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### "A sceane of uttmost vanity": The Spectacle of Gambling in Late Stuart Culture

JAMES E. EVANS

Restoration diarist John Evelyn describes a memorable occasion at court on Twelfth Night, 6 January 1662:

This evening (according to costome) his Majestie opned the Revells of that night, by throwing the Dice himselfe, in the Privy Chamber, where was a table set on purpose, & lost his 100 pounds: the yeare before he won 150 pounds: The Ladys also plaied very deepe: I came away when the Duke of *Ormond* had won about 1000 pounds & left them still at passage, Cards &c: at other Tables, both there and at the *Groome-porters*, observing the wiccked folly vanity & monstrous excesse of Passion amongst some loosers, & sorry I am that such a wretched Custome as play to that excesse should be countenanc'd in a Court, which ought to be an example of Virtue to the rest of the kingdome.<sup>1</sup>

According to *The History of Gambling in England*, "Play at Court was lawful, and encouraged" between Christmas and Epiphany: "When the King felt disposed, and it was his pleasure to play, it was the etiquette and custom to announce to the company, that 'His Majesty was out'; on which intimation all Court ceremony and restraint were set aside, and the sport commenced."<sup>2</sup> Restored along with the Stuart monarchy, this custom was not limited to

holidays. A few years after the Restoration the French ambassador wrote about the court of Charles II: "There is a ball and a comedy every other day; the rest of the days are spent at play."<sup>3</sup> High stakes gambling, which became one of the ubiquitous recreations of late seventeenth-century England at palaces, the groom-porter's, and private houses, epitomized the Carolean carnival that followed the Cromwellian lent. "At no time probably in the history of England," asserts Cyril Hughes Hartmann, "has the passion for gambling reached a greater height or spread over a larger section of society" than during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

Nowhere did the rage for gambling remain more evident than at court, where the King's mistresses and numerous others wagered enormous sums. In January 1685, near the end of Charles's reign, Evelyn once again depicts the gamblers: "I saw this evening such a sceane of profuse gaming, and luxurious dallying & prophaneness, the King in the middst of his 3 concubines, as I had never before." Among those present, Evelyn adds, he was "witnesse" of

the King, sitting & toying with his Concubines . . . whilst about 20 of the greate Courtiers & other dissolute persons were at Basset round a large table, a bank of at least 2000 in Gold before them, upon which two Gent: that were with me made reflexions with astonishment, it being a sceane of uttmost vanity; and surely as they thought would never have an End: six days after was all in the dust.<sup>5</sup>

The rhetoric of Evelyn's diary frames these occasions in such language as "observing the wiccked folly," "a sceane of profuse gaming," and "a sceane of uttmost vanity." However, between the two passages, separated by more than twenty years, there is an important shift in perspective. On the first evening, the persons observed retain their power; depicted in active verbs, the King opens the gambling, the ladies play, the Duke wins. During the second visit the spectator assumes greater authority over those observed. He sees the King "in the middst" and the courtiers "at Basset." Given additional force, at the time of writing, by his knowledge of the reign's imminent end, Evelyn emphasizes the observers' "astonishment" and moral outrage rather than lamenting the negative influence of the court.

Using Evelyn's texts as a starting point, this essay examines a similar shift in the discourse of gambling--from a social spectacle representing the uneasy privilege of the aristocracy during the Restoration to a spectacle recreated in comic plays and periodicals after the Revolution of 1688. Early in this period, for example, Charles Cotton's *The Compleat Gamester* (1674),

a manual describing "all manner of usual and most Gentile Games either on CARDS or DICE," includes an apology for "the lawfulness of recreation" and promises "delight to such who will pass away their spare minutes in harmless recreation if not abus'd."<sup>6</sup> Looking backward in *Memoirs of the Lives, Intrigues, and Comical Adventures of the Most Famous Gamesters and Celebrated Sharpers in the Reigns of Charles II, James II, William III and Queen Anne* (1714), Theophilus Lucas laments that "diversion and entertainment" are "the great excuse which gentleman have for losing their money: Every-body pleads privilege for recreation." To him, gambling is "an enchanting witchcraft, begotten by those devils, avarice and idleness."<sup>7</sup> The differences between Cotton's book, with its accounts of twenty "Principal Games at Cards," six "Games within the Tables," and seven "Games without the Tables," and Lucas's "Secret History" of twenty-six gamblers illustrate the change in the cultural signification of gambling.

According to Lawrence Stone, high stakes gambling in the seventeenth century was one form of "conspicuous expenditure," which was "deeply ingrained in this idle and exhibitionist society." In a century during which "insecurity caused a struggle for status," gambling served "a social function as a symbolic justification for the maintenance or acquisition of status."8 Georges Bataille theorizes similarly about the function of "unproductive expenditure" in archaic societies: "More or less narrowly, social rank is linked to the possession of a fortune, but only on the condition that the fortune be partially sacrificed in unproductive social expenditures such as festivals, spectacles, and games." Usefully for this study, Bataille connects "a positive property of loss" to "nobility, honor, and rank in a hierarchy" and hypothesizes that wealth is "entirely directed toward loss in the sense that power is characterized as power to lose. It is only through loss that glory and honor are linked to wealth."9 Paradoxically, then, upper class willingness to venture enormous sums, even perhaps to risk ruin, was necessary to manifest status to others and thus to maintain privilege in Restoration England.

This process may have been exacerbated by circumstance. After the Restoration, writes Christopher Hill, as "the distinction between landed and moneyed interests" became "more apparent than real," the added insecurity generated another problem for gentlemen and ladies: "The aristocrats who regained their privileged position after 1660 had no significant role to play in the reconstructed social order. Flocking to the court, they ceased even to take their traditional part in local government; and at court their role was decorative rather than functional."<sup>10</sup> In response to "an increasingly defensive awareness that social hierarchy was under assault," argues Michael McKeon,

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aristocratic conduct illustrates "the more elaborate sort of 'theatricalization' that is likely to occur whenever social convention is raised to the level of self-conscious practice."<sup>11</sup> This self-consciousness can be found, for example, in Obadiah Walker's *Of Education* (1673), which asserts that a gentleman "by his *Family*" is "already placed upon the *Theater*, where all his actions shall be observed . . . even more then they deserve; all mens eyes are upon him."<sup>12</sup> Gambling, in all its Restoration excess, contributed to the social spectacle at court and elsewhere, as some men and women risked their fortunes to demonstrate their status.

Not surprisingly, then, gambling was also integral to the reopened theater, especially to comedies of the 1660s and 1670s, including such major plays as Sir George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676) and William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675). Etherege, for instance, evokes "deep play" as a practice congruent with his protagonist's social identity. To the modish Dorimant, "deep" signifies high stakes, which are not, by definition, irrational or immoral.

Emilia. There are afflictions in Love, Mr. *Dorimant*. Dorimant. You Women make 'em, who are commonly as unreasonable in that as you are at Play; without the Advantage be on your side, a man can never quietly give over when he's weary!

Medley. If you would play without being obliged to complaisance, *Dorimant*, you should play in publick places. Dorimant. Ordinaries were a very good thing for that, but Gentlemen do not of late frequent 'em. The deep play is now in private Houses.<sup>13</sup>

As this passage establishes Dorimant as a skilled libertine and gambler, it expresses the values of a gentleman who prefers his pleasures apart from those who gamble for gain. According to Thomas M. Kavanagh, "The true courtier never plays *only* to win money. If he gambles, it is to demonstrate a prowess superior to that of his adversary." Consequently, the courtier's gambling, which shows his "superiority to the ever more imperious rule of money," centers "on affirming one's basic ethics and identity . . . that of the individual as one who knew, lived by, and incarnated a socialized perfection conceivable only within the context of the court."<sup>14</sup> In England, Stone observes, gambling was "a suitable pastime for a gentleman, one of whose functions was to live in idleness with elegance and grace. It was as important to know how to play cards or handle the dice as it was to be able to ride a horse or dance a galliard."<sup>15</sup> As the aristocracy persisted and "grew more

and more into an actor, playing an elaborate part," V. G. Kiernan remarks, "A man had to be able to hazard his fortune on a turn of the cards as cooly as his forefathers risked their lives on the luck of the battle."<sup>16</sup>

The discourse that precedes Etherege's representation of the idle and elegant Dorimant began much earlier when the English began to imitate European courts of the Renaissance. According to Castiglione's seminal text, The Courtier, gambling is suitable as the courtier "attends sometimes to grave matters and sometimes to festivals and games, depending on the occasion." It is not a vice unless the courtier gambles "too constantly and as a result should neglect other more important things, or indeed unless he should play only to win money and to cheat the other player."<sup>17</sup> Numerous English texts echo Castiglione's counsel. Mary Lady Despencer expresses these values to her grandson, a future Earl of Westmorland: "Know play to make thee sociable, but sett not thy harte upon it . . . to play for gayne more then recreation illegittimates all good meetings."<sup>18</sup> Among conduct books repeating such advice, Richard Brathwait's The English Gentleman (1641) includes, among "exercises of the mind . . . Cards and Dice, a speciall Recreation, meerely invented and intended to passe tedious Winter nights away, and not to hazard ones fortunes at them." "Make not your Recreation a distemper," he adds, and advises gentlemen "never to mount your stake so high, as the losse of it may move you to choler."<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, in The Gentlemans Companion (1672), William Ramesay asserts the legitimacy of "Recreations and Exercises within doors ... Cards, Dice, Tables, which many narrow-witted People too severely explode; in themselves they are honest and harmless recreations; the abuse of them must not deny the use of them." Yet Ramesay also declares that "to spend all their Life in gameing" is "very unseemly" for gentlemen.<sup>20</sup> Even George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, advising his daughter on "a wise and a safe method of useing diversions," writes that "To play sometimes, to entertain company, or to divert your self, is not to be disallowed; but to do it so often as to be called a Gamester, is to be avoided."<sup>21</sup> For all their efforts to justify gambling as aristocratic recreation, however, none of these authors condoned the deep play that became widespread in late Stuart England. The status conflicts following the Restoration assured the prominence of gambling as a form of conspicuous, unproductive expenditure. "Nothing," asserts La Bruyère, "makes a man more immediately fashionable or raises him higher in public esteem than high-stakes gambling."22

While *The Man of Mode* does not present the spectacle of characters gambling, Derek Hughes argues that "compulsive play" in Dorimant's world is "nothing less than a generalized model of social existence," which Etherege subjects to "sceptical analysis rather than uncritical celebration."<sup>23</sup>

Gambling also permeates The Country Wife. As John T. Harwood comments, "Horner's world is not the world of sex ..., but of gaming. Sex is sought, offered, or withheld not for its own sake but as a means of enhancing one's power over others through calculated risks."<sup>24</sup> The libertine Horner identifies his seduction plot with gambling even before he is invited to join "a drolling pack of ombre players" or Lady Fidget learns that he "loves play as much as you, and has money." Although Wycherley does not represent their card games, the social complicity of audience and characters in his dramatic satire makes such absence plausible. Playwrights "must follow their copy, the age," declares one of his wits; adds another "Tis but being on the stage, instead of standing on a bench in the pit."25 Restoration comedy, according to Peter Holland, "emphasised its close connection with its audience--and hence its claim, through its vraisemblance in acting and locale, to comment on its audience's morals--by placing the action principally on the forestage." As a result of familiar settings and the alignment of actors with audience, he adds, "The audience saw the actor as in a situation potentially analogous to their own, rather than in a totally fictive world."<sup>26</sup> It is not remarkable, then, that gambling is integral to characters' conduct without being part of the dramatic action. On a given night the audience in the well-lit theaters could contain a number of recognized gamblers: later in the period, for example, Thomas Durfey complains that the reception of A Fools's Preferment (1688) was marred by "the Party that was malitiously made by some eminent Gamesters of both Sexes, who thought themselves touch'd."27

Carolean comedies feature a variety of gamblers and gambling. In James Howard's The English Mounsieur (c. 1663) the protagonist Wellbred is a "wild Gentleman," whose gambling, "thy Extravagant humor," must change before Lady Wealthy will marry him; when she invites him to play ombre in Act 4, Wellbred, lacking funds, comically refuses to join her.<sup>28</sup> Prig, the humorous gamester in Thomas Shadwell's A True Widow (1679), evokes an ironic estimate of "the Groom-Porters, where you may play all night. Oh, 'tis a Heavenly Life! we are never idle."29 Thomas Otway's The Atheist (1683) presents a generational inversion, the protagonist's "wild, extravagant, old Father," who must promise his son "to leave off Gaming."30 Games of ombre take place offstage in Act 2 of Wycherley's The Plain Dealer (1676), Act 3 of Durfey's A Fond Husband (1676), and Act 4 of John Dryden's The Kind Keeper (1678). Characters in Shadwell's Epsom-Wells (1673) are reported to lose money at put and cribbage. There are so many allusions to "the great pleasure of gaming" in Sir Charles Sedley's The Mulberry Garden (1668) that it seems as much the center of characters' social existence as in The Man of Mode, though without much skeptical reservation.<sup>31</sup> When Restoration playwrights represent gambling on stage, they sometimes ridicule pretenders to privilege, antagonists of the rake hero, such as the recently titled Sir Nicholas Cully, who plays dice with sharpers at a tavern in Act 2 of Etherege's *The Comical Revenge* (1664), or the avaricious merchant Sir Cautious Fulbank, who uses his wife's body as his stake in a game of dice with Gayman in Act 4 of Aphra Behn's *The Luckey Chance* (1686). Behn's stage direction locates the satiric exposure of rake and fool in her cuckolding plot on the forestage, when Gayman "Puts down his Hat of Money, and each of 'em take a Box and Dice, and kneel on the Stage, the rest come about 'em."<sup>32</sup>

While Dryden sometimes mocks pretenders to gentility, identifying the eponymous character of Sir Martin Mar-all (1667) as a gamester, two of his comedies also ridicule the "extravagant rake," a more humorous, less dangerous version of this character type.<sup>33</sup> In his Spanish carnival play AnEvening's Love (1668), the English character Wildblood, who twice exits to a gaming-house, loses at dice in Act 3 to the masked Jacinta, who cheats him, then turns the event into a test of his character. When his servant advises Wildblood to "consider your condition," he laughs at himself, "for my condition is so ridiculous that 'tis past cursing," and cites his "promise to return to play."34 In The Wild Gallant (1663) Dryden employs two discovery scenes of the kind that became more common in post-Revolution comedy to expose gambling as a vice. Both show the ridiculous character Justice Trice gambling alone. At the start of Act 1, scene 3, "The Scene changes, and Trice is discovered playing at Tables by himself," as other characters "return and see him, undiscovered by him." Trice invents a genteel quarrel with himself, while the others "laugh and discover themselves." Trice's humor emerges again in Act 4 in another discovery ("Table set with Cards upon it. Trice walking"), when he plays picquet and pretends that his victorious opponent is the protagonist Jack Loveby. Already on stage, but unseen by Trice, Loveby seizes his winnings, "won fairly; a Sixieme, and Fourteen by Aces by your own confession" to conclude this "Game of Gentlemen." Well known for his own gambling debts, Loveby, nevertheless, receives a sort of comic blessing in the play's Epilogue: "The Wild Gallant has quite playd out his game."35 Unlike Cully, Fulbank, and Trice, the extravagant rakes Wildblood and Loveby gamble without threatening their aristocratic status, though their conspicuous, unproductive expenditure causes temporary, comic embarrassment.

Writing texts that remained unpublished during the Restoration, fascinated observers like Evelyn and Samuel Pepys saw another, more decadent spectacle than that represented on the stage. Pepys record of a visit to the

halls of the Inner and Middle Temple during the Christmas season of 1668 emphasizes his role as spectator in a crescendo of infinitive phrases: "to see the manner of the gaming at the Groome porter's," "to see how the dice will run good luck," "to see the different humours of gamesters," "to see how persons of the best quality do here sit down and play with people of any." Pepys concludes:

And lastly, to see the formality of the Groome-porter, who is their judge of all disputes in play and all quarrels that may arise therein; and how his under-officers are there to observe true play at each table and to give new dice, is a consideration I never could have thought had been in the world, had I not now seen it. And mighty glad I am that I did see it.<sup>36</sup>

Determined not to relinquish the perspective necessary to judge the disorder of the scene, Pepys even refuses the opportunity to gamble with another's money.<sup>37</sup>

Critiques such as this are more common after the Revolution of 1688, when reform-minded writers routinely link gambling to other libertine conduct as a legacy of the Restoration. The diarists' dismay becomes received wisdom in texts like The Tatler, where Richard Steele mocks a character who spends his days "in the common Diversions of Men of Fashion; that is to say, in Whoring, Drinking, and Gaming."38 In Susanna Centlivre's The Busybody (1709) a father complains that "gaming, whoring, and the pox, are requisites to a gentleman."<sup>39</sup> Though high stakes gambling continued to flourish during the reigns of King William and Queen Anne, more authors wrote critically of gambling as a recreation in the decades when Societies for the Reformation of Manners spoke for the new morality encouraged by the last Stuart courts. Colley Cibber's The Lady's Last Stake (1707), for instance, includes this declaration: "'tis amazing, that so many good Families shou'd daily encourage a Diversion, whose utmost Pleasure is founded upon Avarice and ill Nature: For those are always the secret Principles of deep Play."40 Linking "Covetousness" to "this Diversion," Jeremy Collier argues that "playing deep" exposes the passions: "Cards and Dice, &c. command the Humour no less than the Moon does the Tide."41 Integral to such judgments was the altered perspective that made gambling a dramatic and literary spectacle.

In the theater and in print this change increased the authority of the spectator at the expense of gamblers and demonstrated authorial confidence in a post-Revolution epistemology which, according to Rose A. Zimbardo, "takes it as a given that vice can be distinguished from virtue."<sup>42</sup> By making the discovery scene central to dramatic actions, Mary Pix's *The Beau Defeated* (1700), Centlivre's *The Gamester* (1705) and *The Basset Table* (1705), and Cibber's *The Lady's Last Stake* expose as false the connection of gambling to status. Adopting the perspective of the observer to discredit gambling, Ned Ward's *London Spy* (1698-1700), Tom Brown's *Amusements Serious and Comical* (1700), and Steele's and Joseph Addison's *The Tatler* (1709-1711), *The Spectator* (1711-1712, 1714), and *The Guardian* (1713) take advantage of the emerging role of periodicals in the bourgeois public sphere to accomplish their critique. Both periodicals and comedies participate in the rhetoric found in texts like *The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum*, an anonymous series of letters to a friend, that "discovers to him most of the Humours, Tricks and Cheats of the Town"; in Letter XI such attributes of the Groom Porter's, ordinaries, and gaming houses are "*briefly exposed*."<sup>43</sup>

Two recent dramatists prepared the way for the campaign of exposure in the humane comedies of Pix, Cibber, and Centlivre. In A Fool's Preferment (1688) Durfey's satire of gambling (anachronistically focused on basset, "the most Courtly, the most Grand, the most Graceful Game," according to one character) includes this stage direction for the discovery scene opening Act 2: "Discovers the Basset-Table: Aurelia, Clermont, Longville, Bewford, and other Gentlemen and Ladies sitting round at Play, Winnall is dealing; several are standing by, and others walking about; Acting the several Humours of Winners and Losers."44 To create such a tableau, more common in Restoration tragedies than comedies, writes Holland, "the shutters, large flats which moved in grooves across the stage to join in the center, open and actors are discovered behind, set against a further piece of scenery." "Restoration practice," he judges, made such upstage action "equivalent to a stronger divorce from reality and a weakening of the claim on the audience to see the actors as individuals similar to themselves."45 Durfey's scene, which includes more farce than usual in such discoveries, presents the spectacle of a country gentleman's town house turned upside down by his own aspirations to be a courtier and the ruinous gambling of his wife, part of the project, stated in the Dedication, of exposing vice.

Less farcical and didactic are gambling scenes in two of Thomas Southerne's comedies. While Durfey ridicules those who imitate aristocrats and their games, Southerne satirizes the adulterous world of upper class marriage rather than gambling per se. *The Wives' Excuse* (1692), which opens with the spectacle of "*Several Footmen at Hazard, Some rising from Play*," includes one of the most ingenious uses of scenery for the discovery of gamesters, the after-dinner card game at the Friendalls' house in Act 4. As characters talk of play, a stage direction indicates "*Scene draws, shews* 

Tables and Cards"; after several characters speak, "They go in to play. The Scene shuts upon 'em." Two characters remain on stage for a brief dialogue until "The Scene opens, the Company rises from play, and comes forward."<sup>46</sup> Like Etherege and Wycherley, Southerne is not interested in reforming gamblers, but in examining a way of life that features gambling among its extravagant recreations. The link between libertinism and gambling recurs vividly in Act 1 of The Maid's Last Praver (1693), when the audience views two perspectives on an evening of basset. While Scene 1 begins at Lady Trickitt's house with "Gayman and Granger, from Play," Scene 2 presents the spectacle the gentlemen have been discussing: "Scene drawn, shows Lady Trickitt, Maria, and Garnish, making up the Bank, Cards scatter'd about."47 Through this representation of gambling Southerne introduces "the human competitiveness" central to his play, which Hughes describes, as "not of the Hobbesian wilderness but of the drawing room . . . not expressions of some deeper and more atavistic urge to dominate; they are the thing itself."48

Unlike the satirical comedies of Southerne, the humane comedies of Pix, Cibber, and Centlivre use discovery scenes to represent the need for reform to the audience. Nowhere is the bourgeois ideology underlying the reforming impulse more explicit than in The Beau Defeated. Mrs. Rich, the widow of a prosperous London merchant, regularly gambles with Lady La Bassett and Mrs. Trickwell, cheats whom she wrongly assumes to be ladies of quality. Her motive is the ridiculous dream she expresses: "may I hope to play at Court? I have a great ambition to play at Court: Oh my Stars! I shou'd torment our City Ladies to death, to talk of Honours done me at Court." Pix's plot eventually compels Mrs. Rich to renounce gambling and subscribe to middle class values offered by other characters. In Act 2 Pix utilizes the scenic stage, the large area behind the proscenium arch, to represent her character's folly: "Scene draws and discovers Mrs. Rich, Mrs. Trickwell, and Lady la Basset, Rising from Play." Having turned this conduct into comic spectacle, Pix ironically permits the beau, Sir John Roverhead, to comment on it and to uncouple status from recreation; "in the last Generation, and this," he observes, "Sharpers, had their Cullies; Gamesters, their Fools . . . Courtiers Promises, and Bullies Oaths, ever made a great Noise, and signify'd nothing." The tableau receives final, more authoritative commentary from Mr. Rich, who advises his sister-in-law to "retrench all this Greatness and Folly."49 Pix leaves no doubt that families of respected merchants should not aspire to the vices of aristocrats. Even Sir James Bellmont, the genteel protagonist of her later comedy The Different Widows (1703), abandons gambling ("that Scandalous Diversion . . . the Shame of Gentlemen, the Destruction of Families, and the last refuge of the Prodigal"), reforming four acts after he provides his own "Harangue against Gaming."50

Cibber uses the discovery scene even more effectively than Pix. If gambling threatens Mrs. Rich's respectability, his Lady Gentle faces peril to her virtue in *The Lady's Last Stake*. Identified as "the Perfection of a good Wife," except for "her Over-fondness for Play," the lady's gambling is finally observed in Act 5: *"The* SCENE *opening discovers Lord* George *and Lady* Gentle *rising from Play.*" When the lord convinces the lady to wager once more, her body against her debts, she loses (though a gift of 2000 pounds rescues her). At the end of the scene Lady Gentle reflects on her experience: "This Vice of Play... appear'd at first an harmless, safe, Amusement; but stealing into Habit, its greatest Hazards grew so familiar, that ev'n the Face of Ruine lost its Terror to me."<sup>51</sup> As Laura J. Rosenthal points out, Cibber sought "to specularize anxieties about the mobility of property and the instability of gender"; once Lady Gentle enters the "unstable economy" of gambling, the play presents "a lesson about the extraordinary risk."<sup>52</sup> In his Dedication Cibber is explicit about the purpose of this spectacle:

Gaming is a Vice, that has undone more innocent Principles, than any one Folly that's in Fashion; therefore I chose to expose it to the Fair Sex in its most hideous Form, by reducing a Woman of Honour to stand the presumptuous Addresses of a Man, whom neither her Virtue or Inclination wou'd let her have the least Taste to.<sup>53</sup>

Cibber employs the discovery scene to parallel Lady Gentle's progress, in his post-Revolution epistemology, from appearance to truth. Not a recreation to be associated with honor, gambling potentially involves women, even more than men, dangerously in vice. To Cibber, it is no longer a matter of conspicuous or unproductive expenditure. According to *The Ladies Library*, "if Gaming is a Vice in Men, it is much more so in Women; for that one of its Consequences is often the Loss of what is much more valuable than Gold or Diamonds, their Reputation, if not their Honour."<sup>54</sup>

Centlivre's two comedies represent her characters' problematic gambling even more extensively. To Valere, the extravagant protagonist of *The Gamester*, gambling is "my dear Diversion . . . the genteelest Way of passing one's Time . . . as much in Fashion here as 'tis in France." In his humorous obsession with play and his reform prior to marriage, he resembles Wellbred in *The English Mounsieur*. Unlike Howard, Centlivre represents her genteel character's gambling on stage, near the end of Act 4, when the "SCENE discovers a Gaming-Table, with Valere, Count Cogdie, and other Gentlemen at Hazard, with several Rakes and Sharpers, waiting round the Table; a Box-Keeper, and Attendants." She sets Valere's deep play in a gaming

house, where the heroine Angelica appears in masculine disguise to test him. After he loses a token of their love to her in a dice game, he must "behold what a Monster this darling Sin has made me." In order to earn Angelica's forgiveness, Valere finally discards his unproductive expenditure as immoral. Near the play's conclusion, Angelica's question opposes claims of status to the privileges of recreation: "Can you upon Honour . . . forsake that Vice that brought you to this low Ebb of Fortune?"<sup>55</sup> Centlivre's spectacle exposes the post-Revolution truth about gambling to protagonist and audience alike. Her gentleman must redefine the relationship of honor to diversion.

A fifth act repentance and reconciliation also conclude Centlivre's The Basset Table, in which the young widow Lady Reveller believes it is not "possible to pass the evenings without diversions" like gambling. Although one admirer calls her "an exact model of what all women ought to be," this comedy begins at 4:00 a.m., following all-night gambling at her lodgings. Her admirer, Lord Worthy, admits "I love her person, but hate her humours," which he associates with her foolish "passion for gain." Once again Centlivre uses the final scene of Act 4 to stage the spectacle of gambling--"LADY REVELLER, MRS. SAGO and several gentlemen and ladies round a table at basset." As in Cibber's play, the Lady's losses put her virtue in jeopardy to pay off debts of honor by borrowing money from a gentleman, Sir James Courtly. Unlike Cibber's Lord George, however, Sir James plots to assist Lord Worthy's pursuit of this humorous character. In Act 5, when he seems to demand her last stake, Sir James asks Lady Reveller: "Can a lady that loves play so passionately as you do, that takes as much pains to draw men in to lose their money . . . can you, I say, boast of innate virtue?" When she learns to moderate the carnivalesque behavior her name suggests, Lady Reveller qualifies to enter the domestic sphere as a wife; her change concludes, for the audience, the process Sir James describes to his friend, "to be spectator of the very diversion you hate, gaming."56

While the humane comedies of Pix, Cibber, and Centlivre exploit late Stuart theater design, especially its increased emphasis on the picture stage, to represent gambling as folly or vice rather than as aristocratic recreation, the periodicals deploy their emerging role in print culture for a similar critique. As the titles of *The London Spy* and *The Spectator* indicate, the authors control readers' perspective in order to present gambling and other aspects of urban life as spectacle. Scott Black's description of Steele's "new kind of representation, one that provided a way to depict the modern public sphere in its indigenous terms," applies to some extent to his less genteel predecessors, Ward and Brown, who, using periodical publication, also "mapped an imagination defined by London's social geography."<sup>57</sup> In *The London Spy*  Ward creates a rural persona "to Expose the Vanities and Vices of the Town . . . that the Innocent might see by Reflection, what I should gain by Observation and Intelligence." Taking advantage of an outsider's sense of "Wonder and Amazement" to evoke distance, Part VII includes a visit to the Temple and the sight of "Merry" gamesters, whose "whole Lives are a Lottery, they read no Books but Cards, and all their Mathematicks is to truly understand the Odds of a Bet."<sup>58</sup> Brown's Amusements Serious and Comical, on the other hand, presents a dual perspective, that of the author and a non-English visitor, an Indian, who "has never seen anything like what he sees in London. We shall see how he will be amazed at certain things which the prejudice of custom makes to seem reasonable and natural to us." Like The London Spy in evoking such distance, Brown's "Amusement VIII" describes Gaming-Houses from the Indian's point of view:

It happened, one day, that my traveller dropped into a chocolate house in Covent-Garden, where they were at this noble recreation; he was wonderfully surprized at the oddness of the sight. Set yourself now in the room of a superstitious Indian, who knows nothing of our customs at play, and you will agree that his notions, abstracted and visionary as they may seem, have some foundation in truth.<sup>59</sup>

The Indian's fragmentary letter is an ethnography of the disorders of gambling, which is framed and complemented by Brown's persona's more extensive reflections on the social scene they observe.

Like their Grub-Street brethren, the more polite writers Steele and Addison use their observers to expose gambling as part of their project of recovering readers "out of that desperate State of Vice and Folly into which the Age is fallen." Steele turns to gambling often in early numbers of *The Tatler*; by the time Isaac Bickerstaff assumes the title of Censor of Great Britain, he claims that he has already "taken many curious Surveys of this great City," including "your *Gamesters.*" *Tatler* 15 includes Bickerstaff's account of an evening at White's Chocolate House, the periodical's setting for "*All Accounts of* Gallantry, Pleasure, *and* Entertainment," where his familiar, Pacolet, makes him invisible, "so that we could see and hear all others, our selves unseen and unheard." This report of their surveillance follows:

The First Thing we took Notice of, was a Nobleman, of a goodly and frank Aspect, with his generous Birth and Temper visible in it, playing at Cards with a Creature of a black and horrid Countenance, wherein were plainly delineated the arts of his Mind, Cousenage and

Falshood. They were marking their Game with Counters, on which we could see Inscriptions, imperceptible to any but us. My Lord had scor'd with Pieces of Ivory, on which were writ, *Good Fame*, *Glory*, *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Posterity*. The Spectre over against him had on his Counters the Inscriptions of, *Dishonour*, *Impudence*, *Poverty*, *Ignorance*, and *Want of Shame*. Bless me! said I, Sure my Lord does not see what he plays for! As well as I do, says *Pacolet.*<sup>60</sup>

Social invisibility permits their observation of conduct in need of reform and the reformist insight that accompanies it. This process contributes to Steele's and Addison's project of "reconstructing honor," as described by Shawn Lisa Maurer: "The notion of honor, customarily a genteel stronghold, was rewritten in ways that appealed to both Christian virtue and burgeoning commercial values."<sup>61</sup> While typical of early eighteenth-century periodicals, which, according to Scott Paul Gordon, seek to "monitor London by means of invisible rather than visible watchers," Steele's allegory also "assumes that truth lies hidden from ordinary sight and therefore equips its authorial persona to see not only everything but *into* everything."<sup>62</sup> Unlike the gamblers he observes here and elsewhere, Bickerstaff possesses the insight to dissociate gambling from false notions of honor.

Steele and Addison's periodicals also published letters from readers, other friendly spies who add their sightings to those of the personae in an effort to persuade readers "made to fear that any offense will be publicly exposed--to pre-emptively discipline themselves."<sup>63</sup> For example, in *Spectator* 140, Rachel Basto writes, "I have observed Ladies who in all other respects are Gentle, Good-humoured, and the very Pinks of good Breeding; who as soon as the Ombre Table is called for, and set down to their Business, are immediately Transmigrated into the veriest Wasps in Nature." Letters such as Josiah Fribble's about his wife's gambling debts, "as becomes a Woman of her Fashion," Clarinda's "Picture of a Life filled with a fashionable kind of Gaiety and Laziness" (on Wednesday, "*From Six to Eleven.* At *Basset*"), and "*The humble Petition of* Jeoffry Hotspur, *Esq.*" after a passionate game of whist, all evidence the on-going surveillance of gambling in *The Spectator.*<sup>64</sup>

By the time Addison and Steele were writing *The Guardian*, they could joke about readers' fears of exposure in their periodicals. One correspondent tells the persona: "I MUST acquaint you, for your Comfort, that your Lion is grown a kind of Bull-beggar among the Women where I live. When my Wife comes home late from Cards... I whisper in her Ear, partly betwixt Jest and Earnest, that *I will tell the Lion of her*." Despite such expectations, Addison continues to record the spectacle of gambling in *Guardian* 120, which

begins with a correspondent's complaint about his wife's "shaking her Elbow for a whole Night together, and thumping the Table with a Dice-Box." This letter prompts the Guardian to "look into the *Mind* of a Female Gamester," where he finds "a fine Woman fretting and bleeding inwardly from such trivial motives." Addison's regulation of conduct according to bourgeois standards marks the threat to a woman's honor as the most dangerous aspect of gambling, a position emphasized by this visual transformation of the gamester: "I have known a Woman carried off half dead from Bassette, and have many a time grieved to see a Person of Quality gliding by me in her Chair at two a Clock in the Morning, and looking like a Spectre amidst a glare of Flambeaux."<sup>65</sup> Addison's ghostly spectacle permits no leeway for gambling as genteel diversion.

I conclude this essay with a scene from George Farquhar's Sir Harry Wildair (1701) because his reprise of the gambler as extravagant rake represents such an anomaly in early eighteenth-century drama and literature. Farquhar introduces the second scene of Act 2 with the discovery of another apartment in the stage set and this direction: "Enter Lurewell, Ladies, Monsieur Marquis, and Fireball, as losing Gamesters, one after another, tearing their Cards, and flinging 'em about the Room." While the scene includes the disorder conventionally associated with gambling, it allows Farquhar to bring his popular character Wildair on stage to rejoice in his triumph over the others and to rhapsodize about the pleasures of unproductive expenditure:

What, forswear Cards! Why, Madam, you'll ruin our Trade.--I'll maintain, that the Money at Court circulates more by the Basset-Bank, than the Wealth of Merchants by the Bank of the City. Cards! the great Ministers of Fortune's Power; that blindly shuffle out her thoughtless Favours . . . What Adoration do these Pow'rs receive (*Lifting up a Card.*) from the bright Hands and Fingers of the Fair, always lift up to pay Devotion here! And then the pleasing Fears, the anxious Hopes and dubious Joys that entertain our Mind! The Capot at Picket, the Paroli at Basset; -- And then Ombre! Who can resist the charms of Mattadors?<sup>66</sup>

The spectacle of the comical Wildair, speaking in "the spirit of True born *English* Quality," seems quaintly out of place in the decade of Centlivre, Cibber, and Steele. It serves as a nostalgic reminder of the world of deep play, of the bad old days of Charles II, supposedly being reformed by authors of contemporary comedies and periodicals, and even offers an amusing rebuttal of bourgeois economic discourse, in which gambling

benefits trade.

One type of pleasure to be found in the extravagant Wildair is described by Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon: "All Nations . . . have such natural Inclinations to Gazing and Spectacles, that they crowd to those which are not in themselves very pleasant." It is preferable, he continues, "to comply with this natural Curiosity, by providing Places for them to resort to, and to be pleased in, than by Inhibitions and Restraints to extinguish that harmless Appetite."<sup>67</sup> In late Stuart England the comedies of the London stage and the periodicals anatomizing London life provided sites for their audiences to "resort to" and to satisfy their inclinations by witnessing the spectacle of gambling, increasingly one filled with admonitions. Few characters like Sir Harry Wildair trod the boards of Williamite or Queen Anne theaters to proclaim the joys of aristocratic diversion, as Loveby in The Wild Gallant or Dorimant in The Man of Mode had done a generation earlier. Gambling, which some conduct books deemed acceptable recreation for gentlemen and ladies, was already theatricalized in the Restoration as an unproductive expenditure of an anxious class. Many Restoration comedies, like The English Monsieur or The Country Wife, incorporated aspects of this spectacle into representations of a Wellbred or a Horner, seen on the forestage in somewhat more proximate relation to audiences and their values, even when these characters were ridiculed. After the Revolution, however, shifts in ideology and epistemology led to a different and, in Hyde's phrase, more "harmless" spectacle. The use of the scenic stage in comedies like The Lady's Last Stake and The Gamester and the narrative perspective of such periodicals as The Spectator and The London Spy turned the formerly genteel gamester into the object of the audience's disapproving gaze. A recreation that once seemed, even when excessive, to be aristocratic folly, was increasingly represented as vice. The private disapproval of Evelyn and Pepys toward deep play during the Restoration received confirmation in the bourgeois public sphere of the early eighteenth century.

#### NOTES

1. *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. S. De Beer, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 3: 308.

2. John Ashton, *The History of Gambling in England* (1898; rpt. Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1969), 47.

3. Quoted in R. O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 15. Bucholz observes that there is "much more than a grain of truth" in the picture of "the court of Charles II as the very epitome of Stuart exuberance, extravagance, and corruption" (12).

4. Cyril Hughes Hartmann, "Introduction," Games and Gamesters of the Restoration (London: Routledge, 1930), ix

5. Evelyn, 4: 403, 413-14.

6. Charles Cotton, The Compleat Gamester, rpt. in Games and Gamesters of the Restoration, xxiii, xxv.

7. Theophilus Lucas, Memoirs of the Lives, Intrigues, and Comical Adventures of the Most Famous Gamesters and Celebrated Sharpers in the Reigns of Charles II, James II, William III and Queen Anne, rpt. in Games and Gamesters of the Restoration, 119, 120.

8. Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 1558-1641 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 571, 185.

9. Georges Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure," *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 123, 122.

10. Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume One: Writing and Revolution in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 320, 301.

11. Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 151, 169.

12. Obadiah Walker, *Of Education*, English Linguistics 1500-1800, ed. R. C. Alston (Menston: Scolar Press, 1970), 53.

13. The Man of Mode, The Dramatic Works of Sir George Etherege, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1927), 2: 228.

14. Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance: The Novel and the Culture of Gambling in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 38-39, 44.

15. Stone, 567.

16. V. G. Kiernan, The Duel in European History: Honour and the Reign of Aristocracy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 153, 154.

17. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (New York: Anchor, 1959), 127.

18. Quoted in Stone, 569.

19. Richard Brathwait, The English Gentleman; and The English Gentlewoman: Both in One Volume Couched, and in One Modell Portrayed, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: I. Dawson, 1641), 109, 110.

20. William Ramesay, *The Gentlemans Companion: or, a Character of True Nobility and Gentility* (London: E. Okes, 1672), 125, 126.

21. The Lady's New-Year's Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter, The Works of George Savile Marquis of Halifax, ed. Mark N. Brown, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 2: 404, 405.

22. Quoted in Kavanagh, 44.

23. Derek Hughes, English Drama 1660-1700 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 151.

24. John T. Harwood, *Critics, Values, and Restoration Comedy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 106.

25. William Wycherley, *The Country Wife*, ed. Thomas H. Fujimura (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 44, 57. See Arthur H. Scouten and Robert D. Hume, "Restoration Comedy' and its Audiences, 1660-1776," in Robert D. Hume, *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 46-81.

26. Peter Holland, The Ornament of Action: Text and Performance in Restoration Comedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 29.

27. Thomas Durfey, *A Fool's Preferment* (London: Jos. Knight and Fra. Saunders, 1688), np.

28. James Howard, *The English Mounsieur: A Comedy*, intro. Robert D. Hume, Augustan Reprint Society Publication No. 182-183 (Los Angeles: Clark Library, 1977), 26.

29. *A True Widow, The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell*, ed. Montague Summers, 5 vols. (London: Fortune Press, 1927), 3: 347.

30. The Atheist, The Works of Thomas Otway, ed. J. C. Ghosh, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 2: 334, 397.

31. Sir Charles Sedley, *The Mulberry Garden*, *Restoration Comedy*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares, 4 vols. (London: Folio Press, 1974), 1: 150.

32. The Luckey Chance, The Works of Aphra Behn, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996), 7: 267. Jean I. Marsden regards this scene and its sequel as "perhaps Behn's starkest representation of the objectification of women" ("Rape, Voyeurism, and the Restoration Stage," Broken Boundaries: Women & Feminism in Restoration Drama, ed. Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 195.

33. See Robert Jordan, "The Extravagant Rake in Restoration Comedy," *Restoration Literature: Critical Approaches*, ed. Harold Love (London: Methuen, 1972), 69-90; Hume, "The Myth of the Rake in 'Restoration Comedy," *The Rakish Stage*, 138-175; Richard Braverman, "The Rake's Progress Revisited: Politics and Comedy in the Restoration," *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Theater*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 141-168.

34. An Evening's Love, Vol. 10 of The Works of John Dryden, ed. Maximillian E. Novak (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 264-265.

35. *The Wild Gallant*, Volume 8 of *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. John Harrington Smith and Dougald MacMillan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 21-22, 53, 54-55, 89.

36. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 9 vols. (London: G. Bell, 1970), 9: 2-4.

37. Among texts critical of gambling prior to the Revolution of 1688 are Sir John Denham's *The Anatomy of Play* (1651), the anonymous *Leathermore: or Advice Concerning Gaming* (1668), and *The Gaming-Humor Considered and Reproved* (1684). *Leathermore* features a scene at an ordinary, which Cotton plagiarized in *The Compleat Gamester*.

38. *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1: 413.

39. The Busybody, Female Playwrights of the Restoration: Five Comedies, ed. Paddy Lyons and Fidelis Morgan (London: Dent, 1991), 309.

40. The Lady's Last Stake, Colley Cibber: Three Sentimental Comedies, ed. Maureen Sullivan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 249.

41. Jeremy Collier, An Essay upon Gaming, in a Dialogue between Callimachus and Dolomedes (London: J. Morphew, 1713), 13, 17.

42. Rose A. Zimbardo, "Toward Zero/Toward Public Virtue: The Conceptual Design of Dramatic Satire Before and After the Ascension of William and Mary," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 12 (1988): 63.

43. The Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum: or His Companion for the Town (London: John Harris, 1699), 69.

44. Durfey, 9, 15. J. Douglas Canfield finds this play to be corrective: "On the eve of the Revolution . . . just as the aristocracy is about to lose control over at least the apex of the status hierarchy to the rising bourgeoisie--it is a satire on social climbing . . . [on] the complicity of the Country in its love affair with the Town and the Court" (*Tricksters & Estates: On the Ideology of Restoration Comedy* [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997], 229-230.

45. Holland, 33, 36. Holland describes "the retreat of comedy behind the proscenium arch" at the end of the century: "The picture stage becomes the norm for all drama" (29, 31).

46. The Wives' Excuse, The Works of Thomas Southerne, ed. Robert Jordan and Harold Love, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1: 274, 323, 324.

47. Southerne, The Maid's Last Prayer, Works, 1: 372, 379.

48. Hughes, 349.

49. The Beau Defeated, The Plays of Mary Pix and Catharine Trotter, ed. Edna L. Steeves, 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1982), 1: 11, 12, 14. Canfield discusses the play as post-Revolution comedy in "Dramatic Shifts: Writing an Ideological History of Late Stuart Drama," *Restoration & Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 6 (1991): 1-9.

50. Pix, The Different Widows, Plays of Pix and Trotter, 1:59, 3. Two other contemporary gamblers in need of reform in are Clarissa in Sir John Vanbrugh's

The Confederacy (1705) and Riot in Charles Johnson's The Wife's Relief (1711). 51. Cibber, 196, 257, 263.

52. Laura J. Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship, Literary Property* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 236, 232.

53. Cibber, 177. Cibber also uses a discovery scene in Act 2 of *The Careless Husband* (1704), exposing Lord Morelove and Sir Charles Easy in a game of piquet.

54. *The Ladies Library*... Written by a lady, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: J. Tonson, 1732),39.

55. The Gamester, The Dramatic Works of the Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, 3 vols. (London: John Pearson, 1872), 1: 162-163, 176, 182, 192.

56. The Basset Table, Female Playwrights of the Restoration, 242, 277, 244, 278, 283, 244.

57. Scott Black, "Social and Literary Form in the Spectator," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33 (1999): 23.

58. *The London-Spy Compleat, In Eighteen Parts*, intro. Ralph Straus (London: Casanova Society, 1924), 2, 163.

59. Tom Brown, Amusements Serious and Comical and Other Works, ed. Arthur L. Hayward (London: Routledge, 1927), 10, 53.

60. *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 1: 44; *The Tatler*, 2: 403; 1: 16, 128-129.

61. Shawn Lisa Maurer, Proposing Men: Dialectics of Gender and Class in the Eighteenth-Century English Periodical (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 75. While The Gentleman's Journal: or the Monthly Miscellany includes pieces critical of gambling, such as "The Witchcraft of Gaming" (May 1693), it does not use the rhetoric of spectacle.

62. Scott Paul Gordon, "Voyeuristic Dreams: Mr. Spectator and the Power of Spectacle," *The Eighteenth Century* 36 (1995): 6, 17.

63. Gordon, 7.

64. The Spectator, 2: 54; 3: 51, 181, 182; 4: 10-11.

65. *The Guardian*, ed. John Calhoun Stephens (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 448, 401, 402, 403. On Addison's and Steele's "refashioning of woman," see Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in The Tatler and The Spectator* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), especially pp. 104-143.

66. *Sir Harry Wildair, The Works of George Farquhar*, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1: 274, 276-277.

67. Two Dialogues: Of the Want of Respect due to Age and Concerning Education, intro. Martine Watson Brownley, Augustan Reprint Society Publication No. 227-228 (Los Angeles: Clark Library, 1984), 345.