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> *Let frailer Minds take Warning; and from Example learn,*
> *that Want of Prudence is Want of Virtue.*
> Edward Moore, *The Gamester*

By the 1750s, the popularity and regularity of social gaming had become a tangible concern for moralists, dramatists, and poets of the time. As the above quotation from Edward Moore's *The Gamester* shows, failure to guard against unwise behavior, specifically the failure to resist the temptation of gambling, signaled a lack of virtue in an individual. Moore's play is among the first British works to openly condemn this type of behavior, and several other literary works followed suit. By the 1770s, gaming was viewed as a sign of moral degeneracy and irresponsibility. Women, however, suffered far more than men for indulging in popular leisure activities. Despite the predominance of central male gamesters in popular drama, the prevalence of female gamesters excited even more social anxiety. Yet this concern differs from that for male gamesters; the inclination toward gaming in a woman signaled something far worse. Wagering and indulging in card play carried a stigma of promiscuity for women unparalleled by any moral censure men's play incurred.

The anti-gambling literature of the period returns again and again to the figure of the gambling woman, who was more problematic than her male counterpart. As Gillian Russell notes, addiction to gambling was represented as profoundly unnatural for a woman, not only a betrayal of social responsibilities and public reputation as in the case of men, but also of her body, her very femaleness (484). Russell cites notorious eighteenth-century gamester George Hanger, who claimed that the hours and feverish atmosphere of deep play not only

destroyed female beauty, but also inhibited a woman's fundamental duty—the production of children. Female gambling threatened the social order because it represented a rejection of women's domestic responsibilities as wives and mothers, reproducers of the patriarchal line (484). Hanger's comment illustrates the unequal criticism of female behavior that lies at the center of Russell's argument and is also crucial to the close reading of Frances Burney's novels presented here.

Frances Burney's novels are among the first literary works to attribute significant weight to the prevalent danger gaming posed to women from their social environment. The threat to female moral character through extravagance excites less notice than the more tangible menaces, like rape and abduction, in the eighteenth-century novel.[1] The ramifications of gaming have been denied sufficient attention from historical and feminist literary critics despite its conspicuous presence.[2] While Burney herself studiously avoided gaming tables despite their popularity, her detailed awareness of wagers came from first-hand knowledge. Drawing on the society around her, Burney explored the undermining social effects of gaming on the female through several heroines' adventures. In each of Burney's early novels, *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, and *Camilla*, different types of gaming appear; from simple foolhardy betting to serious card playing and die throwing, gaming is a constant looming presence. Her use of gaming as a plot device emphasizes her stern portrayal of character and defamation, a very real social concern in her time.

The usual morality tale detailed the perilous consequences that reckless love of gaming wrought among otherwise noble and upright men. Frances Burney expanded this focus to include women as central figures. Young women entering society without proper guidance also stood in danger of moral degeneracy and ruin, not just in the traditional sense of physical virtue, but through close proximity to gaming and games of chance that were considered entertainment. Expectations regarding the social carriage of young ladies did not allow for social gaming of any sort. Within the male-dominated social structure, women necessarily conformed to conservative and emphatically domestic roles, or else were ostracized as disreputable

and immoral.[3] The inherent good nature and moral strength of a woman did not guarantee an unblemished reputation; guilt by association with dangerous company could become a significant threat to character. Julia Epstein points out Burney's interest in "the period in which a young woman becomes quintessentially identified as marriageable . . . [as a] crucially liminal proving ground" (198). Social pressures, acceptable pastimes, and perilously naïve judgment all contributed to the rigors of survival for upper-class young ladies. Burney is among the first female authors of her time to address moral issues and behavior in unorthodox social situations and absolutely the first to incorporate gaming issues under the guise of the ladies' novel. By extending her view to the social disapproval and moral licentiousness associated with female gamesters, Burney exposes a genuine pitfall for young women entering society.

The connection between gaming and sexual imperilment for women is evident in early eighteenth-century stage productions. As Beth Kowaleski Wallace suggests in "A Modest Defense of Gaming Women," several early plays, including *The Basset Table* (1706), *The Lady's Last Stake* (1721), and *The Provoked Husband* (1728), deal with female reputation and the gaming tables (22). Even though Wallace is more interested in aristocratic contexts of gaming and "a class-bound anxiety about the derivations, disseminations, and ultimate destination of wealth," her exploration of the portrayal of female gamesters is valuable because it shows the continuation of Restoration moral concerns (22). Although the female characters in the aforementioned plays are married women, or women tricked into marriage through their reckless play at the tables, the threat to their reputations is still viable. For a direct treatment of gaming and degenerate literary gamers, we are limited to the abundant but dominantly male focused anti-gambling literature produced during the later eighteenth century. Numerous dramas written between 1760 and 1795 outline the moral, financial, and physical perils of the rampant gambling that enjoyed widespread popularity in eighteenth-century English life and theatre.[4] These plays generally confine themselves to the actions of the male central character and the wider effects of reputation and hardship on the men's families, specifically the wives and daughters who ultimately

bear the brunt of the financial and moral burden. Edward Moore's *The Gamester* (1768), Thomas Holcroft's *The Road to Ruin* (1792), and Frederick Reynolds' *Notoriety* (1793) all explore the devastation and degeneracy that gambling causes among decent families. The protagonists here are exclusively male, and while the reality of the female gamester is well documented in critical studies, notably Russell's "Faro's Daughters," her appearance in the popular novels and dramas in Burney's time is scant.[5]

As Russell indicates, the love of cards signified something far more malignant than reckless passion for play in women; it translated into a licentiousness and wanton behavior that branded the female player as a morally adulterated being (484). Men indulged in gaming at institutions such as White's and Brook's, which were sanctioned as venues of legitimate entertainment because of their status as unofficial social clubs of Parliament. This luxury was not available to women, however, who were limited to gambling in private houses, often under the pretext of a musical concert or an evening of amateur theatricals (484). In addition to cards, various social games of chance enjoyed popularity in everyday life; raffles, drawing straws, and horse or carriage racing, although not viewed with the same disapproving tone, involved the same principles and thrill of chance and the potentially rewarding financial speculation that card tables offered.

Frances Burney took this social norm and subtly introduced its plots into women's fiction, following its narratives in novels with female protagonists. Young women entering society without proper guidance stood in danger of moral degeneracy and ruin, not just in the traditional sense of physical violation, but through close proximity to gaming and dabbling in games of chance that members of the upper class patronized for entertainment. The threat to moral virtue, by no means a stranger to literary heroines, is taken into virgin territory through the misadventures of Burney's title characters. Although Burney's heroines never flagrantly indulge in these pastimes but rather are lured to them through mistaken judgment or careless association, they are the first heroines to narrate their perilous journey into society and show by their own faulty judgment the proper way to avoid unpleasant predicaments.[6]

In Burney's first novel *Evelina* (1778), women are primarily relegated to watching men gamble from the sidelines. Betting is a frequent conversation topic among the gentlemen and often the solution to a disagreement or speculation.[7] *Evelina* was written entirely from caricatures that Burney sketched from familiar acquaintances and friends and reflects the very real state of affairs during her own youth. Burney claimed to strive to show "the accidents & adventures to which a *'young woman'* is liable" in her first novel (*Evelina* 1). Yet at the same time Burney cleverly exposes the ridiculous behavior of the *ton*. Evelina's credulousness subjects her to some unorthodox situations from which she must protect herself without offending social customs or further risking her moral reputation. It is her close proximity to betting and games of chance that endanger her reputation and her marriageability. Evelina is the product of two generations of imprudence; she cannot claim her father's name or fortune and is forced to make her own way without the protection of a legitimate family name. Sheltered by her guardian, possessing no social position, Evelina is both wary of society and reluctantly drawn into it by friends of her deceased mother. Mr. Villars, her guardian since birth and a generous man, is called upon to surrender her into the hands of Lady Howard (friend of the deceased Caroline Belmont, Evelina's mother) and later to her extended family. Her experiences and actions mirror the prudent moral conduct expected from well-born ladies during this era.

Madame Duval, Evelina's maternal grandmother, has grand plans for the disposal of Evelina's fortune, which first necessitates forcing Belmont to acknowledge his paternity. These plans quite contradict the predestined courtship plot between Evelina and Lord Orville, a respected local landowner. While Evelina's character is certainly worthy of Orville's hand, the imprudent company she is exposed to causes some concern for her moral reputation. Evelina's proximity to wagering and racing is not least among these. Evelina renews her acquaintance on the journey with some rather showy and questionably honorable gentlemen and is exposed to their foolish and fanatical behavior. Their betting and racing is frequently among the topics in Evelina's descriptive epistles home. She is also thrown into company

with more refined company, including Lord Orville, who hovers unobtrusively around Evelina, presumably to monitor her progress in society. Mrs. Selwyn, however, proves a trustworthy and guarded companion. She preserves Evelina from undesirable company and provides a highly moral example to fortify Evelina's resolve against improper behavior. Despite being confronted with many improper and offensive situations, Evelina maintains her dignity and character and is rewarded with both name and husband at the end.

Evelina is witness to some extravagant betting. Burney paints the surrounding male characters at Hotwells as ridiculous and wasteful; they serve as poignant examples of the idle upper classes Burney sought to critique. Their actions and wagers border on ludicrousness (however humorous the wagers may be). The first example of such preposterous behavior stems from a discussion about a phaeton accident. Since gentlemen prided themselves on the style and speed of their carriages, mocking a man's phaeton was considered a grievous insult. Evelina's assistance is solicited in the settling of the course of the new race. All the ladies present decline to involve themselves by offering suggestions for resolution. Unable to pry a definitive opinion from any ladies present, Mr. Lovel strives to end the stalemate by "propos[ing], with a most important face, to determine the wager by who should draw the longest straw" (274). The ladies agree to draw straws to hasten the settling of the race. At first Evelina is amused by the entire situation. Later, she is dismayed when she is informed of the serious impropriety of her behavior and admits her concern with the whole event in a letter to Villars, telling him, "I had much difficulty to forbear laughing at this unmeaning scheme; but . . . since we came home, Mrs. Selwyn has informed me, that to *draw straws* is a fashion of betting by no means uncommon" (274). Evelina is vexed that she unconsciously participates in a form of betting and attempts to distance herself from further imprudent situations.

It is during this conversation that Evelina hears about the resolution to the bet she witnessed earlier. She tells her guardian in a letter about the event:

> I asked him how the bet was, at last, to be decided? [Orville] told me that, to his great satisfaction, the parties had been prevailed upon to lower the sum from one thousand to one hundred pounds; and that they agreed it should be determined by a race between two old women, one of whom was to be chosen by each side, and both were to be proved more than eighty years of age . . . . (277)

Although the wager is farcical and the amount of the bet seriously curtailed, the sum agreed upon is still an enormous amount of money by contemporary standards. Notably, the issue of dropping the wager completely is never mentioned, and the original issue moves from a "debt of honor" to pure sport. Evelina is appalled that the men are eager to squander their money in an absurd manner rather than use it for a service of some kind. She is not entertained by the mirthful events, and openly expresses her sentiments to Lord Orville, whose opinion she greatly respects.

Because the company one keeps influences reputation, the activities indulged in by Evelina's company reflect on her character as well as theirs. She must separate her personality from those around her and stand apart without offending them. Evelina must learn to share the refined condescension practiced by Lord Orville in order to distinguish herself from the fashionable town set. The outcome of the novel, which turns around an elaborate courtship-plot as all Burney's early novels do, is affected by the heroine's successful performance in society. Her ability to survive the rigors of social life and to maintain her moral virtue is rewarded with a well-mannered, wealthy husband.

In the last pages of the novel, Burney reiterates the dangers society offers to young women of marriageable age and good character. When commenting on the general behavior of society, specifically the society they have lately kept, Lord Orville expresses his antipathy for the amusements and actions of their recent company, saying that "The Bath amusements . . . have a sameness in them, which, after a short time, renders them rather insipid; but the greatest objection that can be made to the place, is the encouragement it gives

to gamesters" (377). Burney offsets this rather serious condemnation of social gaming with a humorous objection by one of the primary offenders of propriety in the novel:

> "Why, I hope, my Lord, you would not think of abolishing *gaming*," cried Lord Merton, "'tis the very *zest* of life! Devil take me if I could live without it."
>
> "I am sorry for it," said Lord Orville, gravely, and looking at Lady Louisa.
>
> "Your Lordship is no judge of this subject," continued the other; "but if once we could get you to a gaming-table, you'd never be happy away from it!" (377)

Orville's abstention and carefully articulated condemnation is presented as solid, respectable, and earnest. Evelina models her behavior and opinions on those she hears and sees from Orville.

Lord Orville marries Evelina at the end of the story, as Burney deems it necessary to reward the young woman for resisting the temptations of society. Orville provides everything Evelina lacks at the beginning of the novel: name, fortune, respectability, and most importantly, moral guidance for life. Having proved her own worthiness and purity, she is provided with a fitting and equally virtuous companion. Burney's most important lesson here is that only proper, modest behavior merits a successful and profitable marriage match. To indulge in behavior showing less than exemplary thought and breeding entails the threat of a match with an equally wasteful and foolish character. Indulging in idle gaming, for women, is tantamount to surrendering virtue. A worthy man would never consent to an alliance with a morally irresponsible wife. Evelina's forays into society serve as an example to young women readers how to conduct themselves in society if they wish to avoid ruin and ridicule.

Burney's second novel *Cecilia* presents a more developed character fully aware of the hazards of society. Although Cecilia is an heiress with an independent fortune, she must also learn through error and circumstance the evils of gaming. Despite her aversion to these habits,

the larger part of society she encounters plays card games on a daily basis. Cecilia lives with the Harrels during the months preceding her majority. Burney's criticism of this social set is illustrated through Cecilia's harsh treatment, despite her incorruptible character. She watches her guardians, a girlhood friend and her husband, ruin themselves financially and socially through gambling debts and bad management. She also suffers personal disappointment and social censure for her innocent connection to them. Cecilia's struggles are a pointed example of the dangers to reputation of which young ladies were susceptible.

Cecilia's primary deficit is her generous and trusting nature, which is repeatedly abused through the hands of friends. Burney gives this character all the properties of a well brought up young lady. Cecilia is the portrait of female delicacy, genuine Christian charity, and virtuous behavior. Armed with these advantages, Cecilia ventures into the city to take up her brief five-month residence with the Harrels and await her independence. As Thompson has pointed out, debt is the primary device Burney uses to disengage her heroines from civil society. Despite the best will in the world, her protagonists get themselves entrapped in financial crises from which they cannot extricate themselves (Thompson 158). Cecilia is no exception. Her guardians are engrossed with their dissipated lifestyle. Obliged to accompany the Harrels into society during her short residence with them, she suffers a loss of reputation through this association. She realizes she must separate herself from this imprudent living situation; however, during the time it takes her to complete this breach she is fleeced for part of her fortune. Her attempts to save her friends involve her with a moneylender, and consequently her reputation is tarnished as she is assumed to be an extravagant spender.

Mr. Harrel is one of the three guardians appointed by Cecilia's late uncle. Unlike the other custodians, Harrel was not chosen for his qualifications as an executor. Rather, his household was selected in deference to the girlhood friendship existing between Cecilia and his wife. With a view of her comfort in mind, the Harrels are entrusted with Cecilia's maintenance during the months before her independence. Although the first meeting between Cecilia and Mrs.

Harrel is tender and affectionate, it is quickly interrupted. The house is full of company and Cecilia is given no chance to rest, but she is drawn into the Harrels' frivolous social circle. The society Cecilia has entered is not at all like the quiet and peaceful rustic country life she left behind. Cecilia is shocked by the crowd gathered in the house and the obvious splendor of their setting and personal dress.

The earliest wagering in *Cecilia* occurs during this first social gathering, and its frivolousness highlights the shallow, insipid characters that make up the ton. Cecilia's healthy, fresh appearance so surprises the city residents that they cannot agree on whether her beauty is real or artificial:

> The men disputed among themselves whether or not she was painted; and one of them offering boldly that she *rouged well*, a debate ensued, which ended in a bet, and the decision was mutually agreed to depend upon the colour of her cheeks by the beginning of April, when, if unfaded by bad hours and continual dissipation, they wore the same bright bloom with which they were now glowing, her champion acknowledged that his wager would be lost. (23)

Although Cecilia herself is not privy to this puerile speculating, it sets the tone for the types of people and mannerisms that now confront Burney's heroine. While Cecilia accustoms herself to her new daily routine, she does not remain ignorant of the happenings in the house. She is continuously aware of the dissipation that seems to be spiraling out of control. Burney allows us to see into Cecilia's thoughts: "She was now no longer surprised either at the debts of Mr. Harrel, or of his *particular occasions* for money. She was convinced he spent half the night in gaming, and the consequences, however dreadful, were but natural" (143). It does not occur to her, however, that being merely associated with the Harrels taints her reputation.

Cecilia faces the Harrels' predictable financial catastrophe without surprise. Mr. Harrel, in dire financial distress after contracting a "larger debt of honour than he had any means to raise" (364), decides

to flee the country rather than face debtor's prison and social disgrace. The reality of their situation exposes a lack of respect and solidarity between Mr. and Mrs. Harrel; their mutual frustration is evident. Mrs. Harrel cannot conceive of the necessity of a life abroad, and Mr. Harrel angrily blames his wife's behavior as the cause of their pressing desperation:

> Mrs. Harrel, wholly unused to such treatment, was frightened into violent hysterics; of which, however, he took no notice, but swearing at her for *a fool who had been the cause of his ruin*, he left the room . . . Cecilia, whose reason was stronger, and whose justice was offended, felt other sensations. . . . the dreadful situation of the family made her forget she wanted it, but to deliberate upon what course she ought herself to pursue. (364–65)

Although Mr. Harrel is equally responsible for their gaming debts and extravagance, he blames both Mrs. Harrel's lack of economy and her indulgence in cards as the root of their woes.

In the throes of this drama, further indignity is heaped upon Cecilia. Mr. Harrel agrees to allow his wife to remain in England without him if Cecilia hastens her marriage to Sir Robert and takes Mrs. Harrel into her own house. Cecilia outrageously protests at the suggestion that she ever considered marrying Sir Robert. She then discovers that Mr. Harrel has been deceitfully encouraging her suitor with the promise of her hand by using his authority as Cecilia's guardian. Harrel was counting on a financial settlement for himself upon the marriage and subsequent transfer of her fortune to Sir Robert. With this odious turn in events, Cecilia makes haste to remove herself forever from the household by fleeing to Mrs. Delvile, wife of another of her guardians, for protection.

Cecilia takes to heart the moral lesson here; although the heroine herself is in no danger of succumbing to a dissolute and licentious lifestyle, she becomes an advocate against it. Finally wary where her reputation is concerned, Cecilia draws a firm line between her actions

and those of the Harrels. When Mrs. Harrel begs Cecilia to save her from social ruin, Cecilia replies:

> "With pleasure, with readiness, with joy . . . should you find assistance from me, were it to you alone it were given; but to supply fewel for the very fire that is consuming you—no, no, my whole heart is hardened against gaming and gamesters, and neither now or ever will I suffer any consideration to soften me in their favour." (381)

Cecilia realizes too late the damage her brief residence with the Harrels has caused her own reputation.

Her love interest, Mortimer Delvile, expresses disbelief and disapproval when her actions come to light, and subsequently doubts her worthiness as a future wife. The importance attached to her fortune is a bitter disappointment for Cecilia, particularly when the bulk of it is lost. Yet the manner in which it is lost is of paramount importance; when Delvile believes she freely contracted a moneylender to provide her with spending funds, he is convinced that her residence with the Harrels has irrevocably altered her character. Upon this knowledge Delvile, in love with Cecilia, distances himself to avoid a potentially embarrassing match. Only after the exposure of the Harrels' debts does Delvile realize the true cause of Cecilia's financial situation. Because she was unprepared for these hazards, her reputation suffers; bad management is not excused by a generous nature, and her deprivation of fortune and estate is attributed to want of guidance. Cecilia's troubles suggest that despite intelligence and modesty, the protection of a husband or father is a young lady's only hope against society's exigencies. With her marital hopes in young Mortimer Delvile dashed, she can only await the outcome of fate with a distant hope that her charitable intentions and generous nature speak for themselves against the malediction imposed on her character.

Cecilia's virtuous nature inevitably triumphs over the aspersions on her character. As is typical for heroines in Burney's early novels,

Cecilia (devoid of fortune) secures the hand of Mortimer Delvile and the sanction and love of his mother, her moral exemplar. Her follies with money, loans, and expenditures are excused under the forgivable heading of inexperience and credulousness. Despite the implied guilt of an avaricious society that preys upon Cecilia's generous character, the heroine herself is amply punished for her naïve ventures. She suffers the loss of her fortune, her uncle's estates, and her hoped for (but never realized) independence. She is compensated for her hard lesson with a loving husband and devoted mother-in-law and is absorbed into their family despite her inauspicious beginnings in society.

Burney pursues her analysis of gaming and moral peril even further in her third novel, *Camilla.* This work broadens the dangers to the heroine's moral worth by involving her in consistently bad financial situations. Unlike her predecessors, Camilla has the benefit of living parents and ample family from which to draw advice and support. Her forays into refined society differ from those of Evelina and Cecilia. Despite a protective and loving family, Camilla is easily susceptible to the whims and frivolities of her companions. The barrage of social situations she encounters present gaming in several covert ways that lead Camilla into dire financial straits. Her inability to resist persuasion and outright cajoling by those around her make her moral reputation vulnerable. It is not the literal cost of these mistakes that is weighed. Camilla's behavior among those more socially experienced, and her apparent conformity with the fashionable set, counts against her desirability as a bride. In order to maintain her worth and secure a husband, Camilla struggles to steer her reputation clear of that of the company she enjoys. At every turn, however, her "polite participation" is required to maintain her status and respectability in society.

The first example of social games of chance occurs fairly early in the form of a raffle for a locket. Initially Camilla shies away from the raffle; she is convinced to try her luck by her companions, the first of many such instances. Although Camilla feels that this type of social entertainment is morally wrong, she allows herself to be influenced. Her attempts at good sense are thwarted by the connivance of chance

and good intentions. The first lottery is followed by a second, and Camilla's extraordinary luck at winning both the necklace and a pair of expensive earrings creates a temporary, childish thrill for her. The prizes she collects outshine the doubts she had about participating and lessen the guilt she would have felt if she had not won. With the increased focus on pecuniary responsibility comes an increase in the frivolous participation in social games of chance. Not only is Camilla besieged by petty debts for clothing and social events, but the social entertainment that characterized everyday life drains her limited financial resources.[8] Moreover, the hazardous games and drawings that dominate the social scene are endorsed as refined entertainment and not considered by her parents, or others watchful of her conduct, as gaming. While Burney prefers to focus on incurring debt and the ramifications of a young girl lacking prudent economy, the groundwork for a moral repudiation of gaming is clearly present.

Having a close knit, loving family circle does not aid Camilla as she strays into the unfamiliar world of the sophisticate. As Epstein illustrates, Burney introduces "the language of the patriarch that Camilla must learn to translate, to speak herself, and finally, to erase. It is the rule book and conduct manual Evelina had lacked" (129). Even having this advice, however, Camilla is no better prepared than Evelina; indeed, Camilla's struggles with the economic and emotional social stresses are significantly more difficult.[9] The ultimate challenge, securing a marriage to a desirably wealthy and uprightly moral man, again serves as a framework for Burney's heroine. Camilla learns through the (temporary) loss of love and esteem of her love interest, Edgar Mandelbert, that her social behavior directly correlates to her worth as a bride.

The first raffle, for a locket set round with pearls, is Camilla's first gamble; she is not alone, as each of the ladies present throws in a half guinea. Although initially Camilla shies away from the raffle, Mrs. Arlbery convinces her to try her luck in the first of many such instances. Burney describes Camilla's hesitation:

> Camilla hung back, totally unused to hazard upon what was unnecessary the little allowance she had been taught

> to spend sparingly upon herself, that something might be always in her power to bestow upon others. . . . She knew not, however, till now, how hard to resist was the contagion of example, and felt a struggle in her self-denial, that made her, when she put the locket down, withdraw from the crowd, and resolve not to look at it again. . . . Camilla, though secretly blushing at what she felt was an extravagance, could not withstand this invitation: she gave her half guinea. (93-94)

Although Camilla feels that this type of entertainment is morally wrong, if for no reason than that the money could be more wisely spent, she allows herself to be influenced by temptation.

Later Camilla has qualms about her decision, which are made manifest when her group encounters a destitute family on the road. Her sister Eugenia and Edgar readily give money to the poor woman, and Camilla contributes a shilling. Edgar questions her mournful silence, and Camilla laments, "What my dear father would have said, had he seen me giving half a guinea for a toy, and a shilling to such poor starving people as these!" (98). Edgar, an astute monitor of Camilla's behavior throughout the novel for motives of his own, offers to retrieve her ill-spent money, soothing Camilla's guilty conscience for a time. She happily bestows her recovered half-guinea upon the unfortunate family encountered earlier. Neither her success in the drawing (from which Edgar did not actually withdraw her bid) nor the guilt she experienced in participating fortifies her against similar future entertainments. Mrs. Arlbery's congratulation uses language that reflects society's propensity for gaming. She tells Camilla, "I heartily wish you equally brilliant success, in the next, and far more dangerous lottery [marriage], in which, I presume, you will try your fate" (105). Clearly, the regularity of gaming for entertainment is an ever-present social context that cannot be avoided with ease.

While Camilla struggles with the social obligations that burden conscience, her brother Lionel runs riot and embroils the family in a scandal. Predictably this scandal involves gaming and enormous debts, as Burney sets Lionel up to be an example of bad moral

behavior for her heroine. In addition to contracting enormous debts at the gaming tables, Lionel extorts money from his ailing uncle under false pretenses to cover them. Lionel's consistently reprehensible behavior and spending habits, while causing his entire family grief, also fail to scare Camilla; she does not draw the parallel between his gaming and the social games of chance in which she, albeit hesitantly, indulges. A small part of Camilla's exposure to gaming and the consequences of behavior are connected to her brother's antics. Lionel fails to modify his aberrant conduct, and soon applies to his sister to aid him in securing more money, presumably for gaming debts. Camilla, knowing Lionel's previous propensity for misbehavior, agrees to solicit her uncle for some two hundred pounds that Lionel swears is of the utmost necessity. While her conscience is heavy with guilt on Lionel's behalf, her uncle Tyrold explains away the frivolous youthful escapades by telling her, "Don't be concerned, my dear . . . for there's no help for these things; though what the young boys do with all their money now-a-days, is odd enough, being what I can't make out. However, he'll soon be wiser, so we must not be too severe with him" (381). The view society held towards a young man's extravagance is unequal to the judgment of a woman's similar actions. Camilla's own behavior, related but far less extreme, later casts more serious aspersions on her moral worth.

While Camilla's halfhearted engagement in these lotteries is not in itself worthy of moral censure, her friendship with Mrs. Berlinton exposes her to some more pernicious vices. As Camilla is introduced into this higher social set, the petty games of chance give way to more extravagant types of betting. The faro tables bring excitement into her friend's house, and her unconcerned attitude about monetary losses, as well as a disregard for gossip and propriety, contributes to Mrs. Berlinton's declining social reputation. Although Camilla only observes these games, she participates in the hopes and disappointments of the players. Her reputation suffers by her residence in the house and her presence near the faro tables. Edgar Mandelbert, suitor and possessor of Camilla's heart, is severely disappointed at Camilla's choice of company. Edgar's doubts about Camilla's reputation are enflamed by mere circumstance and her own

want of judgment. Camilla's presence at the raffles and her taking turns at throwing the dice further compound Edgar's misguided notions of frivolity, lack of propriety, and failure of moral character. He assumes her behavior in society is indicative of her unworthiness as a bride and releases Camilla from their engagement.

Burney draws a fluent picture of the lure of the gaming tables through the restless and melancholy behavior of Mrs. Berlinton. Burney introduces Camilla's new friend to the reader with a rather pointedly detailed history:

> Mrs. Norfield, a lady whom circumstances had brought into some intimacy with Mrs. Berlinton upon her marriage, had endeavoured, from the first of her entrance into high life, to draw her into a love of play; not with an idea of doing her any mischief, for she was no more her enemy than her friend; but to answer her own purposes of having a Faro table under her own direction. She was a woman of fashion, as such everywhere received; but her fortune was small, and her passion for gaming inordinate. (685)

Introduced to such behavior and searching for some occupation to detain her from her invalid husband's presence, Mrs. Berlinton soon finds faro is her favorite pastime. The general opening of her house to a special set of high-stakes playing gamesters adds excitement and unpredictability to the monotony of her life, and quickly Mrs. Berlinton learns to appreciate the thrill of the game: "Moderation was the last praise to which Mrs. Berlinton had any claim; what she entered upon through persecution, in an interval of mental supineness, she was soon awake to as a pleasure, and next pursued as a passion" (686). Although Mrs. Berlinton is socially eminent and adored by the general populace, Burney uses her youth and unhappiness as a conduit for the easy indoctrination of ruinous behavior. While the constant lotteries are an introduction to gaming in *Camilla*, the card tables prove more treacherous and illustrate the center of Burney's critique of the lavish, wasteful lifestyles of the upper classes.

Mrs. Berlinton's naivete and her unsuccessful marriage, presumably common denominators in eighteenth-century society, make her vulnerable to morally degenerate behavior, which offers distraction from her unsatisfactory situation. Burney outlines Mrs. Berlinton's developing obsession:

> Her beloved correspondent was neglected; her favorite authors were set aside; her country rambles were given up; balls and the rooms were forgotten; and Faro alone engrossed her faculties by day. . . . She lost, as might be expected, as constantly as she played; but as money was not what she naturally valued, she disdained to weigh that circumstance; and so long as she had any to pay, resigned it with more grace than by others it was won. (686-7)

Mrs. Berlinton's childishly unconcerned attitude toward the monetary losses she sustains, as well as her disregard for the moral ramifications of play, threaten her respectable social reputation. While this behavior was certainly acceptable among the very rich, the more genteel scorned such wasteful habits.

Like Cecilia, Camilla fortifies herself against card playing and manages to remain aloof in spite of her surroundings. The narrator explains: "That Camilla was not caught by this ruinous fascination, was not simply the effect of necessity. Had the state of her finances been as flourishing as it was decayed, she would have been equally steady in this forbearance" (687). Although Camilla is entertained with the spirit of the business, she is convinced that the principles of staking money on play are wrong, and therefore cannot bring herself to play. Burney allows Camilla to protect herself from this vice with prudence:

> She looked on, therefore, with safety, though not wholly with indifference; she had too much fancy not to be amused by the spirit of the business, and was too animated not to take part in the successive hopes and fears of the several competitors; . . . what she was once

convinced was wrong she was incapable of practising. (687)

Despite her feelings toward and apprehensions of the faro tables, Camilla nonetheless remains a visible presence at these events, and as such her own reputation is linked at large with that of Mrs. Berlinton. Again as in *Cecilia*, this does not become an issue for Camilla until the damage has been done, and her purity of character must exonerate her from equal censure. At the time of her short residence with Mrs. Berlinton, however, her enjoyment at the merriment of company is overshadowed only by her realization of the substantial losses her friend suffers.

Only through Radcliffian dramatics, including a life threatening fever brought on by despair over her actions, is Camilla freed from the guilt that oppresses her. Her crimes are small when contrasted to those of her friend Mrs. Berlinton and even her brother Lionel, whose scandalous behavior at school brings disgrace and pecuniary hardship on the family. The lesson, however, serves as a forceful one to contemporary readers because of the realistic threat it presents. Exposed to social disgrace, driven out of society thinking she has lost the love of Edgar and the respect of her family, she is forgiven by both and restored to life, having learned thoroughly to despise gaming and social excesses.

Burney's novels enjoyed relatively widespread readership upon their publication. *Evelina* was more than well received; a writer for the *Critical Review* claimed that *Evelina*'s moral and literary merit "would have disgraced neither the head nor the heart of Richardson, and not only could but *should* be brought into the home" (quoted in Gonda 111). After Burney, popular nineteenth-century authors like Jane Austen and George Eliot continued to draw on the world of gaming, which was roundly condemned in Victorian literature. The moral incrimination of gaming remained unchanged, as did popular disapproval. Although these later novels continue to emphasize the importance of behavior through example, disreputable moral behavior and gaming addictions remained confined to men. Burney remains a

paradigm in the feminine literary world for exposing a social peril that endangered women's reputations as well as their fortunes.

NOTES

[1] Traditional novels of experience, made popular by authors Defoe, Richardson and Radcliffe, often outline the physical perils of their heroines, centering the danger to young women in unscrupulous men themselves (and by extension their actions). Although Defoe certainly incorporated gaming and its detrimental influence in *Roxana* and *Moll Flanders*, the heroines themselves were not impressionable girls but rather fallen women struggling for survival. While these novels were moderately feminist in their portrayal of social indignities and oppressions committed against the female sex, they by no means meant to portray realistic scenarios encountered by well-bred young women. Along different lines, Richardson's *Pamela* paints an exemplary model of virtue in his heroine, but the strength of her character is only challenged by her Master's sexual intimidation. His Clarissa fares far worse, obliged to throw herself on the mercy of the man who ruins her and rewarded for her experience with death. Radcliffe's gothic style, although toyed with in Burney's novels, is merely a stylistically popular backdrop to the more diverse and suspense riddled perils that confront her heroines. The equation between loose feminine morals and card play stretches further back into literary history; Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" incorporates this very notion with unmistakable (although farcical) clarity; a young, single woman indulging in gaming (however innocent) risked her moral virtue. Belinda understands the rules, but not the nature, of the game. Her desire to play, to risk her gold and challenge the male players, is rewarded with an inglorious victory. Although Belinda wins the card game, she loses a lock of hair, a symbol of her vanity and virtue. Pope's treatment of feminine virtue at risk from gaming is poignant, yet for more than a century following his poem, women remain relatively unimportant in the moral dramas penned by English authors.

[2] Conversely, modern studies of gambling in literature tend to focus on the economics of gaming in society, its direct connection to French social and literary traditions, and its contribution to the rise of Victorian morals and social mores. Contemporary studies, including Thomas Kavanagh's exploration of gaming as social practice in *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance* (1993), focus primarily on issues like monetary circulation and the influence of passion over the exercise of reason in French culture. Liz Bellamy's *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (1998) centers on the consideration of luxury as a vice in the context of increased wealth and economic strength in England. Neither devotes attention to the connections between morality, gaming, and the decline of personal reputation in literature.

[3] Several female authors tackle these constraints on behavior. Mary Wollstonecraft deals primarily with social inequalities and moral decay; Mary Hays broaches the less palatable reality of moral and physical violations by man and society against women. Meanwhile, by making concessions to polite taste in her references to current cultural events and personalities, Burney reached a much wider audience (Kraft 144).

[4] If gaming was viewed as a form of dissipation early in the century, the later eighteenth century saw another, more concrete reformation. In England, reformers sought to "guide society away from the urbanity, cosmopolitanism, deism and polite sociability of the early eighteenth century and towards the earnestness, sobriety, moral strictness, self-discipline and domesticity of the nineteenth century" (Roberts 118). Gaming stood at the center of these recognized dissolute habits; the common social practice and acceptability of gaming threatened the very civility of the genteel classes. The natural response to this return to moral values was a wave of reformist style literature in the literary marketplace. Philosophical texts abounded, concentrating on morality and politics, beliefs and authority, and critiqued the contemporary existence and often misapplied practice of these ideals. The novel took on a new, purposeful task: instructing contemporary society on acceptable, reformed social behavior and demonstrating through example the perils of licentious and immoral living. The movement was paralleled by a similarly motivated reformation in France.

[5] Exactly when the shift in attitude from perceiving gaming as irresponsible behavior to moral licentiousness began is difficult to pinpoint, but condemnation of gaming females is clearly evident by the 1770s. By the time Burney entered society, the prevalence and notoriety of gaming women had earned an independent space within the English social realm. Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, published in 1776, painted the reckless behavior of the Duchess of Devonshire and her cohorts in no uncertain terms; the habits of these wealthy women had become both scandalous and epic. As early as 1779 the debts of the Duchess and her high stakes playing friends were causing outrage; by 1792 the Duchess herself owed some 62,000 pounds (over 6 million dollars) in gaming debts (Russell 484). Such losses were unrivaled and created new concerns for the characters of gamesters. In 1792 a royal proclamation testifies to the rampant and disreputable reputation gaming had earned; George III's "Proclamation Against Vice" was issued as a result of the general alarm high stakes gaming raised (Russell 489).

[6] Julia Epstein explores the "sense of danger that motivates Burney's fictions" in her essay "Marginality in Frances Burney's Novels."

[7] The Book of Betting at White's shows the startling range of wagers made between gentlemen. From betting on the death of a Dowager Duchess to wagering on the time before an exchange of fire between French and British ships would occur, nothing appears to have been regarded as taboo for a bet.

[8] Debt is a central theme in Burney's *Camilla* and is presented in a more ordinary, individualized story of a young woman who gets in financial trouble by spending too much money. Burney continues to deal with decorum, female conduct, and propriety throughout the novel (Thompson 162). The added focus on public and private debt, however, deserves more attention. As Thompson points out, the "(male) financial debt in the public sphere is mirrored by (female) emotional excess in the private. Male characters such as Lionel [Camilla's brother] ruin themselves through monetary extravagance, and female characters such as Mrs. Berlinton [Camilla's friend] ruin themselves through emotional extravagance" (166). Successful

characters, as Thompson observes, learn to regulate their financial and emotional economies. Liz Bellamy points out, however, many eighteenth-century writers hailed luxurious spending as a symptom of increasing wealth and economic strength (Bellamy 22). The development of economic morality in Burney's novels attempts to fill the "ideological vacuum that resulted from the inapplicability of classical morality to the realities of a capitalist economic system" (23).

[9] When *Camilla* was published, Mr. Tyrold's sermon quickly became the best-known section of the novel and was reprinted separately. Julia Epstein cites this phenomenon as a result of the encoded social ethos in the father's advice, "not so much about conduct itself, but about the public interpretation of conduct" (Epstein 128). A similar sermon appeared in Radcliffe's 1794 *Mysteries of Udolpho*, received by the heroine Emily St. Aubert from her father. This similarity reflects Burney's familiarity with contemporary works and her knowledge of the popularity of such literary techniques.

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