Edited by Robin O'Bryan

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Robin O'Bryan

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"That you have seen the pride, beheld the sport,
And all the games of fortune, played at court …"

Ben Jonson, "An Epigram" (*c.* 1625)

"Gaming is an enchanting witchery …"

Charles Cotton, *The Compleat Gamester* (1674)

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Acknowledgments

This collection of essays grew out of a session devoted to “Renaissance Games” that was organized for the Renaissance Society of America conference held in Boston, 31 March–2 April 2016. I thank Erika Gaffney for inviting me to edit a book on the topic and for enthusiastically supporting this project throughout the twists and turns of its development. Special thanks, too, to the series editor Bret Rothstein, our resident game expert Greger Sundin for his helpful advice, the editorial staff at AUP, and to Ann A. Huse and Kimberlee Cloutier-Blazzard for their earlier reviews of some of the chapters.

Introduction

A Passion for Games

Robin O'Bryan

Abstract
This introductory chapter provides a general background on the European passion for games in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As well as giving a brief overview of some of the most popular games in the period, the discussion addresses the various roles that games played in early modern society. The examination then moves on to elucidate a wide range of ancillary topics related to games and their play, while also looking at the ways in which games and game playing revealed greater truths about the inner workings of European culture. In identifying leitmotifs and metaphors used by authors, dramatists, and artists, the investigation shows that the games and issues discussed in the essays are part of a much larger cultural narrative.

Keywords: chess, playing cards, gambling, tennis, educational games, game metaphors

Writing in his *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*, 1528), Baldassare Castiglione engages his characters in a dialogue on the role of game play in the making of an ideal courtier. A young man asks if it is "wrong for the courtier to play at cards and dice?," with his respondent—a courtier himself—assuring him that it is fine as long as he does not neglect things of greater importance nor play to win money and cheat his partner.[1] As for chess, although acknowledging that it is "a refined and ingenious recreation," the speaker goes on to say that it takes too much time and study to master the game, time and effort that is best spent in more noble pursuits; in short, he concludes that for chess "mediocrity is more to

Unless otherwise attributed, translations are mine.

1 Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*, 140. The original Italian reads: "[…] parvi che sia vizio nel Cortegiano il giocare alle carte ed ai dadi? […] A me no […] eccetto a cui nol facesse troppo assiduamente e per quello lasciasse l'altre cose di maggior importanzia, o veramente non per altro che per vincer danari, ed ingannasse il compagno […]"; Castiglione, *Il cortegiano*, ed. Cian, 162–63.

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be praised than excellence."[2] While there were a number of chess advocates who would have certainly disagreed with him, Castiglione seems to be arguing for temperance in game play, recognizing, if not anticipating, the burgeoning taste for such diversions that was to gain traction as the century progressed.

That a discussion on the relative merits of game play should figure in a manual on courtier conduct is indicative of how thoroughly the penchant for games had been embraced by European society. Indeed, commensurate with an increased interest in, and opportunity for leisurely pastimes, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed an unprecedented vogue for playing games.[3] We may get a good idea of this phenomenon by considering the way games are presented in François Rabelais's classic text *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1542). In one chapter the author describes how a cloth laden with all sorts of dice, cards, and board games was set before Gargantua for his postprandial amusement.[4] The names and numbers of these games is staggering—Rabelais enumerates 217 both real and imaginary games—but more surprising is the way his contemporaries augmented this number in their subsequent translations.[5] In the German, Dutch, and English versions, the translators added their own expansive list of national games to those mentioned by Rabelais.[6] While putting a regional stamp on the French text, their embellishments are duly suggestive of the manic hold games seemed to have exerted on the early modern imagination.

Games were, of course, not new to the European cultural vocabulary. In Antiquity, as well as competitive games of sport, the Greeks and Romans played dice, knucklebones, and variants on chess, backgammon, and checkers.[7] Game pieces discovered in Viking ship burials provide evidence that not only were such games still being played in the medieval epoch, but as in past traditions, game objects were considered valuable enough that they were included among the precious articles

2 "Quello certo è gentile intertenimento ed ingenioso [...] di modo, che a cui vuol esser eccellente nel gioco de' scacchi, credo bisogni consumarvi molto tempo, e mettervi tanto studio, quanto se volesse imparar qualche nobil scienzia, o far qualsivoglia altra cosa ben d'importanzia [...] cioè che la mediocrità sia più laudévole che la eccellenzia"; Castiglione, *Il cortegiano*, ed. Cian, 163. Castiglione's words hint at some of the negative connotations that were sometimes assigned to chess and chess players in the epoch; see discussion below.

3 See Burke, "Invention of Leisure," and Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance.*

4 Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 1.22.83–85, and *Oeuvres de Rabelais*, 1: 392–447; and Bakhtin, "Role of Games in Rabelais."

5 The list contains not only the names of actual games, but also reflects gaming terms and methods of playing, with the first third referencing card games and the remainder referring to sports; see discussion by Hayes, "Games," 89. Also see Mehl, *Les jeux au royaume de France.*

6 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 231–32, and "Role of Games in Rabelais," 125.

7 On games in the ancient world, see, for example, Purcell, "Literate games."

accompanying the deceased into the afterlife.[8] By the late thirteenth century, King Alfonso X in Spain had had compiled his *Libro de los juegos* (Book of games, 1283), an encyclopedic illustrated text on tables (backgammon, similar to tric-trac), dice, and mill (or merels, an early version of nine men's morris).[9] Chess, described as the "most noble and of greater mastery than the others," figured prominently in the text with over a hundred problems discussed. But while Alfonso's *Libro* offers confirmation of the rising popularity of games during the Middle Ages, what is unique about the early modern period is the extent to which games permeated all aspects of European life.

What kinds of games were being played in this epoch? Games ran the gamut, from those requiring skill and wit to those considered to be tactical games of luck, and still others that were entirely dependent upon chance. There were seasonal games, outdoor games, and educational games; games for well-heeled aristocrats, games played by those occupying the lower rungs of the social order, and often both. Some games were primarily for men, others for women, still others played by mixed sexes, and those by children. The period saw the development of entirely new games, as well as the popularization of traditional games and changes in how they were played.[10] Further reflective of this interest there was an outpouring of informational works devoted to games and the rules of their play. Similarly, a host of game objects—chessboards, hand-painted playing cards, gaming tables, and the like—were produced to satisfy the demand, articles both utilitarian and those of great beauty. In art, while games and their players had long been represented in the margins of medieval manuscripts, the game topos became a prominent genre unto itself as a number of artists made game players the subject of their works. Writers, poets, and playwrights responded in kind using the game leitmotif as the theme or subtext of their literary and dramatic endeavors. Royals and nobles, traditional arbiters of culture, often encouraged these pastimes, and it is not coincidental that the plentiful treatises that were composed on games were frequently dedicated to those whose taste in such matters, mattered.

8 Hall, "Board Games in Boat Burials." Game objects have been found in Mesopotamian and Egyptian tombs, while knucklebones have been discovered in Roman children's graves, their presence indicating that the deceased were not slaves and thus had the luxury of being able to play games.

9 Golladay provides a translation and extensive analysis of the text in "*Los libros de acedrex dados e tablas*."

10 On the new games that emerged in France in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, see Belmas, *Jouer autrefois*, who also discusses the social ramifications of this "global phenomenon."

Games and Play: Theories and Approaches

Despite the overarching absorption with games and game playing that characterized the early modern period, the study of games did not emerge as a serious subject of academic inquiry until relatively modern times.[11] This investigatory lapse is all the more surprising considering that from the late Middle Ages on, scholars and theologians had lent a critical eye to the subject, providing historical and ethnological surveys of games and offering commentary on ancillary issues related to game play.[12] Medical, legal, and moralistic tracts added to the discussion, with jurists weighing in on the lawful implications of awarding winnings for gambling, and physicians and religious authorities evaluating game play in terms of its impact on physical and spiritual health.[13] Others offered taxonomies of games, while putting forth their theories of game play. In his 1538 pedagogical treatise *Dialogos* (Dialogues), the Valencian humanist Juan Luis Vives presented an early classification scheme for games, differentiating them according to criteria of the players' age, gender, and social class, and proposing a generic theory of laws of play "las leyes del juego".[14] Several decades later Torquato Tasso articulated his ideas on the cultural and social meaning of games and play in his two treatises, the *Gonzaga secondo overo del giuoco* (Second Gonzaga or on games, 1581) and *Il Romeo overo del giuoco* (Romeo or on games, 1582), written at the court of Duke Alfonso II d'Este in Ferrara.[15] Reprising the dialogue format, Tasso established an analytical framework that evaluated games based upon type (for example, games contingent upon luck versus skill) and the role played by Fortune, as well related issues that brought in the

11 This is an oft-repeated observation. A short essay on the "History of Games" posted on the website of the Fondazione Benetton di Ricerche comments that the study of games was long considered to be not "serious" enough, which would account for the lacuna of scholarship on medieval games observed by Patterson, "Introduction," 3. De Voogt has duly noted that research on board games is a relatively recent development; "Editorial," 6. Especially striking is the assessment of Zollinger, paraphrasing Caillois, who asserts that "gambling and lottery studies were exposed to a modern form of ostracism"; Zollinger, "Dealing in Chances," 1; and Caillois, "Unity of Play," 93.

12 Already in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, games had begun to figure in European encyclopedic (such as Alfonso's *Libro*) and other writings; see chapter 3 entitled "Early Writings on Games," in Willughby, *Francis Willughby's Book of Games*, 43–51.

13 Such issues are treated by Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance*.

14 Vives distinguished between physical exercise, children's games, games on paper or cards, and ball games. His "six laws of play" were enumerated in terms of the correct time to play, companions for playing games, the kinds of games played, their stakes, the manner of play, and the length of play; see Vives, *Tudor School-Boy Life*, xliii, and Vives, *Dialogos*, trans. Coret y Peris, 353–72. Also see Renson, "Le jeu chez Juan Luis Vivès," who notes that this categorization of games predates twentieth-century writing and theories on the subject.

15 As McClure observes, Tasso's treatises represent "the most ambitious theoretical attempt in the cinquecento to develop a theory that embraces all types of games"; McClure, *Parlour Games*, 5.

politics of gender and the moral and psychological ramifications of play.[16] Girolamo Cardano's *Liber de ludo aleae* (*Book on Games of Chance*, written sometime in the mid-1500s and published posthumously in 1663) concentrated on gambling. After acknowledging that games could be dependent on agility or strength, or on skill and/or chance, he went on to set out the conditions appropriate for gambling, while also specifying "Who Should Play and When."[17] (Playing with professional gamblers, he deemed, was "most disgraceful" (*turpissimum*) and "dangerous" (*periculosum*).[18]) The Englishman Francis Willughby, an ornithologist by training, utilized his scientific background to produce his encyclopedic *Book of Games* (*c.* 1660). Unpublished and thus overlooked until recently, his text is now recognized as an invaluable source for its systematic observation, description, and classification of period games.[19]

While others addressed the game issue in intervening centuries, in contemporary scholarship Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1938) is traditionally used as the starting point for studies on games as they fall under the larger rubric of "play."[20] Offering a model for description and classification of games as undertaken by earlier theoreticians, Huizinga distinguished play from "ordinary life" to assert the impact of the play element upon all forms of culture and social institutions.[21] Other notable pioneers in the field of game studies have included Mikhail Bakhtin, whose analysis of Rabelais's games focused on their association with popular carnival and feasts, and Peter Burke dealing with games in the context of a developing leisure society in early modern Europe.[22] Alessandro

16 One of Tasso's interlocutors addresses the notion of whether victory in games of chess and playing cards is due to *ingegno* (wit or skill) or *fortuna* (luck); Tasso, *Il Gonzaga secondo*, 10. Among the other issues addressed in Tasso's treatise were the venues for game playing, the goals of various games, and archetypes of players; ibid., and McClure, *Parlour Games*, 4–13.

17 "Quibus, & quando magis conveniat ludere"; Cardano, *Liber*, 262; and Cardano, *Book on Games of Chance*, 1–4. Written over a thirty-year period, the published version was a collection of notes and thoughts on his behalf. I thank Greger Sundin for this information.

18 Cardano, *Book on Games of Chance*, 3; and Cardano, *Liber*, 262.

19 Willughby, *Francis Willughby's Book of Games*, 2.

20 In the mid-eighteenth century, for example, Edmund Hoyle produced his widely influential treatise *Mr. Hoyle's Games of Whist, Quadrille, Piquet, Chess, and Back-gammon*, which established rules, procedures, and strategies for playing these games, as well as discussing the laws of probability. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, several references to games in Jacob Burckhardt's influential *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (published originally in German as *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* in 1860), prompted scholars such as Ludovico Zdekauer, Gerolamo Boccardo, and Angelo Solerti to tackle the subject; see Guerzoni, "Playing Great Games," 43 and n. 2.

21 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 9. Caillois discusses Huizinga's work vis-à-vis games in *Man, Play and Games*, 4–5.

22 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 231–32 and 235–39, with a focused discussion in "Role of Games in Rabelais"; and Burke, "Invention of Leisure," 139. Slethaug, "Game Theory," 66, addresses the subversive aspects of games in Bakhtin.

Arcangeli's recent text has advanced the discussion in exploring how games figured in Renaissance attitudes toward recreation and pastime.[23] More circumscribed period and regional studies have produced encyclopedic collections and monographic works devoted to chess, playing cards, board games, parlor games, gambling, and related sports such as tennis and soccer.[24] Game scholarship has duly infiltrated a number of different disciplines, with terms and mathematical concepts from game theory used to explain economics, political science, psychology, and other social and behavioral sciences.[25]

Some of the most important research in the field has been undertaken by Roger Caillois who issued his *Man, Play and Games* in 1968.[26] Building on the work of Huizinga and most certainly on earlier treatises, Caillois proposed a theoretical classification of games that is widely referenced by scholars of game studies. Although not all have been in agreement over what activities should be included under the game rubric (Huizinga, for example, did not make allowances for games of chance played for money), Caillois nevertheless included gambling in his classification scheme; likewise his typology was expanded to incorporate sports.[27] Placing all games in the domain of "play," Caillois divided games into four categories.[28] The

23 Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance*.

24 Listed in the bibliography are notable specialized monographs and edited collections which include those by H.J.R. Murray, Richard Eales, and Daniel O'Sullivan on chess; Catherine Hargrave, Michael Dummett, Detlef Hoffmann, David Parlett, and Timothy Husband on playing cards; H.J.R. Murray, David Parlett, and Jean-Marie Lhôte on board and table games; Adrian Seville on the Game of the Goose; George McClure on parlor games; Manfred Zollinger on gambling; Heiner Gillmeister and Cees de Bondt on tennis; and sports and games of the Renaissance by Andrew Leibs, and of the early modern period by John McClelland and Brian Merrilees. Among the general edited volumes on games are Elliot Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith's *The Study of Games*; the expansive *Les jeux à la Renaissance* edited by Philippe Ariès and Jean Claude Margolin; and *Jeux de princes, jeux de vilains* edited by Ève Netchine. Also noteworthy is Manfred Zollinger's comprehensive bibliography on game treatises published between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries (*Bibliographie der Spielbücher*). In addition, increasing scholarly interest is testified by the inauguration of journals such as *Ludica* (1995) devoted to the history and culture of games, and the international journal of *Board Game Studies* founded in 1998. Allison Levy's edited collection on *Playthings in Early Modernity*, 2017 (which came out after the essays in this volume had been assembled) addresses a variety of games under the rubric of "play." The edited text by Serina Patterson (*Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*, 2015), which examines the role of games in medieval culture and literature, comes close to the orientation of this present volume.

25 This application of games to these other fields is concomitant with Huizinga's recognition that the play element can be found in a variety of otherwise serious disciplines including art and poetry, law, war, etc.; Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*.

26 Slethaug, "Game Theory," provides a succinct overview of the various approaches taken in games scholarship, which include those that are firmly rooted in philosophy.

27 Patterson discusses the disciplinary distinctions between game and sport in "Introduction," 4.

28 See Caillois's chapter 2 entitled "Classification of Games" (*Man, Play and Games*, 11–36), which includes a schematic of his classification.

first, *agōn*, refers to games of skill, characterized by competitive games such as physical sports and cerebral chess; the second, *alea* (the Latin name for dice), denotes games of chance in which the player's skill is sublimated to the vagaries of destiny (in other words, Fortune).[29] The third type of game Caillois designated *mimicry* or simulation, which he used to connote theatrical representations and drama, as, for example, games of make-believe; with the fourth category—*ilinx* or vertigo—referring to games comprising improvisation and joy as manifested in children's games like leapfrog.[30] This theoretical construct recognizes that such types may overlap and that in some games (like cards) luck might triumph over actual skill. Caillois's typology is invaluable for permitting us to appreciate the various ways in which games coincided with seemingly disparate areas such as theater, dance, performance, and the like, but his theory is also crucial for providing insights into how games traditionally prompted conflicting viewpoints in terms of their value to society. Those falling under the category of *alea* were often censured because the player's abdication of will subjected them to dependence on external (occult) forces; conversely, games that relied on the competitive agents of skill in *agōn* generally merited higher in such assessments.

As becomes evident in the analyses of Caillois, Huizinga, and others, because of the corollary applications of "game" to "play," a precise definition of "game" is often elusive.[31] Compounding the issue are the etymological variations in European languages which, unlike in English usage, conflate the two words. The original Latin *ludus* is an all-encompassing term meaning both "play" and "game," with the German *Spiel*, French *jeu*, Spanish *juego*, and Italian *giuoco* having similar dual connotations.[32] How then to define *game*? Bernard Suits offered a theoretical distinction between games and play in *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (1978), defining "playing a game [as] the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles."[33] In "The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play," Eugen Fink proposed disregarding antithetical frameworks of "work-play" and "frivolity-seriousness" to see play as an essential element

29 According to Ortalli the distinction between games of skill and games of chance was first expressed in judicial writing of the early thirteenth century, perhaps in Azzone of Bologna's *Summa codicis*; Ortalli, "Uncertain Thresholds of Tolerance," 64.

30 Chomarat, "Les échecs d'après Vida," 370, applies Caillois's theory of *mimicry* to chess as it simulates war.

31 The fluid and amorphous parameters that extend to the meaning of game led the games historian David Parlett to dismiss the need for an exact definition; Parlett, *Oxford History of Board Games*, 1.

32 See, for example, Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 35–37; Patterson, "Introduction," 5–7; and Guerzoni "Playing Great Games," 43 n. 1, who piquantly observes that in sixteenth-century Italian courts "everything can be considered both game and play."

33 Suits, *Grasshopper*, 55. Suits was responding to the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's assertion that games were indefinable.

of man's very being.[34] Although his discussion finds points of comparison between games and play, he nevertheless asserted that play is not for the sake of reaching a "final goal."[35] This latter point aligns with the ideas of Jacques Derrida and other French philosophers who demarcated games as governed by rules and structure as opposed to play activities, which are open-ended.[36] Caillois essentially challenged this binary assessment in his assertion that not all games subscribe to rules: those that are free and improvisational (which incorporate the highest degree of play, or *paidia*) can be distinguished from those that are rule-based (categorized as *ludus*).[37]

Deferring to Caillois's more flexible interpretation, but otherwise disentangling our investigations from the complex philosophical and theoretical issues regarding notions of "play," in this volume we put the focus squarely back on "games," examined herein as a leitmotif of creative enterprise. In this respect, our study represents a new approach in the field of game scholarship. The first of titles to be published under AUP's *Culture of Play* series, although pertinent to game scholars, this collection is envisioned to have broader appeal for the general academic readership. To that end, the introduction—admittedly expansive—is intended to provide an appropriate background for those not conversant in the specialized field of game studies. Not only does this extended discussion set out an analytical framework for the games, themes, and subtexts that are treated in the individual essays, but it also allows us to see them as part of a larger cultural construct. Keeping the inquiries "game-centric" then, the essays seek to answer two main questions: how were games used to convey special meanings in art and literature, and how did these games speak to greater issues in European society? In chapters dealing with chess, playing cards, game prints, dice, gambling, and outdoor and sportive games, our essayists show how games were used by artists, writers, game makers and collectors, in the service of love and war, didactic and moralistic instruction, commercial enterprise, politics and diplomacy, and assertions of civic and personal identity. Offering innovative iconographical and literary interpretations these analyses reveal how games played, written about, illustrated, and collected functioned as metaphors for a host of broader cultural issues related to gender relations and feminine power, class distinction and status, ethical and sexual comportment, philosophical and religious ideas, and conditions of the mind.

34 Fink, "Oasis of Happiness," 19. Fink refined his ideas further in his more expansive *Play as Symbol of the World.*

35 Fink, "Oasis of Happiness," 21. Fink characterized play as "interrupting the continuity and purposive structure of our lives," which could also be said of games; ibid., 22. Likewise, allowing that "each game is an attempt at existence," he went on to say that "we do find occasionally in play [...] a withdrawal from the real world, which can go so far as enchantment and trance and reach a point of total enslavement [...]," words that conjure up the serious game player; ibid., 23, 25.

36 Slethaug, "Game Theory," 68.

37 Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 27–35. *Paidia* comes from the Greek for "childish play."

Games, Game Play, and Cultural Response

Chess

As might be inferred from Alfonso's *Libro* and Castiglione's dialogue, the most prestigious game in the epoch was chess. Originating in India and passing through Persia, the game is thought to have been introduced into Europe around 1000 CE via Islamic-controlled Sicily or Spain. From the thirteenth century, chess became a fashionable pastime among the nobility and the clergy, its popularity reflected in a spate of chivalric romances, poems, and moralistic treatises. One of the most significant of the latter was the "chess morality" written by the Dominican Jacobus de Cessolis (*c.* 1273). The *Liber de moribus hominum et de officiis nobilium ac popularium super ludo schachorum* (Book of morals and the duties of nobles and commoners, on the game of chess) was fashioned as an allegory of society, functioning as a *speculum principis* (mirror for princes) and used to instruct young nobles in the art of governance.[38] Lighter in tone but equally influential were a variety of poems treating the game as an allegory for love and seduction.[39] While many of these early chess classics were still being read and/or translated into the sixteenth century, the period also ushered in a host of new instructional tracts and other literary works devoted to the chess theme.[40]

One such treatise was *Das Schach- oder König-spiel* (The Chess, or the King's game, 1616), written by a German duke using the pseudonym Gustavus Selenus.[41] As suggested by his title chess continued to maintain its associations with elite activity. To be sure chess was played by those of more modest means, but in art and literature chess players were often portrayed in aristocratic guise playing the game in elegant settings.[42] Paris Bordone showed two finely dressed men at a chessboard set upon a table covered with an oriental carpet (*c.* 1550), while a portrait

38 Cessolis's Latin text was immediately translated into French, and then into a number of other languages by the fifteenth century assuring it wide distribution. For the English translation, see Cessolis, *Book of Chess.*

39 For more on chess as an amatory pursuit, see the essay by Robin O'Bryan in the next chapter.

40 Besides the work of Luis Ramirez de Lucena in the 1490s, these include instructional treatises by Pedro Damiano (1512), Ruy López de Segura (1561), and Arthur Saul (1614) who published the earliest original book on chess in English, as well as the "love chess" allegorical poems by Catalan writers, and by Marco Girolamo Vida in Italy discussed in the next chapter.

41 *Das Schach- oder König-spiel* was written by August the Younger, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, a member of the elder branch of the House of Este. He reappears in Greger Sundin's essay in Chapter 9 of this volume.

42 Some of the more modest chess sets were fabricated of copper alloy, wood, bone, or horse teeth; Patterson, "Introduction," 2. Interestingly, although chess was played by Dutch royals, chess players are rarely depicted in Dutch genre painting; Naumann, "*Chess Players*," 358–59 and n. 6.

by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen (*c.* 1548) presents the Elector of Saxony outfitted in a fur garment as he plays a match. A charming miniature by Hans Mielich (1552) portrays the Duke of Bavaria and his wife playing chess accompanied by several attendants and two precious lap dogs which occupy a place of honor on the table with the chessboard.[43] William Shakespeare perpetuated the nobility of chess players in *The Tempest* (1610) in staging the match between the daughter of the Duke of Milan and the son of the King of Naples.

Playing Cards

Playing cards were another inheritance from the Arab world, filtering into Europe from Islamic territories in the mid-fourteenth century and achieving remarkable popularity within a few decades. Some of the earliest decks were luxury cards made for noble and royal patrons and decorated with hand-painted imagery; more commonly, cards printed with woodblock or engraved designs were produced for the general playing populace.[44] As with chess, the iconography of the cards was often based on courtly hierarchies, hence kings, queens, jacks/knaves, and occasionally fools/jesters; before codification in the late fifteenth century, depending on geographical region the individual suits might be represented by such motifs as flowers, animals, fruits, cups, hearts, bells, shields, and even hunting imagery.[45] Cards were used in a variety of trick-taking games including tarot (*tarocchi*), German *Karnöffel*, and trappola, as well as in primero (an early version of poker).[46] An English painting from the 1560s shows a group of four men, some wearing fur-trimmed garments and all with rings on their fingers playing primero, the coins on the table indicating they are playing for stakes.[47] In Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602) Falstaff invokes the game when he declares, "I never prospered since I foreswore myself [cheated] at primero."[48] (He lied.)

43 The miniature is the second illustration in the *Jewel Book of the Duchess Anna of Bavaria*, World Digital Library, www.wdl.org/en/item/4104/. Accessed September 10, 2018.

44 Hand-painted playing cards were produced for Charles VI of France in 1392, while the earliest of the woodblock playing cards were made around 1440–50; Hargrave, *History of Playing Cards*, 31, and Husband, *World in Play*, 47.

45 Husband, *World in Play*, 26–41. The Knave is depicted as a jester with a *marotte* in a deck now in the Cloisters Museum; ibid., 85.

46 Feigenbaum provides a concise discussion of primero/a (also spelled primiero/a) in "Gamblers, Cheats, and Fortune-Tellers," 167–68.

47 The painter is attributed to the circle of the so-called Master of the Countess of Warwick, with the image viewable at Wikimedia Commons ("Four Gentlemen of High Rank Playing Primero"), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Primero.jpg.

48 Probably written in 1597, it was not published until 1602; see Shakespeare, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Melchiori, 266 (4.5.94).

Dice and Cards and Gambling

Like cards, dice were widely played in the early modern era, and both frequently used for gambling.[49] Although gambling often received the censure of moralists and religious leaders, Pietro Aretino adopted the leitmotif of playing cards in his *Le carte parlanti* (The speaking cards, 1543) to argue for gambling as an appropriate noble activity: "To risk nothing is a thing for a man worth nothing [*uomo da niente*] [...] a man is not esteemed unless he loses."[50] A gambler himself, Cardano went on to advocate for dice and gambling (albeit with moderation) in his *Liber de ludo aleae*, while allowing that games of dice were suitable for soldiers.[51] This latter was likely a reference to the ubiquitous soldiers that populated the landscape in the sixteenth century and for whom gambling was a favorite pastime.[52] In art, vignettes of dice-playing soldiers had long been included in Crucifixion scenes, but in the seventeenth century artists such as Michelangelo Cerquozzi and Pieter Jansz Quast devoted their entire paintings to portraying motley groups of soldiers casting dice on overturned drums. Shakespeare used the unpredictability of dice as a metaphor for life's fortunes and dangers in *King Richard III* (1592). Upon the realization that he is about to be killed by enemy forces, the king says to his minion, "I have set my life upon a cast/ And I will stand [i.e., accept] the hazard of the die," "hazard" here meaning "risk," but also serving as a pun on the popular dice game of the same name.[53]

Board Games

Dice were also commonly used in the playing of board games, including backgammon, and surprisingly enough, an early variant of chess.[54] One of the most well-known of the so-called "games of chance" traditionally played for money was the Game of the Goose (*Gioco dell'oca*), which achieved great popularity in

49 Once dice were standardized in 1450, they became readily available to the masses, fueling the Elizabethan penchant for gambling among the lower classes; Leibs, *Sports and Games of the Renaissance*, 96–97.

50 Cited in Walker, "Gambling and Venetian Noblemen," 29 n. 3. Aretino did, however, caution against the perils of high-stakes gambling. Also see discussion by Olivieri, "Jeu et capitalisme à Venise," 156–57.

51 Cardano framed the discussion in terms of gambling being "proportionately less of a reproach to boys, young men and soldiers" ("ut contrà pueros non adeò dedecet, & adolescentes, & milites"); Cardano, *Book on Games of Chance*, 3, and Cardano, *Liber*, 262.

52 As Feigenbaum observes, continual wars in the sixteenth century resulted in "large uprooted populations of soldiers"—many of whom were probably mercenaries—and gambling was a favored diversion; Feigenbaum, "Gamblers, Cheats, and Fortune-Tellers," 154.

53 5.4.10, in Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. Hammond, 328.

54 On dice used in chess, see Poole, "False Play," 59–61.

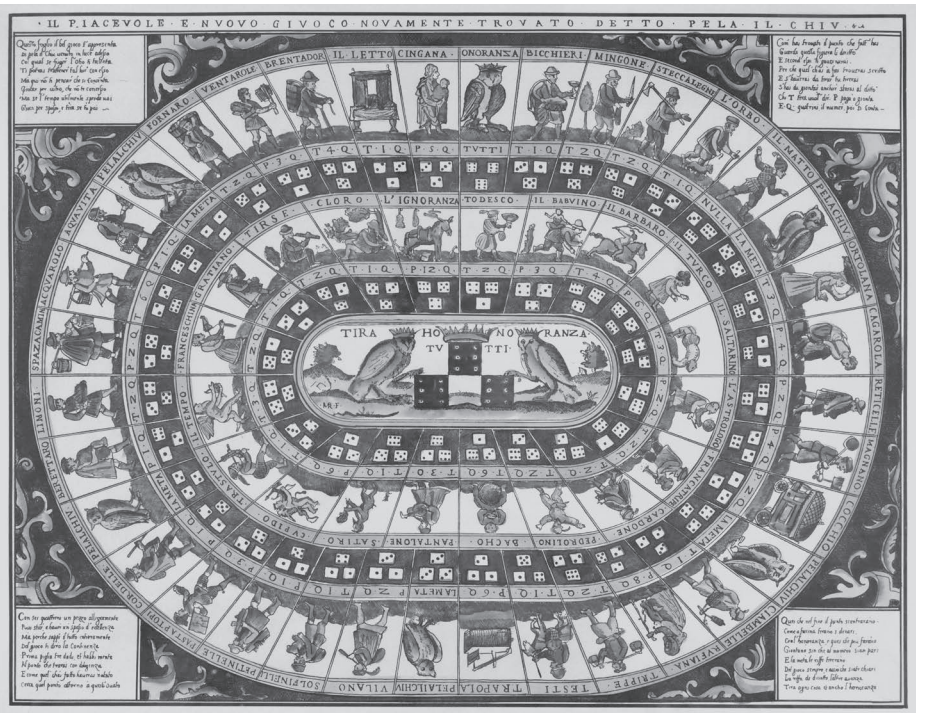

Fig. I.1 Ambrogio Brambilla, "Il piacevole e nuovo giuoco novamente trovato detto pela il chiu" (The pleasant and new game recently found called skin the owl) [Game of Skin the Owl], 1589

the sixteenth century.[55] The goose in the game was considered to be a symbol of good luck, which in subsequent versions was sometimes replaced by the capricious figure of Fortune and other salubrious motifs. A "race game," players rolled the dice to move along a progression of usually sixty-three, but sometimes forty-nine numbered spaces, encountering along the way the pitfalls and fortune that led to the center and eventual victory. The numerical underpinnings of the game were actually quite esoteric, with symbolism assigned to the number sixty-three based upon what the fifteenth-century philosopher Marsilio Ficino had determined were nine seven-year periods in a person's life.[56] Although some Goose game boards were made of wood and stone, those printed on paper flourished from the late sixteenth century when other printed game sheets were also being produced.

55 By tradition the game was thought to have been invented by Duke Francesco I de' Medici, but according to Adrian Seville the earliest reference to the game was in a book of sermons by the Dominican friar Gabriele da Barletta in 1480; Seville, *Royal Game of the Goose*, 13, 16. Also see Ciompi and Seville, *Giochi dell'Oca e di percorso*, for expansive illustrated examples of goose and other game boards.

56 Seville, *Royal Game of the Goose*, 16–17.