

CALL FOR ENTRIES

BERKSHIRE FESTIVAL OF WOMEN WRITERS ESSAY CONTEST

fem·i·nin·i·ty n

1. the quality of looking and behaving in ways conventionally thought to be appropriate for a woman or girl
2. women as a group (dated)
3. a manner or feature commonly attributed to women
4. the qualities, actions, or types of behavior in a man or boy that are conventionally associated with women or girls

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What is femininity? What experiences of culture, body, biology, roles, behavior, language, work, spirit have defined or made you question ideas of femininity? We invite women and girls of all ages and experiences to take on the subject of femininity in a personal essay; be playful, inventive, unconventional or straightforward, but whatever approach you take, base your essay on personal experience.

In his introduction to *The Art of the Personal Essay*, Philip Lopate writes: “The hallmark of the personal essay is its intimacy. The writer seems to be speaking directly into your ear, confiding everything from gossip to wisdom. Through sharing thoughts, memories, desires, complaints, and whimsies, the personal essayist sets up a relationship with the reader, a dialogue—a friendship, if you will, based on identification, understanding, testiness, and companionship.”

Alison Larkin, best-selling author of *The English American*, a novel (Simon & Schuster, 2008), will select three winners who will be invited to read their essays at an awards celebration at The Mount. Larkin will also speak at the event. Poet & columnist, Michelle Gillett, and editor & literary agent, Nina Ryan will administer the contest.

Deadline: Friday, January 6, 2012 (essay must have Jan. 6th postmark)

Award ceremony to be scheduled in March

Length & format: 750-1000 words; pages numbered; include cover page with name, email, phone, mailing address, and the title of the essay.

Submit your essay by mail to:

c/o Nina Ryan & Michelle Gillett

P.O. Box 1134

Stockbridge, MA 01262

For further information check www.gillettandryan.com or email mcgillett@verizon.net.