



A Long Time Ago in a Library Far, Far Away ...

The Adventures of the *Gladiatoria* Manuscript from New Haven

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Abstract – In this paper I will describe the adventurous history of an important late medieval German *fechtbuch*—a fighting manual—that belongs to a number of manuscripts known as the *Gladiatoria* group. In the beginning, the extent and the characteristics of this group of codices are explained; later on I will deal with one specific specimen that formerly belonged to a library in Germany—the Herzogliche Bibliothek in Gotha—from where it vanished during or after World War II. Until quite recently this manuscript was believed to be lost. I was able to identify a *Gladiatoria* manuscript from the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut, as that missing manuscript. The article presents a detailed description of the manuscript; it follows the path of the many places the codex passed through from the days of its creation until the present time; it offers a thorough line of argument that proves on one hand that the manuscript from New Haven is in fact identical to the one that disappeared from Gotha, and that verifies on the other hand an assumption by the renowned researcher Hans-Peter Hils that it is identical to yet another believed-to-be-lost manuscript that was sold by auction in Heidelberg in the 1950s and 1960s as single leaves; and finally it makes an attempt to reconstruct the original structure of the manuscript after it had been pulled apart.

Keywords – Harness fencing, *fechtbuch*, sword, spear, dagger

I. INTRODUCTION

“You don’t know what it is, but it’s there,
like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad.”

Morpheus, *The Matrix*, 1999

This paper expands an article of the same name that has been published earlier in 2015 in an extensive volume about a medieval German fencing book, which I have edited in collaboration with Bartłomiej Walczak.¹ The book in question is the *Gladiatoria* manuscript from the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut, and it belongs to a group of six known exemplars that share a considerable amount of identical material. In March 2015 I also held a lecture about this specific manuscript at “The Real Fighting Stuff Conference” in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum,

¹ Dierk Hagedorn and Bartłomiej Walczak, eds, *Gladiatoria – New Haven, MS U860.F46 1450* (Herne: VS Books, 2015).

Glasgow. In this paper I will describe the eventful history of the New Haven *Gladiatoria* manuscript, including its loss and reappearance, with an attempt to outline its provenance throughout the times and to reconstruct its original structure.

The name itself, *Gladiatoria*, is derived from the title page, folio 1r, of *Ms. Berol. germ. quart.16* (dated to about 1450),² currently in the possession of the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow. It was Hans-Peter Hils who suggested the name “*Gladiatoria* group” for the corpus of these manuscripts based on this title page in his book *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes* in 1985.³ It is a group of German manuscript from the late Middle Ages that deal with fighting and fencing techniques, manuscripts that are known as *fechtbücher* (literally: fencing books). These *Gladiatoria* teachings however are far from homogenous, but common to all of them is combat in armor. Since many *fechtbücher* are compilations of various fighting disciplines, we find combat with spear, sword, and dagger as well as unarmed wrestling techniques among the *Gladiatoria* teachings. Apart from that, several *Gladiatoria* core techniques are occasionally embedded in another context as well. The *Gladiatoria* group consists of at least six manuscripts we know of plus three additional edited adaptations. None of them apparently shows the complete lore of teachings; almost every single manuscript has a couple of unique techniques—or at least texts or images. Some techniques show up only once, others have been lost in the course of time from the manuscripts, others again seem to have vanished entirely from the teachings—or were replaced by another version. So it is quite an endeavour to bring light and order into the web of manuscripts and their copies.

Possibly the earliest appearance of *Gladiatoria* material can be found in *Cod. I.6.4^o.2* (dated to the early 1400s), commonly known as either *Codex Wallerstein* or *von Baumann's Fechtbuch* from the Universitätsbibliothek Augsburg. This manuscript consists of at least two parts, the older of which in return contains about 15 techniques that appear in the overall corpus of *Gladiatoria* teachings.

The nucleus of the *Gladiatoria* group however consists of three manuscripts from New Haven, Vienna, and Cracow. These are the only ones that contain not only images but also extensive explanatory text passages.

MS U860.F46 1450 (dated to about 1430–1440) from the Yale Center for British Art is the one this paper will deal with in greater detail.

The scribe of the New Haven version is also responsible for the major part of the Vienna version, *KK 5013*, Kunsthistorisches Museum. Additionally, the illustrator of the New Haven manuscript may have been responsible for a few pictures of the Vienna codex due to some striking artistic similarities; the larger part however was executed by

² Bartłomiej Walczak, ‘The *Gladiatoria* Group’, in: Hagedorn and Walczak, *Gladiatoria – New Haven*, p. 60–66.

³ Hans-Peter Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985).

another artisan whose work ranks considerably lower and the overall impression is much sketchier which is quite obvious in a direct comparison of both manuscripts.

The Cracow version *Ms. Berol. germ. quart.16* is the most lavishly illustrated one and is clearly a rather sophisticated piece of art. Judging from the style of armour, it was created some time after the Vienna and the New Haven version. Particular to this manuscript is the addition of unarmed combat techniques, for example with sword and buckler, large dueling shields and staff weapons.

Another compendium that contains *Gladiatoria* material is incorporated in *Cod. Guelf. 78. 2 Aug. 2^o* (dated to about 1465–1480) from the Herzog-August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. The illustrations are even sketchier than in the Vienna version and look a bit like traced image. The order of these pictures—unfortunately without any text—appears to be in a completely random fashion when compared to the other three manuscripts with structuring text. Nevertheless, and most surprisingly, there is a large number of additional images, particularly displaying dagger techniques.

The manuscript *MS CL23842* (dated to about 1480–1500) from the Musée National du Moyen Âge in Paris is another compilation from various sources, and the few images taken from *Gladiatoria* are also without any accompanying text.

Apart from these there are the three copies and adaptations of *Gladiatoria* material by Paulus Hector Mair who incorporated some techniques into his vast compendia by being true to the original images but by adding new and more extensive texts. These *fechtbücher* belong to the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden (*Mscr. Dresd. C.94*, dated to after 1542 or 1556), the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (*Cod. icon 393*, dated to after 1542 and before 1567), and the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (*Cod. Vindob. 10826*, dated to after 1542).

A more detailed examination of the *Gladiatoria* group can be found in an essay by Bartłomiej Walczak in the afore-mentioned edition of the New Haven codex.⁴

II. THE DESCRIPTION

“No, it’s the right size. For me, that is.”
James Bond, From Russia with Love, 1963

How nice it is when those things re-appear you have firmly believed to have been lost irretrievably: the missing little red toy car, the untraceable wedding ring, the runaway pet—or the medieval fencing manuscript.

Quite frequently these missing items are not really lost at all but only misplaced somewhere else. And this is exactly what has happened to the manuscript we will deal with here.

⁴ Walczak, ‘The *Gladiatoria* Group’.

Codex MS U860.F46 1450 from the Yale Center for British Art (YCBA) in New Haven, Connecticut has had a rather exciting and trying time which we now will shed some light on. It is a fechtbuch—a book that deals with fighting techniques—that originally was only one part of a larger entity, Codex Gothanus Membr. II 109 from the Herzogliche Bibliothek in Gotha in Germany, which disappeared during or shortly after World War II from the library. We will only deal extensively with this first part, the one containing the fechtbuch, and we'll start by describing it. The fate of the original, entire manuscript will be outlined only briefly later on.

Everything concerning our manuscript is ambiguous, if not difficult. So we will encounter in the course of this brief essay uncertainties and oddities time and again. This is exemplified already with the format.

II.1. Format

In the original shelf mark from Gotha—Membr. II 109—the Roman numeral “II” signifies a quarto book format.

The manuscript was measured at least five times in the past, each time with certain differences:

- In the first known description of the manuscript, Friedrich Jacobs and Friedrich August Ukert⁵ come to a result of 6 x 6¼ French inches, which corresponds to 163 x 169 mm (or 6.42 x 6.65 in)—according to the conversion carried out by Hans-Peter Hils,⁶
- Walter Benary⁷ measures 163 x 175 mm (6.42 x 6.89 in) in the year of 1912,
- Cornelia Hopf⁸ states 16.5 x 17.5 cm (6.50 x 6.89 in) in 1997,
- the catalog of the German illustrated manuscripts from the Middle Ages⁹ from 2009 mentions a size of 165 x 180 mm (6.50 x 7.09 in),
- and finally the YCBA states a format of about 19 x 20 cm (7.48 x 7.87 in) in 2012.

⁵ Friedrich Jacobs and Friedrich August Ukert, *Beiträge zur ältern Litteratur oder Merkwürdigkeiten der Herzogl. öffentlichen Bibliothek zu Gotha* (Leipzig: Dyk'sche Buchhandlung, 1838), p. 141.

⁶ Hans-Peter Hils, 'Gladiatoria. Über drei Fechthandschriften aus der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Codices manuscripti*, 1/2 (1987), p. 11.

⁷ Walter Benary, 'Ein unbekanntes handschriftliches Fragment einer Lope'schen Komödie', *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 36 (1912), pp. 657–678, here p. 658.

⁸ Cornelia Hopf, *Die abendländischen Handschriften der Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha. Bestandsverzeichnis. 2. Kleinformatige Pergamenthandschriften Memb. II (Gotha: Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, 1997)*, p. 66–67.

⁹ Hella Frühmorgen-Voss, Norbert H. Ott, Ulrike Bodemann, Christine Stöllinger-Löser and Rainer Leng (eds), *Katalog der deutsch-sprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters* (München: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), p. 23–25.

Upon request by the author in August 2013 Francis Lapka, catalog librarian of the YCBA, checked the measurements and determines a size of 172 x 185 mm (6.77 x 7.28 in) for the cover; the pages of the body of the book are consistently 165 x 178 mm (6.50 x 7.01 in) large—apart from three leaves whose text has been cut off. These dimensions vary by less than one millimeter altogether.

The current format however is by no means the original one, since frequently passages of the text have been cropped at the outer and lower margins. The Gladiatoria manuscript from Vienna¹⁰ is extraordinarily similar to this one in several aspects, among others in size and proportions. A direct comparison with the illustrations and texts of the Vienna manuscript—its size is listed as 185 x 195 mm (7.28 x 7.68 in)¹¹—suggests that the New Haven manuscript was originally about one centimetre (or a little less than half an inch) higher and wider. It cannot be ascertained for sure when it was cropped, but Jacobs and Ukert had already mentioned damages.¹²

II.2. Cover

The cover consists of auburn leather. Five punched diagonals intersect each other on both the front and the back cover, thus forming rhombic fields. Two rows of three fields one above the other are shaped thus, and in each field a narrow rhombus that is bordered by an outline carries a raised griffin rampant on a punched ground. Six more fields bear embossed flower heads in a circle: two smaller ones on top of another on the left and right side respectively, with two larger ones in the middle.

The spine is divided by four double raised bands. Between the second and the third we find the golden embossed inscription “ARS PALAESTRA” (art of wrestling), beneath the fourth “XV s.” (= the 15th century).

On the inside of the front cover there is an oval ruby-coloured sticker with a central golden wheat sheave and the words “Oak Spring” and “Paul Mellon” in golden letters running around it.

An insert has been glued in on the inside of the back cover which shows the YCBA logo on top with the accession number written in pencil underneath: U860.F46 1450. The lower margin of the inside of the cover carries the embossed name of the bookbinder: S. (= Sven) Wiklander.

¹⁰ Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, *KK 5013*.

¹¹ Frühmorgen-Voss, Ott, Bodemann, Stöllinger-Löser, Leng, *Katalog*, p. 30.

¹² Jacobs and Ukert, *Beiträge*, p. 141.

II.3. Content

According to the information provided by the YCBA the binding of the codex is neat. The manuscript begins with five empty leaves made of heavy paper resembling parchment; at the back, there is another such leaf. These leaves were inserted during the most recent binding in the 1960s.

The actual codex consists of 43 parchment leaves. The fashion of the binding is difficult to recognize without manhandling the manuscript too roughly. It appears however that some leaves are mounted on stubs, others by contrast are not. Unfortunately the YCBA was unable to determine unequivocally whether the entire manuscript was bound together from single leaves. According to Francis Lapka “others appear to have conjugate leaves”.¹³

All leaves are generally in a good condition, save for leaf number 7 which is much grubbier than the rest and quite dilapidated.

Folios 1r–43r feature water coloured pen drawings in black ink over pencil sketches with two fighting persons in harness on each page. The pictures occupy the entire width and approximately the upper three quarters of the page.

A pencil sketch is particularly identifiable at the right leg of the right fencer on f. 17v. This sketch corresponds to the stance found in the *Gladiatoria* manuscript from Vienna, f. 22v; the finished drawing however matches the version from Cracow,¹⁴ f. 24v.

Beneath a separating line, three to eight lines of explanatory text are written in *bastarda* with brown ink. Occasionally the text runs around the fighters’ feet which overlap the separating line. This suggests that the drawings were outlined first with the text being filled in later in a next step. On some leaves, however, the text has been cut off beneath the fighting pairs, specifically on ff. 3, 4, and 7.

Only one scribe was involved in the execution of the manuscript, and he was also responsible for the majority of the Vienna *Gladiatoria* manuscript, revealed by close comparison of the corresponding handwriting (ff. 1r–10v,¹⁵ 12r–27v, and 29r–56v). Occasionally even the alignment of the single lines is identical in both manuscripts.

The dialect is Austro-Bavarian.¹⁶

Folio 43v features several Spanish names, written in pencil, possibly in the 17th century: Don Diego de Coes (twice), Juan Perez del Gurca, Jusepe Cerdeño.¹⁷

¹³ E-mail correspondence from August 21, 2013.

¹⁴ Cracow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, *Ms. Germ. Quart. 16.*:

¹⁵ In Frühmorgen-Voss, Ott, Bodemann, Stöllinger-Löser, Leng, *Katalog*, erroneously indicated as 11v.

¹⁶ Corresponding to the information for the codex from Vienna in Frühmorgen-Voss, Ott, Bodemann, Stöllinger-Löser, Leng, *Katalog*, p. 30.

Almost all pages carry at least one numbering. However, these are inconsistent and incomplete:

- Fencing techniques, numbered consecutively in the text
- in spear fighting (ff. 1r–5r, whereby the text is missing on leaves 3 and 4)
- in dagger fighting (ff. 30r–40r)
- in holding down techniques¹⁸ (ff. 41r–43v)
- Possibly contemporary leaf numbering in ink
- leaves 9–18
- leaves 28–32
- leaves 39–43
- Possibly contemporary leaf number in ink (ff. 25r and 37r)
- Possibly contemporary page numbering in ink (ff. 30r–37v)
- Page numbering in ink, probably from later times (ff. 1r–6v)
- Page or leaf number in ink from later (?) times (f. 7r)
- Modern in pencil (all pages except leaves 11, 18, 22, and 26)
- Modern pencil number 2, in a circle, on f. 22r

Since the current order of leaves got a bit mixed up—particularly in the middle part—these numberings may help us to reconstruct the initial configuration. More on this a little later.

Every page of the *fechtbuch* shows two fighters in full armour who fight against each other in a variety of disciplines:

- 1r–5r Spear
- 5v–19v Sword
- 20r–22r Wrestling
- 22v–28v Sword
- 29r–29v Wrestling
- 30r–40v Dagger
- 41r–43r Holding down

Wrestling however is not listed as an independent discipline, especially when we use the Cracow codex as a reference for comparison. In that volume we find 50 consecutively

¹⁷ Benary, 'Ein unbekanntes handschriftliches Fragment', p. 659.

¹⁸ This term signifies fighting techniques on the ground. Once the opponent is brought down he shall be immobilized and forced to surrender, gladly by seeking the assistance of a dagger. See also Martin Huntfelt's holding down techniques in *codex 44 A 8*, ed. Hagedorn, *Peter von Danzig*, pp. 252–259.

numbered techniques for the sword between spear and dagger combat, and in these the wrestling techniques are included.

The suits of armour are depicted in minute detail, with coloured doublets or coats of arms appearing frequently. These are painted mostly in blue, red, purple, orange, and green. All fighters wear closed helmets with visors that are carried out quite uniformly; the amount of detail of the armour on the other hand varies considerably.

The weapons are drawn in a rather similar fashion as well, but the *ecranches*, the little shields, which mostly lie on the ground, are rendered a bit oddly: usually the *bouche*, the indentation for the spear or the lance, is situated—in heraldic terms—on the right hand side of the shield. On folios 3r, 9v, 11r, 20r, 25r, 29r, and 41v however we find *ecranches* with a left sided orientation lying beneath or next to each of the left fighters; the same is true for the right fighters on folios 19v and 42r; the right one on fol. 4r is holding one of these in his hand; fol. 17r portrays even two wrongly arranged *ecranches* on the ground; and several *ecranches* seem to be void of any strap or grip at all: folios 9r, 14v, 15r, 15v, 16r, 16v, 17v, 18v, 19r, 20v, 21r, 23r, 23v, 26r, 26v, 27v, 28r, 28v, 31r, 31v, 34r, 36r, and 36v. With only a few exceptions, each *ecranche* displays a red St. George's cross on a white background.

Although the suits of armour vary considerably in detail, the overall style of the drawings on the other hand appears homogeneous throughout, so that it is quite likely that only a single illustrator is responsible in the making of the manuscript. Different from the Vienna *Gladiatoria* codex mentioned before, the pictures all share a similar, high quality.

Based on the particularities of the writing, the dialect, the arms, and the armor the manuscript can be dated to about 1430.¹⁹

II.4. Original Collocation

Before the entire manuscript disappeared from Gotha, it consisted of three parts. The first one is the manuscript we deal with in this article; the second one is the fragment of a Spanish comedy, penned by Lope de Vega (1562–1635): *El testimonio vengado*; the third one is lost without a trace to this day, and it contained several Spanish poems with later additions of French and Latin sentences on a couple of leaves.²⁰

¹⁹ Hagedorn, 'Offense and Defense', in Hagedorn and Walczak, *Gladiatoria – New Haven*, p. 94–116.

²⁰ Jacobs and Ukert, *Beiträge*, p. 141.

So the original collocation reads as follows:

56 leaves of parchment:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 1–43 | <i>Gladiatoria fechtbuch</i> |
| 44 | empty recto page, a pen sketch on the back |
| 45–55 | Lope de Vega: <i>El testimonio vengado</i> |
| 56 | title and listing of names |
| 44 | leaves of paper: Spanish poems, French and Latin texts |

Also as far as the correct number of pages is concerned, like with the format, a certain disagreement in the specialist literature prevails: Sometimes the number of parchment leaves is stated as 55, sometimes as 56. Quite probably this inconsistency can be traced back to a mistake in counting the leaves that must have occurred even before the very first description of the manuscript written by Jacobs and Ukert. These two gentlemen account for 55 leaves, in which both Martin Wierschin²¹ and Hans-Peter Hils²² follow them. The latter repeats Martin Wierschin's statement in *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes* in the first place, but later on in his essay from 1987 about three *Gladiatoria* manuscripts, he refers to the description of the manuscript by Rudolf Ehwald, director of the library in Gotha from 1893 until 1921, who counts 56 parchment leaves.²³ The *Katalog der deutschsprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters* doesn't quite agree with itself, since on one occasion it states 55, on another 56 leaves. Nevertheless it points to a newer pagination only on the recto pages: 87–111. Cornelia Hopf lists 56 pages. The confusion can be explained quickly: Walter Benary²⁴ tells us in a footnote that page 101 (which corresponds to fol. 55) has been counted twice.

Benary reproduces the text of the fragment of the comedy in accordance with the original page numbers, namely from page 89 (fol. 45) to page 109 (fol. 55). In some additional remarks concerning the last part of the fragment he writes that fol. 55v (the verso page of the last leaf of our fragment) carries the name Pedro de l'Gurça; on fol. 56v there are some pen scribbles and the name Pedro dee Gnça (sic) in capital letters. Additionally on fol. 56r we find the title of the comedy.²⁵

The remaining leaf that belongs between the *fechtbuch* and the fragment is blank on the recto page, and on fol. 44v shows a rough pen sketch of a fighter in harness which is left uncolored. The assumption that this drawing was executed by the writer of the

²¹ Martin Wierschin, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), p. 17.

²² Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers*, p. 65.

²³ Rudolf Ehwald, *Chart. B 1974* (Gotha: Forschungsbibliothek), p. 164.

²⁴ Benary, 'Ein unbekanntes handschriftliches Fragment'.

²⁵ Hopf, *Die abendländischen Handschriften*, p. 67.

comedy in the 17th century, using an illustration from the *fechtbuch* as a template,²⁶ can certainly be excluded since neither the style of the depicted harness nor the combination of weapons—sword and dagger—appear in our manuscript in this manner.

III. LOCATIONS

“I’ll be back.”

The Terminator, The Terminator, 1984

Unfortunately, we cannot continuously verify the provenance of the manuscript; however we can identify a number of locations that provide reliable indications with reference to the respective repository.

III.1. Bavarian-Speaking Area

The manuscript came into being in the beginning of the 15th century, probably in the area of what today is Bavaria or Austria. It was presumably created in a larger studio or workshop, but only one scribe and one illustrator were involved.

III.2. Gotha

We can only trace back the history of the manuscript with certainty to the 18th century: Hereditary Prince August of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg presented the volume to the Herzogliche Bibliothek Gotha (the ducal library) as a gift on October 22nd 1792.

At this time the manuscript *Membr. II 109* consisted of the aforementioned three parts. During or shortly after World War II however it disappeared from the library, only to resurface some time later and in separate parts:

The fragment of Lope de Vega’s comedy has been restored to the library in Gotha in 1997. This part had found its way into the possession of the antiquarian and auction house Hauswedell & Nolte in Hamburg, which handed it over to the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg (state and university library) in 1953 due to the unclear property situation. After an extensive examination it was restituted to the Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha.²⁷

The third part remains lost to this day.

The first part however, our *fechtbuch*, reappeared a couple of years after the end of the war in Heidelberg.

²⁶ Fröhmer-Voss, Ott, Bodemann, Stöllinger-Löser, Leng, *Katalog*, p. 24.

²⁷ Hopf, *Die abendländischen Handschriften*, p. 67.

III.3. Heidelberg

The *Buch- und Kunstantiquariat* Dr. Helmut Tenner (book and art antiquarian) sold the manuscript at several auctions in the 1950s and 60s. As far as we can determine, 19 single leaves (out of 43) were sold here at auction:²⁸

Auction 5	from November 8 th /9 th 1956	3 leaves
Auction 7	from June 4 th /5 th 1957	4 leaves
Auction 9	from February 6 th –8 th 1958	4 leaves
Auction 11	from October 8 th /9 th 1958	6 leaves
Auction 37	from October 23 rd /24 th 1963	1 leaf
Auction 43	from November 11 th /12 th 1964	1 leaf

Each auction catalog depicts a manuscript page in a rough dot matrix print. We can definitely identify the images that are attached to Hans-Peter Hils' essay²⁹ as the ones stemming from the New Haven codex. Page and plate numbers in the corresponding auction catalogs are juxtaposed with the folio numbers of our manuscript in this table:

A5	(p. 4, no. 3)	28r
A7	(p. 5, no. 2)	34r
A9	(p. 3, no. 3)	9r
A11	(p. 2, no. 10 and plate 1)	30r
A37	(p. 5, no. 2)	22v
A43	(p. 5, no. 2 and plate 1)	18r

At this point the line of tradition discontinues, and the fate of the remaining 24 leaves remains unresolved.

In fact, all parts that had been auctioned off at Tenner's—and obviously not only these—found their way to Sweden.

III.4. Stockholm

AB Sandbergs Bokhandel in Stockholm sold the leaves purchased by auction to the United States.

III.5. Paul Mellon

Paul Mellon (1907–1999) was an American businessman, philanthropist and patron. He studied at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut and was co-heir to a phenomenal fortune, that of the Mellon Bank, founded by his grandfather, father and uncle. He

²⁸ Hils, 'Gladiatoria', p. 11 and 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32–54.

facilitated the foundation of the YCBA and made a vast number of charitable donations. Over the years he purchased the entire *Gladiatoria fechtbuch*:

1959	28 leaves
February 1960	11 leaves
December 1962	2 leaves
December 1963	1 leaf
December 1964	1 leaf

Subsequently, the manuscript was put into the current order and re-bound by bookbinder Sven Wiklander.

III.6. New Haven, Connecticut

Paul Mellon bequeathed his collection, including our *fechtbuch*, to the Yale Center for British Art, where it now resides after he had died.

IV. THE LINE OF ARGUMENT

“There’s nothing more elusive than an obvious fact.”
Sherlock Holmes, *Sherlock Holmes*, 2009

In his 1985 general survey of German fencing manuscripts,³⁰ Hans-Peter Hils still lists the codex from Gotha and the so-called *manuscript ‘T’* as two distinct volumes (catalog nos. 21 and 23). But in 1987 he re-examined the descriptions of the manuscript and the catalogs of the auction house Tenner and through a masterly investigative and deductive process he came to the conclusion that these two were in fact one and the same book.³¹

In 2009 finally, by the means of the various descriptions of the volume, I was able to identify the New Haven codex, which had become generally accessible in the meantime, as the believed-to-be-lost manuscript.³²

The criteria by the means of which the presumably lost codex can be considered as rediscovered are these:

- The description of the manuscript and the text excerpt by Jacobs and Ukert.
- The description by Rudolf Ehwald.
- The documented list of a couple of Spanish names on folio 43v.
- The plates in the auction catalogs.

³⁰ Hils, *Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes*, p. 21–134.

³¹ Hils, ‘Gladiatoria’.

³² I am very much indebted to Christian H. Tobler who was so kind as to draw my attention to this manuscript.

IV.1. Description by Jacobs and Ukert

Friedrich Jacobs and Friedrich August Ukert give an account of a brief text passage in their description of the manuscript on page 9 (which corresponds to fol. 5r—see figure 1):³³

wenn du rasch den anderen packen willst, so nymb deinen speer und swert zu samb an den arm und schrawff ab den knoph von deinem swert und wirff heriklachen in in und lauff nach dem wurff mit ym ein und nutz swert oder spyes, welches dir eben sey. [...] ob er also auf dich würff mit dem knoph, so nym dein taschen (Tartsche. Schild) für dich und vach darauff den Wurff und nym din spyes für dich in die recht hant zu dem stich und hüt dich sein dass er dir nicht inlauf, als er in synne hat.

My own transcription differs only slightly:

ob du wildt reschleich mit ym entten So nymb deinen spyes vnd swert zu samb an den arm vnd schrawff ab den knöph von deinem swertt vnd wirff bertickchleichen in in vnd lauff nach dem würff mit ym ein vnd nütz swert oder spyes welichs dir eben sey ob er also auff dich wurff mit dem knopph So nym dein taschn für dich vnd vach darauff den wurff vnd nym den spyes für dich in die recht hant zu dem stich vnd rett dich sein das er dir nicht in lauff als er yndem synne hatt.³⁴



Figure 1: Folio 5r from *Gladiatoria* New Haven.
Reproduced with permission of the institution.

³³ New Haven, Connecticut, Yale Center for British Art, MS U860.F46 1450, fol. 5r.

³⁴ Hagedorn and Walczak, *Gladiatoria – New Haven*, p. 217.

Additionally, Jacobs and Ukert provide some details about certain pages that correspond to our manuscript: “From page 13 onwards combat goes on with the sword, from page 59 onwards with the dagger. On page 81 start depictions of how to hold the overthrown adversary.” The last two statements are accurate; the first one however is not. Page 13 corresponds to folio 7; sword fighting though already begins on fol. 5v. Nevertheless, this very page is marked with a number “13” written in ink which does not relate to the actual page number, so that we can explain this discrepancy quite easily.

IV.2. Description by Ehwald

Rudolf Ehwald too provides us with several page and leaf numberings in his description of the codex, that most closely approximate those from the New Haven manuscript. Minor differences result partly from the new rebinding, in the process of which the original order was not entirely maintained:

On pages 3, 4, 8 the text beneath the picture is cut off. 2 leaves are missing in the beginning (= title and three pages with pictures), 1 leaf between 35 and 36, 6 leaves between 37 and 38, 1 leaf between 38 and 39, at least 1 leaf before 41. Leaves 1–6 are marked on the individual pages from a more recent hand on each page with 4–15, leaf 7 is unmarked, leaf 8 with the signature 16, 9–14 with later signatures 11–16; 15–17 unmarked; 18–23 have page numbers 22/25, 37=26, 39/43=31/36; in addition however leaves 30/37 possess the page number 1–12 [...], 15–18. Leaves 1, 2 describe the 4th to 7th, leaf 5r the 12th technique of spear fighting; leaves 30/35 eleven subsequent figures of dagger fighting; leaves 36, 37 the 14th/17th, leaf 38 the 30th/31st, leaves 39/40 the 34th/37th figures of the same fight; from the last series only pictures 3/7 have survived. Leaf 43 only has a picture on the front.³⁵

Unfortunately we encounter several contradictions: On one hand Rudolf Ehwald states that leaves 15 to 17 are unmarked. But this isn't so, at least not in the current order. In the reconstructed version which I present in table 2, there are even more unmarked pages. So this statement has to remain in doubt.

On the other hand he writes that the leaves 18–23 show the leaf numbers 22–25 (although not continuously). Yet these numbers are on leaves 29–32 and show the last of the wrestling techniques and the beginning of the dagger section. On another occasion Ehwald indicates eleven consecutive dagger techniques for leaves 30–35, which indeed corresponds to the facts. Unfortunately, also this contradiction cannot be dissolved.

³⁵ Ehwald, *Chart. B 1974*, p. 164–165.

Furthermore he just seems to have miscalculated when enumerating the “last series” of the holding down techniques, since the manuscript features five techniques out of seven, and not three.

IV.3. Spanish Names

Jacobs and Ukert write: “On the back of the last leaf a more recent hand has written down several names: Don Diego de Coes, Juan Perez del Gurca”;³⁶ and Walter Benary says: “Various names are inscribed in the volume, which read as follows: fol. 43v (the verso of the last leaf of the *fechtbuch*): Don Diego de Coes (twice). Juan Perez del Gurca. Jusepe Cerdeño.”³⁷ These are exactly the names we can find on fol. 43v of our *fechtbuch*.

IV.4. Plates

As already outlined above, the plates from the catalogs of the Tenner auction house correspond clearly to those from the New Haven manuscript, which therefore can be considered as the most striking evidence.

So Hans-Peter Hils was able to prove in a first step that the codex from Gotha and the manuscript “T” are one and the same book; and now I succeeded in verifying in a second step that this very manuscript is identical to that one from New Haven and therefore can no longer be considered lost at all.

V. THE STRUCTURE

“The circle is now complete.”

Darth Vader, *Star Wars*, 1977

In the course of its history, the manuscript has been taken apart and rebound repeatedly. The current binding is incoherent and doesn’t always follow a consistent order. Nevertheless, the bookbinder Sven Wiklander has recognizably undertaken great effort in bringing the pages into a logical and comprehensible order based on the above-mentioned diverse numberings. He didn’t succeed though in every aspect, as we can see for example on folios 27r (figure 2) and 28v (figure 3): These two pages depict a sequence of a technique with the plate gauntlet that actually belongs together but is sundered here. For a direct comparison we can turn to the very same sequence in the codex from Cracow on folios 26v and 27r or 24v and 25r, respectively, in the Vienna version. Both codices preserve the correct order of the technique.

³⁶ Jacobs and Ukert, *Beiträge*, p. 141.

³⁷ Benary, ‘Ein unbekanntes handschriftliches Fragment’, p. 659.



Figure 2: Folio 27r from *Gladiatoria New Haven*
Reproduced with permission of the institution.



Figure 3: Folio 28v from *Gladiatoria New Haven*.
Reproduced with permission of the institution.

I have already indicated above the different numberings that occur throughout the manuscript. Subsequently, I want to endeavor to use these and a number of additional descriptions and hints as a means to reconstruct the order the pages were in when the volume still resided in Gotha. I also attempt to reconstruct its original form—if there ever was one to begin with. For earlier Jacobs and Ukert already wrote: “The bookbinder has not been mindful and has not sewn in the parchment leaves in their proper order; he has also damaged many a figure by cropping [the pages].”³⁸ As a guideline for this reconstruction I have used the two Gladiatoria manuscripts from Cracow and Vienna which principally follow the same internal logic. Thus a theoretical original composition can be determined quite exactly.

Table 1 shows the current state of the manuscript and lists all numberings. The most important criterion is the number of the individual Stück (or fighting technique) in the beginning. A slash “/” marks those pages whose text has been cut off. The techniques for spear and dagger fighting as well as for holding down are numbered throughout in the text; only with the sword this is not the case. Consequently, only here the order of the pages has gotten mixed up.

Folio	Piece	Leaf	Page, old	Page, new	Pencil	Other	Gotha
Spear							
1r	4			4	1		1r
1v	5			5	2		1v
2r	6			6	3		2r
2v	7		7 (?)	7	4		2v
3r	/			8	5		3r
3v	/			9	6		3v
4r	/			10	7		4r
4v	/			11	8		4v
5r	12			12	9		5r
Sword							
5v	Anfang			13	10		5v
6r				14	11		6r
6v				15	12	15 (?) ¹	6v
7r	/ [i a]			6 (?)	13	16	8r
7v	/ [i b]				14		8v
8r					15		7r
8v					16		7v
9r		11			17		9r
9v					18		9v
10r		12			19		10r
10v					20		10v
11r	ii a	13					11r
11v	ii b						11v

³⁸ Jacobs and Ukert, *Beiträge*, p. 141.

Folio	Piece	Leaf	Page, old	Page, new	Pencil	Other	Gotha
12r	iii a	14			21		12r
12v	iii b				22		12v
13r		15			23		13r
13v	iv a				24		13v
14r	iv b	16			25		14r
14v	iv c				26		14v
15r	vii a	17			27		
15v	vii b				28		
16r	vii c	18			29		
16v	viii a				30		
17r	viii b	19			31		
17v	ix a				32		
18r	ix b	20					
18v	x a						
19r	xiii a				33		
19v	xiii b				34		
20r					35		
20v					36		
21r					37		
21v					38		
22r	xii b					2 ²	
22v							
23r					39		
23v					40		
24r	v b				41		
24v	vi a				42		
25r	vi b	15			43		
25v					44		
26r							
26v	v a						
27r	xi b				45		
27v	xii a				46		
28r	x b	21			47		
28v	xi a				48		
29r		22			49		
29v					50		
				Dagger			
30r	1 ³	23	1		51		30r
30v	2		2		52		30v
31r	2	24	3		53		31r
31v	3		4		54		31v
32r	4	25	5		55		32r
32v	5		6		56		32v
33r	6		7		57		33r
33v	7		8		58		33v

Folio	Piece	Leaf	Page, old	Page, new	Pencil	Other	Gotha
34r	8		9		59		34r
34v	9		10		60		34v
35r	10		11		61		35r
35v	11		12		62		35v
36r	14		15		63		36r
36v	15		16		64		36v
37r	16	26	17		65		37r
37v	17		18		66		37v
38r	30				67		38r
38v	31				68		38v
39r	34	31			69		39r
39v	35				70		39v
40r	36	32			71		40r
40v					72		40v
Holding Down							
41r	3	34			73		41r
41v	4				74		41v
42r	5	35			75		42r
42v	6				76		42v
43r	7	36			77		43r

Table 1: Present and Gotha State

Additionally, we have leaf numberings from the old days, but we cannot tell for sure whether those were realized in the time or even in the process of the making of the manuscript, or some time later. The nature and the style of the numbers point at least to the period of origin of the manuscript. The dagger techniques feature an old numbering as well, and the spear fighting section has been numbered in more recent times. The final, likewise not entirely universal page numbering in pencil was presumably done in the 1960s.

The last column of the table shows the order of the pages from the time in Gotha. Here the sequence is partially interrupted since unfortunately it proved to be impossible to determine the exact state. Those leaves that are shifted in contrast to the current order are marked in italics for reasons of clarification.

The stücke in sword fighting are unnumbered in the New Haven and the Vienna manuscript, thus differing from the Cracow version. Nevertheless there is frequently a definite order when a certain technique is followed by its corresponding counter technique. These passages are marked with small letters. Since the sequence of the manuscript was disrupted in the process of rebinding it, now on several occasions the wrong counter follows a certain technique. In order to clarify the original composition, sequences that belong together are marked with small Roman numerals. The order follows the codex from Cracow which features a stringent numbering of the sword fighting techniques.

Table 2 offers the complete reconstructed proper sequence which is displayed in the first column on the basis of the current extent of the manuscript. The second column takes into consideration all page losses that can be demonstrated particularly by the numbering in the techniques directly in the text; missing passages are marked with square brackets. The third column repeats the numbering of the techniques as they occur in the text like in the first table in order to facilitate an enhanced comparison with the manuscripts from Vienna and Cracow. These two are also introduced with their according foliation and sequence of techniques. It becomes apparent that none of the three Gladiatoria manuscripts is entirely complete; but in total we are able to reconstruct an archetype. Thus we obtain an overview of not only the probable original sequence of the New Haven codex but also of the initial extent that must have included at least eleven additional leaves.

Original	New Haven		Vienna		Cracow	
	Adjusted	Piece	Folio	Piece	Folio	Piece
Spear						
	[1r]				1r	Title
	[1v]	[1]			1v	1
	[2r]	[2]	1r	2	2r	2
	[2v]	[3]	1v	3	2v	3
1r	3r	4	2r	4	3r	4
1v	3v	5	2v	5	3v	5
2r	4r	6	3r	6	4r	6
2v	4v	7	3v	7	4v	7
3r	5r	[8]	4r	8	5r	8
3v	5v	[9]	4v	9	5v	9
4r	6r	[10]	5r	10	6r	10
4v	6v	[11]	5v	11	6v	11
5r	7r	12	6r	12	7r	12
Sword						
5v	7v	Beginning	6v	Beginning	7v	Beginning
					8r	1/1 ⁴
					8v	1/2 ⁴
6r	8r		7r		9r	2
6v	8v		7v		9v	3
8r	9r		8r		10r	4
8v	9v		8v		10v	5
9r	10r		9r		11r	6
9v	10v		9v		11v	7
10r	11r		10r		12r	8
10v	11v		10v		12v	9
7r	12r	[i a]	11r	i a	13r	10 i a
7v	12v	[i b]	11v	i b	13v	11 i b
11r	13r	ii a	12r	ii a	14r	12 ii a
11v	13v	ii b	12v	ii b	14v	13 ii b

New Haven			Vienna		Cracow	
Original	Adjusted	Piece	Folio	Piece	Folio	Piece
12r	14r	iii a	13r	iii a	15r	14 iii a
12v	14v	iii b	13v	iii b	15v	15 iii b
13r	15r		14r		16r	16
13v	15v	iv a	14v	iv a	16v	17 iv a
14r	16r	iv b	15r	iv b	17r	18 iv b
14v	16v	iv c	15v	iv c	17v	19 iv c
23r	17r		16r		18r	20
23v	17v		16v		18v	21
26r	18r		17r		19r	22
26v	18v	v a	17v	v a	19v	23 v a
24r	19r	v b	18r	v b	20r	24 v b
24v	19v	vi a	18v	vi a	20v	25 vi a
					21r	26 vi b
25r	20r	vi b	19r	vi b		
25v	20v		19v		21v	27
15r	21r	vii a	20r	vii a	22r	28 vii a
15v	21v	vii b	20v	vii b	22v	29 vii b
16r	22r	vii c	21r	vii c	23r	30 vii c
16v	22v	viii a	21v	viii a	23v	31 viii a
17r	23r	viii b	22r	viii b	24r	32 viii b
17v	23v	ix a	22v	ix a	24v	33 ix a
18r	24r	ix b	23r	ix b	25r	34 ix b
18v	24v	x a	23v	x a	25v	35 x a
28r	25r	x b	24r	x b	26r	36 x b
28v	25v	xi a	24v	xi a	26v	37 xi a
27r	26r	xi b	25r	xi b	27r	xi b
27v	26v	xii a	25v	xii a	27v	39 xii a
22r	27r	xii b	26r	xii b	28r	40 xii b
22v	27v		26v		28v	41
19r	28r	xiii a	27r	xiii a	29r	42 xiii a
19v	28v	xiii b	27v	xiii b	29v	43 xiii b
20v ⁵	29r (?)		28r	xiv a	30r	44 xiv a
			28v	xiv b	30v	45 xiv b
20r ⁵	29v (?)		29r		31r	46
21r	30r		29v		31v	47
21v	30v		30r		32r	48
29r	31r		30v		32v	49
29v	31v		31r		33r	50
Dagger						
30r	32r	1 ³	31v	6		
30v	32v	2	32r	1	33v	1
31r	33r	2	32c	2	34r	2
31v	33v	3	33r	3	34v	3
32r	34r	4	33v	4	35r	4

Original	New Haven		Vienna		Cracow	
	Adjusted	Piece	Folio	Piece	Folio	Piece
32v	34v	5	34r	5	35v	5
33r	35r	6	34v	6	36r	6
33v	35v	7	35r	7	36v	7
34r	36r	8	35v	8	37r	8
34v	36v	9	36r	9	37v	9
35r	37r	10	36v	10	38r	10
35v	37v	11	37r	11	38v	11
	[38r]	[12]	37v	12	39r	12
	[38v]	[13]	38r	13	39v	13
36r	39r	14	38v	14	40r	14
36v	39v	15	39r	15	40v	15
37r	40r	16	39v	16	41r	16
37v	40v	17	40r	17	41v	17
	[41r]	[18]	40v	18	42r	18
	[41v]	[19]	41r	19	42v	19
	[42r]	[20]	41v	20	43r	20
	[42v]	[21]	42r	21	43v	21
	[43r]	[22]	42v	22		[22]
	[43v]	[23]	43r	23		[23]
	[44r]	[24]	43v	24		[24]
	[44v]	[25]	44r	25		[25]
	[45r]	[26]	44v	26	44r	26
	[45v]	[27]	45r ⁷	27	44v ⁷	27
	[46r]	[28]	45v	28	45r	28
	[46v]	[29]	46r	29	45v	29
38r	47r	30	46v	30	46r	30
38v	47v	31	47r	31	46v	31
	[48r]	[32]	47v	32	47r	32
	[48v]	[33]	48r	33	47v	33
39r	49r	33	48v	34	48r	34
39v	49v	35	49r	⁶	48v	35
40r	50r	36	49v ⁸	⁶		
40v	50v		53r		49r	36
Holding Down						
	[51r]	[1]	53v	1	56r	1
	[51v]	[2]	54r	2	56v	2
41r	52r	3	54v	3	57r	3
41v	52v	4	55r	4	57v	4
42r	53r	5	55v	5	58r	5
42v	53v	6	56r	6	58v	6
43r	54r	7	56v	7	59r	7

Legend:

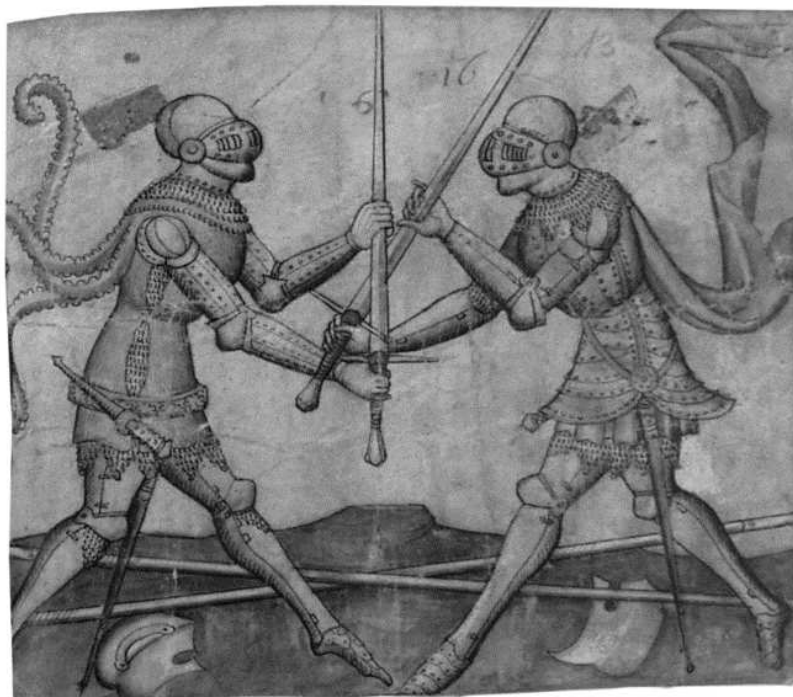
- 1 Difficult to decipher a second 15?
- 2 In pencil.
- 3 Gladiatoria Cracow doesn't contain the first dagger technique at all and in Vienna the image exists, the text however is missing. So the numbering of the pieces in New Haven should be larger by one throughout the codex than in the other two versions. Nevertheless, starting with the third piece, the "regular" numbering is maintained and corresponds to the other two manuscripts.
- 4 This technique is explained on two pages.
- 5 In contrast to the two Gladiatoria manuscripts from Cracow and New Haven the order of these pages is interchanged.
- 6 Without text.
- 7 The texts are identical, the images differ.
- 8 Followed by three empty leaves in the manuscript from Vienna.

Table 2: Reconstructed Version

By means of these juxtapositions it becomes evident that more than half of the manuscript was quite probably in the same order since the days of its creation. In this regard, the consecutively numbered fencing techniques are the most striking support. Further considerations however must remain hypothetical since they cannot be resolved unambiguously.

Once we create a collocation oriented to the two Gladiatoria manuscripts from Cracow and Vienna—as has been done in columns two and three in the second table, we witness the following inconsistencies:

Leaf 7 (see figure 4 for the recto page) is tricky to integrate in every aspect. On one hand it is the one whose condition has suffered the most; if on the other hand we insert it into the textually correct position, it is located between the current leaves 10 and 11, which were marked in old times consecutively with the leaf numbers 12 and 13. Thus, it doesn't really fit there in between. Furthermore leaf 7 carries the number 16. There is another leaf in this manuscript with that same leaf number 16, namely leaf 14. But this is located in the correct neighborhood to leaves 13 and 15—that carry the numbers 15 and 17. In order to complicate matters even more, leaves 25 and 15 that belong together as stated in the reconstructed order, carry the leaf numbers 15 and 17 respectively, so a leaf 16 might very well fit in between. The handwriting of the numberings however shows a thoroughly distinct character.



*Figure 4: Folio 7r from Gladiatoria New Haven.
Reproduced with permission of the institution.*

When we turn our attention again more closely to the old foliation from 11–16, we realize that the reconstructed 10th leaf (currently leaf 9) shows the folio number 11.

A consideration: When the foliation was being executed, which stylistically fits very well into the period of origin of the codex, leaf 7 (the dirty one) had already been inserted wrongly, namely before the original tenth leaf, so that it was counted as the eleventh one. Thus the sequence of the leaves of the manuscript may have been disrupted already at the time of its creation.

A daring hypothesis: What if the author of our fechtbuch had noticed this erroneous composition completed by a bookbinder who was not familiar with the correct execution of the fencing techniques—albeit too late—and subsequently proceeded to also number the sword fighting techniques in the text itself, like he had done anyway with the remaining spear, dagger, and holding-down techniques? Thus he could prevent further discrepancies in future editions of the *Gladiatoria* corpus. And indeed the sword fighting techniques are in fact numbered in the text of the Cracow version which was created later.

Beyond that, the sequence of leave numberings 15 to 36 that was presumably written by one scribe, remains a mystery, as it is interrupted by a larger block not only in the reconstructed version but also in the present one.

There also remains some uncertainty in regard of leaf 20. In contrast to the two *Gladiatoria* manuscripts from Cracow and Vienna the order of both pages is reversed.

Nevertheless, answering my request concerning this matter, Francis Lapka writes that he could not find any clue to prove that the leaf had been inserted the wrong way round:

“The inner margin is still rather healthy in breadth, while the outer margin is closely trimmed (with minor loss of content, as with other leaves in the volume).”³⁹ If the page was ever reversed, this must have happened a long time before the most recent rebinding.

So we end up with several possibilities for assembling the manuscript by making use of the various available numberings; unfortunately none of them turns out to be entirely coherent. Even the continuous page numbers don't lead to satisfying and convincing results: if we kept together the old numbered leaves 21–22, we would pull apart the aforementioned connected sequence of the technique with the plate gauntlet (ff. 28v and 27r). So the foliations and paginations that stem from different times can only serve as a reference point. It is unlikely that we can ever ascertain the initial structure of the manuscript with certainty.

In order to briefly mention the equally incomplete modern pagination in pencil, the odds are that the four leaves without that pagination (11, 18, 22 and 26) were the last ones that Paul Mellon purchased between 1962 and 1964, so that the pagination must have been done between February 1960 and December 1962. Another assumption brought forward by Dr. Elisabeth Fairman, curator of the manuscript library of the YCBA, is that the three leaves with the cut-off texts were the last ones to be purchased—which unfortunately does not coincide very well with the actual leaf numbers. Since we regrettably cannot determine when Paul Mellon acquired what leaf, this question too has to remain unsettled.

Nevertheless, the long-lost fencing manuscript has resurfaced, yet so far it still has not given up its last secrets. Since quite recently the last of the *Gladiatoria* manuscripts, the one from Paris, has become publicly available, further research may shed some more light on the overall concept behind the *Gladiatoria* teachings. Eventually, a comparative analysis has become possible. While none of the *Gladiatoria* manuscripts contains every single technique, a detailed juxtaposition and compilation can help to develop a better understanding of what the anonymous author wanted to convey.

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