

Parrying Daggers and Poniards

by: Leonid Tarassuk

In history of European fencing, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were as important as in most other fields of arms history. During that period European fencing schools, developing ancient traditions of personal combat with sword accompanied by a shield, worked out a kind of double fencing wherein both hands were armed with edged weapons and played an active part in offense and defense. An excellent exercise for body and mind, this most complicated form of fencing, requiring an assiduous training and great skill, cast a sort of spell over contemporaries by mysterious passes and combinations, infinite variety of technical ways, elaborate motor coordination of hands and feet.

The perfecting of weapons and swordplay technique were developing conjointly and finally led to elaboration of the single-sword fencing methods that laid foundations for modern fencing. But this development took one and a half centuries, during which period the sword-and-dagger form of personal combat dominated in Western Europe.

The progress of the double fencing and the ultimate results of this evolution would have been impossible without essential modifications of the weapons used, including those usually called *left-hand daggers*, which are the main subject of this study. As a fencer I have always been interested in these fascinating weapons, and thus interest was given an additional impulse when I was granted a fortunate opportunity to study the excellent array of arms and rare fencing books in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Before going to my subject, I feel it my duty to mention the authors whose works on arms and fencing enlarged my knowledge and impelled me, in a way, to undertake this research. They are listed in the first footnote.

Lep[ido]. Circa al tenerlo [pugnale] in mano, come uolete, uoi che si tenga? Gio[vanni]. Quasi di piatto, facendo che'l fil dritto di esso guardi alquanto verso le parti destre: perche hauerete il nodo della mano piu libero da poter spinger in fuori la spada del nimico, & massimamenté la punta: oltra che hauerete maggior forza nel parare per testa, per esser sostenuto il pugnale dal dal dito grosso: & di piu il tenerlo come ho detto, fa che l'elzo di esso uiene à fare maggior difesa.

Giovanni dall'Agocchie. 1572.²

The earliest picture of a swordsman fencing simultaneously with sword and dagger seems to be an illustration in Talhoffer's *Fechtbuch* dated 1467.³ The fencer is represented here in a difficult situation, facing two opponents. Against one of them he fights with his sword while defending himself, from the other, with his dagger (*Dolch*)



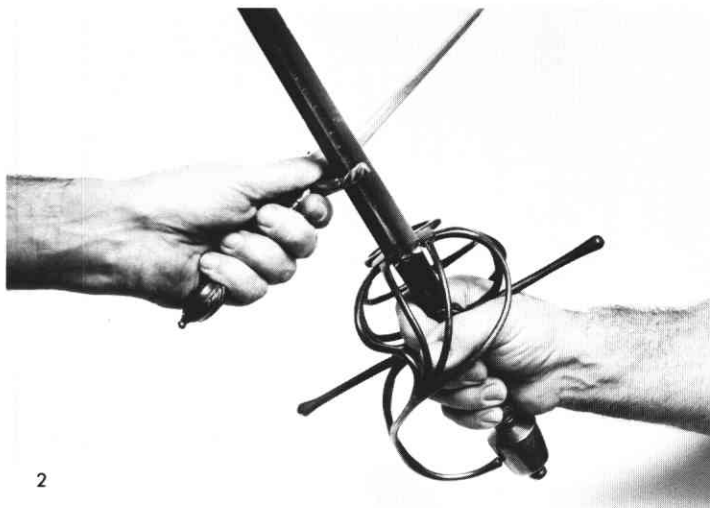
and small buckler held together in his left hand. The fencing master's concept is that in such occurrence the dagger must be held like a knife, the thumb at the pommel, the same hand somehow also gripping the buckler handle. This method can hardly be regarded as practical because, first of all, it almost forbids any offensive actions with the dagger, and, second, a hard blow on this parrying contrivance, particularly on dagger blade, could easily knock out both dagger and shield. Thus, the defense technique depicted here seems to be too farfetched scholastically, reflecting perhaps the teacher's intention to demonstrate his inventiveness and personal technical virtuosity to the students. Anyway, this scene undoubtedly shows an interest in using the dagger as an active auxiliary weapon accompanying the sword. Talhoffer's manual also proves that some ideas about the sword-and-dagger fencing were taking shape as early as the third quarter of the fifteenth century. The dagger and shield combination recommended in the book evidently points to the absence in the dagger of any effective protection for the hand, that is, of a special guard which later became the most distinctive feature of the parrying-daggers.

In the narrative about the duel between Pierre Terrail, seigneur de Bayard, and Alonzo de Soto-Mayor, which took place in Naples in 1499, Brantôme writes that *estoc* and *poignard* were chosen for this occasion.⁴ It cannot be deduced with certainty, however, from Brantôme's account, that both weapons were simultaneously used by the fighters. Most probably the poniards were included in their armament as reserve weapons, to be used whenever convenient, for a poniard was employed by Bayard in the finale of the duel only and in a very traditional way, namely, to force his thrown-down opponent to surrender.

An unquestionable proof of an active use of the dagger with another edged weapon is to be found in Albrecht



Dagger with arched crossguard (*daghetta* of 'cinquedeia' type). Italian, ca. 1500. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 32.75.97. Crossguard daggers could give but limited protection to the holding fingers (see Fig. 2).



A method of high quarte parry, protecting inside lines, with the crossguard dagger of Fig. 1, not provided with a side ring or adequate device. Rapier German (blade Spanish), late 16th century; Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 14.25.1036.



Early Landsknecht parrying dagger. Swiss or French (?), early 16th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.43.



Early Landsknecht parrying dagger. Swiss or French (?), ca. 1510-20. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.40.

Dürer's *Fechtbuch* (1512) which shows a fighter armed with malchus and dagger.⁵ In two episodes, the fencer holds the dagger like a knife but in the third scene the dagger is gripped in the same mode that came to be commonly accepted as more sensible and practical method of handling parrying weapons, well illustrated by later sources. Dürer's drawings, while reflecting a period of experiments in the use of the dagger in the swordplay, are an important evidence to show that not later than the first decade of the sixteenth century this method began coming into use. But for this new mode to become so universally practiced as it was throughout the sword-and-dagger era, one very essential step was necessary in the development of the dagger as parrying weapon, namely, the designing of a protective device for the holding hand.

Dagger guards then in existence either were unhandy for proper parrying use or could not preserve the wrist sufficiently well from various concussions and cuts while repulsing the sword blade. Even the crossguard dagger (Fig. 1) was fit to stop the sword and protect the hand only if the fencer had learnt and gotten into habit of such a parrying technique that directed one of the quillons toward the opponent's blade (Fig. 2). However, this mode has several disadvantages, as it considerably lessens both an important function of the thumb, propping up the dagger blade, and the gripping power of the hand, enabling the opposing sword to knock out the dagger by a strong blow on a quillon or on the edge of the blade. These and similar practical observations could not escape attention when fencers began initial experiments with sword-and-dagger fighting, and an urgent necessity to contrive a special guard for hand protection was surely realized as soon as daggers started their very first performances as parrying weapons, and not, as has sometimes been said, decades later.⁶

Looking at early sixteenth-century daggers from the point of view of their practical suitability for the double fencing, it can be seen that just at this time various modifications of the dagger guards were evolved in one definite direction, that is, to afford better protection of the hand when it grips the dagger with the thumb on the blade heel. Signs of such a development are to be found, for instance, in a group of Landsknecht daggers whose guards seems as though cut-off in half, the internal part of horizontal 5- or 8-shaped guard being removed (Fig. 3). If not yet ideal in design, this form allows one to properly handle the dagger for parrying actions while protecting, more or less, the wrist, especially when such a guard is supplemented by a crosspiece, even a short one (Fig. 4), which is generally less important in parrying weapons than a side ring.⁷ A Landsknecht roundel-hilt dagger, in an early sixteenth-century German painting, seems to have been modified in the same way (Fig. 5). Here, too, the rear part of the guard appears cut-off so as to provide a better grip when the dagger is in use as a parrying weapon.

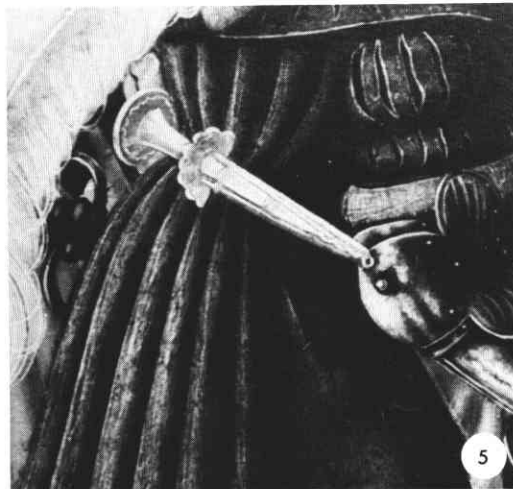
Important evidence from the early period of the sword-and-dagger fencing can be found in the dueling code first published in 1521 by Paris de Puteo, an Italian connois-

eur of dueling customs and conventions. Discussing the selection of weapons for a combat, Puteo relates a case of two gentlemen who came to Italy from [a land to] the north of the Alps to combat without armors, only with words and daggers".⁸ The author is preoccupied, in this passage, with the duelists' decision to fight without any body protection, which was not yet a commonly accepted practice, therefore he makes only a casual mention of their offensive weapons. It is very significant, at this point, that he uses the expression *con spada e pugnale* which is well known in many later sources as a standard Italian idiom to designate the sword-and-dagger fencing. This passage, together with Dürer's drawings and contemporary daggers fit for parrying actions, suggests an idea that the new fencing methods were already practiced in the second decade of the sixteenth century, without being so universally adopted as it happened later under combined influence of Italian fencing schools, the dueling fashion and the sportive attractiveness of the double fencing itself.

If the interpretation of these data is correct, it must be emphasized, as well, that by 1520s the sword-and-dagger fencing was practiced in a country adjacent to Italy, most probably in Germany, where various forms of fencing had since long been elaborated by professional masters from the Fraternity of St. Mark. It would be difficult to affirm flatly that specially designed parrying daggers first appeared in Germany, although attempts had been made here to adjust some traditional dagger forms to the new use. At this period, the leading role in the development of swordplay belonged, above all, to Italian schools which were actively shaping new fencing methods. It is hardly astonishing, therefore, that a completely formed type of parrying dagger was first shown in a treatise published in 1536 by a renowned Bolognese fencing master, Achille Marozzo.⁹

In the chapter that gives the earliest known description of the sword-and-dagger fencing Marozzo recommends to parry with a weapon he calls *pugnale bolognese* (Figs. 6, 7).¹⁰ This dagger has a large edged blade intended for cut-and-thrust strikes, a well-developed crossguard, and a massive side ring: that is, all parts necessary for effective parrying functions. A specific element in this type of dagger is the form of flat crossguard strongly curved toward the side ring, thus giving an additional protection to the wrist from a more vulnerable side.

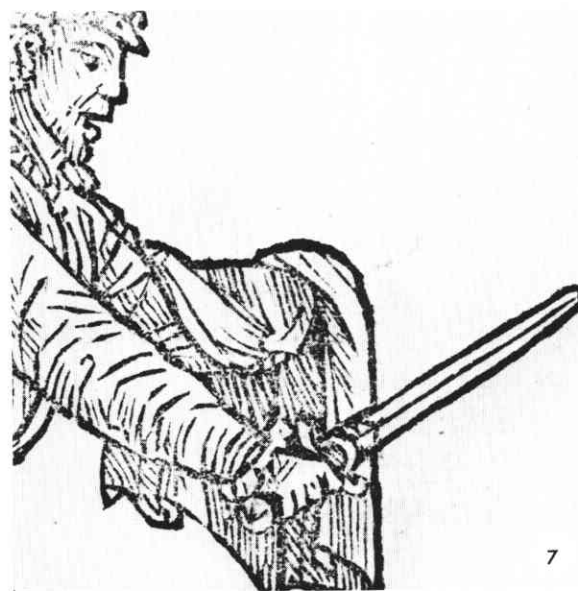
The Bolognese school played a most important part in the development of European fencing at least from early sixteenth century, and it seems highly probable that the term *pugnale bolognese* simply reflects the place of origin and introduction of this particular dagger form. According to a Bolognese chronicle, Marozzo was born in 1484 and began to work on his book in 1516,¹¹ presumably having, by this time, a considerable experience as fencer and teacher. The methods of the sword-and-dagger fight being elaborated just at this period, probably with active participation of Marozzo himself and his own teachers, Bolognese masters and swordsmiths must have designed the proper parrying weapon which was recorded in Marozzo's book. The prin-



Detail of painting "Landsknechts, White and Moorish". German school, ca. 1510. Formerly the Eugene Bolton Collection, London.



Enlarged reproduction of a woodcut in A. Marozzo's *Opera nova* (1536 edition, f. 15, Metropolitan Museum of Art). This illustration is followed by the text wherein the author discusses fighting methods with sword accompanied by *pugnale bolognese*. Note laterally curved quillons for better finger protection.



Enlarged reproduction of a woodcut in A. Marozzo's *Opera nova* (1536 edition, f. 19 verso). Here, the dagger called by the author *pugnale bolognese* (Fig. 6) illustrates the dagger-and-cloak fight. This is the earliest representation of the parrying dagger with guard formed by the side ring and curved quillons.



8

Parrying dagger of Bolognese type. North Italian, ca. 1530-40. René Géroutet Collection (Geneva). *Armes blanches françaises* ("ABC Décor", special issue, 1972, p. 11).



11

Parrying dagger of Bolognese type. Italian, ca. 1550-70. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 34.57.21.



9

Parrying dagger, a variant of Bolognese type. Italian, ca. 1530-50. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 04.3.125.



10

Parrying dagger of Bolognese type. North Italian, ca. 1540-60. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 34.57.22.

ciple of a side ring for hand protection was anything but new by this time for it had been present on some types of sword from the first half of the fifteenth century¹² and thus, could have been well known to Bolognese masters.

Thanks to its famous university, Bologna was an international academic center, and there is no doubt that many of the students took lessons with local fencing masters afterward bringing the new swordplay style to different parts of Europe, not to say Italy itself. No less assiduous as students and promoters for the Bolognese school surely were soldiers from Germany, Spain, France, and Switzerland, participants in the Italian Wars in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. In one of his stories, Brantôme gives a detailed account of a duel fought by two Spanish officers, Azevedo and Saint-Croix (Santa-Cruz, evidently), in the early 1510s, at Ferrara (about 25 miles from Bologna). For this combat, the duelists chose "rapières bien tranchantes" and "poignards". Azevedo began fighting with both weapons in hands, but Saint-Croix sheathed his dagger and preferred to fight with his rapier only. Perhaps he simply was not well trained in the then-new technique of sword-and-dagger play. Whatever was the case, Azevedo proved to have an advantage and, being more skillful, he won the duel.¹³

A remarkable feature of the Bolognese dagger, the flat crossguard strongly curved toward the side ring, is to be found on an excellent parrying dagger in the René Géroutet Collection (Fig. 8), which stays very close to the pictures in Marozzo's book and may be considered as one of the earliest known specimens of the type. In its heavier variant, the side ring function is played by two massive scrolls which probably protected fingers less effectively and so did not become very popular (Fig. 9). On the contrary, the basic pattern of the Bolognese dagger was widely used during a long period, as seen by number and dating of weapons extant (Figs. 10-15), despite the fact that other types of parrying daggers and poniards were later developed in response to more sophisticated modes of double fencing. It is significant, in this respect, that the *pugnale bolognese* was still pictured in late 1620s, in a treatise by a master of the Spanish school teaching in Flanders.¹⁴

The Bolognese dagger guard seems to have directly affected some changes that began taking place in German daggers early in the sixteenth century. This influence is manifest, in particular, in a peculiar shape of the crossguard, strongly bent outward, on certain Landsknecht daggers (Fig. 16c, d). Later this form, clearly doing back to the Bolognese type, found a graceful manneristic fancifulness which, thanks to excellent thought-out proportions, is well joined with a general manly appearance of Saxon body-guard daggers (Fig. 16e).

The tendency to adjust earlier dagger types to practical requirements of parrying methods was already mentioned in connection with the German daggers equipped with "halved" guards (Figs. 3, 4). A similar alteration of the guard, with the same purpose, seems to have been performed on some roundel daggers (Fig. 5), whose abandon-

ment, in their traditional form, during the first quarter of the sixteenth century apparently was not fortuitous but could be just related to their ineffectiveness for parrying actions. At the same time, a half-guard version of the roundel dagger could play a part in the designing of Landsknecht parrying daggers provided with a sturdy shell guard, which served as a wrist protecting device while deep cuts in the shell were contrived as casual traps for the parried sword blade (Fig. 17). A variant type has the shell fully dismembered to form a small shield and two strongly arched quillons (Figs. 18 and 19). The shell guard had been already known by end of the fifteenth century,¹⁵ and its pattern may also have suggested a guard for parrying daggers that, beside protecting the hand, could entangle the opponent's sword blade.

This process of adjustment of the edged weapons to the new swordplay style touched upon the "kidney" dagger, as well. One of its later variants, which had a very short but pronounced crossbar, probably became a prototype of German parrying daggers with side ring and stout crossguard slightly bent toward the point and terminated by globular finials (Fig. 20).

Parrying daggers and poniards with vertically S-shaped crossguard (Figs. 21-24), which were used up till the middle of the seventeenth century, also go back to an early stage in swordplay history as can be seen from illustrations in Marozzo's book.¹⁶ Of two variations of the parrying daggers with side ring and S-crossguard, the more rational one seems to be the type (A) which, when held in left hand ready for combat, faces the opponent with its quillon curved toward the blade (Fig. 21). In carrying out any parry that would meet the sword,¹⁷ a fencer well trained with such dagger could surely count on its upwardly curved quillon to stop the sliding sword blade and possibly to jam it by a well-timed twist of the left hand, taking this moment's advantage for his own offensive actions.

On the contrary, the type (B), with S-crossguard shaped inversely, does not look as handy. Such dagger in the left hand, its quillon curved toward the fingers finds itself in the forward position, bound to meet the opponent's sword (Fig. 22). Being too short, this quillon can in no way function as a knuckle-guard against cutting blows, and its very shape is not reliable enough to stop the sword blade which may easily slide over the rounded curve. To catch the enemy's sword with the rear quillon of his dagger, the fencer parrying, for instance, in an outward line would have to turn his hand clockwise while throwing his arm counterclockwise; then, at the shock, to twist his hand once more out in opposite direction (Fig. 23). These inconveniences of the dagger (type B) disappear should it be handled by the right hand, for the now forward quillon, curved upwards, functions as stopping and trapping device (Fig. 24).

These observations suggest an idea that the variant (B) of the parrying daggers with S-shaped crossguard was specifically intended for left-handed swordsmen, who fought with parrying dagger in their right hand. The his-



12

Parrying dagger of Bolognese type. Italian, ca. 1550-70.



13

Parrying dagger of Bolognese type. North Italian, mid-16th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.100.



14

Parrying dagger of Bolognese type. North Italian, third quarter of the 16th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.117.



15

a,b Parrying poniards of Bolognese type. French or Italian, last quarter of 16th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, (a) No. 26.145.108, (b) No. 26.145.109.

tory of modern fencing shows an astonishingly high number of successful left-handed fencers, and there is no reason to doubt that they existed also in past times. Although not comparable in number with right-handers, left-handed swordsmen must have demanded particular attention from sword- and dagger-makers exactly as did left-handed shooters or marksmen aiming with the left eye, for whom special guns were made.¹⁸ This assumption seems corroborated by the fact that S-crossguard daggers presumably intended for left-handers (variant B) are considerably fewer than those for right-handers (variant A), the proportion being about one to three (evaluation based mainly on specimens in arms collections of The Metropolitan Museum and The Hermitage Museum).

In the woodcuts illustrating Marozzo's treatise there is a picture of a dagger with symmetrical arched crossguard whose ends are curved toward the point.¹⁹ This form, traceable back to corresponding late-medieval sword guards, became probably the most popular design in parrying weapons already in Marozzo's lifetime (he died between 1550 and 1558²⁰). The reason of this popularity, known from the comparatively large number of specimens extant and by numerous illustrations in fencing books, is closely connected with the development of the art of fencing by mid-sixteenth century.

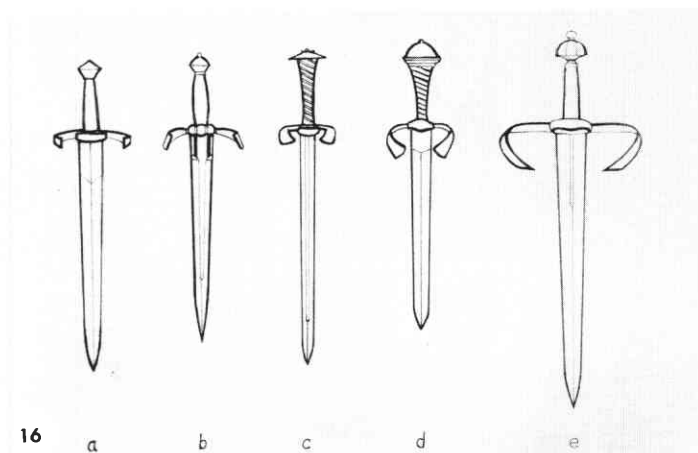
Camillo Agrippa's treatise, published in 1553,²¹ shows that leading Italian teachers of the period, above all the author himself, rationalized actions performed with the sword and worked out a simpler and more practical system of basic positions ("guards"), which often resemble positions adopted by classical and modern fencing.²² Experience and theoretical calculations led masters to conclude that the thrust required less time for preparation and execution than the cut and, besides, let one score a hit from a greater distance. At this time the thrust was given at least an equal importance with the cut but soon, from the third quarter of the century, the thrust increasingly

prevailed as attested by manuals of this period.²³ The application and perfecting of these principles were going along with development of lighter swords whose balance was being improved by decreasing the weight of the blade at the expense of its mass, but not of its length. The rapier somewhat lost its cutting properties but instead gave the fencer more ease and speed in performing thrusts, feints, changes of positions and various combinations. As swordplay gradually became more subtle and complicated, with hits delivered more accurately, new modes of defense were being contrived by fencers and swordsmiths. Rapier guards became more complicated, affording better protection of the hand, while artful traps were devised in bucklers to catch the thrusting blade. At the same period, parrying daggers were coming into use, with special contrivances designed to entangle the opponent's blade, the most sophisticated of them being now usually referred to as "sword-breakers" (Figs. 25, 26).

It is surely no mere chance that Giacomo di Grassi's treatise (1570) describing fencing methods turned out by this time, pays such a great attention to sword-and-dagger fencing. It gives instructions on different ways of handling the dagger²⁴ and depicts, in particular, what may be called a parrying trap-dagger whose guard was provided with two steel prongs, directed along the blade and expressly intended to catch and entangle the sword.²⁵ This description comes very closely to a parrying dagger in the Walters Art Gallery (No. 51.522) and to a variant having one prong only (The Metropolitan Museum, No. 26.145.92). The author clearly dwelt on the trap-dagger because its original design was not too common among other parrying weapons, and naturally he did not need to depict daggers of wide-spread forms, i.e. with straight or arched crossguards, so often represented in fencing books.

Daggers with symmetrical arched crossguards, first shown by Marozzo, certainly proved to be the most practical parrying weapons as soon as this guard was supplemented by a side ring. The ring, turned in the direction of a parry, protected the wrist well, and the quillons, curved toward the point, gave the hand an additional protection, stopping the blade in case the fencer could not complete a circular motion of the hand to expose the side ring to the blow. With the increasing complication of the swordplay in di Grassi's period, the arched crossguard underwent a technically simple but very important modification that actually completed formation of the most perfect parrying weapon. Both ends of the arched quillons were slightly bent toward the side ring, thus enabling the fencer to catch a parried blade more easily and to jam it by a swift twist of the hand. If successful, such action could provoke the adversary's confusion to be used for a counter-offensive. When such a situation cropped up at a close distance, a rapid and vigorous sliding motion of the dagger, commanding the trapped blade, could lead to a thrust inflicted with the dagger itself (Fig. 27).

The long popularity of parrying daggers with arched crossguard was manifested, in particular, by the fact that a *daghetta*, a light version of the "cinquedeia," long survived



16 Modifications of the parrying dagger guard of Bolognese type: a — *Pugnale bolognese* ca. 1515-40. After A. Marozzo's *Opera nova* 1536 edition (see Figs. 6 and 7). b — Italian, ca. 1530-40. René Géroudet Collection (see Fig. 8). c — German, second quarter of 16th century. After K. Ullmann. "Dolchmesser, Dolche und Kurzwehren des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts". *Waffen- und Kostümkunde*, 1961, H.2, Abb. 29, 34. d — German, mid-16th century. Hungarian National Museum, Budapest. After K. János. *Régimagyar fegyverek*, Budapest, 1971, p. 116, Fig. 201. e — German (Saxon), ca. 1600. Tower of London Armouries, No. X. 266. After A. R. Dufty. *European swords and daggers in the Tower of London*. London, 1974, Pl. 25a.

its heavy prototype and continued in use, at least in its native land, well into last third of the sixteenth century, as shown by numerous illustrations in a fencing manual by Giovanni Antonio Lovino (ca. 1580).²⁶ The parrying daggers pictured here had, however, a great advantage over their forerunners from the turn of the century (Figs. 1, 2) for at the time of Lovino even these *daggetti* were equipped with the side ring. (Fig. 28).

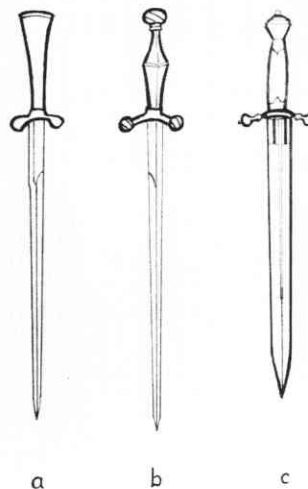
With all their practical merits, arched-crossguard daggers had one deceptive quality that hindered their universal adoption, at the expense of other types of parrying weapons. A fencer using such dagger had to be a very skillful fighter, well mastering his weapons in difficult combat situations. In particular, having caught his opponent's blade, he had to know how to use this tense moment to his advantage, being fully confident in his ability to free his dagger when necessary, without "sticking" himself in the otherwise extremely dangerous engagement. A parrying dagger provided with still more sophisticated sword traps could turn out even more perfidious if its owner had not mastered this specific weapon as perfectly as possible. That was probably one of the reasons why many swordsmen preferred daggers of simpler designs such as those with straight crossguard and side ring. These were widely used in Germany where the style of double fencing was less complicated than in Italy and France.

As has been pointed out, the side ring, hinted at on some early Landsknecht daggers and portrayed by Marozzo, played the essential part in the designing of effective parrying weapons. The function of the side ring was performed by a shell bent toward the blade in certain heavy Landsknecht daggers, already spoken of, and Marc de la Beraudière mentions (1608) "advantageous poniards" equipped with a shell that well covered the hand.²⁷ A French parrying dagger of about 1600, with arched quillons and shell guard bent toward the grip, at The Metropolitan Museum (No. 14.25.1288) exactly corresponds to this description and has analogies to contemporary shell-guard swords.²⁸ The English master of fencing George Silver, active during the same period, probably meant daggers of this or even more developed design when he spoke of a "close hylt vpon yo[u]r dagg[e]r hand."²⁹

A finer rapier play in the second half of the sixteenth century was responsible for parrying daggers in which a steel screen was fixed inside the ring to protect fingers against a casual thrust into the ring itself. In another design a very large side ring was supplemented by an underlying concave shell, with a slight clearance between them, to trap a blade. Later, Spanish masters developed this type to a close shell guard with long straight quillons which facilitated intercepting the rapier blade and jamming it, in the way performed with arched-crossguard daggers. While enlarging defense fields covered by respective parries, long quillons on Spanish daggers and swords made fine disengagements and feints at a close distance much more difficult and risky, for the fencer who began such an action inevitably had to circumvent quillons, thus

greatly uncovering himself and giving his adversary an ostensible advantage. These weapons well fell in line with the overcomplicated principles of the Spanish school but for most of European fencers the parrying dagger design that enjoyed a major popularity during a hundred years remained a combination of simple side ring with arched or straight crossguard.

A dagger with side ring was nearly as portable as same-size ordinary dagger without this device. But a swordsman who carried a parrying dagger felt himself much more assured if he knew he could be involved in a skirmish. The side ring in no way prevented the parrying dagger from being used as an ordinary knife or dagger (that is, gripped with thumb at the pommel), while the latter was good enough to stab or cut only, not to fence with. If the side ring, or an adequate protecting device, is taken as a distinguishing feature of the parrying weapons, it can be stated that numerically they hold a very considerable, if not prevailing place among all kinds of daggers and poniards preserved from the period of ca. 1525 to ca. 1650. Such a high proportion is in no way controversial for it is only logical to suppose that most armed men did then prefer to have and carry the parrying weapons fit for any appropriate use and, thus superior to ordinary daggers and poniards. Accordingly, it does not seem exaggerated to assume that a greater part of all daggers and poniards being produced during the same period were parrying weapons of various designs. Among the exceptions are, of course, parade or costume daggers, and smaller weapons intended for covert carrying, like stilettos. However, even these light, graceful poniards were sometimes provided with a small side ring sufficient to give fingers minimal protection if the weapon had to be used for parrying but not so bulky as to hamper concealment under the dress when necessary. This combination of stiletto and parrying poniard seems to have been particularly popular in Italy and France, as shown by number of these weapons preserved in

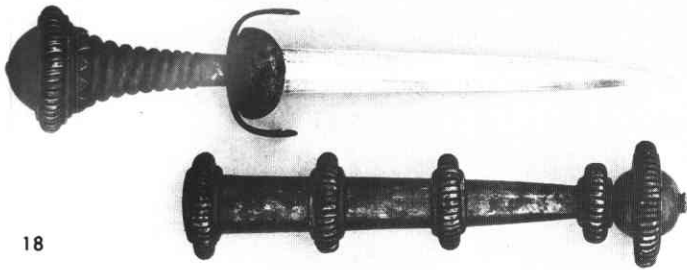


Modifications of the 'kidney-dagger' guards: a — Flemish (?), ca. 1460-1500. After G. F. Laking. *A record of European armour and arms through seven centuries*, III (London, 1920), p. 39, Figs. 808, 809. b — German, early 16th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.71. c — German (Saxon) by W. Paller (died 1583), ca. 1560-70. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 29.158.662.



17

Guard of a Landsknecht parrying dagger. German, ca. 1540-60. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.48.



18

Landsknecht parrying dagger. German, mid-16th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 04.3.140.



19

Landsknecht parrying dagger, German, mid-16th century.

collections.³⁰ In some parrying stilettoes, the blade-stopping function was performed by outwardly bent quillons; less effective than the side ring, this design made the poniard easier to conceal.

So potent were the tradition, fashion and habit, formed by training, to use a weapon for parries, that a fencer, who happened to miss his dagger, clock or gloves, sometimes ventured to beat off the adversary's blade with his unprotected hand. This was the case with de Quélus, in the "duel des mignons" (1578), when he "had his hand all cut by wounds".³¹ On such occasions, anything fit to parry with could be used, as pictured in a 1612 German treatise wherein a fencer (left-hander, by the way) beats off the sword with his scabbard and its hanger and wins over his opponent, who also is missing a parrying dagger.³²

The design and perfection of parrying weapons greatly depended on the collaboration of fencing masters with sword-makers. The sword-maker, apart from being a competent artisan, had to understand the qualities and functions required of the weapons he had to create. Starting with the adjustment of weapons current in the early sixteenth century to a new use, by modifying their guards, the next, and most important, step was taken when parrying daggers with side ring were designed. The gradual refinement of double fencing led to more complicated and diverse parrying techniques, and the development of the parrying weapons themselves was largely responsible for this process. Some of the dagger designs were inspired by a whim or imagination of individual inventors and did not become generally popular. Other patterns gained widespread recognition thanks either to simplicity in their use, like straight-crossguard daggers, or to constructional subtleties for more complex actions, like daggers with arched and outwardly bent crossguards.

With hilts, blades of parrying weapons were subject to changes and improvements. A large and massive double-edged blade of a simple shape was retained for more than a hundred years in heavy parrying daggers used with cut-and-thrust swords (Figs. 6-11, 17, 18). The prevalence of the thrust in rapier play, from the mid-sixteenth century on, and the gradual lightening of sword blades in this connection affected parrying weapons. Increasingly, daggers and poniards were given lighter, often only thrusting, blades in which a delicate balance of rigidity and elasticity, necessary to withstand severe shocks, was obtained by skillful combinations of ridges, grooves and perforations (Figs. 14, 15, 21).³³ About the same time, stiff blades of square and triangular section started regaining the popularity they had enjoyed until the early sixteenth century. More slender and graceful in stilettoes, these blades formed perfect stabbing tools, yet a stiletto of medium or larger size, with a side ring, was strong and reliable enough to parry a light thrusting sword.

Studying various specimens of parrying weapons, one cannot help feeling that many of them were produced by connoisseurs of swordplay who must have possessed a refined knowledge of potential performances of given dagger designs. And it does not seem unlikely that some of

these makers were very keen on fencing themselves, as was surely the case with the artists who illustrated the treatises and displayed an excellent understanding of most complicated actions.

During the heyday of double fencing, the craftsmen certainly sought to provide the swordsman, soldiers, and nobles with a wide assortment of parrying daggers and poniards so that a fencer might have weapons according to his particular taste, skill, training style and favorite parrying methods. A number of swords and daggers were also made to replace damaged and lost weapons, an unavoidable effect of the dueling epidemic that ravaged Europe for many decades. These considerations taken together, it is hardly correct to assume that parrying daggers and poniards were always made en suite with swords and rapiers. Such sets, often artistically decorated and provided with no less expensive, intricate belts and hangers, adorned to match the weapons themselves, were mostly created to special orders or to be kept in stock for prospective wealthy buyers. These garnitures must have been financially out of reach for many adepts of sword-and-dagger fencing, and there can be little doubt that separate parrying weapons and swords for common customers were always produced in considerable quantities to allow fencers to take their pick. Accordingly, it seems not at all necessary to consider any parrying dagger or poniard, preserved without a matching sword or rapier, as only the remaining part of a former garniture.

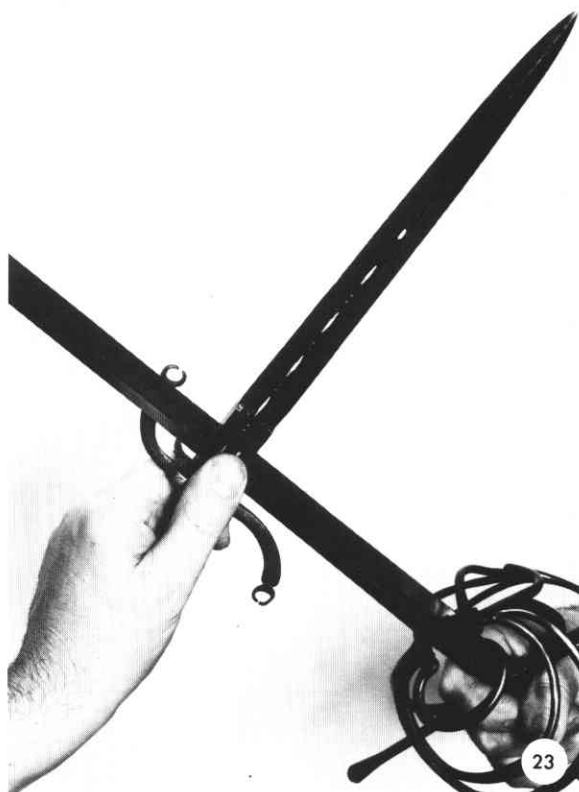
Most of the iconographic material shows parrying daggers and poniards fastened on the sword belt almost horizontally on the back, their hilt near right elbow. This position was known since the later part of the fifteenth century (as seen, for instance, in the *Miracle of St. Bernardino* by Pinturicchio, in the Pinacoteca of Perugia) but must have become particularly convenient and fashionable with parrying daggers because their hilts could sometimes embarrass movements of the hands when the weapons were fixed on the side or in front.

However, an impressive number of pictures show other ways of wearing parrying daggers. Quite often they are represented on the back but with the hilts to the left (Fig. 5). Many such examples can be found in engravings by J. Tortorel and J. Perissin, made by 1570.³⁴ A dagger in The Metropolitan Museum (04.3.149) has a scabbard with belt loop so beveled that it could be worn only with hilt at the left elbow, if suspended on the back (or with hilt toward the right side if worn in front — which would have been extremely awkward because of the horizontal position of the dagger). Parrying weapons are sometimes shown fastened vertically to the sword belt in front, as in the *Portrait of a Maltese Knight* by G. Cavagna, about 1620.³⁵

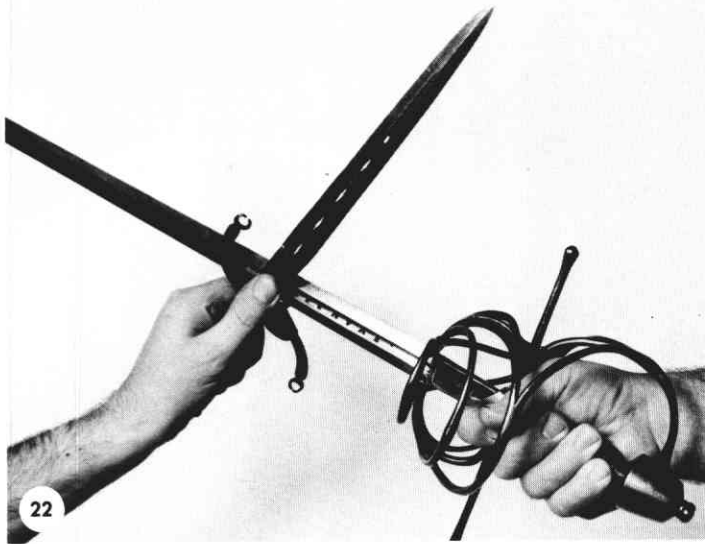
Setting about a combat, the fencer's normal first move was to disembarass himself from the sword scabbard. Before a formal duel, he had time to do this in two different ways. He could unhook the sword hanger and supporting strap from the belt, which was left with the dagger on his waist. Or he could take off the belt itself with both weapons and then unsheath them. In case of a sudden



Tierce parry and trapping of a rapier blade with S-crossguard parrying dagger, type A. This outward high parry requires simultaneous counterclockwise motions of both the arm and the hand, then a quick clockwise twist of the hand to jam the opponent's blade. Dagger German, ca. 1570-80. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.94.



The same parry as in Fig. 22. Parrying and catching with the crossguard should require three contrasting hand movements: parry by counterclockwise arm motion with simultaneous clockwise hand turn followed by quick counterclockwise twist of the hand to jam the trapped blade. Dagger North Italian, late 16th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.93.



Tierce parry with S-crossguard parrying dagger, type B, held in left hand: parrying without trapping of the opponent's blade which is stopped by the side ring but can easily slide over the forward curve of S-crossguard.

encounter, the procedure would be quite different. Pulling back the sword scabbard with hanger, he would draw as quickly as possible, then move his free hand from the sword scabbard to the grip of his dagger to draw it too. The speed and ease of these movements depended not only on the weapons and accoutrements but also on the fencer's build, first of all the reach of his hands, and this personal particularity must often have determined the way of carrying the dagger. A right-hander could well follow the fashion and fix his dagger on the back, its pommel protruding at the right elbow, if his left hand could reach the dagger grip without difficulty. Experiments show that a man of average build can draw a dagger fixed on his back, as this used to be done, and a man with longish arms is able to do the same even when wearing a light half-armor. In this position, too, the dagger could easily be drawn by right hand for stabbing as with a knife.³⁶ The dagger on the back was unobtrusive and did not hinder movements. Apart from that, it was the convenience for either of the two alternative uses that made this manner of carrying preferable. However for stout persons or those with shorter hands, or for those wearing heavy, fluffy dress, this mode could cause problems when prompt unsheathing was of vital importance. Understandably, the dagger was then fixed on the right side or even more at front, as sometimes portrayed in paintings and engravings.

It can be surmised that some eccentric right-handed swashbucklers liked to carry their dagger fixed behind with the hilt at the left elbow, for parrying use exclusively, but generally this position was normal and convenient for left-handed fencers, enabling them to use the weapon in either way with respective hand. When the iconographical documentation show daggers carried this way, one may assume that the wearer is most probably left-handed. Among extant weapons, intended for left-handed fencers, there is a parrying dagger that simply could not be used otherwise than in the right hand (Figs. 25, 26). Another

dagger, already mentioned, could be fixed on the belt at the left side only as clearly indicated by the position of the scabbard loop. This weapon too surely belonged to a left-handed fencer.

Of all types of parrying edged weapons, only daggers and poniards with symmetric guards did equally well for both right- and left-handed fencers. This may have been an additional reason for the widespread popularity of parrying weapons with straight or arched crossguard. The same feature was inherent to Spanish-type dagger with knuckle shell and long quillons. However the latter was too clumsy for constant carrying, while a dagger with comparatively small symmetric guard could be comfortably worn on the belt for any length of time. The only detail in such a dagger that had to be fixed by the sword-maker or furbisher for left-handers was a belt loop welded to the scabbard shape at a proper angle.

An important question may naturally arise here: which were those swords that could properly fit the left-handed fencers. Apart from the weapons expressly made to their orders bis such swordsmen could use a very large number of various two-edged swords and rapiers, as well as tucks, that had any kind of symmetric guard, with or without a closed knuckle-guard. As for guards of asymmetrical constructions, only those without knuckle-guard were good for the left-handers. It goes without saying that weapons from both these groups did equally well for the right-handed fencers.

. . . he that would fight with his Sword and Buckler, or Sword and Dagger, being weapons of true defence, will not fight with his Rapier and Poiniard, wherein no true defence or fight is perfect.

George Silver. *Paradoxes of Defence*. 1599.³⁷

These words express the approach of a prominent English master of fencing to the sword and dagger, considered by him as national weapons, and to rapier and poniard brought to England from the Continent. This opposition is characteristic of Silver's both known works. With invariable disdain he speaks of "the worst weapon, an imperfect and insufficient weapon . . . that is, the single Rapier, and Rapier and Poiniard."³⁸ The main difference between the weapons contrasted, in terms of practical use, is thus explained: ". . . the single Rapier, or Rapier & Poiniard they are imperfect & insufficient weapons . . ." because the rapier is "a childish toy wherewith a man can do nothing but thrust," while "The short Sword, and Sword and Dagger, are perfect good weapons . . . to carie, to draw, to be nimble withall, to strike, to cut, to thrust, both strong and quicke."³⁹

As a parrying weapon, by shape and physical functions of its blade, generally corresponded to an accompanied weapon, it is apparent that by *dagger* Silver had in mind a solid two-edged weapon resembling his favorite cut-and-thrust sword, while the name *poniard* was applied by him to a lighter weapon with a narrow thrusting blade, much like that of a contemporary dueling rapier. It was only nat

ural to associate this light parrying weapon with Italian or Spanish rapier play. Silver's standpoint was evidently shared by other English swordsmen, for one of them, in a pamphlet published some twenty-five years after Silver's works, triumphantly describes a fight by a gentleman armed "with an English Quarter Staffe against Three Spanish Rapiers and Poniards."⁴⁰

The word *poniard* (also *puniard*, *ponyard*, *poyniard*), recorded in English from the 1580s,⁴¹ was an obvious Gallicism, and this fact eventually emerged in minds of educated people in appropriate context. This is illustrated, for instance, in Shakespeare's "Hamlet" (Act V, Scene II) when Osric names rapier and dagger as weapons of the forthcoming contest but in a moment says that Laertes staked (against the King's wager) "six French rapiers and poniards".

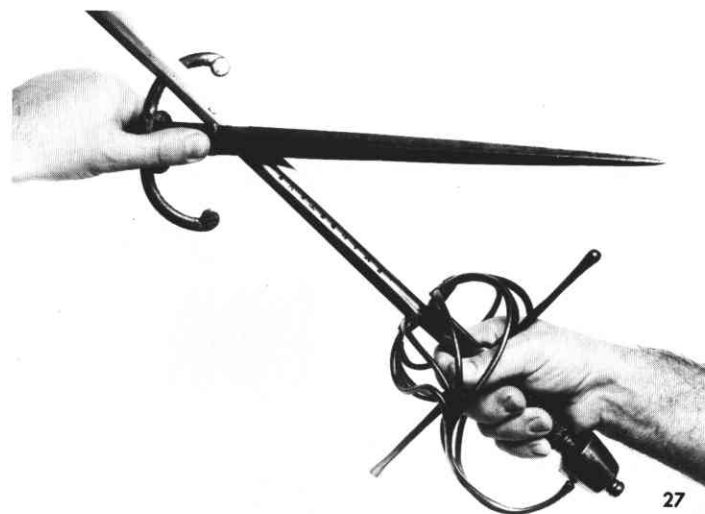
The suggested connotations of *dagger* and *poniard* in English fencing terminology are verified by Jean Nicot (1530-1600), a French linguist and contemporary of George Silver. Nicot explains the word *dague*: "A kind of short sword, almost a third of normal sword length; it is not carried usually with hanger of a sword belt nor hanging on the left side (for the right-handers), as one does with a sword, but attached to the belt on the right side or on the back. Now the dagger is large and has a swordlike point, it is now forged with two ridges between the cutting edges and with a sharper point . . . The dagger could be also called a poniard although the poniard is both shorter and less overloaded with steel [less massive] . . ."⁴²

Poignard is described by Nicot as "a kind of short dagger, with four-ridge blade having a bead-like point, while the dagger has a wider blade with point like that of a sword".⁴³

It is sufficient to look at the actual weapon of Silver's and Nicot's period to be convinced of the accuracy of their descriptions. Without comprehending, naturally, all types of the weapons concerned, their basic features and respective differences are clearly outlined by Nicot's entries which confirm the correctness of the proposed understanding of terms discussed as used by Silver.

There is a certain importance in Nicot's remark that the *dague* could be called a *poignard*, were it not for their difference in size and weight. This observation may well indicate what was happening in everyday life and language: that is a reciprocal colloquial substitution of words whose meanings were so close that only professionals having some special purpose thought it necessary to make distinctions.

In England, the word *dagger*, contrary to *poniard*, had a longstanding tradition,⁴⁴ and even after emergence of the new weapon, coming from abroad with its own name, the national term continued in common use to cover generally all weapon variations similar to daggers. This tendency toward generalization influenced even such a discriminating specialist as George Silver who used, in one passage, the expression "rapier and dagger" (meaning "rapier and poniard").⁴⁵ In analogous way were employed *sword*, a general term, and *rapier*, a more specific one, as wit-



Tierce parry and catching of rapier blade with arched-crossguard parrying poniard. The arched crossguard being also outwardly bent in this type of parrying weapons, the trapping is easily performed by either quillon. At close quarters, a swift and powerful sliding motion of the poniard over the rapier blade could inflict a thrust to the opponent while keeping his rapier away in "opposition". Poniard French (?), ca. 1570-80. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.99.

nessed, for instance, in the English translation of Vincenzio Saviolo's treatise, in which *rapier*, and *dagger*, *sword* and *dagger* are always used in descriptions of fencing with rapier and poniard.⁴⁶ This confusion of the general and the particular is recorded, as well, in some contemporary Italian-English dictionaries⁴⁷ where one can find such explanations as:

Daga, a short sword; a dagger.

Pugnale, a dagger, a poyniard [also 'ponyard', 'poy-nado'].

Spada, "any kind of sworde, rapier; or blade, or glaive."

In France, the words *la dague* and *le poignard* probably had comparable traditions in ancientness, both being recorded from around 1400,⁴⁸ and the distinction of their meanings, so well explained by Jean Nicot, was more or less preserved until the seventeenth century. In the treatise by the Antwerp master Girard Thibault, dedicated to Spanish-style fencing with the thrusting rapier, the parrying weapon is always *le poignard*, and it is only this thrusting weapon that is pictured on excellent detailed engravings for the chapters on double fencing.⁴⁹ Equally, *le poignard* alone is mentioned by Marc de la Beraudière who was working on dueling code in a period when Italian and Spanish schools of fencing with thrusting rapier dominated in France.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the treatise of Henry de Saint-Didier, dealing with the cut-and-thrust sword of the third quarter of sixteenth century, and still favoring the cut, omits *le poignard* and indicates only *la dague* as a weapon to accompany this sword.⁵¹

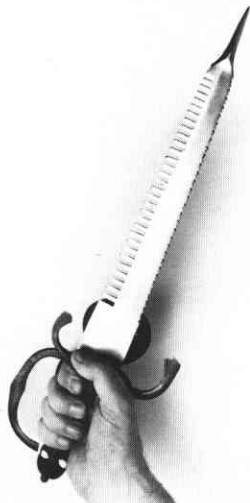
There are some revealing points, for the present subject, in the tales of Brantôme (ca. 1540-1614), who spent part of his life as professional soldier and studied fencing in Milan. Some events, having occurred before his own time, he relates after other narrators, and he takes special care to emphasize the archaism of certain expressions in them. In a story about a duel between two Spaniards fought in



Tierce parry with S-crossguard parrying dagger, type B, held in right hand; parrying and catching is carried out by simultaneous clockwise motions of both arm and hand, and twist of the hand in opposite direction. Dagger North Italian, late 16th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 26.145.93.



25



26

Parrying dagger 'sword-breaker' for use in the right hand by a left-handed swordsman. The traps are formed by the arched crossguard, smaller shield, and teeth of the blade (the serrate back edge only prevented the opponent from seizing the dagger with his hand, even if gloved). Italian, ca. 1550-75. Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 14-25.1275.

Northern Italy in the early 1500s, Brantôme says: "leur combat fut à cheval à la genette, & à la rapière, & le poignard (ainsi parloit-on alors) . . ."52 However, of another duel of the same period Brantôme writes that the adversaries received "deux segrettes et deux rapières bien tranchantes (j'useray de ces mots du temps passé pour suivre le texte & mieux observer & honorer l'antiquité & deux poignards"53 Thus, it can be deduced that the author did not consider *le poignard* an archaism.

The more accurate and trustworthy among Brantôme's tales, naturally, are those of events from his own lifetime, particularly if he witnessed them himself. Here, Brantôme uses *la dague* much more often, describing it as a cut-and-thrust weapon. The story of a combat in 1559, in Rome, mentions "une courte dague, bien tranchante & bien pointue," and referring to his sojourn in Milan Brantôme remembers a local swordsmith who made "deux paires d'armes, tant espée que dague . . . tranchantes, picquantes."54 A very frequent use of the expression *espée et dague* by Brantôme55 and other French authors gives ground to think that from the second half of the sixteenth century this gradually became a current linguistic turn equivalent to the English *sword and dagger* and referring to these kinds of weapons in general. *La rapière*, a loan word in German and English, almost fell out of use in France of this period, while *la dague* took on a broad general meaning in everyday language. *Le poignard* seems to have survived this trend toward generalization but remained in a lesser use, mostly by fencers, swordsmen, and linguists, all of whom continued to employ *la dague* and *le poignard* in their traditional exact connotations. There is a possibility that the term *la dague*, as well as the current *épée et dague* developed wider use and significance under the strong influence of the Spanish language, wherein *espada y daga* was the only common turn of speech to cover double-fencing weapons irrespective of their design.

In German, *der Dolch* invariably appears as a general designation of any daggers, including different types of parrying weapons. Having adopted *das Rappier* from French,56 the German fencing lexicon retained the ancient national term for daggers in general and thus formed a heterogenous locution *Rappier und Dolch* recorded in fencing books of the later part of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The Italian military and fencing vocabulary of the sixteenth century still kept up a distinction between *la daga* and *il pugnale*. In a dueling code, first published in 1521, *daga* is listed among the principal weapons then commonly accepted in personal combats while *pugnale* is included in "altre piccole" weapons admissible for carrying by duelists, in addition to their main armament.57 Both weapons are again specified in a much later dueling treatise (1560).58 Meanwhile, the expression *spada e pugnale* as a general reference to edged weapons used in double fencing, was becoming a stereotyped locution already during an early stage of the new fighting style.59 This was probably contributed to by the trend toward generalizing

each of the components forming this turn. Thus, by the middle of the century *pugnale* had already been used to designate any weapon of its kind, either thrusting or edged, as can be seen, for example, from a dueling code that puts in its listing of the weapons one should refuse to fight with "pugnali senza taglio, senza punta, ò senza schina."⁶⁰ Di Grassi's book, representing the Italian style of the third quarter of the sixteenth century, often mentions *pugnale co'l taglio* and once instructs the fencer to direct its edge toward the enemy in order to inflict a cutting wound.⁶¹ The connotation of *pugnale* continued to widen until, in the seventeenth century, *daga* became if surely not forgotten, at least an outfashioned word, while *pugnale* and its derivatives remained in common use, covering an array of short-blade weapons. In an English-Italian dictionary of this period one finds:

A dagger, pugnale.

A great dagger, pugnalone, pugnaccio.

A little dagger, pugnaletto.

A poniard, pugnale.

It is interesting to note that in Spanish and French the generalization of the terms led to the formation of identical word combinations, *espada y daga* and *épée et dague*, whereas the parallel Italian expression *spada e pugnale* was equivalent to them only in general connotation, its second part being entirely different etymologically. The Italian usage did not modify the French one but could well have contributed to the continuing use of the locution *épée et poignard*.

It may seem strange that parrying weapons, despite their widespread popularity over a long period, did not receive special names to distinguish them from ordinary daggers and poniards.⁶³ This fact does not look unnatural, however, in the light of the foregoing conclusion that during the sword-and-dagger era most daggers and poniards were provided with a parrying guard that made them fit for any appropriate use. This also explains why an early special term, *pugnale bolgonese*, had a regional circulation only and turned out to be shortlived, for very soon this particular form lost its novelty in the multitude of parrying weapons.

Acknowledgments

While preparing this study, I was given any possible assistance and invariably friendly attention by Dr. Helmut Nickel, Curator of Arms and Armor, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mr. Stephen V. Grancsay, Curator Emeritus, gave me the benefit of his knowledge and experience. Mr. Robert M. Carroll and Mr. Theodore R. Cuseo, the Museum's Armorers, helped me with their skill and assisted me in making combat photographs, taken by Mr. Leonid Lubianitsky. Mrs. Elisabeth Usher, the Museum's Librarian, kindly obtained a microfilm of an early Italian book discussed in this article. To all of them I express my most cordial thanks.

Note.

This paper is published with courteous permission of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. An expanded version of the article will be published in the *Journal* of the Museum.

NOTES:

- Egerton Castle. *Schools and Masters of Fence*. London, 1969 (reprint by "Arms and Armour Press"). — Bashford Dean. *Catalogue of European Daggers. The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York, 1929. — H. L. Peterson. *Daggers and Fighting Knives of the Western World*. London, 1968. — H. Seitz. *Blankwaffen*. Braunschweig, 1968. — A. Wise. *The Art and History of Personal Combat*. New York Graphic Society Ltd. — Arma Press, Greenwich, Ct., 1972.
- Giovanni dall'Agocchie. *Dell'arte di scrimia*. Venice, 1572, ff.35 verso-36. "Lep[ido Ranieri]: As for holding it [the dagger] in hand, how do you want it to be held? Gio[vanni dall'Agocchie]: Almost flatly [versus the enemy], directing its right edge toward the right side; in this way you will have the palm free to beat off the enemy's sword outwardly, especially its point; besides, having propped the dagger [its blade] up with your thumb, you will have more power in parrying above the head; and moreover, holding it as I have just said, the dagger hilt [its guard] will give [you] a better protection."
- Talhoffers Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre 1467*. Herausgegeben von G. Hergsell. Prag, 1887, pl. 240.
- Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme. *Mémoires . . . touchant les duels*. Leyden, 1772, pp. 38-40.
- Albrecht Dürers Fechtbuch. "Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorisches Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses," vol. XXVII, part 6, Wien — Leipzig, 1910, pl. 64, Figs. 38-40.
- It is not uncommon to read in the arms literature that "left-hand" daggers came into being in the middle of sixteenth century or were fully developed at some time in the next century. In this context, I recall an incident during the filming of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" in Yalta (the Crimea) in 1954. Some threescore student actors, who had studied historical fencing in Moscow institutes, were to take part in the fighting scenes, playing with swords and daggers. After only two rehearsals, there was hardly one fencer among the company without fingers wounded while parrying the sword with his dagger, all wounds being quite similar. I was then invited by the studio, as consultant and fencing master. I found all daggers to be strongly built crossguard weapons, but missing side rings. In spite of the spending involved, my advice to weld on rings to the daggers was finally accepted, and the fighting was staged without any further trouble.
- In the arms collection of the Metropolitan Museum, several Landsknecht daggers of ca. 1500-1525 belong to the same typological group and can be considered as prototypes of true parrying weapons (Nos. 26.145.26, 26.145.38, 26.145.39, 26.145.41).
- Paris de Puteo. *Duello*. Venice, 1525 (3d edition), f.G [VI]: "et accade che uenendo in Italia doi Cauallieri oltramontani per combattere disarmati solo con spate et pugnali."
- Achille Marozzo. *Opera nova*. Modena (Antonio Bergola), 1536. J. Gelli in his *Bibliografia generale della scherma* (Milano, 1895, pp. 130-138) gave account of a claimed discovery by F. Tribolati in the Biblioteca dell'Università di Pisa of a much earlier copy of Marozzo's book, published in 1517. Relying on this information, Gelli described this copy as unique, and his assertion was repeated by C. A. Thimm in his *Complete Bibliography of Fencing and Dueling* (London & New York, 1896, p. 181). When I examined a microfilm of the book discovered by F. Tribolati I could see that the actual date in the colophon had originally been MDLXVII. At some time, this date was deliberately altered by scratching out the L, the result of this "correction" being a sensational date 1517. This 1567 edition is very close to 1536 edition both in text and illustrations, but their respective lay-outs are slightly different.
- A. Marozzo, *op.cit.*, ff. 15, 19.
- J. Gelli, *op.cit.*, p. 134.
- See, for instance, R. Ewart Oakshot. *The Sword in the Age of Chivalry*. London, 1964, pp. 69, 70, 120, pl. 43A.
- Brantôme, *op.cit.*, pp.27-34.

14. Girard Thibault d'Anvers. *Académie de l'espée*. Leyden, 1628-1630, Livre II, pls. V, VI. Two slightly different versions of the Bolognese dagger guard are shown here. One almost exactly follows the sharp forms of the guard in Marozzo's book, while the other has more flowing, rounded contours. It may be noted that both the Bolognese dagger and its first promoter successfully passed the same time trial, for Marozzo's work was published at least seven times during eighty years. As there are omissions in various bibliographies, concerning this book, it could be useful to list its editions known to me: 1) *Opera nova*: Modena, A. Bergola, 1536. 2) Modena (?), ca. 1540 (Dept. of Prints, Metropolitan Museum). 3) Venice, G. Padovano — M. Stessa, 1550. 4) Venice, Heredi di M. Stessa, 1567 (Library, University of Pisa). 5) Venice, A. Pinargenti, 1568. 6) Corrected and newly illustrated, under title *Arte dell'armi*: Venice, A. Pinargenti, 1568. 7) Verona, 1615.
15. E.g. a French dagger of ca. 1500 in The Wallace Collection, No. A 809 (J. Mann. *European Arms and Armour*. London, 1962, vol. II, p. 404, pl. 138).
16. A. Marozzo, *op.cit.*, ff. 129, 133.
17. According to Giovanni de Grassi (*Raggione di adoprare sicuramente arme*. Venice, 1570, p. 36), the dagger should mainly protect the body's left side up to the knee while the sword beat off strikes directed to the right side and to the left leg below the knee. The practical fencing did not exclude at all dagger parries defending the right side when the sword performed a different action (see e.g., R. Capo Ferro da Cagli. *Gran simulacro dell'arte e dell'uso della scherma*. Siena, 1610). Basic instructions in all manuals were generally addressed to right-handers, the main dagger parries corresponding to the following positions: left side ("guardia di fuori") — *terce* for high parry, *seconde* for low parry; right side ("guardia di dentro") — *high quarte* and *low quarte* for respective parries. For left-handers, who naturally held the dagger in the right hand, these positions and names have inverse meanings, thus the *terce*, for instance, protecting the body's right side in upper lines.
18. See, e.g., L. Tarassuk. *Antique European and American firearms at the Hermitage Museum*. Leningrad, 1972, Nos. 213, 233.
19. A. Marozzo, *op.cit.*, f.128. This woodcut, like those on ff.129, 133, shows the dagger in a position that makes it impossible to say whether this weapon had a side ring.
20. Egerton Castle, *op.cit.*, p. 35.
21. C. Agrippa. *Trattato di scientia d'arme*. Rome, 1553.
22. For detailed analysis see Egerton Castle, *op.cit.*, p. 45 sq.
23. G. di Grassi, *op.cit.*, *passim*. — A. Viggiani. *Lo schermo*. Venice, 1575. The latter treatise, actually completed in 1560, was first to emphasize the superiority of the thrust over the cut.
24. G. di Grassi, *op.cit.*, pp. 36-49.
25. G. di Grassi, *op.cit.*, p. 39: "Altri sono a quali piace di tenir il pugnale con la faccia uerso l'inimico, seruendosi per difesa non solo del pugnale, ma delle guardie ancora di esso pugnale con le quali dicono che si fa presa d'una spada, & per cio fare piu facilmente, hanno i loro pugnali, i quali oltra l'else ordinarie, hanno ancora due alette di ferro lunghe quatro dita diritte distanti dal pugnale la grossezza d'una corda d'arco, nellaiquale distanza quando auiene, che se gli cacci la spada inimica, essi subito uolgendo la mano stringono la spada facendo prese di essa . . ."
26. G. A. Lovino. [*Traité d'escrime dédié au roi Henri III*]. Italian MS No. 959 at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Reproduction published by this Library, n.d.
27. M. de la Beraudière. *Le combat de seul à seul en camp clos*. Paris, 1608, p. 182: ". . . le poignard est semblablement rendu advantageux d'une coquille bien couverte."
28. See, e.g., A. R. Dufty. *European swords and daggers in the Tower of London*. London, 1974, pl. 41 a, b.
29. G. Silver. *Bref instructions vpo[n] my paradoxes of defence*. Edited by Cyril G. R. Matthey, London, 1898, pp. 106-7.
30. Examining stilettoes with side ring in the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum, Bashford Dean probably somewhat hesitated in their classification for he described them as "stylets which in fact, were it not for their small size and slender blades, might justly be included with parrying daggers" (*op.cit.*, p. 142). Nevertheless he did include these weapons in the section entitled "Stylets — parrying daggers." In my opinion, seven stilettoes in this Collection belong to the same group (Nos. 14.25.1300, 26.145.101, 26.145.113-115, 26.145.117, 26.145.85).
31. Brantôme, *Mémoires*, pp. 100-1: ". . . pour parer et destourner les coups que l'autre luy donnoit, il avoit, la main toute découpée de playes."
32. J. Sutor. *New Künstliches Fechtbuch*. Frankfurt, 1612. Facsimile edition by J. Scheibe, Stuttgart, 1849, p. 75.
33. A diagramed analysis of constructional structure of these blades is given by B. Dean, *Dagger Catalogue*, p. 111 sq.
34. J. Tortorel et J. Perissin. *Les grandes scènes historiques du XVI^e siècle*. Edited by A. Franklin, Paris, 1886.
35. Museo Bardini, Florence; reproduced in: L. G. Boccia, E. T. Coelhol. *Armi bianchi italiane*. Milano, 1975, ills. 568, 569.
36. Use of the parrying dagger as an ordinary stabbing dagger or knife is well illustrated by Salvator Fabris in his *De lo schermo overo scienza d'arme* (Copenhagen, 1606), Figs. on pp. 251, 253, 255.
- 36bis. Dr. H. Nickel draw my attention to the saber (Metropolitan Museum No. 14.99.77AB) that could be handled by a left-hander only for it has a closed guard and a thumb ring on the left side of the guard.
37. *The works of George Silver*. Edited by Cyril G. R. Matthey, 1898, p. 56.
38. *George Silver*, p. 30.
39. *George Silver*, pp. 32-33.
40. See A. Wise, *Personal Combat*, p. 61.
41. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v.
42. J. Nicot. *Thresor de la langue françoise*. Paris, 1606/1621, s.v. *Dague*: "Est vne maniere de courte espée, d'un tiers presque de la deüe [due] longueur d'une espée, qu'on porte d'ordinaire non avec pendants de ceinture à espée, ne pendant du costé gauche (pour les droitiers) ains qu'on fait l'espée, ains attachée droite à la ceinture du costé droit, ou sur les reins. Laquelle ores est large et à pointce d'espée, ores est façonnée à 2 arestes entre les trenchans, et à pointce plus aigue . . . La dague se pourroit aussi nommer poignard, co[m]bien que le poignard soit et plus court et moins chargé de maitirère . . ."
43. *Ibid.*, s.v. *Poignard*: "Est vne espèce de dague courte, la lame à quatre arestes, ayant la pointce en grain d'orge, là où la dague a la lame plus large, et la pointce en façon d'espée."
44. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *Dagger* (recorded from the fourteenth century).
45. G. Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence*. 1898 reprint ed. by C. G. R. Matthey, p. 66.
46. V. Saviolo. *His practise . . . of the use of the rapier and dagger . . .* London, 1595.
47. J. Florio. *A worlde of wordes*. London, 1598. — *Queen Anna's new world of words*. London, 1611. — *Vocabolario Italiano & Inglese*. London, 1688.
48. F. Godefroy. *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue françoise, s.vv.*
49. G. Thibault, *Académie*. (1628/1630).
50. M. de la Beraudière, *Combat de Seul à Seul*.
51. H. de Saint-Didier. *Traicté . . . sur l'espée seule*. Paris, 1573.
52. Brantôme, *Mémoires*, p. 37.
53. Brantôme, *Mémoires*, p. 32.
54. Brantôme, *Mémoires*, pp. 66, 80.
55. Brantôme, *Mémoires*, pp. 229, 231, 233, 260 etc.
56. J. und W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. — Joachim Meyer pointed out that *Rappier* had been invented and brought to Germany "by other nations" (*Gründliche Beschreibung der . . . Kunst des Fechtens*. Strassburg, 1570, f.L).
57. Paris de Puteo, *Duello*, Lib. IV, f.G[V].
58. [Girolamo] Mutio Iustinopolitano. *La Faustina delle armi cavalleresche*. Venetia, 1560, p. 32: ". . . daghe, daghette, pugnali di diuerse maniere . . ."
59. Paris de Puteo, *Duello*, Lib. IV, f.G [VI]: "con spate et pugnali."
60. [Sebastiano] Fausto da Longiano. *Duello regolato à le leggi de l'honore*. Venice, 1551, p. 54.
61. G. di Grassi, *op.cit.*, p. 39: ". . . tenendolo con il taglio uerso l'inimico si ha questo auantagio che co'l pugnale si puo ferire di taglio . . ."
62. G. Torriano. *Dictionary English and Italian*. London, 1687, s.vv.
63. In view of the evidence considered, it is hard to accept Bashford Dean's definition of the term *poignards* as "quillon daggers which from the early sixteenth century were used in the left hand as an aid to parrying" (B. Dean, *Dagger Catalogue*, p. 8). Dr. Heribert Seitz mentions a Spanish term *daga de mano izquierda* (also *mano izquierda* and *izquierda*) for Spanish shellguard daggers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, without a reference to his source (H. Seitz, *Blankwaffen*, vol. II, pp. 138, 139, 192). It must be noted that even if some writer casually used this term, it was in no way popular among Spanish fencers and authors for none of the most reliable dictionaries ever recorded it (J. Corominas. *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*. Berna, 1954. — M. Alonso. *Enciclopedia del idioma*. Madrid, 1958. — Real Academia Española. *Diccionario de la lengua española*. Madrid, 1970).