



# Mortification: Writers' Stories of Their Public Shame

*Robin Robertson*

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## **Mortification: Writers' Stories of Their Public Shame** Robin Robertson

A writer's public life is not -- as is often thought -- a round of glamorous parties, prize-acceptance speeches, and triumphant readings to amphitheatres full of loyal, cheering fans; it is, in fact, a grim treadmill of humiliation and neglect. Mortification sets the record straight, once and for all. A collection of seventy specially commissioned contributions -- true stories of public indignity by some of our finest living writers -- this is a celebration of defeat, and a chance to indulge in that most malicious of pleasures: schadenfreude.

You will read about dashed hopes and collapsing bowels, thwarted desire and unimpeded drinking; of fans queuing up for Stephen King's blood; Margaret Drabble bidding at a mock slave auction in Dallas; Louis de Bernières and the S&M prostitute; A. L. Kennedy's disintegrating trousers; William Boyd endorsing Shake 'n' Vac; Margaret Atwood's on-air brush with the Colostomy Association; about an author wanting to kill a member of her audience or another succeeding (accidentally) in killing his host's beloved pet.

These are the best kind of stories: those told against the teller. While readers may be transfixed by the baroque twists of fate, the toe-curling embarrassments, the body's betrayals, and the mind's vanishing acts, they will also wonder at these writers' brave acknowledgment of their own vulnerability and the willingness to expose their shame, a second time, before the public.

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