



**Matthias Johannes Bauer,**  
**“Der Alten Fechter gründtliche Kunst” –**  
***Das Frankfurter oder Egenolffsche***  
***Fechtbuch: Untersuchung und Edition***  
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Reviewed by Daniel Jaquet (University of Geneva)

Matthias Johannes Bauer is a productive scholar in the field of Historical European Martial Arts studies. He has written numerous articles and book chapters dealing with Fight Books from the perspective of his field of expertise: German studies with a focus on linguistic aspects. He is mostly known amongst HEMA aficionados for his edition of the unicum called *Kölner Fechtbuch*<sup>1</sup> or his work on Andreas Paurneindt<sup>2</sup>.

*Der Alten Fechter gründtliche Kunst” – Das Frankfurter oder Egenolffsche Fechtbuch: Untersuchung und Edition* (“The old fencer’s core art” – the Fight Book of Frankfurt or of Egenolff: study and edition) is the publication of his PhD dissertation (defended in 2016 at the University of Duisburg-Essen). The publication is in German, with an English abstract. It offers a reference work regarding the corpus of the four different editions of the printed books by Christian Egenolff in Frankfurt between 1530 and 1558. He studied twenty-three versions of the four known editions, which is the complete mapping of known sources for that matter. The author points out that this source is the first renowned printed German fight book with several editions. His work represents the first scientific edition and study about this specific source, which is relevant at least for fields such as “ancient German technical literature (altgermanistische Fachliteraturforschung), language science and dialectology (Sprachwissenschaft und Dialektologie), mediality (historische Medienkunde) and local history of Frankfurt (Frankfurter Regionalgeschichte)” (14).

The first part (15-90) includes: a codicological study of one version (17-24); a study of the philological and iconological tradition (25-56); an analysis of the content and composition (57-68); a linguistic study (69-80); and a short analysis of the historical and literary context (81-88). The second part (91-196) is a state-of-the-art critical edition, followed by the reproduction of the Padeborn version as the third part (197-296). After bibliographical references (299-312), it ends with a booklet in colour (315-319), gathering eight images, including details of the book cover and four coloured engravings.

<sup>1</sup> *Langes Schwert und Schweinespiess: die anonyme Fechthandschrift aus den Verschlütteten Beständen des Historischen Archivs der Stadt Köln* (Graz: ADV, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> *Paurneindts Fechtbuch aus dem Jahr 1516* (Nordstedt: BoD, 2014).

The codicological study (17-24) details one example kept in Padeborn, which is a collection (Konvolut) of different codicological units bound together. It is a fine description, with all relevant details about this example allowing the author to discuss dating amongst other matters. He does not (yet) explain why he chose this specific one<sup>3</sup>, nor does he propose a comparative codicological description of the other twenty-two sources at hand (shorter descriptions in appendices would have been an added value).

The analysis of the tradition of the text and images (25-56) is primarily descriptive and limited to the comparison between the four editions, and he did include a discussion of the historiography (35-41). The results are laid down by tables and image concordance. The data is not discussed much by the author. The section ends with a typographical analysis, a discussion about dating and the establishment of tradition grouping used in his edition.

The analysis of the content and composition (57-68) is rather short. It discusses the content in the books and maps the items constituting the different sections, with a long list of technical terms (61-68). It does not discuss the tradition of the different texts within the broader corpus of Fight Books.

The linguistics aspects (69-80) forms one of the most interesting (and new) part of his research. He explains the different kind of variations observed with detailed examples and demonstrates how the text is corrupted in the course of the four editions. This raises relevant questions for the study of Fight Books<sup>4</sup>.

The last section of the first part was to me a little disappointing. The literary-historical context (81-88) gathers in only nine pages the discussion about the context of the production, the printer, the place, and the connection of the book with the broader corpus of Fight Books. The most interesting research questions are outlined here, but the author does not go in details. Nonetheless, the basis is laid down, and the desiderata for further research (89-90) maps some of the endeavours left to be undertaken. One must also be reminded that this book is the product of a PhD dissertation, which is limited in both scope and time.

The second part (91-196) is the critical edition, introduced by a detailed section on editorial norms (93-96) and accompanied by an exhaustive critical apparatus. This is an excellent work led by a specialist, including all variations between the different versions. The third part (197-296) offers a black and white reproduction of the version kept in

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<sup>3</sup> The reason for the choice of this version is only mentioned in p. 56 and 89, where he outlines that this collection is one of the key for dating issues.

<sup>4</sup> Outlined with a broader scope in two book chapters published elsewhere. "Fechten lehren mitt verborgen vnd verdeckten worten", in *Das Schwert – Symbol und Waffe*, ed. by Lisa Deutscher, Mirjam Kaiser and Sixt Wetzler (Rahden: Leidorf), 163-170; and "Teaching How to Fight with Encrypted Words", in *Late medieval and early modern fight books: transmission and tradition of martial arts in Europe (14th-17th centuries)*, ed. by Daniel Jaquet, Karin Verelst and Timothy Dawson (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2016), 47-61.

Padeborn. Size and definition of the images are sufficient to allow reading of both text and engravings.

So, all in all, this study is a reference work for the fight books printed by Christian Egenolff. The critical edition is exhaustive and definitive. The book provides also a complete black and white facsimile. The HEMA practitioner might be sad, for there is no translation or technical glossary in this book, but as the author demonstrates, the tradition of the text and the images became somehow corrupted in the course of the different editions. This fact questions the use of translation and interpretation without a careful study of the variations found in the different versions, for which all relevant material is included. The scholar will find there a useful and well-documented resource for the study of Egenolff's fight book and can blindly rely on the edition made by one of the best specialists in the field.