WHETHER using force or ruse to break the stubborn faithfulness of a pair of lovers, the parents and rivals of fiction invariably count on the help of time. Once an initial wedge has been driven in, they seem to assume that the couple may be expected to grow further apart, to become susceptible to new interests, and possibly to submit to the alliance they first resisted. A fault can perhaps be seized upon and turned into a factor of estrangement between the lovers: a case in point is the potential distrust and jealousy of many heroes and heroines, Rebecca Rush's Emily and Kelroy, Cooper's Emily, Evremont in *The Hapless Orphan*, Imlay’s Arl—ton. There is in the severity and cunning of baffled authority or thwarted love some residual justification which the reader, as the author must be aware, is willing to make allowance for. This is not the case when sheer envy or malice causes the separation of the lovers: writer and reader must in such cases share the same detestation of the evildoers and think them capable of any crime. These sinister mischief-makers of fiction frequently appeal to the passion for gambling to rival the love and virtue which they resent. Hardly less a threat to domestic happiness than seduction, gambling is often paired with it in fiction, as a sort of personal union in the character of the villain. Three specimens of "gambling fiction" may here be examined. They have many features in common, though they vary in their emphasis on the addiction to gambling, the person of the gambler, or that of the unscrupulous instigator who first led him astray.

The extant second edition of *The Gambler, or Memoirs of a British Officer* (1802), which was published in Washington, might be taken for a reprint from an original English edition were it not for its introduction. In these opening pages the nar-
erator speaks in his own voice, implicitly praising the true hospitality of the democratic Americans, who judge a visitor on the strength of his personal merits and not, as the British are charged with doing, by his letters of introduction. He mentions that England has a strikingly large number of prisons and derives from this observation an unflattering estimate of the state of English society. There follow two confessions, gathered in the King’s Bench prison, from a gambler and a “prodigal.” The former relates with self-pitying pathos the steps of his fall, the ultimate cause of which, according to him, was the over-indulgence of his mother and the servants in charge of his education. There is little to interest us, with or without such a palliating circumstance, in this character who relapses again and again into ruinous gambling. Although never losing his sense of guilt and remorse, he is unable to change his conduct; and in his confession story he can only sentimentalize, first over his brokenhearted mother and sister, and finally over his wife and children starving in prison with him. A touch of originality, and a welcome relief from this pervasive self-pity, occurs in the interpolated story “The Prodigal” in the person of the hero-victim’s guardian. He is an oddity full of contradictions, who shows little leniency even when his spendthrift ward promises to reform: “Have heard of your distresses—must say you deserve it.—A gaol is the proper reward of extravagance.—Believe you are a great scoundrel. . . .” (p. 67). But though the guardian’s abruptness is refreshing, there is no indication that he is aware of his share of responsibility for his ward’s excesses, by having kept him in the dark concerning his expectations. Possibly, though, the bequest of his fortune to the prodigal and his wife is a gesture of atonement for his former sins of omission.

There are distinct parallels between The Gambler and St. Hubert; or, Mistaken Friendship (1800). St. Hubert, too, is spoiled by his mother and thus fails to develop at an early age the strength to withstand temptation; he temporarily reforms, but backslides under the auspices of a lady of perfectly good reputation. St. Hubert is as weak as the Gambler; his weakness causes his ruin, which involves those he loves best and whose trust he should be the last to betray. His wife is endowed with the neces-
sary amount of long-suffering patience but cannot help him. Both *The Gambler* and *St. Hubert* are tales of confession and repentance told shortly before the death of their confessors. St. Hubert’s experiences, which include the satisfaction of penance, are narrated in a relatively unencumbered style; in this the tale is superior to *The Gambler*. A further quality is to be found in the difference between the hero and other gamblers. St. Hubert’s weakness is differentiated into various aspects, one of which is his love of gambling and another his vanity. The latter attribute is exemplified at the same time as we are reminded of the hero’s genuine goodness: he feels he cannot openly approve of benevolence because to do so would expose him to his companions’ ridicule. Trying to keep pace with his associates’ ways leads him into matching Delaserre’s costly sprees; he then succumbs easily to the corrupt Delaserre’s efforts to drag him down to his own level of shame and dishonesty and progresses further to adultery, bankruptcy, and the desertion of his wife and child.

Whereas the Gambler drifts into error by his own self-indulgence, it takes a malicious influence to lead St. Hubert astray. “Mistaken friendship” similarly causes Leander’s downfall in *The Gamesters; or, Ruins of Innocence* (1805), by Caroline Matilda Warren (ca. 1787-1844). This novel uses an American setting, unlike the two other tales, and stresses its authenticity: the title page announces, “An original novel, founded in truth.” The story is to be a warning, a purpose reiterated in its concluding paragraph. This assertion was presumably indispensable because in *The Gamesters* the element of suicide is dealt with in a way that could appear theologically and morally equivocal. But Miss Warren’s villains are quite unambiguous, and by that standard her intent must have been clear. There is Ebbert, really a subordinate troublemaker designed to serve some mastermind’s purpose, such as the humiliation of Williamson by means of the seduction of his daughter Celestia or the undermining of Leander’s reputation and security. The chief villain, Edward Somerton, is driven to harm Leander very much as Delaserre corrupts St. Hubert, out of envy and a sense of inferiority. But he is given much greater scope than Delaserre to act upon his fiendish conceptions. Under a hypocritical mask of friendship he tests
Leander's steady virtue until he manages to make him "taste" gambling; in this he succeeds only in the last third of the novel when he tempts Leander rather implausibly under a camouflage of crudely sophistical arguments (chap. 22). The hero's yielding ominously suggests the dissolution of the moral order that is soon to become manifest: "The fatal blow was struck. The foundations of his virtue were sapped, and one after another they must moulder away, till the fair fabric of innocence totter on the brink of destruction" (p. 191). Somerton thereafter can devote all his energies to seducing Eliza, while Leander steeply descends into a constant repudiation of all the ways and values he has so far adhered to.

For unlike the Gambler and St. Hubert, Leander starts out under propitious auspices and with all the makings of incorruptible solidity. He has excellent parents; he returns from college with an outstanding record and "uncorrupted in his morals" (p. 3). Yet when tempted, Leander, too, falls, and this just after he has been rehabilitated after a merely supposed offense. As he lives up to the forebodings of our sententious author (p. 250), sinking past hope once his weakness has been made manifest, he illustrates the typical gambler's progress, which resembles the fate of the victim of seduction: if their apparent invulnerability can be violated, they are caught in a sequel of misdeeds, involving also those intimately connected with them. The act of suicide epitomizes the desperateness of their state; Eliza is probably saved from killing herself, as Leander and the seduced Celestia do, only because she goes mad: "Nature struggled, reason tottered, and could not maintain her dominion, and Eliza is a maniac" (p. 288). Both Celestia and Leander succumb to malicious betrayers. But whereas the girl's only crime before her suicide consists in passively yielding to her love, Leander accumulates acts of weakness and is crudely inconsiderate of his family: he obviously attempts to shift on to others the responsibility for his wrongdoings, once even contemplating murder (p. 280). Yet for Leander no less than for Celestia (whose very name suggests salvation), Miss Warren equally claimed God's mercy. The late eighteenth-century clash between orthodox beliefs within the strict Calvinist tradition and liberal views is re-
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reflected in the opinions of the author and her critics.\textsuperscript{12} Leander benefits from his reliance on a remnant of faith (pp. 277, 294, 297); and, being a victim, he is contrasted with the conventional "pure" villain, one of whose distinctive marks is his rejection of any transcendent belief.\textsuperscript{12} The virtuous characters instinctively perceive the divine creative power in the beauty of the creation (p. 24). They are sensitive to religious feelings, which is a specific manifestation of their pure and spontaneous emotional responses; Somerton and Ebbert, for example, have deliberately dulled themselves to displays of genuine feeling. There is a high emotional charge in many passages of grief and joy in Miss Warren's novel. An early instance of it, emphasized by the diction adopted, occurs in connection with the death of Leander's mother:

The husband of her affection stood in the bending attitude of affectionate solicitude, watching her languid features, her hand clasped affectionately in both of his. He pressed it to his lip; a tear fell on it. Precious drop! it flowed from the chrystal fount of sensibility! Leander gazed in silent grief on her pallid countenance; and his beautifully expressive eyes shone with added lustre through the tears that suffused them. (p. 4)

The comments on seduction (p. 244), as well as the dark predictions about Leander's inevitable doom, furnish other opportunities for sentimental dramatizing. Scenes of love are enhanced by settings with a reflecting mood (pp. 9-10), also serviceable in order to give impressions of "pleasing melancholy" (p. 24).

The entirely conventional manner goes hand in hand with the use of familiar plot devices and characters. There is, for instance, the threadbare plan for a "sham marriage, sham certificate, sham clergyman" (p. 145), whose intended victim conveniently falls into a swoon when she discovers with whom she is running away from home. The pedant Christopher Dilemma appears borrowed from the stage; so does the figure of a maid who describes her meeting with Dilemma and whose speech is meant to indicate ignorance, superstition, and a lack of discrimination between true and affected feelings (p. 117). Comic relief is achieved by means of a type-character of a related sort: Tom
Tarpaulin, whose figurative language is inspired by his calling (p. 159). As Miss Warren's style is imitative, it is perhaps not inappropriate that her characters should be conscious of literary parallels. The sixteen lines which Leander carves, with no apparent trouble, into the bark of a tree, are painfully artificial, in the manner of much minor versifying of the age (p. 71); clichés and well-worn figures of speech abound. So do emphatically expressed states of mind, like Williamson's when he meets Celestia's seducer (p. 240), and self-consciously reticent phrasings, as when Somerton seduces Eliza: "Suffice it to say, the setting sun threw his last rays on the tops of the trees; they shone not on the virtuous Eliza" (p. 268). In another sense Miss Warren was explicit when she had better have left certain things unsaid. Thus her early sketch of Somerton's character informs the reader so fully that it nearly robs the plot of any possibility of suspense.

The lack of suspense, however, derives from another flaw of The Gamesters, a flaw connected with the didactic zeal of Miss Warren and similar writers and understandably alarming to those who objected to the whole genre of the novel. Amelia, the perfect heroine, has hardly been mentioned in this discussion of Miss Warren's novel. This is no coincidence: it reflects the ineffectual nature of the "good" characters which is felt throughout the book. The plotters' schemes, too early outlined, are assured of a maximum of effectiveness. Celestia, Leander, Eliza must fall, they are so easily isolated from their friends by their antagonists. In the face of such functional neutralizing of the positive forces for the sake of the explicitness of the story and its moral, the apology for suicide is not so much irreverent as distressingly irrelevant; and the reader may well wonder who in such a world is likely to escape its temptations. Nor are we reassured by the reward granted to Amelia's patience or the presumably promising match between Harriot and Lorenzo, since in the world which these survivors inhabit, consistency is apparently to be found only among the villains. None of Miss Warren's methods of elaboration and relief, whether structural, topical, or stylistic, could compensate for the weaknesses of a work of fiction established on such a basis.
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1. The villain is moreover often addicted to drinking, a failing that was to become a staple topic of fiction later, in the temperance novel.
3. Cf. the guardian’s refusal to accept his ward’s thanks (p. 70).
4. Allibone has two relevant entries: it lists under Warren not the original Boston edition of The Gamesters (here referred to) but an 1806 London edition entitled Conrade, or The Gamesters (3:2587), and under Miss Warren’s married name, Thayer, her later tract Religion recommended to Youth (3:2382).
5. Having seduced Celestia, Ebbert writes her a cynical parting letter: “I shall always remember Celestia with pleasure, but the lady with whom I would unite my future destiny, must possess unconquerable virtue” (p. 80).
6. We are told that “his heart delighted in the ruins of innocence” (p. 16); his envious feelings are “similar to those of the Prince of Pandemonium, when he beheld the first created pair, in the garden of Eden” (p. 99). Cf. Ebbert’s admiration of Somerton’s remorselessness (p. 131).
7. Somerton is as clumsy in his first attempt to poison Leander’s sense of Amelia’s purity (chap. 5).
8. The reviewer of the Boston Magazine (no. 7 [Dec. 7, 1805], p. 26), thought it highly improbable that the almost perfect Leander could have been corrupted by Somerton.
9. Doubts are voiced in The Art of Courting, St. Hubert, Glencarn, and The Champions of Freedom about the influence of university contacts on the individual student’s moral character.
10. A career similar to Leander’s was outlined by Eliphalet Nott: “He commences with play; but it is only for amusement. Next he hazards a trifle to give interest, and is surprized when he finds himself a gainer by the hazard. He then ventures, not without misgivings, on a deeper stake. That stake he loses. The loss and the guilt oppress him. He drinks to revive his spirits. His spirits revived, he stakes to retrieve his fortune. Again, he is unsuccessful, and again his spirits flag, and again the inebriating cup revives them. Ere he is aware of it, he has become a drunkard, he has become a bankrupt. Resource fails him. His fortune is gone; his character is gone; his tenderness of conscience is gone. God has withdrawn his spirit from him. The demon of despair takes possession of his bosom; reason deserts him. He becomes a maniac; the pistol or the poignard close the scene, and with a shriek he plunges, unwept and forgotten, into hell” (The Addresses delivered... at the Anniversary Commencements in Union College, pp. 193-94).
11. Having stressed that according to the Bible Leander must be damned, Miss Warren added, “Yet we are assured, that the Author of our existence is ‘able to save, even to the uttermost’” (p. 208). The Monthly Register credited Miss Warren with good intentions but held her novel to be a plain apology of suicide (Vol. 1, ii, no. 7 [1806]: 193-201). The Boston Magazine (no. 8 [Dec. 14, 1805]:30) suggested the book might serve as a deterrent by arousing “fears of being treated as a suicide.”
12. “There is no future world! and death—is an eternal sleep” (p. 131, Ebbert to Somerton).
13. There are similar sailors in Margaretta, The Asylum, Adelaide, and, of course, The Pathfinder.
14. See the references to Mackenzie (pp. 54-55), and the stage heroine who reminds Leander of his beloved Amelia (chap. 28).
15. A sonnet of Leander is given on pp. 177-78. Within a few lines Leander says, "I was basking in the sunshine of bliss, and sipped the sweet nectar of love," and "All around me was one gilded scene of innocent enjoyment" (p. 294). Another typical cliché is "to barb the arrows of affliction" (p. 166).

16. See also p. 284, and the reference to the seduction of Celestia (p. 78).

17. What are we to make of the possibly dubious source of the money left to provide for the little Alonzo?

18. The Williamson story (chaps. 8, 10, 29) was praised in the *Boston Magazine* (Dec. 7, 1805, p. 26). Chapter 22 is a chapter of climaxes: the moving visit to the house of Leander’s father, the announcement that he is to be his own master, Somerton’s appearance and his success in paving the way for Leander’s first visit to a gaming house. Chapters 25 and 26 are strongly contrasted: the peaceful evening walk is followed by Leander’s first taste of gambling.

19. See the remarks on education (pp. 3, 29, 166, 304); writing as a profession (p. 92); partisan newspaper editing (p. 93); party strife (chap. 9).

20. Her use of the comic, the sentimental, and the melodramatic mood and manner has been variously illustrated in the preceding pages.

21. The *Monthly Anthology* described *The Gamesters* as the "most puny" among the "ephemerae" of fictional writing and wondered at its success (2[December, 1805]:669-70); if the book was really "run after" with "avidity," one is tempted to suppose that it received some publicity independent of its literary merit. The *Boston Magazine* (December 14, 1805, p. 30) raised objections against Miss Warren’s style, but was inclined to leniency, on the grounds of the author’s youth and good intentions. To Quinn, *Fiction*, the novel represents a climax of absurdity (p. 22). For its topic, cf. also Parson Weems’s pamphlet, *God’s Revenge Against Gambling*, with its suggestive title page.