

R. Delamere: His Treatise Upon the Noble Arte of Defense

(1st edition)

A Modern Work in a Period Style

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The Art of Defense has been practiced for centuries as a way to train for both personal and military combat. By the late 1590's, this art encompassed, not only the single sword, but also fighting with all contemporary weapon styles. In their manuals, many masters included advice on fighting with halberd (Jackson 124, 622, Marozzo 104) (Fig. 1, 3), pike (Di Grassi: Of the Pike, Silver "Bref" 122) (Fig. 4), staff (Di Grassi: Of the Weapons of the Staff, Silver "Bref" 116), dagger (Silver "Bref" 127), and two-handed sword (Di Grassi: Of the maner how to handle the Two hand Sword, Silver "Bref" 115, Marozzo 95) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Fighting with the halberd. (Marozzo 104)



Fig. 2. Marozzo's Guardia di Faccia with the two-handed sword. (Marozzo 95)



Fig. 3. A woodcut from the English translation of *Di Grassi's Di Adoprar si Curamente L'Arme Si Da Offesa, Come Da Difesa... Di Giacomo di Grassi*. (Di Grassi: The Holberd)

Advice was also given on fighting with weapon combinations: sword and dagger, sword and buckler, sword and cloak, and case. (Di Grassin: The Single Rapier, The Rapier and Dagger, The Rapier and Cloak, The Sword and Buckler, The Sword and Target, The Case of Rapiers, Saviolo: The First Booke, The Seconde Booke, The Third Booke, and the Fourth Booke, Silver “Bref” 89-115) (Fig. 5, 6, 7)

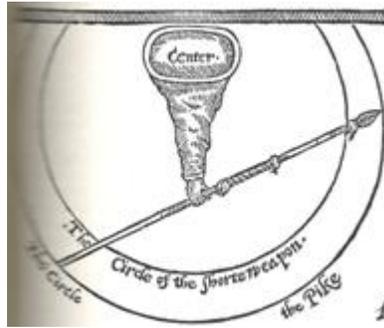


Fig. 4. A diagram explaining striking with the pike from the 86) English translation of Di Grassi's manual. (Di Grassi: The Circle of the Pike)

Fig. 5. Case of Rapier. (Di Grassi 86)

Much of what we know of the Arte of Defense during the 16th century comes from manuals written during that time period.

The writers of these manuals were generally referred to as masters of their craft and were trained and tested by other masters before they earned their title. During Elizabeth's reign, the London Masters of Defense was the guild responsible for the practice of swordplay within the city limits. (Berry25) There were 4 ranks within the guild: scholar, free scholar, provost, and master. Before a provost could gain recognition as a master, he was expected to inform his master that he was ready to play his prize. The masters would then discuss the prize together and, if they approved, they would determine the day his prize would be and arrange for it to take place.

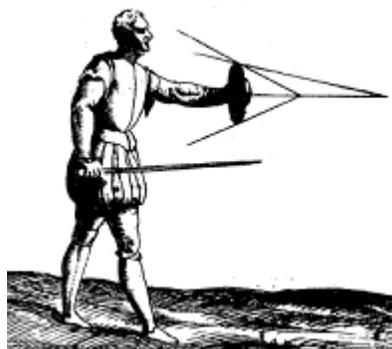


Fig. 6. Sword and Buckler. In this diagram Di Grassi explains how the buckler works to protect a

Fig. 7. Sword and Cloak. (Di Grassi 53)

larger area behind hit. (Di Grass
64)

The candidate would be required to announce their prize as well as fight with a variety of weapons forms at their prize. Once the prize had been played they were then required to have their master's letter drawn up and pay a fee to the masters to have it sealed. (Berry 81) A master probably would not have written a book until his reputation was enough to warrant one. Thus the men who wrote the manuals we have today probably would not have begun to write until later in life. By the time a master sat down to write his treatise, he would have trained for many years under another master, learning the art for much of his younger life. Once they had completed their training and proved themselves as masters of the art, they would go on to open their own schools, teaching and forming their theories for many more years before beginning to put their theories to paper in order to pass their knowledge on to others, immortalizing it in print.

As these men spent years training under other masters before they were named masters in their own right, their own theories were often strongly influenced by the thoughts and theories of earlier teachers. For example, Heredia's grips and throws are almost identical to a number of Marozzo's presas. (Anglo, plate xvii, xv, and xvi; Marozzo 175-194) (Fig. 13, 14) We can also see evidence of influence in the similarities between guards. For example, Silver's Open Fight is framed by standing with your hand and sword held over your head and your point pointing either straight up or backward, whichever the fighter feels is best for attacking or warding. (Silver "Bref" 87) This description seems very similar to Marozzo's Guardia Alta (Fig 8). In this guard a fighter can stand with either his right or left foot forward. His sword should be held as high as possible above his head and pointed straight towards the sky. (Rapisardi 4-8) Another example can be seen in the volte and demi volte, body voids executed by moving the rear foot circularly to the right from behind the front foot to in front of the front foot and to the right of the front foot, respectively. The movements are described by Silver (Silver "Bref" 100-101) and Di Grassi (Di Grassi 14) as well as Saviolo and Fabris (Castle 104). Known as the volte, whole circle pace and incartata; the demi volte and a half circle pace, (Fig. 9) the terminology remains seems to have been consistent during the time period. This influence is not surprising and certainly not uncommon.



Fig 8: Marozzo's Guardia Alta

(Marozzo 60)

The 1590's saw three works on the art of defense published in London. Di Grassi's 1570 manual, *Ragione Di Adroprar Sicvramente L'arme Si Da Offesa, Come Da Difesa*, was translated from the Italian into English and published in 1594. Di Grassi advocated the use of the thrust over the cut, however the cut was still discussed and used through out the manual. In addition, his defense relied heavily on sword parries and body voids. 1595 saw the publication of the first book of Saviolo's *Practice*. He relied far more heavily on the thrust than Di Grassi, although he still discussed and explained cutting attacks in his manual. Since other masters were teaching cutting attacks to their students, Saviolo instructs his students in the use of cutting attacks so that they will be familiar with these attacks. Also in 1599 Silver published his *Paradoxes of Defense*, in which he outlines his arguments against the Italian teachers and their style of fence as well as discussing many his theories of the "true art of defense". Silver's *Bref Instructions*, his manual on the theories he begins to outline in his *Paradoxes*, seems to have been written in 1599 but wasn't published until the 19 th Century.



On line AB:

Whole Straight Pace : C-D

Half Straight Pace : C-F

Whole Slope Pace : C-E

Half Circular Pace : C-G

Fig 9: Di Grassi's footwork demonstrating the Half Circle Pace (Di Grassi 14)

This treatise is a modern work in a period style. The theories and writing are mine, although, just as masters were influenced by earlier teachers in period, my theories have been shaped heavily by the masters whose works I have studied for years. The masters who have had the most influence on my own thoughts and style are Di Grassi and Silver. Their teachings and theories can be seen reflected in my style and my treatise just as any teacher's theories would be reflected in practitioners of the Arte produced by their schools. While there are no woodcuts in this first edition of my work I have commissioned original woodcuts from Keith Neelson (Dunstan Leheryngmongere) future editions which are in the works. They will be executed in a style similar to the English woodcuts which can be seen in the English translation of Di Grassi's manual (Fig. 11) as well as Saviolo's *Practice* (Fig. 12) and Silver's *Paradoxes* (Fig. 10). I have chosen this style over other more elaborate Italian styles, such as we can see in Fig. 9 from the original Italian edition of Di Grassi's treatise, because I want the woodcuts used in my treatise to reflect the style used in England during the late 1590's. Kevin Brock (Oliver de Bayonne) provided the font and assisted me with the grammar and spelling. I also owe him special thanks for answering many of my questions and recognition of all his help I have given him a special place in my treatise, naming him as the printer. The treatise printed using a computer and Epson ink jet printer on a high quality paper which was a fair approximation to paper of the period. It is bound with waxed linen thread and covered in leather.



Fig. 10. Silver's woodcut demonstrating how to determine proper sword length. (Silver "Paradoxes" 28)



Fig. 11. Di Grassi's Low Ward. (Di Grassi: The Lowe at rapier and dagger)

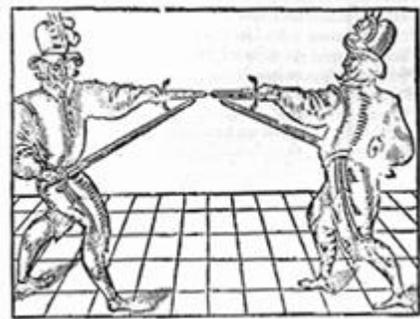


Fig. 12. Saviolo's Second Ward at rapier and dagger. (Saviolo: The First Dayes Discourse, concerning Rapier and Dagger)



Fig. 13. Marozzo's Presa 7. (Marozzo 179)



Fig. 14. Heredia's throw over the thigh. Note the similarities in body positioning to Marozzo's Presa 7. c1600 (Anglo Fig. 35)

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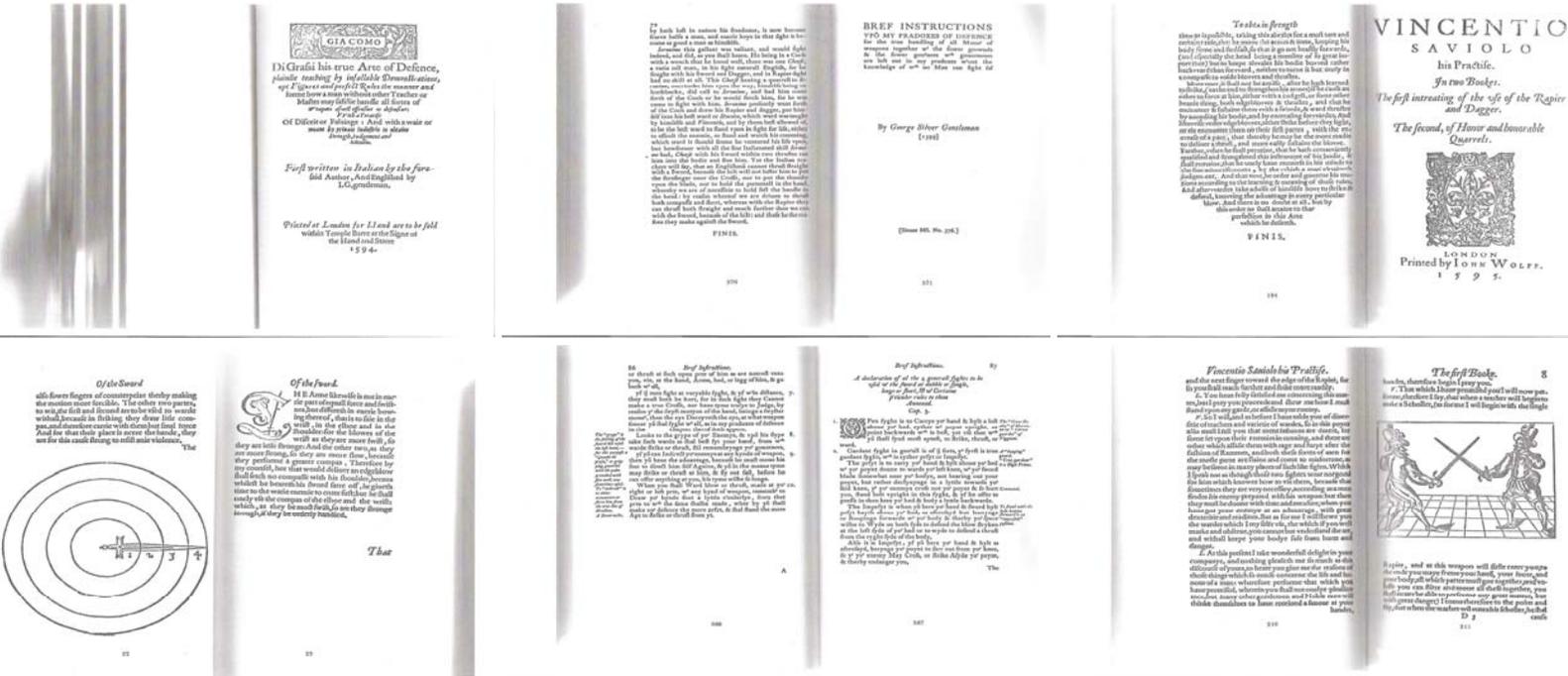
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Appendix I : Excerpts of similar sections of Di Grassi, Silver, and Saviolo's 1590's works.

These are excerpts of reproductions of manuals available in London during the mid to late 1590's. Note the similarities between these works and mine. I strove to create an original work that was extremely similar to these period examples.



Appendix II : An excerpt from the wards section of the 1568 edition of Marozzo's 'Arte Dell'Armi'.



