



# A Solemn Pleasure: To Imagine, Witness, and Write (The Art of the Essay)

*Melissa Pritchard*

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***Poets & Writers* “Best Books for Writers” selection**

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In an essay entitled “Spirit and Vision” Melissa Pritchard poses the question: “Why write?” Her answer reverberates throughout *A Solemn Pleasure*, presenting an undeniable case for both the power of language and the nurturing constancy of the writing life. Whether describing the deeply interior imaginative life required to write fiction, searching for the lost legacy of American literature as embodied by Walt Whitman, being embedded with a young female GI in Afghanistan, traveling with Ethiopian tribes, or revealing the heartrending story of her informally adopted son William, a former Sudanese child slave, this is nonfiction vividly engaged with the world. In these fifteen essays, Pritchard shares her passion for writing and storytelling that educates, honors, and inspires.

**Melissa Pritchard** is the author of, most recently, the novel *Palmerino* and the short story collection *The Odditorium*. Her books have received the Flannery O’Connor, Janet Heidinger Kafka, and Carl Sandburg awards and two of her short fiction collections were *New York Times* Notable Book and Editors’ Choice selections. Pritchard has worked as a journalist in Afghanistan, India, and Ethiopia, and her nonfiction has appeared in various publications, including *O, The Oprah Magazine*, *Arrive*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Wilson Quarterly*. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

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