Conte, from your perspective you have the advantage in the strike when you can hit in one step, or half of <sup>50</sup>one; and from the perspective of your enemy, when he would try some blow without being able to reach you, or being able to reach you in more steps, because he, in disconcertedly attempting his blow, or in the elevation of his sword, will give to you time in which to strike him, and similarly, when he, not having regarded the point of your sword, will give to you occasion to offend him.

CON: This seems true to me; because he cannot already strike me before his sword connects with my body, and that if my sword reaches his body sooner, then he will be [62R] wounded sooner. But then, given that you have said to me that the advantage may be in placing oneself in guard, and in striking, tell me in addition what there may be in stepping.

<sup>51</sup>ROD: Briefly I tell you that when the enemy, in stepping, lifts his left foot in order to move a step, that he is then a bit discommoded, and then you can strike him with ease, and again change guard without fear, because he is intent on the other; and this is from the <sup>52</sup>perspective of the enemy. From your perspective, then, when you are stepping, approaching the enemy, and go closing the step, then you have much advantage; for as much closer as you are with your feet, you will have that much more force in your blows, and in your self defense, and otherwise accordingly will you be able to close with your enemy in less time.

<sup>53</sup>CON: Tell me, Rodomonte, give me advice, how should I go when I want to close the distance with my enemy; which is the greater advantage: to go to encounter him, or to wait for him?

ROD: All the answer to this question is reduced to you being in advantage, and the enemy in disadvantage, because if you go in tempo, such that you are in disadvantage of the sword, and your enemy is in advantage of guard, your going would undoubtedly be worse; but if it were the contrary, it would certainly be better.

CON: I do not doubt this, but I want to learn when one and the other were of advantage, and what would be the case were all else equal.

ROD: One never strikes safely if not during the disadvantage of the enemy; therefore it seems impossible to say that both may have the advantage, and be in equal conditions. Indeed because you ask not of throwing a blow, but of going to encounter the enemy, I would say that it is better to wait; because he who would go discommodes himself, and [62V] the moving of his body often moves the spirit as well; and who stands firm does not receive discommodity, neither by change of body nor of spirit; hence it appears that when both the one and the other could have advantage, that the lesser advantage would always be to whom would go to encounter his enemy; and that when the both could be of disadvantage, the lesser disadvantage would always be to that one who waits for the adversary, and so much more so if he who waits knows to maintain himself in guard.

<sup>54</sup>CON: If this is true, speaking of going to encounter the enemy, what then do you say of striking? Is it better to wait for the enemy to strike, or for him to be the first to throw a blow?

ROD: It is better to wait for the enemy to strike.

CON: It seems to me rather to be the opposite; because when I will be the first to strike it necessitates the enemy to defend himself, and while he pays attention to his defense, he cannot devote attention to offending me.

ROD: This reason of yours would be valid if while one defended oneself one was not still able to offend; but such is discovered to be false of many defenses, which are able to be offenses as well, among which we can place our *schermo*, which is a single parry, a single strike, and a single time.

CON: Why do you say thus to me, that it is better to wait, that the enemy be the first to strike?

ROD: Because he who strikes first, uncovers himself first, and uncovering himself, cannot in the same time cover himself; hence, when your adversary uncovers himself, you can seize the opportunity to strike him; and if you are shrewd, you may also, passing a step diagonally, hit the enemy in the same time. Besides which, if you uncover yourself much, it is better to do so in guard than while striking; because in guard you can more conveniently recover yourself, but when you throw a blow you are entirely intent on hitting. And then, if you consider well, while the adversary strikes, of course he either [63R] somewhat raises, or somewhat lowers his sword, in which time he often removes his sword from your presence, and consequently rests in disadvantage; for which reason you can say that it is advantageous to wait for the enemy to be the first to throw a blow.

CON: I rest very satisfied by such as you have said to me concerning wherein may lie the advantage in placing oneself in guard while striking and stepping; now I wish to know what tempo is, and what is signified to us by saying a “tempo” and a “*mezo tempo*”.

ROD: It is a great controversy among the philosophers, in viewing the nature of tempo, and it is difficult to comprehend, and better to inquire about it of Bocadiferro, now that we come to it.

CON: O Dottore, what do you understand about tempo, and what it is?

<sup>55</sup>BOC: It will be difficult to understand it, Signor Conte; the philosophers say that tempo is measured in motion, and in rest, according to earlier and later; and more intelligently, I say to you, that a body which moves itself, moves itself from one place in order to travel to another; the place from whence it departs is one end of that journey, and the motion is the other end; now divide that journey and that path into two equal parts through the middle; the first half toward the end from whence it departs is called the first part; the other half is called the final part; this consideration of the first and second part (that is to say, earlier and later) in the discourse of our spirit, the philosophers call “tempo”, where the numbering of the parts of the successive motion is tempo.

CON: For what reason is it not recognized during sleep?

<sup>56</sup>BOC: Because when the external senses are bound (sleep being nothing other than a binding of all the external senses) we do not comprehend motion, and consequently tempo is not recognized, which is an occasion inseparable from motion, or to say it better, it is [63V] the same motion according to other considerations; whereupon reaching the first instant, the first beginning of the tempo of sleep, to the last instant, the sleep ends, it not being possible to understand the *tempo mezo*, except when the imagination works and <sup>57</sup>creates dreams, as in respect of that motion; then is understood tempo, and then the understanding grasps tempo to the extent of movement in that dream.

ROD: I see that the Conte does not understand well; and therefore in order to give it to <sup>58</sup>him perhaps to understand, speaking chivalrically: you see, Conte, the philosophers have proven that prior to a body moving itself it will remain at rest, and ceasing its motion again remains at rest; so that a motion (provided that it be single) will lie in the middle of two rests.

BOC: In the Seventh and Eighth Physics Aristotle proved it; Rodomonte speaks the truth.

ROD: I have heard it said by physicians that the motion of the pulse as well lies in the middle of two rests; is it not so, Dottore?

BOC: So proves Galen, and claims to have endured great labor for a long time in order to discern by touch the motion of the pulse when it lowers and raises, and divides itself into systole and diastole, that is to say into elevation and depression.

ROD: All right, it suffices that each motion that is single and continuous lies between the preceding and subsequent rest; look, then, Conte: before you throw a *mandritto*, a *rovescio*, or a *punta*, you are in some guard; having finished the blow, you find yourself in another guard; that motion of throwing the blow is a tempo, because that blow is a continuous motion; thus the tempo that it accompanies is a single tempo; when you rest in guard, having finished that motion, you find yourself once again at rest; it is therefore a

tempo, a motion, which instead of calling a “motion”, we call a “tempo”, because the one [64R] does not abandon the other; and the guard is the rest and the repose in some place and form. In conclusion it is as much to say “tempo” and “guard”, as it is to say “motion” and “rest”. Whereby it is necessarily so, that as between two motions there is always a rest, and between two rests there is interposed a motion, apparently between <sup>59</sup>two thrown blows, or two tempos, or two motions, is found a guard. And between two guards, or rests (as you wish to say) are interposed some blow and tempo. Thus a full <sup>60</sup>tempo is a full perfect blow, because that would be a perfect motion and tempo. And a *mezo tempo* would then be (as you said) a *mezo rovescio*, a *mezo mandritto*. And every bit of movement of the body is called a *mezo tempo*; and if you see it said sometimes that one strikes in *mezo tempo*, do not believe nevertheless that this is always true; because now one strikes with a full blow, in full tempo, and now one strikes with a half blow, in <sup>61</sup>*mezo tempo*; it is true, that the majority of striking is in *mezo tempo*, it being necessary that when there are two well-schooled in the art, he who wishes to strike deceives his companion in the fashion that when the adversary is about to make a blow, he must enter with dexterity and speed, and strike in the middle of the blow of the adversary, with his half blow; hence we can say, that the majority of times the strike will be in *mezo tempo* with a half blow.

CON: I believe that I understand it now, when you say to me that between two blows is found a guard, and between two guards a blow; whence perhaps derives that which you <sup>62</sup>say, that each blow gives rise to a guard, and that each guard gives rise to a blow.

ROD: Thus it is, more or less saying that following each blow one finds oneself in some guard, and that following the guard, the blow succeeds it. And as the rest of a particular <sup>63</sup>[64V] motion is different from the rest of another varying motion (since these are the natural dispositions which they desire) thus a guard is apt to generate a particular blow commodiously and not another; which I will make you to see better, beginning our *schermo*.

CON: When I think over that which you have said to me just now, I find a clear example in the Germans, who, coming to an armed brawl, deliver a blow per man, and delivering the blow, stop in guard in order to wait for their companion to deliver his, and withhold theirs, and then redouble; behold the two rests with a motion in the middle.

ROD: This is a fairly fitting example; but we give the principal place to my *schermo*, beginning with the first guard.

BOC: And I will silence myself, and will watch you, reserving for myself however the liberty to be able to ask of you at times some thing that I desire to know.

CON: That is well reasoned, and we likewise will look to you for that (as you know more than we) when such occasions occur. But speak of the first guard, Rodomonte.

<sup>64</sup>ROD: It is supposed (Conte) that the carrying of the sword at the hip is for defense, and as a guard of man, and nature invites man to carry it for his defense; the carrying of the sword thus bound to the left hip, and resting firmly in this form and at that place, will be the first guard, called by us “*guardia difensiva, imperfetta*”.

CON: For what reason do you call it thus?

<sup>65</sup>ROD: It is a *guardia* through being a still placement and pose; it is called “*difensiva*” through being for defense of that side where the sword is positioned; “*imperfetta*” I call it, because lying within the scabbard it only defends, frightening the enemy; but it is an imperfect defense, as it does naught else.

CON: What blows arise from this first guard?

<sup>66</sup>ROD: The *rovescio*, but you are advised that all seven guards must be done with the [65R] right foot and the right side advance toward the enemy; because they are less mortal and have greater strength and faculty than the left, as much in the offending as well as in the defending. Watch, therefore, Conte, now I hold this sword at my left hip; if I wish to avail myself of it, and use it against you, either to offend you or to defend myself, it will be necessary that I put my right hand here at the hilt of the sword, in order to draw it <sup>67</sup>forth, whereby I do this *rovescio ascendente* with strength, and this is the first blow, originated from the left side, *guardia prima, et difensiva imperfetta*.

[65V] *Prima guardia difensiva, imperfetta*; formed from girding the sword at the left side, from whence originates the *rovescio ascendente*.



[66R] CON: Do you see whether I do it, too? Look, I draw my sword, and here's the *rovescio*; I'm standing with my right side and with my right foot advanced toward you.

ROD: Yes, but you do it nonetheless, I know not why, turning your wrist as you draw it<sup>68</sup> forth, which does not please me; hold your wrist in such a fashion while you draw it forth that you do not make a turning; and do it so that your hand rises high, and to the rear on your right side, so that the point of your sword is aimed at my chest, and downwards somewhat toward the ground, and stop it there, with the true edge of the sword facing the sky, and the false toward the ground, taking care in the selfsame tempo that the *rovescio* travels, that you make with your body a little turn in such a way that your left shoulder is found somewhat more forward than your right, and that your left arm follow the right through the forward side, so that it is found toward the right side; and make additionally a slight turn of your left leg on the point of your foot through the draw, and the heel should be somewhat lifted from the ground; and together with this make your right leg lie extended, with the body somewhat erect: you see how I do it?

CON: I'm watching, but I cannot settle this right leg with the body well, and if I lift the heel of my left foot, I cannot support myself on it well, nor have my right leg extended and somewhat raised.

ROD: I would not know how to do it otherwise; it seems that nature forms such a figure finding yourself in that place with your right side forward, and wanting to throw that *rovescio* quite high, as much as can be done, without pivoting or turning the hand; but do it several times, paying attention to all the particulars of which I have told you.

CON: Look.

[66V] ROD: Lift the heel of your left foot a bit more, and extend your right leg.

CON: Like so?

<sup>69</sup>ROD: Just so; this is our second guard, called "*guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*".

[67R] *Seconda guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*; formed from the *rovescio ascendente*, from which originates the *punta sopramano offensiva*, either complete or incomplete.



[67V] CON: I know why it is called “*guardia alta*”, but I do not know the reason why you call it “*offensiva*” and “*perfetta*”.

<sup>70</sup>ROD: I will tell it to you: every guard formed on the left side will be called “*difensiva*”, and all of those on the right side will have the name “*offensiva*”; accordingly any time that the sword will be found on the left side (with the right foot in front, nonetheless, which we always assume, as much in *guardia larga*, as in *stretta*), still, whether the arm be found higher, or less narrow, or lower than it between the *stretta*, and the *larga*, that will be understood as a defensive guard, and will be for defense; and all the times in which the sword will be found by the right side (also with the right foot forward) both in *guardia alta perfetta* and in *imperfetta*, both in *guardia stretta* and in *larga*, either were it then among the *alta*, and the *stretta*, or between the *stretta*, and the *larga*, provided that the sword should be by the right side, such a guard will always be understood as offensive, and will be in order to offend. This will be our rule, and hold it fixed in your memory.

CON: I would ground it better in my memory, if I understood the basis of these “*alte*”, “*strette*” and “*larghe*” guards of yours.

ROD: We will do them all soon, and then you will better understand the rule. This <sup>71</sup>*guardia alta* is accordingly offensive, the sword being on the right side.

CON: Why is it called “*perfetta*”?

ROD: Because the point of the sword uncovers the enemy more, and looks more toward him in this form, than in some other in which one can be; this *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta* is born from the *rovescio*, the doing of which you have in the drawing forth of the sword.

BOC: And if in that tempo, Rodomonte, in which you pull forth your sword, and in which the *rovescio* travels from low to high, the Conte were to deliver some blow in order [68R] to harm your head or upper body, what would you do?

ROD: With the very same *rovescio* I would beat aside the blow of his sword toward the air, and toward my right side, and then settling into the said *guardia alta, perfetta, et offensiva*, I would thrust the readied point into his chest.

BOC: If you were quick, and he slow.

ROD: If one has understanding, then there is no need for him to already be asleep.

BOC: Do it a bit, Conte.

CON: Look.

<sup>72</sup>ROD: And behold the response, and when you come to blows with your enemy at close range, this is the shortest defense and offense that you can make; because having finished drawing forth your sword, you address it toward the enemy, and not otherwise, in order to offend him, and defend yourself.

CON: And if I am at a distance from my enemy, then what must I do?

ROD: The very same: again, put yourself in this *alta guardia offensiva perfetta*, and here you will give to him that you intend to thrust the point of your sword into his eyes.

CON: Isn't it better to target it so as to thrust into his chest?

<sup>73</sup>ROD: No Sir, because if you elevate the *punta sopra mano* such that you point to his eyes, in the extension your arm lowers, and drops to his chest; but if you point to his chest, it will descend to his thigh, and without pretending to hit him in his eyes, by which

you would give him more terror (the eyes being the noblest parts of the body) and make him lose more spirit.

BOC: You speak the truth, Rodomonte; some of those who are armored in full jousting harness, when the opponent lowers his lance, looking to the visor of their helm in order to offend it, I have seen that they happen to have a little helmet hanging from a band, well advanced from the face, to avoid the enemy's point for fear of their eyes. And there are some that close their eyes out of fear, and these never make worthy blows, except by [68V] luck. Now if these armored men are in such fear of the point finding their eyes, how then will one unarmored be, seeing the very point of a sword directed straight at his eyes?

ROD: A most excellent argument from the least to the greatest.

CON: And if finding myself at a distance from the enemy, I were to make a sign that I wished to do offense to his head with some blow from high to low using the edge, and not the point?

ROD: You would induce less terror thereby; because his left arm holds the care and safekeeping of head in taking the blow with his hand, or in restraining its force with his arm<sup>1</sup>; thus the point is always more perfect and offensive than the edge.

CON: Thus we make use only of the strike of the point in the Roman fashion, and not of the edge, as much in close range as in far.

<sup>74</sup>ROD: And we see as well that we thrust it into the depth of the nobler parts, where the wounds are crueller and more deadly.

CON: Very well, so this is your second guard; I have understood it, and if I practice it, I will do it well before too much time passes. I have heard it said that this guard is well

<sup>75</sup>liked by the Signor Duca Hercole Quarto di Ferrara, who in addition to his many other virtues, is extremely delighted by the military art, and that of the unaccompanied sword.

ROD: That is quite reasonable, because as this guard is quickest to offend it is fitting to a knight most quick, and desirous of striking his enemy, as it is seen that the Signor Duca was in the joust and in the public combats when he was exercising; then had he always well accomplished the keeping of the peace for his people.

CON: I have always heard him celebrated as such, and infinitely commended, and I hear that in writing he is hailed greatly as well.

ROD: Hailed certainly, and it is no wonder, for he is among the ideal and wisest Princes that this age has.

[69R] CON: Now teach me the third.

<sup>76</sup>ROD: Willingly; do the *rovescio* from low to high in drawing forth your sword so that it goes so high that the point of the sword looks to the sky, and that your wrist makes a half turn, in such fashion that the true edge faces up toward the sky, and the false, together with the point of your sword, faces toward the right side of your body over your right shoulder, and the pommel of your sword faces me, making all of those turns of the body, the hand, and the feet, of which I taught you in the other guard. This will be our third guard, called "*guardia alta, offensiva, imperfetta*".

[69V] *Terza guardia alta, offensiva, imperfetta*; formed from the *rovescio ascendente*, from which originates a *mandritto descendente*, either full or half.



[70R] You see how I do it? And how I pull this *rovescio* up high, and how as the *rovescio* travels I make a half turn with my wrist; look how the point of the sword<sup>77</sup> together with the false edge faces behind me. This guard does not give rise to a thrust, but rather a *mandritto* to your upper body, if I allow it to fall.

CON: Let me do it a bit; would that be all right?

ROD: Raise your arm then as high as you can.

CON: And if you had been in the way beneath me?

ROD: Let the blow fall, and you would have contacted me forcefully in the head, if I had not otherwise made a defense.

CON: Why is it called "*imperfetta*"?

<sup>78</sup>ROD: Because it does not give rise to a thrust, but only a cut, and therefore is of less offense, and I will avoid it more easily.

CON: "*Offensiva*", because it originates from the right side, correct?

ROD: Yes Sir, and "*imperfetta*", as such a blow offends imperfectly, as I have said, and also because when you want to deliver a blow from high to low, your right side would be uncovered to my eye, and thus you could be stuck in the body with this thrust; and I might find myself with my sword advanced and could easily defend myself.

BOC: And then, although it happens that the blow falls from high to low with a great onslaught, it does not always kill, because the bones of the skull are extremely strong and doubled in some places; in addition if you contact some other place, such as the shoulder, there are other very hard bones; and sometimes they are armored with good arms of defense, which abate the fury of the cut, but not the thrust.

ROD: This is a good and natural argument.

CON: Up to this point we have the third guard, called "*alta offensiva, imperfetta*"; now let's come to the fourth.

<sup>79</sup>[70V] ROD: Reset yourself in *guardia alta offensiva, perfetta*, and fix all of your weight firmly on your left foot, body elevated, so that the right one may be more agile, and likewise all your right leg, in order to be able to pass forward, and come toward me.

CON: I cannot, if I don't support part on the right leg as well.

ROD: You won't do anything, because if your right leg is weighed down, you can't come forward to me with the side that holds your offensive arms. But if you find yourself with your right foot unencumbered, you can pass forward with a big step in this fashion.

CON: Now watch whether I satisfy you.

ROD: Excellent; now fix yourself in that pose, and take the big step, and make your right shoulder drive your arm as far forward as you can, and with your sword hand direct the aim of your point at my breast without making any turn of your hand, until it comes forward as far as it can come, and then, turn there the true edge of the sword toward the left side, and from here you descend finally to the ground, and it is necessary that you make a half turn with your body at the same time that the blow is traveling, so that your right shoulder is somewhat lower than your left, and that it faces my chest; and the right foot trailing behind somewhat, bring yourself to rest again in good stride, and settle your feet, which are on the diagonal, and bend your knees a bit, and cause your sword hand to be located halfway between your knees, and your left arm to lower from high to low

during that tempo in which the point will travel, and it will go back and by the outside with the left leg somewhat extended. Do you see how I do it? And how I lower myself down to the ground?

CON: I see it, and I believe that in the space of a year I would still never give to it the [71R] beautiful agility, and such elegance of body as you do, Rodomonte; but continue on, as it will take me more time to practice it.

ROD: This is “*guardia larga, difensiva, imperfetta*”.

[71V] *Quarta guardia larga, difensiva, imperfetta*; formed from the full *punta sopramano*, and from which originates the *rovescio ritondo*.



[72R] CON: For what reason is it called “*guardia larga*”?

<sup>80</sup>ROD: It is called “*larga*”, in consequence of the point of the sword being distanced from the enemy in such fashion that it does not target his body in any place. It is called “*difensiva*” from being posted on the left side, from whence all the defensive guards take form, as I told you; and it is “*imperfetta*” because it produces a cut yielding a *rovescio tondo*.

<sup>81</sup>CON: This guard takes form then from that *punta sopra mano offensiva*.

ROD: That it does, and that thrust is a perfect blow, sticking it as far as you can reach with your arm. If you find yourself, then, Conte, in the *guardia alta offensiva perfetta* (also with the right foot forward) and from here throwing an *imbroccata sopra mano offensiva*, and making those same turns of the body, of the hands, and of the feet (except <sup>82</sup>for the turning of the true edge toward your left side, as I taught you), do not pass your sword hand past yourself nor cross your right knee, and make the point aim at my chest; this will be the fifth guard, which we call “*guardia stretta, difensiva, perfetta*”.

CON: Do it, Rodomonte.

ROD: Behold it; you see that my hand does not pass my right knee, and how the point is aimed at your chest?

[72V] *Quinta guardia stretta, difensiva, perfetta*, formed from the *meza punta sopramano*,  
*offensiva*, from which originates a *mezo rovescio tondo*.



[73R] CON: Why do you name it thus?

<sup>83</sup>ROD: I call it “*stretta*” on account of the sword being close to the enemy; and he cannot be an assailant without great contest, in respect of the point, which is aimed at the enemy’s chest, and your left side finds itself again distant from him, such that it cannot be offended, it still being the more mortal.

BOC: Finding the right side forward, which appears to have the duty of defense, and the sword hand advanced, it is found to be as much for defending oneself as offending others; I believe that in this guard the Conte and anyone else will be defended more easily and with less fatigue than in any other guard in which they place themselves.

CON: Why is it called “*perfetta*”?

ROD: Oh, didn’t I tell you that you need to turn the point of your sword toward my chest? Look, because it engenders the thrust, one calls it “*perfetta*”; but if indeed it principally engenders the thrust, nonetheless from it is easily born the *mezo rovescio tondo*, with which we will be able to serve ourselves as well in our *schermo*.

CON: And “*difensiva*”?

ROD: Don’t you see whether this thrust would originate from the left side, and that it would be a *punta rovescia ascendente*?

CON: It is true; this seems to me the finest guard among the defensive, and this (if I recall <sup>84</sup>correctly) was much used by the Signor Giovanni de Medici and the Signor Conte Guido Rangone, rare men, and excellent in the wielding of arms.

ROD: You speak the truth; I have seen it used by the Signor Conte Guido, a man not very tall of body (although towering in valor), and chiefly with the unaccompanied sword. <sup>85</sup>Now when you are in the *guardia alta, offensiva, imperfetta*, such that the point of your sword points to the right (still with the right foot forward), you can make a *mandritto* [73V] thus, that descends down to the ground, and do all those turns of the body, of the hands, and of the feet, that I told to you in the *punta sopramano, offensiva, perfetta*; and this *mandritto* will be a full blow, and a full, offensive, imperfect tempo.

CON: Why “full”?

<sup>86</sup>ROD: Because it originates from on high, to finish low to the ground; and “*offensiva*” because it originates from the right side, from whence originate all the offenses.

CON: “*Imperfetta*”, then, through being the delivery of a cut, and not a thrust.

ROD: You speak the truth; behold you, Conte, that the said full blow will have formed the *guardia larga difensiva*.

<sup>87</sup>CON: And if in this same *guardia alta, offensiva, imperfetta*, I delivered a *mezo mandritto*, which did not reach the ground, but that stopped halfway through its path, not passing myself at the knee in this way, with all the aforesaid turns of the body, the hand, and the feet, ending with the sword held firm; tell me then what blow would that be?

<sup>88</sup>ROD: It would be a *mezo mandritto, offensivo, imperfetto*; it would be offensive, falling from the right side; imperfect, being a cut and not a thrust; and this *mezo mandritto* places you in the *guardia stretta, difensiva, perfetta*, you see?

CON: I’m watching.

ROD: Now let’s step ahead a little, Conte; if you found yourself in one of those two described defensive guards, either *stretta* or *larga*, still with the right foot forward, and

<sup>89</sup>you wanted to do a *rovescio*, you would be forced to turn your right hand in order to rotate the true edge toward your right side; where the point of your sword will turn toward the rear by the outside of your left side, and from low, rise to high finally to your left shoulder, and from here fall from high to low through the right side, finishing at the ground; in that same tempo make your body do a half turn and yet make your left [74R] shoulder be somewhat advanced, and higher than the right, and your left arm follow the right, and the left leg cause its foot to turn a little to the outside of the left side, the heel a bit raised from the ground; so that the sword hand finds itself outside the right leg, and back a half of a *braccio*<sup>1</sup> and a bit distant from the thigh; I say that this *rovescio* will be a full, and a defensive blow: “full”, you see; “defensive”, because the *rovescio* is a defensive blow, originating from the left side. And this blow creates for you a sixth guard, called by us “*guardia larga, offensiva, imperfetta*”.

[74V] *Sesta guardia larga, offensiva, imperfetta*; formed from the full *rovescio difensivo*; from which originates the resetting into *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*.



[75R] CON: Why “*larga*”?

<sup>90</sup>ROD: For the same reason that we called our fourth guard “*larga*”; “*offensiva*”, for being on the right side.

CON: Very well, on to the seventh guard.

ROD: Wishing, Conte, from some defensive guard, either *stretta* or *larga*, to make the <sup>91</sup>same *rovescio* with all of those turns (still with the right foot forward) of the body, the hands, and the feet, as you know; it will be necessary for your sword hand in descending to not pass lower than your knee, but that you stop it outside and a span forward thereof, and that the point of your sword aim toward my chest (you see how I do it?) and this blow will be a *mezo rovescio*, not having made other than half the path of an entire *rovescio*, and it will frame you in a *guardia stretta, offensiva*, which will be our seventh.

[75V] *Settima guardia stretta, offensiva, perfetta*, formed from the *mezo rovescio difensivo*, from which one will be able to reset into *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*.



[76R] CON: Why “*stretta*”?

<sup>92</sup>ROD: Don’t you see whether the sword is hindered in the way it is advanced toward the enemy, that to offend him it is very close? “*Offensiva*” it is, then, through being on the right side, from whence (as I have told you many times) are born all the offensive guards and blows.

<sup>93</sup>CON: The Most Excellent Francesco Maria, Duca di Urbino, of his age a man of valor, knowledge, and prudence (according to a few), praised beyond measure this final guard of yours, and placed it before nearly all others. But let’s return all over again, please, Illustrious Rodomonte, and do these seven guards, as an epilogue, telling along with them the origin of each one.

<sup>94</sup>ROD: I am happy to do this, and every other thing for you, Conte. The first guard is “*difensiva, imperfetta*”, generated from girding the sword at the hip, and it is a tempo, or motion, defensive and imperfect. The second is “*guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*”, made from the *rovescio*, which is done in the drawing forth of the sword to on high, a full, defensive blow. The third is “*guardia alta, offensiva, imperfetta*”, made from the same full *rovescio*. The fourth is called “*guardia difensiva, imperfetta, larga*”, born from the full *punta sopra mano perfetta*, or alternately from the *mandritto sopra mano*, descendent down to the ground, and full. The fifth is called “*guardia difensiva, perfetta, stretta*”, formed from the incomplete *punta sopra mano*, or alternately from the *mezo mandritto sopra mano*, descendent down only as far as the right knee. The sixth is called “*guardia offensiva*”<sup>k</sup>, born from the second full *rovescio difensivo*. The seventh and last is called “*guardia offensiva stretta, perfetta*”, formed from the *mezo rovescio difensivo*. Behold each in order, according to how we have done them. You see now, Conte, how each [76V] blow, or motion lies in between two guards, or rests, and each guard in between two blows?

CON: I observe it plainly.

BOC: It could additionally be said that each action is between two potentialities, and each potentiality is between two actions, because the strike, while it is being a guard, is not yet an action, it is a potentiality; then, once the blow is actually thrown, it is an action.

ROD: You speak most excellently, Dottore, that the guard is nothing else than the potential of a blow; and each particular potentiality refers to its own particular action; thus the particular guard corresponds to its own particular blow.

CON: You would do for me a gracious thing, Rodomonte, if you would put these guards of yours in the form of a Tree, and divide them, as you did in the manner of the strikes, by which I retained them with more facility, and you put them in their places with more order.

ROD: I will do it, but you will not have such copious divisions, and such a fruitful tree, as you had in that one, because then I compressed nearly all of the types of strikes simply and naturally, but here I make for you only seven guards (and all with the right foot forward), more important and useful with which to come to arms with the enemy; because all the guards that want counting are nearly infinite.

CON: Divide only these seven good guards with order.

<sup>95</sup>ROD: Behold: a man can have his arms either on the right side, or on the left side. If on the right side, it will be called an offensive guard; if on the left side, it will be called an defensive guard. The *guardia offensiva, perfetta* gives rise to a thrust or a cut; if it gives rise to a thrust, it will be called “*offensiva perfetta*”; if a cut, “*offensiva imperfetta*”. The *guardia offensiva perfetta* will either be done high or low. If it is done high, it is said to be “*offensiva perfetta, alta*”; if it is done low, “*offensiva, perfetta, stretta*”. The *offensiva imperfetta* will either be done high or low. If it is done high it will be called “*offensiva, [77R] imperfetta, alta*”; if low, “*offensiva imperfetta larga*”. Now we go to the defensive guards; either they give rise to a thrust, or a cut; if a thrust, they are called “perfect”, and have a single type which we call “*difensiva, perfetta, stretta*”. If they give rise to a cut, it will either be wide, or less wide; if quite wide, it will be holding the sword girded at the side, and we say that it is “*guardia difensiva, imperfetta*”. If it is less wide, we call it “*difensiva, imperfetta, larga*”.

<sup>96</sup>CON: Won't this last guard give rise to a thrust? Why do you therefore want to call it “*imperfetta*”?

ROD: You are correct; but we call it “*imperfetta*” because you uncover your body too much to the enemy, and through being very wide, you can use it in other ways than in delivering a thrust.

CON: Give to me, please, the making as a figure of this Tree, copious in such good fruits.

ROD: I am happy to please you, and here it is.



[78R] CON: Yes, now I recall all the names; I knew that thereby I would do them well, as I intend for them. Which of these guards is the most perfect? Which is the most excellent?

ROD: Which do you think to be of greater valor, the offensive, or the defensive?

<sup>97</sup>CON: I would believe it to be the offensive.

ROD: Among the offensive isn't the perfect more excellent than the imperfect?

CON: The name says it.

ROD: Among the *offensiva perfetta*, the high or the low?

CON: It seems the high, which uncovers more of the enemy's body, and can offend it more with all of one's strength united, with all of the body, with all the muscles, and that can offend it in the more vital and nobler parts.

ROD: You have spoken excellently. You see therefore that the *guardia alta, offensiva*,<sup>98</sup>*perfetta* is of greater perfection, and more valorous. This is the most apt guard with which to offend the enemy with grave harm, and to defend oneself marvelously at the same time. If it happens then that the enemy should be smaller than you, and you place yourself in this guard, he will never put himself at risk by coming against your directed<sup>99</sup> point; and if he is clever, he will remain well distant, because this is a necessary condition of a good knight, to consider well the equality, or the inequality of his adversary.

<sup>100</sup>CON: If the Illustrious Signor Conte Ugo, house holder, man of such valor, art, and knowledge that he is the chief Italian close to His Most Christian Majesty, has this guard for his favorite, and is well practiced in it, being large of frame, and well proportioned, he has good reason; because he has thereby among other knights (allow me to say) the greatest advantage.

ROD: You are correct, Conte; it is of great consequence to be of large stature, and have good proportion of limbs, and then to have cunning and great learning, as has Conte Ugo.

[78V] BOC: Our Conte Ugo in truth has done a thousand beautiful enterprises, and has brought excellent fame to his country in distant lands. He is certainly a man with a great heart, and of perfect judgment.

CON: This guard is marvelously even more pleasing to the Most Serene S. Duca Alberto di Baviera, than whom it is not possible to find another more judicious, and more supportive of all the belles artes and the noble disciplines.

ROD: If for no other attribute and virtue were this Serene Prince to deserve to be praised and exalted, he would merit it for his constant and steadfast firmness in defending the Holy Catholic Religion in the midst of so many others who contradict, and do not wish to accept it. And to me it seems that this praise exceeds every greatness, and every glory, which has come to his house from so many Emperors, that he has had.

BOC: After this you must put in second place the favor that he has done to letters, and to the lettered; which I understand, being among the favored, and highly awarded.

CON: Not only the lettered, but all the nobly learned have refuge and entertainment under this high and generous Prince. And I would like, Signor Dottore, for you to see his library, and then you would genuflect, for he has stocked it in every way at incredible

expense, and I say as much, that here is my final opinion, that he has assembled books in every faculty for more than twelve thousand *scudi*.

ROD: I understand that he has apparently innumerable abundances of jewels of inestimable worth.

CON: If I said to you that I had seen about him cases full, you would think me lying; and only of a knight could you believe what I have seen. But you know that all the greatness of this great prince is achieved by another, not one point less.

BOC: And which is this?

CON: The Principe Guglielmo, his son. Now here I would like, Dottore, that you fixate [79R] yourself to contemplate this noble young man, full of holy and Catholic zeal, entirely ardent of charity against poverty, wholly given over to pondering things abstract and remote from the common science of others. And without doubt you will judge that this must turn out to be a most clear example of virtue, of goodness, of generosity, and of humanity above all others. But tell me, Rodomonte, now that we have seen the seven guards, don't you wish to teach me the *schermo* you proposed to me?

ROD: As you like.

CON: It would delight me greatly to know it, if it did not trouble you to show me.

ROD: And I take the greatest delight in showing you.

BOC: The sign of the wise man is the ability to teach others, as does Rodomonte today; he both can, and wants to teach you.

<sup>101</sup>ROD: I tell you, Conte, that whoever will want to know well how to use the *schermo* to offend, and defend himself, will need to know how to do that *punta sopra mano* well, with all those turns of the body, and of the hands, and of the feet, as I have shown you, and with all those gestures, and with that refined bodily grace, to such extent that he does it with great facility. And if he does this, he can indeed claim to have that understanding, which is of greater need in employing one's hands, either suddenly, or thoughtfully. And <sup>102</sup>so that you can understand this safe *schermo* of ours well, behold, I repeat, and say, <sup>103</sup>that finding yourself with your right foot forward in *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*, and with your weight on your left side, and wanting to execute the *punta sopra mano*, and <sup>104</sup>do it perfectly, you must always accompany the sword hand with the right foot together with the entire body, as much with the upper parts as with the lower, and not allow the lower right parts to go forward without the company of the upper right parts.

[79V] CON: Why?

ROD: In order that you be able to put all the strength of your body to your service; but when you have in mind to do the *punta sopra mano*, make the right foot move itself, and go forward a big step, and immediately make the left arm begin to descend, and the right shoulder to propel the arm forward, dropping with the point from high to low, taking aim at my chest, without making any turn of your hand, pushing it so far forward and so long as you are able. In this tempo the heel of the left foot will follow the right, not moving, <sup>105</sup>however, the point of the left foot from its place, then turning the wrist of the sword hand together with the true edge toward the left side, and immediately descending down to the ground, withdrawing the right foot somewhat back, and making the point of your sword draw a line on the ground and travel behind you on the left side, and after the right

foot finally is a span from the left foot, the right shoulder then will find itself very low, and the left arm will be behind, and high, and extended forth toward the left side; the feet remain even, but the point of the right foot will point out toward the right side, and the point of the left foot out toward the left side, your shoulders will be looking at the enemy more than your forward side, and your weight will be placed on your left side; thereby you will find yourself in this *guardia difensiva, larga, imperfetta*. But I advise you well,<sup>106</sup> Conte, that you not make a long stay in one of the defensive guards, low, or wide, or narrow that it may be; but make your right hand turn the point of the sword somewhat to<sup>107</sup> the rear by the outside on your left. And traveling from low to high as far as your left shoulder, the true edge will turn toward me, and the false edge will face your left shoulder; **[80R]** and here you must unite all the strength of your body together with both arms somewhat bent and pulled in, from which you can immediately deliver a *rovescio*, almost *tondo*; but do not uncouple the right arm from the strength of the body, and make the *rovescio* go no higher than your shoulders, the point not be higher than the pommel, nor the true edge higher than the false, but the flat of the sword to face toward the sky; the right leg along with the foot does not move, but the left turns somewhat on the point of the foot with the heel lifted up a bit from the ground; the *rovescio* does not have to pass<sup>108</sup> through the *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*, rather, stop in the said guard, and the right arm must be bent, going with the elbow back as far as you can to the outside on the right side, and the right hand is not higher than the right shoulder, and the point of the sword aims at my face, the left shoulder remains somewhat ahead of the right, and the left arm will be in front of your chest with your hand toward your right side. And place your weight on your left side, in order to have your right leg free and agile. And wanting from<sup>109</sup> the said *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*, to do again the above said thrust, you must lift your sword hand up somewhat high, and turn the true edge toward the sky, and the point will then be lower than your hand; and immediately, with your right foot forward, take a big step toward me, and in the same tempo, drop that point from high to low toward my chest. And in the lowering of the sword toward your left side, you must not let it stop long in some low defensive guard, but make it travel from low to high toward your left shoulder, making immediately the *rovescio tondo*, which terminates in the *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*; but make the flat, or plane, of the sword be face up, and not the true **[80V]** edge, not forgetting to do all those turns of the body, of the hand, and of the feet mentioned above. And thus doing these many turns you will very well comprise the *punta sopra mano, offensiva, perfetta*, together with the *rovescio tondo* with all those gestures and turns of the body. But take heed, that if you were smaller than your enemy, you would have a great disadvantage settling yourself in this manner. Do you see how I do this whole *scherma* entirely with ease?

CON: I'm watching, but I will not be able to do it soon.

ROD: You will be able to do it sooner than you believe, having judgment and disposition<sup>110</sup> in arms, as did the Most Excellent Signor Duca Ottavio Farmese, who, hearing it, and hearing it from me, imagined himself to have to toil long before he would learn it well, and then in the shortest time he became a more perfect master of it than I.

CON: I believe it, because he is of the most subtle and acute wit, and apt to every work<sup>111</sup> of judgment, as though he and all of his most illustrious house were favored beyond custom by nature in every enterprise wherein is required agility of body and strength of mind.

ROD: If we live, Conte, we will see this Signore the chief of all the knights and Signori, he being blessed with valor, virtue, and knowledge. But returning to our proposition, I<sup>112</sup> tell you that this is my *schermo*, composed of the most perfect offense, and of the most perfect guards that there are, namely the *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*, and the *punta sopra mano, offensiva, perfettissima*. There you have also the *rovescio tondo*, a good defensive blow, and the *guardia difensiva larga*.

CON: It is not, therefore, a tempo, as you said.

<sup>113</sup>ROD: On the contrary, as the *schermo* is one, thus is the tempo that accompanies it [81R] one; and as the *schermo* has two blows done successively without an intervening guard, namely the *rovescio tondo* and the *punta sopra mano*, and has two guards; thus this tempo of yours is in turn composed of two tempos, successively issued, and two rests.

BOC: You speak excellently, Rodomonte, except that the rest is measured by the tempo, and it seems that you distinguish the tempo by the rest.

ROD: In accord with our discussion, by “tempo” I intend “motion”, not the number of the motion, as you mean.

CON: Listen to me a bit, please, Rodomonte; if you came against me wishing to offend me, what should I do?

ROD: Come against me always in *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*; but not, however, in a mind to offend me immediately; because if we were both of equal height, then we would offend each other equally, using the same offense in the very same tempo, and if I were taller than you, it could easily occur that my point offended you, I remaining without any harm, or at least with much less.

CON: So you want me to always use this guard?

<sup>114</sup>ROD: Yes Sir, because it is always the most perfect, and better than others in order to defend yourself in every dangerous case. Look; if I were settled in *guardia alta, offensiva, imperfetta*, wanting to offend your head with a *mandritto* from high to low, what protection would you find, Conte, from that *fendente*?

<sup>115</sup>CON: I would reset myself in *guardia stretta, difensiva*, formed from the *meza punta sopra mano* with the right foot forward; and when your *mandritto* fell, I would lift my sword going against yours, as if I wanted to form another *mandritto*, but in such a fashion that the point of my sword did not fall, but rather went higher than my pommel, holding my arm well extended. In this fashion the swords would connect each other true edge to [81V] true edge, in the manner of a cross.

ROD: This is the common *schermo* that all the Masters teach, and the greatest part of combatants use; but this is not a good protection for defending your head, because you cannot deny, Conte (following reason) that the blows which fall from high to low are superior to those contrary ascending blows; hence with my falling blow I could so<sup>116</sup> encumber your sword that you could still be harmed. And if it happened that you did defend yourself, how would you escape that thicket of my having wanted to harm you?

CON: I would turn the point of my sword to my left side, over yours, and from there I would offend your head with a *rovescio*.

ROD: While your *rovescio* travels, my sword, which remains in descent, will soon fall and offend you in the head in this fashion.

CON: I would therefore lower the point of my sword toward my right side in such a way that yours had to take a path to drop by my right side down to the ground; because such would be its travel; where lowering, or not lowering your sword, I would send it toward my left side without moving the fist that holds my sword, and then I would drop from high to low with a *rovescio* to the right side of your head, and do it like so.

ROD: And I, in that very same tempo, would turn my true edge against yours, encumbering it, and I would remain defended, and what is more, I could offend you with a *rovescio* to your right arm, like so.

CON: Therefore I would cross the swords as I did earlier, that is, true edge to true edge, and distancing mine from yours somewhat, I would drop with a *mandritto* to the leg on your left side in this fashion.

ROD: But during all that, couldn't my sword finish falling, and offend you indeed in [82R] your upper body, in the tempo in which you drop to my leg? See?

CON: In fact this is true.

ROD: Return at ease to *guardia stretta difensiva*.

CON: Here you are.

<sup>117</sup>ROD: If you don't make some other block than this earlier one of yours, then I, settled in *guardia alta, offensiva, imperfetta*, as you see, could feign to offend you with a *mandritto discendente* to your head, and you defending yourself with another *mandritto* of your own, I will then be able, in dropping from high to low, to make my sword not to touch yours (in this fashion) and offend your right arm near the hand, and then retreat, so that you remain with your arm struck. I could also go to find your right leg instead of your arm, and then retreat; I could make a feint that I want to offend you on the right side of your head, by making only a half turn of my wrist; I could also feign to want to offend you from high to low with a *mandritto*, and immediately turn the point of my sword forward, into the manner of the *guardia alta, offensiva, perfetta*, and from here drop from high to low, and stick this *punta sopra mano* into the middle of your chest, and then promptly retreat. Do you see, Conte, how many feints I could make, only as a result of you being settled in *guardia stretta, difensiva*, against my *guardia alta offensiva, imperfetta*? And through defending yourself from my *mandritto discendente* with your opposite *mezo mandritto*? This is, therefore, not the good parry.

CON: What, then, should I do?

<sup>118</sup>ROD: It behooves you (to deliver your enemy some desired blow) that (being in that *guardia stretta, difensiva* with your right foot forward) you turn the point of your sword toward your left side, diagonally, so that the point faces that same side, and the pommel [82V] is on your right, as if you wanted to lay hand to the sword, and from here uniting all the strength of your body together, do the same *rovescio tondo* with those same turns of the hand and the feet of which I have told you, and in the same manner; but pay heed that in this delivering of the *rovescio*, the swords meet each other true edge to true edge,

<sup>119</sup>but that the *forte* of your sword will have met the *debole* of mine, whereby mine could be easily broken by virtue of the disadvantage of such a meeting, and also because of the fall of the cut; and you will also be more secure, being shielded by the *forte* of your sword.

CON: How should I avenge myself of the insult?

ROD: While my *mandritto* is beat aside by your *rovescio tondo*, it will go by your right side; lift up your sword hand somewhat, and turn the true edge toward the sky, and make the point of the sword drop somewhat, and move yourself toward me with your right foot forward with a big step, and then immediately drop your left arm, and make your right shoulder throw your right arm forward, declining toward me from high to low, with that *punta sopra mano offensiva*, accompanying it in all of the said manners; and if I do not give you a response with some blow, do not halt there, but lift your sword, and going with it a span forward of your right knee, you will fix yourself in *guardia stretta offensiva, perfetta*; this is a perfect offense, which you must do following the insult received from me, and following your defense. But if I turned to some other blow in order to offend you, then you, with the same *rovescio tondo*, will always be able to beat back my sword toward your right side, and return to offend me in the chest with the same *punta sopra mano, offensiva, perfetta*; and thus after you defend yourself, you will always [83R] be able to offend me again in the chest with the *punta sopra mano perfetta*; therefore it is the most perfect and secure blow that can be found, and to express it succinctly, this <sup>120</sup>is called “Great blow”, because it is necessary to make a conjoining and a union of all the strength of the body, of the wits, of the senses, and of the art; and accompanying the said blow, reveals one to be endowed with knowledge, with heart, and with temperance. Watch, I pray you, how I do it.

CON: I am watching, and with great happiness.

BOC: You have done the same *schermo* that you taught him a little ago, having said it anew, part by part.

ROD: And you philosophers, will you not make to the limit of your abilities, an epilogue, containing in brief the substance of the entire work? And accordingly, I, in order to show him how good and perfect this, my *schermo*, is for offending and for defending, have shown him in this particular case of how much power it is; tomorrow, then, I will show him of how much importance it is in every way that can be done, both of offense and of defense; but now I am ever so wearied, and we have already had swords in hand for nearly two hours; I would not like the Conte Ugo to wait for me overlong, for we have to ride together for recreation. Oh, have you nothing to say, Conte?

CON: I am full of amazement, seeing how utterly perfect is this *schermo* of yours, and <sup>121</sup>fundamental to all wielding of the sword; but how have you reduced everything to a perfect offense, and to a perfect guard?

BOC: If our Aristotle entirely reduces the ten Predicaments under two headings, “substance” and “accident”, or, we wish to say better, under “action” and under “potentiality”, as each thing will be either an action or a potentiality, similarly does the unvanquished Rodomonte reduce under these two headings all his art: that is, under

[83V] “offense”, which is action, and under “defense”, or “guard”, which is potentiality; and in taking the most perfect action and the most perfect potentiality, has therein enclosed every other inferior action, and every other inferior potentiality.

CON: Rodomonte could have struck me a thousand times today with that thrust, yet he wanted that I might make some parry thereto, and this although I have learned something from many most skillful men, and Masters, and have practiced now and then.

BOC: It may be that if you were earnestly at blows, that Rodomonte would have the worse, if he lacked luck. I have seen the most skillful and practiced men many times do worse than others unpracticed in battle. As I could clarify to you by many examples, ancient and modern.

CON: This I do not believe.

<sup>122</sup>ROD: The Dottore speaks truly; I believe that this happens for one of two reasons: the first is that the man blessed in this art is wanting in courage, or in choleric temperament; the other is, that many times the man, through excessive courage and art, is sensed to make an error, as a result of which he is overcome and vanquished. It may also be said that fortune may be the cause of this; she, as the enemy of virtue, cannot endure that one who is virtuous advances himself with aid other than hers, fearing that the people will abandon her and thereby have recourse to virtue. Do you not see, Conte, that if the virtuous advance themselves, it would be believed that they were advanced through their virtue, and not through the benefit of fortune, so that every man would give himself to <sup>123</sup>virtue, abandoning fortune entirely? And thereby it is seen that she most often aids the ignorant.

BOC: This is most lovely reasoning. I will therefore remain without learning this virtue of arms of yours, placing myself in the hands of fortune, which will aid me in such [84R] occasions.

CON: And who knows whether fortune will succor you? Hence who can swear <sup>124</sup>thereunto one jot? Whereof, being thus uncertain, it will be necessary that you, fearing, undertake to succor yourself with virtue and with art.

ROD: It is time that we go, because there waits the Conte Ugo; tomorrow, then, we will do another bit of practice, Conte, and we will talk over this *schermo*, as much as we haven't been able to talk today.

CON: You are right; indeed, let's go.

BOC: And I will return to see you again tomorrow.

ROD: And we will look forward to it.

**THE END**

## ENDNOTES

- a) Literally, “Braggart”.
- b) Literally, “Iron Mouth”.
- c) The phrase “*spade da marra*” has generally been regarded as simply meaning “practice swords”. However, in every other instance (at least, in the sections translated here) Viggiani uses the term “*da giuoco*” (of play/practice) to refer to practice arms. “*Marra*” in modern Italian is “hoe, fluke of an anchor”, and is given by Florio (*A Worlde of Wordes*, 1598) to mean “a mattock, a spade, a shovell, a rake to mingle sand and lome together, a pickaxe, or such rusticke instrument.” While “*spade da marra*” may simply mean “swords of blunt metal”, it is intriguing to speculate that Viggiani used the term pejoratively, to suggest something more akin to “swords like shovels”, as one might today disparagingly refer to bated weapons as “rebar”, or call a wooden waster a “table leg”. Possibly opposing this theory, “*smarra*” is used to refer to the practice rapier by Marcelli (*Regole della scherma*, 1686) and others, presumably as a linguistic descendent of “*spade da marra*” (Gaugler, *The History of Fencing*, 1998, p. 92); turning again to Florio, “*smarrare*” is given as “to pare or shave down” and thus “*smarra*” may simply derive from the meaning of “a sword whose point has been pared down”, rather than a contraction of “*spada da marra*”.
- d) Psalm 45:3.
- e) The word for which I substitute the phrase “dull edge” is, in the original, “*costa*”; the relevant meaning given in Florio is “the back of a knife”. Viggiani uses it to refer, first, to a dull false edge (as in a backsword); and second, to a dull portion of either the false, or, more likely, both edges (as an extended ricasso). I am unaware of a discrete word in English that could stand in adequate stead.
- f) Psalm 149:6-7.
- g) This is almost certainly an error in the original. The text reads “*se nascerà la punta dalle parti dritte, chiamerassi punta rovescia*”. This is, of course, the complete opposite of what is meant by “*punta rovescia*”, and Viggiani immediately contradicts this statement on pg. 57L, endnote immediately following.
- h) Here the correct definition (contrary to the preceding endnote) is given: “*Se si ferirà con la punta, o nascerà dalle parti diritte, & chiamerassi punta diritta, o dalle parti stanche, & chiamerassi punta rovescia...*”
- i) Interpreting this maneuver is problematic. It may refer to the practice of arresting a *fendente* by meeting it at the agent’s hand, hilt, or at worst, forte; yet no mention is made of the patient closing distance to do so, creating the impression of simply putting a hand or forearm in harm’s way rather than take the blow in the head. The relevant passage in the original is “*...il suo braccio stanco tien cura, & custodia della testa in pigliare il colpo con la mano, o in ritener co’l braccio la forza sua...*”
- j) A *braccio* is a unit of length of approximately 60 centimeters. The specified distance is therefore about 30 cm, or one foot.
- k) This is, of course, in full, “*guardia larga, offensiva, imperfetta*”.

