

BROAD!

{a gentlelady's
magazine}

winter
2011



Do magazines have dedications?

I guess they don't, usually. No matter!

WE DEDICATE THIS ISSUE — OUR FIRST (!) — TO ALL OF YOU WHO SUBMITTED, PLEDGED MONEY TO OUR KICKSTARTER, PUBLICIZED US, OR ARE CURRENTLY READING THIS. YOU ARE FABULOUS, EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU.

The idea for *Broad!* was conceived one day in August 2011, when I came across some upsetting statistics on literary publication by gender. (You can see those same stats at the website for VIDA, an organization for women in literature, at www.vidaweb.org/the-count-2010.) At best, two or three men — if not more — are published or reviewed for every one woman. It hardly seems fair that men are published more frequently, or that when women are published, their work is viewed as audience-specific (a female-identified writer's book about an unhappy marriage might be "domestic literature" or "family drama," for instance, while a "Great American Novelist" — often male and white — may write on a similar theme and have it hailed as a novel about the state of modern life in post-9/11 America). Let's be real: that's bullshit. It's the last day of 2011, people! Let's be less gender-biased, eh? Let's make that a resolution.

So: all this is to say that *Broad!* was conceived as a small, do-it-ourselves, scrappy boxer of a litmag to fight gender bias. And for that matter, genre bias. Hopefully Emma and I did it all right.

Special thanks to Autostraddle and their senior editor Rachel, as well as the amazing Margaret Atwood and the Poetry Foundation, both of whom retweeted our call for subs. Thanks to my parents for pinning print flyers for submissions around town and to our Facebook friends for sharing the word on the interwebs. And to you, again:

**HERE'S TO 2012.
HERE'S TO BEING OUR AWESOME SELVES, ALWAYS.**

Love,
Heather

*Aside from contributors, **Broad!** runs on two people:
Heather Lefebvre, editor-in-chief, and Emma Needleman, assistant editor.*

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Art by Sophie Leetmaa on front cover, table of contents, and pages 15 and 19. Photographs by Jillian Rubman on back cover and pages 6, 8, and 12. Photograph by Ellen Allaway, page 20.

TAKING FRUIT

Theodosia Henney

I fly to visit Tiny Chef where it is warm, where fruit begs
to be liberated by night from trees; figs, blood oranges,
grapefruits, key limes, and pomelos, dropping
to the ground. For the stubborn fresh ones,
we wriggle through branches like hunting cats.

Tiny Chef left her last boyfriend when detectives
showed up at their apartment and told her
the chrome ice cream maker
that was her birthday gift had been stolen.

“Eric did give good head, at least.”
“I don't think we smell like fish, for the record.”
“It's the sperm, the ones that stay up there, they die.”
“Wait, that's why—?”
“Yes. Dead things smell bad.”
“I need to go scrape my tongue.”

Tiny Chef takes me to an orange grove. In the trees,
we come across a couple, the woman squatting
on her high heels, the man's upper half lost
behind a clutch of low branches;
to us he is a pair of khaki pants, unzipped.
“That can't be comfortable.”
“She just doesn't want to get her skirt dirty.”

Deeper in the groves, Tiny Chef reaches for a fruit—
she stands on her toes and pauses there, fingers
placed around the fruit as though she is holding it up.
She returns to flat feet without the orange, says
to no one in particular, “I could take a lover here.”

Theodosia Henney is a queer lady from a conservative state who wishes she could spend the night in the library. She enjoys goat cheese on almost anything, and knows all you really need to survive a rainstorm is a decent poncho. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in the Vestal Review, the Allegheny Review, Grey Sparrow Journal, and Ghost Ocean Magazine.

THE MONSTER UNDER YOUR BED

Kendra Fortmeyer

There is a monster living underneath your bed and the monster is lonely. His wife has left him and taken the dog, and his only son is a queer who went to UCLA and got liberated and runs around with a gaggle of men in v-neck shirts and boas. The monster learned all this from his ex-wife's neighbor, the only person from his old life who still talks to him. She is kind of hot, the neighbor, in an older, spank-you-with-a-spatula way, but the monster knows that she pities him, and that's a huge turn-off for the monster. The monster has pride. Not the way his son has pride, mind you, but pride. Pride in his character, pride in his work. The monster has worked for the same company for the last thirty years, in a cubicle next to salesmen named Lenny and Bob. The monster always arrives at eight on the dot and has never taken lunch. Sometimes people try to talk with the monster about football or the weather, but since his wife has left him the monster exudes an air of horrible sadness that makes people feel tired, and so they talk about football without him. Somebody still has to do it.

The monster goes home on Friday nights and sits on the couch and stares into the quiet empty space of time ahead of him with no dog to walk no wife to argue with no son to speak of. The light is gray and aging in the window. The monster lies beneath your bed and stares at the springs. He wonders what it's like to carry all that weight, and thinks that if someone would give him some weight again, something to carry, maybe he could squeal for joy, too.

The monster frightened you when you were little and still believed you could grow up to become anything. You tucked away your fingers and toes, worried that his loneliness would touch you. But now you are old enough to know better. The monster deserved it, you think. Why else would he be a monster?

One night, drunk after your high school graduation party, your ears still ringing with congratulations, you let your hand trail down to the floor beside your bed. You wait for the monster to take it.

The monster thinks about his son and stares at your hand, and he stares at the phone. By the time he reaches out, if he reaches out, you have long since gone to sleep.

Kendra Fortmeyer is pursuing an MFA at the University of Texas at Austin. In her spare time, she moonlights as the elusive proprietess of the English Major Soap Company, making and selling literature-inspired soaps on Etsy.com.



BRING IT HOME

Alex Samets

This is what I desire. The dress, the apron, the middle century. The somewhat nonsensical pumps, the neighbor-wife to whom I speak through open kitchen windows. The recent relocation from downtown to the suburbs, the station car, the days spent laundering and dusting and washing and sweeping and straightening the bedspread. Before the children but in the desire of children. Very much, I desire the desire of children. The husband rushing home on the train, having stayed late in the city for a drink or a mistress. The vacuum, a gift, put away in the closet with its cord wrapped tightly around its neck. The husband, calling from the station, Home in ten. The pie in the oven, dinner on the table. A drink in my hand, a drink on the table by the door. The station car on the gravel outside, the slamming door, the husband inside. The lock. The drink in his hand, his kiss. And before the wifely duty of dinner, before the wifely duties of the day acknowledged, before the husband tells of his up-and-coming at the advertising agency, before anything, with the scent of the city-drink and city-mistress, neither of which can be misconstrued, on his neck, the wifely duty, borne from the desire of children or claimed to be borne of that desire, the wifely duty of being taken on the floor in the entry way, or up against the mirror beneath which he hangs the keys to the station car, or the wifely duty of kneeling before him as he reclines in his easy chair and sips his scotch, kneeling before him as he leans against the front door, unzipping his pants but not even taking off his overcoat. The blinds open.

And in the face of war, we lose the husband. And here I am, alone in my desire and my house in order and still the longing for the longing for children but no children and no actual longing. The neighbor-wife through the window and now through the front door as we listen to the radio, news of our men, gone. The neighbor-wife and I with our husbands' scotch and dinners and pies and laundry between us. The neighbor-wife and I with our loneliness. The radio news bringing no news, the mailman bringing no mail. The neighbor-wife with no children, no desire for children. And how we want our men. And how we cook and clean and fluctuate between hope and despair. The neighbor-wife with her hair pulled back. The neighbor-wife.

Alex Samets holds an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and lives in Massachusetts.



a lot of work
Mary Hughes

It takes a lot of work to figure these things out - which suit to wear, when to get up again, which puddles to jump over, how long to pretend to care, how many sips are too many, who is to be forgotten and who is to be remembered - it takes a lot of work to fathom these things out.

He stares at the window, shut and stuck from the winter, wishing it would fly open of its own accord and not wait for him to make it happen.

It's a cheap metaphor and he knows it.

Her eyes move so quickly and he imagines the sentences that have captured her attention. If he can think as fast as she can read, then he can mouth the words.

'Structure' and 'patella' and 'disturbance' and 'case closed.'

'Panic' and 'stuffy' and 'drunk' and 'I cannot pull you closer.'

Her eyes shift for a second and if he were anyone other than himself, she would have caught this gaze and she could have figured some things out. But he has been trying to figure these things out for days and days.

And she won't find him watching.

Gold is traded for granite and sorrows are shoved aside, so he cannot help but tug this tender hand within his own and carry this woman into his apartment. Good feelings are wilted down to nothing but dust as his kiss finds another mouth to feed upon, so he stops trying to be a decent man and he stops trying to figure out anything at all.

It takes a lot of work.

This is a job that he doesn't know how to leave, though. A fine trade, passed along from unknown father to bastard son, and he doesn't know how to do anything else in this world.

And he wants to love her, that face across the way, but that takes a lot of work, too.

Mary Hughes is a "Jill of all trades" — college student, late-night DJ at WNCW, writer of many short stories, and a slave to the fine art of blogging. She hangs her hat in North Carolina but truly resides in world of her own making.

***THE BLASCHKAS MADE GLASS FLOWERS
FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDY
E.F. Tecosky***

Leo's are the "fresh blown roses washed in dew"
of a rusty bucket's hiss
and plunk, of iron and hollow pole. Ru-
dolph extracted the stamens

and peach fuzz fine
as pulled taffy, his spectacles steaming.
Now their fragile watercolor wash shows signs
of age, patina peeling

on each latticed leaf. Three thousand delicate green
ovaries show the frosted matte
underneath. Even behind glass, stalks grow lean.
Windows made by boys in page caps

thicken and pool,
the bright work of industry
resting immovable
as obelisks above the interred. There's no epiphany;

what we pick and press
in memory for the next generation,
what we believe was expressed
worth imitation

is only this:
the pencil line of light peeling off the rim
of a piston, as if scattered through a sieve.
But it says, "Mirth with thee, I mean to live."

*When **E.F Tecosky** isn't writing poetry, she talks to parrots (and they talk back!). After earning her B.A. in creative writing in 2010, she began learning falconry through the World Bird Sanctuary, and is currently working on a pop-science book about vultures.*

THE VIEW FROM HIS SHOULDERS

Alana Westwood

A spire of sand in the middle of the prairie juts out abruptly from the parkland of aspen and spruce. The hogsback, as it's known around here. A bright trail of well-trodden sand snakes its way up its spine. Below in the valley, an old oxbow of the muddy river is illuminated with the bright green of tamarack. They say the great plains are flat, but they have never left their couches to see this.

We are weary and sore after a day's unsuccessful hunt for an endangered moth. This is unsurprising, since it likely would not be endangered if we could find it in the first place we looked. Now it is time to eat, and flick off the biting ants, and watch as the river undulates below, cutting deep swathes into gleaming ashtray sand. Behind us, mixedgrass prairie waves like an ocean in the fierce wind. Out here, there is no reprieve from the beating heat of the sun.

"A glacier did this," the professor gestures to the panorama before me, and he is right. After the glacier, the Lake Agassiz ended here. We are sitting atop ancient beach, waves of sand stretching taller than anything else for hundreds of kilometres. In the distance the weight of water made it flat, but where I am sitting the glaciers gouged their unforgiving way through the earth's surface.

Ants crawl into the hole in my shoe, I try to flick them out in vain with my big toe. Earlier that hole was painfully filled by a prickly cactus, one of few of its kind in the country. You could only find something like that here, where ecosystems mix and match in impossible configurations, where sand and cacti and juniper and snowberry and prairie grass squabble for every inch of land. The professor, as he often does, explains the ongoing war between the dunes of sand and the encroaching forest. The sand is losing, inevitably, and so is the endangered moth. We are here to find out if their fates are intertwined. The professor spins colourful tales of natural history with hand gestures, pontificating. I can never be sure if his theories have scientific grounding or are just the product of his momentary mental whims.

Ten thousand years ago, the hogsback became what it is now. I wonder aloud, what will this look like ten thousand years from now? Surely not the same, not when the only constant is change. The professor shrugs. We cannot conceive it what it may be. Perhaps the juniper warts on the hogsback will continue to spread across the sand, widening until they harbor festering, suckering aspen trees in their centres, then bursting forth into spruce. Slowly, the trees will penetrate the hills and the sand with their roots, coat their surface with deadfall, and consume them until they are

gone. Perhaps this place will become indistinguishable from every other slice of mixedwood boreal forest. Or, instead, the inevitable fire will come and reduce everything, once again, to ash mixed into the sand. With nothing to weight it down, wind will blow it into new dunes, and the singed hogsback will restart from zero somewhere else.

The professor grows bored of this train of thought and moves on to examine a flower; an aster of some sort. They are hard to tell apart, with so many similar species. With such plants as these, there is no agreement on what is what, and there are new varieties naturally forming all the time as others disappear forever. The professor picks at the tiniest parts of the flower, a look of consternation on his brow. His face is to some a weathered, older version of my own; others see no resemblance at all. Out here we are the same, only he infinitely wiser, with our hands flashing and pointing in a race to identify every plant and animal within view. He has the letters behind his name, which I covet for myself. His work to save these dwindling species will someday, ultimately, be futile. Eventually, everything must change. But he leaves his legacy; a legacy of research, of teaching, but also a genetic legacy. What he began is bound to go forward, as I take up the torch.

I am compelled by whatever force compelled him. Soon I will leave to earn the letters behind my name, toiling in vain to save an endangered species of my own. I wonder if I will ever have the experience and the intelligence to accumulate the experience that leaves him with this easygoing, infectious confidence. The professor is a man who knows what he is doing. With holes in my shoes and an empty mind, I have listened since I was small, sitting upon his shoulders. I am here to learn from him, for as long as we have left.

We turn our back on the tower of sand, which in a few hundred years, will be something else entirely. I certainly won't be around to see it, and neither will he. We are merely a blip in geological time. Like all humans, we hate change, and we long for the panorama before us to stay the same. The professor hates change the most and that is why I am in this world, to build on his work, to fight the encroachment and keep things the same. Nature disagrees, on that we can count. Eventually, our endangered species... his moth and my bird... will disappear. The hogsback will be changed, as it must. It will miss us long before we have the chance to miss it.

Alana Westwood originally hails from Winnipeg, Canada, and is a product of arguably the worst climate of any major city. Long, hard winters facilitating indoor activities encouraged her to begin writing creatively for amusement, and she has never since stopped. To counterbalance eight months trapped inside, she spent her summers in the woods, setting her on a career path of natural science research and writing. She has since fled to the coast, where she is active in wildlife conservation as a graduate student researching bird species at risk.

HORNS
Theodosia Henney

The channel at the bus station changes:
A bull jumps
into the stands at a fight—

barreling past the matador, he hits
a moment of hard,
tucked flight when the breath
of all who watch is gathered
in a pleat of disbelief—
the crash, like falling
to water.

He lurches over metal and plastic,
scrapes his belly on chairbacks,
legs snagging in their search
for a solid hold.

For one bright leap
of a moment, the bull is alone
on screen, eyes locked on something
beyond what the camera can see.

The next shot
is the body, dragged
by the back legs
behind a horse, who flinches
at the sharp bit and thinks
how lucky he is
not to have been born
with horns.

Theodosia Henney is a queer lady from a conservative state who wishes she could spend the night in the library. She enjoys goat cheese on almost anything, and knows all you really need to survive a rainstorm is a decent poncho. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in the Vestal Review, the Allegheny Review, Grey Sparrow Journal, and Ghost Ocean Magazine.



BODY OF WATER
Lindsay Popper

I was thunderstorm grandmother's soup flush of a toilet a whale-spew
slip-stream fog sloughing off an early morning ocean horse piss a body

built of 80% water in a world that knows only how to salvage and redeem
and once upon a time I was the slime from which first life came forth

I was ice age and flood was river cutting canyons through rock
not solid enough to stand up to the relentless rush of me I was sap rising

and sorghum syrup boiling I was honeysuckled into a hummingbird's beak
I was drown and scatter Birmingham's fire hose held against children

monsoon season hurricane with levees broke closest to the poor and black
a bathtub to a sack full of kittens The beluga whales

and the second graders in swim lessons and the world's fleets of warships
all need my hands beneath them to float

I'm the Red Sea standing between you and the promised land and I will
part for you just like rain on a tin roof will put all your fears to rest

just like for the first nine months I was the only thing you breathed
just like I was the river through which you were born.

Lindsay Popper has been a plumber, camp director, urban gardener, tour guide, and wilderness trip leader, but she currently spends her days taking care of other people's children. She writes poetry, essays, and long letters while the babies are napping. She is learning to play the ukulele.

An hour before she dies, my mother is jumping high in the air in the middle of a field. Her dress flies up, her arms spread wide, as she lifts into the air. She is laughing, her eyes shaded by the tall white hat she always wears. The sky is overcast but the grass is green, and she looks happy to be alive.

She and her friends have come to the field to celebrate: my mother is pregnant again, a fact she hasn't yet admitted to my father but that she is proud to tell her friends—a fact my father and I find out later, when we hear the autopsy report. My mother is wearing rain boots, an acknowledgment of the weather she is ignoring as she jumps in the grass, though she does not wear a raincoat. Perhaps she thinks her happiness will ward off the rain, will keep those heavy gray clouds at bay.

My mother is jumping and laughing, her legs splayed out, such beautiful, muscular legs. I remember those legs. They were a comfort to me when I was scared, before I suddenly had nothing to hold onto. And her bracelets, thick bangles that are tangled around her wrists, are a legacy my father gave to me when I was old enough, after he'd gotten up the courage to wash off the blood.

The river in the background is calm, a stark contrast to the wind sweeping through the tall grass and the energy coming off of my mother. The sun is beginning to set, though. She jumps and smiles and splays her arms and legs in a wide X, a stamp of life, of happiness, of promise unfulfilled.

JB Starre is a writer of both literary fiction and fantasy. She is currently publishing an online illustrated serial novel, which she hopes you'll check out if you liked her writing; it can be found at <http://www.thewizardsprophecy.com/>.



THE NIGHT I WROTE THE STORY OF MY LIFE*
Ankita Khanna-Nair

[We started playing 'One Interesting Fact About Me I Bet You Didn't Know.'

The rules were simple. And dangerously safe. Turn by turn. No cross-questioning allowed. This is some of what came up (reproduced with C's permission). Some of it was free associations building on one another, some were memories triggered by what the other said, random meaningless trivia thrown in here and there, and also, intimate confessions that I have probably never shared with anyone before. It was all there.

I have done away with the exclamations and in-betweens, to present the essence of what ensued.

A: I had an imaginary friend till I was 20.

C: I had one too. He died a tragic death (executed by me) and I still mourn his loss.

A: When I used to dress for school, I used to begin socks up, much to my mum's amazement. I still do.

C: I finally found real friends in Class 10. I was a total loner till then.

A: I found mine in second year of college. Till then, not loner but faker.

C: I love my sister and parents utterly and can do ANYTHING for them.

A: I always make my childhood in the mountains sound all romantic and storybookish when, in fact, it was quite dreary and nightmarish in many ways.

C: I had my first case of 'love' (well, I thought so) last year. That too with my best friend. Didn't end well.

A: I often feel like a terribly shallow person.

C: I want to live in a village once.

A: I am by far the most insecure person I know.

C: I have quite a terribly low self-esteem.

A: My greatest orgasms have been entirely intellectual in nature.

C: I think I have the power to change the world with my 'psychobabble' and my writings. I want to be the biggest writer in five years.

A: I have become so conscious of how much weight I have put on that I have actually started avoiding meeting people. In a not-funny-at-all way.

C: I am tired of people telling me how thin I am! I once ate a two-pound rich chocolate cake alone. Didn't help.

C: I wore a salwar-kameez for the first time at my school farewell and that was the end of my (ahem) 'love' story. Very filmy, I know — the climax at the prom.

A: I need to go pee. This totally qualifies since there's no way you knew this!

C: I am sitting and typing in the bathroom. I bet you didn't know that either!

A: I totally cheated on that break I just took by doing three things instead of one — I peed. I took a dump. I called my husband.

C: I love the smell of the soil when the rain first hits it. And I love getting wet. For the most part.

A: I often wish I had a 'gift.' I know I'm pretty good at many things. But sometimes I wish I had a 'gift.' Like something brilliant beyond doubt.

C: I get drained out and tired if I talk too much to people. Total textbook introvert. But now my job (the whole Head Girl thing) requires me to chat up people all the time.

A: I recently realised that most times I'm mad at people I love is because their behaving a certain way makes me look badly, not them. It's things like these that make me feel real shallow.

C: I just won 50,000 bucks in a competition. My last cash prize was 30 bucks.

A: I absolutely HATE sharing food. So it scares me that I will never develop that motherly selflessness towards my own child that my mum and all the mothers I know seem to possess so naturally.

C: I love stealing food from others.

C: I think people are defined more by their circumstances than by their whimsical definitions of themselves.

C: I think sometimes people use me a lot because I don't know when to say no. I hate hurting anyone.

A: I feel that too. But I've realised that I hate hurting people only because I can't bear to be seen as a 'hurter' or a 'bad' person. It has nothing whatsoever to do with my love for them; it has everything to do with my love for myself. This is another one of those 'things' (That Make Me Feel Like A Shallow Person).

C: I'm, like, totally fresh even if I sleep for an hour in the night (only if I meditate). If I don't, then I need three.

A: The Bournville [chocolate] in my head was so much better than the one on my tongue right now. This is a fact I have discovered about life in general. I am a die-hard romantic and romanticise things to the extent that reality can never be good enough for me. Disappointing indeed. And dangerous.

C: I am a romantic too. Utterly. Though I'll never admit this in person. But I think utopias can exist. I really do.

A: It scares me how much intellectual stimulation I need in my relationships to keep them going.

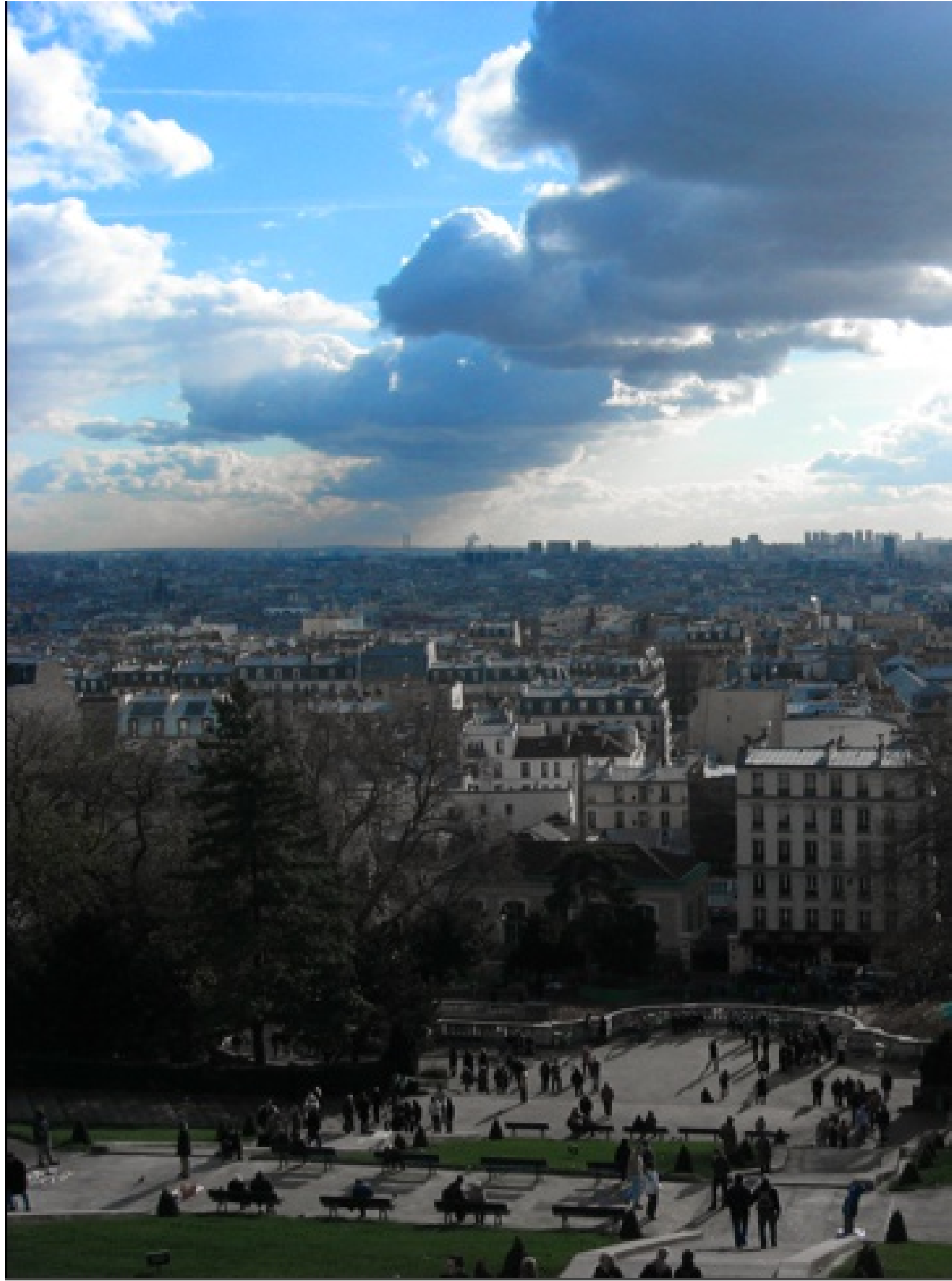
C: I was in a deep, deep, almost suicidal depression for petty reasons in Class 8. It was a bad time.

A: Talking of the Big D, it sneaks up on me in moments I'm off my guard but so far I've been so hyper-aware of its presence and impact that I've managed to keep it at bay. I'm pretty sure it won't be for long. That scares me. I don't have the luxury to indulge it.

C: I came to Delhi in March this time to meet my best friend — I hadn't seen him in two years. It was such a huge culture-shock being around him. I realised I was truly a small-town kid. And I loved it.

Ankita Khanna-Nair is a Counseling Psychologist practicing in New Delhi, India. Her most-loved interests include writing, psychoanalysis, and dogs. She blogs at www.falteringpendulum.blogspot.com.





MAKE YERSELF SCARCE

Kelsey Lothian

I, dented head ashtray crusted out, breathe in muffled white dry as snowflakes, think
a can of pop half-empty will do justice. Just fine for a time being.
Just us, insect and defective, and licking wounds at the site of [us] being
beholden of a sudden. See here. This new sickheart of mine with soft smoulder
on the tips of her matineeextramildslims fingers stuttering out the burn
kindle on the tin mouth edge (of my temples) drawing ragged looks, catch cold
snags in the air as drumming to the Tune of Not Knowing Nothing.
For now, I guess, nothing more but this Nothing else will do.
No hooks this time. No anything. Sparks hit the hot flat root beer go fizz out. Fizz.
And for days later I still smell all smoke speak in my linen closet
Even the paper patterned inlay of cutlery drawers spoke of it.
And we didn't even go there. And I don't even like you.
Besides, you taste like the floor of a pool hall men's room,
a warplane hero pilot's rock bottom, a slumlord's living room left to dry
the gutter by the worst street corner in the worst part of town
where you can see the city's bare naked underbelly begging for it (likely).
Your skin is reptilian and some feral thing trickles briny behind your brain.
I can hear it. You are everyone I hated in high school. Go die,
everything I waste not and want to be, whittling away a gouged soft-metals head. I
don't want you
making me into a weapon, spelling me out like cuss words so as not to fall on
innocent ears, with
tiny tin splinters embedded in a downturned palm. Peer pressured on the smalls of
the backs of my knees until it
doesn't need to be told doesn't want to be held like those babies who are born part
broken. Who never learn to want to laugh easy at themselves, never learn to like that
appalling feeling
of being so full and so hungry of one moment of some body. And if it falls upon
innocent ears, so to do them justice,
all the better for the worst part of seeing straight. So
Hey. You. Got a light?

*The first poem **Kelsey Lothian** ever wrote was about a cloud that would not stop following her. At the time she wanted to be a hairdresser named Emma and have an identical twin when she grew up. Her ambitions have altered slightly and now she only wishes for a day job that will not eat her soul as she pursues knitting stuff, slam poetry and song writing interests. She is super-psyched to be involved with Broad! because it's all wicked awesome etc. If home is where the heart is then she lives in St. John's, Newfoundland with her girlfriend and her girlfriend's cat.*

WHY I WRITE

Kejt Walsh

I write because Kathleen Hanna rejects the bullshit christian capitalist way of doing things, because she declares that it's time for all grrls, everywhere, to start yelling at the top of our lungs in our angry and hoarse voices, because she says that we are good enough and fuck the boys.

I write because Lucille Clifton's "This. This. This." at the end of "it was a dream" calls out to me and needles me and says that somewhere inside of me, in the part that I don't know and can't find, there's the answer to that question, "Why do I write?" when so much in me wants to turn against the question, say that I don't write and that I hate whatever I create. But her "This. This. This." is mine too, and it sings, and I sit with a blue pen and my notebook and I try to get it out on the page.

I write because of Cixous, because she says that writing is like a bird flying that doesn't know that it can fly, but it throws out its wings out into the emptiness and the wings go off and they FLY, the wings do, over the empty vastness that is lack absence and silence, and so too the writer has to toss words out, making a web like we're spiders we can travel along and it might take us somewhere that we need to go or have never been before, and I don't know if I'm a spider or a bird, but I'm a writer and sometimes the silence in me is too big to fill with anything. Sometimes people trigger in me this need to shout, when they're too beautiful and don't know it and I wish that I didn't feel this fucking terrible onus on me for having to explain to you your irrational grace, I wish that you could just see it, and then I would be free.

I write because I want to be like Miranda July. I want to take the teeny-tiny moments of your life that are awful and fucking awkward and make you squirm, because maybe you're broke and a highschool dropout lesbian struggling or maybe you're an old man who cuddles and drools on top of another old man, but there is so much LIFE in you. And she takes that life and it's ugly and broken but her words start singing out over it, weaving their melody over all the shit and the heartbreak, and her words sing and they cut through, and through, that vorpal blade of life/love/beauty, and she cuts right to the core of you, and it's the best.

I write because Amy Hempel makes these stories that are short and maybe don't have a point and maybe they're confused and maybe the dad talks

about jello, a lot, to his kids, and you're like, "what the fuck is this jello garbage and why does anyone write a story about it," but Hempel does, and it blows your fucking mind. She's a miniaturist, she writes about dogs a lot.

I write because Eileen Myles loves her dog. Eileen Myles has a dog named Rosie that she goes running with through the fields when she lives in this cabin in Pennsylvania that some artist friends of hers allow her to live in. She's got this dog and her dog is her only company, really, her only confidante, and Eileen Myles says that she doesn't speak out loud, just sits writes thinks and makes coffee, and then she goes out with her dog, Rosie, into the world, they go see it together.

I write because Mary Oliver says all poets should have dogs, because a dog will remind you what's really good in the world, and that by sniffing and barking and biting and delighting that dog will fucking remind you about the good things that still exist, so that you can collect them take them store them up, save them for yourself or someone who needs them, and then you can transmit and preserve them in your writing, and it's all because of this dog of yours who has transformed the world into more than you could have imagined it being.

I mostly write because of Edna St. Vincent Millay and the first time I read "Witch-Wife" and I could see that there were other females/people/women out there who might be taking seriously the question of, "what is it for me, a woman, to love another woman and to hold her up as beautiful, and how do I express that, and can such a noble and seemingly wondrous thing be wrong?" And of course Millay's answer is no, of course it's not wrong, it's heaven, it's everything. You win. When you're Edna St. Vincent Millay, you win, at least partially, because you take the world by storm when you're nineteen and your hair is bright red and you capture the entire world in these elegant little verses that seem so easy but they're not, because you're a fucking genius, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and you have affairs with men and women and take everyone as a lover that your heart desires, and you burn so bright, burn at both ends, so bright, and when your friend dies you write elegies about Lesbia and her sparrow, and everything you do is perfect.

That's mostly why I write.

Kejt Walsh is a radical queer menace/feminist who subverts hegemonic power structures in hir daily existence. Ze likes writing poetry, baking cupcakes, and opening up a space for the other, in conversation as well as in activism. Kejt will eventually transform into a librarian but expects to maintain a passion for vegan food for the rest of hir life.

