

## Happiness and Queer Politics<sup>1</sup>

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“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

In this exchange Vin Packer, author of the first best selling lesbian pulp novel *Spring Fire* first published in 1952, comes to an agreement with her publisher. 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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. So although Packer expresses regret for the compromise of its ending in her introduction to the new issue of *Spring Fire* published in 2004, she also suggests that while 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.”<sup>3</sup> The unhappy ending satisfies the censors whilst also enabling the gay and lesbian audience to be satisfied; we are not obliged to “believe” in the unhappy ending by taking the ending literally, as “evidence” that lesbians and gays must turn straight, die or go mad. What mattered was the existence of “a new book about us.”

We can see that reading unhappy endings in queer archives is a complicated matter. A literal reading suggests that the very distinction between happy and unhappy endings “works” to secure a moral distinction between good and bad lives. When we read this unhappy queer archive (which is not the only queer archive) we must resist this literalism, which means an active disbelief in the necessary alignment of the happy with the good, or even in the moral transparency of the good itself. Rather than reading unhappy endings as a sign of the withholding of a moral approval for queer lives, we would consider how unhappiness circulates within and around this archive, and *what it allows us to do*.

My aim in this essay is to consider unhappy queers as a crucial aspect of queer genealogy. As Heather Love has argued “We need a genealogy of queer affect that does not overlook the negative, shameful and difficult feelings that have been so central to queer existence in the last century.”<sup>4</sup> Scholars such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Elspeth Probyn and Sally Munt have offered us powerful defenses of the potentialities of shame for queer politics.<sup>5</sup> I will consider what it might mean to affirm unhappiness, or at least not to overlook it. We can explore how queer literatures locate and attribute unhappiness and how, in doing so, they offer us an alternative approach to happiness as a positive, but perhaps still rather difficult, feeling.<sup>6</sup>

In rethinking happiness through queer politics, I turn to the classic novel *The Well of Loneliness*. Lisa Walker has argued that “*The Well*’s status as *the* lesbian novel is inseparable from its reputation as *the most depressing* lesbian novel ever written.”<sup>7</sup> *The Well* has even been described as a “narrative of damnation,” which gives “the homosexual, particularly the lesbian, riddling images of pity, self-pity and of terror.”<sup>8</sup> The book has been criticized for making its readers feel sad and wretched, perhaps even causing queer unhappiness. I would not dismiss such criticisms: they are part of our shared archive. Indeed, the very expression of unhappiness *about* unhappiness is what makes this archive work; the threads of negative affect weave together a shared inheritance. We can, of course, inherit unhappiness differently. I will read novels such as *The Well of Loneliness* as part of a genealogy of unhappy queers. I will also consider how being happily queer might involve a different orientation to the causes of unhappiness, by reflecting on the novels *Rubyfruit Jungle* and *Babyji*.

### Happy Objects

Happiness is about what happens, where the what is something good. I do not assume there is something called happiness that stands apart or has autonomy, as if it corresponds to an object in the world. I begin instead with the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds, and what I called in *Queer Phenomenology* the drama of contingency, how we are touched by what we are near.<sup>9</sup> The etymology of “happiness” relates precisely to the question of contingency: it is from the Middle English “hap,” suggesting chance. Happiness is about what happens. Such a meaning now seems archaic: we may be more used to thinking of happiness as an effect of what you do, as a reward for hard work, rather than as being “simply” what happens to you. But I find the original meaning useful, as it focuses our attention on the “worldly” question of happenings.

What is the relation between the “what” in “what happens” and the “what” that makes us happy? Empiricism provides us with a useful way of addressing this question, given its concern with “what’s what.” Take the work of seventeenth century empiricist philosopher John Locke. He argues that what is good is what is “apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain in us.”<sup>10</sup> We judge something to be good or bad according to how it affects us, whether it gives us a pleasure or pain. Locke uses the example of the man that loves grapes. He argues that “when a man declares...that he loves grapes, it is no more, but that the taste of grapes delights him.”<sup>11</sup> Locke points out that we find different things agreeable. As he suggests: “as pleasant tastes depend not on the things themselves, but their agreeability to this or that palate, wherein there is great variety; so the greatest happiness consists in having those things which produce the greatest pleasure.”<sup>12</sup> For Locke, happiness is idiosyncratic: if we find different things delightful, then happiness consists in having different things.

At one level, Locke’s story seems quite casual. I happen upon something, and if it happens to affect me in a good way, then it is happy for me, or I am happy with it. I want to suggest that the history of happiness is not quite so casual: one history of happiness is the history of the removal of the hap from happiness. Happiness becomes not what might happen, but what will happen if you live your life in the right way. That happiness can signal a “right way” suggests that happiness is already given to certain objects. We can

arrive at some things *because* they point us toward happiness, as if to find happiness would be to follow their point.

Objects can thus be associated with affects before they are even encountered. We need to rethink the relationship between objects, affects and causality. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche suggests that the attribution of causality is retrospective.<sup>13</sup> We might assume then, that the experience of pain is caused by the nail near our foot. But we only notice the nail given we experience an affect. The object of feeling lags behind the feeling. The lag is not simply temporal, but involves active forms of mediation. We search for the object: or as Nietzsche describes “a reason is sought in persons, experiences, etc. for why one feels this way or that.”<sup>14</sup>

We can loosen the bond between the object and the affect by recognizing the form of their bond. The object is understood retrospectively as the cause of the feeling. Having been understood in this way, I can just apprehend the nail and I will experience a pain affect, given the association between the object and the affect has been given. The object becomes a feeling-cause. Once an object is a feeling-cause, it can cause feeling, so that when we feel the feeling we expect to feel, we are affirmed. The retrospective causality of affect that Nietzsche describes quickly converts into what we could call an *anticipatory causality*. We can even anticipate an affect without being retrospective insofar as objects might acquire the value of proximities that are not derived from our own experience. For example, with fear-causes, a child might be told not to go near an object in advance of its arrival. Some things more than others are encountered as “to-be-feared” in the event of proximity, which is exactly how we can understand the anticipatory logic of the discourse of stranger danger.<sup>15</sup>

We also anticipate that an object will cause happiness in advance of its arrival; the object enters our near sphere with positive affective value already in place. What makes this argument different from John Locke’s account of loving grapes because they taste delightful is that the judgment about certain objects as being “happy” is already made before we happen upon them. Indeed, we might happen upon things *because* they are already attributed as happiness causes. So the child might be asked to imagine happiness by imagining “happy events” in the future, such as a wedding day, “the happiest day of your life.”

Perhaps this day happens because it is expected to be the happiest. We can just expect happiness from this or that to end up feeling disappointed. Arlie Russell Hoshchild, in her book *The Managed Heart*, explores how if a bride is not happy on the wedding day and even feels “depressed and upset” then she is experiencing an “inappropriate affect,”<sup>16</sup> or is being affected inappropriately. The bride has to “save the day” by feeling right: “sensing a gap between the ideal feeling and the actual feeling she tolerated, the bride prompts herself to be happy.”<sup>17</sup> The capacity to “save the day” depends on the bride being able to make her self be affected in the right way or at least being able to persuade others that she is being affected in the right way. When it can be said “the bride looked happy” then the expectation of happiness has become the happiness of expectation. To correct our feelings is to become disaffected from a former affectation: the bride makes herself happy by stopping herself being miserable. Of course we learn from this example that it is possible not to inhabit fully one’s own happiness, or even to be alienated from one’s happiness, if

the former affection remains lively, or if one is made uneasy by the labor of making oneself feel a certain way. Uneasiness might persist in the very feeling of being happy, as a feeling of unease *with* the happiness you are in.

The apparent chanciness of happiness can be qualified: we do not just find happy objects anywhere. For a life to count as a good life, then it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one's futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. Happiness might be how we reach such points, though it is not necessarily how we feel when we get there.

We are directed by happiness toward certain things. The promise of happiness takes this form: if you have this or have that, or if you do this or do that, then happiness is what follows. Lauren Berlant usefully suggests that the object of desire could be rethought as a "cluster of promises."<sup>18</sup> Happiness is promised through proximity to certain objects, which might be how objects cluster, becoming promising, becoming proximate. This is why the social bond is always sensational. We have a bond if we place our hopes for happiness in the same things.

Objects that promise happiness are passed around, accumulating positive affective value as social goods. When we pass happy objects around, it is not necessarily the feeling that passes. To share in such objects, or have a share in such objects, means simply that you *share an orientation toward those objects as being good*. Take the example of the happy family. The family might be happy not because it causes happiness, or not even because it affects us in a good way, but if we share an orientation toward the family as being good, as being what promises happiness in return for loyalty. Such an orientation shapes what we do; you have to "make" and "keep" the family, which directs how you spend your time, energy and resources. Being oriented toward the family might make certain kinds of things proximate: tables, photographs, objects that are passed down through generations. The table, for example, gives form to the family, as the tangible thing over which the family gathers<sup>19</sup>. The table is happy when it secures this point.

To be oriented toward the family does not mean inhabiting the same place. After all, as we know from Locke, pleasures can be idiosyncratic. Families may give one a sense of having "a place at the table" through the conversion of idiosyncratic difference into a happy object: love "happily" means knowing the peculiarity of a loved other's likes. Love becomes an intimacy with what the other likes (rather than simply liking what the other likes), and is given on condition that such likes do not take us outside a shared horizon. The horizon of happiness is a horizon of likes.

Sharing a horizon is not necessarily to feel alike. Think about experiences of alienation. When we feel pleasure from happy objects, we are aligned; we are facing the right way. We become alienated—out of line with an affective community—when we are not happy in proximity to objects that are attributed as being good. The gap between the affective value of an object and how we experience an object can involve a range of affects, which are directed by the modes of explanation we offer to fill this gap. I have already commented on the labor of trying to close the gap between an expectation and a feeling. When we cannot close the gap, we are disappointed; we are even disappointed by our inability to overcome our disappointment. Such disappointment can also involve an

anxious narrative of self-doubt (why I am not made happy by this, what is wrong with me?) or (my own preferred response) a narrative of rage, where the object that is supposed to make us happy is attributed as the cause of disappointment. Your rage might be directed against the object that fails to deliver its promise, or spill out toward those who promised you happiness through the elevation of such things as good. We become strangers, or affect aliens, in such moments.

What passes when we pass happy objects around will remain an open and empirical question. After all, the word “passing” can mean not only “to send over” or “to transmit,” but also to transform objects by “a sleight of hand.” Like the game Telephone, what passes between proximate bodies might be affective precisely because it deviates and even perverts what was “sent out.” Affects involve perversion; and what we can describe as conversion points.

One of my key questions is how such conversions happen, and “who” or “what” gets seen as converting bad feeling into good feeling and good into bad. When I hear people say “the bad feeling” is coming from “this person” or “that person” I am never convinced. I am sure a lot of my skepticism is shaped by childhood experiences of being the feminist daughter in a conventional family home. 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 you find problematic. You respond carefully, perhaps. You might be speaking quietly, but you are beginning to feel “wound up,” recognizing with frustration that you are being wound up by someone who is winding you up. Let us take seriously the figure of the feminist killjoy. 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? The feminist is an affect alien; not only is she not made happy by the objects that are supposed to cause happiness, but her failure to be happy is read as sabotaging the happiness of others.

We can place the figure of the feminist kill joy alongside the angry black woman, explored by black feminist writers such as Audre Lorde and bell hooks.<sup>20</sup> The angry black woman could also be described as a kill-joy; she may even kill feminist joy, for example, by pointing out forms of racism within feminist politics. bell hooks describes for us how the arrival of a woman of color disturbs a shared atmosphere: “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 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.”<sup>21</sup>

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 presumed 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. hooks shows how 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 that 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 always to “get in the way” of the happiness of others.

### **Making Others Happy**

Robert Heinlin’s definition of love “is a condition in which the happiness of another is essential to your own”.<sup>22</sup> It is perhaps a truism that to love another is to want their happiness. Whether or not we agree with this truth, we can learn from its status as truth. I want to turn to a text from the eighteenth century, Rousseau’s *Émile*, first published in 1762, which was crucial for how it re-defined education and for the role it gave to happiness. The story is told in the first person, by a narrator whose duty is to instruct a young orphan Émile, in order that he can take up his place in the world. Rousseau also offers a model not only of what a good education would do for his Émile, but also for Émile’s would-be wife, Sophy, whom he introduces in the fifth book. Sophie must become a good woman. As Rousseau describes, the good woman:

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 the 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!<sup>23</sup>

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 loves what is good because what is good is what is loved by her parents. The parents desire not only what is good; they desire their daughter to be good. The daughter desires to be 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.

It might seem that what we can call “conditional happiness,” when one person’s happiness is made conditional on another person’s, involves a form of generosity: a refusal to 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*.

I suggested earlier that we might share a social bond if the same objects make us happy. I am now arguing that happiness itself can become the shared object. Or to be more precise, if one person’s happiness comes first, then *their 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. 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.”<sup>24</sup> 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 given out and 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). In cases where I am also affected by x, and I do not share your happiness with x, I might become uneasy and ambivalent: *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 might 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). In order to preserve the happiness of all, we might even conceal from ourselves our unhappiness with x, or try and persuade ourselves that x matters less than the happiness of the other who is made happy by x.<sup>25</sup>

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.”<sup>26</sup> For the daughter not to go along with the parent’s desire for marriage would be not only to 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*.

We learn from reading books such as *Émile* how much happiness is used as a technology or instrument, which allows the re-orientation of individual desire towards a common good. We also learn from reading such books how happiness is not simply instrumental, but works as an idea or aspiration within everyday life, shaping the very terms in which individuals share their world with others. We do things when we speak of happiness, when we put happiness into words.

Let’s take the statement: *I am happy if you are*. Such a statement can be attributed, as a way of sharing an evaluation of an object. I could be saying I am happy about something if you are happy about something. The statement, though, does not require an object to mediate between the “I” and the “you”; the “you” can be the object, can be what my happiness is dependent upon. *I will only be happy if you are*. To say I will be happy only if you are happy means that I will be unhappy if you are unhappy. *Your unhappiness would make me unhappy*. Given this, you might be obliged to conceal your unhappiness to preserve my happiness: *You must be happy for me*.

I am not saying that such speech acts always translate in quite this way. But we can learn from how the desire for the happiness of others can be the point at which they are bound to be happy for us. If to love another is to want their happiness, then love might

be experienced as the duty to be happy for another. It is interesting that when we speak of wanting the happiness of the loved other we often hesitate with the signifier “just.” “I just want you to be happy.” What does it mean to want “just” happiness? What does it mean for a parent to say this to a child? We might assume that the desire just for the child’s happiness would offer a certain kind of freedom, as if to say: “I don’t want you to be this, or to do that; I just want you to be or to do “whatever” makes you happy.” You could say that the “whatever” seems to release us from the obligation of the “what”. The desire just for the child’s happiness seems to offer the freedom of a certain indifference to the content of a decision.

Let’s take the psychic drama of the queer child. You might say that the queer child is an unhappy object for many parents. In some parental responses to the child coming out, this unhappiness is not so much expressed as being unhappy about the child being queer, but as *being unhappy about the child being unhappy*. Take the following exchange from the novel, *Annie on My Mind* (1982) by Nancy Garden:

“Lisa”, my father said, “I told you I’d support you and I will....But honey... I have to say to you I’ve never thought gay people can be very happy—no children for one thing, no real family life. Honey, you are probably going to be a very good architect – but I want you to be happy in other ways, too, as your mother is, to have a husband and children. I know you can do both....” *I am happy*, I tried to tell him with my eyes. *I’m happy with Annie; she and my work are all I’ll ever need; she’s happy too—we both were until this happened.*<sup>27</sup>

This speech act functions powerfully. The parent makes an act of identification with an imagined future of necessary and inevitable unhappiness. Such identification through grief about what the child will lose, reminds us that the queer life is already constructed as an unhappy life, as a life without the “things” that make you happy: a husband and children. The desire for the child’s happiness is far from indifferent. The speech act, “I just want you to be happy” is directive at the very point of its imagined indifference.

For the daughter, it is only the eyes that can speak; and they try to tell an alternative story about happiness and unhappiness. In her response, she claims happiness, for sure. She is happy “with Annie”; which is to say, she is happy with *this* relationship and *this* life that it will commit her to. The power of the unspoken response is lodged in the use of the word “until”: we were happy “until” this happened. The father’s speech act creates the very affective state of unhappiness that is imagined to be the inevitable consequence of the daughter’s decision. When “this” happens, unhappiness does follow.

The social struggle within families is often a struggle over the causes of unhappiness. The father is unhappy as he thinks the daughter will be unhappy if she is queer. The daughter is unhappy as the father is unhappy with her being queer. The father witnesses the daughter’s unhappiness as a sign of the truth of his position: she will be unhappy because she is queer. Even the happy queer becomes unhappy at this point. And clearly the family can only be maintained as a happy object, as being what is anticipated to cause happiness, by making the unhappiness of the queer child its point.

The speech act “I just want you to be happy” can be used as a form of tolerance or acceptance in coming out stories. A contrasting example to *Annie on My Mind* was presented in Dana’s story of coming out to her parents in *The L Word*. After trying to persuade her daughter to give up desire for duty, her mother eventually says: “I can see that you’ve found love. It doesn’t matter what form it takes as long as it makes you happy”.

It is always paradoxical to say something does not matter: when you have to say something does not matter it usually implies that it does. Recognition can withdraw the approval it gives. What does it mean for recognition to be made conditional on happiness? I have suggested that some things more than others are attributed as happiness causes. In this occasion, the couple are asking for parental blessing of their marriage: a straight way of doing queer love, perhaps. If queers, in order to be recognized, have to approximate signs of happiness, then they might have to minimize signs of queerness. In other words, being turned by happiness can mean being turned toward the social forms in which hopes for happiness have already been deposited. One thinks of the final film in *If These Walls Could Talk 2* (2000, dir. Anne Heche): the happy image in the end is of a white middle-class lesbian couple who are pregnant: they dance around their immaculate house, and everything seems to shimmer with its nearness to ordinary scenes of happy domesticity. Their happiness amounts to achieving relative proximity to the good life.<sup>28</sup> If this is a form of optimism, then it might be a “cruel optimism” as Laurent Berlant describes so well. You follow certain ways of life in the hope that you will catch happiness on the way, even if, or perhaps more cruelly, even because, they embody the scenes of past rejection.

You can see why we might want to embrace the figure of the unhappy queer, rather than placing our hopes in an alternative figure of the happy queer. The unhappy queer is unhappy with the world that reads queers as unhappy. The risk of promoting happy queers is that the unhappiness of this world could disappear from view. Take some of the responses to the Canadian lesbian film, *Lost and Delirious*, released in 2001 (directed by Léa Pool). In the film, two girls fall in love. One cannot bear giving up on the life promised by acceptance into heterosexuality, so she gives up her love. The other cannot bear life without her love so gives up her life. Critics described the film as “dated.” One critic even suggests the film is “time-warped,” as if it is twisted out of shape in its representation of something that is no longer.<sup>29</sup>

The implication of such descriptions is that queers can now come out, be accepted and be happy. The good faith in queer progression can be a form of bad faith. Those of us committed to queer life know that forms of recognition are either precariously conditional—you have to be the right kind of queer by depositing your hope for happiness in the right places—or it is simply not given. Not only is recognition not given, but it is often not given in places that are not noticeable to those who do not need to be recognized, which helps sustain the illusion that it is given (which, in turn, means if you say that it has not been given, you are read as paranoid). Indeed, the illusion that same sex object choices have become accepted and acceptable (that civil partnerships mean queer civility) both conceals the ongoing realities of discrimination, non-recognition and violence, and requires that we approximate the straight signs of civility. *We must stay unhappy with this world.*

The recognition of queers can be narrated as the hope or promise of becoming acceptable, where in *being* acceptable you must *become* acceptable to a world that has already decided what *is* acceptable. Recognition becomes a gift given from the straight world to queers, which conceals long histories of queer labor and struggle,<sup>30</sup> the life worlds generated by queer activism, which has created a “place at the table” in the hope that the table won’t keep its place. It is as if such recognition is a form of straight hospitality, which in turn positions happy queers as guests in other people’s homes, reliant on their continuing good will. In such a world you are asked to be grateful for the bits and pieces that you are given. To be a guest is to experience a moral obligation to be on “your best behavior” such that to refuse to fulfill this obligation would be to threaten your right to co-existence. The happy queer, the one who has good manners, who is seated at the table in the right way, might be a strategic form of occupying an uncivil world. But strategic occupations can keep things in place. Or we can keep in place by the effort of an occupation. I think we know this.

There are of course good reasons for telling stories about queer happiness, in response and as a response to the presumption that a queer life is necessarily and inevitably an unhappy life.<sup>31</sup> We just have to hear the violence of Michael’s tragic comment, “show me a happy homosexual and I’ll show you a gay corpse” from Matt Crowley’s 1968 play, “The Boys in the Band” to be reminded of these reasons.<sup>32</sup> And yet, at the same time, and perhaps even for the same reasons, we can see why telling stories about queer unhappiness might matter. Being attributed as the cause of unhappiness has unhappy effects. It might be the pain of not being recognized. It might be the conditions of recognition. It might even be the work required to counter the perception of your life as unhappy: the very pressure to be happy in order to show that you are not unhappy can create unhappiness, to be sure.

### **Unhappiness and Deviation**

Happiness scripts are powerful even when we fail or refuse to follow them, when our desires deviate from their straight lines. In this way, the scripts speak a certain truth: deviation can involve unhappiness. The “whole world” it might seem depends on your being directed in the right way, towards the right kind of things. The unhappiness of the deviant has a powerful function as a perverse promise (if you do this, you will get that!), a promise that simultaneously offers a threat (so don’t do that!). To deviate is always to risk a world even when you don’t lose the world you risk. Queer histories are the histories of those who are willing to risk the consequences of deviation.

The history of the word “unhappy” teaches 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.”<sup>33</sup> We can learn from the swiftness of the translation between being attributed as the cause of unhappiness and being described as unhappy. We must learn.

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 their 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 happiness of the familiar.

It is hard when your very arrival into the world becomes the cause of unhappiness. We could take any number of sad queer books and they would show us this. Take *The Well of Loneliness*. The book tells the story of Stephen, described throughout as an invert, whose life hurtles towards “the tragic and miserable ending” which seems the only available plot for inversion.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the novel, Stephen has a series of tragic and doomed love affairs, ending with her relationship with Mary Lewellyn, described as “the child, the friend, the beloved,”<sup>35</sup>. The novel does not give us a happy ending, and this seems partly its point: Stephen gives up Mary as a way of relieving her from the burden of their love.

Every sad book has its moments, the moments when it is all “too much,” when a life, a body, a world, becomes unbearable. Turning points are usually breaking points. A key turning point in the novel is when Stephen and Mary arrive at Alec’s bar, a space in which the “miserable army” of the inverted and perverted reside. Stephen is approached by Adolphe Blanc, a “gentle and learned Jew.” He says to her:

In this little room, tonight, every night, there is so much misery, so much despair that the walls seem almost too narrow to contain it. Yet outside there are happy people who sleep, the sleep of the so-called just and righteous. When they wake it will be to persecute those who, through no fault of their own, have been set apart from the day of their birth, deprived of all sympathy, all understanding. They are thoughtless, these happy people who sleep.<sup>36</sup>

In this extraordinary passage, Adolphe Blanc speaks what we could call the truth of the novel: the happiness of the straight world is a form of injustice. Heterosexual happiness is narrated as a social wrong, as based on the unthinking exclusion of those whose difference is already narrated as deprivation. The unhappiness of the deviant performs a claim for justice.

At one point, Stephen and Mary are rejected by a woman who had befriended them. She rejects them to protect her own reputation and the reputation of her daughter. She sends them a letter announcing that she has been forced “to break off our friendship” and asks them not to come to her house for Christmas as had been planned.<sup>37</sup> In other words, to protect her family’s happiness she has to reject proximity to those who might “stain” her reputation, those who are already attributed as unhappiness causes, as being or embodying the unhappiness they are assumed to cause. They are no longer welcome at the family table; they cannot share the celebration.

We can see from this example how happiness can be fearful and defensive. You might refuse proximity to somebody out of fear that they will take your happiness away. To be rejected in order to preserve the happiness of others can mean that you experience the feelings that are attributed to you: “Then it seemed to Stephen that all the pain that had

so far been thrust upon her by existence, was as nothing to the unendurable pain which she must now bear to hear that sobbing, to see Mary thus wounded, and utterly crushed, thus shamed and humbled for the sake of their love, thus bereft of all dignity and protection.”<sup>38</sup> Stephen cannot bear the unhappiness that she witnesses on the face of the beloved. It is because the world is unhappy with queer love that queers become unhappy; because queer love is an unhappiness-cause for the others whom they love, who share their place of residence. It is not then that queers feel sad or wretched right from the beginning. Queer unhappiness does not provide us with a beginning. Certain subjects might appear as sad or wretched, or might even become sad or wretched because they are perceived as lacking what causes happiness.

It does seem like we hurtle towards our miserable ending, when Stephen gives Mary up, by appearing to give Mary to Martin. The association between queer fates and fatality seems partly the point. For some readers this ending is evidence that the novel does not place its own hopes for happiness within lesbianism. Jay Prosser, for instance, argues “that Stephen gives up Mary to Martin Hallam in spite of Mary’s devotion to her indicates that the invert functions not as a figure for lesbianism—a lure or a construct—but precisely as its refusal. Through her passing over Mary (both passing over her and passing her over to Martin), Stephen affirms her identification with the heterosexual man.”<sup>39</sup> I want to read what is being affirmed by Stephen’s gesture quite differently. Does Stephen give Mary to Martin as Prosser suggests? I want to suggest that an alternative gift economy is at stake. Take the following passage:

Never before had she seen so clearly all that was lacking to Mary Llewellyn, all that would pass from her faltering grasp, perhaps never to return, with the passing of Martin—children, a home that the world will respect, ties of affection that the world would hold sacred, the blessed security and the peace of being released from the world’s persecution. And suddenly Martin appeared to Stephen as a creature endowed with incalculable bounty, having in his hands all those priceless gifts which she, love’s mendicant could never offer. *Only one gift she could offer to love, to Mary, and that was the gift of Martin.*<sup>40</sup>

Stephen does not give Mary to Martin. *She gives Martin to Mary.* She gives Martin to Mary as a way of giving Mary access to a happiness that she cannot give. This gift signals not a failure to love, but a form of love: it is because the world is unhappy with their love that Stephen cannot be the cause of Mary’s happiness.

We can see the problems of the idea that love is to cause or to want to cause happiness for a queer politics given a world in which queerness is read as wretched. In other words, a queer lover might not be able to cause happiness for her beloved if her beloved cannot bear being rejected by the straight world. We could of course point to a counter history of queers who have caused other queers to be happy through their love, even if the world has not been happy with such love. But I do wonder whether a queer definition of love might want to separate love from happiness, given how happiness tends to come with rather straight conditions. I thus offer Simone Weil’s definition of love as a queer definition: “Love on the part of someone who is happy is the wish to share the suffering of the beloved who is unhappy. Love on the part of someone who is unhappy is to be filled with joy by the mere knowledge that his beloved is happy without sharing in this happiness or

even wishing to do so.”<sup>41</sup> Queer love might involve happiness only by insisting that such happiness is *not* what is shared.

Stephen might not insist on sharing Mary’s happiness, but it is her desire for Mary’s happiness that leads to the awkward gift of Martin. We do not know, in the novel, whether Mary receives this gift: we are not given an ending for Mary, as Clare Hemmings observes.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the point is that Mary’s happiness cannot be told, as Mary’s “real story has yet to be told” as Esther Newton describes.<sup>43</sup> If anything, for Mary, Stephen’s gesture is lived as a death: “A mist closing down, a thick black mist. Someone pushing the girl away, without speaking. Mary’s queer voice coming out of the gloom, muffled by the folds of the black mist, only a word here and there getting through: ‘*All my life I’ve given...you’ve killed...I loved you...Cruel, oh cruel! You’re unspeakably cruel...*’ Then the sound of the rough and pitiful sobbing.”<sup>44</sup> Martin does arrive at this moment, but only because Stephen has put him there.

Perhaps the injustice of the ending is the presumption that Mary’s happiness depends on being given up. Or does the ending give up on happiness by giving Mary up? This alternative ending does not convert unhappiness into happiness, but does something else with unhappiness. For in the moment Stephen gives up on happiness, she feels a bond of unhappiness with those who share the signs of inversion:

Rockets of pain, burning rockets of pain—*their pain, her pain*, all welded together into one consuming agony. Rockets of pain that shot up and burst, dropping scorching tears of fire on the spirit—*her pain, their pain...* all the misery at Alec’s. And the press and the clamour of those countless others—they fought, they trampled, they were getting her under. *In their madness to become articulate through her*, they were tearing her to pieces, getting her under. They were everywhere now, cutting off her retreat: neither bolts nor bars would avail to save her. The walls fell down and crumbled before them; at the cry of their suffering *the walls fell and crumbled*: “We are coming, Stephen—we are still coming on, and our name is legion—you dare not disown us!” She raised her arms, trying to ward them off, but they closed in and in: “You dare not disown us!” They possessed her. *Her barren womb became fruitful*—it ached with its fearful and sterile burden. It ached with the fierce yet helpless children who would clamour in vain for their right to salvation.<sup>45</sup>

What is striking for me is the switch between “her pain, their pain” and “their pain, her pain”; the passage weaves the stories of pain together. She comes to embody this pain, to speak it, to articulate it. At this moment, the moment when she seems most on her own, she is also most connected to others. And at this very moment, this moment of madness, “the walls fell down.” This is an image of revolution: the walls that contain the misery are brought down: an un-housing that is not only a call for arms, but a disturbance in the very grounds for happiness, insofar as the happy folk, those who sleep, those who do not have to think, depend on misery being kept under ground. Indeed, the moment of revolution is a new form of reproduction, a reproduction of another kind of life form, a queer life form, perhaps. Queer unhappiness offers a rather deviant form of fertility.

In *The Well of Loneliness*, the solution to a world that is unhappy with queer love is to give up the possibility of queer happiness and revolt against the world. It does not follow that

queers must become unhappy even if we are attributed as the origin of familial and social unhappiness. We know after all that queer history is a history of loves that are not given up. We have behind us many stories of queers who are neither made unhappy by causing unhappiness, nor who try and become happy by minimizing the signs of their queerness. Take for example Rita Mae Brown's novel *Rubyfruit Jungle*, first published in 1973, which tells the story of Molly Bolt. One of the first lesbian books I read, it is for me a very happy object. I love it. I loved Molly, for her fierceness, her defiance, her willingness to get into trouble.

Molly follows her desires, wherever they take her. The story of the book is a story of her conquests, and there are many. She says in response to a question from a lover about how many women she has slept with: "Hundreds. I'm irresistible."<sup>46</sup> She still has to live with consequences of her deviation. When she is called into the dean's office at University of Florida after her lesbian behavior has been reported, Molly is asked by the dean about her problem with girls, and replies:

"Dean Marne, I don't have any problems relating to girls and I'm in love with my roommate. She makes me happy." Her scraggly red eyebrows with the brown pencil glaring through shot up. "Is this relationship with Faye Raider of an, uh—intimate nature?" "We fuck, if that's what you're after." I think her womb collapsed on that one. Sputtering, she pressed forward. "Don't you find that somewhat of an aberration? Doesn't this disturb you, my dear?"<sup>47</sup>

Rather than being disturbed by being found disturbing, Molly performs the ultimate act of defiance, by claiming her happiness as abnormal. To be happily queer is to explore the unhappiness of what gets counted as normal. It is as if queers, by doing what they want, expose the unhappiness of having to sacrifice personal desires, in the perversity of their twists and turns, for the happiness of others.<sup>48</sup>

Even the ending of the book is not happy—Molly is the only one from film school who is not offered a break: "No, I wasn't surprised, but it still brought me down. I kept hoping against hope that I'd be the bright exception, the talented token that smashed sex and class barriers. Hurrah for her. After all, I was the best in my class, didn't that count for something?"<sup>49</sup> And yet, we don't end there, with the loss of hope. For Molly articulates a wish that *at the very least*, she can be the "hottest fifty-year-old this side of the Mississippi."<sup>50</sup> To be happily queer is to hope that queerness is what will endure life's struggle.

This is not to say we always have to struggle to be queer. We can also turn to another more recent novel narrated by a happily queer subject, *Babyji*, published by Abha Dawesar in 2005. Set in India, this novel is written from the point of view of Anamika Sharma, a fun, smart, spirited and sexy teenager, who seduces three women: an older divorcee she names India, a servant girl called Rani, and her school friend Sheela. As a character, Anamika is very appealing. Everyone desires her, wants something from her, such that the reader is encouraged to desire her too, as well as to identify with her desire.

We do not notice happiness used as a requirement that Anamika give up her desires. Instead, the first use of happiness as a speech act is of a rather more queer nature: "I

want to make you happy,' I said as I was leaving. 'You do make me happy,' India said. 'No, I don't mean that way. I mean in bed.'<sup>51</sup> Anamika separates her own desire to make her lover happy for "that way." She wants to make India happy "in bed", to be the cause of her pleasure. Not wanting to cause happiness "that way" is what releases Anamika from a certain kind of drama: it is in the bed and not on the table where she finds her place. She refuses to give happiness the power to secure a specific image of what would count as a good life, or of what she can give.

This book is certainly about the perverse potential of pleasure. This is not to say that Anamika does not have to rebel or does not get into trouble. Almost all of this trouble is located in her relationship to her father. Unsurprisingly, the conflict between father and queer daughter turns to the question of happiness. Anamika says to her father: "You like tea, I like coffee. I want to be a physicist, and Vidur wants to join the army. I don't want to get married, and mom did. How can the same formula make us all happy."<sup>52</sup> To which her father replies, "What do you mean you don't want to get married." Anamika recognizes the idiosyncratic nature of happy object choices: different people are made happy by different things, we have a diversity of likes and dislikes. She names marriage as one happy object choice that exists alongside others. The inclusion of marriage as something that you might or might not like is picked up by the father, turning queer desire into a question that interrupts the flow of the conversation.

The exchange shows us how object choices are not equivalent, how some choices such as marrying or not marrying are not simply presentable as idiosyncratic likes, as they take us beyond the horizon of intimacy, in which those likes can gather as a shared form. Although the novel might seem to articulate a queer liberalism, whereby the queer subject is free to be happy in their own way, it evokes the limits of that liberalism, by showing how the conflation of marriage with the good life is maintained in response to queer deviation. Although we can live without the promise of happiness, and can do so "happily," we live with the consequences of being an unhappiness-cause for others, which is why the process of coming out is an ongoing site of possibility and struggle.

Queer politics might radicalize freedom as the freedom to be unhappy. The freedom to be unhappy would be the freedom to live a life that deviates from the paths of happiness, wherever that deviation takes us. It would mean the freedom to cause unhappiness by acts of deviation. Queer enjoyment can thus be expressed as an embodiment of the freedom to be unhappy.

In calling for the freedom to be unhappy, I am thus not saying queers must be unhappy in the sense of feeling sad or wretched, or that queer politics demands our unhappiness. I am not saying that unhappiness becomes necessary. I would say that unhappiness is always possible, which makes the necessity of happiness an exclusion not just of unhappiness but of possibility. The history of happiness is not simply about the description of unhappiness as the failure to be happy in the right way; it is also about the exclusion of the hap from happiness, as the exclusion of possibility and chance. I now think of queer movements as hap movements rather than happiness movements. It is not about the unhappy ones becoming the happy ones. Revolutionary forms of political consciousness involve heightening our awareness of *just how much* there is to be unhappy about. Yet this does

not mean unhappiness becomes our political cause. In refusing to be constrained by happiness, we can open up other ways of being, of being perhaps.

The word “perhaps” shares its “hap” with happiness. We can get from the “perhaps” to the wretch if we deviate at a certain point. One definition of the wretch is a “poor and hapless being.” I would say those who enter the history of happiness as wretches might be hapful rather than hapless. To deviate from the paths of happiness is to refuse to inherit the elimination of the hap. Affect aliens, those who are alienated by happiness, can thus be creative: not only do we want the wrong things, not only do we embrace possibilities that we are asked to give up, but we can create life worlds around these wants. Whilst we might insist on the freedom to be unhappy, we would not leave happiness behind us. Maybe it will be up to queers to put the hap back into happiness.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is drawn from my forthcoming book *The Promise of Happiness* (and in particular from the chapter “Unhappy Queers” which includes a much wider archive of queer materials than is represented here). This book is due to be published by Duke University Press in 2010. Thanks to Duke for permission to include this paper in *World Picture*.

<sup>2</sup> Vin Packer, *Spring Fire* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2004), vi.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>4</sup> Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: The Politics of Loss in Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 127.

<sup>5</sup> Evelyn Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Performativity, Pedagogy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), Sally Munt, *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> This is not to reduce happiness to good feeling. The association between happiness with good feeling is a modern one, as Darrin McMahan shows us in his monumental history of happiness [Darrin M McMahan, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005)]. We have inherited this association such that it is hard to think about happiness without thinking about feeling. Happiness has also been associated with virtue and the value of flourishing: with the good life. My interest is in how happiness involves an affective as well as moral economy: I will thus explore the relationship between feeling good and other kinds of goods, or *how* feelings participate in making some things and not others good.

<sup>7</sup> Lisa Walker, *Looking Like What You Are: Sexual Style, Race and Lesbian Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 127.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine R. Stimpson, *Where the Meanings Are: Feminism and Cultural Spaces* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 101.

<sup>9</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 216.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman and J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 294-295.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>15</sup> See Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Second Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 59.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>18</sup> Lauren Berlant, "Cruel Optimism: On Marx, Loss and the Senses," *New Formations*, 63 (2008): 33.

<sup>19</sup> In *Queer Phenomenology* I described the table as a kinship object and asked how a queer politics might offer a different angle on tables. The argument is extended here (somewhat obliquely) by considering the tables of happiness.

<sup>20</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg: The Crossing Press, 1984); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: from Margin to Centre* (London: Pluto Press, 2000). I develop my argument about the figure of the angry black woman in the chapters "Feminist Killjoys" and "Melancholic Migrants" in *The Promise of Happiness* (forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> hooks, 56.

<sup>22</sup> Cited in Bill Lucas, *Bill (Happy Families: How To Make One, How to Keep One*. Harlow: Educational Publishers, 2006), 26. This principle that to love makes the other's happiness essential to your own is widely articulated. But does this principle always hold true? I would say there is a desire for this principle to be true, but that this desire does not make the principle true, as a psychoanalytic approach might suggest. If love is to desire the happiness of another, then the happiness of the subject who loves might depend upon the happiness of the other who is loved. As such, love can also be experienced as the possibility that the beloved can take your happiness away from you. This anxious happiness, you might say, forms the basis of an ambivalent sociality: in which we love those we love, but we might also hate those we love for making us love them, which is what makes us vulnerable to being affected by what happens to them: in other words, love extends our vulnerability beyond our own skin. Perhaps fellow-feeling is a form of social hope: we want to want happiness for those we love; we want our happy objects to amount to the same thing. Even if we feel guilty for wishing unhappiness upon our enemies, it is a less guilty wish than wishing unhappiness upon our friends. In other words, our presumed indifference toward the happiness of strangers might help us to sustain the fantasy that we always want the happiness of those we love, or that our love wants their happiness.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: Everyman, 1993), 359.

<sup>24</sup> Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 12.

<sup>25</sup> You might be asked to disregard your views on x in order to make someone happy. I have found this especially true in the case of weddings. You are asked or even instructed to join the happy event of the wedding because it would make someone happy for you to share in their happy occasion even if they know that you are not happy with the very idea of marriage that is celebrated in weddings. You are often judged as selfish when you refuse the demand to participate in the happiness of others, especially in cases when such happiness is sanctioned by law, habit or custom.

<sup>26</sup> Rousseau, 434.

<sup>27</sup> Nancy Garden, *Annie on My Mind* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1982), 191.

<sup>28</sup> In *The Promise of Happiness* I offer a detailed reading of this film, suggesting that the happiness of the ending can be related to queer struggles for a bearable life, and not simply or only to aspirations for the good life. So while I am suggesting here that promotions of happiness *can* involve an affective form of homonormativity [see Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003); Judith Halberstam, *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005)], I would not and do not equate happiness with normativity. As I will suggest in due course, being happily queer can be to be happy with and about one's deviation. It is worth noting however that in books such as *How to be a Happy Homosexual* the promotion of happy homosexuality does involve a commitment to "de-queer" gay life. The book includes criticisms of practices such as cottaging, as "for the isolated and insecure gay man it fosters the idea that contact with gay people is of necessity dirty, undignified, nerve-wracking and dangerous. It can do nothing for the self-image of those gay men, who already have a bad opinion of their sexuality" (Terry Sanderson, *How to be a Happy Homosexual: A Guide for Gay Men* (London: The Other Way Press, 1991) 64). Cruising is also criticized as it can "increase the sense of isolation in those who are already unhappy with their sexuality" (Sanderson, 67). Sanderson criticizes the hedonism of queer culture, suggesting that homosexual men need to develop an ethics premised on making other people happy (145). Although he does not describe such ethics in terms of conservative family values (or in terms of mimicking straight relationships or family forms), it is clearly linked to the promoting of a sociability premised on fellow feeling or what he calls "finer feelings," which is contrasted to the superficiality and hedonism of queer cultures (145). I am indebted here to Vincent Quinn for an excellent paper which reflected on *How to be a Happy Homosexual* as a sexual conduct manual.

<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.popmatters.com/film/reviews/1/lost-and-delirious.shtml>. Last accessed July 9, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> See Sarah Schulman, *Stage Struck: Theatre, Aids and the Marketing of Gay America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 102.

<sup>31</sup> The perception of queers as inevitably unhappy can have extremely violent and devastating consequences. See for example Michael Schroeder and Ariel Shidlo's analysis of how clinicians have used this argument—that gay people will inevitably be unhappy—to justify sexual conversion therapy (Michael Schroeder and Ariel Shidlo, "Ethical Issues in Sexual Orientation Conversion Therapies: An Empirical Study of Consumers" in Ariel Shidlo, Michael Schroeder, Jack Drescher (eds), *Sexual Conversion Therapy: Ethical, Clinical, and Research Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Haworth Press, 2002), 134-135). By implication, gay patients are asked to give up desire for happiness. Many of these homophobic discourses in psychiatry aimed to debunk what they call "the myth of the happy homosexual" in order to argue for "cure" rather than "adjustment" (see Peter Conrad and

Joseph W. Schneider, *Deviance and Medicalization: From Badness to Sickness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980), 191). They are deeply invested in the necessity and inevitably of queer unhappiness. So although we might want to question the promotion of happy homosexuals discussed in note 28, we might also want to remember that disbelief in the very possibility of queer happiness is crucial to the violence of homophobia.

<sup>32</sup> Cited by Sanderson, 141-2.

<sup>33</sup> These definitions are all taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*. All subsequent definitions and etymological references are drawn from the *OED*.

<sup>34</sup> Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (London: Virago Press, 1982), 411. Derived from sexology, inversion was used as a way of interpreting lesbian sexuality (if she desires women, she must be a man). Given this, the invert both stands for and stands in for the figure of the lesbian, a way of presenting her that also erases her, which is not to say that we should assume the invert can only signify in this way. See Ahmed 2006 for a discussion of the relation between the figure of the lesbian and the invert in *The Well of Loneliness*, as well as Prosser (*Second Skins: Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) who reads the invert as the transsexual. See also Doan and Prosser's edited collection on *The Well of Loneliness* (2001), which includes articles on the relations between inversion, transsexuality and homosexuality.

<sup>35</sup> *The Well of Loneliness*, 303.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 394-5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>39</sup> Prosser (1998: 166).

<sup>40</sup> *The Well of Loneliness*, 438-9 (emphasis added).

<sup>41</sup> Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr (London: Routledge, 2002), 63.

<sup>42</sup> Clare Hemmings, "All my life I have been waiting for something': Theorising Femme Narrative in *The Well of Loneliness*," in Laura Doan and Jay Prosser (eds.), *Palatable Poison: Critical Perspectives on The Well of Loneliness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 194.

<sup>43</sup> Esther Newton, *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay: Personal Essays, Public Ideas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 188. Both Hemmings and Newton are addressing how *The Well's* focus on the "the mannish lesbian" means that the position of the femme or feminine lesbian is left vacant. My reading concurs with theirs and suggests that this vacation could be re-read in terms of happiness: the femme's desire is not presented beyond the desire for happiness, which is assumed to lead her back into the straight world. Such readings are in sympathy with the novel, recognizing the force of its own revelation of the injustice of the straight world, even if they suggest that femme desire outside the happiness economy needs to be spoken.

<sup>44</sup> *The Well of Loneliness*, 445.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.

<sup>46</sup> Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle*, (New York, Bantam Books, 1973), 200.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>48</sup> The social investment in unhappy queer lives can thus exist alongside envy for queer enjoyment: queer enjoyment bypasses the duty to reproduce social form ("the happiness duty" is a "reproductive duty"), and is thus given without being earned. By living outside the logics of duty and sacrifice, queer pleasures embody what is threatening about freedom.

<sup>49</sup> *Rubyfruit Jungle*, 245.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>51</sup> Abha Dawesar, *Babyji* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), 31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.