



Dice, Cards, Wheels: A Different History of French Culture

By Thomas M. Kavanagh

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1.2in. Gambling has been a practice central to many cultures

throughout history. In Dice, Cards, Wheels, Thomas M. Kavanagh

scrutinizes the changing face of the gambler in France over a

period of eight centuries, using gambling and its representations

in literature as a lens through which to observe French culture.

Kavanagh argues that the way people gamble tells us something

otherwise unrecognized about the values, conflicts, and cultures

that define a period or class. To gamble is to enter a world

traced out by the rules and protocols of the game the gambler

plays. That world may be an alternative to the established order,

but the shape and structure of the game reveal indirectly hidden

tensions, fears, and prohibitions. Drawing on literature from the

Middle Ages to the present, Kavanagh reconstructs the figure of

the gambler and his evolving personae. He examines, among

other examples, Bodels dicing in a twelfth-century tavern for the

conversion of the Muslim world; Pascals post-Reformation

redefinition of salvation as the gamblers prize; the aristocratic

libertines celebration of the bluff; and Balzacs, Barbey

dAurevillys, and Bourgets nineteenth-century revisions of the

gambler....



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Reviews

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