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Wayne Koestenbaum

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Wayne Koestenbaum considers the meaning of humiliation in this eloquent work of cultural critique and personal reflection.

The lives of people both famous and obscure are filled with scarlet-letter moments when their dirty laundry sees daylight. In these moments we not only witness the reversibility of "success," of prominence, but also come to visceral terms with our own vulnerable selves. We can't stop watching the scene of shame, identifying with it and absorbing its nearness, and relishing our imagined immunity from its stain, even as we acknowledge the universal, embarrassing predicament of living in our own bodies. With an unusual, disarming blend of autobiography and cultural commentary, noted poet and critic Wayne Koestenbaum takes us through a spectrum of mortifying circumstances—in history, literature, art, current events, music, film, and his own life. His generous disclosures and brilliant observations go beyond prurience to create a poetics of abasement. Inventive, poignant, erudite, and playful, *Humiliation* plunges into one of the most disquieting of human experiences, with reflections at once emboldening and humane.

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