



Blush: Faces of Shame

Elspeth Probyn

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With the rise of pride - national pride, gay pride, black pride, fat pride - shame, the "sickness of the soul," has acquired a bad reputation. While the repudiation of some forms and consequences of societal shame are undoubtedly necessary, Elspeth Probyn contends that this emotion is a powerful resource in rethinking who we are and who we want to be. When we blush, we are driven to question what we value about ourselves and why. Blush argues that we are all born with a capacity for shame, much as we are born with the capacity for anger or pride, and that shame, like these other emotions, can be good for us and reveal the good in us. Painfully introspective, shame demands that we question our actions and our relationship to others. Shame's physical manifestation - the blush - gives us away, connecting us to our humanity. What shames us says a great deal about our character as individuals and as a society, about our past and our desires for the future. Written in an engaging and personal style, Blush combines psychology and cultural criticism, sociology and popular science, to present a unique perspective on debates about the ethics and emotion of identity.

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