



## A workbook for Capoferro's *Gran Simulacro*

This is intended as a brief reference work for students actively studying Ridolfo Capoferro's *Gran Simulacro*, and learning to fence rapier according to his style. Though no one would call Capoferro a great writer, his work has been extremely influential in the history of fencing, and with a little help and a lot of work, his book can provide years of fruitful swordsmanship practice.

The two most immediately useful supports for the text, I find, are a simple description of the hierarchy of actions, and a table of contents to the plates, to help you find the relevant play.

The hierarchy of actions describes the preconditions for any action, and the proper counters. So, when should one do a *parata e risposta in un solo tempo* ("deflection and strike (or parry riposte) in a single motion")? What must happen before I can do a *scannatura*?

For the sake of clarity: for *cavazione* I use "disengage", for *stringere, guadagnare la spada, trovare la spada*, etc. I use "stringer".

The parry riposte in a single motion is when by simply turning my hand from *seconda* to *quarta*, or vice versa, and extending, I can control the opponent's *debole* with my *forte*, and safely strike. This is the ideal scenario. In two tempi, or two motions, I have to first parry (*forte* to *debole*), and then in a second action of the blade, strike. This happens when either my *debole* has been well controlled by the opponent and I have to free it or recover it before striking, or I am simply unprepared to parry and riposte in one motion.

The following table lays out the pattern:

<i>Action</i>	<i>Counter</i>
Attack (cut or thrust)	Parry riposte in a single time Parry riposte in 2 actions Avoid and counterattack
Parry riposte in a single time	Feint, parry riposte in two actions
Disengage	Counterdisengage Attack closing the line (parry and riposte in one motion)
Counterdisengage	Redisengage or attack
Stringering	Counterstringering Attack Disengage-attack Disengage beat attack
Counterstringering	As for stringering
Beat attack	Deceive beat (disengage in time), attack After beat, parry in 2 actions
Parry	Feint-disengage
Counterattack	Parry, riposte

These can perhaps be most easily understood as a series of pair drills. These can be done from a stringering in quarta (inside) or seconda (outside). As you work through the treatise, feel free to fill in the other plate references- most of these actions and sequences are repeated in the treatise in several different forms.

Having a simple and consistent way to conceptualise the many different techniques, and to classify them according to their tactical use (or place in the hierarchy of actions), makes it much easier to learn them in the first place, and apply them in fencing.

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Patient</i>	<i>Plate reference, notes</i>
Stringers		7 (inside), 16 (outside)
	Disengages, attacks	
Parries and ripostes in one motion		
Stringers		7
	Disengages as a feint	
Attacks in one motion		
	Parry riposte in two motions	
Stringers		
	Disengages	
Feints		
	Parries	
Disengages, strikes		

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Patient</i>	<i>Plate reference, notes</i>
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Stringers		
	Disengages, beats blade, attacks	
Parries and ripostes in two motions		

Stringers		
	Disengages, beats blade,	
Disengages in time against the beat, strikes		

Stringers		19
	Disengages to strike	
Avoids and strikes		

Stringers		
	Disengages as feint	
Avoids and attacks		
	Parries and ripostes in one tempo	

Stringers		15
	Disengages	
Counterdisengages, strikes		

Stringers		
	Disengages	
Counterdisengages		
	Redisengages, strikes	

Stringers		
	Disengages	
Counterdisengages, attacks		
	Parries and ripostes in one motion	

A further useful reference tool when working with this treatise is a list of the contents of each plate. I recommend customising this document so that you can describe the contents according to the way you think of the actions, making it easier to find the plate you want.

## *Table of Contents*

<i>Sword Alone</i>	
<i>Plate</i>	<i>Content</i>
1	Hand on sword
2	Prima and Quarta
3	Seconda and Sesta
4	Terza and Quinta
5	Lunge
6	Stringering, inside
7	Parry and riposte in one tempo; feint, 2 parries
8	Pass back; 2 cuts to head
9	Parry and riposte in one tempo; scanso della vita
10	Counterattack into cut; parry riposte
11	Sotto, 5 ways
12	Pass, parry with both hands; sidestep cut; 2 hand parry
13	Scannatura
14	Contratempo, no parry (sbasso); or parry and riposte with pass; step back, parry; scannatura; left hand parry
15	Stringering inside and outside. Contracavazione. Counter-stringer.
16	Counterattack on inside, cavazione-beat
17	Scanso del pie dritto; feint parry riposte
18	Strike with pass, attack on cavazione; scanso della vita
19	Scanso della vita; gain sword, pass; cavazione beat
20	Pass, grab hand, strike in 2 from inside; doi tempi; contracavazione

<i>Sword and dagger</i>	
<i>Plate</i>	<i>Content</i>
21	Stringering
22	Dagger parry, 3 thrusts
23	Feint (no stringering), deceive dagger
24	Disarm with dagger
25	Stringer, dagger parry, cut or thrust
26	Stringer, parry with dagger and sword, strike arm or face.
27	Feint (no stringering), deceive dagger
28	Stringer, dagger parry, stramazzone or thrust
29	Stringered, cavazione beat, dagger parry, thrust
30	Feint under dagger, parry and deceive dagger, strike
31	He comes to stringer, weapons forward (sword to your right shoulder, dagger to your left); pass while parrying with dagger thrust up (falso) between his weapons
32	Stringer outside; he disengages to attack; parry with dagger point down, deceive his dagger, strike.
33	Attacks with pass; pass back, disengage under his dagger, strike in quarta

34	Enter in 4; he attacks; pass back, parry with dagger, disengage over dagger, strike around his dagger in 2
35	His dagger high, straight and wide; enter from outside it, disengage over it and lunge.

### *Sword and Cloak*

<i>Plate</i>	<i>Content</i>
36	Theory; holding cape; parrying attacks; parry with sword and cape
37	Stringer inside; parry and contracavazione, strike

### *Sword and dagger*

<i>Plate</i>	<i>Content</i>
38	Left handed man: stringer inside in 3, dagger parry, stramazzone, or thrust in 2, or (best) in 4 with only sword.
39	X parry: in 5, opponent in 1; stringer in 4; he disengages and cuts head; X parry (dagger behind), thrust face or cut leg
40	Dagger strike: engaged in 4 on inside; on pressure, he disengages to cut roverso to leg; lower sword, hand to terza, pass and strike in chest with dagger, in rear thigh with sword.
41	Parry with sword, strike with dagger: thrust; he parries with dagger and cuts stramazzone to arm; parry in 3 to outside, thrust with sword (not illustrated): opponent in 3, you in 7; thrust above his dagger; he parries to outside and cuts stramazzone riverso to your arm; parry in 4, pass and thrust to chest with dagger; pass back with riverso to his arm.

### *Sword and Rotella*

<i>Plate</i>	<i>Contents</i>
42	(opponent in guardia stretta, i.e. point forward) Stringer; pass and gain sword with shield; thrust. (opponent in guardia larga, i.e. point back) he cuts leg, parry with falso and cut leg. He cuts or thrust head; parry with shield. (Rotella heavy, unlike targe or buckler, so don't, in case of a feint). Danger of feint to head, lift shield to parry and are blinded, he passes and strikes. So parry with sword in 2 or 4, control with rotella and strike.
43	Danger of parrying without riposte in same tempo. Opponent in sesta; feint outside shield to face; disengage underneath and strike in 4. He should parry extending the shield, pass and strike.