

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art  
Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## On Scandal

Scandal is the quintessential public event. Here is the first general and comprehensive analysis of this ubiquitous moral phenomenon. Taking up wide-ranging cases in society, politics, and art, Ari Adut shows when wrongdoings generate scandals and when they do not. He focuses on the emotional and cognitive experience of scandals and the relationships among those who are involved in or exposed to them. This perspective explains variations in the effects, frequency, elicited reactions, outcomes, and strategic uses of scandals. *On Scandal* offers provocative accounts of the Oscar Wilde, Watergate, and Lewinsky affairs. Adut also employs the lens of scandal to address puzzles and questions regarding public life. Why is American politics plagued by sex scandals? What is the cause of the rise in political scandals in Western democracies? Why were Victorians sometimes accommodating and other times intolerant of homosexuality? What is the social logic of hypocrisy? Why has transgression been so central to modern art?

Ari Adut is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. He holds postgraduate degrees from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris and the University of Chicago, where he has also taught. His research has received support from the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art

Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences

Mark Granovetter, editor

The series Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences presents approaches that explain social behavior and institutions by reference to relations among such concrete entities as persons and organizations. This contrasts with at least four other popular strategies: (a) reductionist attempts to explain by a focus on individuals alone; (b) explanations stressing the causal primacy of such abstract concepts as ideas, values, mental harmonies, and cognitive maps (thus, “structuralism” on the Continent should be distinguished from structural analysis in the present sense); (c) technological and material determination; and (d) explanation using “variables” as the main analytic concepts (as in the “structural equation” models that dominated much of the sociology of the 1970s), where structure is that connecting variables rather than actual social entities.

The social network approach is an important example of the strategy of structural analysis; the series also draws on social science theory and research that is not framed explicitly in network terms but stresses the importance of relations rather than the atomization of reduction or the determination of ideas, technology, or material conditions. Though the structural perspective has become extremely popular and influential in all the social sciences, it does not have a coherent identity, and no series yet pulls together such work under a single rubric. By bringing the achievements of structurally oriented scholars to a wider public, the Structural Analysis series hopes to encourage the use of this very fruitful approach.

### Recent Books in the Series

Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*  
(Second Edition)

Nan Lin, *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action*

Roberto Franzosi, *From Words to Numbers*

Sean O’Riain, *The Politics of High-Tech Growth*

James Lincoln and Michael Gerlach, *Japan’s Network Economy*

Patrick Doreian, Vladimir Batagelj, and Anujka Ferligoj, *Generalized  
Blockmodeling*

Eiko Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and Political  
Origins of Japanese Culture*

Wouter de Nooy, Andrej Mrvar, and Vladimir Batagelj, *Exploratory  
Social Network Analysis with Pajek*

Peter Carrington, John Scott, and Stanley Wasserman, *Models and  
Methods in Social Network Analysis*

Robert C. Feenstra and Gary G. Hamilton, *Emergent Economies,  
Divergent Paths*

Martin Kilduff and David Krackhardt, *Interpersonal Networks in  
Organizations*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art

Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

# ON SCANDAL

*Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics,  
and Art*

**Ari Adut**

*University of Texas at Austin*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art

Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521895897](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521895897)

© Ari Adut 2008

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2008

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Adut, Ari, 1971–

On scandal : moral disturbances in society, politics, and art / Ari Adut.

p. cm. – (Structural analysis in the social sciences)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-89589-7 (hardback)

1. Deviant behavior. 2. Scandals. 3. Sex scandals – Case studies.

4. Scandals – History – Case studies. I. Title. II. Series.

HM811.A38 2008

302.5'42–dc22 2008005084

ISBN 978-0-521-89589-7 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art

Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*To Elyo and İkbal Adut*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art  
Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

And if your quarrels should rip up old stories,  
And help them with a lie or two additional,  
I'm not to blame, as you well know – no more is  
Any one else – they were become traditional;  
Besides, their resurrection aids our glories  
By contrast, which is what we just were wishing all:  
And science profits by this resurrection –  
Dead scandals form good subjects for dissection.

Lord Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto I. St. 31

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art

Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> xiii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>1 The Disruptive Publicity of Transgression</b>	<b>8</b>
What Is Scandal?	11
The Transgression	13
The Publicizer	14
The Public	16
More Complex Forms	17
Publicity	19
Scandal as Lived Experience	21
Contamination	24
Associative Contamination	24
Audience Contamination	25
Aggravating Elements	27
Provocation	31
What Follows	34
<b>2 The Fall of Oscar Wilde</b>	<b>38</b>
The Scandal of Homosexuality in Victorian England	41
Victorians and Oscar Wilde before His Trials	47
The Impending Scandal	52
The Dynamics of the Oscar Wilde Affair	53
The Libel Trial	57
The Prosecution and Conviction of Wilde	60

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art

Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS

<b>3 The Presidency, Imperial and Imperiled</b>	73
Political Scandal	73
Democracy and Political Scandal	75
The Media	77
Moral Attack and Vulnerability	81
The Vulnerabilities of Presidents	82
Sociopolitical Conjuncture	83
Mode of Presidential Governance	85
The Traditional Presidency and Its Scandals	86
The Modern Presidency and Its Protections	93
The Making of Watergate	99
The Transgressions	103
The Unfolding of Watergate	107
The Presidency after Watergate	114
Imperial Tendencies in the 2000s	124
<b>4 Investigating Corruption in France</b>	129
Norm Entrepreneurship	130
Scandal and Norm Entrepreneurship	131
Corruption in France	133
Transformations in the Eighties	136
The French Penal Procedure and the Investigating Magistrates	141
The Mobilization of the Investigating Magistrates	143
The Scandal Strategies	148
Techniques of Insubordination	149
Targeting Higher-ups	150
Publicizing the Transgression	153
Challenging the Political Elite	158
The Consequences of the Scandals	160
The Limits and Discontents of Scandal	168
<b>5 Sex and the American Public Sphere</b>	175
Sex and Scandal	182
Sex and Politics in the Nineteenth-Century United States	185
The Rise of Modesty	190
Sexual Liberalization and the Decline of Modesty	197
The Rise of Sexual Politics	203
The Making of the Lewinsky Affair	209



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art

Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS

<b>6 Provocation in Art</b>	224
Transgression in Art and Its Effects	225
Impressionism and Its Scandals	234
The Moral Logics of Modern Art	248
Subversive Content	249
Form and Morality	254
The Paradoxes of Contemporary Art	271
The Crisis of the Art Object	271
The Return of the Real	283
<i>Conclusion</i>	287
<i>Notes</i>	291
<i>References</i>	321
<i>Index</i>	343

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art

Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## List of Figures

3.1. Federal Prosecutions of Public Corruption in the United States	<i>page</i> 76
3.2. Trust in Government – National Election Study Polls	104
3.3. Trust in the Executive Branch – Harris Polls	105
3.4. Trust in the Presidency after Watergate – Harris Poll	116
4.1. Vulnerability of French Politicians to Scandal	140
4.2. French Politicians and the Corruption Investigations	152
6.1. Carl André, <i>Equivalent VIII</i>	227
6.2. Pablo Picasso, <i>Les Demoiselles d'Avignon</i> ( <i>Young Ladies of Avignon</i> )	229
6.3. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, <i>Madonna dei palafrenieri</i> ( <i>Madonna and the Serpent</i> )	237
6.4. Édouard Manet, <i>Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe</i> ( <i>Luncheon on the Grass</i> )	240
6.5. Édouard Manet, <i>Olympia</i>	242
6.6. Eugène Delacroix, <i>The Death of Sardanapalus</i>	245
6.7. Edgar Degas, <i>The Tub</i> ( <i>Bathing Woman</i> )	247
6.8. Max Ernst, <i>Virgin Punishing Jesus in Front of Three Witnesses: André Breton, Paul Éluard, and the Painter</i>	250
6.9. Salvador Dali, <i>The Gloomy Game</i>	252
6.10. Pablo Picasso, <i>Large Nude in a Red Armchair</i>	260
6.11. Willem de Kooning, <i>Woman I</i>	262
6.12. Jean Dubuffet, <i>Portrait d'André Dhotel nuancé d'abricot</i> ( <i>Portrait of André Dhotel Shaded with Apricot</i> )	263
6.13. Jackson Pollock, <i>Cathedral</i>	268
6.14. Marcel Duchamp, <i>Fountain</i>	273
6.15. Andy Warhol, <i>Brillo Box</i>	275

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art  
Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## LIST OF FIGURES

6.16. Joseph Kosuth, <i>One and Three Chairs</i>	276
6.17. Damien Hirst, <i>The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living</i>	277
6.18. Piero Manzoni, <i>Merda d'artista (Artist's Shit)</i>	282
6.19. Dread Scott, <i>What Is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?</i>	284

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art  
Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Andy Abbott for his continuous, unstinting support since the late 1990s. I am extremely lucky to have worked with someone with such boundless intellectual scope and curiosity during my doctorate. I would also like to express my gratitude to Bill Sewell, who has helped me out in so many ways and from whom I have learned so much in Chicago and afterward. Andreas Glaeser and the late Roger Gould gave generously of their time and knowledge while I was in graduate school. I am indebted as well to Faruk Birtek, Nilüfer Göle, and Michel Wieviorka for initiating me to sociological thinking and research.

Randy Collins, Mark Granovetter, James Jasper, Michael Schudson, Christine Williams, and several anonymous reviewers provided munificent, detailed, and extremely helpful feedback on the entire book manuscript. Jack Katz and Charles Tilly generously made many incisive and useful comments on several chapters. I have tried to address most of the issues that they raised, and wherever I was successful in this enterprise, the book significantly improved. I should also like to thank Viviana Zelizer for her warm encouragement over the years. Thanks are due as well to Ed Parsons, my resourceful in-house editor at Cambridge University Press.

I profited quite a bit from exchanges with Damien de Blic, Luc Boltanski, Bruno Fay, Willie Jasso, Steven Lukes, Laurent Thévenot, Loïc Wacquant, and Ezra Zuckerman. The sociology departments of the University of Chicago and the University of Texas at Austin provided wonderful environments for research and writing. Parts of the book were presented at the various meetings of the American Sociological Association and the Social Science History Association, as

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89589-7 - On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art  
Ari Adut

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

well as at the University of Chicago, University of Texas at Austin, Princeton University, University of California at Berkeley, University of Pennsylvania, New York University, and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. I benefited much from the responses of these audiences. The Social Science Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, Andrew Mellon Foundation, the University of Chicago, and the University of Texas at Austin furnished funds at various stages during this project. I was able to include artwork in this book only thanks to a University Co-Operative Society Subvention Grant generously awarded by the University of Texas. I am also grateful to Matt Valentine for the author photograph. The first, second, and fourth chapters of this book adapt some material that I have already published elsewhere: “A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde” *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (1): 213–48; “Scandal as Norm Entrepreneurship Strategy: Corruption and the French Investigating Magistrates,” *Theory and Society* 33 (5): 529–578.

What I owe to the following people combines the personal with the intellectual. Ödül Bozkurt, Marc Breviglieri, Ozan Erözden, Diana Fleischman, Robert Hogg, Harris Kim, Jim Litzel, Ali Hakan Muştu, Michael Reinhard, Atila Sezen, Diego von Vacano, Brooke Wexler, and Levent Yılmaz helped me in myriad ways impossible to express here. I am indebted as well to my dear University of Texas colleagues Maya Charad, Andrés Villarreal, Michael Young, and Wei-Hsin Yu for their both cerebral and bighearted friendship, which aided me immensely while writing. The ideas that are proposed in this book started to take form in graduate school, mostly through conversations with fellow sufferers. Of the latter I am particularly thankful to Deborah Boucoyannis, Dorothee Brantz, Dave Grazian, Nicole Greene, Gülriz Kurban, Haydar Kurban, Paul Manning, Jacqueline Mraz, Esra Özyürek, Devin Pendas, Michael Rosenfeld, and Joan Stavo-Debaugé.

I would not have been able to write this book without the moral support of my family. My greatest debt is thus to all the members of my family, and especially to my parents, Elyo and İkbâl Adut, to whom this book is dedicated.