

For centuries sports have been used to mask or to uncover important social and political problems, and there is no better example of this than France during the nineteenth century, when it changed from monarchy to empire to republic. Prior to the French Revolution, sports and games were the exclusive domain of the nobility. The revolution, however, challenged the notion of noble privilege, and leisure activities began spreading to all levels of society. Games either evolved from Old Regime spectacles into bourgeois pastimes, such as hunting, or died out altogether, as did trictrac. During this period, sports and games became the symbolic cultural battlefield of an emerging modern state.

Playing at Monarchy looks at the ways sports and games (tennis, fencing, bullfighting, chess, trictrac, hunting, and the Olympics) are metaphorically used to defend and subvert, to praise and mock both class and political power structures in nineteenth-century France. Corry Cropper examines what shaped these games of the nineteenth-century and how they appeared as allegory in French literature (in the fiction of Balzac, Mérimée, and Flaubert), and in newspapers, historical studies, and even game manuals. Throughout, he shows how the representation of play in all types of literature

mirrors the most important social and political rifts in post-revolutionary France, while also serving as propaganda for competing political agendas.

Though its focus is on France, *Playing at Monarchy* hints at the way these nineteenth-century developments inform perceptions of sport even today.

CORRY CROPPER is an associate professor of French studies at Brigham Young University and the author of several articles published in *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, the *French Review*, and *French Literature Series*.