



Disreputable Pleasures: Less Virtuous Victorians at Play (Sport in the Global Society)

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Many historians have claimed that respectability was the sharpest line of social division in Victorian society, even that the line between the 'respectable' and 'unrespectable' was more significant than between rich and poor. This irreverent and revisionist collection argues that they have over-polarised Victorian attitudes and challenges the conventional view that middle-class Victorian leisure had a respectable and serious purpose and approach.

Disreputable Pleasures explores the more sinful and unrespectable Victorian male sporting pleasures, demonstrating the complex interrelationships between such value as manliness, muscularity and machismo, or sensuality, virility and hedonism. It sheds light on the ways in which the public rhetoric of Victorian respectability could be rendered problematic by the practical pursuit of private pleasures. It shows that Victorian leisure was much more contested cultural space than has been recognised, a battleground whose contestants ranged from the rational recreationalist to the avowedly hedonistic, and from the sacred to the profane.

Disreputable Pleasures poses a powerful challenge to the accepted public image of Victorian society and will greatly add to our present understanding of Victorian Britain.

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