Daniel E. O'Sullivan, ed. *Chess in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: A Fundamental Thought Paradigm of the Premodern World.* (Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 10). Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012. Pp. vi, 255. $126.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-3-11-028881-0; DOI: 10.1515/9783110288810.

We have witnessed a renewed scholarly interest in chess in recent years, with an increased emphasis on the game's history, development, and representation in the Middle Ages. Following on the heels of Marilyn Yalom's *Birth of a Chess Queen* (2004), Olle Ferm's and Volker Honemann's contributed volume *Chess and Allegory in the Middle Ages* (2005), and Jenny Adams' *Power Play* (2006), Daniel O'Sullivan's edited collection presents a timely addition to the current discussion. In his introduction, O'Sullivan poses the question "how can we begin to understand the appeal of the game to a medieval audience?" (3) and, perhaps mirroring the thematic focus of previous studies, aims to explore variegated answers by organizing ten essays into three broad, interrelated categories: "Chess, Morality, and Politics;" "Women On and Off the Chessboard;" and "Playing Games with Chess and Allegory."

More implicit and far-reaching is the degree to which contributors are not only still indebted to Harold Murray's pioneering *A History of Chess* (1913) in their research, but also actively engage with Murray's *tour de force,* offering fresh re-readings, corrections, and expansions to little-known and widely circulated texts. In his essay "How did the Queen go Mad?" Mark Taylor re-assesses some of the texts previously covered by Murray in order to explore how the chess queen developed her modern movement on the chessboard. By returning to ground long thought covered, Taylor argues that the queen's development occurred gradually in stages, which challenges the idea that a single event in the fifteenth century altered the movements for both the *fers* and *alphin*. In his conclusion, Taylor points out our reliance on Murray, remarking we must begin reading the material afresh: "Murray is so good and so complete and so enduring that it is easy to fall into overdependence, to lack a sufficiently strong imperative to redo his work" (183). Such a sentiment is shared by O'Sullivan in his introduction: "someone has yet to offer us a single work that adequately combines the fundamental ground covered by Murray with the last century's advances and discoveries in the history of chess" (6). On the other end of the spectrum lies Amandine Mussou's essay, "Playing with Memory: The Chessboard as Mnemonic Tool in Medieval Didactic Literature," which does not reference Murray at all in her assessment of three chess allegories, including Jacobus de Cessolis' *Liber de moribus hominum et officiis nobilium super ludo scacchorum,* Évrart de Conty's *Échecs Amoureux,* and Philippe de Mézière's *Le Sage du Vieil Pelerin.* While her essay explores the use of chess pieces as mnemonic devices and pedagogical tools, her analysis perhaps could have been better supported by engaging with Murray and other chess historians, many of whom discuss chess allegory. While she notes that "the use of a game board for didactic purposes points to the evolution mentalities witnessed at the time" (196), a further examination of this development in mnemonics alongside chess allegory may have provided better insight for her overall thesis.

Cessolis' allegorical *Liber,* a medieval bestseller, is also examined in a number of chapters and becomes the focal point for two essays in the volume. Olle Ferm's "Making Chess Politically and Socially Relevant in Times of Trouble in the *Schacktavelslek*" provides a fascinating reading of the Swedish adaptation of Cessolis' *Liber, Schacktavelslek,* in order to show the ways in which authors could modify texts in order

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to suit their own ideological and political goals. The author of the *Schacktavelslek,* Ferm argues, aims to teach readers "how the Swedish kingdom should be organized for it to be strong and prosperous (47), a noble effort at a time of political corruption, internal conflict, and external threats in fifteenth-century Sweden. Dario Del Puppo offers a different approach to the *Liber,* addressing the ambiguities in Cessolis' *exempla* in order to show how the *Liber* is a social allegory that often defies genre categories. Notably, Puppo's brief analysis of the composition and organization of an early witness of the *Liber,* MS Ricketts 194 in the Lilly Library at Indiana University, suggests the need for further research into the circulation and transmission of *Liber* manuscripts.

Throughout the book, contributors frequently adopt two new categories to describe chess allegory, *static* and *dynamic.* In "Defeating the Devil at Chess: A Struggle between Virtue and Vice in *Le Jeu des echecs de la dame moralisé*," Kristin Juel employs this static/dynamic dichotomy in order to situate *Le Jeu* as a product of both traditions. While such a typology presents a new paradigm for understanding chess allegory, her use of *dynamic* sometimes becomes confused as it is also associated with "loss at chess with sin" (101); this correlation questions the productiveness of such a seemingly artificial distinctions. O'Sullivan and Puppo offer careful uses of *static* and *dynamic* for describing chess allegories—that is, texts that allegorize pieces/gameboard and texts that allegorize movements and gameplay—that are grounded in literary developments of the genre over time.

There is, in the essays collected, an attempt to provide surveys and developments of chess as a literary motif in a diverse number of contexts across Europe. Albrecht Classen's "Chess in Medieval German Literature: A Mirror of Socio-Historical and Cultural, Religious, Ethical, and Moral Conditions" succeeds at providing a first-time account of chess allusions in sixteen medieval German romances and court poetry, arguing that the numerous references to chess in German literature testifies to its significance in German court culture. Through close-readings of Perceval's development as a knight in Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* and the thirteenth century romance *Didot Perceval,* Jenny Adams' "Medieval Chess, Perceval's Education, and a Dialect of Misogyny" traces the changing attitude toward chess concurrently with education and intellectual development, as later authors used the game to identify reason and intellect as masculine traits. Most essays in the volume focus on literature and literary representation to explore the ways in which chess appealed to medieval audiences, but two chapters go beyond literature to explore depictions of chess in other forms. Paul Milliman's historically-oriented discussion of Richard fitz Neal's *Dialogues de Scaccario* [Dialogue of the Exchequer] in "*Ludus Scacarii:* Games and Governance in Twelfth-Century England" explores how chess could be used as a metaphor to illustrate how the Exchequer could be conceptualized as a game. In her captivating and well-researched essay, "Images of Medieval Spanish Chess and Captive Damsels in Distress," Sonja Musser Golladay investigates the historical and artistic significance of chess imagery, arguing that the Alhambra Palace's lateral cupolas, *Solas de los Reyes,* and Alfonso X's *Libros de juegos* [Book of Games] both exhibit an early version of the damsel in distress motif often found in romance and courtly love literature. Through close and detailed analysis, Golladay identifies what might be one of the earliest references to the *Flores and Blancaflor* tale in the miniature of the damsel in the tower on fol. 12v of the *Libros de los juegos*—an odd but effective insertion given that most figures in the *Libros* are based on real people at court. From there, she painstakingly investigates the subtle tensions between the Moor and Christian characters in Alhambra's cupolas, which produce ambiguous depictions of European courtly love that the patron may

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not detect. Describing each scene of Lateral 1 and 2 in detail alongside images etched into caskets and other material artifacts, Golladay argues that the damsel captured in the Moorish castle in scene five, coupled with other scenes on Lateral 2, showcase a non-narrative sequence that thematizes the act of capture and the superiority of Christians, for they are successful in winning the favor of maidens. My only criticism is that images would have been tremendously helpful for such a visually-oriented essay, but Golladay's descriptions are nevertheless accurate and detailed for the reader. In offering this fascinating decipher of "the message behind such images" (165), Golladay debunks, expands, and revises previous readings of Alhambra's lateral cupolas, as those suggested by Roger Sherman Loomis, James A. Rushing, Carmen Bernis, and Jerrilynn Dodds, in order to offer new insights into these ambiguous, puzzling, and difficult works of art.

Readers engaged in ongoing discussions of medieval chess history and literature will find this book useful for the many questions it raises and its discussions of chess as a symbol, motif, and pastime across various media, genres, languages, themes, and nationalities in Europe. The volume covers a wide range of linguistic categories, including Catalan, English, French, German, Latin, Swedish, Pahlavi, and Spanish, dating from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries. The supplementary bibliography also helps provide a basis for those looking to begin work in this topic, though I note that an index would have provided another helpful supplementary apparatus. The topics covered offer a compelling re-orientation of medieval chess for readers and students new to chess history, and the expansions of Murray and other new paradigms and materialities will encourage more scholars to study the wealth of chess literature and its cultural contexts.

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