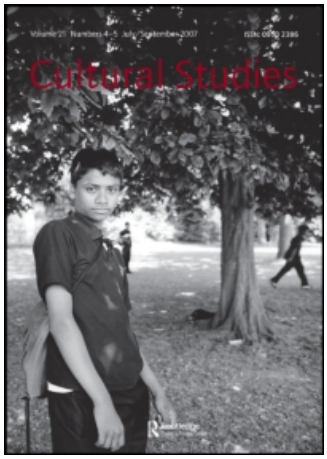


Cultural Studies
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713684873

# Everyday shame

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Online Publication Date: 01 January 2004
To cite this Article: Probyn, Elspeth (2004) 'Everyday shame', Cultural Studies, 18:2, 328 - 349
To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/0950238042000201545
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950238042000201545

**Elspeth Probyn**

# EVERYDAY SHAME

*This article explores aspects of the everyday through a consideration of shame. Drawing on and extending Bourdieu's notion of the habitus, notably in relationship to Silvan Tomkins' affect theory, and to Bourdieu's predecessor Marcel Mauss, the paper argues for the positivity of everyday shame. The very different although complementary privileging of the physiological in Tomkins and in Mauss allows for a radical rearticulation and understanding of the habitus and of everyday life. In this article, their understandings serve to provide a model that more fully comprehends the productive nature of shame within postcolonial societies.*

**Keywords** affect; Bourdieu; everyday life; habitus; Mauss; out-of-place; shame; Tomkins

I have moved around a lot in my life, and my body hates it. It loves the rituals of everyday life, and hates the thought of disruption. When I immigrated to Australia, it went into somatic spasms as I ripped it from its accustomed everyday routines. This is not a tale of woe, nor even very unusual, but the experience does provide me with ample evidence of a strange little strain of shame: the body's feeling of being out-of-place in the everyday. It is a shame born of the body's desire to fit in, just as it knows that it cannot. 'You're not from here': the slip of tongue, the flash of ignorance faced with an entirely different arrangement of the everyday. It is no big deal, compared to the experiences of others violently uprooted. It is just a little shaming from within fed by the desire to be unnoticed, to be at home in the everyday of someone else's culture.

In this article, I argue that shame compels a rethinking of how we conceptualize the everyday as it is lived. Shame, as we will see, dramatically questions taken-for-granted distinctions between affect, emotion, biography, and the places in which we live our daily lives. Moreover, in its insistence on the located and embodied nature of shame as a response to others, it may undo the moral normativity that underpins habitual concepts of guilt. Shame rips the everyday out of its habitual stasis: its sentencing within the present. If in common sense the everyday is privatized, personalized as 'my life', shame makes apparent the ways in which the everyday experiences of radically differently positioned selves are contagious – as Gatens argues, 'the contagiousness of "collective" affects' exposes 'the breaches in the borders between self and other' (1999, p. 14).

*Cultural Studies Vol. 18, No. 2/3 March/May 2004, pp. 328–349*
ISSN 0950-2386 print/ISSN 1466-4348 online 
http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals DOI: 10.1080/0950238042000201545

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Affect theory, in particular approaches indebted to Tomkins, promises a different gestalt of the everyday, wherein it becomes impossible to maintain 'culturally constructed "feelings" and "emotions" [as] substantially divorced from the materiality of the body' (Gibbs 2002, p. 337). Tomkins, a clinical psychologist working in the 1950s and 1960s, argued for a model of radical interconnectedness premised on the idea that humans have innate affects. The affect system serves to amplify at a physiological level the stimuli of everyday life. Tomkins' (1995/1963) list of paired affects included interest–excitement, enjoyment–joy, surprise–startlement, distress–anguish, contempt–disgust, anger–rage and shame–humiliation. Far from delimiting the possibilities of affective life, the distinct nature of affects provides an optic into the complex combinations that characterize the everyday. They are also both intensely individual and social; more importantly, and as I argue, they undo any opposition that relies on alignments of private/public.

Of the affects, it is shame that most interests me, in part because it spectacularly shows the self in its essential vulnerability – its everyday dependence on the proximities of others, of place, of routine, of biography and history.[1] If shame is felt as 'a sickness of the self' (Tomkins), it is also the affect most clearly based in the positivity of interest. As Tomkins clearly argues, without interest there cannot be shame. Shame is the body's way of registering that it has been interested, and that it seeks to re-establish interest. Interest is to be understood widely: the bodily and physiological continually alert us to the interest of everyday life. Elsewhere (Probyn forthcoming) I argue that this focus on interest is desperately needed within cultural studies' analyses. Here I explore shame and interest as resources in rethinking concepts such as the everyday habitus. In the context in which I write, shame also provides a way of navigating the complexity of everyday life in a postcolonial milieu, and demonstrates both the singularity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures and their deep interconnection.

Most experiences of shame make you want to disappear, to hide away and to cover yourself. However, the disjuncture of place, the everyday, self and interest can produce a particularly visceral sensation of shame. It is felt in the rupture when bodies cannot or will not fit the place – when, seemingly, there is no place to hide. Here I mine my own physical reactions and those of others to think through the types of unacknowledged knowledge that are buried in the everyday, and that scramble notions of ordinary and extraordinary.[2] As part of a larger project on shame, I am particularly interested in finding new descriptions of what bodies do and say as they inhabit everyday places. Although commonly understood as negative – both in the strict sense of being a negative affect and in the more usual one of being bad or wrong – I want to argue that shame is immensely productive politically and conceptually in advancing a project of everyday ethics.[3] In political climates such as Australia – dealing (badly) with issues around Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal reconciliation – this conceptual project takes on the edge of urgently needed political rethinking as we become

ever more mired in guilt, on the one hand, and moral denunciations on the other.[4]

At the level of theories, descriptions of shame tend to be differentiated according to whether shame is seen as an affect or as an emotion. In general, descriptions of shame understood as an emotion tend to privilege cognition and even sometimes disparage what the feeling body does in shame. Conversely it seems that those who use affect to describe shame are more interested or open to considerations of what happens in the body (and its components such as the brain and the nervous system). While I am most interested in descriptions that allow us to comprehend the physicality of the body – those more wedded to the vocabulary of affect – here I pursue a more social scientific explanation of this phenomenon. In particular, I am interested in shame's role in reworking the possibilities of the body and its habitus. The term is, of course, most associated with Pierre Bourdieu who uses it to designate how social structures are embodied in everyday practice. Investigating the physiological aspect of shame, I will also enlist ideas developed by his predecessor, Marcel Mauss. Their ideas may reanimate a sociological comprehension of what we feel when we feel shame, of how the physiological experience of shame intersects with the physicality of place. The colour, the place, the everyday histories of bodies all come alive in shame.

Sociologically speaking, it is hard to find ways of describing the body's movement, and feeling: its affects and how the body changes in proximity to other bodies, or in different places. As a strategy, I turn to telling stories and to retelling those of others. Deep down all I ever want to do is to tell stories of the everyday. However, this can cause problems, especially when they are seen as a recounting of the personal. Shameful stories exacerbate the understanding of narrative as merely referencing personal idiosyncrasies. In academic writing, this coalescing around the personal, compounded by shame's seemingly personal quality, renders telling tales difficult, causing painful misunderstandings. Personally, I think it's high time that we got beyond such social scientific unease, but let me cite Benjamin in defence.

> 'It was as if the shame of it was to outlive him.' With these words *The Trial* ends. Corresponding as it does to his 'elemental purity of feeling,' shame is Kafka's strongest gesture. It has a dual aspect, however. Shame is an intimate human reaction, but at the same time it has social pretensions. Shame is not only shame in the presence of others, but can also be shame one feels for them. Kafka's shame, then, is no more personal than the life and thought which govern it.
>
> (1992, p. 125)

Benjamin puts it perfectly. There is something pure about shame as a feeling, even as it publicly twists the very sense of self. Yet, shame always plays on that

doubledness of the public and the private, the extraordinary and the mundane. It is perhaps the most intimate of feelings but seemingly must be brought into being by an intimate proximity to others. Shame makes our selves intimate to our selves, and equally it is social and impersonal; or at least, as Benjamin puts it, no more personal than the life and thought that carry it. In the face of much criticism about 'the subjective', which is then further debased (in some minds) by the labelling of a genre of academic writing as 'the personal', I use Benjamin's thoughts not as an alibi but as inspiration. In this sense, everyday stories of shame may allow us to develop a wider notion of the everyday – of what is personal and what is social.

The body is key here: it generates and carries much more meaning that we have tended to see. That said, using and describing how one's body or those of others react in different contexts can sometimes be exemplary, and sometimes not. It is a bit of an experiment. As Massumi writes, 'exemplification activates detail', and the success of examples hinges on their detail (2002, p. 18).[5] Personally, I do not think that stories can have too much detail, although perhaps theories can. But enough prevaricating, let's get on the road.

## Getting to Uluru

As many will know, at the heart of Australia there is a big rock. It is really big, and sort of red, or many shades of red. It is, debatably, the world's biggest monolith and made of arkosic sandstone. To give some idea of its stature, it is 9.4 km in circumference, 345 metres high, 3.6 km long and 2 km wide. Walking at a good pace, it takes several hours to circumnavigate. It is thought to extend downwards several kilometres, like an iceberg in the desert. Known still by some as 'Ayers Rock', its Aboriginal name Uluru has become increasingly common usage. It is symbolically central to many groups. Most legitimately, it is at the heart of Anangu belief, the Aboriginal people who have lived in the vicinity of Uluru for some 22,000 years, or more. It is also at the heart of white Australia's imagining of itself, although many Australians have not been – it is an expensive enterprise to get to the centre from the east coast where much of the population lives. This does not stop the masses of foreign tourists for whom 'Ayers Rock' is also a central destination. They pique our envy, and perhaps incite shame as they flash around our cut-price dollar.

The rock works differently for tourists than for either the Anangu or for white Australians. For the latter, Uluru is part of the everyday mythology of living in this vast continent. For the Anangu, now the legally recognized custodians of the rock and the park, it is where the everyday is most clearly inhabited by the spiritual and the historical. For the Anangu, Uluru is the site of the energy called Tjukurpa, a Pitjantjatjara word that encompasses their history, religion and law. In the words of Yami Lester, the chair of the Uluru-Katajuta Board of

Management: 'In the past some people have laughed and called it dreaming but that Tjukurpa is real, it's our law, our language and family together'.[6] The Tjukurpa can be said to map the relationships and the travels and activities of the ancestral beings who inhabit the land. Uluru is a busy place, with dozens of sacred sites both for women and men. Next to the grandeur of their tales, any other story is mundane. Certainly mine is:

> In the very dead of winter, we made our way to Uluru.[7] Eliot's phrase – pinched from the epic journey of the Magi – made us smile as we descended down from Darwin. We were on holiday and allowed to be corny. The really hot days were behind us, and the sun would now be on our backs until we turned west at Alice Springs, 1,600 kilometres south of Darwin. The rhythm of time changed slightly as we hit the Stuart Highway. In the back, against the bags, my feet out the window, my body slowed and became all eyes to take in the subtly changing landscape. Nature stops and tea breaks gear-shifted the smooth flow of time and space. I wondered again and again at the marvel of a billy boiling in minutes, perched on a nest of twigs. It is all so new, in such an ancient land. The dryness is pervasive; the land yields up a sigh when I squat to pee. At night we sleep on foamies – a luxurious version of the swag, little rectangles under the stars.
>
> We turned right at Alice and after stopping in the seemingly ghost-drenched former Lutheran mission of Hermannsburg, continued onto a rough track through the Finke Gorge. The riverbed was as dry as could be, but debris from the last time it flooded was left high in the branches of the great river gums. The four-wheel drive clambered up and down sand dunes and rocks. Sometimes you could walk faster but I didn't want to leave the vehicle and my companions – it had subtly become home, a snug encapsulation of another quotidian. It's easy to explain how such a radically different configuration could feel like home: a secure human and nonhuman capsule upon which my life depended. It's harder to know why it so displaced my real home. I caught those whiffs of feeling before thought sets in, when the reference of home would not compute. My body had moulded to the interior, my senses fixated on the outside registering new information.
>
> On the road to Uluru we found a track into the mulga and made camp far away from the noise of the big tourist buses. It was crepuscule, or as one of companions said in Australian, 'crepuscular'. He climbed a dune and came back to say that we could see the rock. Dark had fallen and by the light of the gas lamp I read my novel. The rock could wait.
>
> The next day we broke camp faster than usual. We had a destination. We had plans. For all that the image of the rock burned in my sense of Australia, I was less excited than my companions who had seen it many times before. Vague feelings of discomfort lingered as I sat in the back. Maybe I wouldn't like it, or worse, maybe I wouldn't have the right feeling.

After the undulations of the previous country, the land was undeniably flat. A wide-open flatness that does the heart good. And it is red, well more than red can convey. We drove with no sign of change to the land. How could something that big disappear, or fail to appear?

Then there it was. Awe-inspiring, mind-bogglingly there. Wow – a useless word; but Wow. Complying with a request from their daughter, my companions played her favourite song for the sighting of the rock: 'Beds are Burning' from Midnight Oil's *Diesel and Dust* (1985). As we got closer – movement in slowed time – I breathed in an elation that seemed to be the result of a million things resonating. Then as I breathed out the quiverings were transposed into sobs – great, big, ugly ones. Peter Garrett and the boys sang over them. The anthem of good white Australia dissipated out the window and into the red dust:

> The time has come to say fair's fair
> To pay the rent, to pay our share
> The time has come, a fact's fact
> It belongs to them, let's give it back.

Like a child, I cried myself out and felt that sleepy, empty calm. In a daze, I walked around the rock, registering somewhere its magnificence. We drove to Yulara, the Ayers Rock Resort. Our travels continued but I'll leave us there, filling the water tanks and picking up supplies.

## The place of emotion

As many are beginning to argue, the past is carried somatically into everyday life. Young, a somatic psychologist, writes, 'bodies are passed down in families . . . The body is the flesh of memory' (2002, p. 25, p. 47). If somatic psychology is a recent development, the ways in which the body is marked by large social forces has been a key point in much sociology. In an attempt to figure out where and how shame erupts, connects with the inhabited body, and its histories of place, I turn now to the work of Bourdieu, who has done much to promote an analysis of how and why the social enters into our bodies and selves.

Elaborated in the 1960s and 1970s, Bourdieu's set of concepts, such as cultural, social and symbolic capital, the field, hexis and the habitus promised a more grounded study of distinction and difference than was the norm. These concepts were designed to speak across the great divides within the social science and the humanities and an intellectual situation where the cultural cannot be mentioned in the same breath as the biological, the social as the economic. Crude divisions, elaborated in ever increasingly sophisticated ways, still operate to separate the objective and the subjective, the inside and the

outside, cognition and non-cognition, the body and the social. As he recounts in a 1985 interview, subsequently published in French with the provocative English title, 'Fieldwork in Philosophy', Bourdieu wanted to elaborate a 'genetic structuralism'.

> The analysis of objective structures – those of different *fields* – is inseparable from the analysis of the genesis at the heart of biological individuals of mental structures which are in one instance the product of the incorporation of social structures themselves: social space and the groups which are distributed across it, are the product of historical struggles (in which agents are engaged by function of their position in social space and the mental structures through which they comprehend this space).
>
> (1987, p. 24)

As will be well known, Bourdieu conceived of individuals as agents formed by and through mental structures: the ideas, the representations, the abstractions such as class and gender, etc. As such, agents incorporate these structures or representations in the ways they inhabit social spaces. These mental representations delimit how they can move and in which spaces they can move. Bourdieu's description complexly represents what we all may have felt – our bodies seem to know when they are at ease in a situation, when they know the rules and expectations, and conversely they also tell us loudly when we are out of our leagues, fishes out of water. The field is then a way of describing how all social spaces are inscribed by rules that are, by and large, unstated because as agents we have incorporated them. This 'genetic' knowledge is what allows us access to certain spheres, and enables us to operate, or not, within them. It is the mechanism that turns the extraordinary into daily life. It produces the feeling of the everyday. Conversely, when that knowledge fails us or is not up to the demands of the field, we are alerted acutely by what I've called the feeling of out-of-placeness, what happens when a body knows it does not belong within a certain space: in Bourdieu's terms, there is a schism between the habitus and the field, and this makes us feel, quite literally, out of it.

In this regulation of feeling '*bien dans sa peau*', or conversely out of it, the habitus is crucial. Again, it is the space of incorporation – a favourite Bourdieusian term – where the force of history gets played out in our ways of positioning ourselves and our ways of being in the world. While the body and the social come together in much of his work, Bourdieu is, however, rather vague about the place of emotion or of affect within the habitus – is how the body feels in feeling important, or is the 'feeling body' a side issue compared to the big questions about class and social capital? His attention to the physicality of the embodied habitus does promise a way of thinking about emotion and affect as simultaneously social and physical. This attention to the feeling body, as I will discuss shortly, is more clearly foregrounded by Marcel Mauss.

Habitus is a good point of departure in trying to get at the body's everyday operations. As a concept it can be a little clumsy, but it also provides a useful framing of how the structures of education, social position, class, gender etc., become embedded in our ways of inhabiting the world. Habitus, for Bourdieu, also focused on 'the *generative* capacities of dispositions' (1990, p. 53fn). More precisely, for Bourdieu the concept also seems to have had the wider function within the epistemology of an engaged sociology of the everyday: the Francophone tradition of *la sociologie engagée* where the point of sociology is to intervene in what it elsewhere only purports to study. At another level, habitus was to correct the two tendencies within the social sciences that Bourdieu spent much of his life fighting: objectivism, and more pointedly subjectivism. On this point, here is what he had to say in *The Logic of Practice*:

> [T]he concept of the habitus, which is predisposed by its range of historical uses to designate a system of acquired, permanent, generative dispositions, is justified above all by the false problems that it eliminates, the questions it enables one to formulate better or to resolve, and the specific scientific difficulties it gives rise to.
>
> (1990, p. 53fn)

Here the concept provides a way out of the perils of objectivism which 'universalizes the theorist's relation to the object of science', and of subjectivism which 'universalizes the experience that the subject of theoretical discourse has of himself as subject' (1990, pp. 45–56). In French sociology, this has often been taken as a way of warding against that nasty Anglo habit that some of us have of playing fast and loose with the subjective. But, in fact, I do not think that this is warranted by Bourdieu's thoughts. At another level, as in much sociological and anthropological research, Bourdieu relied heavily on the subjective accounts of his informants.

How else are we to enter other people's everyday lives? This was, of course, precisely Bourdieu's interest: how to account for practical knowledge – the stuff which people gather and deploy in their everyday lives and which constitutes for Bourdieu the real reason that one does sociology. Hear, for instance, in the following quotation the way in which habitus, as a warning to the researcher, shifts into habitus as generative of interest:

> One has to situate oneself *within* 'real activity' as such, that is in the practical relation to the world, the preoccupied, active presence in the world through which the world imposes its presence, with its urgencies, its things to be said and done, things made to be said, which directly govern words and deeds without ever unfolding as spectacle.
>
> (1990, p. 52)

Generative is an important term in Bourdieu's argument about what the habitus does (although all concepts are, or should be, by their nature generative). The habitus as a description of everyday lived realities is that which generates practices, frames for positioning oneself in the world, and indeed ways of inhabiting the world. Analytically it acts as an optic into that world. These two sides come together in his description of the habitus as 'a metaphor of the world of object, which is itself an endless circle of metaphors that mirror each other ad infinitum' (1990, p. 76).

The way in which Bourdieu makes the habitus both an object of study and an analytic is repeated throughout his work. The search for a hinge, or for different hinges, that will render evident the coinciding of the objective and subjective worlds of sociality is at the heart of Bourdieu's project. In one of the many lovely phrases that tend to get lost in his prose, Bourdieu states that 'the habitus – embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product' (1990, p. 56). Elaborating on this, he argues that

> The habitus, a product of history produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history . . . [the habitus] ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices . . . more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms.
>
> (1990, p. 54)

In this way, institutions and privileges 'produce quite real effects, durably inscribed in belief' (1990, p. 57). There is, I think, something quite poignant about Bourdieu's insistence and his persistence in following through on this crucial insight. This is encapsulated by the way the habitus delivers a history that is 'both original and inevitable' (1990, p. 57).

Poignant though this may be, Bourdieu does not wax lyrical about emotions. On one reading, he seems almost dismissive:

> Emotion . . . is a (hallucinatory) 'presenting' of the impending future, which, as bodily reactions identical to those of the real situation bear witness, leads a person to live a still suspended future as already present, or even already past, and therefore necessary and inevitable – 'I'm a dead man', 'I'm done for'.
>
> (1990, p. 292fn)

Here emotion projects the habitus' tendency to continually frame and adjust between the unlikely (possibility) and the likely (probability). This can be clearly heard in Bourdieu's description of how 'agents cut their coats according to their

cloth and so to become the accomplices of the processes that tend to make the probable a reality' (1990, p. 65). In this rather dour depiction of the workings of the habitus, emotion seems to presage the fact that aspirations are always severely tailored by the reality of daily life. Either hallucinatory or fatalistic, emotion seems to be the body's way of registering its return to 'the present of the presumed world, the only one it can ever know' (1990, p. 65). There are no flights of fancy possible here; emotion in this understanding acts like the miner's canary as hope is snuffed out.

Which emotion produces the statement, 'I'm done for'? At once, it is the cry of fear. It might also express the realization that there is nothing left to fear but fear itself. The sense of emotion as anticipation/resignation is supported with a discussion of the physical behaviour of bodies: 'lowering or bending of the head or forehead as sign of confusion or timidity, and also shame and modesty'. Bourdieu concludes that 'Male, upward movements and female, downward movements . . . the will to be on top, to overcome, versus submission. . . . [it is] *as if* the body language of sexual domination and submission had provided the fundamental principles of both the body language and the verbal language of social domination and submission' (1990, p. 71, emphasis added).[8]

In this manner, the body's expressions – including that classic one of shame, the hanging of the head – become a trope to describe the wider structures of social domination. Within this schema, emotions seem to act as synecdoche for the body. The body, these 'acts of bodily gymnastics', root 'the most fundamental structures of the group in the primary expressions of the body . . . as is clearly seen in emotion' (1990, p. 71).

The role of emotion becomes more pronounced in Bourdieu's exposition of belief and the body. 'Practical belief', he argues, 'is a state of the body' (1990, p. 68); 'Enacted belief [is] instilled by the childhood learning that treats the body as a living memory pad'. This learning ensures that values are 'made body', and instils a 'whole cosmology'. Belief – what he calls 'the almost miraculous encounter between the habitus and the field' – is then crucially linked to emotion's role in animating the body. Emotion and bodily gymnastics are central to the fact that 'it is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know'. It is the simple act of 're-placing the body in an overall posture which recalls the associated thoughts and feelings' (1990, p. 69). These acts of the body in emotion then are key to the work of symbolic capital, arguably the most valued of the forms of capital in Bourdieu's well-known theory of distinction.[9]

> Symbolic power works partly through the control of other people's bodies and belief that is given by the collectively recognized capacity to act in various ways on deep-rooted linguistic and muscular patterns of behaviour, either by neutralizing them or reactivating them to function mimetically.
>
> (1990, p. 69)

From this encapsulated picture, we can say that emotion is part of the body's knowledge. It seems to work to amplify or reduce instilled tendencies, and as such it sounds more like affect. As in Massumi's argument, affect is distinguished as 'irreducibly bodily and autonomic' from emotion as 'subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of a quality of experience' (2002, p. 28). This is important in clarifying the type of knowledge emotion plays in Bourdieu's understanding of the body. In Bourdieu's description, emotion is not directly cognitive although its effects may initiate cognition:

> The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is 'learned by the body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is. (1990, p. 73)

This idea of the body as what 'is' sits uneasily with Bourdieu's argument about the 'hallucinatory' role of emotion. As we saw, emotion '"presents" an impending future'; it causes the body to adjust to the inevitability of the future as past. Bourdieu's phrasing of this is: 'I'm a dead man', 'I'm done for'. Earlier I queried the resignation that this expresses – a sort of sociological equivalent of 'sod's law' where things will go bad if they can. In this description, emotion presages and confirms the finality of the habitus. In line with this, as exemplified in the above quotation, the body can only re-enact the past. Listening carefully to the sequence of events described, the body feels, enacts an emotion, and then brings into being the past. It is therefore the feeling body that has the consequence of summoning the past – a spectral past as future.

This describes the ways in which through class, or at times gender, or just by familial instruction, life can seem to dead-end itself. But what of the body's range of affective expressions? Sometimes we weep and are caught within grief and joy. The role of the habitus may well be to sort out that confusion, to reproduce the feeling of inevitability. However, there may also be times when feeling shakes up the habitus; when the body outruns the cognitive capture of the habitus.

In sum, Bourdieu's use of emotion seems to close down the possibilities for the body that his own theory authorizes. The separation of the feeling body and emotion, and the implicit role of the latter as a cognitive adjustment mechanism, conceptually means that the body is captured in and by the social. While Bourdieu admits the physicality of the body, he clumsily contains this within a dour and vague evocation of emotion. It is a thin way of describing what elsewhere Bourdieu so richly evokes. The exciting ideas about the body, or about agents being active within the making of their worlds, are undercut if the body that '*is*' just constitutes a container for what it has been. This may be Bourdieu's reworked Marxism speaking, or perhaps his misapprehension of the emotions as

a nefarious form of false consciousness (a term that he would not use, but that seems apt in this situation). Whatever the source of his curtailing of emotion's role, it is a dead-end vision that can only make sense if ultimately Bourdieu evacuates evidence of the physiological expressions of the affective body.

## A sociology of humanity

It is disappointing to find glimpses of an exciting vision only to find that at the crucial point it has been withdrawn. However, I will now step back in time and consider Bourdieu's predecessor, Marcel Mauss. Mauss, I hope, lets us appreciate the physiological nature of the habitus and the feeling body, beyond it being always and already social, or inversely impossible.[10]

According to James, Mauss was the first to coin habitus as a sociological concept. She also mentions that originally the term was used medically to describe the outward appearance of the face and the body in relation to its internal state of health or sickness (1998, p. 20). Habitus is an important tenet in Mauss' striving to comprehend 'l'homme total', a vision of a sociological accounting for totality that joins 'the local connectedness of form and content, . . . the tangible aspect of human life . . . in relation to the body and its material experience, the techniques of work, and the rhythmic enactment of ritual and symbolic performance' (James 1998, p. 15). Schlanger describes Mauss' work as 'a fieldwork of modernity' (1998, p. 193), in which we can hear an early supplement to Bourdieu's 'fieldwork in philosophy'. In Karsenti's description, Mauss' project concerned nothing less than 'an enquiry into the principles on which the human being is "assembled" . . . a reorientation of the conceptualization of the social' (1998, p. 76).

As Mauss candidly put it, 'after having of necessity divided things up too much, sociologists must strive to reconstitute the whole . . . The study of the concrete, which is the study of completeness is possible' (1990, p. 80). Mauss' challenge included the detailed analysis of the parts as well as the task of figuring how to make them re-connect. In some ways, it is totality from below, one that works through example and detail. For Mauss, it is through the triple analysis of the physiological, psychological, and the societal that one might arrive at an understanding of the total man. In this, the practical, living everyday body was key: through the body's physiology: 'the co-ordination of articulated motions by which it functions and by which it embodies and conveys meaning . . . these efficacious bodily acts [education, fashion, prestige] confirm the social nature of the *habitus*' (Schlanger 1998, pp. 198–199).

Along with the sheer breadth of Mauss' project, there is also something very appealing about the man. In ways that must have been quite shocking at the time, and that remain refreshing, Mauss allowed for everyday human foibles within his sociology of humanity. That humans habitually do things wrong or clumsily, that

our actions and techniques attest to trial and error, mistakes and sometimes plain stupidity was not only accepted by Mauss but also often corroborated by examples from his own experience. In his exposition of body techniques, he recounts, for example, how his swimming technique was a product of a time when 'swimmers thought of themselves as a kind of steamboat' (1979, p. 99). He then depicts himself pushing though the water spouting great streams of water. And what to say of a thinker who on presenting his work – and his challenge – to the Société de Psychologie, remarks that he was inspired in his thoughts about swimming when he came into contact with someone 'whose initials I still know, but whose name I can no longer remember'. Apparently, the article was excellent, but says Mauss, 'I have been too lazy to look it up' (1979, p. 98).

Mauss' ideas about the body and its techniques were infused with his experiences within the trenches of WWI. As is detailed in Fournier's (1994) biography: 'Besides his grief at the loss of friends and colleagues, Mauss also discussed the sentiments of fear and panic he had to endure, and his recognition of the physical and moral force of instinct, which animates or on the contrary discourages and isolates the individual during extreme moments' (in Schlanger 1998, p. 209fn).[11] While he was rather scathing about a theory of the emotions *per se*, Mauss was not shy about using his own emotional experiences – which for me is a huge point in his favour. For instance, in regards to the war he recalls how 'I have also experienced fear, and how it is reinforced by panic to the point that not only the group, but also the individual will itself, even the brute instinct of self-preservation, dissolve all at once' (1979, p. 14). In response to psychological theories of *sthenia* and *asthenia* (courage and weakness towards life), Mauss refers again to the tripartite integration of the physiological-psychological-sociological. Within this complex, instinct is a driving force that, in some regards, exceeds man's symbolic capacities. Humans might communicate with symbols, but the only reason that we have symbols and can communicate with them is that we have instincts: 'The exaltations and ecstasies which create symbols are proliferations of instinct' (1979, p. 16). As Karsenti argues, Mauss' conception of the connection between the corporeal and the psychic was 'not a causal relationship that keeps one outside the other' (1998, p. 76). In relation to this body-psychic linkage, the social cannot be seen as merely that which is imposed or internalized. In the search to grasp the collective totality of our being, the social needs to be understood as 'truly internal, natural in the strong sense of the word' (Karsenti, 1998, p. 77).

The striking thing about Mauss' model, along with its combination of strangeness and commonsense, is the way in which totality is understood through the intersection of quite distinctive elements. In other words, totality is not totalizing. Humanity is not, in this sense, an abstraction but a real call to study all the things that make us. Hear, for example, the number of things going on in Mauss' description of totality:

> [W]e converge with physiology, the phenomena of bodily life, for it seems that between the social and the bodily the layer of individual consciousness is very thin: laughter, tears, funerary laments, ritual ejaculations, are physiological reactions just as much as they are obligatory or necessary or suggested or employed by collectivities to a precise end, with a view to a kind of physical and moral discharge of its expectations, which are physical and moral too.
>
> (1979, p. 10)

Compared to Bourdieu's equivocation about the body and emotion, Mauss goes straight to the pervasiveness of physiological convergences. In contrast to the way that the social seems to close down the body in the Bourdieusian habitus, Mauss is careful to highlight the very thin layer that exists between the physiological and the social. That layer is inhabited and disturbed by the feeling body – its tears, laughter and ejaculations. Unlike Bourdieu, these do not have to be contained as emotion, which as we have seen plays a crucial role in closing down the habitus. While Mauss also links the body's feelings to 'a precise end', his emphasis is on the very physiology that animates the social. This gives a very different picture of embodiment and of sociality where the body does not fall away before the social. The social here is charged by physicality and human physiology: the wants, needs and desires of the body revelling in its affects. The embodied everyday social becomes, to repeat Karsenti's phrase, 'natural in the strongest sense of the word'.

Mauss' mind passionately ranged widely over very different domains. These days we do not often see such passion. The rare places where passion, excitement and interest show up is in arguments that grapple with what the scientific passions might mean if translated into the humanities. For instance, Connolly's recent work engages with current neurological theories in order to advance or renew thinking within the humanities. For Connolly, work such as LeDoux's *The Emotional Brain* can be made to reverberate with Deleuzian philosophy. Connolly finds much of interest, enjoyment and awe in the everyday: the possibility that there might be 'something mute in the world that has not yet been translated into the register of thought'. Connolly uses the interest provided by these very different domains of research to argue for an alternative and quotidian ethical sensibility: 'a constellation of thought-imbued intensities and feeling', the 'stuff of new techniques of thinking' (Deleuze, in Connolly 1999, p. 23, p. 27).

At first glance, it might seem that shame is hardly a subject associated with passion, and if it is a sensibility then surely it is only a painful and uneasy one. Shame is undoubtedly painful, as well as interesting because it activates so many sensations. But shame does more than sensibilize us to the vast variety of sensations that inform daily life; it also proposes a sensibility at once practical, ethical and needed: 'the appropriate reaction to one's own shame is a type of self-transformation', as Redding summarizes Nietzsche's view (1999).

Let us get back to that sense of out-of-placeness in the everyday and shame. Here shame cannot be understood outside of its sheer bodily intensity. As I have indicated in the examples of Bourdieu and especially Mauss, there are traditions of thought within the social sciences that have attended to the physiological, and have seen in it a necessary component to understand the total human (a sociology of humanity that is perhaps a conceptual forebear to Gilroy's (2000) planetary humanism). At a fundamental level, one thing we all share is a biological body. Its somatic effects may be experienced differently, but the body *is*. We are human because of the physiological, and the somatic – how could it be otherwise? Without that basic level, all our theories about embodiment and the everyday fall flat.

## Of bodies in other places

What of that example of my moment of affect left so rudely all these pages ago? Now that it has faded, how to get back into that body sitting in the back of a Land Cruiser, choked on the sight of a huge rock? Where did that affect come from? Was it a reaction to the divorcing of my life and another's? Did that moment of affect mark a shame produced in the schism between my habitus and the field? Or did that space (the rock, the music, my home in the Land Cruiser, the weeks of camping rough) all allow for a radical rearticulation of the everyday? Was I infected by my own past, or that of a completely other culture? Affect theorists respond to such questions with assertions about the biological basis for affect. In this way, we begin to see two interconnected levels: we feel the physiology of being affected, and then emotionally respond through the resources of our habituses. Emotion then 'represents the assemblage of any affect with our previous experience of that affect' (Nathanson 1996, p. 13); 'Affect is biology, while emotion is biography' (Basch, in Nathanson 1996, p. 13). Nathanson, a practicing psychologist and follower of Tomkins, argues that 'so much is going on in the brain that nothing gains attention unless it triggers an affect'. Like Tomkins, he is clear that we are born with innate affects. These are, according to Nathanson, the palette each of us gets; it is in our experience-affect combinations that we differentially experience both individual and collective emotions.

These ideas help in understanding where affect and emotion fit together within the habitus. They begin to sketch out a wider understanding of the role of affect in the everyday. The terms – biography vs. biology – are, however, rather clumsy. But in the search to understand the connections between levels, we're not constrained to one particular language. Mahood, an Australian writer experimenting across the genres of memoir and novel, demonstrates a more nuanced way of describing how and where the physiological and biographical converge. Her book, *Craft for a Dry Lake* (2000), is an extended meditation on

bodies out-of-place. She beautifully conveys how bodies move, change and adapt to place, or refuse to – how the physiology of the everyday body meets the physicality of place.

> Crossing the border back into the Territory, my childhood rushes to meet me. The colours begin to intensify, the light sharpens. I begin to feel something in my bones and nerves and viscera. I would not describe it as an emotion. It is more like a chemical reaction, as if a certain light and temperature and dryness triggers a series of physical and nervous realignments . . . My pulse is up, everything takes on a hallucinatory clarity.
>
> (Mahood 2000, p. 35)

Later Mahood describes her affective reaction to the land as more than an ensemble of mental images: 'it is something else too, a set of visceral alignments over which the intellect has no jurisdiction' (2000, p. 174). Mahood's book is ostensibly in honor of her father's memory and her voyage back to her family's station in the Tanami, a vast track of land between the Simpson Desert and Western Australia. It is also an account of her affective experiences, told in the terms of her physiological realignments to the land, and deeply relational. She writes from one plane to another, scrambling any neat and hard distinction – such as that between biological affect and biographical emotion, or between body and social. Her emotion is biological, and her biography is affectively written on the land. The description of her journey is, in Mauss' sense, total. The full range and reach of the everyday habitus is glimpsed in its continual relation to land, time and place.

Mahood's habitus is deeply informed by being a white woman in relation to the land that was her family's and is now Aboriginal land. When she is invited to a big women's business ceremony, she finds herself automatically, biologically, following the Aboriginal tradition of setting camp in the direction of that land: 'that country that my father turned into a cattle station' (2000, p. 124).[12] As the women's bodies turn in the direction of their country, we feel the way that humans act in accord with tropism too. Like flowers our bodies react to such different stimuli, innately turning this way and that. The relations of relation seemingly multiply indefinitely. As a child, she was given a skin name by the local Aboriginal women on the station, 'a formality which places [whites] in a category of relationships and behaviour'. She now acknowledges the ambivalence: 'It's as if I have come by a secret password by dishonest means and have hoarded it against the moment when it might open a magic door' (2000, p. 125).[13]

To map all the relationships that compose Mahood's habitus would take a long time. At once, she is shy, embarrassed, proud – but is she ashamed? Not in the usual sense, and she pushes back the obvious emotional expression of white shame that she associates with urban romanticism about Aboriginal culture.

> The primordial landscape is scattered with the evidence of ancestral acts of rape, copulation, dismembering. It is about a physical encounter with the land itself, a wounding, a letting of blood, a taking of the country into oneself, of taking oneself into the country.
>
> (2000, p. 195)

The recognition of an Aboriginal singularity is crucial, even as her relationship to it is profoundly implicated in her habitus. In contrast to the unfathomably deep relationship to the land that is part and parcel of Aboriginal daily life, the non-Indigenous seem to flounder. 'Whites who live here struggle to articulate an attachment over which they have no control' (2000, p. 195).[14] 'They leave and return, resentfully, full of anger and indigestible griefs'. These white experiences are 'scratches on the land' that cannot be understood without an appreciation of 'the price the homage this country extracts'. 'Acceptance' is possible, 'predicated on limited ambition: a moment by moment focus on the job to be done, the life to be lived'. It seems unendurable, just as it seems amazing that whites keep at it, rearing livestock in ridiculous conditions. Mahood wants us to acknowledge that keeping at the impossibility of being in this place is predicated on 'a narrow and deeply grounded wisdom' (p. 195).

## Everyday shame

Mahood's account points to a different sense of shame, which illuminates a richer and complex understanding of the everyday. Her shame, seemingly part of her daily experience, cannot be collapsed into white guilt. There is, in fact, no guilt to be found in her landscape. And in this, there is also no morality.[15] The shame I sense in Mahood's account is predicated on interest – the type of interest that's hard to come by unless it's deep within your habitus. In her description of her father and those who stayed on as managers of now Aboriginal-owned land, there is a sense of the affective complex of anger–rage, terror–fear and shame–humiliation. The clinical description of anger-rage – the frown, clenched jaw, red face – uncannily captures the image of the tough, laconic, white Australian on the land. To live, to continually return to live a life circumscribed with 'limited ambition' is to be placed within the ambit of interest interrupted – of shame. It also eerily recalls Bourdieu's example: 'I'm a dead man, I'm done for'. We hear again that awful finality that the habitus seems to guarantee. However, in a more telling way, Mahood also depicts how bodies continually try to escape that finality. They act out and alongside the sentencing of 'I'm done for'.

As a cipher for a larger history of everyday white shame, Mahood's physiological reactions repeatedly speak of interest, and interest foiled. This cannot be understood outside of her habitus. Here the physiological is the psychological

and the social. The body *is*. And the body is its reactions to the dryness, the light, the history which are enfolded fully within that particular habitus.

Neither heroic, nor scandalous, this shame is deeply interested and interesting in ways that cannot be easily described. It is not purely social (that would make it easier to eradicate). Nor can it be written into some general account of a white psychology. The physical and visceral acting of affect disturbs such pigeon-holing. It does recall strongly Mauss' assemblage – the physiological-psychological-sociological intersection – and maybe that language can begin to shed light on the delicacy of white shame, experienced not as monumental but as mundane. If, as the affect theorists put it, we are born with a basic palette of affects, how, where, and when they move us also needs to be understood in different shades of terms. If the social is natural, physical and physiological, we need to make our descriptive language as muted as the colours of the land.

Again, what of my own little example? The constant deferral already speaks of shame. The moment that I described of seeming pure affect certainly did translate into shame; or more precisely two different kinds of shame coincided. It's hard to describe the differences but Tomkins' precise terms may help. The exaltation before and in the sight of Uluru can be precisely described as interest-excitement, and enjoyment-joy. There may also have been some of the neutral affect Tomkins calls surprise-startle. The eyebrows up, eyes wide open and blinking, smiling and looking and listening: I couldn't quite believe I was there. Then the near simultaneous movement to sobbing, head down, fingers covering my face. Well, yes these are the classic facial displays of shame. At this level, I felt the heat of shame – it ripped into me physiologically, and was beyond my cognitive control.

Equally at that moment, in that tensing together of sensation, there was a splitting of shame. As Massumi has argued, the difference between emotion and affect can also be described as a bifurcation in response, where 'language functions differentially to intensity' (2002, p. 25). At another level than the affective, I became aware of my shame. I became cognizant of my shame, which referred itself back onto more shame. The fact that Midnight Oil was playing cannot be forgotten. Their words cannot be ignored. 'How do we sleep while our beds are burning?' 'The time has come to say fair's fair'.

This emotional, or what we might even call cognitive shame exists with that other little shame that whispers in the habitus: the body calling out its hopes and discomfort because it feels out-of-place. This shame is the body saying that it cannot fit in although it desperately wants to. One of the important thoughts to take from Bourdieu's notion of the habitus, or Mauss' description of the total man, is that our bodies and their everyday biographies may be more complicated than we've given them credit for. Conceptually, they challenge any neat division of biological affect and biographical emotion, the social and the physiological. Memory is a strange thing, and it is placed in hard to find areas of the body and

the brain. The point is clumsily put, but it does remind us that our bodies and histories are constituted by so much more than we usually allow for.

Across a number of different theories, descriptions and stories, I have tried to argue for a reconsideration of everyday shame. I am driven by the interest and possibilities of what shame might do – to our bodies, our concepts and ideas, and how we inhabit everyday life. Not all uses of shame are good. Why should they be? But shame is an everyday fact of human bodies and life. Sometimes it leads to reactionary acts, sometimes it compels close inspection of how we live, and becomes the necessary force to catalyse an ethics of the everyday: 'a visceral . . . commitment to more generous identities, responsibilities and connections might be cultivated' (Connolly 1999, p. 21). Let us be shameless in this project.

## Notes

1 In relation to how shame can highlight the construction of the ordinary and the everyday, see Ferrell's (2003) lovely essay on shame, and indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in the context of a town 'that prided itself on the ordinary'.

2 The experiential aspects of the interplay of the ordinary and the extraordinary has had a profound influence in my work (e.g. Probyn 1997), and has been theoretically supported and inspired by Morris' writing.

3 While Tomkins pursues with fervor exactly how affects work in the body, he is equally passionate about what affects do to the self and society. This can be heard over and again in statements like, 'the nature of the experience of shame guarantees a perpetual sensitivity to any violation of the dignity of man' (1995, p. 136). This also animates the need for analyses where 'the biopsychological mechanisms and the social products be integrated into a science of man and not polarized' (1965, p. 72). For a more comprehensive discussion of what this entails for cultural studies, see Probyn (forthcoming). I have been hugely influenced in this project by Sedgwick and Frank (1995).

4 The interventions into the debate about reconciliation in Australia (a formal and government evoked, although neglected, term) are too numerous to mention. However, for arguments based in a Deleuzian framing of the social, see Gatens and Lloyd (1999) and Probyn (2000, 2001).

5 See also Probyn (1996) for an extended deployment of 'examples', indebted to Agamben's arguments.

6 As cited on http://www.thesalmons.org (accessed 12 September 2002).

7 My thanks to Robyn and Jack Durack for taking me on a wonderful voyage that profoundly disturbed my everyday by introducing me to new land and ideas.

8 Elsewhere (Probyn forthcoming) I elaborate on the gendered dynamics of this description. See also feminist uses (Skeggs) and evaluations of Bourdieu (Lovell, Felski).

9 Bourdieu distinguishes between cultural capital, which is the 'incorporation' (the making body) of objective markers of social distinction from symbolic capital that is the 'world-making and changing' ability he states is the possession of artists and writers (see Bourdieu 1986/1984, pp. 241–258). See also Hage (1998) for an interesting application of Bourdieu's ideas.

10 There are connections between Bourdieu and Mauss, although there's little acknowledgement of any debt Bourdieu might have owed to Mauss. There is a vague sense that Mauss got Bourdieu wrong – which is totally illogical of course. It seems to me that Mauss got 'straightened out' in Bourdieu's thought. He never really took Mauss' ideas on, although he was cognizant of Mauss' place in the field of French sociology. How could he not be? Mauss was Emile Durkheim's nephew and did much to propagate Durkheim's influence in French sociology. In 1930, Mauss also held the Chair of Sociology in the Collège de France which Bourdieu was to later occupy. He published three volumes of Mauss' work in his series, *Le sens commun*. Marcel Fournier – Mauss' preeminent bibliographer – comments that Bourdieu seemed to find Mauss less rigid than his uncle. He adds that there are several profound links between Mauss and Bourdieu especially in terms of their attention to the logic of practice and their understanding of the discipline and the role of the sociologist as politically engaged through sociological practice. My thanks to Marcel Fournier for these comments. For the most complete positioning of Mauss' work, see Fournier (1994).

11 Mauss' experience of WWII was perhaps even more traumatic, although by then he was writing much less. Pickering (1998) remarks that Mauss, who did not hide the Jewishness clearly marked in his second name of Israël, may have stepped down in 1940 from his position of director of Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (5th section) because of Nazi pressures.

12 Aboriginal law dictates that there are separate women's and men's spiritual roles and duties.

13 From the perspective of an anthropologist, Biddle (1997) describes – in an embodied, and therefore grounding breaking, approach – other aspects of these forms of relation.

14 I am well aware that this sounds romanticized, and of course there are pressing realities that also inform Aboriginal life. For a compelling and convincing argument about an Aboriginal epistemology in connection to country, see Moreton-Robinson's (2000) groundbreaking argument about 'incommensurability'.

15 There are large arguments about the relation of guilt to shame, and about the more productive nature of guilt. In particular, Nussbaum's (2001) recent opus on the emotions posits guilt over what she calls the primitive nature of shame. Her argument about guilt's more positive role is based on the equation of guilt and reparation, whereas shame refers back to primal scenes in childhood. I find this argument flawed on two levels: first, the equation of guilt and reparation flows from her model of neo-liberalism and the project of

'reforming' individuals and their societies. This turns on a traditional notion of morality, and normativity. This recalls the familiar Foucauldian and Deleuzian formulations of morality as opposed to ethics. Secondly, and central to my argument, Nussbaum goes to great lengths to erase the physiology of the body in her account of the emotions. While too broad to enter into here, elsewhere I explore the erasure of the bodily and the experiential in Nussbuam's project (Probyn 2004). While less surprising in Nussbaum, a recent turn to evacuate the experiential body can also be seen in the work of feminist who one would have thought to be more sympathetic to the body's knowledges. See, for instance, the critique of Berlant's argument against sentimentality (Probyn forthcoming) and the unease exhibited in Brown and Weigman's respective accounts of the problems of teaching women's studies (Probyn 2004).

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