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Le Jeu de la Hache: A Critical edition and dating discussion

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Abstract – Twenty-six years after the first edition and translation by Sydney Anglo in 1991 of the anonymous manuscript *Le Jeu de la hache*, many elements can still be significantly improved. This paper offers a completely new critical edition of the text, and a major revision of the translation. This article includes a detailed glossary as well as notes to discuss the many ambiguous passages in the original text. Finally, the studies of the language, the vocabulary, the dialect, the writing style and the physical document make it possible to refine the dating of the manuscript to the third quarter of the fifteenth century, between 1460 and 1485, and its origin, probably Flanders or Wallonia in the entourage of the dukes of Burgundy.

Keywords – fight book, critical edition, translation, codicology, paleography

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1. Forewords

The anonymous manuscript known as *Le Jeu de la Hache*, kept in the French National Library, is the oldest known fight book written in French and the very first treatise dedicated solely to the use of a polearm.¹ This manuscript is also completely isolated. There is no other known copy of its content, even partial. Moreover, it seems to have been completely ignored until the end of the twentieth century and therefore did not

* We are strongly indebted to Alexandre Strub and Jean Chandler for proofreading the text of the article, Ariella Elema for proofreading the translation and critical apparatus. We humbly consider the present work as being nothing else than climbing on the shoulders of a giant. This paper would probably never have existed without the primary studies made by Sydney Anglo. Therefore, this article is a tribute to his work.

¹ The second is, to our knowledge, the treatise of Johann Georg Pasch about the long staff published in its first edition in 1659. See Dupuis, ‘The French staff material’.

receive any comment over time such as those that could have been collected for the *Liber de arte dimicatoria*.²

The inspiration for this project came during the participation in a book dedicated to fight books where it appeared that *Le Jeu de la Hache* required an updated edition.³ It was edited and translated by Sydney Anglo in 1991 and re-edited in 2008. This made it known to the connoisseurs and gave it the chance to be studied and shared by an international audience. Although the editions and translation were of rather good quality, there was still space for improvement. The edition does not fit the requirements of a good critical edition for a medieval text, which was the first goal of the present article. The translation provided by Anglo is probably very useful for English readers to have a good overview of the content of such a text, especially for those who have no chance of understanding the old French language. Unfortunately, the vocabulary chosen is often not accurate enough, sometimes inappropriate and clearly erroneous in a few cases. In his handbook about historical axe-fighting systems, Knight gives a clear example of a translation error that hinders comprehension of the meaning.⁴ The second goal of this paper is to improve Anglo's translation and to furnish it with a glossary and explanatory notes each time the meaning of the original text was too ambiguous to ensure accuracy. This work will be backed up by a physical and linguistic study of the text, which both helps to narrow down the hypothetical dating period for the writing and production of the text.

Anglo supplied his edition and translation with an extremely erudite contextual study which was extended by both Raynaud and Cognot, and this paper will only have a limited contribution in the form of unedited archival documents.⁵

I.2. Content description

The very first sentence of the manuscript details its subject very clearly: “to exert and to reinforce oneself in arms” and more especially in axe-play. The word used, *jeu*, does not refer exclusively to the practice of the weapon for leisure or in combat, but also by extension to the entire art of fencing with the axe.⁶ The axe referred to here is a polearm the height of a man with a tip at the end and at both sides of the shaft two of the three common offensive heads: axe, hammer or spike. These three combinations are well-documented in the iconography of the fifteenth century and Anglo developed this point

² Cinato and Surprenant, *Le livre de l'art du combat*, pp. XV-XXVIII.

³ Parts from this paper have been taken from this work. See Dupuis, ‘The French Fencing Traditions’, pp. 354-57.

⁴ Knight, *The Play of the Axe*, p. 103. The crux of the problem in §12 is the following translation “you can pick up his queue with yours”, which should be translated instead by “you can pick up his axe with the tail of yours”. This small difference is a big issue for people trying to experiment the techniques described in this document.

⁵ Raynaud, *À la hache!*, pp. 494-579; Cognot, *L'armement médiéval*, pp. 623-37.

⁶ This subject is developed in Dupuis, ‘Organization and Regulation of Fencing’, pp. 233-35.

very clearly in his articles. The tip at the opposite end was named the tail. It is therefore important to understand that this weapon, designated as an axe may not actually have a cutting edge, and as also noted by Anglo, this is precisely the case in *Le Jeu de la Hache* which mentions only the hammer and the spike.⁷

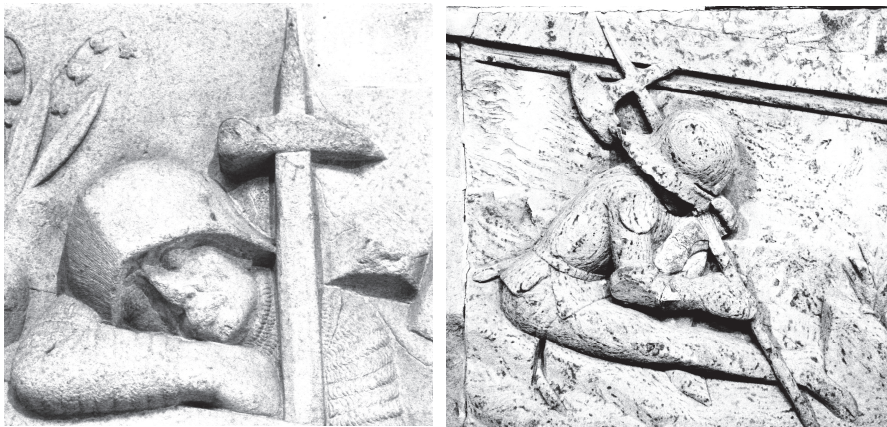


Figure 1: Details of the two types of axes, relief of the demolished cloister of the cathedral of Worms, 1488, Credit Dupuis Olivier

The purpose of the treatise is to describe the use of the axe in armor in the context of duels for pleasure or for honor. It is also one of the few technical sources to corroborate the use of armored combat techniques outside of lethal combat. Was it intended to train students, transfer knowledge to other teachers, or embellish a private library? In reality, this source does not provide sufficiently precise answers, and we consider it wiser to keep this discussion for a study taking a broader set of sources into consideration.⁸

The content itself is extremely complete although its organization is somewhat confusing. The author has established a strict and fairly simple typology of the initial situations and gives the impression of having studied most combinations. Although he does not give explicit strategies, he has separated the techniques into two logical categories: those in which the protagonist has to react to a situation and those in which he takes the initiative. For example, in the chapter discussing a right-handed fighter against another right-handed fighter, the only tactic proposed is to defend oneself against a blow and never to begin with the offensive action (§4-12),⁹ while in the second part the author presents not only how to defend but also how to initiate the engagement with a blow (§55).

⁷ We can only deplore the lack of general studies on these axes. Anglo brushes a first picture, Price (pp. 3-4) seems to have initiated a study of the preserved material, without giving specific references. Cognot offers a very detailed study, but of only one weapon (pp. 597-611).

⁸ Jaquet, *Combattre en armure à la fin du Moyen Âge*, pp. 20-22 for a discussion on the purpose of such document and pp. 58-59 for the specificities of this source.

⁹ The numbers following the mark § are direct references to the paragraph numbers of the following edition.

The author also gives an interesting indication about the classification of combatants: the experienced fighter, called axe player, could be recognized by the fact that he is coming with the tail in front (§19). It shows, if necessary, that there was a sufficient quantity and variety of practitioners to make it possible to distinguish this characteristic between them. In this respect the work shows a good educational maturity, and if it does not address all of the motor behavior associated with the weapon,¹⁰ it remains very accomplished and autonomous. Deacon notes the clarity of the language used and the didactic construction which clearly differentiates it from other fifteenth century fight books.¹¹

Finally, the author mentions a number of other weapons to be used in a closed field -half-pike, dagger, great and short sword- and explicitly announces that the art of fencing with such weapons depends of the art of fencing with the axe (§1). This is interesting for multiple reasons: on the one hand it confirms the important place of this weapon in the duels in armor.¹² On the other hand, this assertion alone justifies the fact that this treatise deals with only this weapon, since the art of fencing with others are deduced.

I.3. Context

Anglo and Raynaud admirably explained the parallels which can be drawn between the axe fights appearing in some chronicles of the fifteenth century and *Le Jeu de la hache*. In his dissertation, Cognot furthered this method and made comparisons between the description of certain phases of the fights and techniques presented in our manuscript.¹³ This method is certainly a precious guideline for further developments and studies about the contextual knowledge of axe fighting from this period. This, however, requires a much broader study and cannot be undertaken here.

We would like to offer some answers to the question so well formulated by Price:

Who were these *Maitre d'armes*, who did they teach [the poleaxe], and how did they and their students relate to the larger martial community of their time, and through these questions, to medieval history in general?¹⁴

Known documents from archives referring to axe fighters during the fifteenth century are much less abundant than in the chronicles. The mention of a certain master Ambroise of Milano, axe player, who came at the court of Burgundy, is already well known. He is mentioned twice in the accounts of the dukes, and is supposed to have been taught axe fighting at the court in Brussels in 1438 or 39.¹⁵ In 1447, he was also mentioned but

¹⁰ Cognot demonstrates clearly that this treatise is not complete and does not describe techniques found in other technical sources. Cognot, *L'armement médiéval*, pp. 620 and 625.

¹¹ Deacon, 'Prologues, Poetry, Prose and Portrayals', pp. 79-81.

¹² This is also clearly attested by Raynaud, *À la hache!*, pp. 518-22.

¹³ Cognot, *L'armement médiéval*, pp. 628-37.

¹⁴ Price, 'Ponderous, Cruel & Mortal', p. 2.

¹⁵ Laborde, *Les ducs de Bourgogne*, pp. 356 and 391.

without any information about his activity. Such documents do not give enough detail and it is impossible to know for how long the lessons were given, whether Ambroise was also a master in other weapons, what the goal of such lessons was, and so on. This proximity of this axe player with the Burgundian court apparently prompted some people to infer that Ambroise of Milano was the author of *Le Jeu de la Hache*.¹⁶ In the absence of stronger evidence, this assumption cannot be given credit.

It was possible to exhume two other mentions of fencing masters expert in axe from the French archives.

In 1454, Pierre Beaulfort, a shoemaker residing in Dijon, near the parish of Saint-Médart, filed a request for tax moderation to the city council. He had a dependent wife and eight children, the oldest of whom was ten years old and is believed not to have been able to pay the forty-one *gros deniers tournois* that the parish demanded of him. All this is pathetically common but it is not so far from our subject. Indeed, Pierre Beaulfort was also master of the free plays of the sword, the axe, the dagger and the half-pike, and volunteered to accompany the Duke on his crusade to Turkey.¹⁷ This is certainly a reference to the recent project of Philip the Good to deliver Byzantium.¹⁸ Anyway, this promise was enough for him to obtain the expected tax rebate from the Dijon administration.

The 25th of April, 1463, Adam Varlier, a native of Soissons, Picardy, then residing in La Rochelle presented himself as a master in all weapons dedicated for deed of arms, that is to say, the two handed sword, the axe, the sword and buckler and the dagger. He was authorized by the mayor of Angers, located at 170km north-east of La Rochelle, to play in his city, to hold a school of the said weapon plays, to hang to the windows the sword, dagger and axe and to organize prize fighting throughout the city.¹⁹

¹⁶ For example, this assumption was recently presented by Ken Mondschein, 'The Italian Schools of Fencing', p. 300.

¹⁷ Dijon, CA, L649, document 99 from the 17th of March 1454. *Supplie humblement Pierre Beaulfort corduanier et maistre de francz jeulx: de l'espee de la haiche de la dague et de la demye lance demeurant à Dijon en la parroiche Saint Jehan et nagueres en la parroiche Saint Medart comme Il par ainsi que ledict suppliant soit disposé et a bon vouloir et entention au plaisir mesdicts sieurs d'aler et acompaignier en armes Nostre tres redouté sieur monseigneur duc de Bourgogne ou saint voaige de Turquie. Neantmoins icelluy suppliant a esté par vous mesdicts seigneurs imposé de l'impôt que leve presentement en ladite parroiche Saint Medart [...] la somme de XLI gros deniers tournois laquelle chose n'est pas de raison considerant qu'il la charge de femme et de huit petis enfans [...] et n'a le plus grant desdicts enfans que environ IX ou X ans considerant aussi qu'il a du tout mis sa bonne devocion d'abord audit saint voaige comme dit est, il vous plaise messire homme [...] en pitié ce que dit est dudit impost de XLI [gros deniers tournois] tenu et sera tenu quitte si [...].*

¹⁸ This project was never realized. For more details, see Lacaze, *Politique méditerranéenne*.

¹⁹ Poitiers, PL, Reg. 4 p. 206, from the 25th of April 1463. *Le XXV^{me} jour d'avril l'an mil CCCC LXIII (sic) Adam varlier natif de Soissons demourant à present en la ville de la Rochelle soy disant et portant maistre du jeu de toutes armes qui competent à fait d'armes c'est assavoir d'espee à deux mains, de la hache d'armes, de l'espee à rouelle et de la daggue a demandé congïé à monssieur le maire de jouer en ceste ville et de tenir escolle*

These three masters show us that mobility seems to have been the rule for their job. The journey of Ambroise from Milano to Brussels is comparable to the one Adam Varlier made to come from Soissons to La Rochelle, and both are much shorter than the long trip that Pierre Beaulfort declared being ready to set out on.

The two last documents are exceptional for many reasons. First of all, they both mention fencing masters who claim the mastery of the axe, but also other weapons which are very similar to those also mentioned in *Le Jeu de la hache*: “axe, half-pike, dagger, great sword and short sword” (§1).

The second document confirms that these weapons are mostly dedicated to the deeds of arms, which were a very particular type of tournament, and normally restricted to the nobility.²⁰ It should also be noted that all records of such deeds of arms showed armored fighters. But it is very unlikely that Adam Varlier expected to teach the use of such weapons only to students of such rank in Angers. The same comment applies to the organization of prize fighting events; they are attested in the sixteenth century as part of an examination of the students before they could receive the title of player of a specific weapon.²¹ Such events are also known to have been organized during the fifteenth century in France but documentation for a proper study is unfortunately lacking. It should be noted meanwhile that they never involved the nobility. Varlier thus probably expected to teach burghers and craftsmen of Angers to fight with weapons reputed for their use in the deed of arms. Favreau, specialist of the history of Angers, sees in this a good indication of the concern for “nobility” of many notables of the city.²² Beaulfort’s situation shows a similar paradox; he presents himself with a very humble face, but declares being master of knightly weapons and uses this expertise to make the advantages he could bring to the duke in his crusade projects seem more convincing. These examples of teachers who could have taught the art of fencing with the axe to non-noble people echoes a sentence in the prologue: “the said Axe-play is honorable and profitable for the preservation of a human body noble or non noble” (§1).

II. THE MANUSCRIPT

II.1. History of the physical document

The first reference to the manuscript is in the inventory made in 1544 of the Royal Library of Blois, before its relocation to Fontainebleau. The manuscript was mentioned without shelf mark but with the indication that it was covered with black velvet and stored in a

desdits jeux et aussi de mettre et pandre aux fenestres l'espee, la daggue et la hache et de porter par la ville jeu de pris. À ce que luy a esté octroyé et donné congé par ledit maire.

²⁰ Van den Neste, *Tournois, joutes, pas d'armes dans les villes de Flandre*, pp. 53-54.

²¹ Dupuis, ‘Organization and Regulation of Fencing’.

²² Favreau Robert, *La ville de Poitiers à la fin du Moyen Âge*, 1, p. 436.

box alongside lavishly illuminated manuscripts.²³ In the second half of the sixteenth century it was indicated in the inventory of the library of the queen Catherine de' Medici.²⁴ It was transferred to the library of Paris before 1622 where it was recorded with the shelf mark 2495, which can be seen on the top of the folio 2r in roman numerals.²⁵ It then remained in this library and can be found in the following inventories of this royal library: in 1645 with the number 1322, and in 1682 with the number 7917.²⁶ Both these numbers are also written in the upper right part of the second folio. The manuscript kept this shelf mark for almost two centuries until 1860 when a new classification was introduced. At this occasion, *Le Jeu de la hache* received its actual shelf mark in the French National Library, MS Français 1996.²⁷ Two diamond shape stickers with this shelf mark were affixed to the verso of the cover page and on the back cover. In 2011, following the

²³ In the modern edition of the inventory (Omont, *Anciens inventaires*, vol. 1, part. 3, p. 258), Omont gives the number 1846 to the manuscript, however it is an arbitrary shelf mark because in a contemporaneous copy of this inventory, written by Jehan Grenaisie and Nicollas Dux in 1544, the number written before the text *Le jeu de la hache couvert de veloux noir* is 1842 and the deed of a modern hand (BNF, MS fr.5660, fol. 123^v). We can do the same observation with a manuscript copy of 1719 where the number 1859 is struck out, replaced by 1831 (BNF, MS fr.12999, fol. 82^r). All of these numbers were written much later than 1544 and reflect a posterior enumeration of the manuscripts and not shelf marks. The numbers 1816-1886 are attributed to the inventory of the books contained in the second box of the library (Omont, *Anciens inventaires*, vol. 1, pp. 256-61). For the story of the Royal Library of Fontainebleau see Quentin-Bauchart *La Bibliothèque de Fontainebleau*.

²⁴ Omont, *Anciens inventaires*, vol. 1, part. 3, p. 310. The number 957 associated to the manuscript in this inventory is probably not a shelf mark and does not appear on the folios of the manuscript, and the catalogue written by Jean Gosselin in the sixteenth century only reads *Le jeu de la hache d'arme* (BNF, MS fr.5585, fol. 33^r).

²⁵ It is the second catalogue of the royal library, finalized by J.-B. Hautin in 1622 under the direct supervision of Nicolas Rigault (Omont, *Anciens inventaires*, vol. 2, pp. 10 and 386). Another inventory, *Le Catalogue général de la Bibliothèque du roi*, was written by Nicolas Rigault himself in 1622 (Omont, *Anciens inventaires*, vol. 2, pp. 10 and 502). In this second catalogue the manuscript is mentioned as *Le jeu de la hache d'armes* without the shelf mark 2495 but with the number 87, probably the rank of the storage.

²⁶ The catalogue of 1645 was written by Pierre and Jacques Dupuy, *Le jeu de la hache d'armes pour soi habiliter en armes* (Omont, *Anciens inventaires*, vol. 3, p. 68), and the one of 1682 by Nicolas Clément: 2.1322 / 7917 *Le jeu de la hache d'armes* (Ibid., p. 142).

²⁷ See the *Catalogue des manuscrits français*, pp. V-IX, for a description of this new classification. The notice of *Le Jeu de la hache* is on p. 344: 1996. "La Doctrine et l'industrie du noble jeu de la hache et la maniere de battaillier", commençant par: "[C]onsiderant et voyant par experience que naturellement tous corps humains nobles et non nobles..." et finissant par: "...par le visage et par les piés pour luy faire perdre son advis". Vélin. XVe siècle. - (Anc. 7917).

restoration of the manuscript the stickers of the back cover were removed and placed on the grey cardboard which protects the manuscript.²⁸

Before the first mention in the inventory of 1544, the history of this manuscript is highly hypothetical. Indeed, it is unfortunately absent from the previous inventory of 1518 which contains about 200 fewer works than the 1544 inventory.²⁹ This difference in volume is explained by a few purchases in the interim period, either through negligence of the first inventory or by a late transfer of books of the previous kings which remained at Amboise castle or other reserves.³⁰ This latter scenario is plausible because under Charles VIII several campaigns for refreshing the books of the Amboise library have been identified, including the purchase of black velvet for the binding as seen on the *Le Jeu de la hache* in the inventory in 1544. In any case, this book is not mentioned in any of the previous inventories of the funds that supplied the library of Blois,³¹ but the small size of this manuscript may have slipped the attention of people who made these inventories. As the discussion about its origins leads for many reasons to the Burgundian areas, especially Flanders, as will be seen in the paleography section, it should be noted that the library of Blois did not receive any of the books from the library of the duke of Burgundy.³² However, at that time this library contains a large list of beautiful illuminated manuscripts coming from the library of Louis of Gruuthuse. How they were acquired is still a mystery, but it could only have happened after 1492.³³ It would be tempting to see the former possessor of this manuscript in this jousting and great bibliophile, but first of all it has none of the notable characteristics of the known manuscripts coming from the library of Louis of Gruuthuse.³⁴ In the second place, its layout leaves no room for large illuminations, which radically contrasts with the sumptuous manuscripts which came from the said library.³⁵

The current research in library catalogues does not allow us to go back beyond the year 1544. It is therefore necessary to make use of other studies directly linked to the materiality of the manuscript in order to bring elements which would allow us to set a more accurate date to the production of the document. The importance of such studies

²⁸ After 1868, the manuscript is referenced in many catalogues: Delisle, *inventaire général et méthodique*, p. 286; Vidier and Perrier, *Catalogue général des manuscrits français*, 3, p. 275; etc.

²⁹ Omont, *Anciens inventaires*, vol. 3, pp. 1-58 for the books written in French.

³⁰ Baurmeister and Laffitte, *Des livres et des rois*, pp. 223-24 and also p. 174 for the example of a book missing in 1518 but acquired before in Italy by Louis XII.

³¹ Delisle, *Le Cabinet des manuscrits*, pp. 72-150.

³² Baurmeister and Laffitte, *Des livres et des rois*, p. 73.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-95.

³⁴ The list of such characteristics can be found in Delisle, *Le Cabinet des manuscrits*, p. 141.

³⁵ Baurmeister and Laffitte, *Des livres et des rois*, pp. 196-203

in this case has already been explained by Forgeng who points out that this helps to understand the provenance of the text, how it was made, and when.³⁶

II.2. Codicology

II.2.1. Material aspects³⁷

The manuscript is a book made of 10 small parchment leaves, containing only the text of *Le Jeu de la hache*. The present-day covering is 245 mm high, 166 mm wide and 9 mm thick, and the parchment's leaves are 237x160 mm.³⁸ The volume is made of three paper guard-leaves which follow the anterior pastedown, of one parchment bifolium, of one quire formed with four bifolia of parchment and again of three paper guard-leaves preceding a posterior pastedown. The dimensions of the paper sheets which protect the parchment are 241x160 mm. The collation can be resumed to: III + 1²+2⁸ + III. The manuscript is therefore composed of two quires, a first bifolium and a quaternion, as shown by the emplacement of the clearly visible binding thread. This observation is supported by the presence of a numbering of the quires inscribed with a lead or graphite point in a writing posterior to the fifteenth century which serves as a quire signatures. A number 1 is written on the bottom left of fol. 1^r and a number 2 is inscribed at the same location on the fol. 3^r. The ten folios are also numbered in Arabic numbers from one to ten with black ink on each recto on the top right of the page.³⁹

³⁶ Forgeng, 'Owning the Art: The German Fechtbuch Tradition', p. 165.

³⁷ In June and July 2016, we could undertake a codicological analysis of the manuscript. We are particularly grateful to Anne-Caroline Le Coultre who participated in the observations and measurements reports and the codicological analysis of the manuscript in July 2016. A scientific article going into the details of the analysis is being prepared by Vincent Deluz and Anne-Caroline Le Coultre. Our thanks also go to Franck Cinato and Steve Planchin for transmitting their personal analysis of the manuscript.

³⁸ The measures were made on leaves 5 and 6. Every following dimensions given in this format must be understood as height per width.

³⁹ We did not determine when this numbering was added.

GI					*PD	G1	*G2	G3	
I					1	2			
II		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GII			*G3'	G2'	*G1'	PD'			

Legend

I	Quire		Inserted bifolia
1	Foliation		Prologue
*	Watermark		Le Jeu de la Hache

Anterior pastdown and guard-leaves

Quire I

Quire II

Posterior pastdown and guard-leaves

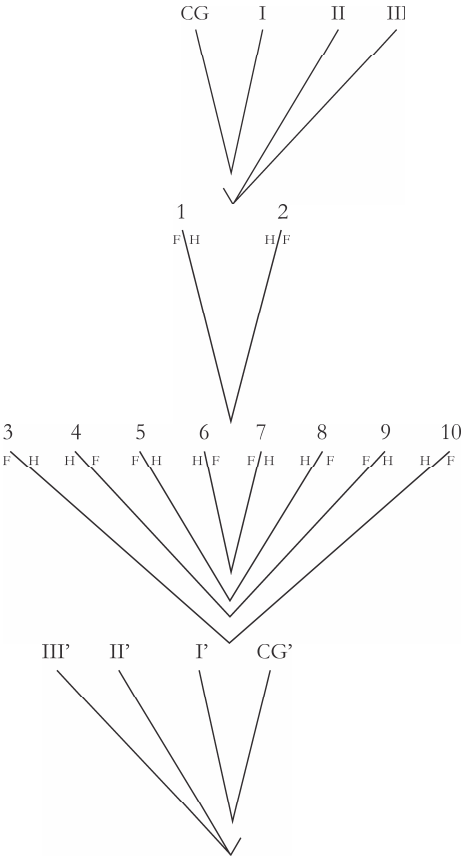


Table 1: Scheme of the quires. Diagram of the authors.

The first bifolium only contains the prologue of the work. It starts in the middle of the fol. 2r and ends in the second third of fol. 2v, the first leaf having been left white on both sides. The quaternion contains the body of the text of *Le Jeu de la hache*. The tenth leaf is left empty except for the first six lines of the recto side and is entirely empty on the verso side. The parchment bifolia were assembled especially so that they would respect a regular alternation on both the flesh and hair sides, in order for the facing pages to always be similar. It was done to offer a similar aspect to both visible pages when the book is open (See Table 1). The hair side is still showing the dark spots of the animal hairs, and apparently, the matching was done so carefully that the hair sides which have the more dark spots have been also set face to face.⁴⁰

The presence of such trace of hairs, in conjunction with the small dimension of the manuscript both argue in favor of a parchment made of goat's skin.⁴¹

According to the 1544 catalogue, the manuscript was bound and covered with black velvet. However, there is no proof that the manuscript did not circulate for some time without binding before entering the royal library. Indeed, some stains are visible on the two first leaves as well as on the last one. The first folio and the verso of the tenth remain empty, and could have served as a temporary protection for the two quires before the manuscript received a hard covering.

The current covering is a half binding made of two cardboard sheets covered with sheep leather of a faded red, but in a perfect state. The paper pages were certainly placed with the actual binding during the eighteenth century, an estimation confirmed by the restoration report of 2011.⁴²

The back of the manuscript contains some decorative gilding as well as the title of the work inscribed in golden letters: *Le Jeu de la hache d'armes*. The edges of both the paper and the parchment contain traces of red painting that were probably applied concomitantly to the red binding, in order to homogenize the color of the book. Despite the restoration, some other small stains also remain visible on all the parchment leaves. A few small holes, probably made by parasites are likewise visible on the leaves 1, 8 and 10. Two red stamps of the Royal Library can be seen on the folios 2r and 10r. On the top right corner of fol.

⁴⁰ These dark spots are clearly visible on fols 5v, 6r, 7v and 8r.

⁴¹ An observation of the parchment with a microscope could confirm this hypothesis. For a short overview of the different types of parchment, see Derolez, *The Palaeography*, p. 31.

⁴² Paris, BNF, restoration report sheet n°11082, 5p. (15.03.2011-13.04.2011). A better dating could be obtained by a meticulous study of the paper. The digitized version has been done before the restoration.

2^r three shelf marks written in black ink are still visible.⁴³ Apart from these few comments, the manuscript has been very well conserved since its making until today.

II.2.2. Organisation and layout of the writing

The writing of the second quire is justified and ruled with pale red ink. The writing frame has an average size of 184x110 mm always located at the same distance from the parchment edges,⁴⁴ and thus respects the proportion of a gold rectangle. The ruling of the lines for writing are similarly very regular, each sheet contains exactly 37 lines drawn with the same pale red ink. The distance between each line is between 4.5 mm and 5 mm with a majority around 4.9 mm. The copyist who prepared this quire carefully prepared the ruling of all the four bifolia before he proceeded to the copying of the text. Consequently, while the text stops on line 6 at the beginning of fol. 10^r, the rest of this leaf is entirely ruled with inks down to the bottom of fol. 10^v.

The first quire has not been prepared in the same way and therefore forms an independent and distinct codicological unity although quite similar to the second quire. Indeed, the writing frame has been drawn on the four pages (fols 1^r-2^v) with a smaller size than the second quires, 180x108 mm.⁴⁵ Furthermore, inside this frame, the first folio has no ruling at all. On the second folio, a set of lines is visible only where text has been written (lines 17 to 34 on fol. 2^r and lines 1 to 22 on fol. 2^v).⁴⁶ All the text of the second folio was underlined with red ink, probably in order to enhance the prologue. The number of possible lines inside the writing frame of this first quire is 34 lines by page and the unit of ruling is 5.3 mm. These differences in layout between the two quires are not extremely important, but they are sufficient to notice a work executed at two different times and possibly by two different people. The copyist who prepared the first quire drew the ruling exclusively for the text he had to copy, whereas the second quire has been fully ruled without taking into account the precise number of lines necessary.⁴⁷ In any case, the layout of both quires has been done carefully with very close methods. From folio 2^r to folio 10^r the text has been copied with a black ink in a beautiful cursive script. It is not possible to say whether many different hands worked on

⁴³ These are MMCCCCXCV, 1322 and 7917. See above History of the physical document.

⁴⁴ The height varies between 181 and 185 mm; the width between 108 and 112 mm. The margins are larger on the edge and on the bottom of the leafs, and smaller in the center and in the top.

⁴⁵ The width is systematically 108 mm, the height is between 179 and 182 mm. Furthermore, the writing frame is slightly more centered here than in the quaternion.

⁴⁶ The lines 23 to 26 have not been ruled.

⁴⁷ As indicated previously, the copyist misjudged the length of the prologue by three lines.

the text, the writing being similar overall. The text is divided by three rubrics written with red ink. The prologue rubric (fol. 2^r, lines 18-19): *Sensuit le prologue du Jeu de la bache por soy habillier / et esvertuer en armes*,⁴⁸ then comes a second rubric which introduces the first part of the text (fol. 3^r, l. 1-2): *Cy cōmence la doctrine et l'industrie du noble Jeu de la bache / et la maniere de battaillier*; and then a third rubric which introduces the second part (fol. 7^v, l. 20): *Cy cōmence le Jeu du gauchier au droitier et pmiement*. The writing finishes on fol. 10^r at line 5 with these words: *et par les pies por luy faire perdre son advis*. Consequently the text, containing 73 paragraphs, is divided into three parts by these rubrics. The first part is the short, three paragraph-long prologue. The second part is a chapter dedicated to the fight between two right-handed fighters; it is the larger of the two chapters with 48 paragraphs. The third part is a chapter which consists of 22 paragraphs opposing a right-handed and a left-handed fighter.

Besides the three rubrics, the manuscript is laid out with a lot of free space which meant either illuminations or initial letters. These decorations would have served equally to embellish this manuscript as well as to provide a supplement to the text between the paragraphs by means of a decoration system and sophisticated layout. Yet again, the layout work distinguishes the first quire and the second. The first leaf remains empty, perhaps to serve as a protection for the second leaf, but more likely to receive a full-page illumination for the opening of the manuscript, as can be seen from the ruling-frame drawn on recto and verso of this leaf.⁴⁹ The leaf includes a first big free space on recto over the text (89x108 mm) which was certainly meant for a large illumination in order to mark the beginning of the prologue, in a similar way to other prestigious manuscripts from the fifteenth century. Below the red rubric, on the left, a smaller free space (27x30 mm) was left to host the initial letter **C** as a complement to the first word (*[C]onsiderant*). Lastly, on the verso, two red pilcrows were added on the left of the framed text in order to indicate the beginning of the new paragraphs.

The second quire contains no such pilcrow to mark the paragraph changes. It is the word *item* which systematically starts a new paragraph. An indentation of one centimeter wide is kept free each time to receive the initial **I** of the word. Its size changes according to its importance in the paragraph hierarchy. These initials have never been drawn. However yellow ink has been applied on all **t** of the words

⁴⁸ The usual title attributed to this text is not taken from the incipit of the prologue, but from the second rubric.

⁴⁹ According to Derolez (*The Palaeography*, p. 33), most of the illuminated manuscripts of the fifteenth century begins with a full-page illumination on fol. 1^r in particular on the flesh side of the parchment, like here.

item. This yellow ink is also used to enhance the capital letters which begin a sentence, and to ease the reading or the tracking of the sentence opening. Finally, there are 26 relatively large free spaces in the second quire, all of which were meant to contain an illumination. These spaces could not possibly be meant for initial letters as only the **I** of *item* are expected to be written and those have a dedicated space reserved for their execution. These 26 free spaces are also layered. On the fol. 3^r and on the fol. 7^v, under the red headings, the space left for these two illuminations is approximately 55x55 mm,⁵⁰ while the space available for each of the 24 other illuminations is only 40x50 mm.⁵¹ The two places for the illuminations which introduce the two largest parts of *Le Jeu de la hache* are significantly larger than the others, helping to structure the text. Admittedly, the copyist probably made mistakes calculating the free spaces or was forced by the available space and thus reduced the height reserved for the illumination somewhat, but on the whole, the 24 free spaces have the same dimensions. The space reserved for the initials **I** is exactly two lines when it follows a simple illumination, only one line when it introduces a simple paragraph and up to 3 or 4 lines when it follows one of the two principal illuminations.

This structuring of the text by the use of a first full-page illumination at the beginning of the text, followed by three red rubrics, with 26 illuminations of different size, and of 73 paragraphs must be kept in mind by a reader of *Le Jeu de la hache*, because this specific layout contributes to the reading and the understanding of the text.⁵² Indeed, at a first glance, each of these sections which start with a free space seem to begin a logical section, and they are clearly indicated in our edition. However it is worth mentioning a notable exception with the paragraph which begins the fifth section (§11). Its content seems to be the continuation of the previous paragraph (“If he would use this above-said entering on you”), while the paragraph which follows it (§12), would have been a much better candidate for a new section (“Another protection against *tours de bras*”). Could it be an error of positioning of the free space which would probably have been placed on the following paragraph? This would require a deeper study of the technical content of the text which is outside the scope of this paper.

⁵⁰ Fol. 3^r : 56x56 mm and fol. 7^v : 54x55 mm.

⁵¹ It is difficult to tell whether it is a mistake or a deliberate choice.

⁵² Raynaud (*À la hache !*, p.507) identified clearly the division in 26 sections. Cognot (*L'armement médiéval*, p. 623) and Jaquet (*Combattre en armure*, p. 119) both estimated that these spaces are not dedicated to receive decorated initials but rather miniatures illustrating the techniques. This is a very appealing idea, although no mention in the text makes it possible to confirm the existence of associated illustrations.

However, if such a mistake were confirmed, could it be a reason to have kept the manuscript in an unfinished state rather than finish an imperfect work?

Indeed, the work as it was transmitted to us is clearly unfinished as it lacks the embellishments, many initials and thumbnails, as discussed before. Many reasons may explain why the decorations have not been executed. For instance, the copyist and the illuminator are two specialists who intervene one after the other.⁵³ The realization of *Le Jeu de la Hache* is only halted between the stage of writing and the beginning of decoration. The rubrication and the addition of yellow paint is already part of the execution of the decorations, which means that the copying of the text had probably been finished, but the project was abandoned. Some scholars think the text itself is incomplete and that there are missing paragraphs. It is true that the manuscript contains neither dedication to a sponsor nor colophon signed by the copyist nor even an *explicit* that closes the text in response to the *prologue*. But many finished manuscripts do not possess any of these three elements. They therefore rely essentially on the existence of drawn lines left empty on the last folio.⁵⁴ However, this argument does hold up because the process of producing a manuscript implies the separation of tasks and the preparation of the frame-ruling, including drawing the baselines at regular distances, should have been done long before the writing task.⁵⁵ Anyhow, the MS fr.5085 from the French National Library is a good counter-example. This beautiful illuminated book cannot be suspected of being incomplete, although most of the drawn lines in the last folio remain free.

II.2.3. Discussion

The codicological study does not provide any evidence concerning the dating and origin of the manuscript. Its characteristics, however, are remarkable and very regular, but it is regrettable that no research tool currently allows us to compare it with other manuscripts from the same estimated period.

The production of the manuscript is excellent, and few, if any other fight books from the fifteenth century can be compared to it.⁵⁶ This very careful work of preparation of the layout betrays the project to realize a sumptuous work, which is not incompatible with its modest size.

This study, however, provides important insights into the structure of the text itself. It has been divided logically in three levels. The first level was already known, and directed by the three rubrics, one for the prologue, and two for the

⁵³ Géhin, *Lire le manuscrit médiéval*, p. 127.

⁵⁴ Raynaud estimates 8 to 9 missing paragraphs (*À la hache* !, p. 502); Chaize, *Les arts martiaux de l'Occident médiéval*, p. 187.

⁵⁵ See Derolez, *The Palaeography*, pp. 35-38, for a description of the preparation of the layout.

⁵⁶ In addition to the exceptional quality of the manuscript, it forms an independent booklet that is a book in itself. While many of the fight books known for the period of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are contained in the collections linked to many other works.

technical content. The second is the division of the technical content into 26 sections, each of them being identified by a space which could have received an illumination. The third one is the division of the prologue and each of these sections in 73 paragraphs. The manuscript itself is physically divided in two quires, which are of similar workmanship, but clearly made in two different times, and possibly by two different people. The first quire contains only the prologue, the second all the technical content.

This separation into two quires is also necessary because of the length of the text: indeed since the text fits on five folios, it was necessary to fill a quaternion plus a folio to contain all the text.

The separate realization of this prologue has therefore been deliberate... or imposed. Either the prologue was not initially foreseen and added later, or the author of the book could have imagined that he could separate the prologue from the technical content in the future. In the hypothesis of different copies of the technical content, but dedicated to different persons, this physical organization offers the possibility to personalize the introductory pieces (incipit, dedication, and prologue).

There are other unresolved enigmas. The restoration report of 2011 does not determine the number of bindings this book has received. This could have helped us to discuss the hypothesis that the two quires could have traveled without binding before entering the royal library of Blois. Only the visible stains on the first and last folios now help us to make this assumption. It would be also interesting to study more precisely the hypothesis of an error in the positioning of free space before paragraph 12. Finally, the first folio should not have remained empty: the presence of the frame proves it. But what was planned for it? A first full-page illumination? An half page illumination, followed by a dedication? Certainly, the study of the organization of other manuscripts could make it possible to propose a list of hypotheses which might thus better enlighten perhaps the destination of this book.

II.3. Paleography

The study of the script style used in this book offers many perspectives, albeit without giving a definitive argument in each case, on the geographical localization of the production of the physical document, and also some indications on the dating of the manuscript. The script used in *Le Jeu de la Hache* reveals a clear intention to produce a qualitative and didactic product, which is confirmed in the introduction: “I have employed my slight understanding to set forth in writing some doctrines and instructions touching the said Axe-play in the manner which follows” (§1). In this text, the letter **a** has only one compartment, there are loops on ascenders on every **b**, **h** and **l**, **f** and straight **s** have a bold body and thin and short descenders which go a little below the baseline. The cursivity of the writing has been thwarted by many angles in the letters’ forms, especially in **v**, **x**

and some forms of **r**, but also to a lesser extent in the **a**, **e** and **q**. The letters are clearly separated and only few ligatures or partial fusions occur between them. The scribe seems also to have been concerned with the need to preserve a straight right edge and there are never more than two letters that go beyond this line.

Following the terminology of Derolez, this script can be classified as a *cursiva formata*, also called *bâtarde*, which is a subtype of the cursive book scripts.⁵⁷ This script appears in France at the end of the fourteenth century and was in use until the end of the fifteenth century. It must be seen as a calligraphic version of the cursive script in use in France. This script was very famous for the sumptuous manuscripts produced for the court of the duke of Burgundy in Flanders between 1440 and 1477. However, it is not exclusive to that area and many manuscripts sharing the same book script have been produced in France and also in England. It would thus be a mistake to infer that this manuscript came from Burgundy only on the basis that it has been written with this type of script.

The writing used in *Le Jeu de la Hache* has a very particular specificity that distinguishes it from the great mass of manuscripts using the *cursiva formata*. In a private discussion, Dominique Stutzmann, specialist in paleography, pointed out the use of three allographs for the letter **r**, four if the capital letter form is counted. An allograph is an alternative form of a letter, which is a very common feature in gothic scripts. Dr. Stutzmann also explained that the presence of these allographs for **r** is a characteristic shared with other manuscripts using the *cursiva formata* from a short period of time, from c.1460 to c.1480. Nevertheless, is it possible to contextualize this expert opinion? It may be useful to explain in more detail what it is exactly. The best-known examples of allographs are the long **s** and round **s**: the long **s** resembles the modern **f** without the horizontal bar, and the round **s** is much closer to the modern form. In *Le Jeu de la Hache*, there are also three allographs of **d**. Coming back to the allograph of **r**, there is a straight **r**, a round **r** and also an angular **r** (see the figure 2 for a better understanding of these three different forms).



Figure 2: Details of the three allographs of **r**, straight **r**, round **r** and angular **r**.
Paris, BNF, Fr. 1996

The round **r** is most of the time used into the consonant clusters **br**, **dr**, **pr** like into the words *bras*, *droit* or *pres*. It is as usual used after the **o**, and is also associated to **v** in the contraction of *vostre* (*vre*). It is also used in second position in case of consonant doubling (*pourrez*, *terre*), but only in the second position, while the first position is always filled by the angular **r**.

⁵⁷ This section owes much to the work of Derolez, *The Palaeography*, especially pp. 157-60.

Except in fol. 3^r, the angular **r** is systematically used when **r** is the first letter of the word, like in the verbs *retraire* or *retourner*, and is considerably more used than the straight **r**. The fol. 3^r is curiously the only one in the manuscript which shows no occurrence of the angular **r**, except in the rubric on the top of the page. In this particular folio, the straight **r** is clearly the most represented allograph, which could indicate either a different hand for this particular folio, or an earlier writing.

There are a few more manuscripts which use the same *cursiva formata* script and which also contain examples of the three aforementioned allographs. A short description of these manuscripts is given in the following list, along with their approximate dating. Indeed, despite the fact that these manuscripts are more famous, luxurious and decorated than *Le Jeu de la hache*, only very few are dated accurately.

The manuscript 2533 from the Austrian National Library was produced between 1455 and 1467 in Flanders and was in possession of Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy.⁵⁸ The angular **r** seems to be rare in this manuscript, but it is clearly present on folio 3^r, in conjunction with the round **r** in the word *terre*.

The manuscript 9092 from the Royal Library of Belgium shares many similarities with the previous text. It is dated between 1457 and 1460, produced in Flanders and also belonged to Philip the Good.⁵⁹ The three allographs of **r** are present in the text, for example in the illuminated folio 9^r. The straight **r** is rarer, as it appears only once in this folio, at the end of the word *premier*. The writing shows many similarities with *Le Jeu de la Hache*: there is no point above the **i**, the **s** and **f** go very little below the line. It is less cursive however, there are more angles in the letter forms and there is furthermore no loop on ascenders of the letters **b** and **l**.

The manuscript fr.5085 from the French National Library is supposed to have been produced in Bruges between 1464 and 1467 and belonged to Louis de Gruuthuse.⁶⁰ The writing is less cursive than in *Le Jeu de la Hache*: there are only a few loops on the ascenders and the letters are more angular, especially the **d**.

The manuscript fr.1696 from the French National Library was also the property of Louis de Gruuthuse, certainly produced in Bruges around 1460-1469.⁶¹ It is slightly more cursive than the previous one with loops on the ascenders and has the most similar writing to the one used in *Le Jeu de la Hache*.

The ms. 3326 from the Library of the Arsenal, in France, is an anthology gathering three different texts about the Trojan war. It is supposed to have been written around 1460-68 in Lille for Jean the Fifth of Créquy. The first text does not contain any occurrence of an

⁵⁸ Pächt, Jenni and Thoss, *Die illuminierten Handschriften*, pp. 61-77.

⁵⁹ Avril, *Le Livre des tournois du roi René*, p. 12.

⁶⁰ *Manuscripts enluminés*, p. 42.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, number 12.

angular **r**. This allograph comes up a few times in the second text, and seems to be used essentially for the writing of the word *grand*, as in folio 90r. In contrast to the two first texts, the third text shows examples of all three allographs of **r** and the angular **r** is employed far more often. This difference between the three parts is very peculiar, especially when considering that all parts were possibly made by the same scribe, as Duval argues in his dissertation.⁶²

The manuscript 5196 from the library of the Arsenal in Paris was produced in Bruges between 1460 and 1475 for the family of Borssele.⁶³ The round **r** allograph is rare, mostly present in the words *grant* or *livre*.⁶⁴ The descenders of the letters **f** and long **s** go down further below the line than in *Le Jeu de la hache*, and the loops on the ascenders of **l** and **b** are irregularly present.

The manuscript 9359-60 from the Royal Library of Belgium was produced in 1467 and belonged to Philip the Good.⁶⁵

The manuscript 9028 from the Royal Library of Belgium was written in Flanders between 1476 and 1485.⁶⁶

This list is absolutely not exhaustive but it already allows us to observe striking similarities between them. They were all produced or are supposed to have been produced in Flanders, in different French dialects, which is statistically not surprising for such a script. All of these are sumptuous books, often produced for the high nobility. Their hypothetical periods of production lie between 1455 and 1485, which matches Stutzmann's estimates. This does not offer sufficient evidence to support a definitive argument for dating the manuscript but is still much more accurate than just considering the whole period during which the *cursiva formata* was in use. It is also a good argument to attribute the writing of *Le Jeu de la hache* to a scribe active in Flanders.

II.4. Linguistic and dialectal study⁶⁷

The language and vocabulary studies of a medieval text can also provide indications for the identification of the period of writing and in some cases, for Old French in particular, the dialect used and therefore the geographic origin of the author. Indeed, the material

⁶² Duval, *Réécritures de l'Antiquité troyenne à la fin du Moyen âge*, 1, pp. 11-12.

⁶³ Kren and McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance*, p. 255.

⁶⁴ For example in fol. 129^r, *grant* in line 7 and *livre* in line 27.

⁶⁵ *La librairie des ducs de Bourgogne*, vol. 5.

⁶⁶ *Manuscripts enluminés*, p. 55.

⁶⁷ For the study of the language, the constitution of the glossary and the translation we worked with the following tools: the online *Middle French Dictionary from the ATILF* (<<http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/>>, accessed on 15/12/2016), the *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch from Von Wartburg* (FEW), the *Godefroy dictionary*, and for the grammar Marchello-Nizia, *La langue française*, and Joly, *Précis de Grammaire*.

dating of the book, based either on codicology or on paleography, can only provide a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the text itself. The text dating must begin with the study of the text-tradition, and then with a study of the language of the older texts in this tradition. The textual content would then allow for a dating of the first writing, which differs to the material dating. Even when there is a gap of several centuries between the original composition and the copy manuscript, the copied text will stay close enough to the original version. There are obviously copyists who partially modernize the spelling of words or incorporate regionalisms, but overall the syntax, the spelling and the morphology stay close to the initial text.⁶⁸ It is therefore possible that the dialectal features of the author and of the successive copyists merge in the same text. This exercise is obviously simplified with *Le Jeu de la Hache* as it is the unique known document in this tradition, with the exception of the recent edition of Anglo.

The lexicon used in *Le Jeu de la Hache* as a whole is quite common and standard, and although some common words take a specific meaning in expressions related to the martial context (*venue*, *tour de bras*, etc.) and technical vocabulary specific to the axe-playing is also used, they do not immediately provide any information about the dating of the text.⁶⁹

However, three recurring terms have drawn our attention for their late apparition in the French vocabulary: *seousse* (§9, 11, 23, 26, 28, 46, 61), *desroquer* (§39, 58, 61, 68) and *escrevisse* (3 occurrences, §22, 61). The earliest mention of the word *seousse* (a jolt), newly constructed from the passive participle of the verb *secourir* (which stems from the Latin verb *SUCCUTERE*), can be dated to around 1460. This word occurs for the first time in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, a new work ordered by Philip III the Good, duke of Burgundy, which he received before 1467.⁷⁰ The older word which was gradually replaced by *seousse* and with a similar meaning of an abrupt movement is *escousse* which descended from the etymon *EXCUTERE*.⁷¹ The verb *desroquer* (to floor someone) is also first mentioned in a text from 1459. It is a learned coinage built on the Latin *ROCCA* which appeared when an older form was already in use. Indeed *desrocher*, with the same meaning, was the previous and spontaneous evolution from the same etymon.⁷² Finally, the word *escrevisse* (from the Frankish **kreibitja*), literally crayfish, appears in texts in the middle of the thirteenth century. It later became used to refer to a piece of armor, more precisely a cascade of tiles

⁶⁸ For a classification of the mistakes in copying, see *Conseils pour l'édition des textes médiévaux*, vol. 2, pp. 25-30.

⁶⁹ Some of these idiomatic expressions are discussed in the chapter in chapter III.2. General remarks on translation. For all other expressions, see the glossary.

⁷⁰ The writing period goes from 1456 to 1467, however, the currently conserved manuscripts all date from after 1480, see *Les Cent nouvelles nouvelles*.

⁷¹ Concerning *EXECUTER* see FEW, vol. 12, pp. 384-85 and for *SUCCUTERE* vol. 3, p. 287 ; the firsts references of *seousse* (~1460) are indicated in the DMF and in the Godefroy Complément p. 647. The large majority of occurrences dates from after 1470.

⁷² See the glossary and the translation for the specific meaning of *desroquer*. The Godefroy indicates the first mention of this word in 1459 (Arch. JJ 190, doc. 18), the FEW indicates the same date without mentioning the reference (vol. 10, p. 437) and the DMF gives 1460 as a first date and refers to Guérin Paul, *Recueil des documents concernant le Poitou*.

covering an articulation. This use of the word is attested only in the second half of the fifteenth century, and especially after 1470. The oldest mention found is from the *Traité et devis d'un tournoi* from the King René, dated from 1460: "Which are commonly protected with white crayfish or armors".⁷³ The frequent use of such words in the text is a sign that they were well established, and there is also no occurrence of the old forms *escousse* and *desrocher*. It would be very unlikely for this text to have been composed before 1460, which gives a *terminus post quem* for the composition.⁷⁴

A thorough linguistic analysis of syntactic constructions and grammatical uses would provide interesting information for itself, but is largely outside the scope of this paper.⁷⁵ However, it is worth noticing a few points. There is a distinct difference of style in the construction of sentences between the prologue (§1-3) and the technical part of the fighting manual (§4-73). The prologue is built with only three sentences, two of which are extremely long; in particular the subject and the main verb are drowned by subordinates and participial clauses. The author of the prologue or the copyist was forced to strongly punctuate the long subordinates, and to reintroduce the complements by means of the phrases *Pour parvenir et obtenir les desirs naturelz dessusdits* and *pour les raisons dessusdites*. He does not seem very comfortable with the convoluted and topical structure of the prologue. On the contrary, the technical part of *Le Jeu de la Hache* is structured into short sentences and relatively simply constructed with a vocabulary reduced to the essence of the subject. Very few emphatic adjectives are used and there are only three pairs of synonym (*sans bourgeois ne desmarchier* §7, *ce coup est bon et seur à poursuivre* §13, and *qui est bonne et seure deffaite* §47) against more than fifteen in the prologue. It seems obvious that the exercise of style is not the same between a topical prologue and a more pragmatic technical content. The great difference in style between the two parts could hardly be explained by the existence of different authors for the prologue and the rest of the text. This hypothesis is contested by the author of the prologue himself who explicitly indicates that he is also the author of the technical part: "I have employed my slight understanding to set forth in writing [...] in the manner which follows".

On the dialectical level, the result of the analysis is rather disappointing. We can only affirm that *Le Jeu de la Hache* is written in prose and presents the general characteristics of the *scripta* of the Middle French. The text was composed at a time when the written French

⁷³ *lesquels sont communément armez d'escrivisses ou de barnoys blancs. Livre des tournois*, p. 31. See the introduction from Avril to *Le Livre des tournois*, pp. 9-10 for a discussion on the dating. The FEW (vol. 16, p. 382) gives a first mention as early as 1380. This comes from Gay who misinterpreted a gold jewel in the shape of a crayfish in an inventory of 1380 as a piece of armor. All other examples cited by Gay are after 1460 (*Glossaire archéologique*, p. 599). See also Godefroy, vol. 3, p. 439.

⁷⁴ It is nevertheless necessary to keep in mind that this dating is dependent of the current lexicological data. In any case, it seems unlikely for *le Jeu de la hache* to contain the first occurrence of the terms *desroquer*, *secousse* and *escrivisse*. On the contrary, the majority of occurrences appear in the last third of the XVth century.

⁷⁵ We invite linguists to examine this text which is an isolated representative of a particular technical literary genre. A similar case occurs with a contemporary book called *La Fachon de tirer de l'arc a main*, preserved in a single manuscript from the end of the fifteenth century and two Parisian prints of the early sixteenth century. See Dejonghe and Deluz, *L'art d'archerie*.

language had long been imposed as an administrative and literary *koine* in the form of a standardized *scripta* devoid of any trace of regionalism. The common *scripta* slowly constituted by generations of clerks and poets gradually imposed itself for many historical and political reasons throughout the kingdom of France and in the regions in close contact with it slowly from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards.⁷⁶ For this reason, only very few dialectal features still appear in the *scripta* used by the majority of the copyists in the fifteenth century.

Among the few traits still present at the end of the Middle Ages listed by Christiane Marchello-Nizia (pp. 32-33), only a Walloon feature has been found in *Le Jeu de la Hache*, visible in the forms *tumbe* (§52) and *tumber* (§51) (**u** resulting from **o** closed followed by nasal) and perhaps also two northeastern traits, Picard-Wallon, *matérielles* (§1) and *guieres* (§36) (**ie** coming from the diphthongisation of the open **e**), and the spelling **ou** in the words *honnourable* and *demourrez*.⁷⁷ The other characteristics proper to the Picarde *scripta*, albeit the most represented in the texts of the fifteenth century, are totally absent. The same is true of other phenomena which appear episodically and which are linked to the regions of Wallonia, Lorraine, Normandy, Champagne, Orleans and Burgundia.⁷⁸ The dialect analysis produced mixed results. The dialectal trait, *tumber*, is isolated and insignificant and, in addition, could be an etymological writing (étymon *tumb-* > *tomber*). The two others traits find their origin in an unconfirmed area in the Northeast.

However some remarkable elements of the general *scripta* used by the copyist deserve to be noted. The first is the regularity in the spelling of words. While at that time it is common to encounter many different spellings for the same word in the same document,⁷⁹ the repeated occurrences in this manuscript are systematically similar with only eight exceptions for more than 600 different words. On six occasions the copyist forgot a letter: *avis* (§60) for *advis* (§73); *bec* (§29) for *becq*; *dariere* (§66) for *darriere*; *espanles* (§51) for *espanlle(s)*; *quevre* (§8) for *queuvre*; *tallon* (§9) for *talon*. There is also a hesitation between an archaic and a standard form: *genoil* (§22) or *genoul* (§22, 23, 61, 62). Finally, the difference repeated more than once is a regular alternation between *aulture* (12 occurrences) form and *l'autre* (15 occurrences). The orthographic regularity throughout the entire text shows that the copy was carried out carefully in an aesthetic search in the visual rendering of the words by a reasoned choice of the graphic ordinances, but also in a concern of reading.⁸⁰ The orthography in this text appears to be especially chosen to support reading

⁷⁶ See Marchello-Nizia, *La Langue française*, pp. 27-31 and pp. 55-57.

⁷⁷ In the case of *matérielle* only a relocation of the tonal accent can explain this diphthongisation.

⁷⁸ For a list of the dialectal *scripta* traits in Middle French see Ibid., pp.31-39, on the particularities of the Picarde *scripta* see Gossen, *Grammaire de l'ancien picard* and Lusignan Serge, *Essai d'histoire sociolinguistique*.

⁷⁹ Marchello-Nizia, *La Langue française*, p. 23.

⁸⁰ On spelling in manuscripts of the fifteenth century see Cazal, Y., Parussa, G., Pignatelli, C., Trachsler, R. 'L'orthographe : du manuscrit médiéval à la linguistique moderne'.

and avoid ambiguity. For example, when the **c** is in the final position it represents the sound [s] (*fourc*), otherwise it is accompanied by a **q** to render the sound [k] (*avecques, becq, estocq, estocquer, estommacq, parcq*) which disappears in the plural (*estocs*). Similarly, the **s** is systematically repeated after *-ers-* (*renversser, reversser, verssant, traversser, adverssaire*). The regularity of the spelling is also found in the maintenance of some archaic forms fixed by standard *scripta* for common words (*veoir, cheoir, recen*). There is also in the first verbal group the persistence of the palatalized suffix: *-ier* or *-iés* (*acrochiés, approchier, descherger, ...*) while the reduction of the diphthong [ye] had already occurred as explained by Zink.⁸¹ One can notice the restoration of etymological or pseudo-etymological letters: **-b**: *dessoubz* (11 occurrences); *soubz* (9); *sublever* (1); **-d**: for terms prefixed in **ad-**: *advenir* (1), *adverssaire* (1) *advis* (1) *mesadvenir* (1); **-p**: *temps* (1); *temptations* (1); **-l** preconsonantic: *aultre, faulcon, fault, principaulx, veult*.

Therefore *Le Jen de la Hache* was probably composed after 1460 and transcribed by a copyist who took care to use a common French *scripta* with an extremely regular spelling by removing any regional trait. It is not possible to determine whether the prologue and the technical content were composed at the same time. This could justify further linguistic analysis.

II.5. Conclusion about the dating and origin of the text

The manuscript offers no obvious unquestionable evidence or clue for a possible dating like a written date in a colophon or a mention of a contemporary historical episode. It is also anonymous and lacks any dedication which could give an indication about its origin and receiver. Anglo estimates that it could be a presentation copy to some prince or dignitary, and is certainly the work of a professional master at arms, well versed in the practical instruction of knightly pupils.⁸² It has been seen before that the teaching of such axe play could have been addressed to less noble people. But could this manuscript in particular have been produced for commoners? This chapter aims to assemble a significant amount of evidence to offer a more precise dating than the existing one.

A first clue can be found in the text: the weapon used in the technical treatise has no cutting edge but only a hammer and a spike as discussed before. There is no mention of an axe blade, although it seems that until the mid-fifteenth century, a clear distinction is still made between these two forms to cause dissent when a participant brings a hawk-like beak instead of an axe, as mentioned by Raynaud.⁸³ This could support an argument in favor of a composition in the second half of the fifteenth century, but this would require further study.

⁸¹ Zink, *Le Moyen français*, p. 12

⁸² Anglo, *Martial Arts*, pp. 152 and 154.

⁸³ Raynaud, *À la hache !*, p. 534

The manuscript as a physical document shows no particular feature that could support or contest any dating of the production. However, the quality of the writing, the use of parchment, the space kept free for illuminations, all these elements speak in favor of a book dedicated to a rich person.

The paleography study shows that the writing shares many similarities with other manuscripts that were produced between 1455 and 1485. It is also very likely that the production took place in Flanders, between Lille and Bruges.

The vocabulary used in the text provides a *terminus post quem* to the composition of the text and can thus help in dating the manuscript. Indeed, words such as *escrevise* or *seconsse* are not found with the same meaning in other texts before 1460, which sets a limit to the period during which the manuscript could have been earliest written.

The history of the manuscript is very well documented since 1544, when it was listed for the first time in the royal library of Blois. The history of the manuscript before this date remains completely unknown. The most tempting hypothesis would be to see this manuscript as an unfinished book from the library of Louis of Gruuthuse, but as has been discussed earlier in this text, this hypothesis is fragile. It is much more tempting to see in this manuscript a modest example of this Burgundian library described by Wijnsman.⁸⁴

It was drafted very carefully in a pure common Middle French *scripta* in which every dialectal trait was rubbed out. It was probably written and realized in a workshop in Flanders, close to sponsors fond of literary didactic books written in that language, and especially with the typical script *cursiva formata*. The *scripta* so regular and standardized could be an argument that the writing was made for the entourage of the dukes of Burgundy. Indeed, the Burgundian court was usually held in Flanders or Wallonia, but in addition the members of the literary school which gravitated around the Dukes of Burgundy were not native of the region.⁸⁵ A more thorough study of the Burgundian libraries as well as the sponsors would no doubt make this hypothesis clearer.

III. THE TEXT OF *LE JEU DE LA HACHE*

III.1. Transcription and Edition Rule set

To facilitate the reference to the various paragraphs, the numbering used by Anglo was retained, with the only difficulty that no number is assigned for headings. However another organization of the text has been marked each time by an insertion of a space reserved for an illumination or large drop cap illustrated before the paragraphs. This logical unit is the subject of a second numbering. For example, the paragraph 5 is the

⁸⁴ Wijnsman, “Bourgogne”, “bourguignon”, pp. 369-76.

⁸⁵ For this subject, see Ibid. or Marchello-Nizia, *La Langue française*, p. 34.

second paragraph of the second unit, and is identified by the couple of references §5 and 2.2.

The edition of *Le Jeu de la hache* has been made in order to help a modern reader to access the Middle French text, following the pieces of advices provided by the *Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*.⁸⁶ Or in other words, these rules are here to provide a better legibility of the text, without betraying the intentions of the scribe. In particular, the following transcription rules have been used:

- the missing letrines have been marked between brackets and the missing letter has been inserted.
- the scribe made some rare corrections to the text, for example by an addition of a few letters above the line, and they are all indicated in footnotes.
- an obvious mistake of the scribe has been directly corrected and mentioned in footnote (§32).

The abbreviations have all been expanded and are not mentioned in the edited text. The most common abbreviation mark used in the document is the tilde, a horizontal mark over the word, and must be expanded according to the context. In the following examples, the letters concerned by the abbreviation mark are emphasized by an underlining:

- *pmierent* expands to *premierement* (§2)
- *bone* expands to *bonne* (§1), *maĩ* in *main* (§59).
- *come* expands to *comme* or *hyme* to *homme* (§1 and *passim*). It should be noted that this text has no example of two following *m*. Every candidate is abbreviated. It is thus not possible to determine whether the developed form *-mm-* instead of *-mm-* would have been more appropriate.
- *spuelles* expands to *spirituelles* (§1)
- *q* expands to *que* (§1)
- the occurrences of *ql* are expanded according to the context into *quel* or *qu'il*.
- *eployé* expands to *employé* (§1)
- the abbreviation *vze* is very common and has been expanded to *vostre* (§3) according to the spelling of the word found developed in §34
- *marche* expands to *marchier* (§23), according to the form attested in §3
- *bñ* expands to *bien* (§35, 41, 57)
- *au* expands to *avoir* (§41)
- *tirat* expands to *tirant* (§46)

⁸⁶ *Conseils pour l'édition des textes médiévaux*, vol. 1 and 2.

There are also cases of abbreviation noted with a small letter or figure in superscript.

- *g^{nt}* has been expanded to *grant* (§7, 24, 41, 46, 55, 61), according to attested form in the §60.
- *t^{uers}ser* expands to *traverser* (§46)
- *q^{nt}* expands to *quant* (§57, 63), according to the attested form in §2.
- *q^l* expands to *qu'il* (§22, 35)
- *po^r* expands to *pour* (title), *po^rueoir* to *pourveoir* (§1), *desto^rnez* to *destourner* (§7)
- *vo^o* expands to *vous* (§3 and *passim*) or *pl^p* to *plus* (§22, 47)
- A small **7** above a letter is the indication of an abbreviation for **-er-** or **-re-**, as in *conl⁷* which expands to *contre* (two occurrences in §1), *v⁷tueuse* to *vertueuse* (§1), *darrie⁷* to *derrière* (§9, last occurrence). *Fe⁷* (§29, 50) and *deffe⁷* (§37) are not expanded to *ferre* and *defferre* respectively but instead to *faire* and *deffaire* following the only attested form in the infinitive in this text.

There are a few occurrences of the abbreviation with a stricken **p** which expands to *per*, *p^{sonne}* expands then to *personne* (§1) and *p^{ar}* to *par* (§9).

The **p** whose descending line is preceded by a small loop is developed into **pro**, with two occurrences, *p^{cedent}* et *p^{ffit}able*, which expand to *procedent* and *profitable* (§1).

Some contractions are indicated by a comma at the end of the word but not always in the last position, and expands according to context: *dess,* to *dessu^s* (§1), *plus,* to *plusie^s* (§1) following an attested form in §43, and more curiously *ass,* to *assavoir* (§1), which form is attested in the same paragraph.

The very common abbreviation mark which looks like the letter **9** at the start of a word is used a few times in this text and always to abbreviate *comme* with the form *9me* (§17, 48, 50). The expansion follows the rule discussed above for the tilde mark.

Every abbreviated forms of *-dit*, *-dite*, *-dits*, *-dites* has been expanded, even if it is not a common practice. This has been done to keep a coherence with the developed forms found in the text, for example on §64 (*ledit*), or on §28 (*vostredite*). For the feminine form, it should be noted that the unique form with two **t**, *ditte* appears in §14.

The tironian **et**, similar to a modern **z** without descender loop has been transcribed *et*.

Finally, the sign + is used once in the text and has been replaced by the word *croix* (§68).

The following edition rules have been employed:

- the letters **i** which have a consonantal value have been replaced with the letter **j**, as *juste* (§2), *sejourner* (§57), *jointes* (§66)
- the letters **u** which have a consonantal value, most of time in the middle of words, have been replaced with **v**, as for example in *devez* (§2).

- For the particular case of the verb *pouvoir* and its many declinations in the text, the transcription maintains the **u** following the unique lesson of *poés* (§37) which confirms a pronunciation of the **u** as a vowel.⁸⁷
- the letters **v** which have a vowel value have been replaced with **u**, as for example in *ung* (§36)
- an apostrophe has been inserted to separate the article from the name in case of elision of a vowel. For example, this has been the case for *qu'il* (§19) and *l'estocq* (§20). In case of ambiguity, a footnote explains the decision made.
- acute accents have been placed above the **e** when such letter has the value of a final tonic, like in the word *pié* (§23) or the past participles (*tourné* in §43). An accent has also been added to the **e** in the case of a third-person plural (*pourriés*, §19) or in the imperative mood (*ayés*, §29).
- grave accents have been placed above the **a** in the prepositions *à* and *là* to avoid a confusion with the verbal forms *a* or the article *la*. This accent is also placed above the **u** to separate the relative pronoun *où* (§4) to the coordinating conjunction *ou* (every other case).
- the punctuation and the use of capitals follow modern practice.

the foliation changes are indicated in the margin; if it occurs between two paragraphs, it is positioned at the beginning of the second paragraph, without any indication in the text. If the foliation change occurs inside a paragraph between two words, its position is indicated with a vertical bar |, when it occurs inside a word, its insertion cut the word (*pous-|-ser*, §72).

III.2. General remarks on translation

The translation done by Anglo was very valuable but lacks in accuracy and consistency. However, this was a very good start and the choice has been made to improve it instead of pretending to do a completely new job, which means that some of the sentences have not been changed at all and remained exactly in the state they were in the translation by Anglo.

The main work here has been to propose the most accurate word to translate the meaning of its counterpart in Middle French. When required, the translation is accompanied by a comment to explain the choice made. In addition a comprehensive glossary from a large part of the French words used in the original text is provided below with a reference to the paragraph where each occurrence appears.

The main rule followed in this translation is to try to be as faithful as possible to the meaning of the original French text, but not necessarily to the syntax. For example, the

⁸⁷ This follows also the conclusions of Jodogne, “pouvoir” ou “pouvoir”. See also Marchello-Nizia, *La Langue française*, pp. 277-78.

Middle French authorized sentences without subject pronoun,⁸⁸ which is the case in this text: *De toutes les trois couvertes pouvez donner lesdits coups* (“From all three protections, [you] can give the said blows”). When there is no ambiguity about the subject, it is inserted without indication. Otherwise, the insertion of the subject is then made between brackets.

The other major difficulties which often caused problems during translation were the anaphora, the pairs of synonyms and idiomatic expressions.

The text also contains many pronouns or possessive adjectives that are anaphors, which means that they depend upon another expression in context to be understood: *devez [...] baisser le gros bout de vostre hache en la tournant par dessoubz la queue de la sienne* (§65, “you must lower the butt of your axe, turning the axe under the tail of his”). In this case, *sienne* is an anaphor and refers to the axe, mentioned just before. However the author overindulges of such anaphors, especially when he speaks about the axe, which led him to make undefined anaphors. For example, the sixth paragraph begins with *se vous avez la croix devant [...] pouvez recevoir ledit coup de la queue de la vostre* which translates to “if you have the cross in front, [...] you can receive the said blow with the tail of yours”. Syntactically, *la vostre* should refer to the cross, the only feminine word mentioned before. But “the tail of your cross” does not make sense, and this is clearly a reference of the word “axe” which sticks to the global context of the text, and not only in this particular sentence. In such case, to avoid confusion, the related word has been inserted into brackets: “the tail of your [axe]”. It is not always as simple. In the twelfth paragraph, the French text is *pouez [...] cueillir la sienne* (“you can pick up his”), but the anaphor could refer either to the axe or to the tail. In such case, the principle was to choose the more logical word depending on the situation. It was also sometimes necessary to invert the anaphors for more clarity of the translated text: *frapper de vostre queue contre la sienne* (§70) has been translated into “to strike against his tail with yours” and not “to strike with your tail against his”.

The text of *Le Jeu de la Hache* offers some pairs of words coordinated with the conjunction *et* and with very close meanings. The custom, not specific to Middle French, was to reinforce the first term with a second which did not completely overlap its meaning.⁸⁹ It brings some constraints to the translation, but could also help clarify the meaning of certain words. The complete list of such potential synonyms are: *habiller et esvertuer* (R1), *exerciter et habilliter* (§1), *doctrines et enseignemens* (§1), *armé et embatonné* (§3), *la doctrine et l'industrie* (R2), *sans [...] bougier ne desmarchier* (§7). This last couple seems reversible and has been translated into “without moving or stepping”. The couple *armé et embatonné* is a good example as both words mean equipped with weapons. It could have been possible to translate it only with the English word “armed”. To maintain a pair of words in the translation, and with the idea of reinforcement, the significance of the first word has been reduced: “equipped and armed”. *Doctrines et enseignemens* is a good example of such a pair

⁸⁸ For a deeper understanding about null subjects and subject pronouns, see Vance, *Syntactic Change in Medieval French*, pp. 257-327.

⁸⁹ On that subject, see Buridant, ‘Les binômes synonymiques’, particularly pp. 7-19.

which helps to clarify the meaning of a polysemous word, here *doctrine*. This passage has been translated into “teachings and instructions”. In the second passage including the word *doctrine*, *la doctrine et l’industrie*, this word certainly keeps the similar meaning of teaching when *industrie* could mean the know-how, the knowledge but also the ability to do something. It has been translated by “the teaching and expertise”. The two last pairs contain each the word *habiller*, which means to make fit or to enable someone; *exerciter et habiller* is also pair of near synonyms, where *exerciter* could be translated by the generic “to exercise” or “to practice” when *habiller* goes further and means “to enable”. For the last pair, *habiller et esvertuer*, the word *habiller* takes the first place and one should understand *esvertuer* a more specific meaning. This verb is difficult to translate; it could mean to engage all one’s strength in an activity, to fortify or to reinforce; the expression *esvertuer en armes* can be found in the literature of the time.⁹⁰ The translation to the verb “to exert”, proposed by Anglo, seems finally a good choice, with the idea to not only being capable to manage weapons, but also to be able to do it vigorously.

Two idiomatic expressions repeatedly used in the manuscript are particularly troublesome from the translation work: *tour de bras*, and *demy hache*. For both of them the conclusions have been to keep them in French for lack of a better choice. Here follow the detailed explanations.

Tour is a really polysemous word and can be understood in at least two ways in this context, a turn or trick. It seems to refer in this text to an action done with the arms in conjunction to a stroke or a rush. The formulation *tour de bras* is not common and no other occurrence of it outside this text has been found. The closer form has been found in a description of deed of arms written around 1400: “The seneschal made a *tour de hache* and struke him on the hinge of the basinet and knocked him to the ground.”⁹¹ However in this sentence, the word *tour* has probably the generic meaning of a trick, and moreover, this expression is introduced with an indefinite article which is not the case in *Le Jeu de la hache*. In *Le Jeu de la Hache* this formulation is introduced by a preposition, *à*, *de* or *du*. Here is the complete list of combinations found in the text:

- *à tour de bras*: ruer... (§4, 55)
- *de tour(s) de bras*: coups de (§6, 22), couverte... (§7, 12), ruer... (§9), donner... (§4, 52, 54), hausser... (§26), faire... (§7)
- *venir du tour de bras* (§9)

When it begins with the preposition *à*, it could be understood as the known idiomatic expression *à tour de bras* (§4, 55), attested since the fifteenth century and meaning “with main strength” or “with all the strength”. The preposition *de* can also be understood as a partitive article, in the sense of either the possible “turns of arms” or a partial turn of

⁹⁰ Et lorz vouldroit il sa force et son corps en armes esvertuer, from the cycle of Guillaume d’Orange in prose, composed the middle of the fifteenth century, Suard, *Guillaume d’Orange*, p. 199.

⁹¹ Et d’une faulce desmarche que Monsieur le Seneschal fist avecques un tour de haiche qu’il luy donna sur la charniere du bacinet, il le porta par terre. Correspondence of Jean de Werchin, p. 149.

arms; in such case, it does not explain the plural form *de tours de bras* (§6, 12). In both cases, it is not satisfactory. In Middle French, the prepositions *à* and *de* can both be employed as instrumental prepositions, which is no more the case in Modern French for the preposition *à*.⁹² This could match with all occurrences, except with *couverte de tour de bras* where the preposition *de* has an adversative meaning: “a protection against *tour de bras*”.⁹³ The expression *tour de bras* should then be considered in its entirety as a mean. In the text, it seems to refer both to the way some strikes are made (*coup de tour de bras*), or mostly refers directly to a specific stroke in a sort of elliptical construction (*ruer de tour de bras, couverte de tour de bras, ...*). And in each case, the strike does not appear to be a thrust. Indeed, thrusting requires an extension of the arms, with less rotation of every articulations of the arms than a lateral stroke given with the hammer or the spike.⁹⁴ The *tour de bras* must then be considered as a technical term specific to the Axe-play, without equivalent in English, or even in Modern French. This explains why it has been kept in Middle French in the translation.

The second idiomatic expression, *demy hache*, is also complicated to translate. Like the *tour de bras*, no other occurrence of a similar expression has been found outside this text. Literally, it means “half-axe”, which seems to be different to the middle of the axe as the author chose another expression for it, *milieu de sa hache* (§62)? Here is the complete list of types of combinations found in the text:

- verb + *demy hache*: *recevoir...* (§12), *boutter/bouttant...* (§40, 50, 68), *pousser...* (§41)
- *à demy hache*: *mettre...* (§57), *bouttier* (§45, 64)
- *de demy hache*: *pousser...* (§11), *destourner...* (§25), *boutter...* (§26, 35), *parade...* (§32, 33), *recevoir...* (§9)
- article + *demy hache*: *mettre soubz sa ...* (§28, 44, 58), *sans bougier vostre...* (§41), *mettre la...* (§51), *boutter de ladite...* (§41).

Anglo defined the *demy hache* as the middle of the shaft between the two hands. As the text has many references to sliding the hands on the shaft, the *demy hache* must change place constantly, and when the hands are united, it no longer exists at all. This is then a dynamic part of the weapon which certainly requires balancing the two ends of the weapons properly to be correctly exploited. The expression *demy hache* has then to be considered as a technical term, and similarly to the *tour de bras*, could not be translated satisfactorily. It has then been kept in Middle French in the translation.

⁹² Shears, *Recherches sur les prépositions*, pp. 125-36 and in particular pp. 125-28 for *à* and pp. 131-32 for *de*.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 87-97 and in particular p. 97 for the preposition *de*.

⁹⁴ Chaize made an interesting parallel between the expression *tour de bras* with the word *quarter* in the English medieval fencing sources (*Les arts martiaux de l'Occident médiéval*, pp. 486-87). He defines the *quarter* as a type of stroke which development requires a quarter of space around the fighter.

III.3. Edition and translation

Folio	Level	<i>Le Jeu de la Hache</i>	English Translation
f°1r-1v			
f°2r	Rubric 1	S'ensuit le prologue du jeu de la hache pour soy habiliter et esvertuer en armes	Here follows the prologue of Axe-play for enabling and exerting oneself in arms.
	§1	Considerant et voyant par experience que naturellement tous corps humains nobles et non nobles fuyent la mort et desirent vivre longuement en ce mortel monde, et apres au royaume de paradis vivre pardurablement, pour parvenir et obtenir les desirs naturelz dessusdits, il me samble que toute creature humaine et raisonnable se devoit tenir en bon estat et soy armer premierement de bonnes armures spirituelles, c'est assavoir de belles vertus pour soy deffendre et resister contre tous vices et temptations dyaboliques en preservant et gardant l'ame de mourir de mort eternelle.	Considering and seeing by experience that all human beings, noble and non-noble, naturally fly from death and desire to live long in this mortal world, and to live forever afterwards in the Kingdom of Paradise, it seems to me that to achieve and obtain the natural desires above-said, every human and rational creature ought to keep himself in a good state, and arm himself first with good spiritual armor, that is to say with beautiful virtues to defend himself and to resist all vices and diabolic temptations, preserving and guarding the soul from dying an eternal death.
	1.1	Et cela estre fait, on doit armer le corps de bonnes armures corporelles et materielles et soy pourveoir de glaives convenables comme la hache, la demy lance, la dague,	And for this to be done, one must arm the body with good corporeal and material armor, and provide oneself with suitable weapons, like the axe, half-pike, dagger,
f°2v		la grande espee et la petite pour soy deffendre et resister contre ses ennemis corporelz et mortelz.	great sword and short sword, to defend oneself and resist one's corporeal and mortal enemies.
		Et pour ce que tout homme noble de corps et de courage naturellement desire d'exerciter et habiliter sa personne en occupacion vertueuse et honnorable, et principalement ou noble fait d'armes, c'est assavoir au jeu de la hache dont procedent et despendent plusieurs glaives dessus nommez, d'autre part ledit jeu est honnorable et profitable pour la preservation du corps humain noble ou non noble, pour les raisons dessusdites, j'ay employé mon petit entendement à mettre par escript aucunes doctrines et enseignemens touchant ledit jeu de la hache en la maniere que s'ensuit.	And because of this, let every man, noble of body and courage, naturally desire to exercise and enable himself in a virtuous and honourable occupation. And principally in the noble feat of arms, that is to say in axe-play, from which proceed and depend several weapons above-named. Moreover, the said axe-play is honorable and profitable for the preservation of a human body, noble or non-noble. For the above-said reasons, I have employed my slight understanding to set forth in writing some teachings and instructions touching the said axe-play in the manner which follows.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§2 1.2	Et premierement vous qui estes l'ung des II champions, appellé en champ de bataille soit à oultrance ou aultrement, soyés attendant ou deffendant, sur tout devez sentir en vostre conscience avoir bonne et juste querelle.	And first, you who are called on the field of battle as one of the two champions, whether [in a fight] to the finish or otherwise, whether you should be attendant or defendant, above all you must feel in your conscience that you have good and just cause.
	§3 1.3	Item au partir de vostre pavillon, devez estre bien armé et embatonné de vostre hache d'armes et d'aultres glaives appertenans. En vous recommandant à Dieu devez faire le signe de la croix et marchier droit d'une belle contenance et valereuse en regardant vers l'autre bout du parcq pour veoir vostre adverssaire. Et en le regardant devez prendre amoderement ung fier courage en vous pour bataillier vaillamment comme il appertient et avoir souvenance des principaulx poins contenus es chappitres qui cy apres s'ensuivent.	On leaving your pavilion, you must be well equipped and armed with your axe and other suitable weapons. Commending yourself to God, you must make the sign of the cross and advance with upright posture and a good and valorous countenance, gazing at the other end of the close to seek out your adversary. And, gazing upon him, you must take in a measured manner a proud courage in yourself to fight valiantly, as is fitting and keep in mind the principal points contained in the chapters which hereafter follow.
f°3r	Rubric 2	Cy commence la doctrine et l'industrie du noble jeu de la hache et la maniere de bataillier.	Here begins the teaching and expertise of the noble axe-play and the manner of fighting.
	§4 2.1.	Item quant on vous donra de tour de bras droittier à droittier, se vous avez la croix au devant, vous puez marchier avant du pié gauche en luy recevant son coup en cueillant de la queue de la hache. D'une venue ferez ⁹⁵ contre bas pour la luy faire cheoir à terre. Et de là, puez, en marchant l'ung pié apres l'autre en suyvant, luy baillier d'estocq de ladite queue en coulant par la main gauche au visage ou là où bon vous samblera, ou luy baillier à tour de bras sur la teste.	When someone strikes you by means of a <i>tour de bras</i> , right-hander to right-hander, if you have the cross in front, you can step forward with your left foot, receiving his blow by picking it up with the axe's tail; in a single movement strike downward to make his axe fall to the ground. And from there, following up one foot after the other, you can thrust him with the said tail, sliding it through the left hand, at the face, or wherever seems good to you. ⁹⁶ Or you can strike him by means of a <i>tour de bras</i> to the head. ⁹⁷

⁹⁵ *Ferez* could mean either “to put iron on”, “will do” or simply the present tense of the verb *ferir*, “to strike”, which makes more sense.

⁹⁶ This group of words could also mean “either there or wherever seems good to you” depending on how the second *ou* is understood. In this case, it is taken as a coordinating conjunction, “or”. In the translation proposed, it is taken as the relative pronoun *où*, “where”. Both propositions make sense, however the second is neater and has been selected for the translation.

⁹⁷ The idiomatic expression *à tour de bras* could also mean “with all the strength of your arms”.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§5 2.2	Item se vous avez la queue devant, le puez pareillement faire sans vous bougier.	If you have the tail forward, you can do it the same way without moving.
	§6 2.3	Item encore se vous avez la croix devant comme dessus, puez recevoir ledit coup de la queue de la vostre en desmarchant en arriere. De toutes les trois couvertes puez donner lesdits coups de tours de bras et de l'estocq de la queue.	Again, if you have the cross in front, as above, you can receive the said blow with the tail of your [axe] by stepping backward. From all three covers, you can give the said blows by means of <i>tours de bras</i> and the point of the tail.
	§7 3.1	[I]tem une aultre couverte de tour de bras. Se vous avez la queue devant, sans vous bougier ne desmarchier ruez au devant de sa hache de la croix de la vostre pour la trouver en croisee seulement qu'il puisse soustenir le coup qu'il ne dessende sur vous. Et incontinent la croisee faite, destournez vostre hache en luy ruant de la queue de bas en hault, en fauchant entre sa main et la croix de la sienne grant coup pour la luy faire cheoir hors de sa main. Et se failliés que soyés prestement retourné en vostre garde. Et se vous la luy avez fait saillir de la main, vous puez faire ce que bon vous samblera de tour de bras ou aultrement.	Another protection against <i>tour de bras</i> : if you have the tail forward, without moving or stepping, ⁹⁸ rush the cross of your axe in front of his, to engage it crossways, so that it can only hold up the stroke which does not fall on you. ⁹⁹ And as soon as the crossing has been effected, disengage your axe, casting at him with the tail from low to high, sweeping violently between his hand and the cross of his axe, to make it drop from his hand. And if you should fail, you may quickly return on your guard. And if you have made it jump out of his hand, you can do whatever seems good to you by means of a <i>tour de bras</i> or something else.
f°3v	§8 3.2	[I]tem se vous luy rués le premier de tour de bras et qu'il se quevre de la fasson dessusdite, vous puez faire pareillement de la queue comme du sien dessusdit.	If you strike him the first by means of a <i>tour de bras</i> , and he protects himself in the fashion above-said, you can do the same thing as him with the tail, as described above.

⁹⁸ Anglo translated this passage by “moving or stepping back” but *desmarchier* does not necessarily mean to step back and we are more inclined to see in *bougier* and *desmachier* here a pair of synonyms. See the discussion in the section II.4.

⁹⁹ The first *qu'il* is ambiguous as normally the masculine pronoun *il* can only refer to the opponent. But here, it seems to be an impersonal and neutral pronoun.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§9 4.1	[I]tem se de rechief venoit à vous du tour de bras et que ayés la queue devant, devez marchier à l'encontre du coup le costé droit de vostre homme, et de là recevoir de demye hache son coup. Et tout d'une venue, le plus pres que pourrez, devez marchier de l'autre pié gauche et l'assoir darriere son tallon bien ferme en luy sourdant sa hache qui est dessus la vostre et mettre la queue de la vostre soubz son menton, et de là donner une secousse en darriere pour le ruer par terre.	If he would come at you again by means of the <i>tour de bras</i> , and you have the tail forward, you must move toward the blow, to the right side of your opponent, and from there receive his blow by means of <i>demy hache</i> . And at the same time, as close as you can, you must advance your left foot and place it behind his heel really firmly, as you raise his axe which is above yours. And place your tail under his chin, and thus give him a jolt backwards to push him to the ground.
	§10 4.2	[I]tem se vous failliés, vous devez retourner sur vostre garde. Et cela se doit faire prestement.	If you fail, you must return to your guard. And this should be done quickly.
	§11 5.1	[I]tem s'il vous faisoit ceste entree dessusdite, vous devez mettre prestement la dague de vostre hache soubz son esselle pour l'esloignier de vous ou repasser la croisee de vostre dite hache par soubz son bras pour le pousser de dessoubz l'esselle de la demy hache, en le suyvnt pour le mettre hors de la lisse, ou donner bonne secousse de la force de vos bras seullement pour sentir se le pourrez getter par terre.	If he would use this above-said entry on you, you must quickly place the dagger of your axe under his armpit to drive him away from you. Or [you must] pass the cross of your axe under his arm to push him under the armpit by the mean of the <i>demy hache</i> , following it up to thrust him out of the list, or give him a good jolt with all the strength of your arms, just to see whether you can hurl him to the ground. ¹⁰⁰
	§12 5.2	[I]tem aultre couverte de tours de bras. Vous estant sur la garde de la queue, sans vous bougier, pouez recevoir demy hache ¹⁰¹ tant que vos bras se pourront estendre en hault. Et incontinent le coup receu, pouez de la queue de la vostre cueillir la sienne,	Another protection against <i>tours de bras</i> . When you are in tail guard, without moving, you can receive [the blow] by means of <i>demy hache</i> as high as your arms can be extended. And the moment the blow has been received,

¹⁰⁰ Two translations are possible depending how *seullement* (meaning “only” or “just”) is associated to the text: “to jolt him with your arms *just* to see if he could fall”, or “to jolt *only* with your arms to see...”. Both are coherent. However, the two other uses of *seullement* in this text introduced a subordinate clause and were not referring to the previous text, so the decision has been taken here to follow the formulation already selected by Anglo.

¹⁰¹ The word *demy* is cut on the original text to start a new line. The scribe could have forgotten a *de* on this occasion like the lesson of the §9: *recevoir de demy hache*; however the combination of a verb followed by *demy hache* without a preposition or an adverb is attested in other situations (§41, *pousser demy hache*). There is no certainty that the scribe made a mistake.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
		ainsy qu'il la voudra lever, et tout d'une venue la ruer en avant. Et se elle ne vole hors de sa main, au mains vous l'esbranlerez tellement que aurez temps pour donner coup ou estocq.	while he wishes to raise it, ¹⁰² you can pick up his [axe] ¹⁰³ with the tail of yours, and all in one movement rush it forward. And if it does not fly out of his hand, at least you will undermine him so much that you will have time to give him a blow or thrust.
f°4r	§13 6.1	[I]tem se il vient la croix devant pour vous estocquer, de la queue de la vostre luy devez destourner la sienne le plus souvent que pourrez. Et se la puez tellement destourner que le puissez veoir descouvert, entre luy et sa hache puez ruer l'estocq de la queue au visage. Et ce coup est bon et seur à poursuivre, car il ne vous en puet mesadvenir. Et vous devez approchier de luy, joindre vostre bras gauche au sien droit. Et se vous voyés que bon vous soit et que en ayés le loisir, puez laisser couler la queue de la vostredite hache soubz son menton, ayant vostre pié darriere son talon, et de là essayer à le renverser.	If he comes with the cross forward to thrust at you, you must turn his axe with the tail of yours as often as you can. And if you can, turn it aside sufficiently so that you can see him opened up. You can rush the point of the tail to the face, between him and his axe. ¹⁰⁴ And this technique is a good and sure one to pursue, because it cannot do you any harm. And you must approach him, join your left arm to his right. And if you see that it would be good for you, and that you have the time, you can let the tail of your axe slide under his chin, while you have your foot behind his heel, and from there try to throw him.
	§14 6.2	[I]tem il puet deffaie ceste entree en destournant sa croisee de sa hache par soubz la queue de la vostre, et de sa ditte croisee debouter en avant de soy vostredite queue. Et en faisant cestedite deffaite vous puet suyvre l'ung pié chassant l'autre pour entrer entre vous et vostredite queue affin de vous estocquer au visage.	He could counter this entry by diverting the cross of his axe under the tail of yours, and with the said cross-bar push your tail away from him. And while doing this counter, he could follow you, one foot chasing the other, to get between you and your tail in order to thrust you in the face.

¹⁰² *Ainsy que* could either mean “in such a way”, “while”, or “during”, and is most probably the second case here. The opponent will raise his axe after his strike has been parried, and during this action, the text proposes picking up his axe.

¹⁰³ There is ambiguity in the elision *cueillir la sienne*: *sienne* can refer either to the tail, or to the axe. Having received the opponent's axe between the hands in *demy hache*, it is difficult to imagine that one can pick up his tail, which remains low and close to the opponent. This explains the choice made here.

¹⁰⁴ Anglo's version was “And if you can turn it aside sufficiently to see a gap open up between him and his axe, you can give him...” However, this division of the text does not take into account the dot accurately set by the writer between *descouvert* and *entre lui*.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
f°4v	§15 6.3	[l]tem s'il vous fait ladite poursuite, n'avez que à vous retraire l'ung pié apres l'autre, ung pas en arriere, et retirer aussy en coulant par la main gauche vostre hache à vous. Et en ce faisant vous vous trouverez despechié et davantage serez sur la garde de vostre dite queue.	If he carries out the said pursuit, you have only to retreat one foot after the other, one pace back, and also pull your axe back toward you, sliding it through the left hand. And in doing this you will find yourself free, and furthermore you will be in tail guard.
	§16 7.1	[l]tem se vos haches sont jointes l'une croix contre l'autre et que il vous boutte pour vous reculler, puez desmarchier seulement du pié devant à demy pour retirer vostre hache à vous, et incontinent mettre la dague de la vostre entre son becq de faulcon et sa main, le plus pres de la croix que pourrez du costé devers son bras droit, en luy bouttant sa hache d'autre costé. En suyvant, puez marchier du pié gauche vers son darriere, en le bouttant de demy hache contre ses espaulles, et le ruer par terre.	If your axes are joined one cross against the other, and he pushes you to make you recoil, you can merely move half a step with your front foot, to draw your axe back to you. And immediately place the dagger of your axe between his <i>bec-de-faucon</i> and his hand, as close as you can to the cross from the side toward his right arm, pushing his axe to the other side. While following up, you can advance your left foot toward his back, pushing him by means of the <i>demy hache</i> against his shoulders, and push him to the ground.
	§17 7.2	[l]tem plus se il vient à vous la dague de sa hache devant pour vous baillier de l'estocq, et que vous ayés vostre hache pareillement comme la sienne, quant le verrez venir à vous, puez marchier sur son darriere le plus que pourrés affin qu'il ne treuve rien devant luy. En faisant ceste desmarche, devez boutter du plat de la queue de vostre hache sur son col pour le faire tresbuchier en avant. Et se failliés ¹⁰⁵ , tournez prestement sur la garde de vostre hache.	Moreover, if he comes at you with the dagger of his axe forward to give you a thrust, and you have your axe in the same position as his, when you see him come at you, you can step toward his back as far as you can, so that he finds nothing in front of him. While doing this move, you must push with the flat of the tail from your axe onto his neck to make him trip forward. And if you fail, return quickly to axe guard.

¹⁰⁵ The final *s* has been added in superscript above the *e*.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§18 7.3	[l]tem se il vous vouloit donner de la dague de sa hache au visage en coulant, devez de ¹⁰⁶ la queue de la vostre destourner le coup rudement pour essayer se la pourrez faire cheoir. ¹⁰⁷	If he should wish to give you a sliding thrust with the dagger of his axe at your face, you must rigorously divert the blow with the tail of yours to see if you can make it fall.
	§19 8.1	[l]tem se il est joueur de la hache et qu'il viengne la queue de sa hache devant, devez essayer se de la dague de la vostre luy pourriés de coup darriere main ¹⁰⁸ faire perdre la sienne d'une main. Et se le pouvez faire, vous pouvez deschergier sur luy telz coups que bon vous samblera.	If he is an axe-player, and he advances with the tail of his axe forward, you must try whether a blow of your dagger given behind his hand, could make him lose the grip of one hand on his axe. And if you can do this you can unleash on him whatever blows seem good to you.
	§20 8.2	[l]tem se vous failliés, vous devez essayer à luy donner de l'estocq de la queue au visage pour luy faire hausser la queue de la sienne. Et se vous la pouvez trouver croisee contre la vostre, vous pouvez retirer la queue de la vostre en luy baillant du mail contre le costé la sienne ou en marchant en darriere luy en baillier sur la teste.	If you fail, you must try to thrust him in the face with the tail to make him raise the tail of his axe. And if you can get it crossed against yours, you can draw back the tail of your axe, hitting against the side of his with the hammer. Or [you can], stepping back ¹⁰⁹ , hit with the hammer to his head.

¹⁰⁶ *de* has been added above the line.

¹⁰⁷ There is a possible mistake here. *En coulant* could be associated with both actions: the opponent can give a thrust sliding the axe through the forward hand, or alternatively, the defender can slide the poleaxe in his hands to defend himself. The comma and the translation both follow the first hypothesis, which seems more relevant.

¹⁰⁸ There are two possible ways to understand *darriere main*: if one reads it like all previous uses, it could mean a blow given behind the hand. But it could be also read *d'arriere main*, which means then a back-handed blow. The first hypothesis seems more relevant but contradicts Anglo's translation version.

¹⁰⁹ This action seems a little bit confusing. The first solution is to use the hammer against his tail, standing firm. The second one proposes stepping back and using the same hammer to aim at his head, which is normally farther away than the tail. Anglo proposed in his translation to understand that move as a step behind him. However, every certain occurrence of such a move behind the opponent is written using the possessive "on his" (*sur son darriere*, §17, 41, 64, or *vers son darriere* in §16). This hypothesis is not convincing as it implies too much addition to the original text to obtain a correct sentence. One must instead admit that stepping back with the left foot offers the fighter a better way to extend his arms and paradoxically the possibility to aim at a more distant target.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§21 8.3	[l]tem se il vous vouloit faire, ¹¹⁰ devez baisser la queue de la vostre en desmarchant en arriere du pié gauche, en vous couvrant demy hache ou du mail, et puis tourner sur la garde duquel bout que bon vous samblera.	If he would do it to you, you must lower the tail of your axe while stepping back with the left foot, protecting yourself by the mean of <i>demy hache</i> or the hammer. And then return to the guard of whichever end seems good to you.
f°5r	§22 9.1	[l]tem en quelque garde que ce soit, vous pouez essayer à luy donner sur la teste. Non pas que se vous failliés que vostre hache passast oultre, car il y auroit peril. ¹¹¹ Et incontinent ce coup fait, devez faire samblant de retourner sur la teste affin qu'il se queuvre hault, et à dont luy pouez donner sur le genoul du becq de faulcon. Et se vostre becq de faulcon passe l'escrevisse de son genoil, devez tirer à vous pour le ruer par terre. Et se il desmarche que vous ne trouvez rien, gardez que vostre hache ne passe plus avant que vostre homme, et pareillement en tous vos coups de tour de bras, et prestement tournez en vostre garde.	Whichever guard you are in, you can try to hit him on the head. But if you miss, your axe must not overtake, because that would be dangerous. And immediately after giving this blow, you must make feint at having another go at the head, so that he covers himself high. Whereupon you can strike him on the knee with the <i>bec-de-faucon</i> . And if your <i>bec-de-faucon</i> passes the poleyn, you must pull him toward you to rush him to the ground. And if he moves, so that you find nothing, take care that your axe does not go beyond your man, and similarly with all your strokes by means of <i>tour de bras</i> . And quickly return to your guard.
	§23 9.2	[l]tem et se on faisoit ledit coup du genoul, devez marchier en avant le costé droit vers vostre homme en luy mettant la queue de vostre hache entre sa hache et vostre genoul. Et de là vostredite queue devez essayer à luy errachier de ses mains en donnant darriere main ¹¹² bonne secousse contre la croisee de la sienne. Et se ne pouez, de là approchiés de luy en suyvant l'ung pié apres l'autre et luy donnez de l'estocq de la dague de la vostre au visage.	If someone tries the knee stroke, you must step forward to the right side, toward your man, placing the tail of your axe between his axe and your knee. And from here with your said tail you must try to wrest [the axe] from his hands by striking a good jolt behind the hand, against the cross of his [axe]. And if you cannot do this from there, approach him, following up with one foot after the other. And thrust him in the face with the dagger of your axe.

¹¹⁰ It lacks the impersonal pronoun: *se il [le] vous vouloit faire*. It is possible that this is not a mistake, because they are not always expressed in Middle French.

¹¹¹ The syntax of this sentence is really tormented in such a way it is difficult to understand in Middle French, and near impossible to follow literally. The translation has been done by modifying its structure.

¹¹² There could be a confusion with a back-hand blow, but is really much more realistic to understand here a blow behind the hand.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§24 10.1	[I]tem se il tient sa hache la queue devant, frappez grant coup de la queue de la vostre arriere main contre la sienne pour la faire saillir hors de la main. Et se ne pouez, avecques le coup, marchant en avant entre luy et sa hache, le pouez frapper de l'estocq de la dague au visage.	If he holds his axe with the tail forward, give him a hard back-handed blow with the tail of your axe against his, to make it jump out of the hand. And if you cannot do it, then while stepping forward with the blow between him and his axe, you can hit him with the point of the dagger to the face.
f°5v	§25 10.2	[I]tem se il le vous faisoit, devez baisser la queue de la vostre pres de vos piés, et desmarchiés en arriere, et de demy hache destourner la sienne de devant vostre visage, et demourez en vostre garde sur la dague. Et puis pouez desmarchier et tourner sur la garde, de laquelle, se bon vous samble et souvent, le devez arguer de ces estocs puis sur le pié puis sur la main et au visage, et qu'il ne treuve point vostre hache au ferme que vous puissiez se non à vostre requeste pour faire aucune entree. ¹¹⁴	If he were to do it to you, you must lower the tail of your axe close to your feet, move backwards, and by means of <i>demy hache</i> turn his [axe] aside from in front of your face, and remain in the dagger guard. And then you can move and change your guard, from which, ¹¹³ if it seems good to you, you must press him frequently with these thrusts: alternately to the foot, to the hand and to the face; and he should not find, if you can, your axe at all still to make any entry, except at your request.
	§26 11.1	[I]tem se il vient à vous la queue devant et qu'il la tienne haulte, pouez mettre la queue de la vostre, en marchant, sur son costé gauche de dessoubz son bras, et que la queue passe par soubz la sienne hache entre ses deux mains, et tirer vers sa main bonne secousse pour la luy faire perdre d'une main. Et de là pouez boutter de demy hache en son costé pour le getter par terre. Au mains le ferez vous marchier avant et aurez assez loisir de hausser de tour de bras sur luy.	If he comes at you with the tail forward, and he is holding it high, stepping to his left side, you can place the tail of your axe under his arm; and the tail should pass under his own axe between his two hands, and pull toward his hand with a good jolt, to make him lose his grip with one hand. And from there you can push by means of <i>demy hache</i> in his side to throw him to the ground. At least you will make him move forward and will have sufficient time to raise by means of a <i>tour de bras</i> at him. ¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Anglo translated *tourner sur la garde de laquelle, se bon vous samble...* by “turn on whichever guard seems good to you” which is more clear than our translation. However this does not fit to the syntax of the original text, neither with the use of the adverb *se*, meaning here “if”.

¹¹⁴ The syntax of this last sentence is very unclear: *que vous puissiez* is understood as “if you can”, but it lacks a negation in the last part of the sentence to confirm this interpretation. The following form would have been more clear: *pour ne faire aucune entree*.

¹¹⁵ It means to raise the axe and deliver the stroke.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§27 11.2	[l]tem se il vous fait ceste mesme chose, vous n'avez à faire que de lachier à coup la main basse, et de reprendre à coup vostre hache plus hault en desmarchant, et tourner sur vostre garde ¹¹⁶ .	If he does the same thing to you, you have only to release the lower hand suddenly, and immediately take hold of your axe again higher up while moving, and return on your guard.
	§28 11.3	[l]tem se il deffaisoit ceste prinse que luy aurez faite en la maniere dessusdite et qu'il fust sur la garde de la dague, pouez pareillement mettre la queue de la vostre soubz sa demy hache, en marchant visage contre visage, et passer vostre dite queue par dessus son bras droit, et donner bonne secousse pour luy faire perdre le gros bout de sa hache. Et de là aurez loisir de donner coup ou estocq.	If he escapes this hold which you have practiced on him in this manner above-said, and he has put himself in the guard of the dagger, you can similarly place the tail of your axe under his <i>demy hache</i> , stepping face to face, and pass your said tail over his right arm, and give a good jolt to make him lose the big end of his axe. And from there you will have time to give a blow or a thrust.
	§29 12.1	[l]tem et se vous venez croiser vos haches à demy, à pousser l'ung l'autre, faites que en croisant vous ayés la croix de la vostre plus hault que la queue, et en poussant tournez vostre bec de faulcon vers sa hache pour la tirer à vous en desmarchant de la force de tous vos bras. Seulement acrochiés ledit becq de faulcon au milieu de sa hache, et sera pour luy faire perdre sa hache.	And if you come to cross your axes in the middle to push one another, do it so that, in crossing, you have the cross of your axe higher than the tail; and, as you push, turn your <i>bec-de-faulcon</i> toward his axe to pull it toward you with all the strength of your arms while moving. Merely hook the said <i>bec-de-faulcon</i> to the middle of his axe and it will make him lose his axe.
f°6r	§30 12.2	[l]tem se il ne chiet ou ne pert sa hache, au mains vendra il ung pas apres vous. À dont remarchiés au devant en luy baillant au visage de l'estocq, et puis tournez en vostre garde.	If he does not drop or lose his axe, at least he will come one pace closer to you. At this time march forward again, thrusting him in the face, and then return to your guard.
	§31 12.3	[l]tem se il vous fait la pareille prinse, lachiés vostre main de dessoubz et il ne fera rien.	If he does the same hold on you, release your lower hand and he will do nothing.
	§32 12.4	[l]tem vous la pouez autrement deffaire en le suyvant en son tirer. Marchiés en avant ainsy qu'il tirera, et de là pourrez en marchant du pié gauche sur son costé droit getter la queue de la vostre	You can otherwise counter it by following up his tugging. Step forward as he pulls and from there, stepping with your left foot to his right side, you will be able to throw the tail of your axe onto his neck, knocking him over, as it

¹¹⁶ The two final letters, **-de**, have been written above the line.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
		sur son col en le verssant comme ¹¹⁷ dessus est dit en la parade de demy hache.	is said in the aforesaid parry by the mean of <i>demy hache</i> . ¹¹⁸
	§33 12.5	[I]tem se il le vous fait, ja en savez vous la defaite en ladite parade de demy hache.	If he does it to you, you already know the counter to it in the said parry by means of <i>demy hache</i> .
	§34 13.1	[I]tem se il vous donnoit de l'estocq de sa queue au pié, vous devez lever vostre pié en luy donnant de vostre queue contre la sienne pour le destourner et faire saillir hors de sa main se pouez. Et fait ou non vous luy pouez donner prestement sans vous bougier du mail de la hache sur la teste et sur les mains à vostre avantage.	If he would thrust you to the foot with his tail, you must lift your foot, while using your tail against his tail, to turn him aside and make it jump out of his hand, if you can. And accomplished or not, without moving you can hit him quickly with the hammer of the axe on his head and on his hands, to your advantage.
	§35 14.1	[I]tem se vos deux haches sont en croix des II queues, ¹¹⁹ faites, se vous pouez, qu'il hausse la queue de la sienne bien hault. Et de là pouez baisser le bout de la queue de la vostre en la retirant ung peu, coulant par la main tant que la puisiez repasser par dessoubz la sienne sans esloigner que le mains que pourrez, et de là frapper d'arriere main contre la sienne pour essayer se la pourrez faire eschapper de la main. Au mains la desvoyer par fasson que puisiez entrer entre luy et sa hache en marchant sur son costé gauche. Et de là pouez boutter de demy hache sur le costé pour le ruer par terre.	If your axes are crossed at the two tails, if you can, make him raise the tail of his axe very high, and from there you can lower the end of your tail while drawing it back a little, sliding it through the hand until you can pass it under his tail again without moving away more than the least possible. ¹²⁰ And from there [you can] strike back-handed against his axe to try to make it escape from his hand. At least redirect it in such a way that you may be able to get between him and his axe while stepping to his left side. And from there you can push by means of <i>demy hache</i> to the side to knock him to the ground.

f°6v

¹¹⁷ The scribe has duplicated the two final letters, **-me**, at the beginning of the next line. This mistake has not been introduced into the edition.

¹¹⁸ This is probably a reference to the sequence developed in the §9.

¹¹⁹ The final **s** has been added in superscript above the **e**.

¹²⁰ There is a possible misunderstanding here. Does the verb *esloigner* apply to the axe-player, or to the axe itself? This second hypothesis has been chosen for the translation and *esloigner* has been translated with “to move away”.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§36 14.2	[l]tem pour vous garder qu'il ne le vous face, gardez qu'il ne treuve vostre hache en croisee, au mains que la vostre ne soit darriere la sienne. Et ne la tenez guieres en ung lieu.	To protect yourself against his doing this to you, ensure that he does not find your axe crosswise - at least that your axe should not be behind his. And do not hold it for long in one position.
	§37 14.3	[l]tem se d'aventure il le vous faisoit, vous vous en poés defaire en dressant vostre hache pres de vous, et passer vostre queue par bas entre vous et luy, et de là la sourdre à l'encontre de son estommacq et le deboutter de vous.	If by chance he does it to you, you could counter it by raising your axe up close to you, and passing your tail from below, between you and him. And from there raise it up against his stomach and push him from you.
	§38 14.4	[l]tem aultre defaite. S'il le vous faisoit, il vous fault dresser vostre hache loing de vous, et de là la hausser encontre son estommacq en vous redressant contre luy, et le deboutter de vous.	Another counter: if he does it to you, you must raise your axe well away from you; and from there leave it up against his stomach, straightening yourself against him, and push him from you.
	§39 14.5	[l]tem se vous le pouez à coup bien faire en vous tournant, pouez getter le becq de faulcon en son col, et tirer à vous veoir se le pourrez desroquer.	If you can do this well and suddenly, as you turn you can throw the <i>bec-de-faucon</i> at his neck and pull him toward you to see whether you can destabilize him.
	§40 14.6	[l]tem se il le vous fait, devez marchier du pié droit en avant en bouttant demy hache la sienne loing de vous, et pouez demourer en vostre garde.	If he does it to you, you must step forward with your right foot, while pushing his axe away from you by means of <i>demy hache</i> , and you can remain on your guard.
	§41 15.1	[l]tem se de rechief les queues ¹²¹ desdites haches sont croisees, devez pousser de la vostre la sienne en la mettant dessoubz la vostre, tant que vous l'ayés fait baisser si bas que ayés fait passer lesdites queues sur vostre costé gauche, tant que ayés loisir de marchier du pié droit sur son darriere. Et de là le pouez demy hache pousser contre les espaulles grant coup. Ou s'il vous a le darriere tant tourné que puissiez avoir le plat des espaulles, vous le pouez boutter de ladite demy hache en le suyvant bien prestement, puis sur l'ung costé, puis sur l'autre selon que	Again, if the tails of the said axes are crossed, you must push his axe with yours, placing it below yours until you have caused it to be lowered so much that you should have made the said tails pass on your left side, so that you have the time to step with your right foot behind him. And from there you can push him violently by means of the <i>demy hache</i> against the shoulders. Or if he has turned his back on you sufficiently so that you can get his shoulder blades, you can push him with the said <i>demy hache</i> , following him very quickly, first on one side and then

¹²¹ The final s has been added in superscript above the e.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
f°7r		pourrez appercevoir du quel costé il veult retourner contre vous. Alors bouttez contre ceste espaulle. Et s'il veult tourner d'aulture costé, poussez sur l'autre sans bougier vostre demy hache de dessus son dos. Et en ce faisant le pouez mettre de dehors la lisse.	on the other. Whichever side you will perceive that he wishes to turn against you, push against that shoulder; and if he wishes to turn to the other side push him there without moving your <i>demy hache</i> from his back. And in doing this you could put him out of the lists.
	§42 15.2	[I]tem se il vous faisoit cestedite entree, incontinent que vous l'appercevez, desvoyés la vostre sur la sienne et il ne trouvera rien.	If he uses this entry against you, as soon as you perceive it, misdirect your axe onto his, and he will find nothing.
	§43 16.1	[I]tem se il vient à vous le visage devant, le pouez estocquer au visage de la queue de vostre hache ou au pié qu'il n'a point de couverte, ou vous pouez tirer plusieurs aultres coups.	If he comes at you with the face-first, ¹²² you can thrust at his face with the tail of your axe, or at the foot, which has no protection; or you can throw several other strokes.
	§44 16.2	[I]tem se il venoit comme dessusdit le visage devant, vous luy pouez donner d'ung estocq de la queue au visage affin qu'il hausse sa hache. Et se il la tient loing de luy, vous pouez mettre la queue de la vostre par dessoubz sa demy hache droit encontre son col, et le boutter. Et se ne trouvez vostre avantage à boutter, passez ladite queue par sus sa teste pour le prendre à l'autre costé du col à tirer arriere. Et se failliés que ne le puissés pousser, de là tirez en suyvant vos pas en arriere et vous ne trouverez point d'empeschement.	If he comes as above-said, face-first, you can give him a thrust with the tail in the face so that he raises his axe. And if he holds it away from him, you can place the tail of [your axe] under his <i>demy hache</i> right against his neck, and push it. And if you do not find it to your advantage to push, pass the said tail over his head to take him from the other side of his neck to pull him backwards. And if you fail so that you cannot push him, from there pull as you move backwards and you will encounter no hindrance.
	§45 16.3	[I]tem se il vous faisoit ladite prinse, vous pouez boutter à demy hache encontre son col ou son espaulle, et le deboutter de vous.	And if he does the said hold on you, you can push by means of <i>demy hache</i> against his neck or his shoulder, and push him back from you.
	§46 16.4	[I]tem se il la vous deffaisoit en ceste maniere, vous devez obeyr à reculler. Et en vous recullant, devez traversser ladite queue de vostre hache par dessus son bras droit en tirant grant secousse pour la luy faire perdre du gros bout.	If he counters you in this manner, you must obey and draw back. And as you do so you must cross the said tail of your axe over his right arm, giving him a great jolt to make him lose the big end.

¹²² The precision “face-first” probably means that the shoulder is not in front, which is the usual case.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
f°7v	§47 16.5	[l]tem une aultre deffaite. Incontinent que sa queue sera sur vostre col, lachiés vostre main gauche et reprenez vostre hache plus hault par dessus la sienne en vous desmarchant en arriere, qui est bonne et seure deffaite.	Another counter. As soon as his tail is on your neck, release your left hand, and take up your axe again higher up, above his, stepping backwards: which is a good and sure counter.
	§48 17.1	[l]tem se il tient la queue haulte, vous la devez tenir hault comme luy, mais autant hault l'ung bout comme l'autre affin de non moustrer le creux de la main que le mains que vous pourrez. Et de là vous puez garder de son estocq s'il vous tiroit au visage.	If he holds the tail high, you must hold it high like him: but one end as high as the other, so as to show the hollow of the hand as little as you are able to. And from there you can guard against his point if he strikes at your face.
	§49 17.2	[l]tem se il tenoit la queue de sa hache plus hault que la croix, il moustre le creux de sa main dont vous luy puez donner de l'estocq de vostredite queue au creux de la main.	If he holds the tail of his axe higher than the cross, he shows the hollow of his hand, whereupon you can give him the point of your said tail in the hollow of the hand.
	§50 18.1	[l]tem se il vient à vous comme devant, le visage devers vous pour vous boutter demy hache ou aultrement, se puez approchier de luy, vous puez mettre la queue de vostre hache entre ses cuisses le plus avant que pourrés. ¹²³ Et lors levez le gros bout que tenez en la main de toute vostre puissance pour le sourdre hault et luy faire perdre terre.	If he comes at you as previously, his face toward you, to push you by means of <i>demy hache</i> or otherwise, if you can get near him, you can put the tail of your axe between his thighs as far forward as you can, and then lift up the big end which you are holding in the hand, with all your strength, to raise him high and make him lose contact with the ground.
	§51 18.2	[l]tem se ainsy le faites, force luy est de tumber en arriere. Et se il le vous vouloit faire, n'avez à faire que prestement mettre la demy hache contre son col ou son espaule, et cela le gardera de pouoir lever sy grans fais.	If you do it thus, he will of necessity fall backwards. And if he wishes to do it to you, you have only to put the <i>demy hache</i> quickly against his neck or his shoulder, and this will prevent his being able to lift so great a burden.
	Rubric 3	Cy commence le jeu du gauchier au droittier. Et premierement :	Here begins the play of the left-hander against the right-hander. And first:
	§52 19.1	[l]tem se le gauchier vient à vous donner de tour de bras, devez desmarchier du pié gauche en avant en ruant la queue de vostre hache au devant de son coup affin que le coup ne tumber sur vous. Et	If the left-hander is about to strike you by means of a <i>tour de bras</i> , you must step forward with your left foot, projecting the tail of your axe in front of his stroke so that the blow does not fall

¹²³ The final *s* has been added in superscript above the *e*.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
		de la couverte faite, prestement devez retirer la queue à vous en ruant du mail de vostredite hache encontre le dos de la sienne pour luy ayder à s'en aler avecques son branle dont il vous cuide ferir, ou pour luy faire eschapper du gros bout de sa main.	on you. ¹²⁴ And having made the protection, you must quickly withdraw your tail, rushing the hammer of your said axe against the back of his axe to help him go on with the swing with which he thinks to strike you. Or make the big end escape from his hand.
	§53 19.2	[I]tem se il avoit retiré sa hache sy à coup qu'il vous couvenist faillir, retirez vous prestement sur la garde de vostre queue.	If he withdraws his axe so suddenly that it causes you to miss, you must immediately withdraw to the guard of your tail.
f°8r	§54 19.3	[I]tem se ledit gauchier vous vient donner de tour de bras en quelque garde que vous soyés, desmarchiés ung pas en arriere et il ne trouvera rien.	If the said left-hander comes to strike you by means of a <i>tour de bras</i> , in whatever guard you may be, step back one pace and he will find nothing.
	§55 20.1	[I]tem se vous ruez à tour de bras à vostre gauchier, se il se treuve de sa queue en la fasson dessusdite, incontinent le coup fait, donnez de la queue de la vostre contre le darriere de la sienne grant coup pour essayer à la luy fere perdre d'une main. Mais perde ou non, vous puez avecques ledit coup atant marchier du pié gauche en avant darriere son talon, en luy mettant la queue de la vostre par dessoubz le menton pour le reversser se puez. Se ne puez rien faire, tournez vous prestement en vostre garde, en vous retirant suyvant vos pas, ainsy demourrez sur la garde de vostre queue.	If you rush by means of a <i>tour de bras</i> at your left-hander, and it is met with his tail in the above-said fashion, As soon as the stroke has been delivered, give a great blow with the tail of your axe against the back of his, ¹²⁵ to try to make him lose [the axe] with one hand. But whether or not he loses his grip, you can, with the said blow, at this time advance the left foot behind his heel, putting the tail of your axe under his chin to overthrow him, if you can. If you can do nothing, return quickly to your guard, retreating in your steps, so that you will remain in the guard of your tail.
	§56 20.2	[I]tem se il vous faisoit cestedite entree, n'avez à faire que tirer vostredite queue par dessoubz la sienne et la hausser en la mettant à luy pareillement comme il la à vous avoit mise, et en ce faisant deffaites sa prinse.	If he applies this said entry on you, you have only to pull your said tail under his and raise it up, putting it to him in the same way as he has put it to you, and in doing this you counter his hold.

¹²⁴ Anglo translated *ruant la queue [...] au devant de son coup* with “hitting hard with the *queue* [...] to intercept his stroke”. The French text does not tell to act explicitly against the opponent’s axe. The protection could simply be done by interposing the tail in front of the stroke. The translation proposed here authorized the two possibilities.

¹²⁵ Here it could mean “to his tail” or “to his axe”.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§57 20.3	[I]tem il la puet deffaire quant l'auriés reffait en la maniere dessusdite, et tant que vous avez la vostre hache soubz son menton, avez le bras hault. Et de là vous puet mettre à demy hache dessoubz vostre esselle, et vous puet pousser bien fort. Et pareillement la luy pouez faire, s'il vous faisoit ladite entree. Et pour ce fait ou failly, n'y devez point sejourner.	He can counter the move when you have done it again in the manner above-said, inasmuch that when you have your axe under his chin, [you] have the arm high. And from there, he can place himself by means of the <i>demy hache</i> under your armpit, and he can push you very strongly. And equally you can do it to him if he uses the same entry on you. And whether this works or fails, do not tarry at all.
f°8v	§58 21.1	[I]tem et pour deffaire cestedite bouttee soubz l'esselle. Incontinent que la sentirez, vous pouez lachier à coup vostre main gauche, et mettez vostre bras par entre sa demy hache qu'il tient loing de luy pour vous boutter et son corps, et faites tantost d'une venue que luy mettez la main par le fourc et le haussez hault pour le desroquer.	[58] And to counter this said push under the armpit :as soon as you feel it, you can suddenly release your left hand and place your arm between his <i>demy hache</i> -which he is holding away from himself in order to push you- and his body; and immediately in the same movement get your hand by the fork and lift him up in order to floor him. ¹²⁶
	§59 21.2	[I]tem se il le vous faisoit, devez à coup lachier la main gauche de la queue de vostre hache et reprendre de ceste main gauche la croix de vostredite hache en coulant la main droite contre bas, et de là pousser contre son col, et il n'aura pouoir de vous hausser.	If he were to do it to you : you must immediately drop your left hand from the tail of your axe and, with this left hand, take up the cross of your said axe, sliding the right hand downward and from here push against his neck, and he will not have the power to lift you.
	§60 22.1	[I]tem se ledit gauchier vient à vous la dague de sa hache devant pour estocquer au visage ou en aultre lieu au dessus de la sainture, pouez tourner de la queue de la vostre souvent devant son visage pour luy troubler son avis qu'il auroit entrepris de faire quelque coup, et de là pouez tirer coup de mail sur la teste de hault en bas, ainsy se failleiez, que vostre hache ne vous emporte tant qu'il vous couvenist luy tourner le dos, qui seroit grant peril.	If the said left-hander comes at you with the dagger of his axe forward, to thrust you in the face or another place above the belt: you can keep circling with your tail in front of his face to disrupt his plan to strike he could have prepared; and from there you can throw a blow with the hammer to the head from high to low in such a way that, were you to fail, your axe would not carry you so far that you were obliged to turn your back to him, which would be a great danger.

¹²⁶ The three branches of the fork are probably materialized here by the shaft and the forarm.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§61 22.2	[I]tem s'il se couvroit de la croisee de sa hache pour le premier coup, faites samblant de recouvrer ung aultre coup affin qu'il se queuvre hault comme devant pour garder sa teste. De là tirez grant coup par le genoul et bien avant affin que, s'il desmarchoit, que la hache treuve l'autre genoul par dedens jambes. Et s'il ne desmarchoit, devez tirer grant secousse à vous affin que vostre becq de faulcon s'acroe à son genoul pour le ruer par terre. Et se vous puez, ne tirez pas ce coup au dessoubz de l'escrevisse, mais en l'escrevisse ou au dessus affin que, se vous failliez à le desroquer, que vous le puissiez desarmer de quelque piece de cuissot.	If he protects himself with the cross of his axe for the first stroke: feint repeating another blow so that he protects himself high as before, to guard his head. Then give a great blow to the knee and well forward, so that if he takes a step the axe finds the other knee from inside the leg. And if he does not move you must pull brusquely toward you, so that your <i>bec-de-faucon</i> hooks his knee to knock him to the ground. And if you are able, do not give this stroke below the poleyn but in the poleyn or above, so that if you fail to overthrow him you may be able to disarm him of some piece of cuisse.
	§62 22.3	[I]tem se il le vous faisoit, n'avez à faire que desmarchier du pié gauche qui est darriere et le mettre devant l'autre pour hurter du genoul le millieu de sa hache pour vous desenferer.	If he does it to you. You have only to take a step with your left foot, which is behind, and advance it in front of the other, in order to push your knee with the middle of his axe in order to disentangle yourself.
	§63 22.4	[I]tem de là le puez de la queue de vostre hache estocquer au visage qui est bonne deffence. Et pour ce, quant ferez ledit coup, faites le prestement. Et se vous failliés, tournez vous à coup en vostre garde.	From there, you can thrust at the face with the tail of your axe, which is a good defence. And for this, when you make the said stroke, ¹²⁷ do it quickly. And if you miss, return immediately to your guard.
f°9r	§64 23.1	[I]tem se ledit gauchier vient à vous la dague au devant, de rechief devez de la queue de la vostre debouter la croix de la sienne, puis sa, puis là. Et en ce faisant, puez mettre vostredite queue contre la croix de la sienne sur le manche par devers son corps, et devez laisser couler de la main gauche ladite queue encontre la croix de la sienne	If the said left-hander comes at you with his dagger forward. You must once more push back the cross of his axe with your tail, now here, now there. And while doing this, you can place your said tail against his cross on the shaft towards his body, and you must let the said tail run through your left hand toward his cross, so that you have the

¹²⁷ *Ferez* could be a form of the future tense of the verb *faire* ("to do") or the present tense of the verb *ferir* ("to strike"). Both could make sense. However, every other occurrence of the adverb *quant* introduced a futur tense, which justifies the translation.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
		tellement que ayés force de la esloignier en arriere main. Et en faisant ceste coulisse, droitement devez marchier de vostre pié droit sur son darriere pres de luy et tout d'une venue devez boutter à demy hache vostre grant bout pour essayer se le boutterez à terre, ou au mains se desmarchera il et pourrez faire coup.	strength to move it away backhanded. And as you do this sliding movement step with your right foot directly to his rear, close to him, and you must press your great push by means of <i>demy hache</i> all in one movement to try to beat him to the ground. Alternatively he will at least move, and you will be able to deliver a blow.
§65	23.2	[I]tem se il le vous faisoit, devez, si prestement que vous vous sentez enfermé, baisser le gros bout de vostre hache en la tournant par dessoubz la queue de la sienne sans guieres la esloignier, et tant que vostredite hache viengne sur le darriere de sa queue. Et de là pouez esbranler tant que aurez loisir de desmarchier en arriere pour tourner en la garde de la queue, car elle est plus avantageuse que celle de la dague.	If he were to do it to you : as soon as you feel yourself chained up, you must lower the big end of your axe, turning it under the tail of his [axe], without moving it out of distance, and so that your axe comes to the back of his tail. And from there you can impart motion so that you have the time to step back, to return on the guard of the tail, because it is more advantageous than that of the dagger.
§66	24.1	[I]tem se vos queues sont jointes en croix, les pouez affermer ensamble affin qu'il asseure la sienne. Et de là devez desmarchier en arriere de vostre pié gauche, et en desmarchant tirez ung coup du mail en coulant sur ses mains. ¹²⁸ Et c'est ung bon coup, mais que la vostre queue soit darriere la sienne. Et pour vous garder de coup, gardez que jamais il n'ayt la sienne d'arriere la vostre, car se il l'a devant il ne le vous puet faire pour la queue de la vostre qui l'en garde.	If your tails are crossed together. You can jam them together, so that it stabilizes his [tail]. ¹²⁹ And then you must step back with your left foot; and as you step, throw him a sliding blow with the hammer to his hands. And this is a good stroke, but only when your tail is behind his. And to protect yourself from this blow, make sure that he never has his tail behind yours: because, if he has it in front, he cannot do it to you on account of the tail of your own [axe], which prevents it. ¹³⁰

¹²⁸ The final *s* has been added in superscript above the final *e*.

¹²⁹ The pronoun *il* has been understood here as an impersonal pronoun instead of the masculine pronoun: there is no reason that jamming the oponent's tail obliged him to stabilize it.

¹³⁰ The elisions in this paragraph are ambiguous. In the beginning, *la sienne* could only refer to the previous feminine noun used in the sentence, the tail. But in all other similar elisions in the other paragraphs, it refers to the axe. The later case at the end of the paragraph: *de la queue de la vostre*, "from the tail of yours" refers certainly to the axe, even if this word has not been used in the

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
	§67 24.2	[I]tem vous pouez tousjours, ayant vostre queue darriere la sienne, en la debouttant ung peu en avant, luy tirer d'estocq par le visage.	When you have your tail behind his, pushing it forward a little, you can always thrust him in the face.
f°9v	§68 25.1	[I]tem se ledit gauchier vient à vous la dague devant et qu'il tiengne sa hache longue, vous pouez mettre la queue de la vostre en croisee entre sa main et la croix, ¹³¹ et de là tirer en arriere main contre bas pour la faire passer sur vostre darriere. En marchant du pié droit en avant, ¹³² le pouez boutter demy hache contre ses espaulles pour le desroquer.	If the said left-hander comes at you with the dagger forward, and he is holding his axe extended. You can put the tail crossways between his hand and the cross, and from there pull back-hand downwards, in order to make his axe pass behind you. Stepping forward with your right foot, you can push him by means of <i>demy hache</i> against his shoulders to destabilize him.
	§69 25.2	[I]tem gardez que jamais il ne puisse advenir à appuyer croisee de sa queue ¹³³ contre le devant de la vostre, ou se d'aventure il faisoit, prestement qu'il aura appuyé, destournez la vostre par sus la sienne et ne le pourra faire.	Ensure that he can never get to press crossways with his tail against the front of yours. Or, if by chance he does, then as soon as he has pressed, turn yours over his, and he will not be able to do it.
	§70 26.1	[I]tem se vostre homme vient à vous sur la garde de la queue et qu'il la tienne comme basse, pouez frapper de vostre queue contre la sienne avant main pour la esloignier sur son devant. Et se le pouez faire en suyvant l'ung pié apres l'autre, pouez vous mettre entre sa hache et luy. Et de là devez mettre vostre queue entre ses cuisses jusques à demy, et devez sublever vostre homme sur ladite queue le plus hault que pourrez. Et pouez faire	If your man comes at you in the tail guard, and he is holding it somewhat low: you can give a forehanded strike against his tail with yours, in order to move it away from in front of him. And if you can do it, as you follow up one foot after the other, you can place yourself between his axe and him; and from there you must place your said tail between his thighs, half-way along, and you must lift your man up on the said tail as high as you can. And you can

paragraph. Inserting the word “axe” here would mean that the author made a mistake, but there nothing that can assert this hypothesis and the choice has been made to keep the possessive alone.

¹³¹ The word *croix* is abbreviated with the sign †.

¹³² *En marchant du pied droit en avant* could have been associated with the previous sentence. The editorial choice in the modernization of the punctuation was based on the idea that the step forward accompanied better the push against the shoulders.

¹³³ Sic. This word could mean “a cover” but is never used in the text with both this spelling and this meaning. The same spelling is attested on §22, in a verbal form. I suspect here a mistake of the scribe and that the word *quene* (“tail”) should be substituted for it.

Folio	Level	Le Jeu de la Hache	English Translation
		cestedite prinse de plusieurs aultres entrees, ne plus ne mains comme devant est mis au jeu de droittier à droittier.	carry out this hold from various other entries, neither more nor less than are set out before in the play of the right-hander against the right-hander.
	§71 26.2	[l]tem se il le vous faisoit, devez mettre à demy vostre hache entre sa poitrine et n'aura pouoir de la faire.	If he does it to you. You must stick your axe halfway [against] his chest, ¹³⁴ and he will not be able to do it.
	§72 27.1	[l]tem se vostre homme vient à vous le visage devant, soit droittier ou gauchier, se pouez mettre la queue de vostre hache par sus la sienne et en mettre le bout sur l'esselle droite, le pouez pousser du costé de ladite queue en le suyvant tousjours sans qu'il y ait guieres bon remede de se desenserrer. Et par cela le pouez mettre hors de la lisse.	If your man comes at you with the face-first, whether right-handed or left-handed. If you can place the tail of your axe above his, and from there get the end of the tail into the right armpit, you can push him from the side of the said tail, always following him without having his having the slightest good remedy to disengage himself. And by this you can put him out of the lists.
f°10r	§73 27.2	[l]tem le devez souvent arguer d'estocs par le visage et par les piés pour luy faire perdre son advis.	You must frequently press him with thrusts at the face and at the feet to make him lose his judgment.
f°10v			

III.4. Index and glossary

This glossary is a short selection of words or terms found in the original text. It offers a short definition and the list of paragraphs where it is used. To avoid confusions, the entries are followed by an indication of the quality of the word, *n.* for name, *v.* for verb, *adj.* for adjective, *adv.* for adverbial phrase, *adv.* for an adverb, *ie.* for an idiomatic expression, *v.* for a verb and *v/l.* for a verbal locution.

À demy, *adv.* (§16, 70, 71): Used alone (§16, 71), it could mean not entirely, hardly, scarcely or halfway. Two specific expressions can be found in the text, **jusques à demy** (§70) which means “half-ways”, and **croiser à demy** (§29) which means “to cross in the middle [of the axe]”.

Amodereement, *adv.* (§3): this adverb is built with the Latin prefix “ad-” (in the direction of) and means “moderately”.

¹³⁴ The text asks to stick the axe between the opponent's chest and something undescribed. It seems to miss something here. Maybe *encontre* should have been written instead of *entre*, like in §37 *encontre de son estommacq*, which gives in English “you must stick your axe halfway against his chest”. This hypothesis is really appealing as it could be seen as an homeoteleuton, by skipping the letters between two **n**; it could as well be an oversight of an abbreviation mark.

Advis, avis, *n.* (§60, §73): this word could have many meanings like opinion, idea, judgment, intention, project. The two uses in the text seem to be related to the meaning of project or intention, and then *perdre son advis* means to lose one's judgment.

Affermer, *v.* (§66): to consolidate, to fix or to jam.

Arguer, *v.* (§25, 73): to press, to torment.

Arriere main, *ie.* (§24, 35, 64, 68): a backhand.

Asseurer, *v.* (§66): to secure.

Atant, *adv.* (§55): at this time.

Attendant, *n.* (§1): Anglo translated it by *appellant*, which seems to be a misunderstanding. *Appellant* in Middle French is often opposed to *defendant* into historical texts, as shown by Raynaud (p. 518). However, here in this text, the author used instead *attendant*. *Attendant* means here “waiting his enemy”, in a similar meaning like in *Le Jouvencel* from Jean de Bueil (vol. 2, p. 243): *Et certes ceulx qui attendent leurs ennemix de pié coy ont moult grant avantaige et en toutes façons.*

Avant main, *ie.* (§70): forhand.

Aventure, *n.* (§69): chance, hazard.

Avis (§60): see **Advis**.

Bailler, *v.* (§4, 17, 20, 30): always used in conjunction with a part of the axe, the hammer or one of the two points, with meaning of to strike or to thrust. See also **donner**.

Bec/Becq de faulcon, *ie.* (§16, 22, 29, 39, 61): literally falcon's beak, refers to a curved fluke resembling to a bird's beak, located at the opposite side of the axe or the hammer.¹³⁵ The French term seems to be commonly used in English to refer to it.

Bout, *n.* (§21, 48, 72): generic term to refer to one of the ends of the axe, that is to say, the dagger or the tail. This should not be mixed up with **Grant bout** (§64) which means a great push, or **Gros bout**, *ie.* (§28, 46, 50, 52, 65) the big end of the axe. The paragraph 50 is very clear, this refers to the opposite end of to the tail and cannot be translated in “butt”, which is the big part of the handle.

Boutter, *v.* (§16, 35, 40, 44-45, 50, 57, 64, 68): to push.

Bouttee, *n.* (§57): a push.

Branle, *n.* (§52): a jolt or a bump, but can also refer to a movement.

Contre bas, *ie.* (§4, 59, 68): downward.

¹³⁵ For a discussion about this weapon, see Curry and Mercer, *The Battle of Agincourt*, p. 151 and p. 283 notes 41-43.

Creux de la main (§48, 49): the hollow of the hand. The author did not use the French word for the palm, *paume*. The hollow certainly refers here to something smaller and more accurate than the entire flexor surface of the hand.

Croix, *n.* (§16, 29, 49, 59, 64, 68): a figurative reference to the cross approximately formed by the intersection of the head and shaft of the axe. The expression *être en croix*, *vl.* (§35) means to have both axes joined in form of a cross, to be crossed.

Croisee, *n.* (§14, 23, 61): the cross-bar of the axe. Anglo interprets this term as referring to the transversal spikes but it is most likely a synonym of *croix*.

Croisee, *adj.* (§20, 36, 41, 66, 68-69): crossed, crosswise.

Croiser, *v.* (§29): to cross.

Couler, *v.* (§4, 13, 15, 18, 35, 59, 64-66): to slide. To give a thrust or a strike *en coulant* means to give it while sliding the hands along the shaft. Sometimes, the text does give the indication that the sliding motion should be done through the hands (§18, 66).

Coulisse, *n.* (§64): a sliding movement.

Coup, *n.* (§4, ...): a blow or a strike. *Grant coup* (§7, 41, 61) indicates an intensive action, and *pousser grant coup*, to push violently. The expression *à coup*, *ie.* (§27, 39 53, 58-59, 63) is a contraction form for *à ce coup*, which means at the same time, immediately, suddenly.

Couverte, *n.* (§6-7, 12, 52): a cover, a protection.

Couvrir, queuvrir, *v.* (§8, 21-22, 61): to protect, to cover.

Cuider, *v.* (§52): To hold for real or probable.

Cuissot, *n.* (§61): a generic term referring to a piece of the armor covering the upper part of the leg. It has been translated by *cuisse*.

Dague, *n.* (§1, 11, 16-19, 23-24, 60, 64-65, 68): a dagger. It could mean the weapon (§1), but refer mainly to the steel point of the axe after the cross. See also *garde*.

Darriere, *adv.* (§9, 13, 19-20, 23, 36, 55, 62, 66-67): behind, rear. *Darriere main* (§19, 23) refers mainly to the hand, always used in a context of an action to the shaft. It should be understood as a spatial indication for the closest side of the shaft to the leading forearms. It is somewhat similar to what is called “short edge” for a sword.

Darriere, *n.* (§16-17, 41, 55, 64-65, 68): the back of a man, or the back of the tail (§55, 65).

De rechief, *adv.* (§64): once more.

Debouter, *v.* (§37-38, 45, 64, 67): to push someone somewhere, to push back.

Deffaie, *v.* (§14, 28, 32, 37-38, 46, 56-58): to counter or to escape.

Deffaite, *n.* (§14, 33): a counter.

Demy hache, *ie.* (§9, 21, 26, 28, 32, 35, 40-41, 45, 50-51, 57, 64): technical term which refer to the moving section of the shaft between the two hands. See the dedicated paragraph in the Discussion about Translation section.

Demy lance, *n.* (§1): an half-pike.

Desarmer, *v.* (§61): to disarm a weapon or to take off the armor. This verb is only used in this source with this second meaning.

Desenferrer, *v.* (§62): literally to unshackle or to unchain, here used in the meaning of to disentangle.

Desenserrer, *v.* (§72): to unclasp.

Desmarchier, *v.* (§6-7, 16, 21-22, 25, 27, 29, 47, 52, 54, 61-62, 64-66): to move with one foot or with both beet, possibly forward (§52, 62), but mostly backward (§6, 21, 54, ...). It should be noticed that any move to the side is indicated with the verb *marchier* : *en marchant sur son costé gauche* (§26). **Se desmarcher** (§22, 46) means to move, to change one's place.

Desmarche, *n.* (§17): a displacement.

Despechier, *v.* (§15): to free, to release.

Desroquer, *v.* (§39, 58, 61, 68): to break, to floor someone, but also to destabilize.

Desvoyer, *v.* (§35, 42): to put something out of its way, to misdirect.

Destourner, *v.* (§7, 13-14, 18, 25, 34): to turn away, to turn aside or to divert a blow.

Doctrine, *n.* (§1, R2): in this text, this word seems to be employed with the meaning of a teaching.

Donner, *v.* (§4, 18, 22, 23, ..., 54): this entry is mainly dedicated to the case when the verb *donner*, to give, is used with an omission of what is given, like *donna de tour de bras* (§4) or *donner du bec de faucon* (§22). The use of the verb with such omission is attested in other texts,¹³⁶ in the same context of a fight and confirms that it should be translated to “to strike”. *Donner de l'estocq* (§20, 23, 34) has the same elliptical construction and means to thrust.

Dresser, *v.* (§37-38): to place in a vertical position, to put up.

Droittier, *n.* (§4, 70, 72, R3): literally right-hander, here it means someone wearing the axe with the right hand located to the side of the head.

Enferrer, *v.* (§65): to shackle, to chain up or to put iron on. See also *desenferrer*.

Entrer, *v.* (§14, 35): to close the distance or to insert oneself between the opponent and its axe.

¹³⁶ *Et lui donna [...] sur les mains tellement que la hache jusques à terre chust.* Jean de Buëil, *Le Jouvencel*, vol. 2, p. 110.

Entree, *n.* (§11, 14, 25, 42, 56-57, 70): an entry in close proximity or close combat.

Esbranler, *v.* (§12, 65): to undermine, to destabilize, to impart motion to something.

Escrevisse, *n.* (§22, 61): literally crayfish. It was a generic term of the armory field in the fifteenth century which designates the cascade of tiles covering an articulation (breast, knee, elbow ...). In this source, *escrevisse du genoil* has no other meaning than a poleyn, the articulated plates covering the knee.

Estat, *n.* (§1): *être en bon estat* means to “be in accordance with the divine law”, and has been translated by “to be in a good state”.

Estocq, *n.* (§4, 6, 12-13, 17, 20, 23-24, 28, 30, 34, 44, 48-49, 67, 73): this word has two meanings in the text. It could refer to one the two extremities of a axe (§4, 6, 13, 17, 20, 23-24, 30, 34, 44, 48-49, 67) or to a thrust (§12, 28, 44, 73). *Bailler d'estocq*, *vl.* (§4, 17, 30), *donner de l'estocq*, *vl.* (§20, 23, 34, 44, 49) or *tirer d'estocq*, *vl.* (§67) are three identical elliptical constructions and mean “to thrust”, see respectively *bailler*, *donner* and *tirer*.

Estocquer, *v.* (§13-14, 43, 60, 63): to thrust.

Esvertuer, *v.* (R1): to exert, to reinforce or to fortify.

Faillir, *v.* (§60, 63): to miss or to fail.

Fais, *n.* (§51): a burden.

Ferir, *v.* (§4, 52): to strike.

Ferme, *adv.* (§10, 25): firmly, stable or which has a certain resistance to pressure.

Fourc, *n.* (§58): a fork, in the meaning of the separation of two branches of a tree. Its sole use in the text is ambiguous and may refer to the fork materialized by the hand clung on the shaft. Anglo translated it by the crotch, a hook integrated to the breast plate, which is an interesting hypothesis, but it seems unlikely, especially as the following paragraph (§59) proposes a counter operated by releasing the hand from the shaft. Actually, it is also difficult to imagine being able to heave one's opponent wearing an armor from the crotch, while being pushed by the armpit.

Garder, *v.* (§1, 36, 48, 61, 66, 69): to guard, to ensure.

Garde, *n.* (§7, §10, 21, 22, 27, 30, 40, 54-55, 63, 65): guard, stable position, which can be kept (*demourrez sur la garde*, §55), to which one can return (§27, 30, 55, 63, 65). *Garde de la queue* (§12, 15, 53, 55, 65, 70), tail guard. *Garde de la hache* (§17): axe guard. *Garde de la dague* (§25, 65): dagger guard.

Gauchier, *n.* (§52, 54-55, 60, 64, 68, 72): literally left-hander, here it means someone wearing the axe with the left hand located to the side of the head. The fact that the person is real left-handed is of little importance for the comprehension of the text. What matters are the problems posed by the change in the grip of the weapon.

Glaive, *n.* (§1): in medieval text, this word means either a polearm or a short cutting weapon, and should be understood here as a generic term to refer to a weapon.

Guières, *adv.* (§36, 65, 72): no too many, not for a long time.

Habiller, **habilliter**, *v.* (R1, §1): to enable, to apt or to make fit for.

Hurter, *v.* (§62): to collide.

Hausser, *v.* (§26): to raise and deliver a strike. This elliptical construction is attested in contemporary texts, like in La Sale, “The Abbey raised his axe with such strength that, if he had touched the lord of Saintré, he would have knocked him to the ground or killed him.”¹³⁷

Joueur de hache, *ie.* (§19): axe-player, here meaning a skilled or expert axe-fighter.

Jeu de la hache, *ie.* (R1, §1): Axe-play.

Lisse, *n.* (§11, 41, 72): the list, a barrier delimitating the arena.

Loisir, *n.* (§13, 26, 28, 41, 65): the time to do something, or possibility to do something.

Mail, *n.* (§20, 21, 34, 52, 60, 66): the hammer of the axe.

Parade, *n.* (§32, 33): a parry.

Parcq, *n.* (§3): A close or enclosed place.

Peril, *n.* (§22): danger, risk.

Prestement, *adv.* (§7, 10-11, 17, 22, 34, 41, 51-53, 55, 63, 65, 69): quickly or as soon as.

Prinse, *n.* (§28, 31, 45, 56, 70): literally a hold. This word is used to refer to a situation where the axe hooks the opponent’s body (§45, 56, 70) or the opponent’s axe (§28, 31) with enough strength to pull or push vigorously.

Querelle, *n.* (§1): literally a quarrel, however in this context, this is a good quarrel, with the meaning of a good cause.

Queue, *n.* (§13-15, 17-20, 23- 29, 32, 34-35, 43-44, 46-50, 52-53, 55-56, 59-60, 63-70, 72): literally the tail, in this context, it refers strictly to the point of the axe located at the opposite of its head. The word *queue* is systematically translated as tail even if this term is uncomfortable in English. However it should be considered that it is no less unusual in French. At least, this translation can be made unambiguously for the reader. It should be noted, however, that in archeology, the tail of a spear-head or the tail of an axe-head only refer to a part of the metal object, here the opposite part to the cutting edges. **Plat de la queue** (§17) means literally the “flat of the tail”. It is uncommon to use the shaft near the tail to hit the opponent, thrusting with the tail is much more preferred. This precision is certainly given to avoid confusion.

¹³⁷ [Damp Abbés] *haussa haiche et par tel force que, s'il eust atcaint le seigneur de Saintré [...], il l'eust a terre porté ou navré.* Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan de Saintré*, p. 296.

Queuvrir, *v.* (§61): see *couvrir*.

Recouvrer un coup, *vl.* (§61): to give a blow another time, to repeat the blow

Reculler, *v.* (§46): to draw back

Remede, *n.* (§72): remedy.

Reversser, *v.* (§55): to knock down, to overthrow.

Ruer, *v.* (§7-8, 9, 12-13, 16, 22, 35, 52, 55, 61): to rush, to cast or to throw something abruptly. It could also means to strike (§8). **Ruer par terre** (§9, 16, 22, 35, 61) means to push or knock someone to the ground.

Secousse, *n.* (§9, 11, 23, 26, 28, 46, 61): a jolt, a brusque move

Sejourner, *v.* (§57): to tarry.

Sourdre, *v.* (§37, 50): to raise

Tantot, *adv.* (§58): immediately.

Tirer, *n.* (§32): a tugging.

Tirer, *v.* (§22, 26, 29, 32, 39, 43-44, 56, 60-61, 66-68): depending of the context, could mean to pull (§22, 68...) or to throw a stroke (§43, 60), or the point (§67), which means to thrust.

Tour de bras, *ie.* (§4, 6-9, 12, 22, 26, 52, 54, 55): idiomatic expression which refers to a non thrusting stroke. See the dedicated paragraph in the Discussion about Translation section.

Venue, *n.* (§9, 58, 64): *d'une venue* means “in the continuity of movement” or “at the same time”.

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