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Introduction

The history of a single book can involve mystery, travel, even danger. Books that were created in the same place and at the same time, that formed part of one collection, or even were bound together in one volume, are often separated forever. For this reason, The University of Chicago is celebrating the acquisition of a manuscript of the *Le Roman de la Rose* (*The Romance of the Rose*) and its reunion with *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé* (*The Moralized Game of Chess*), a manuscript that has been in the Library's collection since 1931. The two manuscripts, which have been apart for 100 years, have been reunited as a result of good fortune and the generosity of donors who made the acquisition possible.

Each of these two popular medieval texts – one a courtly romance, the other a treatise on medieval society that uses the game of chess as its framework – was written and decorated in France, ca. 1365. They were bound together, perhaps soon after they were created, and stayed together for over 500 years. In 1907 they were disbound and sent their separate ways. By bringing them back together, The University of Chicago Library has made it possible for scholars to study the two manuscripts together to learn about their shared origin and production history. Both manuscripts will be made available to the worldwide community online, while students and faculty at The University of Chicago will experience first-hand the thrill of seeing and working with these magnificent manuscripts.

The acquisition of Le Roman de la Rose was made possible by gifts from the Visiting Committee to the Library, the University of Chicago Library Society, individual donors, the B. H. Breslauer Foundation; and funds from Library endowments.

Le Roman de la Rose (The Romance of the Rose)



Le Roman de la Rose

Le Roman de la Rose, begun by Guillaume de Lorris ca. 1230 and completed, in a different style, ca. 1270–80, by Jean de Meun, builds on the concept of courtly love found in the poetry of the troubadours. The authors create a complex allegory of the romance between the Lover and the Rose. In the quest to pick the Rose (to achieve the conquest of love), the flower and its attendants represent the Lady and her sentiments while being wooed.

In the first part of the poem, written by de Lorris, the Lover recounts his dream, ending with the winning of a kiss from the Lady. In the dream, the Lover discovers a walled garden and gains entrance thanks to a beautiful young woman. He meets Diversion and dancers who represent courtly values such as Beauty and Generosity. A tour of the garden brings him to a beautiful bed of roses by the Fountain of Love. Pierced by the arrows of the god of love, he sets out to pluck the rosebud that has overwhelmed his senses. Love explains to the Lover how he ought to conduct himself, and the conflicting emotions he will feel. With help from Warm Welcome, the Lover makes his way through the thicket of thorns and confronts Danger and his allies, Slander, Fear, and others. Aided by Friend, Honesty, Pity, and Venus, he succeeds in overcoming Chastity and obtaining his desire.

His bliss is short-lived, as the forces of resistance oppose him in the second part of the poem, written by de Meun. The Lover sets out on a renewed quest to conquer the heart of his love, whom Jealousy has imprisoned along with Warm Welcome. The long and arduous battle is interspersed with didactic lectures by such figures as Reason. False Appearance and Forced Abstinence trick and strangle Slander, thus entering the wall and freeing Courtesy and Generosity. The four confront the old woman guarding Warm Welcome, who advises on table manners and dress for young women and recommends that they not be faithful to only one man, as men are by nature untrustworthy. The Lover gains admittance to see Warm Welcome, but is confronted with Danger, Shame, and Fear who imprison Welcome ever more securely. Before those forces can conquer the Lover, he calls his army to assail the castle with the help of Venus (carnal love). Venus sets the castle on fire, causing Danger, Jealousy, and her companions to flee. The battle over, the Lover is able to complete his pilgrimage and at last pluck the rosebud.

Le Roman served as an influential compendium of advice for readers of its time and was the cause of the first literary “war,” which revolved partly around arguments on the role and dignity of women.

Le Roman de la Rose

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. *Le Roman de la Rose*. France, ca. 1365. 40 illuminations by the Master of Saint Voulst. University of Chicago Library MS 1380.

Le Jeu des échecs moralisé (The Moralized Game of Chess)



Le Jeu des échecs moralisé

Le Jeu des échecs moralisé (The Moralized Game of Chess) was written in Latin in the 13th century by Jacobus de Cessolis, an Italian Dominican friar. Cessolis took advantage of the opportunity to use a relatively new game, chess, to describe an ideal society through the medium of the chessboard. Written at a time of political instability, his work was read centuries later as a guide to proper behavior, both because of the readily understood nature of the metaphor and the references to biblical and classical literature that buttress the argument.

Each piece and its attributes is thoroughly described; for example, if the Knight can move in front of a Pawn it is because the role and responsibility of the Knight is to protect the commoner – who in turn serves the Knight. Morality is prescribed: the King who leaves his wife for another acts against nature; the Queen must be chaste, docile, and concerned with the raising of her sons; the peasant should respect the laws and serve the lord. Each of the eight Pawns stands for a group of people, such as innkeepers or doctors and apothecaries. An intertwined society of mutual obligation is neatly laid out, as Cessolis says, “talents are distributed so that no one suffices by himself, but only has value in his relationships with others.”

With the focus on societal behavior rather than on the rules of the game, it would be nearly impossible to learn to play the game of chess from this text, but it is clear that the rules of medieval chess are quite different from those in place today. The King, for example, was restricted in his movement to the first three rows of the board, as it is his duty to stay close to home and defend the country.

Le Jeu des échecs moralisé

Jacobus de Cessolis. *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé*. Anonymous compilation of translations by Jean Ferron and Jean de Vigny. France, ca. 1365. 13 illuminations by the Master of Saint Voul. University of Chicago MS 392.

The Making of the Manuscripts

The University of Chicago's manuscripts of *Le Roman de la Rose* and *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé* were produced ca. 1365, about 100 years before the invention of printing. By the 14th century, there was a well-developed book trade outside of monastic scriptoria, supplying Bibles, Books of Hours, or prayer books for private devotion, and other liturgical books; legal, medical, philosophical, and other texts for students and practitioners; and manuscripts of secular works. Professional trades had developed for each specialized component of manuscript production, including making ink and pigments; preparing parchment from animal skin; writing and decorating the text by scribes, illuminators, rubricators, gilders; and binders.

During the reign of Charles V of France (1364-1380), manuscript production flourished at the court. The king; his brothers, Philip, Duke of Burgundy, and John, Duke of Berry; and other members of the nobility commissioned translations into French and the creation of original works in French. Members of the court patronized workshops of scribes and artists in which manuscripts of religious and secular texts were written and illuminated. One of these artists, known as the Master of Saint Voulst, created the illuminations of The University of Chicago's manuscripts of *Le Roman de la Rose* and *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé*.

The physical and artistic similarities between the two manuscripts are stunning: they are the same size; each has 39 lines of text in two columns; and the miniatures and decorations are nearly interchangeable.



Le Roman de la Rose



Le Jeu des échecs moralisé

The History of the Chicago Manuscripts



Le Roman de la Rose

Provenance – or ownership history – is a crucial part of authenticating and studying an object. In the case of books and manuscripts, provenance is reconstructed from inscriptions and marginalia in the volume, together with external documentation such as estate inventories and auction and bookseller records.

The earliest indications of common ownership of *Le Roman de la Rose* and *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé* come from comments and names written in the manuscripts themselves. Appearing in various forms are the names of early 16th-century owners: Petro Gendron, Bertran Garnier and J. Gendron. The first external evidence for the fact that they were bound together appears in the catalogue of the sale of the library of Thomas Crofts, M.A., Chancellor of the Diocese of Peterborough, April-May 1782. The manuscripts are described as lot 8299.

Nearly two hundred years later, the manuscripts were purchased by Sir Sydney Cockerell, who wrote the following note in *Le Roman de la Rose*: “I bought this book at Sotheby’s. The name of the owner did not appear but Dr. Warner tells me that he was a Captain Douglas, and that he brought the book to show him at the British Museum. It was rebound for me by Miss Adams of Broadway in red pigskin. It had no cover when I bought it, March 16, 1907, lot 382.” Katharine Adams, a well-known bookbinder, gave the manuscripts identical treatment and signed each binding.

Cockerell sold his manuscripts over a lengthy period of time. When he sold *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé*, it was purchased for The University of Chicago with funds provided by Shirley Farr, an early donor to the University who was instrumental in building the Library’s manuscript collection. *Le Roman de la Rose* stayed in Cockerell’s collection until February 18, 1957, when it was sold to the bookseller Pierre Berès. The following year it was sold by Pierre Berès to Gérard de Berny. De Berny, a private collector, sold his library in 1958, but the catalogue of the sale does not list this manuscript. In 2000 it was purchased by Les Enluminures LTD from a private collector. Sandra Hindman, an alumnus of the University of Chicago who represented Les Enluminures, knew that The University of Chicago held *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé*, and thus the manuscript made the final leg of its journey to Chicago.