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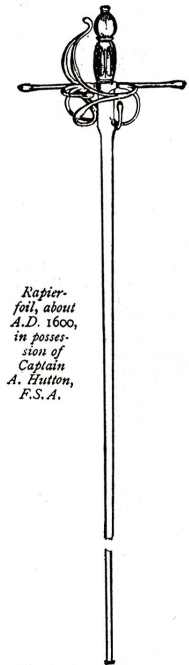
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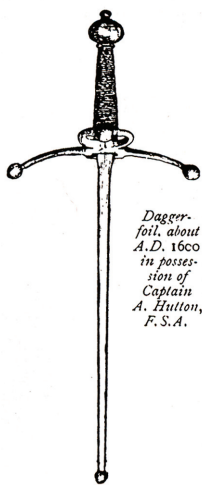
# Practice for the Duel

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Rapier-foil, about A.D. 1600, in possession of Captain A. Hutton, F.S.A.

Figure 1. Practice rapier in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. (Hutton. *The Sword and the Centuries*, 1901, p. 74.)



Dagger-foil, about A.D. 1600, in possession of Captain A. Hutton, F.S.A.

Figure 2. Practice dagger in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. (Hutton. *The Sword and the Centuries*, 1901, p. 75.)

Many manuals were published in Sixteenth Century Europe on the use of arms both in war and in individual combat. For the most part, these manuals give detailed instructions on the manner of doing great harm to your opponents while contravening their attempts to harm you. Occasionally, however, these manuals will discuss activities that are part of a training regimen rather than, in themselves, movements that one would carry out in combat. These discussions sometimes explicitly address what might better be called sport fencing than actual combat.

While few Renaissance treatises explicitly address the issue of “sport” fencing, Giacomo Di Grassi raises the issue at length in his *Ragione Di Adoprar Sicuramente L’Arme si da Offesa, Come da Difesa* (Venetia: 1570) and in the nearly contemporary translation of this treatise, *Giacomo Di Grassi his True Arte of Defence . . . With a Treatise of Disceit or Falsinge* (London: 1594).<sup>1</sup> In discussing the division of his treatise into the true art and the false art, Di Grassi wants his readers to understand, “that falsehood hath no aduantage against true Art, but rather is most hurtfull and deadlie to him that useth it.”<sup>2</sup> The majority of the treatise focuses on the True Art: first, describing positions and movements appropriate to the use of arms, and second, providing detailed instructions in the use of the rapier alone; the rapier and dagger; the rapier and cloak; the sword (or rapier) and buckler (small shield, either round or square); case (pair) of rapiers; two hand sword; and vari-

ous staff weapons. He then turns to “The Second Part intreatinge of Deceites and Falsinges of Blowes and Thrustes.” Di Grassi explains that he is including this section because he had promised to do so earlier in the treatise, and also “to satisfie those who are greatly delighted to skirmish, not with pretence to hurt or overcome, but rather for their exercise & pastime.”<sup>3</sup> He explains that in this activity, one is admired for being able to carry out a wide range of elaborate motions; but that in combat, it can happen that an opponent with “good stomach and stout courage”<sup>4</sup> can thrust past these fancy maneuvers. Di Grassi therefore advocates that the practices associated with the false art only be employed “in sport, and . . . for their practise & pastime.”<sup>5</sup>

Beginning his discussion of “Deceits or Falsings” with the single rapier, Di Grassi reminds the reader of the various wards previously described within the true art, “And standing in all these waies, he may false a thrust above, and force it home beneath: and contrarie [false a thrust] from beneth [and thrust] above, he may false it without and deliver it within, or contrariwise.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise, one can false a cutting blow and then deliver a different blow instead. All of these most common form of falsings are what we today would call making a feint before delivering the real attack. While the use of feints eventually becomes one of the most standard of fencing practices, Di Grassi regards it as a technique that carries with it great danger for the user: “And as for these Falses and Slips, they must use them for their exercise & pastimes sake onelie, and not presume upon them, except it bee against such persons, who are either much more slow, or know not the true principels of this Art.”<sup>7</sup>

While Di Grassi warns of the danger of making false attacks, he is stronger still in his criticism of

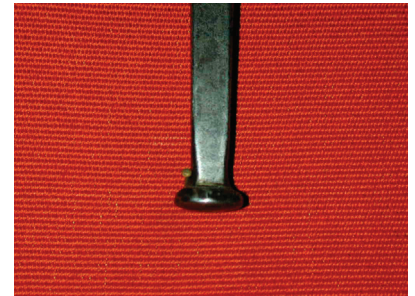


Figure 3. Photograph of tip of practice rapier in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

a second form of falsing which can be performed when one has supplemented the rapier with a dagger in the other hand: “As for example, to widen it [the dagger] and discover [expose] some part of the bodie to the enemie, thereby provoking him to move, and then warding, to strike him, being so disappointed: but in my opinion, these sortes of falses of discovering of the bodie, ought not to be used.”<sup>8</sup> That is, while “feints” are dangerous to the user, “invitations” are far more so. A third form of falsing receives even more criticism than these first two: “But this manner of falsing next following, is to be practiced last of all other, and as it were in desperate cases. And it is, either to faine, as though he would forcibly fling his dagger at the enemie’s face, . . . or els . . . to fling the dagger in deede at the enemie’s face”<sup>9</sup> One is reminded of the scene in the 1974

movie version of *The Four Musketeers* in which Porthos demonstrates his new attack which entails flinging his rapier at his opponent. After easily parrying the thrown weapon, Aramis remarks, “Only Porthos could invent a new way of disarming himself.”<sup>10</sup> Di Grassi is especially critical of this idea of giving up a weapon to achieve some imagined immediate advantage. He likewise recommends against seizing the enemies sword with the left hand if doing so calls for the casting away of one’s dagger.<sup>11</sup> The objection here is not to the seizing of the opponent’s weapon, but to the sacrifice of one’s own dagger. Several pages earlier, Di Grassi describes in some detail how one can close with an opponent, grasp his rapier near the hilt, and twist it out of the opponent’s hand.<sup>12</sup> In that earlier case, however, one is engaged in single rapier play and the left hand is already empty so no weapon is being abandoned during the grappling.

In keeping with the theatrical nature of the moves which characterize the false art, Di Grassi ends this section with a disarm in which you continue to hold on to your own dagger while seizing your opponent’s rapier. If, according to Di Grassi’s instructions, your opponent delivers an edge blow (or thrust) from above, you first block this blow with your own rapier at the third or fourth part (that is, near the point) of the opponent’s rapier which you

allow to slide down along your own rapier towards your hilt a bit off to your right side. You then bring the blade of your own dagger up inside (that is, to your right) of his rapier near to his hilt, and pull with your dagger hand to your left while holding or pushing with your right (rapier) hand toward your right. The execution of this maneuver is greatly enhanced by nimbly stepping in with your left (rear) foot immediately upon establishing contact between your rapier and his. As you pull with the left hand and push with the right, swing your left foot (and your entire body) back, rotating on the right foot. The separation of your hands, combined with the force provided by having your entire body involved, creates a large turning force or torque which easily twists the grip of your opponent’s rapier out of his hand.<sup>13</sup> In practice (and we have practiced

this on many occasions), this disarm is both effective and very “flashy.” It is a maneuver guaranteed to garner the admiration of any onlookers. Note, however, that should an actual enemy attack you in earnest with such a blow, the standard, far less flashy, response would be to thrust in quickly at his chest while his weapon is coming around from

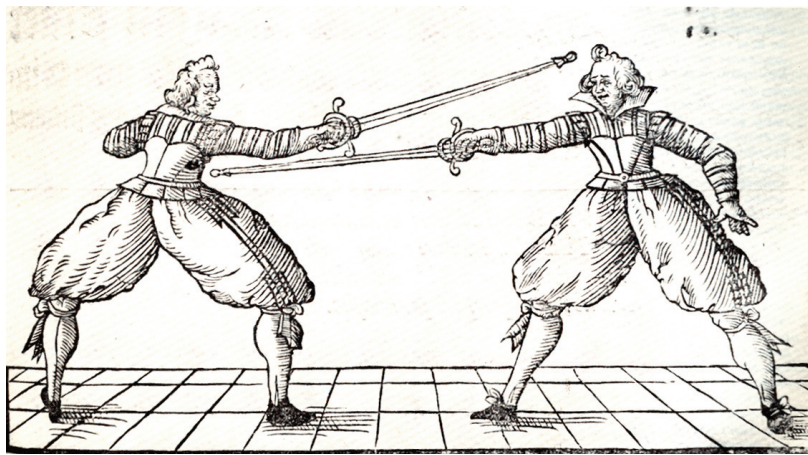


Figure 4. Fencing practice showing padded tips on rapiers after Michael Hundt. *Ein new künstliches Fechtbuch im Rappier zum Fechten und Balgen* (1611) (Arnold, 1979, p. 120.)

above, thereby ending the matter with greater dispatch and avoiding the danger of allowing his weapon to approach closely before blocking, as the disarm requires. This is the difference between the True Art and the False Art. After treating rapier and dagger, Di Grassi turns to rapier and cloak. In his treatment of the true art, Di Grassi comments on the cloak that “the use thereof being in a manner altogether deceitfull, I was resolved to put over all this to the treatise of Deceit, as unto his proper place.”<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, he acknowledges that since one will usually have a cloak near to hand should the need arise to defend oneself from attack, one should know how to use it to advantage. The flexibility of the cloak means that it cannot offer the same kind of protection that a rigid implement can provide. Therefore, one cannot wrap the cloak around an arm and then use that to block a strong blow from the opponent’s sword. Likewise, while the body of a cloak hanging from an arm can interfere with a thrust or



blow, one must not allow it to drape directly over the leg. That is, one must be sure to hold the cloak forward with the left hand or arm, while keeping that leg back. As Di Grassi puts it, “the Cloak wardeth not when there is any harde substance behind it.”<sup>15</sup>

Having treated the cloak at some length in the true art, the rapier and cloak section in the false art becomes (as with the other weapon forms) a repository for tricks and flashy gambits. If your opponent is slow, you can quickly grab his cloak near the clasp at the neck with one hand, and then strike him in the face with the other hand, ending the altercation before weapons have even been drawn. At the very beginning of a bout, you can grab your own cloak with both hands, one at each shoulder, and fling it over your own head at your opponent’s face to blind him while you draw your rapier and attack. Once you are engaged in combat, you can throw your cloak with one hand, or you can drape it over the blade of your sword and fling it from there by a sweeping action of your sword hand.<sup>16</sup> The true art of the sword and buckler (or target, either round or square) focuses on the manner of best protect-

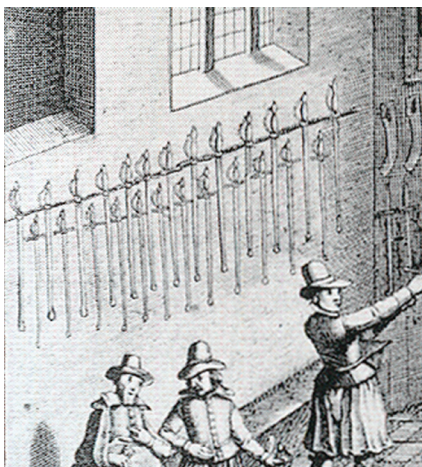


Figure 6. Detail of above showing practice rapiers with padded tips.

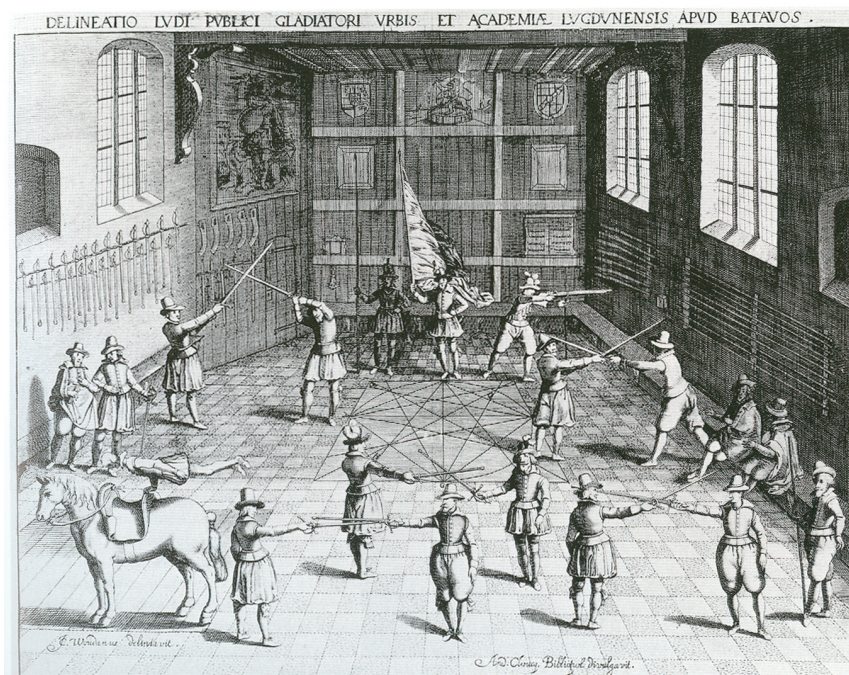


Figure 5. Swanenburgh late sixteenth century engraving of the fencing school at the University of Leyden. (Anglo, 2000, p. 15.)

ing the body with these various types of small shields. The essence of the false art is to deliberately put the buckler or target aside to create an apparent opening, being ever ready to bring it quickly back to defend against the attack when it comes.<sup>17</sup> The case of rapiers, where one has a full length

rapier in each hand, is the most complex combat form, both in the true art and in the false. One can attack with one rapier at the same time as one defends with the other, or one can attack simultaneously or successively with both. The danger is that one can get so caught up in the potential for attack that one fails to give adequate attention to one’s own defense, which can also be accomplished with either weapon. Once

again, the special feature of the false art is the making of feints or false attacks. With two rapiers, such a feint can be followed by an actual attack with the same rapier which made the feint, or even more quickly, by an attack with the other rapier.<sup>18</sup> To be proficient in the true art with case of rapier, “it is necessary that he can as well manage the left hand as the right, . . . he can do no good, without that kind of nimblenes and dexteritie.”<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, in the false art, where the stakes are much lower (win or lose vs. live or die), one can allow oneself to use one sword for attack and the other for defense, as with rapier and dagger. As Di Grassi puts it, “But if he would exercise himself onlie in sporte & plaie, he shal then continually use to strike his enimie with one, and defend his person with the other.”<sup>20</sup>

As Di Grassi makes clear, there are any number of things one may feel comfortable doing in practice or play that one should not do in combat. In part, it is a matter of the difference between what is at stake in the two cases. It is also a matter of what constitutes a good hit in each case. As Di Grassi says, “For in this false arte men consider not either of advantage, time, or measure, but alwaies their manner is (as soone as they have found the enemies sword) to strike by the most short waie, be it either with the edge, or point, notwithstanding the blowe be not forcible, but only touch weakly & scarsly: for in plaie, so it touch any waie, it is accounted for victorie.”<sup>21</sup>

If the goal is to practice or play with swords and to avoid being badly hurt, special equipment is called for. In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, King Claudius tells Laertes that “he



[Hamlet], being remiss, Most generous, and free from all contriving, Will not peruse the foils, so that with ease—Or with a little shuffling—you may choose A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice Requite him for your father.”<sup>22</sup> If one is engaged in practice with a sword or rapier, one should use a “foiled” or bated weapon rather

than a “sharp”. Few original practice weapons from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries have been preserved, but the nineteenth century fencing historian Alfred Hutton owned a set which is depicted in his work, *The Sword and the Centuries, Old Sword Days and Old Sword Ways* (London: 1901)<sup>23</sup> (see Figures 1 & 2) The Hutton Collection of early sword treatises is now in the research library at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London while Hutton’s bated rapier and dagger are on display in the same museum. The rapier has a small (about 1/2” diameter) disc welded to its tip (see Figure 3), the dagger has a ball at its tip.

Period illustrations of practice weapons are not particularly common, but they appear in Michael Hundt’s fencing treatise *Ein new künstliches Fechtbuch im Rappier zum Fechten und Balgen* (Leipzig: 1611).<sup>24</sup> (See Figure 4) Note that the padded ball at the tip of the bated rapiers is a good deal larger than the metal tips on the Hutton rapier and dagger in the V&A Museum. This is also the case in other depictions of practice weapons, as in Swanenburgh’s late sixteenth century engraving of the fencing school at the University of Leyden,<sup>25</sup> (see Figures 5 & 6), and in Philibert De La Touche’s illustration of a fencing school and figure showing the Lunge in his *Les vrais principes de l’espée seule* (1670).<sup>26</sup> (see Figures 7 and 8) This suggests that even bated tips were padded to a considerable degree. As fencing masks were not popular until the late eighteenth cen-



Figure 7. Seventeenth Century “Salle D’Armes” after Philibert De La Touche. *Les vrais principes de l’espée seule* (1670) (Hutton, *Old Sword-Play*, 2001, Plate 36, p. 62.)

any other,” Swetnam provides the following instructions:

To make your buttons take wooll or flocks, and wrappe it round in leather so bigge as a Tennis-ball, then make a notch within a halfe an inch of your wooden foile or staffe, but if it be an Iron foile, then there be an Iron button rivetted on the point, so broad as two pence, and take your button being made as beforesaid, and set in on the end of your Staffe or foile likewise, and then take leather and draw hard upon it, and binde it with Shoemakers-ends of parchthread in the notch, and another leather upon that againe, for one leather may be worne out with a little practice.<sup>27</sup>

The exact size of a two pence piece, as well as that of a tennis ball, varied considerably over the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. With regard to the latter, we

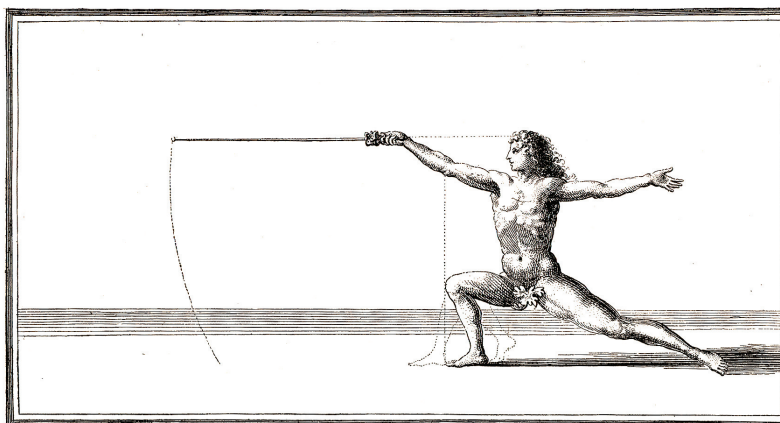
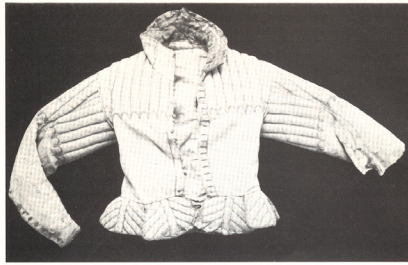
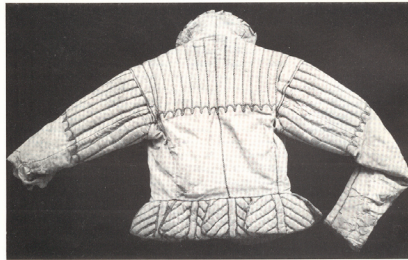


Figure 8. De La Touche’s depiction of “The Lunge” showing a rapier with padded tip. (Hutton, 2001, Plate 39, p. 69.)

can consult the Italian manual of ball games by Antonio Scaino da Salo, *Trattato del Givoco della Palla* (Venice: 1555), though a more nearly contemporary source for tennis ball dimensions would be preferable. Scaino describes two types of balls: wind balls which are inflated by a syringe, and solid balls. For solid balls, “the skin of which it is made must be neither rough, nor hard, nor too spongy, but dry, smooth & well stretched. The wool hair with which it is filled must be smooth, well-cleaned & stuffed gently & loosely into the Ball, not in hard knots.”<sup>28</sup> For the game



1. Padded leather doublet, c. 1610, front view. Nürnberg, German. Nationalmuseum.



2. Padded leather doublet, c. 1610, back view. Nürnberg, German. Nationalmuseum.

Figure 9. Padded leather doublet in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg. (Arnold, 1979, p. 108.)

Figure 10. Back view of same.

of hand-ball, the solid ball should be “two light ounces in weight, & two inches & one sixth in diameter.”<sup>29</sup> For the game played with a racket, the ball “must be one light ounce in weight, one inch & three-fifths in diameter.”<sup>30</sup> A further complication introduces itself here as the Italian Renaissance linear “uncia”, or “inch”, could have a value anywhere from .8 to 1.3 modern inches.<sup>31</sup> This broad variation, both in ball size measured in inches and in the value of the inch itself, makes it impossible to draw precise conclusions about the common size of the ball on the rapier tip. The best we can do is to look carefully at the few iconographic examples and, keeping in mind the presumed goal of preventing the tip entering the eye socket, decide on an approximate size.

With regard to the iron button that Swetnam advocates riveting to the tip of the rapier, the available information is more precise. While the two-pence (half-groat) coin also varied in size over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Swetnam’s publication date of 1617 fixes the details of the relevant coin. An illustration in Brooke’s *English Coins* (London: 1950) of the half-groat at the time of James I (1603-1625) measures 1.7 cm in diameter.<sup>32</sup> This measurement accords with that published Coincraft’s 1998 *Standard Catalogue of English and UK Coins* (London: 1998)<sup>33</sup> and also with that included in an email message of September 19, 2006 from British Coin expert Tony Clayton.

There is good evidence that Renaissance swordsmen had dedicated padded jackets for fencing practice.

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3. Padded leather doublet, c. 1610, front view. Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Mus.



4. Padded leather doublet, c. 1610, back view. Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Mus.

Figure 11. Padded leather doublet in the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. (Arnold, 1979, p. 109.)

Figure 12. Back view of same.

with bated rapiers depicted in Michael Hundt’s fencing manual of 1611.<sup>35</sup>

While fencing jackets came into use for practice swordplay relatively early, the fencing mask was not introduced until well after the seventeenth century. As mentioned above, this makes the issue of padding the tip of practice rapiers critically important. The earliest illustration of a protective mask that I have found is in Domenico Angelo’s article on “Escrime”, published in Volume 21 of *L’Encyclopedie* of Diderot and D’Alembert in 1765.<sup>36</sup> Were this mask not depicted with other fencing practice implements, one would not think of it as a fencing mask at all, but merely as a theatrical mask. (see Figures

Janet Arnold has described (with construction details) two padded leather doublets, one in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nürnberg, (see Figures 9 & 10) the other in the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh (see Figures 11 & 12) which she convincingly argues were likely intended as protection for swordplay.<sup>34</sup> These jackets closely resemble those worn by the swordsmen

with bated rapiers depicted in Michael Hundt’s fencing manual of 1611.<sup>35</sup>

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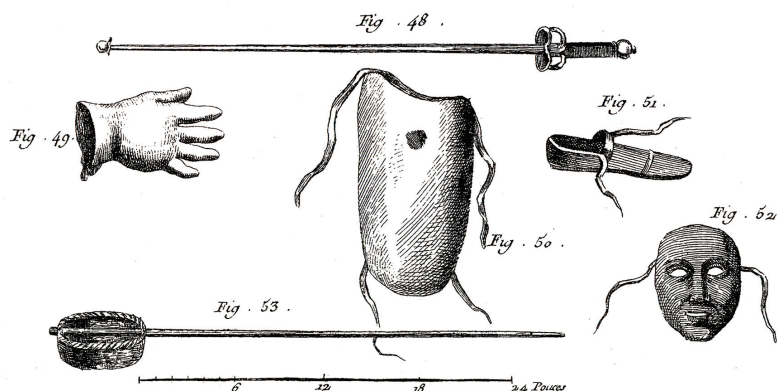


Figure 13. Fencing equipment. (Angelo, “Escrime”, 1765, Plate XV, Fig. 48-53.)

by the French fencing master la Boëssière. That said, none of the many modern sources I have seen provide any period documentation to support this claim;<sup>37</sup> nor does la Boëssière’s son, generally known simply as M. la



Fig. 52.

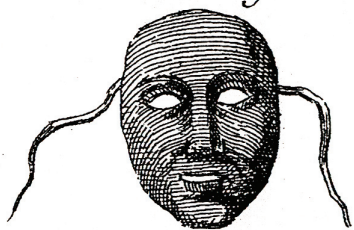


Figure 14. Fencing mask. (Angelo, "Escrime", 1765, Plate XV [detail], Fig. 52.)

wire to avoid being hurt in the eyes, struck in a tooth, and the many other accidents. . . ."<sup>38A</sup> The earliest illustration I have found of wire-mesh fencing masks is in Thomas Rowlandson's colored engraving of "Mr. H. Angelo's Fencing Academy at the Opera House, Haymarket 1789", attributed to 1790 or 1791.<sup>39</sup> (see Figures 15 & 16) In any case, it is clear that this critical protective device post dates the Renaissance and early modern eras by a over a century.

The final practice device to be addressed in this paper is a particular device for teaching the various standard cuts with the sword. In Book 2 of Joachim Meyer's *Gründtliche Beschreibung der frenen Ritterlichen und Adelichen kunst des fechtens in allerley gebrauchlichen Wehren* (Strassburg: 1570), Meyer describes the cuts to be made with the dusack (a single-edged one-handed cutting weapon) with the aid of a diagram showing four lines crossed to form an asterisk. This diagram is not merely a book illustration, but is depicted as a large plaque mounted on the wall of a fencing room.<sup>40</sup> (see Figure 17) The master stands off to the side, directing the student's attention to the plaque, which the student faces as he makes his practice cut. Chapter 3 of this section describes the "Four

Cuts, with Four Good Drills Teaching How to Execute and Learn Them Correctly:"

- Firstly, the vertical line, through which the High Cut is sent and delivered, and therefore it is called the Scalp Line [Scheittellini], since it divides [underscheiden] the combatant into left and right. [through point A]
- The second diagonal or hanging line, through which the Wrath Cut is sent, is called the wrath Line [Zornlini] from the Wrath Cut, or also the Stroke Line [Strichlini]. [through point B]
- Through the third Thwart or Middle Line [Zwerch oder Mittellini], the Middle Cut is executed. [through point C]
- The fourth rising diagonal line shows the Low Cut its way, [through point D] just as it shows the route for the Wrath Cut from the other side down from above, so that the Low Cut is sent upward through the same line through which the Wrath Cut is delivered diagonally from above.[through point H]<sup>41</sup>

As the full set of eight letters indicates, the four cuts referred to in the chapter title are really eight (four pairs of) cuts. Meyer provides a number of exercises in which one is to deliver a series of cuts in succession. In "The Fourth Drill, teaching how one shall change the cuts into one another", Meyer advocates a variety of patterns, including: downward along a diagonal (from B to F), horizontally back to the original side (from G to C), upward along the other diagonal (from D to H), upward again on the other diagonal (from F to B), then horizontally (from C to G), and finally along the remaining



Figure 16. Detail of above showing wire-mesh mask.



Figure 15. Fencing salle showing wire-mesh fencing masks. (Thomas Rowlandson. "Mr. H[enry]. Angelo's Fencing Academy at the Opera House, Haymarket 1789", attributed to 1790 or 1791.)



Figure 17. Meyer's diagram of cuts with the dusack. (Meyer, 1570, Book 2, Part 2, Plate A, f. 2:3r.)



Figure 18. Meyer's rapier diagram. (Meyer, 1570, Book 2, Part 3, Plate A, f. 2:61v.)

downward diagonal (from H to D).<sup>42</sup> His “Example with Six Cuts” uses the same pattern, except that the final cut, instead of being on the downward diagonal, is directly downward (from A to E).<sup>43</sup> His next example, “Changing the Cross by means of the Middle Cut” makes a different pattern, going through from B, then H, then C, H, B, G, and a final C.<sup>44</sup> A diagram similar to that presented in the Dusack section, but this time depicted within a circle rather than a square, is featured in Meyer's treatment of the rapier later in Book 2.<sup>45</sup> (see Figure 18) As in the Dusack figure, the master is directing the attention of the student to this diagram on the wall of the practice room. In this case, however, the student has just completed a thrust to the center of the diagram rather than the cut shown in the Dusack version.

A strikingly modern feature of Meyer is the attention he pays to the training process, something that may make him unique among the early martial arts mas-

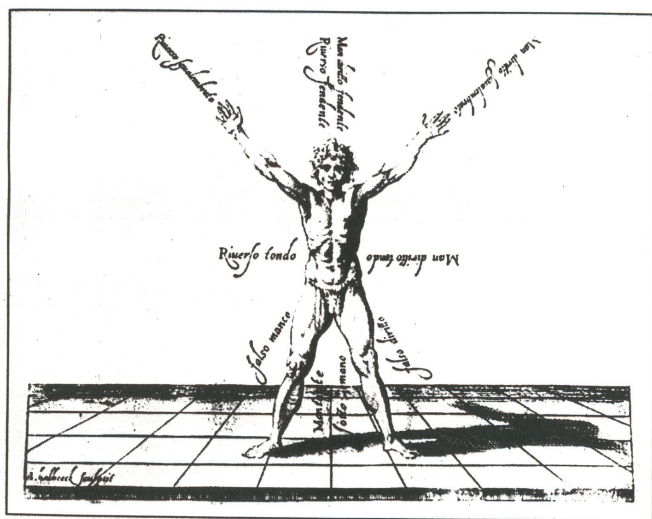


Figure 19. Fabris's cutting diagram (Fabris, 1606, p. 27.)

ters writing in any language. Meyer offers numerous recommendations for drillwork to prepare the reader in the fundamentals of his weapons systems, in particular a repertoire of attack combination drills for the longsword (1.27v ff.), cutting drills for the dusack (2.4v ff.), cutting and thrusting drills for the rapier (2.58r-v, 64v), and ‘driving’ drills for the halberd (3.32r, ff.).<sup>46</sup>

It may also be worth noting that most of the weapons depicted in Meyer's woodcuts appear to be blunted and rounded practice versions of those weapons. Dusacks, however, represent a special case as they may not have had any other role except as practice weapons, and they were likely constructed out of (perhaps hardened) leather rather than metal.<sup>47</sup> This attention to Fechtshule activities is well typified by the cutting plaques which Meyer has invented.

Meyer's dusack and rapier plaques are not adopted as such in subsequent treatises on sword or rapier combat. Some of these manuals do, however, feature cutting diagrams fully consistent with Meyer's. The first figure in Salvator Fabris's *De Lo Schermo Overo Scienza d'Arme* (1606) shows the same eight cuts arranged like an asterisk centered on a man's torso.<sup>48</sup> (See Figure 19) Francesco Antonio Marcelli presents a corresponding cutting diagram in his *Regole Della Scherma* (1686).<sup>49</sup> (See Figure 20) This figure includes the basic eight cuts (labeled A through H) directed through the man's torso, but also several additional cuts passing through the thighs and knee. From the point of view of the present study, the main difference between these cutting diagrams and those in Meyer is that these are intended to show the reader various available cuts, while Meyer is depicting a physical training device, a wall-mounted plaque, that one might have found in a fencing salle of the period.

By way of a minor digression, Marcelli's treatise does contain a teaching device depicted in his chapter on performing what modern fencers would call a lunge, “Capitolo VI. Della Stoccata Dritta, e del Modo di tirarla bene.”<sup>50</sup> His figure of the “Terminazione della Stoccata” shows his

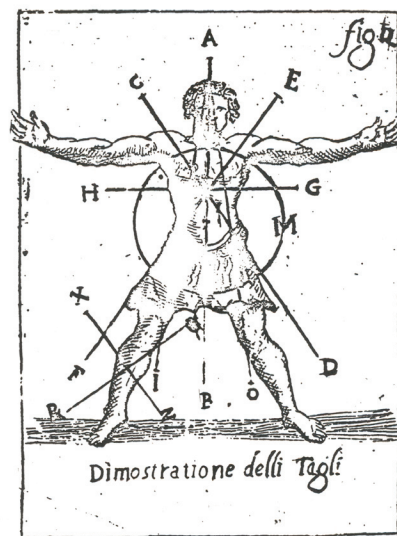


Figure 20. Marcelli's cutting diagram (Marcelli, 1686, p. 124.)



fencer in a lunge, arm fully extended, with the tip of his rapier hitting the center of a small target which appears to be either a ball or ring hanging from a string.<sup>51</sup> (see Figure 21)

In modified form, the device of a cutting diagram to be hung before students in a fencing salle or other space where the use of the sword is being taught, arises again in the late eighteenth century and becomes the basis for sabre training through most of the nineteenth century. It appears in *The Art of Defence on Foot with the Broad Sword and Sabre, second edition* (London: 1798) by C. Roworth as “The Six Cuts” (see Figure 21); that is, with neither a vertically downward cut nor a vertically upward cut. Roworth mentions the seventh, or vertically downward, cut, but omits it from his figure as “in practice, that cut will be found to partake so much of the diagonal direction, and of course be so easily parried either by the inside or outside guard, or if aimed at the head by the hanging guard, or the St. George, that I shall not trouble the reader farther with it.”<sup>52</sup> Roworth does not provide the same variety of practice cutting patterns that we see in Meyer. The cuts are simply numbered 1 through 6, and his figure and text describe a pattern of practice that proceeds through the six cuts in numerical order. This practice admirably develops strength and subtlety of the wrist and arm, though one would never want engage an actual opponent with such a predictable strategy or pattern of cuts. Obvious as this point may be, it is curious that Roworth does not discuss this matter in detail; nor does he explicitly address the issue of which specific cuts can most readily be made from a given guard or immediately following a successful parry of an opponent’s attack.

The 1804 version of this same work, often attributed to Mr. John Taylor as his name is most prominent on the title page (Roworth’s name being absent) repeats “The Six Cuts” figure and associated text with no signifi-

cant changes.<sup>53</sup> (see Figure 22) The title page reads *The Art of Defence on Foot with the Broad Sword and Sabre. . . Improved, and augmented with The Ten Lessons of Mr. John Taylor* (London: 1804). The only other name on the title page is that of R. K. Porter, who was responsible for the plates (which are different from those in the 1789 ed.).

The 1817 edition of the *Rules and Regulations for the Infantry Sword Exercise* (London: 1817)

features a version of the same figure, but including the vertical downward cut number 7 (and an additional pair of vertical lines). (see Figure 23) Just below the figure, in small print, is the legend, “This Plate is added to assist those who cannot conveniently procure the Regulation Target (in which the Circular Figure is 14 inches diameter).”<sup>54</sup> The 1845 edition of *Infantry Sword Exercise, Revised Edition* (London: January, 1845)

also features this figure, again with cut 7, but without the additional lines that were added in the 1817 version.<sup>55</sup> (see Figure 24) In his sabre manual which is bound with *The Sword Exercise, Arranged for Military Instruction* (Washington: 1850), the American Brevet Major Henry C. Wayne presents a similar diagram showing the seven

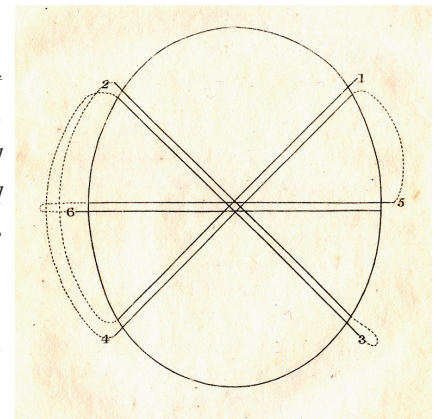


Figure 22. “The Six Cuts” figure. (Roworth, 1798, opp. p. 30.)

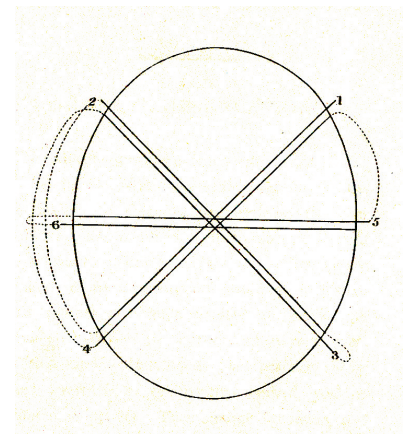


Figure 23. “The Six Cuts” figure. ([Roworth]/Taylor, 1804, opp. p. 30.)



Figure 21. Marcelli’s lunge at the small ball or ring (Marcelli, 1686, p. 77.)

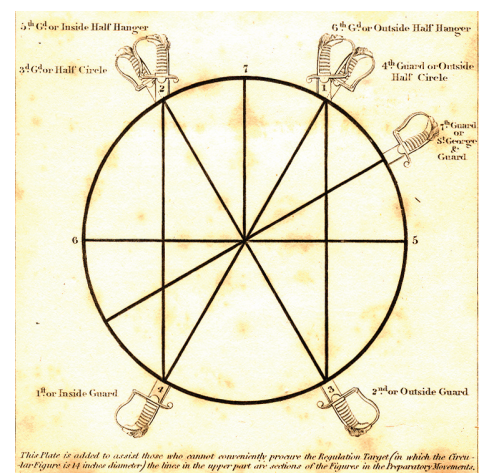


Figure 24. The seven cuts figure. (*Rules and Regulations for the Infantry Sword Exercise*, 1817, p. 6.)

(Washington: 1850), the American Brevet Major Henry C. Wayne presents a similar diagram showing the seven



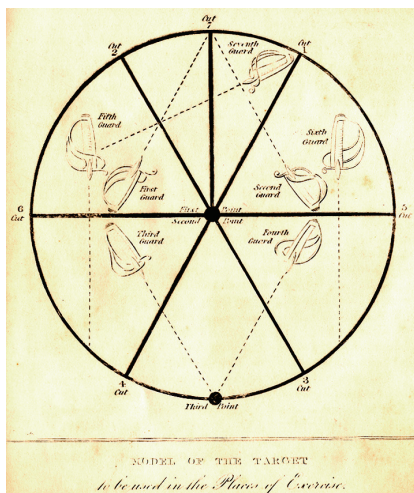


Figure 25. "Model of the Target [with seven cuts] to be used in the Places of Exercise." (*Infantry Sword Exercise*, Revised Edition, 1845, opp. p. 13.)

26) The vertical cut seven is omitted from this diagram.

The American manual by Capt. M. W. Berriman, *The Militiaman's Manual, and Sword-Play Without a Master* (New York: 1861) virtually reproduces the British figure of 1845, including the depiction of the parries that are to be used to block each of the 7 cuts.<sup>58</sup> (see Figure 27) Mathew J. O'Rourke publishes a rather bizarre version of the diagram in his post-Civil War manual, *A New System of Sword Exercise, With a Manual of the Sword for Officers* (New York: 1873).<sup>59</sup> (see Figure 28) This version emphasizes the idea that the numbered cuts represent approximate trajectories only, and that a myriad of cuts (that is, a nearly continuous array) could actually be made.

Not all nineteenth century sword manuals utilize this six or seven cut target approach. A. J. Corbesier, Sword-Master of the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD, ignores it entirely in his *Principles of Squad Instruction for the Broadsword* (Philadelphia: 1869). Instead, cuts are described as being directed at the head, at the left (or right) cheek,

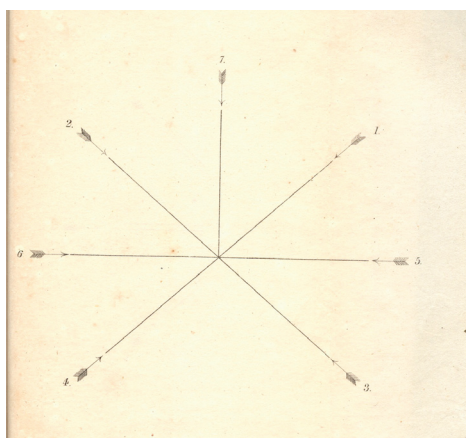


Figure 26. The seven cuts shown without the enclosing circle. (Wayne, 1849, Vol. 2, Plate 2.)

numbered cuts (that is, without the vertical upward cut eight), but without the enclosing circle.<sup>56</sup> (see Figure 25) Wayne then provides a second diagram, again without the enclosing circle, which shows by small segments of dotted lines at the ends of the cutting lines the path by the sword in making cuts one through six in order.<sup>57</sup> (see Figure

or at the left (or right) flank.<sup>60</sup> In *A New System of Broad and Small Sword Exercise* (Philadelphia: 1843), Thomas Stephens identifies seven cuts from the first cut at the opponent's left cheek through Cut Seven down upon

his head. The intervening five cuts correspond approximately to the standard cuts depicted on the circular cutting diagram (except for their order, the absence of a cut at the left leg, and the presence of two middle-height cuts directed from right to left), but he neither includes nor refers to a

cutting diagram of the form under consideration.<sup>61</sup> The second edition of this manual (Milwaukee: 1861) represents a great deal of rewriting and features a large number of new illustrations. The seven cuts are described differently than in the first edition, but appear to represent

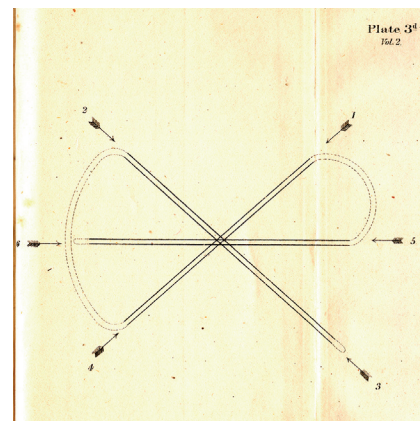


Figure 27. The path of the sword in making cuts one through six (Wayne, 1849, Vol. 2, Plate 3.)

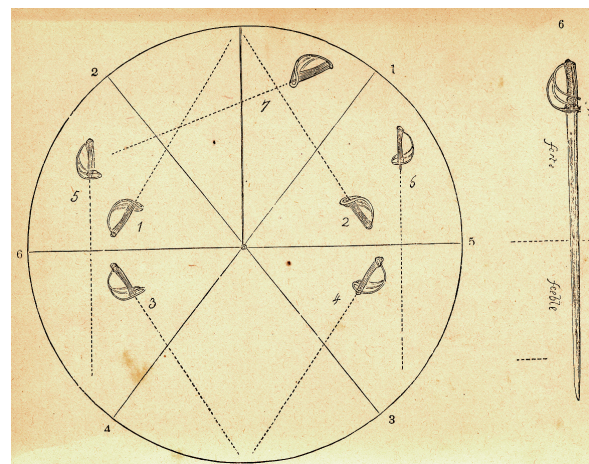


Figure 28. The seven cuts figure – same as 1845 British figure. (Berriman, 1861, opp. p. 20.)

the same motions cut by cut.<sup>62</sup> As in the first edition, there is no cutting diagram to aid the student or recruit.

While these manuals fail to make use of the circular cutting diagram, Richard F. Burton, the well-known author, swordsman and adventurer, is far more forceful in his rejection. In *A New System of Sword Exercise for Infantry* (London: 1876), he actively attacks the standard sword training practices of his day. Referring to the *British Infantry Sword Exercise manual* of 1874, which he points out is identical (except for the redrawn illustrations and a single added sentence) to that of 1845 (referred to above), he is vituperative in his criticisms: "I am opposed to almost every page of this unhappy brochure, especially to the 'Seven Cuts and Guards' of the target; to the shape of the target – I never yet saw a man absolutely circular; to the grip of the sword; to the position in guard; to the Guards



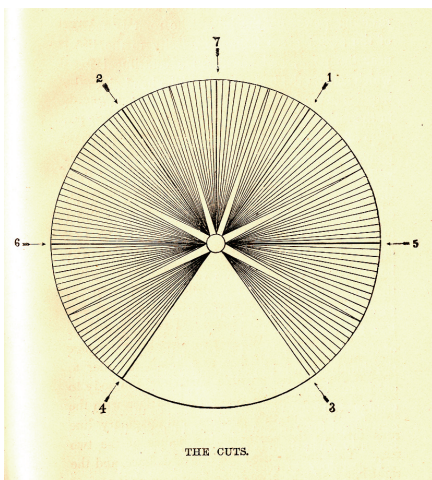


Figure 29. "The Cuts" - Seven numbered cuts and the continuity of intermediate ones. (O'Rourke, 1873, p. 49.)

also depicts, but does not discuss, a version of the eight cut figure which he refers to as the "German System."<sup>64</sup> (see Figure 29) Burton's own "Twelve Cut" System emphasizes that cuts must not only be practiced from various angles from above and below, but that they must be practiced at different elevations to insure that in combat cuts can be sent accurately towards the head, body or legs.<sup>65</sup> (see Figure 30) This explicit discussion of the elevation (rather than merely direction) of cuts brings us back to Joachim Meyer's own cutting instructions in his manual of 1570. Having first introduced his square target in the section on the Dusack, Meyer is quick to add: "However you shall not suppose that you may not also send the cuts lower or higher than the lines indicate; rather it is only to be understood in this regard that you should first learn to execute

or Parades, especially the inside engaging guard (Carte); to the Lunge; to the angle of the feet, and to the system of "loose practice."<sup>63</sup> Burton notes that the dominant French military sword manual of the day, the *Manuel de Gymnastique et d'Escrime* (1875), has seven cuts like the British manuals. He

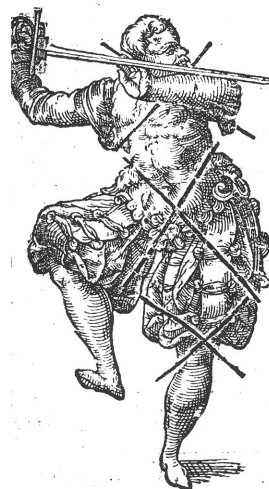


Figure 31. Meyer's figure of rapier cuts. (Meyer, 1570, f. 2:58r.)

and deliver the cuts through them."<sup>66</sup> This variation in height is made even clearer in his treatment of the rapier later in Book 2, where he provides an illustration showing lines of cuts at an opponent at various elevations.<sup>67</sup> (see Figure 31)

## NOTES

This paper was presented at the Massachusetts Center for Renaissance Studies, Amherst, Massachusetts, at the Third Annual Conference on Historical Swordsmanship, April 28, 2007.

1. Giacomo Di Grassi. *Ragione di Adoprar Sicuramente L'Arme si da Offesa, Come da Difesa, Con un Trattat dell'inganno, & con un modo di effercitarsi da se stesso, per acquistare forza, giudicio, & prestezza* (Venetia: Giordano Ziletti, 1570). Giacomo di Grassi. *Giacomo di Grassi his True Arte of Defence, plainlie teaching by infallable Demonstrations, apt Figures and perfect Rules the manner and forme how a man without other Teacher or Master may safelie handle all sortes of Weapons as well offensive as defensive, With a treatise of deceit Falsinge: And with a waie or means by private industrie to obtaine Strength, Judgement and activitie. First written in Italian by the foresaid Author, And Englished by I.G. gentleman* (London: Printed for I.I, 1594).

2. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 9v.

3. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 73r.

4. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 73v.

5. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 73v.

6. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 74r.

7. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 73v.

8. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 76v.

9. Di Grassi, 1594, pp. 76v-77r.

10. Aramis to Porthos, Movie version of *The Four Musketeers* (1974), directed by Richard Lester.

The Twelve Cuts (shown by the thick strokes), the dotted lines denoting the course of the blade in "Moulinet", or rather in "Semi-Moulinet."

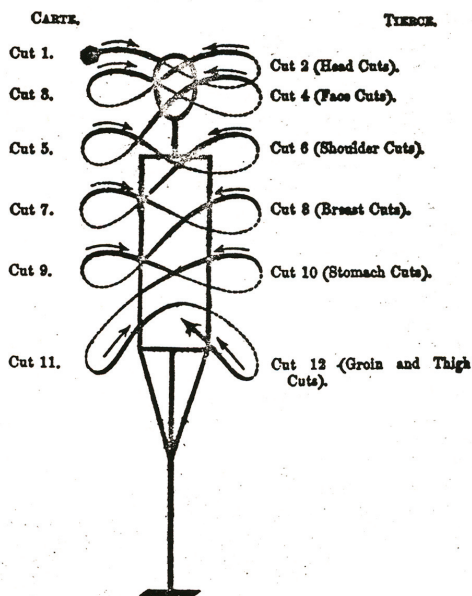


Figure 30. "The Twelve Cuts" (Burton, 1876, p. 35.)

11. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 77r.
12. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 75v.
13. Di Grassi, 1594, pp. 77r-v.
14. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 36v.
15. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 37r.
16. Di Grassi, 1594, pp. 78r-79r.
17. Di Grassi, 1594, pp. 79v-81v.
18. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 83r.
19. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 54r.
20. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 82v.
21. Di Grassi, 1594, p. 77r.
22. William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. Ed. by Harold Jenkins (The Arden Shakespeare) (London: Routledge, 1992), Act IV, Scene VII, pp. 371-372.
23. Alfred Hutton. *The Sword and the Centuries, Old Sword Days and Old Sword Ways* (London: Grant Richards, 1901). Reprinted: (Rutland, Vermont: Charles Tuttle Company, 1973), pp. 74-75.
24. Janet Arnold, "Two Early Seventeenth Century Fencing Doublets" in: *Waffen- und Kostümkunde*, Jahrgang 1979. (München & Berlin: Sonderdruck Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1979), p. 120.
25. Sydney Anglo. *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p.15.
26. Alfred Hutton. *Old Sword-Play, the Systems of Fence in Vogue During the XVIth, XVIIth, and XVIIIth Centuries* (London: H. Grevel & Co.1892). Reprinted as: Alfred Hutton. *Old Sword-Play, Techniques of the Great Masters* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2001), Plate 36, p. 62; Plate 39, p. 69.
27. Joseph Swetnam. *The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence* (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1617), pp. 184-5.
28. Antonia Scaino da Salo. *Trattato del Givoco della Palla* (Venice: Gabries Giolito, 1555). *Treatise on the Game of the Ball*. Translated by W. W. Kershaw, notes by P. A. Negretti (London: Raquetier Productions Ltd, 1984), p. 105.
29. Scaino (1555), 1984, p. 105.
30. Scaino,(1555), 1984, p. 105.
31. R. E. Zupko. *Italian Weights and Measures from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981), pp. 174-175.
32. George C. Brooke. *English Coins from the Seventh Century to the Present Day*. 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1950), Plate XLIV, ill. 7.
33. Richard Lobel, et al. *Coincraft's 1998 Standard Catalogue of English and UK Coins, 1066 to Date* (London: Coincraft, 1998), "Second Coinage 1604-1619," p. 296.
34. Janet Arnold, "Two Early Seventeenth Century Fencing Doublets" in: *Waffen- und Kostümkunde*, Jahrgang 1979. (München & Berlin: Sonderdruck Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1979), p. 120.
35. Arnold, 1979, p. 120.
36. Domenico Angelo, "Escrime", published in Volume 21 of *L'Encyclopedie* (1765) of Diderot and D'Alembert, Plate XV, Fig. 52.
37. Egerton Castle refers in his seminal work on the history of fencing, *Schools and Masters of Fence from the Middle Ages to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, Revised Edition (London: 1892) to "Monsieur de la Boëssière, one of the most eminent members of the Compaigne [l'Académie d'Armes], especially celebrated as having been one of the masters of the Chevalier de Saint George, and as the inventor of wire masks."(p. 238.) Castle notes that Boëssière introduced these masks in about 1750, and that they were like those depicted in some of Rowlandson's drawings, having strings to tie them on the head.(p. 238, n. 2.) Castle observes elsewhere in his book that "Full masks with wired openings for the eyes seem indeed to have been worn in some salles d'armes about the middle of the century, but they were generally proscribed in fashionable schools as unnecessary to good players, who were always supposed to place their hits on their adversary's breast." (pp. 225-226.)
- Several more recent secondary sources (including a number of computer websites) concur in attributing the invention and introduction of wire-faced masks to Boëssière, occasionally referencing Castle as the source for this information; but most often giving no source whatsoever.
38. M. La Boessiere. *Traite de L'Art des Armes* (Paris: L'Imprimerie de Didot, 1818)
- 38A. Alexandre Picard Brémont. *Traité en Raccourci sur l'Art des Armes* (Turin: 1782). Translated in: William M. Gaugler. *The History of Fencing, Foundations of Modern European Swordplay* (Bangor, Maine: Laureate Press, 1998), p. 70.
39. Thomas Rowlandson's colored engraving of "Mr. H[enry]. Angelo's Fencing Academy at the Opera House, Haymarket 1789", attributed to 1790 or 1791.
40. Joachim Meyer. *Gründtliche Beschreibung der frenen Ritterlichen und Adelichen kunst des fechtens in allerley gebrauchlichen Wehren*, 2nd. ed. (Strassburg: 1570), Book 2, Part 2, Plate A, f. 2:3r. In: Joachim Meyer. *The Art of Combat, A German Martial Arts Treatise of 1570*, translated by Jeffrey L. Forgeng (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), p. 166.



41. Meyer, 1570, f. 2.3v. Meyer, 2006, pp. 123-124.
42. Meyer, 1570, ff. 2.6v-2:7v. Meyer, 2006, p. 127.
43. Meyer, 1570, ff. 2.7v-2.8r. Meyer, 2006, p. 127.
44. Meyer, 1570, f. 2.8r. Meyer, 2006, pp. 127-128.
45. Meyer, 1570, Book 2, Part 3, Plate A, f. 2:61v. Meyer, 2006, p. 226.
46. Meyer, 2006, p. 22.
47. Meyer, 2006, pp. 18-19.
48. Salvator Fabris. *De Lo Schermo Overo Scienza d'Arme* (Copenhagen: Henrico Waltkirch, 1606), p. 27. Salvator Fabris. *Art of Dueling*. Translated by Tommaso Leoni (Highland Village, Texas: Chivalry Bookshelf, 2005), p. 33.
49. Francesco Antonio Marcelli. *Regole Della Scherma* (Rome: Nella Stamperia di Dom. Ant. Ercole, 1686), p. 114.
50. Marcelli, 1686, pp. 75-82.
51. Marcelli, 1686, p. 77.
52. C. Roworth. *The Art of Defence on Foot with the Broad Sword and Sabre*, second edition (London: T. Egerton, 1798), p. 22, fig. opp. p. 30.
53. [C. Roworth]/John Taylor. *The Art of Defence on Foot with the Broad Sword and Sabre* (London: T. Egerton 1804), pp. 24-30, fig. opp. p. 30.
54. Anon. *Rules and Regulations for the Infantry Sword Exercise* (London: William Clowes, 1817), p. 6.
55. Anon. *Infantry Sword Exercise, Revised Edition* (London: Parker, Furnivall, and Parker, January, 1845), opp. p. 13.
56. Brevet Major H. C. Wayne. *Exercise for the Broad-sword, Sabre, Cut and Thrust, and Stick* (Washington: Gideon and Co., 1849), Vol. 2, Plate 2. Bound with: Brevet Major H. C. Wayne. *The Sword Exercise, Arranged for Military Instruction* (Washington: 1850).
57. Brevet Major H. C. Wayne. *Exercise for the Broad-sword, Sabre, Cut and Thrust, and Stick* (Washington: Gideon and Co., 1849), Vol. 2, Plate 3. Bound with: Brevet Major H. C. Wayne. *The Sword Exercise, Arranged for Military Instruction* (Washington: 1850).
58. Capt. M. W. Berriman, *The Militiaman's Manual, and Sword-Play Without a Master*, Second Edition (New York: D. van Nostrand, 1861), opp. p. 20.
59. Mathew J. O'Rourke's, *A New System of Sword Exercise* (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood, 1873), p. 49.
60. A. J. Corbesier, *Principles of Squad Instruction for the Broadsword* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1869) pp. 24-28.
61. Thomas Stephens. *A New System of Broad and Small Sword Exercise* (Philadelphia: I.R. & A.H. Diller, 1843), pp. 50-56.
62. Thomas Stephens. *A New System of Broad and Small Sword Exercise*, second edition (Milwaukee: Jermain & Brightman, 1861), pp. 31-32.
63. Richard F. Burton. *A New System of Sword Exercise for Infantry*, (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1876), p. 13.
64. Burton, 1876, pp. 33-34.
65. Burton, 1876, p. 35.
66. Meyer, 1570, f. 2:3v. Meyer, 2006, p. 124.
67. Meyer, 1570, 2:58r. Meyer, 2006, p. 181.