

# The use of scholastic concepts in describing fighting technique in European fight books (1400-1600) as cultural and intellectual markers.

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**Abstract** – At the end of the Middle Ages and during the early modern period, some of the fight books’ authors, or those involved in copying or rewriting existing content about fighting techniques, used scholastic concepts either explicitly or implicitly. Scholastic concepts are tools, methods or references taken from the European reception of Aristotelian writings during the Middle Ages and its inclusion in academic education. This article attempts a survey of such concepts found in the fight book corpus (1400-1600). It yields information about the representation of the art of fighting as a discipline in the broad organisation of knowledge as cultural and intellectual markers. It also provides information about the social and educational context of both the authorship and the intended audience of the heterogeneous corpus of fight books.

**Keywords** – Fight books; European universities; Scholasticism; Education; Intellectual history; Aristotle.

## I. FIGHT BOOKS PRODUCTION AND SCHOLASTICISM

Any technical writing uses the conceptual and theoretical devices of its author. Analysing those devices yields information about the background and the education of the author of course, as well as the representation of the practice described in its intellectual and societal context. To a certain extent, a closer analysis also delivers information about the intended audience of the writing. Such an angle also proves to be highly relevant when the texts are technical in nature with scarce para text (prologue, dedication, etc.) or when there is little known about their author. This is also relevant to contextualise the reception of a given text when it is copied, rewritten or translated over time.

In this article, I follow the argumentation of the project ‘Schol’Art: The early modern theories of arts and letters in the light of Scholasticism (France-Italy, 1500-1700)’ of the Group for Early Modern Cultural Analysis (University of Louvain-la-Neuve), which researches ‘the permanence, and even the omnipresence of Scholasticism (traditionally associated with medieval culture) as the basis of the philosophical and theological

curriculum in all European universities in the Early Modern times'.<sup>1</sup> Here, 'Scholasticism' is understood as a critical method of philosophical analysis used in the medieval and early modern universities, in particular in the faculties of arts and theology.<sup>2</sup> My focus is on the corpus of European fight books and their authors in order to identify explicit or implicit scholastic concepts (methods, ideas and references to scholastic authorities) as cultural markers in the production of technical literature on the subject of fighting (1400-1600).

The corpus is highly heterogeneous and contains nearly 60 manuscripts and 120 prints for the period of interest.<sup>3</sup> My investigation is not exhaustive and is limited to demonstrating in which ways scholastic devices or concepts appear explicitly or implicitly in selected cases over time and geographical areas. The explicit mentions are cited references to scholastic authors or concepts (notably in relation to Aristotle), based on their medieval or early modern scholastic reception. The implicit mentions are information found in other sources than fight books, biographical information about their authors or the study of the content of the fight books, particularly their formal aspects. Both types of mention yield relevant information on the cultural and intellectual context of the authorship and intended audience of the fight books.

## II. FIGHT BOOKS AS A GENRE AND ITS PLACE WITHIN THE ARTES LITERATURE

Much has been written on the topic of the representation of the art of combat (lat. *ars dimicatoria*,<sup>4</sup> ger. *kunst des fechtens*,<sup>5</sup> it. *arte di combater*<sup>6</sup>) and its place in the organization of knowledge according to scholastic thinking and the medieval reception of the philosophy of Aristotle. In the late fourteenth and in the fifteenth century, some authors classify the

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<sup>1</sup> Aline Smeesters, Ralph Dekoninck and Agnès Guiderdoni (principal investigators), Schol'Art, University of Louvain-la-Neuve, online: <https://uclouvain.be/en/research-institutes/incal/gemca/schol-art.html> (last accessed 01.09.2022).

<sup>2</sup> See Leblanc, 'introduction'. For a definition of Scholasticism, see König-Pralong 'Scholasticism', 290-4 and Dekoninck, Guiderdoni, Leblanc, Smeesters, *Clés scolastiques pour la théorie des lettres et des arts des 16<sup>e</sup> et 17<sup>e</sup> siècles*. See also in this volume the comments about the use of 'Scholasticism' as a label, Leblanc (in coll. with Cinato), 'Scholastic Clues in Two Latin Fencing Manuals'.

<sup>3</sup> Jaquet, 'European Fight Books 1305-1630'.

<sup>4</sup> *Notandum quod ars dimicatoria sic describitur [...]* Anonymous, *Liber de arte dimicatoria*, 1305 (Leeds, Royal Armouries, Fecht 1, fol. 1r).

<sup>5</sup> *Hie hebt sich an meister lichtenawers kunst des fechtens mit deme swerte ezu fusse vnd ezu rosse blos vnd yn harnüsche*. Anonymous, [fight book], end of 14<sup>th</sup> c. (Nurnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs 3227a, fol. 13v).

<sup>6</sup> *Fiore furlan de Civida d'oustria che fo de misgr Benedeto [...]* in *sua zovenuto volse imprendere ad armizare, e arte de combater in sbarra zoe a oltranza*. Fiore dei Liberi, *Fior di battaglia*, 1410 (New York, Morgan Library, B1 361 MS M.0383, fol. 1r).

practice of fighting in the seventh mechanical art, namely the courtly arts (*theatricum*),<sup>7</sup> along with other physical exercises such as dance, but also with the magical arts.<sup>8</sup> This, however, is rarely mentioned by any fight book authors,<sup>9</sup> who mostly use the term ‘art’ when describing their practice, later sometimes along with the adjective ‘free’, which can mean different things. One of them being that the art is not to be attributed to any categories of knowledge or established type of arts. Towards the end of the fifteenth century and in the sixteenth century, the word ‘science’ appears more often instead of or in addition to the word ‘art’. Globally, this phenomenon of elevating one discipline (or a body of knowledge) first as belonging to liberal or mechanical art categories, then as a science, occurs at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance.<sup>10</sup> Is fighting to be considered an art or a science?

As I wrote elsewhere, the matter cannot be easily settled, and this, up to the eighteenth century when even in the article about fencing of the Encyclopaedia of Diderot, cannot decide between the one and the other.<sup>11</sup> It actually depends on the specific argument of the author and its consideration of the discipline, and what he wants to achieve with it. On top of this, taking the intended audience into consideration also plays a role in the choice of words of the author.

A good example illustrating the matter is found in the 1482-7 fight book by Filippo Vadi, entitled ‘Book of the art of combat’ (*De Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi*), dedicated to the duke of Urbino, Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, a known patron of the arts and sciences.<sup>12</sup> In his preface, Vadi uses eight times the word ‘art’ and four time the word ‘science’, and he later uses both terms as synonyms (*in tale arte et scienza*, fol. 3v). Despite his own book title, he declares in his first chapter ‘that his discipline is a science rather than an art’ ([...] *che l’è scienza vera e non è arte*, fol. 3v), and his argument is justified later by saying that it is based on ‘geometry that divides and separates space by infinite numbers and measures’ (*La geometria che divide e parte / per infiniti numeri e misure / che impi(e) di scientia le sue carte*, fol. 4r).

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<sup>7</sup> Haage and Wegner, ‘Zur Verortung Mittelalterlicher Ring- und Fechtbücher im Artes-Schema Hugos von St. Viktor’. See also Bauer, ‘Einen Zedel fechter ich mich ruem/Im Schwerd vnd Messer vngestuem.’.

<sup>8</sup> Jaquet, ‘Les arts magiques et les arts du combat’.

<sup>9</sup> Among the exceptions, we find Pietro Monte who wrote in the last decade of the 15th c., but his work is published post mortem in 1509. He qualifies his discipline as a ‘mechanical art’ (*artes mechanicas*). Pietro del Monte, *Exercitiorum atque artis militaris collectanea in tris libros distincta*, 1509, lib. 2, cap. 2.

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Heimann, *Ars und Scientia*, pp. 13ff.

<sup>11</sup> Jaquet, *Combattre au Moyen Âge*, p. 117.r

<sup>12</sup> Mentioned in Jaser and Israel, ‘Einleitung’, pp. 245-6. I have reworked this case study in Jaquet, *Combattre au Moyen Âge*, p. 117.

The divide, or the opposition between art and science as concepts, had a different meaning at the time of the production of the fight books, than it has for academic discourse nowadays. Sorting out which is which is not easily settled. Going back in time to the golden age of the so-called ‘medieval encyclopaedism’ (art of compilation),<sup>13</sup> one of the ‘fathers’ of Scholasticism, Pierre Abélard, in his glosses on Aristotle’s *Categorías* (*Glossae in Categorías*, 1105-1108) explains that the knowledge of how to fight is not a natural art, and thus implies a ‘science of fighting’ (*scientia pugnandi*).<sup>14</sup> Following his argumentation, it is a ‘science’ because it is unnatural and thus requires specific learning. As mentioned earlier, authors of the fourteenth and fifteenth century tend to classify the discipline in the seventh mechanical arts. This is actually a prelude to the phenomenon of elevating the status of a given discipline to an art form (or a science, which is superior to art according to Aristotle). This phenomenon, that has been coined by Dubourg Glatigny and Vérin as ‘reduction in art’ (*ad artem redigere*), based on the writings of Varro and Cicero, is formalised at the end of the sixteenth century with Louis le Roy and Francis Bacon during the (pre)scientific revolution.<sup>15</sup> What becomes standardised in the seventeenth century could already be observed during the fifteenth century in the fight book corpus, as in the above example with Filippo Vadi.

It raises questions about the education of the fight books’ authors, as well as their intended audiences. How much these authors (and their readers) were versed into the intellectual debates of their time and how these ideas sculpted the representation of their own art in their writing?

### III. LEARNED AUTHORS AND EDUCATED WRITINGS

There are different kinds of fight books, from the personal notes of a student intended for his own reading to the presentation work dedicated to a prince, but also unachieved drafts or compilation works of different kinds.<sup>16</sup> Most of what can be designated as presentation works are of the descriptive type according to my classification, intended to be read and understood by others than the author itself. Some of these books are named ‘treatise’, pointing to the intended didactic use, when in fact it does not qualify as such formally. Whether didactic or not, most fight books are mnemonic devices intended for different uses, as other types of the late medieval pragmatic literature (*Pragmatische*

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<sup>13</sup> König and Woolf, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ut cursor aut pugillator. [...] Nam pugillatoria, ut ipse ait, tantum [nomen] scientiae pugnandi [...]*. Ed. Geyer, *Peter Abaelards philosophische Schriften*, p. 240.

<sup>15</sup> Louis le Roy, *De la Vicissitude ou Variété des choses en l’univers...*, 1575 and Francis Bacon, *Of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning, Divine and Human*, 1605. See Vérin, ‘Rédiger et réduire en art’.

<sup>16</sup> Jaquet, ‘Martial Arts by the Book’.

*Schriflichkeit*).<sup>17</sup> There are more types of work existing in the manuscript form than in the printed format of course, the latter being usually of the descriptive type.

Some, but definitely not all fight books are written by educated men, following existing models or canons. The intended audience was also not restricted within the fighting aristocracy, but may be addressed to lower social strata (urban burghers), even up to encompassing society as a whole.<sup>18</sup> Most authors of the late medieval fight books were of low birth, did not belong to the aristocracy and very few followed a military career. They usually gravitated towards the urban centres, within regional corporations or networks of masters of the sword, while some of these masters aimed at being retained by princes in courts.<sup>19</sup>

There are examples of educated men writing (or teaching) martial arts in the entire period of investigation. Considered one of the ‘fathers’ of the Italian school of fencing (at least in the region of Bologna), Filippo di Bartolomeo Dardi was an astrologist and mathematician, teaching at the University of Bologna (1444-1453). He was also teaching fencing in Bologna, according to preserved exchanges of letters, with the city trying to regulate wages of his teaching activities.<sup>20</sup> His fight book is lost. Another example in the fifteenth century is Johannes Lecküchner, who wrote the *Kunst des Messerfechtens* (the art of combat with the long knife) in 1478-82. The author was registered at the University of Leipzig in 1455 and achieved his Bachelor of Arts (*Baccalaureus artium*) in 1457. He received the low orders in Bamberg in 1457 and returned to university in Heidelberg in 1478. He was ordained priest of the parish of Herzogenaurach in 1480.<sup>21</sup>

It is then only logical to find references to academic training and thinking spread across the heterogeneous corpus of fight books. Even if not written by learned authors, most of the fight books attempt to elevate the status of the discipline described by employing forms and formats that are academically recognised, or at least part of intellectual history shared by authors and their intended audience.

### III.1. Explicit references to Aristotelian philosophy

In the German corpus, which is the largest for the manuscript-type fight books, the first one explicitly cites Aristotle, through its medieval reception. This manuscript is a compilation work (*Hausbuch*) compiled in the last decade of the fourteenth century. The

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<sup>17</sup> Haage and Wegner (eds.), *Deutsche Fachliteratur der Artes*, pp. 256-265.

<sup>18</sup> Wetzler, ‘Überlegungen zur Europäischen Fechtkunst’.

<sup>19</sup> Hils ‘Der da sigelos wirt, dem sleht man die hant ab’. For a more recent views, see Jaquet, *Combattre au Moyen Âge*. For a case study of a master retained in court, see Burkart, ‘Die Aufzeichnung des Nicht-Sagbaren’.

<sup>20</sup> Battistini and Corradetti, ‘Income and working time of a Fencing Master in Bologna’.

<sup>21</sup> Welle, ‘Lecküchner, Hans’.

anonymous author appears to be learned, and was a student of the art of combat.<sup>22</sup> In his notes commenting the verses of Johannes Liechtenauer (see below), he writes:

If they're Strong on the sword, defending against your thrust and diverting the sword, then become Soft and Weak against it once again, giving way to them and letting your sword be pushed aside, and then swiftly seek their exposures with cutting, thrusting, and slicing (whichever it may be). This is what Liechtenauer means by the words 'Hard' and 'Soft'.

This is based on the classical authorities: as Aristotle wrote in his book *Peri Hermeneias*, 'Opposites positioned near each other shine greater, and opposites which are adjoined are augmented'. Thus, Strong against Weak, Hard against Soft, and vice-versa. The stronger always wins when strength goes against strength, but Liechtenauer fences according to the true and correct art, so a weak person wins more surely with their art and cunning than a strong one with their strength. Otherwise, what's the point of art?<sup>23</sup>

The author refers to the *Peri Hermeneias* (lat. *De Interpretatione*; gr. Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας). It is the second text from Aristotle's *Organon*. With another text related to the first of the six texts composing the *Organon* (lat. *Categoriae*; gr. Κατηγορίαι), namely the *Isagoge* (gr. Εἰσαγωγή) or *Introduction to Aristotle's Categories*, composed by Porphyry (268-70), the *Peri Hermeneias* circulated through the Latin translations, the first one attributed to Marius Victorinus in the fourth century being lost. These classical texts became textbooks in late medieval and early modern European universities, through layers of re-interpretations. For the case of the *Peri Hermeneias*, we do have the following translations, which impacted the meaning of the original texts and shaped late medieval and early modern

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<sup>22</sup> Burkart, 'The Autograph of an Erudite Martial Artist'. See also Vodicka, 'Origin of the Oldest German Fencing Manual Compilation'.

<sup>23</sup> *Is das her stark wirt weder an dem swerte vnd dessem syn swert abeweiset vnd den stich weret also das her desen syn swert vaste hin dringt zo sal deser aber swach vnd weich dirweder werden vnd sal syn swert lassen abegleiten vnd im weichen vnd syne blossen rischlichen stichen mit beuen stichen ader mit sneten wy her nür mag · Vnd das meynt lichtnauer mit desen wörter · weich · vnd herte vnd das get of dy auctor[22v]tas als aristotyles spricht in librū periyarmentias · *Opposita iuxta se posita · magis elucescunt vel opposita oppositis amantur* Swach weder stark herte weder weich *et equatur* Denne solde stark weder stark syn zo gesigt allemal der sterker · dorvm get lichtnauer fechten noch rechter vnd worbaffiger kunst dar das eyu swacher mit syner kunst vnd list als schire gesigt mit als eyu starker mit syner sterke worvm were anders kunst. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs. 3227a, fol. 22rv.*

Scholasticism: Boetius (510-2), William of Moerbeke (1268) and John Argyropoulos (1496).<sup>24</sup>

The actual quote by the author of the fight book does not match the original text, but paraphrases the principles of the ‘Square of Opposition’, found in the *De Interpretatione*, which contains three claims: ‘that A and O are contradictories, that E and I are contradictories, and that A and E are contraries (17b.17–26)’ (see Fig. 1).<sup>25</sup> These Aristotelian formulae were translated into geometrical figures (triangle, square and hexagon) to become broadly circulated in university manuals of scholastic logic (dialectic) in visual form.<sup>26</sup> The example below is taken from the introduction to the Logic by Conrad Pschlacher, not directly referring to the *De Interpretatione*, but rather to the commentaries of Peter of Spain (13<sup>th</sup> c.) made about it.

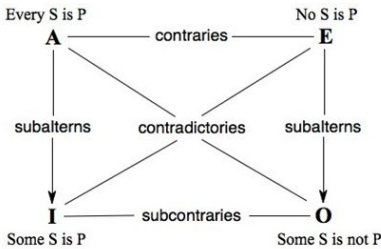


Fig. 1: Left: Diagram of the Square of Opposition (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).  
Right: Conrad Pschlacher, *Compendarius parvorum logicalum, Tractatus primus Petri Hispani*, Vienna: Vietor und Singriener, 1512 (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Philos.3293, fol. 44v).

The author of the fight book uses this square to describe the concepts ‘strong’ (*starċk*) against ‘weak’ (*schwach*), ‘hard’ (*herċ*) against ‘soft’ (*weich*). It allows to explain transitions in fencing actions in relation to the verses about the ‘five words’, on which ‘the entire art of

<sup>24</sup> For a comparative study of the translations and the bibliographical references for this case, see Leblanc, *Théories sémiotiques à l’âge classique*, pp. 48-53.

<sup>25</sup> Parsons, ‘The Traditional Square of Opposition’.

<sup>26</sup> Many available examples. Among the (very) complex ones, see the so-called ‘octogon of opposition’ found in the *Summulae de dialectica*, of Jean Buridan (1301-60), who taught at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris (Paris, BNF, Lat 14716, fol. 17v).

the master is built'.<sup>27</sup> The word *indes* (in the middle or in between) is added as the fifth word to the four opposite words building the corners of the square.<sup>28</sup> It then symbolises the transition between the opposites. The application of scholastic logic to fencing theory, in this case through the square of opposition is therefore not surprising since this scholastic concept is broadly circulated in a visual form. It however points out, that this author commenting the verses of the martial authority Johannes Liechtenauer was educated.<sup>29</sup> Later commentators of the same text in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not include references to the *Peri Hermeneias* or to scholastic logic in general.

In the sixteenth century, another direct reference is found in Angelo Viggiani, *Lo Schermo*, composed in 1551, but offered in 1567 as a presentation manuscript to the Emperor Maximilian II<sup>30</sup> and later published in Venice in 1575 by Viggiani's brother. The treatise is in the form of a dialogue between a university professor and a *condottiere*. The character of the professor actually impersonates Ludovico Boccadiferro (1482-1545), who taught philosophy in Bologna in a typical humanist vein. He belongs to the Averroism current of thoughts, spread in the northern Italian university environment of the period.<sup>31</sup> The reference to Aristotle is made in a discussion about the concept of time, presented as an alternance between motion and rest. The author writes:

ROD. [...] Listen Comte, these philosophers have proved that before a body moves it is at rest, and that when motion ceases it is again at rest, so that one motion (though it be alone) lies in the middle of two rests.

BOC. In the seventh and eighth chapter of the Physics, Aristotle proved this. Rodomonte is right.<sup>32</sup>

Not only does the author quote directly from the Aristotle's *Physics* (gr. Φυσική ἀκρόασις; lat. *Physica*), book VII (H 242a26), but he also uses a visual form for illustrating the concept: the Porphyrian tree (fig. 2). This tree like diagram is rooted in the *Isagoge* of

<sup>27</sup> vor · noch · dy zwey dink etc do nent ber dy fünff wörter · vor · noch · swach · stark · Indes · an den selben wörtern leit alle kunst Meister lichtnawers vnd sint dy gruntfeste vnd der kern alles fechtens ezu fusse ader ezu rosse blos ader in harnüsch. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs. 3227a, fol. 20r.

<sup>28</sup> For an interpretation of this concept, see Chaize, 'Quand la pratique est logique'.

<sup>29</sup> No information available about the anonym author of this manuscript, see Burkart, 'The Autograph of an Erudite Martial Artist'.

<sup>30</sup> Angelo Viggiani dal Montone, *Trattato d'uno Schermo di spada sola da filo*, 1567.

<sup>31</sup> Rotondò, 'Boccadiferro, Ludovico'. I thank Héléne Leblanc for sharing her research regarding this case.

<sup>32</sup> ROD. Udite Conte, essi Filosofi hanno provato che innanzi ch'un corpo si muova stà in quiete, & cessando il moto anchora stà in quiete; di modo ch'un moto (piu che sia un solo) stà nel mezzo di due quieti. BOC. Nessettimo, & ottavo della Fisica l'ha provato Aristotile: dice il vero Rodomonte. Trattato dello schermo d'Angelo Vizani dal Montone, Terza parte, quoted from the printed version of 1588 kept in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Réserve des Livres Rares, V-9537, fol. 63v.



Porphyry (see above) for the classification of categories in his discussion of Aristotle. As for the previous example, this Aristotelian concept is translated in a visual form broadly circulating in late medieval manuals, up to becoming a ‘notational habit’,<sup>33</sup> especially in the field of the art of memory. Such a tree-like diagram is used to map fencing actions described in the treatise, providing a mnemonic visual aid for the reader.

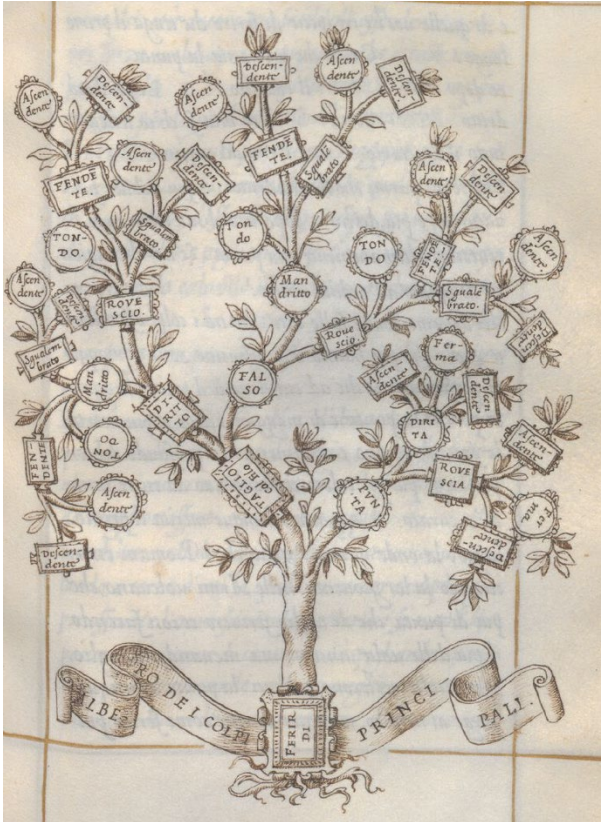


Fig. 2: Porphyrian tree in *Trattato dello schermo d'Angelo Vizani dal Montone*, 1567 (Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vindob. 10723, fol. 89r). 141r).

Similar scholastic visual concepts are also present in the fight book corpus both in print and manuscript form, but do not include direct quotes from any texts. In the anonymous commentaries (glosses) of the *Zedel* of Johannes Liechtenauer (see below), another tree-like diagram is to be observed in a 1452 manuscript (Fig. 3). The author uses a visual aid to organise the description of the fighting techniques on horseback, which he titled

<sup>33</sup> Even-Ezra, *Line of Thoughts*, p. 16.



text preserved from the master himself, but his *Zedel* (epitome, as a series of didactic verses representing the core of the teachings) is documented in a large part of the German fight books (sometimes attributed to other masters). The manuscript discussed above (Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Hs 3227a) is the first one, and like many of the following ones, it used an academic format to present the text. It consists of selected verses of the *Zedel* glossed by the author. The glosses consist of prose texts intended to explain the meaning(s) hidden behind the verses.<sup>36</sup> Later manuscripts added another media to the discussion of the *Zedel*, namely the images, representing selected motions belonging to a series of complex movements in the context of a technique, called *Stück* (piece or play).

This correlation of verses in connection to prose explanation or commentaries is not exclusive to the German fight books. It is found in the first fight book of the corpus, written in Latin (Leeds, Royal Armouries, Fecht01). Following Cinato and Forgeng, the fight book bears clear signs of a clerical production and learned authorship, and the text as secondary medium achieves a ‘scholastic gloss of the images.’<sup>37</sup> The correlation of verses, prose and images is found as well in Italian fight books such as those of Fiore dei Liberi or Filippo Vadi. For the latter cases however, the correlation between the verses and the glosses are different from the German fight books, in which the *Zedel* glossed over share the same authority (external). The Italian examples, as well as the *Liber de arte dimicatoria*, use the verses and the prose as part of the redaction of the text (verses are internal to the authorship or at least not presented as external). It is also the case for several German fight books, such as those authored by Johannes Lecküchner.

As seen above in the Viggiani’s case, another format spreading in the printed fight book production is the dialogue, in which the text is articulated around spoken words of learned men. This format is modelled on classical authors and is common among philosophical authors of the sixteenth century. Many examples may be found in Italian<sup>38</sup> or Spanish<sup>39</sup> fight books. This feature is not strictly tied to any scholastic concept (Viggiani’s content is, the format is not). The format alone, be it the gloss of verses in the manuscript corpus, or the philosophical fictive dialogue in the printed corpus, is yet another marker of cultural influence in the production of the fight book corpus, as is the academic dispute.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Müller, ‘Bild– Vers– Prosakommentar am Beispiel von Fechtbüchern’.

<sup>37</sup> Cinato and Surprenant, *Le livre de l’art du combat*, p. XLII.

<sup>38</sup> For example: Giovanni dall’Agocchie, *Dell’Arte di Scrima Libri Tre*, 1572.

<sup>39</sup> For example: Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza, *De la Filosofía de las Armas y de su Destreza y la Aggression y Defensa Cristiana*, 1582.

<sup>40</sup> Bas, ‘The arts of fighting and of scholastic dispute’.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Some explicit and implicit traces of an academic culture may be highlighted in the production of the fight books, in particular in scholastic features. Two results seem of particular interest at least, because they antedate phenomena usually situated later in the specialised historiography of fencing history.

Firstly, the geometry and mathematical sciences used to describe fighting techniques are not an invention to be attributed to Italian or Spanish authors in the second half of the sixteenth century, but can already be found in the fifteenth century. They are explicitly mentioned by Filippo Vadi in 1482-7.

Secondly, the phenomenon of ‘reduction in art’ (*ad artem redigere*), which attempts to elevate the status of one’s discipline, is standardised at the end of the sixteenth century, but takes shape earlier, actually as early as the first fight book (1305), which bears clues of scholastic influences,<sup>41</sup> but here demonstrated with the fight book of Filippo Vadi (1482).

The investigations I have carried out into the education of authors would benefit from further research. However, they are limited by several factors. The first of these is the state of preservation of the corpus. The preserved primary sources are not necessarily representative of the socio-professional milieu of the masters at arms, and some fight books were not authored by them directly. Moreover, there are entire cultural areas that are not represented by the preserved primary sources, when we know that manuscripts were produced, but are now lost, such as is the case for late medieval Spain.<sup>42</sup> Eventually, any observation or study on the fight book corpus must acknowledge those limits. The corpus is heterogeneous. The inscriptions, descriptions or codifications of the fighting techniques are not necessarily representative of the actual fighting practices. Lastly, the entire cultural areas that are not represented within the preserved source material.

The findings presented here are restricted to the study of selected examples and scarce information found in earlier studies in the field. It however achieves to demonstrate the permeability of scholastic concepts circulating in the form of visual diagrams in late medieval and early modern universities. It would definitely benefit from a more thorough investigation on topics broadly found across the corpus, such as the construct of time in fighting techniques or the education of the authors to cite only two examples out of many possibilities.

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<sup>41</sup> Leblanc (in coll. with Cinato), ‘Scholastic Clues in Two Latin Fencing Manuals’.

<sup>42</sup> Valle Ortiz, ‘The Destreza Verdadera: A Global Phenomenon’, in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Fight Books*, ed. by Daniel Jaquet, Karin Verelst, and Timothy Dawson (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 324–53.

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