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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Shame, Embodiment, and Empathy: The Ethics of Affect

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

What new insights might we gain if we consider shame from the perspective of psychosocial evolution? I argue that Charles Darwin's observations in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) suggest that shame incites self-consciousness about how we appear to others. Awareness of others' perspectives is essential for empathic thought; therefore, shame is both self- and other-oriented. Subsequently, I reveal the accordance between Darwin's and Oscar Wilde's interpretations of shame as a relational emotion through *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890 & 1891). Next, I use Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) to distinguish guilt from shame, both physiologically and cognitively. Freud's work, along with contemporary neuroscience, informs questions raised by Darwin's research. Finally, I consider the ethics of bodies in relation to one another through Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* (2014). Rankine's work provokes and performs self-conscious thinking and empathy, which are processes analogous to shame.

"[S]hame is felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul."

-Silvan Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*

Shame fascinates me because whenever I discuss the topic with others, the reaction tends to be a conspiratorial smile, reddened cheeks, and an allusion to a gut-wrenching memory. Why do recollections of shame come to mind so readily? Perhaps it is because shame is linked inextricably with specific events or experiences. While other emotions such as happiness, anger, or sadness tend to wax and wane in intensity, shame holds onto its visceral force, indefinitely.

I have noticed that when I talk about shame with non-academics, the work of Brené Brown comes up repeatedly. Brown, who has a PhD in Social Work, reaches public audiences by translating her academic research in "vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame" ("About" 1) into bestselling books, TED Talks, and workshops. In Brown's 2012 TED Talk, "Listening to Shame"[1], she proclaims, "Shame is an epidemic in our culture. And to get out from underneath it — to find our way back to each other, we have to understand how it affects us and how it affects the way we're parenting, the way we're working, the way we're looking at each other" (TED talk transcript, 10). Brown's use of the word "epidemic" pathologizes shame and invokes the imperative "to get out from underneath it" before the suggestive weight crushes our psyche.

My thesis project started out as an investigation into literature and performance to discover strategies that might ameliorate shame. In hindsight, I think that my approach was motivated unconsciously by the Euro-Western[2] cultural milieu of the past decade that seems obsessed with

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[1] The video recording of Brown's talk has 7,329,677 total online views (59% TED.com, 23% YouTube, 11% TED apps, 2% iTunes, 5% Other) according to TED.com.

[2] This project is Euro-Western focused because it is problematic, even harmful, to interpolate shame onto a culture with which I have little understanding or interaction. For example, Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) is an anthropological study that makes the sweeping generalization that Japan is a "shame culture" (223-24). As an American white woman

uncomfortable emotions and how to cure them. This is a paradigm steeped in privilege; at the heart of it is the notion that discomfort of any kind is both intolerable and amenable, but only if you have money. Neoliberal capitalism offers up hope through the promise of cure-alls such as medication, self-help books, rehabilitation centres, and health gurus that commodify affect for financial gain. In fact, one of the first notes to appear in my research journals simply states, "Shame is toxic." A Google search of the phrase "shame is toxic" yields 13,600 results, most of which are self-help books, confirming my hypothesis about current conceptualizations of shame.

While I empathize with the inherent appeal of interventions against emotional discomfort, I wonder what knowledge we lose when we approach shame from the negative side of the binary alone. Therefore, this project is motivated by the following research questions: What new insights might we gain if we consider shame from the perspective of psychosocial evolution? Does shame promote social cohesion and survival? How does the study of affect that is grounded in embodiment advance current notions of intersectionality and identity politics?

Literature Review

The theoretical basis for my thesis is indebted to the field of affect studies, particularly those scholarly works associated with the "affective turn" (Cvetkovich 13) in the humanities. In her essay "Affect" (2014), theorist Ann Cvetokovich identifies affect theory's foundation in "Marxism and psychoanalysis" as well as 1970s-era "feminist critiques of the gendering of dichotomies between reason and emotion" (14). Humanities scholars' renewed attention to the typically feminized field of emotion gave way to "[s]ubsequent generations of scholarship in feminist cultural studies [which] have been more skeptical about an easy reversal of the

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studying Japan (without traveling to the country or speaking the language) on the heels of World War Two, Benedict's work has fallen under heavy criticism in the past twenty years (Fukui 173).

reason/emotion binary […] this scholarship has provided rich and nuanced histories of the centrality of feeling to the relations between private and public spheres" (Cvetkovich 14). Cvetkovich credits the influential work of critical race scholars and queer theorists whom she suggests "have produced new theories of melancholy or unfinished mourning as productive rather than pathological […] Queer studies has also made important contributions to embracing ostensibly negative emotions such as shame" (15). Similarly, my project takes up an atypical approach to shame by investigating how it is a "productive" emotion that informs our social interactions. Subsequently, I will consider the importance of affect studies, particularly notions of embodiment, when we consider the ethics of relationality.

Cvetkovich refers to the "affective turn" in the humanities as "recent" (13) but she does not specify a year. Affect theory arguably *feels* recent: we have seen a renewed interest in affect studies since the publication of *The Affect Theory Reader* by Duke University Press in 2010. However, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, the editors of Duke UP *Reader*, identify affect theory's foundation in scholarship that was taking place over twenty years ago. Gregg and Seigworth contend that "Undoubtedly the watershed moment for the most recent resurgence of interest and intrigue regarding affect and theories of affect came in 1995 when two essays – one by Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank ("Shame in the Cybernetic Fold") and one by Brian Massumi ("The Autonomy of Affect") – were published" (5). Moreover, Gregg and Seigworth argue that these two pivotal essays polarized the field of affect studies; they suggest that "[t]hese two essays […] have given substantial shape to the two dominant vectors of affect study in the humanities: Silvan Tomkins's psychobiology of differential affects (Sedgwick and Frank) and Gilles Deleuze's Spinozist ethology of bodily capacities (Massumi)" (5). My project is concerned with the interaction between the "two dominant vectors of affect study" that Gregg

and Seigworth identify: psychobiology and ethology (5). In particular, I focus on the physiology of shame and how it works to shape and motivate interpersonal relations, bio-power, identity, and hegemony.

The collaborative work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank continues to inform affect theorists (such as Elspeth Probyn) studying shame today. Sedgwick and Frank's work is ground-breaking in the field of affect studies because of their revival of the research of psychoanalyst Silvan Tomkins. Tomkins's studies began in the 1950s and continued for decades as he painstakingly observed the various affective states in infants, children, and adults. Sedgwick and Frank's *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (1995) carries out a close reading of Tomkins's affect studies, particularly his delineation of the various affects and how they manifest themselves within the body. Tomkins's research gives Sedgwick and Frank the language to decipher affect within texts by categorizing and naming the corporeal and cognitive sensations that we call emotions. Affect theorists today, such as Anna Gibbs and Megan Watkins, continue to rely on Sedgwick and Frank's method of affective reading that came out of their meticulous study of Tomkins's work.

One of Tomkins's significant observations about shame is the way that it isolates us from others. In *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (1962) he describes shame as "the affect of indignity, of defeat, of transgression and of alienation" (Tomkins 351). Tomkins's close observation of the physiological changes caused by specific affective experiences reveals the likely cause of the isolation associated with shame. He notes the following:

> The shame response is an act which reduces facial communication […] By dropping his eyes, his eyelids, his head and sometimes the whole upper part of his body, the individual calls a halt to looking at another person, particularly the other

> person's face, and to the other person's looking at him, particularly at his face. [For example] the child early learns to cover his face with his hands when he is shy in the presence of a stranger. (Tomkins 352)

What Tomkins's study reveals is that when we feel ashamed, we unconsciously avert our gaze from the eyes of others who might witness our shame. We exhibit this behaviour even as infants which suggests that it is inherent rather than taught. Averting our gaze or covering our face with our hands is an act of self-protection, which also suggests that we feel threatened or vulnerable when we feel ashamed. This explains why we feel isolated from others when we feel ashamed: our instincts are informing us that we are under threat, even if it is the social threat of public humiliation, rather than physical harm. Averting our eyes is an act of self-preservation; it protects us from experiencing further shame by blocking out the stares of others. Disappointed and judgmental facial expressions socially condition us to conform to group norms because of our instinctual desire to fit in.

Tomkins's research contends that at about seven-months-old, infants start to be able to differentiate the faces of their parents from those of strangers (206-08). Interestingly, at this developmental stage, infants also begin to exhibit what Tomkins calls a shame response: "In human infants […] there is no shyness until the infant can learn to distinguish the mother's face from the face of the stranger, at which point he first begins not to smile, to look away and sometimes to cry and even to fall asleep" (354). By refusing to meet the gaze of the stranger (looking away, crying, falling asleep) the infant "calls a halt to" looking at and being looked at by a stranger (Tomkins 352). Tomkins theorizes that this is a protective instinct, meant to interrupt the infant's interest or joy incited by novel stimuli. Anything new will attract the gaze of the infant as they learn to process visual stimuli and discern familiar objects from the

unfamiliar (Tomkins 206-08). This could pose a risk to the infant, however, because "there exists a universal taboo on looking" particularly on what Tomkins calls "interocular intimacy" (373). Before verbal communication existed, humans had to rely on signifiers like the gaze to relate to one another. We can see how it would be an evolutionary advantage to develop an innate shyness or shame response to the face of the stranger early in life. It is a way to avoid transgressing cultural taboos around looking that could be perceived as overly intimate or even aggressive when interacting with people outside of the immediate family.

Importantly, Tomkins's theory purports that shame is not a response to contempt or disgust, but rather to interrupted interest or joy. It is not that the infant is repulsed by the face of the stranger: in fact, their first instinct is to look at the stranger's face because novel stimuli are inherently interesting. However, the shame response innately triggers the lowering of the eyes, the turning of the head, crying, and even falling asleep, as ways to disengage the infant from the "intimate" exchange. This is a paradoxical reaction because the infant is compelled to look and look away simultaneously, which gives rise to the somatic unrest that is the visceral feeling of shame. Tomkins explains:

> We are inclined to favor the theory that shame is an innate auxiliary affect and a specific inhibitor of continuing interest and enjoyment […] The innate activator shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy. Hence any barrier to further exploration which partially reduces interest or the smile of enjoyment will activate the lowering of the head and eyes in shame and reduce further exploration or self-exposure powered by excitement or joy. (353-54)

This observation is noteworthy because it disrupts the conflation of shame with morality, arguably a socially constructed notion rather than an innate biological reaction to the immoral.

The fact that infants as young as seven-months-old exhibit shame challenges the notion that shame is felt innately in reaction to a moral transgression as infants do not have the cognitive ability to grasp morality until much later in life.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's reading of Tomkins's research on shame in her work *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003) devises a generative way of thinking about the infant's response to the stranger. Sedgwick suggests that we might think of the innate response to turn away from the stranger as a reaction to the strange, unfamiliar, or unknown, rather than to something inherently wrong or bad. She explains, "Tomkins's emphasis in this account on *the strange* rather than on the prohibited or disapproved" challenges the assumption that we feel ashamed because we have done something categorically immoral (Sedgwick 97; original italics). Rather, as Tomkins's research contends, shame is an ambiguous reaction of wanting to be near the unfamiliar object out of interest, while simultaneously wanting to be away from it due to the corporeal discomfort of shame that arises out of confrontation with the strange. This leads me to question how shame came to be intractably tied to morality.

Our notions of affect are socially constructed: culturally bound, fluid, and ever-changing with context. I went looking for theoretical and literary examples of earlier studies of affect so that I could begin to identify the sociohistorical etiology of Euro-Western theories of shame. When I attended an international conference on affect theory hosted by the University of Manitoba in 2015[3], I was first introduced to Charles Darwin's empirical study of affect, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Darwin's meticulous observations on the somatic and cognitive signifiers of affect are an important antecedent to the research that Silvan Tomkins conducts nearly one hundred years later. Moreover, Darwin provides an

[3] Entitled "Memory, Aesthetics, and Ethics" in Winnipeg, Manitoba: September 18-20, 2015.

extensive theoretical account for why humans might have evolved to experience shame in the first place. This psychosocial approach to affect returns to the body, the site of subjectivity, which we must acknowledge if we are to do justice to notions of intersectionality and identity politics. Subjectivity is predicated on the ontological differences associated with particular bodies, such as racialized, disabled, or gendered bodies.

Methodology

My thesis takes up a theoretically informed close reading of literature that works dialogically, so that the theory and text speak to and interrogate one another. I believe that the result of this hybrid methodological approach is a more rigorous and comprehensive conceptualization of shame. This project is divided into two sections and each has two parts that juxtapose theory with literature. Section One: Radical Darwinism, Affective Empathy, and Shame as a Social Construct is grounded in the central question: how did shame become associated with morality? The first part of Section One argues that Darwin's physiological observations in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) suggest that shame incites self-consciousness about how we appear to others. Awareness of others' perspectives is essential for empathic thought; therefore, shame is both self- and other-oriented. The second part of Section One reveals the accordance between Darwin's and Oscar Wilde's interpretations of shame as a relational emotion through a close reading of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890 & 1891; uncensored and censored editions, respectively) as well as of Wilde's Oxford University notebooks.

Section Two: Freud, Guilt versus Shame, and the Ethics of Embodiment centres on the question: how does the notion of shame as a social emotion reframe the ethics of relationality? The first part of Section Two examines Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) to distinguish guilt from shame, both physiologically and cognitively. Freud's work, along with

contemporary neuroscience, informs questions raised by Darwin's research, such as why blushing might be a protective involuntary reaction. The second part of Section Two considers the ethics of bodies in relation to one another through a reading of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014), a book of poetry, prose, and artwork. Rankine's work provokes self-conscious thinking and empathy: processes that are analogous to shame. Therefore, the reader must contemplate their own relationship to race and power, as the text demands self-reflection and resists personal appropriation.

Section One: Radical Darwinism, Affective Empathy, and Shame as a Social Construct

Part One

Saving Face: Darwin on the Evolutionary Advantage of Shame

"It is not the simple act of reflecting on our own appearance, but the thinking what others think of us, which excites a blush."

-Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*

What are the biological, social, and evolutionary functions of the emotions in humans and animals? Do humans exhibit emotions that animals do not (or vice versa) and why? Are there human emotions that are exhibited and interpreted universally, regardless of language or culture? These are a few of the central questions that Charles Darwin takes up in his work *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). His study is an interdisciplinary approach to the somatic, cognitive, and relational complexities of affect. *Expression of the Emotions* is a unique amalgamation of evolutionary theory, social psychology, anthropology, and philosophy. Darwin's work offers up an in-depth analysis of the emotions through empirical observations, anecdotal evidence, and examples from literature.[4]

In chapter XIII: "Self-attention – Shame – Shyness – Modesty: Blushing" Darwin focuses particularly on blushing as an expression of shame, due to its apparently unique human quality. He opens the chapter by stating that "Blushing is the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions. Monkeys redden from passion, but it would require an overwhelming amount of evidence to make us believe that any animal could blush" (Darwin 310). Not only does Darwin contend that shame is the "most human" of all the emotions, he also suggests that a certain level

[4] Darwin refers to the works of Shakespeare, the Old Testament, and classicists such as Seneca throughout *Expression of the Emotions*.

of cognitive aptitude is required in order to experience shame. Darwin observes, "It appears that the mental powers of infants are not as yet sufficiently developed to allow of their blushing. Hence, also, it is that idiots rarely blush" (311). Darwin's claim conflates infants with "idiots" and subsequently animals by suggesting that they are all less-than-human because they do not exhibit shame.[5]

It is important for me to pause here to acknowledge the problematic nature of many of Darwin's observations, as well as the history of his works being taken up by others to justify atrocities such as eugenics, racism, and genocide. For example, in *Expression of the Emotions*, Darwin interrogates whether or not all human races are capable of blushing. He does not conduct empirical studies in this instance; rather, he relies on anecdotes from fellow researchers. The supposedly scientific observations that make up the section entitled "Blushing in the various races of man" expose the Eurocentric bias of Darwin's research. He claims that "Several trustworthy observers have assured me that they have seen on the faces of negroes an appearance resembling a blush […] An increased supply of blood in the skin seems in some manner to increase its blackness; thus […] caus[ing] the affected places in the negro to appear blacker, instead of, as with us, redder" (Darwin 319). When Darwin compares people of color "with us" he reveals his assumption that the readers of *Expression of the Emotions* are white like him. Importantly, Darwin's collection of anecdotes draw him to the conclusion that "The facts now given are sufficient to show that blushing, whether or not there is any change of colour, is common to most, probably to all, of the races of man" (319). Therefore, all races of humanity must be considered equal, as "Blushing is […] the most human of all expressions" (Darwin 310).

[5] This rhetoric was and still is treacherous because individual rights and freedoms are systemically denied to whom and what we perceive as not-human or less-than-human, such as land, water, animals, and even persons with mental or physical impairments.

However, the reader should keep in mind the fact that Darwin assumes that white men are the status quo against which all other human behavior is measured.

Darwin posits that blushing is a bodily reaction to self-consciousness (310). He parses out distinct "mental states which induce blushing" that "consist of shyness, shame, and modesty; the essential element in all being self-attention" (Darwin 324). Echoing the sentiment that infants and "idiots" do not blush, Darwin suggests here that the expression of shame relies on a particular level of cognitive development, as the mind must be capable of attending to and interpreting the bodily sensation of blushing.

Darwin contends that while "infants are not as yet sufficiently developed to allow of their blushing" (311) they do exhibit shyness:

> In one of my own children, when two years and three months old, I saw a trace of what certainly appeared to be shyness, directed towards myself after an absence from home of only a week. This was shown not by a blush, but by the eyes being for a few minutes slightly averted from me. I have noticed on other occasions that shyness or shamefacedness and real shame are exhibited in the eyes of young children before they have acquired the power of blushing. (329-30)

From Darwin's observations of his own children, we might infer that shyness is a behavior that children acquire first, before they reach the developmental stage where they are able to express shame. If we think of young children's capacity for emotions as building blocks, perhaps shyness lays the foundation for more complex structures of emotion like shame that take longer to construct.

Darwin distinguishes shyness from etiquette, modesty and shame, all of which are bound up in self-consciousness and the opinion of others. His observations reveal the cognitive dissonance associated with shame that is incited by public "breaches of etiquette":

> The rules of *etiquette* always refer to conduct in the presence of, or towards others. They have no necessary connection with the moral sense […] Nevertheless as they depend on the fixed custom of our equals and superiors, whose opinion we highly regard […] the breach of the laws of etiquette, that is, any impoliteness or *gaucherie* […] will cause the most intense blushing of which a man is capable. Even the recollection of such an act, after an interval of many years, will make the whole body to [sic] tingle. So strong, also, is the power of sympathy that a sensitive person […] will sometimes blush at a flagrant breach of etiquette by a perfect stranger, though the act may in no way concern her. (Darwin 332; original italics)

Why do violations of etiquette elicit the same, or an even stronger,[6] somatic response as behavior that disrupts moral order? I think it is important to consider the sociocultural emphasis on etiquette in Victorian England as a class signifier. Andrew Maunder explains:

> The mid-Victorian era saw a massive increase in the production and consumption of books and articles on etiquette. For a rapidly expanding bourgeoisie possessing the means, but not the social decorum, either to carve out a new position of ascendancy or to assimilate with the aristocracy, the 'how to' book became an indispensable guide for the nouveau riche anxious on how to deport themselves in polite society. (48)

[6] "[T]he most intense blushing of which a man is capable" (Darwin 332).

Maunder's observation reveals the classist aspect of etiquette as a marked performance that distinguishes the bourgeoisie from both the working class and the aristocracy. Darwin's claims about modesty in relation to etiquette reveal a similar cultural bias: he argues that "modesty frequently relates to acts of indelicacy; and indelicacy is an affair of etiquette, as we clearly see with the nations that go altogether or nearly naked […] This is indeed shown by the derivation of the word *modest* from *modus*, a measure or standard of behavior" (332-33; original italics). There is a xenophobic underpinning to this observation. By suggesting that entire nations are somehow less modest because they wear less clothing, the subsequent argument is that they are less shameful[7] because they are not as concerned with the supposed "indelicacy" of nudity in public.

I am struck, too, by the dichotomous nature of Darwin's claims about etiquette: he suggests that blushing is induced by a concern for the opinion of others, which is a self-conscious behaviour, but he also observes that breaches of etiquette can evoke "the power of sympathy" (332) which is strong enough to induce empathic blushing on behalf of a stranger. I argue that this indicates the relational nature of shame: its provocation is founded on an understanding of how we are perceived by others, which requires empathy or the ability to intuit another's perspective. Perhaps a consequence of the connection between empathy and shame is that we can also feel ashamed on behalf of someone else, even a stranger, which Darwin observes as "blush[ing] at a flagrant breach of etiquette by a perfect stranger, though the act may in no way concern her" (332). [8]

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[7] And therefore less human if we consider Darwin's claim that blushing is the "most human" of all the emotions (310).

[8] I do not think it is accidental that Darwin uses "her" in this example (he usually defaults to he/him pronouns or "man"): I will discuss Darwin's observations on the gendered nature of shame later in this section.

Darwin's claims about etiquette also suggest that there is a cognitive aspect to shame, which was discussed previously in this section in relation to infants' incapacity to blush. His observation that "Even the recollection of such an act [of impoliteness], after an interval of many years, will make the whole body to [sic] tingle" (Darwin 332) gestures to the intricate mind-body feedback loop: memory alone, without any external stimuli, can evoke a somatic reaction so strong that one's whole body "tingle[s]". This is supported by Darwin's observation that "we cannot cause a blush […] by any physical means – that is by any action on the body. It is the mind which must be affected. Blushing is not only involuntary; but the wish to restrain it, by leading to self-attention, actually increases the tendency" (310). Darwin's research also reveals the involuntary nature of the "desire for concealment" that blushing evokes:

> Under a keen sense of shame there is a strong desire for concealment. We turn away the whole body, more especially the face, which we endeavour in some manner to hide. An ashamed person can hardly endure to meet the gaze of those present, so that he almost invariably casts down his eyes or looks askant. (319-20)

This observation is supported by Darwin's claims on infantile shyness: specifically, infants avert their gaze when they feel shy in another person's presence before they acquire the cognitive capacity to blush, which requires self-consciousness (329-30). The fact that even infants who do not have the capacity for language or self-awareness instinctively break eye contact from the gaze that makes them feel shy suggests that there might be an inherently self-protective (and therefore evolutionary) motivation behind this behaviour.[9]

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[9] Silvan Tomkins studies the phenomenon of infantile shyness (which he interprets as shame) in *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (1962). An in-depth discussion of Tomkins's findings can be found in pages 4-7 of the introductory chapter of this thesis.

Darwin's observation that most humans, even during infancy, desire to restrain and conceal their blushing suggests that blushing is an undesirable (or somatically uncomfortable) trait that we do not want others to witness. However, if blushing is an indication of shame, which in turn points to heightened self-consciousness, why are we so loath to reveal this to others? Darwin's explanation is that self-consciousness arises from an individual's concern about what others think of them, particularly their appearance, which is intensified by the increased attention from others that blushing incites (324).

Darwin contends that "It is not the simple act of reflecting on our own appearance, but the thinking what others think of us, which excites a blush. In absolute solitude the most sensitive person would be quite indifferent about his appearance" (324). Moreover, "attention directed to personal appearance, and not to moral conduct, has been the fundamental element in the acquirement of the habit of blushing" in the first place (Darwin 324). Darwin supports this claim with the observation that "It is plain to every one [sic] that young men and women are highly sensitive to the opinion of each other with reference to their personal appearance; and they blush incomparably more in the presence of the opposite sex than in that of their own" (325). The heteronormativity of this argument is likely shaped by Darwin's theoretical approach: he explicates the behavioral and physical traits of humans and animals in relation to how they might contribute to the propagation of the species.[10] I am curious, too, about the effect of socialization, as heteronormative cultures encourage reticence between the sexes, particularly during childhood.

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[10] It is only in the past twenty years or so that researchers have begun to consider seriously the evolutionary advantages of queerness. See Jim McKnight's *Straight Science? Homosexuality, Evolution and Adaptation* for a concise overview of the historical resistance to the study of queer sexuality within the evolutionary sciences.

If blushing arises from self-consciousness about one's appearance, as Darwin contends, then how did shame become intractably linked to morality? He argues:

> With respect to blushing from strictly moral causes, we meet with the same fundamental principle as before, namely, regard for the opinion of others. It is not the conscience which raises a blush, for a man may sincerely regret some slight fault committed in solitude, or he may suffer the deepest remorse for an undetected crime, but he will not blush. 'I blush,' says Dr [sic] Burgess[11], 'in the presence of my accusers'. It is not the sense of guilt, but the thought that others think or know us to be guilty which crimsons the face. (Darwin 331)

This is where the elision of shame and self-consciousness gets murky: is Darwin suggesting that humans do not feel ashamed about the (im)morality of their actions without the presence of witnesses ("accusers")? Or is he stating that people simply do not *exhibit* the bodily reactions associated with shame (blushing) without the self-awareness provoked by the concern for others' opinions? I am inclined to say the latter: Darwin's explication of the acquired habit of blushing in response to self-consciousness suggests that he believes that humans have the propensity to feel shame, regret, remorse, and guilt (emotions which he conflates) due to moral transgressions, regardless of whether or not we are alone. However, Darwin theorizes that morality does not exist *sui generis*: rather, the human species' reproductive investment in what others think about their appearance evolved into self-consciousness of others' opinions on all subjects, including behavior, with the stakes being social inclusion and the acquisition of a mate.

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[11] Darwin is referring to Thomas Henry Burgess's *The Physiology or Mechanism of Blushing* (1839), whose research he draws on frequently throughout the chapter on shame.

Darwin puts forward a theory to explain how self-consciousness became attached to morality over time:

> We have seen that in all parts of the world persons who feel shame for some moral delinquency, are apt to avert, bend down, or hide their faces, independently of any thought about their personal appearance […] It is, however, probable that primeval man before he had acquired much moral sensitiveness would have been highly sensitive about his personal appearance, at least in reference to the other sex, and he would consequently have felt distress at any depreciatory remarks about his appearance; and this is one form of shame. And as the face is the part of the body which is most regarded, it is intelligible that any one ashamed of his personal appearance would desire to conceal this part of his body. The habit having been thus acquired, would naturally be carried on when shame from strictly moral causes was felt; and it is not easy otherwise to see why under these circumstances there should be a desire to hide the face more than any other part of the body. (326-27)

A complex feedback loop between self-consciousness and one's sense of morality appears to be in play, according to Darwin's conceptualization of shame. His observation that those who commit a "moral delinquency" hide their faces instinctively, regardless of any pragmatic reason to be hidden, suggests that self-consciousness about one's appearance is an involuntary somatic response produced by thousands of years of evolution that gradually confounded morality with the concern for others' opinions. Through iteration and evolution, the biofeedback provided by the flushing of one's cheeks came to be interpreted by the mind as a signal from the body that a

moral transgression has occurred and that others might respond unfavourably, heightening the sense of self-awareness incited by the blush.

Darwin is uncertain of the biological etiology of blushing, so he puts forward an evolution-based hypothesis to support his argument about the correlation between blushing and self-consciousness:

> [A]ttention closely directed to any part of the body tends to interfere with the ordinary and tonic contraction of the small arteries of that part. These vessels, in consequence, become at such times more or less relaxed, and are instantly filled with arterial blood. This tendency will have been much strengthened, if frequent attention has been paid during many generations to the same part […] by the power of inheritance. Whenever we believe that others are depreciating or even considering our personal appearance, our attention is vividly directed to the outer and visible parts of our bodies; and of all such parts we are most sensitive about our faces[12], as no doubt has been the case during many past generations […] Through the force of association, the same effects will tend to follow whenever we think that others are considering or censuring our actions or character. (336)

What are the implications of Darwin's theory of blushing and its relation to morality? Most notable is his argument for the separation of morality from religion: "The belief that blushing was *specially* designed by the Creator is opposed to the general theory of evolution (Darwin 335;

[12] "Of all parts of the body, the face is most considered and regarded, as is natural from its being the chief seat of expression and the source of the voice. It is also the chief seat of beauty and of ugliness, and throughout the world is the most ornamented. The face, therefore, will have been subjected during many generations to much closer and more earnest self-attention than any other part of the body; and in accordance with the principle here advanced we can understand why it should be the most liable to blush" (Darwin 326).

original italics). Darwin references the pre-eminent work of Dr. Thomas Henry Burgess and Sir Charles Bell[13] to point out that Victorian scientists' perspectives were limited by their need to attribute human creation and behavior to God. He states: "Sir C. Bell insists that blushing […] 'is not acquired; it is from the beginning'" (Darwin 335) while "Dr [sic] Burgess believes that it was designed by the Creator in 'order that the soul might have sovereign power of displaying in the cheeks the various internal emotions of the moral feelings'" (335). One can imagine how shocking and subversive it would have been for Victorians to wrap their minds around Darwin's conceptualization of morality as an acquired behavior rather than an inherently human quality handed down from God.

In Part Two of this thesis section, I reveal the congruence between Darwin's and Wilde's theorizations of shame through a close reading of Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, which he kept during his university studies prior to the publication of his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890 & 1891; uncensored and censored editions, respectively). I argue that *Dorian Gray* is akin to a philosophical thought experiment: the text explores the possible ramifications for morality and social order if we did not bear the consequence of others' judgment, particularly in relation to our appearance. *Dorian Gray* deliberates the moral dilemma that arises from Darwin's theory of shame: do we behave morally solely because of our involuntary concern for others' opinions of us? Moreover, how would we behave if we had a guarantee that our actions would have no social or personal ramifications? *Dorian Gray* explicates the precarious nature of the social contract: perhaps we follow a moral code only because we know that others are watching and critiquing our actions.

[13] See footnote 10 for the influential Burgess text. Darwin is also drawing on Bell's *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting* (1806).

Section One: Radical Darwinism, Affective Empathy, and Shame as a Social Construct

Part Two

Vanity, Empathy, Shame: Oscar Wilde's Radical Darwinism

"The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame."

-Lord Henry, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (censored edition)

Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was published originally in July 1890 by *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* and distributed throughout Britain and America (Frankel 4). In the 2011 annotated and uncensored version of Wilde's text, its editor Nicholas Frankel provides socio-historical context for the public reception of the novel upon its publication, which accounts for the editorial changes that transformed Wilde's first edition into the more widely read, censored 1891 version.[14] Frankel's introduction to the uncensored version of *Dorian Gray* reveals that "When the novel appeared in *Lippincott's*, it was immediately controversial […] a significant segment of the British press reacted with outright hostility, condemning the novel as 'vulgar,' 'unclean,' 'poisonous,'[15] 'discreditable,' and 'a sham'" (Frankel 5). In fact, by August 1890, "Wilde claimed to have received 216 such attacks on his novel since its appearance in *Lippincott's* two months earlier" (Frankel 5). Frankel contends that the cultural and political climate leading up to the last decade of nineteenth-century Britain shaped the public's scandalized reaction to Wilde's novel:

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[14] Frankel remarks, "It is a curious fact in the history of the novel that Wilde's [original] typescript has remained unpublished until now [(2011)], given the general recognition among Wilde scholars that the *Lippincott's* version was bowdlerized" (41).

[15] Wilde anticipates the words of his critics: in the 1890 edition, the narrator claims, "Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book. There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realise his conception of the beautiful" (*Dorian Gray Uncensored* 210). The preface to the 1891 edition of the novel argues the opposite: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book" (*Dorian Censored* xxiii).

> Understanding the general atmosphere of hysteria about sexuality that existed in Britain in the years leading up to the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is important to understanding the hostility that greeted the novel in 1890. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, under which Wilde was eventually prosecuted […] criminaliz[ed] 'gross indecency' between men […] it succeeded in driving homosexual practices further underground and only heightened anxieties about homosexuality in Britain […] 'gross indecency' […] was broad enough to encompass any sexual activities between men, regardless of age or consent, and it was under this statute that Wilde and many other homosexuals were prosecuted in Britain until the Act's repeal in 1956. (8)

The negative critical reception of Wilde's original *Lippincott's* version of *Dorian Gray* meant that the novel underwent extensive rewriting before it was released again in 1891. Frankel's comparison of the 1890 and 1891 versions reveals that the original "is more explicit in its sexual references and allusions than the revised 1891 book version, in which Wilde, in response to his critics and at the insistence of his publisher, toned down the novel's homosexual content" (10-11). In the lengthier censored edition, many of the male characters appreciate Dorian Gray's beauty openly, but any sexual attraction between the men is nuanced and obscured by Wilde's witty epigrams and ornate prose.

Wilde experienced censorship not only in his writing, but also in his personal life: "Since at least 1886, Wilde had been leading a secret double life, designed to conceal his sexual orientation and extramarital affairs from close family members and 'respectable' society" (Frankel 11). Therefore, it is apt that the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter was added to the 1891 amended version of the novel: when Lord Henry declares to Dorian that "[t]he books

that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame" (Wilde 248), he speaks on behalf of the author, the novel, and homosexual men in Victorian Britain. What exactly does the world see when "its own shame" is revealed? Wilde explores this question through the novel's anti-hero, Dorian Gray, who considers his portrait as a "mirror of his soul" (253) and "the mask of his shame" (107). Further, Lord Henry's claim signals a central concern of the novel: the connection between morality and shame.

I had read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* several times, yet I did not think of it as a text about shame until I read Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Darwin's meticulous observations gave me new insight into the myriad expressions of affect, and how to read them, giving me language to speak to the underlying *feelings* that permeate a text. When I returned to *Dorian Gray*, I saw shame everywhere, and I realized that Darwin's chapter on shame aligns closely with the concerns of Wilde's novel – in particular, the notion that morality is motivated by our instinctual concern for others' opinions rather than by the desire to approach the world ethically. Darwin's contention that humans evolved the involuntary somatic reaction of blushing in response to self-consciousness in the presence of others challenged British Victorians' conception of morality as grounded largely in Christianity.

Darwin's writing was, of course, already known for subverting religious dogma: *On the Origin of Species* (1859) argued for evolution rather than creationism which subverted the centrality of religion in relation to ethics and morals. *The Expression of the Emotions* suggests that morality is a social construct rather than a universal truth or God-given proof of the soul. The central argument of Darwin's chapter on shame is that "attention directed to personal appearance, and not to moral conduct, has been the fundamental element in the acquirement of the habit of blushing" (324); through iteration and socialization, "The habit [of blushing] having

been thus acquired, would naturally be carried on when shame from strictly moral causes was felt" (327). I imagine that these ideas would have been challenging and exhilarating, simultaneously, for some Victorian readers, especially for someone whom lived on the margins of normative society like Wilde did.

Wilde was living in Britain during a time of radical shift in theories of morals and ethics, influenced by the increasing separation of the sciences from religion throughout the last forty years of the nineteenth century. Victorianists Aileen Fyfe and John van Whye explain:

> At the beginning of the nineteenth century in Britain, religious faith and the sciences were generally seen to be in beautiful accordance. The study of God's Word, in the Bible, and His Works, in nature, were assumed to be twin facets of the same truth […] This harmony between science and faith, mediated by some form of theology of nature, continued to be the mainstream position for most men of science, and most interested individuals, right up to the 1860s, at least. (1)

However, Fyfe and van Whye caution against the assumption that all British Victorians experienced a simultaneous shift in ideology. Instead, drastic change happened in literature and the academic elite first; popular culture and the Victorian masses followed suit over time, but not without resistance. Fyfe and van Whye's research suggests that:

> [I]n the popular arena, there was far more variety in the relationship between science and religion. Although some writers and publishers did present the sciences in a secular manner […] they did not have a monopoly. Publishers with explicit religious credentials continued to publish popular works on the sciences right up till the end of the century, and their works competed in the marketplace with the secular versions. Although much has been made of a mid-Victorian crisis

> of faith, perhaps triggered by the sciences, this seems to have been a feature of a certain class of intellectuals, and not an accurate description of the majority of society (especially middle-class society), which retained a religious faith long after most expert men of science. (2)

We know from Wilde's collected notebooks of his studies at Oxford University[16] that he was a member of the British intellectual elite (considered by Fyfe and van Wyhe to be the first group influenced by the shifting intellectual paradigm). Further, the notebooks reveal the extent to which Wilde studied "a number of controversies which concerned contemporary intellectuals; for instance, evolution and human descent, historical criticism, and the opposition of philosophical idealism and materialism" (Smith and Helfand vii). While there is no record in his Oxford notebooks (or elsewhere, that I could find) of Wilde reading Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Wilde scholars note that "He was well aware of controversies concerning evolutionary theories of human improvement […] He knew intellectually, and sometimes personally, people who applied evolutionary theory to social problems: Spencer, Ruskin, Huxley, Clifford, […] J.S. Mill" and so on (Smith and Helfand 81). Moreover, one year before the publication of the *Lippincott's* version of *Dorian Gray*, Wilde evidently "reviewed D.G. Ritchie's *Darwinism and Politics* (1889), a work which outlines and attempts to reconcile the political conflicts developed from materialist and idealist positions and theories of human development" (Smith and Helfand 81). According to Smith and Helfand, Wilde's theories intersected with radical Darwinists such as D.G. Ritchie, Patrick Geddes and J.A. Thomson,[17]

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[16] Philip E. Smith II and Michael S. Helfand, the editors of *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks: A Portrait of Mind in the Making* (1989), estimate that the notebooks were kept from 1874 to 1879 (3).

[17] *The Evolution of Sex* (1889).

and Alfred R. Wallace,[18] among others (81). It is clear from Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, then, that he was contemplating the implications of evolutionary theory on human behavior in the 1870s, prior to writing *Dorian Gray*.

Smith and Helfand explain that, in general, "Radical Darwinists believed that individuals were naturally social and creative creatures who cooperated with their fellows to ensure the survival of the human species" (81). The emphasis on the social over the individual departed from the pervasive Victorian interpretation of evolutionary theories: that humans are inherently "selfish, competitive, and brutal creature[s] who improved through a bloody intraspecies struggle for existence caused by an inevitable scarcity of human necessities" (Smith and Helfand 81). Radical Darwinists, in contrast, had a more optimistic approach to humanity, arguing that the "brutally competitive 'law of the jungle' which supposedly dominated human nature was encouraged by an artificially imposed social and economic system" (Smith and Helfand 82). Wilde's writing "used evolutionary theory to support his radical critique of society," (83) which can be traced throughout his critical essays, beginning with "A Chinese Sage" (1890), followed by "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" (1891), and finally "The Critic as Artist" (1891) (Smith and Helfand 82-3). At the same time, Wilde was writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Myriad scholars[19] have discussed the novel's nuanced synthesis of his thoughts on ethics informed by aesthetics, which Wilde meditated on for years in his studies and writing (Smith and Helfand 96). Instead, I will make the argument that there are undeniable undercurrents of Darwin's

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[18] *Darwinism: An Exposition of the Theory of Natural Selection with Some of Its Applications* (1889).

[19] See the work of Philip E. Smith II and Michael S. Helfand, Nicholas Frankel, Carolyn Lesjak, Richard Ellmann, and Karl Beckson, for example.

theories on shame and morality from his *Expression of the Emotions* running through Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), a claim that scholars have yet to take up.

I will focus on the 1891 edition of the novel because of the significance of the addition of Lord Henry's claim that, "The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame" (Wilde 248). This amendment to the 1890 *Lippincott's* version is a nuanced claim that requires unpacking: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* "show[s] the world its own shame" quite literally, through Dorian's decaying portrait. The picture symbolizes the connection between shame and morality by exploring what might occur if that link were severed: Dorian seems to be immune to the effects of shame when his portrait, rather than his body, reflects his misdeeds. Through Dorian's moral disintegration, Wilde considers the vital relationship between biofeedback and self-consciousness, which aligns with Darwin's theories on shame in *The Expression of the Emotions*.

When Dorian's actions fail to impact his conscience and influence his portrait instead, he loses his sense of empathy as well as his concern for others' opinions. As long as no one can see his portrait, "the origin of all his shame" (Wilde 173), Dorian remains apathetic about the consequences of his actions on others or on his own reputation. Moreover, through the figure of Dorian, the novel suggests that the world's shame is in the hypocritical nature of human behavior. Dorian's tragic flaw is his vanity: he is not constrained by notions of norms and taboos because he transcends social reprobation. Keeping up appearances is the ethical imperative that guides Dorian's decision-making.

When I reread *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) through the lens of Darwin's theories on shame, I was surprised to discover that the word "shame" (or other permutations of the word like ashamed or shameful) occurs twenty-six times. By comparison, "morals" (or morality,

immoral, and so on) appears seventeen times, while "ethics" had the lowest frequency at five iterations. By consistently referring to shame throughout *Dorian Gray*, Wilde insists that we consider the way that the body and the emotions inform humanity's conceptualization of morality. The novel reveals that affect influences ethics and morals just as much as rationalism. Wilde subverts the mind/body Cartesian dichotomy by demonstrating the inseparability of emotion from cognition.

Basil Hallward, the artist who paints Dorian's portrait, foreshadows Dorian's fate unwittingly when he says to Lord Henry, "The harmony of soul and body […] We[20] in our madness have separated the two, and have invented a realism that is vulgar, an ideality that is void" (Wilde 11). Dorian's conscience (or soul, from a theological perspective) is severed from his body when Basil completes his portrait, and Dorian wishes aloud for eternal youth. Echoing the well-known allegory of the Faustian deal with the devil, Dorian offers up his soul in exchange for his youthful beauty: he says to Basil and Lord Henry, "How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young […] If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old […] there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!" (Wilde 29).

Dorian's wish is granted, but with unexpected consequences: while Dorian's youth and beauty remain unchanged for decades, his portrait mutates inexplicably to reflect Dorian's grotesque inner world. Through the metaphor of Dorian's portrait, Wilde takes up the implications of separating "The harmony of soul and body" (11) as Lord Henry puts it. What knowledge is lost when the body and the conscience fail to communicate with one another? The

[20] When Basil says, "We" he is referring to members of the British aristocracy, such as himself, Lord Henry, and Dorian, which he juxtaposes with ancient Greek society and "all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek" (*Dorian Censored* 11).

novel suggests that affect, particularly shame, influences morality just as much as the mind. When Dorian's portrait, rather than his body, reflects the shame that he feels, the impact of the affective experience is lost on his conscience. Instead, any shame or regret that Dorian feels seems to be ameliorated by the painting, as he is able to recover from uncomfortable affective states remarkably quickly. For example, Basil goes to check on Dorian when it is discovered that his ex-fiancée, Sibyl Vane, is dead; Basil is shocked to find Dorian in good spirits, having already been out to the opera that night with friends. Dorian's defense is as callous as his behavior; he says to Basil, "you must not think I have not suffered. If you had come in yesterday at a particular moment – about half-past five, perhaps, or a quarter to six – you would have found me in tears […] Then it passed away. I cannot repeat an emotion. No one can, except sentimentalists" (*Dorian Censored* 124). Dorian has convinced himself that he is impervious to lasting emotions, as they are ephemeral and bound by temporality in his view. I would imagine that any emotion would seem tolerable, if you only had to experience it once, knowing that it would pass within minutes.

Throughout the novel, Wilde focuses on the emotions and how they manifest themselves, both in the body and, symbolically, in Dorian's portrait. Dorian's observations about the painting allude to the Darwin's analysis of facial expressions in *Expression of the Emotions*. For example, the first time that Dorian notices that his portrait has altered is the morning after he breaks off his engagement with Sibyl Vane, which he does with particular cruelty and self-interest.[21] When he arrives home, Dorian is startled when he notices that his portrait seems to have altered:

[21] When Dorian ends his relationship with Sibyl, he tells her, "You are shallow and stupid […] I would have made you famous […] What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face" (*Dorian Censored* 99).

> [T]he face appeared to him to be a little changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth […] the strange expression that he had noticed in the face of the portrait seemed to linger there, to be more intensified even. The quivering, ardent sunlight showed him the lines of cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing. (*Dorian Censored* 102)

When Dorian checks his reflection in a mirror to compare, he concedes that "No line like that warped his red lips […] He rubbed his eyes, and came close to the picture, and examined it again. There were no signs of any change when he looked into the actual painting, and yet there was no doubt that the whole expression had altered" (*Dorian Censored* 102). The word "expression" appears three times within the span of two pages, as Dorian takes in the effects of his actions on his portrait which, importantly, relate to the facial expression. The picture could have decayed in any number of ways: the paint could have started to chip, the color could have lost its vivacity, or the print could have gradually disappeared. Instead, Wilde considers the relationship between affect, consciousness, the body, and morality. Much like Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions*, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is concerned with empirical observations of the face, and how facial expressions shift in response to emotion. Wilde makes the connection between morality and shame tangible through Dorian's portrait: the changes in the picture reflect a fixed, measureable outcome of cruel behavior. While shame is fleeting and relatively difficult to observe, Dorian's portrait reflects the alterations to his facial expression permanently. Mirroring the photographs of faces in Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, which hold the same expressions forever, Dorian's portrait is a record of misbehavior that outlives affect.

Moreover, Wilde reflects upon the heightened self-consciousness that is incited involuntarily by actions pertaining to morality, again evocative of Darwin's theories on shame. When Dorian observes the grotesque changes in his expression in the portrait, he feels as though he is "looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing" (*Dorian Censored* 102). Similar to Darwin,[22] Wilde alludes to the role of the face in evoking self-reflective thought, particularly when feeling ashamed. Dorian feels as though he is looking at a mirror after doing something "dreadful" because the portrait forces him to face himself, quite literally, just as shame prompts us to turn inward and reflect on how our actions are perceived by others. Cognitively, the experience of shame is similar to looking at oneself in the mirror: both are self-conscious activities that invoke thoughts of what others might think of us. Darwin's observations in *The Expression of the Emotions* suggest that shame is a dichotomous experience, as it motivates self-reflection and empathic thought simultaneously. Shame is a social emotion which requires an understanding of how we are perceived by others: we can only imagine what others think of us if we can empathize with their perspective.[23]

Darwin describes the same phenomenon of the avoidance of others' eyes when we feel ashamed, observing that "An ashamed person can hardly endure to meet the gaze of those present, so that he almost invariably casts down his eyes or looks askant" (*Expression of Emotions* 319-20). Darwin does not elaborate on whether or not the avoidance of the gaze

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[22] "Of all parts of the body, the face is most considered and regarded, as is natural from its being the chief seat of expression and the source of the voice. It is also the chief seat of beauty and of ugliness, and throughout the world is the most ornamented. The face, therefore, will have been subjected during many generations to much closer and more earnest self-attention than any other part of the body; and in accordance with the principle here advanced we can understand why it should be the most liable to blush" (Darwin 326).

[23] A developmental milestone called "theory of mind" which was first conceptualized by Jean Piaget in the 1960s. According to Piaget, humans reach this stage around age three or four (Dubuc 2).

applies to oneself when feeling ashamed; however, what is more important to consider is what Wilde's mirror metaphor represents – self-reflective behavior. Darwin's research contends that the somatic response of blushing involuntarily in response to shame originated out of "primeval" man's concern for how their physical appearance was perceived by others (327). Moreover, "as the face is the part of the body which is most regarded, it is intelligible that any one ashamed of his personal appearance would desire to conceal this part of his body. The habit having been thus acquired, would naturally be carried on when shame from strictly moral causes was felt" (Darwin 327). When Dorian describes the uncomfortable sensation of "looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing" (*Dorian Censored* 102), he reveals the unbearable sensation of having scornful eyes directed at one's face, as it augments the feeling of having done something wrong. This is why "[a]n ashamed person can hardly endure to meet the gaze of those present" (Darwin 319): instinctively, we cover our faces out of self-protection, both from the gaze of others and to cover the blushing, the signifier of shame.

From the first instance that Dorian notices the alterations to his portrait, he becomes increasingly obsessed with its transformation, as well as with hiding "the origin of all his shame" (*Dorian Censored* 173) from the critical eyes of those around him. The consequence of Dorian's eternal youth and beauty is that his portrait is tangible evidence of his inner turmoil. In fact, Dorian's portrait bears the evidence of his shame permanently through its degradation, while the affective experience of shame seems to pass over Dorian's psyche without influencing his behavior. It is as if the portrait takes on and reflects back the shame that would normally run throughout Dorian's body like a current, circulating in a cycle of biofeedback; this tells the brain, through blushing and lowering of the eyes, to reflect on how we are being perceived amongst others. Without this constant feedback from his body, Dorian is free from the burden of shame

and does not feel motivated to alter his behavior, regardless of the rumors that start to generate about him.

The morning after Dorian observes the alterations to his portrait for the first time, he wakes up feeling paranoid about others seeing the painting, much like the instinct to cover one's face when feeling ashamed. Dorian feels compelled to check the portrait again, in the hopes that the changes were just a dream or a hallucinationHe thinks to himself, "what if, by some fate or deadlier chance, eyes other than his spied behind, and saw the horrible change? […] He got up, and locked both doors. At least he would be alone when he looked upon the mask of his shame" (*Dorian Censored* 107). Before he confirms that the portrait has in fact changed, Dorian seems certain that the painting is a reflection of his shame in some way. It is interesting that he calls the portrait the "mask of his shame" because it really does the opposite: rather than concealing Dorian's shame, the picture magnifies and records it permanently. Unlike the face, which might reflect shame for a moment through the blush or the avoidance of eye contact, Dorian's portrait does not return to its original state, regardless of his actions.[24]

When Dorian confirms that the portrait has altered, and that he did not imagine it, he is overcome with regret and vows to restore his engagement to Sibyl. Looking at the portrait, Dorian reflects on its impact on his psyche:

> One thing, however, he felt that [the portrait] had done for him. It had made him conscious how unjust, how cruel, he had been to Sibyl Vane. It was not too late to make reparation for that. She could still be his wife […] the portrait that Basil

[24] Later in the novel, Dorian tests this notion when he tries behaving compassionately toward a young woman in his life; however, he is curious about the influence on his portrait, more than he is concerned about her feelings: "Perhaps if his life became pure, he would be able to expel every sign of evil passion from the face. Perhaps the signs of evil had already gone away. He would go and look" (*Dorian Censored* 251).

> Hallward had painted of him would be a guide to him through life, would be to him what holiness is to some, and conscience to others, and the fear of God to us all. There were opiates for remorse, drugs that could lull the moral sense to sleep. But here was a visible symbol of the degradation of sin. Here was an ever-present sign of the ruin men brought upon their souls. (*Dorian Censored* 108)

The portrait reveals the socially constructed nature of shame: shame motivates social order in the same way that the structures of "holiness […] conscience […] and the fear of God" work on the psyche because they are all paradigms of morality (*Dorian Censored* 108). Darwin's research supports the notion that shame is socially constructed: he contends that the affective experience of shame (blushing, lowering one's head) originated in "primeval man" (327) in response to feeling self-conscious about one's appearance in the presence of others, particularly those with whom one might procreate. The affective reaction of shame is nothing more than a "habit" that supported reproductive behavior, and "[t]he habit having been thus acquired, would naturally be carried on when shame from strictly moral causes was felt" (Darwin 327).

Shame is, in this way, an affective "habit" of human behavior that supports the survival of the species by motivating social order. If it were not for vanity in the presence of others, we would not have an understanding of how our actions are perceived by others. The irony (or hypocrisy) of humanity is that compassionate behavior is borne out of self-concern: the caveat being that self-reflective behavior is also other-oriented, as social beings. We look to the people around us to reflect ourselves back to us, either through affirmation or rejection. Social cohesion and adherence to group norms are essential behaviors for humanity's survival and progress, as we are all social beings (whether we want to be or not) and it is next to impossible to thrive on one's own. Radical Darwinists such as Wilde thought of humanity similarly, contending that

"individuals were naturally social and creative creatures who cooperated with their fellows to ensure the survival of the human species" (Smith and Helfand 81) and in contrast to the winner-takes-all, individualistic interpretation of evolution that some Victorian scholars favoured.[25]

Just after Dorian vows to let the portrait act as his conscience so that he might prevent its decay, Lord Henry comes to visit. Dorian is bursting with the news of his transformed approach to life: he tells Henry, "I am perfectly happy now. I know what conscience is […] It is the divinest thing in us […] I want to be good. I can't bear the idea of my soul being hideous" (Wilde 109). Lord Henry's response alludes to Wilde's thinking on aesthetically informed ethics: he says, "A very charming artistic basis for ethics, Dorian!" (Wilde 109). Lord Henry has no idea how apt his comment is: Dorian's ethics are motivated by art, quite literally, as Basil's painting has become his conscience and guide to moral behavior. Moreover, Dorian's vanity is the true motivation for his ethical shift, not remorse or compassion for Sibyl. He says that he cannot "bear the idea of [his] soul being hideous" (Wilde 109) because Dorian's concerns are purely aesthetic, and ugliness is the most intolerable of moral trespasses. Dorian's curse, in exchange for eternal youth, is that he must see his soul, in its beauty and its hideousness, forever fixed in a painting, and adjust his behavior accordingly. The portrait itself is a metaphor for aesthetics as ethics, as unkind actions manifest themselves as ugliness. Dorian wants to restore his relationship with Sibyl because he hopes that compassionate actions will restore beauty to his portrait.

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[25] Smith and Helfand reference George Gaylord Simpson's *The Meaning of Evolution: A Study of the History of Life and of its Significance for Man* (1949) for a comprehensive explanation for "the dominant Victorian view of a basically selfish, competitive, and brutal [human nature] who improved through a bloody intraspecies struggle for existence caused by an inevitable scarcity of human necessities" (Smith and Helfand 81).

Unfortunately, Dorian's resolution to marry Sibyl Vane comes too late, as Lord Henry has come to visit with the news of Sibyl's death. Apparently, Sibyl "had swallowed something by mistake" the night before, sometime after Dorian broke off their engagement (Wilde 111). Dorian seems to feel the burden of responsibility, as his first response to the news is, "So I have murdered Sibyl Vane […] murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife" (Wilde 111). His next comment is, however, jarring in juxtaposition: he goes on to say, "Yet the roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden" (Wilde 111). It seems as though any burden of grief or remorse lifts instantaneously from Dorian's shoulders, and somehow he comes to the conclusion that Sibyl "had no right to kill herself. It was selfish of her" (Wilde 112). Dorian knows that his reaction to Sibyl's death is apathetic, and he wonders aloud to Lord Henry about the cause, saying, "I am glad you don't think I am heartless. I am nothing of the kind. I know I am not. And yet I must admit that this thing that had happened does not affect me as it should" (Wilde 113). He does not realize it, but Dorian has touched on what is missing from his response to Sibyl's tragic death, which is a lasting affective reaction – specifically, shame. Dorian seems to feel a sense of culpability when he says, "So I have murdered Sibyl Vane" (Wilde 111); however, Dorian's guilt appears to dissipate as quickly as it came over him. In the next moment, he is able to appreciate the beauty around him and he moves on to anticipating his plans that evening to attend the opera with Lord Henry.

Dorian's radical shift in his affective approach to the world begs the question: is the portrait the cause of his apathy toward Sibyl's death? Perhaps it is another consequence that Dorian must bear in exchange for his wish for eternal youth? I am not so convinced; instead, I think that Dorian makes a conscious decision to detach himself from his feelings of shame, or at least ignore them in regards to his actions. The catalyzing event seems to be Sibyl's death. After

Lord Henry leaves, Dorian feels compelled to check his portrait again in case his involvement in her death has altered the painting since he checked it that morning. Dorian observes that, "No; there was no further change in the picture. It had received the news of Sibyl Vane's death before he had known of it himself. It was conscious of the events of life as they occurred" (Wilde 118). To his relief, Dorian finds that he has already borne the punishment for his misdeed, as the portrait has not transformed further. This moment is crucial as Dorian realizes that he is face-to-face with a moral dilemma:

> He felt that the time had really come for making his choice. Or had his choice already been made? Yes life had decided that for him – life, and his own infinite curiosity about life. Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins – he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame: that was all. (*Dorian Censored* 119)

Dorian surrenders himself to the notion that his fate has been decided for him, which lifts his sense of responsibility for his actions. Moreover, Dorian convinces himself that the portrait's degradation is an inevitable consequence of his wish for eternal youth. By renouncing agency over his life and insisting that fate has already made his choices for him, Dorian also denies accountability for his choices. When Dorian says that, "The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame" (*Dorian Censored* 119), he is making a conscious decision to relinquish shame to his portrait so that he can behave without regard for others' opinions.

Do humans have the ability to choose to feel no shame? Darwin's research contends that the somatic reaction of blushing, which consciousness interprets as shame, is not volitional. In *The Expression of the Emotions*, he observes that, "Blushing is not only involuntary; but the wish to restrain it, by leading to self-attention, actually increases the tendency" (Darwin 310). Does

Dorian blush after he vows to let his portrait "bear the burden of his shame"? There is only one instance that I can find, occurring shortly after Dorian declares that his portrait will be the repository for his feelings of shame. Basil has just received the news of Sibyl's death, which prompts him to check on his friend. When he finds Dorian calm, and reveling in his previous night at the opera, Basil seems equally shocked and disturbed, saying, "Dorian, this is horrible! Something has changed you completely […] You were the most unspoiled creature in the whole world. Now, I don't know what has come over you. You talk as if you had no heart, no pity in you. It is all Harry[26]'s influence. I see that" (*Dorian Censored* 122). In response, "The lad flushed[27] up, and going to the window, looked out for a few moments" (*Dorian Censored* 123). Dorian cannot help but blush and break eye contact with Basil when his friend reprimands him. By turning away to look out the window, Dorian exhibits the instinct to avert one's eyes from others when feeling ashamed, just as Darwin describes in *Expression of the Emotions*.

The Picture of Dorian Gray reveals Wilde's understanding of the connection between blushing, the gaze of others, and shame, echoing Darwin's observations. Moreover, Wilde quotes the exact same passage from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* that Darwin does in his chapter on shame in *The Expression of the Emotions*. Darwin quotes Shakespeare in the context of elucidating his thoughts on blushing: for Darwin, blushing in solitude does not support his theory that we only blush around others, due to the self-consciousness elicited by their presence. Therefore, he disregards anecdotes from others who claim that they blush when they are alone,

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[26] Lord Henry's friends call him both Henry and Harry, as a diminutive.

[27] Wilde uses the term "flush(ed)" more than he uses "blush"; however, he does provide context so that we can infer affect. For example, "[Dorian's] cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure" (*Dorian Censored* 28) and, "a flush of pleasure [stole] into his cheek" (42). In the example referenced above, Dorian's flushing is a shame reaction, as Basil has chastised him, not only for his actions, but also for his character when he says, "Something has changed you completely" (*Dorian Censored* 122).

stating, "The fact that blushes may be excited in absolute solitude seems opposed to the view here taken, namely, that the habit originally arose from thinking about what others think of us" (Darwin 333). He goes on to claim that, "Shakespeare, therefore, erred when he made Juliet, who was not even by herself, say to Romeo (ii, 2):

> 'Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face;
>
> Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek,
>
> For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night.'" (Darwin 334)

Darwin's reading of Shakespeare interprets Juliet to be saying that if it were not dark out, she would be blushing. By pointing out that Juliet "was not even by herself" (334) Darwin contends that regardless of the darkness, because of Romeo's presence, Juliet should be blushing, which is why "Shakespeare, therefore, erred" in his description (334). However, Paul Ekman, the editor of the 1998 edition of Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions*, suggests that the lines could be read quite literally: instead, Juliet is saying that Romeo would see her blushing, if it were not for the darkness (Ekman 334). Regardless, Darwin does concede that blushing by oneself might occur under rare circumstances, admitting that, "when a blush is excited in solitude, the cause almost always relates to the thoughts of others about us" (334).

Wilde's thoughts on blushing appear to align with Darwin's: when the same lines from *Romeo and Juliet* appear in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, they are spoken by Sibyl Vane onstage, on the night that Dorian falls out of love with her. The lines foreshadow Dorian's fate, if we are to read them as Darwin does: when Basil tells Dorian "Something has changed you completely" (*Dorian Censored* 122), Dorian blushes and turns away as he is faced with the shameful possibility of social rejection. This is a critical turning-point in Dorian's life, as he will not blush out of shame, after this moment, throughout the rest of the novel. Basil's confrontation shames

Dorian into becoming more secretive about both his behavior and his portrait. Rather than motivating him to change his actions, shame fuels Dorian's paranoia about being found out by others, compelling him to hide what his peers might disapprove of. For example, there is a brief allusion to Dorian spending his time "in [a] sordid room of the little ill-famed tavern near the Docks, which under an assumed name, and in disguise, it was his habit to frequent" (*Dorian Censored* 145). The shame-driven secrecy of Dorian's life begins to mirror the "secret double life" that Wilde was forced to live because of his sexuality (Frankel 11). The compulsion to lie, hide, and act in secrecy reveals one of the central themes of the novel: the dichotomy between private and public shame.

Dorian's obsessions with checking his portrait and hiding it from others suggest that private shame is more bearable than public shame. The novel makes the case for considering the effects of shame on the psyche when it is experienced in complete secrecy, versus shame that is witnessed by others and particularly by people about whom we care. After the confrontation with Basil, Dorian decides that he must secure his portrait to eliminate the risk of one of his staff removing the temporary cover over the painting. He locks the portrait in his childhood playroom, in an apt metaphor for the trade-off of his eternal youth, so that:

> [T]he face painted on the canvas could grow bestial, sodden, and unclean. What did it matter? No one could see it […] He kept his youth – that was enough […] There was no reason that the future should be so full of shame […] Dorian locked the door, and put the key in his pocket. He felt safe now. No one would ever look upon the horrible thing. No eye but his would ever see his shame" (*Dorian Censored* 138-39).

The dichotomy between public and private shame supports the notion that shame is a social emotion that evolved out of humanity's need to belong to a group in order to survive. Therefore, the instinct to avoid public shame motivates human behavior more strongly than private shame. Thus, as long as no one has access to the material proof of Dorian's shame, he feels free to move about socially, despite the increasing rumors about his secret life.

Dorian's youth and beauty draw out hypocrisy in his peers: as long as he looks good, they assume that the same must be true about his actions. Darwin's theory on blushing reveals the aesthetic basis for humanity's morality: we do not want others to see us blushing because they might assume we have done something wrong. When blushing became associated, through habit, with immorality and shame, we also learned, unconsciously, that someone who has their gaze averted and cheeks reddened likely feels guilty about something. Is this not an aesthetic instinct informing our sense of ethics? Wilde reinforces this notion through Dorian's ability to get away with his ill-reputed behavior because, as humans, we assume that what is beautiful must be good and what is good is therefore beautiful.[28] As the years pass, Dorian carries on with his secret double life:

> Even those who had heard the most evil things against him […] could not believe anything to his dishonour when they saw him. He had always the look of one who had kept himself unspotted from the world. Men who talked grossly became silent when Dorian Gray entered the room. There was something in the purity of his face that rebuked them. His mere presence seemed to recall to them the memory of the innocence that they

[28] See Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999) for a compelling analysis of aesthetics and its relationship to our conceptualization of justice.

> had tarnished. They wondered how one so charming and graceful as he was could have escaped the stain of an age that was at once sordid and sensual. (*Dorian Censored* 144)

Dorian's admirers reveal the unconscious associations that youth evokes: "purity", "innocence", and beauty that have not been "tarnished" yet by "the stain" of the inevitable signs of aging. From an evolutionary perspective, it would make sense for youth to have an inherent aesthetic appeal, as reproduction is more likely to be successful at a younger age. This logic becomes problematic, however, if we consider the social construction of youth and beauty which encourages the othering of marginalized persons on the basis of appearance.[29]

Dorian is able to sustain his life of secrecy for many years without consequence: "Summer followed summer, and the yellow jonquils bloomed and died many times, and nights of horror repeated the story of their shame, but he was unchanged. No winter marred his face or stained his flower-like bloom" (*Dorian Censored* 155). The rumors catch up to him, however, when Basil confronts Dorian again about his reputation, claiming, "it is quite sufficient for you to enter a house, [and] for shame of some kind to follow after" (*Dorian Censored* 172). Basil seems to be the one person who can get under Dorian's skin: he asks Dorian, "I wonder do I know? Before I could answer that, I should have to see your soul" (*Dorian Censored* 172). Dorian surrenders his desperate fight for secrecy and decides to show Basil the portrait. It appears as though Dorian can no longer keep the shameful secret of the portrait to himself; when Basil mentions seeing his soul, Dorian feels "a terrible joy at the thought that someone else was to share his secret, and that the man who had painted the portrait that was the origin of all his shame was to be burdened for the rest of his life with the hideous memory of what he had done"

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[29] Dorian's beauty is associated with typically white features: he is described as having "ivory" skin (*Dorian Censored* 3), with "finely-curved scarlet lips […] frank blue eyes" and "crisp gold hair" (18).

(*Dorian Censored* 173). He replies, "I shall show you my soul. You shall see the thing that you fancy only God can see" (*Dorian Censored* 173). Dorian's reply acknowledges the strong association between religion, shame, and morality for many Victorians when he suggests that the portrait is a manifestation of his soul. Moreover, exposing his soul to Basil suggests that he is Dorian's most trusted confidante: he is the only person whom is given permission to see the changing portrait throughout the entirety of the novel.

When Dorian reveals his deformed portrait for the first time, he makes himself immensely vulnerable, as he is sharing a secret that has haunted him with shame for years. Moreover, he is asking one of his closest friends to witness, and help carry, the burden of his shame. Basil's response is horror, disgust, and pity for Dorian's soul; he begs Dorian to change and repent, exclaiming, "Good God, Dorian, what a lesson! […] Pray, Dorian, pray […] The prayer of your pride has been answered. The prayer of your repentance will be answered also […] You have done enough evil in your life. My God! don't [sic] you see that accursed thing leering at us?" (*Dorian Censored* 178). Dorian feels cornered and judged by Basil. Evidently, his instinctive response to the pain of social rejection is self-protective hatred and rage:

> Dorian Gray glanced at the picture, and suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him, as though it had been suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his ear by those grinning lips. The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him […] He rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table, and stabbing again and again. (*Dorian Censored* 179)

Dorian's violent reaction toward Basil suggests that acute emotional distress is caused when private shame becomes public, particularly if the result is social rejection. Dorian's worst fear is

realised when he exposes his deepest, most vulnerable secret to Basil, and his friend reacts with abject fear and the desire to change Dorian.

This is the catch-22 inherent to shame: the affect becomes too painful to bear on one's own, which motivates us to share our shame with others. This is the appeal of confession in the Catholic Church or of seeing a therapist; shame isolates us in our attempts to keep our secrets private, so when we unburden ourselves of our shame around those whom we can trust, the experience is reparative and cathartic. However, there is the risk of social rejection if we are to reveal what we are most ashamed of, which is why we are so prone to secrecy around shame in the first place. Dorian takes an immense risk when he shows his portrait to Basil and, unfortunately, Basil's negative response incites hatred and violence in Dorian. I think that Dorian kills Basil because he feels instinctively that his life is under threat when his friend reacts so adversely to the portrait's degradation. While Basil does not threaten Dorian's life directly when he reprimands Dorian's behavior, Dorian feels that his identity is under attack. He also feels the unbearable shame of sharing his deepest secret with a friend who refuses to accept him unconditionally. When Dorian is faced with the choice to either change his actions or be rejected by his closest friend, he feels as vulnerable as a cornered animal – "The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him" (*Dorian Censored* 179) – and he retaliates violently, perhaps even unconsciously, out of the instinct to survive.[30] I think that as social creatures, the threat of social isolation or public humiliation evokes the same affective response as a threat to one's life because, instinctively, we know that we rely on others in order to survive. Unfortunately for

[30] Darwin argues that instincts are just as vital as physical traits for the survival of both humans and animals; he puts forwards that, "It will be universally admitted that instincts are as important as corporeal structure for the welfare of each species" (257) in *On the Origin of Species*.

Dorian he kills one of his best friends in a moment of "mad passion" out of fear and shame; the result is the unraveling of his psyche in the remainder of the novel.

When Dorian kills Basil, he is not free from a guilty conscience, the way that he has lived his life for many years, since the fateful decision to allow his portrait to "bear the burden of his shame" (*Dorian Censored* 119). Basil's death haunts Dorian, unlike anything else he might have done over the years. That night he attends a party, "But at dinner he could not eat anything" (*Dorian Censored* 200). Dorian cannot shake the sense that he is being watched everywhere, and thoughts of Basil overcome him: "From time to time he seemed to see the eyes of Basil Hallward looking at him […] He wanted to be where no one would know who he was. He wanted to escape from himself" (*Dorian Censored* 213). Interestingly, the remorse that Dorian feels over killing Basil seems to open up a floodgate, giving Dorian access to the affect of shame that he has repressed within himself for so many years.

Dorian subsequently runs into Sibyl Vane's brother James who blames Dorian for his sister's death. James is about to kill Dorian out of revenge, but stops when he sees that Dorian has not aged after "eighteen years" (*Dorian Censored* 217), which makes him think that the man he has apprehended cannot possibly be his sister's former fiancé. Dorian escapes, but cannot forget the shame that he feels about Sibyl, though he has managed to do so for nearly two decades. He becomes obsessed with the thought of James Vane coming to find and kill him, to the point that he is haunted by James's face much like Basil's. At a party Dorian faints suddenly and, when he comes to, "a thrill of terror ran through him when he remembered that, pressed against the window of the conservatory, like a white handkerchief, he had seen the face of James Vane watching him" (*Dorian Censored* 226).

Why is it that Dorian feels shame and remorse after so many years of living without any concern for others? I think that everything changes when Basil sees Dorian's grotesquely transformed portrait. As I have discussed previously, Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions* posits that blushing due to shame is a corporeal habit that humans adapted due to primeval man's concern for how their physical appearance was perceived by others (327). Dorian's perfectly preserved youth and beauty, as well as the secret of his portrait, prevent him from feeling public shame. However, when Basil witnesses the painting and feels abject terror not only because of the portrait's physical transformation, but more importantly for what it reflects about the degeneration of Dorian's soul, the moment reignites Dorian's sense of social consciousness.

In *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks* the editors Philip E. Smith II and Michael S. Helfand point out that Wilde's notes suggest he was thinking about the relationship between social consciousness and evolution. In their commentary on the notebooks, Smith and Helfand contend that "two theories Wilde recorded in the notebooks best explain the action and meaning of the novel [*The Picture of Dorian Gray*]: the inheritance of acquired characteristics and Clifford's [31] related belief in a tribal self, a powerful social consciousness which preceded the development of the ego" (97). Smith and Helfand come up short, however, when they unpack their argument: the editors provide a few lines and one textual example to support their claim, focused on the ending of the novel. The editors interpret Dorian's death upon destroying his portrait as an affirmation of Wilde's belief in the evolutionary merits of the tribal self: they posit that "His attack on his symbolic self is turned by the more fundamental tribal self to an attack on his physical being. To kill the past is to kill the self. The spiritual and social self is stronger, the action suggests, than

[31] They are referring to the philosopher and mathematician William K. Clifford, whom Wilde quotes several times in his notes.

the individual, self-regarding reason" (Smith and Helfand 103). While I do agree with Smith and Helfand in their attention to the novel's gesture to tribal conscience, I think that a more nuanced reading is possible: one that considers the congruence between Wilde's and Darwin's theories on shame.

Wilde's notes provide context for my argument that Basil's discovery and rejection of the grotesque portrait evokes Dorian's social consciousness, which he has managed to repress and ignore through compulsive secrecy. Wilde's notes reveal his understanding of the socially constructed nature of morality, which has its evolutionary roots in group preservation; he explains:

> The basis of our moral Feelings may be found in the desire for self-preservation […] But this preservation of <u>self</u> is not the individual self but what Clifford calls the 'Tribal self': individualism, private property, and a private conscience, as well as the nom. [sic] case of the personal pronoun, do not appear till late in all civilizations: it is the Tribal self wh. [sic] is the first mainspring of action, and canon of right and wrong: a savage is not only hurt when a man treads on his own foot, but when the foot of the tribe is trodden on. (*Oxford Notebooks* 129-30; original underlining)

Clifford's notion of the "tribal self" supports the tenets of radical Darwinists such as Wilde, specifically the primal reliance on others in order to survive, and emphasizes social cohesion over individual competitiveness so that the species might thrive.

Dorian is able to avoid the affective discomfort of public shame for years because he allows his portrait to take the place of social consciousness: he realizes this at the end of the novel, reflecting that, "[The portrait] had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been

conscience" (*Dorian Censored* 253). Dorian's concern for others' opinions of him is reawakened when Basil sees the portrait and foreshadows the shift in Dorian's psyche from self-centered to socially self-aware. For the remainder of the novel, Dorian is haunted by what he has done to Basil and Sibyl, which reveals his rediscovered social empathy. Suddenly Dorian is self-conscious in social situations again, which is the basis for shame according to Darwin. For example, when Dorian meets a beautiful young woman, Hetty Merton, who wants to run away with him, he decides to break it off before he ruins her reputation. He tells Lord Henry, "I spared somebody […] Suddenly I determined to leave her as flower-like as I had found her" (*Dorian Censored* 239). Dorian's joy over his newfound compassion does not last long, however: when he re-evaluates his motives, he realizes that his kindness is motivated by hypocrisy and vanity. Dorian reveals the contradictory nature of tribal conscience when he reflects on why he chose to spare Hetty; he thinks to himself, "Vanity? Curiosity? Hypocrisy? Had there been nothing more in his renunciation than that? […] No. There had been nothing more. Through vanity he had spared her. In hypocrisy he had worn the mask of goodness. For curiosity's sake he had tried the denial of self. He recognised that now" (*Dorian Censored* 253). Through Dorian's character, Wilde reveals the paradoxical role of vanity in motivating social empathy.

The Picture of Dorian Gray reveals a more nuanced understanding of shame when it is read alongside Darwin's observations in *Expression of the Emotions*. Darwin's argument that shame arises from our primal concern for how our appearance is perceived by others aligns with Dorian's realization that his kindness toward Hetty was motivated by vanity rather than compassion. Like Darwin, Wilde suggests that social empathy, or the "tribal self," is founded in vanity, which is hypocritical when considering the dichotomy between self-oriented thought and social consciousness. However, Darwin's research also suggests that vanity requires empathic

thought: you have to consider others' perspectives in order to understand how they might perceive your appearance. Moreover, vanity is motivated by the wish for social approval and acceptance. The evolutionary instinct to fit in with the group in order to survive explains how shame became attached to morality over time: the "tribal self" came to understand that shame is a signal from the body, telling us that we are in danger of being rejected by the tribe. This somatic signal incites self-conscious thought as well as social regulation; when you feel ashamed, you check in with yourself and those around you to understand why. Is there something on your face? Have you violated a group norm? Vanity is matched by empathy as the mind and body seek out internal and social cues in order to avoid expulsion from the tribe, an outcome that meant certain death for our primal ancestors.

Dorian wonders if the solution to his overwhelming guilt is to confess, thinking to himself, "it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement" (*Dorian Censored* 252), but this option seems unbearable. He decides that he will not own up to what he has done, and chooses to destroy the portrait instead. Dorian realizes that, "There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The picture itself – that was evidence. He would destroy it […] It would kill the past, and when that was dead he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and, without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the [knife], and stabbed the picture" (*Dorian Censored* 253). Dorian seems to think that he can destroy the material representation of his conscience, and return to his carefree life of complete self-absorption. Unfortunately, when Dorian stabs the painting, it has the opposite effect: Dorian dies and the portrait regains its beauty. Further, Dorian's body appears to age and decay suddenly, taking on the grotesque nature of portrait; his corpse is described as "withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage" (*Dorian Censored* 254). I agree with Smith and Helfand's

interpretation of the end of the novel where they contend that Dorian's "attack on his symbolic self is turned by the more fundamental tribal self to an attack on his physical being" (103). I would go further, though, and argue that Dorian's death points to the necessity of social empathy and belonging for survival, despite the havoc that shame wreaks on the psyche. The death of conscience means the death of shame: it might sound ideal because shame is uncomfortable, even painful. However, the absence of shame causes the subsequent demise of empathy. We cannot feel empathy for others if we do not experience public shame at least periodically throughout our lives.

Dorian's death suggests that we cannot survive without shame or empathy because they are traits that we evolved as social beings. Group cohesion encourages reproduction and survival more than isolation and individualism. Moreover, the novel's conclusion thinks through the implications of tribal conscience for the individual if the "tribe" is unequal, and the group's norms are set by a powerful few. This is one of the consequences of post-tribal, post-agrarian societies such as the increasingly industrialized world that Dorian and his peers inhabit during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Government takes over as the tribal conscience and what is "best" for the masses is enforced by law. Wilde experienced the consequences of this imbalance in social justice firsthand: because the norms of Victorian society dictated that his sexuality was unacceptable, Wilde was forced to live a duplicitous, secret lifestyle that resulted in imprisonment. When Dorian dies, perhaps Wilde is mourning the death of the part of himself that lived like Dorian. Both Wilde and Dorian realize their forbidden desires by hiding in the margins of society; unfortunately, once others find out, they both end up getting punished for violating group norms.

The first part of Section Two of this thesis will explore the impact of shame on marginalized persons, as I move away from the Victorian context into present-day identity politics. Shame incites empathy and subsequently social order. The idea of social order sounds appealing when we think of societies grounded in ethics and justice. However, it is important to consider how much of an individual's agency and identity is subsumed by group norms, particularly in societies that reinforce an unequal balance of power. Further, I will reveal the ways in which Darwin's and Wilde's theories on empathy and shame anticipate and add complexity to the research on identity formation and social consciousness by psychologists Jean Piaget and Silvan Tomkins that emerged in the 1960s. Finally, I turn to Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) to distinguish guilt from shame, both physiologically and cognitively. Freud's work, along with contemporary neuroscience, informs questions raised by Darwin's research such as why blushing might be a protective involuntary reaction.

Section Two: Freud, Guilt versus Shame, and the Ethics of Embodiment

Part One

Symptoms of Society: Distinguishing Shame from Guilt and Shyness

"[W]hat we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery."

-Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

In Section One, I make the argument that works by Charles Darwin, particularly *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), inform Oscar Wilde's writing on the connection between shame and social consciousness. I provide textual evidence to support my claim through a close reading of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (both the 1890 uncensored and 1891 censored versions). The first part of this Section will reveal the pervasiveness of Darwin's research as it makes its way into Sigmund Freud's exploration of the link between humanity's "sense of guilt" (*Civilization* 70) and the origins of civilization. More than fifty years after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Freud takes up the question of the primal origins of human civilization in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Subsequently, Freud elaborates on the claims he made in *Totem and Taboo* as he attempts to explain in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) the overabundance of guilt that afflicts his contemporaries.

What I find compelling about the juxtaposition of Darwin's and Freud's writing is that Darwin writes about shame extensively and touches on guilt briefly, while the inverse is true for Freud's works which focus on guilt almost exclusively. Moreover, both theorists identify the tension between the individual's desires and the norms of society as a source of affect that expresses itself as shame (according to Darwin) and guilt (in Freud's view). Together, the two theorists' works help distinguish the difference between guilt and shame, a complex task as

perhaps exemplified by both writers' reticence to take on the comparison of such similar affective states.

Future affect studies will benefit from a precise distinction between shame and guilt, so that they are not interpreted as interchangeable when reading the underlying affect of texts. To do so, I will ask the following: are guilt and shame separate and distinct emotions, or do they influence one another? Do guilt and shame exist on a spectrum of intensity, where shame is a stronger expression of guilt, or vice versa? Finally, is it possible to experience shame without guilt, or guilt without shame?

My inquiry into the distinction between shame and guilt through the theories of Darwin and Freud is supported by Michael Lewis's research (2011). An expert in early childhood development and pediatric psychiatry, Lewis contends that:

> Until recently, the self-conscious emotions have been poorly studied[32]. Little research on their meaning, how they develop, and how individual differences arises have been conducted, even though Charles Darwin discussed them in some detail as far back as his book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. Darwin's observations were not followed up by neither psychoanalysis nor developmental psychopathology until about 40 years ago [in the 1970s]. In part, this was due to Freud's focus on guilt and on the confusion between such self-conscious emotions as embarrassment, guilt and shame. (*Self-Conscious Emotions* 1; my italics)

Lewis's observations gesture to the pervasiveness of Freudian theory in the field of psychology, at least up until the 1970s when research and theory began to question, subvert, and depart from

[32] According to Lewis's earlier research, *Shame: The Exposed Self* (1992).

Freud's ideas. Considering Silvan Tomkins's undeniable influence on affect theory,[33] it is imperative that we return to and elucidate the antecedents of his research, such as Darwin's and Freud's works on emotions. Subsequently, we can discover new lines of inquiry into Tomkins's studies, as well as within affect studies in general.

I will start with Freud's theory of guilt, explicated in *Civilization and Its Discontents*[34]. Here he identifies society as the source of affective tension within the individual that manifests itself as guilt. While social living promotes survival by offering protection, pooling of resources, and comradery, one of its consequences is that the desires of the individual come second to the normative constraints of the group. Freud asserts that "what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery, and […] we should be much happier if we gave it up and returned to primitive conditions" (*Civilization* 33). Thus he idealizes the past by suggesting that there was a point in history when humans were "happier" because they were not burdened by the obligations, taboos, and laws of civilization. The assumption that earlier societies were "primitive" in comparison to Europe in the 1930s reveals, of course, Freud's Eurocentric approach to studying human behavior.

Freud applies evolutionary theory, specifically his understanding of Darwin's theory of instinct,[35] to explain the source of tension between the self and society. Freud identifies this dissonance as "cultural frustration":

> [I]t is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction

[33] See pages 4-7 of the introduction of this thesis for a comprehensive overview of Tomkins's writings on shame, as well as the influence of his research on contemporary affect theory (from the 1990s onward).
[34] See chapters VII and VIII in particular.
[35] Darwin's theory of instinct first appears in Chapter VII of *Origin of the Species* (1859).

> (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts. This 'cultural frustration' dominates the large field of social relationships between human beings. As we already know it is the cause of the hostility against which all civilizations have to struggle […] It is not easy to understand how it can become possible to deprive an instinct of satisfaction. Nor is doing so without danger. If the loss it not compensated for economically, one can be certain that serious disorders will ensue. (*Civilization* 44)

The "serious disorders" that Freud alludes to are what he calls "the neuroses" such as anxiety and obsessive behavior. He suggests that the neuroses arise from "cultural frustration" based on his observation that "It was discovered that a person becomes neurotic because he cannot tolerate the amount of frustration which society imposes on him in the service of its cultural ideals, and it was inferred from this that the abolition or reduction of those demands would result in a return to possibilities of happiness" (*Civilization* 34). [36] Freud turns to evolutionary theory[37] to trace the possible origins of civilization so that he might explain humanity's instinctive drive to live as a collective, despite the "sense of guilt" (*Civilization* 70) that manifests itself in the individual's psyche as a consequence. Living as a group must offer up an evolutionary advantage that overrides the individual's instinct to avoid and ameliorate uncomfortable emotions such as guilt.

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[36] See Freud's *Selected Papers on Hysteria and Other Psychoneuroses* (1912) for further reading on his conceptualization of the neuroses.

[37] Darwin is not referenced explicitly in either the text or the bibliography of *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Instead, Freud references James Jasper Atkinson's "Primal Law" (1903). However, Atkinson's work on early civilization is based on Darwin's theory of the emergence of "civilized nations" which appears in *The Descent of Man* (1874). Moreover, Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) acknowledges Darwin's *Descent of Man* directly as the basis for his theory of the etiology of incest taboos.

Freud contends that "men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness" (*Civilization* 58).[38] Freud's understanding of the origins of civilization is informed by Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1874) and James Jasper Atkinson's "Primal Law" (1903; see footnote 35). Freud's assumption that humanity is inherently aggressive informs his hypothesis regarding the origins of civilization; he deliberates:

> What means does civilization employ in order to inhibit the aggressiveness which opposes it, to make it harmless, to get rid of it, perhaps? […] This we can study in the history of the development of the individual. What happens in him to render his desire for aggression innocuous? […] His aggressiveness is introjected, internalized; it is, in point of fact, sent back to where it came from – that is, it is directed towards his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of 'conscience', is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals. The tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him

[38] By contrast, radical Darwinists such as Oscar Wilde posit that humanity's survival is predicated on socially conscious actions that promote group cohesion, or what Wilde calls "tribal conscience" (*Oxford Notebooks* 129-30). See Part Two of Section One of this thesis for an extensive discussion of Wilde's radical Darwinism.

> to watch over it [the super-ego], like a garrison in a conquered city. (*Civilization* 70-1)

Freud's theory suggests that the super-ego emerged in the individual's unconscious mind in response to the demands and restrictions that society imposes on behavior. He speculates that the external authority of the governing body of civilization became internalized within the individual's psyche. This resulted in the development of the super-ego or our sense of "conscience" (*Civilization* 70) that evaluates our thoughts, emotions, desires, and actions. Further, Freud argues that human nature's instinct for aggression is mitigated by the super-ego, but the repression of aggression toward others results in "tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego" which expresses itself as "the sense of guilt" (*Civilization* 70). Freud's notion of the super-ego sounds similar to Darwin's theory of "self-attention" or self-conscious thought provoked by shame.

How might we begin to distinguish the expression of guilt from shame? The physiological differences between the two affects seem like a good place to start. While Darwin contends that the corporeal reaction to the violation of group norms manifests itself as shame, Freud asserts that "civilization" incites a pervasive "sense of guilt" due to the constant struggle between the desires of the individual and the mores of society (*Civilization* 70). Therefore, we might say that shame is an involuntary response that originates in the body when we blush, which provokes self-conscious thought (according to Darwin). Guilt begins with cognition, specifically the awareness that human instincts are in competition with social constraints, fostering a perpetual "sense of guilt" (in Freud's view).

Darwin argues that guilt is one of the myriad sources of shame, which he attributes to a somatic reaction due to "moral causes" (*Expression of the Emotions* 331). He contends that guilt

and shame are different affective states and that guilt can incite the bodily reaction of shame, which is why the two sensations are ambiguous. However, Darwin points to an important distinction: guilt does not provoke blushing, but shame does. He observes that, "It is not the sense of guilt, but the thought that others think or know us to be guilty which crimsons the face" (Darwin 331). Perhaps the difference between guilt and shame is that guilt is not grounded in vanity the way that shame is. Rather, guilt arises from the cognitive dissonance that is a consequence of social obedience and the awareness that what we have done or what we want to do violates the social contract. Therefore, guilt stems from the evaluation of oneself in relation to society, whereas shame is predicated on society's opinion of the self, particularly the aesthetics of the body. Perhaps guilt is not as cognitively sophisticated as shame: guilt is grounded in obedience and rules[39], whereas shame relies upon the complex mental processes of self-reflection and awareness. I returned to Darwin for clues as to how to read the expression of guilt versus shame through the language of the body.

What I failed to notice during my initial research on shame is that Darwin elaborates on the expression of guilt in Chapter XI, "Disdain – Contempt – Disgust – Guilt – Pride, etc. – Helplessness – Patience – Affirmation and Negation" (250). He devotes less than two pages to the study of guilt and then moves on to pride, perhaps an indication of Darwin's uncertainty as to where guilt fits relative to the other emotions. He contends that:

> My correspondents almost unanimously answer in the affirmative to my query, whether the expression of guilt and deceit can be recognized amongst the various races of man […] In the cases in which details are given, the eyes are almost always referred to. The guilty man is said to avoid looking at his accuser, or to

[39] Behavioral conditioning acquired through repetition (Skinner).

> give him stolen looks. […] The restless movements of the eyes apparently follow, as will be explained when we treat of blushing, from the guilty man not enduring to meet the gaze of his accuser. (*Expression* 261)

The intractable distinction between guilt and shame is complicated by the fact that even Darwin seems unable to make up his mind about the nature of each affective state. He suggests that the resistance to make eye contact associated with guilt "will be explained when we treat of blushing" in Chapter XIII on shame (*Expression* 261), but this account only leads to more questions. How does the body's reaction to shame explain the physiology of guilt? Does guilt induce shame which then causes blushing and the subsequent inability to make eye contact with others? Or does shame provoke a sense of guilt through the similar action of averting the gaze? I think that Darwin makes an important distinction when he observes that in the case of guilt, "the eyes are almost always referred to" (261). Moreover, he does not provide evidence of blushing in response to guilt alone.

Importantly, Darwin observes guilty behavior in young children before they have developed the capacity to blush. In his brief writing on guilt he states that:

> I have observed a guilty expression, without a shade of fear, in some of my own children at a very early age. In one instance the expression was unmistakably clear in a child two years and seven months old, and led to the detection of his little crime. It was shown, as I record in my notes made at the time, by an unnatural brightness in the eyes, and by an odd, affected manner, impossible to describe. (Darwin 261)

Darwin's observations on infantile guilt prompt me to question whether or not guilt is a predecessor of shame. Perhaps it is a developmental milestone that must be reached before

children have the cognitive capacity to express shame? This possibility is supported by Darwin's contention that shyness appears in infants long before the blushing reaction to shame does. I wonder, then, if shyness and guilt might be correlated; Darwin's account of infantile shyness suggests that the two affective states provoke similar somatic responses. He states that:

> In one of my own children, when two years and three months old, I saw a trace of what certainly appeared to be shyness, directed towards myself after an absence from home of only a week. This was shown not by a blush, but by the eyes being for a few minutes slightly averted from me. I have noticed on other occasions that shyness or shamefacedness and real shame are exhibited in the eyes of young children before they have acquired the power of blushing. (*Expression* 329-30)

When juxtaposed, it appears as though infantile shyness and guilt elicit the same reaction, to avoid making eye contact with others. Notably, both shyness and guilt are social emotions just like shame, as the body's reaction is elicited by the eyes of onlookers; therefore, all three affects are predicated on the precarious nature of relationality. Social interaction relies on the affirmative gaze (or ear) that indicates attention and engagement from both sides of a dialogue for it to be "felicitous" (Loxley 9-10). The breaking off of eye contact on one side creates an impasse in communication, a refusal to meet the other halfway, and the logical reaction is to avert the gaze in response. Moreover, Darwin's observations on the corporeal reactions associated with the affects suggest that shame lives in the face, while guilt and shyness occupy the eyes. This distinction is vital as it gives us signifiers by which we can read and interpret the body: the blushing face signals shame, while the avoidance of eye contact indicates guilt or shyness.

Contemporary researchers in childhood developmental neuroscience, such as Michael Lewis,[40] provide evidence in support of Darwin's contention that infants younger than two-years-old do not blush. Darwin's explanation posits that "It appears that the mental powers of infants are not as yet sufficiently developed to allow of their blushing" (*Expression* 311). In the previous section of this thesis, I argue that children do not acquire the capacity for self-conscious emotions like shame until they reach the developmental milestone of "theory of mind" (Piaget) around age three to four. Contemporary research in developmental psychology, such as Laura Berk's *Infants, Children, and Adolescents* (2008), continues to utilize Piaget's notion of theory of mind that he put forward in the 1920s. Berk explains that "By age 3, children realize that thinking takes place inside their heads and that a person can think about something without seeing, touching, or talking about it" (342). As children begin to acquire language, they "start to reflect on their own thought processes. They begin to construct a *theory of mind*, or coherent set of ideas about mental activities. This understanding is also called **metacognition**, or 'thinking about thought' […] [which] is made possible by language" (Berk 342-43; original italics and bolding). Therefore, my argument that blushing does not occur in children until they acquire the capacity for self-conscious thought aligns with Berk's research on childhood emotions.

Berk contends that "Self-conscious emotions appear in the middle of the second year, as 18- to 24-month-olds become firmly aware of the self as a separate, unique individual. Toddlers show shame and embarrassment by lowering their eyes, hanging their heads, and hiding their faces with their hands. They show guiltlike [sic] reactions, too" (257). Importantly, Berk does not mention the occurrence of blushing in 18- to 24-month-olds; instead, she suggests that

[40] See Lewis's "The Self-Conscious Emotions" (2011) and *Shame: The Exposed Self* (1992).

children younger than three "show shame" differently, through the avoidance of eye contact and hiding of the face. However, I argue that Berk is observing guilt, shyness, or embarrassment in two-year-olds rather than shame, based on the absence of blushing. Moreover, Berk observes the emergence of "guiltlike [sic]" behaviors in two-year-olds (257), which occur before the capacity to blush develops. Berk's research thus aligns with Darwin's study of children and infants in *Expression of the Emotions*. Together, both theorists' works provide evidence for my argument that guilt and shame express themselves in physiologically distinct ways; specifically, shame affects the face while guilt and shyness influence the eyes. Corporeal signifiers offer up a way to read texts and performances for their underlying affect in a more precise manner. Guilt and shame are associated with similar thoughts and sensations: the feeling of having done something wrong, a fixation on particular memories, and general somatic discomfort. Therefore, the language of the body helps discern Freud's cognition-centered explication of guilt and shame in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

Shame versus Guilt: The Evolution of Affect

One of Freud's most compelling observations is hidden in a footnote to *Civilization and Its Discontents* in which he suggests that the origin of civilization is grounded in shame[41]. He argues there that "The fateful process of civilization would thus have set in with man's adoption of an erect posture […] a consequence of man's raising himself from the ground, of his assumption of an upright gait [is that] this made his genitals, which were previously concealed, visible and in need of protection, and so provoked feelings of shame in him" (*Civilization* 46). Freud's hypothesis is enticing because it provides a possible explanation for the "strong desire

[41] Footnote 1 on page 46.

for concealment" that Darwin observes in the shame reaction following blushing (*Expression* 319). If humanity's feelings of shame are founded on the instinct to cover one's exposed genitals, we might infer that shame is an acquired habit that preserves the species by inciting the reflex of covering oneself when the body is especially vulnerable, such as when it is naked and exposed to others.

If the somatic response to the body's naked exposure is blushing and covering of oneself, then why is blushing expressed predominantly by the face and not the genitals? Darwin grapples with this same problem in *Expression of the Emotions*; he states that, "It is a rather curious question why, in most cases the face, ears, and neck alone redden, inasmuch as the whole surface of the body often tingles and grows hot" (314). Darwin suggests that blushing in the face is due to its "having been habitually exposed" (314), an assertion he supports with the observation that "men of certain races, who habitually go nearly naked, often blush over their arms and chests and even down to their waists" (314). Therefore, it is quite possible that our ancestors used to experience blushing in the genitals, but after thousands of years of covering the body with clothing to varying degrees, the face became the site of shame's expression. Freud's assertion that shame is predicated on the instinctive desire to cover oneself is supported by the etymology of the word "shame." The Oxford English Dictionary explicates:

> Etymology: Common Germanic: Old English sc(e)amu, sc(e)ǫmu, corresponds to Old Frisian scome, Old Saxon skama, Middle Dutch schame (modern Dutch schaam- in compounds), Old High German scama (Middle High German, modern German scham), Old Norse skǫmm with unexplained gemination (Swedish, Danish skam), Gothic *skama (inferred from the derivative skaman (reflexive) to be ashamed) < Germanic *skamō […] Outside Germanic no root of

> corresponding form and sense has been found, but many scholars assume a pre-Germanic *skem- , variant of *kem- to cover (Germanic *hem- : ham- as in hame), 'covering oneself' being the natural expression of shame. ("Shame" 1)

Importantly, then, the word for shame has its derivations in the pre-Germanic term for "covering oneself" which the OED identifies as "the natural expression of shame" ("Shame" 1). However, if shame is aroused by the instinct to cover one's vulnerable body, why does the body draw so much attention to itself through the blushing face that is impossible to ignore? I argue that contemporary psychophysiological research offers persuasive responses to the questions that Freud's and Darwin's works incite.

The problem of why shame is expressed primarily by the face might be explained by contemporary neuroscience. Nancy Kanwisher and Galit Yovel (2006) provide extensive evidence for the existence of a specialized region of the human brain, the fusiform face area (FFA), which is involved in the recognition and interpretation of human faces. Their study explains that:

> Faces are among the most important visual stimuli we perceive, informing us not only about a person's identity, but also about their mood, sex, age and direction of gaze. The ability to extract this information within a fraction of a second of viewing a face is important for normal social interactions and has probably played a critical role in the survival of our primate ancestors. Considerable evidence from behavioural, neuropsychological and neurophysiological investigations supports the hypothesis that humans have specialized cognitive and neural mechanisms dedicated to the perception of faces (the face-specificity hypothesis). Here, we review the literature on a region of the human brain that appears to play a key role

> in face perception, known as the fusiform face area (FFA). (Kanwisher and Yovel 1)

The fact that, as humans, we are experts in reading the expressions of human faces makes it logical that a protective, visceral reaction would manifest itself in the face. Therefore, our brains are hardwired to read and respond to others' blushing. Why is this important? Neuropsychiatrist Enrique Jadresic (2014) makes a provocative argument that shame might involve a process of social mirroring that occurs between the blusher and observer(s). He puts forward that:

> An interesting phenomenon to note is that of 'mirroring' in interpersonal relationships […] While my patient was blushing and thus manifesting his desire to go unnoticed, my striving to ignore what I was seeing could be viewed as the observer – myself doing the same thing as the observed. Modern neuroscience terms *mirror neurons* a certain type of neurons that are activated both when a certain activity is performed and when another individual is observed performing the same activity. These neurons are presumed to play an important part in capacities such as empathy and imitation, which are crucial to success in relating socially with others. (Jadresic 91; footnote; original italics)

Jadresic's observations support the argument made in the previous section of this thesis, specifically that shame is a social emotion that provokes self-conscious thought in relation to others' perspectives. However, my thoughts there were missing a crucial component: the fact that blushing can induce empathic thought in both the observer and the individual blushing.

Jadresic's argument about the role of the socially contagious nature of blushing is a novel way of approaching Darwin's research on shame. In *Expression of the Emotions*, Darwin acknowledges the phenomenon of blushing on another's account: that is, blushing out of

empathy. He claims, "So strong, also, is the power of sympathy that a sensitive person […] will sometimes blush at a flagrant breach of etiquette by a perfect stranger, though the act may in no way concern her[42]" (*Expression* 332). Yet Darwin does not go on to explain why witnesses of someone blushing will blush and avert their gaze in response beyond his gesture to "the power of sympathy" (332). Paul Ekman, the editor of the 1998 edition of *Expression of the Emotions*, points out this gap in Darwin's theory, though he does not offer much in the way of further explanation. Ekman contends: "Darwin remains consistent in not considering the communicative value of the blush, although he tells us it is caused by people paying attention to our appearance, especially our faces" (334; footnote). What is communicated by the blushing face? If we consider the effect of mirror neurons (Jadresic), arguably the blush demands attention and avoidance simultaneously.

Blushing is a striking visual stimulus that arrests the eyes of onlookers. However, if we agree that blushing arouses the desire to conceal oneself, "to go unnoticed" (91) as Jadresic puts it, why does the body draw more attention to itself with the blush? Jadresic's solution of the influence of "'mirroring' in interpersonal relationships" (91) is convincing: due to the power of mirror neurons, some human behaviors are particularly vicarious, such as blushing, yawning, and laughing. This is because of the activation of "*mirror neurons* [which are] a certain type of neurons that are activated both when a certain activity is performed and when another individual is observed performing the same activity" (Jadresic 91; original italics). Mirror neurons facilitate

[42] It is worth noting Darwin's use of the pronoun "her" in this example, as he defaults to man/men and he/him, which indicates his bias toward the masculine as the prototype for normativity against which all other bodies are measured. I wonder if he attaches a feminine identity to the idea of "a sensitive person" who blushes out of sympathy, either consciously or unconsciously. Moreover, Darwin's observation that "Women blush much more than men" (311) is important to keep in mind as I discuss the effect of the gaze on the marginalized body.

social learning through mimesis, making it logical that they would be involved in the mental processes of self-awareness that motivate blushing and shame.

If we think of the blush as a communicative process, as Paul Ekman suggests, how might we consider blushing as a dialogue between bodies? I think that it is helpful to ground this question in an example. Let us think of the experience of walking in on someone who is nude or using the toilet. If their involuntary response is to blush and cover themselves, it is because their body is communicating, "I am in danger, I am vulnerable, I need to hide" to the brain via biofeedback. Subsequently, the blushing and hiding response tells the observer, "Don't look at me." Due to the power of mirror neurons, the witness will blush in response to the visual stimulus of another person's blushing face. When the observer mirrors the blushing response, their body gives them the same message that "I am vulnerable" and "Don't look at me" through biofeedback. Importantly, this triggers the same impulse to go unseen. Therefore, we might infer that blushing provokes the protective behavior of social mirroring, so that the individual's feeling of exposure is mitigated by the fact that others are compelled to look away.

I think that the phenomenon of mirror neurons explains the affective discomfort and impulse to look away that we feel when we accidentally violate someone's privacy, such as the example of walking in on someone nude or using the toilet. If we did not feel shame in reaction to the expression of another person's shame, we would likely stare out of fascination, particularly due to arresting visual stimulus of the blush. Arguably, this logic supports the notion that blushing evolved in humans in order to support social cohesion, which aligns with my earlier argument about the importance of self-consciousness in group living. Social mirroring ensures that the person blushing is protected as much as possible from the invasive gaze of others by compelling them to look away. This line of thinking supports Freud's hypothesis that human

shame has its origins in the adoption of upright posture which exposed the genitals, making them a source of vulnerability that incited the instinct to cover oneself (*Civilization* 46). Moreover, the notion that shame is grounded in the body's exposure, particularly in relation to the genitals, explains why nudity and the body continue to evoke such a visceral reaction in many people. This is reinforced by social norms that govern which bodies (or parts of the body) *ought to* provoke shame.

The phenomenon of mirror neurons also offers a new approach to the question of why infants do not blush. Considering the vulnerability and absolute reliance on adults that is inherent to infancy, it is logical that children under the age of three do not blush. Infants rely on their caregiver(s) to change their diapers and to wash them. Imagine if infants experienced shame every time that their naked bodies were exposed: diaper-changing or bathing would become affectively excruciating due to the constant instinct to cover or hide one's body from the view of others. Moreover, if infants blushed in response to being seen nude, their caregiver would blush and turn away too due to the involuntary compulsion to mimic somatic expressions that is incited by mirror neurons. Even if the caregiver does blush in response to the infant's nudity, because children under the age of three cannot blush (not even through imitation), they do not experience the instinct to cover oneself that the shame reaction incites. Therefore, we can see the evolutionary appeal to this argument, as the lack of blushing in infants promotes survival by fostering their attachment to their caregivers upon whom they depend completely during the first two years of life. Attachment would be difficult, if not impossible, to foster if both the infant and the caregiver were subjected to the discomfort of shame in response to the infant's nudity or bodily functions.

Due to the communicative and vicarious nature of blushing, it is important to consider the ethics of the gaze, particularly between individuals where an imbalance of power exists. The body is the site of autonomy and oppression, therefore, embodiment must be taken into account when contemplating the ethics of relationality. Thus far, I have argued for the positive social consequences of shame. Moving forward, I will reveal aspects of shame that perpetuate systemic inequality, such as when the act of shaming is used to reinforce hegemonic notions of normativity.

Shame and the Ethics of the Gaze

Euro-Western hegemony imbues racialized, disabled, queer, gendered, immigrant, and economically precarious persons with shame by reinforcing the notion that their bodies are non-normative and therefore abject in some way. These are the bodies that we are socialized to look away from. If we blush and avert our gaze from someone, we convey to them that "Your body causes me to feel shame." Subsequently, that person will blush and look away involuntarily because of the phenomenon of social mirroring. Therefore, the social norms that marginalize identities attached to particular bodies are reinforced through relationality. There is a constant threat of being confronted by shame through interaction with others. Whether we are aware of it or not, our bodies are in dialogue with one another. There is an ethics of the gaze that I had not considered before: the communicative notion of the averted gaze in response to marginalized persons.

We might feel ashamed that our body is imposing normativity onto us through the involuntary reaction of shame. However, we can respond ethically to our body's demands by reminding ourselves to return our gaze to the other, despite the urge to look away. We cannot

engage with others if we refuse to meet their eyes and we deny the existence of particular bodies, usually the bodies that are deemed non-normative, when we ignore them. Through looking we communicate to the other that "You exist, and you are worthy of my attention."

The second part of this section considers the ethics of bodies in relation to one another through a reading of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* (2014). I will reveal the congruence between Rankine's text and Jean Piaget's concept of "theory of mind," a developmental stage in human cognition that is integral for empathic thought and self-reflection (Berk 342). According to developmental psychology, we must acquire the capacity for theory of mind in order to experience "self-conscious emotions" such as shame (Berk 257). Therefore, *Citizen* inspires the reader to reflect upon their own relationship to race and to consider their own complicity in structures of power that perpetuate marginalization. This is not to say that Rankine's text shames the reader; rather, the text *performs* the cognitive and affective intricacies of shame through poetry, prose, and artwork.

Section Two: Freud, Guilt versus Shame, and the Ethics of Embodiment

Part Two

Performing Shame: Identity Politics, Theory of Mind, and Ethical Relationality

"because white men can't

police their imagination

black men are dying"

-Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*

Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014) addresses the ethics of the gaze in relation to embodiment through the text's amalgamation of poetry, criticism, art and photography from various artists, and personal anecdotes. Rankine exposes the affectively charged interactions that occur every day for her as a woman of color moving through public space in the United States (she is an English professor at the University of Southern California). Thus far, I have argued that shame is not only an uncomfortable emotion, but also a necessary affective experience in the development of empathy. However, it is equally important to consider how cultural norms imbue particular bodies with shame disproportionately.

Shame can be used as a tool of oppression, and the act of shaming is a performance that maintains the status quo by targeting bodies that transgress hegemonic constructions of normativity[43]. For example, *Citizen* recounts an anecdote from an American man of color to explicate how shame is used by law enforcement to police particular bodies. Entitled "Stop-and-Frisk," [44] the narrator begins with the constant fear of police interaction that people of color in

[43] Normativity is itself a performance that is enforced by hegemony: notions of what the body can be or do are forms of bio-power.
[44] Section VI of *Citizen* focuses on the fraught relationship between men of color and law enforcement in the US by incorporating news transcripts and individuals' personal anecdotes.

the US face daily: "I left my client's house knowing I would be pulled over. I knew. I just knew. I opened my briefcase on the passenger seat, just so they could see. Yes officer rolled around on my tongue, which grew out of a bell that could never ring because its emergency was a tolling I was meant to swallow" (*Citizen* 105). The police are the ones to be feared, rather than relied upon, for visible minorities (particularly black men[45]) in America. The narrator continues, "The charge the officer decided on was exhibition of speed. I was told, after the fingerprinting, to stand naked. I stood naked. It was only then I was instructed to dress, to leave, to walk all those miles back home" (*Citizen* 109). As the earlier discussion of Darwin's research illustrated, shame originates from self-consciousness about our appearance; therefore, there are not many scenarios that would be more shame-inducing than having to stand naked in front of strangers. The police weaponize the act of shaming in this instance in order to undo the autonomy of the black male subject by debasing him. He is vulnerable, nude. Moreover, the arbitrary nature of the punishment is a performance of power: a warning to black Americans that the police have ultimate authority over their corporeal freedom.

Citizen also performs an interrogation of structural racism through the reiteration of the phrase, "And still you are not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description" throughout the "Stop-and-Frisk" anecdote (*Citizen* 105-09). Racism is perpetuated in America through structures of power such as the justice system, so that every time a black man is arrested, systemic racism is reiterated and revalidated. Black men will continue to be "the guy fitting the description" who must be feared

[45] "Black males aged 15-34 were nine times more likely than other Americans to be killed by law enforcement officers last year [2016], according to data collected for The Counted, an effort by the Guardian to record every such death. They were also killed at four times the rate of young white men" (Swaine and McCarthy 1).

and incarcerated, over and over again, when people of color are portrayed as the prototypical criminal. Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown were both shot and killed by white men because they were perceived as "the guy fitting the description." Rankine's poem used as the epigraph to this section reminds us that "black men are dying […] because white men can't / police their imagination" (*Citizen* 135). "Police" works as a pivot because it is the police who justify killing black men, inciting the imaginations of white men who come to see people of color as criminals.

Citizen also reveals the way that racialized bodies paradoxically become either invisible or "hypervisible" (49) under the white gaze. Rankine considers the ethics of relationality, grounded in the understanding that our interactions with one another are always predicated on perceptions associated with particular bodies. We must contemplate what the gaze does to the subject, especially when there is an imbalance of power between the observer and who is seen. In Rankine's case, her gendered and racialized body elicits reactions from others that reflect back shame, abjection, and indifference. It is a privilege to embody the status quo: in the US, white, cisgender, male, and non-disabled bodies are portrayed as standards of normativity, whereas anybody who deviates from the prototype incites social shaming. Rankine provides a brief example of an everyday encounter that leaves her feeling invisible:

> In line at the drugstore it's finally your turn, and then it's not as he walks in front of you and puts his things on the counter. The cashier says, Sir, she was next.
>
> When he turns to you he is truly surprised.
>
> Oh my God, I didn't see you.
>
> You must be in a hurry, you offer.
>
> No, no, no, I really didn't see you. (*Citizen* 77)

It is a small moment that Rankine describes, but it speaks volumes about the politics of bodies in contact with one another and the intersection of privilege. The man who makes Rankine feel invisible is portrayed as moving through public space without the hyper-vigilant self-awareness of one's body in relation to others that is inherent to the experience of visibly racialized, disabled, or gendered persons, for example. When the man says to Rankine "No, no, no, I really didn't see you," he means it; her presence does not register as important enough to engage his full attention.

Conversely, *Citizen* divulges moments when Rankine's presence is reduced to a stereotype when a stranger's gaze sees nothing except for her race. The experience is dehumanizing. Rankine recalls:

> The new therapist specializes in trauma counseling. You have only ever spoken on the phone […] At the front door the bell is a small round disc that you press firmly. When the door finally opens, the woman standing yells, at the top of her lungs, Get away from my house! What are you doing in my yard? It's as if a wounded Doberman pinscher or a German shepherd has gained the power of speech. And though you back up a few steps, you manage to tell her you have an appointment. You have an appointment? she spits back. Then she pauses. Everything pauses. Oh, she says, followed by, oh, yes, that's right. I am sorry. (*Citizen* 18)

There is nothing comically ironic about Rankine's traumatic experience with a trauma counselor that leaves her feeling less-than-human, like "a wounded Doberman pinscher or a German shepherd". Rather, Rankine's exchange with an educated woman who clearly does not have frequent exchanges with people of color reveals the everyday dissonance that black Americans

experience. Despite Rankine's success as a poet and scholar, she cannot escape the daily violence of misinterpretation and prejudice that is imbued upon her because of her visibly racialized body. Moreover, the consequences of quotidian racism impact the body directly, so that the body is both the source and the site of systemic violence.

Rankine's *Citizen* does not let the reader forget about the immediacy of the body as part of the lived experience of people of color. Rankine reminds us that "confrontation is headache-producing" (10) and that "Certain moments send adrenaline to the heart, dry out the tongue, and clog the lungs. Like thunder they drown you in sound, no, like lightning they strike you across the larynx" (7). Everyday interactions are interrupted by moments of somatic unrest, anxiety, and disgust: "An unsettled feeling keeps the body front and center. The wrong words enter your day like a bad egg in your mouth and puke runs down your blouse, a dampness drawing your stomach in toward your rib cage" (Rankine 8). The reader cannot ignore the intractable union of embodiment and ontology for people of color. The narrator of *Citizen* asks, "And where is the safest place when that place / must be someplace other than in the body?" (143). Rankine's question prompts readers to reflect inward and imagine what it might be like to feel unsafe in one's own skin.

Is it advocacy or erasure to write fiction from a perspective that one has never inhabited? Rankine's *Citizen* responds to and resists appropriation by using the pronoun "you" throughout the text. It is a very careful, particular use of "you" that demands empathy and attention. Importantly, "you" never becomes "I" because the reader is a visitor who has been plucked up by Rankine's prose and placed into her social context for a moment. The immediacy of the body is a constant reminder that if "you" does not signify black and American, you can only imagine, but you will never know completely what being black in America *feels like*. What it means today to

inhabit a black body, physically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally in a country that was founded on and continues to thrive off of the oppression and exploitation of people of color. The distinction between empathy and knowing is crucial: to empathize is to try to understand through attention and engagement, whereas knowing creates an impasse. Knowing implies that we can stop asking questions or engaging with one another because we purport to be experts in each other's reality.

Rankine considers the social construction of segregation that perpetuates the simultaneous invisibility and "hypervisibility" (49) of racialized bodies in an interview with *The Guardian* entitled, "Why I'm Spending $625,000 to Study Whiteness" (October 2016). Rankine's announcement was timely as it came on the heels of author Lionel Shriver's well-publicized and divisive keynote speech at the Brisbane Writers Festival in September 2016. The transcript of Shriver's speech, "Fiction and Identity Politics," reads like an adult temper-tantrum: she insists that identity politics and notions of cultural appropriation are stifling her creativity as a fiction writer. Paradoxically, Shriver evokes the language of affect and embodiment, the site of subjectivity and the self, to convey what censorship *feels like* to the audience. She bemoans, "I confess that this climate of scrutiny has got under my skin. When I was first starting out as a novelist, I didn't hesitate to write black characters, for example, or to avail myself of black dialects, for which, having grown up in the American South, I had a pretty good ear. I am now much more anxious about depicting characters of different races, and accents make me nervous" (Shriver 8). Shriver's anxiety and nervousness about depicting race is not oppression. In juxtaposition with Rankine's depictions of the somatic consequences of racism in *Citizen*, Shriver's complaints about her challenges as an author sound trivial and downright petty.

Shriver is upset that she has to "hesitate to write black characters" while black Americans fear that they will be killed, fired, sexually assaulted, subjected to violence, or arrested every day of their lives. She goes on to lament:

> I am hopeful that the concept of 'cultural appropriation' is a passing fad […] Because the ultimate endpoint of keeping our mitts off experience *that doesn't belong to us* is that there is no fiction. Someone like me only permits herself to write from the perspective of a straight white female born in North Carolina, closing on sixty, able-bodied but with bad knees, skint for years but finally able to buy the odd new shirt. All that's left is memoir. (Shriver 4-6; original italics)

Shriver's claim that there would be no fiction if authors concerned themselves with respecting identity politics is thoughtless and outright racist. She seems to think that only straight white people like her are writing fiction, or at least fiction worth reading. Further, Shriver unwittingly reveals a likely source of her discomfort with tackling notions of identity politics when she suggests that if she could only write memoir, her novels would focus on the limited "perspective of a straight white female born in North Carolina." The more important question to consider is why would Shriver's memoirs of growing up in North Carolina necessarily exclude people of color?

Rankine addresses fiction writers like Shriver who write about people that they have not encountered and therefore do not understand. Rankine's interview in *The Guardian*, "Why I'm Spending $625,000 to Study Whiteness," responds to white writers who resist including the perspectives of people of color in their novels such as Jonathan Franzen. Rankine explains:

> [Franzen] said something like 'I can't write about people I don't know.' That, to me, is more complex[46]. So, why don't you know these people? What choices have you made in your life to keep yourself segregated? How is it one is able to move through life with a level of sameness? Is that conscious? Is segregation forever really at the bottom of everything? When he says something like that, I find that really interesting as an admittance to white privilege: that he can get through his life without any meaningful interaction with people of color. (Thrasher 3)

Rankine identifies a crucial tension in the writing community: many white authors want to write about people of color, but they are not willing to engage with people of color on a day-to-day basis. By comparison, Rankine's *Citizen* is rife with white people not necessarily because she chooses to associate with them, but because hegemony demands it. Rankine cannot move through life as a woman of color in America without encountering white police officers, white therapists, white colleagues, white neighbours, white doctors, and so on.

Importantly, the "you" that pervades *Citizen* elicits a challenge from Rankine to readers who are tempted to appropriate her experience. The "you" demands that the reader does more than picture themselves living as a black American. Rankine insists that the reader embody the experience, from the constant headaches and chronic ailments to the gut-wrenching shame and abjection that permeate the viscera. Rankine's *Citizen* is not an invitation to "try on" racial identity like an article of clothing for vicarious pleasure. Instead, the text engages a specific type of empathy that is analogous to the vicarious nature of shame invoked by mirror neurons, which

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[46] In comparison to Lionel Shriver's claims that her writing is impervious to notions of identity politics or cultural appropriation. Thrasher, the interviewer, reveals that, "Rankine won't initially talk about Shriver because 'she doesn't have the work behind it. If [Shriver] had the work, then I would engage'" (3).

I discuss in the previous sections of this chapter. When we feel ashamed on behalf of someone else, the self and the other do not blur: rather, we become more aware of the distinction between self and other because blushing induces self-consciousness.

Self-awareness relies on the recognition that the self is not the other, and the other is not the self. The ability to empathize with another person's perspective without distorting the line between self and other is the foundation for cognition that is informed by "theory of mind" (Piaget). Contemporary developmental psychologists such as Laura Berk argue that "[s]elf-conscious emotions" such as shame are predicated on theory of mind (257), or the "realization that others' perspectives can differ from [our] own" (342). We cannot experience empathy if we assume that our own beliefs and values are shared by everyone else. Further, without theory of mind, relationality would face an impasse: the understanding that different perspectives exist is what motivates us to seek out thoughts and opinions other than our own. *Citizen* reveals the painful frustration that manifests itself as anger as a consequence of being misinterpreted daily by people who lack theory of mind, and subsequently empathy, toward people of color.

Rankine explains that, "the anger [is] built up through experience and the quotidian struggles against dehumanization every brown or black person lives simply because of skin color" (*Citizen* 24). She goes on to assert that anger "is accompanied by visceral disappointment: a disappointment in the sense that no amount of visibility will alter the ways in which one is perceived" (*Citizen* 24). Rankine uses the example of Venus and Serena Williams' athletic careers to illuminate the constant misunderstanding and lack of empathy that people of color face, regardless of actions that visibly contradict stereotypes. She contemplates, "What does a victorious or defeated black woman's body in a historically white space look like? Serena and her big sister Venus Williams brought to mind Zora Neale Hurston's 'I feel most colored when I

am thrown against a sharp white background'" (*Citizen* 25). Rankine asserts that people of color will continue to be misunderstood and dehumanized when their identities are reduced to their racialized bodies that are interpolated within a white context. Serena Williams's angry reaction toward an umpire at the 2009 Women's US Open semi-final is the result of "all the injustice she has played through all of the years of her illustrious career [that] flashes before her" (*Citizen* 25). Moreover, Williams's actions are interpreted by many viewers as "crazy" when the history of racist oppression throughout her tennis career is erased (*Citizen* 25). Instead, the focus becomes the seemingly disproportionate "rage" that Williams displays, which erases her identity by reducing her to a stereotype: an angry person of color whom does not deserve compassion or empathy (*Citizen* 25).

Empathy is distinct from appropriation because empathy respects and recognizes the discrepancy between others' pleasure and pain versus one's own, whereas appropriation elides the difference completely. Shame is an affect that resists appropriation because it is uncomfortable; this is why most of us are loathe to empathize with others' pain. Rankine's *Citizen* is ingenious and effective because the text invites empathy, while it resists vicarious pleasure or exoticization of life for people of color by insisting that "you" experience grief, pain, rage, and shame. The "you" in *Citizen* gets no reprieve from suffering, no flashes of joy or hope or optimism because black Americans do not get to set aside their racial identities at the end of the day, the way that the white reader can simply close the book. Rankine's positioning of the black body at the center of *Citizen* portrays exactly what white authors like Shriver deny: embodiment intersects with ontology to form the subject whose existence is either affirmed or erased by the systemic structures that perpetuate hegemony.

Why is the primacy of embodiment and affect so important to identity politics today? To ignore the body is to obscure subjectivity. Rankine will not allow readers to inflict the same violence upon her text. She reminds us: "the body has memory. The physical carriage hauls more than its weight. The body is the threshold across which each objectionable call passes into consciousness – all the unintimidated, unblinking, and unflappable resilience does not erase the moments lived through" (Rankine 28). *Citizen* gives the reader a brief glimpse into Rankine's inner world, but ultimately her experience belongs to her alone; her body will not let her forget it.

Rankine's text complicates the conclusions that I make about shame in the previous sections. While it is true that shame promotes social cohesion by inciting self-conscious thought, we must remember that shame is experienced disproportionately by people with bodies that do not fit the status quo. The act of shaming is a powerful weapon in the hands of hegemony, which is why we must consider what shaming does systemically to maintain power. *Citizen* makes a vital contribution to affect theory, particularly studies of shame, by performing the visceral consequences of systemic racism through text and visual artwork. Rankine adds to what I have argued about shame by shedding light on the way that structures of power, such as law enforcement, use shaming as a tactic to control people of color. Shame motivates socially conscious behavior; however, we must consider who is oppressed by shame, and how shame perpetuates social inequality.

Conclusions

We would not have empathy without shame, and without empathy we would not be able to live socially. Charles Darwin's in-depth study on shame provides a new framework for approaching affect from a psychosocial perspective. My project has focused exclusively on shame, but there is much to be gained from returning to Darwin for his provocative thoughts on why particular emotions promote survival of the species. *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* continues to be relevant to the field of affect studies, due to Darwin's meticulous observations on the bodily manifestation of emotions. Oscar Wilde's radical uptake of Darwinism provides an innovative approach to Darwin's theory of survival-of-the-fittest by shifting the focus from traits that foster survival of the individual to behavior that benefits humanity on a group or societal level instead. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* thinks through Darwin's theories on shame, performing a literary case study of what human behavior might look like if we did not experience the consequences of shame.

Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* contributes the important distinction between guilt and shame: guilt is not grounded in vanity the way that shame is. Rather, guilt is provoked by social structures such as rules and norms, and the awareness that our thoughts or actions disobey the social contract. Therefore, guilt motivates us to follow the rules in order to avoid social punishment. Shame, by contrast, is incited by our understanding of how others might perceive us, particularly our bodies. Shame is generated from internally through self-consciousness whereas guilt is imposed externally through social mores that arbitrarily establish notions of right and wrong behavior. Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* reminds us that shame is experienced disproportionately by people with bodies that are deemed non-normative by society.

Moreover, the act of shaming is a hegemonic device that maintains bio-power over marginalized identities.

This project's hybrid methodology of theory and literature in dialogue with one another, where neither text nor theory is given primacy, constitutes, I suggest, a productive approach to affect studies. When we allow literature and theory to speak to one another, a new affective terrain is charted by the language of emotionally informed cognition. Just as we cannot separate the body from the mind, we cannot analyze rhetoric without considering affect. Emotions such as shame shape the way that we perceive ourselves, as well as the ethics of relating to one another. Vanity, empathy, and shame are inextricably connected. The confluence of affect and cognition promotes ethical relationality as we cannot help but reconsider our behavior through other peoples' eyes.

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