

# **The Epic Study & Interpretation of the 1805 Manuel de Brea's Destreza-Fencing Treatise**

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## INTRODUCTION

This document pretends to be a translation, study and interpretation of the work done by Major Master Manuel Antonio de Brea in 1805. His special variation of Destreza and mixture of several swordsmanship styles, taken from international connections, is of great value to me and, in a way, inspired my style that I coined as Destreza Nova. My aim is to facilitate such knowledge to all rapier and smallsword lovers, especially those ones who want to approach to Destreza (Verdadera) and are scared to do the first steps. As I said many times in symposiums, the style of de Brea is fresh, multi-influenced and focused in the very fencing itself. There are many aspects such mathematical, philosophical or religious that are absent in his book, leaving pure knowledge of the technique we all want to exhibit in our fights.

I must say that there is already a de Brea's translation by John Cropper in a blog called "[Spanishsmallsword](#)" the same work was re-edited by Jean-Philippe Wojax and allowed me to add it on [destrezanova](#) page. Years ago I offered myself to support in the interpretation of such great job. However, after the creation of my own project, I found out that many people asked my personal opinion on the technique de Brea described and I found out that his book is very confusing to people who lacks a specific knowledge in Destreza. I am far from calling myself an expert, but for what I have been reading and practicing since 2008 I believe I can be of help to the community. Beware that you must consider this translation as a biased interpretation that has three purposes: firstly, I want to make more popular the work of Destreza and de Brea in particular, being an author that in my opinion had been unfairly ignored. Secondly, I would like to show all the links de Brea had with many authors of his context and find the reasons and references that influenced his knowledge. Lastly I want to promote the fact that all martial arts are in constant evolution. Nowadays some people have a low consideration at Destreza-mixture by de Brea, it is the same kind of people who laughed when they first heard about "Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu" or the same who come to troll on Destreza Nova. In a world where information is at one single click, ignorance is a terrible choice.

I spent many hours on this writing and I hope you give it a fair try. Sometimes it can have a humoristic touch, but I never wanted to be vulgar (pun intended) or to offend anyone. If there is anything that you think it must be corrected, feel free to contact me through the website, insulting me through the social media can be fun (for some), but it does not really help anyone. Remember to use this knowledge wisely. Fencing, like life, is to have fun and must be always operated in the best service of mind and spirit, for you and the community.

## FORMATTING

Since de Brea was kind of a modern for his time I use Arial Narrow when using his words/translation from the treatise. When I am talking (André) you will see the text in “Book Antiqua” format, sometimes between very long parenthesis and other times after a de Brea’s text, marked as “A”. Another point regarding my translation is the wording used. I pretend to be as simple as possible without being simplistic, it probably can sound too informal but it does not necessarily mean unprofessional, but the contrary, I think it makes it more understandable. In reference to the etymology, you might find out that I translated some particular concept/names that other translators might not dare to do. In the other hand I left other words untranslated. There is no consistency among translators and, after four years of instructing in both English and French I believe to have reached a high comprehension in what is more suitable to translate. Following the subject on *concepts*, there are many from Master de Brea that are differently understood and explained by other masters from his time, before and/or after: beware of it. In this text I added many references to other ancient authors, in which I believe Master de Brea could have been influenced or was the one influencing others. Sadly, the author does not name any other particular fencers and I think it is a mistake from his side. Therefore, you will find images from other treatises and books that I collected just to give some support to the knowledge of de Brea and should be considered, again, that is part of my own vision and judgement. As well, I believe that a Destreza glossary, available also in the [website](#), can be very useful to have at hand when reading this document.

Furthermore, another warning must be said regarding the images. De Brea’s images on the original book are sometimes inconsistent with the text, misplaced or wrongly numbered/mentioned. It would not be the first time that authors and drawing-artists have different knowledge and perceptions. Moreover, the man was old when his book got published, probably his vision and mind was prone to produce mistakes, not even mentioning the lack of a knowledgeable editor at hand. Therefore, I played a little on his images, cutting, editing, pasting and so on. Again, it is done with the best of my intentions in order to ease lecture. Since some purists could found that chaotic, at the end of this document, after the references, I added an annex with all the untouched images. Find also in there an index of his chapters.

Finally, this work has been edited by my own standards of formatting. I consider that all the official formats (Chicago, MLA, etc.) are just ugly. However, I attempted to make it as close as possible as any academic guidelines to make it familiar to your minds. The names of the images could be a bit chaotic, that is due to my inexistent edi-

tor. For the rest of the text, consider all the fencers female by default (like many role-game manuals) and right-handed unless said otherwise, even though the name *diestro* (user of Destreza) has been kept in masculine in order to not confuse (even more) the English community.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My love for promoting fencing would not be possible without my Master Aleix Basullas, who wrongly believes I don't read much, and of course Sendo Espinalt "the other" Master. I must mention that the many manual translations found in the internet by Tim Rivera made me think of how valuable his *free* work is and how *eternal* will become as well. I am jealous and I want to do something as well, although it will be just a shadow of his steps. Many other people should be mentioned, but there would not be enough bytes in the internet or pages for that. In any case, I must give my many thanks to the nice community in the internet, and the once less nice, since they also push the peers to work harder. Extra thanks go to Destreza Discord and all the nice people inside. I must mention Sergi Reig, for the insight he gave me on "unconventional" Spanish authors. As well, my thanks to la Compagnie Médiévale, Arte Dimicatoria, American Smallsword Symposium and all the people who invited me to do international symposiums of my art in countries such Spain, Canada, China, US and Mexico. Finally, to my pupils: they give sense to everything I do.

Try always to do well and don't be a dick.

## ABOUT MANUEL ANTONIO DE BREA and HIS TREATISE

Manuel Antonio de Brea entered as a Fencing Instructor in the Real Seminario de Nobles (Nobiliary Royal High-School) of Madrid in 1782<sup>1</sup>. Since that date he taught fencing to a wide variety of students until he retired in 1808. At first, he was just a regular instructor for civilians, teaching the arts of fencing to noble teens, which surely was not well received by some of them. I say the latter because fencing was an obliged subject at school and, believe it or not, there are people who do not like it.

In 1785, the school widens its teachings by annexing *Colegio de Caballería de Ocaña*<sup>2</sup> (Equestrian School of Ocaña), the aim of which was centered in preparing Cavalry army for Elite force in the Army. Manuel de Brea starts teaching the art of fencing to this new group and a year later his teachings will also be received by another annexed group to the school: the *Caballeros de la Casa de Pajes* (I can only translate it as Royal Household Cavalry school). It is important to mention that leading teachings of fencing to Royal-bound members was an exclusive duty to the holder of the title of Maestro Mayor (Major Master), which at that time was not Manuel de Brea, but Diego de Cea y Carrillo<sup>3</sup>. The whole title name was “Maestro en la Ciencia Filosófica y Matemática de la Destreza de las Armas y Examinador de todos los del Reyno” (Master in the Mathematics and Philosophic science of Destreza of Weapons and Examiner of everyone in the Kingdom). This specific title was like in the movie *The Highlander* “it can only be one”. This means that another person cannot hold the title until the previous holder renounces to it or dies. At the death of Diego de Cea, the title divides to *Maestro Mayor* and *Maestro de Pajes* and de Brea takes the first, but teaches to everyone: it is confusing (also to me) but that is what the few sources tell us about it.

Little (actually nothing) we know about the early life of Manuel Antonio de Brea before the date. According to his sayings he learnt from multiple masters of fencing from different countries and he applied that knowledge to his writings in the manuscript of 1805. However, it is possible that his own title and influence helped him to establish contact among other masters along Europe. It must be said, that early in his years of teaching, the Domenico Angelo’s 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his book of fencing came to light, with English text and many good drawings. Probably de Brea got some influence from it, as we see some techniques in which the name got appropriated by de Brea and included in his *Destreza* Manuscript, such the one of *Fanconada*, one that Angelo mentions as *Flanconade*. Moreover many other masters of his time and previous had some similarities to the style and I tried to use them as support to disentangle his text.

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<sup>1</sup> Carretero - *Manuel Antonio de Brea*.

<sup>2</sup> Mogaburo - *18<sup>th</sup> century teachings*.

<sup>3</sup> Nieves - *La esgrima y el mundo de la espada en la España moderna*. Pg. 80

If I could define de Brea's treatise in one word that would be: *pragmatic*. He is concise and has no wish to differ far from a subject. However, you will see in many occasions that he mentions concepts, which later on, will be forgotten for the rest of the book. This is because his work sometimes functions as an encyclopaedia, explaining concepts without an explicit need to tie them together. Other times the opposite happens, he ties concepts without explaining meanings of the etymology he uses. I believe that occurred due to a desperate attempt to summarize his great knowledge in such a small document. Many times you will read him saying "I don't explain this because it would take too long." That sentence gives a hint of how difficult is for many authors to throw all their knowledge at the public in an organized manner. It has been years I am attempting to write down my knowledge and usually, after 100 pages, I re-start again a new document.

With no more excuses, I present you the translation, study and interpretation of "*Principios Universales Y Reglas De La Verdadera Destreza Del Espadin, Segun La Doctrina De Francesa Italiana Y Española, Dispuestos Para Instrucción De Los Caballeros Seminaristas Del Real Seminario De Nobles De Esta Corte, por su Maestro D. Manuel Antonio de Brea, Maestro Mayor y Examinador de Todos los del Reyno*" (that is the full title).

**Universal Principles and General Rules of the ~~True Art~~ Verdadera Destreza Regarding the Use Of Smallsword, Based In a Mixture of Spanish, French and Italian Disciplines. All Purposed for the Teaching of Fencing to the Gentlemen Attending to Royal Nobiliary School of this Kingdom. By Master Manuel Antonio De Brea, Major Master of Fencing and top Examiner of the Whole Kingdom.<sup>4</sup>**

MADRID, ROYAL HOUSE PRINT, 1805

To Mr. Andrés López y Sagastizábal, knight from the Royal Order of Carlos III (I refuse to translate names), brigadier of the Royal army and General Director of the Royal Nobiliary School.

Dear Director,

Two powerful reasons push me to dedicate you this short book on principles of Verdadera Destreza: First, the love you gave to this Art from your position as Director of the School, and the second the admiration I have for you as Master of the Knights (could be riders, since there were riders as well). I must just place all my greetings in all support received by you as Director, because it was that support that push me to fill my duties in the school, which became my eternal glory. I cannot say it clearer that I owe you this book, made by many years of study and experience, all destined to the skill of the arms. All my desires would be fulfilled if this document achieves teaching the exercise of the basic principles to the gentlemen of this school. There are other aspects aside of technique, such the promotion and love for the art, that are not covered in this book, but I believe your sole presence will take care of them in the future teachings. That being said, the same Nobility of Spain and the school owe you much for the existence of those values. The noble students will remember in this document how they grandparents enjoyed such decent and manly (facepalm) exercises, in order to become deserved owners of noble titles and gain the trust of their sovereigns. With this powerful stimulus, every person who walks with a sword, in war or in peace, will show the respect this Art (Destreza) deserves, and the respect of our ancestors will shine again. As well, they will achieve the skills and maturity needed in order to dwell a dignified life at the service of Religion and the Homeland, and therefore accomplish the final wish.

Your most grateful servant.

*Manuel Antonio de Brea*

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<sup>4</sup> De Brea - *Principios Universales de la verdadera destreza del Espadín*.



## INTRODUCTION

In this volume, which is small in size but huge in both strength and correctness of its teachings, I offer to the Spanish Nobility an easy method to defend oneself, or, if necessary, to attack one's opponent, which is, in its simplest forms, what fencing is. Although I could have done it, I decided not to fill the book with quotations from famous ancient and contemporary authors to back up my teachings. It did not seem helpful or useful to do this because I am sure of my teachings. They do not need any back up or support. I have seen and read various books and in all of them, I find major inconsistency and contradiction when amassing volumes of information, adding more confusion than help, with no purpose at all. In this book, I do not cover the origins of the sword or swordplay. Neither do I cover mathematics. These might all be useful, but by experience I learnt that is wise to leave them out, because people who just want to learn sword fight they will find those concepts a waste of time. This is especially true given that those areas of learning can be studied separately. (I believe de Brea is right when mentioning the inconsistency and the less useful concepts of other authors, but I also think it is a poor excuse for leaving out of mention all the masters that he learnt from. Therefore, I don't feel bad in filling his study with many external references: they are not meant to confuse, but the opposite.)

My work has been motivated by a sense of duty to my homeland and the fact that I have participated in several conferences with foreigners, especially French and Italians. All of them insisted that their method was the best one, words that were justified by solely narcissism. They do not take into account that the Verdadera Destreza is a science based on universal principles, with no country of origin thus no geographical limits. It belongs to all those gentlemen people of good taste, titled or not, as well as any members of the militia, who need to learn how to use a sword in order to successfully carry out their orders or resolve any situation in which they find themselves into. Failure in such sort of events can lead to death or, in worse case, the loss of honor. My method of fencing, which I offer to you, will easily, clearly and with no confusion, teach anyone to defend oneself.

I am sure that there will be people who will criticize part of my writings, or even the whole of it. I will suffer patiently; however, as others have done before me I will say that many more are prepared to argue with words rather than deeds. Furthermore, I know that those who disdain what I have written will be copying me in secret.

A: This last paragraph is absolutely brilliant, nothing changed since then. Haters existed before social media. A glimpse to some facebook pages is enough to find them anywhere. The presence of alt-right diestros in the net made many HEMA people stay away of Destreza (mostly Verdadera). Sadly, those superiority complexes brought much bad publicity to the Art. So at any time in your life, if you ever become good in what you have learnt, I ask you the following: show good intentions and be nice at people. If you love your art, don't push people away from it, but the contrary, open its doors to them.

## CHAPTER 1: TYPES OF FOILS AND GRIPS (Ways to hold it)

The smallsword, which will be called foil from now on, since we will use it to learn to fight and do exercises, must be of 3 castilian feet or one vara (wand), from the point to the hilt.

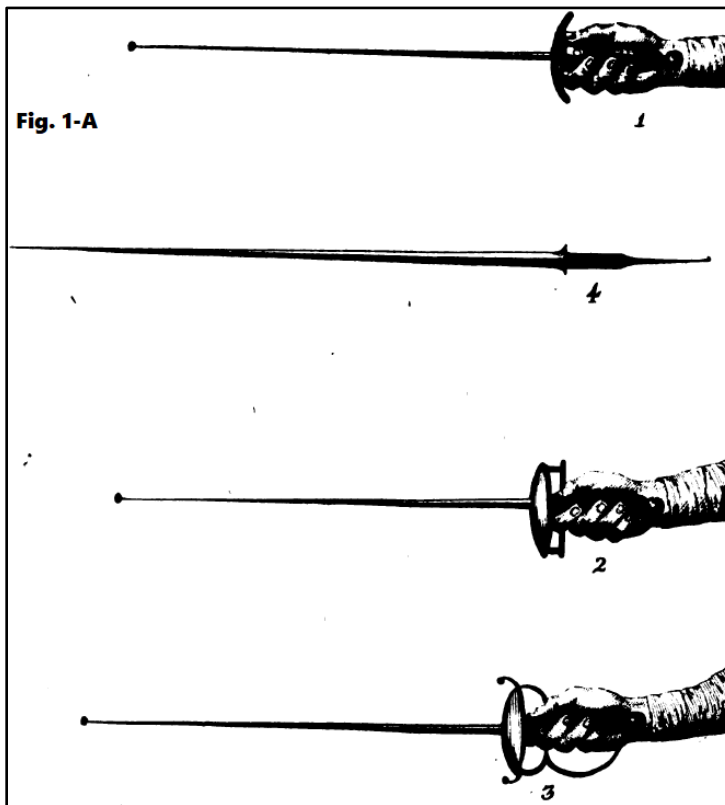
A: This is 83 cm. Luckily, 4 years before the publishing of this book (1801) the measurement units in Spain were unified<sup>5</sup>, before that, every city had different values for each unity of measurement, something chaotic.

This measure does not start at the cross (as we usually do), but it goes from the visible blade out of the cup until the point. The type of sword described will be examined after the text.

The hilt will be small and there are many types out there: the first one I describe to you is a round one plate, with 4 fingers of diameter (8-10 cms) a bit round, with long handle and heavy pommel, you can see it in **image #1** from **figure 1-A**. The second one (**#2**), in which 2 rings will come out of the grip to the plate, has a cross (ricasso) of 1 finger tall (1-1.5 cms).

The third one, **#3**, has the same kind of hilt but with the adding of 2 quillons, getting out 1 inch. The plate is quite round and allows space inside to place two fingers, surrounding and pinching the ricasso (assisted by the thumb). The ricasso is rounded and wide, so it won't hurt your hand. The handle is short and wide, so the pommel doesn't surpass the base of the palm of the hand where there are the so called "rascette lines".

A: Generally in Destreza, sword handles are short and the pommels never surpass the palm. That allows you to have more mobility and the sword does not get stuck when drawing cuts or reverses. There are many rapier in the market that are labeled *for Destreza*, but they display wrong characteristics, such incredible long grips or with huge pommels. Those example are made by blacksmiths with no knowledge or advice on Destreza. Unfortunately many HEMA users think that "any rapier" works.



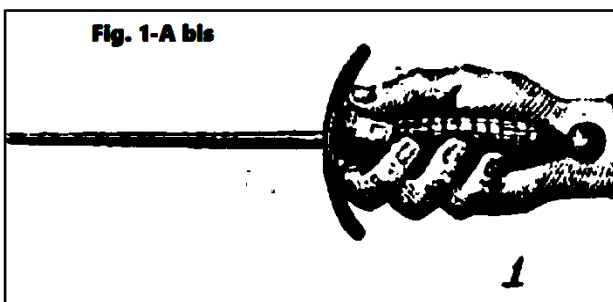
<sup>5</sup> Dedieu et Vincent. *L'Espagne, l'État, les Lumières*, pg. 289.

These are the 3 types of hilts/handles you can find, more universal and useful which will allow you to work with quite ease.

The foil can be held in 3 different ways:

Firstly, in #1, we appreciate no fingers in the ricasso (because there is no ricasso). This one has the most reach, but has less power and is less tight to the hand. French users go that way in all their actions.

A: If you observe in a bigger detail, in this grip (**fig 1-A bis**), the index and middle finger embrace the handle of the sword. The final anatomy of the arm and sword reminds to the modern pistol handle of nowadays. It is indeed an awkward way of holding the sword, but that same grip



has been seen in a “fan-art” manual of fencing made around 1755 by someone called ACO<sup>6</sup>. You can observe the mentioned image in **figure ACO-1**. About that book, it is said, that had been once in the possession of the very Alfred Hutton. However I could not find solid information backing up such fact.

The second grip is putting one finger on the ricasso, (plus the thumb), as you see in #2. This one loses 1 finger of reach (1.5 cms). However it is stronger than the first and is the one preferred by the

Italians. (In here, de Brea keeps talking on stereotypes, advocating that the one finger was typical of Italians. However such grip can also be seen in Early Destreza of 17<sup>th</sup> century. As well, inside the *Italian style* different grip systems can be encountered. Sadly there is the tendency of putting all of them inside the same theme, from Agrippa until Marcelli.)



The last one in #3, with two fingers (2 + the thumb) loses 2 fingers of reach (3-4 cms), but it is the strongest grip and the one we should go for. Because with it we can do all the movements implemented in Verdadera Destreza, as I will prove you.

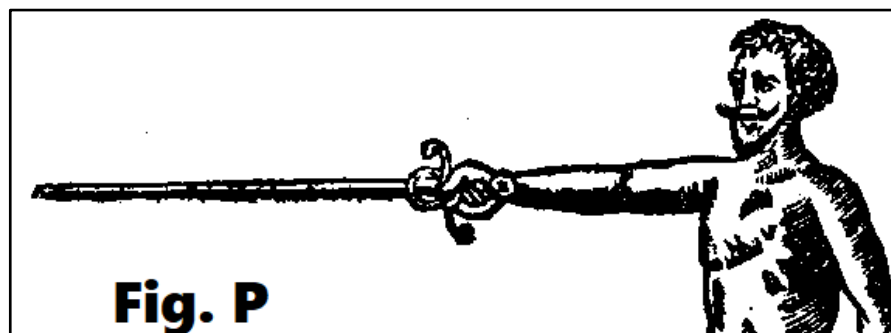
Beware that the empty space inside the cup is called concavity, the round shape outside is convexity. Ricasso is the inside part of the blade between the plate and the cross. If you see a naked blade you can see that part as it is depicted in #4 of **figure 1-A**.

A: Aha! Here there is a very interesting point that I use in my lectures / workshops to validate use rapier in de Brea martial art. As you can see the blade shown in #4 is not a

<sup>6</sup> AOC. *Libro de Armas*, pg. 10.

foil, but a “real” one, longer, wider, which specifications reminds us to the type of blade used nowadays as rapier. That suggests me that even if de Brea was teaching with a foil and talking about a smallsword, the real weapon that was in the background of his philosophy was no other than a rapier-like one, or at least a transitional one. As you will see in this book, he doesn’t limit the blade to thrust, but he goes also for cuts, reverses and even mentions attacks to the legs. Such maneuvers are not inside the stereotypical range of the smallsword use, but for rapier. As well, at some point at the end of the book, he mentions how the fencers arrive to the club, remove their “court swords” and take the trainees, which have more old-fashioned look than the swords they were using at that time. Thus, his philosophy could easily be adapted by rapierists.

Many people argue that de Brea was too modern, and using a kind of foils that do not behave as rapiers, and therefore *Purely Destreza* concepts cannot apply to him. Nevertheless, I would advise to all detractors to take a look at the swords in use in the first treatises of Destreza, from Pacheco/Carranza<sup>7</sup> (see **figure P**) and compare those swords to the ones that de Brea uses. Besides, take a look at the “rapiers” you see in your club. I would bet that the swords that you most have and identify as rapiers are closer to the ones on de Brea’s book rather than Pacheco & Co. Most of the new rapiers I actually find in the tournaments are thinner and lighter every now and then. For all these reasons, the next time you hold a rapier take in consideration that de Brea could be one of the best treatises for you.

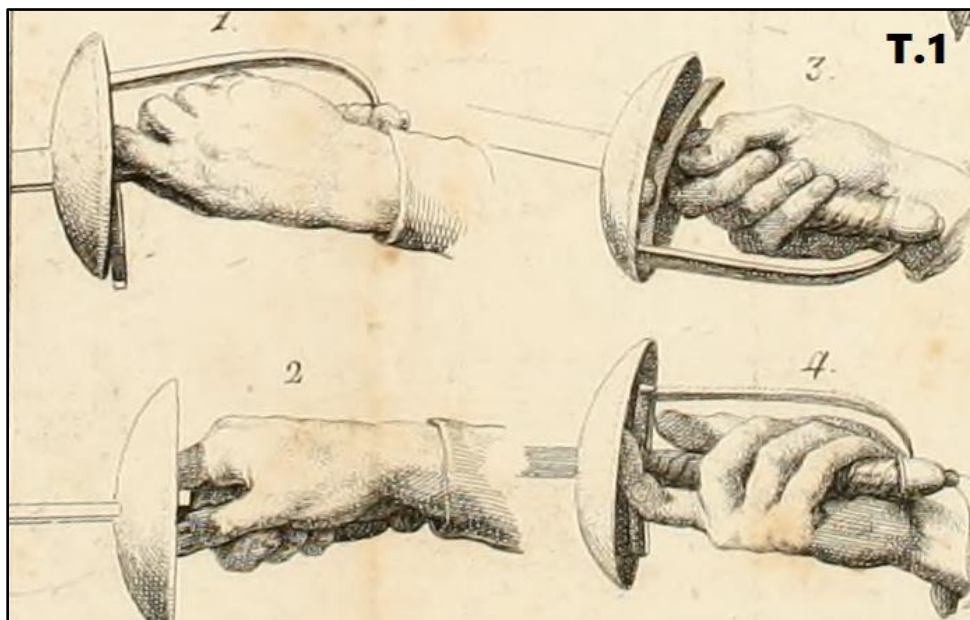


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<sup>7</sup> Pacheco – *Grandezas de la Espada*, pg. 39

## CHAPTER 2: HAND POSITIONS

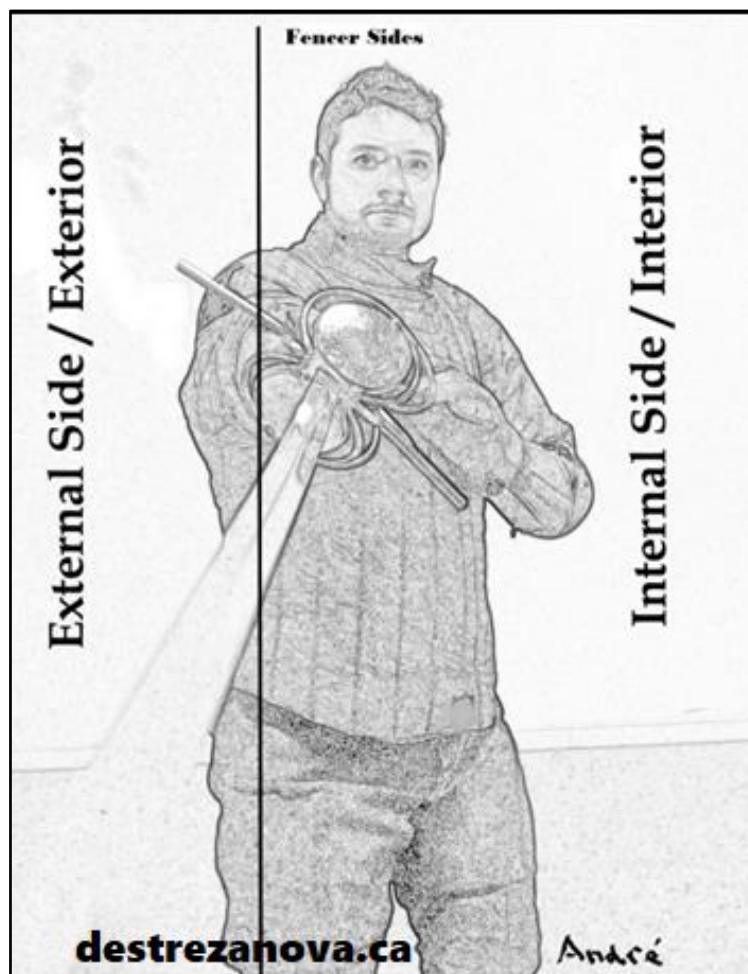
The hand positions are 6. *Nails-in*, *Nails-out*, *nails-down* and *nails-up*. Then we have the participle positions (I call them *mid* positions) and those are called *participle nails-up* (mid nails-up) and *participle nails-down* (mid nails-down. Beware that he does not mention it here, but he will put names after from first, second, etc. following the way he named then. Therefore the first position will be nails-in. In any case it is always better to stick to nails position to not be confused with inconsistencies.) These are the ways the hand position should do all offense and defensive actions. Beware that the *inside* part represents the chest and the *outside* represents the back of the fencer.



A: Since Mr. de Brea does not include any image from the hand positions, I stole the image from an Italian treatise that came out only 5 years before the one of Manuel A. de Brea. This is the *Paolo Bartelli*<sup>8</sup> (1800) and you can refer to hand positions in **image T1** from his treatise. The first drawing corresponds to a nails-out hand position. #2 would be nails-down, #3 is nails-in and finally #4 is the one of nails-up. The participle or mid positions would be a mixture between #2 and #3 for the mid nails-down position, whereas a participle or a mid nails-up position would be a mixture of #3 and #4. These participle positions are very important, because they are a sort of *standard* hand positions during the combat. As mentioned, Mr. De Brea doesn't want to extend himself into many explanations, since sometimes he considers some concepts too simple and easy for anyone who has his book at hand. In any case, since my own system of *Destreza Nova* is highly related to his fencing, you might find many concepts in the website [destre-](#)

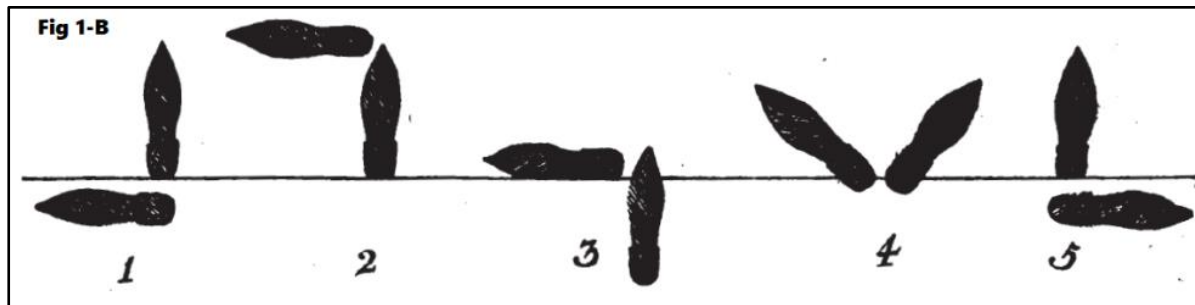
<sup>8</sup> Bartelli - *Trattato di Scherma*, annex-T1.

[zanova.ca](http://zanova.ca), where you can refer when searching some names, as well refer to the glossary aforementioned. Not everything I know, gladly comes from de Brea, so, be careful interpreting my notes at any time. An important slide from the website that must be understood by any fencer, and I paste in here, is the *inside* or *internal side* of the fencer and the *exterior* or *external side* of the fencer, concepts he just mentioned at the end of the paragraph. In my humble opinion, this entire chapter should be learnt by heart, since all the rest of the book will be built with these mentioned concepts.





## CHAPTER 3: FEET POSITIONS / STANCES

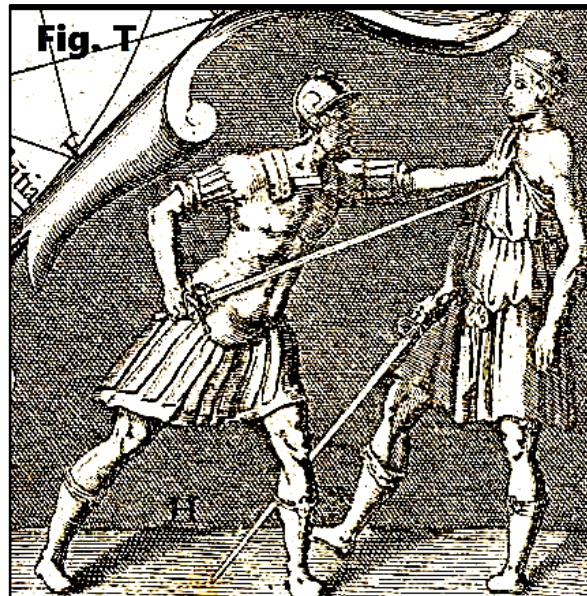


The feet positions are 5. The #1 goes by the right foot forward and left behind, heels together, making a right angle (I believe this diagram lacks consistency of the distance among the two feet, and only shows the schematic-relative position of them). From the first position we derive the other 4. The #2 is when we step forward with left, placing still a right angle with the right foot. The #3 is when we step with the right foot backwards, keeping again a right angle and straight legs (he doesn't make it clear, but it comes again from #1 to #3 and you only move right foot, thus the horizontal line is wrongly drawn, but I believe is intended to make them all fit in the same square of the image). #4 is placing your body squared (this word comes from Verdadera Destreza and it refers to "showing" your chest to your opponent), your legs are together, feet point diagonally out and front of your body, making obtuse angle (to me that is right angle, but anyway). The #5 is the same position as the first one but the left foot goes forward and the right backwards (inverted feet position or as I call it, *disarming step*, when the movement is involved). All these positions can be seen in **figure 1**. (1-B). The uses of these positions are the following:

1. We use this one to be profiled.
2. We use this one occasionally when pushing the enemy and gaining control of her weapon.
3. This one is to step away of the opponent and is also used for the salutation. Moreover it is a good position for turning your body and stop the opponent (I understand this position can help changing the position of your shoulders, front to back, as done in many martial arts in order to break the power of someone who bull-runs you, also, is a fast way to put your body away with only one step).
4. This one is totally squared body position, used to take the weapon from the floor (when doing all the courtesy of pre-sparring).
5. This one is to free your weapon or use a mix angle.

A: When freeing the weapon, it can refer to the specific situation in which the fencers are too close and the swords have no use if engaged, as well, to prevent the enemy to hold our sword. In both cases, if we want to put some space between our sword and the enemy, the best is to step back with the right. There is

an image in the manual of Thibault d'Anvers<sup>9</sup> (**figure T**) in which he mentions such distance, calling it *mesure étroite* (narrow distance). Also I took the liberty of adding another image from ACO<sup>10</sup>, showing a *Conclusion* or Disarm in **figure ACO-2**. Observe the advanced left foot.



<sup>9</sup> Thibault - *Académie de l'espée*. Table 1, Figure G.

<sup>10</sup> AOC. *Libro de Armas*, pg. 35.



## CHAPTER 4: REGARDING THE ANGLES

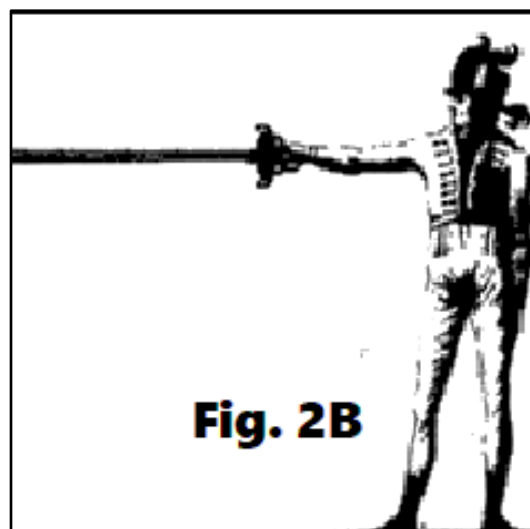
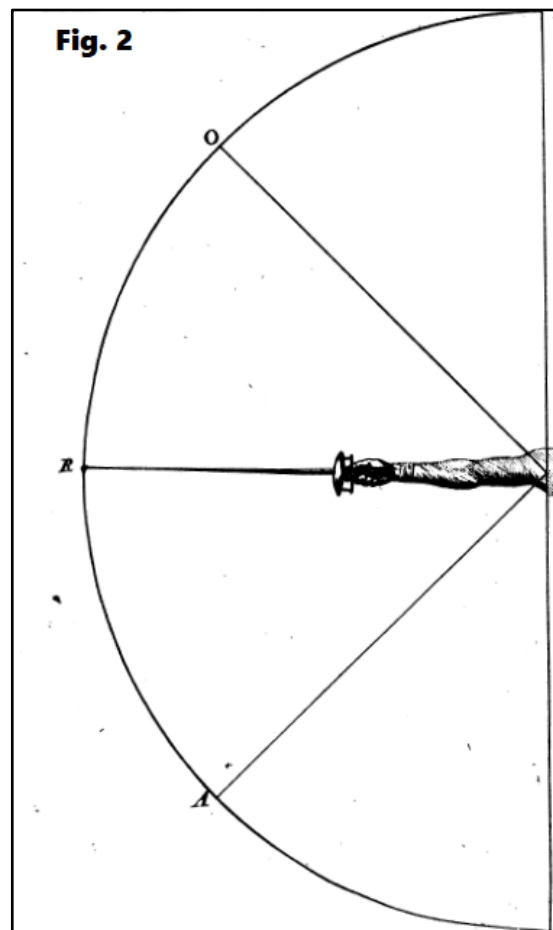
The types of angles that a diestro (the user of Destreza) can do using her feet, body, arm and foil are three: right, obtuse and acute angle. (In this case is basically arm-sword). Let's explain them.

Imagine the diestro at his #1 feet position, straight body, profiled, wielding the foil. The arm will be extended creating a right angle. You can see that described as letter **R** in the **figure 2**. (As well I created **figure 2B**, *manipulating* drawings from de Brea's own book. The angle in this image is more visually helpful than the one he offers for the matter.)

The obtuse angle will be done raising the arm and weapon, as it shows in **letter O**. The acute angle goes when we put the arm and weapon pointing downwards, under right angle. We can see it pictured in **letter A**.

As you see figure 2 the angles are measured in the union of the arm with the body. (I call that arm-pit).

A: At some point he will talk about the mixed angle. Mixed angles refer to different position or different angle between the arm and the sword.



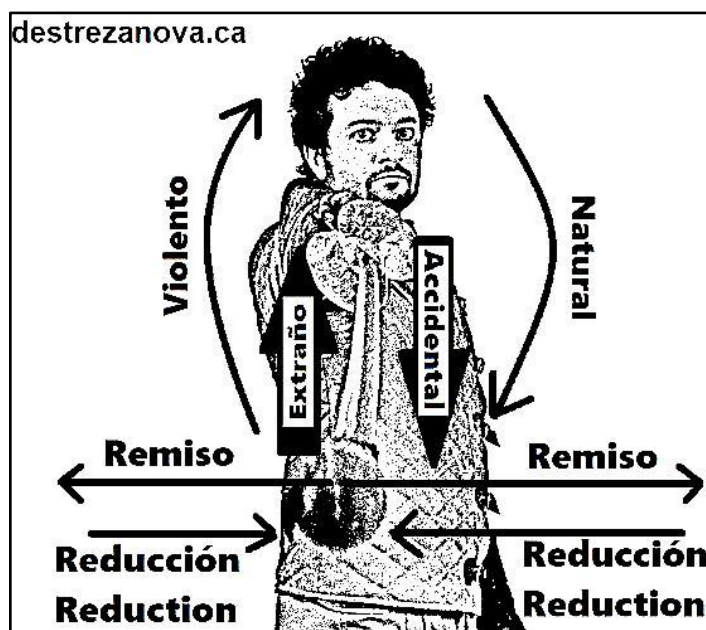
## CHAPTER 5: BASIC SWORD MOVEMENTS

A: In this chapter he will talk about the movement of the sword in the 3 axis (Cartesian Axis), the horizontal, vertical and depth. Verdadera Destreza used many mathematical forms, but never talked about Cartesian axis. Descartes was not born yet at the time of Carranza and Pacheco, and afterwards no one thought of using them for Destreza until me.

The simple movements to know are 6: *violento*, *natural*, *remise* (remiso), *reduction* (reduccion), *extraño* and *accidental*. Among them, 3 of them are considered *dispositive* movements (load and action, pulling sword out of the center) and the other 3 are *executive movements* (sword goes to the center). To start such movements, we must consider the diestro positioned in right angle. When arm and sword goes up, this will be *violento*, a dispositive. When goes down (from up and towards the center), will be called *natural*, which is an executive movement. Again from the right angle and center, moving your sword to one of the sides will make the *remise* movement (remiso), this will be a dispositive movement. From any of the sides to the center, doing an executive movement, we will find the *reduction* movement. When we pull the sword from right angle towards our body we will call it *extraño*, a dispositive movement. Finally, extending the sword forward will be called *accidental*, the executive movement.

To any thrusting movement we will call it *puncture wound* (or *piercing wound*). Any other wound, that is no thrust, will be called *cutting wound* (I would go for *laceration* or, even better, *edge attacks*).

A: Observe the schematic picture below, with the ugly guy, for easy reference on the basic sword movements.

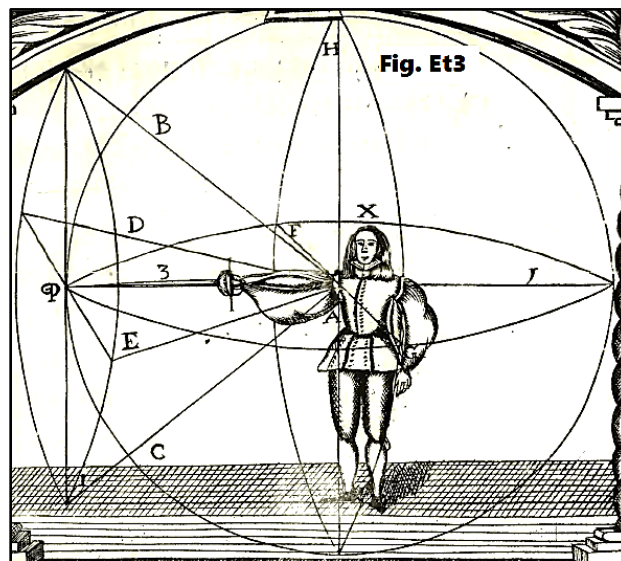


## CHAPTER 6: RECTITUDES

A: I translated the term direct and plainly, possibly too risky but I think it does the deal. To Destreza understanding, it refers to the limits of positioning your sword and arm facing an opponent. It is another pedagogical concept that helps describing a position. A good way to practice these positions at class is by linking them with the movements of the sword mentioned in the previous chapter. For example: “*We move the sword with violento until high rectitude*”.

The general *rectitudes* are 6: these positions mark the extreme in which a diestro can place her body when facing an opponent. You can raise your arm and sword as much as you can, then lower it until the point of the sword touches the floor. Then you can put it horizontal to your right side, as much as possible and then left side. Afterwards, we pull backwards the armed arm as much as possible and then we draw a line frontwards. The names of each of them are: *high, down, outside, inside, backwards* and *frontwards*.

A: Don Francisco de Ettenhard is one of the “classical authors” who well described the *rectitudes of the sword* in his treatise from 1675. Observe **figure Et3**, from his Compendio<sup>11</sup> treatise for reference.



<sup>11</sup> Ettenhard. *Compendio de los fundamentos de la verdadera destreza, y de la filosofía de las armas*. Pg. 23

## CHAPTER 7: BODY POSTURES

The Universal and useful postures for the body that the diestro can do for any defense and offense are three and she doesn't need more than those. There are people that tried to add 2 French ones, 2 Italians, 2 Spanish and 1 mixed. However I find such concepts superfluous and confusing. Thus, I decided to exclude them.

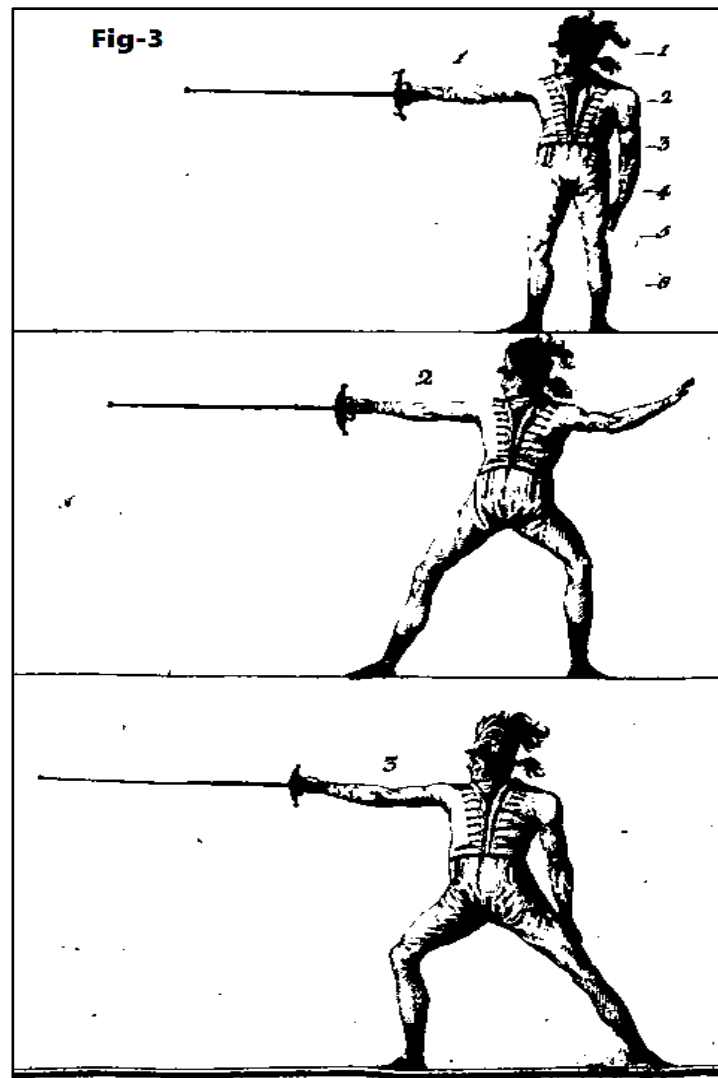
Firstly we have the *useful* stance (in my discipline I called *standard*). Imagine the diestro standing straight, profiled and with the #1 feet position, but with the only difference that should be 1 foot of distance among your feet. (He refers to "user feet" so it would be different for each person, which makes sense). You can see this in the #1 of figure-3.

*Second body posture.* Now imagine your feet 2.5 feet distance one among the other. Lowering your gravity point and flexing your legs. Your left foot points outside (this outside refers to "a bit backwards"), towards the same position where your knee is pointing. Your weight should be mostly on your left leg and be totally profiled. Your opponent should see only your profile, as you can see in #2. This *body position* can be done in 2 ways: pushing forward your front foot, or pulling backwards your back foot. (Think as this one as a defensive stance.)

*Third body position.* In this case there should be a distance of 3 feet among your heels. You lower your body like before but bend the front knee, forming a perpendicular line with the heel of your front boot, while the other leg is extended, making a triangular line with the rest of the body. Your body should be diagonally forward and down, as seen in #3 from figure 3.

This body positions are useful for everything and you cannot do anything in Destreza without knowing them. We cannot put a fixed measure in these postures, because no person is made equal.

A: These postures must be memorized, since de Brea uses them in the entire book.



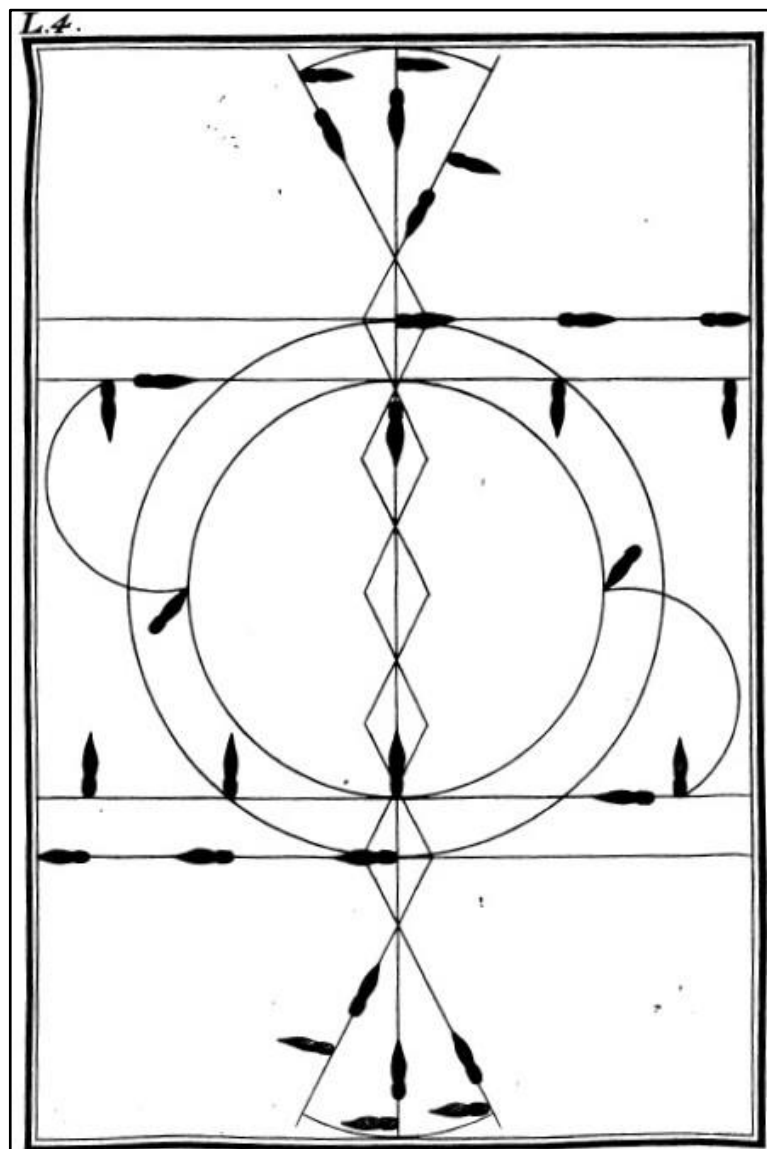
## CHAPTER 8: STEPS

A: Also referred as Compass, if you check the definition of compass in an English dictionary, it comes from “steps” and in the treatises of Destreza are used as such. Lorenz de Rada<sup>12</sup> uses compass (actually *compás en género*) for the movement of both feet, thus focusing in the transportation of your body from one place to the other. De Brea uses *Compases* (plural) with the same purpose but sometimes the word *step* slips out of the unconscious. Therefore, to ease communication I will explain them with the same coding I use at my classes:

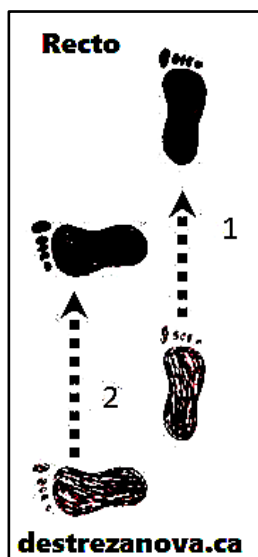
**Step** = movement of the body, includes two feet movement.

**Single step** = movement of one foot alone.

The steps are 7 and all very necessary for applying Verdadera Destreza. These steps are: *Recto*, *Extraño*, *Trepidante*, *Curvo*, *Transversal*, *Retrocedente de Transversal* and *Mixto de Transversal y Curvo*. In order to know them, imagine two circles on the floor, called *common circles*. Each circle will be contacting one of your heels/feet and the other side of the perimeter will contact the same feet of your opponent. One circle is 2 feet wider than the other, as each fighter has 1 foot distance among her feet, as we stated in #1 feet position. These circles will be divided by a straight vertical line, the *Diameter line* (Summarized in the future by just *Diameter* for easing reading). For each foot, there will be a horizontal line, those will be parallel and will be called *Infinite lines*, since they never touch each other (I tell the students that they work like train rails). Now we can define every step.



<sup>12</sup> Lórenz de Rada, Francisco. *Nobleza de la espada*. Vol II. Pg. 45.



*Recto* step goes following the diameter line, you start from the right foot forward (I pulled from my website the image of **Recto**, observe it at the right side for reference), and the left foot follows it. You will end up in #1 feet position. If you do the inverse, you will be doing the one called *Extraño*. It is done by moving back first with the left foot and then following with the right one.

A: Remember that the basic sword movement in depth axis towards backwards is also called *Extraño* and could lead to confusion.

Following the *Infinite lines*, inside or outside (this is left or right), we will have *Trepidantes*. (His explanation on *trepidantes* ends here and he doesn't mention it, so I will do it: You always must start moving the foot belonging to the side that you are moving to. Thus, when moving left, use first left foot and follow with right one. It will be vice versa to the right side, starting with right and following with left. It

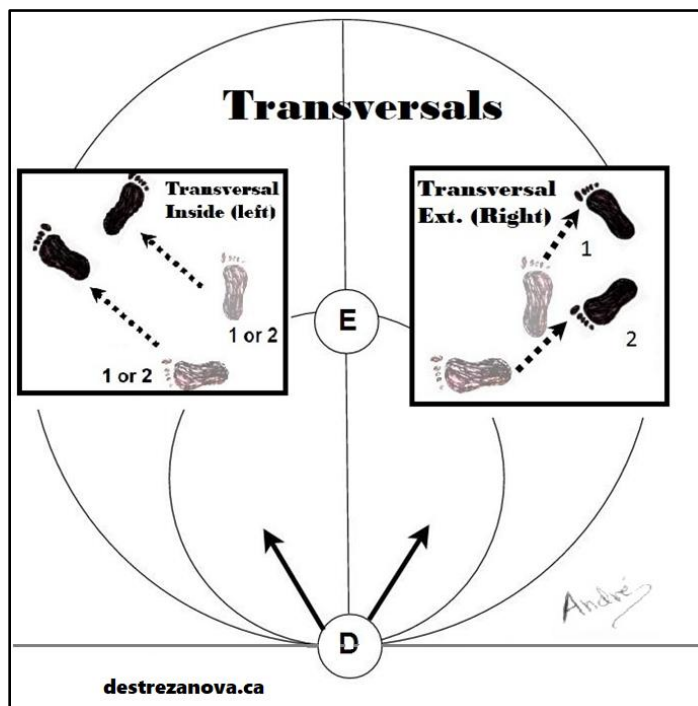
is never recommended to cross your feet.)

We call the *Curvo* when we walk through the circumference; each foot corresponds to its own circumference.

We call it *Transversal* when we cross the Diameter line to one side or the other, walking forward and one side, (or just "moving diagonally". Again, I pulled an schematic image from the website that can help you see this movements. Refere to the image called **transversals**.

We call it *Mixto de transversal y Extraño* when you walk backwards crossing the same line.

A: in some classical treatises the authors call it Mixto de Trepidante y Extraño<sup>13</sup>. Also beware that in the summary at the beginning de Brea used the word *retrocedente de transversal*, that is "Back-transversal". I did not remember any other author coining it that way, and I support its use. It makes it easy and clear.



<sup>13</sup> Ettenhard, Francisco Antonio. *Compendio de los fundamentos de la Verdadera Destreza, y filosofía de las armas*. Antonio de Zafra, Madrid 1675



We do the *Mixto de transversal y curvo* when we cross the Diameter with the right one, then we do a half circle with the left foot, advancing the right one in order to step in the *Infinite line* (the one of the opponent!). The right foot follows after the left one, leaving the fencer in feet position #5 or inverted #3. You can see all these steps in the **Figure-4** (In order to see this one clearly I created **figure 4B**).

The utility of these steps are:

*Recto* will seek the *Mean of Proportion* (this concept and others will be found later own, but you always can refer to the glossary).

*Extraño* or *Retrocedente*, will work in order to move you away of the opponent. (Please, ignore this last word, *retrocedente*, immediately, since he doesn't use it much and is redundant, I believe he took such word from Noveli<sup>14</sup>, a Destreza author that uses it as well and was previous to de Brea.)

*Trepidante* is done in order to defend yourself from a lacerating or puncture injure from the opponent. That way the diestro puts her body away from a dangerous place and might gain a good advantageous position.

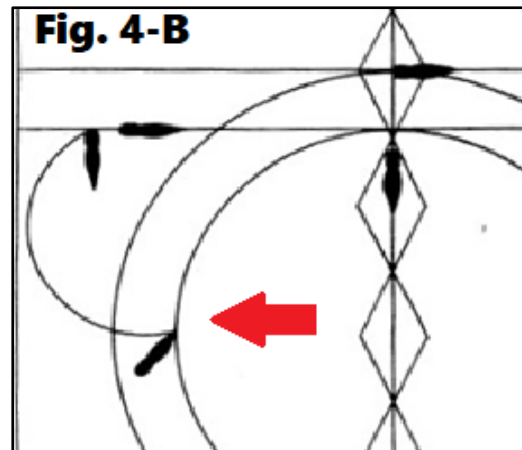
*Curvo* step is done in order to unveil the depth of the opponent's body (this means, you seek to see the chest of your enemy, thus you work the circle towards your right side, imagining your opponent is right handed), or also gain advantage of the weapon of your enemy (by this, he refers in walking the circle to the other side, left, the one in which the enemy has the sword. It might seem paradoxical, but walking towards the sword of the enemy is a very wise movement in order to control the sword. I use to say to my students: *Once you are a good fencer, the closer you are from your opponent's blade the safer you should feel.*)

*Transversal* step is done in order to put pressure on opponent's sword and do mixed angles (mixed angles can help in direct attacks, requiring only one single step in some occasions).

Mixture of *Transversal* and *Extraño* is done when you want to get out of opponent's pressure and free your weapon if this one is under her control.

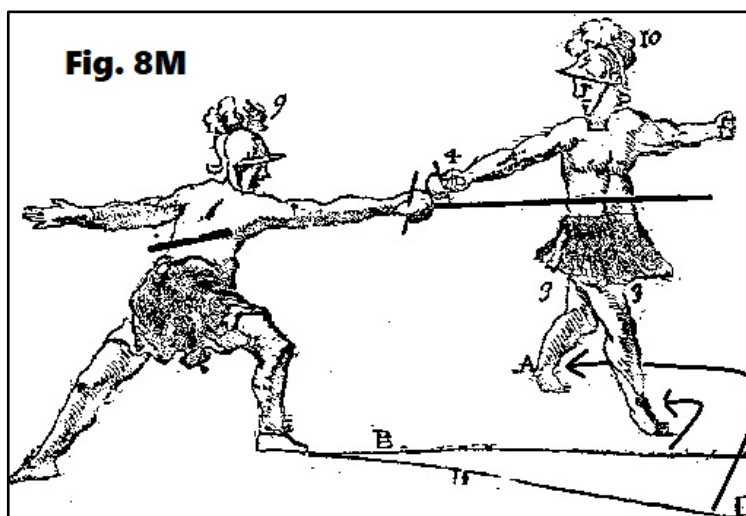
Mixture of *Transversal* and *Curvo* step is used in order to do *Conclusión* (Or Conclusion) movements (disarms). This one can only be done in one side, which is the one of the opponent's weapon and your inside.

All these steps can be done with lower position, but always trying to not unveil your chest and being as profiled as possible.



<sup>14</sup> Noveli, Nicolas-Rodrigo. *Crisol Especulativo de la Destreza de las armas*. Alonso Balvas. Madrid 1731.

A: Regarding the steps, there is one in particular that is not described but you will find it forward in this book. This is the one known as *Girata* (or *Giratta*), from the Italian tradition. Marcelli<sup>15</sup> in 1686 called it *passo misto* (mix step) which can be seen in **figure 8M**. Fiore, earlier than him, called it *Tutta Volta*, but eventually became to be called *Tutta Girata* probably by a more modern use of the language. De Brea mentions these types of movements when describing pivoting actions. This sort of movement is very useful for stepping out of the line and creating a new diameter for your own. There is a big disadvantage though. That is if the one who does the step misses her attack, the recovery is hard to achieve.



<sup>15</sup> Marcelli, Francesco Antonio. *Regole della Scherma* Pg. 106



## CHAPTER 9: DIAGONAL POSTURES

A: It would also refer to sword parry positions, since what it changes is where you place the arm and sword. Before we proceed we need to point some warnings about this chapter and the 8<sup>th</sup> diagonal postures de Brea will mention.

Firstly, the pictures and the description do not match in many times. That could be due to the possibility that the positions were too generic and allowed many different possibilities, which I doubt, since his description of each position seems very specific. It could also be a problem of the drawer or mismatching the pictures. I would even dare to say that the images are a previous movement to the parry position. In any case, I would only trust the text, as well, following my interpretation of the text I searched extra images from other treatises to find support de Brea's words. Here the second problem comes. His eight position do not match any other earlier treatise that I searched of, eventhough the community on social media could not even help to identify 8<sup>th</sup> positions before de Brea.

I could relate to the eight "parry positions", described in classical fencing manuals such the one by Hutton<sup>16</sup> or the one by Olivier<sup>17</sup>, but again, those don't seem to follow the ones described by de Brea. Earlier treatises of smallsword mention 4 positions, from prima to quarte. André Desbordes<sup>18</sup> (1610) is one them and he is helpful enough to recognize that those positions are related to the ones explained earlier by Camillo Agrippa<sup>19</sup>.

After de Brea I found other authors using eight guards, such Laborde Navarro y Martinez (1832) or Vendrell (1879). However, the closest finding I could match is a treatise from Cucala y Bruno, written almost 50 years after the publishing of de Brea's treatise. Cucala y Bruno focuses in the military saber, and he probably changed some of the guards from de Brea in order to suit his teachings, adapting them to his specific weapon. I dare to claim such assumptions, because there is evidences proving that Cucala was influenced by the same de Brea's treatise that we are here analyzing. Those findings will be revealed forward in this Epic Study. Refer to the **figure CC-1** for the eight parry positions from Cucala's treatise<sup>20</sup>,

Lastly, these positions do not have much emphasis in the rest of the book, therefore, ignoring them would not harm much the rest of the technique and knowledge that de Brea represents. I do not use them in my teachings, since they all can be found by the

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<sup>16</sup> Hutton - *Cold Steel*, pg. 13

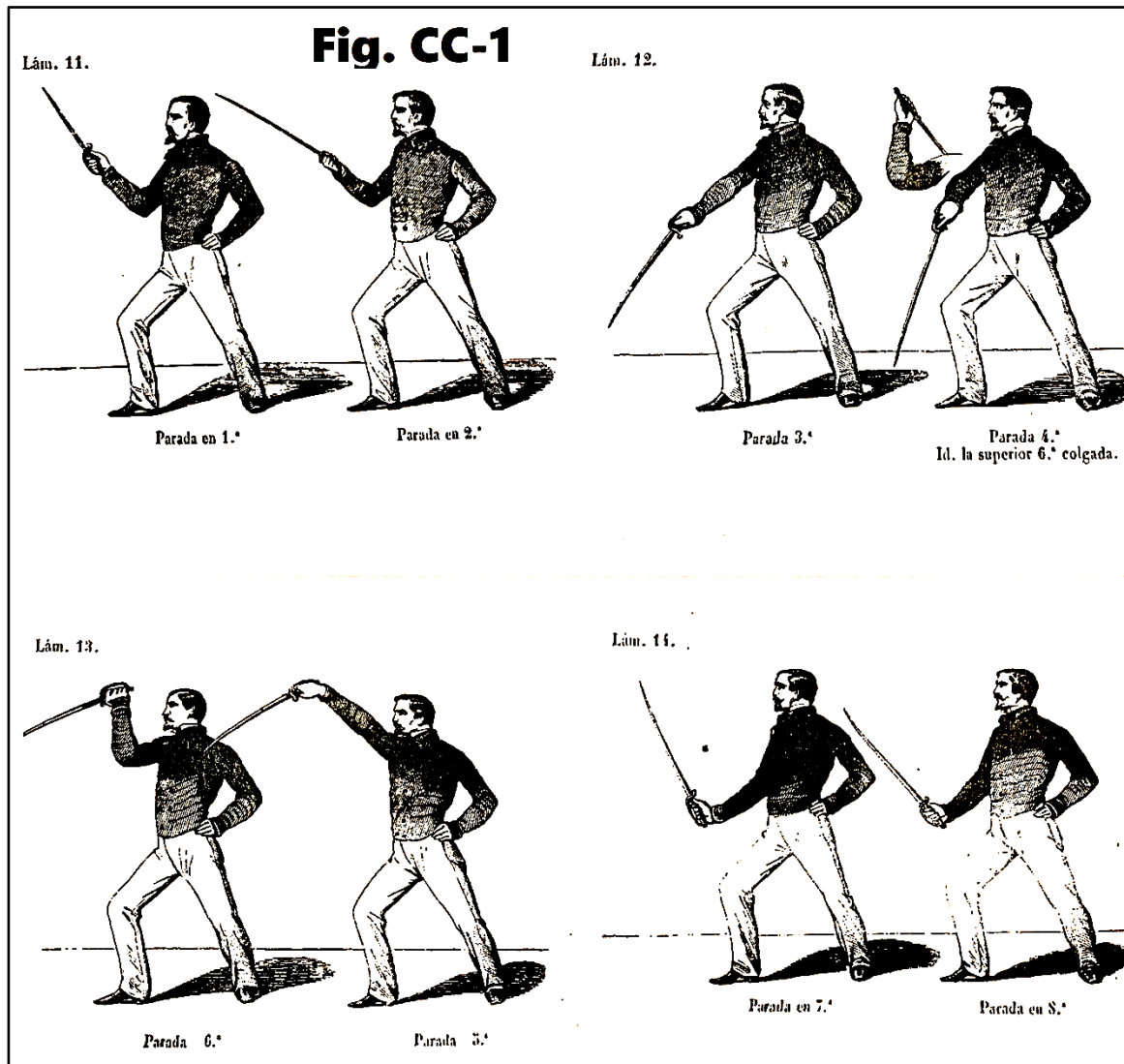
<sup>17</sup> Olivier - *Fencing familiarized: or A new treatise on the art of sword play*, pg. 10

<sup>18</sup> Desbordes - *Discours de la théorie et de la pratique de l'excellence des armes*, chapt. 3

<sup>19</sup> Agrippa - *Trattato di scienza d'arme, et un dialogo in detta materia*, chapt. 2 Part III

<sup>20</sup> Cucala - *Tratado de Esgrima*, lam. 11-14

assembling of other basic concepts. Nevertheless, de Brea mentions what parts of the body are protected and which ones are open for each described diagonal posture, which is a positive practical point to consider.

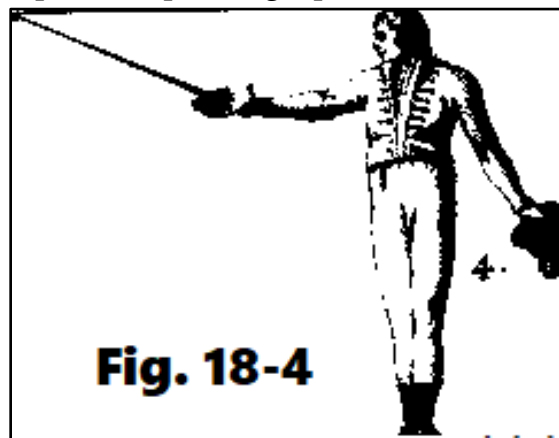


We have 8 diagonal postures, 4 in the upper sector and 4 lower ones. They exist in order to defend oneself against any kind of aggression. These are useful regardless the part of your body that the opponent is aiming, such head, chest, rest of the torso or even legs.

A: Beware that de Brea considers every part of the body as a target, at least from the opponent's point of view. This is a good consideration ignored by many authors.

*First diagonal posture. (#1-Figure L5)* Imagine the diestro with any of the body postures (chapter 7), foil in hand. She must raise the hand holding a sword at the level of her right ear. Arm should be slightly flexed creating an obtuse angle at the armpit. The hand should be mid nails-down. This posture will protect you from all the reverse attacks (chapter 10), diagonal or vertical. The exposed part is the inferior one.

A: So as you can see the image is very different as what you would imagine it. He mentions especially that the hand should be *mid nails-down*, whereas in the image we see *nails-in* or even *mid nails-up*. Later on (chapter 21) he mentions again this posture, at that moment you will clearly see that the image doesn't seem to correspond well. I would suggest also taking a look to image #4 from the **figure 18**, at another part of the book (that I actually repost after this text, calling it **fig. 18-4**), where the position is mentioned once again with a picture. This one makes more sense than the one originally posted in this chapter. However, the rest of the body must be ignored and take in consideration only arm and sword, since in that chapter is explaining a particular salute action.

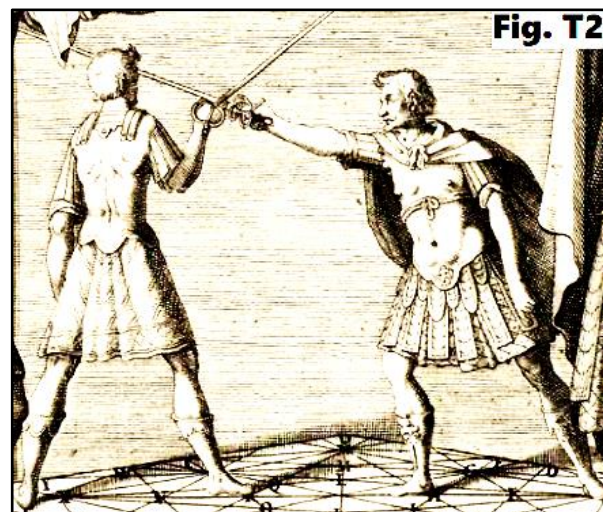


*Second diagonal posture. (#2)* Imagine your arm transversal, in front of you, crossing towards the inside. Your hilt is at the level of the left ear. The point of your sword is looking upwards and towards your external side. If a perpendicular line passes from the point of your sword (thus making a T), that line should be 4 fingers away of your shoulder (around 2 inches). Hand should be nails-up. This position will defend you against cuts (an edge attack coming towards your inside), diagonal or vertical. The part that leaves exposed is the upper and lower part of your arm. (I understand this as the very surface of the arm).

A: The picture is awful. Again I think of a completely different image rather than the one drawn in the book. I imagine the arm crossed in front of your body (as he says transversal, like the step) while the sword crosses perpendicular to the right side, covering your head and right upper side, since the sword crosses in front of your eyes

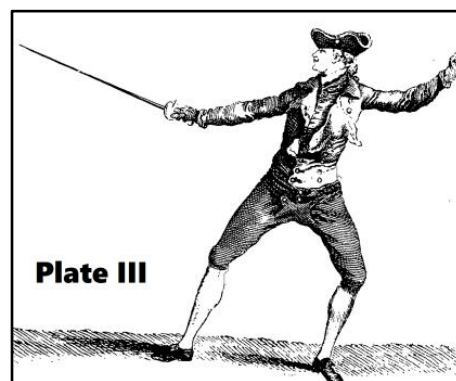
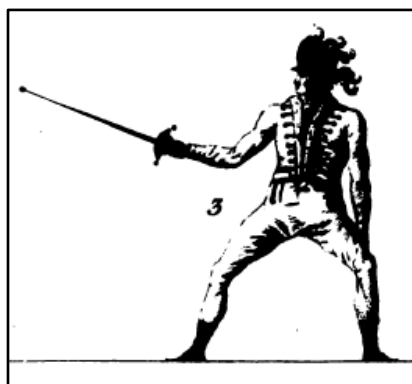


towards the external side. I found, in the treatise of Thibault<sup>21</sup>, a similar position of what I imagine it ought to be, even though there are actions reflected on it. Refer to the left fencer at **figure T2**.



*Third posture.* Imagine your arm taking the diameter line. Hand is participle nails-down (mid nails-down) and it should be at the height of the horizontal line that divides the body in two (at your belly button). The point of the blade should be upwards and *remise* towards our outside or right side. This one is useful in order to protect yourself from horizontal hits (reverses) at your right side. It leaves you open from the inside.

A: Curiously, The image seems this time to match what we can imagine from the text. This same posture matches the *tierce position* described in the classic épée by many other masters. Find in **Plate III**, from Angelo's<sup>22</sup> book the third/tierce parry posture compared with the image from de Brea's (left side).

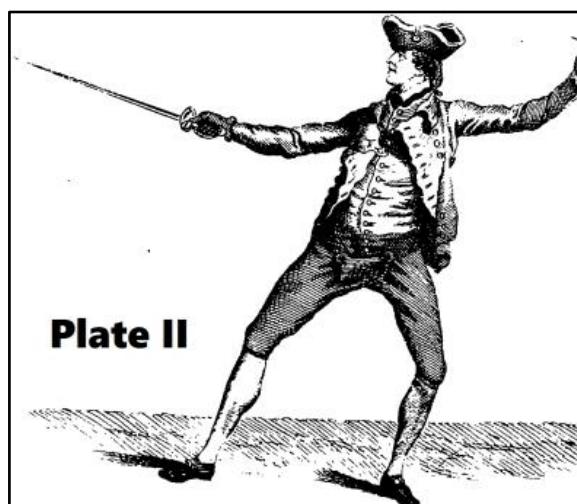


<sup>21</sup> Thibault - *Académie de l'épée*, table 5, Figure 2. -

<sup>22</sup> Angelo - *School of Fencing*, plate III

*Fourth diagonal posture.* Put the arm transversal towards your inside. Hand at the level of the horizontal line (the same one he mentioned for the third diagonal posture). Hand should be in part of nails-up (mid nails-up). The point of the sword should be upwards, and the blade should be *remise* at the left/inside side. This posture is useful in order to defend yourself from horizontal cuts at your left side of the chest/torso. This posture will leave open the upper part of the arm (I guess external side of right shoulder).

A: Well, again I imagine a more advanced arm. Beware that says “*remise in the inside*”. To me that blade at the **picture #4** is looking backwards. Not only offers the upper arm, but the lower arm, the whole external side, the front leg (inside and outside), and so on. Therefore, and finding it also matching the *forth* or *cuarte* position from Angelo<sup>23</sup>, I include you the picture of his manual, **plate II**. Beware that the book of Angelo was published at the time de Brea started giving lessons, thus it is possible the English master had some influence on him.

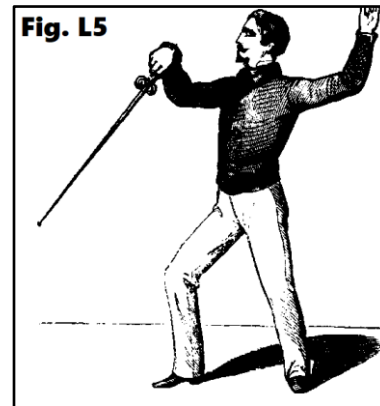


*Fifth diagonal posture.* Imagine your arm in a high position and transversal towards the inside. Hand is in nails-out, your hilt is slightly over your head. The blade is pointing at the floor and it takes the place of transversal space at your left side. You should see your opponent under your arm. This posture is useful in order to protect yourself from a diagonal or horizontal cut, and once blocked it should allow you to respond with a same cut. The offered openings are low targets.

A: Again, image 5 makes little sense, since there is no way someone can do any parry with such guard/position. Instead, I imagine a hanging guard, with the sword looking forward and down, diagonally. If we imagine that we are stepping in the center of a huge clock on the floor, then, the blade should be pointing at your 10-11 o'clock,. He does say “point of the blade is pointing towards the floor” and in the image it is pointing towards “who-knows”. Besides, the hand is said to be *nails-out* whereas in the picture is *nails-in*. To me the *fifth diagonal posture* is very similar to the 1<sup>st</sup> *pronation prime*

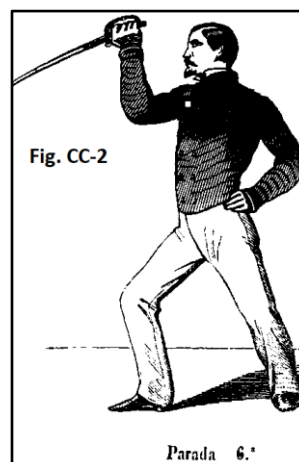
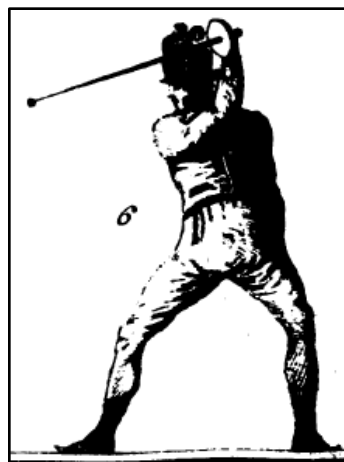
<sup>23</sup> Angelo – *School of Fencing*, plate II

form classical fencing, but can actually be as well a variation of pronation *quinte*. In any case, I found out that José Cucala<sup>24</sup>, mentioned before, in his fencing manual of 1861 also describes a fifth parry position (**figure L5**), very similar to the actual text of de Brea. See both compared images below.



*Sixth diagonal position.* Imagine your hand in a high position. Hand as Nails-up. Hilt is looking at your left ear (instead of hilt I think he actually referred to pommel). The blade should be *remise* at your right side, and keep pointing outside. Again you should be able to see your opponent under your arm. This position is useful to protect yourself from the *reverse* (see next chapter) and answer with another attack of the same type. The opened targets are the lower ones and upper ones (here I think it refers to only inside).

A: So, to me this guard would be like a hanging guard but hand in *nails-up*, crossing your arm in front of the face. Beware that he says “you should see your enemy under your arm”. I assume the elbow should be covering the vision of your right eye, and the blade should cover your high right (external) flank. Quite different of what we see in the image. I would refer to Cucala<sup>25</sup>’s sixth saber position, which you can see in **figure CC-2**.



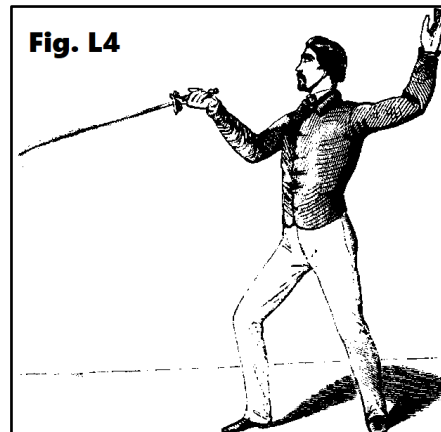
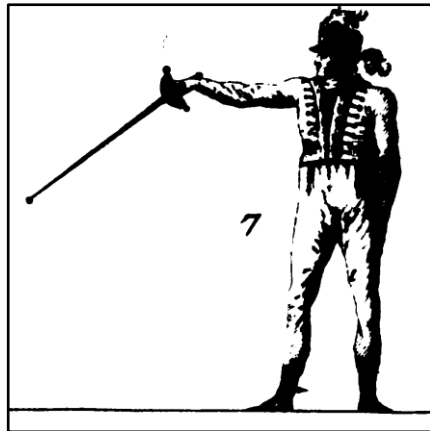
<sup>24</sup> Cucala – *Tratado de Esgrima*, sheet #5

<sup>25</sup> Cucala – *Tratado de Esgrima*, sheet #13



*Seventh diagonal position.* To do this position, you should have your arm extended and hand in high position. Nails-in, the hilt should be at the right shoulder level. The blade is pointing down, and is placed *remisa* at the outside or right side. The target that is granted is all your inside.

A: The picture would seem legit except for the hand position, he says nails-in but it looks as if the diestro has nails down. It can be similar to the Octave position of classical French fencing. Also he doesn't mention it, but this should protect you from lower revers attacks. Again Cucala<sup>26</sup> has the same position for his *seventh parry*, with the difference that he uses *nails-up*. Find it in **figure. L4**.



*Eight diagonal position.* Your arm should be extended and transversal to the inside. Hand should be in part of nails-up (mid nails-up). Your hilt should be at the level of your left shoulder. The point of the weapon should be down and *remisa* towards the left/internal side. This one is useful in order to protect yourself from horizontal internal cuts, as well as lower ones. Moreover, it can be used to deflect the opponent's sword. Your weakness or granted target is the central and upper part of your arm, from above and below.

A: Another confusing picture. Remember that says "arm transversal to the inside". Therefore, I would imagine a sort of *Septime* of classical fencing, explained also by Hutton<sup>27</sup>. Even if his treatise is posterior I think his guard might be significantly similar, find the image called **Plate XV** or Parry of Septime, ignoring the height of the guard.



<sup>26</sup> Cucala – *Tratado de Esgrima*. Sheet #4

<sup>27</sup> Hutton – *Coldsteel*. Plate XV

Everything that has been said can be found in the 6 figures from the image five and the two figures, 7 and 8 from the image 6, (which I put you separately for each text).

Warning: Always try to do these postures keeping your hand inside the parallelogram made by the two fencers, that way you will be always ready to defend yourself. (Regarding this imagine you throw a line from your right shoulder to the left shoulder of your opponent. Afterwards another line is thrown from your left shoulder to the right shoulder of your opponent. Then, you get an imaginary flying parallelogram between those lines).

A: So, as you see I debated greatly the images seen, thus, try to limit yourself to the text. I don't consider myself a great translator (even if I worked as such), but I really believe that De Brea had some faulty connection between text and images in his book. It would be probably the biggest inconsistency in his work, and the rest of it should not be regarded with the same criticism. In any case, as said before, these positions are not really important, since we have lines of the body and hand positions that can manage to figure out infinite positions, and use them for pedagogical purposes towards our students.



## CHAPTER 10: REGARDING THE ATTACKS

A: I decided to translate the word “tretas” into just “attack”. The word *treta* (singular) should be better understood as “way-to-attack” or “strategic-offensive-movement”, not just simple attacks. Therefore, other authors, for example Ettenhard<sup>28</sup> refer to these particular offensive movements as “tretas particulares”. Therefore when you want to extrapolate *tretas* from de Brea, consider it as *tretas particulares* by other Destreza authors.

The attacks in Verdadera Destreza are three: *Cut*, *Reverse* (Reverse-cut for some translators) and *thrust*. There are no more and even if you want to invent more than these ones you will not be able to find them. Some masters say that the types of attacks are infinite and others try to convince us that they are five, adding to the cut and reverse a *half-cut* and *half-reverse*. To me it is fine to keep it the way it is, because a cut and a reverse have already a circular motion and can be divided in three depending on the inclination: *vertical*, *diagonal* and *horizontal*.

In order to do a cut, you must start a movement in nails-down, and if you want to start a reverse you must use nails-up. The movement axis of cuts and reverses are three: *remiso*, *violento* and *natural*. Related to half-edge attacks (half-cut and half-reverse) the axis movements are only two: *remiso* and *reducción*. As you see, by the movements, the full edge attacks also include the half edge attack. Cut and reverse have 360° circumference, other edge attacks can have more or less degrees than that. Again, depending on the inclination we can only subdivide them in *vertical*, *diagonal* and *horizontal*. These cuts and reverses can be done also with the tip of the blade and you will find them by the names of *convertido*, *reducido* and *continuado*.



A: To do a cut, the sword moves circular from your inside, goes over your head and strikes the enemy at her left side (your right side). The Reverse is the contrary, your sword starts doing a circle, moving out of your body from the right side, going first down, then over your head, and striking the enemy at her right side. The half-edge attacks they move up and down at the same side that are executed. I pulled from my website one slide that explains these manoeuvres for the half-cut. Cut and reverse actions are the same in all Spanish and Iberian fencing and it can be found in any other treatises with good consistency among them. Regarding the types of attacks, I can only give a good explanation to the *continuado*, from Master Lorenz de Rada<sup>29</sup>. A *continuado* cut is an edge attack that the diestro starts executing but, when the enemy is going to block it, the diestro pulls the sword towards herself (with extraño sword movement),

<sup>28</sup> Ettenhart - *Compendio de los fundamentos de la verdadera destreza*. Pg 218

<sup>29</sup> De Rada - *Nobleza de la Espada* Vol III pg. 125

avoiding contact among swords, right afterwards, under the sword of the opponent, the diestro can deliver a thrust.

Since we talked already about edge attacks, (no you didn't but I did) we are going to talk about thrusts. There are seven types of thrusts to know: *¼ of a circle*, *½ circle*, *full circle*, *portion of a circle (greater and lesser)*, *diagonal* or *raising thrust* and *the sagitta*. All these attacks take the name of the line they follow in order to be done as well as the movements needed to that matter.

A: The name of such circles that he mentions refer to the movements of the blade while making the thrust or right before it. For example, imagine our blade at one side of the opponent's, pointing at her right shoulder. We will call a full circle thrust if our blade does a whole round circle under and around her blade and strikes at the same point we were previously aiming, which is the right shoulder. In following chapters this information will be expanded.

Even though we said so much, I can presume to say that the attacks aren't more than two: *lacerating* and *puncture* attacks. There can be no more injuries in the Verdadera Destreza than the ones that can be done with the edge or with the point of the blade, and to these ones we have to defend ourselves.

A: De Brea is such a gentleman and does not want to go to other less elegant attacks such grappling, something that is has been actually described by other masters referring to Destreza (although Vulgar Destreza). As well beware that outside of a civilized fencing duel, many other unimaginable attacks can exist, such hitting with a pommel, stabbing with the quillons, and so on.

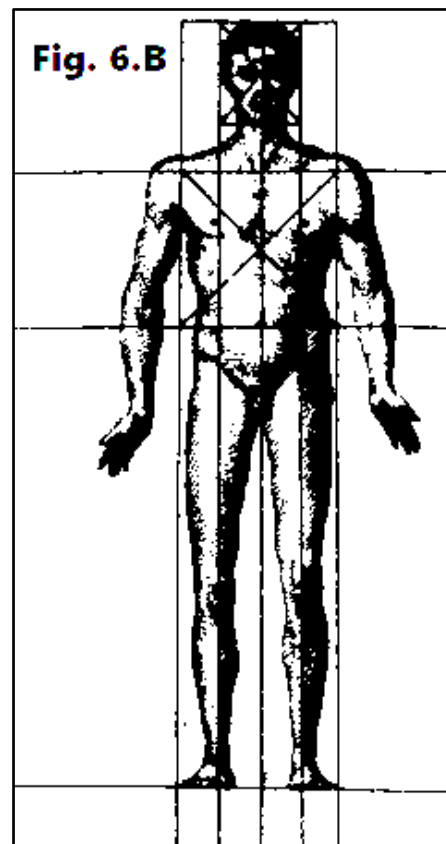
## CHAPTER 11: REGARDING THE BODY-LINES

It is really necessary to have the knowledge of the body *lines* on your opponent, since the type of attack/injures will take the same names of the followed lines. In short, we can say they are nine lines: 5 *vertical*, 2 *horizontal* and 2 *diagonal*. In order to describe them you must imagine a man standing still in a straight posture, feet close to each other, staring at front or squared (this expression is used as the contrary of profiled), making a solid straight shape.

The line coming from in between the feet all up towards the nose and dividing the body in two equal parts is called *diametrical chest line* (beware that we will use *diametrical* for the chest line and *diameter* for the line on the floor, uniting the two fencers inside the circumference). From the beginning of each of your arms (outer extreme of collarbone) a line will go down through your armpit towards the side of your ankles, these lines are called *vertical lines*. In between the *diametrical* and the *vertical* ones two lines will go down from the ears towards your feet (passing through the nipples), this lines are called *collaterals* (or *collateral lines*. It is actually *coracteral*, but any English translation from that sounds weird, so collateral seemed beautiful). All these mentioned lines are vertical, and they must be well identified when talking about injures in order to not get ourselves confused.

From shoulder to shoulder we have a line called *contingency line*. Another line parallel to this one and goes from vertical line to vertical line (the ones at the side), passing through the belly button, will divide our body in two: this line is called *horizontal*. The contingency line (and verticals) and the horizontal one, they all make a square which is drawn on the chest of the fencer. Two lines will cross this square, going from each upper corner to the opposite side. They are called *diagonal lines* and will create 4 angles in the center of the chest. Beware, that this same square with four angles is drawn in the face, as you can see in the **figure 6B**.

A: It is important to learn by heart *vertical*, *collateral* and *diametrical* lines, since de Brea will be mentioning them many times along the book.



## CHAPTER 12: THE MEANS OF PROPORTION AND DEGREES OF STRENGTH OF THE SWORD

A: The concepts regarding the **means** are taken from mathematical theories by Aristotle and other ancient mathematicians/philosophers. An important point to consider is: everything is relative, thus the use of *mean* or *medium* cannot be changed by *distance* or *average* (an important lesson from my Master), because using those other words will alienate us from the real purpose, that is put the two fencers in a constantly evolving situation. In Destreza the use of all different means do not describe only a contextual mathematical situation, but implicit actions among fencers, actions that were, actions that are and some actions that have not yet come to pass. Particularly, de Brea goes on some of the nomenclature on the means without explaining them, and in some other cases he mixes his own words. I will try to assist his writing as much as possible. After all, that is why I am writing this document, to help people who could not understand the whole script and revise some things that can seem inconsistent.

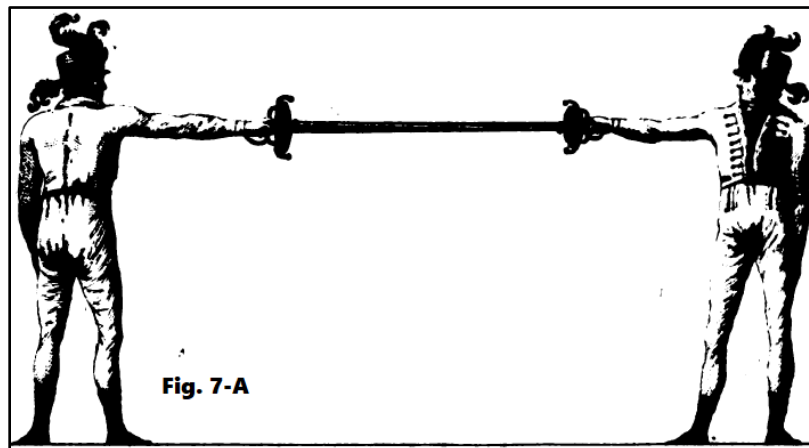
The *means of proportion* are three: *Own*, *Appropriated* and *Transferred*. The *Own* is the mean that the diestro takes for herself in order to injure her enemy without being injured. This happens when the weapon is just longer, or otherwise walks around using the correct steps in order to gain control of the weapon and manage to be in advantage of distance towards his enemy.

A: Here I believe de Brea makes a fusion of the *Proportioned Mean* to the definition of *Own Mean of Proportion*, two concepts that are not exactly the same in the *classical Verdadera Destreza*.

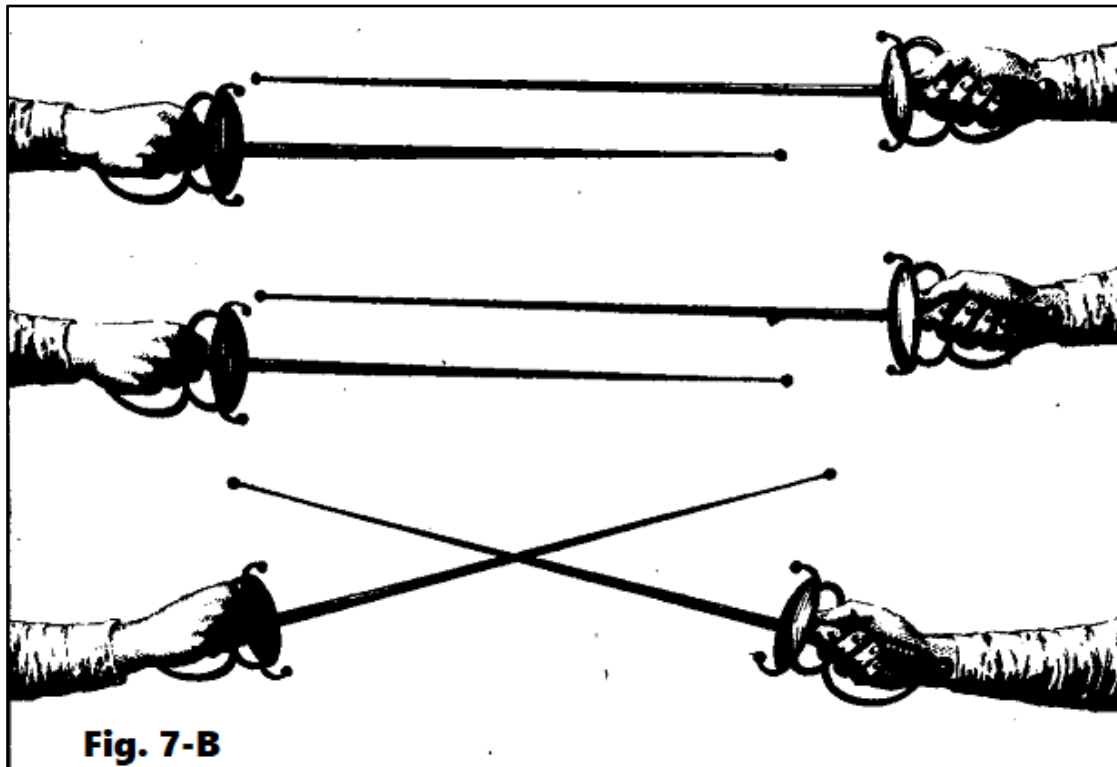
The *Appropriated* one is when we oblige our opponent to content with the mean we give him, because he has a shorter weapon (and therefore in disadvantage). (Strictly speaking, the classical term of *apropiado* refers to the mean the diestro has when the enemy has advantage of distance and control of her weapon to injure without the diestro being able to injure. Later on you will see that de Brea follows this definition I give.)

The *Transferred* one refers to the mean that is achieved when someone changes a disadvantage position to an advantageous one. The enemy has advantage when he uses his blade to place ours to one of the sides; in that moment the opponent has the center and can injure. In order to place our sword to the center from here and place her sword aside we must search for the *Transferred mean*, we will do it by moving the sword with: *Remiso*, *Violento* and *Natural*. Once done, we will be the ones holding the sword of the enemy at any of our side while controlling the center.

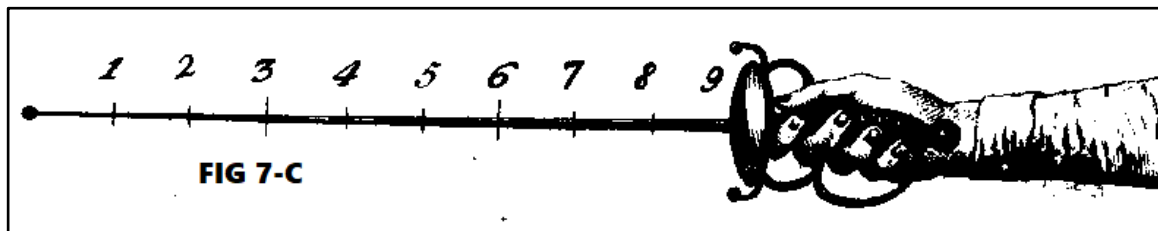
If both fencers have same length of weapons, the mean of proportion will be the same for both. In order to achieve this, the diestro must get the sword in right angle, reaching (with the point of her blade) to the hilt of the enemy without surpassing it. This can be seen by the fencers in the **figure 7-A**.



In case we seek to find this measure, but we find out that our weapon is longer, in that case the *mean of proportion* is our *Own*, and for the opponent it will become the *Appropriated* one. The one who has the sword shorter, cannot be considered *in proportion*, but *disproportionate*; and as well he will have it *appropriated*, because it will be the contrary who got to choose the mean. At this moment the shorted sword must act carefully and proceed further with *atajo* (sort of binding), or else the fencer will be in danger. Everything related to this is well represented in the **figure 7-B**. (The wording is confusing, always refer to my explanation, even if they are far from perfect, they are more understandable.)

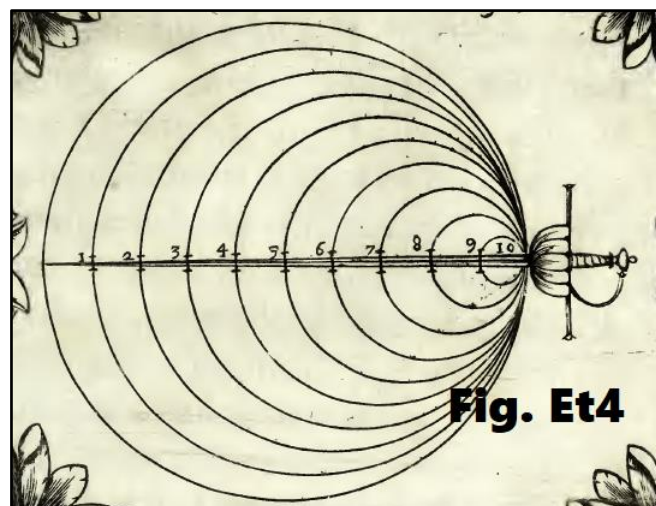


Before mentioning the mechanics of the *atajo* it is worth explaining the degrees of strength of the weapon. These degrees are part of the identity of Verdadera Destreza. Consider your blade divided in 3 equal parts, which we can call them *thirds* (usually in my teachings, I use *strong*, *mid* and *weak* thirds) and each of those parts will be divided again in 3. So in total we will have 9 parts, that we will call *degrees*. They will be numbered from the point of the blade to the hilt. The *third* with the low degrees (the point) is the one that must injure. The mid third must be used to deflect the opponent's sword and do the bindings, and finally, the strong third must be used for *subjections* (that is a kind of binding that leaves the other sword almost inoperative, *blocked*). All this can be seen in the **figure 7-C**.



A: Regarding the *degrees of strength* on the sword there is not much consistency among authors, some divide the sword in 4 parts (Rada), 10 or in 12 parts such Thibault. Personally, I use thirds for exercises that do not require much precision, and then I use a scale of 10, like Ettenhart<sup>30</sup>, for those who require more accuracy. See **figure Et4** for the reference of this last mentioned master.

I use 10 better than the 9 of de Brea, because is a 10 scale is less cognitive demanding for the students. That is, people are more familiarized on a 10 scale rather than 9. Example: "Put your sword with 8 degrees over 2 of your opponent".

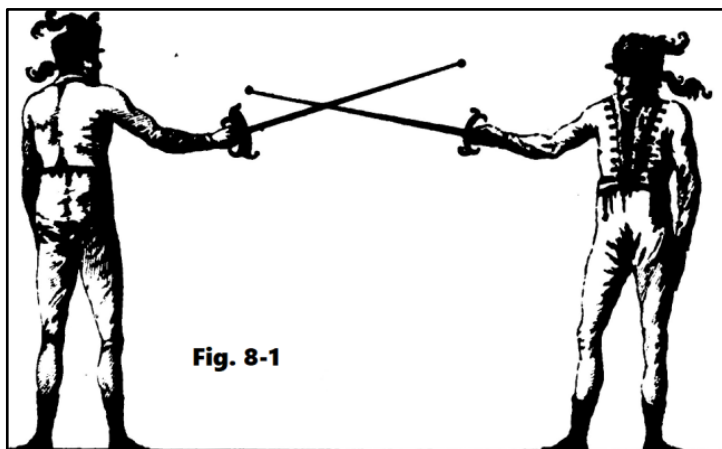


<sup>30</sup> Ettenhard - *Compendio de los fundamentos de la verdadera destreza.*, pg. 63

## CHAPTER 13: MECHANICS OF THE ATAJO

A: *Atajo* is truly more complex than simply *binding*. Many treatises along the Verdadera Destreza discipline spent a vast extension of them in defining the atajo. Interestingly, other masters who come with a new treatise they also have saying of the sort: “*the atajo explained by that master is wrong or that is not the proper way, my atajo is the good one to follow*”. Here we will go just over what de Brea believes, but be aware that this knowledge can be greatly extended if you want to refer to other sources. In any case, I believe it suffices to have a good understanding of what an atajo pretends and what contexts can appear from it, all the rest is just “splitting hairs”. Beware that from now on de Brea uses in his explanations the *diestro* (the one who will make the actions) and the *opponent* (the passive fencer).

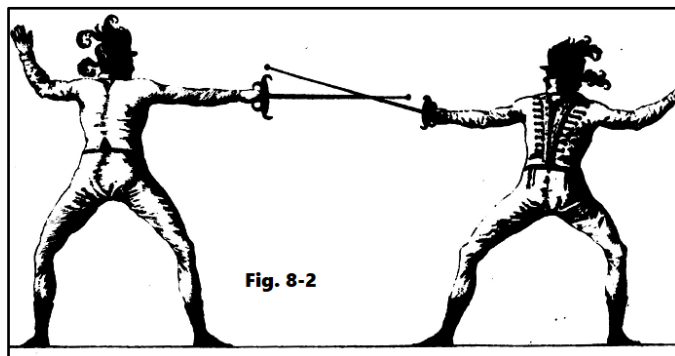
The *atajo* has 3 phases: *atajo at the beginning*, *atajo at midway* (also *atajo in the middle*) and *atajo at the end*. Very roughly speaking, we could say that any impediment of the opponent's sword with ours is an *atajo*. This kind of impediments must be understood in three types depending of the force behind it: *resistant force*, *operative force* and *permanent force* (he also adds some synonyms that I omit, for considering them redundant). This force can be applied to any of the both sides of our posture, external and internal. We will assume that the *diestro* already chose her *mean of proportion* and found the opponent with obtuse position of her blade and extended arm. From here, the *Diestro* will seek and contact the opponent's blade with hers. Once done, she must try to put aside the other's blade, avoiding always being aimed by the point of the opponent's sword (this is important, I always tell my students: never allow the opponent's sword to look at your eyes). That way you would have done the *atajo at the beginning*, as it is shown in the **figure 8-1**. (It doesn't show, but the *diestro*, at the left side of the picture, pushes aside the sword of the enemy, just enough to displace it from the center. Beware that this movement, and any sword opposing, must be done by having more degrees of strength than the opponent's sword. Other authors say more or equal degrees, I don't.)



Another way of the *atajo at the beginning* is if the opponent puts her sword in right angle, extending sword and arm and taking the diameter. The *diestro* will put her sword over it, trying to do binding of 6 degrees over 3, and this will be the *real atajo*, that give its name (he means that this is the *classical* definition of the *atajo*). It is still in the beginning because both of them have right angle (here I believe he just refers that none of the fencers started really entering in the distance of the

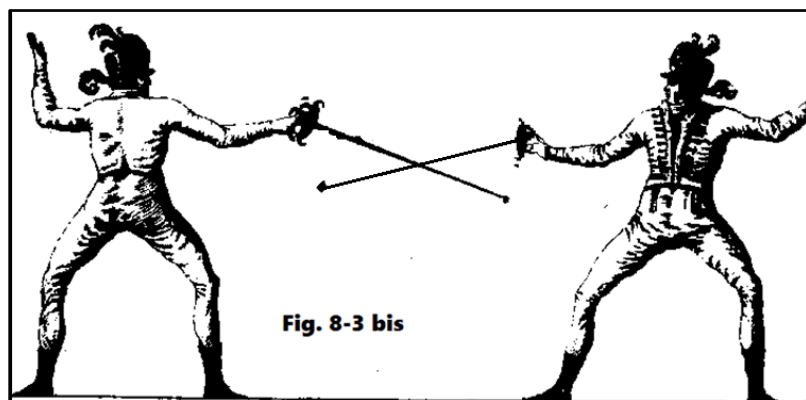


other and, therefore, the arm did not start moving, only the wrist and sword). The 2 weapons create 4 angles when in contact. (Must visualize the shape in “X” created by the blades). In here, we will see 2 types of force: the one who has the sword under has *resistant force*, and the one who is over is on *operative force*. It is called this way because the operative will be the one ruling where the swords will move. It is worth mentioning that forces should not be very unbalanced among them, but having only a slight difference of magnitude of one over the other. In order to achieve this aspect one must well choose the degrees of force that both weapons will contact. This is shown in the **figure 8-2**.



A: In this case, it seems that the fencer at the right is the one doing the exercise/atajo.

If the opponent does not offer way to have the sword with a proper contact in this case we will use the *virtual atajo*. (He actually says imaginative atajo, but the actual classical word used for this concept is “*virtual atajo*”, therefore I decide to choose the latter for the translation. To expand his explanation: virtual atajo is when the diestro creates a barrier/impediment to the opponent’s sword without any existing contact between them.) This can be done in 2 ways (actually there are infinite ways, but he will define the most common virtual atajos): if the opponent has her sword remise towards either side and the point is low



(acute angle), then we will put our sword over it and transversal.

A: Since de Brea does not put any image of it, and it can be confusing I created **figure 8-3 bis**, where you can see for reference. The diestro in this case is at the right side of the image. The opponent,

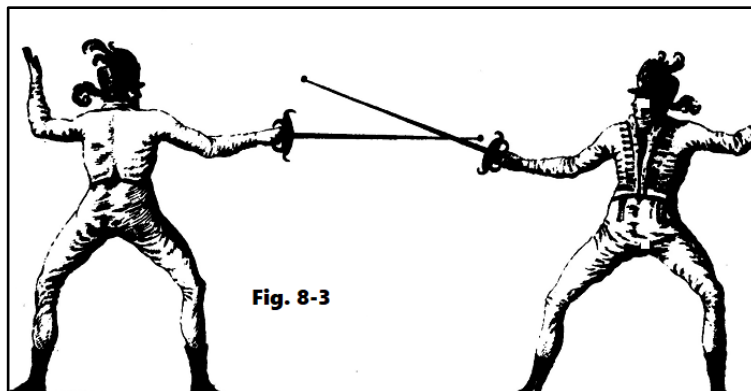
at the left side, puts the sword down and with no contact. The diestro places it over it, creating an invisible impediment. If the sword is too far away, it would be dangerous to search for it, since the enemy can gain back center, avoiding our sword.

The other way the diestro can do virtual atajo is by placing her sword in *weak under strong* (de Brea does not explain when to do it, but this situation could be perfectly done when the opponent puts her sword to either side, like before, but with the point looking upwards instead, that is in obtuse angle). Weak under strong (in Spanish we call it *flaqueza bajo la fuerza*) is when the diestro places the point of her blade under the hilt of the opponent’s sword, without



applying any significant force (or not even contact). That way, whatever movement the enemy does, we will be ready to respond. This can be seen in **figure 8-3** (Now diestro is at the left side). In this case we will see that the maximum force on the weak becomes useless and gains no control.

A: This is related to what de Brea said before, in which *forces cannot be too unbalanced*. You might think that stronger force always wins, but in this situation, if the opponent (at right) tries to push away the point of

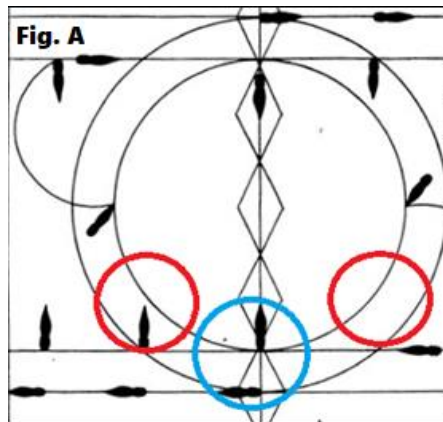


the sword, the diestro can easily get out of the control. A very similar approach would happen with *weak over strong* or *flaqueza sobre la fuerza*, that is when the diestro puts the point of the sword over the hilt of the opponent. If the opponent attempts to control the sword of the diestro, it is easy for the diestro to go towards an attack or to escape from such attempt of control. These situations happen when the opponent commits the mistake of not controlling the blade of the diestro on time, allowing this one to place the point of her sword in a “comfortable” position. These 2 types of “weaknesses” or *flaquezas* are considered by some authors *Tretas Generales*, that is Principal Destreza Fencing moves. De Brea does not make much emphasis on them, but I recommend studying them.

Consider now that we already explained the three possibilities that *atajo* gives us: those are *aggregation* (when the swords connect and the diestro pushes slightly), *subjection* (when the diestro has control over the other sword with clearly stronger degrees) and *imaginary virtual atajo*, superior and inferior (these words: superior and inferior, proves us that he was talking about 2 virtuals, one over and one under, which I had to be the one explaining them), and these types of forces are necessary for the following principles that will discuss.

A: Well, here now he just introduced *aggregation* and *subjection* and as there could be some inconsistency towards the wording he used compared with early authors. Allow me, based on the previous authors of Destreza, to put my 5 cents: *aggregation* refers to establish contact between blades. *Subjection* (Sujeción) would mean that your contact has a slight pressure aimed to block movements of your opponent’s sword, thus the opponent will have to do several movements to escape that subjection. Subjection is one of the 3 pillars that define a *perfect atajo*. The 3 bases of *atajo* are: **subjection** (holding sword of enemy), **privation** (privation means that the enemy cannot injure you, has no place to attack or deliver a movement that will put you in danger) and **disposition** (disposición. This refers that the one who does the *atajo* should have achieved an open

way to start an attempt of attack or at least has advantage over the enemy). In the next paragraph, de Brea will focus (finally) in the atajo movements and its phases, 1 beginning, 2 middle/midway and 3 end, until now it was a bit of babbling.

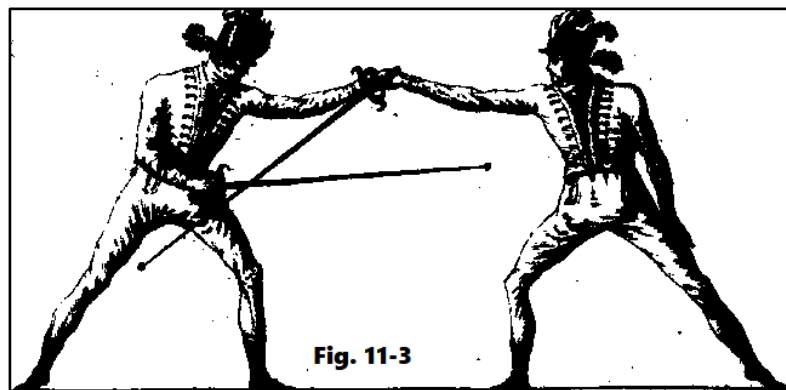


We will now discuss the 3 phases of atajo that we discussed at the start of the chapter. That way there will be no doubt in how to do it and we will be confident when we use it. So we will be in the atajo at the beginning when we are at the mean of proportion (remember **figure 7A** from a previous chapter). In that case we cause an effect of privation (to the opponent's sword). To get towards the midway atajo, the diestro must put more degrees of force onto opponent's weapon by advancing her sword. That can be done by changing your posture (forward) or moving with steps forward to what we call the proportional mean

(allow me a huge parenthesis. Here he refers to steps that follow the common circle between the fighters, shortening the distance. I added his own old image edited [**fig. A**] in order to show which step he refers. In blue (center) we are in the mean of proportion, when we move inside the red circles (at the side) controlling the weapon, we are in the proportional mean. At this point, from red, if we step directly towards the enemy we will injure the enemy reaching what in classical destreza is called *proportioned mean*. For the next explanation keep in mind in my image-made because the diestro will walk from first to the second circle, and then will end up doing the arched step at the top left side of the image (the *disarming step* that I explained in **figure 4B** in chapter 8). Beware that sometimes de Brea might mix *mean of proportion* and *proportional mean*, but there will be warnings for each situations.)

At this point, from midway atajo, if we keep advancing the sword towards the strong third, we can subject the enemy's sword with 8 degrees over 6 and we will manage to arrive to the *atajo to the end* and will have 3 effects: privation, subjection, and disposition. To manage this we should have put our right foot in the position seen in the **figure 11-3**.

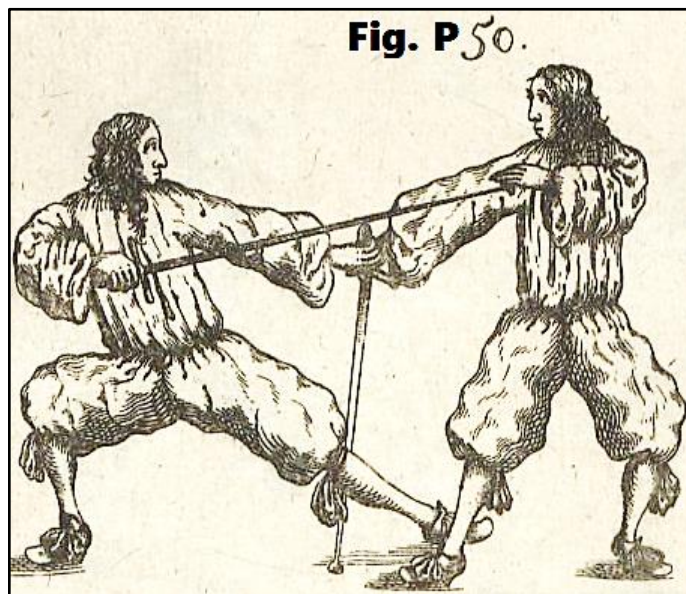
A: There are many details missing on the explanation, indicating clearly that the book is just a summary for the students. Now, hear ye! Imagine you have the sword of your opponent at your inside; you start pushing it, with



more degrees than your opponent and keep walking into the circumference. Your swords keeps pushing towards down and your inside while you are walking, therefore

the point of the blade of the enemy goes down and down while you are getting closer and closer to her hilt. In the moment you are about to reach the hilt, you do a round half circle with your left foot, placing it in front of your right one, while holding the hilt of the opponent with your left arm (do not hold ever the wrist! Only the hilt, knuckle bow, pommel or even the strong of the blade, but never the wrist, as the enemy can still move the sword.) At the same time you are holding the hilt, your sword does a half circle from the low plane (under your belly) passing from inside towards your right side, leaving it in the diameter line, pointing at your opponent. Beware that your right arm has to be far from the opponent. Reason 1: to find place to stab. Reason 2: avoid the enemy to hold your blade with the same type of movement. The disarm/holding of opponent's sword is called conclusion (*conclusion*) and is the optimal and most powerful movement in a combat.

In any case, my favourite image of a conclusion/disarm is from the German single-sword tradition from Johannes Paschen<sup>31</sup> (or Pascha). As you can see in the **figure P50**, the position is more martial-arts style compared to the ones portrayed in Destreza manuals. The stance is more aggressive, pulling out the opponent from her balance. In case the enemy doesn't let the sword go will get dragged onto the blade of the "die-stro". This is the default position I teach to my students.



<sup>31</sup> Paschen (Pascha) -. *Vollständiges Fecht Ringe*, image 50.

## CHAPTER 14: WAYS TO ESCAPE FROM THE CONTROL (of your weapon)

There are three ways to escape the control of your weapon or put it away. Those possibilities are: *disengage*, *transference* or *formation* (probably too literal translation but I believe it does work well enough). There are no more than these, it is impossible. We will imagine that the opponent put the atajo, for the external or internal side, it does not matter. A way to put it out is passing the sword under the opponent's one doing a very short move with the wrist, and a circular motion with the blade. This one is the first way, and is called the *disengage* (*librar* for the verb or *libramiento* for the noun).

If the opponent is using the strong third to push our middle third, in that case we need to do a *transference* or transfer our sword in order to gain control (here the enemy is already advancing, and if we dare to just disengage, we can end up dead, therefore we need to do this action called *transference*). To do so, we must put the balance of our body to the backwards so we win certain distance, pull up the sword with *violento* creating a wider angle and then do *remise* to a side with a *natural* at the same time, gaining control of opponent's blade. All these movements must be done with body, arm and weapon at the same time in order to have it done correctly.

The third way is when the opponent is putting a lot of pressure, is going with the atajo towards the end, (at this time we cannot get out by disengage or transference, it is too late for both of them) at that moment we do a *formation*. To do so we take out the weapon doing a circle backwards and coming again forward, we can come back with a reverse or a cut, depending on the situation (depending where we are pushed at). As well you would change the position of your body, depending on the position it had when starting the movement. This means that it is a good moment to switch it from low stance to a higher one and vice versa.

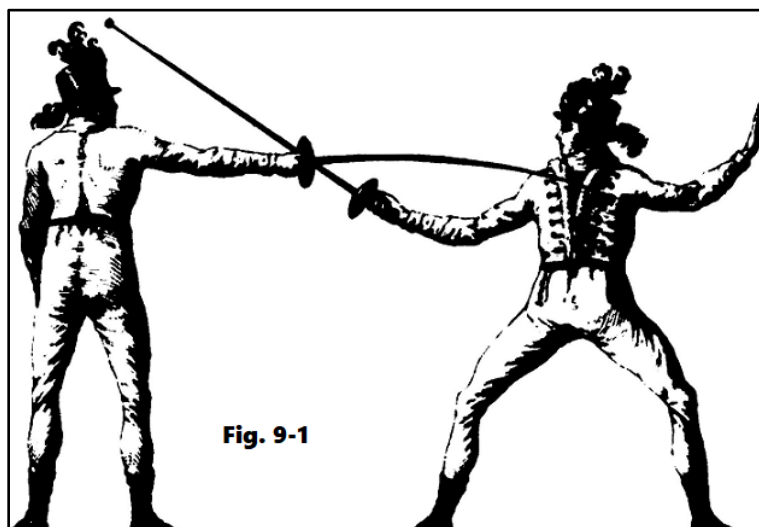
These are the three ways to free your weapon from the opponent's control. They are all circular moves, the first belongs to the wrist, the second, the transference comes from the balance of the body and the last one intervenes with the shoulder to help the whole body get out of the sword.

## CHAPTER 15: WHEN AND HOW REGARDING OFFENSIVE ACTIONS

Attacking the opponent can be done in many ways, but in Destreza, according to science and art there are three particular ways to do them. These are the following ones: *on straight posture*, *lowering the body* and *raising the body*, and there are no more than these ones.

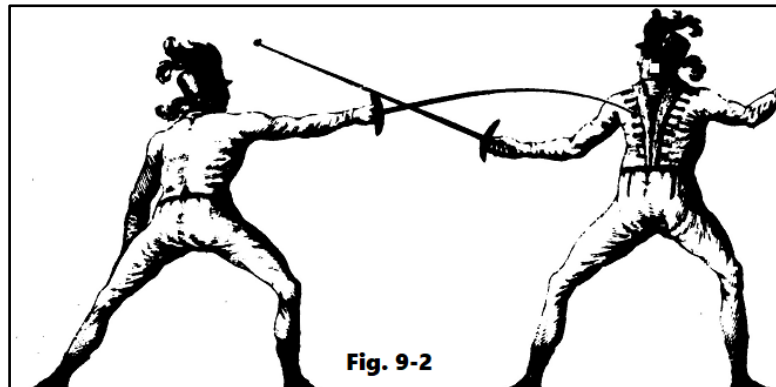
Talking about the proper concept of injuring, thrust or edge attack, they will be executed in one of these three options: reflexes, chance (a more direct translation for the word could be opportunity) or the art (I would say technique). If we were talking that only reflexes (speed) are needed to fight, then we would come to realise that only the fastest one will be the winner, that would mean that the slower would never have a change to defend herself and would never be successful, which is not true, (now de Brea will pivot his explanation of atajo and sword control to timing actions).

Injuries can happen in one of the three following phases: *before time*, *on time* and *after time*. It is true that reflexes (speed) can be helpful, but in Destreza we want to be able to injure without being injured and that will happen only if we know the situation and we are able to read the opponent's disposition, technique and reflexes. All these 3 things should act together so tightly that if one fails there will be no success. To reach this success, imagine that the diestro managed to successfully do the atajo (say atajo at mid) in her first posture (straight stance) and the opponent cannot injure us. In that case the diestro will just walk forward, enough to thrust while moving forward the weapon and keeping the control of opponent's blade, that is shown in **figure 9-1**. As well, whether if you are successful or not in the thrust, remember to move backwards with your left foot after your action, moving to a second posture. This way to thrust is called by *straight posture* and *before time*, and is when we give no time to the opponent to react.

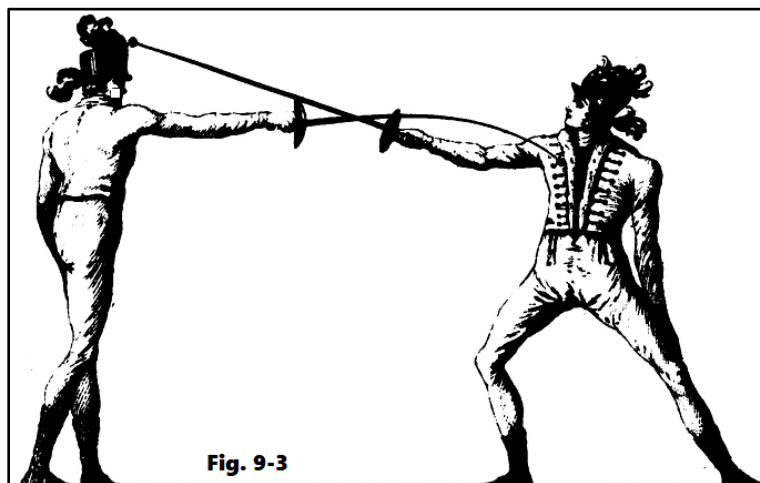


Second way: *after time* and *lowering the body*. Imagine that the diestro attempted the attack and it did not work (we missed or got deflected) and the opponent answered with a counter attack. At that moment we lowered our body in order to defend ourselves, moving towards the second body position (body backwards). From this position the diestro will recover and attack the opponent (he does not say it, but switches to an attacking posture, the one he calls #3). As you can see in **figure 9-2**

we do injure the enemy *after time*, because we attacked after her attack, and our body is displayed in *lower stance*.



Third way: *on time*, (or at the same time) Imagine the diestro have been waiting in the second stance (weight in the back) and at the moment in which the opponent attacks the diestro advances with left foot or retreats with the right one, but in any case raising her body (this is the important part) and injuring in the opening she can find. That is shown in the **figure 9-3**.





## CHAPTER 16: GENERAL CONCEPTIONS ON THE THRUST

The principal thrusts can be divided in three, which eventually have the same purpose (kill). The types of thrusts are named by how they interact with the opponent's weapon. Therefore we have: *on the line of the blade* (1), *by subjection or atajo* (2) and *free-cause* (3), (The concept "*free-cause*" refers to the situation when there is no contact or pressure among the swords and an offensive action is done or taken. It is sort of the *virtual* concept, but when attacking). These attacks should be aimed to the face, chest or side of the torso. We choose these places because trying to injure another one would be dangerous to us and cannot be done safely. Therefore the diestro should always try to target any of these three places by moving the hand in the ways that have been mentioned in this book. Sometimes the hand will be in the first position, or second, third or fourth (it is odd that he refers to numbers instead of *nails-position* but at this point of the century Angelo and others made trending the numbers of the hand positions in fencing). The thrusts that we can do have 3 categories: *simple*, *complex* or *ligated*.

A: It seems that de Brea starts explaining the examples without defining the three categories. According to what the Master will explain later it seems that the *simple one* refers attacks that the diestro does when the opponent does not defend or react to them. The *complex thrusts*, are the ones that are done when the diestro started a movement, which provoked a reaction from the opponent and, eventually, that movement leaves an opening for the diestro to attack. The *ligated ones* are counter-attacks of the diestro with a successful thrust.

Regarding the simples. Let's see a *first way to do it*. Imagine that the diestro put the atajo ~~on the inside of her sword~~ (by his saying, checking every detail on the movements and his posterior possibilities he is actually referring to the OUTSIDE), subjecting the blade of the opponent, as we saw in chapter 13. Without removing the contact among swords the diestro will move to the proportional mean (that is walking towards the red circle at her right side). At that moment, if her opponent does not react, the diestro should just advance and thrust doing a movement of *accidental* and *natural* with her blade. The diestro's sword should slide down the blade of the opponent, following its path until the person holding it, doing an injury to the *right collateral*. This one will be *thrust on the blade contact*. To make it with enough safety, advance with the front right-foot to the third stance, moving your heel towards the inside (that means that the point of the foot moves slightly to your outside, I also recommend to point at the enemy with the front foot by default). The hand should be in mid-nails-up, that way our hilt will put the blade of the enemy away of our body and we would be able to thrust without being injured.

A: This kind of thrust is first seen by Viedma<sup>32</sup> in 17<sup>th</sup> century. He actually names it *injury at the body and at the sword position*, quite close to the description of de Brea's. Observe (**figure V1**) the position of the sword in Viedma's, in nails-up or mid nails-up as de Brea

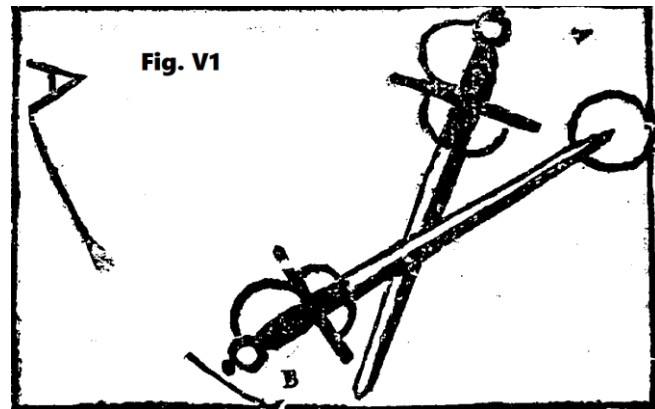
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<sup>32</sup> Viedma – *Método de enseñanza de maestros*. Pg. 27



would suggest, pushing towards the outside, walking from A to B in circle towards the *proportional mean* and finally striking close to the sword of the enemy, at the body according to Viedma as well.

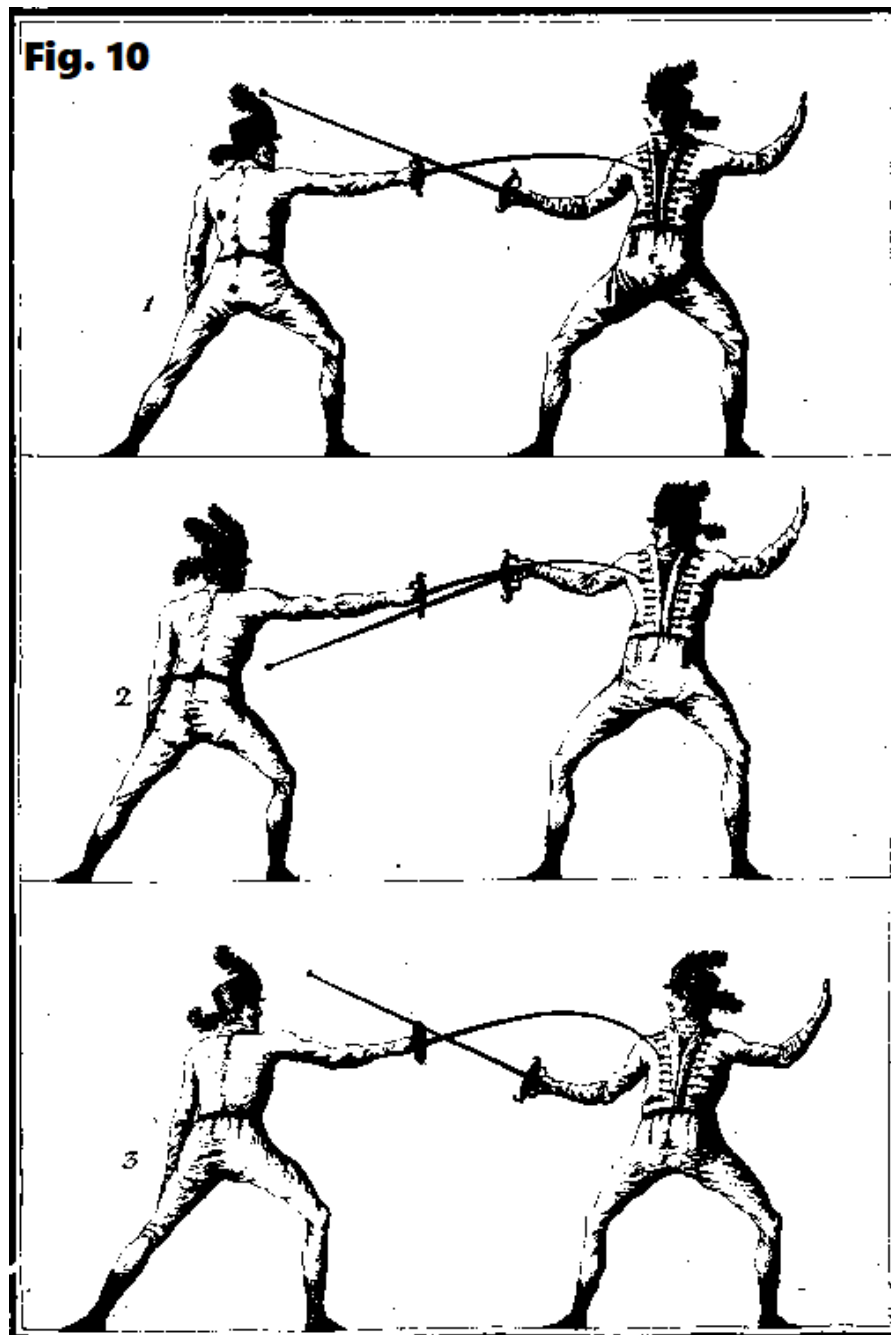
The next simple thrust attacks that we will see from de Brea will require for the sword to do circle movements in the air. That would be imagining a big circumference parallel in front of the diestro.



A second type of simple ones is the following: *The ¼ of circle thrust*. The diestro has the sword of the enemy in contact with the external side, and without leaving contact, as we said in the previous action the diestro will move towards the proportional mean. Then she will add one degree of force over the other sword, while still doing the *atajo* (we use to say *advancing the atajo*). Right after, the diestro will slide her blade over the one of her enemy and thrust in the diametrical line of the opponent at the chest (imagine the point of the blade drawing a ¼ circle in the air before thrusting). Diestro must keep pressure to avoid being hit and place the hand in mid nails-down, that way her front/low quillon would trap the sword of the opponent in case she attempts to get out (with a disengage). This is *the quarter of circle thrust*.

A: In image #2 of figure 10 we see that the opponent tried to get out and the diestro trapped it with the lower quillon while still thrusting.

A third way: (Still in simple thrusts). Imagine that the opponent is waiting in the second body posture. She offers an opening on the chest or in the collateral line through the internal side of the sword. The diestro has her sword in the *weak under strong* that is 1 degree of strength under the 9 degrees of the opponent (check the previous figure 8-3). So at this point, if the opponent is waiting for us, we will disengage the sword, keeping it close to the opponent's blade and seek for the thrust. Our hand should be at the height of our head so we avoid a possible attack from the enemy (figure 10-3). As well, the hand should be mid nails-up. Feet should be in the third body stance like the first thrust mentioned. This type of thrust is called *causa libre / free cause*. This one can be done to any side of the weapon, but the hand should be always able to change from mid nails-up to mid-nails down to block the sword of the enemy in inside or outside respectively. In case the sword has no quillons we should use the full edge of our blade to deviate the opponent's sword and switch it to flat when we thrust, that is hand in nails-in as we call the first one (remember what I said in chapter 2, in which de Brea put numbers to the hand positions without ever mentioning). All the rest can be seen in the 1, 2, 3 images of figure #10. And with this last one we have explained all the simple ones.



Now let's explain the complex thrust. (These ones require an answer from the opponent following an action from the diestro).

For the first one: imagine the diestro waiting with the opponent's sword in contact in the inside, and at the same time the diestro displays an opening at her upper arm (from the outside). In the moment the opponent disengages, to get free or try to thrust at the opening, the diestro should attempt the attack (thrust), getting more profiled and stepping out of the diameter (that is towards her right side at the moment the sword of the opponent just passed at the other side) and thrusting on the

diametrical line in the chest of the opponent with mid nails-down. That way our quillon would deflect or trap the blade if she tries to get out a second time.

For the second complex one. Diestro has the opponent's sword at the external side. In the moment that the enemy disengages, in order to get rid of the pressure, the diestro will thrust with accidental towards the chest of the opponent. In the case the enemy does a *formation*, (because she can do that), the diestro's thrust should go towards the collateral right line. As well the diestro's hilt should be high at the level of her head. If the enemy follows the formation with a cut, the diestro would be able to stop it with her strong side of the blade. In case the enemy just disengages and places herself in right angle, even if she is in a low position the diestro should search to injure under her arm, in the vertical line. To do so she would turn her hand mid nails-up (before when we were pushing it was in mid nails-down). Seek the opponent's blade to block it with hers and low quillon if needed. That is *¼ circle thrust*. In case there is no quillon, we can add the hand in between the blades (to deflect the other sword) and do a *fanconada* (injuring under the arm). But try not to use such resource (the hand), because is too risky.

Third one. Diestro has the opponent's sword in the inside, and pushed it with the atajo, deflecting and subjecting it. In the moment that she walked into the proportional mean the opponent does the transference (remember chapter 14. The opponent, pushes the sword of the diestro towards her internal side, from her right to her left). At that point, when she is pushing back our sword to her other side, the diestro will turn the hand mid nails-down (it was mid nails-up) and will thrust forward, with hilt up in order to be defended and point of the blade down, aiming the collateral right, over the arm of the opponent. This type of attack is called *occupying the diameter line*. (In a way is a sort of *en-arcada*, a change of supination-pronation of the wrist in order to change the disposition of the blade and bypass the sword of the enemy and attack with a curved thrust, a name that I have seen from other translators).

This kind of injures depend a lot on the *timing*, since the diestro takes profit from the short moments of advantage in which the opponent is taking time to free her weapon. The way our art calls these kinds of attacks are *complex thrusts*.

The *ligated* ones are not much different from what previously said, but they need of more movements in order to be done, as you will realize (this kind of thrusts seem to happen as counters from opponent attacks).

The first one: Imagine the diestro being pushed by her opponent. At that moment the diestro can start formulating with either reverse or cut, depending on the side, and ending with a thrust towards the closest possible objective, ensuring that we are defending.

A: For more explanation: In this case imagine someone pushes our sword too hard. Our blade will do a wide circle around us, in the air, as if it was turning around the world and coming back from the other side. Our sword not only does that but comes back to the other side, passing the diameter, if needed, and blocking the sword of the enemy, thus, the cut or reverse does not necessarily have to be done to the opponent but to her sword. Instead of a real edge attack, what our blade should do is stopping the circle at the moment it occupied the line of the other sword (and managed to defend ourselves if

the enemy wants to now attack us). When our sword arrives at that imaginary line or even contacting the sword, then we thrust at the same time. In summary: we do a *formation* + thrust, in a way that almost there is no hiccup between one movement and the other.

The second one: The diestro is waiting to her opponent, offering openings in either side. At the moment the opponent attempts to attack, the diestro will deflect and thrust at the same time, placing a thrust wherever there is an opening.

Third one: Imagine the fighters are in the mean of proportion (the old **figure 7-A**). The opponent used *atajo* towards the inside and walked towards *proportional mean*. At that moment, the diestro knows that she is open and will be dangerous to remain in that posture. Therefore, she must bind the weapon using a *transference*, deflecting opponent's sword and thrusting at that moment with accidental movement in the *right collateral* (here it would seem more plausible to attack the vertical line). Afterwards she should move back to keep herself defended.

These 3 examples are enough in order to see the difference between, simple, complex and ligated. I could spend more time explaining them, but it is better to refer to them again inside the *general rules* that will be talked. (As you will see, there is a lot of redundancy in this treatise.)

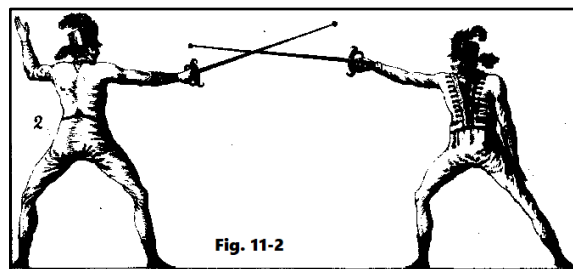
Since now we know the ways to offend our enemy, we should learn how to defend ourselves.

## CHAPTER 17: WAYS TO DEFEND IN DESTREZA

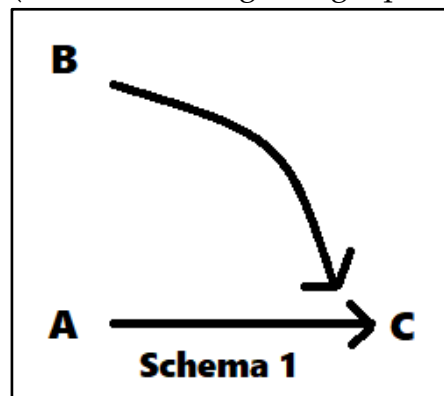
A: Do not mix it with “ways to escape of opponent’s control” even though it can be similar or overlapping. This lesson is broader, the enemy can even attack without the control of the sword.

There are three ways that the diestro could use in order to defend herself from the attacks of the opponent, these are the following: *deflecting*, *subjecting* the opponent’s blade or *blocking* it. Each of these three possibilities has also different names, which are respectively: *from inside*, *from outside* and *from below*.

The first possibility of defense: deflection and from inside: Imagine the diestro waiting in the second body posture (body weight in the back). Diestro is offering openings at the internal side. The opponent attempts to attack at the chest or head from the inside. The diestro will *deflect* the attack placing her sword at that area with hand in mid nails-up position, as well as pulling the body backwards, extending the arm towards the inside, with the point of the blade slightly away of the diameter, blade obtuse. That way, the recovery towards a central position would be faster (explanation below\*). The feet should be slightly shifted towards the inside, front leg extended, back leg slightly flexed, body and feet forming a triangle (I think he means that we should have them in the same line: if we put 3 points in the air, 1 for each foot and one in our chest, it makes a triangle). This way we manage to defend our *inside*, even if our opponent attempts to attack with a diagonal cut, either from stick or sabre as it is shown in the image 2 from ~~figure 15~~ (this is a typo from de Brea, wrong image, he actually is referring to **figure 11-2**, which I correctly added it here.)



A\*: It is interesting the point that de Brea slightly mentions without making any major explanation: he says to use obtuse position in order to gain the center in a faster way, (faster from a right angle position at the left side). Probably I am presuming too much



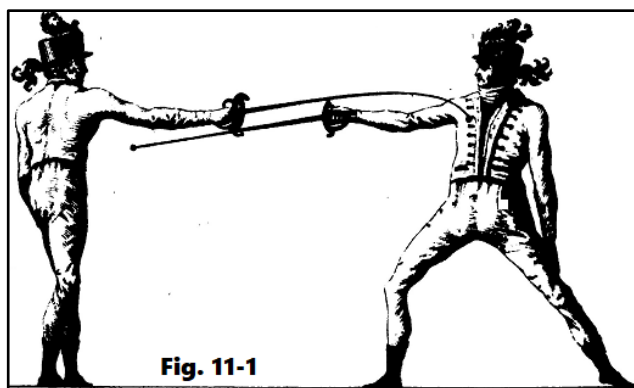
but I believe there is a higher explanation to this and I would like to mention it. Take a look at **schema1**. Imagine as a fencer that you are in front of that schema on the wall. A, B and C are points in the space where your sword is at. A represents your sword in a lateral position, whereas B represents your blade in a higher, obtuse and lateral position. Finally C represents your true diameter line. If I ask which is the fastest path A–C or B–C you might think that your sword should be faster

from **A** to **C**, rather than from **B** to **C**. But you are not accounting for the gravity, which applied from **B**, it will not only give you greater speed to the weapon but also a higher power to bind in case you want to close the line, preventing any attack from the opponent. Therefore, remember that being slightly higher can be used as an advantage, and from the same reason obtuse angle can have the same respect that is due to right angle.

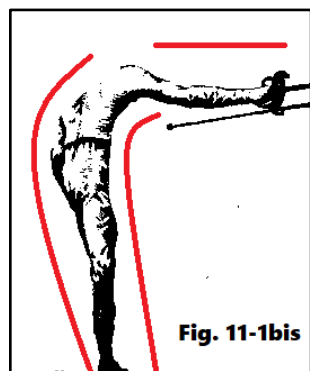
Second modus: The diestro is in that same triangle position as before (second position, weight backwards, front leg extended) and now the opponent recovers. (this means that the opponent saw herself blocked in the inside and now she will try to disengage and attack from our other side, that is outside). Then the opponent decides to attack towards diestro's head or arm. At that moment, the diestro should make her blade fall onto the opponent's one, profiling herself (that is raising her body, displacing the weight forward, to meet the other weapon with the strong mid of the blade). Right after the diestro should recover the second position again. That way, the diestro would have done the *defense for the outside*, this defense and the other one (for the inside) should be done with the strong third of the sword and the long edge of the blade (or true edge).

A: In summary, staying in *mid nails-up* we change to *mid nails-down* falling diagonally onto enemy's weapon when this one does the disengaging from our inside towards our outside.

Third modus is by *blocking*. In the case the diestro has the opponent's blade subjected with hers in the outside and then the opponent decides to disengage and attack towards the diameter line of the chest or right vertical, then, the diestro will raise the body to her third feet position (remember the old **figure 1-B, chapter 3**) making a curved line with the body and straight line with the arm (I created an image called **figure 11-1bis** which shows what de



**Fig. 11-1**



**Fig. 11-1bis**

Brea refers to "*curved body and straight arm*", something that later on will be called *body concavity*, as it is shown in the **figure 11-1**. The diestro will manage to block the opponent and remain defended. (This posture is made by pulling back the forward leg, hiding your tummy, a common movement that I found myself doing many times on smallsword by purely instinct.)

Another way to defend ourselves is by *diverting*. It is name like this, because it is effortless to do and has no risk (*divertir* in Spanish has two meanings, *divert/deviate* and *to have fun*, so, there was probably some pun there, or I want to think so). At the moment that we rise the body (like doing the concavity), we put the eighth diagonal (here we must refer to the confus-

ing diagonal postures described in chapter 9) so we can deviate the weapon and be defended (to be clearer, the enemy disengages from outside, pretending to go under our weapon and thrust us in the chest/tummy but then, our blade, does half circle from our right side clockwise following the other blade. Then we capture and deflect the opponent's blade towards our inside).

It seems than in here there is an extra explanation for defense, since I said in the beginning that there were only three: *deflection*, *subjection* and *blocking* (and now he said *diverting*). However, I still say these are 3, because *diverting* is just a different wording for *deflect*, that means to deviate the weapon, changing the direction in which was intended to go, not mattering if it goes over or below. For now, these explanations seem enough for what is planned in the document.

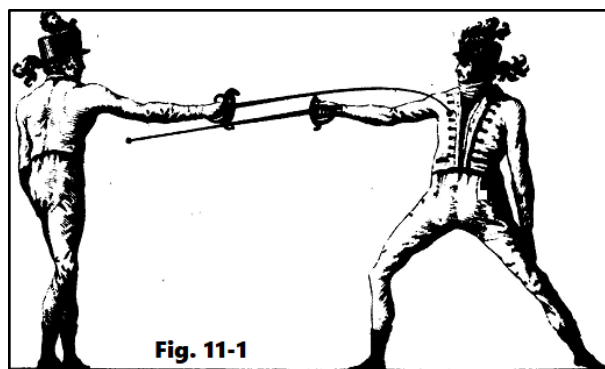
### Universal ways for defense

A: With Universal he refers to *all-terrain* defense techniques. Universal Techniques or *Tretas Universales*, are part of the "sacred pillars" of Verdadera Destreza. However, as you will see afterwards, he will complain about this sort of wording. As well, as I mentioned in other occasions, there is some redundancy in here, but at the end of the chapter there will be a small summary of these last concepts.

The three universal ways (means) of defense are no other than the ones mentioned earlier, that is deflecting the weapon of the opponent or blocking it. In any case the way of doing such things differ for every situation.

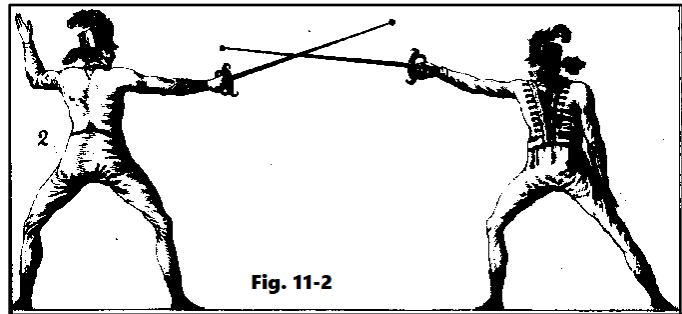
First one. Imagine the diestro waiting in her second posture, offering the arm, the opponent seeks the *strong below the weak*, (the already seen **figure 8-3bis**). Then, the opponent disengages and seeks injuring *accidental* at the opening offered by the diestro. The diestro will place her body to the first position (diestro approaches their feet and gains height). At the same time the diestro will place right angle arm, falling with her blade over the opponent's one and blocking her. In case the enemy keeps approaching, the diestro can thrust her, attacking while being defended. This is the first way for defense, as it is shown in **figure 11-1**.

A: So, he does not mention it, but he use the technique of *right angle* to seek defense and offense. One of the Universal Means by the Classical Verdadera Destreza.

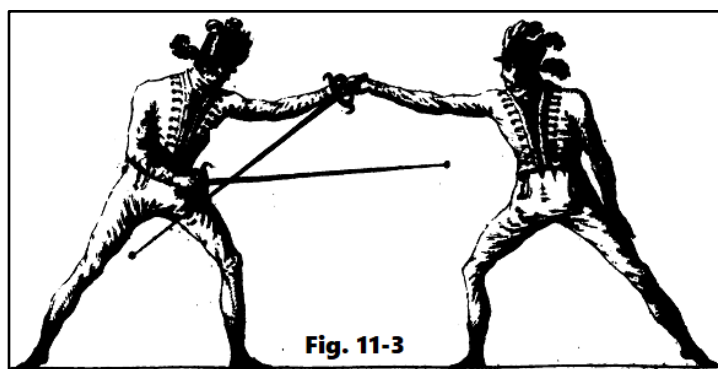




Second one. If the diestro stays in right angle and the opponent recovers and attempts to thrust to the chest or face (now the enemy passes from our outside to our inside), in that case, the diestro will just go back at her second position by retreating her back leg, as well she will deviate the opponent's sword with hers. That way she will be defended and will have a good chance for the offence. This is shown in **figure 11-2**, (as you see he is repeating information and images, adding some details, but it is still worthy to see, because now he just talked about the second mean of defense, the *atajo*, without even mentioning it).



Third one. The diestro is waiting in her second position, same terms as before (following 11-2). At that moment the opponent recovers, closing with left foot and stepping with the second stance. (Until now, the diestro is protecting her inside, and the enemy sword seems to be in the inside as well, covered by the other sword). Then opponent frees her weapon and attempts to thrust with accidental. (So the opponent approached, by putting her left foot closer to the right and then advancing the right, staying in a second posture, weight back. Also the opponent disengaged, passing the sword under it). In the moment the opponent starts the thrust (de Brea does not say it, but the opponent changes second stance towards the third stance, that is weight back from weight forward, in order to attack), the diestro will place herself in the third position (shifts weight to the front as well), and will make her sword fall onto the one of the opponent, with the strong third of the blade and high rectitude (this last obtuse angle is in order to place the sword as perpendicular as possible to the attack, and while offering the strong part of the blade the defense is really powerful). As well the diestro will reach with her left arm to the hilt of the opponent's weapon, doing it so all at the same timing: deflecting and disarming (*concluir* or to conclude) while advancing with the foot (left foot!) This way, the diestro would manage to do the three effects of the defense: *privation*, *subjection* and *disposition*. Disposition to attack if she wanted. This action can be seen in **fig.11-3**.



It has been well shown the reality and reassurance of the three universal means. These are not offensive but defensive, even though, they all offer the opportunity to the diestro to be in *disposition* of offending the opponent if she wanted to. Conclusively, nothing can be done in Destreza without these movements.

To reassure what had been said: with the right angle, which will be the first universal mean, the mean of proportion must be sought. Once here, the diestro must gain the control of the diameter line by placing atajo, which is the second universal mean.

In case the diestro is in a low position, must raise the body with right angle and first universal mean, and switch to atajo and second universal mean if she sees the enemy in coming to attack her. In case the enemy, from the defended position wants to seek injure or disarm, she will attempt the third universal mean. As well, we should know that even if the diestro wants to injure with the edge of the blade, she should use always one of the third means.

I dealt with some people who want to debate the existence of a universal technique. To me it does not exist. Because whatever movement we do or attempt, the opponent will always be able to distort it by using steps, body postures or deflections of the blade. Therefore there is only one way to be successful and is by injuring or disarming, and achieving such things is only possible by using one of three means that we just discussed.

A: So, following the three examples, we would assume that for M. de Brea there are 3 Universal ways for defense, which also match the ones described by many other authors. Those are:

1. The Right Angle
2. The Atajo, subjection of the sword
3. The Conclusion (disarm)

The ways of defense are already mentioned by Tamariz<sup>33</sup> who adds to them: diversion and sword aggregation. This last one will be mentioned by de Brea as a general way of seeking an injury, in Chapter 20.

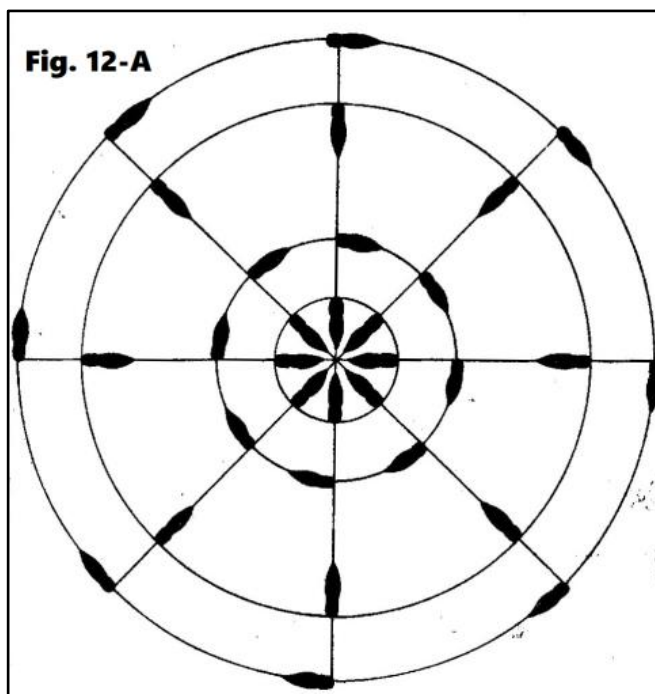
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<sup>33</sup> Tamariz, Nicolás. *Cartilla, y luz en la verdadera destreza*. Pg. 10

## CHAPTER 18: REGARDING TRIANGLES AND PIVOTING POINTS

A: In this chapter, among other things, Master de Brea talks about what he calls *centers*, which I translated it as *pivoting points*, since they are most understandable concepts. Imagine that you are in X position and one of your feet is anchored in a particular place, that point will be the center or pivot point. Moving the other foot and the rest of your body will cause the image of a triangle on the floor (**figure 12-1**).

The pivoting points and the triangles in the Verdadera Destreza are three: *on the right foot*, *on the left foot* and *over both*. Sometimes the pivoting point center would be in the heel of your feet and other times in the tip of the boots. These triangles are made depending on the context of the battle, opponent and diestro. These imaginary triangles will be different depending on the situation, as the demonstrations will show. Their names: *isosceles*, *scalene* and *equilateral*. These triangles are the base for doing subjections of the opponent's sword, mixed angles, punch thrusts, disarms and defense and offense actions inside the propincuo extreme. (The *propincuo* extreme is the distance situation in close combat when we enter with left foot in order to do the disarming; an example is seen in previous **figure 11-3**).

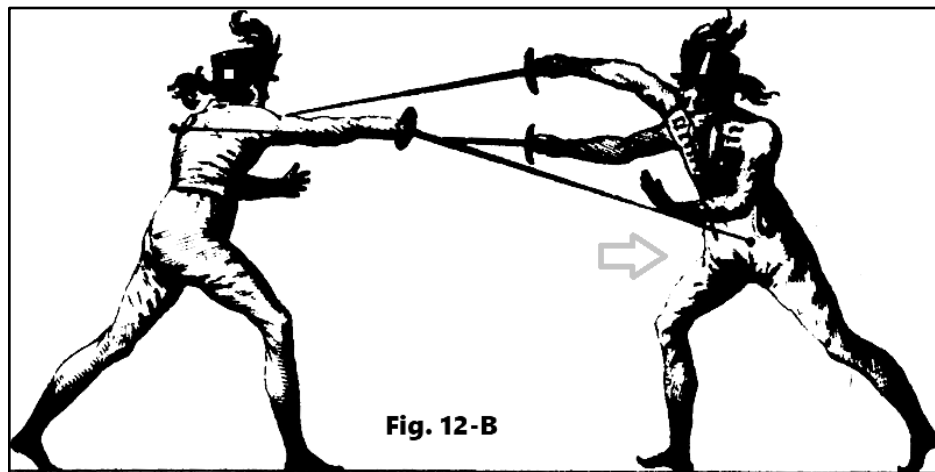


First pivoting point: Imagine both fighters in the proportional mean. The opponent walks through the perimeter of the circumference, towards the diestro's outside or back while trying to control her sword. In order for the diestro to prevent the opponent from reaching an pening, she will move only the back foot, pivoting with the right one. If the opponent decides to *gain profile degrees*, that is, walking towards the diestro's inside with the same purpose than before, then the diestro will use the left foot as pivot, walking around using only the right (forward) foot, closing the space.

A: This is an important lesson that I first learnt from de Brea. So he just now explained two pivoting actions, swinging with right or left foot, when the enemy walks towards our left or right side respectively. This is a very easy exercise that anyone can practice at home every day, with no need of partner. Therefore, once it is time to use in combat, the brain does not have to think about which foot has to step.

Pivoting over both feet. In this case imagine both fighters in close distance. The diestro is putting pressure in the inside of the blade to her opponent. The opponent, attempts to do a disarm by approaching the left hand. At that moment, the diestro should put her arm in between the weapons to block enemy com-

ing back with her sword. Once done the diestro can put the sword away, in nails-out position and thrust at the chest of the opponent. This can be seen in the **figure 12-B** (diestro is indicated with an arrow).  
A: An easy explanation is that your feet play *the twist*, that ~~ugly American~~ peculiar dance from the 60s. Turning over your own feet, tip or heel, allows you to move your hips and shoulders from square to profile position and vice-versa.



## CHAPTER 19: REGARDING RECOVERINGS AND HAND RESOURCES

A: In this chapter Master de Brea explains how to recover your position with your body as well as pulling and extending the arm, offensively and defensively in concordance to your body and the attacks of the opponent. He refers to these many possible movements of the sword as *hand resources*.

The use of recoveries and resources will depend in how clean and solid the diestro's technique is. To attain successful recoveries, the diestro should always have perfect posture, sometimes retreating with left foot and other times with the right one. These movements are infinite, because every time the diestro goes to her third posture and attempts to injure, the opponent can just move away and put distance among them. Then, the diestro, must go back to her second posture, find again the mean and either re-attempt the same attack or try some other techniques.

Imagine the diestro just attacked (diestro went to 3<sup>rd</sup> posture) and the opponent deflects the attack without retreating, keeping herself in the same proportional mean. The diestro must know that she is in danger (because the enemy can beat her in timing and in distance), therefore she must either retreat to a second posture, or rise to the first stance.

The way of extending the left and pulling back the right is called *recovery*. I am quite sure there is no other possible way to free the sword and put the body straight and ready to keep it with its functioning.

The *hand resources* follow these recoveries. To use such resources the diestro must have a complete knowledge of the opponent's openings as well as her owns. That way the resources will be able to be used not only to find path for injuring but as well to avoid being injured. The ways to do them are infinite and we must be careful in having good linked the resources and the recoveries. If one of them mismatches in time, by being too early or too late, any action in either defense or offense will fail.

Time judgement is of great importance to the diestro, since she will rely on it to her protection. Certainly, if someone practice such manoeuvre with the correct way, that person will be victorious, not falling in the whims of vanity of those who just want to show off, trusting excessively in their temper and strength, I refer to those type of people who see an opening and throw themselves into the danger without a contingency plan to their exit, being at the mercy of their opponents.

It should be said: when the diestro attempts to injure the opponent, she should start always in the proportional means. In case the opening is blocked, the diestro should attempt to aim another target, always without surpassing the limits. Therefore, whatever the result is, the diestro can always move back to a safe position, recovering it by using her feet. If all the movements are made in a proportioned way, the diestro should manage to remain protected at all time. However, if in any case she exceeds in her movements, because she lunged too wide or too far, in that case the diestro would not be able to recover and will be dangerously exposed.

Even if it seems clear my explanation that hand and body should always work together, I will add some examples, to ensure the knowledge of the operations. However, before going to that point, it is crucial to learn an extra way to deviate the opponent's sword, this is the *expulsion*. The *expulsions* can be of 3 types: *vertical*, *divisive* and *expulsive* (yes, it's a bit redundant. These techniques consist in sharp and rapid movements of the hand and blade in order to put the one of your ene-

my away. In Destreza those are called *expulsiones*. There are names for these actions in other disciplines, for example Domenico Angelo calls them *crossing the blade*<sup>34</sup>. De Brea does not do much distinction about the different expulsion movements; it seems he leaves it just as a general concept.

Imagine the opponent waiting in the mean of proportion, waiting, sword on the diameter line and offering very little opening with sword in right angle. In that case, the diestro will place the sword for the inside, as if making the first part of the atajo. If it happens that the opponent has the hand in nails-in, while keeping blade contact, the diestro will place the hand in mid nails-down and will push the other blade with natural move, gliding the blade with the one of the opponent and pushing it vertically down, towards the floor, strong and sharp move. In some occasions the opponent loses her sword and gets disarmed. The way the diestro should do the expulsions or deviations must be starting the contact at the number 2 of degrees of the blade of the opponent, while the diestro's contact point is at 9. At the end of the movement, the diestro's sword is contacting with 1 degree at 8 degrees of the opponent's sword (therefore, it is a kind of slicing/gliding movement on the blade of the opponent). We keep ourselves in the proportional mean, in order to be able to injure the opponent once the expulsion is done, finding the opening that this one created. Beware that the expulsions can be done in any of the sides of the weapon, inside or outside, as soon as we can be ready to attack safely.

In the case the opponent has the hand in nails down, the diestro, (once placed the sword) will deviate (push) the sword towards the outside of the opponent, which will create opening in her collateral right line.

If the opponent has the hand in participle/mid nails-up or completely nails-up we must do the expulsion towards the inside of the opponent. That expulsion will create the opening in her arm. (It seems that, by default, we want to push the sword towards the palm-flexion position of the opponent.)

If we do the expulsions that way, we will be able to destroy the strength of the opponent and create openings. Thus, the diestro should remain in measure in order to execute the thrust with accidental move towards the opening that is closest to her. Sometimes, the opponent overreacts to the expulsion, by jumping backwards, going so far that cannot be hit even using a pistol. In that case, follow my advice do not follow your opponent. There is no destreza against those who run away. A fleeing enemy, silver bridge (this is a literal translation of the Spanish proverb, which means that is always wise to let your enemies run away).

This knowledge displayed on the *recoveries* and *resources* seems enough for the moment. In destreza nothing works if we ignore these mentioned concepts, therefore we can disclose now further knowledge.

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<sup>34</sup> Angelo – *The school of fencing* 53

## CHAPTER 20: GENERAL RULES

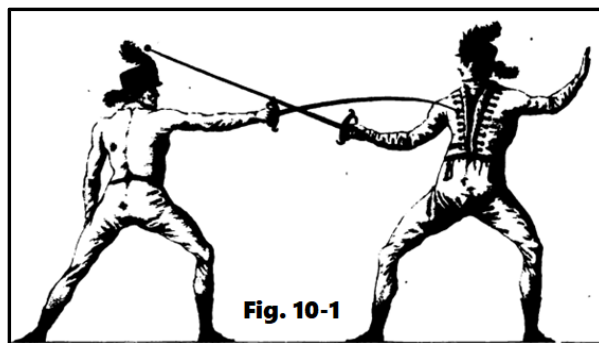
A: In this section, Master de Brea re-explains sword techniques of Destreza, getting in deeper details and explaining some concepts that wanted to save for this chapter alone. Beware to not mix this general rules with the three universal means of defense, even if they are related or even connected in symbiosis. But, these General Rules refer basically in how to deal any fencing movement and seek execution with safety, focusing in how the sword of the diestro and the one of the opponent interact each other.

The general rules that we discussed for the moment can be divided in 3 categories: by *blade aggregation*, by *atajo* or *subjection* and *free-cause*. There could not be more than these. There are some Masters who wish to add 3 more to make it to 6, which are: *inclusion*, *transference* and *formation*. Truly we should not ignore those techniques, but those are much dependent to other movements. I fought against many types of people, from different nations and with all sort of weapons as well, therefore I gained a lot of experience of the matter and I can reassure that there are no more than the 3 types I said. In Chapter 16 of this book we already mentioned that any other movements will be just considered simply dispositional movements, and all of them get derived from the General rules, as I will prove you. Following this advice, we will proceed to explain each of them.

### Aggregation Rules

A: Sword Aggregation by Mendoza<sup>35</sup>'s definition, is when two swords approach to contact each other, not necessarily one subjecting the other.

In order to start the explanation of such rule, we should consider the opponent in right angle, with arm and sword covering the diameter line. The diestro approaches, with right angle and finds the mean of proportion. Afterwards, the diestro will contact the blade of the enemy (here he doesn't say it, but automatically we should switch angulations: 2 right angles cannot contact each other. Thus, we assume there is a slight obtuse angle in one or both fencers). The diestro keeps contact with the blade in the inside. In the case the opponent retreats with left foot, the diestro will follow her with right foot, attempting the second posture while going towards the proportional mean (that means the diestro advances more than the opponent retreats), things that we already mentioned in chapter 13 when the atajo was explained. In case the opponent leaves an opening in order to be injured, the diestro will attempt the thrust with a mixture of natural and accidental move, sliding her blade along the opponent's. The injury should be in the right colateral. This action can be seen in **figure 10-1**.



A: Beware, that even if de Brea said "proportional mean", but it does seem that the Die-

<sup>35</sup> Mendoza - *Principios de los cinco sujetos principales*. Pg 108



stro moves straight forward and not around the circles. It makes me think that Atajo can be done in linear movement, which would contradict all classical definitions for it.

Second possibility: In case the opening is too narrow, the diestro will do expulsion maneuvers, any of them, the way they had been explained and will do the attack for the new opening presented.

A: Indeed many times seems too narrow, finding the chest, so he proposes to push away the other sword and occupy the diameter with a thrust to the chest.

Third possibility: In case the opponent flexes the arm and lowers the point, attempting to disengage the weapon, the diestro must do an inferior diversion with seventh diagonal posture. (The classical aspect of a *diversion* is a deflection move, resembling a hanging guard, letting the other blade slice away to one of our sides, external or internal. However in here, the diestro lets the blade of the opponent pass under hers and then follows it doing a counter-clockwise movement with the blade, catching the other blade with such acute angle.) After the point of the sword of the opponent is deviated away of the diameter line, the diestro will place her sword back in that diameter and seek the injure in the open area, which will be the upper part of the arm, in the outside. (So, after stopping the blade with the septime posture and acute angle, the diestro switches to a right angle and walks towards her inside to hit the opponent.)

Fourth possibility: If the diestro realizes that the opponent doesn't apply pressure at the blade while contacting it, then she should just push the opponent's blade with natural and accidental, thrusting following the line of the opponent's blade. In case there is no place to thrust, the diestro should do any of the expulsions in order to find a good opening to do so, (this is very close to the second possibility).

Fifth possibility: The diestro can use feinted attempts of attack, which have 2 possibilities: Cero or Imperfecto and perfecto.

A: In several treatises there is a mention of *acometimiento imperfecto* which translated would be "imperfect attempt", which can have different connotations: 1) it can be an attempt to attack non-vital points, and make the enemy cover them in order to find a real opening for a vital point 2) Any attempt to attack the enemy, KNOWING that it will not work but it will create a PREDICTED response to the enemy which will be later on used by the diestro to gain timing on his opponent. This last movement for me is the definition of a feint.

Something to be aware of is that Master de Brea uses two word/concepts for "imperfect attempt", and one of them is *acometimiento cero* (zero attempt), which I will not use since it can be easily mistaken with *movimiento cero* (zero movement), which is another concept of Destreza (which I will not explain here) and it can lead to confusion. Therefore, I will not use such synonym here, talking only about "imperfect attempt".

The diestro will place the sword over the opponent's one, and will slide the sword over the other blade until the point of her own blade gets to be under the hilt of the opponent's sword (weak under the strong). Then the diestro will put more weight on the left, back-side of the body and will rise the front foot, as if she was going to step forward, but putting it on the same place and hitting the floor. All these actions

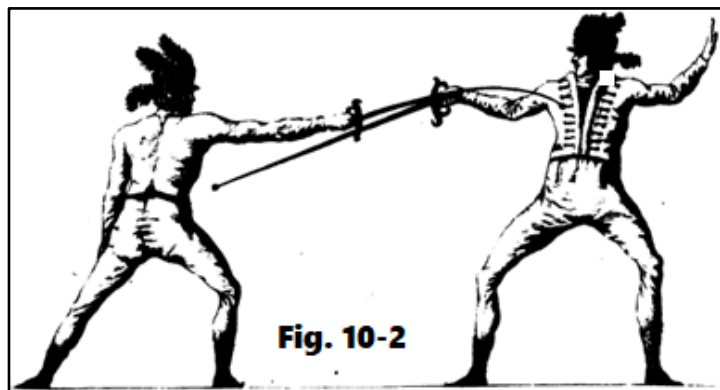
must be done at the same time. This movement is called imperfect, because the diestro cannot execute any injure (at least lethal) but causes the opponent to move, trying to stop a non-existing attack, at that moment the diestro will attack to the open target she finds and manage the injury.

Sixth possibility: In the moment that the diestro lowers the point of the blade in order to start the feint-attempt (same as before) if the opponent attempts to attack (here I believe the opponent tries to go over your sword), then the diestro will raise her sword again, connecting it with the opponent's blade in order to avoid the injure. Without ceasing the contact, the diestro will do a mixed movement of natural and accidental, doing a thrust in the right collateral or vertical line, because that will be the opening that the opponent left. (Here I think that the movement does not necessary to be accidental and natural, but can be only accidental or accidental and violento, depending where the opening is and how the opponent is trying to thrust us.)

### Rules for the Atajo

A: In this section Master de Brea will be talking about actions in which the binding and subjection of the blade is the central focus. There will be a fight to control the sword of the opponent and seek disposition for a safe attack. All of the above is what we understand as atajo.

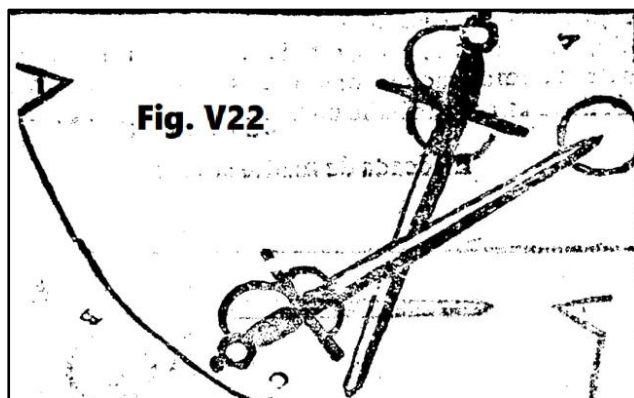
For this rules we should imagine the fighters inside the proportional mean (he again might refer to



the mean of proportion, the initial position). The opponent has arm and sword occupying the diameter line. Then, the diestro places the atajo from the outside, (at least the beginning of the atajo). The diestro should walk towards the interior of the opponent (now entering in the proportional mean classically speaking) gaining profile degrees. In case the opponent resists to the pressure, the

diestro should put more degrees of strength. (Once the control is gained) The diestro should thrust to the diametrical line, with what we call  $\frac{1}{4}$  of circle, which some authors call it *cross of swords* (the real expression is *tercia de armas*, the verb *terciar* means among other things: cross something diagonally using something else), we will do it that way, with hand in nails down, in order to capture the opponent's blade with the lower quillon, as it can be seen in **figure 10-2** (in case the opponent wants to disengage). In the case the weapon does not have quillons the diestro must place the hand nail-up, still doing a  $\frac{1}{4}$  thrust. Also the thrust must be always by *subjected cause*, (that means with pressure and control of the opponent's weapon, as we mentioned in another chapter).

A: This particular last option, using the hand in *nails-up* to do an atajo to the outside, is something uncommon for classical Destreza users, which are usually restricted to use only the front edge for this sort of actions. Ignorant fencers following dogma would criticise it, but it must be said that this same way of doing the binding has been seen in one of the classic authors of Spanish fencing, that is Diaz de Viedma<sup>36</sup>. His use of line in cross with the reverse edge can be seen in **figure V22** pulled from his treatise published in 17<sup>th</sup> century. Viedma calls it *injure of perfect attempt to the head*. It is indeed a technique that many masters forgot about it. De Brea is not one of them.



Second possibility. When the diestro is moving to the proportional mean, (we are still attempting the atajo from the outside), if the opponent starts pulling away her arm and lowers the point of the blade in this case the diestro will go to a eight diagonal posture of the blade (it is the posture I ventured to say it reminds me to the *sep-time* by Hutton, which actually makes sense here: the enemy tries to disengage and injure. This *diagonal movement* will protect you, doing half a circle clockwise, following, capturing and pushing away the sword of the opponent). Once the opponent's blade is deviated of the diameter, the diestro can seek the thrust in the diametrical line of the chest. Beware that the diestro must gain profile degrees (walk towards the right side or inside of the opponent) at the right timing, doing it as all the rest of the actions, if that is correct the diestro should remain always defended, not giving a change to the opponent to achieve *reduction* (that is *coming back* with his blade to occupy the diameter line, definition coined in the early chapters).

Third possibility. (We are still pushing the blade towards the outside, and walking towards our outside). Imagine the diestro feels no pressure on her blade while pushing the opponent's one, in that case, in order to be more secure, she should do a whole revolution to the blade, coming back to the same point of the atajo and thrust in the chest, at the diameter line, always walking towards the outside in order to gain degrees of profile.

A: Here someone could say "if it wasn't doing pressure, why we don't just thrust?" well, regard that he says "to be more secure". That is, if the opponent is not putting pressure on our blade, it means that we do not have control of what that blade would do: imagine we start thrusting and the opponent's blade gets out and hits us, even if we hit it would not be a wise move. Therefore, de Brea proposes to do a full circle revolution controlling again the sword of the enemy and when finishing the revolution we thrust to the chest, that way we would manage to thrust with *subjected* cause.

<sup>36</sup> Viedma – *Método de Enseñanza de Maestros*. Pg. 22

Fourth: in case the opponent only offers a very narrow opening, the diestro might use expulsions in order to find new openings to injure, (this seems like a side note, as a good permanent friendly reminder).

Fifth: If the opponent raises her hand, putting the sword in acute angle, not allowing the control of her blade, but showing arm and part of the face. In that case the diestro will stop her atajo and attack the closest target, moving towards her own inside, towards the open area of the opponent.

A: this is one of my favourites, many fencers when in pressure, tend to retreat the sword and hand, protecting the inside of their body, exposing the hand. This is a common error from *pure diestros*. A pure diestro will only injure when he has the reach to attack to the head or chest of the opponent, therefore, they wrongly think that they are safe as soon as the opponent diestro does not have reach to their chest or head.

Sixth possibility: It is very useful for the diestro, once placed atajo (still outside) to do a feint of a thrust, that will be done by the diestro by putting more degrees of strength to her sword onto the opponent's and doing a tap on the floor with her front foot, body in the second posture. The opponent will think that an attack is coming and will rush to push and defend herself (raising her sword in obtuse angle and moving it towards her outside, sort of transference). At that moment, the diestro will disengage the sword under the arm and sword of the opponent and thrust in the collateral right of the opponent, avoiding her blade to be touched at any time during the disengage. Such type of attack is called *½ circle thrust*.

Seventh possibility: Once placed the atajo, the same way we did it before, the diestro can attempt to attack the enemy towards the head while being defended, thus, this kind of attack is called *perfect attempt*, because the enemy cannot injure the diestro and all her energy has to be put in defending herself of the attack. If the opponent does not deviate, the diestro will injure. In the case she deviates or pushes the sword, the diestro must pass the sword under the opponent's one and injure under her arm. This kind of attack is called *major portion of circle thrust*. (Major portion of circle refers to a thrust that does more than half a circle revolution but less than a whole revolution, I call it 40 minutes of a clock. These thrusts are described in other classical books of Destreza, such Mendoza<sup>37</sup>.) This perfect attempt can open the door as well to execute a cut, in which at the same time this cut can be done *converted, reducido or continuado*, (when de Brea says that we can continue, it means that probably the enemy will do something to stop this attempt of attack, which can chain our reaction to a next attack).

*Note about the last movement.* Sometimes, if the diestro really seeks the reaction of the enemy parrying her action, then, the diestro must slow down the point of her sword while going towards the face of the enemy, which will make the opponent react as it should. This is important, because to do this action we require the control and contact of the weapon of the opponent. Beware that after the first attempt of attack by the diestro the opponent might possibly just walk away, an action that would oblige the diestro to recover her posture of feet if she wants to follow any attempt of attack.

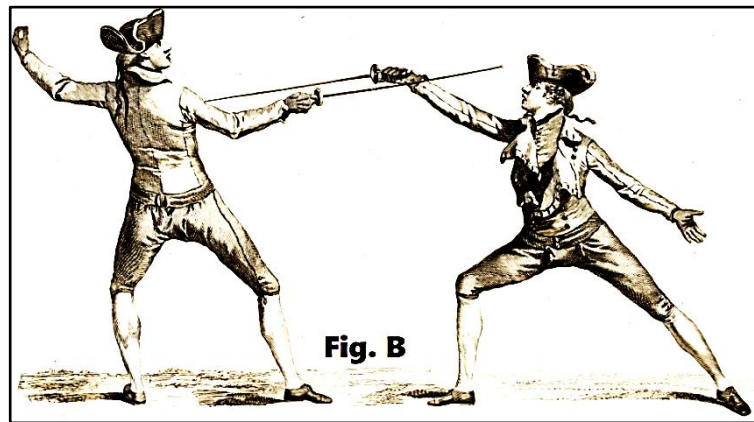
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<sup>37</sup> Pérez de Mendoza – *Resumen de la verdadera destreza de las armas*. Pg. 54

A: Here de Brea wants to make us clear, that whatever we do, we should always be safe, and that we should not attack every time we see an opening.

Eighth possibility: Again the diestro placed the atajo in the outside and moved to proportional mean, but this time the opponent's weapon is too stiff and the place to injure is too narrow. In that case the diestro would move her blade along the opponent's one or two degrees, doing the same with her feet. The blade would point to a low position, turning the hand nails-out, the same way of the *fifth diagonal posture* (I presume the diestro raises the hilt of her sword and lowers the point, seeking to threat the opponent). The diestro would also tap on the floor to provoke the reaction of the enemy. When the opponent moves her position in order to be defended, the diestro would change the hand to nails-up and would execute the thrust in *second intention* by doing a *thrust in Cuarte*.

A: I attach here an image from Angelo's<sup>38</sup> book when describing such thrust in cuarte, which is just with nails up (**fig.B**). The rest of the image, such the position of the fencers or the swords should be ignored, since it differs from this specifically technique. You can, in any case, use it for reference, and imagine the position of the hand when the opponent is pushed in the outside by the diestro at the right side, while doing the thrust in the chest.



Ninth: In case the opponent does not switch position to defend against that first attempt of attack, but places her sword in right angle, occupying the diameter line, the diestro would use expulsions. That way the sword of the opponent would be deviated and execute the thrust to the opening. In case the weapon does not get out of the line, the Diestro can use the lower quillon (I believe here the diestro should have to play with the hand position nails-up/nails-down in order to achieve it) and seek the thrust in the diameter line of the chest. In any case it is always important to walk towards the outside in order to be better defended.

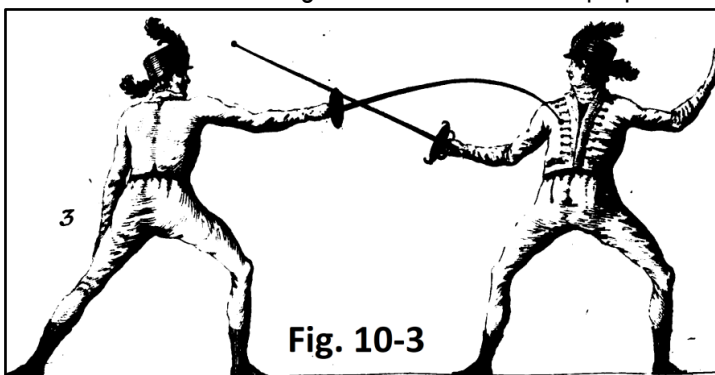
A: Here de Brea gives a hint about a typical error of people who place right angle against any situation. Remember that right angle gives you maximum reach, but has a big adverse effect: it offers the weak part of the sword to the enemy. A smart fencer, in the right terms of distance and context, can easily trap the blade with the quillons.

<sup>38</sup> Angelo – *School of Fencing* pg. 6

### Rules to disengage

A: In here Master de Brea explains several possibilities regarding the disengage of the sword and thrusts in the *free cause* (causa libre). Many fencers from Olympic fencing or even Smallsword have a tendency of such actions with rapier. Some people call them *Vulgars*, I dare to say, they do “de Brea”. You will realise there are many possibilities with *free cause* that are not as careless as someone can imagine. Nevertheless, there is nothing safer than ending your opponents’ life quickly, avoiding playful games around her sword.

First possibility: To start explaining these rules we must imagine the fencers in the proportional mean (I believe that, again, he refers to the mean of proportion). The diestro will have her sword with *weak under the strong* of the opponent; the latter would have an opening at the upper arm. At this point, the diestro would disengage and right away do a thrust with an *accidental* move, placing the armed hand up and the point downwards. That way the hilt will protect the diestro from an upcoming attack. Observe this in **figure 10-3**.



A: His explanation seems to be a thrust in the outside, upper arm. However, since this movement plays in the diametrical line, it can be done regardless of the side the diestro is playing.

Second: In the moment we disengage the sword, the diestro would fake a movement by raising a little the body and tapping the floor with the front foot. In the moment the opponent closes the target, (by putting the sword towards the side that the attacking blade is coming), the diestro would disengage again and thrust to the new open area. This thrust is called  $\frac{1}{2}$  circle thrust (because it does half a circle, duh) and *causa libre* (free cause, because there is no need of contacting the sword or doing pressure, the sword of the enemy is moving contrary to our blade, once we thrust, if the enemy wants to come back she will find our sword occupying the central line, and we will be defended. Something similar to **fig. 10-1**, which will be seen again in the seventh proposition.)

Third: The diestro would disengage and place the point just over the hilt of the opponent. Then without having any contact with the blade of the opponent, the diestro will do a *perfect attempt* pointing her sword at the opponent’s face. The opponent will come to protect herself and the diestro will thrust under the arm of the opponent by doing a *sagita* but with *circular* move. Beware that all these movements must be done without having the opponent’s sword touching the one of the diestro, or else she will lose the timing needed to do so.



Fourth: In case the opponent ignores the attempt and just decides to attack the diestro, this one would fall with her weapon on the opponent's one, causing atajo. (He doesn't say which side, but it's indifferent). The opponent, feeling the pressure of the atajo would attempt to escape from it (disengaging), at that moment, the diestro would thrust the opponent into the open target she finds.

Fifth: In the case the diestro gets imprudent and the opponent puts the atajo on her weapon, and the opponent is controlling the diestro's sword with 6 degrees over 3, the diestro should not disengage. Doing it would be dangerous to her. The diestro should do transference to the sword of the opponent to the other side (by gaining more degrees, changing arm or/and angulation of the sword and/or moving body, as it was explained in another chapter). Without stopping the pressure, doing a mixture of accidental-reduction-natural the diestro would thrust the opponent, keeping contact with the blade, towards the opening she finds, being this one vertical or right collateral.

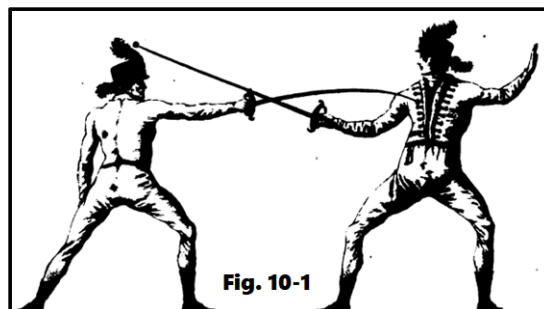
A: Interestingly this fifth rule is actually a way of "not to disengage", you will find others similar to it.

Sixth: In the case the opponent gets the arm and blade in right angle, occupying the diameter line, the diestro would do expulsions. To manage such movements correctly, the diestro must put more weight on the back foot, and advance with the front while doing the expulsions, switching the balance properly. It is important to swing correctly the body at any time, having it ready to execute injure to the opening target (and defend when is needed).

Seventh: Imagine the diestro in the *weak under the strong*, as it was said before. The opponent decides to place her weapon transversal to the diameter line, in her inside, pulling also her arm, the point of her blade is low and seems to have strength on it (here the opponent puts it away of the diameter line while you have the diameter line, it seems advantageous, but the opponent is waiting for you correctly, so she can close the line with stronger degrees and harm you a lot). In this case, the diestro should not attack, even if the opponent has openings over and under her weapon, because she can counter-disengage and there is no possible reaction to it. The correct solution for the diestro is disengaging and contacting the sword of the opponent (instead of just attacking we put it over the weapon of our opponent, that is at our external). Right after, the diestro will push the opponent's sword away, with diversion, or the eight diagonal posture (here I recollect the image of



the diagonal postures, adding the one I decided to steal from Hutton. Seemingly, we put it over the other sword, make an acute angle and swing it towards our inside.) Once it passes the diameter line, the diestro must release the pressure. (The next text is highly rephrased to make it understandable). Afterwards, the diestro must do the thrust forming a triangle with feet, arm and sword in order to be defended while doing the thrust, like in **figure 10-1**. In case the opponent does reduction (comes back to the





diameter line before the thrust) the diestro must disengage again and do a thrust putting pressure to the opponent's blade making a movement mixture of reduction, violento and accidental, doing the injure in the right collateral.

A: Summary of the last movement: your opponent had the sword in her inside, your sword was under hers, controlled. Then you do a full revolution clockwise, pushing the opponent's sword towards your inside and then you want to thrust. But the enemy sword comes back, closing the line, then before you enter to her threat area, you disengage, catch the sword of the opponent from your outside (where the sword of the opponent was already going, in order to protect the line), then you can keep goint towards the outside while pushing and thrusting/stabbing.

*Advertence:* Note that the *attempts of attack*, from any side of the opponent's weapon, *inside* or *outside*, can also go over the weapon or arm and under it. Sometimes we would need to step forward, other times we would need just to fake the step. There is the possibility of disengaging any time you find necessary, always doing it lowering the point and raising the hilt, avoiding the sword being deviated or touched by the opponent's, if that happens the diestro will need to recover control of the situation. A way of disengaging repeatedly is called *disengaging by feints*. Those are done with the purpose of making the opponent switch her position and discover new openings to thrust while being defended. They can be called *one-two feint* or *one-three feint* and successively, depending on the times the diestro would pass under the opponent's sword. Sometimes the diestro needs more than one or even four to make the opponent switch position. Beware that the opponent might try to do circular movements in an effort to deviate the diestro's blade.

Any attempt of attack must be done from a proportioned mean (meaning the distance in which the diestro can hurt the opponent, defended and without any need of further advance on the body). That way the diestro will not waste time when attempting to attack, as well is the only mean in which the opponent will attempt to defend herself, because if these same movements are done out of distance (such *mean of proportion* or even farther), as some people do, it would be superfluous, with no value. In those cases the opponent would not need to do any reactions and if she does the diestro would not reach to touch her and suffer the consequences of such wrong movements. So, according to my judgement any time a feint or an attempt of attack takes place, it must be done from a proportioned measure, and once the opening is seen the diestro must not stop her thrust. However it is important to keep one defended with the techniques that have been mentioned in other chapters, not hesitating to use them during the attack. It is not wise to have the weapon moving around without control, because if the diestro is exposed she can be lucky once, but not twice, and sometimes we find that both contenders end up injured by such mistakes, a situation that we call it *encounter* (I have never heard of any other master calling a double hit with such word, which is interesting).

These rules explained in this chapter and the movements before can be done at any side of the weapon of the opponent. Remember using the means of defense, sometimes the diestro might need to play by *blocking*, other times by *subjecting the opponent's sword*, or *including it*, or *transferring*, doing *diversion* (diverting) and other times doing *formation*, each thing done at its suitable time, doing it in a matter that the opponent could not find the good knowledge to injure. The diestro will not only be defended but

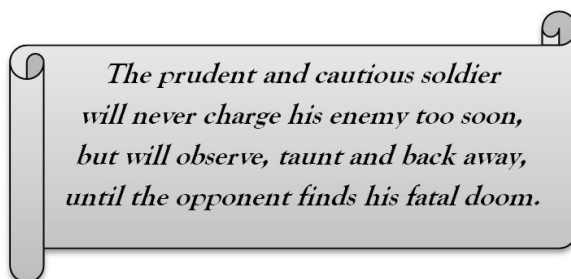
will also manage to destroy the defense of the opponent, finding the opportunity to injure her as it has been shown in many examples.

The *formations* will be done when the opponent uses great force to subject or deviate the blade, a sort of action that could be used to respond with an edge attack. These cuts or reverses can be done in the head, called *verticals*. The ones aimed to the ears will be called *diagonals*. As well, our blade can just fall on the opponent's one, in order to subject it. I do not advise you to attack using *horizontal* cuts (the ones to the low torso), neither attacking to the legs, because in those cases your body is exposed and the opponent can advantage you with the right angle.

A: Interestingly de Brea advises not to do low cuts. However, the fact that he mentions them means that the idea is present, and most probably was used by students or thugs out of the school.

## CHAPTER 21: TESTING FEINTS, DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE ACTIONS

The diestro might need to use the *testing feint* in order to know the intentions of her opponent. That way the diestro can decide to attack at the same time the opponent reacts or right after it. As well, it can be used to avoid the encounters (remember he uses *encuentro* as double-hit), something that can happen often and is due to ignorance in the battlefield. It happens when the fencers are too confident and careless that they just fight focusing in the open targets of the opponent. In those cases both fighters find the target and they jump against each other, like goats striking their heads, both ending up injured or dead. In order to avoid this happening to the diestro, she should have in mind the verses of such song:



A: I could not find the author of this text, but it was curious to find the exact same paragraph used in another Spanish fencing treatise posterior to de Brea, written by José Cucala<sup>39</sup>. In case you are wondering: yes, in the translation I had to play with synonyms in order to make it rhyme.

To achieve such important goal, the diestro will be in her second posture, offering a clear opening in purpose, waiting for her opponent to attempt striking the opening. In case the opponent hesitates, the diestro must change her position, sometimes including the weapon, other times moving the feet or the body, as if planning to attack, as well the diestro can call using diagonal postures, staying in a cautious distance (here he says *very proportionate measure* but it seems to me that he does not refer to any specific mean but to an actual distance that would allow the reaction of the diestro, but also be close enough to make her movements credible, since we are talking about feints.) Also, the diestro should never take out the focus from the opponent, that way she can be ready to defend when the opponent decides to attack. In case that happens, the diestro can either step back with left foot or stop the attack with a right angle, which is the first mean of defense, (the first Universal rule mentioned before, end of chapter 17).

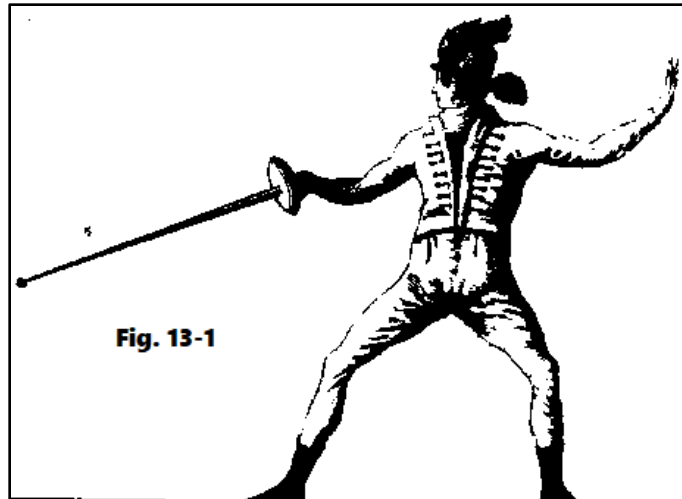
In case the diestro finds that the opponent by imprudence offers an opening, she should go to attack such target, in a controlled way, placing the body, arm and sword towards that zone, in a manner that she would be defended. If that is correctly done, she should not be scared of the encounter or being injured, since the opponent will be so surprised to be attacked that she will try to defend herself. In the case that the opponent breaks diestro's proportioned mean and attempts to control her weapon and close the distance, the diestro should not consent it. It would be wise for the diestro to lower degrees of the weapon

<sup>39</sup> Cucala – *Tratado de Esgrima*. Pg. 28

(here it mostly refers to play with arm flexion, angulation and height of the arm), usefully, the diestro could also rise the body (that also gains degrees of strength, that is switching to position #1), falling with the sword onto the opponent's, stopping her and obliging the opponent to search for another way to attack.

However, I feel in need to add some other possibilities for what is mentioned, that way, if the diestro finds herself in any other guard or position, the defense will not be confusing and would be able to apply all the possibilities that were mentioned in the general rules.

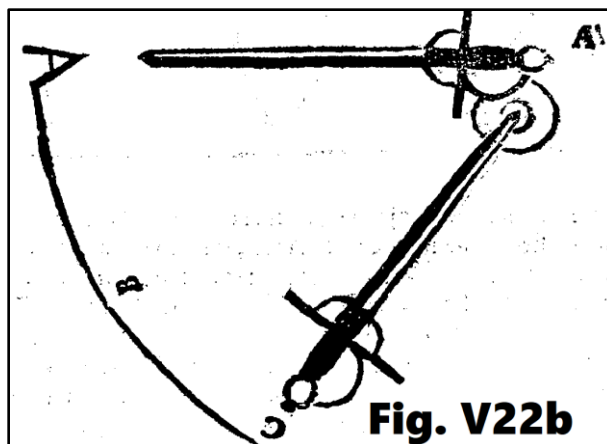
First possibility: Imagine the diestro in her perfect posture (he never talked before about a perfect posture, let's see). The arm will be a bit flexed, hand in slightly low position, mid nails-up (it seems *septime* in classical epee), the sword is transversal towards the inside, the point of the blade looks downwards. The open area the diestro shows is over and under the arm and weapon, as well as that side of the chest, as it can be seen in **figure 13-1**. (Remember that the weapon is diagonally placed towards the inside of the fencers, thus a profile image is not very descriptive). If the diestro is attacked over such position, she can defend by just extending the arm. That would be enough to deviate the opponent's weapon (towards diestro's outside), at the same time she should move backwards the right foot around half foot of distance, creating a concavity with the body (remember the **figure 11-1bis** form early chapters). Once the sword of the opponent is outside of the parallelogram (among the fencers), the diestro can pass the weapon under the arm of the opponent (in here we placed away the sword of the opponent, but we want to do a disengage and attack to the inside) with caution and thrust towards the right collateral with accidental move, trying to minimize all movements, so it would be more challenging to be defended by the opponent.



A: Here de Brea means to do a small disengage to find the lower point in the right collateral, thrusting the nipple, but it can be wise to do as well some walking towards the inside.

Second: In the moment that the opponent thrusts over the weapon of the diestro, this one will step out of the line, towards the interior of her opponent, while disengaging under her weapon. Once outside of the line the diestro will find an opening to thrust into the diametrical line on the chest of the opponent.

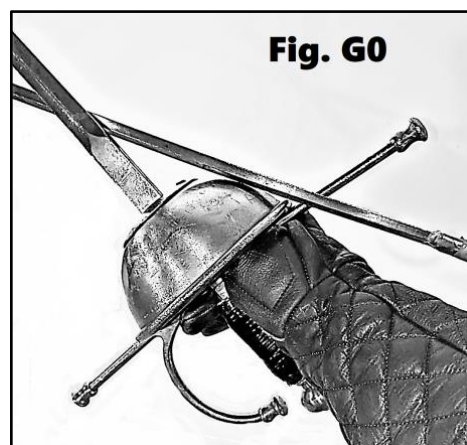
A: As seen before, this sort of getting out with a disengage and thrust is the *free cause*. Remember as well, that is manoeuvre is also appointed by other early Masters. Luis Diaz de Viedma<sup>40</sup> has a sort of disengage from *weak under strong* towards his right side. You can see it **figure V22b** (I am running out of names). Some alt-right diestros would go against the dangers of stepping away of the opponent's sword



while putting distance among swords. But beware that the enemy was doing a forward action with a powerful thrust. Changing the action or recovering would be impossible for the opponent if the diestro read correctly the intentions. That is why I say that *psychology* is the most powerful weapon in a fight. Feinting and foreseeing the actions of your opponent are indeed top keys for any fighter. Italian fencing and many British broadsword treatises have a big consideration on such aspects.

Third: Waiting in the second posture and the same guard that has been described before, the opponent will attack the diestro over the weapon. Then, the diestro will pull back with the left foot and move the weight forward, towards the third posture in the moment the enemy approaches. At the same timing, the blade will do a disengage (we assume the disengage is because the opponent's sword was on the diameter line, and our sword was placed on the inside-down, we want to change our side, probably to trick the opponent) and the hilt will rise in order to push the opponent's one aside, placing a *sagitta* thrust in the vertical line, doing all those movements with coordination to offense with defense.

Fourth: Starting in the same posture that said previously, the opponent will attempt to attack over the other weapon, but this time the diestro will have the wrist nails up (ready to use the false edge with a circular movement). Then the diestro will raise the body, approaching left foot to the right one. At the same time the diestro will put aside the blade of the opponent with hers using an obtuse angle and trapping the blade of the opponent with the back quillon. (This kind of manoeuvre resembles to the one called *Encadenada* "Chained" by other authors, a technique that has the same name when dagger is involved. To do so, quillon and blade trap the sword of the opponent and using 2 fulcrums create a blockage of the opponent's blade. Observe **Figure G0** for reference. A very simple method to see the utility of



<sup>40</sup> Viedma – *Método de Enseñanza de Maestros*. Pg. 22b

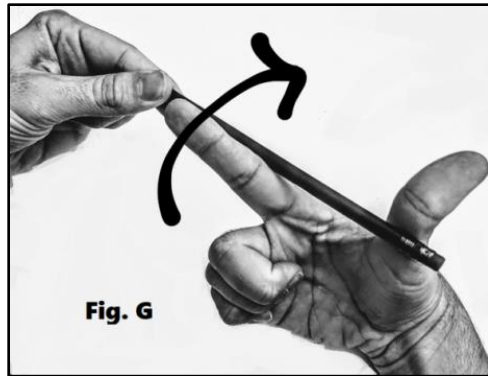


Fig. G

such actions, for those who are dubious, is just taking a pen and placing it between index and thumb finger, as seen in **figure G**. Then, if you do a circular action with your hand, as indicated in the picture, one would find out that the moves of the pen from the left hand are completely blocked. It is even possible to break the pencil with the force of two fulcrums.) Then the thrust will be able to be done in the shoulder or the face. If the diestro does not want to do such

painful injure, instead of pushing forward, can also pull backwards (I guess there is no *encadenada* t his time) by keeping the left foot in the same position and retreat with the right foot, also raising the position as before. But this time the diestro will use just the first universal mean (that is right angle). This way we can as well apply the universal rules of defense as it was shown previously in the **figure 11-1**, remembering to always do all the actions with coordinated timing. (I repost the image that comes from another chapter. Probably the sword of the opponent is not in the same position as this third possibility but the position of the diestro matches the description.)

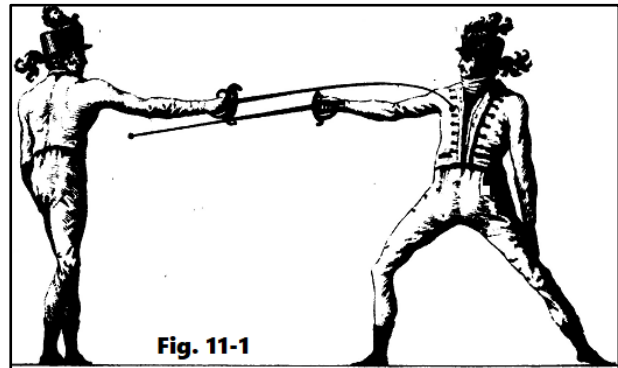


Fig. 11-1

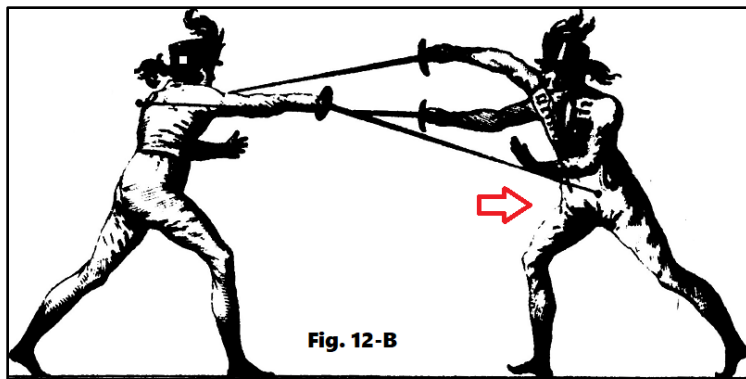
Fifth: ...

A: This fifth possibility text was so confusing that I decided to narrate it myself. Here it goes:

The diestro can do formations to deviate the sword of the opponent while coming back with offensive manoeuvres. Imagine the situation that the opponent wants to thrust over our weapon, which was still low towards the inside. Doing an expulsion with a full circle we can manage to push away the opponent's sword towards our inside and then execute a cut, following the same motion. If we want to go for the thrust, then we can use our left hand, putting it in between the blades, so our sword is free to thrust the opponent (similar to **figure 12-B**).

As well we can just do expulsion over the other weapon and go towards our external side, thrusting to the right collateral of the opponent while keeping contact with her sword. All these movements must be done by having an adequate change of balance among left and right foot. Beware of switching from defensive position (second stance) to offensive position (third stance) adequately.

Sixth: If diestro wants to get closer towards the propincuo extreme, she can do it safely in the moment the opponent approaches. To do so, she will raise the sword with nails out and point of the blade down, deflecting with front edge. At that moment, she will put the arm between the two weapons, even passing the other blade under her arm,



sometimes giving chance to do the disarm. (Here I advise many times to the students to play armpit disarms, a similar technique described from old times from Talhoffer itself, but capturing the blade rather than the hands of the opponent.) But also the opponent can release her weapon, passing the blade under the opponent's arm and doing a double pivoting with her feet while doing a punching thrust towards the chest. All must be done as fast as possible to avoid the coming back from the opponent. This movement can be seen in **figure 12-B**, (a picture that we already saw when explaining the swing movement).

Seventh: Same starting position as before. When the opponent attempts to thrust over the weapon, the diestro will disengage and place her sword with the strong third over the weak third of the opponent's blade (we manage to be from swords at the outside towards swords at the inside). From there, just sliding down the weapon and doing an accidental movement we can manage to thrust in the vertical line of the opponent. The diestro may attempt to injure the shoulder or the face of the opponent. In case the opponent decides to deflect the thrust (towards her own inside), the diestro must answer with a reverse (doing a circular movement over our head with the blade and coming to slice the opponent at her right side), occupying the line and stepping out of the way after the execution. In case the diestro does not want to do any attack, she can just hold the sword of the opponent after the disengage, obliging the opponent to find a way of escaping from such subjection, which is by disengaging or doing a formation. The diestro, knowing that, can attack right in the moment the opponent start such manoeuvres.

Until now we well explained the existing possibilities when the opponent wants to attack with a thrust over our weapon, aimed to the diametrical line on our chest. But it is as also important to know that the diestro is also offering a target under the arm, as we said in the first proposition, and in case the diestro is not prepared for such attack she can be harmed as well. However trying to attack under the arm is indeed dangerous, as once I was battling a renowned Master, famous for his skills (he does not say who he is). He charged towards me with so much power that I was glad to avoid it with just a left trepidante, or else he would have injured me with his sword and even his head. (Since de Brea was covering the inside, the *monster master* charged him towards low outside, thinking that he would not be able to stop him if he was going very strong.) His movement had so much energy that once I avoided him he had to put his left hand on the floor to not fall over. After that, the sire did not seem to have learnt the lesson, but on the contrary. Beware of the cynicism of some people, which he even ventured to



reply to me the following words: “I never hesitate to attack my opponent when this one shows me a target under the arm. Sometimes I managed to be successful, either because my opponent was unaware or because he did not know how to defend himself, or also because they tried to defend with less force than mine. That is why I tried so hard this time, since I thought I would be as well successful.”

There would be many responses to such manner of talking and fighting, but I would not like to extend myself too much. I only pretend to put some examples of ways to practice instead of writing all the possible solutions. If I ever do that I would create more confusion than assistance. It's worth mentioning that against some ways to fight, as before, the diestro only needs to step aside in order to overcome other's actions. Therefore it is important to know some actions at hand in order to establish defense against many situations.

A: That was a beautiful paragraph to show off the art against the animal fighters, which we see every day in the media, especially in tournaments and/or with big weapons. It seems to me that the bigger the weapon the smaller the accuracy needed to use it and, consequently, the smaller the brain needed to use it.

In the following paragraphs the opponent will attack under the arm. He does not say in which position the diestro starts, but I assume that is the same as before, in which his “friend” master attacked him.

First possibility: When the opponent attempts the thrust under our weapon, the diestro would lower her point putting the sword in low rectitude (that is acute angle). With the mid of the sword should deviate the opponent's sword and execute a thrust in the vertical line, right under the arm with *sagitta*. (Extra explanation: There is a deflection with the sword making a semicircle or less, counter-clockwise, deflecting the opponent's blade towards our external side. Then our blade detaches the other and recovers with the same movement but thrusting forward). It is important to do this while using the third posture, which can be done by just pulling back the backward foot. (This is mentioned because there is a need of increasing the distance, since the enemy pushed forward and there is no place for us to come back with the sword unless we put some distance among the fencers). Also it can be done if we drag back the front foot, connecting it with the left foot in the back, that way we can be defended and attack our opponent without risk (This other possibility seems slower, since two feet need to be moved).

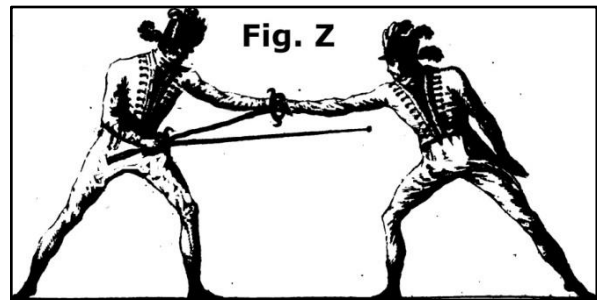
Second: In the time the opponent attacks, the diestro would cut that line, switching the hand nails-down and putting aside the sword using the front edge. As well, the front foot should move back around 1 foot, the heel should be raised in order to make some sort of concavity with our body (remember we create a “C” with the body). Taking out our weapon from the same inferior plane, the diestro can execute a cut (a reverse actual-



ly) that can go to the face or the upper arm, wherever it conveys. To do such defense with bigger convenience, the diestro can step with left foot, doing a semicircle forward with it, ending with left forward and right backwards, doing an inverted third posture, as it can be seen in the **figure 14**.

Third: In case the diestro does not want to do a whole formation, she can just add her blade onto opponent's and by advancing with right foot would be able to dissipate the opponent's power and make a conclusion (disarm). As well the diestro can just thrust towards the diametrical line on the chest by doing all the adequate movements in order to avoid the opponent's recovery.

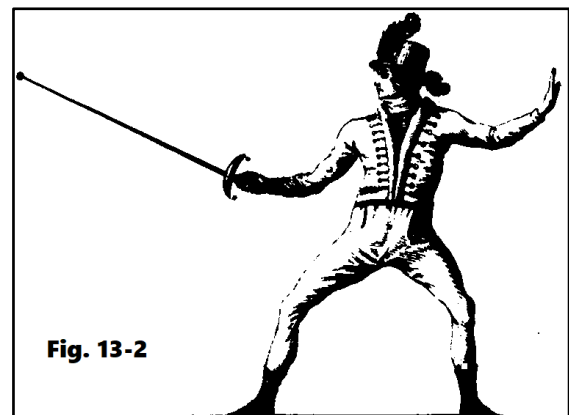
A: In summary, the sword of the opponent comes towards your low-outside. You place the sword onto the other, deflecting it, placing the point of your sword looking towards your outside, as the beginning of the first part of the second possibility. Then, you have the control of the opponent's sword



since you gained and able to decide her destiny. You can thrust with mixed angle, arm remise outside, sword angled towards the opponent (blade in reduction) and it is optional to advance with left hand and do a disarm action while thrusting. I created **figure Z** by editing some images from de Brea. In case I did not mention it before, my computer skills are not great. Content yourself with what you've got.

Now we would refer to a new set of possibilities in which the diestro is waiting in her second posture. This time with the arm slightly flexed, hand in mid nails-up, the point of the weapon remise towards the outside in high rectitude (obtuse angle), but near the diameter. The offered openings are right collateral or face. This can be seen in **fig. 13-2**.

A: Beware that this position protects the outside; therefore, we assume that all the following attacks by the opponent will be delivered towards our inside. Sometimes over the hilt sometimes close to the hilt. Head and chest are the preferred targets, followed by arm.

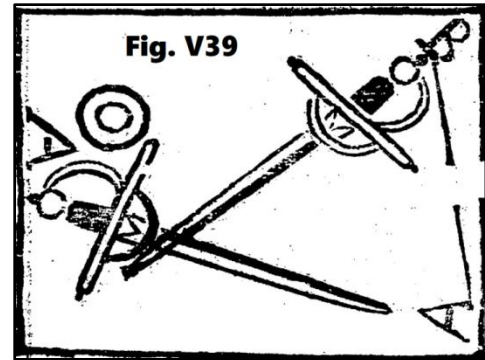


First possibility: Any time the opponent attempts to attack any of the mentioned targets, the diestro might have to just deflect the attack by using the front edge, moving it into *natural*, (I guess covering also the diameter line with some sort of reduction movement). After the deflection, the diestro may attack to the open area.

A: It is too open to interpretations, but I would think about the simplest one, one movement of deflection, another for thrusting, which can even be converted in one single melodic action, attacking "at the same time".

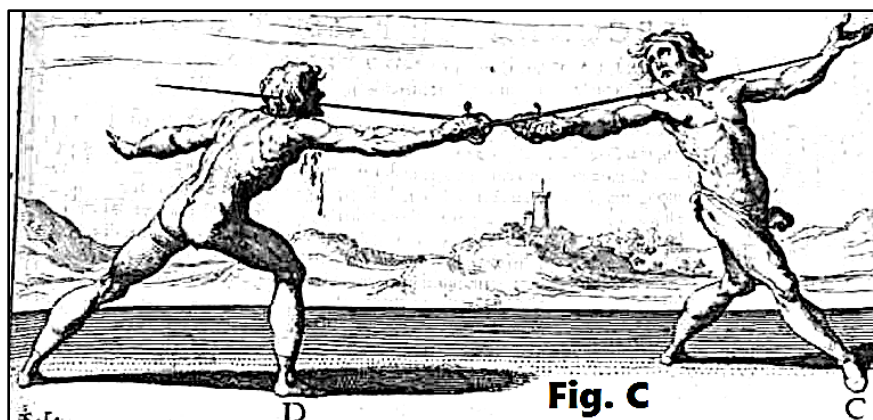
Second possibility: the diestro can attack at the enemy at the same time she walks out the diameter, so that way she will be better defended.

A: In here we just walk towards the outside of the enemy and thrust. In classical Destreza would be similar to a *weak over strong*, with a curvo step with right towards the right side, but seemingly avoiding the sword of the opponent and without the need of disengaging. A technique that can be seen in the Viedma's treatise<sup>41</sup>, here it is reflected in the **figure V39**.



Third: At the moment the opponent attacks, the diestro will do a curvo with left foot from behind the right one, using the right foot as a pivoting center. If the sword of the opponent is high, the diestro must protect herself with the strong part of the blade, if the opponent's thrust is low, she will have to use the quillons or the hilt.

A: (This is the *girata*, aforementioned by oneself in the chapter regarding the steps. In **figure C** you can see an example of a *girata* from Master Capoferro's<sup>42</sup> treatise. I believe this image explains well de Brea's intentions. Beware that this kind of movement is dangerous with heavy rapiers, but it makes more sense in light smallswords.

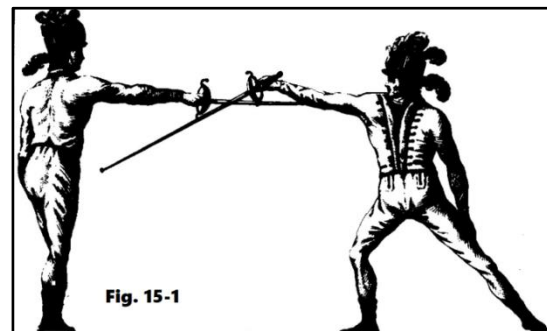
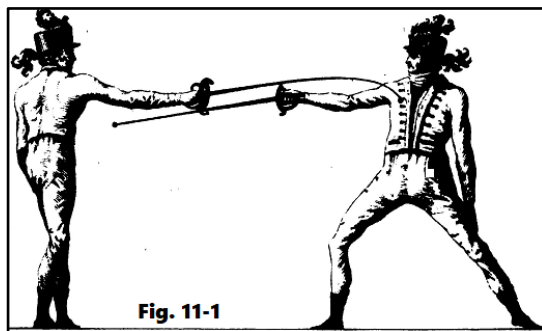


<sup>41</sup> Viedma – *Método de Enseñanza de Maestros*. Pg. 39

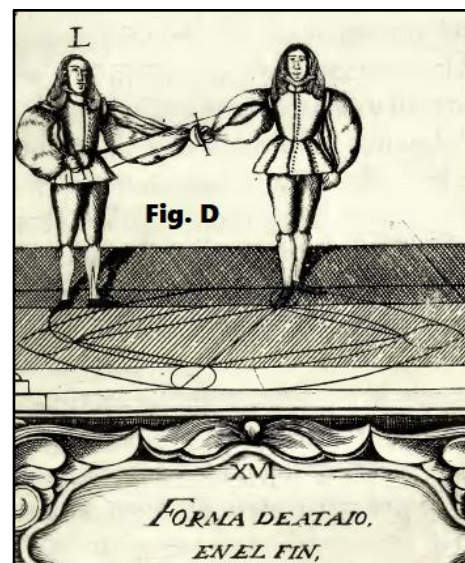
<sup>42</sup> Capoferro - *Gran Simulacro dell' Arte Edell' uso della Scherma*. Pg. 71

Fourth: When the opponent attempts to attack, the diestro will deflect the attack by raising her body to a superior plane, deviating and thrusting the opponent at the same time. It can be done either over the other weapon or under the other one. Both can be seen in **fig.11-1** or **fig.15-1**.

A: I had to simplify the text to remove useless details de Brea added, while as well he disregarded some important information. Basically, you place your body away enough to defend yourself from the opponent's thrust (concavity), while extending the arm and gaining control of the diameter. In **11-1** the diestro takes the diameter and thrusts the opponent. In the second image, the diestro crosses the diameter with a circular movement and goes down to the vertical line. Beware the change of the hand position for each action.



Fifth: If the diestro wants to begin *atajo* actions, she can do so, by putting both feet together, without getting out of the perfect posture (he refers to posture #1 where the weight is centered: we raised our body while approaching the front foot, that gives us some distance advantage in order to gain timing for achieving the binding of the attacking opponent's sword towards our inside), that way we could *estrechar* the opponent. (The word *estrechar* is used in early Destreza when doing a binding counter-clockwise action). In case the opponent wants to escape from such pressure, (disengage or formation) the diestro can take advantage of the situation at the right time and thrust her. If the opponent does not want to put the weapon away, the diestro must approach with left arm (and left foot) and grab the hilt of the opponent and can release her own sword in order to thrust the diametric line or face. (This one reminds me to the classical *atajo al fin* described by many authors, at the side you can see **figure D** from Ettenhard<sup>43</sup>). In case the enemy wants to just seek defense (I believe the enemy will try to walk away after finding her sword being under the bind), the diestro can just formulate a reverse edge attack

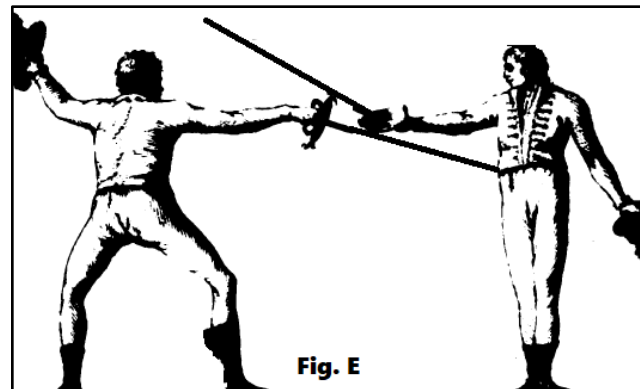


<sup>43</sup> Ettenhard - *Compendio de los fundamentos de la verdadera destreza*, pg. 149

while going back to defense. (That is, we were moving to do some uncertain action and we decide to stop due to opponent's retreat or attempt to get the diameter line. Then, before the enemy gets out of our reach we draw an edge attack towards the external side of the opponent, slashing her face).

Sixth: The diestro would do circular movements in order to put away the opponent's thrust, and then attempt second intention thrust, the way we discussed in previous chapters. (The circular movement it refers to do a counter clockwise move with the blade, from 2 o'clock towards 9 o'clock, approximately, catching the opponent's blade that is attacking you around 10 o'clock. Practice your imagination. That will keep the blade of the opponent towards our internal side. Regarding *the second intention*, he will repeat the concept in the next lines). I say again, that once the diestro put aside the opponent's sword, she will come back to the diameter line, feinting that is going to attack towards the arm or face. When the opponent comes back with the intention to push away the weapon, the diestro must go low with the point of her blade, disengaging the sword under the opponent's sword and arm and then execute the thrust in the right collateral (so that was second intention). In the case the opponent wants to defend from the feint by raising the arm (that gives the opponent more strength and range and is dangerous to go to the other side), the diestro will just thrust in the vertical line under the arm, that way will not have to do so much movement with the sword.

A: In order to make sense to the last sentence, I just made up an image using parts of de Brea treatise and edited using paint. This is the one called it **figure E**. Please, ignore the leg position and pay attention only to arm and swords.



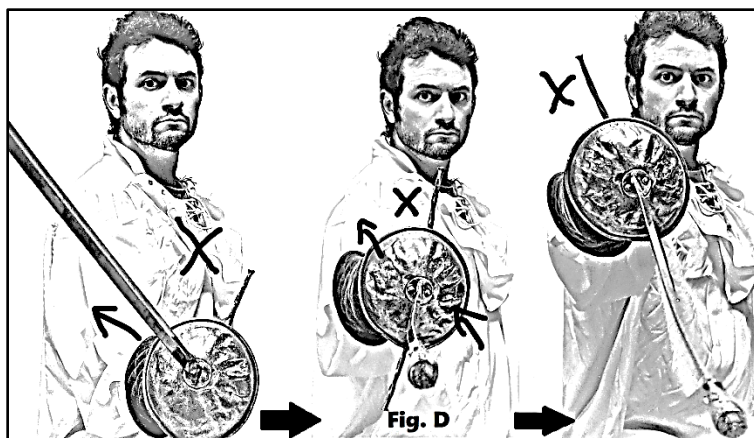
Seventh: The diestro could also do a thrust in the diametrical line on the chest while holding the weapon of her enemy after a same circular movement; this must be done right in the moment the opponent attempts to thrust or after it, walking and pushing the sword towards the same side in which we will do our thrust.

A: It seems vaguely explained. I believe we do a higher circular move, and we keep catching the blade, following to probably a full circle, while walking towards our external side and thrusting at the opponent in the chest.

Eighth: When the opponent attempts the thrust, the diestro will put the opponent's blade away using her upper (or rear) quillon. While having the blade of the opponent in contact with her quillon, the diestro will attack at the face or any other close target in which she finds the opening.

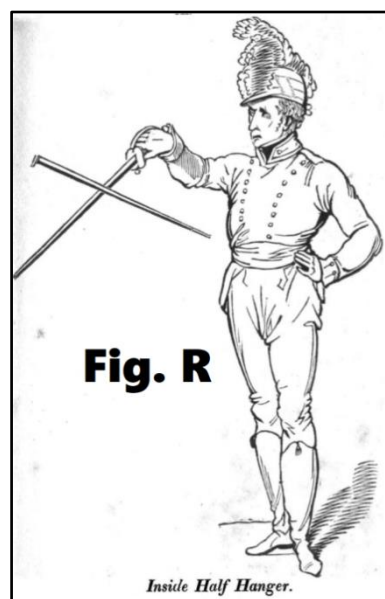


A: Follow **figure D** for this combination. In the first image, marked with a **X**, we can appreciate the target where the opponent is aiming. Once the sword enters, we push it away using the quillon. Afterwards we can thrust while having it blocked, as it has been shown in previous images. The de Brea description



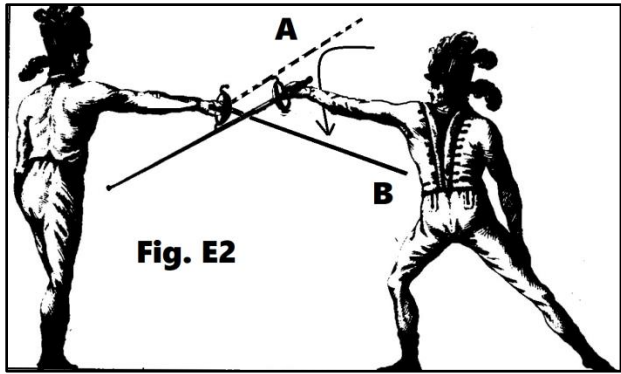
mentions that “puts it away”. These words could lead to the last images, in which we put it away towards our external side while we thrust. An option I also thought about, would be by putting away towards our inside, pushing the blade with the internal side of the quillon. However, such action would not block the enemy sword, which could get out of the subjection with a short disengaging action over our quillon.

Ninth: In case there are no quillons, the diestro must expulse / deviate with a divertive action. (A common prototyped understanding of *diversión* for nowadays *destreza*, at least for my art, is similar to a *pronation prime*. I added an image of *Inside Half Hanger*, which can be very similar, from Roworth’s treatise<sup>44</sup>. The arm can be flexed, so the sword can be lower than the one of the picture, putting more power on the binding or expulsive action. Beware, that at this point, for de Brea, our sword is in the *inferior plane*, therefore that suggests again a lower position from the sword in contraposition to Roworth’s image, as well as being not a static parade but a circular motion to put away the sword of the opponent. Also the hand/nails position from Roworth does not feel very comfortable to me, so the parade could be also with nails-in.) Once the opponent’s sword is away from the diameter, the diestro would come back with her sword to the center, coming back from the same plane by just disengaging (and passing under opponent’s arm) or doing formation. A single twist to the wrist should do. In any case, without stopping, the diestro’s blade should seek the contact to the other sword over it, in order to be ready if the opponent brings back her sword. At the same time the diestro would seek to thrust at the open target. The thrust should be as fast as possible and depending of the circumstances it can happen to be as a *second intention thrust* (as previously mentioned) or it can even end up in *conclusión*.

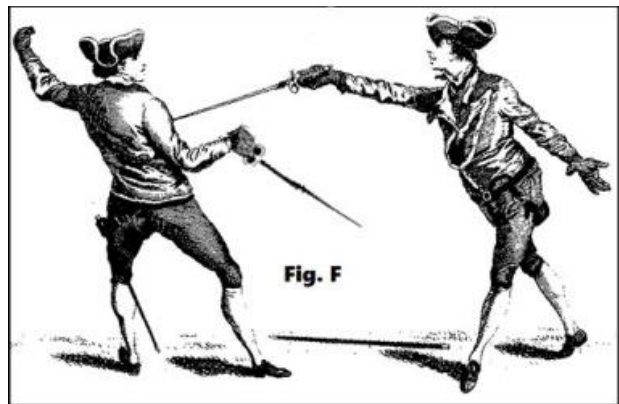


<sup>44</sup> Roworth, C. Taylor, John.. *The Art of Defence*. Plate IX

Tenth: Imagine the opponent attacking towards right collateral, contacting the sword of the diestro for the inside, following the similar way as we mentioned until now. The diestro will do a half circle with her sword, (clockwise half-circle, deviating the other blade towards her left), passing her blade under the other and ending up in the first diagonal position. (Similar to the previous Roworth's image but with nails up and the point aimed to hit under the arm). From this position, the diestro, in nail-out will attempt a thrust under the opponent's arm, in the vertical line, this kind of attack is called *thrust in segunda*. (I left the Spanish name here, but this same attack can be matched to the *thrust in seconde*, described by Domenico Angelo in his treatise<sup>45</sup>. I created **figure E2**, in which we can see the diestro at the left, passing her sword from first position, "A" to second position "B".) In case the opponent recovers from this attack, then the thrust must be in the diametrical of the chest, while stepping towards the internal side of the opponent. To do such thing with good reassurance, the diestro can feint is going to do a thrust in segunda, and when the opponent is coming to defend herself, the diestro will turn the hand towards nails-up and will pass the weapon over the opponent's and execute the injure at the right collateral (coming back to earlier position form the same path). This type of action would be an *attempt in segunda* and a thrust in *quarta*.



A: I hope Manuel forgives me, but I used another plate<sup>46</sup> (**figure F**) from Angelo's book in order to show this attack, (beware that the image has been edited to make it more similar to the situation). As you can imagine, the opponent (now at left) pulled back the arm and sword to put away the sword threatening her in *segunda*. Then, the diestro, switches the hand and thrusts in *curate/quarta* with nails-up. You can decide to do this last movement while walking towards the opponent's inside for a major safety, something that it does not seem to be done in Angelo's plate. But we cannot ask better from him, since he is not a diestro.



These aforementioned possibilities are to be considered when the opponent thrusts close to our weapon, at the internal side, aiming towards right collateral or head. It seems that we gave enough notice

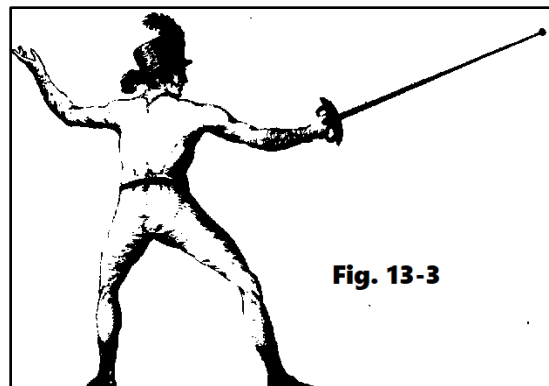
<sup>45</sup> Angelo - *The School of Fencing*. Plate VII

<sup>46</sup> Angelo - *The School of Fencing*. Plate XXX



of such defense in the mentioned guard and we can move now towards the next set of possibilities in the following posture.

That is, imagine the diestro waiting in her second posture, arm slightly flexed, weapon in high rectitude (obtuse angle) slightly towards our internal side, while the hand is mid nail-down. The target offered to the opponent is right collateral or head, close to the diestro's blade and in the external side. This posture can be seen in the **figure 13-3**.



A: In this *new* posture, de Brea displays a fencer with a higher arm position, almost in right angle, more similar to the stereotypes of classical Destreza images. The sword is still obtuse and the body is in the second posture, which is weight towards the back foot. Since the sword is slightly inside, the opponent will attempt to attack from our external side, as close as possible to our sword.

First possibility: Imagine being in such guard and the opponent attempting a thrust in the opening. The diestro should just deviate or do a subjection of the opponent's blade by just doing a *natural* movement, using the front edge of her sword. At that moment playing with the angulation, the diestro can seek to injure in the diametrical line of the opponent by doing *atajo* (this might be done by extending the arm transversal outside and pointing at the opponent with mixed angle). Another way to do so is just waiting for the opponent to disengage the weapon, in which case the diestro will just injure by doing an *accidental* movement. (He does not mention it but it might be necessary to walk towards the inside of the opponent).

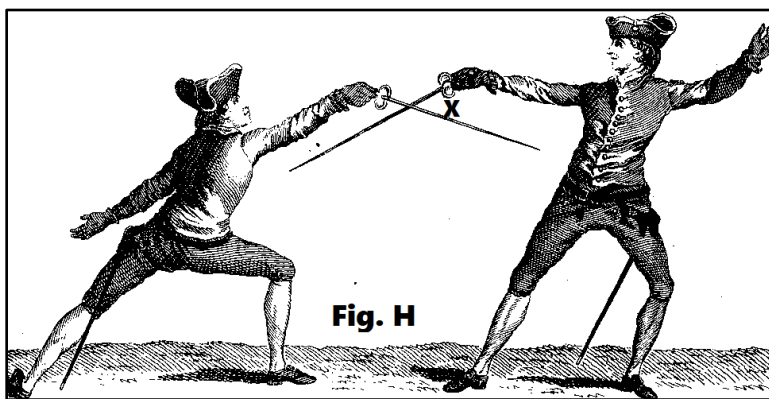
Second possibility: Once the sword of the opponent is deviated, the diestro can use *feint attempts* as we mentioned in other circumstances, then, when the opponent comes to close an area and opens a new target the diestro would seek that new opening, achieving offense while being defended.

A: As you can imagine, the *feinted attempts* are infinite, and open a whole new world that many masters (usually outside of Destreza) explain in their books. We can imagine, for example, the diestro attempting a thrust to the face towards the outside, when the opponent pulls back the sword in order to defend herself, the diestro can do a disengagement and attack with thrust towards the inside, close to the opponent's blade. This second intention thrust has been mentioned before and can be a good prototypical example. If the opponent comes to stop our second intention, we can as well disengage and retry again with a third intention to the other side. Also between paths, things can change, opening to cuts, reverse or disarms.

Third possibility: The diestro can as well do a thrust to the opponent at the same time the other fencer attacks, just moving out of the diameter. It can also be done when the opponent re-does his attack after being deflected following first possibility.

Fourth: Imagine the diestro waiting as we mentioned before (arm slightly diagonally or transversal to the inside): In the moment the opponent attacks, the diestro would capture the other blade using her rear quillon, (Remember old **figures G** and **G0** from the first position. This sort of blocking the sword of your opponent is known in destreza as *encadenada* and it can be found in the Destreza Glossary at [destrezanova.ca](http://destrezanova.ca).) Instantly after blocking the sword, the diestro will react, thrusting the shoulder or face. In case the opponent reacts raising her hand (I guess de Brea would better refer to “flex the arm to pull the sword in obtuse angle”), the diestro must thrust under her arm (doing half a circle counter-clockwise if needed), using nails up, regardless of the presence of quillons in the diestro’s sword.

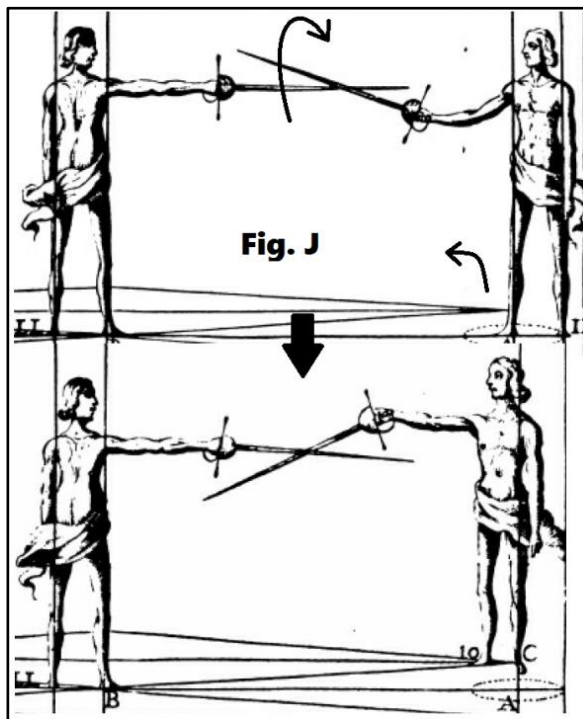
Fifth: The diestro will prepare her hand in mid nails-up (remember that it was previously in mid nails-down), at the moment in which the opponent is doing the thrust attempt, the diestro will use the circular movement in order to deviate the weapon and blocking it with the lower quillon, then executing the injure in the vertical line under the arm in a type of thrust that we call it *quarta*. (Here it seems confusing to which side happens anything. But if we want to use the lower or front quillon is because while being in our initial position the opponent thrust towards the outside of our blade. Then, the diestro having the hand in mid nails-up will do half circle clockwise, even more than half, if needed. That movement should put the sword of the enemy in our inside, 7 o’clock, as if we have a clock in front of us. Putting it at 6 o’clock would be right in front of us, on the diameter, and therefore be dangerous. I stole another image from Angelo<sup>47</sup>, **figure H**. It is not exactly the same context but it is the same action, or very similar. Now, imagine that the diestro at the right side, has a quillon where the “X” mark is. While doing the round circle with the blade, the quillons traps the other



blade, while using the own diestro’s blade as a second fulcrum, and completely blocking the opponent’s sword. This action in Destreza is known as *engavilánada*, also found in my glossary of Destreza.) But if in the moment in which the diestro is doing the circular action the opponent removes the sword without being touched (the enemy does the same circle to escape from it), the diestro will just take the diameter with an accidental movement before the opponent. (This means that 1: diestro starts the circle 2: opponent attempts another circle to escape of being trapped 3: diestro stops following the other blade with her circle, and just goes forward, taking place of the diameter line and doing a booboo to the opponent.)

<sup>47</sup> Angelo – *The school of Fencing Plate XIX*

Sixth: (This one is very similar to the earlier one, but the diestro takes more time in the deflection, thus there is no need to “prepare” your hand previously as fifth possibility. But, in any case, it is advised to do the movement, by default, with front edge, therefore the hand position will change when contacting blades.) At the time in which the opponent is thrusting, the diestro can stop her by retreating with left foot and rising to a first position, while, at the same time, will do a circular movement with sword and arm in order to deflect the opponent’s sword. (This one is very confusing, but it was clear to me when he said: circular movement with sword and arm. To me, the sword does a clockwise circular motion, ending under it. Very similar to an *atajo* #8 from *Lorenz de Rada*<sup>48</sup> (1705), a sort of *line in cross* deflection from other classic masters. I created **figure J** from de Rada treatise, showing such circular motion.) From here we can execute a thrust under the arm by doing a *sagita* or it can also be done in the right collateral. (To do the latter, I believe the diestro just walks towards her outside, leaving the other weapon at her inside and thrusting the opponent. As you can see, in the *Rada treatise*, the diestro moved to a new diameter line.)



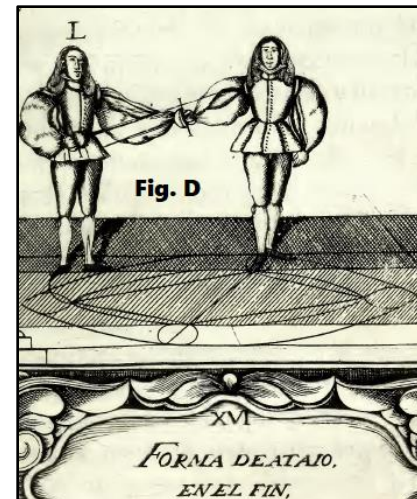
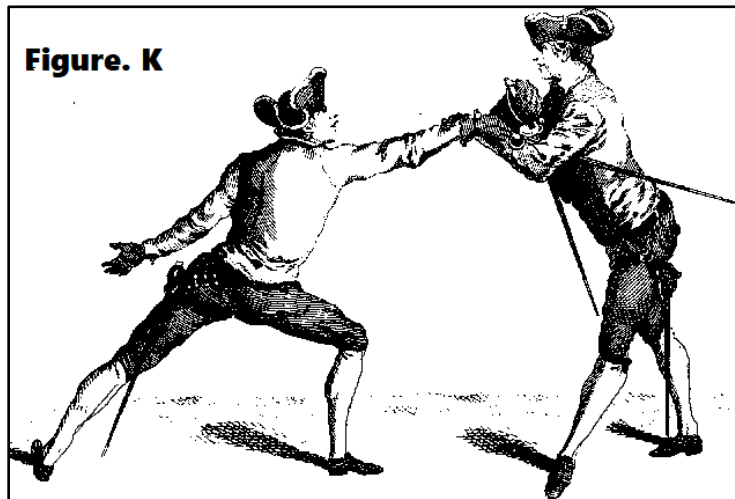
Seventh and last possibility: In case the diestro, with the same circular movement, would like to go to the means of the end of *atajo* (that is keeping the control of the sword until maximum extend) she could do so by approaching using both feet. In the case the opponent does not react to it, the diestro can pass the left arm over the blade of the opponent and grab the hilt of the sword from under it (Observe **figure K** from *Angelo's*<sup>49</sup>, for reference). The right hand must be pulled back at that exact moment (observe **figure D** from *Ettenhard*<sup>50</sup> for reference.), putting your sword back into the diameter would be able to thrust the diametrical line of the chest, doing a *punching thrust* (*estocada de puño*). In case the opponent moves away right before the conclusion (disarm), disengaging her sword and attempting a reverse (circular cut towards our outside), the diestro must just do an accidental movement, thrusting where is closer, with a position in which makes her stay defended (by that he means that if you thrust while your enemy is “loading” an edge attack, and you cover

<sup>48</sup> De Rada – *Nobleza de la Espada* Book III, image 42.

<sup>49</sup> Angelo – *The school of Fencing* Plate XXXVIII

<sup>50</sup> Ettenhard – *Compendio de los fundamentos de la verdadera destreza*, pg. 149

the center line, you should be able to use your same sword that is offending to defend yourself from upcoming attacks.)



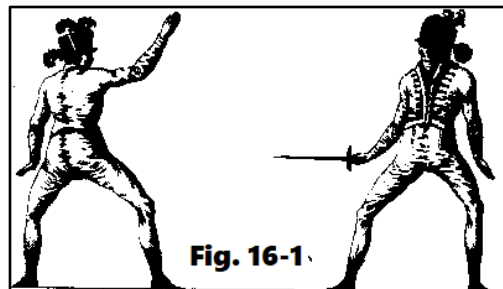
A: Beware, as I said many times, that when we use the left hand to do disarms, is also wise to approach with the left foot, and place the right one behind, so our sword is away of the opponent and our disarming arm is in front of us.

These three mentioned guards are to me the most prominent in which a diestro must wait her opponent in the battlefield. However, she must not forget the diagonal postures, through them one has all the tools to reach defense. I cease the explanation of these positions, even though I could extend infinitely. Nevertheless, I believe that knowing which open targets each position presents to the opponent is already enough. The **figure 13** (L.13 in Annex) shows the three mentioned guards or postures.

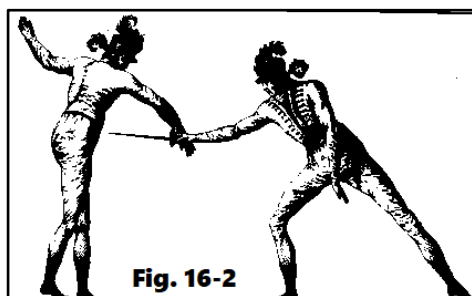
## CHAPTER 22: DEFENSE AGAINST A DAGGER

A: If you have been training with knives, dagger or *karambit* from different authors and styles you might doubt the style of de Brea as I did at first. One might even debate if he ever entered in a knife fight, but we will not argument here the usefulness of his technique, since that is not the aim of this document. Nevertheless, it is still interesting to have a point of view of unarmed matter against a dagger following a Destreza principle. Master de Brea plays it quite original:

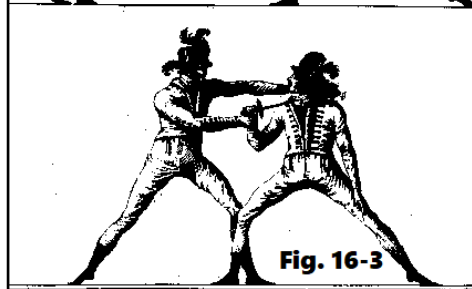
If there is a time that the diestro does not carry a sword, which is usual, and one of the many existing ill-intentioned man (here I enjoyed keeping the gender of the ruffian) faces the diestro with a dagger, she must not escape, because that might end up badly. What she must do is to wait for the opponent in her second posture (remember weight in the back), while raising her right hand higher than her head, leaving a big opening on the chest area. This is seen in **figure 16-1**. When the



**Fig. 16-1**



**Fig. 16-2**



**Fig. 16-3**

opponent attempts to thrust, the diestro will put away the knife by using a natural movement of the arm and hitting the hand of the offender. If possible, she should try to grab him the hand, but in case it is not successful she should keep her hand close to the offender arm, while doing a concavity with her body, dragging backwards the right foot. This can be seen in the **figure 16-2**.

Then, using the right foot as the center (pivoting), the diestro will advance with left foot, reaching and holding the back of the neck with her left arm (remember my lesson, “use left foot when using left hand”). All these movements must be done with no fear and as fast as possible. In case the opponent realizes of his failure and wants to pull away the knife, the diestro must then use that same action against him, as seen in the **figure 16.3**.

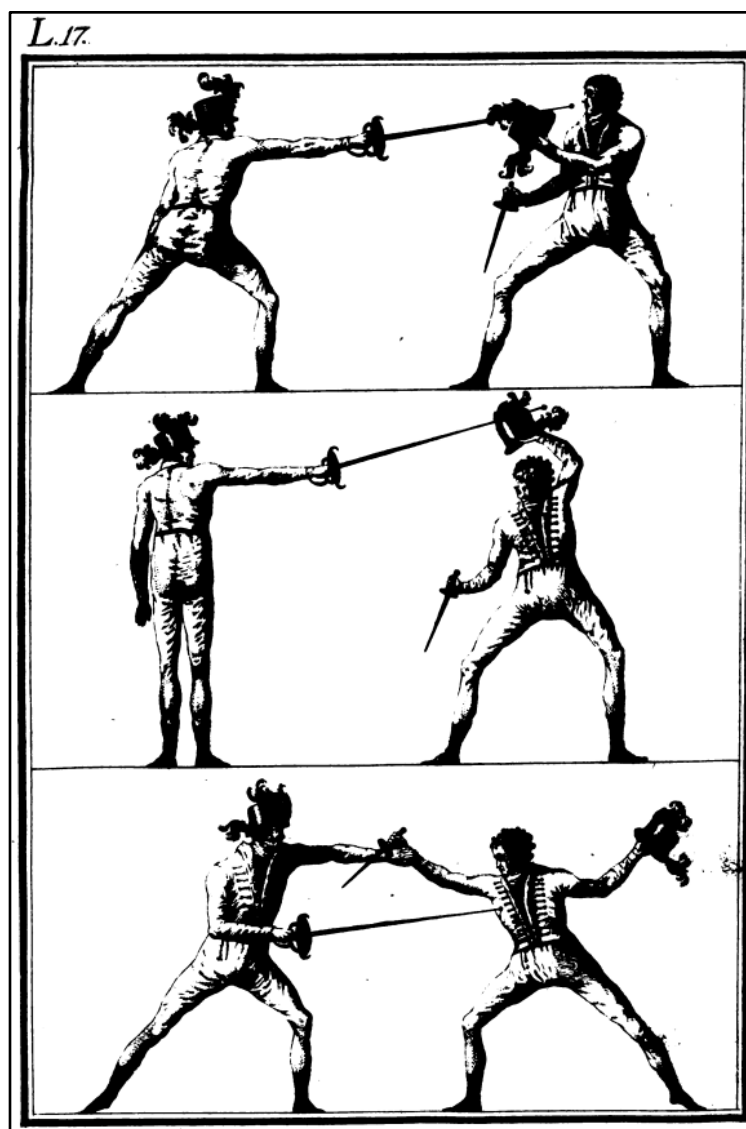
### Second Possibility

A: In this case the diestro has a sword, and the thug has a dagger, and, for some reason, de Brea feels the diestro needs some advice to survive such situation, when it should be the opposite:

Imagine both fighters in the proportional mean, the opponent has a dagger and a hat, whereas the diestro has a sword (it must be said that de Brea says specifically *sword*, and not *foil* as other times, thus making the assumption we are not playing anymore and the diestro is wear-

ing her dressing *courtsword* outside the school). The diestro will attempt to attack the thug with edge attacks or thrusts (it seems stupidly evident, but beware that de Brea left unmentioned the disarm/conclusion, meaning, we should never get close to the opponent if we have the longer weapon). The opponent uses the hat to stop those attacks while approaching with the left foot. At some point the thug attacks the diestro with the dagger, aiming to the collateral left or left shoulder of the diestro. To defend herself, the diestro will put her left hand in nails-out, making a hook with the arm in order to stop the attack. She will try to grab the wrist of her opponent. Putting the right foot behind the left the diestro will find the space to place the weapon in the diameter and attack under the arm of her opponent. All movements must be done as fast as possible in order to achieve defense and punish those who dare to use forbidden weapons, this can be seen in **figure 17** (L17).

As it had been said previously, there is no intention to make this book too long. Therefore, only two demonstrations had been included regarding this subject, being these the easiest and most practical ones.

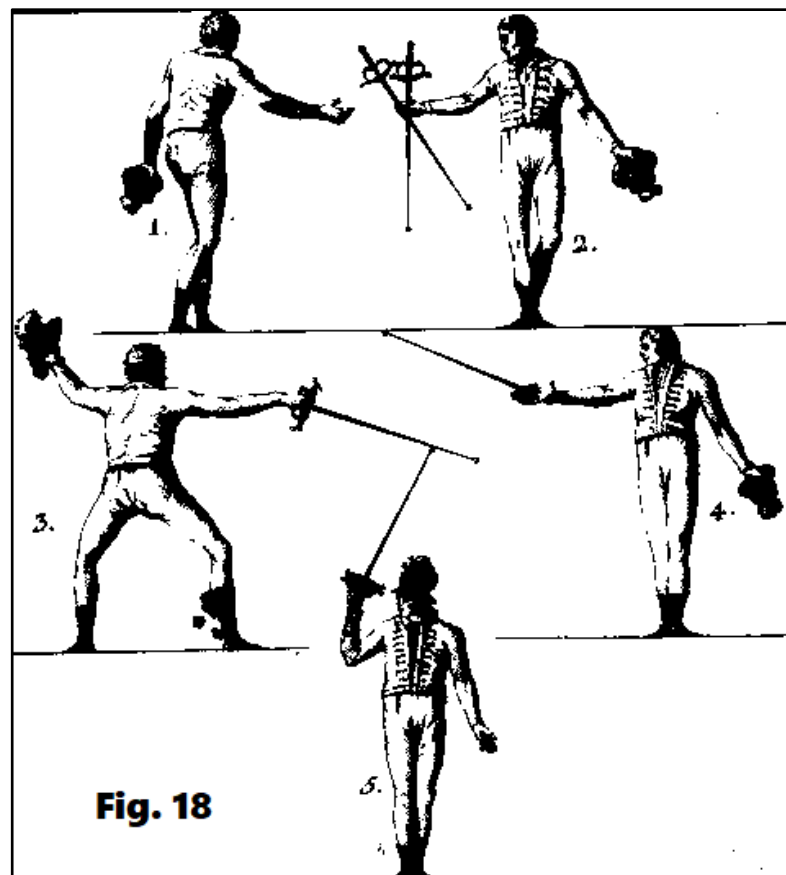




## CHAPTER 23: REGARDING THE COURTESY SALUTE AND MANNERS IN SPARRING

If two gentlemen people would like to have fun or exercise their bodies with this noble art, one of them must take the foils with the right hand. Both foils would be together at the hilts, and blades would form an 'x'. Then, the diestro will go to her friend or competitor. They both must be in squared position or feet position #4 (remember feet positions), then, the diestro will extend the arm to offer the swords to the partner. This one will chose one of the swords, leaving the other to the diestro. At the same time, they will take out their hat with the left hand and put their feet in the position #3. This is shown in the images 1 and 2 from the **figure 18** (de Brea refers by mistake to **figure 17**, so I corrected it). Afterwards, the fencers will release themselves form their own courtswords (or smallswords!) or capes if they have them and will put on the gloves, in order to avoid getting hurt.

In order to start the salute, both fencers will remain in the diameter line, approaching with hat in hand as shown in **image #3** from **figure 18**. Then, raising to superior plane, the contenders will do a circle with their sword, as if they were making a reverse cut, afterwards they will freeze at their first diagonal position and third feet position, as it is shown in #4. Then the diestro will place herself in the second posture while doing a vertical cut, as it is shown in #3, at the same time she will do a slight tap on the floor with the front foot. Then, will go back to a superior plane and third position of feet, raising the foil up to the sky, as shown in #5. These three stages are the ones that compose the courtesy among fighters previous to the practice.



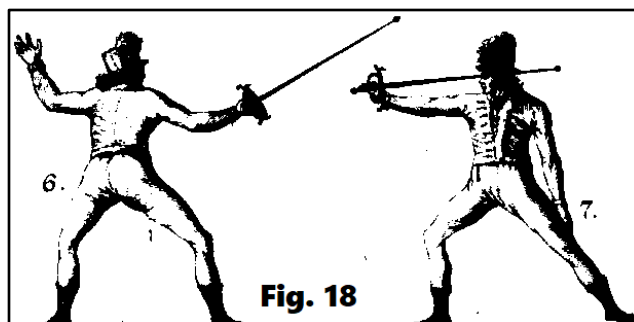


## CHAPTER 24: THE THREE WALL-EXERCISES

A: Here Master de Brea gives us examples on how the fencers must practice some actions.

### Simple wall

Before explaining these exercises, the fencers must place themselves at the mean of proportion, with second posture, occupying the same diameter line. One of the fencers waits while the other offers an open target, inside or outside. Once the first fencer sees the target, she will engage by placing her foil with *weak under strong* (point of the blade under the hilt of the opponent), and depending where the opening is, she will attack with a thrust to one side or the other,



but controlling the blade of the opponent (that is going as close as possible to it). The opponent, in order to defend of such attempt of attack, will push away the sword of her opponent. If the opponent has her sword deflected, she has to make it visible to the diestro. To do so, the opponent will bring her blade backwards at her sides after each successful deflection, as it can be seen in #7 of figure 18. The one expelling the weapon, #6, should only step back using a single step with the left foot, giving enough time and distance to execute her defense.

A: At my class when we do such exercise I even recommend avoiding to step back, that way it can be more challenging for the defender and allows a better training of reflexes and reaction time. Some people overuse the “step-back”, a manoeuvre that does not allow the real practice of the upper body. Beware that, in real fights, the fencers do not always have the luxurious possibility of stepping backwards.

### Composed wall

This one is a more violent exercise, and it allows the attacker fencer play around the hilt, attempting by *feints*, the ones we called, one, two or three, disengaging fast when the opponent seems to react to them and coming back at the other side, without halting, fast enough to trick the partner. The fencer who deflects must keep only defending, so that way her partner keeps training the attack and recovery.

A: I call this sort of movement, up and down around the hilt, *the Cobra*, due to its similarity to the reptile movement previous to an attack. Another Destreza fencer, de la Vega<sup>51</sup>, mentions in his 1681 treatise such movement the *Ribbon* (*la cinta*), due to the silhouette it does in the air. In combat, the Cobra is a powerful offensive tactical move-

<sup>51</sup> Vega – *Comprensión de la Destreza*. Re-edition 1895, pg. 34

ment, but is poorly defensive if the enemy reads the pattern or just defends well the diameter line.

Linked wall, also called campaign exercise

This exercise starts the same way as before, but with the only difference that the fencer who is doing the expulsive / deflective action can come back with an attack, trying to do it before the opponent responds or comes back.

These kinds of exercises are called *the wall*, since both fencers play on the same line.

A: At my club I made sometimes the students practice on a long and narrow sitting bench. This is a way to practice offense and defense in a central line. Destreza has a very nice way to play with the 3 dimensions, walking in rounds, but often people relay too much in doing steps aside, forgetting that the straight line is the closest distance between two points. With good reflexes inside the central line, one can turn a bad situation to a favourable one with just the twist of a hand. As mentioned, one day I will publish a manuscript with all the possible exercises that I do in my club, many of them invented by me and others found from international seminars.

## FINAL NOTE

People must try to show their skills with measure, never going too hard, where our partner can be injured; by all means we have to avoid the occurrence of such events. Following the virtue of any battle, it may happen that we are onto the execution of an attack, what it is correct is to mark that injury without ever executing it for real, attempting all the time to be as quiet as possible while swords are in our hands, (evidently de Brea refers to the context of classes, in which chit-chat is not a good display of behaviour).

Moreover, one must be cautious to ask advice and discuss any concept, which must be done with the most excellent professors, never with the cocky ones (Master de Brea is already telling us to be careful in Facebook groups!). There is no glory in beating those individuals, and in case they are the victorious, they will just be an insult to the skills and our subject.

I tried to be as brief as possible in the figures, putting only the easiest and most practical pictures, it would be impossible to represent all the postures and different possibilities that our art offers, it is indeed important to follow correctly the instructions of each one given.

This book shows clearly that the art has two parts, a speculative one, which is linked to the doctrine of the Trinity (in Spanish is literally the *power of the soul* and I believe it makes reference to the three capacities of the soul from the bible<sup>52</sup>: mind, soul and emotion), and a practical one, which refers to the actions of the body. Whoever wishes to accomplish the mastery must possess knowledge, disposition and enforcement: with these three powerful tools, one would manage the objective, and eventually use it (the Art, I guess) at the service of God, the King and the Homeland (Amen).

A: This book is what Manuel A. de Brea left us. In my opinion, his work is a very short summary of what Destreza can offer, especially when mixed with other disciplines. Therefore, if you ever liked this biased version, speak it loudly; we all need some extra push, so we can continue in our labour of helping the community. Keep the reading and keep the practice!

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<sup>52</sup> Proverbs 2:10

## ABOUT ME (André)

As a kid I was in love of a Spanish cartoon show called (for the English users) “Dogtanian and the Three Muskehounds” (d’Artacán y los tres mosqueperros). A TV show that went around the world in the 80s. It wasn’t until 2008 that I discovered a Club near my town in the Center of Catalonia, where Aleix Basullas, Sendo Espinalt and others were practicing rapier fencing, following the teachings of the old masters such Lorenz de Rada. Along the years we travelled many times to get as much knowledge as we could from all around Spain and rest of Europe.

Once I moved to Canada, I became a lonely diestro. No one in Quebec at that time was practicing Rapier, and least of all Destreza. The main weapons were longsword, broadsword and sidesword. That pushed me to teach people as fast as I could so I would have opponents to fight with, so in fact, my passion for teaching is just pure egoism, heh! The challenging of such great students pushed my limits. I had to learn more, expand my knowledge to many different Rapier usages. The styles I had seen in Canada and around the world after many years of competitions and International workshops made me see that learning only one particular type of fencing can become counterproductive. Endogamic learning leads to a narrow understanding of the Art. De Brea offers this expansive view I like and it is something that inspired me to create the Destreza Nova Project. A book is on the way, with all my secrets and teachings. I would be glad if you can appreciate it then, as I hope you did with this Epic Complete Study.

Be happy and be kind.

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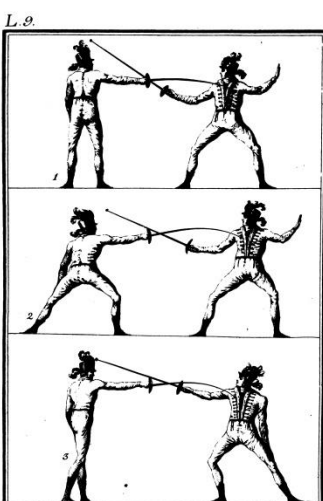
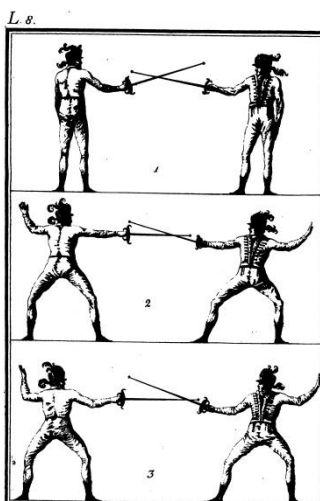
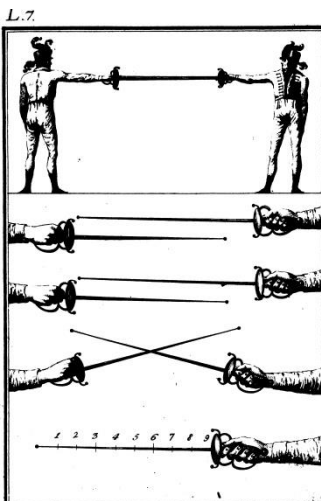
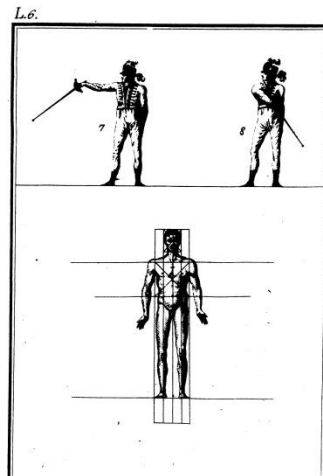
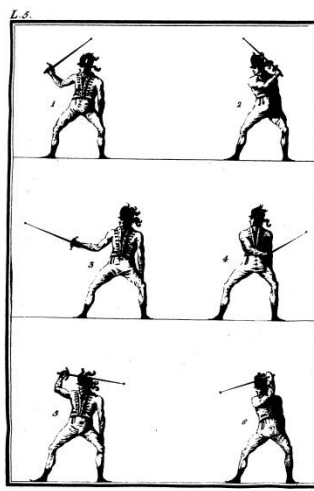
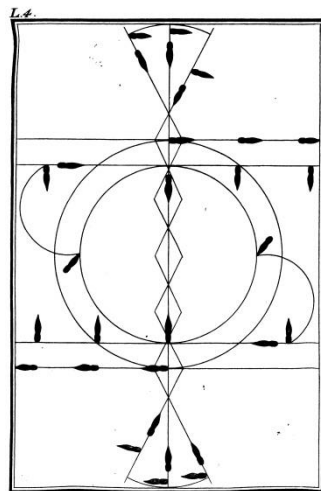
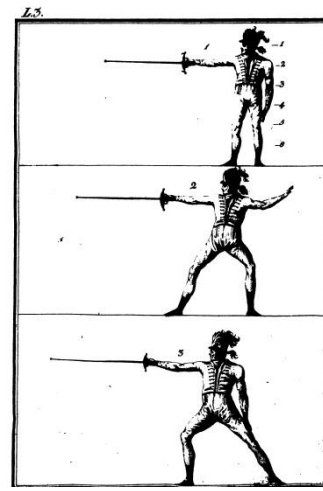
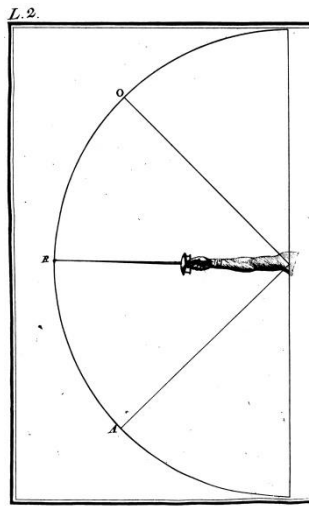
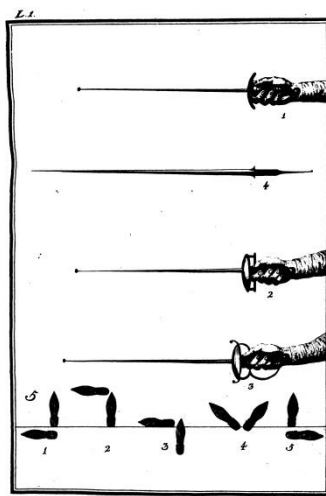
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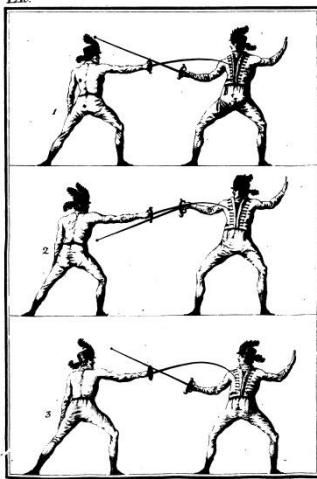
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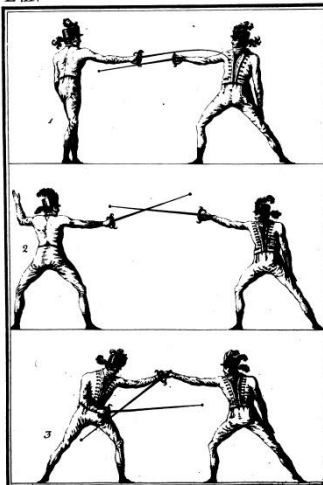
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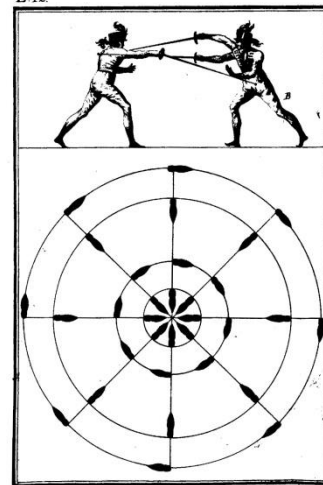
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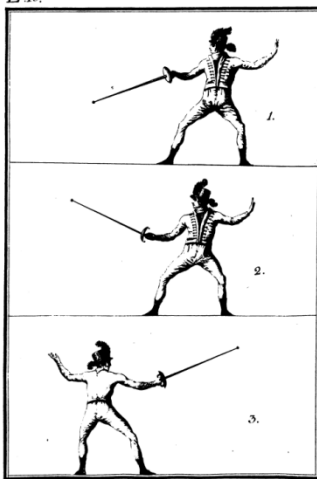
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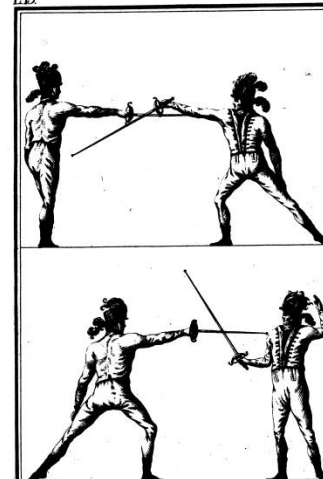
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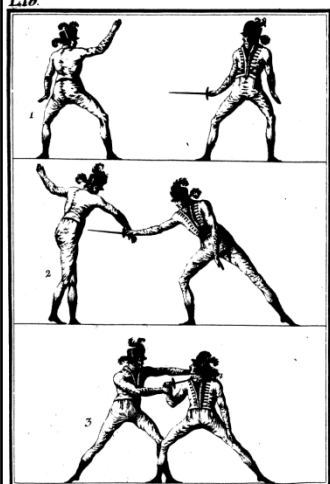
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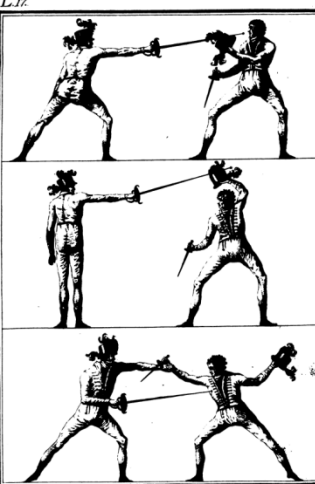
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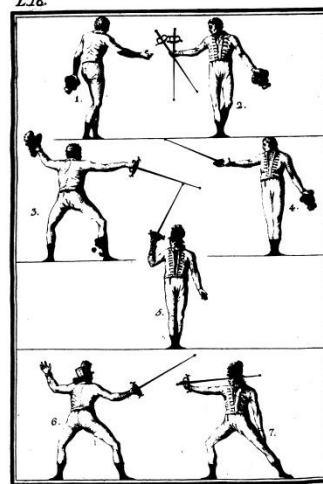
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