

An

Introduction

to the

Fundamentals

of

Bolognese

Swordsmanship

by

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Introduction

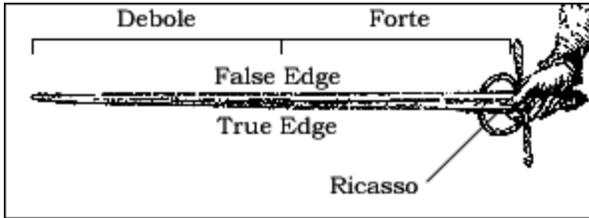
There are five known authors from the Bolognese school of the 1500s who have either published books or left manuscripts. They are Antonio Manciolino (1531), Achille Marozzo (1536), Giovanni Dall'Agocchie (1572), Angelo Viggiani (1575), and the anonymous author of Manuscripts 345 and 346 from Ravenna (c. 1550). I have used all of these and also works of their contemporaries in the analysis of the Bolognese system. However, the focus of this document and my class is the *The Anonymous* (i.e. the anonymous from Ravenna), with the others in an important but supporting role.

One of the most significant hurdles when interpreting the Bolognese system as compared to the earlier systems is the incredible number of actions described in the texts: the more than 400 distinct plays for sword alone in *The Anonymous* dwarfs the Italian works of the previous century, making analysis a long and laborious process. Furthermore, unlike the works of the following century, the Bolognese treatises do not lay out a discreet set of rules of the art; instead, they require you to learn the rules implicitly through analysis and practice of the many actions described in the texts. It becomes the job of the researcher, therefore, to extract these rules through careful analysis and comparison of the various sources. Thus, my main task is to give students a clear picture of the system as it is distilled from the hundreds of pages and thousands of techniques. What follows is much of the requisite knowledge to understand and practice the Bolognese system as I teach it.

The Sword and Body

The Sword

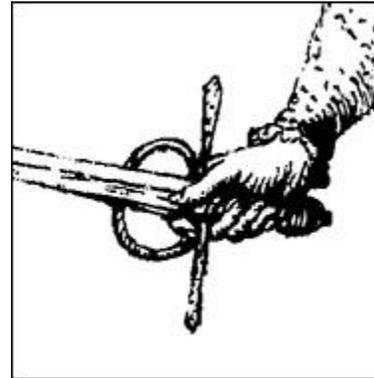
The sword consists of a blade, a guard, a handle and a pommel. The unsharpened section of the blade just above the guard is the *ricasso*. The blade is divided into two edges, the true edge and the false edge, which in the figure are on the bottom and the top respectively. The blade is also divided into two equal parts along its length from the guard to the point. The half closest to the guard is the *forte* and the half which contains the point is the *debole*.



The Position of the Body

If possible, you should hold your sword with one finger placed around the ricasso. However, if your sword has a simple cross hilt or lacks finger protection, I would recommend the “hammer” grip instead (to reduce the possibility of injury to your index finger).

In most guards, you should stand with your front foot pointed directly forward and your front knee bent. Your rear foot should be turned somewhat to the side and placed so that the rear heel is a little out of line with that of the front foot. Your weight is usually biased toward your forward foot and your feet will typically be about one-half of an arm length apart. However, the step can be wider or narrower for some guards, and your weight distribution will change depending on the situation.



Manner of holding the sword by fingering the ricasso

If you do not have a weapon in your off-hand, then place that hand as if you were gripping your belt, with the back



Manner of holding the Targa (left) and the Buckler (right)

of your hand in the small of your back; be sure to keep your elbow back so that you do not present that arm as a target. If you have a buckler, hold it with your arm fully extended and the face of the buckler directly toward your opponent. Similarly, if you have a targa, your arm should be fully extended, but held at an angle so that the face is slanted to the outside and the upper inside corner is directed at your opponent.

While the position of your sword hand will be determined by the guard, your sword arm should generally be fully extended (but without locking your elbow) except in cases where the form of the guard prevents it (such as *Guardia di Sotto Braccio* and *Guardia di Sopra Braccio*).

The Guards

Since the Bolognese masters are not completely consistent with their nomenclature, I have decided to use the terminology and forms exclusively as described in *The Anonymous*, as I find that text to be the most comprehensive and least ambiguous of the Bolognese works. Where possible, I have included figures to aid in forming the guards; however, it is important to remember that the figures are only imperfect representations of the guard positions.

The Primary Guards

Each Bolognese master describes between ten and twenty distinct guards, but an examination of the techniques for *Spada da Filo* in Manciolino and Marozzo, as well as the techniques described in *The Anonymous* and Dall'Agocchie show that these can be reduced to a small number of essential guards. The remaining guards are used mostly for specific tactical situations, such as parries or provocations, or transitional positions, such as at the end of attacks. (A *Provocation* is an action or position with which you induce your opponent to act in a predictable way. A beat to your opponent's sword is an example of one form of provocation, lowering your sword to invite an attack to your upper body is another.)

The two most important guards of the Bolognese system are *Porta di Ferro Stretta* and *Coda Lunga Stretta*. We can see this not only from the fact that the majority of all techniques for *Spada da Filo* begin from one of these guards, but also from Dall'Agocchie's clear statement of this in his treatise. In addition to these two guards, we can include one other guard, *Guardia di Lioncorno*, as fundamental to this system.

However, if we consider that each of these three guards can be formed with either foot forward, we can actually double the number of essential guards from three to six. Therefore, the six fundamental guards are:



Porta di Ferro Stretta

- Coda Lunga Stretta, Right Foot Forward*
- Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward*
- Porta di Ferro Stretta (Right Foot Forward)*
- Cinghiara Porta di Ferro Stretta (Left Foot Forward)*
- Guardia di Lioncorno, Right Foot Forward*
- Guardia di Lioncorno, Left Foot Forward*

Porta di Ferro Stretta

The right foot is forward and the sword arm is extended so that the hand is at waist height with the hand turned to the inside of the right knee (to the left of your right knee). The shoulder of your sword arm should be turned toward your opponent with the point of your sword directed at the opponent's face or upper chest.

Cinghiara Porta di Ferro Stretta

The position of the sword hand and sword arm is identical to that for *Porta di Ferro Stretta*, but the left foot is forward.



Coda Lunga Stretta

Coda Lunga Stretta, Right Foot Forward

The sword arm is extended so that the hand is at waist height and on the outside of the right knee (to the right of your right knee). Your body is square with your opponent and the point of the sword is directed at the opponent's face or upper chest.



Guardia di Lioncorno

Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward

This guard is identical to the right foot forward version in all aspects except that the left foot is forward.

Guardia di Lioncorno, Right Foot Forward

The sword arm is extended and turned so that the hand is at or just above the height of the head with your thumb down and your palm to your right. The sword points directly forward and not across the body, with the tip directed at the opponent's face or upper chest.

Guardia di Lioncorno, Left Foot Forward

This guard is identical to the right foot forward version in all aspects except that the left foot is forward.

The Secondary Guards

In addition to the six fundamental guards, the Bolognese system also includes several more which are used as transitional positions or for specific tactical situations, such as to present an opening to the opponent or to parry an attack.

Coda Lunga Larga (either foot forward)

This guard is identical in all aspects to *Coda Lunga Stretta* except that the point of the sword is directed at the ground and the hand is somewhat withdrawn.



Coda Lunga Larga

Coda Lunga Alta (either foot forward)



Coda Lunga Alta

This guard is identical in all aspects to *Coda Lunga Stretta* except that the sword arm is extended so that the hand is at or near shoulder height (but no higher) with the hand turned to the outside, in or nearly in pronation. Note that the guard given this name in *The Anonymous* is different from the other treatises, where it is a specific form of *Coda Lunga* with the left foot forward and the hand a little higher than in *Coda Lunga Stretta*. (This form of this guard, as it is described in *The Anonymous*, is comparable with the version of *Guardia di Intrare* which is described in Dall'Agocchie's treatise.)



Coda Lunga Lunga

Coda Lunga Lunga (either foot forward)

For this guard, the sword arm is extended backwards with the true edge down and the point directed towards the ground. This guard is identical to that referred to as *Coda Lunga*

Distesa by Marozzo and Dall'Agocchie. (See the note about the guards and the different masters at the end of this section.)



Porta di Ferro Larga

Porta di Ferro Larga

In the same way that *Coda Lunga Larga* is derived from *Coda Lunga Stretta*, this guard is derived from *Porta di Ferro Stretta* by directing the point of the sword at the ground and pulling the hand a little towards the body. The *Cinghiara* form of this guard is identical except that the left foot is forward.

Porta di Ferro Alta

This guard is formed from *Porta di Ferro Stretta* by extending the arm somewhat forward so that the hand is about chest height. The *Cinghiara* form of this guard is identical except that the left

foot is forward. This guard is often the ending position of half cuts and the *Mandritto Ridoppio* when the sword is used in conjunction with a buckler or *targa*.



Guardia di Testa

Guardia di Testa

This guard is formed from *Coda Lunga Stretta* by raising your sword hand to shoulder height. The guard is most commonly used to parry a vertical or nearly vertical cut to the head.



Guardia Alta

Guardia Alta

This guard is formed with your buckler held straight out in front of you at arm's length and with the sword arm straight up with the sword point directed up or somewhat backwards. Your step should either be very narrow with your right foot forward or fairly wide with either foot forward. This guard is almost always a transitional

position if not used with a buckler.



Guardia di Faccia

Guardia di Faccia

The blade is held straight out in front of you, parallel with the ground, with the point of your sword directed straight at your opponent's face; the sword hand should be covered by the buckler or *targa* if one is used. In *The Anonymous*, this guard is usually the ending position of a *Falso*, a *Montante*, or a *Stoccata* (see the section on attacks). Unlike other manuals, *The Anonymous* does not describe this guard being used to parry.



Guardia di Intrare

Guardia di Intrare

This guard is formed by extending your arm with your hand in supination so that the true edge of the sword is to your left or even a little upward (depending on the situation) and with the

point directed at your opponent's face. This guard is commonly used to parry a *Mandritto* targeted at your head; it can be the ending position of a *Mandritto Ridoppio* and the starting position of an *Imbroccata Riversa* (see the section on attacks). This guard is sometimes used to counterattack with a thrust against a cut to your head.

Guardia di Sopra Braccio

To form this guard, stand with your right foot a little in front of your left with either a normal step or a very narrow step and with your right shoulder turned toward your opponent. If you have a targa or a buckler, it should be held with your arm fully extended at your opponent. Your sword arm should be held so that the elbow points at the opponent, your hand crosses above your buckler arm and your sword points behind you on your left side. This guard is rarely used without a buckler or targa except as a transitional position.

Guardia di Sotto Braccio

This guard is formed like *Guardia di Sopra Braccio* except that the sword arm is held below the buckler arm instead of above. This guard is rarely used without a buckler or targa except as a transitional position.

The Differences of the Guards among the Bolognese Masters

While the guards vary from master to master, the positions exist in all of the masters' treatises. For those individuals who are familiar with the other Bolognese works, it is important to remember that the exact form and duties of a guard can vary by author. For example, the appearance and responsibilities of Dall'Agocchie's *Guardia di Intrare* are encompassed in *The Anonymous* by *Coda Lunga Alta*. I did not attempt to reconcile the differences of each guard by blending the nomenclature of more than one master; instead, I have opted to use the guards as described in *The Anonymous*. This allows a clear and specific definition of the form and capabilities of each guard to help avoid confusion.

The Steps

The Bolognese system uses a wide variety of steps, both linear and offline, as dictated by the tactical situation and goals of the swordsman. By necessity, I was forced to make a number of arbitrary decisions regarding the nomenclature as the specific names of steps are rarely given and even more rarely used; where possible, I have adopted the terminology from *The Anonymous*. When reading these definitions, it is important to realize that the size of each step is not a specific, quantifiable distance; the end goal of each step dictates its length and direction. Instead, the named steps should be considered as a classification system to describe how the feet move relative to each other.

The Fundamental Steps

Passing Step

The rear foot passes to completely in front of the leading foot in the manner similar to a walking step. Example: Starting from Porta di Ferro Stretta with your right foot forward, you make a Forward Passing Step and end in Cinghiara Porta di Ferro Stretta with your left foot forward. To *Pass Forward* means to make a Forward Passing Step with your rear foot.

Chasing Step

This step consists of two distinct motions. In the first motion, the rear foot is brought forward until it is even (or nearly so) with the front foot. In the second motion, the front foot steps forward so that you end with your feet the same distance from each other as when you started. Example: Starting from Porta di Ferro Stretta with your right foot forward, bring your left foot near your right foot, then step forward with your right foot and end in the same guard as you started, having covered about the same distance as you would with a Passing Step.

Advancing Step

This step is consists of two motions. In the first motion, the front foot moves forward a distance of approximately one shoe length. In the second motion, the rear foot comes forward by an amount equal the distance of the step of the front foot. With this step, you will travel forward approximately half the distance of a Passing or Chasing Step. This is similar to the modern fencing advance.

All of the steps described above can be made backward as well as forward. They can also include a lateral component so that the swordsman moves off the line of direction.

The Specialized and Partial Steps

Changing Step

This step consists of two motions. In the first motion the forward foot is brought back until it is even (or nearly so) with the back foot (a Backward Gathering Step—see below). In the second motion, the back foot steps forward (a Half Step—see below). Note that the step forward is often an oblique step.

Great Step

This is a modifier to denote that the step is larger than normal. For example, a *Great Passing Step Forward* will end so that the feet are around one-half of a shoe-length farther apart than you normally have them when standing in guard.

Offline, Oblique or Diagonal Step

This is a modifier to denote that the step is not directly forward or backward, but is somewhat to one side or the other, for example: an *Oblique Forward Pass*.

Half Step

This is the first motion of an Advancing Step or a Retreating Step, and the second motion of a Chasing Step or a Changing Step. When used alone as a forward 'lunge', this step is often called the *Accrescimento*; recovering from this step—that is, pulling your front foot back to a normal step—can be called a *Decrescimento*.

Accrescimento

An *Accrescimento* is a special type of *Half Step* made from a typical guard position (with your feet one-half of an arm length apart) by stepping forward with your front foot. The reach of this step is approximately half the distance of a Passing or Chasing Step. This is the first motion of an *Advancing Step*.

Decrescimento

This step is exactly the opposite of the *Accrescimento*. With your feet in a wide step, such as after making an *Accrescimento*, draw your front foot back so that your feet at a typical guard position (around one-half of an arm length apart). This is the first motion of a *Retreating Step*.

Gathering Step

A Gathering Step is made by drawing one of your feet close or next to the other. In a *Forward Gathering Step*, you draw your rear foot up to your front foot; this is the first motion of a *Forward Chasing Step*. In a *Backward Gathering Step*, you draw your front foot back to your rear foot; this is the first motion of both the *Backward Chasing Step* and the *Changing Step*. You might be instructed to “gather forward” in which case you will bring your rear foot up to be even with your front foot, or “gather back” which means you should draw your front foot back to your rear foot.

Circular Step

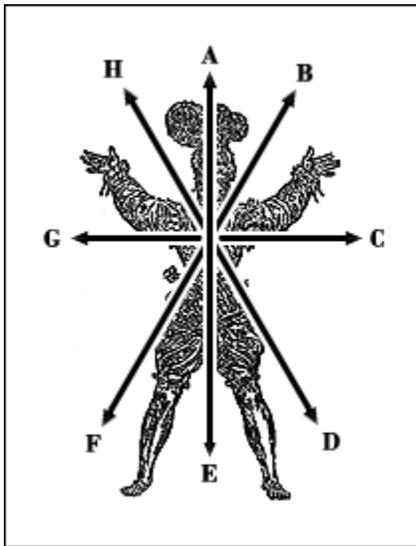
This step can be made by the trailing foot after you have made some type of oblique step. The rear foot is moved in a circular path with the front foot acting as the center so that your new line of direction is at an angle with respect to the original line of direction. Example: Starting from Coda Lunga Stretta with your right foot forward, you make an *Oblique Forward Passing Step* to your left, then with a *Circular Step*, your right foot moves around behind your left so that you are facing your opponent on a new line in Coda Lunga Stretta with your left foot forward.

Although there is a specific name for nearly every step, the context and position will often make such terminology unnecessary. For example, if you are standing in Guardia Alta with your feet close together, you might be instructed to “step forward with your right foot” instead of being told to “make a Forward Half Step with your right foot.” Both instructions tell you to perform the same step.

The key to correct stepping in the Bolognese system is the proper coordination between the hands and the feet. Additionally, there is a general set of rules or guidelines which determine what steps can be used for each tactical situation. Many of these will be covered in the seminar, but the total number of permutations for complex actions is very large and requires considerable practice to perfect.

The Attacks

Attacks can be divided into Cuts and Thrusts: a cut is any attack which is delivered with the edge of the sword; a thrust is any attack which is delivered with the point. Cuts are generally delivered with the arm and shoulder, cuts from the wrist being a specialized subtype. Thrusts are generally delivered with a ‘flinging’ action of the sword arm in addition to any footwork; that is, the motion of the hand and arm coming forward adds impetus to the attack. When using left and right side designations, I am assuming that the swordsman is right handed; a left-handed swordsman would consider a mirror-image of the action. For example, a Mandritto normally begins on the swordsman’s right and strikes to his opponent’s left, but for a left-handed individual, the Mandritto begins on the left and strikes to his opponent’s right. It is important to remember that the name of the strike is not named by the target, but by the path of the sword, the motion of the swordsman’s arm, and the attitude of his hand.



Terminology and Definitions

Mandritto

This is any cut that begins from your right. Often this term is used by itself to refer to a diagonal descending cut more properly designated by the term Mandritto Sgualebrato. In the figure, cuts starting on **A**, **B**, **C**, and **D** are types of Mandritti. A descending Mandritto usually ends in a variation of Porta di Ferro, or in Guardia di Sopra Braccio or Guardia di Sotto Braccio; an ascending Mandritto (see below) will usually end in Guardi di Intrare or Guardia di Sopra Braccio

Riverso

This is any cut that begins from your left. Often this term is used by itself to refer to a diagonal descending cut more properly designated by the term Riverso

Sgualebrato. Any cut in which you cross your body with your sword arm during the preparation is a type of Riverso. In the figure, cuts starting on **A**, **F**, **G**, and **H** are types of Riversi. A descending Riverso usually ends in a variation of Coda Lunga; an ascending Riverso usually ends in Guardia di Lioncorno or Guardia Alta.

Fendente

This is a descending vertical cut. Sometimes a master will refer to a *Mandritto Fendente* or a *Riverso Fendente*. In this case, it is a nearly vertical attack that might tend toward one side or the other, or it designates the type of preparation for the Fendente cut. In the figure, the Fendente starts at **A** and descends along the line towards **E**.

Sgualebrato

This is a descending diagonal cut. This cut is usually designated with the direction—*Riverso Sgualebrato* or *Mandritto Sgualebrato*—unless it is obvious from the context of the action. In the figure, the paths starting at **B** and **H** are the Mandritto Sgualebrato and Riverso Sgualebrato respectively.

Tondo

This is a cut where the path of the sword is horizontal; the target of this cut can be anywhere from the head to the knee. A master will use the terms *Mandritto Tondo* and *Riverso Tondo* to designate the direction of the cut unless it is very obvious. In the

figure, the paths starting at **C** and **G** are the Mandritto Tondo and Riverso Tondo respectively.

Falso

This is a cut delivered with the false edge of the sword. Although any cut can be delivered with the false edge, the great majority of Falso cuts are ascending cuts delivered to the opponent's sword hand or to his sword. Unlike the Fendente, the Sgualembrato, and the Tondo, the ascending Falso uses a slightly different naming scheme to designate the side of origin. A *Falso Manco* is a diagonally ascending cut starting from your left—a type of Riverso—and a *Falso Dritto* is a diagonally ascending cut starting from your right—a type of Mandritto. In the figure, the Falso Manco and the Falso Dritto follow the paths starting at **F** and **D** respectively.

Montante

This is a rising false edge cut that follows a nearly vertical path, in exactly the opposite direction as the Fendente. In the figure, the Montante ascends vertically from **E**.

Ridoppio

A *Ridoppio* is an ascending cut delivered with the true edge. A *Riverso Ridoppio* is a common cut used both offensively and defensively and follows the same path as the *Falso Manco*, starting at **F**. The *Mandritto Ridoppio*, which follows the same path as the *Falso Dritto* and starts at **D**, is less common and not generally used defensively.

Tramazzone

This is a cut delivered using the wrist instead of the elbow or shoulder. The path of the cut is generally close to vertical, although some masters differentiate by *Mandritto Tramazzone* or *Riverso Tramazzone*. Note that the rotation of a Tramazzone is always made by breaking the wrist to the inside, so that the sword circles on your left side.

Molinetto

This is a circular cut similar to the *Tramazzone* except that the wrist breaks to the outside. This cut is much less commonly used compared to the Tramazzone.

Stoccata

This term is used mostly to designate an underhand thrust where the true edge of the sword is downward and the palm of your hand faces left. However, it is sometimes used as a generic term for any type of thrust. As an underhand thrust, the Stoccata is usually delivered to the opponent's inside, or to his outside under his sword and arm. This thrust typically ends in Porta di Ferro Stretta.

Imbroccata

This is an overhand thrust which starts with your sword hand higher than your shoulder and turned to the outside with your palm generally facing to your right in a position similar to Guardia di Lioncorno. This thrust can be delivered to the opponent's inside, to his outside over his sword and arm, and to his outside but under his sword and arm. This thrust typically ends in Porta di Ferro Stretta or Porta di Ferro Larga.

Punta Riversa

This thrust is delivered from your left side, with your hand turned in supination so that your palm faces upward. This thrust is made to the opponent's outside over his sword arm, to the opponent's inside, and occasionally below his sword arm. This thrust typically ends in Coda Lunga Stretta.

Imbroccata Rivversa

This is an overhand thrust delivered from your left side, with your hand raised near or above shoulder height and turned beyond supination so that your palm faces to your right. This thrust typically ends in *Coda Lunga Stretta* or *Coda Lunga Larga*.

Punta Dritta

This is a thrust delivered with your hand near shoulder height and your hand turned so that the palm is down. This thrust is nearly always made to the opponent's outside over his sword arm, often as a *Punta Ferma*. This thrust typically ends in *Porta di Ferro Stretta*.

Punta Ferma

This is any thrust which is delivered by carrying the point forward with the step, rather than with an arm extension. In *The Anonymous* this is usually a *Punta Dritta* delivered from *Coda Lunga Alta*. (See the section about mechanics of the attacks below.)

Mezzo Colpo ('Half Strike')

Properly speaking, the *Mezzo Colpo* is an attack that ends with the sword in a *Stretta* guard. That is, *Porta di Ferro Stretta* or *Coda Lunga Stretta*. This is usually in reference to a cut such as a *Mezzo Mandritto*. Often, such cuts are made with a turning of the hand (properly called a *Mezza Volta di Mano*) from one *Stretta* guard to another to deliver a quick cut to the opponent or a beat to the opponent's sword. For example, from *Coda Lunga Stretta* you could deliver a *Mezzo Mandritto* to the opponent's sword by vigorously turning your hand into *Porta di Ferro Stretta*.

Colpo Intero ('Full Strike')

A *Colpo Intero* is an attack that starts in a high guard and ends in a low guard. The most obvious example would be a *Mandritto Sgualembrato* that starts from *Guardia Alta* and ends in *Porta di Ferro Larga*.

The Targets of the Attacks

The target for most attacks falls within a narrow range of choices, depending on whether the attack is a cut or a thrust.



Primary targets for the cut

Cuts are generally used after a provocation (such as a beat or a feinted thrust), as a redoubled attack, or after a parry. The most common targets are the head and face, the forward leg, the sword arm and hand, and the off-arm and hand (when it is available as a target—usually when the opponent has a dagger or cape). The lower arm will occasionally be targeted with a half cut as a provocation, as will the leg (but in the latter case, only when you have a buckler or other off-hand weapon to protect yourself from a counterattack to your head or another upper target). In rare circumstances, a cut will target the foot, the chest, or the stomach.

In addition to wounding an opponent, cuts can also be delivered to the opponent's weapon to make a provocation, as an active parry, or as a defensive measure as you retreat out of measure after delivering an attack.

Thrusts are much more likely to be used as an opening attack as they do not require you to remove the point from presence during the preparation. The targets for the thrust are the face, the chest, the flank, the sword arm or hand, and less commonly, the stomach. A thrust to the arm or hand is usually part of a provocation, a stop hit (for example, when the opponent lifts his hand in preparation of a cut), or as a final defensive attack as you retreat out of measure. Thrusts to other targets such as the leg or the off-hand or arm are uncommon.



Primary targets for the thrust

Preparation of Full Cuts

Making a full cut will often require a preparation; that is, moving the blade to a position from which the motion of the cut can begin. For example, if you are in Porta di Ferro Stretta and wish to strike with a Mandritto, your sword must first be raised into the starting position for the cut. This can happen in two ways. First, you can move the sword directly along the path opposite to that of the cut you wish to deliver. For a Mandritto delivered from Porta di Ferro Stretta, this would mean either making the motion of a Falso Manco or a Riverso Ridoppio—both into a position similar to Guardia Alta—and then making the cut (aligning the true edge first, in the case of the preparation being made with a Riverso Ridoppio). Alternatively, you can prepare by following a different path than that of the cut, and circling the blade to the start of the cut. To cut a Mandritto from Porta di Ferro, this could mean lifting your sword along the path of a Falso Dritto, then circling it around your head to your right side and making the Mandritto. Alternatively, for a Mandritto, this might mean that you cut directly down through Coda Lunga Larga, and then circle the sword along your right side and up to the initial position of the Mandritto. Note that in these examples, the preparation for the cut was actually another cut which circled through one or more guards; the type of preparation to use will often be dictated by the tactical situation. To better illustrate the different mechanics of the preparation of cuts, here are some specific examples:

Executing a Mandritto:

1. Beginning in Porta di Ferro Stretta, make a Falso Manco into Guardia Alta and cut a Mandritto.
2. Beginning in Coda Lunga Stretta, make a Falso Dritto into Guardia di Sopra Braccio, circle your blade around your head into Guardia Alta, and cut a Mandritto.
3. Beginning in Porta di Ferro Stretta, turn your true edge upward, make a Riverso Ridoppio through Guardia di Lioncorno, circle the tip around into Guardia Alta, and cut a Mandritto.
4. Beginning in Coda Lunga Stretta, cut a Riverso (without any preparation) down through Coda Lunga Larga into Coda Lunga Lunga, circle your sword behind you and upward into Guardia Alta, and cut a Mandritto.

Executing a Riverso:

1. Beginning in Coda Lunga Stretta, make a Falso Dritto into Guardia di Sopra Braccio and cut a Riverso.
2. Beginning in Porta di Ferro Stretta, make a Falso Manco into Guardia Alta, circle your blade around your head into Guardia di Sopra Braccio, and cut a Riverso.
3. Beginning in Coda Lunga Stretta, turn your true edge upward, make a Mandritto Ridoppio through Guardia di Intrare, circle your tip around into Guardia di Sopra Braccio, and cut a Riverso.

4. Beginning in Porta di Ferro Stretta, cut a Mandritto (without any preparation) down through Porta di Ferro Larga into Guardia di Sotto Braccio, circle your sword upward and around your left side into Guardia di Sopra Braccio, and cut a Riverso.

Executing a Falso Dritto:

1. Beginning in Coda Lunga Stretta, cut a Riverso (without any preparation) down into Coda Lunga Larga and cut a Falso Dritto.
2. Beginning in Porta di Ferro Stretta, turn your true edge upward, make a Riverso Ridoppio through Guardia di Lioncorno, circle your point around your right side through Coda Lunga Lunga into Coda Lunga Larga, and cut a Falso Dritto.

Executing a Falso Manco:

1. Beginning in Porta di Ferro Stretta, cut a Mandritto (without any preparation) down into Porta di Ferro Larga and cut a Falso Manco.
2. Beginning in Coda Lunga Stretta, turn your true edge upward, make a Mandritto Ridoppio through Guardia di Intrare, circle your point around your left side through Guardia di Sopra Braccio, continue through Guardia di Sotto Braccio into Porta di Ferro Larga, and cut a Falso Manco.

Preparation of Half Cuts

The term *half cut* can be applied to any cut that ends in a Stretta guard—Coda Lunga Stretta, Porta di Ferro Stretta, or Cinghiara Porta di Ferro Stretta—with the point in presence. In this case, the preparation is identical to that for a normal Mandritto or Riverso. However, there is a special type of half cut that is delivered without any preparation, but by only turning the hand so that the point of the sword never moves outside of the presence of your opponent. This is the cut made with the *Mezza Volta di Mano* (Half Turn of the Hand). For example, starting from Coda Lunga Stretta you can deliver a Mezzo Mandritto to your opponent's sword arm by vigorously turning your hand into Porta di Ferro Stretta. Cuts made by a *Mezza Volta di Mano* are weaker than those delivered with a preparation, but do not offer the opponent as much opportunity to counter-attack during their execution.

Preparation of Wrist Cuts: the Tramazzone and the Molinetto

Both of these types of attacks are delivered with a circular motion of the wrist. Although they include a preparation (the circular motion of the blade), it is usually small enough that they can be considered to not have any preparation with regard to any accompanying steps (see below).

Thrusts

As with cuts, thrusts can also require a preparation. This often involves changing from one guard to another prior to pushing the point forward, such as turning from Coda Lunga Stretta to Porta di Ferro Stretta to deliver a Punta Riversa, or from Coda Lunga Stretta to Guardia di Lioncorno to strike with an Imbroccata. One distinguishing feature of pre-17th century Italian swordsmanship is the tendency to withdraw the hand somewhat during the preparation so that the thrust is delivered with an arm extension in addition to any step. However, the same rules apply when coordinating footwork with a thrust: everything must be timed so that the point hits the target as the front foot lands on the ground (see below). Remember that the Punta Ferma does not use the 'flinging' motion of the arm extension; it is delivered solely by the forward motion of

your step. After a thrust is delivered, the sword hand is usually immediately withdrawn, especially in when it is followed with another strike (such as a thrust redoubled with a Tramazzone). Each thrust has an ideal ending position as given in its description, although the tactical situation might dictate otherwise.

Coordinating Strikes and Steps

It is important that all motions be properly coordinated for each attack so that the hands, feet, and body work together to deliver the cut or thrust in an efficient manner. The timing between the hand and feet varies by the type of attack and the type of step, but in most attacks, the cut or thrust is coordinated so that it strikes its target at the same time as the final motion of your step. This often means that the preparation, if any, is performed with the first motion of the step. For example, if you are in Coda Lunga Stretta with the left foot forward, and wish to attack using a *Riverso* made with a *Chasing Step* forward, the preparation could be performed with the *Gathering Step* of the rear foot, and the cut delivered with the *Half Step* of the front foot. If you are in *Porta di Ferro Stretta* and wish to attack using a *Riverso* with a *Passing Step* forward, the preparation and cut must be timed so that the preparation occurs in the beginning stages of the pass and the cut strikes the target as the left foot hits the ground.

When coordinating an attack with an *Accrescimento*, you will usually need to perform any preparation before the step. If the *Accrescimento* is actually made as the first part of an *Advancing Step*, then the attack should hit the target at the same time that the forward foot is set in its new location. The motion of the rear foot merely resets the correct distance between your feet. There are a few other instances where you might have a final step which is performed after your attack has landed, such as with an *Oblique Passing Step* or an *Oblique Chasing Step*. In these cases, the steps are concluded with a *Circular Step* to align your body with the new line of direction, which is often performed after the attack has struck the target.

When coordinating footwork with a *Tramazzone* or *Molinetto*, you can often treat the attack as not having any preparation, as the circular motion of the wrist is usually quite small. However, you must still ensure that the cut is coordinated to strike the target as the foot lands.

Redoubled blows, such as repeating an initial attack (for example, a *Mandritto* followed by another *Mandritto*) or a strike followed by a *Tramazzone*, are executed so that the second strike is made without a step or in a succeeding step. For example, if you deliver a *Mandritto* with an *Oblique Passing Step*, you can redouble your blow with a *Tramazzone* delivered without a step or as you make a *Circular Step*.

There are a few circumstances where a cut might be made as you lift a foot rather than plant it. The most common example is the *Falso* cut delivered as a parry (see the next section). As you make the *Falso* to strike the opponent's blade to deflect his attack, you could also raise your foot in the beginning of an *Oblique Passing Step*; then your foot would land on the ground at the same time that you strike the opponent with the *riposte*. In this case, you can think of the *Falso* parry as the preparation for the *riposte*.

The Parries

We define a parry as a type of defense where the opponent's attack is actively prevented from reaching its target. These are of two types: 1. positioning your sword or other weapon to prevent the attack from reaching its target; 2. striking the opponent's attacking weapon with one of yours to intercept and deflect it so that it does not strike the target. While examples of both are found in the Bolognese treatises, the masters tend to prefer the second type over the first.

The first type of parry is made by placing your weapon or weapons in a particular guard or position such that the attack cannot reach its target. For example, against a *Riverso* to your head, you might parry by putting your sword in *Guardia di Testa*. Alternatively, you might parry the attack with an offhand weapon such as a buckler. When parries of this type are made with the sword, they are always made with the forte and nearly always made with the true edge. Sometimes a parry of this type will be combined with a counter-attack, such as parrying a *Riverso* in *Coda Lunga Alta* while stepping forward to deliver a *Punta Dritta* as a *Punta Ferma* to your opponent's face.

Parries of the second type, when delivered with the sword, can use either the true edge or the false edge. Ideally, a parry made with the false edge is made with the *debole* of your blade; however in both cases, you should always strike the opponent's sword so that the point of impact of the two blades is closer to the hilt on your sword than on the opponent's sword. A *Falso* parry is usually delivered as a *Falso Manco*, a *Falso Dritto*, or a *Montante* against a thrust or cut by the opponent, such as a *Falso Manco* used to parry a *Mandritto*. A true-edge parry is often a half cut made with a *Mezza Volta di Mano* from *Coda Lunga Stretta* to *Porta di Ferro Stretta*, or *Porta di Ferro Stretta* to *Coda Lunga Stretta*. For example, if you are in *Coda Lunga Stretta*, you could parry a *Stoccata* with your true edge by striking your opponent's sword with a *Mezzo Mandritto* and ending in *Porta di Ferro Stretta*. As with the first type of parry, you can sometimes combine the parry with a counterattack. For example, against a *Fendente*, you could perform an *Oblique Passing Step* to your left and deliver a *Riverso* that simultaneously parries your opponent's *Fendente* while delivering a cut to his head. Also, a parry made by positioning your sword can be done with a percussive element by more vigorously moving to the parry position. For example, if you are in *Porta di Ferro Larga* and your opponent attacks you with a *Riverso* to the head, by forcefully moving into *Guardia di Testa*, you are not just stopping his cut, but forcefully knocking his sword away.

One important aspect of parrying your opponent's attack is the accompanying step. There are several options which require much practice to fully understand; these can be summarized as follows: 1. you can retreat from an incoming attack, 2. you can move forward into the attack, 3. you can move laterally away from the attack—for example you could pass to your right against a *Mandritto*, and 4. you can move under an attack—for example, passing to your left to move under a *Mandritto*. The steps made to accomplish each of these movements are varied with a large number of combinations, but I will give a few examples to give a general idea:

1. Against a cut or thrust, parry while making an *Oblique Passing Step* away from the attack, then riposte while making a *Circular Step*.

Example: Starting in Porta di Ferro Stretta, against a Riverso to the right side of your head, make an Oblique Passing Step to your left with your left foot while parrying the Riverso with a Falso Manco. Then, as you make a Circular Step with your right foot, riposte with a Riverso to the opponent's head and end in Coda Lunga Stretta.

2. Against a cut or thrust, parry while making an Oblique Accrescimento away from the attack, then riposte while making a Circular Step.

Example: Starting in Coda Lunga Stretta with your right foot forward, against a Stoccata (to the inside), make an Oblique Accrescimento to your right with your right foot while making a Mezza Volta di Mano so that you parry with a Mezzo Mandritto. Then, as you make a Circular Step with your left foot, riposte with a Mezzo Verso to the opponent's sword-arm and end in Coda Lunga Stretta with your right foot forward.

3. Against a cut or thrust, parry while making a Gathering Step forward with your rear foot, then riposte while making a Half Step forward (i.e. parry and riposte with a Chasing Step).

Example: Starting in Coda Lunga Stretta with your right foot forward, against an Imbroccata, make a Gathering Step with your left foot while parrying with a Mezzo Mandritto. Then, as you make a Half Step forward with your right foot, riposte with a Punta Versa to the opponent's chest.

4. Against a cut or thrust, parry while making a Gathering Step back with your forward foot, then riposte while making an Oblique Half Step forward with your rear foot, followed by a Circular Step (i.e. parry and riposte with an Oblique Changing Step followed by a Circular Step).

Example: Starting in Porta di Ferro Stretta, against a Fendente, make a Gathering Step back with your right foot while parrying with a Falso Manco. Then, as you make an Oblique Half Step to your left with your left foot, riposte with Verso to the opponent's head, then finish by making a Circular Step with your right foot and end in Coda Lunga Stretta with your left foot forward. (Note that you could redouble during the Circular Step.)

5. Against a near-vertical cut, parry while making an Oblique Accrescimento under the cut, then Riposte while making a Circular Step.

Example: Starting in Porta di Ferro Stretta, against a Mandritto Sgualebrato to your head, make an Oblique Accrescimento to your left with your right foot (under the cut) while parrying with a Falso Manco. Then, as you make a Circular Step with your left foot, riposte with a Mandritto to the opponent's sword arm so that you end in Porta di Ferro Stretta. (Note that if your opponent were to attack you after your riposte, you could easily defend yourself with a Mezzo Verso by making a Mezza Volta di Mano.)

6. Against a cut, parry while making an Oblique Passing Step under the cut, then riposte while making a Forward Passing Step.

Example: Starting in Porta di Ferro Stretta, against a Mandritto Sgualebrato to your head, make an Oblique Passing Step to your left with your left foot (under the cut) while parrying with a Verso Ridoppio (here you would be in a position similar to Guardia di Lioncorno with your left foot forward). Then, as you make a Forward Passing Step with your right foot, riposte with an Imbroccata to the opponent's face or chest and withdraw your sword to end in Porta di Ferro Stretta.

In many cases, if the opponent retreats during the parry, the Circular Step could be replaced by a Forward Passing Step to maintain the measure, as in example 6.

Solo Drills for Steps and Attacks

I am including a set of drills so that those who are interested can practice the proper coordination of strikes and steps. These drills, in addition to improving the mechanics, will also help develop strength and stamina if done vigorously for a reasonable amount of time. If performed with a buckler, be sure to pay close attention to the position of your buckler to ensure that the arm always remains extended forward and parallel to the ground. I am only including a few drills to give a general idea and cover the most basic mechanics; with a little thought, you can come up with many more combinations of your own.

Gathering Step with Cut:

Start in Porta di Ferro Stretta:

1. Make a Gathering Step forward with your left foot and at the same time make the preparation for a Mandritto.
2. Step forward with your right foot while cutting a Mandritto into Porta di Ferro Stretta.
3. Repeat.

Start in Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward:

1. Make a Gathering Step forward with your right foot and at the same time make the preparation for a Riverso.
2. Step forward with your left foot while cutting a Riverso into Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward.
3. Repeat.

Both of the above drills can be performed backwards: make the preparation with a Gathering Step back with your front foot and make the cut as you step back with your rear foot.

Passing Step with Cut:

Start in Porta di Ferro Stretta:

1. Make a Passing Step forward with your left foot coordinated with the preparation and delivery of a Riverso which ends in Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward.
2. Make a Passing Step forward with your right foot coordinated with the preparation and delivery of a Mandritto which ends in Porta di Ferro Stretta.
3. Repeat.

This drill can also be performed while passing backwards by coordinating your steps and cuts.

Thrust & Cut with Gathering Step:

Start in Porta di Ferro Stretta:

1. Gather forward with your left foot and at the same time make a Punta Rivera.
2. Step forward with your right foot and make a Mandritto which ends in Porta di Ferro Stretta.
3. Repeat.

Start in Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward:

1. Gather forward with your right foot and at the same time make a Stoccata.
2. Step forward with your left foot and make a Riverso which ends in Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward.
3. Repeat.

Thrust & Cut with *Accrescimento* and Passing Step:

Start in Coda Lunga Stretta, Right Foot Forward:

1. Make an *accrescimento* forward with your right foot and at the same time make a Stoccata.
2. Pass forward with your left foot and make a *Riverso* which ends in Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward.
3. Make a *Mezza Volta di Mano* so that you are in *Cinghiara Porta di Ferro Stretta*.
4. Make an *accrescimento* forward with your left foot and at the same time make a *Punta Riversa*.
5. Pass forward with your right foot and make a *Mandritto* which ends in *Porta di Ferro Stretta*.
6. Make a *Mezza Volta di Mano* so that you are in Coda Lunga Stretta, Right Foot Forward.
7. Repeat.

The above drills can be varied by making steps offline, adding additional steps, and redoubling strikes. For example, the last drill could be varied by making the Passing Steps as *Oblique* and then redoubling while making a *Circular Step*:

Thrust & Cut with *Accrescimento* and Oblique Passing Step with Circular Step and Redoubled Strike:

Start in Coda Lunga Stretta, Right Foot Forward:

1. Make an *accrescimento* forward with your right foot and at the same time make a Stoccata.
2. Pass to your left with your left foot and make a *Riverso* which ends in Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward.
3. Make a *Circular Step* with your right foot and redouble with a *Mezzo Mandritto* which ends in *Cinghiara Porta di Ferro Stretta*.
4. Make an *accrescimento* forward with your left foot and at the same time make a *Punta Riversa*.
5. Pass to your right with your right foot and make a *Mandritto* which ends in *Porta di Ferro Stretta*.
6. Make a *Circular Step* with your left foot and redouble with a *Mezzo Riverso* which ends in Coda Lunga Stretta, Right Foot Forward.
7. Repeat.

A quick scan through *The Anonymous* or any of the other treatises can turn up some interesting and challenging actions which can serve as excellent solo drills:

A Sequence Based on an Action in *The Anonymous*:

Start in Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward:

1. While passing forward with your right foot, turn your hand into *Guardia di Lioncorno* and deliver an *Imbroccata*, continuing the motion of the sword so that you go into *Guardia di Sopra Braccio* and gather back with your right foot.
2. Without stopping the motion of your sword, turn it in the manner of a *Tramazzone*, as you step to your left with your left foot and strike with an *Imbroccata Riversa*.
3. Pass to your right with your right foot and deliver a *Riverso Ridoppio*.
4. Circle behind with your left foot while delivering a *Mandritto*.
5. Pass back with your right foot and redouble with a *Riverso* into Coda Lunga Stretta, Left Foot Forward.