

Three Short Chapters from the Anonimo Bolognese (Biblioteca Classense di Ravenna MSS. 345 and 346)

(Translated by Piermarco Terminiello)

MS. 345

The Sword Alone Against Polearms

Defences to be performed with the sword alone against polearms

If you are attacked by an opponent with a polearm, and have nothing other than the sword alone, my advice is to move into *porta di ferro stretta* with your right foot forward. When he moves to push an attack of any sort towards your chest, using any common type of polearm, you should beat it to your right side with your false edge, then pass your left foot forward. With a half turn of the hand you should then pass your right leg a great step forward, before quickly moving your left leg forward and thrusting a point into his face, and once in front of him you should not relent.

If you are in the aforementioned guard of *porta di ferro stretta* and your opponent pushes an attack with a polearm towards your right leg, you should parry by beating it to his left side in the form of a *mezzo roverso* with your sword's true edge. Having passed with your left leg, you should let your right leg pass deftly forward, before immediately passing your left leg in front and putting your point into his stomach. You should always be intent however on pushing yourself ever forwards, so that you can grab the pole with your left hand.

If you are in *coda lunga stretta* however with your left foot forward, and your opponent throws a partisan thrust to your chest, you should immediately pass your right leg forward. Having driven your sword's true edge into his weapon, you should push it far over to his right, beating it to the floor on that side. You should then turn your left leg so that it straddles your right,¹ then without hesitation pass forward with your right to give him a *roverso* to the face, or thrust to the chest. As before having parried your enemy's attack, you can grab the pole of his weapon by raising your left hand, not releasing it for any reason.

If you are in the aforementioned guard however and your opponent pushes an attack towards your front leg, then you should pass your right leg forward somewhat to his left side, while throwing an ascending *mandritto* from below into the approaching pole, beating it towards his right side, so that your left leg can straddle behind the other. By then passing forward with your right leg you can give him a *roverso* to the face, or to wherever is easiest to wound.

1 i.e. performing a *girata* or analogous action.

MS. 346

On the method of fighting with the sword and grabbing gauntlet

You can set yourself against your enemy in *coda lunga e stretta* with your left foot forward, keeping your glove hand together with your sword hand, making sure that your right foot pushes your left forward from this position. Do not attempt an attack but keep your eye fixed on the enemy's sword hand. When he attempts any type of blow to your upper body, in whichever manner he pleases, be they *stoccate*, *imbroccate*, overhand, underhand, or attacks of any other type, you should parry with your sword in *guardia di testa*, and with gracious dexterity grab his sword from the inside with your gauntlet hand.

You should note at this point that, in the *tempo* in which you defend with the sword, you must perform the grab with the said gauntlet hand immediately, enabling you to wound him quickly with a cut or a thrust as you prefer, or as seems best. You will then let your right leg run behind your left, so that he cannot grab your sword with his gauntlet.

Facing the enemy in the aforementioned guard, *coda lunga e stretta* with your left foot forward, if he does not attempt an attack to your upper body but instead to your lower body, you should note that in the *tempo* in which he seeks to wound you, whatever the nature of his attack, that by withdrawing your left foot towards the right you can leave the enemy's blow to pass in vain.

You should then pass your right foot forward, showing him that you would like to push a point into his chest, and as he seeks to parry by any means, you should give a *mezzo mandritto* to his sword hand, or if you prefer thrust the point, likewise you should not disdain a *mezzo roverso* in this situation. The most praiseworthy of these attacks however is the one that best returns you in good order, so much so that you should not attack other targets, in order that he cannot grab you with his gauntlet. If during all this he does nonetheless find a *tempo* in which to attack, you can parry the blow with your sword; always venturing, with a certain deftness, to grab the enemy's sword with your gauntlet hand.

Finding yourself again against your enemy in the aforementioned guard, with your left foot forward, you can press him, ensuring that you push from your right foot in advancing your left. It is not necessary to throw any kind of blow at him, because in this manner you will provoke him into either going backwards or into attacking.

If he does neither, instead opposing you in a matching guard, in order either to grapple you or for some other design of his, you can let him catch a few glances to see that you wish to wound him, forcing him to make some kind of move or other. As he approaches, knowing his intentions and not being caught out by making him move, you can attack his hand with a *mezzo roverso*, thrust or *mezzo mandritto*. Being then forced to throw an attack at you, you can parry it with gracious dexterity and in the same *tempo* perform the grab with the gauntlet hand. If you cannot achieve the grab on the first or second occasion, you can do so on the fourth or fifth, but in any case ensure that you grab him.

Finding yourself again in the aforementioned guard, in the same manner as above, facing the enemy in whichever guard he prefers, with shrewd dexterity you can turn your sword underneath his in the form of a circle. Starting from over your opponent's sword, you will turn your sword towards his left side and underneath his, moving in the manner of *guardia di testa*, in that *tempo* taking his sword from underneath with great speed, and giving him yours wherever you please.

On the sword and armoured gauntlet

Finding yourself in *coda lunga e stretta* with your right foot forward, against your enemy in the aforementioned guard² that is in *porta di ferro stretta* with his right foot forward, you should hold the gauntlet so that it always accompanies your sword hand, then let him see that you would like to push a firm thrust to the left side of his stomach.

As he moves to defend himself from this attack, you will be able to quickly run your left foot forward towards his right side, turn your sword underneath his, in that *tempo* gracefully grasping your sword four fingers from the hilt with your gauntlet hand,³ and with great impetus push a thrust into the right side of his chest with both hands. With this accomplished you will gather your left foot back and settle yourself in the aforesaid guard.

If he were to raise his sword to parry this thrust, although I do not know how because in parrying he would not have the strength in one hand that you have in two, as you move your point forward to wound him in the chest, you can use your gauntlet hand to grab his sword hand, then strike him wherever you please.

The contrary of this would be that while your opponent gives the semblance of a thrust, you show that you wish to parry it with the true edge of your sword. As he passes to wound you with the said thrust, grabbing his sword with his gauntlet hand to give it more force, you should likewise grab your sword with your gauntlet hand, and push his sword to the outside, to your right. Having done this you can push a thrust into his face.

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² This refers to the preceding chapter in the manuscript, on the sword and rotella.

³ i.e. half-swording.