

Introduction

From Snapdragon to Three-Card Loo: Rediscovering Nineteenth-Century Games

ANN R. HAWKINS, MILES A. KIMBALL,
ERIN N. BISTLINE, ALLISON WHITNEY,
AND CATHERINE S. BLACKWELL

They met for the sake of eating, drinking, and laughing together, playing at cards, or consequences, or any other game that was sufficiently noisy.

—Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*¹

Readers of nineteenth-century literature and letters—or twenty-first-century Regency romance²—encounter a world filled with games. Consider Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden*, where the progress of a game of whist is described with a rhetoric reminiscent of the *Iliad*:

With solemn energy do they watch the shuffled pack, and, all-expectant, eye the coming trump. With what anxious nicety do they arrange their cards, jealous of each other’s eyes! [. . .] Now thrice this has been done, thrice has constant fortune favored the brace of prebendaries, ere the arch deacon rouses himself to the battle; but at the fourth assault he pins to the earth a prostrate king, laying low his crown and sceptre, bushy beard, and lowering brow, with a poor deuce. (51)

Or consider Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, where card games reveal character and deepen situation.³ Lady Catherine De Bourgh prefers the complicated strategies of *quadrille*, while her daughter Anne plays the less rigorous *cassino* (Austen, *Pride* 172; Hoyle).⁴ Mrs. Bennet has a "rapacity for whis[t]," while Lydia Bennet loves the luck involved in "a noisy game of lottery tickets" (Austen, *Pride* 350, 76). Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley "both like Vingt-Un better than Commerce," while neither Elizabeth Bennet nor Mr. Darcy has a fondness for cards (Austen, *Pride* 25).⁵ Austen's letters to her sister Cassandra mention a dozen or more games in passing, including cribbage, brag, speculation, whist, billiards, charades, "bilbocatch, [. . .] spillikins, paper ships, riddles, conundrums, and cards" (150). Such "amusements," as Austen calls this range of games, were as familiar to her contemporaries as *Monopoly* or *Go Fish* are to us. But, as we look at Austen's world, we find a wonderland of unfamiliar games. *Snapdragon*—where players thrust their fingers into a low bowl of flaming brandy to capture raisins. *Hot cockles*—where a blindfolded player knelt, face in another player's lap, hands behind the back, and guessed who struck them. *Bullet pudding*—where a bullet or marble sat on top of a pile of flour and players sliced the flour, then, with only their lips, retrieved the marble from wherever it fell ("Charades").

This collection takes as its territory that unfamiliar wonderland. We focus on games in nineteenth-century transatlantic culture, examining the games themselves as they appeared in popular magazines, engravings, and art of the period and demonstrating the ways in which games reflect, permeate, and influence culture. While some essays might include criticism of specific literary texts, that is not our primary purpose. Instead, we hope to open up the field of nineteenth-century games for further study. For the nineteenth-century scholar relatively new to the study of games, we survey the importance of games both historically and for our present moment. And for the scholar of games, we overview the ways the historical record shows that nineteenth-century people used the terms *games*, *sport*, and *play*. Finally, as is traditional for publications of the sort, we summarize in this chapter the contributions of our essayists whose work follows.

Playing Games

Playing games is as old as human history itself and as new as the game of the week in the Apple app store. Archaeological excavations routinely

find games or depictions of games included in burial sites. Ancient Egyptian tombs have included a variety of such pastimes from guessing games, to board and ball games, to representations of sports such as boxing and wrestling; and many of these games are still played in some form across the world (Brewster 27).⁶ Game courts (such as those of the Maya and Aztecs) and game boards carved into stone (from Thebes to Moscenice, Croatia, to an ancient carving of “Hounds and Jackals” in Gobustan, Azerbaijan) all testify to the human interest in playing together (Gurevich). Mencius, Herodotus, Plato, Ovid, and Tacitus all record this passion, describing games and game play in their works. Even Shakespeare records the importance of games: in *Henry V*, the French Dauphin sends Hal a “tun” of tennis balls; and in *King Lear*, Kent calls an angry servant a “base football player,” accusing the servant of playing an illegal game (1.2.255; 1.4.85).

More recent history (and scholarship) has focused on video games, dating at least to their popular advent in the 1970s and 1980s—from *Pong* to *Donkey Kong*, from *Oregon Trail* to *Zork*, from *Ms. Pac-Man* to *Super Mario Brothers*. Simply mentioning these titles today fosters nostalgia from those of a certain age, as evidenced by the tone of the 2015 IEEE Historic Gaming Timeline, which “invit[ed]” users “to get gaming nostalgic by exploring and engaging with our homage to console gaming history!”⁷ It is by now a truism that the gaming industry has eclipsed the film, television, and music industries in terms of its sheer presence and economic impact in most American household. According to the Entertainment Software Association’s 2020 demographic survey, “three quarters of all U.S. households have at least one person who plays video games, and 64 percent of U.S. adults and 70 percent of those under 18 regularly play video games,” including 41 percent of all women (“2020” 3, 5). Moreover, Americans spent a total of \$35.4 billion on gaming in 2019, underscoring this pastime’s priority in many household budgets (“U.S. Video” 4).

Such investment has spurred both technological advances (enabling players to adopt play roles in increasingly lifelike and diverse scenarios) and broad expansion of the sorts of topics suitable for game play, leading to controversy about the role of games in society and private life. While the growing graphic realism of “first-person” games—such as “shooter,” “fight,” and “combat” genres—have caused concern, that same technology has also allowed players with disabilities—who number some “42 million”—to experience virtual professional athleticism (“2020” 4). Such “first-person” games blur the lines between “games” and “sports”—a trend

that echoes the nineteenth century's own broad definitions—and many have developed into competitive and lucrative spectator sports involving leagues, televised tournaments, and betting lines. While gamers can be personally isolated from one another, their play can be strongly communal, with team-based multimedia communication: 65 percent report playing 6.6 hours playing online with others and 4.3 hours playing in person (“2020” 6). Teachers have gamified the classroom at every level, and more than half of parents play video games with their children at least weekly, making gaming a social experience that most parents feel is a “good opportunity to socialize with their children” (“2020” 13). Finally, the growth in video games has also led to cross-media pollination, as moviemakers have created motion pictures based on games. Examples include *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* and *Prince of Persia*, both of which led to movie spin-offs while also echoing such earlier cinematic productions as *She* (1935), *Beau Geste* (1939), and *Gunga Din* (1939). These games thus connect video gaming in the twenty-first century with the colonialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Despite video games' market dominance, board, card, and dice games have remained a staple in many modern households. And the board game market, which topped 9.6 billion dollars in sales in 2016, was expected to reach “more than 12 billion by 2023” (“\$12”).⁸ While *Clue* (or *Cluedo*) and *Yahtzee* are more familiar to us than such nineteenth-century titles as *The Mansion of Happiness* or *Game of the District Messenger Boy*, many family game nights and informal get-togethers still feature low-tech amusements. And groups still gather to play communal games, whether outside of downtown store fronts, at the local diner or bar, or in board game parlors. People gather to play games such as checkers or dominoes, or older games like *Monopoly*; games developed in parallel with the video-game age, such as Gary Gygax's popular *Dungeons & Dragons* series; and newer games, such as *Settlers of Catan*. Card-trading games such as *Pokémon* have helped children practice not only basic arithmetic, but important social skills (its app version in *Pokémon Go* fosters physical activity). Building on this burgeoning interest, International Table-top Day, founded in 2012, provides a day worldwide for groups to build community and play board games.

Seeing a way to use games to generate foot traffic, museums have frequently included board games in their programming. We saw this development, for example, from 2013 at the Monterey County Youth Museum in California, 2016 at the Cleveland Museum of Art, and

2017 (and following) at the Rubin Museum in New York City (“Fun”; “Then”; “Board”). From family game nights, museums moved to other population segments. The 2020 Grand Rapids Public Museum’s LaughFest Game Night allowed players-of-age to sample local wines and beers, and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences virtual Adult Nights added a Game Night lecture series with interactive gaming (“LaughFest”; “Adult”). Whether for children or adults, these popular programs have become regular features of museum programming, such as the Amon Carter Museum of Art’s Game Night in Fort Worth, Texas (“Game”). As part of this trend, some museums have even opened up their collections for play: the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer in Grand Island, Nebraska, for example, from 2017 to 2019, allowed patrons to play dozens of historic games (“Special”).⁹

As museums use game play to draw in patrons, those with substantial collections of historic games have built exhibitions around them. One of the oldest of these collections—and exhibitions—was associated with the University of Waterloo, which still hosts the Elliot Avedon Virtual Museum of Games, whose robust collection of online exhibitions includes a section of scholarly papers on games from various countries.¹⁰ The San Francisco Museum hosted the 2012–13 exhibition *Let’s Play: 100 Years of Board Games* which examined mass-produced games from the 1860s, 14 of which are still featured on their website. The Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood’s 2016–17 touring exhibition *Game Plan: Board Games Rediscovered*, highlighted 100 game objects from around the world, with an emphasis on those which were beautifully designed and produced.¹¹ Most recently, the British Museum’s 2019 exhibition “Playing with Money: Currency and Games,” curated by Robert Bracey, examined how modern board games shape players’ understanding of money and economics (Pierre). Even the Louvre provides a virtual selection of its games (“Selected”).¹²

Perhaps the best known board-game collection is the New York Historical Society Museum and Library’s Liman Collection—an archive of more than 500 items donated by Arthur and Ellen Liman. The Liman Collection provides important access to nineteenth- and twentieth-century board games. As a regular rotating exhibition, *The Games We Played: American Board and Table Games* focuses on a different set of games every four months. Objects from the Liman Collection have appeared in a number of catalogues, including Marisa Kayyem and Paul Sternberger’s 1991 *American Board and Table Games of the Nineteenth Century from*

the *Liman Collection*, Margaret Hofer and Kenneth Jackson's 2003 *The Games We Played: The Golden Age of Board and Table Games*, and Ellen Liman's 2017 *Georgian and Victorian Board Games: The Liman Collection*. The Liman catalogues join earlier descriptive collections based in the nineteenth century, specifically including Olivia Bristol's 1995 *Victorian Board Games* and 1996 *Six Edwardian and Victorian Board Games* and Jill Shefrin's 1997 *Ingenious Contrivances: Table Games and Puzzles for Children*, an exhibition from the Toronto Public Library's Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books.

And so here we are: we make electronic games central to our social lives, assisted by a massive video game industry, and we look back into the (mostly recent) past with an unavoidable air of nostalgia, prompting (or reinforcing) our renewed interest in games of the past, such as board games. This combination is so potent that several universities now offer the full range of academic programs (from baccalaureate to doctoral) in the field. Little wonder, then, that scholars have grown interested in the broader history of games in human culture. These factors tend to drive the cycle of scholarship: as interest builds, and resources become more publicly available, research becomes increasingly possible, thus increasing awareness and making resources available, and so on). UPenn's CFP list routinely includes calls for papers and presentations on games (though most focus on video games and online culture). Academia.edu, which allows scholars to self-archive their work, shows researchers tagging their work with at least 23 headings having to do with games, including history of games, games in pedagogy, and video games. Of the self-archived published articles, conference presentations and other works in progress, we find more than 140 articles on board games. This kind of sociological evidence shows that our contemporary interests in games is growing.

Yet, despite this expanding interest in games, gaming history, and gaming culture, *nineteenth-century* games haven't received substantial scholarly attention.¹³ This is despite the consistent popularity of games based in the nineteenth century, such as classic games like *Oregon Trail*, *The Yukon Trail*, and *Gold Rush!* which pit players against the landscape and dangers of nineteenth-century U.S. westward migration, or those that reflect an ongoing interest in nineteenth-century transatlantic history and literature, including the history-infused *Victoria: an Empire Under the Sun* or *Victoria II* but also the literature-oriented *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, or the many Sherlock Holmes-inspired games.

It's not that interest in the nineteenth century has waned; but it's possible that the corresponding scholarship on games has not kept up with the scholarship of other aspects of Romantic and Victorian culture, or that nobody has been keeping track as well as we do with other fields of scholarship. It is remarkably difficult even to locate research on nineteenth-century games. A perusal of the *Modern Language Association's International Bibliography (MLA-IB)* yields some interesting data. Of the 24 published works in English tagged by *nineteenth-century* and *games* in the *MLA-IB*, two focus on literary texts as games, while 13 (almost 60 percent of the remainder) focus on sports and sporting life (baseball, cricket, lacrosse, highland games, archery, shooting, fox hunting, horse racing, even bull- and cockfighting). The remaining nine divide across toys (four, including dolls, blocks, etc.); specific games in literature and culture (four, including chess); and sewing (one). *Board games* more broadly generates only 94 articles (two from Ann R. Hawkins and Erin N. Bistline's 2017 special issue of the *CEA Critic* on games and gaming). *Games and nineteenth-century literature* generates only five results; *games and nineteenth-century culture*, four; and *board games and nineteenth-century literature*, only one. In Worldcat, *board games* combined with both *nineteenth-century* and *Great Britain* yields only 12 records for historical games: two for reproductions of games, two catalogues of exhibitions, three versions of Hoyle's instructional books, and one critical work, Megan Norcia's 2019 *Gaming Empire in Children's British Board Games, 1836–1860*, an extension of her article in this collection. Using the Library of Congress subject heading *Games—Social Aspects—United States—History—19th Century* yields only three works on baseball, one on the bicycle, and Doug Guerra's 2018 *Slantwise Moves: Games, Literature and Social Invention in Nineteenth-Century America*, which discusses commercially produced games to understand the cultural intertextuality of Nathaniel Hawthorne's, Herman Melville's, and Walt Whitman's literary texts.

The field for studies of sport is generally more robust than the scholarship of parlor games. But even so, the combined Library of Congress search heading *Sports—Great Britain—History—Nineteenth-century* garners fewer than 25 titles, including two bibliographies. Most allied to our interest are those studies which base their examinations in contemporary literature and periodicals. The first group of studies offer more historical than literary arguments. Mike Huggins's 2004 *The Victorians and Sport* examines the complex history of sport in Victorian society, tracing the

changing relationship people had with sport during the time and connects those changes to the massive social upheavals occurring simultaneously. Adrian Harvey's 2004 *The Beginnings of a Commercial Sporting Culture in Britain, 1793–1850* examines the shifting approach to sports in Britain, using detailed periodical and quantitative research to make arguments about professional sports and changing our ideas about commercialized sports. Nancy Fix Anderson's 2010 *The Sporting Life: Victorian Sports and Games* intertwines discussions of sport with larger social issues, providing along the way fascinating historical details and insights into the increasing importance of sport in the Victorian era. The second set situate their studies more in literary texts. Kathleen Blake's 1975 *Play, Games, and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll* offers a close reading of Lewis's Alice books and his lesser-known work. Michael Oriard's 1991 *Sporting with the Gods: The Rhetoric of Play and Game in American Culture* ambitiously approaches a study of play and game, through literature, history and theory. Malcolm Cormack's 2007 *Country Pursuits: British, American, and French Sporting Art from the Mellon Collections in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* focuses on the art of sport, and its sections—"Animals, Horse racing, Foxhunting and Coursing, Shooting and Fishing, Coaching and Carriages, and Other Country Pastimes"—offer a fascinating overview of sporting as the nineteenth-century viewer would have seen it (97). Finally, Sharon Harrow's 2015 edited collection *British Sporting Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century* shares many of our own aims, though focusing on sports in the eighteenth century. Her collection covers a breadth of topics—sport overall, clothes, tennis, archery, horse culture, swimming, and boxing—from a variety of theoretical standpoints.

Even with the recent growth of study on nineteenth-century sport, research on nineteenth-century games remains still in its infancy. Other literary and historical periods generated considerable amounts of scholarship, *MLA-IB* recording 291 articles and books on medieval games; 124 for renaissance; 85 for eighteenth-century; and 112 for twentieth-century. Studies of medieval and renaissance games can find homes in two publishers's series: University of Amsterdam's *Cultures of Play, 1300–1700* and the Medieval Institute Publications's *Ludic Cultures 1100–1700*. And of course there is a robust field of book series and journals examining digital game studies. But, clearly, the contemporary interest in games has not yet fostered adequate basic research on the nature and significance of nineteenth-century games and gaming.

Our collection steps into this gap in nineteenth-century and games scholarship, exploring the role of games and play in nineteenth-century society in the United Kingdom and the United States. But before we lay out the terrain we undertake to traverse, we should point out the terrain we leave to others to explore. We value works that theorize the nature of games, of play, of the ludic nature of human experience, of literary texts as games—but that is not our focus. Instead, we examine specific moments in the historic record, drawing on descriptions of games and gaming in contemporary periodicals, engravings, and other ephemera as well as in the physical evidence of the games themselves. Our approach draws on the methods of bibliography, book history, and textual criticism in considering specific games and their historical, cultural, literary, and social contexts.

Our focus on the nineteenth-century transatlantic culture thus recognizes the roots of current games and gaming practices in the narratives of print culture, particularly the production of printed ephemera, and we suggest that it participates as fully in the formation of transatlantic culture as scholars have long suggested is the case with cultures of print. After all, most board games were printed; Milton Bradley, the well-known producer of board games, began as a maker and seller of lithographic prints. The nineteenth century's visual and print technologies allowed people to visualize play in new ways—both to render them as part of scientific discourse and to discover new levels of aesthetic features in the playing body. Meanwhile, developments in print culture allowed for ever greater distribution and ownership of play materials—for those who could afford them.

Games and the Nineteenth-Century Consumer

Therefore, it is not only the game and the players that we must attend to, but the entire culture of new middle-class consumers flexing their purchasing power in order to amuse themselves in socially appropriate ways, as well as the emerging industry that produced games for a rapidly growing gaming culture. To build an authentic sense of the role of games in everyday life, we must track their economic cost and contemporary value to the people who bought and played them. Therefore, we focus on ephemera to reveal the importance of games in everyday British and

American lives. Games and play were integral to nineteenth-century culture in Britain and the United States, building on their historical antecedents, yet leaving a dynamic inheritance to games in later centuries, even today. Briefly, technological advances during the nineteenth century allowed for easier and cheaper manufacturing and distribution of board games and books about games, while the changing economic conditions created a larger market for games as well as more time in which to play them. These changing conditions not only made games more profitable, but they also increased the influence of games on many facets of culture.

Defining Games

So, what resources would a nineteenth-century game player need to have in order to play games? To answer this question, we must first address another: What do we mean—and more importantly, what did their original audiences mean—by “games” and associated terms such as games, sport, and play, which were related in ways that might seem alien to twenty-first-century scholars? To get a sense of the nineteenth century’s definitions of and distinctions between these terms, we examined Gale’s *Nineteenth-Century Collections Online* (NCCO) as well as the nineteenth-century holdings of the *British Newspaper Archive* (BNA), paying close attention to the use of the word *game* in its various forms.¹⁴ We reviewed thousands of page images, collecting evidence for how the nineteenth-century authors published in those periodicals or the nineteenth-century advertiser hawking books, games, and other wares might have used the terms. Though it’s not easy to trace references to particular games at any given moment or across the century, we did find references to a variety of games. Many, such as cricket, chess, billiards, darts, and cribbage, are familiar to us, at least by name. Others are less so, like “three-card loo.”

But we also discovered that *games* as a term was both more broad and more narrow than we find it today. In the 1849 *Social Sports; or Holiday Amusements*, the narrative categorizes as “sports,” a range of activities from hoops, jumping rope, cup and ball to enigmas, charades, and see-saw. Likewise, though periodicals commonly used the word *game* in ways that seem familiar to us, they also used that word with enough slippage that it seems useful to notice its nineteenth-century breadth. In the July 1821 *La Belle Assemblée*, for example, an English antiquarian

traces the range of “English sports and amusements” from 1698 to 1759 (“Recollections” 7–9). In that essay the author lumps together sport, games, play, and the arts somewhat willy-nilly, discussing (in this order) chess, dice, ball, trundling the hoop, riding, horse races, hunting, hawking, singing, archery, racing, leaping, throwing stones, baiting bulls and bears, cockfighting, spear throwing at a shield in the Thames to win a prize (and avoid dunking), Quintain (hitting a bag of sand attached to a spindle with a spear while on horseback), tournaments, keeping fools, leaping on and off of horses as at Astley’s, masquerading in the streets, wrestling, back-sword and football, boxing, singing ballads, going to the theater, and masked balls. It’s a dizzying level of granulation, making it easy to see why more scholarship hasn’t yet been attempted. But it also shows that the nineteenth century’s view of *games* wasn’t distinct from other forms of what most today might call *play* or *physical sport*.

Below, we order our discussion of the word *game* and its meanings, roughly according to our perception (given our search results) of how frequently forms of that word appear in *BNA* periodicals. Though this is a problematic measure, it is the only one we have. We also focus our discussion below on the early years of the nineteenth century, leaving it to our contributors to draw the conversation through the rest of the century.

To Hunt Game: Sports in Field and Pasture

Most frequently in the periodicals, *game* refers to animal stock, whether cultivated through animal husbandry or living wild on the property, and the sports—hunting, fishing, fox-chase—associated with it. Owning game, hunting game, consuming game, all are a function of property ownership, making this *game* the realm of the wealthy and aristocratic male. The person who owns the land is understood to also own the wildlife on it, making roaming animals like deer and rabbits often contested property. This use of *game* appears frequently: in articles on game laws, various field sports, and animal husbandry; in notices indicating which estates are open or closed to hunting or fishing; and as the century progresses, in articles and notices protesting the inhumane treatment of such animals. This *game* is the territory of wealthy men, as Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme’s advertisement addressed “To Sportsmen” shows¹⁵ (1e). Taking up two-thirds of a newspaper column, the advertisement appeared multiple

times in multiple newspapers across England and Scotland. Both the size of the advertisement and its widespread use suggest that its publishers expected the books to perform well in terms of sales. The first section of the advertisement describes five books on sport and animal husbandry, devoting between five and eight lines to each; the second section describes several volumes on game laws. The five sporting books are well produced, lavishly illustrated, and expensive:

- William Barker Daniel's new three-volume edition of *Rural Sports*, boasting seventy-three fine engravings by John Scott, Edwin Landseer, John Tompkins and others, is priced at £7 17s 6d in quarto, and £5 5s in octavo.
- William Taplin's two-volume *The Sportsman's Cabinet; or, a correct Delineation of the various Dogs used in the Sports of the Field, including the Canine Race in general* published under the pseudonym "A Veteran Sportsman" includes engravings of each dog breed, taken from original paintings by Philip Reinagle and engraved by John Scott, and accompanied by "beautiful vignettes engraved on wood." In quarto, Taplin's *Cabinet* costs £7 7s.
- Richard Badham Thornhill's one-volume *The Shooting Directory* is available with "elegant engravings by Medland" for £1 11s 6d and with "the plates coloured after life," for £3 3s.
- Delabere Blaine's two-volume large-octavo *The Outlines of the Veterinary Art, or the Principles of Medicine, as applied to a knowledge of the structure, functions, and economy of the Horse, the Ox, the Sheep, and the Dog; and to a more scientific and successful manner of treating their various diseases* capitalizes on Blaine's status as a "professor of animal medicine," includes anatomical plates and costs £1 5s.
- An Amateur Sportsman's one-volume *Sporting Anecdotes, original and select; including Characteristic Sketches of eminent Persons who have appeared on the Turf*, published under the pseudonym is illustrated with "several engravings." An octavo, the book costs 10s 6d. ("To Sportsmen" 1e)

The Cost of Games

So much for the definitions, how much did these things cost?

Thirty-six billion dollars—or 36,000 million—seems an unimaginably large number for most twenty-first-century people to contemplate, except to recognize that a \$36 billion annual outlay means that many Americans spend lavishly on video games and equipment—about \$108 for each adult per year. Of course, the top-down statistical data provided today by nations, trade agencies, importers, and exporters was not for the most part available either during the nineteenth century or after; we simply don't have accurate categorical data about trade until the early twentieth century. However, we can make some educated guesses to determine what monetary resources were needed to enjoy games in the nineteenth century. We can use data from advertisements to find the raw costs of games, but we need to know whether a game costing six shillings or a game-related book costing seven pounds was cheap or expensive and who could have afforded either or both. William St. Clair in his landmark study *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* offers a useful method for determining what was affordable and wasn't, based on pay rates. Using the British government's 1816 pension and half-pay rates, St. Clair predicts that a "reasonable but not extravagant income for members of the upper- or upper-middle classes" would be 100 shillings (or £5) per week (194). For "younger sons, clergymen, officers, doctors, merchants, widowed ladies on annuities, journalists, university students," and others in the lower-middle classes, St. Clair estimates weekly incomes between 100 shillings (or £5) and 50 shillings (or £2 10s) (195). After 1810, printers—among the highest-paid skilled workers—earned around 36 shillings a week (or, £1 16s); carpenters earned 25 shillings (or, £1 5s); and law clerks around 10 1/2 shillings (St. Clair 195–96). For the rest of the "employed population"—"journeymen, tradesmen, farm workers, factory worker, domestic servants, and others"—"only a few earned as much as ten shillings a week" (St. Clair 196).

What could nineteenth-century people have purchased with these earnings? St. Clair converts the cost of any item into shillings, then estimates that cost as a percentage of a worker's weekly pay. The weekly four shillings a bookseller's apprentice earned could buy him a shared boarding-house bedroom, meals, and the "right to sit by the fire" (St. Clair 195). But the six-shilling "pint of wine served in a provincial hotel"

would have cost the maid who served it the “equivalent of three weeks’ wages,” and a “copy of [George Gordon, Lord Byron’s] *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage a Romaunt* would have cost six week’s income” (St. Clair 196). Admission to the English Opera House in 1823 cost “five shillings for a box, three for the pit, two for the gallery, and one shilling for the upper gallery” (St. Clair 368). An individual printed Shakespeare play cost half a shilling. By St. Clair’s calculations, the majority of the working population would have found most popular entertainments, including board games, out of reach. But we’ll examine the costs of games more below.

Prefaced to each of the advertisements—perhaps for ease of changing the list between newspapers—is a long list of those booksellers publishing these books. Given the hefty cost of the volumes and the variety of publishers named on the title pages, these are most likely members of a consortium sharing the cost of producing and distributing the books, not simply booksellers keeping the books in stock. Taken collectively, the advertisements placed across a range of regional papers from an 1806 *York Herald and Caledonian Mercury* to an 1807 issue of the *Bury and Norwich Post*, the consortium included publishers in at least eight cities, one each in London, Bury, Hadleigh, Ipswich, Woodbridge, and Witham; eight in Edinburgh alone; and an additional six sales partners in York and Doncaster. Clearly, the books—however expensive—appeared to be a good investment, offering a strong return.

But who could afford these volumes? And who would want them? To answer that, we use St. Clair’s 100-shillings-a-week gentleman. Daniel’s two-volume *Rural Sports* and Taplin’s one-volume *Sportsman’s Cabinet*, cost 157.5 and 147 shillings, respectively: either one would cost a bit more than and a bit less than a week-and-a-half’s income. Thornhill’s one-volume *The Shooting Directory*’s 31½ shillings costs only two day’s income, but if one chooses the colored illustrations, the price jumps to 63 shillings, almost a week’s wages. Blaine’s *Outlines of the Veterinary Art*, with anatomical plates, costs 25 shillings, somewhat reasonable if our gentleman is also to care for estate animals. The cheapest of the lot (but likely the smallest book), *Sporting Anecdotes* costs only a little more than a tenth of our gentleman’s weekly income: at that cost, a book is a manageable, if not a frequent, purchase. Clearly, St. Clair’s gentleman is not the intended purchaser of these books. Those who could afford the books on sport are most certainly landowners who would care about preserving their game. This likely audience explains why second section of the advertisement lists a series of books on game laws. But no one

outside the upper or upper-middle classes could hope to afford even that one. The law clerk dreaming of a future country estate would have to devote almost a full month's pay to buy *Sporting Anecdotes*, and the other four books would be far out of reach. Clearly, game, as in game and field sports, was a lucrative subject, garnering strong interest from those most able to purchase the books.

Given the interests of this market, publishers developed other products for the "sportsman" who owned an estate and the game on it. By 1804, a number of publishers kept in stock a "sporting or game book," fashioned "on the plan of a book kept at Chevely Hall by the Duke of Rutland" ("This" 4b). Such a book by the help of "printed tables" "enables the lover of Field Sports to keep a daily Register of Sporting Occurrences; an accurate account of Game; the different kinds; when and where killed, where sent, (as presents), and various other particulars" (York). The 1808 version of this "sporting annal" allowed the purchaser to keep five years of records and was priced according to the book's size and other amenities, at seven shillings; ten shillings and six pence; fourteen shillings; twenty-one shillings; or forty-two shillings ("This"). Given the buying power of this market segment, it's no wonder that their interests appear robustly in every newspaper, if not on every page.

To Play Sports: Rustic and Ancient Games

Game is also used to designate athletic events or sports, though that context was narrower in the nineteenth century than it is for us. These sort of games fall broadly into several (sometimes overlapping) categories:

- ancient games such as the "Olympic, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian" games;¹⁶
- games played in rustic settings; and
- what we would call sporting events.¹⁷

Discussions of ancient games in periodicals is often tied to considerations of classical authors, such as Pindar. Rustic games are typically mentioned in articles extracted from or indebted to Joseph Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*. Boasting 21 editions between 1801 and 1903, Strutt's book considers the full range of "rural and domestic recreations,"

including “[m]ay-games, mummeries, pageants, processions, and pompous spectacles, from the earliest period to the present time,” and his books were often copiously illustrated with engravings from ancient paintings depicting these events (title-page). The third category—references to sporting events—should be more robust, as Harvey argues that such events in England took place every day of the week. But our examination focuses on how the periodicals use the word *sports* or *sport* in general contexts, while Harvey counted references to specific sports (boxing, fox hunting, bear-baiting). A subset of the books on sporting events includes discussions of games played in various educational contexts as with the 1810 anonymously authored *A book of games, or A history of juvenile sports, practised at a considerable academy near London*. These juvenile games became, by mid-century, less play and more a form of physical and moral training, encouraged by the muscular Christianity movement. By 1867, *The Young Englishman’s Journal* provided descriptions and illustrations of a variety of games intended to “develop the muscular system, and otherwise promote health, whilst they afford amusement to our young friends” (“British” 421). The games themselves emphasize physical ability: in *Saddle my Nag*, one team plays the role of the nag and the other team piles on top to see how many bodies the ‘nag’ can hold; in *Beating the Bear* (or “bast[ing]” as in the *Boy’s Own Book*), a boy (the bear) is led about by a partner (his master) and attempts to tag another boy in order to make him the bear (“British” 421; Williams 32). The other boys may elude the bear by beating him with knotted handkerchiefs (the article cautions that the handkerchiefs should not contain “stones or hard substances” lest the bear be “seriously hurt” (“British” 421).

To Game and Gamble in the Hell and the Drawing Room

Both our prior senses of game tend to fall the province of men. Even Strutt’s rural amusements, such as Morris dancing, focus on the activities of men, though in communal contexts. But with card and other gambling games (whether played for money or not), *gaming* cuts across gender and social class. At the same time, card games most often associated with locations in which women could play them—like whist—tend to be presented as more innocent in the periodicals of the time. Consider, for example, this tartly amusing dialogue from “A Game of Skill,” published in the 1893 *Bristol Magpie*:

“I do wish you wouldn’t gamble, Harry, dear.”

“I don’t, I only play Whist, my darling, and that is a game of skill.”

“I am sure it isn’t. Not as you play it, anyhow”

The distinction here between games of skill and games of chance is an important one, for games of chance played for money were often illegal. On 11 November 1748, for example, *The Derby Mercury* records the Lord Mayor of Ireland’s actions in enforcing the anti-gaming laws: he “burnt a Rowley-powley table, and two shuffle-boards on Cork-hill” and “intended to suppress the billiard-tables, and other gaming diversions” (“Ireland” 2c). While one could play games of chance, one was forbidden to bet or wager on them, and across the nineteenth century, the periodicals frequently recount the often dire consequences of playing forbidden games of chance for money.

But to play games of skill well requires a thorough knowledge of the rules. And publishers’ advertisements of the period show a robust trade associated with gaming manuals. The most famous are those of Edmond Hoyle (1672–1769), whose 1740 *Short Treatise on the Game of Back-gammon* was followed by his 1744 *Short Treatise on the Game of Quadrille*, and his more substantial 1745 *The Polite Gamester, containing short treatises on the game of whist, quadrille, backgammon, piquet, and chess. Together with [. . .] the game of whist*. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hoyle appears in as many permutations as publishers can hope to sell, and by 1800 (as we mentioned before) that involves a dramatic expansion of games. Here are some examples from a single advertisement, published in multiple newspapers, in order of price point:

- For three shillings, *Hoyle’s Games Improved and selected as a Companion to the Card Table*, consisting of practical treatises on twenty-two Fashionable Games, wherein are comprised calculations for betting upon equal or advantageous terms, in 18mo, “sewed in a case like an Almanack, with gilt edges.”
- For two shillings, *Hoyle’s Game of Chess, now first including his Chess Lectures, and some selections from other Amateurs*, “in extra boards,” which, according to John Carter, appears to signal a cloth binding.

- For six pence, sewed, *Hoyle's Treatise on Backgammon, as improved and corrected by Charles Jones, Esq.*
- For one shilling, *Introduction to Payne's Games of Draughts, with additions, extracted from Hoyle's Games, improved by Charles Jones, Esq.* ([Advertisement] 2e).

Clearly this coalition of nineteen London and five Manchester publishers wished to produce a Hoyle for every audience. That audience, at least in this advertisement, seems to be decidedly aristocratic: for the advertisers place at the head a description of the newest (fourth) edition of Longmate's *Pocket Peerage, of Great Britain and Ireland, continued to March 1808: containing an account of the Descent, Connections, Marriages, and Issue of every noble Family, with the Blazonry of their Arms*. Priced at 18s, Longmate's appeared in "two volumes, 12mo, printed on wove paper with fine ink, illustrated by above 1200 Arms, Crests, &c. recently engraved on Copper-plates" ([Advertisement] 2e). The juxtaposition of this book with the various Hoyles suggesting that the rule books were expected to find an audience among those who wished to have a pocket peerage as well.¹⁸

But Hoyle was not the only rule book. Across the nineteenth century, newspapers frequently announced publication of rule books for every game imaginable. In chess, for example, we find J. H. Sarratt's eighteen-shilling two-volume octavo *Treatise on the Game of Chess, containing a regular system of Attack and Defence*; or in billiards, E. White, Esq's 10s illustrated *A Practical Treatise on the Game of Billiards, with Calculations for Betting, Tables of Odds*. Some of the more interesting rule books also promise to help players avoid the unfair practices of professional players, as does Antony Pasquin's two-shilling and six pence *Treatise on the Game of Cribbage; shewing the Laws and Rules of the Game, as now played [. . .] with the best method of laying our your Cards, and exposing all the unfair Arts practised by Professional Players, or such men as are generally known by the appellation of BLACK LEGS*.

Games on Linen and Board

While games in the sense of sport, gaming (as in hunting), and gaming (as in gambling) were most often the province of men, board games were

frequently part of the territory of the nursery and the drawing room. An advertisement in 1805 *Derby Mercury* for Parke's Shew Room makes game's delegation to the terrain of women quite clear. Parke advertises a wide and varied stock in household items, tucking a "[g]reat variety of Fine and Common Toys, Maps, Games, Alphabets, and various diverting and instructive Toys, for the Improvement of Youth" neatly beneath the notices for pearl, amber, coral, and cornelian jewelry, tea urns, japanned trays, knife cases, writing desks, Tunbridge Ware, umbrellas and parasols, fans and combs, but above hair powder, pomatum, soap and perfumes (emphasis added; d4). Likewise, J. Harris, the London successor to Newbery, advertises children's books and Christmas games "for the instruction and amusement of young persons" ("Christmas!" 1c). His advertisement includes two types of board games: three whose purpose is largely entertainment, and three whose purpose is explicitly educational. The "entertaining" or "interesting" board games are the following:

- *The Panorama of London, or a Day's Journey round the Metropolis; being an entertaining and instructive Game, exhibiting fifty views of the exterior or the interior of the principal buildings in London, with suitable directions, and the apparatus for playing (price nine shillings including a case);*
- *Geographical Recreations, or A voyage round the Habitable World; an instructive game, consisting of one hundred and twenty representations of the manners and customs of the inhabitants of the different parts of the globe, accompanied with directions, a short system of geography, and an apparatus for playing; and*
- *The Jubilee!! An interesting game, intended to exhibit the remarkable events, from the accession of his majesty King George the third, to the 25th of October, 1809, when he entered into the fiftieth year of his reign, and which was celebrated by every class of his subjects as a day of Jubilee; the whole elegantly engraved from 150 drawings, made for the purpose accompanied with a book descriptive of them, rules and directions, and apparatus for playing (also nine shillings in a case). ("Christmas!" 1c)*

While these "entertaining" games might teach players about the habits and customs of peoples around the world or the reign of King George, they are clearly less educational than the three games produced under

the aegis of Mrs. Lovechild, a well-known children's author. Two of Lovechild's games—*A secret worth knowing* and *Friendly whispers for youth of both sexes*—involve play with a pack of “curious” cards (whatever *curious* means). Priced at one shilling each, these games are easily within the reach of well-to-do women, purchasing Christmas gifts with pin money. The third game, priced more expensively at six shillings, is a *Box of Grammatical amusement* includes a series of “sportive exercises” “intended to enable Ladies [. . .] to instil in the minds of youth the first rudiments of English grammar” ([Parke's] d4). The advertisement also includes two books by Lovechild—for two shillings, *The family miscellany; in prose and verse; a new and improved edition*, and for one shilling and six pence, the new and improved edition of *A Birth Day Present, or Nine Days Conversation between a Mother and her Daughter, on interesting subjects*. These books by Lovechild make the distinction between her games and the others in the advertisement clear.

The rest of Harris's advertised stock are children's books priced from one to five shillings. While most of the 21 books and games are anonymously authored, eight are explicitly identified with women (five with Mrs. Lovechild, and one each with Mrs. Dorset, Emma Hamilton, and Miss Lefanu), two more associated with a woman (Miss Sandham, whose name appears on the books' title pages), and only two with men (Mr. Roscoe and John Sabine). This suggests (as Stephanie Eckroth has discussed in her studies of the early-nineteenth-century novel's market) that, when signed, woman-authored books were more valued. But though Harris's advertisement is as long as Longmans's “To Sportsmen” and “Game Laws,” it packs in far more titles, each one garnering three typographic lines or fewer.

By mid-century, the explicit distinction between board and other games began to fade. In 1857, an advertisement in the *Worcester Herald* for Birley's “presents for the new year” lumps all types of games together: “race and steeple chase games, bagatelle, backgammon, & chess boards, chess and draught men,” “playing cards, conversation,” “Cribbage and Pope Joan boards” (“Merry” 3e).

Addressing the Knowledge Gap

Playing Games in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the United States considers the material and visual culture of both American and British games,