Research Article

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From Shame to Shaming: towards an Analysis of Shame Narratives

Abstract: This paper examines shame in three narratives involving the social self and the evaluative perception of that self. The semiotic square is used for analysing some of the conceptualizations of shame and highlighting the structural relations of the shame phenomenon in narrative. The stance of this paper is that shame is a moral emotion which results from two main evaluative perceptions, involving moral sentiment and social reputation. In support of this claim, different aspects of shame are analysed in three types of narratives from different socio-cultural contexts.

Keywords: shame, moral emotion, shame narrative

Introduction

The paper examines shame as a moral emotion involving the social self and the evaluative perception of that self. In part one, linguistic and cultural dimensions of shame are explored to show the tenuous and varied links between words and emotional states of shame. The semiotic square is used as an instrument for making explicit the logical oppositions in which shame is nested, and which determine its meanings. The semiotic square also highlights various implications between the self and its social context. In part two, three shame narratives are discussed and analysed under the assumption that shame typically occurs in certain scenarios. It is argued that shame also has a narrative structure with a beginning, middle and an end, a "before" and "after," which is why the protagonists experience prospective and retrospective shame, respectively. The three shame narratives occur in different socio-cultural contexts: in Classical Greece (c 428 BC) and current social media (2013 and 2016). It is suggested that the narratives belong to a "shame-culture," in the sense defined by Crouch: "you know you are good or bad by whether your community honours you or excludes you." In this sense, shame is viewed as an external sanction (*shaming*) against a subject's failure to internalise a social group's norms. Following Corbí, it is assumed that protagonists' 1st person perspectives of shame experiences differ from 3rd party perspectives.

The Dimensions of Shame

Shame is usually considered as an emotion involving the self and, more precisely, a negative self-evaluation, either reflectively, by the individual herself, or by others. However, the idea that shame is a social emotion has recently been rejected. Deonna et al. (102-104) argue that shame does not necessarily involve an external

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perspective: we can evaluate ourselves as worthless or feel a self-evaluative sense of failure, regardless of how others evaluate us. "In shame, we apprehend a trait or an action of ours that we take to exemplify the polar opposite of a self-relevant value as indicating our incapacity to exemplify this self-relevant value even to a minimal degree" (102). Although we can certainly feel a sense of personal failure regardless of an others' evaluation, the stance of this paper is that our criteria of evaluation, and hence our self-relevant values, are acquired in a socio-cultural context even if they diverge from that context. Likewise, our self-evaluation as having failed does not happen in isolation but in relation to others. And while there may not always be an actual or imagined audience when we feel shame, our feeling of shame is informed by our emotional rapport with others which affects how we see and evaluate ourselves. We feel unworthy because we accept others' negative evaluation. Deonna et al. (148-9) rightly argue that the critical perspective may be internal, taken by ourselves in a reflective stance, rather than by an external evaluator. However, *pace* Taylor (60) and Deonna et al., in feeling shame, we also accept an observer's standards of evaluation. As Aristotle says, we usually feel shame before those whose opinion matters to us (*Rhet*. 1384a25). It follows that shame is an emotion which at least concerns the social self and that our evaluation of ourselves as flawed, worthless or having failed requires a social context. Shame may be self-directed, but it has a social dimension precisely because it is an experience which impacts that dimension by isolating us from our peers, whom we perceive as perceiving our disgrace. As Zahavi puts it, shame "affects and alters our relationship to and connectedness with others" (223).

In English, the source-language of this investigation, *shame* denotes a painful feeling and an ethical notion related to disgrace. Shame also connotes the desire not to be seen (Wierzbicka 591). It picks out an awkward complex of feelings covering the feeling person, their body and the situation (Fuchs 8). These feelings are not all identified by words, though some are conveyed by expressions denoting affective and emotive components, such as "burning with shame," "losing face" or "wanting to disappear." Hence shame also involves an appraisal of the self or a scenario mediating how the self sees itself. This scenario is set out in narratives about the (a-)shamed self. The upshot is that shame is a relational emotion in narratives involving the social self. We feel shame when our social self is identified as something that deviates from how we see ourselves. To put it differently—we feel shame as we are exposed to emotional states which undermine our self-image. Thomason (13) points out that shame "arises out of tension between our identity and our self-conception: those things about which we feel shame are part of our identities, but they are not part of our self-conception." Thus, shame is felt when we perceive ourselves as being perceived as devalued. It is a response to our self-evaluation informed by our social approval (or disapproval).

According to psychologist Helen Block Lewis (30-34), shame denotes various negative emotional states which "catch the Self as the focus of evaluation . . . shame (is) a cover for a family of feelings—humiliation mortification, shyness, feeling ridiculous, feeling painfully self-conscious, embarrassment, chagrin." She describes shame as an acutely painful and self-conscious experience with physiological symptoms of blushing, sweating or averting one's gaze (Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis, 34; Shame and the narcissistic personality*, 96). Recent psychological literature focuses on shame as a painful self-conscious emotion involving negative self-evaluation in relation to an *other*, often related to exposure or being seen (Lewis 34; Tangney & Fischer 117; Tangney, Stuewig et al.; Zahavi 239). Shame's evaluative and moral aspects extend to unpleasant social states such as disgrace and dishonour or shaming, as well as to the painful feelings attached to them.[1] The negative concept of shame seems to be the one wearing the trousers: the English word shame has mainly negative connotations, emotionally and morally, although psychologist Leon Wurmser, xv) also identifies a "positive form of shame, as a protective attitude and a guardian of values and ideals. This sense corresponds to the medieval word "shamefastness," which likens shame to modesty and which also appears in Shakespeare: "Have you no modesty, no maiden shame?" Helena reproaches

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1 The expression ''a sense of shame'', besides deriving from a situation of embarrassment, humiliation or disgrace, also denotes an awareness of ethical responsibility or lack of it, if formulated as a reproach: ''have you no sense of shame?''

Hermia.[2] However, our grasping the concept of shame is determined by the negative properties of shame rather than the positive ones: to feel shame is, at best, sensitivity to how we are valued (or devalued).

Emotion-words are not natural categories, but are culturally relative and language specific (Wierzbicka 119). Different languages conceptualise shame differently, and emotion-words may correlate with various emotional states, depending on the culture. In some languages, the shame-concept is clearly embedded in a binary opposition with positive and negative connotations, although the opposition may differ from English because the emotion words may be linked to different feelings and an evaluative perspective derived from the values of a specific culture.[3] However, the range of experience covered by the emotion-words for shame is quite similar, and the evaluative perspective (by self, other, and social standards) seems relatively constant.

On a socio-cultural level, shame is elicited when a subject is the focus of public disapproval for failing to conform to the norms of a social group. An American woman felt she was the focus of negative evaluation because she was infertile. "Infertility was shaming for me, because it was a lonely feeling" (Brown, 8). When a Bengkulu school girl fell pregnant, she went into hiding. After her pregnancy was discovered, she committed suicide because she had become the focus of public disapproval (Fessler 218). In most cultures, the concept of shame is traditionally opposed to honour, and hence shame is considered a dishonour and a fear of dishonour. This double face of shame as an emotion tied to social reputation has some etymological support in the Indo-European context. Historical Indo-European linguists Mallory & Adams and Pokorny list three main Indo-European derivatives of the word "*shame*" from roots connected to old word forms denoting pain (*khormo*), disgrace and humiliation (*kau*) and being seen (*aig-u* and *gher*). A fifth root indicates honour (*ais*, *aiz-d*) (Pokorny 14, 16, 436, 441-2, 535, 557, 615; Mallory & Adams 193, 196, 277, 330, 345). The word-tokens may vary across different languages. English distinguishes *shame* from *fear* and *embarrassment*. Classical Greek, by contrast, uses two or three words which do not map neatly onto the English word for shame. One Greek word, *aidos*, covers three English words: *fear*, *respect* and *shame* (Cairns, *Aidos*). The English word *shame* lies somewhere between *aidos* and *aiskhune* (a painful feeling and a fear of disgrace).

Plato (*Laws*, 1.646e4-647b7) sets up the dimensions of what we call *shame* as two kinds of fear: 1) respect or awe (*aidos*) and 2) fear of disgrace or contempt (*aiskhune*). These two aspects of shame are opposed to shamelessness (*anaiskhuntia*). For Aristotle, our "shame" complex is both a virtue or state of character and a feeling (*NE* 1128a10-16, *NE* 1128b15-21), and commentators sometimes call his notion a "semi-virtue" (*aidos*).[4] As a feeling, *shame* is either a fear of disrepute (*aidos*) or a sort of pain and agitation (*aiskhune*) (*Rhet*. 2.6, 1383M2-14). As a virtue or character trait, *shame* (*aidos*) is opposed to shamelessness. A shameless person is one who does not care about the opinions of decent people (*anaiskhuntia*) (*EE* 1233b26-35). A further dimension of *shame* denotes an action which causes dishonour or public disapproval or a person who does shameful things (*aiskhos*, Homer, *Od.*; *aiskhros*, Euripides), or feeling shameful as a result of such actions or behaviour (*aiskhune*, Hdt, Aesch), (Autenrieth; Liddell).

The cultural and linguistic oppositions in the conceptualizations of shame can be displayed in the semiotic square, an instrument used for the analysis of signs by expounding their contrasting and oppositional relations. Greimas' semiotic square provides a way for structuring the various moral and emotional aspects of the shame-complex, because it can highlight the oppositions underlying the shame concept across several languages and cultures. The semiotic square is used here for mapping the oppositional structure of English and Greek emotion-words for shame and their correlated signs of disgrace. The square also displays the different relations between emotional and evaluative beliefs in three shame-narratives.
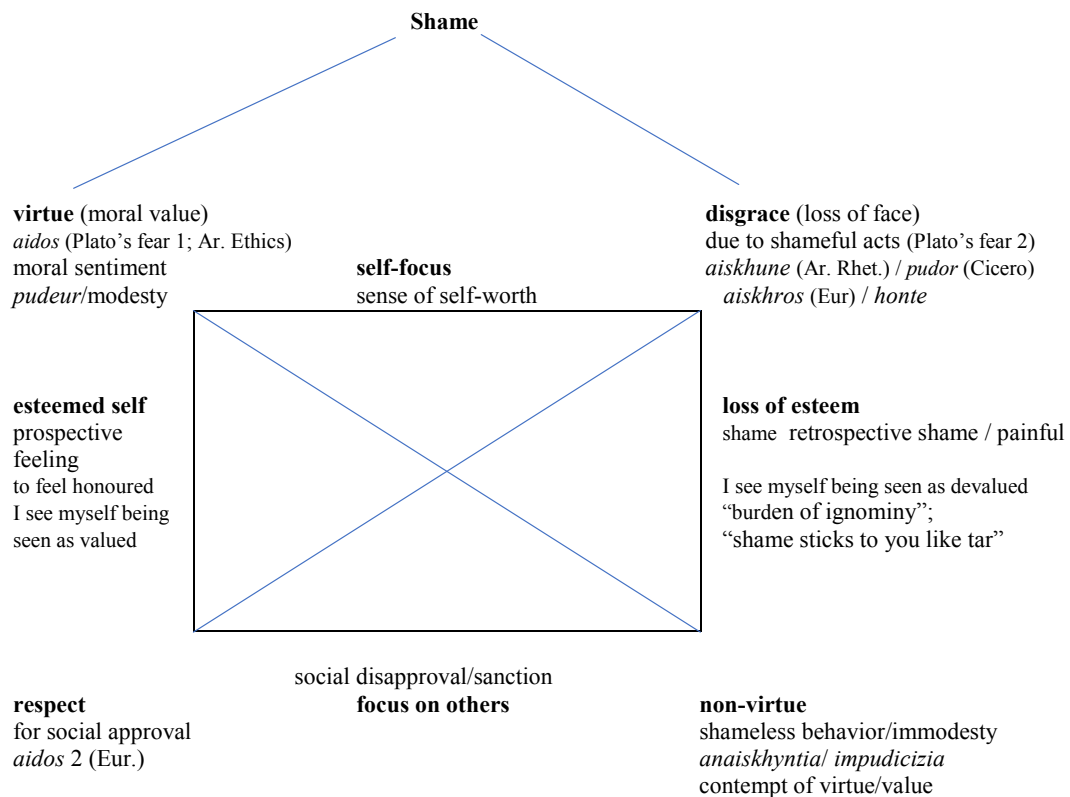
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2 A Midsummer Night's Dream, 3.2.284. Cf. on this Wierzbicka (132) who comments that this sense of shame does not imply anything shameful in the modern sense, but is closer to the German Scham, as in a maiden's shame, which must be protected. According to her, this sense is close to the Aboriginal concept of shame which denotes avoidance rather than a feeling resulting from something bad and the desire to disappear.

3 Shame's emotional and ethical aspects seem more differentiated in languages other than English. Chinese is particularly challenging, with 113 words for shame, relating to moral principles and emotions, both positive and negative. Family connections pervade shame lexemes more deeply than in Indo-European languages. Thus, Chinese has a word for "feeling ashamed so strongly that the ancestors of eight generations can feel it". (Li, Wang & Fisher, 775).

4 Burnyeat (78).

The Semiotic Square of Shame

The notion of shame seems embedded in oppositions between emotion and morals and in implications between the self and the social. The semiotic square allows for identifying oppositions in the shame-complex which give rise to its diverse meanings, and it makes these meanings explicit, although it does not cover all possible shame-cases. These oppositions are only implicit in English, where the same word, shame, has derivatives for the painful feelings (feeling ashamed), the semi-virtue (shamefulness) and a non-virtue (shamelessness). Shame's positive and negative aspects are shown in the square, in their complex relation with emotion and moral value.[5] While this characterization may seem superficial, it is helpful to map out the different aspects of this complex so that we can see the intimate relation between the positive and negative faces of shame, before discussing them in more detail. The semiotic square also shows relations between shame as a moral emotion and shaming, or eliciting shame, by making a subject the focus of public disapproval.

Shame

virtue (moral value)
aidos (Plato's fear 1; Ar. Ethics)
moral sentiment
pudeur/modesty

self-focus
sense of self-worth

disgrace (loss of face)
due to shameful acts (Plato's fear 2)
aiskhune (Ar. Rhet.) / *pudor* (Cicero)
aiskhros (Eur) / *honte*

esteemed self
prospective
feeling
to feel honoured
I see myself being
seen as valued

loss of esteem
shame   retrospective shame / painful

I see myself being seen as devalued
"burden of ignominy";
"shame sticks to you like tar"

social disapproval/sanction
focus on others

respect
for social approval
aidos 2 (Eur.)

non-virtue
shameless behavior/immodesty
anaiskhyntia/ *impudicizia*
contempt of virtue/value

Fig. 1. The semiotic square of shame: shame is "masked and masking" (Wurmser, 1981: 15)

In the top left corner, shame is shown as a moral value or *virtue*. In this positive sense, shame is a moral sentiment of modesty, and a self-conscious awareness of one's own value implies respect for social approval (*prospective shame*). It is opposed to disgrace, shame and loss of face (top right), which imply a painful feeling of humiliation (*retrospective shame*) and contempt of virtue and the onus of public sanction (*shaming*). Although someone's sense of shame can relate to public disapproval, their "non-virtuous" acts may hardly compare to their ordeal. Hence their sense of shame is not determined by the wrong they have done but by the burden of the sanction. Here the square shows that shaming implicates retrospective shame but not prospective shame, which protects from shaming by making us sensitive to threats to our social image, and, as moral sentiment (top left) safeguards us from shamelessness (bottom right). Put simply, shame as moral sentiment can be either an internal sensitivity to one's moral value or an external

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5   Thanks to Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou for her considerable input into the semiotic square.

sensitivity to one's social image. This contrast is analysed in the first shame-narrative, below.[6] The square also highlights the complex relation between shame as a self-conscious moral emotion and perception, explored by both psychologists and classicists (Cairns, *Aidos*; M. Lewis, *The Exposed Self*, "Self-conscious Emotions: Embarrassment, Pride, Shame, Guilt and Hubris"; Kaster; Scheff; Tangney & Fisher; Tangney & Dearing, 2002, 2011). In the prospective and retrospective opposition, shame is related to our sensitivity to being seen and valued, which can be positive or negative. Thus, phenomenologist Max Scheler (152) explains that to feel honoured is to see oneself through the evaluating eye of one's community. So, on the plus side, I see myself being seen as valued, and on the minus side, I see myself being seen as devalued (Kaster 29). The former implies a respect for social approval or concern for one's reputation (bottom left): I know my moral worth by what my community says about me (Crouch 2).

On the right side, the line of social disgrace, shamefulness relates to failure, whereas shamelessness relates to immodesty: being incapable of shame or lacking a sense of shame. Shame is painful, but if we are susceptible to feeling it, we can recognize moral standards and perceive ourselves through a social perspective. By contrast, being shameless means we are not susceptible to feeling shame, and "there is something wrong with being shameless." Shame has a negative import which shows up through shamelessness: we come to know the positive concept of shame through the negative concept. "The moral value of shame can be seen most clearly by considering what it would be like to no longer possess a liability to it" (Thomason 21). Therefore, non-virtue (bottom right) defines virtue (top left) on the moral/immoral diagonal in the square. Consequently, the virtuous person has a 'shame attitude' that should prevent him or her from both being shamed (negation of moral value) and being shameless (contradiction or lack of virtue). The idea that shame protects us from social threats was advanced by cultural anthropologist D. Fessler, according to whom shame is a social emotion dealing with rank-negotiation and appeasement. Shame is an "evolved psychological mechanism that makes us exquisitely sensitive to the extent to which others view us unfavourably" (242).

While the first diagonal represents the contradictory relation between virtue/non-virtue, in which shame and honour appear as complementary on the plus side and as opposites on the negative side, the second diagonal respect/disgrace (bottom left, top right) shows shame's social dimension: how shame is tied to reputation and evaluation by others. The two diagonals also show an interplay between internal moral sentiment (axis of virtue) and public social reaction (axis of reputation) related to how we are seen. The semiotic square could potentially be expanded into a lozenge (Chandler 128), so that additional semantic spaces on the lateral sides would come to the fore. Shame as a state with self-focus and shame as focus on others are then shown to intersect with the axis of virtue and the axis of reputation at the horizontal lines of contrariety, while said axes also pass across prospective shame (left side) and retrospective shame (right side) at the vertical lines of complementarity.

In the next section, three shame narratives are examined, with various intersections between emotional states of shame and social respect and disgrace. These intersections are depicted in the semiotic square, together with their Greek and English designations.

Three Shame-Narratives

Shame and narrative appear interconnected, not just because shame typically occurs in certain scenarios. First, shame has a temporal dimension providing a narrative structure, a beginning and an end, a chronological 'story-time', and a prospective and retrospective perspective which indicates an underlying causal relation. This relation grounds explanations of shame as the response to, or consequence of, certain actions and behaviours in a social context. According to Nussbaum (4, 178), emotions such as shame

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6 In a recent socio-psychological study, Jesse, A. Brown, R. et al characterized shame by a threatened social image (image shame) or a threatened moral essence (moral shame). An example of image shame is the apologetic CEO at a press conference, who is worried about how his company is perceived after it was involved in a major pollution incident. An example of moral shame is a political leader's public apology to the aboriginal people of her country for their historical mistreatment and her promise to implement economic and cultural support programs for them.

are value judgments and have a narrative form which shapes our reality: who we are, what we did, what happened to us and how we responded. From an autobiographical perspective, shame is an emotional response evoked by self-evaluation: we reflect on ourselves and our sense of shame provides us with feedback of our moral and social acceptability (Tangney, Stuewig et al. 2-3).

As shown in Fig. 1. above, prospective shame or 'before shame' is a protective attitude, modesty as a guardian of virtue, as well as a sense of self-worth, perhaps derived from social approval (Wurmser 48-49). According to G. Taylor, shame is the "emotion of self-protection" (81). Prospective shame also involves imagining possible shame-scenarios and the fear of them happening to you, which psychologists call 'shame-anxiety' (Wurmser 81). The fear of shame keeps us on the moral track and protects us from public sanction and disgrace. By contrast, retrospective shame is a feeling of humiliation and mortification after one has lost one's self-esteem and good reputation, which occurs after pillorying or public disgrace. This onus is Hester Prynne's "burden of ignominy" in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. More than a feeling, shame in this sense denotes a loss of reputation and social esteem which "sticks to you like tar," as Monica Lewinsky puts it. Loss of esteem can also lead to a loss of identity, when a person no longer knows who they are because their life has been destroyed. Shame's narrative structure spans across "before" and "after": from protecting one's virtue to losing one's self-esteem and good reputation. This structure is instantiated by the shame-accounts I examine.

It seems that shame narratives illustrate the temporal organization of shame as a complex phenomenon, as well as the temporal organization of the social self which experiences shame and sometimes produces a counter-narrative. For this reason, I discuss the complex notion of shame in the contexts of three shame narratives from different socio-cultural backgrounds. 1. tragedian Euripides' heroine Phaedra in *Hippolytus* (c 428 BC). 2. journalist Jon Ronson's interviewee Justine Sacco in *So you've been publicly shamed*. This section includes a parallel with another interviewee of his, Monica Lewinsky, in *Shame sticks to you like tar*, to highlight the similar reactions of the two shame-survivors and to show that some of the features of social media shaming also occur in traditional media. 3. Buzzfeed editor Luke Lewis' account of his pillorying by an online Brexit crowd. The first one is historical and fictional but emblematic of a 'shame-culture' mindset, the second one is a biographical account about shame in modern life, and the third one is autobiographical, about how you can be shamed because you said you're ashamed. The first narrative examines shame in the context of the "shame culture" of classical Greece, while the second and third accounts highlight the current impact of social media on shame and shaming.[7] I have chosen these accounts as my 'case-studies' because they illustrate emblematic characteristics of shame, such as feelings of fear, pain, humiliation and mortification, as well as moral features of honour and dishonour, modesty and immodesty. I analyse the relevant narrative perspectives in the light of J. Corbí's assumption that the victim's 1st person perspective and the observer's 3rd party perspective are asymmetric in elucidating shame experience. When referring to 'shame culture," I use this expression in the sense advanced by Crouch; "[i]n a shame culture you know you are good or bad by what your community says about you, by whether it honors or excludes you."[8]

Phaedra's Tale

Phaedra's tale unravels shame between a dual *aidos* and *aiskhros / aiskhyne*, across both axes of virtue and reputation in the semiotic square. Phaedra is condemned to experience a passionate love for her stepson Hippolytus. Phaedra's love is shameful in the eyes of society as well as her own. She shocks the chorus by

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7 Pace Cairns (Aidos), I do not use Mead's shame-culture/guilt-culture dichotomy but merely refer to "shame-culture" as used by Crouch.

8 Cairns (Aidos, 27-47) has convincingly argued against Mead's distinction between shame-cultures that rely on external sanctions and guilt cultures which rely on internal sanctions of conscience. There is neither a "true" shame-culture nor a "true" guilt culture and these two categories are "empty sets" because all societies use external sanctions such as punishment or disgrace against failures to internalize their norms (42). Cairns also rejects the idea that ancient Greece was a shame culture: "[t]here is no simple correlation between the empirical data on the prominence of notions of honour, reputation, and "face" in Greek morality" (43).

admitting she is sick from love for Hippolytus and wants to starve herself to death to retain her honour. When the nurse informs Hippolytus and he threatens to tell his father, Phaedra is mortified because her secret is out, and hangs herself.

To paraphrase Phaedra's speech about the dual nature of *aidos*:

> we understand what virtue is but we fail to act accordingly, either because we are lazy or because we prefer pleasure to virtue. And life has many pleasures, such as long and idle chats, as well as a sense of shame (*aidos*). However, shame has two faces, one of which is not bad, but the other crushes entire households. However, it is difficult to discern between shame's good and bad faces. If they were easily discernible, the word denoting them would not be the same (*Hyppolitus* 383-7).

One of Phaedra's tasks is to discern between the dual sense of prospective shame (*aidos*). Phaedra's dilemma is that, on one side, her virtuous character feels ashamed of this passion and her inner sense of shame compels her to conceal her passion (*aidos* 1). On the other side, she is concerned about public opinion, and does not want to bring her community's disapproval upon herself and her entire family (*aidos* 2). On a third side, she knows that her passion is shameful (*aiskhron*), and she faces the consequences of public disapproval (*aiskhros*) or retrospective shame. By contrast, her virtuous disposition or prospective *aidos* of modesty is an evaluative feeling of her own worth. In this first sense, *aidos* is a guardian of her dignity, and her self-esteem brings her pleasure. In addition, she enjoys her good reputation or what her community says about her. She knows that she should not give in to her passion, but she is not so good at discerning between the two faces of *aidos* which motivate her actions—or putting into practice her discernment of the dual *aidos*—because she is torn between internal and external criteria. As a result, she is ambivalent about whether *aidos* is a good or bad pleasure. As Crouch puts it: "do you know you are good or bad by what your community says about you or by how you feel about your behavior and your choices?" (2) This question highlights an opposition about "shame-cultures." Crouch re-frames Mead's distinction between "shame-cultures" that rely on external sanctions and "guilt cultures" that rely on internal sanctions of conscience. His question integrates both internal and external criteria into "shame cultures," in the sense that shaming is an external social sanction against failures to comply with, or internalize, social norms. Euripides' text also cuts across the external/internal distinction, because Phaedra's fear of being found out and shamed responds to both internal (how she feels about it) and external (what her community says about her) criteria. By contrast, in social media "shame culture," the external criterion seems to outweigh the internal one.

In the tragedy, the question regarding *aidos* is whether morality is "rooted in the restraining force of convention" or whether it is something in the individual (Segal 294). The *Hippolytus*' message seems to be that things are not so clear-cut: leading a virtuous life entails having a good reputation, so the two faces of *aidos* are almost indiscernible. Private and public spheres are interrelated in a "shame culture", since a person's shame is recognized by one's community and censured by public opinion (the chorus). And Phaedra is afraid of losing her honour or social respect. "I blush (*aidoumetha*) for the words that from my lips came. Veil me." (244). Before committing suicide, she tries to ward off her dishonour and says "I am trying to turn shame (*aiskhros*) into honour" (332).

> I resolved to die
> As of all counsels best – . . .
> I knew the deed, the very pang, was shame (*aiskhros*).

The question is not merely whether Phaedra is motivated by moral values (*aidos* 1) or a respect for public opinion (*aidos* 2), but whether she is worried about public dishonour (*aiskhros*), the negation of moral value and the contradiction of public respect. Apparently, she is afraid of being caught shaming her family (420-1), which is why she asks the nurse not to reveal her passion, and is mortified after discovering that her secret is out. So, rather than *aidos* 1 or even *aidos* 2, her request indicates the contrast of the former and the contradiction of the latter, namely *aiskhros*, because her criterion of honour or social respect is secrecy. Phaedra's moral choice seems motivated by others' knowledge of her actions, rather than by the immoral

nature of these actions: she does not want to be perceived as behaving immorally, so that she will not be devalued. If moral virtue and honour (social respect) hinge on secrecy or invisibility, they depend less on behaving according to moral standards than on a lack information about one's private life and feelings, and hence a lack of accountability.[9]

The *Hyppolitus* suggests that Phaedra's trilemma between *aidos* and *aiskhros* relates to others' knowledge and 'being seen' and that, between the dual *aidos* and *aiskhros*, it is the fear of public dishonour (*aiskhros*) which wears the trousers. So, the negative import of shame (*aiskhros*) determines her wish to safeguard her honour, rather than the positive import—her sense of modesty (*aidos* 1) or even her respect for public opinion (*aidos* 2)—but rather the negative aspect of (*aidos* 2), namely her fear of being shamed because of her faulty behaviour and its discovery. Phaedra's honour and good reputation are maintained, if no one finds out about her shameful passion. She knows that she should not give in to it (380-81), but although she does not act on it, she fails to keep quiet about it and hence fails to safeguard her honour. She then chooses to die, because that is the solution to her trilemma: death will spare her from public dishonour (*aiskhros*) and from losing her good reputation (*aidos* 2, 400-407), and from her inner shame: seeing herself as being seen as devalued (*aidos* 1). The chorus comments:

> The noose shall she cast . . . round the neck that was whitest and loveliest,
> Because that with shuddering shame (*kataidestheisa*) she shrank from a loathed name,
> And she chose, in its stead, the stainless renown of a wife's fair fame (769-72).

We may note that Phaedra's own perspective is in line with her audience's perspective. She knew the sanctions she would face if she broke the rules, but that did not stop her, nor was she able to get away with it by eluding discovery. The chorus had mapped this perspective for her. In a non-fictional account, however, the perspectives are asymmetrical, as is shown in the following two narratives about shaming on social media.

Justine's Tale

Justine Sacco's tale is about shaming on social media and her public humiliation. The tale relates to the axis of reputation in the semiotic square and how the backlash of her public shaming determines the protagonist's position on the axis of virtue. She was interviewed by documentary journalist Jon Ronson (*So You've Been Publicly Shamed*), who writes about high-profile shamings. Justine was a PR woman from New York with 170 Twitter followers to whom she tweeted little jokes. On her way to a holiday in South Africa in December 2013, she tweeted what she intended as a race joke. "Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white!" When Ronson asked her to explain, she replied: "It was a joke about a dire situation that does exist in post-apartheid South Africa, that we don't pay attention to. ... Living in America puts us in a bit of a bubble when it comes to what is going on in the Third World. I was making fun of that bubble" (69). At first, Justine received no replies, so she got on the plane and turned off her phone.

When her plane landed in South Africa 11 hours later, Justine turned on her phone and discovered she was "the worldwide number one trending topic on Twitter" (Ronson 65). Her tweet had not been seen as an attempted joke but as an offensive racist comment. "no words for that horribly disgusting racist as fuck tweet from Justine Sacco. I am beyond horrified.]; [Good luck with the job hunt in the new year. #GettingFired]; [@JustineSacco last tweet of your career. #SorryNotSorry]." Her employers got involved: "[IAC on @JustineSacco tweet: This is an outrageous, offensive comment. Employee in question currently unreachable on an intl flight.]." And the haters: "[Somebody (HIV+) must rape this bitch and we'll see if her skin colour protects from AIDS]" (Ronson, 65 104).

Then Justine's story seems to have become thrilling for her Twitter crowd: "[Oh man, @justinesacco

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9 The result of invisibility as a criterion for moral actions is illustrated by Plato's parable of Gyges and the ring: the shepherd Gyges finds a ring which makes the wearer invisible and able to ado what he wants without being found out. Gyges uses the power of the ring to seduce a queen, kill the king and seize the kingdom. (Republic, 2:359a–2:360d).

is going to have the most painful phone-turning-on moment ever when her plane lands.] [We are about to watch this @JustineSacco bitch get fired. In REAL time. Before she even KNOWS she's getting fired.]" A hashtag began trending: "#hasJustineLandedYet? [It is kinda wild to see someone self-destruct without them even being aware of it]" (ibid). In the virtual world of social media, an excited Twitter crowd followed her to witness her reaction to their shaming in real time.

Far away from the screens of the online crowd, their collective rage cost Justine her job as she quickly became a social outcast. She also lost her sense of self. As she told Ronson, she had to reclaim her identity so as not to lose herself:

> I had a great career and I loved my job and it was taken away from me and there was a lot of glory in that. People were *happy* about that. . . . It was incredibly traumatic. You don't sleep. You wake up in the middle of the night forgetting where you are. All of a sudden, you don't know what you're supposed to do. You've got no schedule. You've got no … purpose. (Ronson 75)

Monica Lewinsky (TED talk) tells a very similar tale about the shame she felt in response to public shaming after her affair with Bill Clinton was made public:

> Overnight, I went from being a completely private figure to a publicly humiliated one worldwide. I was patient zero of losing a personal reputation on a global scale almost instantaneously. Granted, it was before social media, but people could still comment online … I was branded as a tramp, tart, slut, whore, bimbo, and, of course, "that woman." I felt like every layer of my skin and my identity were ripped off of me in '98 and '99. . . . It's a skinning of sorts. You feel incredibly raw and frightened. But I also feel like the shame sticks to you like tar. (Lewinsky).

These shame targets express their experience of (retrospective) shame as "traumatic" and "a skinning." The choice of "skinning" and "ripping off of identity" fits with the idea that prospective shame is like a protective veil which, if torn off, leaves the self bare and exposed. Many linguists assume that shame is etymologically related to covering, "on the basis that covering is a natural expression of shame" (H. Lewis, 62-3).[10] Phenomenologist Max Scheler (86) analyses prospective shame (moral virtue) as "the soul's natural suit."[11] When shame's protective veil is no longer perceived, the pain of shame is felt, for flesh, soul and sexuality, are exposed, or shameless. The public brands the "offenders" for their shameful acts and they receive a new cover of tar—or a scarlet letter, like Hester Prynne. The relation between clothing and shame is analysed in detail by Cairns (Clothed in Shamelessness), who examines "what garment metaphors do in the Greek conceptualization of emotion" (1). On this view, shame (*aidos*) is an emotion that has garment metaphors which show how this emotion is manifested. Garment metaphors belong to the category of covering or concealment (*kalyptein*) and are an aspect of the emotion. Covering with a veil as an expression of *aidos* "can stand for the emotion itself" (Cairns 13). The garment metaphor can be either positive (a protective veil stands for moral virtue) or negative (a scarlet letter or a tar covering stand for public disgrace). Shamelessness and retrospective shame both relate to lack of covering. "The veil or the mantle . . . is a typical symbol of *aidos*, used both as a concrete physical expression of the emotion and as a metonymy for the emotion itself" (Cairns 13).

Justine and Monica feel shame because their social self was stained by disgrace and this disgrace now determines their self-perception: they see themselves being seen as devalued. Unlike Phaedra, who sees herself being seen as devalued as part of her inner moral sentiment, the two women who were shamed in traditional and social media, feel ashamed because their stained identity is not part of their self-image. Rather, their experience of shame is enforced by a stigma and involves "a tension between [their] identity

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10 This assumption is based on the popular claim that both words are derived from the Indo-European root "kem," which historical linguists reject (Pokorny, Mallory).

11 "Die Scham ist so das ''natürliche Seelenkleid'' unserer gesamten Geschlechtlichkeit," that "liegt wie ein feiner Schleier über dem blossen Fleische" (Scheler, 86).

and [their] self-conception" (Thomason 13).[12] And unlike Phaedra, who escapes by death, Justine and Monica have little choice except to let themselves be seen with their social flaws as exposed. While Phaedra is liable to shame mainly because she fears being shamed, the other protagonists are liable to shame because their social self has been undermined by how others viewed them and the opposition between the latter their own self-conception. Thus, Justine says: "[o]f all the things I could have been in society's collective consciousness, it never struck me that I'd end up a brutal nadir" (Ronson 73).

Another question is, to what degree the public is entitled to shaming Justine or Monica. Unlike Phaedra, they do not mention any form of prospective shame (*aidos*) but are plunged directly into public dishonour and are forced to see themselves as devalued. However, the attacks against the two women in social and traditional media seem disproportionate to what they actually did. While Monica's affair with the president involved issues of political power that entail a more complex discussion than this paper can offer, Justine's tweet violated a social taboo, as moral judgment and social custom prohibit racist jokes. Justine's perspective is not aligned with the third party's perspective (the shamers and their audience). Unlike Phaedra, she seems to have felt no prospective shame (*aidos*) because she was not aware of the consequences of breaking a rule: she was not aware of the sanctions that would follow her comments. Had she been aware of the racist import of her tweet, she may not have tweeted in the first place.

The internet and social media have blurred the division between "public" and "private" (Papacharissi). This blurring of boundaries also affects the 1st person and 3rd party perspectives, because the latter has become more invasive, as the former's private space has evolved into a social space. Consequently, demarcations between individual self and social self are re-mapped in this new culture, which is why Justine's tale plays out on the axis of reputation in the semiotic square. The notion of shame in social media culture has been reconfigured to: "you know you are good or bad by whether your bad social reputation has risen dramatically." In Phaedra's classical shame scenario, shame is tied to both axes in the semiotic square: virtue and reputation. In social media culture, the virtue axis has been relegated to a function of the axis of reputation, and the visibility factor has multiplied: rather than to honor, shame is now opposed to fame. "Like honour, fame is a public estimation of worth, a powerful currency of status. But fame is bestowed by a broad audience, with only the loosest of bonds to those they acclaim" (Crouch). In these cases, the shameful feeling of perceiving oneself as devalued is a result of public dishonour without prior concern for losing public respect. And the ensuing defamation or 'skinning' causes feelings of pain and humiliation.

Social media audiences easily become cybermobs. These are fast, vicious and anonymous. Someone makes a mistake and the story is repeated without context and it goes viral, like the Matthew effect in reverse.[13] The idea of the Matthew effect is that "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer," so if you're shamed a lot on social media, your shame will increase. This effect is a structural property of the social network that could explain why twitter posts on Justine were not merely contagious. Social networks have an authority bias: a tendency to attribute more credibility to the opinion of a reputable figure, independently of the content. On Twitter or Facebook, it takes someone with authority who points to a target and increases the trend, for the target's social reputation to go up. In Justine's case, her bad reputation increased. It seems the public doesn't follow a target, like Justine, rather, they follow a trend: Justine's disgraced social reputation. According to Ronson (*So You've Been Publicly Shamed* 73), Justine's story went viral after journalist Sam Biddle received a tweet from one of Justine's followers and retweeted it to his 15,000 followers. Rather than following the target, Justine, people followed the people who followed the target. The public follow what they believe is other people's opinion, rather than the target. Therefore, as G. Origgi (833) puts it, reputation is not merely an opinion; rather, it is an opinion of an opinion that indicates the opinion we should have of someone.

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12 My interpretation differs from Thomason's, according to whom "[a] liability to shame reveals that we recognise the limitations of our own self-conception. Shame prevents us from ignoring our unflattering features that undermine our own positive self-estimation." (13). While this is relevant to Lucy, the case she discusses, in the cases I examine, the protagonists' liability to shame reveals the impact of shaming on their social selves (Justine, Monica and Luke) and the impact of a subject's fear of being shamed (Phaedra).

13 The Matthew effect takes its name from the biblical parable of the talents, or cumulative advantage. It was coined by R. Merton for academic renown.

Shaming on social media is not personal, argues tech writer D. Pogue: "shaming has become so common it might soon begin to lose its impact . . . We used to put wrongdoers in the stocks in the public square or, centuries before that, stone them. The anonymity and speed of the Internet, of course, just make shamings easier to start, execute and coordinate. . . . If you're the target, it's not about you, you're a faceless bull's eye." Arguably, this view does not help shame victims. However, our third shame narrative presents an interesting sea-change.

Luke's Tale

Luke's tale also unravels on the axis of social reputation and evaluation of others in social media but, unlike Justine's, it has unexpected twists and turns via the axis of virtue. If shame is equivalent to losing face, then Phaedra's tale plays out from the fear of losing face to the consequences of having lost face—or between prospective and retrospective shame. By contrast, Justine's and Luke's tales present different versions about what happens when face is already lost. While Justine's tale is focused on the shame experienced by her own self, Luke's tale begins with a focus on the shame of others which then doubles back on his own shaming and reverses back to transform that shaming into empathy. For Luke's tale is a narrative with a counter-narrative, which shows that sometimes empathy and courage can defuse a social media shaming. It also shows how a public expression of your sense of shame can trigger shaming. Buzzfeed editor Luke Lewis' posts in favour of 'Remaining in the EU' on his Facebook page attracted an online Brexit crowd: "[Smash your fucking face in you wanker]" is a typical example. Luke's post the morning after the referendum drew a large public shaming, after he admitted his own sense of shame: "To all my friends across Europe—I'm so sorry for what my country has done. I've never felt so ashamed to be British." Luke received 44,000 hate comments. From: "[If you're that ashamed Luke Lewis then fuck off to another country. Don't apologise for me as I voted out and am proud to do so.]" and "[Ashamed to be British. I wouldn't say you're British spouting utter nonsense like that. YOU are the problem. Its people like you who have ruined the country. End of story.]" to comments posted on a picture of Lewis with his baby daughter: "[How sad your child has a gutless wonder for a father. You sad pathetic bellend]" (L. Lewis).

Unlike Justine or Monica, Luke feels ashamed and is attacked because he admits how he feels before an audience who disagrees with how this admission makes them appear. This narrative situation is more complex than it may seem. At first blush, Luke is shamed for publicly expressing his sense of shame. However, his admission makes a part of his audience lose face, because in saying that he feels ashamed to be British, he devalues those people who then see themselves as being seen as devalued by Luke and his "friends across Europe." Luke feels shame by association or shame for others, the British who voted for Brexit and, insofar as his social self is affected, he is ashamed of himself. His statement expresses a negative view of the British Brexiters' self-conception and an apology for their vote intended for his European audience, which is couched in an expression of shame. "I am ashamed to be British" is on par with "I'm so sorry for what my country has done."

There is not only an asymmetry between Luke's perspective on his shame and the Brexit voters' perspective on theirs, but also an overlapping of their perspectives, since they both victims and observers of a shame experience. Hence the Brexit voters' insulted reaction to his Facebook post is to shame him for using moral sentiment to stain their social reputation. In Luke's tale, the impact of shaming on the social self is double: on the Brexit audience and the backlash on Luke himself. Similar to Justine's shamers, Luke's attackers were anonymous followers of a trend. Unlike Justine's shamers, this cybermob supported racism under the banner of "triumphant nationalism amplified by social media," as Luke puts it. Social media platforms seem to encourage emergent socio-political assemblages or 'publics' which need not be publicly visible (Bruns & Burgess). Sadly, they also encourage shaming, since invisibility fosters a lack of accountability.

Luke, however, explains that the shaming experience was a valuable lesson for him and confronts the shamers with a counter-narrative: "For me, this has been a valuable lesson in what happens when the social media filter bubble bursts and you are forced to confront the views of people with whom you

disagree." He then began to receive positive feedback, thus resetting the tone for a new "echo chamber" effect, in which Facebook users engaged with his view. The Matthew effect now worked in Luke's favour, generating a new crowd identity with a new social message and redeemed his social image. Interestingly, he managed to do something that crowd theory (Reicher) does not account for: he transformed the momentum from "feeling against" and disapproval to "feeling for" and approval. Some supportive comments also show how crowd actions can provide strength in numbers to racist "keyboard warriors," particularly when they are motivated by victory.

> [Sorry to hear about this Luke. I've read your posts and agree with you wholeheartedly, and to bring your family into the argument is despicable.]" "[I can see that this horrendous, and I feel for you, no one should need to face this level of abuse, any abuse really, because of their political view or beliefs. … Both sides have idiots, people who have no shame to troll other people . . . (L. Lewis).

Can public shaming be reverse engineered? On Reicher's crowd theory, an individual's values shift to social identity but not vice versa. Yet the interaction between an author, haters' crowd and a supportive crowd shows that a collective identity can change from shaming to empathetic, where a participant can say: "I feel for you" and assert that no one should be abused for their political beliefs.[14] Empathy may reverse a shaming by causing someone to feel ashamed of their own behaviour and change their attitude. However, this shift in perspective could also be due to people's capacity to avoid shame by adapting to a changing trend. As mentioned above, prospective shame also makes us sensitive to the extent to which others view us unfavourably (Fessler, 242). Managing one's response to a potential social threat may be a self-serving adaptive strategy, although it presupposes an attunement to others' feelings and an ability to see things from their perspective rather than one's own, namely empathy. Whether our sensitivity to the feelings of others is employed to serve our own selves or others, is a question concerning the moral nature of empathy, although it is empathy which prompts our feeling of shame. And while the reversal of a shared social identity from shaming to empathizing may not be the norm, it instantiates a precedent. Luke's maintaining his individual norms and values in facing a hostile onslaught attracted a different social identity from the original crowd, because he had a counter narrative. There may be a rule that a shame narrative can be transformed by a counter narrative. This idea was mentioned by one of the most humiliated people in the last 20 years, Monica Lewinsky. In a recent interview with Ronson ("Shame Sticks Like Tar"), Lewinsky mentions a piece of advice given to her by her LSE professor, Sandra Jovchelovitch in 2005: "She said to me, 'Whenever power is involved, there always has to be a competing narrative. And you have no narrative.'" Monica got to work on her narrative: *Shame and Survival,* and recently the former pariah was invited to give a TED talk on the price of shame.

Concluding Remarks

This paper explores how shame as a moral sentiment and painful feeling coheres with shame as a public reaction and social reputation. Shame is examined in three narrative scenarios from two different cultural contexts, one historical and the other two from social media. These contexts highlight the narrative structure of the shame complex as a tragedy in which the protagonists face shame and lose face. The semiotic square is suggested as a theoretical background for highlighting the structural relations of the shame-complex. The square brings out structural relations between shame and moral sentiment on one hand and social reputation, on the other hand. An analysis of the narratives based on the oppositional relations accentuated in the semiotic square shows that shame is an emotion which results from evaluative perceptions involving moral sentiment and social reputation. It is also shown that shame has a narrative structure of "before" and "after," relating to prospective and retrospective shame experienced by the protagonists in the examined narratives. The former is experienced when the protagonist sees herself as being valued and protects herself from potential social threats. The latter is felt when she sees herself as being devalued, once she has become

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14 According to shame researcher Brené Brown (32), empathy is the strongest antidote to shame.

the focus of public disapproval. The analysis shows shame as the self's emotional seismograph, which measures our self-worth in terms of moral and social acceptability. Consequently, this paper sustains the view that shame is an emotion of self-evaluation which assesses the self's social reputation.

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