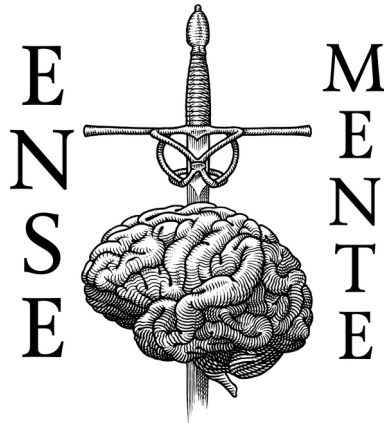


Giovanni Negri of Venice's

New Art of Defense and Offense



An English translation by Reinier van Noort

2023-04-23

www.enseetmente.com

About this document

The following document presents an English translation of a fencing treatise written and published by the Italian fencing master Giovanni (Johann) Negri of Venice's. This work was originally published in a dual language, Italian-German edition in Nuremberg in 1681, with the respective titles *La Nuova Diffesa & Offesa / Neue Vertheidigung und Beleidigungs-Art*.¹

As a work written by a native of Venice who was educated as a fencing master in Rome, Negri's treatise provides an interesting insight into how fencing in Germany in the second half of the 17th century, based heavily on the teachings of Salvator Fabris and other (northern) Italian fencing masters of the earlier 17th century, was perceived by fencing masters from other Italian traditions. In addition, it further confirms how Fabris's teachings did not take hold in his native Italy as they did in Northern Europe. In return, Negri's account of a visit to his *salle* by various locals who came to inspect (and criticize) his teachings gives an indication of how receptive the fencing enthusiasts of Nuremberg were to his alternative manner of fencing (or, at least, his manner of presenting that). This cold reception is also apparent, perhaps, from Negri's occasionally bitter tone, and some of the harsh parting shots, presumably

1 Negri, Giovanni (Johann), *La Nuova Diffesa & Offesa / Neue Vertheidigung und Beleidigungs-Art*. Nuremberg, 1681.

aimed at the local fencing masters, that he left in his book, written just before he departed Nuremberg for an unspecified destination.

As Negri claims to have learned fencing in Rome, a comparison of his work to that of Francesco Antinio Marcelli² should be made and other works in that school.³ A quick comparison to these works shows that, while Negri indeed includes some terms, and principles also seen in this Roman-Neapolitan school (and not found in works by earlier northern-Italian masters), there are also discrepancies, such as Negri's continued use of three of the four numbered guards (*secund*, *terz*, and *quart*).

Considering Negri came from Venice, it may also be interesting to compare his work to other northern-Italian treatises of the late 17th century. Indeed, Negri's teachings show some overlap with the writings of Gio. Petro Gorio⁴ For example, both use the four numbered guards, and a similar posture. Furthermore, both Gorio and Negri advise their reader that, when they approach their opponent, they should take up a somewhat shorter

2 Marcelli, Francesco Antonio, *Regole della Scherma*. 1686, Rome.

3 Such as: Mattei, Francesco Antonio, *Della Scherma Neapolitana*. 1669, Foggia.

4 Gorio, Gio. Petro, *Arte di adoprare la Spada per sicuramente ferire e perfettamente diffendersi*. 1682, Milan.

stance than their opponent's, in order to have a longer reach.⁵ A quick comparison to the work of Di Mazo shows neither clear disagreements, nor strong similarity.⁶

About Giovanni (Johann) Negri

All that we know about Giovanni Negri, who used the name Johann Negri when writing in German, is what he wrote about himself in this treatise. According to the title page of this book, Negri was born in Venice, but learned fencing at the St. Parelli in Rome. At some point after that, he traveled to Nuremberg, via Venice, Vienna, Prague, and Bayreuth; demonstrating his fencing in each of those towns. Negri must have arrived in Nuremberg at some point before June 1680, as he writes about a visit to his *salle* that took place on that date. By 12 September 1681, the date at which he signed the dedication to his treatise, he was preparing to leave Nuremberg. While he did not give reasons for his apparently sudden departure, perhaps it was related to the relatively hostile reception he received from the local fencing enthusiasts, as implied in parts of his book.

While it seems Negri did not stay in Nuremberg long, he did manage to build up contacts with a number of the important patricians within the government of the

5 See Gorio, Seventh treatise, Third chapter.

6 Di Mazo, Bondi, *La Spada Maestra*. 1696, Venice.

Free Imperial City, to whom he dedicated his work, mentioning that he was asked by them to train their sons, as well as other lords' sons, in the art of fencing. In addition, Negri named several other patricians and officers as friends present in his *salle* when the visit by a group of rival fencers took place. Here, it is of interest to note that some 32 years later, Johann Andreas Schmidt would likewise dedicate his fencing treatise to a number of magistrates of the Free Imperial City of Nuremberg.⁷ However, there appears to be no overlap between the individuals or families named by either master.

About the translation

The translation presented in this document is mostly based on the German version of Negri's text, referring to the Italian version when the German was unclear. This is not ideal, however, as German was most likely not Negri's first language, and the English translation presented here should thus be considered a translation of a translation. It is quite possible that Negri made errors in translating his Italian text to German, that subsequently made it into this English translation, in addition to any errors that this English translation may have added. Where significant differences between the Italian and German texts were noted, these have been highlighted in footnotes.

7 Schmidt, Johann Andreas, *Leib-beschirmende und Feinden Trotz-bietende Fecht-Kunst*. Nuremberg, 1713.

Otherwise, I have striven to present an English translation that is understandable to a modern reader, while conveying the intent and mirroring the style of the author as much as possible. It should be noted that, in doing so, I have rendered references to the opponent as gender-neutral where the original assumed the opponent to be male.

The following list presents English translations of technical terms, alongside their German originals, and their Italian equivalents. This to not only give the reader a reference for my translation, but to also give an insight into what German and Italian terms were considered equivalent by Negri.

English	German	Italian
attack	Angreiffen	attaccar
beat	Schlag	toccho
to beat	battiren	battere
before- <i>tempo</i>	inanzi il tempo	inanzi il tempo
blade	Klinge	lamma
blind-man's thrust	Blindlings-Stoß	tirarla
		orbescamente
to break	rumpiren	rompere
<i>contra-tempo</i>	contra tempo, contra-tempo	contratempo, contra-tempo
counter-	contracaviren	contracavata
disengaging		

to counter-	contracaviren	contracavare
disengage		
counter-	contracavation	contracavatione
disengagement		
counter-gaining	contraguadaniren, contraguadagno	contra guadagno
counter-guard	Gegen-Lager	contra guardia, contraguardia
counter-play	Widerspiel	all'incontrario
counter-thrust	Gegenstoß	risposta
cut	Hieb	taglio, fendente
dagger	dolch	pugnal
to deal	versetzen	dare, tirare
to deceive	verführen	ingannare
to deliver	anbringen	dare, tirare
disengaging	caviren	cavata
disengage	cavata	cavata
to drop	caliren	calare
to engage	stringiren	stringere
fencer	Fechter	giuocatore
feint	Fint	finta
feint, broken	gebrochen Fint	finta rotta
foil	Florett	fioretto
fool-maker	Narren-Zucht	castigamatti
gaining	guadagniren, guadagno	guadagno
to gain	guadagniren, gewinnen	guadagnare
gaining below (the blade)	guadagniren unten(/r der Klinge), guadagno di terra	guadagno di terra
to go at	angehen	andare, andare d'attacare, partire

going before- <i>tempo</i>	partirn inanzi il tempo	partire inanzi il tempo
going in (<i>contra-</i>) <i>tempo</i>	partirn di (<i>contra-</i>)tempo	partire di (contro) tempo
grapple	Presa	presa
grapple, straight	gerade Presa	presa dritta
grapple with a pass	Presa mit einer Passata	presa della passata
guard	Lager, guardia, quardia	guardia
(half) round	(halb-)runde cavata	cavata (mezza)
disengage		tonda
half thrust	halber Stoß	mezza stoccata
hilt of the sword	Degen-Gefäß	impugnatura della spada
<i>incontro</i>	incontro	d'incontro
to injure	verletzen, verwunden	ferire, offendere
injuring	Verletzung	ferita
lunge	Ausstoß, Stoccata	stoccata, stoccata assoluta
to lunge, lunging	austretten	partire
lunge, broken	gebrochen Stoccata	-
lunge, full	absolute Stoccata, völlige Stoccata	stoccata assoluta
measure	Mensur	misura
<i>mista</i> ⁸	mista, vermischt	mista
opening	Blösse	sito di ferirlo
parry	Parata	parata
to parry	pariren	parare
pass	Passata	passata

8 This is used to indicate guards that are located between the perfect guards (e.g., between *terz* and *quart*).

perfect	vollkommen, gantz, perfect	perfetta, tutta
point	Spitze	punta
pommel	Degen-Knopff	pomolo de la spada
posture	Positur, Postur	postura
probe	Prob	prova
to probe	probiren	dare la proba
provocation ⁹	chiamata	chiamata
provoking	Reitzen	fare delle chiamate
<i>quart</i>	quart	quarta
resolution	Resolution	risolutione
to resolve	resolviren	risolvere
to retreat	retiriren	ritirare
<i>salle</i>	Fechtboden	sala
<i>secund</i>	secund, secunda	seconda
span	Spann	palmo
Spanish arrest	Spanischer Arrest	arresto alla spagnuola
position	Stellung	essere ben piantati, stare in pianto
stance	Austritt	passo, spassiggio in piedi
straight line	gerade Linia	linea retta
strong	Stärke	forte

9 In various other German fencing treatises of the 17th century, *chiamata* is used to indicate the giving of a false opening, i.e., an invitation.

sword	Degen	spada
<i>tempo</i> ,	primo/secondo/terzo	primo/
<i>primo/secondo/terzo</i>	tempo	secondo/terzo
<i>zo</i>		tempo
<i>terz</i> ¹⁰	terz	terza
thrust	Stoß	punta, stoccata
to thrust	stossen	tirare
to thrust <i>incontro</i>	contra stossen	tirare d'incontro
weak	Schwäche	debole
with your foot set	mit steiff gesetzten Fuß,	di piede fermo
firm	mit festem Fuß	
wounding	ferita	ferita

Some of the technical terms used by Negri require a little more clarification with regards to their translation. Firstly, the German term *Gegenstoß*, literally meaning “counter-thrust”, usually corresponds with *risposta* (“*riposte*”) in the Italian text. In those cases, *Gegenstoß* has been translated as “counter-thrust”. However, there are instances where *Gegenstoß* corresponds to *d'incontro* in the Italian. Furthermore, there are also instances of *d'incontro* in the German text. In cases where the German *Gegenstoß* corresponded to an Italian *d'incontro*, as well as when *d'incontro* was used in the German text, “*d'incontro*” was also used in the translation. While Negri’s interchanging use of *risposta* and *d'incontro* to correspond to *Gegenstoß* suggests that these terms were equivalent to him, there may actually be some

10 *Terz* is used for both the third guard, and the middle section of one’s blade or arm.

distinction, and I did not want that to be lost in this translation.

Secondly, at several instances Negri uses the German verb *versetzen* to indicate delivering a thrust to your opponent. While *versetzen* is a common verb in German fencing treatises of the 1600s, it usually refers to setting aside (displacing) a thrust made by the opponent, possibly while making a simultaneous counter-thrust. Due to their similarity, *versetzen* is easily confused with another technical term, *vorsetzen*, which means as much as holding your point in front of your enemy so they may move themselves into it. While the two may be used interchangeably in some works of the 1600s, in treatises from the 1700s, such as the work(s) of Weischner,¹¹ they become more consistently distinct. While it is possible that Negri intended his *versetzen* to have the same meaning as the (later) *vorsetzen*, this is not clear. Furthermore, where the German uses *versetzen*, the Italian typically uses verbs such as *dare* and *tirare*, which generally mean no more than simply delivering an attack. Therefore, *versetzen* has been translated as “to deal”, which agrees with the Italian equivalents, but keeps it distinct from other (equivalent) verbs used in the German, such as *anbringen* (“to deliver”).

11 E.g., Weischner, Siegmund Carl Friedrich, *Übungen auf dem Fechtboden*. 1731, Weimar, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Sig. Fol. 351c.

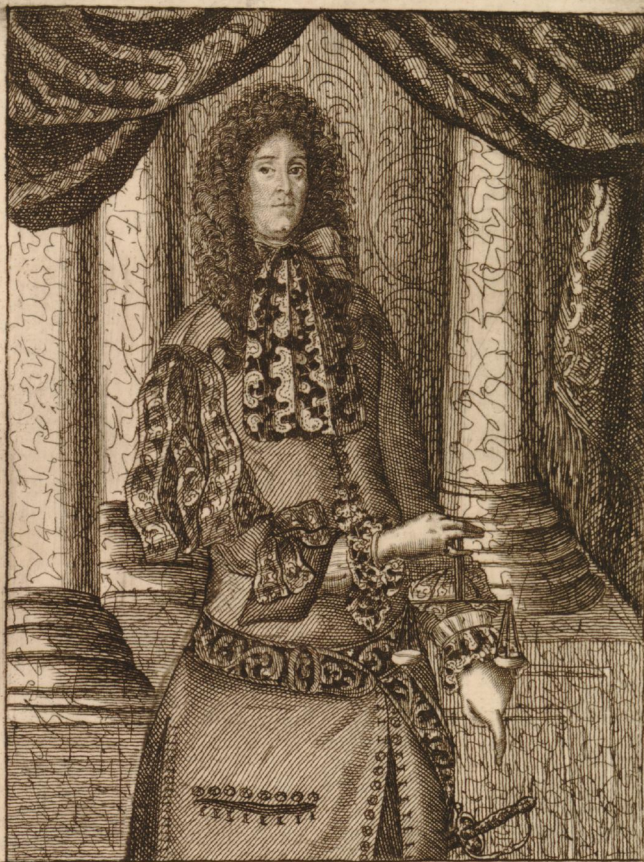
New Art of Defense and Offense

Drawn together in several chapters, composed, and
practiced by

Giovanni Negri of Venice,

Raised in the high fencing school at St. Parelli in Rome.

Quite useful and very easy to use against your enemy in
all emergencies; both defensively and offensively, and
for those who are enthusiasts of the noble Art of
Fencing.



Giovanni Negri, Profes=
sor di Spada.

Dedicated to the honourable Lords,

Lord Paul Albrecht Rieter of Kornburg, in Harlach, of the Old Secret and War Council, and also Colonel and Warlord of the Holy Roman Imperial City of Nuremberg.

Lord Christoph Fürern of Haimendorff in Wolckersdorff, of the Inner Secret and War Council there.

Lord Philipp Jacob Stromer von Reichenbach, of the Inner Secret and War Council here, and

Lord Gustav Philipp Tezel of Kirchensittenbach in Vorra and Artelshofen, of the Inner Secret and War Council there.

Honourable Lords, Esteemed Gentlemen and Patrons,

The honour that I enjoy, of dedicating this small work of mine to your high-noble lordships and austerities, can readily be compared to the singular virtue, in which these high persons are elevated such, that they worthily govern the militia and the high military estate of this noble city. When now, in this little time that I have resided here, I am honoured by your high-noble lordships most-precious command to instruct your, and also other distinguished lords', sons here in the art of fencing; then I must not fail, with my upcoming departure from Nuremberg, to apply my particular perception, and to make this known only as part of my devoted obligation to you (through the humble dedication of this little book titled the New Art of Defending and Offending). Living in the consoled trust that your great kindness will be satisfied with this, my first though minor beginnings in authorship, and therefore I humbly ask the most generous favour that you read through this with full attention. And while it may contain various errors, I fully assure myself that you high-noble lords, as persons so incomparable in such virtue in this city, will deign to illuminate this

such, that I may so much sooner improve them, as I have chosen them for my improvement. And I once more ask that you have high-minded patience with this weakness, while I hereby most humbly commend myself as

Your high-noble lordships and austerities,

Nuremberg, the 12th of September of the year 1681.

Most humble servant,

Giovanni Negri.

**Of the art and manner in which you must
act in defense against your opponent,
though in such a way that you understand
the sword beforehand.**

To know how to defend yourself against your opponent, you need four pieces, namely: the guard, the measure, the *tempo*, and the injuring, as those who practice and apply this correctly, can scarcely be injured by their opponent.

Firstly, the guard, or *guardia*, is no more than keeping your body such that you are not injured by your enemy. The measure is that you watch well how far you stand from your enemy, and whether you can also defend yourself if the opponent wants to undertake something against you.

Tempo is when you come so close to your enemy, that you can undertake something against them at will. When your enemy directs the first thrust at you, and you have come into the measure, then parry and direct a thrust against their opening. These are what are called guard, measure, *tempo*, and wounding.

This *tempo*, now, can occur to you in various manners. That is why it can be divided into three parts; that is into *primo*, *secondo* and *terzo tempo*; and with that, this is also complete.

Firstly, I say that *primo tempo* is when you are the first to direct a thrust at your enemy.

Now, if your enemy parries your thrust, as you direct it, and at the same time, right in that *tempo*, makes a counter-thrust, then this is called *secondo tempo*.

When you go to gain your enemy[’s blade], and, as it goes, they counter-disengage in that moment and want to deal you a thrust, then parry and direct a thrust. This is called the *terzo tempo*.

Before-*tempo* is going at your enemy without giving them any time, but always pursuing and going after them with directed thrusts, which is called thrusting before the time or *tempo*.

Necessary remark, how to divide the arm and sword so that their strength can better be differentiated.

It is necessary that, to begin, I speak of the strength of the arm, and the necessary cause of that, as this is the most necessary member used in our defense and offense. And therefore, I say that the arm has the same strength as the sword, and, furthermore, that no one can either defend himself, or offend another, when this is not differentiated and divided into its three main parts.

The first part of the division is the shoulder, and this is called its strong.

The second is the elbow, and this is called the *terz*.

And the third is the hand, which is called the weak.

Now, when you grasp the sword, and give it its strength in fencing, then this is indeed equal to the arm, as each of them possesses equal strength, or virtue. Thus, the sword can also easily be divided into three parts, like the arm, but no more, the defense and offense of these are as follows.

The strong of the sword serves for defending the head on the in- and outside.

The *terz* serves for defending the chest on the in- and outside.

And the weak can protect the lower parts, against both thrusts and cuts.

However, there are many who think that you must defend the chest with the strong, which I dispute. And I say that the strong does not have the strength to defend any part of the chest, just as the *terz* is not able to defend the head, nor the weak the chest; as each has its own particular strength.

In the year 1680 in the month of June, here in Nuremberg, two enthusiasts of the profession, as well as many other cavaliers; came to me in the *salle*. Among them there were three that I knew, namely Lord Baron Mordax, Lord Colonel Watchmaster Oberndorff, and Lord Captain Gumperg, all esteemed patrons of mine. In the said *salle* of mine at that time were present Lord lieutenant Johann Christoph Friekinger, Lord N. Halbach, and Lord Johann Paul Straßkirchner, as well as other gentlemen experienced in the art that I did not know, and more friends. At that time, then, I was

requested by those two enthusiasts to please show them something of my science. Initially, I excused myself, and furthermore bid them have patience with my weakness, but then I publicly showed them what the art and science of the noble art of fencing was capable of.

I exerted myself greatly, giving it my best, but nonetheless they said to those cavaliers that my parries were quite false, and that I taught the counter-play. Now, I understood this myself, but after I had finished my exercise, and these words were conveyed to me, I silently presented them the foils, and bid that they would likewise, in the presence of this cavalier, show their art, and that they would each confront their opponent as they pleased. As, then, the above-mentioned cavaliers likewise urged them not to decline the invitation I presented to them, we began to show one another some things, so that over that I then began to tell them to their faces that their actions were all false. But what happened then, I will skip in silence out of politeness, mind you. Thus, when they departed from my *salle*, I declared to these gentlemen that I showed them in all manners that my parries in all three lines are perfect, which I had also shown and demonstrated in Vienna, Prague, near Bayreuth and in Venice, in the presence of many cavaliers.

Therefore, I say that firstly the resolution is required. Secondly, you must attack your opponent right at the start, both on the outside and the inside, as well as below, in accordance with the manner and opportunity,

as you see fit. And this must indeed be done with well-considered courage, while regarding well the dangers that may arise.

Thirdly, go at them with a good defense, while considering that this defense can happen in various ways. Then, when your enemy fights back valiantly, and wants to deal you a counter-thrust at you on the in- or outside, or below, or even a cut, as the opportunity comes to them, in that case, parry swiftly, and give them a counter-thrust or -cut, at your discretion.

Fourthly, always look at how you can avert the counter-thrusts that your opponent may deliver to you. Then, you must avert their counter-thrust, and retreat into the guard, always remaining at their blade, or else jump back while dealing a cut, when an emergency demands this.

And this that I am telling you, you must take heed of in all four guards, and in this order retreat, as there is no better defense than this.

Meanwhile, a guard consists of nothing more than a good position, presenting a beautiful natural figure, and a nimble, stout, and rough countenance to your opponent, always looking them in the eyes as in that way you will discern where your enemy wants to injure you. With this, you must observe well in what sort of wide or narrow stance and guard they set themselves, to form a counter-guard against them immediately so that they themselves are deceived. But you must not do what many fencing masters do, who, when they set

themselves in guard, do this not in accordance with nature, but take on the appearance of cripple and lame monkeys. And this originates from those masters who have no knowledge of natural guards, and understand even less of the actual nature of those persons that they teach.

For example, when your enemy sets himself in a guard between *terz* and *quart*, which guard nowadays is the most common and customary as many masters have no knowledge of the other guards, and which is called a *guardia mista* because it is neither a perfect *terz* nor a perfect *quart*.

This guard is perfect in all things, especially for those who know how to use it in full lunges on the out- or inside, with their defense and other actions required for this.

In that case, now, you will confront your enemy outside of measure, with a nimble, stout and well-defended stance, gradually engage them, and see to it well that, when you are close to the measure, you observe the width of their position and then set yourself one span narrower than they. Because this will be the most secure, as you can reach them with your blade, but they cannot reach you with theirs due to the fact that you stand about a span narrower in your position than they. Then, you must pay close attention to where you can deliver a thrust to them, as thus you will be all the more secure because your enemy stands a span wider than you.

If you then see that your enemy is covered well on the inside, the outside, or below, then, as the *quarta mista* is a well-defended guard, you can form a counter-guard against them from it, though observing well in doing so, that you stand well back with your head, this being the main part of your whole body. Now, if you stand like this, then that will keep all your other members removed from the enemy. Likewise, when you look your opponent steadily in the eyes, you will discern everything that they might plan against you. But with this, remember to also cover your flank; that is, that your pommel is at the height of your lower flank, and your point at the height of your enemy's face, as thus you will be covered well.

But you must not do as some masters, who, when they set themselves in guard, instead of covering their flank, pull this back while holding their hand high and their head forward. And this is a fashionable guard, in which, instead of holding back their head, they draw back their backside. This type of guard is called the defense of the backside and not of the head, as in this way the head, being placed more forwards than the other parts, as well as the flank itself can be injured all the more easily.

Now, as you are covered on both the inside and the outside, as well as below, you can attack your enemy as follows. Test them with a probe, always looking them in the eyes from which you will discern their actions; where they want to thrust at you, or if they want to deceive you with feints, with broken or entirely full

lunge¹, with gaining, counter-gaining, disengaging, counter-disengaging, gaining with broken feints on the inside and the outside, as well as below; further by going in *tempo* or in *contra-tempo*, by going before-*tempo* or *incontro*, by provoking, by weakening the arm, when they beat onto your blade, lunging on the inside, on the outside, or below, with their foot set firm, or else by making a pass with a gaining below² your blade to perform a grapple. In short, you will discern and recognize anything that they may plan against you on the inside and the outside, as well as below.

Now, once you have made your probe, and you have seen that your opponent does nothing, or wants to do nothing, then you will know their mind already, and go against them as follows:

Firstly, stoutly go at them yourself with a free, straight lunge to there where you think you can hit them, or make your feints and broken feints with a straight thrust, and try to deliver a thrust to them in *tempo*, in *contra-tempo*, or in before-*tempo*; beat onto their blade; to set forth your thrust with straight and broken beats; straight, broken, and false gaining, disengaging,

1 Here, the Italian version instead states “with feints or broken feints, or with full lunges”.

2 While the German uses, *guadagniren unter der Klinge* (in later instances often shortened to *unten gaudagniren*), the Italian uses *guadagno di terra*. While the German implies a blade action, the Italian (“gaining of the ground”) could instead be interpreted as forward footwork.

counter-disengaging, counter-disengagements, or a grapple, though without putting yourself in danger.

If your enemy moves back, then follow them on the inside, on the outside, below, and above, and always pursue them. Because in this manner, they will never be able to hold you off; even less carry out something against you. With that, [you] must be careful that your enemy, when they find themselves overcome by you, does not run in desperately to get hold of your body, as that is their best means to defend themselves against you.

I have experienced what I am talking about many times. Therefore, in such cases, I have always taken good care, especially when someone wanted to come at my body like a mad dog, and have always unceremoniously held them back in this manner, with *mista* thrusts between *secund* and *terz*,³ as these are the best. Because thrusts made in this manner have great strength when they are used correctly, with your defense and jumping back when needed, immediately directing a counter-thrust with them. Because in this manner, your enemy must see to themselves, and their fury will not help them.

This thrust is called the fool-maker, and I have often seen it put to use by various enthusiasts, in particular by Captain Giovanni Carlo Mazziotti, a Roman cavalier, whose opponent, Carlo Tori, was a man well-versed in the art of fencing. These two confronted each other by

3 The German reads *mit den Stossen / zwischen der Secund und Terz vermischt*. The Italian reads *delle stoccate infra la seconda e la terza mista*.

chance behind the embankment at Padua, and while Mazziotti at that time carried a blade that was a good span shorter than that of his opponent, he carried himself very valiantly regardless. Because, after Carlo Tore fell to the ground twice, Mazziotti, with generous spirit, each time granted him his life, and gave him the time needed to stand up again. Until they finally came together again, and what then followed, and the other glorious deeds of Mazziotti, are known to the whole world. And while his enemies want to establish themselves as his equals, there has been none who has been able to do the same to him.

Now, when you want to go at your enemy, then go resolutely at them, and note well to begin the first thrust a little between *secund* and *terz*, and complete it in *quart*, and see to it that your hand and foot go off the straight line at the same time, and not too far along it,⁴ on either side. And try to keep your head straight and rather stout against your opponent, both on the inside and on the outside. Because in this manner, they will recognize your skill, and that you do not fear them. Do not think

4 This section is somewhat open to interpretation. The German and Italian read, respectively: *und sehet daß euer Hand und Fuß zugleich ausserhalb der geraden Linia, und nicht viel darüber gehe / e fare, che la mano & il piede vadino unitamente fuori della linea retta en non più d'avantaggio*. Based on context (“on either side”), “off”, rather than “to the outside of” was likely meant. The Italian helps clarify the meaning of “not too far along it”.

this remark is strange, because this is the right manner of directing a thrust with its defense, since you will also at the same time see what you have achieved, and whether you have injured or not. In this way, you can also immediately resolve what you want to do, because this is the proper, true manner of defending yourself against your opponent.

But there are many gentlemen, who think that they are completely covered and that you cannot hit them anywhere if they direct their thrust in such a way, that they hold their head below the hilt of their sword, and put their feet on the straight line at the same time. Indeed, I say to them that this is so,⁵ however, in that way they also can't even see the least bit of their opponent.

And this manner of thrusting is not called art, but a blind-man's thrust. Therefore, I say that this is not a good defense, in any piece, as you cannot foresee what your enemy might aim to do against you. And thus, you also do not know if you have injured them, as your thrusts do not correspond with your eyes, because you cannot see anything.

When you can direct a full thrust in two *tempi*, I would like to give some stipulation, as one *tempo* can serve to hide your head, and the other *tempo* to disengage to the outside, as the goldfinches do, when they quickly stick their head in and out.

5 I.e., that it is true that they are covered well; this is clearer in the Italian.

However, directing your thrust in the above-said manner is the most secure of all, as in this manner, your weak will go in on their strong.

On the outside, you must thrust between *secund* and *terz*.

But below, [you must thrust] the perfect *secund*, at the same time being prepared for a swift parry.

Now if, in that moment, you must parry on the inside, on the outside, or below, as it could happen that your enemy directs a counter-thrust while you thrust, then you must parry nimbly as the necessity of your defense demands, and at the same time take heed well where you might detect an opening into which to direct your counter-thrust.

Further, I say that it could be that your enemy directs an *incontro*-thrust,⁶ or wants to forestall your thrust. From this *incontro*-thrust, you have nothing to fear; even less when they forestall your action as you shall complete your thrust, and stay at their blade. That is, deliver your thrust in such a manner that when they thrust, you gain their weak with your weak, and stay on⁷ their blade.

6 This is an instance where the German uses *einen Gegenstoss führen* ("direct a counter-thrust") while the Italian uses *partire d'incontro*. Therefore, rather than "counter-thrust", I chose to use "*incontro*-thrust".

7 It is good to note that here, the German uses *auf* instead of the more commonly seen *an*. This more strongly indicates blade contact is made here.

Because thus, your weak will all the more easily gain⁸ your enemy's strong, and your strong will have gained their weak.

At the same time, on the one hand, your head will be defended, while on the other hand, your enemy will be attacked. And therefore, they will no longer have the strength to achieve anything with their strong, nor to defend themselves against this thrust. Their weak, however, will also have no strength to deliver a thrust to you, when, at the right time, you have set yourself to your defense, which you must take heed of well as you will be quite often confronted with this *incontro*-thrust, on the inside and on outside, as well as below, and there are also very few of those who are fond of the parry.

When you have delivered your thrust to them, and you see any danger, then you can jump back with a cut, or else draw back. However, you must always stay on your enemy's blade, and in this manner extricate yourself from the counter-thrust that they could deal you.

You must observe this remark for all three parts of the body that are the most important, both in defense and in offense. These are the head, the chest on the inside and on the outside, and the lower parts. Therefore, it is necessary to know how to defend each of these separately.

8 In the German, the term *guadagniren* is used, but with *gewinnen* added between brackets, explicitly confirming that these terms have the same meaning to Negri.

Of the head, we have already spoken above. Now, I want to say that on the inside you must parry between *terz* and *quart*. And when you have time⁹ to make a counter-thrust, then do so swiftly between *terz* and *quart*, to their chest or their face. Furthermore, you can parry on the inside, and make a feint at their head. But as they parry, disengage to the outside and direct a thrust in *secund* on the outside. This, then, is called a false counter-thrust, as, instead of hitting on the inside, it does so on the outside.

In another manner, when the enemy wants to parry the thrusts that you pretend to deal at their face, then immediately drop your point under their blade. Thus, you will hit them falsely in *quart* under their right breast.

On the outside, you must parry between *secund* and *terz*, and swiftly direct a counter-thrust between *secund* and *terz*, to their flank on the outside, or else to their face. And when your enemy happens to parry high, to liberate themselves from these two thrusts to the side of their head or a part of their body on the outside, then go at them and pretend to deal a thrust at their face, besides looking into their eyes at all times. And when they want to parry, then drop your point below their flank. Thus, you will hit them below their flank with a thrust directed from a half-round disengage.

Below the flank, you must parry in perfect *secund*, with your point aimed at the ground, to liberate yourself

9 i.e., when you have a *tempo*.

from the thrust that comes at you below your flank. Then, when you have parried, direct a counter-thrust below the flank, likewise in *secund*. And in the case that your enemy parries your counter-thrust, with their hand held low, then parry once more and engage at the same time with your foot from behind, until you come to your right foot.¹⁰ Then, you can deal them a counter-thrust to their flank from above, or else to their face, and make either a straight grapple or a grapple with a pass. In short, you can begin with them what your generosity permits you, as they are in your hands and under your control.

After this short discourse, you can set yourself in, and make use of, all four guards, both perfect and *mista*, and doing so securely know that your enemy shall never attack without you having probed them beforehand, unless it is an attack without foundation.

Therefore also remember well to diligently observe your enemy's guard¹¹ as well as all their other postures, even if they are laughable and have no similarity to any guard, or when they set their point to the ground, and

10 This part is somewhat unclear in both the Italian (*col piede da dietro, portandolo appresso del dritto piede*) and the German (*mit dem Fuß von hinten her, biß ihr an euren rechten Fuß kommet*). Most likely, the intended meaning is that, as you parry and engage your opponent's blade, you move your back (left) foot forward until it comes to your right (front) foot, in preparation for the following riposte.

11 The Italian reads *tutte le quarto guardie*, meaning "all four guards".

their arm back, or [when they] hold their blade higher than their head. And make no mistake over this, as even the most capable fencers seek to change their postures to try to make their opponent make a mistake, when they do not know how to deliver anything else.

And I also like deceiving my opponent very much. Because then, when I see that my opponent does not find any means to protect themselves, I resolve to what I want as my opponent is unable to avert my actions.

Remarks about these postures.

Now, in such cases you must elect to seek your enemy's blade more with art than with foundation, and in all intentions plan to deceive them. And such deception will be when you pretend to deal a thrust at their face in fury, with a gaining below, especially if they stand with their point low. Then note that, right at that time, they could lunge with a *secund* from below, which would be the shortest *tempo* to defend themselves against the thrust that you are directing at their face. Then, swiftly hold your blade¹² down to the ground in *secund*, and parry their thrust from below in *secund*. Then, you can injure them below their flank in *secund*, as well as in their head, and grapple them.

12 While the German reads *Klinge* ("blade"), the Italian uses *punta* ("point").

Next, when your enemy stands with their point higher than their face, in that case you must set yourself just as if, as well as gaining them below, you want to deal a thrust below their flank, and show them that you forcibly want to injure them. If they then see that you want to take their life with your point, it could be that they lower their point to ward off your thrust. Then, you must make a round disengage above in *secund* as they lower their point, and go in with a gaining below. Because thus you will hit them above in *secund* on the outside.

Furthermore, it could also be that they thrust *incontro*, or else, in the Spanish manner, hold their point in your face as you thrust, while stepping back somewhat with their right foot. Therefore take good care to ascertain their intention with your probe. This probe is done by directing a half thrust below their flank at them, and completing your thrust when you see that they do not want to try the arrest. But if he does want to attempt the arrest, or thrust *incontro*, then complete your thrust in the same manner, and always go forth below their blade, with your hand raised somewhat, as much as needed. Because in this manner, you will hit them below their flank in *secund*, and make a straight grapple against them below.

Now, when after this, they want to make the arrest, or thrust *incontro* by dropping [under] your point,¹³ then

13 The meaning here is somewhat unclear. The German reads *oder mit Caliren eurer Spitze cont[r]a stossen*

disengage and gain above, both at the same time, and pursue their blade as the opportunity arises. Thus, you will not only escape the danger, but will also injure them at your pleasure.

("thrusting *incontro* with a dropping of your point"). In contrast, the Italian reads *con de calarvi la punta al quanto piu bassa*, which could be translated as "by dropping their point quite low".

**Defensive and offensive remarks about
the above lessons with their counter-
lessons. How these must be distinguished,
and how you should use them in case of
need.**

Offense	Defense ¹⁴
Against a lunge or thrust	follows a parry.
Against a feint or broken feint	the <i>contra-tempo</i> , with all sorts of feints.
Against a gaining	counter-disengage and counter-gaining.
Against a counter-gaining	counter-disengagement.
Against broken gains with feints	the <i>contra-tempo</i> , as they make a feint at you, or when they break.
Against going in <i>tempo</i> , or <i>incontro</i>	go at [them] with your thrust, and forestall their <i>tempo</i> or <i>incontro</i> .
Against <i>contra-tempo</i>	pretend to give them a <i>tempo</i> ; when they then want to lunge

¹⁴ In the German edition, the words *Vertheidigung* (Defense) and *Beleidigung* (offense) were switched.

		with a <i>contra-tempo</i> , then forestall their <i>contra-tempo</i> with your thrust.
Against [going] before- <i>tempo</i>		The counter-lesson to this, is that you do not let your enemy come too close into the measure, but always look at their face and hands, especially when you have some suspicions against them. In this way, you will be able to discern everything, even their before- <i>tempo</i> , which will not help them much because they will fear you.
Against provocations		if they are at your measure, then lunge with your defense.
Against beating of the blade		disengage in the moment when they want to beat your blade.
Against a firm-footed lunge		parry, if needed.
Against with below, grapple	passes gaining and	when you note that they want to make a pass at you on the outside or below, ¹⁵ and gain your sword, then counter-disengage in any

15 Here, the translation follows the Italian, *dalle parti di fuori, o di sotto*, as this agrees better with the Offense that is being reacted to. The German reads *ausserhalb oder innerhalb*, meaning “on the outside or on the inside”.

manner and way, with a gaining below,¹⁶ because thus your enemy will be deceived, and you will be able to make a pass and grapple against them without danger. If they want to pass below, without gaining you[r blade], then immediately make the Spanish arrest at them, by holding your point in their face; or parry with a counter-thrust, and grapple in the same manner.

With this I want it to be understood at all times, that against all these above-mentioned counter-lessons, you are free to injure with any counter-thrusts that you are able to deliver, at your best convenience.

And while I have no more time to write, as my upcoming journey prevents this, I am yet determined to write a short discourse about the four guards, both perfect and *mista*, and their various lessons. And with each lesson a thrust, cut, and grapple; to show each separate from the others. And the same for the dagger alone and how this has the strength to let you defend yourself against your enemy, no matter how long a sword they have. Then, of the manner and way in which you must strike your opponent's sword out of their hands in all four guards, which I have shown to many

16 Here, rather than *unten guadagniren*, the German uses the Italian *guadagno di terra*.

cavaliers and enthusiasts of this noble art, and am also inclined to demonstrate to those who do not believe it, when needed.

I started my discourse with the four most important pieces for enthusiasts, namely the guard, measure, *tempo*, and the wounding.

Now, I will end it likewise with four pieces, that are luck, reason, art, and courage.

Those who have those four pieces, will be blissful in both their defense and their offense.

THE END.