

Play's the Thing: Phenomenology and Play in Early Modern Literature, 1500-1800

University of California, Santa Barbara

Conference Date: March 4-5, 2016

Proposal Due Date: December 4, 2015

The Early Modern Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara invites proposals for our annual conference, "Play's the Thing: Phenomenology and Play in Early Modern Literature, 1500-1800," to be held on March 4 and 5, 2016. We are happy to announce our three keynote speakers: Laura Engel (Duquesne University), James A. Knapp (Loyola University Chicago), and Bruce Smith (University of Southern California).

In his *Essais*, Montaigne suggests that "Childrens playes are not sportes, and should be deemed as their most serious actions" (Florio translation, 1603). Three hundred years later, Sigmund Freud maintains that "it would be wrong to think" that a child at play does not take his imagined "world seriously . . . The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real" ("Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," 1907). We are seeking papers that take up notions of play (broadly construed) in early modern literature from a phenomenological perspective: how can we understand play as lived experience or lived experience as play in early modern texts? Taking our cue from recent scholarly developments in historical phenomenology and in the study of affect, emotion, cognition, and design, we are looking for papers that attend seriously to play in various early modern manifestations. If play and seriousness are conjoined, as Montaigne and Freud write, what serious work does play perform, and how do play and playfulness reflect, distort, shape or create the realities they resist, enjoy, or inhabit?

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- the world of the imagination and "playing pretend"
- imagined worlds and places of play
- the experience of play / the relationship of experience to play
- play, sensation, and the senses
- acting and embodied play
- affect and playing / playing a role
- cognition and play
- designing play / play's designs on us
- affordances and the conditions of possibility of play
- empathy, sympathy, and projection
- play and care / therapeutic play
- playing *with*: community and the intersubjectivity of play
- playing with oneself
- laughter and joy
- flirtation and amatory or erotic play
- being a player (social / theatrical / political)
- the politics of play / the play of politics
- gaming, competing, sport
- diversion and entertainment

hospitality and the play of entertaining
language and play / wordplay, punning, joking
animals, play, and animal play
play and discovery, emergence, disclosure
play, imitation, repetition (with a difference)
phenomenology and play in natural philosophy
counterfactual thinking and thought experiments
serious, earnest, or deep play
excluding play / what is excluded from play
play and crossing boundaries / play and taboo / taboo play
playing with / within disciplines, playing with periodization
playing with / within conferences and conference papers

We invite abstracts of 300 words or less and a 1-page CV to be sent to EMCCConference@gmail.com by **December 4, 2015**.

In the spirit of serious play, we also invite you to include a short description (outside of the 300-word limit) of how you envision this paper being delivered (short format, roundtable, artistic presentation, traditional conference format, exhibit, etc.).

Please feel free to contact the conference organizer, Kristen McCants, at emcfellow@gmail.com with any questions you may have.