

game, as well as tracing how the game has evolved and developed historically.

Ultimately, the sociologist in Fine is most concerned about the communities that aggregate around the activity, and here he is at his best, showing how the relationships of individuals around the chessboard, not just across it, perpetuate the game. Traditionally, this has taken place at chess clubs and tournaments, but, increasingly, digital tools mediate these relationships through a host of chess websites, virtual communities, and ever more powerful programs. Fine's insights into how digital tools are transforming the world of chess seem particularly pertinent.

If there are flaws in the book, they are flaws of commission rather than omission. At times the author circles back to pet anecdotes (for instance about the high school team that favored the "fried liver" opening) several times. And some discussions feel repetitive, perhaps because sections of the book were published earlier as separate and distinct articles. Fine knows his scholarship well and sometimes slows the narrative to mention the works of other scholars, material that might have found a better place in the footnotes. The book's basic structure of previewing each chapter, then summarizing it at the end, ensures the reader gets the point, though occasionally by belaboring it.

Yet these are minor cavils with a fine book that rewards the novice with an excellent overview of the worlds of competitive chess and benefits the expert with new insights into an ancient game that is still fresh today.

—Jon-Paul C. Dyson, *The Strong, Rochester, NY*

**Once Upon a Playground:
A Celebration of Classic
American Playgrounds,
1920–1975**

Brenda Biondo

Lebanon, NH: ForeEdge, 2014.

Foreword, introduction, afterword, acknowledgments, photo locations, historical image credits, images. 154 pp. \$22.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781611685121

With *Once Upon a Playground: A Celebration of Classic American Playgrounds, 1920–1975*, author Brenda Biondo has compiled a beautiful collection of images of American playgrounds that spans over fifty years. She frames many of these colorful pieces of playground equipment within spacious landscapes and skiescapes, and in doing so these apparatus tend to jump off the page. The absence of children on these play structures accentuates the structural qualities of each piece.

By grouping the play equipment by the decades in which they were popular, Biondo provides a historical context for each picture. The foreword, authored by art historian and playground scholar Susan G. Solomon, astutely offers the sociocultural foundation underlying the construction of apparatuses in each era. As Solomon proffers, beginning in the early twentieth century, playgrounds were designed to acculturate immigrant and poor children growing up in an ever-changing urban environment. During the 1920s and 1930s, the purpose of playgrounds shifted to creating a place where children could find both enjoyment and excitement, not only in urban settings but also in rural communities.

Biondo artistically captures the

natural beauty of rural America in her sweeping photos. In many instances, the landscape serves to highlight the unique and seemingly otherworldly quality of these structures. Biondo's photos of the 1960s and 1970s depict the movement away from traditional playground designs. During this period, play equipment often mirrored the popular culture at that time, whether it was the United States' obsession with space exploration or characters portrayed on television or in the movies. Especially striking are colorful animal-shaped elements. The photos display the artistry inherent in each element. Biondo also augments her photos with advertisements from original play catalogs, which provide additional insight into the time period when the piece of equipment was marketed.

The limited geographical scope of this chronology of American classical playgrounds appears to be its only shortcoming. For the most part, Biondo photographed playgrounds from the American Midwest and Plains states. A follow-up presentation that replicates Biondo's format but expands to other regions of the United States would greatly illuminate the diversity of playgrounds throughout this country. A longitudinal examination of the same playgrounds would offer an additional insight into the evolution of playgrounds in the United States.

Biondo contributes a visually engaging overview of the development of playgrounds over time in the United States. Her photos capture the essence of both the form and function of these play elements, providing a unique archival perspective. As society moves on into a highly technical world, it becomes extremely important

that Americans remember and appreciate the role that playgrounds had and still have in our culture.

—David B. Jones, *University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME*

The Gameful World: Approaches, Issues, Applications

Steffen P. Walz and Sebastian Deterding,
eds.

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 2014.
Introduction, index. 676 pp.
\$50.00 cloth. ISBN: 97810262028004

According to the remarkably concise definition provided by Sebastian Deterding and his coauthors in a 2011 article, *gamification* is “the use of game design elements in nongame contexts.” Assigning points, badges, and rewards to loyal customers, monitoring one's performance while jogging and comparing it with that of other joggers, and dividing one's process of learning math or a foreign language into challenges are all classic applications of the precepts of gamification. Now that the pervasiveness of gamification as a ubiquitous buzzword—Gamify your business! Gamification for learning!—has started waning, it is possible to reconsider its applications and consequences with the due critical distance. *The Gameful World*, a hefty anthology edited by Steffen P. Walz and Sebastian Deterding, aims at discussing the process of the ludification of everyday life, culture, and work, of which gamification represents a notable epiphenomenon in the context of a scholarly debate that eschews