Femininity, Shame, and Redemption

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At a time when some modicum of formal gender equality has been won in many late-capitalist societies of the West, what explains the persistence of practices that extract labor and value from women and girls while granting a "surplus" of value to men and boys? Gendered shame is a central mechanism of the apparatus that secures the continued subordination of women across a number of class and race contexts in the mediatized, late-capitalist West. Focusing on the story of Amanda Todd, two forms of shame are distinguished. "Ubiquitous shame" is that shame that accrues to feminine existence as such, and is structured in relation to a futural temporality of redemption. "Unbounded shame" is a brute form of value-extraction that has found its ecological niche in social media—and destroys all futural aspirations.

In Freud's fifth lecture on psychoanalysis from 1932, he famously states: "shame, which is considered to be a feminine characteristic par excellence but is far more a matter of convention than might be supposed, has as its purpose, we believe, concealment of genital deficiency" (Freud 1965, 164). It is just one sentence, but it is the key to the whole analysis. "Genital deficiency," after all, is the one differentiating factor in the girl's development that Freud considers sufficient to explain how it is that her early attachment to her mother, which is just as impassioned as the boy's, might be exchanged for hostility—an exchange that is necessary to secure the course of "normal" heterosexual development. The achievement of heterosexuality will require two extra steps for the girl: that she change her object choice from female to male, and that she change her preferred erogenous zone from the clitoris to the vagina. To secure these transitions, there necessarily exists a powerful motivational element in feminine development, Freud speculates, that isn't there for the boys.[1] Shame arises in relation to the realization of the specific genital deficiency that results in what Freud calls "penis envy" and catalyzes the affective investments that initiate an operation of detachment from the mother and attachment to the father. Shame is the affective power that drives the heterosexualization of women, in other words.

I'm going to propose that we take Freud seriously on one point, and regard shame as an affect powerful enough to motivate upheavals in the trajectory of subjective

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development, fundamental reorientations in modes of being, and the breaking and forming of passionate attachments that are life-shaping in their importance.[2] The scientific evidence strongly supports this view. Studies of shame are consistent in characterizing it as an affect so powerful that it bends the body over on itself, buries the face in the hands, hangs the head. Silvan Tomkins associates shame with an excruciating, intolerable visibility. "Shame is the affect of indignity," he writes, "the humiliated one… feels himself naked, defeated, alienated, lacking in dignity or worth" (Tomkins 1995, 133). "Shame has the power to make us feel completely worthless, degraded from head to foot," Mario Jacoby writes (Jacoby 1994, 21). "Behind the fear of shame stands not the fear of hatred but the fear of contempt which… spells fear of abandonment… death by emotional starvation" (Piers, quoted in Probyn 2005, 3). June Tangey and Ronda Dearing write in their 2002 review of empirical studies of shame that "when people feel shame… they are berating themselves not just for the specific event; rather, they are damning themselves—the core of their being—as flawed, useless, despicable. In this way shame experiences pose a tremendous threat to the self" (Tangey and Dearing 2002, 92). Shame can undo the self, unmake social ties, destroy the lifeworld of the one who is shamed, so that the only chance for survival seems to be a total remaking of the self and the self–world relation.

I am interested here in the power of shame in the transitional period between girlhood and womanhood for those of us who share, at least to a significant extent, a hypermediatized, late-capitalist social world. Shame has been a ubiquitous feature of feminine subject-formation for as long as we know our history, as Freud notes, but it has undergone certain modifications in the present that significantly alter the scene of shame even as it remains a central structuring feature of the lifeworld in which the becoming of women is undertaken and undergone. In fact, we now need two names for shame to understand how it does its work. "Ubiquitous shame," on the one hand, is the name that I give to that shame-*status* that attaches to the very fact of existing as a girl or woman, or of having a female body, captured so powerfully in such common phrases as "like a girl" and "such a pussy." This is the kind of shame that Sandra Bartky first analyzed in 1990—I will draw on her account of shame here (Bartky 1990). It is the kind of shame that all aspiring women must negotiate, and its underside is a certain experience of pride. I will argue that this shame is essentially characterized by a promise of redemption, that is, its futural temporality. "Unbounded shame," on the other hand, is a thick, relentless, engulfing shame—often catalyzed by a shame-*event*—that snuffs out any hope for redemption, and has suicide as its logical endpoint.[3] It is a kind of shame that many women, but not all, experience—and the threat of it is part of the thick atmosphere of danger that accompanies women's becoming. The two kinds of shame are related, in that ubiquitous shame with its promissory temporality is the "setup" for the decisions that catalyze the events that issue in unbounded shame for some girls and women.

Both kinds of shame are deep structural components of the material relations of domination and exploitation that continue to mark gendered existence in our world. In other words, shame is one key component of the structure that maintains male supremacy across a number of class and race contexts in the mediatized, late-capitalist

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"West" even as formalized equality becomes the norm. It enables the extraction of labor power and value that still characterizes heterosexual relations. This is not to say that heterosexuality is the same in all places and all times, nor is it to claim that heterosexuality cannot be or is not lived differently by some, even many. It is to *observe* that heterosexuality is still lived, too often, in the mode of appropriation and extraction on which my analysis here is focused. In this essay, I include the powerful first-person narrative offered to the public by Amanda Todd, the Canadian teenager whose story, written on note cards and released on YouTube, went viral in 2012, a few months before she took her own life (Todd 2012). I understand Todd to be a *thinker*, who has published a *text* she hopes will be read, someone who not only provides a story about shame but also an account, however rudimentary, of its central structures.[4] Her story takes us into the lived dimensions of shame, and shows us that shame in contemporary Western, late-capitalist life is a deeply personal and viscerally lived affect, on the one hand, and a feature of our social and political world, on the other. In fact, it is one of the structural features that key the inner life of the subject into the broad patterns of power and social control that characterize exploitative relations between persons who are socially situated differently—in this case men or boys and adolescent girls. What I offer here is a political phenomenology that approaches shame both as a viscerally lived experience and as a historical phenomenon.[5]

The Contemporary Scene of Shame

Freud gestures toward the historical dimension of shame in that single sentence, when he says that shame is "far more a matter of convention than might be supposed" (Freud 1965, 164). I take this to mean, whether Freud actually meant this, that shame is specific to time and place and context, that it must always be considered, to borrow a phrase from Beauvoir, under "the present state of education and customs" (Beauvoir 2010, 279). Beauvoir applied this restriction to Freud's entire enterprise, suggesting, in relation to "penis envy": "this growth, this delicate stalk of skin, can only inspire indifference and even disgust; the girl's envy, when it appears, is the result of a prior valorization of virility. Freud takes this for granted when instead he should account for it" (52). In other words, Beauvoir reframed Freud's notion of "genital deficiency" as what we might call "social deficiency"; "it is not the absence of a penis that unleashes this complex but the total situation; the girl envies the phallus [if she does] only as a symbol of the privileges granted to boys" (53).

This social inferiority is first encountered less as an idea to be cognized than as an emergent embodied reality. The girl experiences the prescribed superiority of the boy through the responses of her own body, before she ever thematizes it. In early adolescence she catches herself giving away space, is possessed by an urgency to be small, she finds herself smiling and tilting her head in response to male speech, she feels eyes on her skin when she walks past men or boys looking, she finds herself not speaking, not doing, in contexts where she would have spoken and done before. It is this embodied awareness of her prescribed social deficiency, an awareness that

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intensifies and crescendos in early adolescence, that serves as the backdrop against which the events of adolescence unfold.

It is important to remember that, for Beauvoir, all of this takes place in the context of the subject's urgent need to *justify herself* in the eyes of others. This is a generalized existential need, but it takes a specific form under conditions of male supremacy. On my reading of Beauvoir, one of her most crucial insights is that gender itself is an *operation of justification*.[6] This insight runs throughout *The Second Sex*, appearing everywhere without being thematized explicitly. What we now call gender and practices of gendering are, for Beauvoir, specific, contingent, historical forms of *justification* in the existential sense. In other words, the way you live your gender is a key part of how you establish your worth in the eyes of others. Your aspiration to be a man of a certain kind or a woman of a certain kind (and you have to be pretty brave, and pretty creative, to aspire to anything but one of these two), is also about whether and how you are valued, and by whom, and for what. Gender and gendering are ways that we establish our relative worth or worthlessness in the eyes of others. They are ways that we aspire to higher positions of status on our social status hierarchies, ways we are assigned positions of status by others, positions that range from abject worthlessness to mundane contempt to respect to awe. Think about adolescents posting selfies on social media, think of the comments on those photographs: "you're so hot," "what a slut," "he's ripped," "such a pussy." All of those comments are judgments of value, assignations of value, attached to a certain way of doing or being your gender. If your picture is labeled "hot," you are being assigned a value that is high, while if you are "butt ugly" or "fugly," you are being devalued through that assignation. You are worth a lot more as a gendered, sexual being if you are the first. If my gender sometimes seems to be a life or death matter, it is because it is one important way that I justify my existence to myself and others. Without it, I may be worthless.

With that understanding of gender in mind, then, let's consider what characterizes the contemporary scene of shame in which the subject assumes her femininity in adolescence—the matters of convention that delineate the specific modalities of shame and self-justification that prevail here and now. By here, let me reiterate, I mean the developed, technologized, late-capitalist West. By now I mean in these times of technologically mediated self-understanding and self-making, in which assignments of status arrive equally quickly from close proximity and vast distances, instantaneously in fact, from collectivities of others who have little in common except for their presence in certain virtual spaces. These conditions have altered the scene of shame in important ways.

Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell, two Australian feminist thinkers, write of what they call "technology-facilitated sexual violence" (Henry and Powell 2015). They note that "the unprecedented power of new technologies in achieving new forms of social shaming—beyond geographic borders, at vast speeds, to diverse audiences, and often with unparalleled impunity," has significantly altered the social landscape in which adolescent girls attempt to develop a sense of themselves as sexual subjects (Henry and Powell 2015, 759). This is a world where virtual social interactions are characterized by "disinhibition, anonymity, complicity, and impunity" (760).

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At the same time, they argue, far from being the exclusive province of new forms of democratization and sexual freedom, the virtual spaces occupied by adolescent girls are often sites of a heavy-handed, even brutal "retraditionalization" of social relations.

This is confirmed in a study of teen "sexting" practices in Britain carried out by Jessica Ringrose and her colleagues, who report that "girls are called upon to produce particular forms of 'sexy' self display, yet face legal repercussions, moral condemnation and 'slut shaming' when they do so" (Ringrose et al. 2013, 305). Boys circulate images they convince girls to provide for them, mostly images of girls' breasts, as forms of social currency, and are "rated" (given respect) by other boys when they do so. "Moral value is materialized through practices of looking, judging and evaluating the worth of subjects through various codes" (309), they argue, "since girls must negotiate moral discourses regarding their sexual reputations, and being attractive and wanted, when deciding whether to send images, this suggests a new norm of feminine desirability as mediated (though not determined) by the affordances of digital technology" (312). The boys effectively prove their manly prowess by convincing girls to create images of their breasts for them. "The affective dynamic… is where images of girls' bodies become an acquisition, and where the boy becomes the holder of something of value that the girl has done for him" (314). Meanwhile, the boys regularly refer to the girls who provide them with the photos as "skets" and "slags" (or "sluts," as we would say in the US) (316), and the girl's body is "marked out as shameful and morally suspect" (317). Being asked for the image "constitutes a new norm of feminine desirability" (319), and once provided it circulates like currency, but the girls who provide the images are seen as sluts who lack self-respect and thus deserve no respect from the very boys who pass around their images to gain respect themselves (319). It is important to understand this as a material-symbolic operation, where value is extracted from the girl's body in the form of a photograph, creating a value deficit for her, whereas a value-surplus is harvested by the boy who achieves the extraction.

Unbounded Shame: The Amanda Todd Story

I agree with Henry and Powell that this economy of value isn't new, but it circulates through new media, and in that sense the scene of shame is altered dramatically. "Technologies shrink the effort needed by the offender and multiply the effects" of his actions (Henry and Powell 2015, 763). They also multiply the offenders and open avenues to complicity that are virtually unlimited numerically. In our contemporary world, girls are facing "the unbounded nature of potential and perpetual public shame and humiliation" (767).

There is perhaps no story that has come to represent the reality of this unbounded shame more than the story of Amanda Todd, the Canadian seventh-grader who, after having uploaded some sexy videos of herself and her friends, fully clothed, was stalked online by a thirty-six-year-old man in The Netherlands (see Lau 2012; Todd 2012; BBC News 2014). After a year of chatting, and his asking, Amanda finally "flashed him," that is, provided him with an image of herself lifting up her shirt and

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baring her breasts. As is the practice of those calling themselves "cappers" on the internet, he captured that image in order to try to extort private sex-shows from Amanda over the course of the next three years by threatening to release the photo to everyone she knew. These extorted videos are then shared with the online community of "cappers," like a gift, which generates respect and admiration for the capper who bestows it. In Amanda's case, her refusals resulted in the photograph being released to all her Facebook friends at three different schools and circulated broadly on child porn sites, as she and her family sought to flee the abuse by moving twice and unsuccessfully tried to get the police to pursue an investigation.[7] The posting of the photograph resulted in repeated waves of what is now called "slut-shaming" at each new location. The cruelty of her peers was almost unimaginable.

Of course the fact that something so utterly mundane as a picture of a girl's breasts should give anyone the kind of power that it gave the central perpetrator, should enable such cruel *collusion* between him and Todd's peers, should produce the lethal shame that it did, already speaks volumes about the social *situatedness* of shame. There is an entire misogynistic economy at work here, which secures the power of the photograph in advance.

At the second school, Amanda made a not-atypical, teenage, in her own words, "huge mistake," that is, having gone to the home of a boy she liked who professed to like her and having had sex with him, she was publicly confronted at her school in front of dozens of her peers by the boy's girlfriend, with him in attendance, who, egged on by onlookers, slugged Amanda in the face. This event took place after months and months of previous humiliation, or to stick to the material-symbolic language that captures something important about such events: after months and months of attempted value-extraction and relentless value-depletion. She reports that she went and lay down in a ditch until her dad came to get her, then drank bleach when she got home in her first attempt to kill herself. The failed suicide attempt and Amanda's turn to self-harm, in the form of drug and alcohol abuse and cutting, resulted in a further escalation of the tirade of online abuse from people in Amanda's close proximity and people far away—a truly unbounded scene of shame. My own eighteen-year-old daughter, as I discussed this article with her and talked about Amanda Todd, knew of her as "that girl who drank bleach," and was aware of the internet noise around the case and people calling for her to do a better job trying to kill herself the next time. Amanda fought back by trying to rescue her online reputation over and over again. She challenged the stalker to "come and meet me right now," thinking she would lure him into a situation where he could be arrested. Then in September of 2012 Amanda posted a silent YouTube video of herself with note cards in which she told what she called her "never ending story," a video that went viral and finally gained her some virtual support. A month later, she killed herself.

I want first to say something about this experience of unbounded shame as Amanda described it, which seems to characterize our world now in ways that are fundamentally distinct from previous modalities of sexual value-extortion and extraction, but then I want to turn to the background condition of ubiquitous shame as

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described by Bartky that prepares the ground for the extortionist moment—and more important, to talk about the relation between the two.

I'm going to quote from Amanda's own telling of her story, starting with her characterization of the first extortionist message she received, but then I'm going to string together several quotations from her story as a way of giving the reader a sense of her own description of her experience:

> "It [the message] said… if you don't put on a show for me I will send ur boobs"
> "He knew my address, school, friends, relatives, family names"
>
> Christmas break, 4am, cops at door
> [they told her that her picture was circulating online]
> "I then got really sick"
> "Anxiety, major depression, panic disorder"
>
> [second school: as Amanda continues to refuse his demands, the perpetrator makes a fake Facebook page saying he is going to be a transfer student to the school and is looking for friends, in order to expose her again]
> "My boobs were his profile pic"
> "Cried every night, lost all my friends, and respect"
> "people had for me… again… "
> "Then nobody liked me"
> "name calling, judged… "
> "I can never get that photo back"
> "It's out there forever… "
>
> "I promised myself, never again… "
> "Didn't have any friends and I ate lunch alone"
>
> [After leaving the second school]
> "Six months has gone by… people are posting pictures of bleach, clorox, and ditches"
> "tagging me… I was doing a lot better too… They said… "
> "She should try a different bleach. I hope she dies this time and isn't so stupid"
> "They said I hope she sees this and kills herself…"
> "Why do I get this? I messed up but why follow me?"
> "I left your guys' city… I'm constantly crying now… "
> "Everyday I think, why am I still here?"
>
> "I'm stuck… what's left of me now… nothing stops"
> "I have nobody… I need someone" (Todd 2012).

The recurrent themes in Amanda's story, told in her own words, are social abandonment and hopelessness. The eternal time of the picture repeatedly overwhelms geographical distance and the time of Amanda's life story—"nothing stops," she writes:

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the frustration of a future that simply repeats the past. The stalker destroys any fragile sense of an open future that emerges each time she flees to a new school, with shame as his weapon. Shame closes time. Seeking some way out, she tries to kill herself three times.

Ubiquitous Shame

This shame that undoes the self—this acute, excruciating, endless, geographically unbounded shame—has found its ecological niche in contemporary forms of social media; it is a future-killing shame, and suicide is its logical conclusion. But there is another shame that precedes and prepares the ground for it that is harder to make visible, in part because it lives in close proximity to something we might call pride. In order to fully grasp the economy of shame in which adolescent girls' lives unfold, we have to understand both modalities of shame, and more important, we have to understand their relation.

In Bartky's essay, "Shame and Gender," she attempts to give an account of what I am calling ubiquitous shame (Bartky 1990). In this essay, she is specifically concerned with gendered shame in educational settings, but as she contextualizes those concerns, she offers us an early elaboration of the nature of ubiquitous shame, its role in disclosing the social status of the feminine, and indeed, the pervasive part it plays in the prereflective constitution of feminine ways of being in the world. One of the central arguments Bartky makes about feminine shame has to do with its pervasive, enduring character. She suggests that shame enters the lives of men against a background assumption of male power in the form of singular shame-events. Shame in the lives of women is more like an atmosphere or environment that affectively shades the subject–world relation without reprieve.

I want to review in some detail Bartky's most important insights into the nature and structure of this experience of feminine shame, as well as her articulation of its disclosive character in relation to the shape and structure of the world. Bartky imagines the shame constitutive of femininity to have a pervasive character, in other words, to be a shame-without-redemption. I will argue, instead, that shamed femininity is temporally structured around its own redemptive aspirations, and that feminine shame's futural fixations are a key aspect of creating the specific vulnerabilities of emerging women/subjects to the unbounded shame that now characterizes our social world. Although this shame is *ubiquitous*, it is not relentless from the perspective of the lived experience of the subject, but is punctuated by, or interrupted by, pride and hope.

Bartky situates her essay in the context of a wider call for feminists to undertake "a political phenomenology of the emotions" and their role in the "constitution of subjectivity" and "the perpetuation of subjection" (Bartky 1990, 98). Feminists need to engage in the "identification and description" of the emotional attunements that characterize the feminine subject's relation to her world (84). These attunements show us the warp and woof of that relation, such that "a study of the most pervasive patterns of gendered emotion in their revelatory moment" (84) will be "ontologically

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disclosive" in the Heidegerrian sense (83). Pervasive emotional attunements show us what matters to us (83), how we are faring in the world, our characters, and how we are "inscribed within the social totality" (84). This "showing" does not take place on the level of conscious cognition, however. Bartky claims, for example, that shame is one way that "their inferiority is disclosed to inferiorized subjects, though, paradoxically, what is disclosed fails, in the typical case, to be *understood*" (97). It is the disclosive operation of shame, however "ambiguous and oblique" (93), to which Bartky urges feminist phenomenologists to turn their attention.

She limits her own account of shame to a particular manifestation of it in educational settings in relation to intellectual achievement, setting aside "the larger emotional constellation in which a feminine preoccupation with appearance is situated" (Bartky 1990, 84). She is not, she tells us, analyzing "the alteration of pride and shame called forth by the imperatives of feminine body display" (85), or as she puts it in another passage, "the peculiar dialectic of shame and pride in embodiment consequent upon a narcissistic assumption of the body as spectacle" (84). These aspects of gendered shame that Bartky sets aside are precisely those that I am most interested in giving an account of—yet Bartky's essay takes us a good distance in our attempts to bring into view this larger emotional constellation.

One of Bartky's most important claims is also the most apparently mundane one, that shame is gendered. Not only does Bartky claim that women experience shame more often than men (Bartky 1990, 93), she also argues that "the feeling itself has a different meaning in relation to their total psychic situation and general social location" (84). For men, shame works most often against the backdrop of a "presupposition of male power" (84). For those whose reference point in giving an account of shame is the masculine subject, then, shame "is typically construed as a specific episode in the agent's history" (96), which has an ameliorative outcome because "guilt or shame mark his investment in moral norms, these painful emotions are occasions for moral reaffirmation" (96). The shame is undergone by a fully lucid subject who calls himself to account for his shortcomings.[8]

For the feminine subject, Bartky argues, shame is not episodic, it is a species of pain (Bartky 1990, 88) or suffering (89) that is pervasive. Shame-events are ubiquitous rather than isolated. Bartky outlines the micropractices, the microaggressions and omissions that constitute the atmosphere in which feminine shame becomes pervasive. Shame is "not a discrete occurrence but a perpetual attunement, the pervasive affective taste of a life" (96).

Perhaps because it saturates social space, the subject does not undergo shame in an entirely lucid state. Shame discloses without resulting in a corresponding cognitive understanding of what is disclosed. It is a "pervasive affective attunement" that exposes a "generalized condition of dishonor" (Bartky 1990, 85), and thus it has no ameliorative moment. "Not only does the revelatory character of shame not occur at the level of belief," she writes, "but the corrosive character of shame and of similar sensings, their undermining effect... lies in part in the very failure of these feelings to attain the status of belief" (95). One might well believe oneself to be competent and capable, Bartky suggests, while feeling oneself to be a failure. If the feeling were

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to become a belief, it could be refuted. But as a pervasive background attunement, it results in a "confused and divided consciousness" (94): one believes one thing, but on a prereflective level, experiences something else. For this reason, shame is "profoundly disempowering."

The Promise of Redemption

But if we turn our attention to the phenomenon Bartky sets aside—"the larger emotional constellation in which a feminine preoccupation with appearance is situated" (Bartky 1990, 84), "the alteration of pride and shame called forth by the imperatives of feminine body display" (85), or "the peculiar dialectic of shame and pride in embodiment consequent upon a narcissistic assumption of the body as spectacle" (84)—we will have to challenge her assessment of ubiquitous shame as an experience of the irredeemable. I'm going to suggest that a promise of redemption is at the very heart of ubiquitous shame; it is the feature of ubiquitous shame that distinguishes it from unbounded shame and structures the young woman's vulnerability to sexual predation.

Let's consider typical feminine modes of imaginary "play" in adolescence, particularly modes of play that involve rituals of dressing and making up in front of the mirror or the camera. Beauvoir's discussions of childhood and girlhood in *The Second Sex* give insightful descriptions of the kind of play that I have in mind. These remarks take place first in the context of Beauvoir's account of the child's imaginary domain, in which, as she puts it, the girl will have to "win the approbation of others in order to justify" herself (Beauvoir 2010, 285). "If well before puberty and sometimes even starting from early childhood, [the girl] already appears sexually specified," Beauvoir writes, "it is not because mysterious instincts immediately destine her to passivity, coquetry, or motherhood but because the intervention of others in the infant's life is almost originary" (283). What is this almost originary intervention of others? What form does it take? For Beauvoir, this intervention takes place at the level of the imaginary, at the level of the subject's impassioned attachment to certain images that are, in turn, her way of justifying her existence to others. "In a bodily form," she writes, "[the child] discovers finitude, solitude, and abandonment in an alien world; he tries to compensate for this catastrophe by alienating his existence in an image, whose reality and value will be established by others" (284). "Through compliments and admonishments, through images and words, she discovers the meaning of the words 'pretty' and 'ugly'… she tries to resemble an image, disguises herself, she looks at herself in the mirror, she compares herself to princesses and fairies from tales" (293). The imaginary domain of the child is a place where her worthiness in the eyes of others is constantly negotiated. How she inhabits, enacts, and embodies gender, how she appears as gendered to others, how her gendered aspirations cohere or diverge from the aspirations others hold for her are keys to her social worth or worthlessness in a community of others. That community may be loving or hostile, may celebrate her aspirations or disparage them, but she is beholden to them from the

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very beginning, before she is even the sort of creature who can resist or criticize, comply with or defy those normative entanglements.

The child, then the adolescent, negotiates and reworks these relations through play. Play, in this case, is not opposed to seriousness, as it is for Sartre. His position is summarized by Linda Bell as follows: "In play, we create without being bound by any preexisting values, prescriptions, and proscriptions" (Bell 1993, 240). For Beauvoir, however, gendered play is an instrument of binding, even when it is undertaken in order to negotiate the disappointments of gendered existence, particularly at that moment when, as Beauvoir puts it, "she realizes that it is not women but men who are the masters of the world. It is this revelation—far more than the discovery of the penis—that imperiously modifies her consciousness of herself" (Beauvoir 2010, 301).

The girl works and reworks her relation to her world both before and after this realization, through play. "The child inhabits the level of play and dream," she writes, "the little girl can compensate for boys' superiority of the moment by those promises inherent in her women's destiny, which she already achieves in her play" (Beauvoir 2010, 296). The future promises are made present, are brought close in play, where "she is encouraged to feel delight for these future riches" (297). What are the promises cast into the girl's future through the thickness of the social imaginary? Beauvoir has already emphasized that "puberty has a radically different meaning for the two sexes because it does not announce the same future to them" (329). Adolescence is that moment when the future settles into the girl's body, becomes heavy, an occupying force heralding an inexorable transition. A paradoxical promise is delivered: a place in adult existence is being prepared for her… she will be a prestigious object—she will be allowed perfect passivity, and through that passivity perfect power—in other words, she is promised that her present abjection will be converted into admiration, desire, adulation, the power of allure. "There is a conflict between the girl's narcissism and the experiences for which her sexuality destines her. The woman only accepts herself as the inessential on the condition of finding herself the essential once again by abdicating" (363). She will become the essential in that promised future moment when her mere physical presence will instantiate a powerful agency. "Because she is doomed to passivity and yet wants power," Beauvoir writes, "the adolescent girl must believe in magic: her body's magic that will bring men under her yoke, the magic of destiny in general that will fulfill her without her having to do anything" (352–53). "Above all," Beauvoir tells us, "the adolescent girl is condemned to the lie of pretending to be [an] object, and a prestigious one… makeup, false curls, corsets, padded bras, are lies; the face itself becomes a mask: spontaneous expressions are produced artfully… one's eyes no longer perceive, they reflect; one's body no longer lives, it waits, every gesture and smile becomes an appeal… offered, she is still the one who stalks her prey; her passivity takes the form of an undertaking" (370). There is no dichotomy here between subjectivity and objectification. Self-objectification is the willful preparation of the subject for objectification by others, and is thus constitutive of feminine subject-formation rather than distinct from or opposed to it. The adolescent girl spends her free time in front of the mirror, or today, taking sexy pictures of herself after a long period of preparation, and posting them online where

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her friends affirm her project of becoming bait by "liking" the pictures and commenting on how hot she looks. She pursues a hyper-stylized beauty, shaving, plucking, styling her hair, applying layers of make-up. In the mirror, she practices looking like the photo she will take of herself. Then she injects her future into the present moment through the vehicle of the self-produced pornographic portrait. "For the girl," Beauvoir writes, "erotic transcendence consists in making herself prey in order to make a catch" (349). Her future sediments into the body, stylizes itself in the gait, the tilt of the head, the pursing of the lips, the photo-ready smile.

Here play is not opposed to ready-made values, but is a way of negotiating their inscription in the body. Play is not an opening of the future but the binding of a prescribed future into the flesh. To reach this conclusion, however, as I did when I first studied these passages closely, is to import the mother's perspective and superimpose it on the girl. It is to miss the fact that, *for her*, the very binding action described relies for its extraordinary efficacy on a powerful *futural* temporality.

From the perspective of the girl living it, time is not closed, time is promissory. Hope is not extinguished, it is intensified and concentrated. Against a backdrop of ubiquitous shame, there is the promise of redemption. Her dawning bodily awareness of her own powerlessness is not, in fact, completely pervasive, but punctuated by the anticipation of an exquisite, eroticized power that she imagines to be structurally constitutive of her future. This is what, I believe, Bartky meant to gesture toward in referring to "the alteration of pride and shame called forth by the imperatives of feminine body display" (Bartky 1990, 85) and "the peculiar dialectic of shame and pride in embodiment consequent upon a narcissistic assumption of the body as spectacle" (84). In Freud's distorted but not simply inaccurate view, the anticipated promise is of being given the penis (that is, power), and ultimately the child, in heterosexual pairings. On my interpretation, we are witnessing an aspiration to power that makes livable the ubiquitous shame of one who discovers herself to occupy the position of the abject.

From the perspective of the girl, the futural, promissory dimension is paramount. It is not that she is unaware of danger, but she risks herself against the backdrop of the embodied realization of her own shameful insignificance. She has already experienced, for years, the pervasive micro-practices that constitute the world as belonging to boys. She has already heard, long before she had any understanding of what they meant, the words "slut" and "bitch" and "whore" as disclosive of something essentially stigmatized about women in their sexual being. She has come of age in an image-world replete with stories of women's shame, but not exclusively. Stories of redemption are an ever-present counterpoint to the background of shame. Redemption in a masculinist economy of desire is concentrated around three events: the provocation of male desire; the marriage proposal; the wedding day—nearly every cultural coming of age story, for girls, is organized around the sorts of words and images that collect affective energy around these three moments.[9] These are the events in a woman's life in which ubiquitous shame is relieved, in which both power and dignity are restored. The bride is immune from shame on her wedding day (which is why it is "her day" not his); the girlfriend is exempt from shame at the moment of the proposal. The

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moment of desire is more ambiguous. It must be handled perfectly if the girl is to convert that desire into redemption. She has to provoke the desire, and then keep it going, keep it directed toward her body—she has to feed it, in other words—but she risks everything in feeding it. If it turns away, the weight of a closed future settles in. If she capitulates in the wrong way, at the wrong time, or to the wrong person, in the wrong circumstance, everything is lost. But it is the first moment of the salvific promise, the first step on the lonely path to redemption, and as such *must* be cultivated, sustained, undertaken.

The moment of danger arrives when she is just learning to think of herself as a sexual being. She is inexperienced, scared, thrilled, and tremendously unskilled at negotiating the complexities, the subterfuges, the hostilities, the promises, the risks. Her hope is her vulnerability—her vulnerability is, in other words, embedded in the temporal structure of the experience. Amanda Todd tells us, in the simplest and most deeply explanatory terms, what made her succumb to the request for a photo of her breasts: "then got called stunning, beautiful, perfect, etc.," she writes (Todd 2012). In relation to the hook-up with the boy, her explanation is this: "I thought he liked me." Girls fighting for their self-worth in a masculinist economy of desire, against a backdrop of ubiquitous shame to which they refuse to succumb, can give no other explanation for their actions. When they inevitably mistake extortionist practices for the promised desire they have been relentlessly trained to wait and hope for, they are condemned for being "stupid" as well as being "sluts." In the London study, Ringrose and her co-authors note that girls who send boys images of their breasts are designated by their peers of both genders as "stupid" and "skets," while boys who circulate images of themselves receiving blow jobs from such girls are "sick" (a contemporary term of respect) (Ringrose et al. 2013). It is a particularly noxious cruelty that the stupid logic of male supremacy both forces young women into impossible choices and holds them deeply, individually accountable for the results of those choices, while the boys, who follow the logic just as "stupidly," are deemed especially clever and capable.[10]

What Amanda's words disclose to us is nothing less than the shape of the world she inhabits, the urgent intensity of the promise of redemption: "stunning, beautiful, perfect," "I thought he liked me" (Todd 2012). The existential desperation to rescue the self from ubiquitous shame is a motor driving the girl to, in the words of Lynn Phillips, "flirt with danger" (Phillips 2000). The redemption narrative has been a feature of her world since she was able to walk and talk. As the time of redemption draws near in adolescence, its promise feels tangible, believable, necessary, *destined*—for the girl whose status is constituted by a background condition of ubiquitous shame that saturates her self–world relation without being articulable, thematizable. In an economy of masculine desire, in which value-extraction and depletion, value-acquisition and surplus, are the terms of the logic, she is surrounded by stories and images of women rescued by male desire, women whose value is secured by the proposal, the wedding—those moments of rescue require the provocation of male desire.[11] This becomes an urgent existential necessity, for so many girls, in adolescence. It is the shape of this imagined future, paired with a deep determination not to succumb to

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the ubiquitous shame of feminine existence, that secures the girl's complicity in her own destruction.

A Feminist Political Phenomenology of Shame

Ubiquitous shame becomes unbounded shame when the economy of desire and disrespect churns out its waste products, the skets and slags and sluts who are so "stupid" as to believe that the promise belongs to them, stupid enough to take the risk of the opening step in their own stories of rescue and redemption, stupid enough to undertake a prescribed project of freeing themselves from ubiquitous shame. For these girls, the process of value-depletion that ensues, the radical closing of the future that comes next, the social isolation and the suicides, disclose the contours of a world in which all of us still live. Imagining ourselves as having achieved some modicum of gender justice and gender freedom, living as we do in the age of formal gender equality—these lives, these realities, give the lie to all of it, demonstrate the degree to which men still own the world, where, as Amanda put it, "I'm stuck… what's left of me now… nothing stops."

A feminist political phenomenology of shame can help us to understand how it could be that after formal equality, the continued vulnerability of women to masculinist projects of value-extortion and value-extraction is secured. If shame is at the very heart of what makes male supremacy resilient beyond its ability to secure its own formal institutionalization in law and policy, then understanding and combating gendered shame is essential to feminist politics in the new century. Indeed, activists have recently taken on the theme of shame and invented a new term to help us name what is going on when women are shamed for their sexual self-display ("slut-shaming"). It is my hope that this essay will contribute to a deeper understanding of what is at stake in the culture of ubiquitous shame that *demands* such display as a redemptive project, yet sets girls and women up for unbounded shame through their very hope of redemption from ubiquitous shame *through* culturally prescribed forms of sexual self-display. The two forms of shame work together to secure women's vulnerability and men's power. It is urgently necessary that we continue to create the conditions for affective investments in other kinds of self-justification for both women and men, so that self-worth and social recognition are not negotiated so intensively or exclusively through gendered practices of risk, extortion, extraction, and depletion.

Notes

1. I don't agree with Freud that shame plays a less significant role in masculine identity-formation. On the contrary, I believe it is absolutely central, though distinct from the kind of shame I analyze here. See Mann 2014.

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2. I'm not, of course, suggesting that we take Freud seriously *in toto*, but rather in relation to the specific point that shame has a powerful role in feminine identity-formation. I will discuss Beauvoir on Freudian "penis envy" below. I am reading Freud against himself, as Beauvoir does.

3. In masculine identity-formation, the "logical endpoint" of shame is often an exhibitionist display of violence against others; see Mann 2014.

4. I don't mean to suggest by this that she is not also a victim of gendered violence who is suffering. It is important not to reduce her to that status, however, and to recognize that she is also thinking about what has happened to her, and trying to articulate important dimensions of that experience.

5. I give a much more developed account of what feminist phenomenology is and how it does its work in "The Difference of Feminist Phenomenology: The Case of Shame" (Mann forthcoming). In that essay, I recontextualize the analysis of shame here to compare a feminist phenomenology of shame to other phenomenological accounts.

6. This is an insight that has profoundly shaped my work, but has been left largely unexamined by Beauvoir scholars, thus it might not be immediately recognizable even to those who are closely familiar with Beauvoir. See Mann 2012.

7. When I talk or write about such cases, I often get a question about the parents in the situation. The question is either posed with outrage, "Where the hell were the parents?" or more generously, "Why isn't good-enough parenting, or the presence of caring adults, enough to counter the force of this vicious peer culture?" There are too many dimensions to a meaningful response to such questions to explore here, but certainly such a response would have to include the late-capitalist fetishization and elevation of youth and their peer relations, the political economy of those relations, which is touched on in this essay, and the concomitant stripping of cultural authority from parents and other adults in relation to adolescents. Parents and other adults often experience themselves as utterly powerless to effectively intervene in an adolescent trajectory, however apparently headed for disaster.

8. I don't agree with Bartky's claims here at all. I think that shame events in masculine identity-formation are absolutely ubiquitous, and haunted by the specter of humiliation associated with *failed* masculinity, as much as by the promise of masculinity redeemed by power. Nor do they result in moral ameliorization, according to all empirical evidence. See Mann 2014.

9. Of course we wish that a positive, powerful affirmation of female sexuality would be an alternative source of redemption from shame, and for some of us it has been or will be. The ongoing cultural struggle to create the space for such affirmation, and to create the stories and images to facilitate it, is an important site of feminist work, but one that still has trouble gaining a cultural foothold against more dominant narratives, and often finds itself repeating and perhaps reproducing those narratives (I wonder this about the "slut walk" phenomenon, for example). What is certain is that for many girls and young women, such space is not yet a reality. I propose to my own students that they replace the word "slut" with "sexually adventurous," but I don't get the sense that the suggestion gets much traction.

10. In Lynn Phillips's research, interviews with young women revealed that at the time of an experience of sexual use or abuse, women tend to see themselves as agents, who have made individual, free choices that "got them into" an abusive situation. Thus, they may well view themselves as "stupid" if things go wrong. Later in life, Phillips found,

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women have a different understanding of earlier events, and often look back at them with more compassion for the younger selves who lived through them (Phillips 2000).

11. The project of provoking male desire, in this historical situation, seems to largely supplant or colonize a girl's exploration of her own sexual desire, which one would hope would be a part of any adolescent life.

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