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).[1] 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.

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.

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.[2] 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 on (often Orientalist) readings of Eastern traditions, especially Buddhism.[3] 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.[4] 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.[5] 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."[6] 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.[7] 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).[8] 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

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" (6). 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.[9] 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.

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.[10] 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 I

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 uncouples 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 council. 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.[12] 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" (xi). 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.[13]

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).[14] 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.[15] 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-

ing point[16]—shame, hate, fear, disgust, anger, and so on—then this book starts at a different point, with good feeling, although I do not assume that the distinction between good feeling and bad feeling will hold (and, as we will see, it does not). Developing the arguments I made in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), I explore how feelings are attributed to objects, such that some things and not others become happiness and unhappiness causes. Feelings do not then simply reside within subjects and then move outward toward objects. Feelings are how objects create impressions in shared spaces of dwelling. Building on my approach in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), I explore how we are directed by the promise of happiness, as the promise that happiness is what follows if we do this or that. The promise of happiness is what makes certain objects proximate, affecting how the world gathers around us.

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.[17] 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).[18] Philosophy brackets the everyday or ordinary and thinks with

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 describe 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 philosophy 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 philosophers write themselves as being against specific traditions of happiness—for instance, utilitarianism—by placing their hope not in unhappiness, or indifference 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.[22] 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.[23] 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."[24] 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 killjoys 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.