

Editor's Introduction

From marauding wild turkeys to electroejaculation in wild felines, this volume of *Prized Writing* provides much to ponder and admire. Chosen from about 400 submissions, the 23 essays herein represent the best undergraduate writing from an exhilarating range of disciplines. You'll find work by students majoring in Computer Science, Philosophy, Biotechnology, Economics, International Relations, Animal Science, Environmental Toxicity, and much more.

The academic rigor, stylistic range, sophisticated awareness of audience, and sheer creativity and intelligence to be found in these essays is, I'm certain you'll agree, something to behold. The scientific literature review, the personal essay, journalism, literary analysis, cultural studies, and medical case studies are just some of the genres contained in this volume. Topics range from *World of Warcraft* and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* to Spotify, 19th-century painting, the science fiction of Octavia Butler, and Mark Twain in relation to Plessy v. Ferguson. You'll learn about the vital role played by Filipinos in the United Farm Workers movement, the representation of Native American history in the classroom, and an overlooked legacy of the New Deal in San Francisco. A budding chef shares his introduction to the beautiful chaos of restaurant life. One writer offers an autobiographical meditation on assimilation and conflicting ideologies, while another provides a reverse angle narration of her Ethiopian-American family's experience with US health care. The story of toxic contamination in a small Virginia town is followed by an inspiring local story of efforts to transform food waste into food security. Another student writes about the vexed issue of informed medical consent. The scientific/technical portion of the book begins with an essay on pediatric eye problems, told both as a general interest narrative and as a technical case study. This topic is followed by spotted owl conservation, problematic fig trees, the kinship between cucumbers and melons, and literature reviews on the latest research on PTSD and breast cancer.

I want to acknowledge the superb work of my assistant editor, Shai Nielson, who responded to all of my rookie errors with good humor and unimpeachable efficiency; without her, this volume that you are holding would have been a complete mess. Thank you, Shai.

As *Prized Writing* nears its third decade of publication, the one constant has been that such an endeavor requires strong and enthusiastic institutional support, and for this I gratefully acknowledge Gary May (Chancellor), Ralph

Hexter (current Provost and the Interim Chancellor during the time covered by this volume's production), Carolyn Thomas (Vice-Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education), Susan Kaiser (Interim Dean for the Division of Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies), and Elizabeth Spiller (Dean for College of Letters & Science).

Within the University Writing Program, I offer seven thunderous shout-outs to Chair Carl Whithaus, Anita Rodriguez, Darla Tafoya, Vicki Higby Sweeney, Melissa Lovejoy, Mary White, and webmaster Elliot Pollard. Elliott has been of crucial assistance during our transition to a new website (<http://prizedwriting.ucdavis.edu>), guiding us in the daunting task of updating the archive. At Reprographics, I thank Christina Peiffer for overseeing the bound book. And thank you to the instructors who have discovered the pedagogical benefits of using *Prized Writing* in the classroom.

This past year I have been fortunate to supervise three interns for *Prized Writing*: Jasmine Gonzales, Kendall Larsen, and Maxine Mulvey. Thanks also to Rebekka Andersen and Elyse Lord for their oversight of the UWP internship program. A special acknowledgment here to Cindy Cheung, who designed the striking cover for this year's volume. Meanwhile, incoming assistant editor Marissa Trujillo dipped her toe in the water near the end of production, and I look forward to working with her on volume 29.

Amy Clarke, the most recent editor of *Prized Writing*, guided and consoled me throughout the process and for this I am especially grateful. Two other recent editors, Pamela Demory and Karma Waltonen, also provided wise counsel and saintly forbearance whenever I approached them for help. Thanks also to this year's thoughtful and undeniably pleasant group of readers: Pamela, Karma, Jillian Azevedo, Brad Sekedat, Bill Sewall, Julian Elias, Catherine Hatzakos, Cassie Hemstrom, Beth Pearsall, and Agnes Stark.

To double the chances that those skimming this introduction understand the importance of assistant editor Shai Nielson to this book, I offer Shai a second—but by no means gratuitous—acknowledgement.

Finally, thank you to *all* of the students who submitted. It is an honor and an inspiration to read so much excellent writing from across the disciplines. Whether or not you find yourselves represented in these pages, know that all of you have contributed to making *Prized Writing* something in which the entire UC Davis community can take pride.

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