

Working out the 8th, 9th and 10th plays of the *zogho stretto*

In the 8th play, from the crossing of the *zogho stretto*, we enter like so:



The text at the 8th play reads:

“When I am crossed I come to the close plays. I place the hilt of my sword between your hands and lift your arms with your sword up. My left arm is now thrown over your arms to my left side, and strike your arms with your sword under my left arm. And I will not leave off striking you until I get tired. The play that is after me, that is made by the scholar: that is my play, and I want to do it.”



Which leads us merrily and easily to the 9th play, shown left, the text of which reads: “The scholar that is before me, I complete his play. That which he has said I will do. I have your arms tied up in the middle bind. Your sword is in prison and cannot help you. And with my strikes I can do (many things) to you. I can put my sword to your neck without doubt. The play that is after me I can do immediately.”

This is where the difficulty lies. The image looks like this:



And the text reads: “From the play that is before one makes this play, that when the scholar has struck the player, having the arms with the sword well tied up with his left arm, he throws his sword to the neck and places him in this technique. If I throw him to the ground the play is complete.”

In the absence of the image, just following the text, it would look like this:



But there is no sensible way to get from the ligadura as shown to the throw as shown. Any of the following either require the legs to be the wrong way round, or a magic trick where my opponent's sword passes harmlessly through my body.



But we know from other places in the manuscript that sometimes the text and pictures don't exactly match. For instance, in the 5th and 6th plays of the abrazare:



In the fifth play is clearly the scholar's right hand that is pushing the player's face; in the sixth, the text tells us: "I am the counter to the fifth play, that is immediately before me. And I say that with my right hand I lift your arm and your hand that was offending my face, I'll make you turn in this way, and I will put you on the ground, in this way

that you see illustrated, or i will gain a grip or lock, and your wrestling (skills) will do you no good." The hand against the face has suddenly changed from the right to the left. This text nicely follows its illustration, but the illustration does not follow the previous illustration on this point. In practice, we simply remember to push the hand that's against the face, and not worry about left or right.

Likewise, here on folio 19r, the scholar defends against a sword blow with his dagger, and the text states:



"If someone strikes a fendente to the head against the master standing on guard with the dagger, he passes forwards and quickly makes this cover, and makes him turn by pushing the elbow. And this must be done very quickly. Also he can bind the sword in the way that the fourth play of the sword in one hand is done. And also in the dagger at the third play you will find this middle bind, which is done close to the face, a span's length from it. For reference, here are those two plays; the third play of the dagger and the fourth of the sword in one hand.

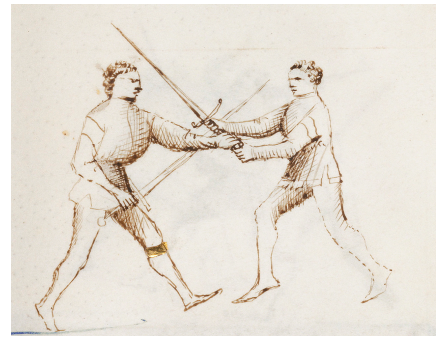


So, here we see that depending on which line is open we will either push the elbow, or wrap the arms. Elbow pushes abound in this treatise, here's one example, the 15th and 16th plays of the second master of the zogho largo:



Note that having had his elbow pushed, the player ends up in exactly the same position that the player in our elusive 10th play is in. The scholar of course is further away, and strikes with the sword instead of throwing.

We also know that the plays of the stretto can be done by either one of the men illustrated (a master and his scholar); one will normally enter on the inside (the master in the illustration), leading to the second play:



The scholar has access to the master's outside line, and so would enter as in the third play:

So, one possibility here is that the illustration in the 10th play, despite the text, is not showing a continuation from the 9th play, but from a similar condition on the other side. Thought of like this, the play is easy, looks exactly like the illustration, and requires no fiddling about with the foot relationships nor getting the player's sword from one side of the scholar's body to the other.



It looks like this:



So as you find yourself in the stretto condition (often but not always as an attack is met by a counterattack, which is parried by the attacker), you enter on the inside or outside, use your hilt to bash his hands out of the way, get control of his sword, and beat the crap out of him, then throw your sword to his neck and throw him to the ground. Like this:



[You can see a summary of this argument on video here.](#)

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