As a group of gentlemen discuss fashionable masculine pastimes in Frances Burney’s third novel, *Camilla* (1796), an Irishman named Macdersey defends himself against their assumption that because he has expressed superlative passions for women, wine, and hunting (declaring each is “the first pleasure in life”), he doesn’t care for cards, dice, or betting:

Why what do you take me for, gentlemen? ... Do you think I have no soul? no fire? no feeling? Do you suppose me a stone? a block? a lump of lead? I scorn such suspicions; I don’t hold them worth answering. I am none of that torpid, morbid, drowsy tribe. I hold nobody to have an idea of life that has not rattled in his own hand the dear little box of promise. What ecstasy not to know if, in two seconds, one mayn’t be worth ten thousand pounds! or else without a farthing! how it puts one on the rack! There’s nothing to compare with it. I would not give up that moment to be sovereign of the East Indies! no, not if the West were to be put into the bargain. (480)

If the gambler's experience is that of discrete episodes, as I argue in Chapter 2, Macdersey offers us a vivid description of what makes each episode so compelling. In Macdersey’s account, the gambler is not merely a greedy man trying to make money easily. Rather, he gambles to experience a particular type of emotion, and to express his identity as a man of feeling who appreciates such emotions. As Macdersey describes it, the emotional ecstasy of gambling does not come from the big win, as non-gamblers might assume. Instead, the pleasure and purpose of gambling is in the precise moment when the dice are out of the cup, in the air, not yet on the table, when the gambler imagines all possible
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outcomes at once. Macdersey claims he would rather experience that sublime moment when he is simultaneously anticipating both extreme outcomes, great fortune or ruination, than to have vast colonial holdings in his actual possession. Macdersey courts in gambling a Burkean sublime imaginative encounter with the possibilities both of the vast heights of a huge win (£10,000 on one throw) and of the depths of financial ruin. Edmund Burke explains in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) that “Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime” just as “whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (66, 36). For the sublime gambler, the purpose of gambling is not to acquire wealth, but to experience this vertiginous ecstatic moment when all possible outcomes are imagined and felt at once. This is the romance of gambling. To appreciate, to revel in this sublime moment, defines the man of feeling, shows that he has “soul,” “fire,” “feeling,” rather than being a “stone,” “block,” or “lump of lead.” Indeed, the sublime moment before the outcome of a wager is known, according to Macdersey, is the very “idea of life” itself!

In this chapter, I examine two types of men who use gambling to define their status as men of feeling: the sublime gambler, who revels in the multiple simultaneous possibilities of the ecstatic gambling episode, and the sentimental gambler, who wagers to show that his real feelings are spent elsewhere, that he cares for people, not money. Like Charles II tossing the dice, when sublime and sentimental gamblers place their bets their gambling is both non-productive (displaying status) and productive (interacting with an economy founded on gambling). Both types of gambling men of feeling demonstrate ongoing productive tension between gambling and capitalism. Although the state continued to run public lotteries throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, the discursive separation of public credit and gambling meant that gambling came to be associated with the economy of private credit whose expansion was underwritten by public credit. There continue to be occasional moments, such as the critique of the Royal Exchange in Sarah Fielding’s *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), in which we are reminded of finance capital’s links to gambling. But by and large, when gambling becomes primarily a concern of the private sphere, it becomes intimately connected with the ways people thought not about public credit and the national debt, as earlier in the century, but about the