

Play in the Long Nineteenth Century

Conference Programme

17th January 2025 | University of Kent, Canterbury

Conference Chair

Sophie Thompson

Conference Committee

Marion Tempest Grant, Will Kitchen, Andie Lloyd,
Katie Maclean, Megan McInenrey
and Michelle Reynolds

With thanks to

Christopher Prior, Johanna Harrison-Oram, Timothy Gao,
Debbie Tyler, Matthew Roberts
and Sara Lyons

Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose, John Singer Sargent (1885-6)





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Romance, Revolution & Reform

Play in the Long Nineteenth Century

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17th January 2025 | University of Kent, Canterbury

9.00 Registration open

9.30 Welcome

In-person: KSR1 Online: [Teams Room 1](#)

9.45 **Panel 1: Play and the Body**

In-person: KSR1 Online: [Teams Room 1](#)

Heather Glenn (University of Chicago)

Visceral Play: Regression, Innovation, and Ethical Crises Inside the American Cadaver

Ralph Roberts (University of Kent)

Manly, Muscular, Mindless? The Relationship between Christianity and Physical Activity in the Middle Years of the Nineteenth Century

Anna Shane (University of Exeter)

'Affinity between the two things': the athletic body and the criminal body in E. W. Hornung's Raffles stories

Panel 2: Reading and Writing Play

In-person: KSR10 Online: [Teams Room 2](#)

Michele Brugnetti (Sapienza University of Rome and University of Silesia)

The Rhythm of Decadence and Desire, or: leisured reading in Arthur Symonds's *Jenny Lane*

Rebekah Cohen (University of Cambridge)

From rags to patent revivers: playing with the past in sketch-writing by Charles Dickens and Washington Irving

11.00 Panel 3: Play and Performance

In-person: KSR1 **Online:** [Teams Room 1](#)

Amélie Addison (Northumbria University)

'Playing' for your Life: Virtuosity, Hardship and Invisibility in the Lives and Deaths of Touring Performers

Victoria Roskams (University of Oxford)

Playing Chopin in Decadent Fiction

Henry Mason (Queen Mary University of London)

'Is there any news stirring?': Satire and Spectacle in J.R. Planché's *Success; or, A Hit if you Like it*

Panel 4: Play and Politics

In-person: KSR10 **Online:** [Teams Room 2](#)

Aditi Behl (IIT Bombay)

Linguistic Play and Cultural Politics: The Evolution of Insha's *Rani Ketki ki Kahan* in 19th-century North India

Christopher Blandford (University of Kent)

Playing with form: Robert Browning's political retreat into classical closet drama

Travis Seetoo (Brock University)

Glasstown: The Brontë's Imaginary World of Play, Power and Politics

12.00 Lunch

13.00 Panel 5: Play, Institutions and Society

In-person: KSR1 **Online:** [Teams Room 1](#)

Mary Clare Martin (University of Greenwich)

Play and religion in the long nineteenth century, 1789-1914

Rachael Bailey-Gibson (University of Leicester)

Theatre Within the Victorian Lunatic Asylum

Stephen Edwards (University of Southampton)

Culture and Play in the Philanthropy and Fiction of Walter Besant and Mary Ward

Panel 6: Playing Games

In-person: KSR10 **Online:** [Teams Room 2](#)

Zahra Kandeh Kar (University of Haute Alsace)

Wordsworth Playing Around with Childhood Plays in *The Prelude*

Gavin Davies (Independent)

The Birth of Britain's Proprietary Games: Codifying Play, 1759-1860

Soomin Hong (University of Sydney)

Gamification of war in Meiji Japan—in case of Sino-Japanese War Sugoroku

14.00 Panel 7: Spaces for Play

In-person: KSR1 **Online:** [Teams Room 1](#)

Jon Winder (University of Liverpool)

Public spaces for play in the long nineteenth century

Jacqueline Imrie (University of Stirling)

The Water Drinkers Register: The Recreational Reading of Visitors to Dunblane's Spa, 1813-1833

Xinrui Xu (Aalborg University and Shanghai University)

Translating Playground: The Localization of Playgrounds in China at the turn of the 20th Century

Panel 8: Play and Identity

In-person: KSR10 **Online:** [Teams Room 2](#)

Joshua Fagan (University of Washington)

H.G. Wells and the Playfulness of Victorian Travel

Oksana Volovodiuk (Central European University)

Leisure practices and masculinity in the Polish military units of the Napoleonic Army (1806-1814)

Catherine Freeman (Independent)

Girls' play and imposed identity in a late nineteenth century English industrial school

15.00 Tea & coffee break

15.30 Keynote: Dr Timothy Gao, University of Bristol

Messing Around with M. P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud*

In-person: KSR1 **Online:** [Teams Room 1](#)

16.45 Closing comments and Issue 7 launch

In-person: KSR1 **Online:** [Teams Room 1](#)

17.00 End

18.30 Conference dinner at the Parrot (Church Lane, St Radigunds Street, CT1 2AG).

Romance, Revolution and Reform, Issue 8

Call for Submissions:

Play in the Long Nineteenth Century


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Romance, Revolution & Reform

While the long nineteenth century is not immediately associated with playfulness, scholars recognise it as a period that revolutionised play. Games were ubiquitous, hundreds of dedicated recreational spaces (museums, playgrounds, parks) were established, and a new cult of leisure took root, reshaping both public and private life. Play was also central to Victorian and Edwardian ideals of childhood, laying the groundwork for modern conceptions of child development. The fluidity of play as a concept reflects its inherent contradictions and multiplicity of meanings.

In the seminal text on play studies, Johan Huizinga characterises the nineteenth century, with its rationalising tendencies, as "the end of play" (*Homo Ludens*, 1944). Others still have identified play as "a totalizing concept" which "pervades nineteenth-century literature and culture and forms the foundations of the modern self" (Matthew Kaiser, *The World in Play*, 2011). Structured or spontaneous, subversive or conformist, innate or transformative, play offers a mode of looking at the broader cultural and societal dynamics of the long nineteenth century as well as our own era.

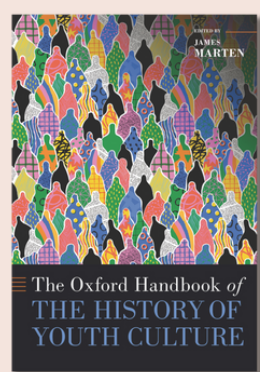
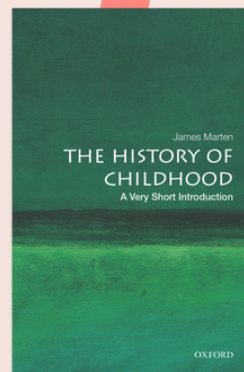
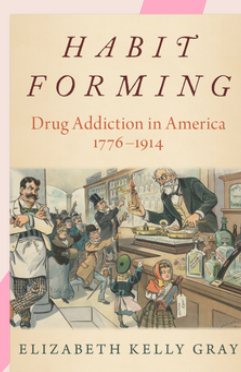
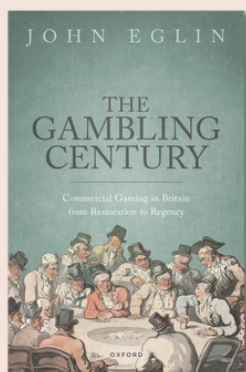
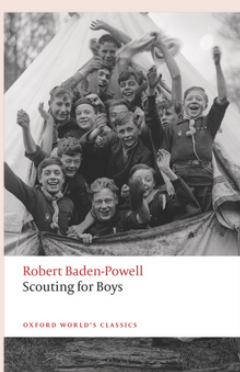
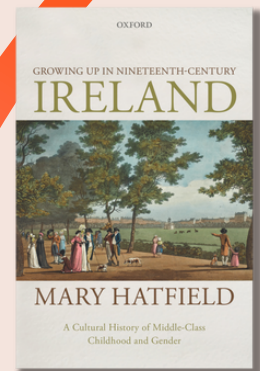
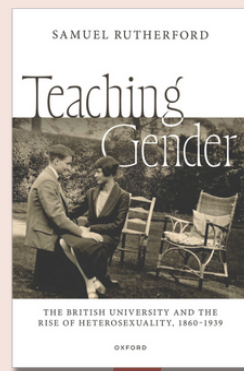
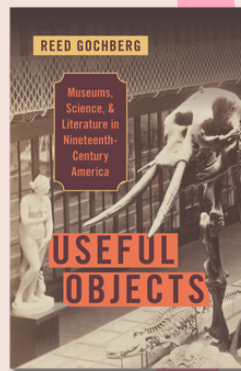
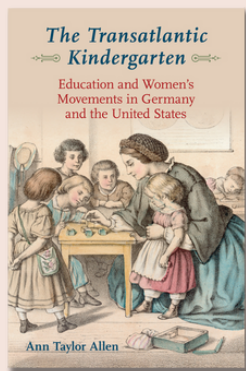
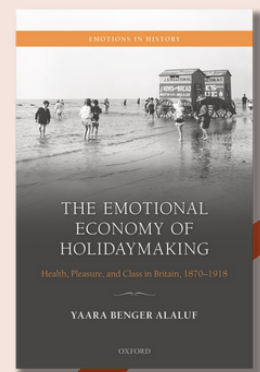
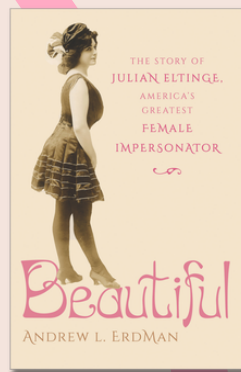
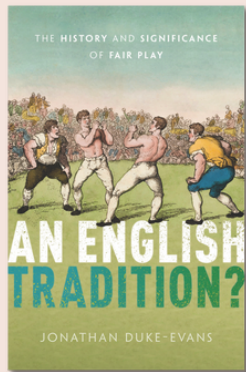
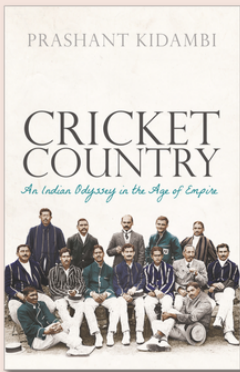
This issue of *Romance, Revolution and Reform* is looking for papers of 5,000–8,000 words on 'Play in the Long Nineteenth Century' (1789–1914) in all its forms and in a global context. We encourage broad interpretations of play and invite submissions that explore its fluid and multifaceted nature. We welcome playful and creative approaches. The journal encourages multi- and interdisciplinary papers from across the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities and invites contributions from those at any career stage, including PGRs and ECRs.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Leisure and recreation
- The politics of play; access to play
- Theatricality and spectacle
- Comedy
- Music
- Spaces for play: playgrounds, the nursery, parks, the music hall, the seaside, etc.
- Education and play; child development
- Public/private pleasure
- Play and sexuality
- The commodification of play
- Literary playfulness; the aesthetics of play
- Toys and games: board games, gambling, imaginative games, sport, etc.
- Decadence; hedonism

The closing date for submissions is **midnight on Friday 18th April**. Papers should be submitted to **rrr@soton.ac.uk**. Early expressions of interest are welcomed.

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