“The Torneada & Destreza Kick”

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Source

Manuscript of Octavio Ferrara[1] - Compendio y Filosofía y Deztreza de las armas reducido a su simplicidad, 1625

There are two versions:

1. A (original) Manuscript in the collection of MAM by Roberto Gotti in Botticino, published by AGEA Editora[2]
2. A (copied) Manuscript in the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium (MS R4-B274)[3]

Transcription of the Gotti edition Page 31 v: La torneada

CÓMO SE HACE. (La Torneada)

Esta treta la inventó algún hombre desatinado, según en sus efectos se ve, y es que comunican la espada por la parte de adentro a modo de ganancia, y desde allí da una vuelta a la redonda hacia su lado izquierdo, y así da la espada con dos manos, y acercándose mucho a su enemigo le quiere dar una herida en los pechos o en la barriga, y dicen que la espada de su enemigo no es de provecho entonces. Y no se tome a cosa de risa, porque un maestro que hay en Flandes que se llama Giraldo Gibaute dicen que la aprueba por buena, tal sea su salud[4],

LA DEFENSA.

y para que empecemos a decir las defensas que hay contra ella: al principio que hace la ganancia puede el diestro dar un compás con el pie izquierdo y hacer movimiento de conclusión; y si no se aprovechare de aquel principio, cuando empezare a dar la vuelta puede el diestro darle tan fuerte coz en las nalgas que dé con él en el suelo hiriéndole de cuchillada, juntamente que a quien tal treta hace es justo tratarle como a bestia; y si no quisiere el diestro aprovecharse de eso, podrá abrazarle por detrás y con el pomo de su guarnición darle

[1] https://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Octavio_Ferrara

[2] https://ageaeditora.com/en/livros/ferrara/

[3] https://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Compendio_y_Philosophia_y_Dztreza_de_las_Armas_(MS_R4-B274)

[4] "Tal sea su salud" is an ironic or sarcastic expression. Literally, it means "such may his health be." Idiomatically, it can be understood as "may his health be what it deserves," or "God help his health." In this context, it conveys the author's disapproval or mockery of Giraldo Gibaute, adding a dismissive or contemptuous remark after mentioning that Gibaute approves of the technique.

un golpe en, el celebro, y si quiere usar treta galante y provechosa dará un compás con el pie izquierdo mixto hacia su lado derecho y le herirá de tajo o estocada o medio revés, porque para todo hay disposición; y si le cogiese tan de improviso que todo lo dicho faltase, dará un compás desde punto N a punto O y reducirase al ángulo recto, y si quiere hacer atajo en la espada que entonces le será cosa fácil, y desde allí conseguirá la treta más conveniente según la disposición ly porque no hemos dicho que cosa sea ganancia,' es cuando una espada se pone encima de la otra a modo de tentada que de este lenguaje usan los esgrimidores

Translation

HOW IT IS DONE. (The Torneada[5])

This technique was invented by some reckless man, as its effects clearly show. It consists of bringing the sword inward, as though seeking a gain (ganancia[6]), and from there making a circular motion toward one's left side. Then the sword is wielded with both hands, and by closing in very tightly upon the opponent, one attempts to strike a wound to the chest or the belly. They claim that in such a situation the enemy's sword is of no use. And let no one take this as a joke, for there is a master in Flanders named Giraldo Gibaute[7] who, they say, approves of it as a sound method - may his health be as it deserves.

THE DEFENSE.

To begin describing the defenses against it: at the moment the opponent makes the gain (ganancia), the diestro may take a compás with the left foot and execute a movement of conclusion[8]. If he does not take advantage of that initial moment, then, when the opponent begins to make the circular movement, the diestro may kick him so hard in the buttocks that he throws him to the ground, striking him with a revés at the same time - for anyone who performs such a trick deserves to be treated like an animal.

If the diestro does not wish to take advantage of that, he may instead seize him from behind and strike him on the head with the pommel of his hilt.

Or, if he wishes to employ a more elegant and effective technique, he should take a mixed compás with the left foot toward his right side and wound him with a tajo, a thrust, or a medio revés, for the position allows for any of these.

And if he should be caught so unexpectedly that none of the foregoing is possible, he should take a compás from point N to point O and recover to the right angle. If he then wishes to establish an atajo

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[5] Treta vulgar, mentioned for example by Pacheco (Cien conclusiones, Modo facil y Nueva Ciencia) und Pérez de Mendoza (Principios).

[6] Treta vulgar = Gaining the sword, mentioned by Pacheco and Pérez de Mendoza but also for example in Luis Godinho's Arte de Esgrima 1599, folio 18r. Godinho advises it frequently, defining ganar as taking control of the middle of the opponent's sword

[7] Gérard Thibault d'Anvers (ca. 1574–1627).

[8] A disarm, mostly by seizing or securing the opponent's sword with the off-hand.

on the opponent's sword, it will be an easy matter, and from there he may execute whichever technique is most appropriate according to the circumstances.

Finally, since we have not yet explained what a gain (ganancia) is: it is when one sword is placed over the other in the manner of a probing contact - this being the term commonly used by swordsmen.

Interpretation

HOW IT IS DONE.

1. Fencer A (vulgar diestro) and fencer B (diestro verdadero) facing each other in wide measure.
2. A performs a ganancia on the inside, stepping with the right foot. Contact is made on the middle of the blade of A with some kind of energy and resolution.
3. A performs the torneada and to do so he spins around on the point oft he right foot and delivers a thrust with both hands on the hilt of the sword to the chest of B.

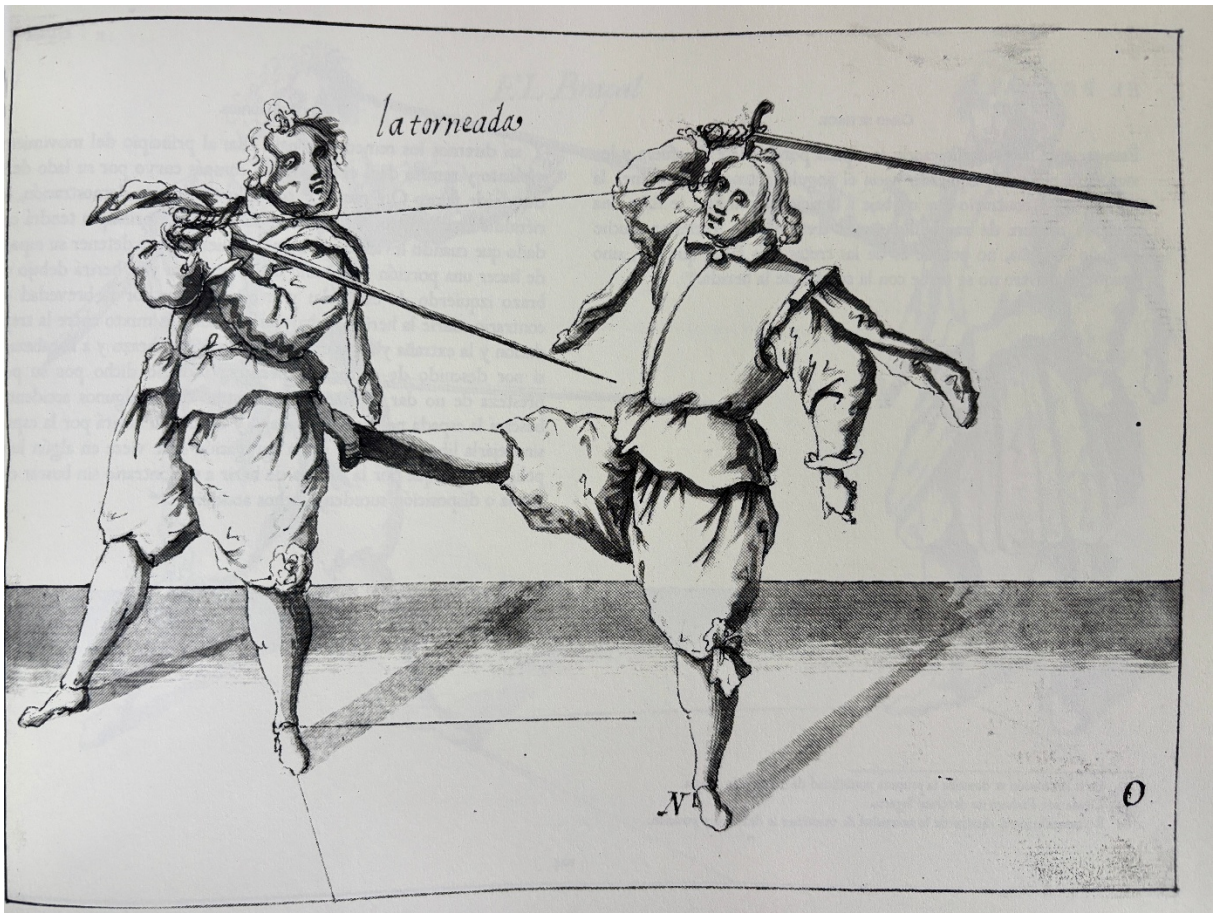
THE DEFENSE.

1. After the ganancia of A and right before the torneada, B performs a movement of conlcusion (disarm) by grabbing the opponent’s hilt with the left hand and threaten with the sword to the face and simultaneously stepping with the left forward out of the diametral line to his left, bringing the right foot behind the left foot. B can execute wounds as he wishes.
2. During the torneada of A, B performs a kick with the right foot to the left buttock of A that brings him to the ground, and instantly or during this execution performs a revés towards A.
3. Instead of performing a kick and revés, B goes during the execution oft he torneada into grappling with A, hugs him from behind and delivers a pommel strike with his sword to the head of A.
4. The more elegant reaction and maybe Ferrara’s preferred option is, that B performs a mixed compás (diagonal backwards) to his right side and in the same movement B delivers a tajo[9], a thrust or a medio revés[10] towards A during his execution oft he torneada. In our interpretation we prefer to select a a medio revés, because a medio revés could be easily deliverd tot he face of A.
5. The last option of B would be to retreat into the Medio de proporción[11] during the torneada of A. This would grant the option to perform an Atajo and attack by B as he wishes. This is the safest option.

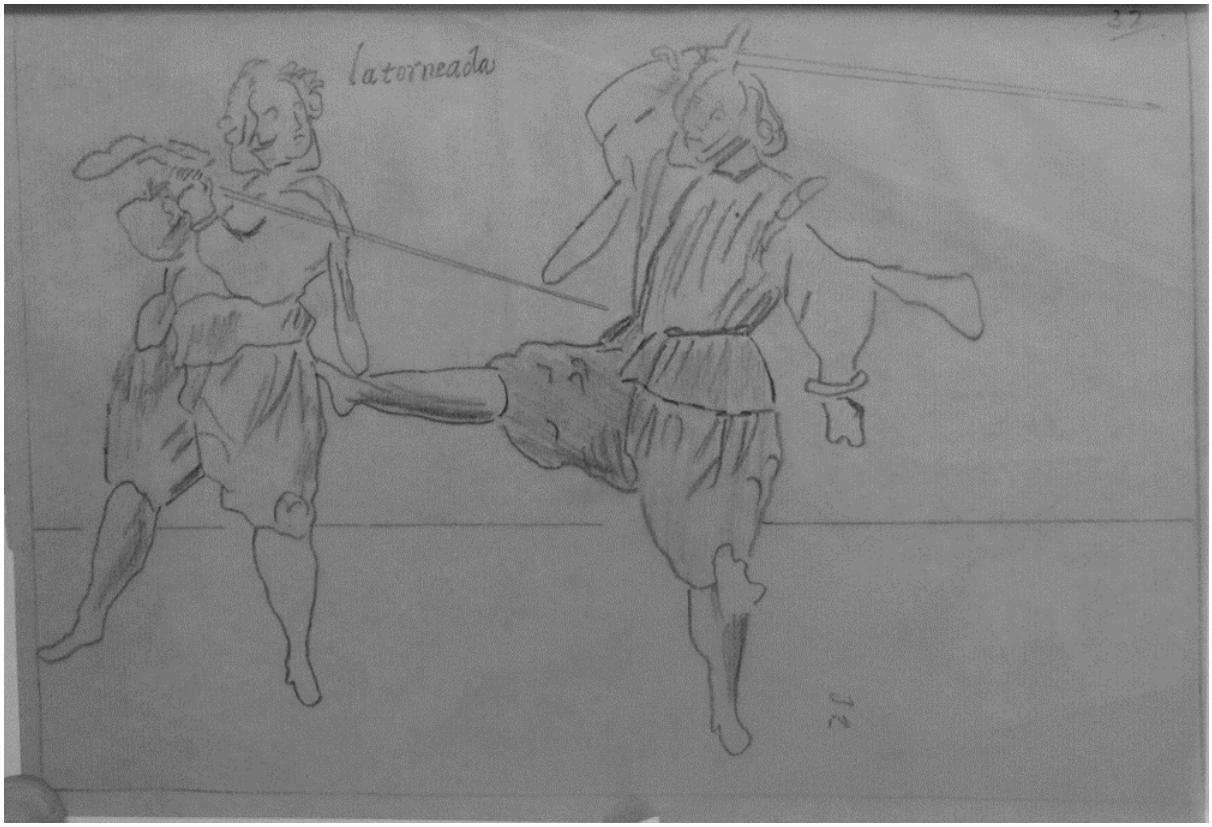
[9] Cut from the right side.

[10] A half cut from the left side.

[11] The Medio de proporción in La Verdadera Destreza is the initial safety distance, position and angle. At this medio, the fencers stand as close as possible to the opponent without being in immediate danger, such that the opponent’s sword point does not extend beyond one’s own pommel oft he sword and neither fencer can wound the other without first taking a step or performing an additional movement.



Gotti edition by AGEA Editora, page 32 v (Copy of original drawing)



MS R4-B274, page 32 r (Tracing of the original drawing)

ANNOTATIONS

Several remarkable conclusions can be drawn from this passage of Ferrara's work. First, it is striking that the imagery of the manuscript appears considerably more martial in character than is usually encountered in many other sources of the Verdadera Destreza. Comparable depictions are more commonly found in Italian fencing treatises, for example those of Capoferro's - Gran Simulacro dell'Arte e dell'Uso della Scherma - from 1610[12]. Particularly noteworthy are the illustrations showing thrusts directed into the opponent's eye - a form of representation that is rather unusual in Destreza sources overall. However, it must be taken into account that many of these works were published and printed, and therefore passed through processes of both secular and ecclesiastical censorship. From the perspective of the Catholic Church, killing another Christian was considered a sin, and it is therefore possible that depictions and descriptions of violence were deliberately softened or morally framed.

The torneada appears to have been not only a known vulgar technique, but also an act of insult or provocation. This becomes particularly evident in Ferrara's remark that "juntamente que a quien tal treta hace es justo tratarle como a bestia / anyone who performs such a trick deserves to be treated like an animal." Such a strong statement suggests that executing this action carried a significant element of humiliation or disrespect toward the opponent. It can therefore be assumed that this judgement was not limited exclusively to the context of a fencing school, but also applied to the context of a duel. Within a fencing hall, it would have been the responsibility of the instructors or overseers to intervene, whereas in a duel such an action would have carried a much more personal significance.

The reference to Thibault is particularly interesting in this regard. In his work Académie de l'Espée[13], which was published posthumously in 1630[14], Thibault describes several 360-degree turns[15] that, in their outward appearance, correspond to a torneada. It is likely that Thibault encountered this technique during his time in Spain (approximately 1605–1610), where he worked as a wool merchant in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, south of Seville, and where he was strongly influenced by the Verdadera Destreza. However, the torneada described by Thibault must be considered separately regarding both its tactical circumstances and technical execution and should not be directly equated with Ferrara's description.

According to Malte Melms[16] a fundamental distinction lies in the fact that Thibault does not describe a movement as an isolated trick, but rather develops it from the specific tactical situation. Distance, timing, and the opponent's reaction within the course of a movement are decisive factors. It is precisely this integration into a tactical framework that elevates Thibault's torneada from a mere

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[12] https://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Gran_Simulacro_dell%27Arte_e_dell%27Uso_della_Scherma_(Ridolfo_Capo_Ferro_da_Cagli), for example in Figure 7.

[13] https://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Academie_de_l%27Esp%C3%A9e_(Girard_Thibault_d%27Anvers)

[14] Thibault's book was published after Ferrara wrote his manuscript. Ferrara must heard of Thibault's technique before.

[15] For example on Tabula eight.

[16] https://www.academia-da-espada-germany.de/maltemelms

deception or trick into a fully developed technique. He employs it particularly in situations where his right leg is loaded and his grados del perfil are threatened. In order to maintain the natural flow of movement while simultaneously turning the body away from danger, the resulting actions often take the form of movements similar to the Italian inquartata, girata or vulgar escampavita[17]. At very close distance - such as during the transition from the second to the third instance - these movements can, in their extreme form, develop into torneadas.

The connection to the Italian inquartata therefore appears essential for understanding the torneada within Thibault's system. In essence, it can be regarded as a logical continuation of this principle. Thibault makes extensive use of lateral body displacement and employs body weight less as a static centre of balance and more as momentum for continuous movement. His actions are rarely brought to a complete stop; instead, direction is changed by redirecting the movement of the body's centre of gravity. Although Thibault does not explicitly formulate this concept, it may be suggested that it is theoretically connected to contemporary ideas of tempo theory, in which time in combat is defined through the beginning and ending of movements. A movement that has once been initiated and continues without interruption could, in this sense, be understood as a continuous tempo - an idea that also recalls concepts found, for example, in the second book of Fabris[18].

The pommel strike mentioned by Ferrara as an alternative is also noteworthy, as - much like the kick -such an action occupies an unusual position within the canon of the Verdadera Destreza. While the pommel strike was certainly known as a technique in longsword fencing, its application with the rapier introduces a further area of use. It must be considered that rapiers around the mid-1620s often still possessed comparatively large pommels, which would have been capable of causing considerable injury. In the later development of the Spanish rapier into the cup-hilt rapier, a general tendency toward smaller pommels can be observed, despite individual exceptions. This may reflect a gradual change in the practical relevance of such actions.

[17] Treta vulgar = Stepping with the left foot behind the right foot and to the right side, turning to the left, often executed with a thrust, mentioned for example in Pacheco's Modo facil.

[18] https://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Salvator_Fabris

Spanish rapier by Thomas de Aiala, ca. 1600[19]

In keeping with the principles of the Verdadera Destreza, Ferrara also describes the two most obvious responses to such a situation: first, exploiting the opening created by the action through a treta particular, such as a tajo, revés, or thrust; and second, the safe withdrawal into the Medio de proporción in order to prepare a controlled attack through an atajo. Thus, despite its unusual character, the described technique remains fully integrated into the underlying tactical system of the Verdadera Destreza.

Thibault, Academie de l'Espée, Tabula 8[20]

[19] https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/21936.

[20] https://wiktenauer.com/wiki/File:Academie_de_l%27Esp%C3%A9e_(Thibault)_1-07.jpg#/media/File:Academie_de_l'Esp%C3%A9e_(Thibault)_1-07.jpg

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ISBN 979-13-88465-01-7

Language: Spanish

Price: 35 Euros

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