Happy in Changing Contexts:
The History of Word-Use and the Metamorphoses of a Concept

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To explore changes in the concept of happiness, the syntactic behaviour of the adjective happy is traced from its first occurrence in the early 14th century (in Northern dialects) to the 19th century. The Middle English data are taken from the electronic Middle English Dictionary, the Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse, and the Innsbruck Computer Archive of Machine-Readable English Texts. For Modern English a self-constructed corpus from the Gutenberg Project and the Online Books Page, originally designed for a different purpose and concentrating on literary prose of the 18th and 19th century, is used. On the hypothesis that happy originally referred to favourable conditions due to chance (i.e. an external condition) and acquired the modern meaning of being content with the conditions of one’s life (i.e. a mental or affective state) in the course of time, colligations are selected which are capable of manifesting either ‘internal’ or ‘external’ conditions. For ME the most useful distinction is between ‘bringers’ and ‘recipients’ of hap (roughly: ‘happy events’ vs. ‘happy people’), for ModE between an external condition, an enduring attitude and an emotion-like state with physical symptoms and of relatively short duration. Important syntactic and semantic changes are found in late medieval mysticism and romance and in the early 19th-century novel.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Problem

Happiness is one of the most persistent topics of European philosophy and theology, but the words happy and happiness are comparative latecomers to the English lexicon. According to the MED the first occurrences of happi are in the Cursor...
Mundi, a Northumbrian poem written c1300. The noun happiness is not even listed in the MED although it occurs at least once in ME writing. Benjamin Minor, an English rendering of a Latin tract by Richard of St. Victor (fl. 1141–73), is probably an early work by the author of the Cloud of Unknowing (14th century, second half), who seems uncomfortable with the word. Having translated feliciter (ultimately from Gen. 30,11) as happily, he renders felicitas as “happynes or selynes, wheþer þou wilt”, using only selynes in the rest of the text (Hodgson 1955, 27). This reluctance to use a probably newly formed word is remarkable in a writer known for his many neologisms (Burrow 1984, 141; Hodgson, 1955, xxii). A similar uneasiness is found in Chaucer. In his translation of Boëthius’ De Consolatione Philosophiae (“Boece”) he usually renders felicitas with another neologism, welefulnesse, which he explicitly prefers to felicite. Welefulnesse found only a small following among Chaucerians like Lydgate and Usk (see also Rissanen 1997, 244). Felicite, a loan from French, is frequent in Chaucer’s and Gower’s poetry (Tatlock & Kennedy 1927, Pickles & Dawson 1987). But only in the 15th century does it find a generally accepted place in prose: Trevisa (a1387) translates Higden’s felicitas in a variety of ways, the second translator (1432 x 1450) uses felicite throughout. Richard Misyn, translating Richard Rolle, renders felicitas as happis (Misyn 1896, 80 l. 17; Rolle 1915, 247) and hap (Misyn 1896, 130, l. 35; Rolle 1995, 68), and elsewhere as felicite (7 times).

The OED entry happiness gives as its first witness Palsgrave’s Lesclarcissement de la langue françoyse 1530 (translating prosperité), though s.v. savour, savor (v.) a quotation from Alexander Barclay’s Shyp of Folys (1509) contains the word. Quite clearly, there was a discontinuity in the discourse on happiness which enabled or required new words to enter. Yet another discontinuity is signalled by the fact that today happiness is usually regarded as an emotion, whereas in the classical tradition the elimination of emotions (πάθη, affectūs) was essential for the attainment of happiness. To complicate matters, English happy has a wider meaning today than close equivalents in other European languages. When we say that we are happy to do something that is merely a polite way of saying that we are willing.

1 The Helsinki Corpus assigns the original Cursor to 1250–1350 (Header “<O 1250–1350>” in Helsinki file CMCURSOR.TXT). Hence probably Rissanen’s claim that happy as well as hap (n.) and hap(pen) (v.) “can be found […] from early Middle English on” (1997, 246).

2 “(the heritage is to seyn the doctrine of the whiche Socrates in his opinyoun of felicite, that I clepe welefulnesse)” (Boece I p. 3, ll. 29–32). Felicite occurs twice in the Boece. Here it translates summum bonum from Trivet’s commentary (Gleason 1987, 100); in III p. 10, l. 193 it renders beatitudo from Boëthius’ original text. On Trivet’s presence in Chaucer’s Boece see also Benson & Robinson 1005. A presumably exhaustive list of Trivet echoes in the Boece is given by Minnis 1993.

3 Word-listing experiments will show happiness among the first six emotions (e.g. Fehr & Russell 1984, 470); see also Fabiszak (2001, 92, fn. 42): “‘happiness’ and ‘joy’ […] are often used interchangeably in psychological literature.”
In this somewhat complex state of affairs a paradigm shift seems in order. The history of happiness is usually discussed as the history of a concept, i.e. as a philosophical problem. But ethical concepts like ‘happiness’ do not exist in specialized discourse alone. They arise from ordinary word-use, and they may affect ordinary word-use in return. A history of word-use has a number of advantages over a history of concepts. Above all, the pool from which it can draw its data is wider in terms of both text genres and word classes (the history of concepts is usually confined to nouns); its data will also be more tangible and better defined. On the other hand the mass of data will impose severe limitations on the research design and the relevance of the results. We can study the collocational and colligational behaviour of words with considerable methodical rigour, but the results may not tell us very much about the thinking of the past.

In this dilemma I will analyse the occurrence of one word, the adjective happy, in a number of colligations which I expect to be diagnostically useful. My aim resembles that of the students of linguistic metaphor who try to find an idealized cognitive model behind our language use (for happiness see above all Kövecses 1991 and this volume), though the historian of word-use has the advantage of drawing on utterances made by specified individuals in specified contexts on a specified number of occasions. Still better, we can risk zero-assertions like “I am happy is not said in ME.” Admittedly, our evidence will always be incomplete, but it can always be supplemented. Our results are thus open to useful disagreement. Since the data bases for ME and ModE differ considerably I will defer the more narrowly methodological questions to sections 2.1 and 3.1.

But in order to select diagnostically useful colligations a little conceptual analysis is required even now. Since ordinary language-users categorize happiness as an emotion, and since this marks a radical change from the original concept, we must look at the concept ‘emotion’ first. Von Wright implicitly positions happiness in relation to other emotions by comparing it with pleasure and joy:

Pleasure, joy, and happiness are things of increasing degrees of permanence and resistance to change. [...] A piece of news, say of an unexpected inheritance, can make a man jump with joy. But whether it makes him happy as distinct from merely glad can only be seen from effects of a longer lasting and less obvious showing on his subsequent life. (1963, 96f.; italics vW.)

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4 I define ‘colligation’, following Siepmann (2005, 431), as “the grammatical company” of a word, i.e. the other words with which it tends to co-occur in a chosen construction. ‘Collocation’ is to me merely the tendency of a word to occur in the (syntactically undefined) neighbourhood of other words.
With his descriptions and examples von Wright moves happiness away from the prototypical centre of the category ‘emotion’. Typical emotions are processes following a script of comparatively short duration (Fischer 1991), whereas happiness is a state which is expected to last much longer and does not follow a script. But von Wright also mentions a feature which happiness and the core emotions have fully in common:

[...] whether a person is happy or not depends upon his own attitude to his circumstances of life. The supreme judge of the case must be the subject himself. To think that it could be otherwise is false objectivism. (1963, 100f.; italics vW.)

This principle is so important that it deserves a name. Let us call it the ‘subjectivity postulate’. It distinguishes emotions and happiness from, for instance, physical states like health, illness, drunkenness or fatigue: only I know whether I am angry or sad (or happy), but a doctor may know better than I do whether I am ill or drunk or tired. What to von Wright is a logical necessity is to Locke an empirical fact (Book II, ch. 21, §58, I 224): “As to present happiness [...] a man never chooses amiss [italics in 5th ed.].” Locke and von Wright are agreed that people may be mistaken on their “prospects of happiness” (1963: 99, italics vW; cf. Locke op. cit., §60, I 225). But while Locke insists that “virtue and religion are necessary to [...] happiness”, von Wright distinguishes the “primarily [...] utilitarian notion” of welfare from the “primarily hedonic notion” of happiness and admits that he has been unable to form a clear view on the nature of their relation (1963: 88). In ordinary language these two notions are, of course, not clearly distinct – a confusion with potentially dramatic consequences. For if everybody is the only judge of their own happiness and at the same time can invoke the American Declaration of Independence which guarantees the divine and inalienable right to pursue it, unending strife seems to be the inevitable result. It is important to realize that the signers of the Declaration of Independence are closer to Locke than to von Wright and us. While to von Wright happiness is to like the circumstances of one’s life, the signers’ understanding could be defined as a life whose circumstances are liked and valued by any rational and virtuous human being. To assume such a meaning in the Declaration may be just plain common sense. But we cannot be satisfied with an assumed meaning merely because it suits us: we must be able to support our assumption with evidence.
2 Middle English

2.1 The Data Base: Corpora

The ME data come from the eMED and the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (CMEPV). Both are freely accessible at <http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/mec/>.\(^5\) The eMED is of course the electronic version of the MED. For information on word-use it is vastly superior to the printed MED because one of its search options enables us to find any word or word-beginning we want in the quotations which illustrate the word-senses distinguished in the dictionary. Thanks to this function it can be used as a ‘dictionary-as-corpus’, with an estimated size of about 20.5 million running words.\(^6\) In the case of *happi/y* the quotations search exactly trebles the data base: not only the 29 attestations s.v. *happi* but also a further 58 in the rest of the dictionary. This extension of the data base has its price, though: the 58 genuinely additional quotations had to be picked manually from the return of a Boolean search for "*happi*" OR "*happy*" which yielded a total of 442, the eliminated majority being spurious matches or multiple quotations.

A Boolean search of CMEPV yielded 124 genuine matches. Eliminating duplications with the MED, the total of easily accessible attestations of *happy/i* amounts to about 190. A useful supplement to CMEPV is provided by the *Innsbruck Computer Archive of Machine-Readable English Texts* (ICAMET) which holds a number of religious prose texts not in CMEPV.\(^7\) These instances of *happy* will be approached with basically one question: under what conditions, and in respect of what, is who or what said to be happy? The question may sound complicated, but the answers can be inferred pretty straightforwardly from the context – mainly though not exclusively from the syntactic co-text. This is most evident with “who or what?”: is ‘being-happy’ predicated of the person who experiences happiness, or of the condition(s), event(s) or moment(s) which shape the person’s fate? What makes people happy? The conditions under which they have to live, or their attitude to these conditions? Is being happy a momentary state or a more durable quality, perhaps even a character trait? Since *happy* enters the language in the late Middle Ages it is also pertinent to ask whether happiness is to be found in this life or the next.\(^8\)

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5 For terms and conditions see <http://www.press.umich.edu/webhome/mec/sitelic.html>, last visited 18/02/2007.

6 My own estimate, based on the following figures: number of quotations in MED (acc. to <http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=6787>, last visited 18/02/2007): 891,531; average length of MED quotation, based on a sample of 450: 23. 891,531*23=20,505,213.


8 McMahon (2006, 137) points out that similar words (*bonheur, Glück*) originated in other European languages about the same time. I thank Heli Tissari for drawing my attention to this book.
2.2 Happy and hap

Happy is derived from hap, a Norse word attested already in Layamon’s Brut (MED, s.v. hap (n.)). The basic meaning of the noun is simply what ‘happens’ to a person, “a person’s lot (good or bad)”, as the MED puts it. This definition is apt because it connotes the element of chance. The default or unmarked sense, however, is ‘good luck’. ‘Bad luck’ is usually qualified by an adjective; alliterative poetry is naturally fond of hard happes. When hap is paired with grace in theological tracts, it will often mark a contrast, as when the gifts of Nature (kinde), Fortune (hap) and Grace are listed (e.g. Dan Michel, 24). Hap is close to Fortuna, as shown in Dan Michel’s reference to “þe lheuedi [=Lady] of hap” turning her wheel (ib.).

Poets familiar with the Boëthian tradition, like Chaucer and his follower Thomas Usk, will also exploit the contrast. Learning that Troilus has fallen in love with his niece, Criseyde, Pandarus turns that love into a divine gift: “not […] hap, but grace” (TrCr I 896). In less learned poetry, including even Lydgate, collocations using both hap and grace serve as mere line fillers with no pretensions to theological nuance (e.g. Lydgate, Reson l. 5096–7, Pilgrimage, l. 21471–2). The (Northern) Surtees Psalter uses hap to translate gratia, the Gawain poet’s Cleanness and Patience for the Beatitudes of the Sermon of the Mount. On the whole, it is therefore the favourableness of the condition that is important, not whether it originates with God or fortune. These observations have implications for the semantics of happy. Remarkably, this is not so with the adverb, hap(p)i(ly), where the neutral reading seems more normally apposite (cf. MED, s.v. happi(ī) (adv.)).

2.3 Happy: ‘Bringers’ of hap

Happy may be predicated of ‘givers’ or ‘bringers’ as well as of ‘recipients’ of hap. Human hap is said to be influenced by constellations and the time-units defined by them (days, hours) as well as by the actions of other humans. Again, the default meaning of happi is positive. John Metham’s “Days of the Moon” (pp. 150f.), for instance, identifies days as “happy to begynne alle werkys vp-on” or “happy to by and to selle vp-on” (similarly Lydgate, Siege, l. 386). Events or actions can also be bringers of hap. Hoccleve calls Eve’s accepting the apple from the serpent “happy to man-kynde” (Letter of Cupid, l. 393). In the Fairfax MS of the Cursor Mundi Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream (Gen. 41) is called “happy rede” (l. 4677).

In more literary narrative the context suggests occasionally a more ambivalent reading. The voyage of Agamemnon’s fleet to Troy (Lydgate, Troy Book, 2.6257) and the day of Troilus and Criseyde’s first encounter (TrCr II, 621) are called happy

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9 All Chaucer quotations are from Benson & Robinson. See also Usk, Bk. II, ch. 3, p. 79: “grace and non hap.”
though the consequences are not entirely positive. In the case of the fleet the mood of the voyagers is strictly irrelevant to the story although it can be seen as an ironic contrast to the outcome and Lydgate’s *amplificatio* does everything to create a pleasant atmosphere. Troilus and Criseyde are embarrassed rather than joyful at their encounter: they are caught between their involuntary emotions and their social duties. The day, moreover, does not inaugurate a happy future but leads, as the reader knows, “Fro woo to wele, and after out of joie” (TrCr I, 4).¹⁰

This interpretation seems to use the notion of context in an extremely broad sense (covering a distance of over 1,600 lines in fact), but indicators of the inevitability of the encounter are also found in the nearer neighbourhood (e.g. II 623), and they dominate the plot at least from I 204ff., when the God of Love decides to punish Troilus for his contempt. The important thing is: when *happy* is predicated of a bringer the positive meaning is not sufficiently ‘entrenched’ to overrule any contextual clues to the contrary.

But it is not only events, actions and constellations that *hap*-bringing can be predicated of. Persons can also be bringers, e.g. Jesus Christ and his mother. In the York Play of the Presentation in the Temple Simeon hails the Christ child as “happy to great and to small” (Beadle 158, Play 17, l. 368), in the “Appearance of Our Lady to Thomas” Mary is addressed as “happy to helde to” ([it brings luck to submit to you] Beadle 395, Play 45, l. 138). Even animals can be “happy to mete” – when they are worshipped as idols, as they are in Mandeville’s *Travels* (Warner, p. 82).

### 2.4 Happy: ‘Recipients’ of *hap*

Turning now to the recipients of *hap*, we can start with two striking observations: (1) they invariably have good fortune; the ambivalence or neutrality of *hap* is absent in this construction. And (2), perhaps even more remarkably, they tend to be presented as habitually *happy* rather than only occasionally. Being *happy* seems to be a character trait rather than a mere accident.

Given Dame Fortune’s notorious changeability, the preponderance of habitual good fortune in the texts may be astonishing – as long as we do not take a closer look at those texts. One example from ‘advice’ literature and a large number from narrative literature will make the point clear:

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¹⁰ Benson & Robinson (497) glosses happy as ‘lucky’, but even this does not do full justice to the ambivalence of the lovers’ future.
(1) He is right happy þat encrecithe & keep[th] … the lordship that his predecessours has left him, and he is v[un]fortunat þat lesithe it. *(Dicts* ed. Bühler, 140 l. 13)*

Hap is ‘specialized’ on the recipients’ side even more than on the bringers: people may be happy to *gammys sere* *(Cursor Mundi* 3505, MS. Fairfax), *in batelle* *(Higden, 15th-century transl., IV 309)*, *in armes* *(Alliterative Morte Arthur, ll. 1741, 2974, 3878)* or *unto the werrys* *(Malory, ed. Vinaver, p. 270, l. 35f.)*, *in marchandise* *(Mandeville’s Travels, ed. Hamelius, Part II, ch. 17, vol.1, p. 98)*, *til alle worldes welthes* *(Pricke of Conscience, Part II, l. 1339)*, *to wowe* *(good at matchmaking, Paston Letters I 480)*, or *unto love* *(HF l. 1757, Chaucer’s earliest use of the word)*. Chauliac mentions *happy leches* *(MED s.v. fortunat (1a)), Dunbar even a *happy woman* (i.e. one who has “wylis […] in luf,”: *Twa mariit women and the wedo*, l. 464). What I have called ‘specialized luck’ appears as ‘skilful’ in the MED (s.v. *happi*, sense 2b), and no doubt fighting, trading, hunting, surgery and even love-making are skills. But so are cooking, farming, weaving and a host of other activities, and yet there is no talk of happy cooks, ploughmen, weavers, etc. Is there a feature which the first group has and the second lacks? It seems the first group of activities is carried out under unpredictable conditions, often against human ‘adversaries’ who will not behave as passive objects like wool, farmland, or food. These recipients of *hap* have mastered fortune either by following principles of wisdom or by continuous practice. Perhaps we should call them ‘earners’ rather than recipients.

### 2.5 Happiness a Gift of Grace or of Fortune?

The *hap* which recipients receive can be specified by three binary oppositions. It can be (1) a gift of grace or of fortune, (2) heavenly or earthly, (3) objective or subjective *(sensu* von Wright). The distinction between *happy* and *gracious* seems to be even less observed than that between *hap* and *grace*. A good test case is Trevisa’s translation of Higden’s *Polychronicon*. On one occasion he is forced by his original to observe the distinction: In Book IV, cap. 2 Higden writes about Herod: “In rebus quidem domesticis infelicissimus, in aliis fortunatus” (IV 288). Trevisa renders it as: “He was most ungracious in homeliche þinges, and happy in oþer þinges” (IV 289). Elsewhere he translates *fortunatus* and *felix* as *gracious* and in various other ways, though never as *happy*. His anonymous successor is fairly consistent in translating both words as *happy or fortunate*, but he skips the passage just quoted.¹²

According to CMEPV Malory uses *happy* twice in doublets: *nat happy nother fortunate* *(Book VI, ch. 10, Vinaver 268)*, *happy & gracious* *(Book XII, ch. 2, Vinaver 113)*.

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¹¹ Similar advice appears op. cit., p. 299, l. 19, in Ashby’s *Dicta* (p. 373) or is quoted in a narrative like *The Destruction of Troy* (Panton & Donaldson, ll. 1432, 11217).

¹² Cf. the verdict of the editor, Ch. Babington: “[W]hen he could not construe a sentence he passed on to the next” *(Higden I lxix)*.
A close analysis, for which there is no space here, suggests they are hendiadys – a figure using two words but conveying only one meaning. A definitive answer would of course require a more thorough study of LME translations, but the evidence available to me suggests that the opposition of grace vs. fortune is only rarely observed.

2.6 Happiness Earthly or Heavenly?

There is only slightly more evidence for a lexicalized distinction between heavenly and earthly happiness. I have found three instances of happy paired with blessed (Arderne 7, Ashby 373, Chaucer, CT, Melibee, ll. 1675–1680, Benson & Robinson 235), but it is only in Chaucer that the doublet may be said to imply a distinction. Chaucer modifies his French model:

(2) ‘Wel happy and blessed been they that loun and purchacen pees, for they been called children of god.’ ‘Bieneurez sunt ceulz qui ayment et purchacent paix […]’ (Askins 2002, 396)

The French is by Renaud de Louens, MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 578, which is generally regarded as the text closest to Chaucer. If Chaucer was indeed using this text, he was apparently uneasy about the translation of bieneurez, for which wel happy clearly is a calque. On the four other occasions when Chaucer uses happy it is closely associated with Fortuna;14 the addition of blessed in this case helps to weaken the association. The combination of happy and blessed makes the Seventh Beatitude (Matt. 5, 9) do double service as a piece of practical advice, showing the road not only to heaven but also to success in this world. The peacemakers are not only beati or blessed, they are also happy, presumably in the sense of ‘successful’. Such an insertion is not only in keeping with the double meaning of the allegorical Tale of Melibee; it also suggests that Chaucer saw happiness as basically confined to this world and added blessed for the heavenly dimension.

But Chaucer was of course an unusually sensitive user of English, and thus hardly representative of his language community. More ‘ordinary’ usage may be found, for instance, in dictionaries, where both happy and blyssyd stand for beatus as well as fortunatus and felix.

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13 The CMEPV text is out of date. The quotations were of course checked, but it is possible that Vinaver’s text contains more doublets than are found in CMEPV.

14 CT Melibee 2745–50, Tr Cr II 621 (cf. 2.3.), 1382; HF 1757 (cf. 2.5.).
There is, however, some important evidence to the contrary. Richard Misyn translated Richard Rolle’s De Emendacione Vitæ and De Incendio Amoris in 1434 and 1435, respectively. The Fire of Love is to my knowledge the only religious text using happy with any frequency (Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich do not use it at all!). It consistently translates Rolle’s felix, while beatitudo becomes bliss or blissfulness (as in Chaucer’s Boece), and blessed represents either beatus or benedictus (as in the Promptorium Parvulorum, see Table 1). Bliss is the state to be expected in the next life. By contrast, the soul is happy because it is enjoying communion with the Deity while still in this life.

2.7 Happiness Objective or Subjective?

Rolle describes his ecstasies as accompanied by strong physical symptoms such as heat, sweetness and intoxication (Misyn 3, l.5; 12, l.13; 12, l.27; 34, l.11; 72, l.13f.; 85, l.4; 95, l.33). These experiences qualify as emotional in a very modern psychological sense: not only for finding physical expression but also for being of limited duration (Misyn 3, l. 55). Apparently Rolle is giving us the first instance of fully ‘subjective’ happiness.

When BE .. HAPPY\textsuperscript{15} is used in the first person singular it is difficult to apply the objective / subjective opposition; the distinction between ‘in circumstances to be valued by all rational beings’ and ‘in circumstances actually valued’ is otiose unless the speaker excludes himself from the community of rational beings. Still, we can usefully ask what is in the foreground: the circumstances or the emotional reaction to them. John Paston II describes himself as “nott happy to wow” (Davis 1971, I 480; cf. above section 2.4, last para); in Caxton’s Charles the Grete Ganellon reports his

\textsuperscript{15} Capital italics are chosen to refer to an entire paradigm rather than a single form, i.e. in this case including am happy, was happy, etc. – Adapting a convention of the MED quotations, two dots are used to indicate the place of optional elements (such as very in quotation 4).
narrow escape from 20,000 Saracens with “I was wel happy […]” (p. 189 l. 7). Both times the ‘objective’ reading is entirely satisfactory. ‘I am ill at ease matchmaking’ introduces an irrelevance. Equally with Ganellon: the ‘happiness’ of his escape highlights the magnitude of the danger; in ModE he would say I was lucky. It also stresses the threat which the Saracens pose to Charlemagne and his host – and, by implication, the courage with which the danger will be met. For Ganellon to tell the Emperor how he felt during his escape would be almost impertinent.

If in the majority of cases an ‘objective’ interpretation is to be preferred, that does not mean that the ‘subjective’ one is always wrong. The best illustration is an exemplum in An Alphabet of Tales: the Duke of Marseille and his wife are converted by Mary Magdalene. After an apparently long period of childlessness their prayers to the saint are answered. Anxious to learn more about their new religion, they want to see St. Peter in Rome. During a storm at sea the duchess dies while giving birth. The duchess and the (living) child are abandoned on land; the duke continues his journey to St. Peter. After two years he returns to the place, where he finds a little child on the beach who runs away and hides under his mother’s mantle. The duke follows, lifts the mantle and exclaims:

(3) “O þou, Marie Magdalen! […] how happy war I if my wyfe war now on’life & myght go home with me into myne awn’ contretē […]” And at þis wurd þe womman’ was olfe & rase vp, […]. And þan’þai a† samen wente hame vnto Marsulie […]. And whenþþai come at home þai fe kenis befor’ Marie Magdalen’ & thankid hur hertelie, & tolde hur a† how it had happend’paim. (Banks 1904–05, 313, ch. 458)

The following points seem worth noting, because they or similar ones reappear in the other texts which suggest a ‘subjective’ reading of happy:

– the phrase BE .. HAPPY is used in the first person singular, though not in the present tense but in the past subjunctive, the “subjunctive of unreality” (Mustanoja 1960, 455–457);\(^\text{16}\)

– it is used to express an extremely strong wish which is most unlikely to be fulfilled;

– the language is highly emotional, particularly in the sentence which contains happy: the saint is invoked using the interjection ‘O’, the adjective is preceded by a ‘booster’ (the “exclamatory how”, cf. Quirk \textit{et al.} § 8.105);\(^\text{17}\)

– after the happy-making event, the adjective is not used again; as a consequence no-one is actually described as ‘happy’.

\(^{16}\) Cf. Burrow \& Turville-Petre 1992, 48: “The past tense of the subjunctive is used where Modern English uses ‘would’ to express something that is unlikely to happen.”

\(^{17}\) Our example is cited MED, s.v. ‘hǒu conjunctive adv.’, sense 3b: “to what an extent or degree!”
The number of examples to be found in CMEPV is too small to draw any far-reaching conclusions, but it seems plausible to assume that the ‘emotional’ sense of happy was not sufficiently ‘entrenched’ to be understood without special markers, as found in our example. Happy is used to express a wish, not to describe a state. Texts showing this use of happy form a small, rather well-defined group: Melusine (p. 356), Caxton’s Blanchardyn and Eglantine (p. 41), and the alliterative Wars of Alexander (p. 267 l. 5381). With the exception of the Wars (a translation from Latin), they are translated from the French. These findings antedate the OED records for senses 2b and 4 cited by Rissanen (1997, 247) by almost a century and suggest that these senses should also be included in the MED. The subjective sense of happy seems to be an emergent category: there is a growing need to describe ‘inner’ happiness (apparently induced by translation), but the concept is not sufficiently established to lexicalize the opposition between the two kinds, between ModE happy and lucky.

3 Modern English

3.1 The Corpus, and Methods of Analysis

ME is represented by closed corpora which contain about 150 texts with 3 to 5 million words and are well known to the scholarly community. For ModE we have websites like Project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org> and the Online Books Page <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/>, which are both linked to the homepage of the European Society for the Study of English <http://www.essenglish.org/> (last visited 26/02/07). Those websites allow us to download 20,000 and 25,000 books, respectively, with, in my estimate, some 4 billion words (Diller 2008). In this deluge of data one has to make one’s own selection (which will always be questionable). I used a corpus of some 100 text files (see Appendix) which I had constructed for a different purpose, containing mostly 18th and 19th century novels, but also some philosophical works. My corpus clearly cannot claim to be balanced between registers (in contrast, for instance, to Tissari, this volume). But while balanced corpora must necessarily be corpora of text excerpts, my corpus consists of full texts, which enables me to risk zero-assertions (cf. section 1.2). When I say, e.g., “Colligation X does not occur before Jane Austen”, I may of course be faulted by a counter-example from an earlier novel which is not in my corpus. But my assertion, if true of the texts studied by me, will still say something significant about the texts studied.

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18 The OED’s first records for happy (2b) and (4) are 1526 and 1523, respectively. The Wars of Alexander “was written not later than 1450” (Oakden 1930, I, 153). The Alphabet of Tales is dated “c1450” by the MED.

19 These websites offer texts in ASCII text-only format, which facilitates searches with simple, self-written programs. For other websites see, e.g. <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/connotations/bauer/links.htm>.
in my corpus: that those before Austen had no use for colligation X (and explaining why this is the case will be a worthy task in itself). No such significance can be derived from zero-assertions concerning a corpus of text excerpts: the absence of the colligation from any part of the corpus may be simply due to the accidents of sampling, not to any property of the texts from which the sample was taken. My unbalanced selection may even derive some justification from Tissari’s discovery that in her corpus (ARCHER) fiction is the genre showing the highest frequency of happy and happiness (this volume, beginning of section 3).

Even with a comparatively small selection of about 100 texts the returns will be much more numerous than from CMEPV, eMED and ICAMET. I obtained some 6,000 occurrences of ModE happy and about 2,500 of ModE happiness.20 Clearly, the analysis cannot be as detailed as I have tried to make it in the ME part of this contribution. I have chosen a few colligations which promise to be revealing for my Erkenntnisinteresse, which is the borderline status of happiness between emotions and something “of a longer lasting and less obvious showing” (von Wright 1963, 97, quoted section 1.2). The colligations chosen will be either compatible or incompatible with certain characteristics of emotions, such as:

(1) Emotions and happiness share the subjectivity postulate: in ModE a person cannot ‘think’ he or she is happy (or angry, or sad, or glad). They either are, or are not. A construction which is incompatible with this postulate is THINK ONESELF .. HAPPY. Conversely, the construction BE .. HAPPY TO + Infinitive is fully compatible with the postulate. The two constructions will be shown to be in “diachronic complementary distribution”: authors tend to use either the one or the other.

(2) Notwithstanding (1) emotions are typically communicated by involuntary physical symptoms, like blushing, frowning, change of voice, etc. I will accordingly look for colligations showing happiness as visible or otherwise perceptible.

(3) Emotions are of limited duration, whereas according to the tradition we cannot be truly happy if we are conscious that our happiness is bound to end. This is why the Middle Ages distinguished between beatitudo and felicitas. Colligations showing happiness as temporary may be regarded as weakening the religious (or philosophical) content of the concept and thus deserve our attention.

(4) Time-spans are not always clearly distinguished from events taking place in them; a section on “Happy days, events, etc.” will deal with such overlap phenomena.

20 The ratio of adjectives to nouns is thus 2.4/1, hardly different from Tissari’s 2.5/1 (this volume, Table 3: 424/168).
(5) The construction *MAKE .. HAPPY* is of particular interest because it involves more than one person. Participants may be more or less aware of the subjectivity postulate; the potential for conflict which that implies is of linguistic as well as narrative interest.

**3.2 THINK ONESELF .. HAPPY and BE .. HAPPY TO + Infinitive**

The first construction is extensively used by Richardson (30 times) and Smollett (17). It was not found after Scott, who uses it four times. It is usually part of a polite formula, as in quotation (4).

(4) I shall think myself very happy to have it in my Power to serve your Ladyship. (Fielding, *Tom Jones*, Book IX, ch. 4, p. 566)

Very often it is preceded by a modal auxiliary and accompanied by a conditional clause; as in our example, it usually occurs in conversation. Perhaps one should not set too much store by such a frozen expression, but it is noteworthy that it should disappear with Scott. If it has gone out of conversational fashion we may suppose that it clashes with the more relaxed, more casual, more ‘emotional’ *BE .. HAPPY TO* + inf (see below). Taken literally, the formula is not an expression of feeling but an estimate of the speaker’s (potential) situation. The meaning of *happy* in this colligation is well described by the OED’s definition of sense 2a: “favoured by lot, position, or other external circumstance”. Its eighteenth-century ring becomes apparent when we look at 19th-century phrases which remotely resemble it:

(5) While I looked, I thought myself happy, and was surprised to find myself ere long weeping -- (Ch. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ch. 31, p. 460)

(6) [N]o sooner had I wiped one salt drop from my cheek than another followed. Yet, I thought, I ought to have been happy, […]. (op. cit., p. 19)

(7) Two such letters together made me think how far beyond my deserts I was beloved and how happy I ought to be. (Dickens, *Bleak House*, ch. 36, p. 515)

These are first-person narrators reflecting, at the moment of narration, on their emotional states in the narrated past. The solitary, un-social situation calls for self-searching, not politeness.

The construction *BE .. HAPPY TO* does occur in the 18th century, but usually it describes the characters’ good fortune rather than their emotional state, as the following example from *Tom Jones* shows rather well (Lord Fellamar to Sophia Western): “Is it then, Madam, that I am so unhappy to be the Object of your Dislike and Scorn; […]?” (Book XVII, ch. 8, p. 903). If this were the kind of (un)happiness on which the subject is the supreme judge the question would be awkward, since
it would be directed at a person who knows less than the questioner. To become acceptable in PDE, it would have to be rephrased as Do I have the misfortune to …? or Am I the object of … (which would be most unfortunate)?

Another occurrence of the construction, also in Tom Jones (Book XI, ch. 2, p. 572), is not so easily disambiguated: Sophia says to a (putative) stranger with whom she is travelling some distance that "She was very happy to find they were both travelling the same Way." This is clearly meant to be polite, but here there are at least two ways to be polite. Sophia may be saying that she regards it as fortunate to have a travelling companion; in that case happy describes her condition. Or she can say that she is pleased with the other's company; in that case it describes her attitude to that condition, as it does in modern usage. The question seems undecidable because travelling the same way is half way between willed action and accepted condition. Travelling is willed but travelling the same way as someone else is not.

The next example is unambiguous:

(8) The marabout, as if happy to do their behests, bounded from the earth, and spun his giddy round before them with singular agility, […] (Scott, Talisman, ch. 20, p. 800)

Jumping up and spinning round do not happen by chance or coincidence; they are fully intended by the agent. Moreover, the marabout’s happiness is inferred by the observers from his behaviour. This is how we know, and all we know, about the mental or emotional states of others. With Scott and Jane Austen this sort of being happy is becoming common, as Table 2 shows.21

<table>
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<th></th>
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<th>N/100,000 words</th>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>N/100,000 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Ch. Brontë</td>
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<td>1.06</td>
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<td>0.11</td>
<td>G. Eliot</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hardy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Galsworthy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Happy to + infinitive. (Relative frequencies are only rough estimates calculated on the basis of file lengths)

21 To save space, tables contain only those authors in whose works the constructions in question have been found.
3.3 Colligations Showing Symptoms of Happiness

These can be of two kinds: the colligates are either verbs like look or seem, or they are nouns denoting parts of the expressive apparatus of the human body. Under LOOK I will also subsume the noun: a happy look will be counted. In this section it is particularly important to consider only colligations as opposed to collocations, as the following example may show (George Eliot, Daniel Deronda II, 133): “Happy the eye which saw all these things; but verily to hear only of them afflicts our soul.” The pattern is repeated twice, which would give us three instances of happy eye. But these eyes are not symptoms of an emotional state; they are channels of perception. Since the face is the only part of the expressive apparatus to colligate with happy with reasonable frequency, the others (eye, countenance, glance, smile, tear(s), accent) are lumped together in one category.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>FACE</th>
<th>others</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rel. Freq. (N/100,000 words)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>22</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|        |        |      |      |        | 116   | 0.97                          |

Table 3. Colligates showing symptoms of happiness.

In terms of relative frequency the difference between the 18th century (this time including Scott) and the 19th is remarkable. While most 19th-century authors show at least 1 pertinent colligation per 100,000 words, the highest mark in the 18th is Smollett’s 0.3. Fielding, Johnson, and Mackenzie do not appear in this category at all.
Even so, the pre-19th-century examples deserve a closer look. Apart from one LOOK in Richardson the only colligate is the verb SEEM. Semantically it is the least specific: unlike LOOK HAPPY, SEEM HAPPY is not necessarily mediated by a part of our body. This is shown particularly well by the one example from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*:

(9) Kings, princes, monarchs, and magistrates seem to be most happy, but look into their estate, you shall find them to be most encumbered with cares, in perpetual fear, agony, suspicion, jealousy. (p. 183; 1st Partition, Sect. II, Memb. III, Subsect. X)

The *Anatomy*, “one of the great psychological texts of all time” (Harré & Finlay-Jones 1986, 223), is also a key text in the history of the concept of ‘happiness’. Melancholy, the early modern medical successor of the medieval deadly sin of Accidia (ib.), is an inability to be happy in circumstances which give us every reason to be so. But Burton's aim is negative and pre-Enlightenment: to cure melancholy, not to pursue happiness – to accept conditions, not to change them. That may be one reason he hardly uses our diagnostic colligations and is thus severely under-represented in this paper.

Before Jane Austen nouns denoting expressive organs do not colligate with happy. The change begun by her is symptomatic of two related phenomena: of the “immediate showing” which is alien to the earlier notion of happiness, and of the greater intimacy which seems to mark communication in 19th-century fiction. When the face communicates involuntarily in the 18th-century part of the corpus it usually expresses negative feelings like embarrassment or sadness. Often it is used with communicative intent, as when it is turned towards or away from the communication partner. This is a point where the syntax of happy passes into the communication of emotions in general, a topic which unfortunately cannot be gone into here. But the colligations studied are strong evidence that linguistically happiness is increasingly treated as an emotion.

### 3.4 Colligations Suggesting Happiness is Short-lived

There is an obvious group of colligates to be studied in this section: nouns denoting time-spans, from moment to year and life. We should also include life-phases like infancy, childhood, youth and adulthood, although happy youth occurs in the corpus only in the sense of ‘happy young man’, and adulthood not at all. Table 4 gives a full account of the findings; the smaller categories minute, morning, evening, week, fortnight, month, year, infancy, childhood are lumped together as ‘others’.
<table>
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<th>day</th>
<th>time</th>
<th>life</th>
<th>others</th>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>95</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>245</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. *Happy* as attribute of nouns denoting periods of time.

The picture is far more ambiguous than in sections 3.2 and 3.3. Until now the 19th century showed the far larger figures, but this table is dominated by Richardson, who accounts for one-third of the total, very distantly followed by Thackeray and Dickens. Only three other authors rise (just) into two-digit figures: Austen, Hawthorne and Eliot. These are absolute figures, but in relative terms Richardson’s position is just as striking.
We may conclude that, in general, time-span nouns are not terribly important, but figure 1 shows that Richardson and Thackeray (and to a lesser extent Dickens, too) owe their pre-eminence largely to their generous use of *day*.

A closer look at this apparent similarity reveals a remarkable difference. While Thackeray’s and Dickens’ *happy days* are part of the characters’ past and are remembered by them, Richardson’s are in the future and are ‘fixed’ (P. I 266 [Journal continued, Friday afternoon], C. 581 L. 178), ‘nominated’ (C. 692 L. 216) and – repeatedly – ‘delayed’ (C. 660 L. 203, 693 L. 216, 704 L. 220, 843 L. 245). A large proportion of Richardson’s *happy days* are wedding days – hence the fixing, nominating and delaying. The consequences for the meaning of *happy* will become clear when we look beyond time-spans to what fills those time-spans. For the moment, suffice it to say that for Richardson’s pious ladies a *happy hour* or *happy moment* may be the moment of one’s death (P. II 183 L. 37, C. 1339 L. 465). It is not so, of course, for Lovelace (C. 465 L. 127).

### 3.5 Happy Days, Events, etc.

Even to Clarissa and Pamela these *happy moments* are not enjoyable in themselves but are forebodings of eternal happiness. In a similar fashion a *happy day* is not primarily called *happy* because one feels happy on such a day. The primary reason, especially in earlier texts, is that the day brings luck. Pamela, for instance, wants to marry on a Thursday because that is her *happy day*. Mr. B. makes fun of her superstition and perhaps even plays on the two senses of *happy*:

(10) I think you should begin now to make another day in the week a happy one; as for example, on a Monday, may you say, my father and mother concluded to be married on
the Thursday following. On a Monday […] my mother was preparing all her matters to be brought to bed on the Thursday following. […] On a Monday, I myself,” said he, “well remember it was that I wrote you the letter which prevailed on you so kindly to return to me; and on the same day you did return to my house here; which I hope, my girl, will be as propitious an era as any you have named! […] Thursday has reigned long enough o’conscience; let us now set Monday in its place […]. And then, I hope, we shall make Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, as happy days as Monday and Thursday […]. (P. I 292, Journal Continued, Monday)

What is here said of days can also be said of minutes or moments but also of entities which are not time units, such as events, presages and omens. As Table 5 shows, happy event is common in Richardson and Smollett but disappears after Scott and Jane Austen, who still use it moderately. It is similar with happy presage and happy omen: after Smollett they disappear from the corpus (with a solitary exception in Poe). Dickens and George Eliot use good omen instead:

<table>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poe</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Happy as attribute of nouns pointing to the future.

This says little about a decline in superstition, as presage and omen remain quite common in 19th-century texts. But since they cease to colligate with happy it says a good deal about the meaning of that word. Rather than ‘fix’ or ‘nominate’ them, Thackeray’s and Dickens’ characters look back on happy days (or times, or hours). The evidence of the corpus shows eighteenth-century characters as happy in expectation, nineteenth-century characters in reminiscing or “in the flitting moment”, forgetful of both past and future (Hawthorne, *Marble Faun*, ch. 47, p. 1215). 22


MAKE .. HAPPY is a very common construction; about one-tenth of all instances of happy colligate with make. To exploit its potential for the identification of the senses of happy we must distinguish:

22 According to Dr. Johnson, happiness in the present is possible only when one is drunk (McMahon 2006, 245). Several quotations in that conversation (Boswell, 1934–1964 II, 351 [April 10, 1775]) suggest that the view that happiness was only to be expected in the future, not experienced in the present, was widely shared at the time.
(a) the participants: ag(ent) makes ben(efficiary) happy;
(b) the means or instruments by which a person is made happy, e.g. help in an emergency, consolation, gestures of esteem or gratitude, etc. ;
(c) the effect, the sort of happiness which results, e.g. passing pleasure or improved circumstances that ideally may last a lifetime.

Participants and means are semantic roles and should not be confused with syntactic slots like subject, object or adjunct. To compare agents and beneficiaries across some 100 texts is hardly feasible, since to form sensible categories of characters would require detailed discussion of many texts and would remain highly arbitrary even after such an exercise.

What we can generalize about is the speech situations in which statements about happy-making occur. Do they occur in the narrative or in the dialogue? Is the beneficiary of the happy-making the speaker, the addressee, or a third person? A complete answer to the first question would require a careful distinction between various types of speech presentation (cf. Short 1988, 1996) which cannot be undertaken here. On a rough distinction between direct speech and reported speech on the one hand and the rest (including narrative) on the other we can say that Thackeray's statements about happy-making occur relatively less often in dialogue than Dickens:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thackeray</th>
<th>dial.</th>
<th>narr.</th>
<th>Dickens</th>
<th>dial.</th>
<th>narr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Lyndon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bleak House</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Esmond</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>B. Rudge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcomes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Copperfield</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snobs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>E. Drood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VF</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gr. Expect.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginians</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N. Nickleby</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curiosity Shop</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ol. Twist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. MAKE .. HAPPY in dialogue and narrative.

For Richardson such a statement would be problematic, as in epistolary novels the entire text is arguably dialogue as far as the choice of first and second person pronouns is concerned. It is all the more remarkable that Dickens’ percentages of first and second person beneficiaries should even exceed those of Richardson while both leave Thackeray far behind:
Table 7. Beneficiaries of *MAKE .. HAPPY*: first, second, third person.

Considering the subjectivity postulate Thackeray is in a sense the most ‘authorial’ narrator, i.e. the one who is most confident that he knows his characters’ emotional state.

A glance at the two Parts of *Pamela* reveals how the meaning of happiness can be negotiated in the course of a novel. Table 8 shows that, in this novel at least, happy-making proceeds mainly from social superiors to inferiors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Part I</th>
<th></th>
<th>Part II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. B.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Agents and beneficiaries in *Pamela*.

In Part I Mr B. is the agent of happy-making in the majority of cases, Pamela only in about one-fourth. When Pamela is agent, the beneficiaries are her socio-economic inferiors, chiefly her parents, but also her (former) fellow-servants. In Part II, when Pamela is Mrs. B., the proportions are balanced, Mr. B. even becoming beneficiary twice as often as his wife. To a large extent happiness is thus identified with economic well-being. This is a view to which Pamela herself subscribes quite
candidly, 23 although she always maintains that you cannot be happy if you betray
your values and principles. The most eloquent reflection of this view is found in
Letters 30 and 31 of Part I, where Mr. B.’s and her own understanding of happiness
are contrasted. Mr. B. has offered “to make all your family happy” – provided she
yield to his unchaste advances. She replies to his face: “he [her father] is happier
already than ever he can be, if his daughter’s innocence is to be the price of your
favour” (I 69 L. 30). Privately she translates his offer into her own and her parents’
language: “he will make my poor father and mother’s life comfortable” (I 71 L. 30).

These observations convey some idea of Richardson’s careful choice of words,
but they do not lend themselves to the sort of generalizations that should be our
concern. A better litmus test for the nature of happiness is to look at the ‘instruments’
or means by which it is bestowed. To stay with Pamela for a moment, an important
difference between Mr. B. and Pamela is that his preferred instrument is financial
support, whereas she accompanies her charitable gifts with gestures of kindness
and with pious words. She also makes her neighbours and their servants “happy”
by encouraging them to attend divine service (II 174 L. 34).

But whatever the differences between Mr. B. and his wife, they share one basic
view of happiness: making-happy is always done with a view to the beneficiaries’
future; happiness is thought of as a long-term condition. Long-lasting happiness
remains of course an important concern in the 19th century. But a closer look at
the ‘instruments’ confirms what we have seen already: the emotion-like sort of
happiness is gaining ground. This is particularly apparent in Thackeray’s novels. A
poor wretch is “made happy by being allowed to win a few pieces” at the gambling
table (Barry Lyndon, ch. 13, pp. 163/4), a young fellow is made happy by a sweet
voice (The Newcomes, ch. 41, p. 437), George Osborne is asked: “Do something to
make [Amelia] happy; a very little will” (VF, ch. 13, p. 117), after her mother’s death
Amelia exerts herself “to make her old father happy” (VF, ch. 57, p. 553), in other
words: to cheer him up.

Thackeray is of course a cynic concerning happiness, as his final words in
The Newcomes (p. 806) show, where “the poet of Fable-land […] makes the hero
and heroine happy at last, and happy ever after.” But temporary, emotion-like
happiness is also a common feature in Dickens, as is equally well shown by the
‘instruments’ used by his characters. Agnes makes David Copperfield’s time light
and happy by reading to him (David Copperfield, ch. 18, p. 228). Kate Nickleby is
made so happy by just looking at John Browdie that she could forget all her cares
(Nicholas Nickleby, ch. 45, p. 584); Mrs. Maylie is made happy by Oliver’s gratitude

23 E.g.: “I am far from thinking that a prudent regard to worldly interest misbecomes the character
of a good clergyman.” (II 149 L. 32, Tuesday)
Like other constructions \textit{MAKE .. HAPPY} shows that happiness in the nineteenth century is more momentary than in the eighteenth. It also shows it is less understood in socio-economic terms.

\textbf{4 Conclusions}

I have studied the syntactic behaviour of a single word – a narrow subject with wide implications. At the beginning of this paper we found that the discourse on the concept of ‘happiness’ shows a number of discontinuities which make us wonder whether the users of the word are really referring to the same object. To at least partially answer this question I found it necessary to supplement the history of the concept with a history of word-use. The use of the adjective suggests continuity but not identity: rather something like a Wittgensteinian family resemblance. Tracing the use of \textit{happy} has shown us a shift from ‘under conditions to be valued’ and ‘creating conditions to be valued’ through ‘under conditions actually valued’ to ‘valuing the conditions one is under’. The conditions themselves have changed, too: from success to lasting harmonious human relations and enjoyable moments. Tracing these changes provides a well-defined \textit{tertium} under which a large number of authors can be compared. In an age of academic hyper-specialization such \textit{tertia} may serve as tools for combining precise detailed analysis with a long perspective. They may also instil a readiness to revise or refine opinions in the face of compelling evidence. This, however, presupposes the irreversible insight that there is such a thing as compelling evidence.
Abbreviations

C.: Richardson, *Clarissa*
CMEPV: *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (added after titles not seen in print)
CT: *Canterbury Tales*
EETS: Early English Text Society
(e)MED: (electronic) *Middle English Dictionary*
ES: Extra Series
HF: Chaucer, *The House of Fame*
ICAMET: Innsbruck Computer Archive of Machine-Readable English Texts
L.: (numbered) Letter in P. or C.
OED: *Oxford English Dictionary*
OS: Original Series
P.: Richardson, *Pamela*
PDE: Present-Day English
SS: Supplementary Series
TrCr: Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*
References

(a) Quoted Editions

*Alliterative Morte Arthur* see Krishna.

*Alphabet of Tales* see Banks.


Ashby see Bateson.


*Ayenbite*: see Dan Michel.


Benson & Robinson: see Chaucer.


*Cursor Mundi*: see Morris.


*Destruction of Troy*: see Panton.


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24 Quotations were of course found in the electronic files listed in the Appendix and in CMEPV and ICAMET (which are often out of date, cf. fn. 13). But the quoted texts are from the editions cited here.


Mandeville’s *Travels*, Cotton Ms.: see Hamelius.

Mandeville’s *Travels*, Egerton Ms.: see Warner.

*Melusine*: see Donald.


*Paston Letters:* see Davis.

*Pricke of Conscience:* see Morris.


Vinaver: see Malory.


*York Plays:* see Beadle.

(b) Other Studies


Kövecses, Zoltán 2008. The conceptual structure of happiness. This volume.


Appendix:

Texts from Gutenberg and Online Books Page used in this study (short titles; quoted works under “References”):