The Promise of Happiness

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For Audre Lorde

For teaching me so much about everything
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INTRODUCTION

Why Happiness, Why Now?

Happiness is consistently described as the object of human desire, as being what we aim for, as being what gives purpose, meaning and order to human life. As Bruno S. Frey and Alois Stutzer argue, "Everybody wants to be happy. There is probably no other goal in life that commands such a high degree of consensus" (2002: vii). What they are describing is perhaps a consensus that happiness is the consensus. Do we consent to happiness? And what are we consenting to, if or when we consent to happiness?

Even a philosopher such as Immanuel Kant, who places the individual’s own happiness outside the domain of ethics, argues that "to be happy is necessarily the wish of every finite rational being, and this, therefore, is inevitably a determining principle of its faculty of desire" ([1788] 2004: 24). And yet Kant himself suggests rather mournfully that "unfortunately, the notion of happiness is so indeterminate that although every human being wishes to attain it, yet he can never say definitely and consistently what it is that he really wishes and wills" ([1785] 2005: 78). If happiness is what we wish for, it does not mean we know what we wish for in wishing for happiness. Happiness might even conjure its own wish. Or happiness might keep its place as a wish by its failure to be given.
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Happiness: a wish, a will, a want. In this book I wonder what it means for happiness to be thought in such terms. The question that guides the book is thus not so much "what is happiness?" but rather "what does happiness do?" I do not offer a definition of happiness, or a model of authentic happiness. Nor do I offer a set of instructions on how to achieve happiness: I do not have one to offer, and if anything I write from a position of skeptical disbelief in happiness as a technique for living well. I am interested in how happiness is associated with some life choices and not others, how happiness is imagined as being what follows being a certain kind of being. The history of happiness can be thought of as a history of associations. In wishing for happiness we wish to be associated with happiness, which means to be associated with its associations. The very promise that happiness is what you get for having the right associations might be how we are directed toward certain things.

Happiness shapes what coheres as a world. In describing happiness as a form of world making I am indebted to the work of feminist, black, and queer scholars who have shown in different ways how happiness is used to justify oppression. Feminist critiques of the figure of "the happy housewife," black critiques of the myth of "the happy slave," and queer critiques of the sentimentalization of heterosexuality as "domestic bliss" have taught me most about happiness and the very terms of its appeal. Around these specific critiques are long histories of scholarship and activism which expose the unhappy effects of happiness, teaching us how happiness is used to redescribe social norms as social goods. We might even say that such political movements have struggled against rather than for happiness. Simone de Beauvoir shows so well how happiness translates its wish into a politics, a wishful politics, a politics that demands that others live according to a wish. As she argued: "It is not too clear just what the word happy really means and still less what true values it may mask. There is no possibility of measuring the happiness of others, and it is always easy to describe as happy the situation in which one wishes to place them" (1949, 1997: 28; second emphasis added). I draw on such critiques of happiness as a way of asking questions about the happiness wish. We need to draw on such critiques now, as a way of responding to the worldliness of this now. Why happiness, why now? We could certainly describe this now as a "happiness turn." The Promise of Happiness is written in part as a response to this turn.
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The Happiness Turn

What do I mean by "the happiness turn"? It is certainly the case that numerous books have been published on the science and economics of happiness, especially from 2005 onward. The popularity of therapeutic cultures and discourses of self-help have also meant a turn to happiness: many books and courses now exist that provide instructions on how to be happy, drawing on a variety of knowledges, including the field of positive psychology, as well as an (often Orientalist) readings of Eastern traditions, especially Buddhism. It is now common to refer to "the happiness industry": happiness is both produced and consumed through these books, accumulating value as a form of capital. Barbara Gunnell (2004) describes how "the search for happiness is certainly enriching a lot of people. The feel-good industry is flourishing. Sales of self-help books and CDs that promise a more fulfilling life have never been higher."

The media are saturated with images and stories of happiness. In the UK, many broadsheet newspapers have included "specials" on happiness and a BBC program, The Happiness Formula, was aired in 2006. This happiness turn can be described as international; you can visit the "happy plant index" on the World Wide Web and a number of global happiness surveys and reports that measure happiness within and between nation states have been published. These reports are often cited in the media when research findings do not correspond to social expectations, that is, when developing countries are shown to be happier than overdeveloped ones. Take the opening sentence of one article: "Would you believe it, Bangladesh is the happiest nation in the world! The United States, on the other hand, is a sad story: it ranks only 46th in the World Happiness Survey." Happiness and unhappiness become newsworthy when they challenge ideas about the social status of specific individuals, groups, and nations, often confirming status through the language of disbelief.

The happiness turn can also be witnessed in changing policy and governance frameworks. The government of Bhutan has measured the happiness of its population since 1972, represented as Gross National Happiness (GNH). In the UK, David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative party, talked about happiness as a value for government, leading to a debate in the media about New Labour and its happiness and "social well-being" agenda. A number of governments have been reported to be introducing happiness and well-being
as measurable assets and explicit goals, supplementing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with what has become known as the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI). Happiness becomes a more genuine way of measuring progress; happiness, we might say is, the ultimate performance indicator.

Unsurprisingly, then, happiness studies has become an academic field in its own right: the academic journal *Happiness Studies* is well established and a number of professorships in happiness studies now exist. Within academic scholarship, we have witnessed a turn to happiness within a range of disciplines, including history, psychology, architecture, social policy, and economics. It is important to witness this turn, reflecting not simply on happiness as a form of consensus but on the consensus to use the word *happiness* to describe something.

Some of this work has been described under the rubric of "the new science of happiness." This is not to say that the science of happiness is itself new; many of the key texts in this area offer revivals of classical English utilitarianism, in particular, the work of Jeremy Bentham with his famous maxim of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number." As Bentham explains in *A Fragment of Government* "it is the greatest happiness of the greater number that is the measure of right and wrong" ([1776] 1988: 3). Bentham is himself drawing on an earlier tradition, including the work of David Hume as well as Cesare Beccaria and Claude Adrien Helvétius. The science of happiness shares a history with political economy: just recall Adam Smith’s argument in *The Wealth of Nations* that capitalism advances us from what he might call "miserable equality" to what we could call "happy inequality" such that "a workman, even of the lowest and poorest order, if he is frugal and industrious, may enjoy a greater share of the necessaries and conveniences of life than it is possible for any savage to acquire" ([1776] 1999: 105).

Of course, nineteenth-century utilitarianism involves an explicit refutation of such a narrative, in which inequality becomes the measure of advancement and happiness. Bentham, following Alexander Wedderburn, describes the principle of utility as dangerous for government: "a principle, which lays down, as the only right and justifiable end of Government, the greatest happiness of the greatest number—how can it be denied to be a dangerous one? dangerous to every Government, which has for its actual end or object the greatest happiness of a certain one" ([1776] 1988: 59). Despite this belief that every person’s happiness should count equally (the happiness of many refuses to elevate the
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happiness of any one), the utilitarian tradition did uphold the principle that increased levels of happiness function as a measure of human progress. Émile Durkheim offered a forceful critique of this principle: “But in fact, is it true that the happiness of the individual increases as man advances? Nothing is more doubtful.” ([1893] 1960: 241)

One of the key figures in the recent science of happiness is Richard Layard, often referred to as "the happiness tsar" by the British media. Layard’s important book Happiness: Lessons from a New Science, first published in 2005, begins as a critique of the discipline of economics for how it measures human growth: “economics equates changes in the happiness of a society with changes in its purchasing power” (ix). Layard argues that happiness is the only way of measuring growth and advancement: “the best society is the happiest society.” One of the fundamental presumptions of this science is that happiness is good, and thus that nothing can be better than to maximize happiness. The science of happiness presumes that happiness is “out there,” that you can measure happiness and that these measurements are objective: they have even been called “hedonimeters” (Nettle 2006: 3).

If the science of happiness presumes happiness as being “out there,” then how does it define happiness? Richard Layard again provides us with a useful reference point. He argues that “happiness is feeling good, and misery is feeling bad” (5). Happiness is “feeling good,” which means we can measure happiness because we can measure how good people feel. So “out there” is really “in here.” The belief that you can measure happiness is a belief that you can measure feelings. Layard argues that “most people find it easy to say how good they are feeling” (13). Happiness research is primarily based on self-reporting: studies measure how happy people say they are, presuming that if people say they are happy, they are happy. This model both presumes the transparency of self-feeling (that we can say and know how we feel), as well as the unmotivated and uncomplicated nature of self-reporting. If happiness is already understood to be what you want to have, then to be asked how happy you are is not to be asked a neutral question. It is not just that people are being asked to evaluate their life situations but that they are being asked to evaluate their life situations through categories that are value laden. Measurements could be measuring the relative desire to be proximate to happiness, or even the relative desire to report on one’s life well (to oneself or others), rather than simply how people feel about their life as such.
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It matters how we think about feeling. Much of the new science of happiness is premised on the model of feelings as transparent, as well as the foundation for moral life. If something is good, we feel good. If something is bad, we feel bad. The science of happiness thus relies on a very specific model of subjectivity, where one knows how one feels, and where the distinction between good and bad feeling is secure, forming the basis of subjective as well as social well-being. Cultural studies, as well as psychoanalysis, may have an important role to play in these debates by offering alternative theories of emotion that are not based on a subject that is fully present to itself, on a subject that always knows how it feels (see Terada 2001). Cultural and psychoanalytic approaches can explore how ordinary attachments to the very idea of the good life are also sites of ambivalence, involving the confusion rather than separation of good and bad feelings. Reading happiness would then become a matter of reading the grammar of this ambivalence.

Happiness research does not simply measure feelings; it also interprets what it measures. Measuring happiness primarily generates knowledge about the distribution of happiness. Happiness research has produced databases that show where happiness is located, which are largely predicated on a comparative model. Happiness databases show us which individuals are happier than others, as well as which groups, or nation-states are happier than others. The science of happiness makes correlations between happiness levels and social indicators, creating what are called “happiness indicators.” Happiness indicators tell us which kinds of people have more happiness; they function not only as measures of happiness but also as predictors of happiness. As Frey and Stutzer argue in *Happiness and Economics*, social indicators can predict how happy different kinds of persons will be, creating what they call “happiness psychograms” (2002: 7).

One of the primary happiness indicators is marriage. Marriage would be defined as “the best of all possible worlds” as it maximizes happiness. The argument is simple: if you are married, then we can predict that you are more likely to be happier than if you are not married. The finding is also a recommendation: get married and you will be happier! This intimacy of measurement and prediction is powerful. The science of happiness could be described as performative: by finding happiness in certain places, it generates those places as being good, as being what should be promoted as goods. Correlations are read as causalities, which then become the basis of promotion. We promote what l
call in the first chapter "happiness-causes," which might even cause happiness to be reported. The science of happiness hence redescribes what is already evaluated as being good as good. If we have a duty to promote what causes happiness, then happiness itself becomes a duty. I will explore the significance of "the happiness duty" throughout this book.

This is not to say that happiness is always found. Indeed, we might even say that happiness becomes more powerful through being perceived as in crisis. The crisis in happiness works primarily as a narrative of disappointment: the accumulation of wealth has not meant the accumulation of happiness. What makes this crisis "a crisis" in the first place is of course the regulatory effect of a social belief: that more wealth "should" make people happier. Richard Layard begins his science of happiness with what he describes as a paradox: "As Western societies have got richer, their people have become no happier" (2005: 3). If the new science of happiness un couples happiness from wealth accumulation, it still locates happiness in certain places, especially marriage, widely regarded as the primary "happiness indicator" (see chapter 2), as well as in stable families and communities (see chapter 4). Happiness is looked for where it is expected to be found, even when happiness is reported as missing. What is striking is that the crisis in happiness has not put social ideals into question and if anything has reinvigorated their hold over both psychic and political life. The demand for happiness is increasingly articulated as a demand to return to social ideals, as if what explains the crisis of happiness is not the failure of these ideals but our failure to follow them. And arguably, at times of crisis the language of happiness acquires an even more powerful hold.11

Positive Psychology

Given that this new science rests primarily on self-reporting, it involves an important psychological dimension. Within psychology, we can also witness a happiness turn. Much of this work is described as "positive psychology," which begins as an internal critique of the discipline. Michael Argyle argued that "most work on emotions in psychology has been concerned with anxiety, depression and other negative states" (1987: 1). Or as the editors of the volume Subjective Well-Being argue, following Ed Diener, "Psychology has been preoccupied less with the conditions of well-being, than with the opposite: the
determination of human unhappiness” (Strack, Argyle, and Schwarz 1991: 1).
While the science of happiness “corrects” the tendency of economics to focus on economic growth at the expense of happiness, the psychology of happiness “corrects” the tendency of psychology to focus on negative feeling states at the expense of happiness.

We can start with Michael Argyle’s classic The Psychology of Happiness (1987). He defines the project of his book as follows: “This book is primarily concerned with the causes and explanations of positive happiness, and how our understanding of it can be used to make people, including ourselves, happy” (1). We can immediately see how happiness becomes a disciplinary technique. Positive psychology aims to understand “positive happiness”—by providing explanations of its causes—as well as to use this knowledge about happiness to create happiness. Positive psychology aims to make people happier. Positive psychology is positive about positive feeling; it presumes the promissory nature of its own object.

At one level, this seems a wise counsel. Surely, feeling better is better, and we all want to feel better? Surely, all knowledge should be transformative and predicated on an impulse to improve life worlds and capacities for individuals? What is at stake here is a belief that we can know “in advance” what will improve people’s lives. Making people happier is taken up as a sign of improvement. The very “thing” we aim to achieve is the “thing” that will get us there. Positive feeling is given the task of overcoming its own negation: feeling positive is what can get us out of “anxiety, depression and other negative states” (1). To feel better is to be better—positive psychology shares this presumption with the economics of happiness. Here there is a stronger argument: to feel better is to get better.

Argyle relies on self-reporting as an objective measure of the subjective: “We shall rely to a large extent on subjective reports of how people feel: if people say they are happy then they are” happy” (2). He then describes certain institutions as good insofar as they are likely to promote happiness: “the greatest benefits,” he suggests, “come from marriage” (31). Happiness involves developing a certain kind of disposition: “Happiness is part of a broader syndrome, which includes choice of rewarding situations, looking on the bright side and high self-esteem” (124). Individuals have the project of working on themselves, governing their souls, to use Nikolas Rose’s (1999) terms. Such projects are described as forms of “enhancement” and include “mood induction techniques,”
which can “become a habit” and thereby “have more enduring effects” (203). In contrast, unhappy people are represented as deprived, as unsociable and neurotic: “Unhappy people tend to be lonely and high in neuroticism” (124). Individuals must become happier for others: positive psychology describes this project as not so much a right as a responsibility. We have a responsibility for our own happiness insofar as promoting our own happiness is what enables us to increase other people’s happiness. One of my key concerns in this book is to explore what follows from the idea that we have a responsibility to be happy for others, or even simply from the idea that there is a necessary and inevitable relationship of dependence between one person’s happiness and the happiness of others.

Unsurprisingly, positive psychology is now a huge popular as well as academic field: many cross-over books now exist that instruct people on how to become happier, forming a generalized culture of expertise. Take the work of Martin Seligman, who has written books on positive psychology and also runs the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Like Argyle before him, he offers a critique of psychology as it has made “relieving the states that make life miserable” more of a priority than “building the states that make life worth living” (2003: xi). He describes the role of positive psychology as providing “guideposts” for “the good life” (xii). Happiness is often described as a path, as being what you get if you follow the right path. In such descriptions, happiness offers a route, and positive psychology helps you to find the route: “This road takes you through the countryside of pleasure and gratification, up into the high country of strength and virtue, and finally to the peaks of lasting fulfillment: meaning and purpose” (xiv). Happiness becomes a form of being directed or oriented, of following “the right way.” Seligman does not simply describe happiness as a reward, as being what follows a life well traveled, but also as being a quality of a person. Happiness is a kind of trait. He closely identifies happiness with optimism (see chapter 5). Happy people are more optimistic as they “tend to interpret their troubles as transient, controllable, and specific to one situation” (9-10). Seligman also suggests that happy people are more altruistic: “when we are happy, we are less self-focused, we like others more, and we want to share our good fortune even with strangers” (43). You might note here that correlations (happiness with optimism, and happiness with altruism) quickly translate into causalities in which happiness becomes its own cause: happiness causes us to be less self-focused, more opti-
mistic, which in turn causes us to be happier, which means we cause more happiness for others, and so on.

Not only does happiness become an individual responsibility, a redescription of life as a project, but it also becomes an instrument, as a means to an end, as well as an end. We make ourselves happy, as an acquisition of capital that allows us to be or to do this or that, or even to get this or that. Such a means-based model of happiness is at odds with classical conceptions such as Aristotle's work, which I will discuss in chapter 1, where happiness is "the end of all ends." Positive psychology involves the instrumentalization of happiness as a technique. Happiness becomes a means to an end, as well as the end of the means.

Happiness becomes, then, a way of maximizing your potential of getting what you want, as well as being what you want to get. Unsurprisingly, positive psychology often uses economic language to describe happiness as a good. Heady and Wearing, for example, describe the "relatively stable personal characteristics" which account for some people being generally happier than others, which they call "stocks," including social background, personality, and social networks (1991: 49). Happiness gets you more in the bank; happiness depends on other forms of capital (background, personality, networks) as well as acquiring or accumulating capital for the individual subject.

One of the most recent proponents of positive psychology is Alan Carr, whose work also crosses the border between popular and academic readerships. Carr also describes the project of positive psychology in terms of the twin objectives of understanding and facilitating happiness and subjective well-being (2004: 1). Positive emotions "like pleasure or contentment tell us something good is happening" (12). He argues that happy and unhappy people "have distinctive personality profiles" (16). A happiness profile would be the profile of the kind of person who is most likely to be happy, as we can also see in the following classic description:

happy persons are more likely to be found in the economically prosperous countries, whose freedom and democracy are held in respect and the political scene is stable. The happy are more likely to be found in majority groups than among minorities and more often at the top of the ladder than at the bottom. They are typically married and get on well with families and friends. In respect of their personal characteristics, the happy appear relatively healthy.
both physically and mentally. They are active and openminded. They feel they are in control of their lives. Their aspirations concern social and moral matters rather than money making. In matters of politics, the happy tend to the conservative side of middle. (Veenhoven 1991: 16)

The face of happiness, at least in this description, looks rather like the face of privilege. Rather than assuming happiness is simply found in "happy persons," we can consider how claims to happiness make certain forms of personhood valuable. Attributions of happiness might be how social norms and ideals become affective, as if relative proximity to those norms and ideals creates happiness. Lauren Berlant has called such a fantasy of happiness a "stupid" form of optimism: "the faith that adjustment to certain forms or practices of living and thinking will secure one's happiness" (2002: 75).

For Carr happiness profiles are also profiles of social forms as well as individual persons: he suggests that certain types of families "promote the experience of flow" by optimal levels of clarity, centering, choice, and challenge (62). If certain ways of living promote happiness, then to promote happiness would be to promote those ways of living. Thus happiness promotion becomes very quickly the promotion of certain types of families. The idea of "flow" to describe the relationship between happy persons and happy worlds is powerful. Deriving primarily from the work of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, flow describes the experience of an individual engaged with the world, or involved with the world, where the world is not encountered as alien, as an obstacle or resistance. "The best moments in our lives" Csíkszentmihályi suggests, "are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times—although such experiences can also be enjoyable, if we have worked hard to attain them. The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile" (1992: 3). He argues that "in the long run optimal experiences add up to a sense of mastery—or perhaps better, a sense of participation in determining the content of life—that comes as close to what is usually meant by happiness as anything else we can conceivably imagine." (4)

When the subjects are not "in flow" they encounter the world as resistant, as blocking rather than enabling an action. Unhappy subjects hence feel alienated from the world as they experience the world as alien. I suspect that Csíkszentmihályi can teach us a great deal about the phenomenology of happiness as an
intimacy of body and world. What if to flow into the world is not simply understood as a psychological attribute? What if the world "houses" some bodies more than others, such that some bodies do not experience that world as resistant? We might need to rewrite happiness by considering how it feels to be stressed by the very forms of life that enable some bodies to flow into space. Perhaps the experiences of not following, of being stressed, of not being extended by the spaces in which we reside, can teach us more about happiness.

Unhappy Archives

I will not respond to the new science of happiness by simply appealing for a return to classical ideas of happiness as eudaimonia, as living a good, meaningful, or virtuous life. Examples of such arguments are evident in work by Richard Schoch (2006) and Terry Eagleton (2007: 140–48). Schoch argues in The Secrets of Happiness that we have become "Deaf to the wisdom of the ages" and that "we deny ourselves the chance of finding a happiness that is meaningful" (1). He suggests that "we've settled, nowadays for a much weaker, much thinner, happiness," which he describes as "mere enjoyment of pleasure" (1). Critiques of the happiness industry that call for a return to classical concepts of virtue not only sustain the association between happiness and the good but also suggest that some forms of happiness are better than others. This distinction between a strong and weak conception of happiness is clearly a moral distinction: some forms of happiness are read as worth more than other forms of happiness, because they require more time, thought, and labor. Noticeably, within classical models, the forms of happiness that are higher are linked to the mind, and those that are lower are linked to the body. In Schoch's description a "weaker, thinner" happiness is linked to "mere enjoyment of pleasure." Hierarchies of happiness may correspond to social hierarchies that are already given.

If higher forms of happiness are what you get for being a certain kind of being, then the being of happiness would certainly be recognizable as bourgeois. We could even say that expressions of horror about contemporary cultures of happiness involve a class horror that happiness is too easy, too accessible, and too fast. We just have to remember that the model of the good life within classical Greek philosophy was based on an exclusive concept of
life: only some had the life that enabled one to achieve a good life, a life that involved self-ownership, material security, and leisure time. For Aristotle the happiest life is the life devoted to "contemplative speculation," as a form of life that would only be available to some and not others (1998: 193). The classical concept of the good life relied on a political economy: some people have to work to give others the time to pursue the good life, the time, as it were, to flourish. Arguably, such a political economy is essential rather than incidental to the actualization of the possibility of living the virtuous life.

Ideas of happiness involve social as well as moral distinctions insofar as they rest on ideas of who is worthy as well as capable of being happy "in the right way." I suspect that an attachment to happiness as a lost object involves not simply a form of mourning but also an anxiety that the wrong people can be happy, and even a desire for happiness to be returned to the right people (the people with the time and privilege for philosophy, perhaps). To consider happiness as a form of world making is to consider how happiness makes the world cohere around, as it were, the right people. It is no accident that philosophers tend to find happiness in the life of the philosopher or that thinkers tend to find happiness in the thinking of thought. Where we find happiness teaches us what we value rather than simply what is of value. Happiness not only becomes what is valued but allows other values to acquire their value. When happiness is assumed to be a self-evident good, then it becomes evidence of the good.

This book proceeds by suspending belief that happiness is a good thing. In this mode of suspension, we can consider not only what makes happiness good but how happiness participates in making things good. I have taken it as given that happiness involves good feeling, even though I would challenge some of the models of good feeling offered in the science of happiness. This is not to reduce happiness to good feeling. The association between happiness with good feeling is a modern one, as Darrin M. McMahon (2006) shows us in his monumental history of happiness. We have inherited this association such that it is hard to think about happiness without thinking about feeling. My task is to think about how feelings make some things and not others good.

In considering happiness in this way, my book can be situated within the feminist cultural studies of emotion and affect (Berlant 2000, Sedgwick 2003, Cvetkovich 2003, Brennan 2004, Probyn 2005, Ngai 2005, Munt 2007, Love 2007, Woodward 2009). If much of this work takes "bad feelings" as the start-
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In order to consider how happiness makes things good, I track the word happiness, asking what histories are evoked by the mobility of this word. I follow the word happiness around. I notice what it is up to, where it goes, who or what it gets associated with. If I am following the word happiness, then I go where it goes. I thus do not go where the word happiness does not go. The risk of using this method is that I could give the word happiness too much power in order to challenge the power happiness can give. My method does have this limitation: if my aim is to describe what kind of world takes shape when happiness provides a horizon, then I will not be exploring worlds that take shape under different horizons. In my view, there is such a general emphasis on happiness as the point of human existence that we need to ask what follows from this point. We will also need other kinds of critical and creative writing that offer thick descriptions of the kinds of worlds that might take shape when happiness does not provide a horizon for experience.

In describing my method in these terms, it should be clear that I am not producing a new concept of happiness. Claire Colebrook following Gilles Deleuze differentiates a philosophical concept from an everyday concept. Rather helpfully for my purposes she uses the concept of happiness to make her point. As she describes: "Our day-to-day usage of concepts works like shorthand or habit; we use concepts so that we do not have to think" (2002: 15). A philosophical concept of happiness, she suggests, "would not refer to this or that instance of happiness: it would enact or create a new possibility or thought of happiness" (17). Philosophy brackets the everyday or ordinary and thinks with
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extreme forms, such as found in modern art. This book in contrast explores the
everyday habits of happiness and considers how such habits involve ways of
thinking about the world that shape how the world coheres. I want to attend to
how happiness is spoken, lived, practiced; happiness, for me, is what it does.

This does not mean I bracket philosophy. After all, the history of philosophy
could be described as a history of happiness. Happiness could even be described
as the one philosophical teleology that has not been called into question within
philosophy. François Jullien argues persuasively that philosophy’s submission
to the idea that happiness is the goal of human existence is the point at which
“its inventiveness is nowhere to be found” (2007: 104).19 I would abbreviate
the status of happiness in philosophy in the following way: happiness is what
we want, whatever it is. Disagreement seems restricted to the content of this
“whatever,” which is perhaps how happiness retains its role in philosophy as
the placeholder of human desire. I think of philosophy here not only as a body
of texts that describe themselves as inheritors of philosophy, and that engage
with philosophical histories, but also as a “happiness archive”: a set of ideas,
thoughts, narratives, images, impressions about what is happiness. Happiness
appears within ethical and political philosophy, philosophy that aims to de-
scribe the good life.20 Happiness also appears in the philosophy of mind. In this
book I draw in particular on the empiricist account of the passions offered by
John Locke.

To speak of philosophy as a happiness archive is not to say that happiness
can simply be found in philosophy or that happiness exhausts the project of
philosophy, as its only horizon of thought. And it is not to say that all philo-
sophy rests on the conviction that happiness is necessarily good. We can find
philosophers who challenge this conviction; a countertradition has much to
teach us about happiness, whether in the dark pessimism of writers such as
Alfred Schopenhauer or in the claims that we should be morally indifferent to
happiness that we find in the formalist ethics of Immanuel Kant. Other philo-
sophers write themselves as being against specific traditions of happiness—
for instance, utilitarianism—by placing their hope not in unhappiness, or indif-
ference to happiness, but in other ways of thinking about happiness. One
can think of Nietzsche’s affirmation of the happiness of the over-man, which
he opposes to the happiness of serfs in such terms. And if we think of Freudian
and Lacanian psychoanalysis as philosophy, or if we read their psychoanaly-
sis as offering a psychoanalysis of the happiness of the philosopher-subject, then we learn so much about the emptiness of the promise of happiness, as an emptiness that haunts the subject in the very restlessness of its desire.21

To read for the habits of happiness thus involves reading philosophy. How do I read philosophy? We could contrast my method with Darrin M. McMahon's Happiness: A History, a book that gives us so many threads to unravel. He begins with the question “How to write a history of something so elusive, so intangible—of this ‘thing’ that is not a thing, this hope, this yearning, this dream?” (2006: xi). This is a good question with which to begin. We can also ask: what does it mean to think of happiness as having a history? How or why would we write such a history? Who or what would belong in this history? McMahon's history of happiness is premised on the belief that thinking about happiness means thinking about how different ideas of happiness have been conceptualized over time. He calls his history of happiness an "intellectual history" (xiv).

It is useful to note that Darrin McMahon describes himself as being for "methodological pluralism" (xv), suggesting that his history is one history of happiness that should exist alongside others: "there are infinite histories of happiness to be written" (xiii). He implies that such histories would be told from more specific viewing points as "histories not only of the struggles and pursuits of the peasants, slaves, and apostates mentioned by Freud—but of early-modern women and late-modern aristocrats, nineteenth-century bourgeois and twentieth century-workers, conservatives and radicals, consumers and crusaders, immigrants and natives, gentiles and Jews" (xiii). Different histories, we might imagine, unfold from the struggles of such groups.

The Promise of Happiness does not supplement McMahon's history with a history told from a specific viewing point, as a particular history within a general history. I want to think about how the intellectual history of happiness—as a history of an idea—can be challenged by considering what gets erased if we take a general viewing point, where to see what is erased would change the view you see from this point. In other words, this general history of happiness could itself be considered rather particular. Just note how women appear or don't appear in McMahon's intellectual history. In the index, we have one reference to women, which turns out to be a reference to John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women. Even the category of "women" refers us back to a male genealogy, to philosophy as white male European inheritance. Treating happi-
ness as an intellectual history amounts to becoming indifferent to how differences matter within that history, troubling the very form of its coherence.

Unhappiness remains the unthought in much philosophical literature, as well as in happiness studies. Its neglect can partly be explained by the assumed transparency of the "un": the presumption that unhappiness is simply not, not happy, defined only by the lack of happiness, as the absence of its presence. I aim to give a history to unhappiness. The history of the word unhappy might teach us about the unhappiness of the history of happiness. In its earliest uses, unhappy meant "causing misfortune or trouble." Only later, did it come to mean "miserable in lot or circumstances" or "wretched in mind." The word wretched also has a suggestive genealogy, coming from wretch, referring to a stranger, exile, or banished person. The wretch is not only the one driven out of his or her native country but is also defined as one who is "sunk in deep distress, sorrow, misfortune, or poverty," "a miserable, unhappy, or unfortunate person," "a poor or hapless being," and even "a vile, sorry, or despicable person." Can we rewrite the history of happiness from the point of view of the wretch? If we listen to those who are cast as wretched, perhaps their wretchedness would no longer belong to them. The sorrow of the stranger might give us a different angle on happiness not because it teaches us what it is like or must be like to be a stranger, but because it might estrange us from the very happiness of the familiar.

I thus offer an alternative history of happiness not simply by offering different readings of its intellectual history but by considering those who are banished from it, or who enter this history only as troublemakers, dissenters, killers of joy. In the first chapter of the book, I draw on the intellectual history of happiness as a resource to consider how happiness is attributed to objects. My aim is not to offer an account of different philosophies of happiness but to develop my own approach to how happiness makes some things and not others seem promising. What I call "unhappy archives" emerge from feminist (chapter 2), queer (chapter 3), and antiracist histories (chapter 4), as well as in socialist and revolutionary modes of political engagement (chapter 5). The first three of these chapters take the negativity of a political figure as their organizing trope: the feminist killjoy, unhappy queer, and melancholic migrant. These figures have their own political histories, which are unfinished, leaky, and shared. The figure of the angry black woman, for instance, must appear and does appear in the chapters on feminist killjoys and melancholic migrants. There are risks in
organizing a book around figures, as if the intelligibility of the figure preserves the coherence of a history. Chapter 5 is framed differently, taking "the future" as its opening question, and considers the significance of what I call "happiness dystopias" for the imagining of alternative futures. I could have taken the figure of the "raging revolutionary" as my title, but didn't. That figure seems to gather too much, thus saying too little.

I call the archives that I draw on in these chapters "unhappy archives." It is not simply a question of finding unhappiness in such archives. Rather, these archives take shape through the circulation of cultural objects that articulate unhappiness with the history of happiness. An unhappy archive is one assembled around the struggle against happiness. We have inherited already so much from authors who have challenged the very appeal of happiness — and yet these authors are never or rarely cited by the literatures of happiness. These archives do not simply supplement philosophy and its happiness archive. They challenge it. My aim is to follow the weave of unhappiness, as a kind of unraveling of happiness, and the threads of its appeal.

Of course, I still had to find my objects, make choices, include some things, and exclude others. I have thus assembled my own archives out of the unhappy archives we have inherited. In the chapter on feminist killjoys, almost all the books I cite I first encountered in women's writing courses in the late 1980s — books that stayed with me, in part as they showed so powerfully the sadness implicit in becoming conscious of gender as loss. Others texts I read more recently and had been moved by them, noticing how happiness and unhappiness were doing things. The Well of Loneliness is such an example, a book I engaged with in Queer Phenomenology, commenting then on its thematization of heterosexuality as unthinking happiness (2006: 105). Still other books were books I happened to be reading at the time of writing this book, which gave me a new angle on what I was thinking. Andrea Levy's work is one example of such a happening (I was so struck by how well she describes the jolting experience of becoming conscious of racism), and Nancy Garden's Annie on My Mind is another, with its demonstration of how parents express a fear of unhappiness in response to the queer child. Uncannily (or so it felt at the time), I was reading that book on the plane to Vancouver in 2006 to deliver my first paper drawn from my happiness research. Some of my experiences as a reader and viewer shaped my desire to write about happiness — seeing Bend It Like Beckham at the cinema in 2002 was one of the experiences that made me want to write about
happiness (it was the happy image of reconciliation the film offers in its ending that captured my interest).

Other examples I found through talking to people in formal events such as seminars and conferences, as well as informally. Someone suggested I read Our Sister Killjoy after I gave a talk at Kent University. In chapter 5, I discuss The Joy Makers: I was lucky enough to be given the book by the author, James Gunn, who was in the audience when I gave a paper on happiness at Kansas University in 2007. Reading The Joy Makers led me to reread Brave New World and to consider its political demand for "the right to be unhappy." The generosity of strangers is behind so many of these arrivals. Of course, I cannot give you the story of the arrival of every object. But it matters, how we assemble things, how we put things together. Our archives are assembled out of encounters, taking form as a memory trace of where we have been.

Every writer is first a reader, and what we read matters. I think of myself primarily as a reader of feminist, queer, and antiracist books—these books form the intellectual and political horizon of this book. I would describe these books as my philosophy books in the sense that they are the books that have helped me to think about how happiness participates in the creation of social form. But my archive does not just include books or films. If you follow the word happiness you end up everywhere! So my archive is also my world, my life-world, my past as well as present, where the word happiness has echoed so powerfully.

One of the speech acts that always fascinated me is "I just want you to be happy," which I remember being said to me an awful lot when I was growing up. Writing this book has given me a chance to wonder more about what it means to express "just want" for the happiness of another. But this is just one kind of happiness speech act. There are many! Others you will encounter in this book include "I'm happy if you are happy," "I cannot bear you to be unhappy," "I want to make you happy," "I want to see you being happy," and "I want to be the cause of the happiness that is inside you." How often we speak of happiness? If my task is to follow the words, then I aim to describe what kind of world takes shape when it is given that the happiness of which we speak is good.

The question "what does happiness do?" is inseparable from the question of how happiness and unhappiness are distributed over time and in space. To track the history of happiness is to track the history of its distribution. Happi-
ness gets distributed in all sorts of complicated ways. Certainly to be a good subject is to be perceived as a happiness-cause, as making others happy. To be bad is thus to be a killjoy. This book is an attempt to give the killjoy back her voice and to speak from recognition of how it feels to inhabit that place. I thus draw on my own experiences of being called a killjoy in describing the sociability of happiness. So many of the discussions I have had about this research have involved "swapping killjoy stories." I remember one time at a conference table when we were discussing being killjays at the family table. The conference was organized by the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association in 2007, and it was the first time I had been to a conference in Australia as a person of color from Australia where I felt at home. I now think of spaces created by such conferences as providing new kinds of tables, perhaps tables that give support to those who are unseated by the tables of happiness.

I know that I risk overemphasizing the problems with happiness by presenting happiness as a problem. It is a risk I am willing to take. If this book kills joy, then it does what it says we should do. To kill joy, as many of the texts I cite in the following pages teach us, is to open a life, to make room for life, to make room for possibility, for chance. My aim in this book is to make room.
In 1963, the problem that has no name burst like a boil through the image of the happy American housewife. In the television commercials the pretty housewives still beamed over their foaming dishpans . . . But the actual unhappiness of the American housewife was suddenly being reported . . . , although almost everybody who talked about it found some superficial reason to dismiss it. **Betty Friedan**

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**CHAPTER TWO**

Feminist Killjoys

Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* identifies a problem that has no name by evoking what lies behind the image of the happy American housewife (1963: 19–20). What lies behind this image bursts through, like a boil, exposing an infection underneath her beaming smile. Friedan proceeds by exposing the limits of this public fantasy of happiness. The happy housewife is a fantasy figure that erases the signs of labor under the sign of happiness. The claim that women are happy and that this happiness is behind the work they do functions to justify gendered forms of labor, not as a product of nature, law, or duty, but as an expression of a collective wish and desire. How better to justify an unequal distribution of labor than to say that such labor makes people happy? How better to secure consent to unpaid or poorly paid labor than to describe such consent as the origin of good feeling?

And yet, who or what do we see in this image of the happy housewife? She is, as Friedan points out, a fantasy. Even as fantasy, however, she evokes the embodied situation of some women more than others. After all, many women at this time were not housewives: for some women to work at home would be an aspiration rather than situation. bell hooks in *Feminist Theory* points to this exclusivity of the happy housewife, even when understood as fantasy:
"When Friedan wrote The Feminine Mystique, more than one-third of all women were in the workforce. Although many women longed to be housewives, only women with leisure time and money could actually shape their identities on the model of the feminine mystique” (2000: 2). Friedan’s solution to the unhappiness of housewives — that they should be liberated from the house — has consequences for those women who could not shape their identities around the feminine mystique. As hooks points out, “She did not discuss who would be called in to take care of the children and maintain the home if more women like herself were freed from their house labor and given equal access with white men to the professions” (1–2). While the fantasy of the happy housewife conceals the signs of domestic labor under the sign of happiness, the fantasy of the housewife becoming happy through being liberated from the home might also conceal the labor of other women, who might be required to take over “the foaming dishpans.”

When we track this figure of the happy housewife, we need to think of what the figure does, and how that figure works to secure not just ideas of happiness but ideas of who is entitled to happiness. White liberal feminists such as Betty Friedan taught us that proximity to the fantasy of the good life does not mean proximity to happiness. Sheila Rowbotham describes how “in the writing of the early years there is a struggle to assert a separate identity and challenge the house as a fantasy of happiness” (1988: 3). Black feminists such as bell hooks teach us that some women — black and working-class women — are not even entitled to be proximate to the fantasy, though they may be instrumental in enabling others to approximate its form. We can consider not so much how happiness as such is distributed (this would forget what was important about the second wave critique of the unhappiness concealed by the figure of the happy housewife) but the distribution of relative proximity to ideas of happiness. Or we might speculate that what is unequally distributed is the feeling that you have what should make you happy, a distribution of the promise of a feeling, or the feeling of a promise, rather than the distribution of happiness, as such.

Have images of happy housewives been replaced by rather more desperate ones? While there is a diversification of affects tied to the figure of the happy housewife, which gives her a more complex affective life, it does not necessarily dislodge the happiness that is presumed to reside in “what” she does, even in descriptions of relative unhappiness. Unhappiness can function as a sign of frustration, of being "held back" or "held up" from doing what makes
her happy. Explanations of relative unhappiness can function to restore the power of an image of the good life in the form of nostalgia or regret for what has been lost.

The happy housewife retains its force as a place holder for women’s desires and could even be said to be making a return. Take the following passage from Darla Shine’s Happy Housewives: “Being home in a warm, comfy house floating around in your pajamas and furry slippers while sipping coffee as your babies play on the floor and your hubby works hard to pay for it all is not desperation. Grow up! Shut up! Count your blessings!” (2005: 15). Shine conjures for the reader a very specific image of what makes housewives happy. In conjuring this image—of leisure, comfort, and ease—she calls for us to return to a certain kind of life, as if this was the kind of life that women gave up in embracing feminism: her fantasy of the happy housewife is as much a white bourgeois fantasy of the past, a nostalgia for a past that was never possible as a present for most women, let alone being available in the present. Shine argues that women have become invested in “being desperate” and have been betrayed by the feminist movement that has “dropped the ball for women at home” (19).

Alluding to the program Desperate Housewives as an example of what women do not want, Shine encourages us to adopt a new image: “I want mothers everywhere to dismiss this horrible image of desperation and come together to promote the image of the happy housewife” (6). This new image comes with a commitment to specific values: “respect; pride; confidence; passion; friendship; a clean beautiful home; and, most importantly, a close relationship with your children” (2). While mothering is a crucial element here in this manual for happiness, so too is marriage, as an institution described in terms of hetero-sexual intimacy: Shine suggests that “you will never be a happy housewife if you’re not intimate with your husband” (53).

Shine’s book is unexceptional. On the Internet, we witness a new generation of bloggers who take on this identity of “the happy housewife.” These bloggers use the opportunity of the public space generated by new technologies to make public their claim of happiness. This claim is also an insistence on the error of feminism and on the importance of instructing women on how to be happy; happiness is being good at being a housewife, as well as what follows being good. Such blogs typically include recipes, tips on doing housework, thoughts on mothering, as well as belief statements that register the happy housewife as
an important social role and duty that must be defended, as if the speech act
(“I am a happy housewife”) is itself a rebellion against a social orthodoxy. The
image of the happy housewife is repeated and accumulates affective power in
the very narration of her as a minority subject who has to reclaim something
that has been taken from her. This affective power not only presses against
feminist claims that behind the image of the happy housewife was an unspoken
collective unhappiness but also involves a counterclaim that happiness is
not so much what the housewife has but what she does: her duty is to generate
happiness by the very act of embracing this image.

In this political context, it is not surprising that research in happiness
studies has “shown” that traditional housewives are happier than their work-
ing counterparts, as the American journalist Meghan O’Rourke explores in
her aptly named article “Desperate Feminist Wives” (2006). By implication,
it is feminism that gives women the desires that have made them unhappy.
This chapter will offer a different way of understanding the relationship be-
tween feminism and unhappiness. I begin by reflecting on how happiness was
used historically as an argument for sustaining a gendered division of labor,
taking as a starting point the work of the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau
on education. My argument challenges Lesley Johnson and Justine Lloyd’s claim
that the happy housewife was a feminist myth—what they call “a myth of a
myth”—through which the feminist subject could generate the housewife as
“the other” (2004: 2). I suggest that the happy housewife has a very long gene-
alogy, and that she emerges as a figure at least in part as a response to feminist
claims.

By providing a genealogy of the happy housewife, we can reflect on the po-
itical landscape in which the figures of the unhappy housewife and the femi-
nist killjoy emerge. My suggestion is that we can reread the negativity of such
figures in terms of the challenge they offer to the assumption that happiness
follows relative proximity to a social ideal. I focus not only on the affective
power of these figures but also on feminist consciousness as a form of unhap-
iness, suggesting that earlier feminist languages of “consciousness-raising” and
even “false consciousness” may be useful in an exploration of the limitations
of happiness as a horizon of experience.
Happiness, Education, and Women

In the previous chapter, I argued that happiness functions as a promise that directs you toward certain objects, as if they provide you with the necessary ingredients for a good life. Happiness involves a form of orientation: the very hope for happiness means we get directed in specific ways, as happiness is assumed to follow from some life choices and not others.

If happiness is an affective form of orientation, then happiness is crucial to education, which can be considered an orientation device. The child—who we might recall is considered by John Locke as a blank slate—is the site of potential. What happens to the child will shape what the child can become; the child's presumed emptiness becomes an imperative to shape its becoming. Education becomes about directing such potentiality; about steering the child in the right direction. Or to use a metaphor from horticulture, education is about cultivation, whereby, through tending the soil, you encourage the plants to grow in some ways rather than others. To educate is to orient, which is why education plays a central role in debates about happiness. Nel Noddings describes how "happiness should be an aim of education, and a good education should contribute significantly to personal and collective happiness" (2003: 1).^{1}

Since classical times, the role of education as a form of orientation has been explicit. In Republic education is described as "the art of orientation" (1998: 245). Education should "devise the simplest and most effective methods of turning minds around. It shouldn't be the art of implanting sight in the organ, but should proceed on the understanding that the organ already has the capacity, but is improperly aligned and isn't facing the right way" (245–46; emphasis added). Education provides a way of getting the would-be subject to face the right way such that they can receive the right impressions. Education involves being directed not only by being turned around but by being turned "the right way" round. To turn minds around is an educational imperative only given the presumption that the would-be subject is improperly aligned.

The promise of happiness involves being "turned around." We can see how happiness involves turning in Rousseau's Émile ([1762] 1993), a book which has been described as "haunted" by Plato: Rousseau himself considered Republic "the most beautiful book on education that had yet been written" (Strong
Emile is told in the first person, by a narrator whose duty is to instruct a young orphan named Emile, in order that he can take up his place in the world. Education for Emile is about becoming a good man. Within this book, happiness plays a crucial role: the good man does not seek happiness but achieves happiness as a consequence of virtue. This book had considerable influence on European thought and became a key reference point within feminist debates. Rousseau offers a model of what a good education would do for his Emile, but also for Emile’s would-be wife Sophy, whom he introduces in the fifth book. Rousseau’s argument was that women and men should be educated in different ways that enabled them to fulfill their specific duties as gendered beings.

In this book, education for Sophy is about what she must become in order to be a good wife for Emile. Happiness provides a script for her becoming. As Rousseau explains, the aim for woman is “to be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of women for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young. The further we depart from this principle, the further we shall be from our goal, and all our precepts will fail to secure her happiness or our own” ([1762] 1993: 393). Any deviation from gender roles defined in terms of women being trained to make men happy is a deviation from the happiness of all.

For Rousseau the good woman has a duty to keep the family together, to preserve the integrity of its form. Rousseau asks us to “imagine a virtuous and charming wife, adorned with such accomplishments and devoting them to her husband’s amusement; will she not add to his happiness? When he leaves his office worn out with the day’s work, will she not prevent him seeking recreation elsewhere? Have we not all beheld happy families gathered together, each contributing to the general amusement?” (404). Subjects do not participate equally in the “general amusement.” Women must learn to make men happy in order to keep families together, in order to prevent recreation from taking place elsewhere. It is women’s duty to keep happiness in house.

The good woman is good in part because of what she judges to be good, and hence how she aligns her happiness with the happiness of others. The good woman is made happy by what is good. As Rousseau describes: “She loves virtue because there is nothing fairer in itself, she loves it because it is a woman’s glory and because a virtuous woman is little lower than the angels;
she loves virtue as the only road to real happiness, because she sees nothing but poverty, neglect, unhappiness, shame, and disgrace in the life of a bad woman; she loves virtue because it is dear to her revered father, and to her tender and worthy mother; they are not content to be happy in their own virtue, they desire hers; and she finds her chief happiness in the hope of just making them happy" (431). The complexity of this statement should not be underestimated. She loves virtue as it is the road to happiness; unhappiness and disgrace follow from being bad. The good woman wants to be happy and hence wants what is good. The good woman also loves what is good because this is what is loved by her parents. The parents desire not only what is good; they desire their daughter to be good. The daughter is good to give them what they desire. For her to be happy, she must be good, as being good is what makes them happy, and she can only be happy if they are happy.

 Statements on the conditionality of happiness — how one person’s happiness is made conditional upon another's — ensure that happiness is directive: happiness becomes what is given by being given as a shared orientation toward what is good. It might seem that what I am calling “conditional happiness” involves a relationship of care and reciprocity: as if to say, I will not have a share in a happiness that cannot be shared. And yet, the terms of conditionality are unequal. If certain people come first — we might say those who are already in place (such as parents, hosts, or citizens) — then their happiness comes first. For those who are positioned as coming after, happiness means following somebody else’s goods.

The concept of conditional happiness allows me to develop my argument about the sociality of happiness. I suggested in the previous chapter that we might have a social bond if the same objects make us happy. I am suggesting here that happiness itself can become the shared object. Or to be more precise, if one person’s happiness is made conditional on another person’s happiness, such that the other person’s happiness comes first, then the other person’s happiness becomes a shared object. Max Scheler’s differentiation between communities of feeling and fellow-feeling might help explain the significance of this argument. In communities of feeling, we share feelings because we share the same object of feeling (so we might feel sorrow at the loss of someone whom we both love; our sorrow would be directed toward an object that is shared). Fellow-feeling would be when I feel sorrow about your grief although I do not share your object of grief: “all fellow-feeling involves intentional reference of the
feeling of joy or sorrow to the other person's experience" (Scheler [1913] 2008: 13). In this case, your grief is what grieves me; your grief is the object of my grief. I would speculate that in everyday life these different forms of shared feeling can be confused because the object of feeling is sometimes but not always exterior to the feeling that is shared.

Say I am happy about your happiness. Your happiness is with x. If I share x, then your happiness and my happiness is not only shared but can accumulate through being returned. Or I can simply disregard x: if my happiness is directed "just" toward your happiness, and you are happy about x, the exteriority of x can disappear or cease to matter (although it can reappear). Alternatively, because I experience happiness in your happiness, I could wish that our feeling of fellowship in happiness amounts to being happy about the same things (a community of happiness), such that x becomes shared as a happiness wish. Of course, if the object that makes you happy is my happiness wish, then this would be precarious basis for sharing something (as wishing to be happy about x can also be an admission that one is not simply happy about x). In cases where I am also affected by x, and I do not share your happiness with x, I might become uneasy and ambivalent, as I am made happy by your happiness but I am not made happy by what makes you happy. The exteriority of x would then announce itself as a point of crisis: I want your happiness to be what makes me happy, but I am reminded that even if my happiness is conditional on yours, your happiness is conditional on x and I am not happy with x. In such occasions, conditional happiness would require that I take up what makes you happy as what makes me happy, which may involve compromising my own idea of happiness (so I will go along with x in order to make you happy even if x does not "really" make me happy).5 In order to preserve the happiness of all, we might even conceal from ourselves our unhappiness with x, or try to persuade ourselves that x matters less than the happiness of the other who is made happy by x.6

We have a hint of the rather uneasy dynamics of conditional happiness in Émile. For Sophy, wanting to make her parents happy commits her in a certain direction, regardless of what she might or might not want. If she can only be happy if they are happy, then she must do what makes them happy. In one episode, the father speaks to the daughter about becoming a woman: "You are a big girl now, Sophy, you will soon be a woman. We want you to be happy, for our sakes as well as yours, for our happiness depends on yours. A good girl
finds her own happiness in the happiness of a good man" (434). Sophy’s father offers a happiness commandment: it is for the sake of her own happiness and the happiness of her parents that she must find happiness in the right place, which is in the happiness of a good man. So it is not simply that groups cohere by taking up the same objects as the causes of happiness; some subjects are required to take up the happiness causes of others. In this case, for the daughter not to go along with the parents’ desire for her marriage would not only cause her parents unhappiness but would threaten the very reproduction of social form. The daughter has a duty to reproduce the form of the family, which means taking up the cause of parental happiness as her own.

In this case, Sophy “happily” does what her parents want her to do. We might imagine that she wishes to be made happy by the same things and receives some comfort by the realization of a happiness wish. Of course, we do not “really” know if Sophy gets what she wants. The book can give us a happy ending by not giving us an account of Sophie’s desires beyond the articulation of a wish to make her parents happy. The narrator declares triumphantly: “At last I see the happy day approaching, the happiest day of Émèl’s life and my own: I see the crown of my labours, I begin to appreciate their results. The noble pair are united till death do part; heart and lips confirm no empty vows; they are man and wife” (526–27). The happy ending involves not simply the alignment of desire but the willingness of the daughter to align her desire with the parental desire for happiness.

Happiness is how the given becomes given. In Émile happiness is linked to nature: as being what follows naturally from how things are, or how things are if they are allowed to flourish. As Rousseau explains: “I kept to the path of nature, until she should show me the path of happiness. And lo! their paths were the same, and without knowing it this was the path I trod” (487). Happiness becomes what follows nature’s paths. Deviations from nature become deviations from the common good. For women to be educated to be anything other than wives for men would hence take them away from nature, and from what can promise happiness.

It should be no surprise that Rousseau’s treatment of Sophy was a crucial object of feminist critique. Mary Wollstonecraft in her Vindication of the Rights of Women spoke out against Rousseau’s vision of what makes women happy. She comments wryly about his treatment of Sophy: “I have probably had an opportunity of observing more girls in their infancy than J. J. Rousseau” ([1792]
The political plea of Vindication is against the right of men to decide what happiness means for women. As Wollstonecraft argues: "Consider, I address you as a legislator, whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness?" (5). The struggle over happiness forms the political horizon in which feminist claims are made. My argument is simple: we inherit this horizon.

Troublemakers

We learn from this history how happiness is used as a technology or instrument, which allows the reorientation of individual desire toward a common good. We also learn from rereading books like Emile how happiness is not simply used to secure social relations instrumentally but works as an idea or aspiration within everyday life, shaping the very terms through which individuals share their world with others, creating "scripts" for how to live well.

We can think of gendered scripts as "happiness scripts" providing a set of instructions for what women and men must do in order to be happy, whereby happiness is what follows being natural or good. Going along with happiness scripts is how we get along: to get along is to be willing and able to express happiness in proximity to the right things. The child thus has a happiness duty. A duty can function as a debt, a way of returning what is owed. In the previous chapter, I spoke of happiness as involving the logic of deferral: the parents defer their hope for happiness to the next generation in order to avoid giving up on the idea of happiness as a response to disappointment (you can keep your belief in happiness while being disappointed as long as you can place your hopes for happiness in another). The obligation of the child to be happy is a repaying of what the child owes, of what is due to the parents given what they have given up. The duty of the child is to make the parents happy and to perform this duty happily by being happy or by showing signs of being happy in the right way.

Going along with this duty can mean simply approximating the signs of being happy—passing as happy—in order to keep things in the right place. Feminist genealogies can be described as genealogies of women who not only
do not place their hopes for happiness in the right things but who speak out about their unhappiness with the very obligation to be made happy by such things. The history of feminism is thus a history of making trouble, a history of women who refuse to become Sophy, by refusing to follow other people's goods, or by refusing to make others happy.

The female troublemaker might be trouble because she gets in the way of the happiness of others. Judith Butler shows how the figure of the troublemaker exposes the intimacy of rebellion and punishment within the law. As she argues in her preface to Gender Trouble: "To make trouble was, within the reigning discourse of my childhood, something one should never do precisely because that would get one in trouble. The rebellion and its reprimand seemed to be caught up in the same terms, a phenomenon that gave rise to my first critical insight into the subtle use of power: The prevailing law threatened one with trouble, even put one in trouble, all to keep one out of trouble" (1990: vii). Happiness might be what keeps you out of trouble only by evoking the unhappiness of getting into trouble. We can consider how nineteenth century bildungsroman novels by women writers offered a rebellion against Émile in the narrativization of the limitations of moral education for girls and its narrow precepts of happiness. Such novels are all about the intimacy of trouble and happiness.

Take, for example, George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss, which is told from the point of view of Maggie Tulliver.16 The early stages of the novel depict Maggie's childhood, the difficulty of her relationship with her brother Tom, and her perpetual fear of disappointing her parents. The novel contrasts Tom and Maggie in terms of how they are judged by their parents: "Tom never did the same sort of foolish things as Maggie, having a wonderful instinctive discernment of what would turn to his advantage or disadvantage; and so it happened that though he was much more willful and inflexible than Maggie, his mother hardly ever called him naughty" ([1860] 1965: 73). Various incidents occur that contribute to Maggie's reputation as a troublemaker: when she lets Tom's dogs die (37); when she cuts her dark hair (73); when she knocks over Tom's building blocks (96); and when she pushes her cousin Lucy into the water (111-12).

The novel shows us how trouble does not simply reside within individuals but involves ways of reading situations of conflict and struggle. Reading such situations involves locating the cause of trouble, which is another way of talking about conversion points: the troublemaker is the one who violates the
fragile conditions of peace. If in all these instances Maggie is attributed as the cause of trouble, then what does not get noticed is the violence that makes her act in the way that she does, as the violence of provocation that hovers in the background. Even when Tom is told off, it is Maggie who is the reference point in situations of trouble. Mrs. Tulliver says to Tom: "'Then go and fetch her in this minute, you naughty boy. And how could you think o' going to pond and taking your sister where there was dirt. You know she'll do mischief if there's mischief to be done.' It was Mrs. Tulliver's way, if she blamed Tom, to refer his misdemeanor, somehow or other, to Maggie" (114). Maggie gets into trouble because she is already read as being trouble before anything happens.

Maggie gets into trouble for speaking; to speak is already a form of defiance if you are supposed to recede into the background. She speaks out when something happens that she perceives to be wrong. The crisis of the novel is when her father loses the mill, threatening his ability to look after his family. Maggie is shocked by the lack of sympathy and care they receive from their extended family. Maggie speaks back out of a sense of care for her parents: "Maggie, having hurled her defiance at aunts and uncles in this way, stood still, with her large dark eyes glaring at them as if she was ready to await all consequences. . . . 'You haven't seen the end o' your trouble wi' that child, Bessy,' said Mrs Pullet; 'she's beyond everything for boldness and unthankfulness. Its dreadful. I might ha' let alone paying for her schooling, for she's worse nor ever'" (229). Girls who speak out are bold and thankless. It is important that Maggie is compelled to speak from a sense of injustice. Already we can witness the relationship between consciousness of injustice and being attributed as the cause of unhappiness.

The novel relates Maggie's tendency to get into trouble with her desire, will, and imagination, with her love of new words that bring with them the promise of unfamiliar worlds. For instance, she loves Latin because "she delighted in new words" (159). For Maggie "these mysterious sentences, snatched from an unknown context—like strange horns of beasts and leaves of unknown plants, brought from some far-off region—gave boundless scope to her imagination and were all the more fascinating because they were in a peculiar tongue of their own, which she could learn to interpret" (159–60). The association between imagination and trouble is powerful. It teaches us how the happiness duty for women is about the narrowing of horizons, about giving up an interest in what lies beyond the familiar.
Returning to Émile, it is interesting that the danger of unhappiness is associated precisely with women having too much curiosity. At one point in the narrative, Sophy gets misdirected. Her imagination and desires are activated by reading too many books, leading to her becoming an "unhappy girl, overwhelmed with her secret grief" (439-40). If Sophy were to become too imaginative, we would not get our happy ending, premised on Sophy being given to Émile. The narrator says in response to the threat of such an unhappy ending, "Let us give Émile his Sophy; let us restore this sweet girl to life and provide her with a less vivid imagination and a happier fate" (441). Being restored to life is here being returned to the straight and narrow. Imagination is what makes women look beyond the script of happiness to a different fate. Having made Sophy sweet and unimaginative, the book can end happily.

Feminist readers might want to challenge this association between unhappiness and female imagination, which in the moral economy of happiness, makes female imagination a bad thing. But if we do not operate in this economy—that is, if we do not assume that happiness is what is good—then we can read the link between female imagination and unhappiness differently. We might explore how imagination is what allows women to be liberated from happiness and the narrowness of its horizons. We might want the girls to read the books that enable them to be overwhelmed with grief.

It is Sophy's imagination that threatens to get in the way of her happiness, and thus of the happiness of all. Imagination is what allows girls to question the wisdom they have received and to ask whether what is good for all is necessarily good for them. We could describe one episode of The Mill on the Floss as Maggie becoming Sophy (or becoming the Sophy that Sophy must be in order to fulfil her narrative function). Maggie has an epiphany: the answer to her troubles is to become happy and good: "it flashed through her like the suddenly apprehended solution of a problem, that all the miseries of her young life had come from fixing her heart on her own pleasure as if that were the central necessity of the universe" (306). From the point of view of the parents, their daughter has become good because she has submitted to their will: "her mother felt the change in her with a sort of puzzled wonder that Maggie should be 'growing up so good'; it was amazing that this once 'contrary' child was becoming so submissive, so backward to assert her own will" (309). To be good as a girl is to give up having a will of one's own. The mother can thus
love the daughter who is becoming like furniture, who can support the family by staying in the background: "The mother was getting fond of her tall, brown girl, the only bit of furniture now in which she could bestow her anxiety and pride" (309).

It is as if Maggie has chosen between happiness and life, by giving up life for happiness: "I've been a great deal happier," she said at last timidly, "since I have given up thinking about what is easy and pleasant, and being discontented because I couldn't have my own will. Our life is determined for us — and it makes the mind very free when we give up wishing and only think of bearing what is laid upon us and doing what is given us to do" (317). Happiness is associated here with the renunciation of desire. It is her friend Philip whom Maggie is addressing at this point. It is Philip who refuses to allow Maggie to give up her life for happiness in this way. He says impatiently: "But I can't give up wishing. . . . It seems to me that we can never give up longing and wishing while we are thoroughly alive" (317).

It is Philip who loves Maggie for her aliveness, who gives her books that rekindle her sense of interest and curiosity about the world. He gives her one book that she cannot finish as she reads in this book the injustice of happiness, which is given to some and not others, those deemed worthy of love. "I didn't finish the book," said Maggie. "As soon as I came to the blond-haired young girl reading in the park, I shut it up and determined to read no further. I foresaw that that light-complexioned girl would win away all the love from Corinne and make her miserable. I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness. I should begin to have a prejudice against them. If you could give me some story, now, where the dark woman triumphs, it would restore the balance. I want to avenge Rebecca, and Flora Maclvor, and Minna, and all the rest of the dark unhappy ones" (348–49). Exercising a racialized vocabulary, Maggie exposes how darkness becomes a form of unhappiness, as lacking the qualities deemed necessary for being given a happy ending. Maggie gives up on giving up her life for happiness by speaking out against the injustice of happiness and how it is given to some and not others.

The novel relies on contrasting the cousins Lucy and Maggie in terms of their capacity to be happy and dutiful. Maggie admits her unhappiness to Lucy: "One gets a bad habit of being unhappy" (389). For Lucy, being happy is a way
of not being trouble; she cannot live with the reality of getting into trouble: as she says, "I've always been happy. I don't know whether I could bear much trouble" (389). Happiness involves a way of avoiding what one cannot bear.

The climactic moment of the novel comes when Stephen, who is betrothed to Lucy, announces his desire for Maggie, who is swept away by it. She almost goes along with him but realizes that she cannot: "Many things are difficult and dark to me, but I see one thing quite clearly: that I must not. cannot, seek my own happiness by sacrificing others" (471). Maggie chooses duty as if without duty there would be only the inclination of the moment. As a good Kantian subject, she says: "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment" (499), to which Stephen replies, "But it weighs nothing with you that you are robbing me of my happiness" (500–501). By choosing duty, Maggie does not avoid causing unhappiness. She must pay for her moment of transgression. Having deviated from the path of happiness, she has fulfilled her destiny as trouble. As she says in one letter: "Oh God, is there any happiness in love that could make me forget their pain" (528). Death as a result of a natural disaster (a flood) thus liberates Maggie from the unhappy consequences of causing trouble, of deviating from the paths of happiness. The injustice of her loss of life is how the novel speaks against happiness, which itself is narrated as the renunciation of life, imagination, and desire.

Even if books like The Mill on the Floss seem to punish their heroines for their transgressions, they also evoke the injustice of happiness, showing what and whom happiness gives up. In giving up on those who seem to give up on happiness, happiness acquires its coherence. We could describe happiness quite simply as a convention, such that to deviate from the paths of happiness is to challenge convention. What is a convention? The word convention comes from the verb "to convene." To convene is to gather, to assemble, or to meet up. A convention is a point around which we gather. To follow a convention is to gather in the right way, to be assembled. Feminism gives time and space to women's desires that are not assembled around the reproduction of the family form. Feminists must thus be willing to cause disturbance. Feminists might even have to be willful. A subject would be described as willful at the point that her will does not coincide with that of others, those whose will is reified as the general or social will.

The figure of the female troublemaker thus shares the same horizon with
the figure of the feminist killjoy. Both figures are intelligible if they are read through the lens of the history of happiness. Feminists might kill joy simply by not finding the objects that promise happiness to be quite so promising. The word feminism is thus saturated with unhappiness. Feminists by declaring themselves as feminists are already read as destroying something that is thought of by others not only as being good but as the cause of happiness. The feminist killjoy "spoils" the happiness of others; she is a spoilsport because she refuses to converse, to assemble, or to meet up over happiness.

In the thick sociality of everyday spaces, feminists are thus attributed as the origin of bad feeling, as the ones who ruin the atmosphere, which is how the atmosphere might be imagined (retrospectively) as shared. In order to get along, you have to participate in certain forms of solidarity: you have to laugh at the right points. Feminists are typically represented as grumpy and humorless, often as a way of protecting the right to certain forms of social bonding or of holding onto whatever is perceived to be under threat. Feminists don’t even have to say anything to be read as killing joy. A feminist colleague says to me that she just has to open her mouth in meetings to witness eyes rolling as if to say “oh here she goes.”

My experience of being a feminist has taught me much about rolling eyes. This is why when people say the bad feeling is coming from this person or that person, I am never convinced. My skepticism comes from childhood experiences of being a feminist daughter in a relatively conventional family, always at odds with the performance of good feeling in the family, always assumed to be bringing others down, for example, by pointing out sexism in other people’s talk. Say we are seated at the dinner table. Around this table, the family gathers, having polite conversations, where only certain things can be brought up. Someone says something that you consider problematic. You respond, carefully, perhaps. You might be speaking quietly; or you might be getting “wound up,” recognizing with frustration that you are being wound up by someone who is wounding you up. The violence of what was said or the violence of provocation goes unnoticed. However she speaks, the feminist is usually the one who is viewed as “causing the argument,” who is disturbing the fragility of peace.

Let’s take this figure of the feminist killjoy seriously. Does the feminist kill other people’s joy by pointing out moments of sexism? Or does she expose the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced, or negated under public signs of joy?
Does bad feeling enter the room when somebody expresses anger about things, or could anger be the moment when the bad feelings that circulate through objects get brought to the surface in a certain way? Feminist subjects might bring others down not only by talking about unhappy topics such as sexism but by exposing how happiness is sustained by erasing the very signs of not getting along. Feminists do kill joy in a certain sense: they disturb the very fantasy that happiness can be found in certain places. To kill a fantasy can still kill a feeling. It is not just that feminists might not be happily affected by the objects that are supposed to cause happiness but that their failure to be happy is read as sabotaging the happiness of others.

We can consider the relationship between the negativity of the figure of the feminist killjoy and how certain bodies are “encountered” as being negative. Marilyn Frye argues that oppression involves the requirement that you show signs of being happy with the situation in which you find yourself. As she puts it, “It is often a requirement upon oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signify our docility and our acquiescence in our situation” (1983: 2). To be oppressed requires you to show signs of happiness, as signs of being or having been adjusted. As a result, for Frye, “anything but the sunniest countenance exposes us to being perceived as mean, bitter, angry or dangerous” (2). If an oppressed person does not smile or show signs of being happy, then he or she is read as being negative: as angry, hostile, unhappy, and so on. Happiness becomes the expected “default position” for those who are oppressed, such that it comes to define the sphere of neutrality. You are either happy; or you are not.

To be recognized as a feminist is to be assigned to a difficult category and a category of difficulty. You are “already read” as “not easy to get along with” when you name yourself as a feminist. You have to show that you are not difficult through displaying signs of good will and happiness. Frye alludes to such experiences when she observes that “this means, at the very least, that we may be found to be difficult or unpleasant to work with, which is enough to cost one one’s livelihood” (2–3). We can also witness an investment in feminist unhappiness (the myth that feminists kill joy because they are joyless). There is a desire to believe that women become feminists because they are unhappy, perhaps as a displacement of their envy for those who have achieved the happiness they have failed to achieve. This desire functions as a defense of happiness against feminist critique. This is not to say that feminists might not be
unhappy; we might be unhappy after all with this representation of feminism as caused by unhappiness. My point here would be that feminists are read as being unhappy, such that situations of conflict, violence, and power are read as about the unhappiness of feminists, rather than being what feminists are unhappy about.

Of course, within feminism, some bodies more than others can be attributed as the cause of unhappiness. We can place the figure of the feminist killjoy alongside the figure of the angry black woman explored so well by writers such as Audre Lorde (1984) and bell hooks (2000). The angry black woman can be described as a killjoy; she may even kill feminist joy, for example, by pointing out forms of racism within feminist politics. She might not even have to make any such point to kill joy. You can be affectively alien because you are affected in the wrong way by the right things. Or you can be affectively alien because you affect others in the wrong way: your proximity gets in the way of other people’s enjoyment of the right things, functioning as an unwanted reminder of histories that are disturbing, that disturb an atmosphere. Listen to the following description from bell hooks: “A group of white feminist activists who do not know one another may be present at a meeting to discuss feminist theory. They may feel they are bonded on the basis of shared womanhood, but the atmosphere will noticeably change when a woman of color enters the room. The white women will become tense, no longer relaxed, no longer celebratory” (56).

It is not just that feelings are “in tension” but that the tension is located somewhere: in being felt by some bodies, it is attributed as caused by another body, who thus comes to be felt as apart from the group, as getting in the way of its organic enjoyment and solidarity. The body of color is attributed as the cause of becoming tense, which is also the loss of a shared atmosphere (or we could say that sharing the experience of loss is how the atmosphere is shared). As a feminist of color you do not even have to say anything to cause tension. The mere proximity of some bodies involves an affective conversion. To get along you have to go along with things which might mean for some not even being able to enter the room. We learn from this example how histories are condensed in the very intangibility of an atmosphere, or in the tangibility of the bodies that seem to get in the way. Perhaps atmospheres are shared if there is an agreement in where we locate the points of tension.

To speak out of anger as a woman of color is to confirm your position as the
cause of tension; your anger is what threatens the social bond. As Audre Lorde describes: "When women of Color speak out of the anger that laces so many of our contacts with white women, we are often told that we are 'creating a mood of helplessness,' 'preventing white women from getting past guilt,' or 'standing in the way of trusting communication and action'" (1984: 131). The exposure of violence becomes the origin of violence. The woman of color must let go of her anger for the white woman to move on.

The figure of the angry black woman is also a fantasy figure that produces its own effects. Reasonable thoughtful arguments are dismissed as anger (which of course empties anger of its own reason), which makes you angry, such that your response becomes read as the confirmation of evidence that you are not only angry but also unreasonable! To make this point in another way, the anger of feminists of color is attributed. So you might be angry about how racism and sexism diminish life choices for women of color. Your anger is a judgment that something is wrong. But in being heard as angry, your speech is read as motivated by anger. Your anger is read as unattributed, as if you are against x because you are angry rather than being angry because you are against x. You become angry at the injustice of being heard as motivated by anger, which makes it harder to separate yourself from the object of your anger. You become entangled with what you are angry about because you are angry about how they have entangled you in your anger. In becoming angry about that entanglement, you confirm their commitment to your anger as the truth "behind" your speech, which is what blocks your anger, stops it from getting through. You are blocked by not getting through.

Some bodies become blockage points, points where smooth communication stops. Consider Ama Ata Aidoo's wonderful prose poem Our Sister Killjoy, where the narrator Sissie, as a black woman, has to work to sustain the comfort of others. On a plane, a white hostess invites her to sit at the back with "her friends," two black people she does not know. She is about to say that she does not know them, and hesitates: "But to have refused to join them would have created an awkward situation, wouldn't it? Considering too that apart from the air hostess's obviously civilized upbringing, she had been trained to see to the comfort of all her passengers" (1977: 10).

Power speaks here in this moment of hesitation. Do you go along with it? What does it mean not to go along with it? To create awkwardness is to be read as being awkward. Maintaining public comfort requires that certain bodies "go
along with it.” To refuse to go along with it, to refuse the place in which you are placed, is to be seen as trouble, as causing discomfort for others. There is a political struggle about how we attribute good and bad feelings, which hesitates around the apparently simple question of who introduces what feelings to whom. Feelings can get stuck to certain bodies in the very way we describe spaces, situations, dramas. And bodies can get stuck depending on what feelings they get associated with.

Consciousness and Unhappiness

To be against forms of power and violence that are concealed under signs of happiness does not necessarily mean becoming unhappy, even if it does mean refusing to go along with things by showing signs of getting along. It is striking that Shulamith Firestone’s “dream action” for the women’s liberation movement is “a smile boycott, at which declaration, all women would instantly abandon their ‘pleasing’ smiles, henceforth only smiling when something pleased them” (1970: 90). To refuse the promise of happiness is to refuse the demand that you show signs of happiness. For Firestone, this means a shift of orientation; it means changing one’s bodily habits: “In my own case, I had to train myself out of the phony smile, which is like a nervous tic on every teenage girl. And this meant that I smiled rarely, for in truth, when it came down to real smiling, I had less to smile about” (90). To refuse to keep smiling for Firestone is not a refusal of joy or any of those good feelings that are not distributed along accepted paths of happiness. If anything, the false smile sustains the very psychic and political condition of unhappiness. The feminist who does not smile when she is not happy wants a more exciting life. Indeed, as Firestone argues: “Eroticism is exciting. No-one wants to get rid of it. Life would be a drab and routine affair without at least that spark. That’s just the point. Why has all joy and excitement been concentrated, driven into one narrow difficult-to-find alley of human experience, and all the rest laid waste?” (155; second emphasis added). Feminism involves challenging the very “pressure” of happiness, the way it restricts the possibilities for finding excitement, of being excited.

This is not to say that feminism makes women happy. It is simply that feminism by refusing to go along with public displays of happiness can participate in the widening of horizons in which it is possible to find things. Feminism
does not guarantee what we will find through this expansion of bodily hori-
zons. It simply opens up the places where we can look. The fact that any such
opening is read as a sign of hostility, or of killing other people's joy, tells us
something. The public investment in happiness is an investment in a very par-
ticular and narrow model of the good; being happy requires a commitment to
find what Firestone brilliantly describes as a "narrow difficult-to-find alley" of
human experience.

I have explored how feminism is represented as causing unhappiness and as
caused by unhappiness. Rather than disregarding the possibility of a link be-
tween feminism and unhappiness, I want to consider another way of thinking
about it. We could describe consciousness raising as raising consciousness of
unhappiness. As Gayle Greene argues, "For though education raised women's
expectations, it also made many of them unhappy, creating ambitions that were
frustrated by the rigid domestic ideology that urged them back into the home" (1991: 9; emphasis added). Indeed, you have to experience limitations as limi-
tations; the act of noticing limitations can actually make life seem more rather
than less limited. If the world does not allow you to embrace the possibilities
that are opened up by education, then you become even more aware of the
injustice of such limitations. Opening up the world, or expanding one's hori-
zons, can thus mean becoming more conscious of just how much there is to be
unhappy about. Unhappiness might also provide an affective way of sustaining
our attention on the cause of unhappiness. You would be unhappy with the
causes of unhappiness. Consciousness-raising does not turn unhappy house-
wives into happy feminists, even though sometimes we might wish that this
were the case!

Feminism involves political consciousness of what women are asked to give
up for happiness. Indeed, in even becoming conscious of happiness as loss,
feminists have already refused to give up desire, imagination, and curiosity
for happiness. There can be sadness simply in the realization of what one has
given up. Feminist archives are thus full of housewives becoming conscious of
unhappiness as a mood that seems to surround them: think of Virginia Woolf's
Mrs. Dalloway. The feeling is certainly around, almost as a thickness in the air.
We sense the unhappiness seeping through the tasks of the everyday. There she
is, about to get flowers, enjoying her walk in London. During that walk, she
disappears: "But often now this body she wore (she stopped to look at a Dutch
picture), this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing — nothing at all. She
had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" ([1925] 1953: 14).

Becoming Mrs. Dalloway is itself a form of disappearance: to follow the paths of life (marriage, reproduction) is to feel that what is before you is a kind of solemn progress, as if you are living somebody else’s life, simply going the same way others are going. It is as if you have left the point of life behind you, as if your life is going through motions that were already in motion before you even arrived. As I argued in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), for a life to count as a good life, it must take on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one’s futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. If happiness is what allows us to reach certain points, it is not necessarily how you feel when you get there. For Mrs. Dalloway, to reach these points is to disappear. The point of reaching these points seems to be a certain disappearance, a loss of possibility, a certain failure to make use of the body’s capacities, to find out what it is that her body can do.19 To become conscious of possibility can involve mourning for its loss.

For Clarissa this rather uncanny sensation of becoming Mrs. Dalloway as a loss of possibility, as an unbecoming, or becoming "nothing at all" does not enter her consciousness in the form of sadness about something:20 The sadness of the book—and it is a sad book—is not one expressed as a point of view.

Instead, each sentence of the book takes thoughts and feelings as if they are objects in a shared world: the streets of London, the very oddness of the occasion of passing others by, a feeling of that oddness. Sometimes it can feel like a coincidence, how one coincides with others. To say "it is just a coincidence" can create the impression that the absence of a causal relation between events is the absence of any connection. But feeling a coincidence might mean recognizing that to fall in the same time and place as others, to happen with others or to happen upon others, is a kind of connection. As Clarissa goes out with her task in mind (she has to buy her flowers for her party), she walks into a world with others. You might be in your world (with your own tasks, your own recollections) and yet you share the world of the street, if only for a moment, a fleeting moment, a moment that flies. Things appear as modes of attention: the plane above that writes letters in the sky, the plane that is seen by those
who pass each other by. Questions unfold as shared questions: What letter is that? What word is that? "What are they looking at?" said Clarissa Dalloway (42). It is as if the mere direction of a glance is enough to create a shared world. Although each brings to the street a certain kind of moodiness, a preoccupation with this or with that, the street itself can become moody, when an object grabs attention, like the plane that creates words in the sky above, although for each person who looks up, what is seen might be quite different.

If unhappiness becomes a collective impression, then it too is made up of fragments that only loosely attach to points of view. In particular, the proximity between Mrs. Dalloway and the character Septimus is what allows unhappiness to be shared even if it is not passed between them; two characters who do not know each other, though they pass each other, but whose worlds are connected by the very jolt of unhappiness. We have the immanence of the shock of how one person’s suffering can have an effect on the life world of another. Septimus suffers from shell shock; and we feel his feelings with him, the panic and sadness as the horror of war intrudes as memory. His suffering brings the past into the time of the present, the long time of war, its persistence on the skin as aftermath, its refusal of an after. To those who observe him from a distance, those who share the street on this day, he appears as a madman, at the edge of respectable sociality, a spectacle. To encounter him on the street, you would not know the story behind his suffering. To be near to suffering does not necessarily bring suffering near.

Clarissa and Septimus, as characters who do not meet, thus achieve an odd intimacy: the not-just-private suffering of the housewife and the not-quite-public suffering of the returned soldier are interwoven. Importantly, their sadness is proximate but not contagious. They do not catch sadness from each other; their sadness is what keeps alive histories that are not shared, that cannot be shared, as they pass by on the street. And yet something is shared, perhaps those very things that cannot simply be revealed. Clarissa, thinking of her “odd affinities” with strangers “she had never spoken to,” sits on the bus and wonders whether the “unseen part of us” might provide a point of attachment to others and might even be how we survive through others, “perhaps—perhaps” (231–32).

It is Septimus’s wife, Rezia, whose musings reflect most directly on the difficulty of experiencing emotions that are simply revealed to proximate others. Rezia is so anxious to reveal her own unhappiness that she “almost felt some-
times that she must stop people in the street, if they looked like good, kind, kind people just to say to them "I am unhappy" (125). She is conscious of how her feelings and Septimus's feelings cannot simply be revealed to passers by: "was there, after all, anything to draw attention to them, anything to make a passer by suspect here is a young man who carries in him the greatest message in the world, and is, moreover, the happiest man in the world, and the most miserable?" (126). To inhabit a feeling world does not create a world out of feeling.

Much of the novel is about an event that will happen. For Mrs. Dalloway is planning a party. To some feminist readers, the preoccupation with the party makes the book disappointing. Simone de Beauvoir reads Mrs. Dalloway's enjoyment of parties as a sign that she is trying to turn her "prison into glory," as if as a hostess she can be "the bestower of happiness and guilt" (1949) 1997: 554). For de Beauvoir, the gift of the party turns quickly into duty; such that Mrs. Dalloway, "who loved these triumphs, these semblances," still "felt their hollowness" (555). For Kate Millett, Mrs. Dalloway is a rather disappointing figure; she exposes Woolf's failure to turn her own unhappiness into a politics: "Virginia glorified two housewives, Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsey, recorded the suicidal misery of Rhoda in The Waves without ever explaining its causes" (1970: 37). We might say that it is because Mrs. Dalloway is planning a party that we do not have much revealed about her unhappiness, other than the sadness of recalling lost intimacies with Peter and with Sally, who both turn up, unexpectedly during her day, in a way, it is implied, that does not just happen but bears some relation to Mrs. Dalloway's own thoughts: "all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally" (280). Such lost intimacies become lost possibilities, hints of a life she might have lived, if things had not turned out the way they did.

If Mrs. Dalloway is distracted from the causes of unhappiness by the party (and we can have some sympathy with the necessity of distractions), the party is also the event in which unhappiness comes to life. For Mrs. Dalloway, her party is life; it is how she can make things happen; it a gift, a happening (185). What happens? That this question is a question is a preservation of the gift. And something does happen. For it is in the party that Septimus's life "touchesa " Mrs. Dalloway most directly. It touches her through death. Lady Bradshaw says to her: "Just as we were starting, my husband was called up on the telephone, a very sad case. A young man (that is what Sir William is telling Mr. Dallo-
way) had killed himself. He had been in the army: Oh! Thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought" (279). In the middle of the party, words accumulate as a narrative, telling the story of a death. A young man kills himself, and the death itself (and not just the narrating of the death) takes place in the middle of the party, in the middle of the life of the party. The soul of the party is death. The reader has already read about this death; we have witnessed it. Now, we witness the ripples of this death; how it acquires a life of its own, how it takes place somewhere in the middle. For Mrs. Dalloway, this death becomes something to imagine, to bring to life by thought:

What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party—the Bradshaws, talked of death. He had killed himself—but how? Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. But why had he done it? And the Bradshaws talked of it at her party!

She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept coming). They (all day she has been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wearied about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved.

Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death. (280-81)

Septimus's death becomes a question that takes Mrs. Dalloway away from the party; she attends to his death, wonders about it; she becomes a retrospective witness even though she was not and could not have been there. The shudder: the sounds of it; the thud, thud, thud of it; the ground that flashes; the rusty spikes. His death becomes material, becomes fleshly through her thoughts. His death announces not only that sadness can be unbearable but that we don't have to bear it, that you can fling it away. And in this moment, when death intervenes in the life of the party, life becomes chatter, becomes what goes on,
“they went on living,” what comes and goes, “people kept on coming.” Death comes to embody the suffering that persists when life becomes chatter.

What is striking about Mrs. Dalloway is how suffering has to enter her consciousness from the edges, through the arrival of another, another who is an intruder, who has not been invited to the party. It is the suffering of an intruder that exposes the emptiness of life’s chatter. Suffering enters not as self-consciousness—as a consciousness of one’s own suffering—but as a heightening of consciousness, a world-consciousness in which the suffering of those who do not belong is allowed to disturb an atmosphere. Even when unhappiness is a familiar feeling, it can arrive like a stranger, to disturb the familiar or to reveal what is disturbing in the familiar.

The arrival of suffering from the edges of social consciousness might teach us about the difficulty of becoming conscious of suffering or teach us about our own resistances to recognizing those seemingly “little” uneasy feelings of loss or dissatisfaction as unhappiness with one’s life. The party might expose the need to keep busy, to keep going in the face of one’s disappearance. So much sadness revealed in the very need to be busy. So much grief expressed in the need not to be overwhelmed by grief. It is hard labor just to recognize sadness and disappointment, when you are living a life that is meant to be happy but just isn’t, which is meant to be full, but feels empty. It is difficult to give up an idea of one’s life, when one has lived a life according to that idea. To recognize loss can mean to be willing to experience an intensification of the sadness that hopefulness postpones.21

To inherit feminism can mean to inherit sadness. There is sadness in becoming conscious not only of gender as the restriction of possibility, but also of how this restriction is not necessary. After all, we have inherited the book Mrs. Dalloway; we have passed the book around, and the book itself has passed into other cultural forms.22 Take the film The Hours (2002, dir. Stephen Daldry), based on Michael’s Cunningham’s novel The Hours (1998), which takes its title from Woolf’s original title for Mrs. Dalloway. The Hours places three generations of women alongside each other and follows their life on a single day: we have a fictionalized account of a day in the life of Virginia Woolf (Nicole Kidman); of Laura Brown (Julianne Moore), an unhappy housewife living in the 1950s as she bakes a cake and reads Mrs. Dalloway; and of Clarissa Vaughan (Meryl Streep), who is organizing a party like Mrs. Dalloway, this time for her former lover and friend Richard (Ed Harris), who is dying of AIDS.
Mrs. Dalloway the novel is inherited by The Hours in multiple ways; we inherit the lost name of the book, the book itself. The Hours also mimics the book following its orientation, its directionality in time, by depicting a whole life in a single day. The film attends closely to gestures which bind each generation to the figure of Mrs. Dalloway: Clarissa, for instance, begins her day by saying she will get the flowers for the party. The gestures or tasks of the everyday become forms of inheritance.

I want to focus in particular on Laura Brown, the unhappy 1950s housewife. She is reading Mrs. Dalloway, and we hear the voice of Virginia Woolf as she has been evoked by the film, and the voice travels over time, as a trace of a history that is not gone, of a past that lingers. Laura longs to read the book. She caresses the book; she wants to stay in bed with it; she wants to keep reading, to read more and more. Her desire for the book is also her desire not to be in her life, to be suspended from its time and rhythms: she wants to spend time with the book to avoid spending time with her husband and child.

It is a day, one day. It is her husband's birthday; but Laura wants to say in bed with the book; we imagine that she wants to be in bed with Virginia. Later, when her husband has gone, her friend Kitty arrives and asks her about the book. Laura talks of Mrs. Dalloway, as if she was co-present, as if she shares the same space, the same world. She says of Mrs. Dalloway, "Because she is confident everyone thinks she is fine. But she isn't." To be confident is to convince the world of a happiness that does exist: it is to pass as happy with what does exist. You work to support the belief that everything is fine — when it isn't. The story of Mrs. Dalloway becomes Laura's description of her own present, what surrounds her, her life world. She identifies with Mrs. Dalloway through suffering, by sharing her grief, as a grief that is not revealed, as if to say: like you, I am not fine, like you, my life is about maintaining the appearance of being fine, an appearance which is also a disappearance.

What happens when domestic bliss does not create bliss? Laura tries to bake a cake. She cracks an egg. The cracking of the egg becomes a thematic gesture throughout the film, connecting the domestic labor of women over time. To bake a cake ought to be a happy endeavor, a labor of love. Instead, the film reveals a sense of oppression that lingers in the very act of breaking the eggs. If, as I suggested in the last chapter, happiness creates its own horizon, as a horizon of likes, then it is possible to be surrounded by likes that are not your own, and by promises that haunt you in their emptiness. Not only do such objects
not cause your happiness but they may remind you of your failure to be made happy; they embody a feeling of disappointment. The bowl in which you crack the eggs waits for you. You can feel the pressure of its wait. The empty bowl feels like an accusation. Feminist archives are full of scenes of domesticity in which domestic objects, happy objects, become alien, even menacing.

In one very poignant scene in The Hours, when Laura's family gathers around the table, having their own party with the cake she has finally baked, the promise of happiness is evoked. Her husband is telling their child the story of how they met. He says: "I used to think about bringing her to this house. To a life, pretty much like this. And it was the thought of the happiness, the thought of this woman, the thought of this life, that's what kept me going. I had an idea about our happiness." As he speaks, tears well in Laura's eyes. Her sadness is with his idea of happiness, with what keeps him going, and the world it creates for her. Laura explains to Clarissa at the end of the film how she came to leave her husband and child: "It would be wonderful to say that you regretted it; it would be easy. But what does it mean? What does it mean to regret when you had no choice? It is what you can bear. There it is. No one is going to forgive me. It was death. I choose life." A life premised on "an idea about our happiness," for Laura, would be unbearable. Such happiness would be death. She does not leave this life for happiness. She leaves this happiness for life.

We might say, why not leave his happiness for another kind of happiness, a happiness that could be called her own? Couldn't we understand the creativity of feminism, its potentiality for generating new horizons, as giving us alternative ideas of happiness? Perhaps what is revealed in Laura's sadness is how happiness is saturated by its own history becoming too hard to separate from an idea, from an idea her husband has for her. For Laura, to leave happiness is to leave everything behind; it is to cause unhappiness for those who are left behind, an unhappiness which is inherited by her child, who, we learn by the end of the film, is Richard. And it is Clarissa who in The Hours cares for Richard and attends to his unhappiness, who has to pick up the pieces of the happiness that Laura has shattered. Clarissa: who ends up (like Mrs. Dalloway) organizing a party for her friend, worrying (like Mrs. Dalloway) that her parties are trivial. Clarissa (like Mrs. Dalloway) tries desperately not to be sad; to use the happy occasion of the party, its celebration of Richard's award of the Carrouthers Prize for poetry, to stop herself thinking about the sadness of his imminent death; to avoid being overwhelmed by grief.
The film might in its dramatization of the unhappiness caused by Laura, the woman who cannot bear the idea of happiness, withdraw its sympathy from her plight. I think it does. Perhaps we can learn from this withdrawal of sympathy. If the one who leaves happiness must cause unhappiness to those who are left behind, then she must refuse to be sympathetic: she must not return feeling with like feeling (happiness with happiness, love with love) if she is to escape from the very obligation to return. In other words, to give up happiness is to become unsympathetic. That Laura's act is only narratable as extreme, even as violence, as the cause of suffering that cannot be repaired, shows us just how hard it can be to give up on the idea of happiness because that idea is also bound up with the impulse to care for the happiness of others. There are, I think we know, many who stay in situations of unhappiness out of fear of causing unhappiness, out of fear of losing sympathy, of becoming unsympathetic.

It is hard to leave happiness for life. There is always a gap between becoming conscious of what is lost by living according to an idea of happiness and being able to leave happiness for life, a gap where things happen, where lives are lived and lives are lost. Not only is there sadness in recognizing gender as the loss of possibility but there is also the sadness of realizing that recognizing such loss does not necessarily make things possible. After all, Clarissa in The Hours spends her time, as does Clarissa in Mrs. Dalloway, caring for the happiness of Richard: it is her relationship with Sally that suffers, which does not have her attention. Perhaps the film teaches us that Clarissa's unhappiness is both her inheritance from Mrs. Dalloway and her failure to inherit from Laura, from Laura's act of rebellion, rather than being what she catches from Richard, as the child Laura left behind. In the end it is Clarissa's daughter who is sympathetic toward Laura. We learn from this intergenerational sympathy: perhaps it takes more than one generation to reproduce a feminist inheritance, where we can acquire sympathy (maybe a sympathy for affect aliens or an alien sympathy) toward those whose acts are publicly remembered without sympathy, as causing unhappiness to others.

To leave happiness for life is to become alive to possibility. The concept of feminism as "becoming alive" was crucial to second wave feminism even in the mode of its critique of the happy housewife, which seems at one level to deposit feminist hope in happiness. In The Feminine Mystique, for instance, Friedan recognizes that some women may be happy as housewives—by saying this, she also implies that making women happy is not the point of feminism.
As she argues, "Surely there are many women in America who are happy at the moment as housewives, and some whose abilities are fully used in the housewife role. But happiness is not the same thing as the aliveness of being fully used" (1965: 223–24). The concept of aliveness is held up as an alternative social value to happiness. Indeed, Friedan argues that women who can fit the image of the happy housewife are the ones who are more likely to adjust to this role and who then give up—without any conscious act of sacrifice—other opportunities for "finding yourself" (310). Behind this argument is a critique of the concept of adjustment, how happiness demands adjusting your body to a world that has already taken shape. If we take the shape of what is given (which depends on being able to take this shape), we experience the comfort of being given the right shape. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman argued, "Comfort and happiness are very likely a matter of prolonged adjustment. We like what we are used to" ([1905] 2002: 8; emphasis added). What lies behind this adjustment is the loss of other possible ways of living, a loss that must remain un mourned if you are to stay well-adjusted. To even recognize such loss is to mourn, which is why it can be easier to avoid recognition. Feminist subjects in refusing to be well-adjusted not only mourn the losses but in mourning open up other possibilities for living, as openings that we inherit over generations.

**Consciousness and Racism**

Our feminist archive teaches us about unhappiness and what it can do. Feminism involves a sociality of unhappiness not only by generating talk about the collective nature of suffering that is concealed and reproduced by the figure of the happy housewife (which is perhaps how we could consider consciousness-raising) but also through passing books around. To inherit unhappiness through the circulation of books is not necessarily to inherit the same thing. It is not simply that feminism coheres around the inheritance of books such as *Mrs. Dalloway*, which offer alternative forms of consciousness of the world in their narration of gender as loss. After all, if we were to assume feminist consciousness took the form of consciousness of gender as the restriction of possibility, then we would be excluding other kinds of political consciousness from our idea of feminism. Black feminists have had a lot to say, after all, about happiness as a political myth that does things, writing not from the point of
view of those who should be happy because they have what promises happiness but instead of those who are already imagined as being unhappy, as lacking the very qualities and attributes that would make a life good.

Consider Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, which offers us a very different account of unhappiness than that found in the unhappy housewife novels, though it also critiques the idea of the happy family. *The Bluest Eye* begins its critique of the happy family by sentencing it to death: “Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy” ([1970] 1979: 1). By taking the punctuation out of the sentence until it becomes “hereisthehouseitis” (28), the picture-book story becomes nonsense, becomes gackle. To disturb the promise of happiness, which has become literalized, such that happiness is “in house” requires disturbing the very technologies through which we make sense.

The novel tells the story of a family that deviates from the social ideal, that cannot be the “they are very happy” of the picture book. This family is not white, not middle class, where “being not” means being unhappy. Unhappiness becomes a kind of want. In this novel, the family is narrated as wanting, as lacking the qualities or attributes that would make for a good or happy life. Most powerfully, the novel describes the discourses of happiness in terms of the conflation of whiteness with beauty and virtue: the happy ones are blue-eyed, the blue-eyed ones are beautiful ones, the beautiful ones are the good ones, the good ones are the happy ones. The “not family,” the Breedloves are the ugly ones, as if their ugliness is a curse: “You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and you could not find the source” (28). For some, deviation from the happiness scripts is itself an inheritance: you inherit unhappiness by not being the blue-eyed ones, as if “the master had said, ‘you are Ugly people’” (28). The evocation of the master is the evocation of the history of slavery. Unhappiness becomes an inheritance of the violence of history.

The story of the novel is the story of what happens to the Breedloves, violence, despair, and misery being what follows being not. The novel offers us different narrators, beginning with the sisters Claudia and Frieda, before switching to the Breedloves: the mother Pauline, the father Cholly, and their daughter Pecola. In a way, the novel is the story of the unhappiness inherited by Pecola, who is raped by her father and who loses her child, an unwanted black
baby conceived through violence, in a miscarriage. We first witness Pecola's unhappiness in the opening passage written from the point of view of Claudia:

"So deeply concerned were we with the health and the safe delivery of Pecola's baby we could think of nothing but our own magic: if we planted the seeds, and said the right words over them, they would blossom and everything would be all right. It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to ourselves that no green was going to spring from our seeds. Once we knew, our guilt was relieved only by fights and mutual accusations over who was to blame. For years I thought my sister was right: it was my fault. I had planted them too far down in the earth. It never occurred to either of us that the earth might have been unyielding." (3).

I have described happiness as a technology of cultivation: of cultivating subjects "in the right way" so they will flourish. What is so powerful in this description is how much the failure to flourish is not the failure of care or orientation but the failure of the earth to yield. For some, the earth is unyielding, unable to provide the soil in which life can flourish. The unyielding earth provides the grounds of whiteness, as the restriction of life possibility, as giving life to some and not others.

Our first narrator, Claudia, learns to notice that this earth might be unyielding. Claudia expresses rage at the world that asks her to love in a certain way:

"It had begun with Christmas and the gift of dolls. The big, the special, the loving gift was always a big, blue-eyed Baby Doll. From the clucking sounds of adults I knew that the doll represented what they thought was my fondest wish... which were supposed to bring me great pleasure, succeeded in doing quite the opposite... Traced the turned-up nose, poked the glassy-blue eyes, twisted the yellow hair. I could not love it. But I could examine it to see what it was that all the world said was lovable... I destroyed white baby dolls" (13–15).

By not experiencing pleasure in the right way, toward the right things, she must destroy things, transferring her hatred and rage from white baby dolls to white baby girls. To hate what is loved is to recognize your alienation from the beloved.26

In contrast, Pecola, in wanting happiness, wants what is attributed as the cause of happiness: the bluest eyes. For Pecola: "Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike... It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights—if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different" (34). In the following paragraph we
return to the picture-book family: "Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes. Run, lip, run. Lip runs. Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes. Jerry has blue eyes. Jerry runs. Alice runs. They run with their blue eyes. Four blue eyes" (34). The desire for blue eyes is the desire not to be not white; the double negative does not amount to a positive.

This is a bleak novel, bleak as it shows us that the consequences of unhappiness can be more unhappiness. To be conscious of unhappiness is to be conscious of being "not," or of being "un," as lacking the qualities or attributes of happiness. To be not happy is to be not in the eyes of others, in the world of whiteness, which is the world as it coheres around white bodies. Consciousness of "being not" involves self-estrangement: you recognize yourself as the stranger. Note that consciousness is already worldly if you are the one whose arrival disturbs an atmosphere. To recognize yourself as the stranger is to become conscious of the violence directed toward you. Audre Lorde dramatizes how becoming conscious of being a stranger involves a retrospective renaming of apparently random events as racism:

Tensions on the street were high, as they always are in racially mixed zones of transition. As a very little girl, I remember shrinking from a particular sound, a hoarsely sharp, guttural rasp, because it often meant a nasty glob of grey spittle upon my coat or shoe an instant later. My mother wiped it off with the little pieces of newspaper she always carried in her purse. Sometimes she fussed about low-class people who had no better sense nor manners than to spit into the wind no matter where they went, impressing upon me that this humiliation was totally random. It never occurred to me to doubt her. It was not until years later once in conversation I said to her: "Have you noticed people don't spit into the wind so much the way they used to?" And the look on my mother's face told me that I had blundered into one of those secret places of pain that must never be spoken of again. But it was so typical of my mother when I was young that if she couldn't stop white people spitting on her children because they were Black, she would insist it was something else.

(1982: 17–18)

An event happens. And it happens again. The violence is directed from the white body to the black child, who receives that violence by shrinking, shrinking away from its sound. But the mother cannot bear to speak of racism and creates an impression that the violence is random. Racism is a pain that is hard
to bear. Consciousness of racism becomes retrospective, and the question of
ts its timing does matter. You learn not to see racism as a way of bearing the pain.
To see racism, you have to un-see the world as you learned to see it, the world
that covers unhappiness, by covering over its cause. You have to be willing to
venture into secret places of pain.

Some forms of "taking cover" from pain—from not naming the causes of
pain in the hope that it will go away—are to protect those we love from being
hurt, or even to protect ourselves from hurt, or are at least meant as a form of
protection. If happiness does provide a way of "taking cover," it is not always
offered to protect us from hurt. It can also work to conceal the causes of hurt
or to make others the cause of their own hurt. In The Cancer Journals, Audre
Lorde offers a powerful critique of the politics of happiness. She writes as a
black lesbian feminist who is experiencing breast cancer: Lorde never refuses
the power of "writing as" nor assumes it can abbreviate an experience. Faced
with medical discourse that attributes cancer to unhappiness and survival or
coping to being happy or optimistic, she suggests: "Looking on the bright side
of things is a euphemism used for obscuring certain realities of life, the open
consideration of which might prove threatening or dangerous to the status
quo" (1997: 76). To obscure or to take cover by looking on the bright side is to
avoid what might threaten the world as it is. Lorde moves from this observation
to a wider critique of happiness as an obscuration: "Let us seek 'joy' rather than
real food and clean air and a saner future on a liveable earth! As if happiness
alone can protect us from the results of profit-madness" (76). Lorde suggests
that the very idea that our first responsibility is for our own happiness must
be resisted by political struggle, which means resisting the idea that our own
resistance is a failure to be responsible for happiness: "Was I really fighting the
spread of radiation, racism, woman-slaughter, chemical invasion of our food,
pollution of our environment, the abuse and psychic destruction of our young,
merely to avoid dealing with my first and greatest responsibility to be happy?"
(77).28 I think Audre Lorde has given us the answer to her question.

We can now see how you can retrieve a model of false consciousness in cri-
tiquing claims to happiness. You would not be saying "you are wrong, you are
not happy, you just think you are as you have a false belief." Rather you would
be saying there is something false about our consciousness of the world; we
learn not to be conscious, not to see what happens right in front of us. Hap-
piness provides as it were a cover, a way of covering over what resists or is re-
sistant to a view of the world, or a worldview, as harmonious. It is not that an individual person suffers from false consciousness but that we inherit a certain false consciousness when we learn to see and not to see things in a certain way.29

Becoming conscious — refusing to take cover — is a form of political struggle. I have been thinking about the labor of becoming conscious of racism and what that does to how we inhabit and know the world. It is hard labor, for sure. I am speaking to a black feminist colleague about racism. We are just talking, recognizing each other, as you do, in how we recognize racism in those everyday encounters you have with people who can't handle it, the idea of it. That's what they always say, she says to me, that you always reduce everything to racism. Racism becomes your paranoia. Of course, it's a way of saying that racism doesn't really exist in the way you say it does. It is as if we had to invent racism to explain our own feeling of exclusion, as if racism provides us with a way of not being responsible for the places we cannot go. It is a form of racism to say that racism does not exist. We know this.

But I am thinking more about paranoia, and the good reasons for bad feelings. I guess the problem is that I do feel paranoid even if I know that this paranoia is reasonable. I do have a kind of paranoid anxiety about things that do and could happen. I am never sure, when x happens, whether x is about racism or is a result of racism. I am never sure. And because I am never sure, then x is lived as possibly about racism, as being what explains how you inhabit the world you do. Racism creates paranoia, that's what racism does. Whiteness is reproduced both by the fantasy of paranoia (it doesn't "really" exist) and by the effect of the fantasy of paranoia, which is to make us paranoid. Our feelings become its truth. And when we scream the truth, we are the sore points. Some people describe the struggle against racism as hitting your head against a brick wall. The wall keeps its place, so it is you that gets sore.

One of the best literary descriptions of how consciousness of racism puts you in a different world is offered in Andrea Levy's Fruit of the Lemon (1999). The novel tells the story of Faith Jackson, a black British girl whose parents migrated to England from Jamaica. She is getting along with her life, doing her own thing. She moves out of home, into a share house with her white friends. Her parents let her go: "Ah Faith, what can we do with you? You just go your own sweet way, you just go your own sweet way." (19). I will return to this idea of the children of immigrant families being
allowed to go on their "own sweet way" in chapter 4. What follows here is a powerful description of a girl experiencing blackness, as something that jolts her consciousness and puts her into a different world.

Again, there is an event. Something happens. Faith and her flatmate Simon witness a violent attack on a black woman. He runs after the attackers, and they are caught. Events are what catch you out and catch you up. We witness the event through Faith's eyes: "A black woman was standing in the doorway of a bookshop. She looked composed, although she had a startled stare—like she's just won the pools and couldn't quite believe it. But sliding slowly down one side of her face were several strings of blood—thick, bright, red blood. I stood in front of her and asked, 'Are you all right?' and felt stupid when she collapsed onto the ground" (150). They return to tell the story of the event.

The story creates a certain kind of drama, in which Simon becomes not simply witness or participant but also the savior, the hero, and even the victim. The housemates gather around him as if this has happened to him, as if what made the event an event was how it affected him: "Simon's hands shook as he lifted his cigarette to his mouth—he couldn't hold it steady, Marion put her hand over his hand to support it. 'I think you're in shock.' Sweet tea is what you need,' she said looking closely into Simon's face. 'Mick, put the kettle on!'" (156). Faith watches the black woman disappear as they gather around him. She interrupts the gathering, "I interrupted the story twice. 'She was a black woman,' I said. Simon had just called her the woman who worked there. Twice I had to tell them this woman was black like me. And both times Simon and Mick had looked at me and nodded" (156). Faith identifies with the black woman who has been hurt; she says she was black. She says she was black like me. The point of political identification rests on this recognition of another's hurt.

But they keep going with their story, as if her blackness was just a detail that can be passed over. They fuss over Simon: giggling, full of the drama of an event. And then Faith can't bear it anymore. She can't bear the violence of the event, as a violence that acquires its force by being directed against a black woman, to be passed over: "But then I tipped my cup of tea slowly over the table. 'Will you all just shut up. Just fucking shut up. Its not funny!' And there was complete silence as they stopped and stared at me I left the house" (158). To speak of racism, to name racism, to be conscious of racism, puts Faith in a different world, a world where blackness cannot be passed over. The black
woman shouts to be heard. And in shouting, the black woman is the one who
becomes the origin of bad feeling. So it is she who must leave. Although she
returns, she has been undone. She cannot look at her friends; she cannot bear
her own reflection in the mirror, as if what the mirror reflects back to her, her
black face, is something she can now see and thus no longer bear. How
can one be disturbed by one’s own arrival? The familiar is that which recedes
to those who inhabit it. To become estranged from the familiar is thus to have
it revealed to you. The familiar is disclosed in the revelation of your estrange-
ment. You learn to see yourself as you are seen by those who can inhabit the
familiar, because they can recede into its form as Frantz Fanon demonstrated
so powerfully in Black Skin, White Masks (1952) 1986.

What follows is a story of Faith going home, as a home that she has never
been to, going back to where her parents are from, back to Jamaica. In a way
the plot of this novel is simple, as if going home, discovering your roots, can be
the solution. It can be read that way—but that’s not how I would read it. Con-
sciousness of racism becomes consciousness of being out of place in a world ori-
ented around whiteness. For Faith, finding her place means learning of her
parents’ arrival, which means learning about where they are from, her own
coming into being, an inheritance of displacement. This is not a story of her
becoming happy. But it is a story of becoming black as an act of resistance to
being passed over, where becoming black means restoring family connections,
of hearing family stories. White feminist consciousness novels tend to involve
freedom from family and its narrow scripts of duty and obligation. Black femi-
nist consciousness novels may involve freedom-to-family, as family is what is
lost through unfolding histories of displacement and dispossession.

Feminist consciousness can thus be thought of as consciousness of the vio-
ence and power that are concealed under the languages of civility and love,
rather than simply consciousness of gender as a site of restriction of possibility.
We learn from this so much, too much. We learn to see what is concealed
by signs of happiness. You can cause unhappiness merely by noticing some-
thing. And if it can cause unhappiness simply to notice something, you realize
that the world you are in is not the world you thought you were in. Feminism
becomes a kind of estrangement from the world and thus involves moments
of self-estrangement. Our feminist archive is an archive of unhappiness even
though the threads of unhappiness do not weave our stories together.

In calling for us to recognize how feminist politics involves killing joy, I am
also asking us to turn back, to return to feminist histories, as a history of those who have struggled against happiness. I am thus uncertain what it means to call for a more affirmative feminism in our present time. Rosi Braidotti has suggested that the focus on negativity has become a problem within feminism. She offers a rather bleak reading of bleakness: "I actively yearn for a more joyful and empowering concept of desire and for a political economy that foregrounds positivity, not gloom" (2002: 57). The call for affirmation rather than negativity in her work involves an explicit turn to happiness. As she argues: "I consider happiness a political issue, as are well-being, self-confidence and a sense of empowerment. These are fundamentally ethical concerns. ... The feminist movement has played the historical role of placing these items at the centre of the social and political agenda: happiness as a fundamental human right and hence a political question" (2006a: 230). My desire is to revitalize the feminist critique of happiness as a human right and as the appropriate language for politics.

To revitalize the critique of happiness is to be willing to be proximate to unhappiness. I have suggested that feminist consciousness involves consciousness of unhappiness that might even increase our unhappiness, or at least create this impression. Happiness can work to cover over unhappiness, in part by covering over its causes, such that to refuse to take cover can allow unhappiness to emerge. This process of consciousness raising involves not simply becoming conscious of unhappiness but also achieving (with others) better ways of understanding unhappiness. We can recognize that unhappiness is structured, and that what happens to us might be connected in some way to what happens to others. We can recognize not only that we are not the cause of the unhappiness that has been attributed to us but also the effects of being attributed as the cause. We can talk about being angry black women or feminist killjoys; we can claim those figures back; we can talk about those conversations we have had at dinner tables or in seminars or meetings; we can laugh in recognition of the familiarity of inhabiting that place. There is solidarity in recognizing our alienation from happiness, even if we do not inhabit the same place (as we do not). There can even be joy in killing joy. And kill joy, we must and we do.
"You might have a good story there," Dick said, "but . . . you cannot make homosexuality attractive. No happy ending . . ." In other words, my heroine has to decide she's not really queer . . . "That's it. And the one she's involved with is sick or crazy."  

VIN Packer

CHAPTER THREE

Unhappy Queers

In this exchange Vin Packer, author of the first bestselling lesbian pulp novel Spring Fire, first published in 1952, and her publisher come to an agreement. The novel will be published, but only on condition that it does not have a happy ending, as such an ending would "make homosexuality attractive" ([1952] 2004: vi). Queer fiction in this period could not give happiness to its characters as queers; such a gift would be readable as making queers appear "good": as the "promotion" of the social value of queer lives, or an attempt to influence readers to become queer.

Somewhat ironically, then, the unhappy ending becomes a political gift: it provides a means through which queer fiction could be published. If the unhappy ending was an effect of censorship, it also provided a means for overcoming censorship. In her introduction to the new issue of Spring Fire published in 2004, Vin Packer does express regret for the compromise of its ending. But she also describes how although it "may have satisfied the post office inspections, the homosexual audience would not have believed it for a minute. But they also wouldn't care that much, because more important was the fact there was a new book about us" (vii). The unhappy ending satisfies the censors while also enabling the gay and lesbian audience to be satisfied; we are not obliged

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