

Introduction

Flavio Gregori (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

In Woody Allen's film, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), the fictional philosopher Louis Levy holds the pessimistic view that events in one's life «unfold so unpredictably, so unfairly, human happiness does not seem to have been included in the design of creation»; it is only «we, with our capacity to love, that give meaning to the indifferent universe». The apparently hopeful note that «most human beings seem to have the ability to keep trying, and even to find joy from simple things like their family, their work, and from the hope that future generations might understand more» (qtd in Lee 2001, pp. 57-58) is contradicted by the fact that, at the end of the film, we know that professor Levy committed suicide, going «out the window» (see Fahy 2001, p. 87). Professor Levy's «Sartrean existentialism» (Lee 2001, p. 58) would not be endorsed by most eighteenth-century thinkers, writers and divines, at least in England (for France, see e.g. Mauzi 1969). The age of the Enlightenment believed that man's morality could be attuned to the harmony of the universe and individual happiness, when obtained through a virtuous and ethical life, was synonymous with universal happiness.

Roy Porter, who devotes a chapter to «Happiness» and puts it at the very center of his influential book on the British Enlightenment, thinks that the Enlightenment's «great historical watershed lay in the validation of pleasure» (Porter 2000, p. 258). One's personal, psychological and even bodily pleasures became, to use Alexander Pope's words, «our being's end and aim» (*Essay on Man*, Epistle IV, ll. 1-2; Mack 1950, p. 128). Pope actually did not want to define happiness: he rejected both the principal classical versions of happiness, the Stoic and the Epicurean, «Pleasure and Contentment» (l. 22; p. 129); he did not fully subscribe to the egotistical explanation of happiness, as it does not «subsist [...] in the good of one, but all» (l. 38; p. 131); he thought that happiness increased in «mutual wants», without depending on condition and circumstance, because «Heav'n breaths thro' ev'ry member of the whole / one common blessing, as one common soul» (ll. 61-62; p. 134). Pope's *caveat*, «Oh sons of earth! Attempt ye still to rise, / By mountains pil'd on mountains, to the skies? / Heav'n still with laughter the vain toil surveys, / And buries madmen in the heaps they raise» (ll. 73-76), reminded his readers that happiness is not easy to obtain and cannot

be the outcome of one's will-to-power, because «Fortune her gifts may variously dispose, / And these be happy call'd, unhappy those» (ll. 67-68; pp. 134-135). That said, though, Pope agreed with his contemporaries on some philosophical and moral grounds of happiness. In the famous discussion of self-love at the end of *An Essay on Man*, Pope equated individual passions with social reason, and, although their relationship is «hopelessly murky» (Damrosch 1987, p. 149), that association shows how Pope voiced the eighteenth-century *locus classicus* of spontaneous, natural happiness: the natural rights to pursue one's interest could increase sociability, if contained within the bounds of virtue and benevolence.

As noted above, happiness remained somewhat mysterious to Pope (Meyer Spacks 1997, p. 183), because «Fix'd to no spot is Happiness sincere, / 'Tis nowhere to be found, or ev'ry where» (ll. 15-16; Mack 1950, p. 129). William Warburton, the first posthumous editor of Pope's collected works, believed that Pope's idea of happiness coincided with that of virtue:

Conscious Innocence (says the poet) is the only source of *internal Peace*; and *known Innocence*, of *external*, therefore, *Peace* is the sole Issue of *Virtue*; or, in his emphatic words, *Peace* is all *thy own*; a conclusive observation in his argument, which stands thus: Is *Happiness* rightly placed in *Externals*? No; for it consists in *Health, Peace, and Competence*. *Health* and *Competence* are the product of *Temperance*, and *Peace* of perfect *Innocence*» (Warburton 1750, p. 92).

Self-love and sociability, in fact, «are only two different motions of the appetite to Good, by which the Author of Nature hath enabled Man to find his own happiness in the happiness of the Whole» (p. 84). The coincidence of happiness and virtue (the desire of moral good) in a 'conscious and known innocence' is providential: it is guaranteed by the «Author of Nature». Warburton proposed a teleological understanding of happiness, in which theology, naturalism, empirical psychology, and ethics coincide. Warburton's reference to providential interpretation, however, should not obscure the fact that for him, as for most eighteenth-century writers and thinkers, the ultimate ground of happiness lies in one's 'inside being', what Locke defined as the satisfaction of our desire of pleasure, fear of pain and avoidance of uneasiness. Locke united a hedonistic interpretation to theological voluntarism (and Pufendorf's *jus naturale*): real happiness is «not only what we ought to do morally, but it is also what conduces to our greatest happiness, as is evident when we think of the 'unspeakable' joys and equally terrible pains that God holds out as rewards and punishments» (Taylor 1989, p. 171).

Charles Taylor observes that Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, the philosophers of moral sentiments, and even most Deists subordinated the reference to God «to a conception of happiness which is defined in purely creaturely

terms. Happiness is the attaining of things we by nature desire, or pleasure or absence of pain» (p. 267). Afterlife's rewards and punishments are only the reflections of this life's pleasures and pains.

Thus, also happiness as pure expression of virtue became a secularized version of theological thought. Darrin McMahan underlines how the Enlightenment changed the traditional conception of the happy man «as one who approached the gods, who had gone beyond the merely human, who had achieved a form of transcendence» (McMahan 2006, pp. 12-13). The eighteenth century made happiness into something that can be obtained in this life, or in the course of history, through progress: «We may therefore acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue of the human race», Edward Gibbon declared (see Nisbet 1994, p. 187). Happiness became «less an idea of godlike perfection than a self-evident truth, to be pursued and obtained in the here and now» (McMahan 2006, p. 13). Others held an even more extreme view according to which the «principle of self-interest» was not only the spring of human actions but the main and best incentive to promote and administer a society. «This atomization of the public good into disparate interests amounted to a privatization of virtue» (Porter 2000, p. 263).

Various historical changes and events contributed to the transformation of happiness from a luxury item for the very few into a larger social and political agenda: the growth of urban centres, the birth of a consumer society, the emergence of secularized individualism, the financial revolution, Locke's science of the mind, utilitarian ethics, the new political arithmetics (forerunner of modern economic science), and the rise of sentimentality and sensibility (McMahan 2006, pp. 197-252). Individualism and empiricism shaped the new configuration of happiness: in traditional societies, from the Greeks through Christianity, the norms by which man's actions are judged were inscribed within society itself and even when actual social life diverged from the norms nonetheless it was ultimately perceived as the production of those norms; instead,

the breakup of the traditional forms of social life which was produced by the rise of individualism, begotten partly by Protestantism and capitalism, made the reality of social life so divergent from the norms implied in the traditional vocabulary that all the links between duty and happiness were gradually broken. The consequence was a redefinition of the moral terms. Happiness [was] no longer defined in terms of satisfactions which are understood in the light of the criteria governing a form of social life; it [was] defined in terms of individual psychology. Since such a psychology [did] not yet exist, it ha[d] to be invented. Hence the whole apparatus of appetites, passions, inclinations, principles, which is found in every eighteenth-century moral philosopher (MacIntyre 1998, p. 107).

The utilitarian rule of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, introduced by Richard Cumberland (White 2006, p. 129) and Francis Hutcheson (Taylor 1989, p. 264) and developed, later in the century, by Jeremy Bentham, derived from the psychologization of the ethical, theological, and socio-political spheres. Happiness became 'my' happiness, or, in Dr Johnson's terms, the «multiplicity of agreeable consciousness» (see Norton 2012, p. 6). «Happiness consists in the highest and most durable Gratifications of, either of all our *Desires*, or, if all cannot be gratified at once, of those which tend to the greatest and most durable *Pleasures*, with exemption either from all *Pains* and Objects of *Aversion*, or at least from those which are most grievous», wrote Francis Hutcheson (1742, p. 114). Those divines and thinkers, such as Joseph Butler, who took issue with Hutcheson's 'complete sentimentalism' (see Potkay 2000, p. 97) and with the moral-sentimental school for transforming ethics into aesthetics, and promoted, instead, a rational view of passions and self-love, adopted a providential explanation of the coincidence between morality and happiness. Such a coincidence is granted in the after-life, however, not in this sublunary world.

Yet even Butler's providential justification of the conjunction of duty and self-interest is based on, and clashes with, his individualism. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, «[Butler's] theology is pernicious because it enables him to bring in the eternal world to redress the balance of duty and interest in the temporal world. The individualism is apparent in his account of human nature, which is expressed in terms of the self-awareness of the single individual» (MacIntyre 1998, p. 106). In less refined thinkers such as Abraham Tucker, adds MacIntyre, God had become almost a *deus ex machina* who bridged the gap between the wordly, corporeal explanation of happiness, and other-wordly providentialism: the link between the here-and-now and future life remained more a *petitio principii* than a convincing explanation. For instance, in *The Light of Nature Pursued*, Tucker said that men naturally follow their instincts and satisfy their desire for pleasure; at the same time he maintained that «the basic moral rule is that we should all work for the good of all men, to increase the amount of satisfaction in the universe, whether it is our own or that of others» (p. 107). Therefore, if men work to increase the happiness of all men, God becomes the metaphysical guarantee that all the benevolence and happiness produced by them will be equally divided. It was almost a financial version of theology, on which MacIntyre comments: «This happiness God has divided into equal shares - equal because our original corruption makes us all equally undeserving - to be allotted one per person. I become entitled to my share by working to increase the common stock. By so working I increase that stock and thus my own share. I am, in fact, a partner in a cosmic joint stock enterprise of which God is the unremunerated managing director» (p. 107).

Separated though they were by their different conceptions of morality, in

the end both the moral-sentimentalists and the providentialists shared the same quantitative-arithmetic vocabulary (Benjamin Stillingfleet's satire of the 'mathematical methods' being the exception to the rule; see McMahon 2006, pp. 213-214). Both Tucker and Hutcheson believed in a «perfectly interlocking universe, which God had designed for the mutual good and happiness of its inhabitants» (Taylor 1989, p. 261). On the other hand, not only the followers of Descartes, Locke and Hume, but also orthodox Latitudinarians such as John Norris, or John Tillotson, admitted the desire for pleasure, including sensory pleasure, which then would lead to the desire for God, as an irresistible bias in us that must be seconded and made more explicit and clear through will and reason (Mander 2008, pp. 149-159; see also Regina Dal Santo's article in this collection). «Things work together for the best», in this optimistic conception of individual *and* cosmic happiness (Taylor 1989, p. 261).

However, the picture is not always so bright and uniformly positive. According to Vivasvan Soni, the modern devaluation of happiness as a «bourgeois complacency» (Fredric Jameson's phrase, see Soni 2010, p. 3), as private self-interest with no regard for community and without a political scope, was already contained «in the logic of the eighteenth-century's own discourses». The eighteenth-century rhetoric of a universal, providential happiness, in Soni's view, obscured the fact that it had lost the deeper understanding of happiness as was present in the classical Greek conception, in particular in Solon's cryptical proverb: «Call no man happy until he is dead». The Greek conception, in fact, stressed the fact that happiness is not «a passive emotion, but the practice of living well» (pp. 14-15): in other words, not the immediate fulfilment of desires or the acquisition of goods, but a life that is led virtuously and happily until its completion, and whose true happiness can be judged only from the vantage point of its final stages (on the classical 'making sense of one's life as a whole', see also Annas 1993, pp. 27-43). The eighteenth century forgot the classical conjunction of contingency and wholeness exactly when the discourses on happiness were at their height. Soni thinks that the decline of the Solonian idea of happiness had happened already in Aristotle's and Plato's ethical systems (which he calls «the first forgetting»; pp. 17 and 123 ff.); however, it was in the eighteenth-century paradigm of the 'trial narrative' that the modern discourse on happiness supplanted the Solonian idea of happiness, by suspending its hermeneutics of contingency and replacing it with the test of one's individual ability to overcome life's troubles. The 'trial narratives' undermined the full acknowledgement of contingency in favour of the individual test's results. Happiness was no longer a fact of one's complete life, bringing about the Delphic injunction 'know thyself', but «a specifically epistemological knowledge, abstracted from everyday existence, and only found by *subjecting oneself* to conditions of suffering and hardship» (p. 197). In this transformation of life into problem-solving

utilitarianism, happiness became a prize, a reward, even a profit that can be calculated. In Soni's interpretation, the process whereby the hermeneutics of happiness became a 'trial narrative' which suspends and negates the very hermeneutics from which it was generated, is visible in Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, in Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and in many eighteenth-century narratives, especially in the sentimental ones. Once the trial narrative intruded into the novel, it generated «the modern reified conception of happiness in time *after* the trial» and impeded the return to the classical notion, imposing «its rules on any subsequent narrative of happiness. Thus even when the trial narrative itself has ended, no return to a tragic [i.e. Solonian] narrative structure is possible» (p. 18). What was finally lost in this sentimentalized replacement of the classical idea of happiness with the 'trial narrative' is the very utopian ideal that the Enlightenment wanted to celebrate and enact in modern society: «driven out of narrative, severed from community, emptied of political content, happiness [became] an awaited reward in a never-ending time of trial» (Norton 2014, p. 359).

Soni's interpretation is complex and philosophically profound, and cannot be adequately summarized and discussed here; it brings to surface the dire implications of what McMahon calls the transition from «the happiness of virtue to the virtue of happiness» (McMahon 2004): the reification of happiness, the shrinking of the political within the spheres of the economical and the individual, the loss of totality and of any ambition to utopia. The problem of the reification and mystification of happiness was however well-known to some eighteenth-century writers: we have seen how for Pope happiness was indeed a slippery concept; Samuel Johnson made the search for happiness a theme of his work, yet he imbued it with the difficulty of not only grasping the concept but grasping felicity itself, *qua* the vanity of human wishes (on Johnson and Hume's sceptical approach to happiness see Potkay 2000, and Freibrug in this collection); Jonathan Swift's scourging satire of all forms of enthusiasm exposed the condition of complacent happiness as a form of madness: «*the Possession of being well deceived. The Serene Peaceful State of being a Fool among Knaves*» (Walsh 2010, p. 112).

In his *Jonathan Swift: Defeat, Isolation, and the Price of Failed Norms* in this collection, Howard D. Weinbrot examines Swift's increasing disenchantment with the flimsiness of the norms that rule the individual and society. In his life, Swift became ever more hostile «to British culture's growingly benevolent view of mankind», observes Weinbrot; this created in him a personal unhappiness towards the violence and dogmatism of his cultural and political milieu, a «darkness of vision» that cast a gloomy shadow over his affection for his friends and his delight in domestic harmony, and made him «almost instinctively [hate and detest] 'that animal called man'». Professor Weinbrot detects the several reasons for «Swift's fear, concern with change, and fury toward those not properly responding

to his concern», in the political situation of his time, with a new royal dynasty that threatened to reduce the power of the established Church, and upstart politicians who had become powerful and rich to the detriment of a virtuous administration; in the recollection of a past made of revolutions, upheavals, regicide, dissenting sects; in «the special case of Irish Catholic subjection»; in his failed career and removal from England; in his idea of original sin and predestination; and in his own poor health. A dominant theme in Swift's works is the «sense of collapse, loss of order, of one man who stands in the gap to resist presumed moral barbarism and pays the price»: whether he denounced the disappearance of the norms or insisted on norms that are under threat, he ultimately regarded humanity as self-destructive or unable to improve. For Swift, «neither church nor state, neither humanity nor a beloved woman, neither epic precedent nor equine reason, are enduring and practical models»; and yet, Prof. Weinbrot insists, we should not confuse the dark side of Swift's message with his larger desire to draw attention not only to the problems he satirized but also to how overcome and solve them: «Excess evokes awareness, which evokes attention, which, he again hopes, might check decay. Swift thus does not often provide comfort, but does evoke a norm that requires reorientation or significant stretching of our own norms». If Swift's lost battles made him an unhappy man, his continual reference to a stability under threat, which can exist only in «shared rather than competing human interests in human relations», bequeaths us with a glimpse of political optimism and allows to think in sober utopian terms, without any concession to a sloppy complacency with the present, and with a clearer vision of the future.

Samuel Johnson perfectly understood Swift's uneasiness: Rudolf Freiburg, in his «*The Multiplicity of Agreeable Consciousness*»: *Samuel Johnson's Sceptical Philosophy of Terrestrial Happiness*, expands on James Boswell's portrait of Dr Johnson as a complex and unhappy character, troubled by various diseases and unbearable bouts of «morbid melancholy» that made him wish to «escape from himself». However, Johnson was also a good-humoured man, who liked to entertain his friends, spend the nights in pub-crawls, and drive through London, a city he associated with life and felicity because it provided a «multiplicity of agreeable consciousness». Freiburg discusses the special nature of Johnson's eudaemonism, finding its characteristics in the intersection of various doctrines, from Callicles to Plato, from Aristotle to the Stoics, the Scholastic tradition, and contemporary empiricism. In particular, Johnson believed, as Richard Hooker had done, that «Happiness is that estate whereby we attain, so far as possibly may be attained, the full possession of that which simply for itself is to be desired, and containeth in it after an eminent sort the contentation of our desires, the highest degree of all our perfection» (Lynch 2002, p. 232). Johnson's happiness is an end of human life and is meaningful in itself: it must be «imagined as a welcome byproduct of human activities»

that can be obtained through a virtuous life. In the end, Johnson's sceptical approach made him reject a simplistic interpretation of the nature of happiness: he adhered to the 'know thyself' dictum, and put the several expressions of human, worldly happiness to the test of reason, by destroying the 'cobwebs of the mind' that submerge consciousness in the illusion of an ephemeral and vain felicity. Johnson deconstructed several clichés of worldly happiness, eventually to endorse only the felicity «beyond the grave», the eternal happiness of after-life.

Regina Dal Santo, in her *John Tillotson, Self-love and the Teleology of Happiness*, explores the ways in which not only sensualists, moral-sentiment philosophers, or enlightened eudaemonists, but also divines and sermonists adhered to the 'happiness revolution' that took place in the long eighteenth century. The Latitudinarians promoted a moral reformation that validated human feelings, desires and ambitions on earth, when controlled by reason and leading to a virtuous and charitable behaviour. In particular John Tillotson's ample reference to the egocentric passions of self-love and self-interest «show[s] a turning point in the evolution of the modern concept of happiness: while asserting the individual right to happiness, Tillotson reminds his audience of the possibility of a moderate but delightful enjoyment of the world that ultimately correspond to the natural fulfilment of self-interest. Tillotson changes the question 'How can I be saved?' into 'How can I be saved and happy?'. Righteous improvement in this life thus becomes tantamount to redemption in the after-life, in Tillotson's view, and the consideration of future happiness could leave room to a restrained enjoyment of earthly pleasures. Dal Santo underlines the pedagogic side of Tillotson's homiletics, his addressing «the malleable nature of Man, the part that can be educated to religion and to the promotion of sincerity and charitable activities». The search for happiness, joined with obedience to God's laws and sincerity of heart, favours the improvement of society's mores and helps man to obtain his eternal happiness in the after-life. However, Tillotson never recommended an unmindful bliss in the pleasures of earthly matters or political grandeur; on the contrary, Dal Santo remarks, «Tillotson [drew] an interesting parallel between loving oneself and denying one's material desires and [concluded] that they coincide». The traditional principle of 'knowing oneself' then was central in Tillotson's prudential and providential teleology.

Brian Michael Norton's «*The Spectator*», *Aesthetic Experience and the Modern Idea of Happiness* finds the sources of modern aesthetics in eighteenth-century discussions on *eudaimonia* as «a first-person, typically present-tense feeling or affect», and in perceptual metaphors borrowed from the language of taste: «We have grown so accustomed to thinking about happiness in this way that we may no longer recognize it as metaphorical, and indeed it may no longer be metaphorical. In moments of happiness, we really do feel happy; there are times when we really do seem

to savor life. Aesthetic-perceptual tropes lurk even in historical accounts of how this idea came into being». By focusing on Addison and Steele's *Spectator* papers, Norton provides an archeological reconstruction of the cultural background of modern aesthetics as (also) the principles of human happiness. Addison and Steele promoted not only an artistic theory but also an art of living «that pursues affective well-being through intensifying and enlivening our experiences of the world». By becoming more perceptive to the beauties of the world and of life, «we can intensify the feeling of living, enhancing the 'Satisfactions of [our] Being'», and creating the condition for us to fully appreciate our position in a cosmic order, because aesthetic pleasure is the same pleasure animating the larger world of nature. Through «an affective affirmation of being», Addisonian aesthetic pleasure and happiness confirmed a universal, holistic experience of the world.

Kevin L. Cope's *Happy Face or Happy Space? Expansions of Happiness in Eighteenth-century Expository Verse* explores the similarly widening scope of the aesthetic (in this case poetic) experience of happiness not only as something that happens within the individual, as something 'inside', but also as something happening 'in space'. In a discussion of eighteenth-century poets ranging from Mark Akenside to James Thomson, Thomas Warton, and Christopher Smart, Cope explores the association between happiness and space, finding out several contradictions in the idea of happiness contained in eighteenth-century poetry, between mimesis and praxis: for instance, in Thomson, «happiness is procedurally paradoxical. On one hand, it is experienced primarily in the long view, from a position so detached that very little is happening; on the other hand, that long view must not only be of something but must also show that particular occasion of happiness interacting with Thomson's panoramic presentation of the seasons». The paradox consists in the fact that happiness mixes activity and inactivity, observation and engagement, and is a property in itself and a consequence of experience, as happens with the preposition 'of' that is so typical of much poetry of the time (e.g. Akenside's *Pleasures 'of' the Imagination*): «a slightly bewildering preposition, for it suggests connecting both a bond and a diverging proceeding». Happiness's space, in the eighteenth-century verse, is a space both lost and regained, and is vast.

In her article, «*Nothing Better than Mirth and Hilarity*»: *Happiness, Unhappiness, Jest and Sociability in the Eighteenth Century*, Abigail Williams perceptively shifts the focus of scholarly attention from philosophy and the poetic evocations of the *beatus vir* to the «culture of mirth, of jestbooks and pamphlets designed to create well-being in alternative ways, and in particular, to drive away melancholy through communal joviality». Hers is an entirely new chapter in the study of the formation of public opinion, understood not only and not so much as the political *agora* of the newspapers, parties and clubs, but as the shared practice of sociable mirth,

a literature of laughter that moved across class and gender boundaries, «situated between oral and printed culture, constantly evoking the social exchanges that it mimics, and in turn, as jokes and jests and comic poems are copied into commonplace books and letters, [moving] back into oral circulation». The many publications designed to ‘purge melancholy’ were evidence of the eighteenth-century effort to increase sociability, good humour and an amiable form of communality. However, Williams observes how the idea of becoming happy through laughter was far from being a simple one: creating a shared ground for mirth was a complicated task, as jestbooks and comic poems created a tension between the well-being induced by laughter and a sense of alienation in those who were laughed at; therefore the search for sociability in merry laughter had to negotiate between ‘laughing with’ and ‘laughing at’ the social subjects. Moreover, the traditional topos of the idealized contentment of the ‘happy man’ was complicated and upset by jovial sociability: looking «at how people read and used the literature of jest reveals the faultlines between theories of happiness, and the lived reality. We can see the way in which jokes and games were sometimes seen as an embodiment of friendship groups, and were thus especially valuable for those living in relative isolation – often the same kind of rural seclusion that was elsewhere praised as a model of contented moderation. It also shows us the way sociable humour promoted inclusive ideas of general human well being, but that it was also frequently predicated on the exclusion of certain groups». Even in jestbooks the questions of happiness created more paradoxes than clear-cut social answers.

Isabelle Bour, in her *Happiness and Ideological Reconfiguration in the Revolutionary Novels of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays (1788-1799)*, studies the issue of happiness in the end-of-century, revolutionary interpretation given in Mary Wollstonecraft’s and Mary Hays’s novels, where happiness is «defined dialectically in relation to such key concepts and values as nature, reason, virtue, the passions and sensibility». Both writers derived their ideas of happiness from their reading of fiction, «where the dominant aesthetics and ethics had been for several decades those of sensibility, the corresponding generic model being the romance». Wollstonecraft and Hays set out to challenge the sentimental model rather than endorse it, because it was based on the assumption that women are intellectually inferior to men and dominated by the passions, therefore they did not give much room to happiness in their novels, where the word ‘unhappy’ occurs more often than ‘happy’ in connection with their protagonists. On the other hand, their redefinition of both sensibility and reason, with regard to women, problematized the idea of virtue and made the very structure of the sentimental novel explode into a dystopian and formally dysfunctional kind of romance that exposed «the many ways in which women are exploited by men» and voiced «the misery of the protagonists in the hyperbolic style that may be associated with revenge tragedy or Gothic fiction». In

Wollstonecraft and Hays, happiness became «gendered, psychologized and historicized [...] and found to be graspable only through redefinition of other values and through a depiction of unhappiness». These two writers may be the first example of the nineteenth century's dislike of happiness; however their criticism and dissection of sentimental romance and sentimentality positions them among those enlightened thinkers who wanted to reconsider men's and women's social and cultural status without recourse to sentimental rhetorics (on sentimentalism and happiness see Soni 2010, p. 290 ff.).

All together the articles contained in this issue complicate and – we hope – make more interesting the questions concerning eighteenth-century happiness, its role in modern literature, and its meaning for us; in the hope, to quote again Woody Allen's fictional philosopher, «that future generations might understand more».

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