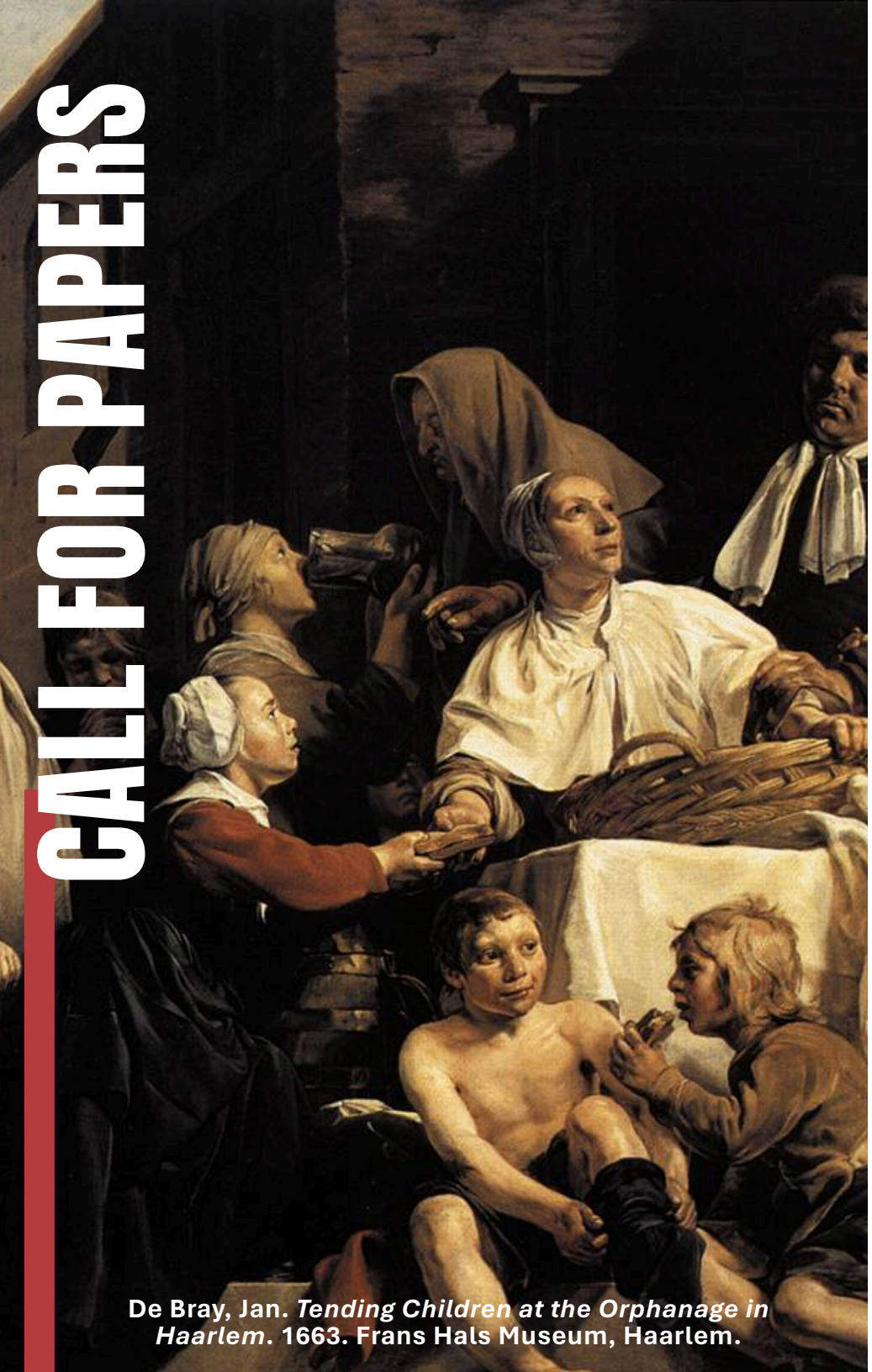
CALL FOR PAPERS



De Bray, Jan. *Tending Children at the Orphanage in Haarlem*. 1663. Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem.

Growing Up in the Early Modern World: Children, Institutions and Belonging

Thursday 27 November 2026 | Macquarie University, Sydney

Organised by Katie Barclay and Paula Plastić

Institutions played an important role in the lives of many early modern children. Some children were shuffled through foundling hospitals to wet nurses shortly after their births. Others found themselves in the care of schools, reformatory institutions, orphanages and workhouses. Different institutions cared for children of different ages, so that an unfortunate child might move from one to another over their lifetime. An institution might provide a dowry to support successful entry into adulthood. There is now a growing body of work on children and a wide range of institutions, but much less attention has been placed on them as sites where children 'grow up', moving from infancy to childhood to adolescence, even adulthood. This workshop wishes to reconsider ongoing research on children and the institution, and to encourage novel contributions, that open up the institution as a placed in which children lived, loved, were educated and nourished, and formed relationships. How did children find a sense of belonging or identity as they aged and moved across different carers and types of care? How did children maintain bonds (or otherwise) with those they lived with? Can we see the traces of ongoing responsibility and attention from institutions to their wards, or is this a history of isolation from community? How are children integrated into the early modern world?

CALL FOR PAPERS

This workshop explores childhood within institutional settings in the early modern world, with particular attention to experiences of care, discipline, and education across their life course. We invite papers that examine the intersections between children and the institutions created to shape, support, regulate, manage, and care for them.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Foundling hospitals, orphanages, hospitals, and other charitable institutions for children
- Schools, apprenticeships, and training institutions as formative spaces
- Children's labour within institutional settings: workshops, manufactories, and workhouses
- Education, tutelage, and governance training of noble and royal youth
- Fosterage, wardship, and guardianship among noble and elite families
- Religious institutions and the shaping of childhood and youth
- Transitions from childhood to adulthood within and beyond institutional settings
- Institutional regulation of behaviour, morality, and labour
- Everyday life in children's institutions: routines, diet, leisure, and material culture such as clothing, tools, and living spaces culture
- Affective bonds within institutions, including friendship, kinship, and care relationships
- Access to and functions of children's institutions in rural and/or urban settings
- Parent's and children's agency within institutional frameworks
- Military institutions and childhood: pages, cadets, and children attached to armies, garrisons, or naval households
- Dynastic strategies, inheritance, and institutional upbringing
- Investments in children to protect and secure social, economic, and moral futures
- Legal, administrative, and normative constructions of childhood and institutional care
- Comparative perspectives on children's institutions across time and region
- Children with disabilities and institutional care, support, exclusion
- Institutions and children who did not conform to confessional and/or moral norms
- Penal institutions and children: houses of correction and juvenile confinement
- Ritual, representation, and the political uses of childhood

Papers should be 20 minutes in length. Proposals for panels and roundtables are also welcome. Participants wishing to propose less conventional formats are encouraged to contact organisers. Online and hybrid participation possible; please indicate your preference in your proposal. Please submit a title, a 200-word abstract, and a three-sentence biographical note for each speaker, combined in a single document, to **paula.plastic@mq.edu.au by 15 July 2026**.

MACQUARIE University
SYDNEY·AUSTRALIA

SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY of EMOTIONS