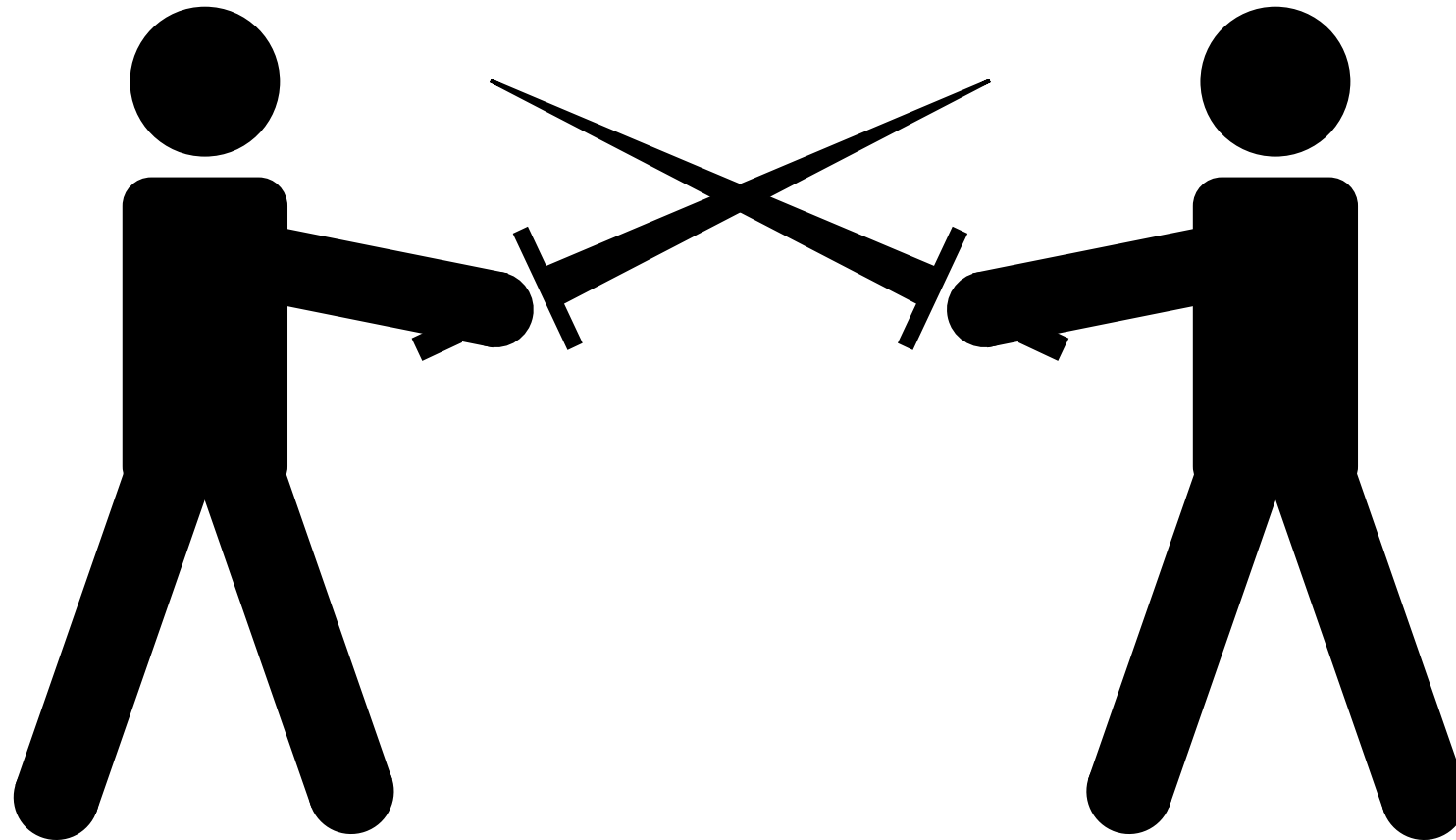


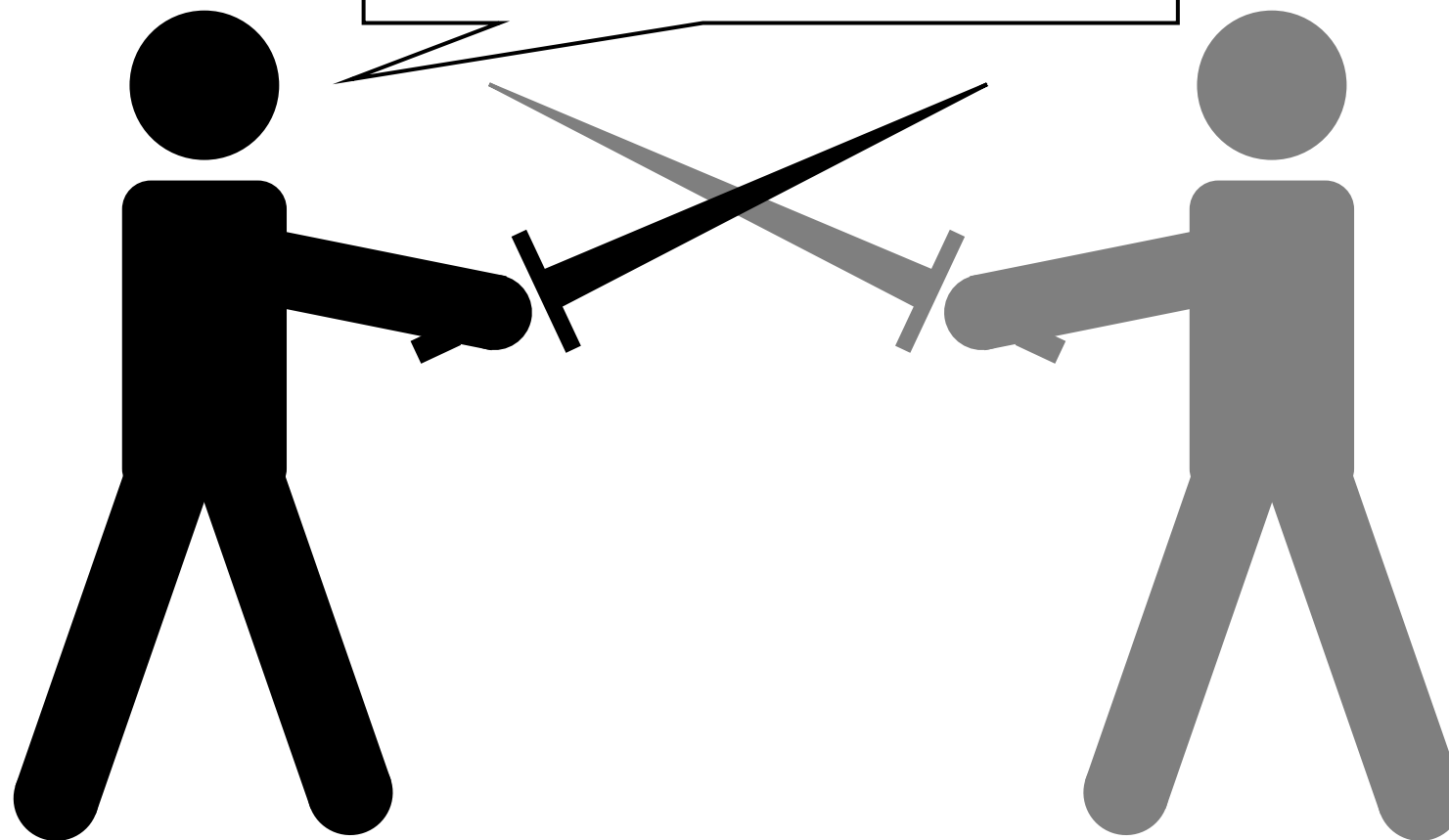
Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II



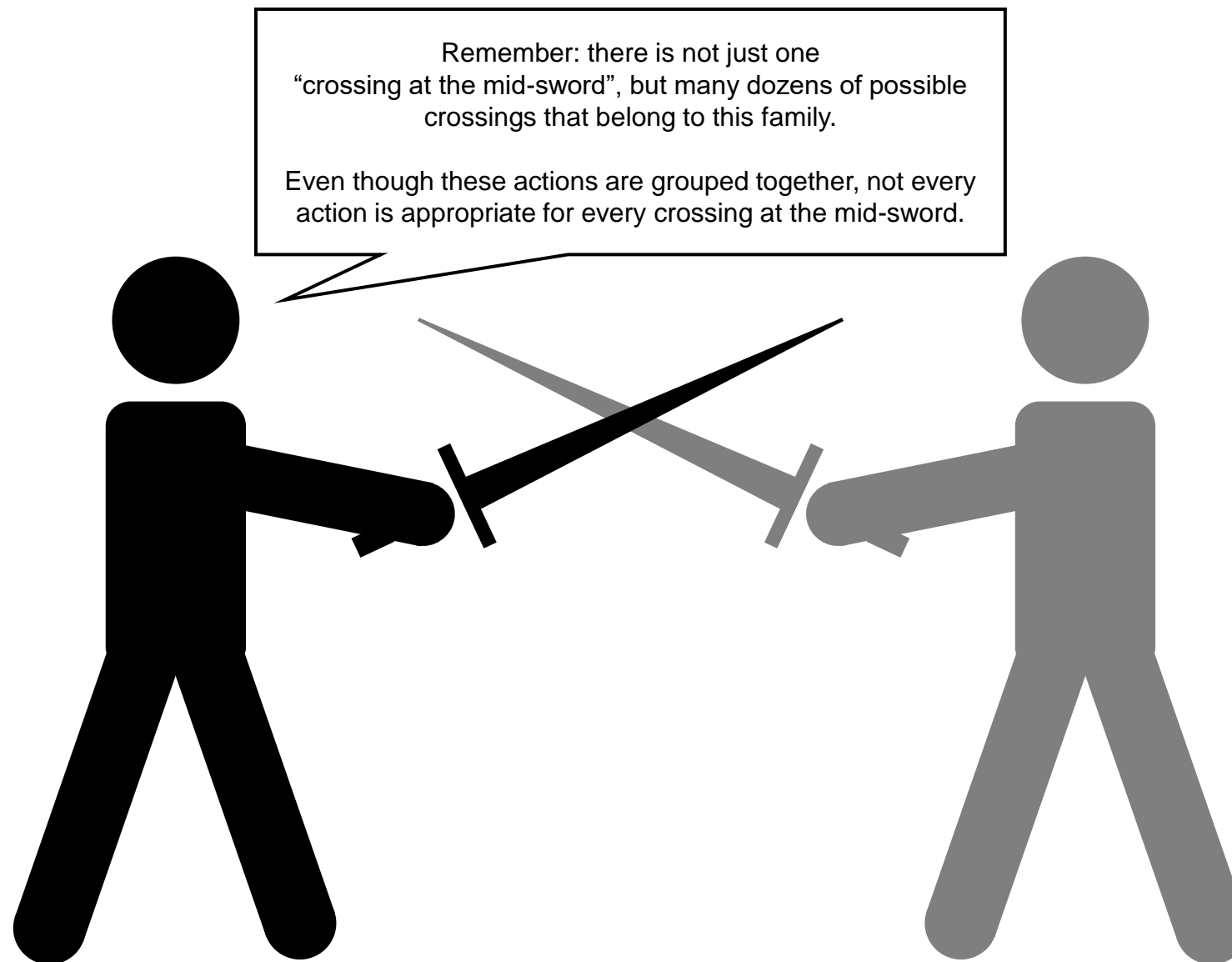
Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

In the [last post](#), we saw the most important plays of the second master of *largo* crossed at the middle of the swords.

In this part, we look at the remaining plays.



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Second scholar: blade grab

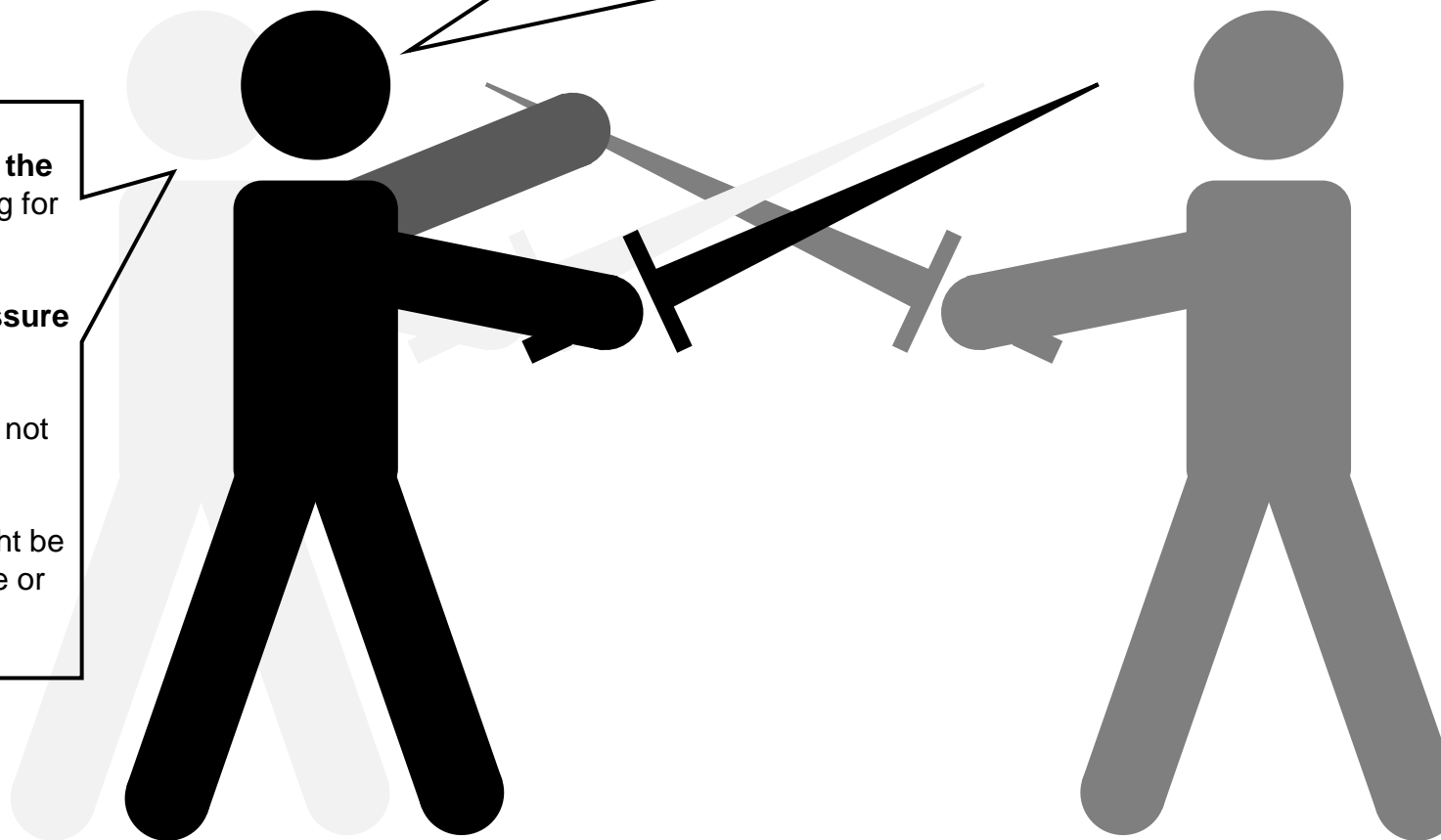
If I am **close enough to reach my opponent's blade** with a small step or no step at all and **my opponent's blade is not moving**, I can grab it with my non-dominant to give me a window of opportunity to strike directly.

I want a **crossing that closes the direct line of attack** while going for the grab.

I also want at least a little **pressure in the crossing**.

The pressure tells me they are not leaving the crossing.

If there is no pressure, they might be cutting around to the other side or attacking my leg.



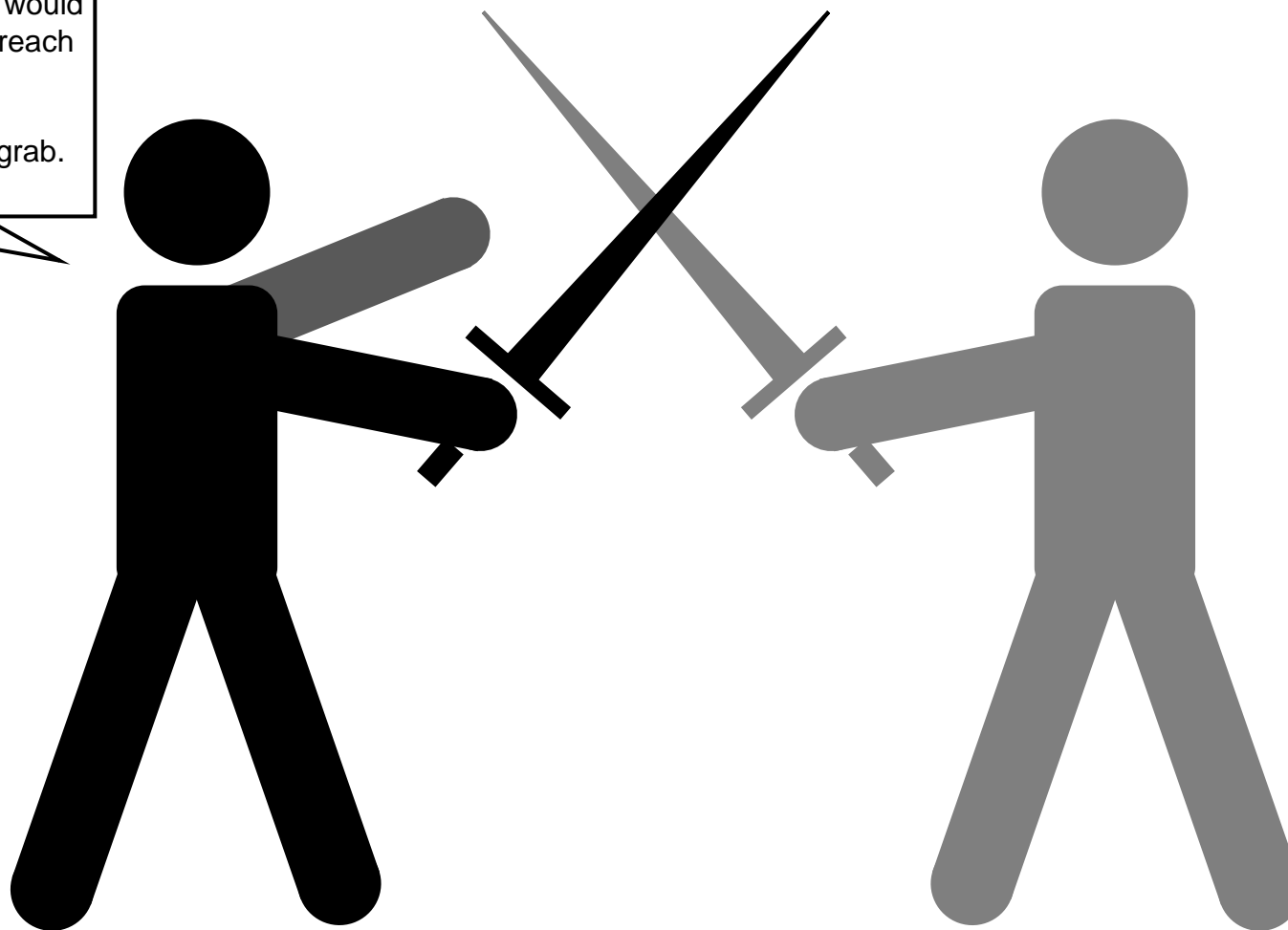
Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Second scholar: blade grab

This is also a crossing at the mid-sword.

Even though I am closer to my opponent, I would need a big step* or multiple small ones to reach my opponent's sword.

This is not a good time to initiate a blade grab.



* Where is the border between a “small” and a “big” step? I think this is too context-dependent to give you a rule, but I think any passing step is too big for a blade grab in a *largo* situation

Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Second scholar: blade grab

If I successfully grab my opponent's blade and they flee, I can follow them.

If their blade does not slide across my hand, it will not cut me.

See [this article](#) for a detailed discussion of how grabbing a sharp blade can work.



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

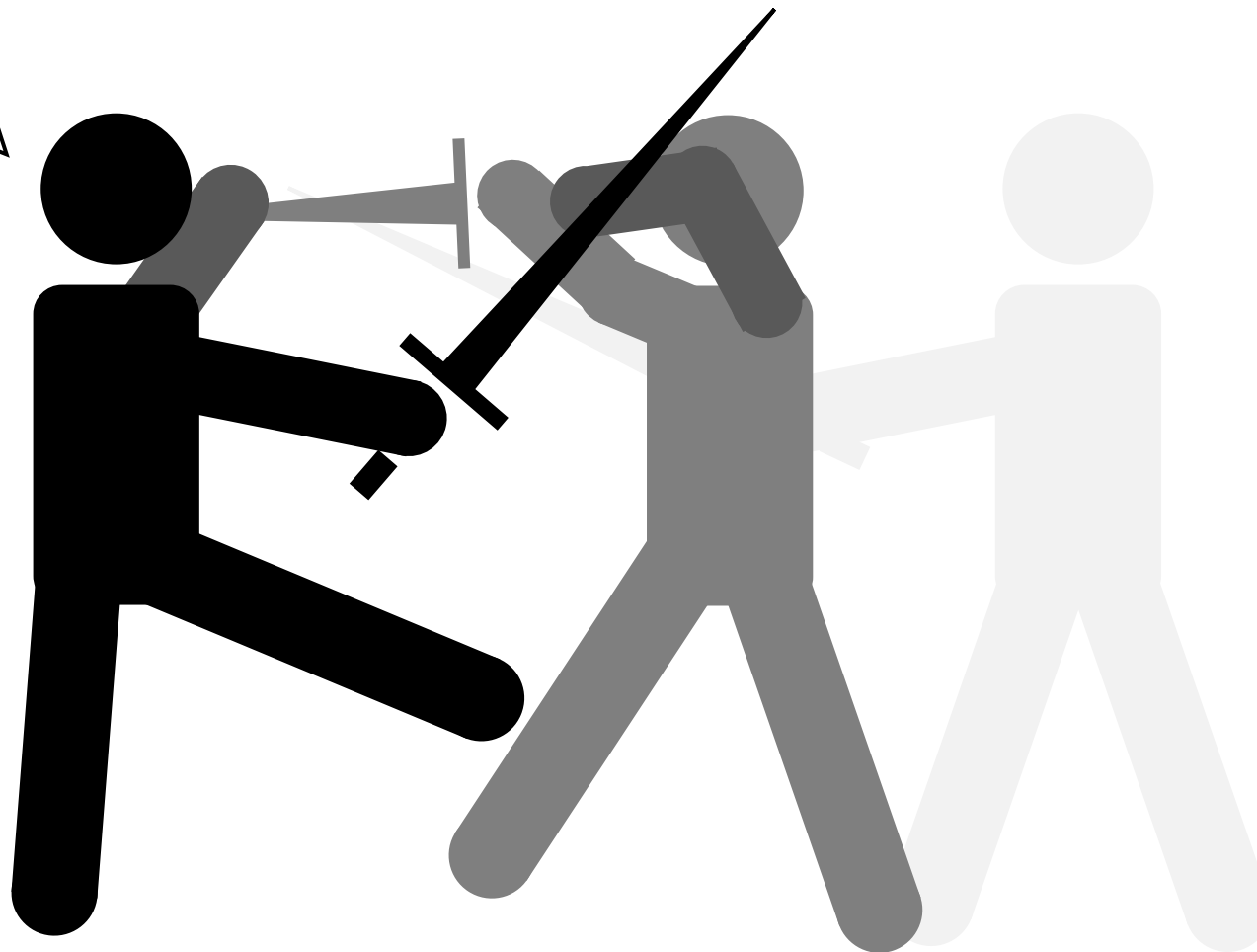
Third scholar: blade grab and kick

If I successfully grab my opponent's blade, another common reaction is for the opponent to rush in.

Maybe they want to shove the strong of their sword into the path of my attack or maybe they want to wrestle.

The third scholar of the second *largo* master shows a kick to the shin or knee to "destroy the leg".

In modern sparring, where we do not want to destroy our training partners, a push kick to the stomach or hip can fulfil a similar purpose.



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Second and third scholars: blade grab

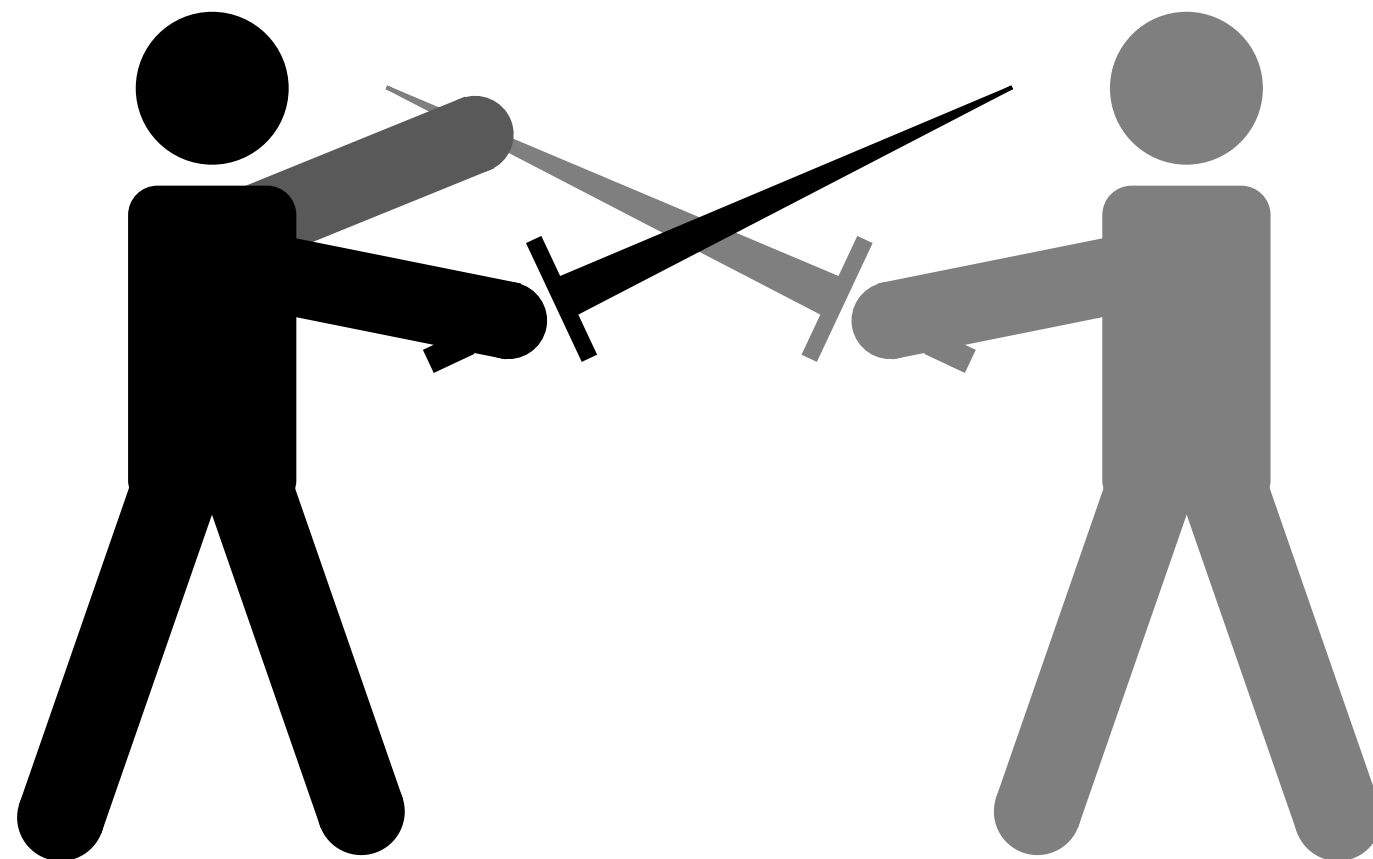
Discussion

Requisites for Blade Grab

- **Necessary**
 1. Opponent's blade is not moving in a way that can harm you
 2. Opponent's blade is in reach
- **Nice to have**
 3. You have a good crossing
 4. You feel at least a little pressure in the crossing
 5. The crossing happened on your terms
 - You provoked the crossing
 - You interrupted your opponent's action

Other Tips

- Grab with your non-dominant hand, thumb pointing down
- Approach the opponent's blade from your dominant side (So, for a right-hander, the grab is made from right to left)
- Blade grabs are easiest when the crossing is on your inside (for a right-hander, on your left-side)
 - If the point of your sword is up, the grab is intuitive
 - If the point of your sword is down, grab under your dominant arm



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

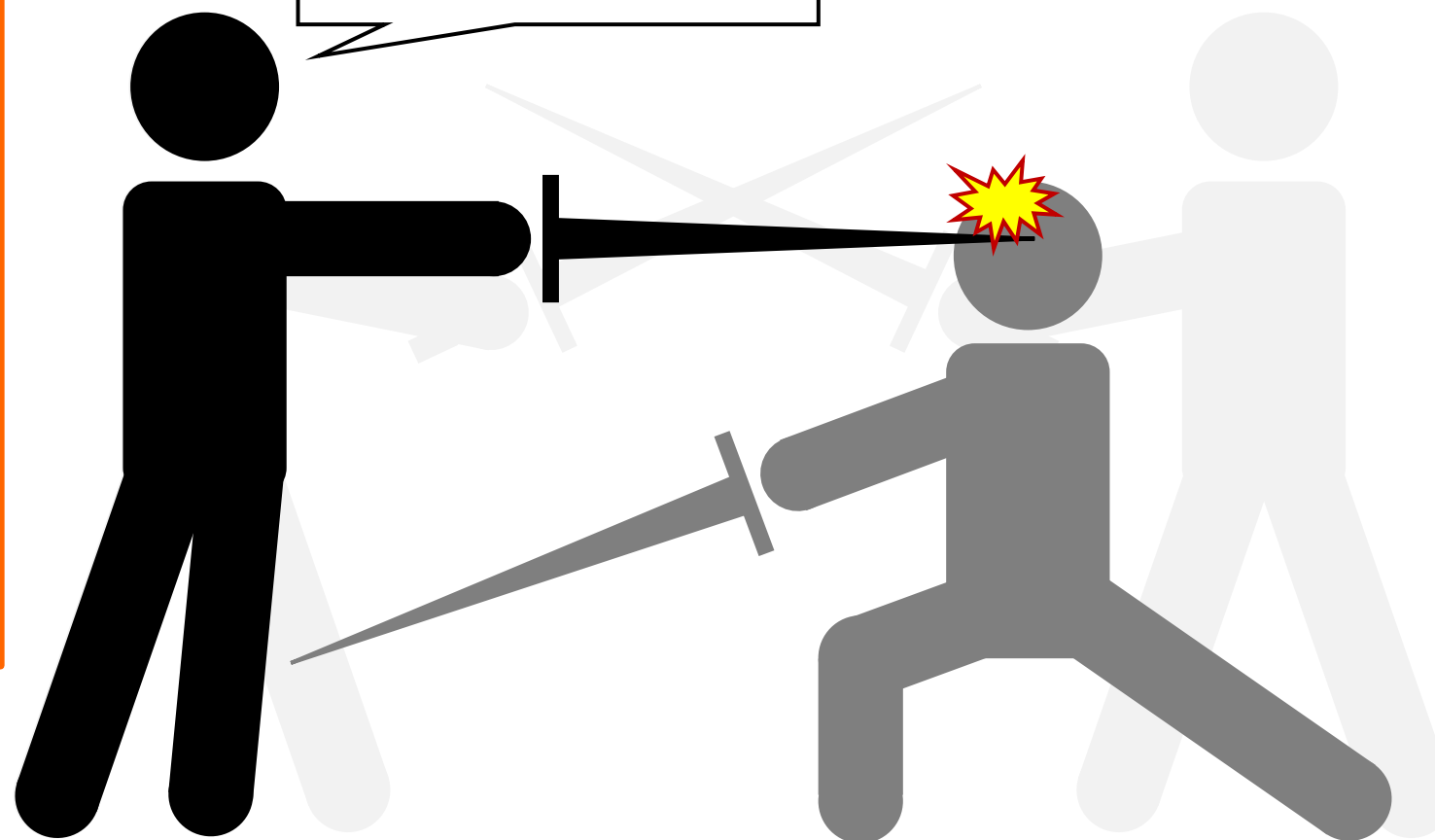
Sixth scholar: slip the front leg

Fiore admonishes the reader not to attack the leg below the knee while using the sword in two hands because it leaves the attacker too exposed.

He writes, “Unless one had fallen to the ground, then you could well strike at the leg. But otherwise no, being sword against sword.”

Fiore is conceding that there are edge cases where a strike below the knee is reasonable, but the core message is clear: unless there is some extenuating circumstance, going for the leg is risky.

If your opponent strikes at your front leg, withdraw the leg and hit them in the head at the same time.



Why does Fiore include this play with the second master of *largo* crossed at the middle of the swords?

Obviously, it is **possible** but not **necessary** for the opponent to attack your leg from a crossing.

I think this is an indication that we should generalize the actions of the masters to situations without a crossing.

The crossing is also related to distance. Generally, the front leg is only accessible at the distance where the swords would cross near the middle if they were crossed at shoulder height.

Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Seventh scholar: kick in the groin

Quoting Fiore's directly:

"This technique is that I strike you with my foot in the balls. I do it to cause you pain and make your cover falter."*

Fiore continues:

"In making this play you want to do it immediately, so you don't have to worry about the counter. The counter to this play wants to be done quickly, thus: the player grabs the right leg of the scholar with their left hand and can throw him to the ground."*



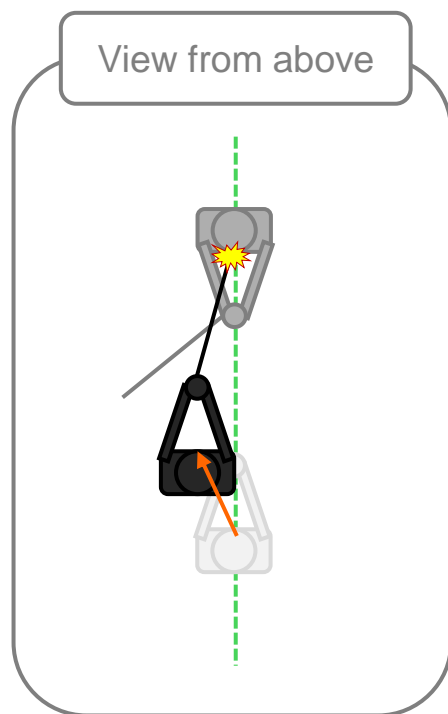
I don't think there's any deep meaning behind this play.

I interpret the groin-kick as being useful for when you are not quite close enough for *Stretto* techniques, but you don't feel like you have any other good options.

Since this technique is not appropriate for modern free fencing, I don't put much emphasis on it. However, if both fencers had sufficient experience in kickboxing, I'm sure one could find sparring-friendly substitute techniques.

Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Eighth scholar: *Scambiar di Punta* (Exchange of Thrusts)

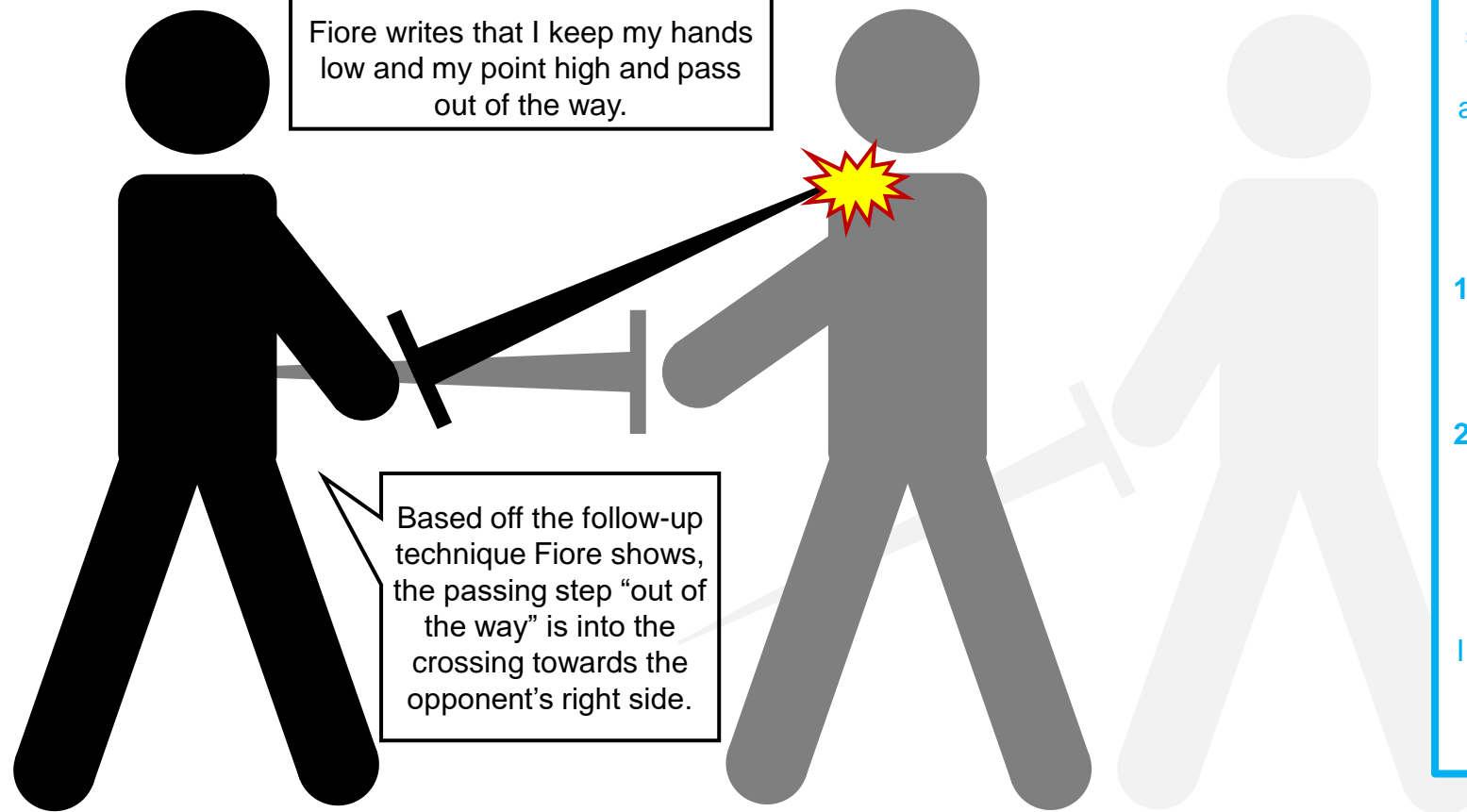


Notice how the footwork is the same as the footwork in slide "A" in Part I of the handout on the second master of *Largo*.

The "Exchange of Thrusts" is a counterattack on tempo against a thrust: my opponent thrusts, and I counterthrust while crossing his sword.

Fiore writes that I keep my hands low and my point high and pass out of the way.

Based off the follow-up technique Fiore shows, the passing step "out of the way" is into the crossing towards the opponent's right side.



Part I:
A

Compare this play to the thrust of the first scholar of the second master of *Largo* (Slide "A" in Part I). The bladework and footwork are practically the same!

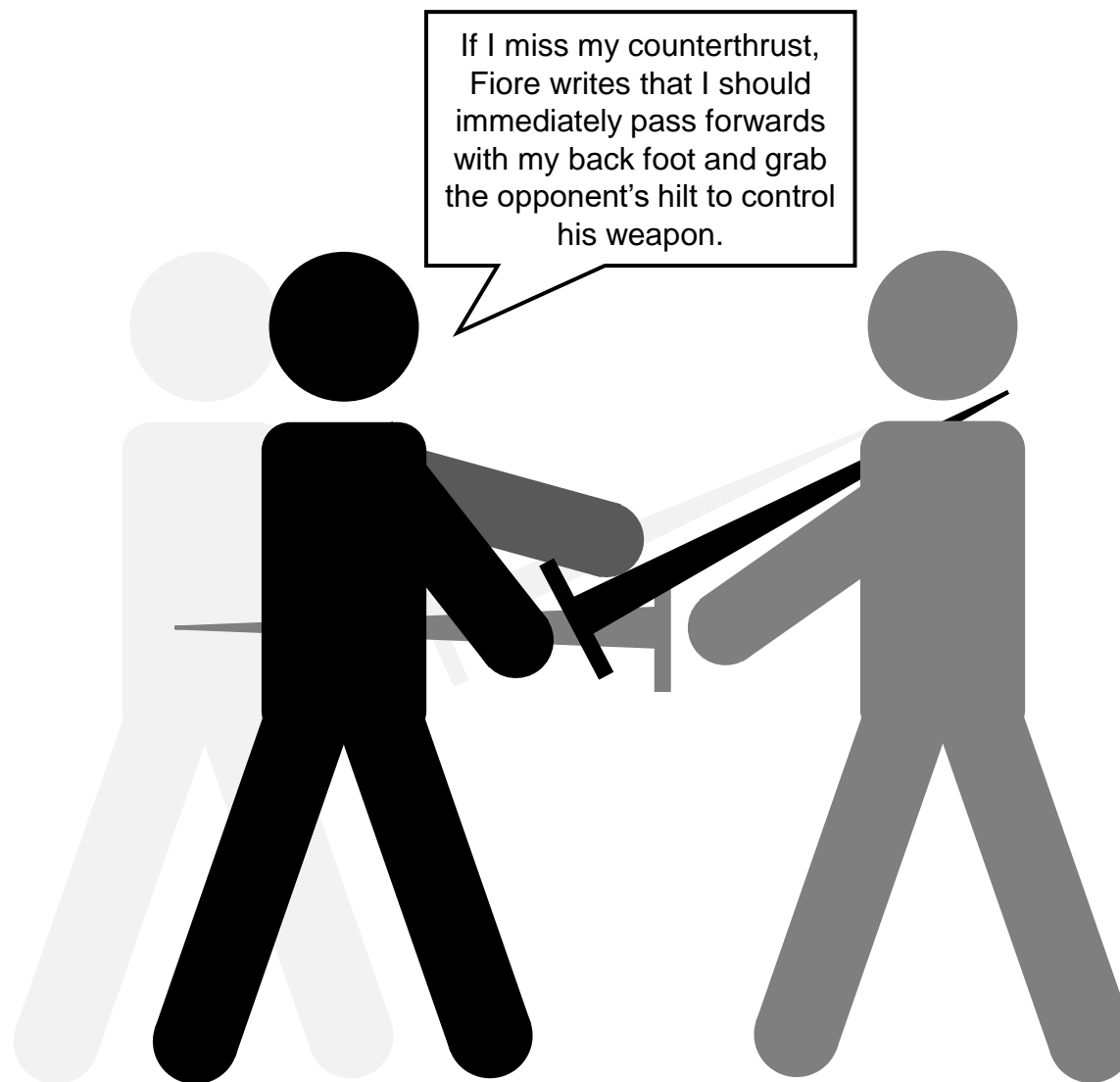
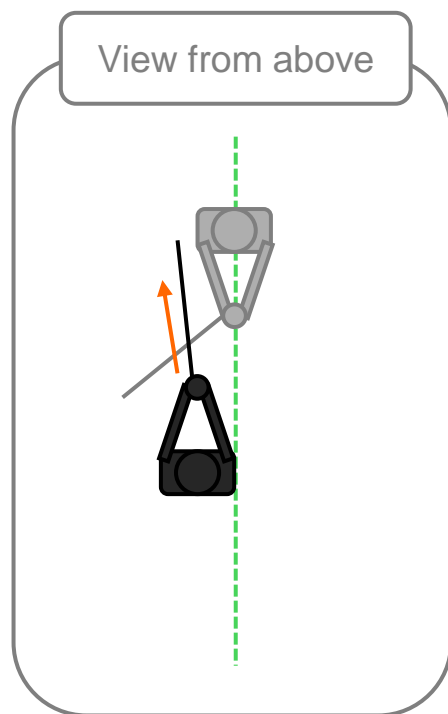
The only differences are:

- 1. The tactical context:**
This is a counterattack, the other is a riposte or a remise
- 2. The height of the hands:**
Fiore explicitly writes that you keep your hands low and keep your point high during the exchange.

I consider the exchange to be a special case of the first scholar's play.

Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Ninth scholar: Follow-up to the *Scambiar di Punta*



Fiore does not explicitly say you missed your counterthrust. He writes only that you did not place the thrust - perhaps because your opponent is wearing armour.

This is one of many examples of Fiore considering armoured combat in his unarmoured plays.

Either way, it's useful to have a follow-up.

Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Eighth scholar: *Scambiar di Punta* (Exchange of Thrusts)

Discussion

In the descriptions of the guards of the sword in two hands, Fiore writes that all guards on the dominant side (right side for right-handers) can exchange **and** break thrusts.

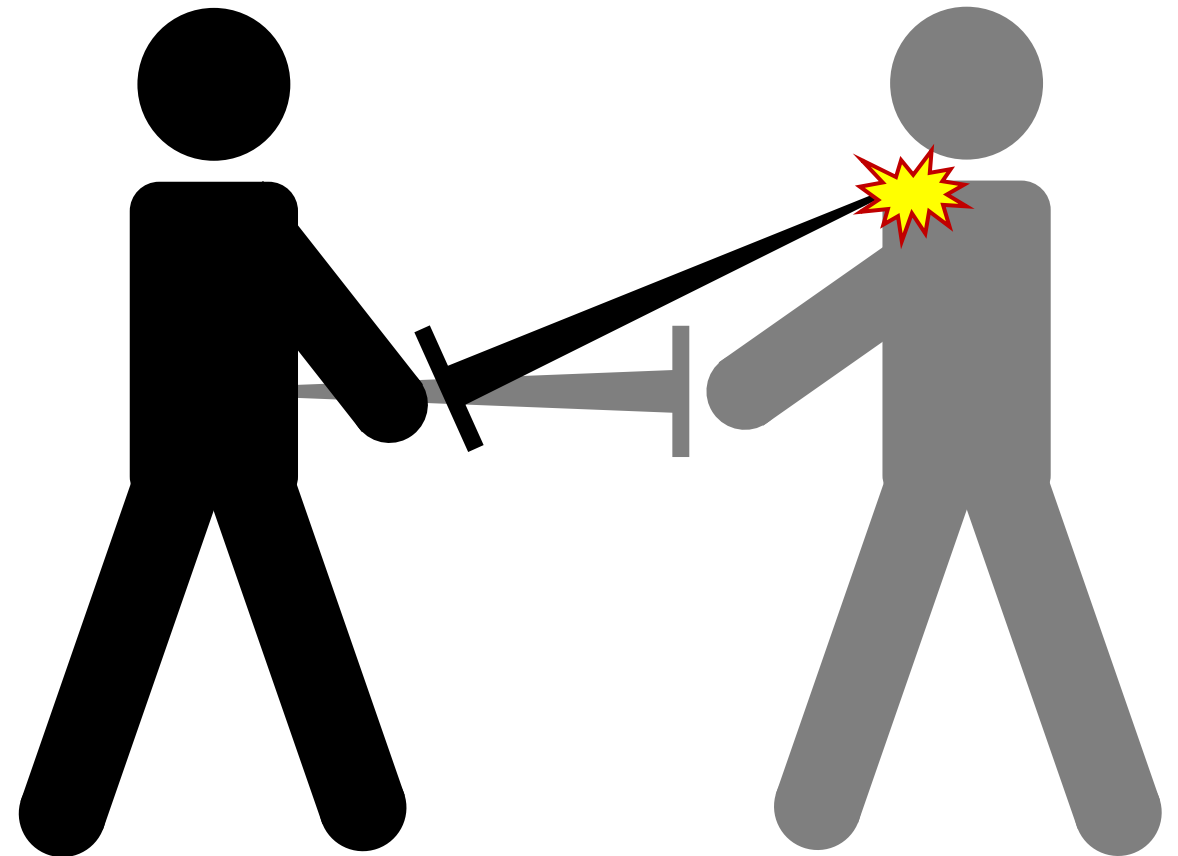
However, he writes that guards on the non-dominant side (the left side for right-handers) can only break thrusts (i.e. beat them out of the way).

Later, Fiore writes:

“All the guards that are out of the way are sufficient to wait with the short lance or short sword against all long hand-held weapons. And those on the right side cover and with the cover pass and place the thrust. And the guards on the left side cover and beat aside, and strike with a blow, and cannot place the thrust so well.”

This suggests an asymmetry and explains why Fiore only recommends the exchange of thrusts from the right for right-handers. Indeed, if you try the exchange from your non-dominant side, you will find it is more difficult. Why?

- The outside of your hand protrudes more than the inside and a simple cross guard does not compensate for this
- Your arms must be crossed to exchange on your outside, which reduces your reach and structure somewhat



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II
Eighth scholar: *Scambiar di Punta* (Exchange of Thrusts)
Discussion

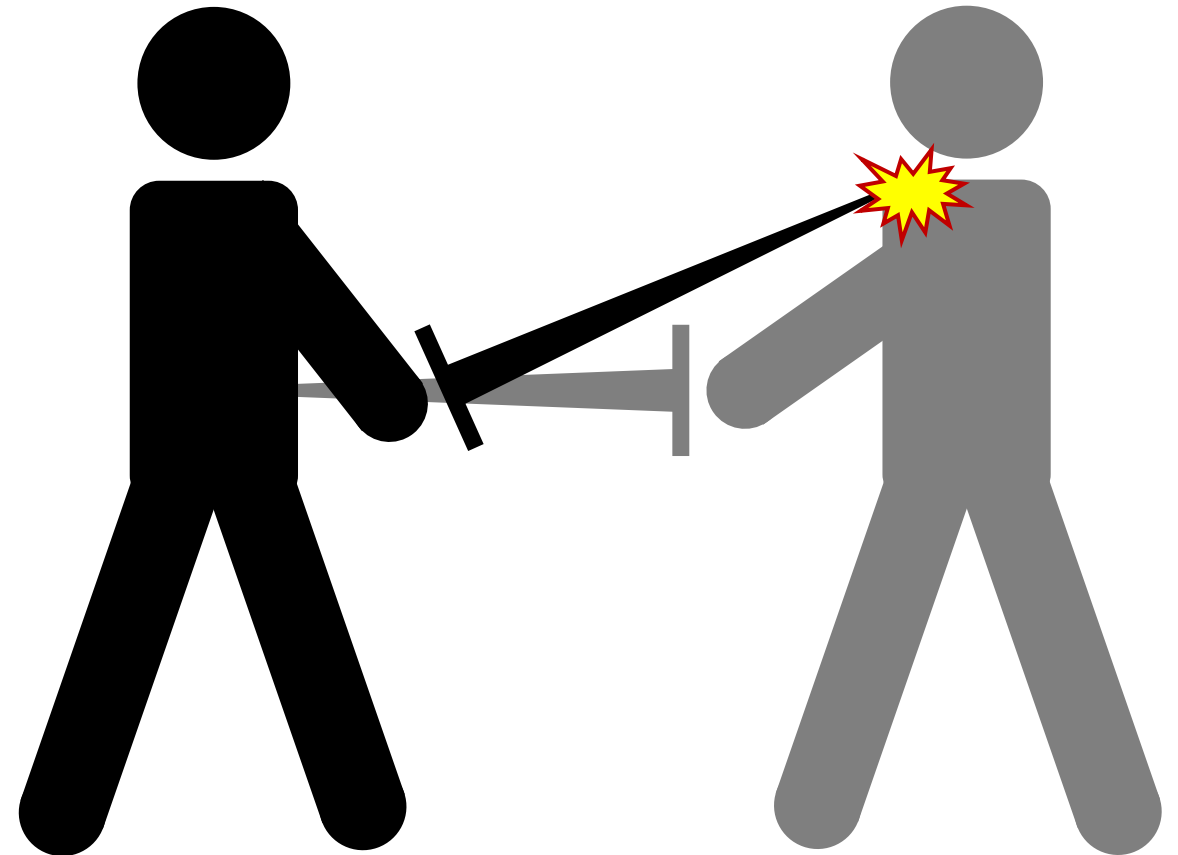
If the exchange is a counterattack, why is the defender moving forward?

A literal interpretation of Fiore's text suggests that the defender makes two steps during the exchange: a small step out of the way with the front foot, then a pass forwards with the back foot.

However, during a counterthrust your opponent is already moving towards you. You might need to make a small adjusting step, but you can also counterthrust without stepping at all. Indeed, you might not have time to make a single step, let alone two!

How do we reconcile this reality with the text?

1. **Interpret the forward movement as a tactical preference of Fiore's:** This is one possibility, but the question remains: how can we make two steps in the time of our opponent's one attack? Maybe we hit with the first step and the second step is a follow-up.



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II
Eighth scholar: *Scambiar di Punta* (Exchange of Thrusts)
Discussion

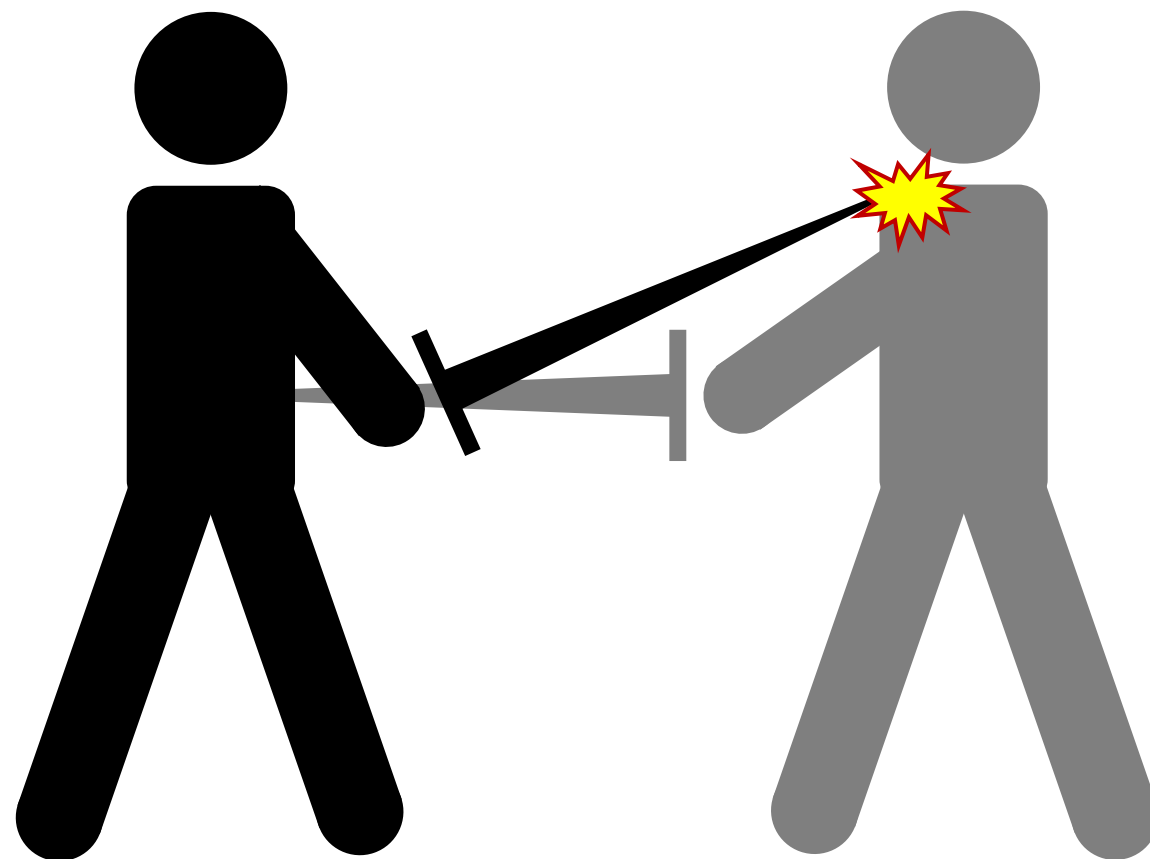
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How do we reconcile this reality with the text?

- 2. Interpret the footwork differently:** Maybe the footwork is moving backwards and out of the way and the follow-up technique starts differently. Maybe the two steps Fiore describes are alternatives and not a fixed combination.



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II
Eighth scholar: *Scambiar di Punta* (Exchange of Thrusts)
Discussion

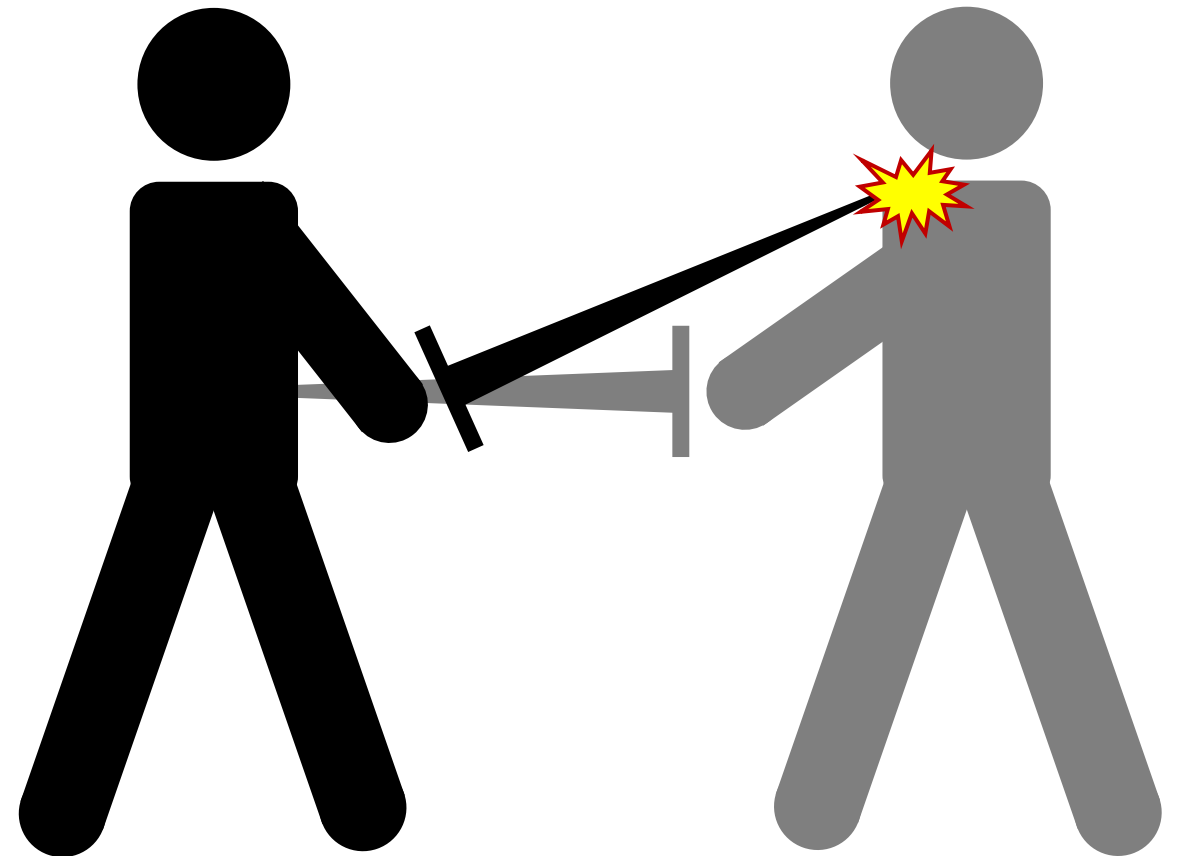
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How do we reconcile this reality with the text?

- 3. Interpret the footwork flexibly:** Fiore is showing us just one example of an exchange, but the reader should understand there are many variations of the same technique.



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Eighth scholar: *Scambiar di Punta* (Exchange of Thrusts)

Discussion

If the exchange is a counterattack, why is the defender moving forward?

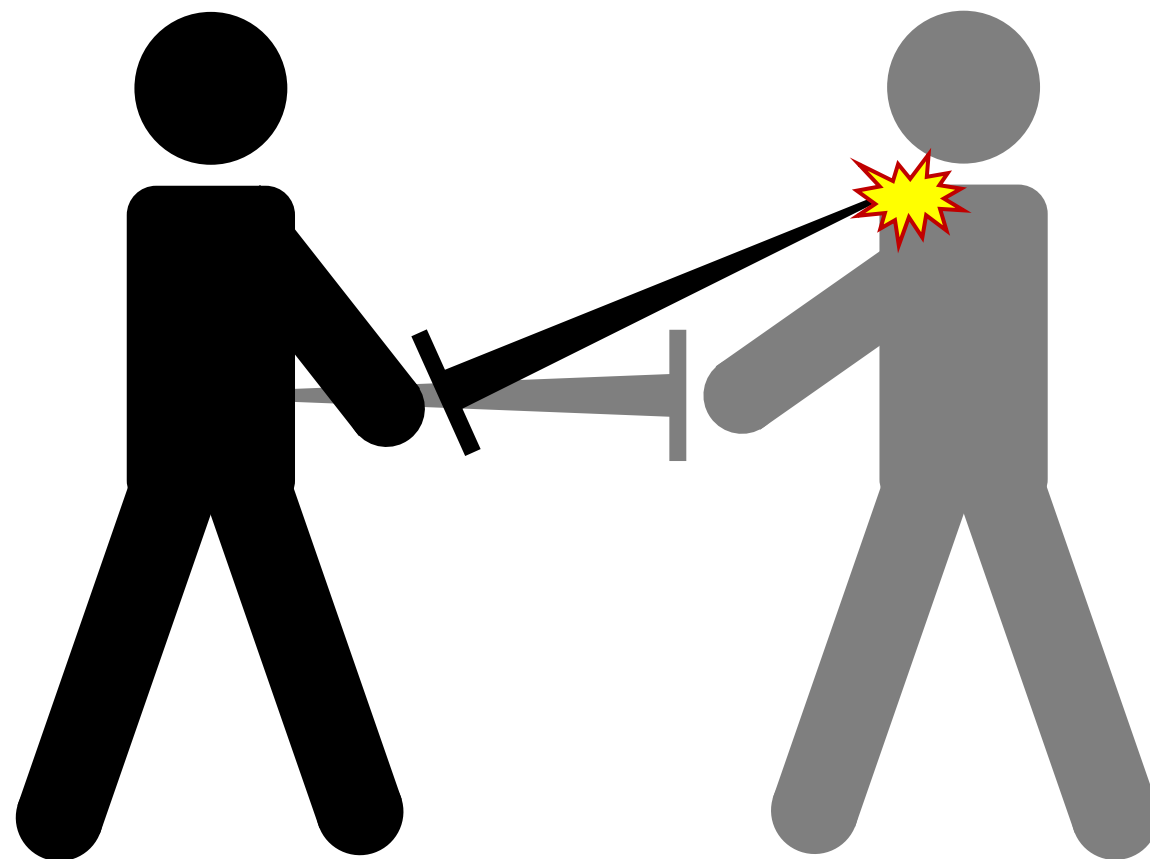
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How do we reconcile this reality with the text?

4. Interpret the footwork as an artifact of training before fencing masks:

Fiore may be describing a method of training the counterattack rather than the counterattack as it would occur in real combat. Fencing masks did not exist in the 14th century. Training counterthrusts to the face at full speed without fencing masks is dangerous. However, you can modify the action to make training it safer by splitting the counterattack into a parry and a riposte and letting just one of the students control the distance. Stabbing past your opponent's face (as in the follow-up to the exchange) is another way of simulating a counterthrust while reducing the risk of injury to your training partner. Perhaps this is also why the opponent appears to be thrusting to the belly as well: if the student misses the crossing, he doesn't risk losing an eye or teeth from the opponent's thrust.



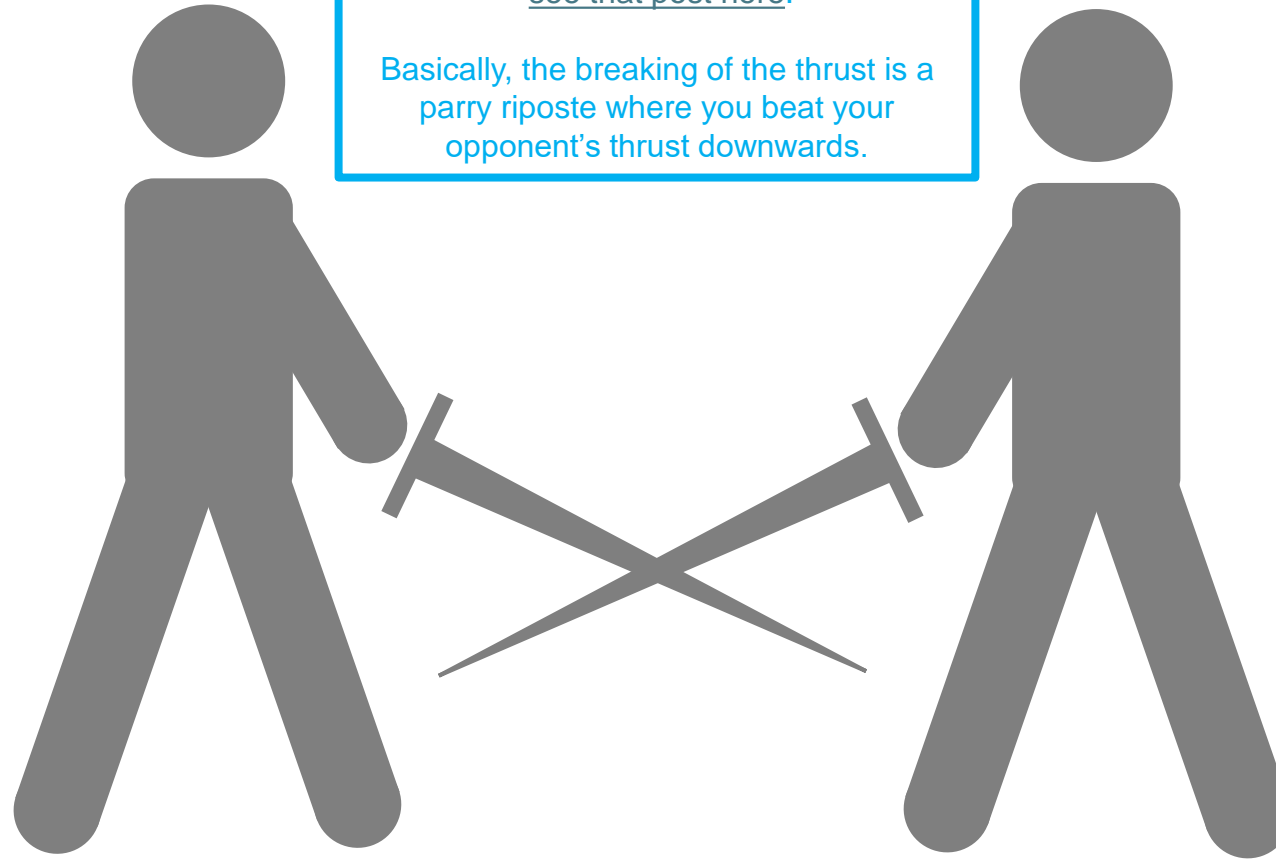
Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Tenth-Fifteenth scholars: *Rompere di Punta* (Breaking of the Thrust) and follow-ups

I discussed the breaking of the thrust in part I of my interpretation of the second master of largo crossed at the mid-sword.

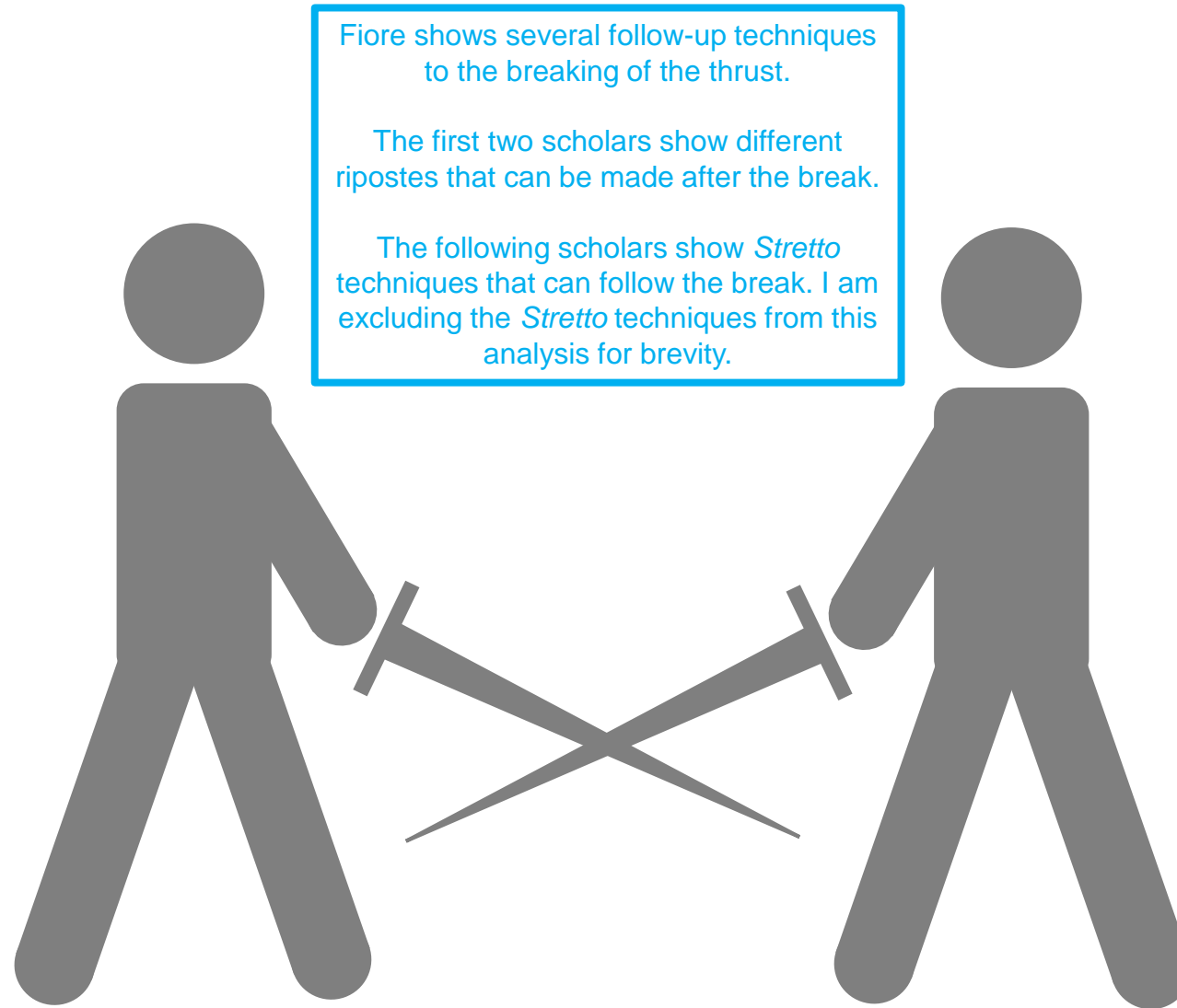
For details on that technique, [see that post here](#).

Basically, the breaking of the thrust is a parry riposte where you beat your opponent's thrust downwards.



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Tenth-Fifteenth scholars: *Rompere di Punta* (Breaking of the Thrust) and follow-ups



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Sixteenth Scholar: *Punta Falsa* / *Punta Curta* (False Thrust / Short Thrust)

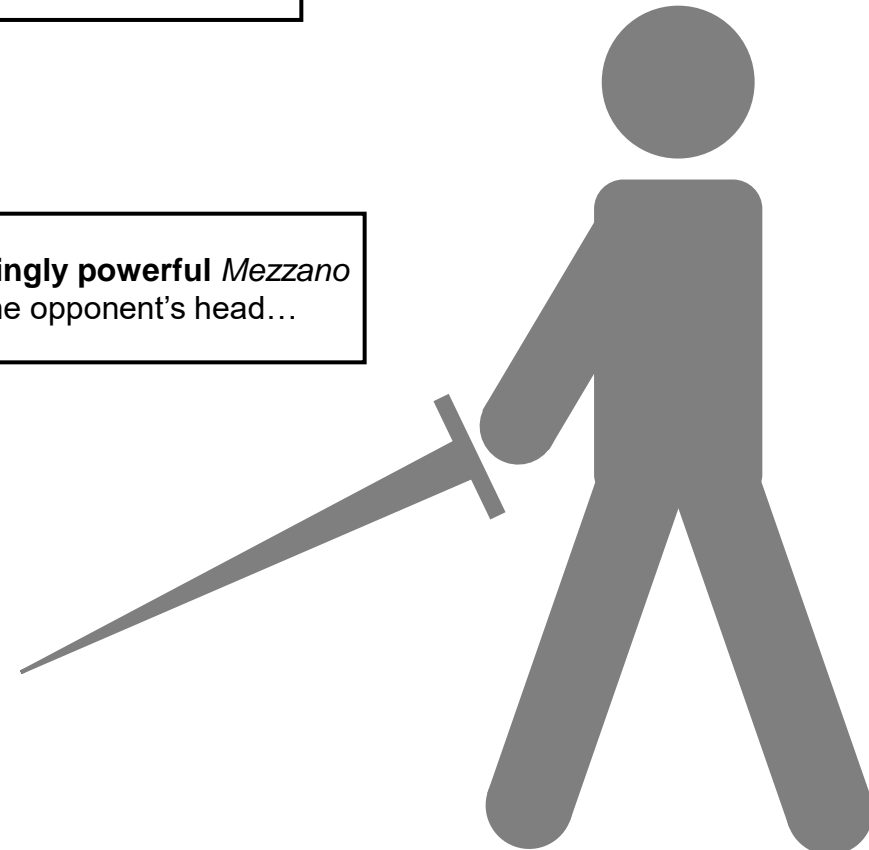
1



The *Punta Falsa* is the **only** play with the sword, spear, or axe in Fiore's text where the scholar **explicitly** initiates the crossing with an attack.

All other plays demonstrated by scholars are **defences** or **start from a crossing**.

I begin with a **seemingly powerful** *Mezzano* (middle cut) to the opponent's head...



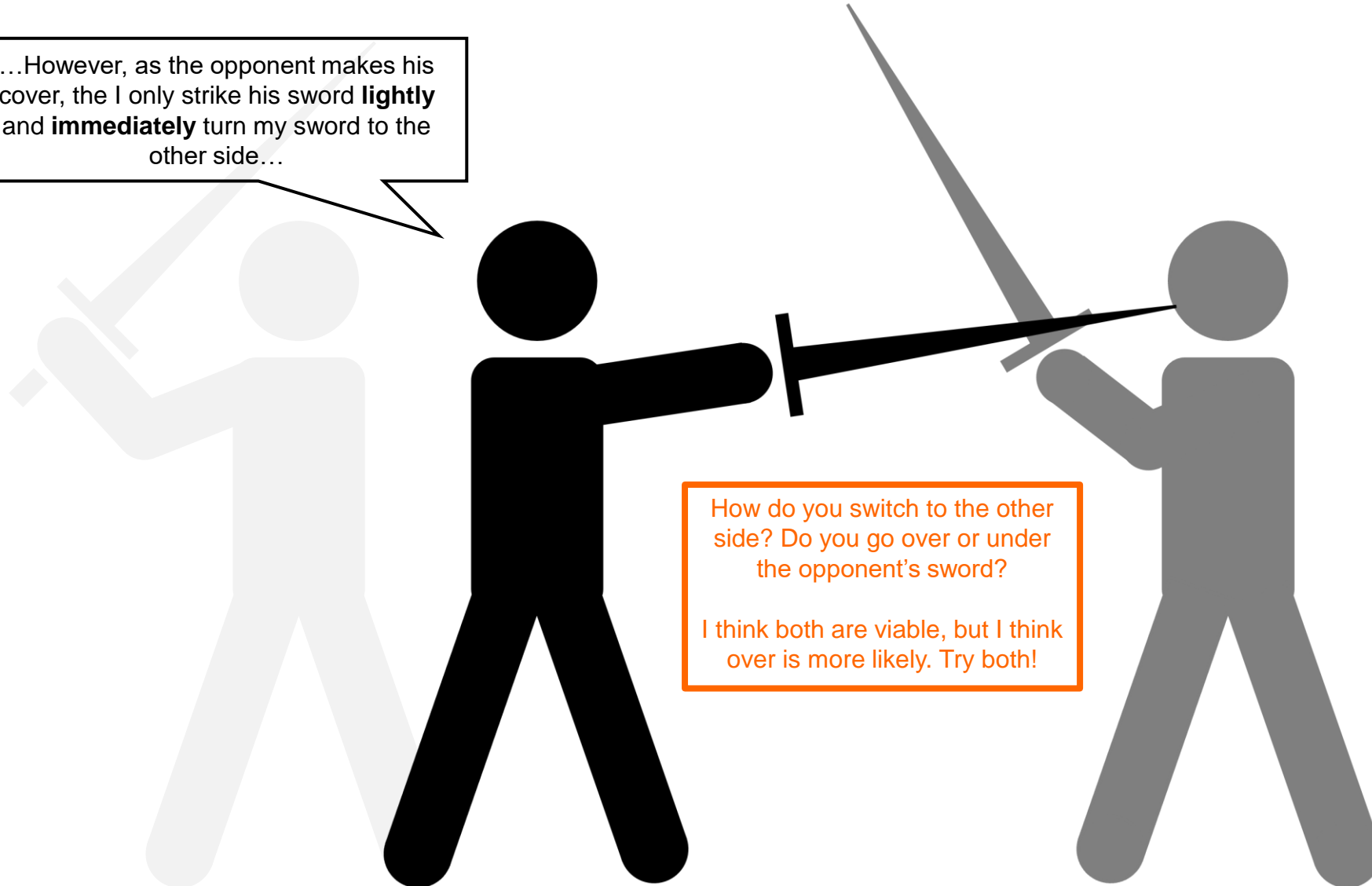
Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II Sixteenth Scholar: *Punta Falsa* / *Punta Curta* (False Thrust / Short Thrust)

2

...However, as the opponent makes his cover, the I only strike his sword **lightly** and **immediately** turn my sword to the other side...

How do you switch to the other side? Do you go over or under the opponent's sword?

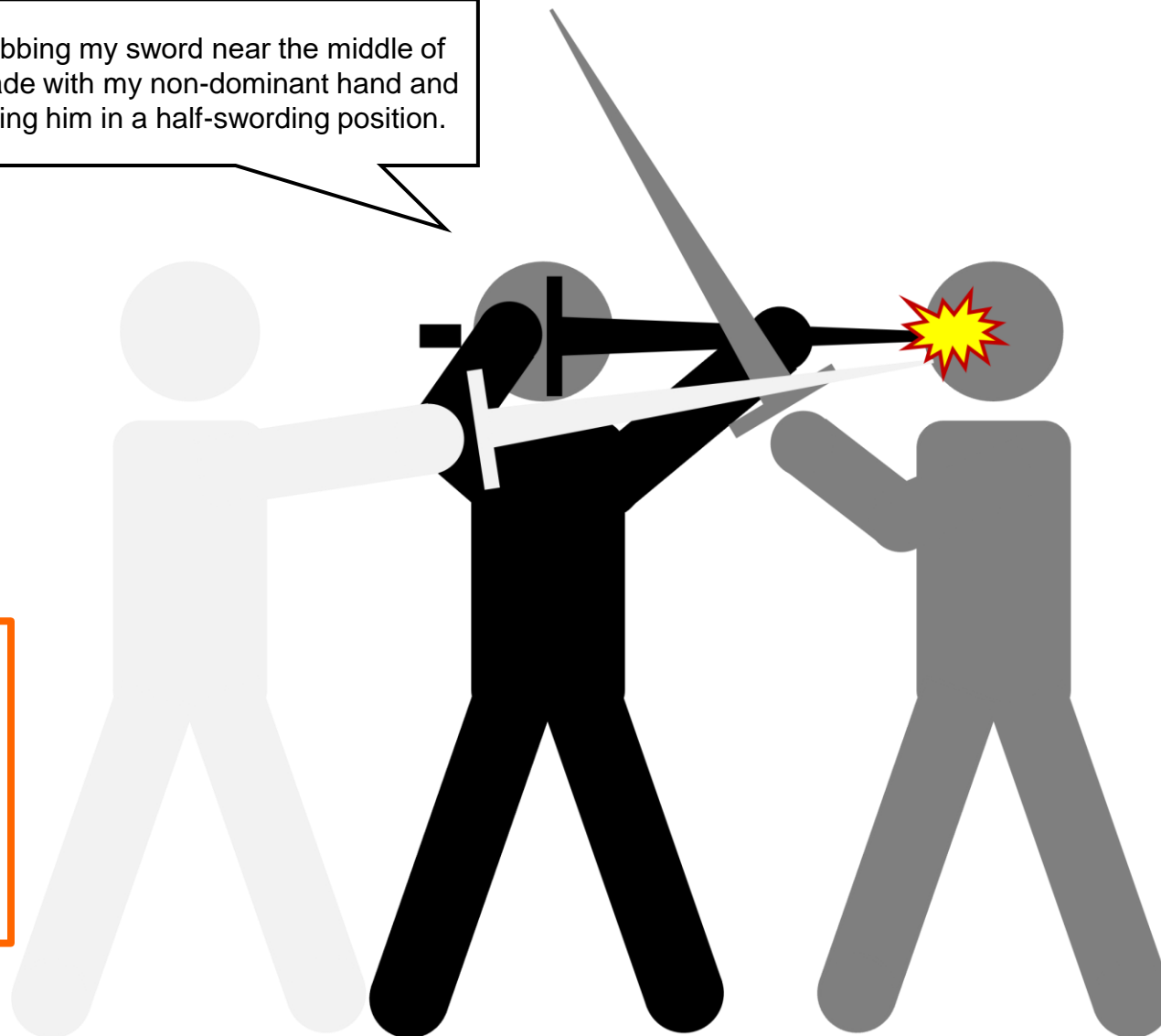
I think both are viable, but I think over is more likely. Try both!



Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II Sixteenth Scholar: *Punta Falsa* / *Punta Curta* (False Thrust / Short Thrust)

3

...grabbing my sword near the middle of the blade with my non-dominant hand and stabbing him in a half-swording position.



Fiore writes that this play is "better in armour"

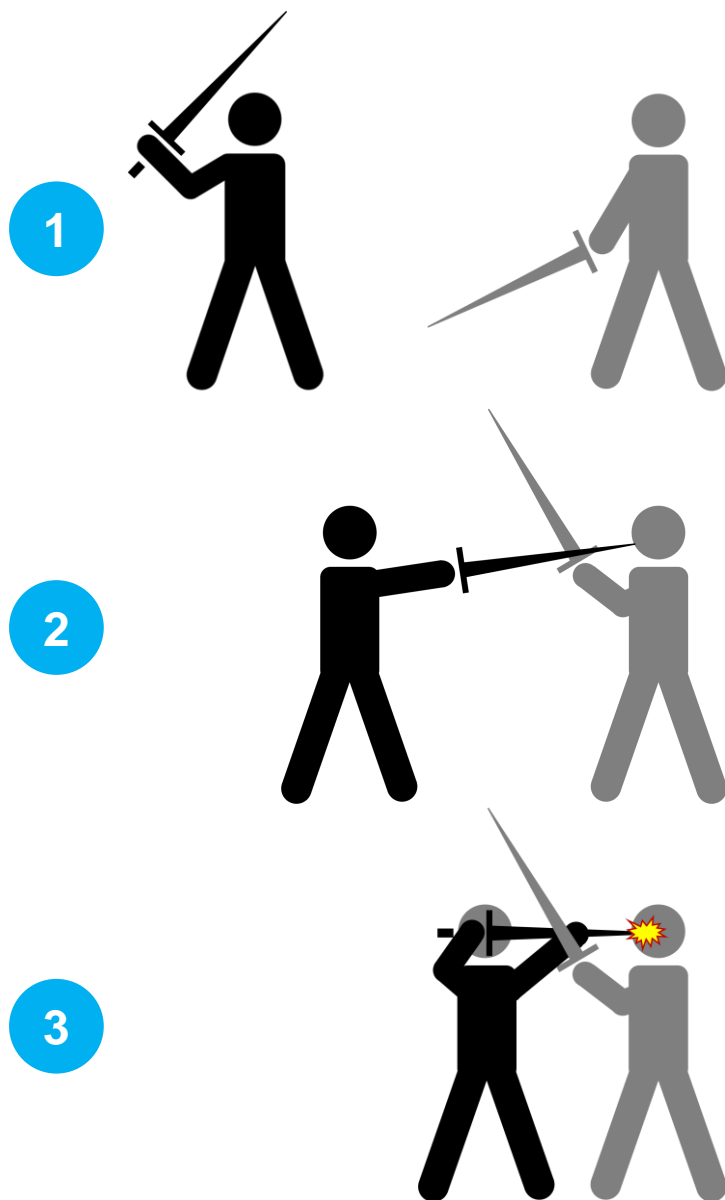
This is something that Fiore writes in several places, and I think it's code for "this play is kinda risky"

However, it's also an example of how to transition to half-swording from wide measure – a skill which is more useful for armoured fighting.

Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Sixteenth Scholar: *Punta Falsa* / *Punta Curta* (False Thrust / Short Thrust)

Discussion



What is the purpose of the *Punta Falsa* play?

As mentioned earlier, this is the only play demonstrated by a scholar where the scholar initiates the crossing with an attack.

One reading of this play is that it is an example of an **indirect attack** by means of a **feint**.

However, the initial attack is not fully a feint since it does at least make light contact with the opponent's sword before turning to the other side. So, another interpretation is that this play demonstrates a **second intention attack**: where the first attack is "real" yet not expected to hit. This is a very subtle distinction and not something Fiore discusses.

It is possible that Fiore is using this play to teach the reader about feints, second intention attacks, or both. However, the *Punta Falsa* is not the simplest feint nor the best feint. Indeed, Fiore writes that the *Punta Falsa* is "better in armour" suggesting that this play is not optimal for unarmoured fighting. In modern longsword fencing, a more optimal play using the same tactic would be a feint (or provoking attack) on one side followed by a *Zwerchhau* (lateral cut with the hands held high) to the other side. This is one of the most common techniques in the contemporary competitive longsword scene. Perhaps the *Punta Falsa* is essentially the equivalent high-percentage technique for armoured fencing.

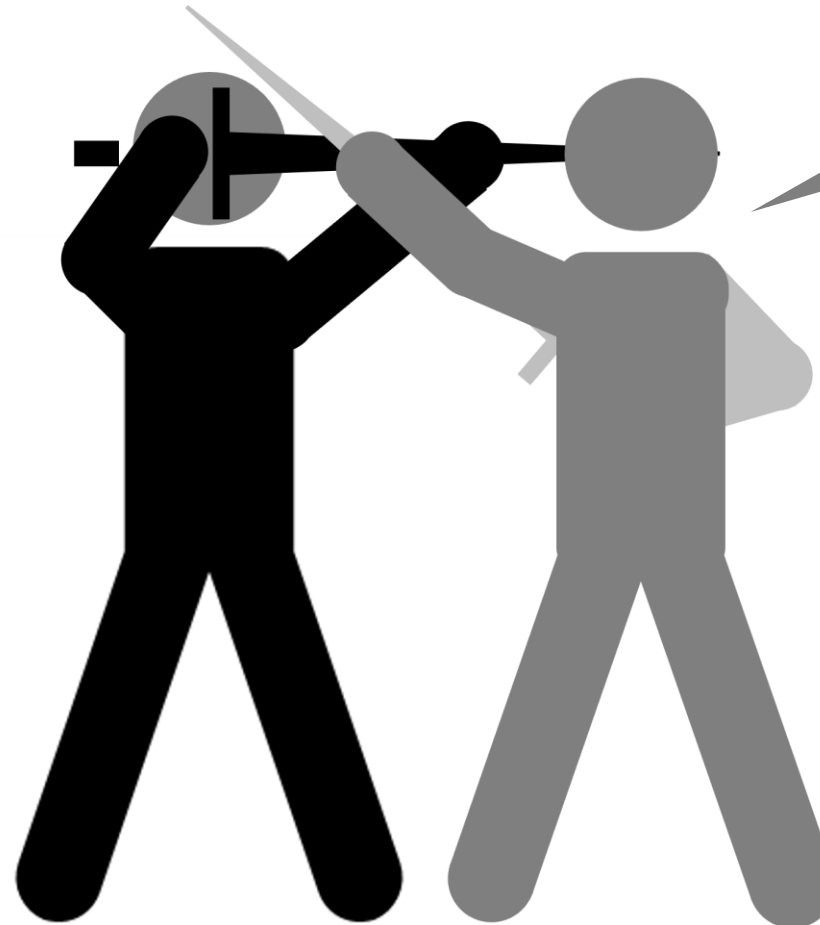
Another possibility is that the *Punta Falsa* is a good way of transitioning to half-swording from wide measure – a skill which is more useful for armoured fighting.

Second master of *Largo* crossed at the middle of the sword: Part II

Counter to the Sixteenth Scholar: *Punta Falsa* / *Punta Curta* Counter

Fiore writes that this counter is good both with and without armour.

In my opinion, the counter requires a smaller movement than the *Punta Falsa*, itself, which probably why it is good even without armour.



The counter to the *Punta Falsa* is straightforward:

I transition to a half-swording position as well, covering myself from the opponent's strike while stepping to my left (away from the opponent's thrust)

This counter is a good transition to the plays of the sword in armour that Fiore shows after the plays with the sword without armour; our position here is similar to the starting position of the first scholar of the sword in armour.