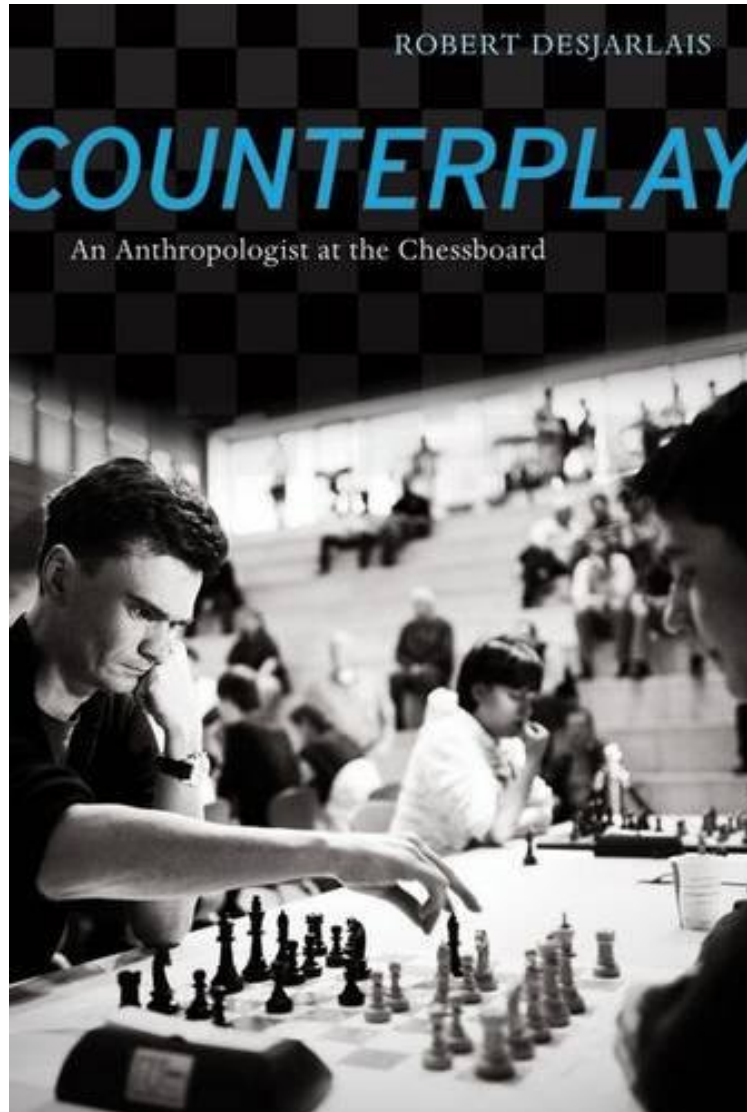


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Counterplay: An Anthropologist at the Chessboard

Robert R. Desjarlais

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Robert R. Desjarlais : Counterplay: An Anthropologist at the Chessboard before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Counterplay: An Anthropologist at the Chessboard:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Why are people so attracted (sometimes obsessed) to chess and how does it fit into our culture.By SkinnyhorseSome one once wrote, paraphrasing "I am done with chess, but chess is not done with me". Mr. Desjarlais writes deeply about the potential of chess to be addicting to its devotees, in some cases, to take over their lives completely, leading to chessplayers leaving behind careers, wives and families for chess, poverty and loneliness. These are the extreme cases, but sometimes it happens. He also talks about the total sense of

absorption, of "being", and of going into another world where all other matters become as nothing while playing the chess game. He presents the views of Sunil Weeramantry, Rusudan Goletiani, Elizabeth Vicary and Jesse Kraai about chess. Jesse says "To my mind, that's the key advantage that chess has over other areas. There isn't any room for fooling oneself. No one can bulls***for long at the chessboard." The book would have been better if the author had included some of his games and what his thought processes were during the games. A minimum of 5 games should have been presented with the moves and some diagrams. Overall, an insightful and interesting book about one of the little explored areas of our culture.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. very interesting view on an addictive mind game

By Presidio I have been playing chess since I was seven years old. While I am a working man with a family and a career and tons of other interests, chess has received my attention inconsistently over the years. At ten I joined a chess club, then I quit playing chess until I was 17 when I rejoined a chess club for a brief period of time, not playing at all during my university career. After I found the chess app on Yahoo I became seriously hooked again, before I quit again for many years only to pick it up during the holidays. There is an addictive element to this sport and the chapter on Internet chess is particularly interesting. Internet chess is an addiction and it should be treated as such. The author describes the effects of it very well. This is a great book that describes many elements of the game. Definitely worth reading.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A different perspective

By David Borensztajn For those who are interested in another side of the game of chess this book is highly recomendable. The author describes his feelings and addiction of chess, in a way that I had not seen anywhere else. He is an anthropologist and this makes the book more interesting, as he is not a professional player. Therefore, for an average player, or club player, with interests beyond the game itself I recomend the book. Very interesting!

Chess gets a hold of some people, like a virus or a drug, writes Robert Desjarlais in this absorbing book. Drawing on his lifelong fascination with the game, Desjarlais guides readers into the world of twenty-first-century chess to help us understand its unique pleasures and challenges, and to advance a new anthropology of passion. Immersing us directly in chess's intricate culture, he interweaves small dramas, closely observed details, illuminating insights, colorful anecdotes, and unforgettable biographical sketches to elucidate the game and to reveal what goes on in the minds of experienced players when they face off over the board. Counterplay offers a compelling take on the intrigues of chess and shows how themes of play, beauty, competition, addiction, fanciful cognition, and intersubjective engagement shape the lives of those who take up this most captivating of games.

From Publishers Weekly Desjarlais probes the many uses and forms of chess, with extensive research in the U.S. and abroad. Drawing on interviews with dozens of players, authors, and teachers, as well as on online journals, and blogs, Desjarlais finds "a sense of the sacred" in chess rituals. He contrasts the slow pace of correspondence and e-mail chess with high-speed "blitz chess." The book is packed with player profiles and anecdotes, along with a look at the use of chess in education to develop cognitive skills. He also probes the philosophical and psychological aspects of chess, noting that during "intersubjective encounters" of conflicting wills and intentions, a player "finds he grasps something of another's life." He looks at the impact of computers on the game, such as "analysis engines" that calculate the strengths of different moves. Chess clubs have lost members to online games, the author finds, and, as in other areas of life, chess on the Internet is "increasingly removed from flesh-and-blood encounters." Desjarlais, a professor of anthropology at Sarah Lawrence, adds a glossary of chess terms to this informative and penetrating survey of the game today. (Mar. 7) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. The subject of chess boasts more books than any other game, but this one is special, crafted for the general reader as well as the aficionado. . . . Like the game itself, Counterplay is an enjoyable mental exercise.