

Mythology of Hunger

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December 13, 2023

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Intro to Creative Writing: English 254

Mythology (11/15/23)

My earliest memories awaken the shame dozing in the pit of my stomach. Don't make me go down there, the acid burns my toes. It suffocates my attempts at pleading my case. The mental muscle-memory of an apartment with cats and being babysat by a downstairs neighbor. I don't know that we are going to leave, and I do not know the reason why. Not yet.

There are strawberries in our yard, but there are also pyrite strawberries. That is to say, I must be told that I cannot eat every red berry growing in a patch of scratchy leaves. This lesson will hurt me, deep in my heart. It will lodge like a grain of sand in an oyster's soft mouth, except I don't think I can cover it in enamel enough to make it something valuable. I no longer seek out red berries, except to mash them into red-black-purple ink.

Dark berries multiply endlessly around the fence. They consume the chain links, starving. I reckon that the only force holding back their onslaught is the children whom the fence is meant to hold back. What a game of rock-paper-scissors, isn't it? These berries grow big and firm with beautifully dark skin. The plants they grow off are devoid of thorns, as their roots grow deep enough to nullify the threat of removal. They have spade-like leaves that bloom even wider than my face. They are *perfect*! We turn them into ink and paper, artist's tools from the prehistoric. There is no shortage of resource, the berries swelling in size faster than we can crush them. And then the frost comes. Dark berries stop swelling, the leaves shrivel and harden, and we go back to indoor recesses.

Rage and violence in my head. In my hands, I shake with emotions that are too large for my brain. My body is shivering in her attempts to consolidate this energy. The tongue flapping in my mouth is *useless*. Squalling voices bely the avatar of insanity approaching me. No one understands what I am fighting. I barely conceive of it. When I begin to howl and snap my teeth, it will make me look insane. My visage will be that of rage and violence, only now I am the aggressor. Now instead of the avenging ray of sunshine, I am the conqueror. Things have changed, faster than my inopportune mind can track. I am abandoned by my tracking skills.

14, Shame, Periwinkle, Lamp (10/2/23)

I am fourteen (freshman year of high school) and creating from a place of shame. I exist only in the full, unyielding light of the sun. It is like an interrogation room if the whole world wanted something from me.

But the world wants nothing from me. My only exports are my body (shame) and shame (shame).

My best friend's colors are periwinkle. And wisteria. My best friend is still 9-10 in my mind. My best friend has aged but I won't let my best friend move on from periwinkle. And wisteria. Who even likes periwinkle?

I am still fourteen, on the inside. If you peel back five layers (six, soon), you will see her. Naked and wet and shivering under the heat lamps of a dead snake. She loves snakes (of the not dead variety). So I love snakes, especially if you've peeled back a few layers.

I never wrote by lamplight, you know. No lamps for me. Only the full light of full-chested creation. So how is it that I am still full of shame? Shouldn't the doctors have taken that out when they peeled back eleven (almost twelve) layers? But maybe they need to go deeper. Maybe—

Weak, warm light spills out of my infrared lamp. It soothes me with all the comfort of green-growth rejuvenation that comes with teenage years (thirteen, fourteen, fifteen). Gray light starts to filter through, periwinkle through tangerine lens. Slowly, I think the maple syrup-sticky shame might start to loosen.

Creative Writing Response: Memory (9/18/23)

What does memory feel like?

A memory feels like silver-blue spidersilk,

Haunted, hallow stands descending like--

Memory feels like walking.

Memory feels like mundanity imported

From the neighborhood of dreaming.

Memory feels like nothing;

Nothing more than the muscles

Of my hips and legs moving in

Divine machinery of flesh.

Describe digestion to me!

Not chemicals or evolution, but

Describe the sensation of dissolving

A beloved meal prepared by beloved hands,

Food devoured in the haste of the rat race.

You tell me how you know the secrets

Of contorting muscle and meat into smiles,

And I'll tell you what a memory feels like.

Glossary of Terms (9/11/23)

word	Elongate	Incorrigible	Thigh
Meaning	V To pull meaning from, sometimes without the subject's consent	A unable to rust, unable to change, unable to learn	N just part of your leg
See Also:	extract; anguish; toothy	im; not; like; anyone	hips, chest, legs, arms
Antonym	affection	hope	eye
Origin	6th grade English class	the same place storms and hate come from, idiot	animal surety
Dreams of Being	satisfied	even more rigid	can't you just relax, like, for once?

Glossary of Terms: Mythologized (11/15/23)

No one thinks that God exists in a middle school English classroom. They would be right, but God doesn't exist in a lot of places. And all the same, God is invoked into those places.

You know what does exist in a middle school English class? Violence. Rage. Hunger. The kind of hungry that happens in winter, when animals get thin and empty-eyed. The kind of hungry that we civilized people pretend doesn't happen to us. But the elongation of our histories, the distortion of our animal being... well. It does something to the thing that lives inside you.

When we were barely us yet, we took our bodies and broke them. You pulled your skull back 45 degrees until it looked into the sky with raving eyes. Without my permission, something pulled the beast out of me and put a pencil into her hands. All the bones in my paws had to be broken to make me hold it, you know. I saw you watching. You're incorrigible, that way.

I pulled the tendons out of my tail and tied together my broken ulna and tibia. It hurt. Bad. My eyes bled from it. The rust in it tasted delicious. All those extra teeth got put to use after all. Still, there was no satisfaction in any of it. Even after we tottered about in our new, improved bodies, there was something we could not name. But it was gone. We knew that much. Storms and hate swelled above us. Light and fire and sound, all those new things. Destruction couldn't be talked out of trying its new body, either. Despite the water that thundered down around us, our new bodies stayed bone-white. The streaks of red could not be rust, we told ourselves. It was simply blood from the experience of being new. You told me that it was certainly not the cost of our changes. You told me I should never say anything like that again. You told me (with your hands) that I was being stupid and inciteful. I did not tell you that you were being incorrigible. Even though I invented that word for you, I did not say it to you.

So much time has passed. Thighs still trouble me. I did not like the way you elongated yours. Emulation, of course, dictated that I lengthen mine the same way, but I did it wrong. I do not like my thighs either. All the other adjustments we made work perfectly. Painful spasms, constant leaks, the weeping that is definitely coming from my mouth. All according to the

blueprints. Nothing is missing. Anyone who says otherwise is an enemy of the purpose, right?

We know best. My physiological inability to relax is a feature. Not a bug. I took out all the bugs in me. Insect legs have a tendency to squirm and then get caught and mashed by my divine machinery, but again. A feature. It was decided (by the blueprints) that removing all the insects and various carapaces would be best. That way, nothing inside us would age or rust or evolve. Our tightly-wound gears and springs would function perfectly forever and ever.

You don't understand. You can't understand. It was so cold and hungry, those first winters. We had thighs, yes, but there was something too right with them! We had to fix it. The eyes found a plan to fix us. No storms would speak to us. I don't know where we all came from, but it was supposed to be the same place. There was no way to get back. Every time my stomach squeezed, it elongated my brain. He did that to us! He looked down on us from His throne filled with food and satisfaction. He looked *down* on us! We had fixed our stomachs but they still wanted more. We put our viscous, blubbery scraps into the holes in our faces and let them fall through our organs but our bodies still quivered.

He tasted good. He tasted good, that's research! There was a purpose to our eating Him, it was just research and the eternal starvation -- I mean search -- for knowledge! I'm begging you, don't you understand? You have to understand. Don't look at me like that. Don't look at me, at my seams, my scars, my yellow-weeping wounds, like I've done something wrong and horrible. We had to eat Him, we had to, we had to, we had to we had to we had to we *had* to! Please don't walk away. Don't walk away. Don't leave me here! Take me with you, you can't leave me here with my awful body and my awful bones and my awful -- yes, I admit it, it's a perversion! I'm a perversion. But please, don't go. Don't look away. Don't go.

You would have done it, too.

Metaphors: Dream (10/11/23)

I wake up about to scream. All night my throat had been strangling my screams for help. But now that I am awake, *I* smother the urge. I don't need to shriek, I am fine.

That's a lie that's a lie help me heLP ME

My chest heaved with leftover adrenaline from a dream I will forget soon. I will forget it if I just stoPPED THINKING ABOUT it will all be okay. I pull breath into my lungs by force and try to pet the frothing, slaverling dog in my brain.

"Shh, it's okay, it's all okay," I whisper to myself. No need to yell and wake my roommates. There is nothing they can do. Nothing that needs to be done, I mean. Everything will be fine in a few moments. I'll forget the dream.

I keep breathing, taking off the autopilot. Calling the inhales and exhales on my own. *Shhshhshh*, I hush myself consolingly. I pretend I am holding someone else, someone else who'd had the nigh-- the dream. It wasn't a nightmare, just a dream. I try to scream in my sleep all the time. Doesn't mean it was nightmares. *You just had a bad dream, it's over, I'm here*, I tell the imaginary person cradled in my mind. I ignore the fact that I am consoling myself with my own presence. *Relax, relax, relax*. The shudders and gasping breaths were behind me. The spiking heartrate and hairs on my arms are relaxing, lying down. I pull together the parts of myself that had spiraled off in disparate directions in terr – in an irrational moment. *You're safe, it's all okay*. I send feelers down to my feet, my knees, out to my fingers and my eyes and ears. The results came back like a blood test: all clear, negative, no problems here, no, ma'am.

Dismiss the thoughts of stringy black hair and bleeding meat. There is nothing wrong. Focus on breathing, again: in-and-out, in-and-out, keep going. Look into the blackness of a darkened bedroom shared with four other bodies. Remember what you owe them: serenity, support, a living mate who doesn't wake up screaming in the night.

The *thoughts* of the dream are forcibly shoved into a dark cellar in the house of my mind. I stab at them with a broom, brushing them away again and again until they fall into the

basement, and then I *slam* the door shut, shoving all my weight against it. With prejudice, I lock them into that mental space, a cellar, a closet, a small, dark place where I can let them wither and be forgotten.

In my bed, I lay down and close my eyes again. *Nothing happened. Let's go back to sleep.*

Ekphrastic poem inspired by Frida Kahlo's "Broken Column" (11/28/23)

Unanchored pain
Obsolescence encroaches upon the spinal column
Pulling away at the earth and the body in tandem
With agony in lockstep
Locked in the grid of my heart.

Pin me in place so you can decide exactly how I
Will look best when you design my rigor mortis.
I outplan, outlast, outsmart all your designs, I
Consume them so I become part of them and
So you can never consume me
Spineless, weakened, adrift in my hospital bed.
I make the best artist when my mouth is closed.
Glass embeds in my eyes so they shine like stars,
So close to the earth and my bones that it burns.
Closer than anything, more intimate than the
Blessing of lust on legs, which I become,
Loose in the woods of the zoo.
Jadeite and opalite and dyed glass and it all
Comes to *nothing* when I try to
Trade in on my value because ultimately? I was
Only ever something to be looked at.

Bafflement, bewilderment, befuddlement --
Why would I ever try to run?
Despite the imprint of vises and chains
Scored so deeply in my skin --
Rabbits have eaten softer skin than mine,
No man would feed his lowest dog something like me,
Lowering myself to the hellfire and ice,
Melting my skin until I am pretty again;
Shards, shrapnel, are all I should ever want;
Mincemeat is the height of my existence.
burn burn *burn burn burn burn*—

Violet light spills across my lap
Colors like the dawn that only
Chemical spills could bring to me but
Why can't I love something that deserves to be loved?
How do I stop shedding tears for
Every stupid thing? Every stupid thing?
Vastness envelops me and spits me
Back out because I am in fact
Only perfumed enough to smell good.

No one was ever supposed to try and taste me,
My bids at love will doom me,
There is nothing more I am supposed to take on!

Ears will swivel on their posts,
Metal rivets tearing the tendons,
Waiting for me to reach the goal.
The corpus of my work is legs-spread wide.
Don't look too closely, please,
Don't pick now to love me.
My sins are numeric and small, I promise,
It's only that they are happening now.
I am harmless and obedient except for this once, but
Let me eat and then I will be good for you.

No one touches my hair any more.
It is not decorative like glass or my taste,
I have adorned and softened it for you to touch.
For someone to wrap their hands in and coo at me
I am trying to perform so that someone will look at me.
Well-groomed tresses, are they all for nothing?
Curling swaths of the night have fallen into place
Except there is no one in the room to admire it.
Apologies to those who funded my show, I am
A disappointment. We all knew it. So I
Am sorry because I thought too highly of myself.

Sestina: Scar let (9/18/23)

A pulsing, vibrant hornet with burning eyes of red
Sits simmering at the temples of my leaden head.
There is no relief from this crown of bloodied roses.
It's not until I hear the cackling crow of dawn
That I realize relief may yet exist. I think god
Has abandoned me to the snarling tiger legions.

I fume and ramble, picking the painless legions
of the hopeful as my target. With hands dyed red,
What right do others have to favor of god?
Why do I suffer with an aching, boiling head
Bound to wait like a dog until the bright dawn
Chooses to favor us like a bride tossing roses?

See seething child-me making weapons out of roses
Pulling their thorns as they wilt, slewn legions,
Victims of nocturnal carnage, abandoned as dawn
Lays her grabby fingers streaked with red
On my exultant sacrifice, tens of scarlet heads
Discarded for thorns I will use to kill god.

While the impotent rage of a child can't kill any god,
I still hold it dear. No matter what, it still rose
From the core of my being, flowing from my head
Through my body. Child-feelings, those loyal legions
Lay coddled in my heart, the blood pumping red
And truer than anything that may come to dawn

On me with age. My burden bows in warm dawn
Light, feeling unlike a skull should. But god,
It's probably just the all shit that I've read
Finally coming to root among the decoy roses
I planted over the bodies I've buried in my head.
"Please let the ache end", I beg the stony legions

Of up-and-coming migraines, but those firm legions
Don't care for me, only for the authority of dawn,
That cunt. Someday I'll fill her pompous head
With pinecones and knives and she can cry to god
About what a bitch *I'm* being. *Eat my roses,*
You unbelievable-- so goes on my raging haze of red.

But despite the legions of pain touring in my head,
I still find beauty in the red of the she-devil dawn.
I won't let fear of god keep me from mutilating my roses.

vessel, following (3/29/23)

i am following another girl through a door. she hesitates for a second, arm outstretched, so i can follow her through the opening. as i pass through, another girl walks past me. i hesitate, arm outstretched, so she can leave through the opening. for a handful of seconds, the sacred bonds of community use our bodies as the vessel for promise.

Pink (11/26)

Bubble gum bubbling so bright that all the hues of the sky are blocked out except those of dusk and dawn, coloring the clouds like cotton candy. The brightness bursts and splatters my life in all the shades of my insides and all the tones of my tongue. When I blink in bright light, it sears through my eyelids like it must announce to the world: "I am here and I am delight and laughter and the edges of photographs of beloved memories!", so loud that I must hear it through my eyes.

The Homoeroticism of a Claire's™ Ear Piercing (11/16/23)

i'm going to put my teeth on you and you're going to beg me to pierce your jugular like we're at Claire's and you're ten and i am a gun.

you're going to say thank you ma'am while i rip us both into a bloody pile that even raw steak would turn away from.

my guts will curl around you like an overly-affectionate cat, until you realize my stomach acid is burning through those lovely new jeans, burning through your lovely genes.

carita can you hear me? (10/18/23)

oh sweet sunflower, you are running away from me! i can hear your precious footsteps pattering like rain on my windows, or like stones on my roof. it is so soothing, so soft. so sweet. you are so deli- you are so perfect, my rose. you blossom into beauty like it was made for you. as though you are the fountain from which youth and grace leap eternal. but you are cruel, my dandelion! i laugh. you are where youth and rejuvenation run everlasting, but you've hidden yourself away! my eyes narrow around my smile. i watch you think *that is how a predator smiles while she prepares me for the dinner table*. but i will not prepare you for the dinner table! not as a meal, of course. but as a bride? i look up at you from under my long, luscious lashes and you realize how sweet and petite i am. how much bigger and stronger than me you are. how cold and punishing you've been. it is not fair for those with power to wield it like a bludgeon upon the small and unfortunate. and now, as you watch me blush, you see that you wield love over me as well. my cheeks are the same color as your lips. my hair is chestnut to your hazel eyes. my skin is the sugary sunrise amber of honey to your hair. i cannot help myself! i leap to your arms, wrapping you tight in my embrace. you feel the unexpected, strong surge of my passion. you feel my hair lay on your shoulders, tangling in your hair. you feel tangled in my hair. you are tangled. my hair, my hands, my heart weaves around you, wrapping you. caressing you with the clutch of it. suddenly flowers sprout like weeds. you've always tried to care for your garden, but weeds spring up eternally. just like your wet, soft, sweet heart always leaps again to a new day. you do not age, do you know that? do you know that time weighs itself on me like a stone? i am its ox. it makes me pull this sorry state forward and forward. it lets me wither! all my beauty is borrowed from a moment. but time hates to share. so won't you, beloved? be my bride on-- at the dinner table. my hair coils around you like tangles of weeds. your heavy-headed blossoms flop pathetically while the snatching vines weave and embellish and enmesh you in my adoration. be my bride at the dinner table. or on the dinner table. but i know you've got a squishing beating blossom of a heart in there. i've weeded this garden long enough. one way or another, i will eat.

Hungry Newbeast (11/3/23)

I can't help myself but close my jaw a little tighter. It just feels so good, the *bumpbumpbump* of his heartbeat under my tongue. He's whimpering a little and it makes him sound submissive. *That* makes me want to bite down harder. Hard enough that I could make him just as warm and wet as I am, so that I get to see what's fluttering around inside him. Maybe if I bite down hard enough, really force these new, sharp teeth through his bones and muscle, I'll get to taste that tantalizing thing he's been flaunting around. I don't know what it is, but it makes me hot and shaky and *hungry*. Surely he wouldn't make me hungry unless he wanted me to eat him, right?

But his heartbeat is going rabbit-fast and wolf-wild under my teeth. A vague memory of my old heart shuddering like that comes to mind, with a little label saying "*fear*". I don't really remember that, but revulsion is climbing up my throat with needle-like hands so I force the thought away and relax my mouth a little. A couple drops of precious blood well up around my canines and it takes all my remaining control not to snap my jaws together and shatter the fragile vertebrae in his neck. It tastes like ambrosia, like copper shoved down my esophagus and sweet bile coming back up. My thighs clench a little tighter around his leg, making him whimper just a bit more, *jesus*, he's driving me crazy! My jaw is cracked open almost 180 degrees to fit around his thick, *thick*, neck but I try to nuzzle him just a bit anyway. Some version of human rationality in the back of my head tells me he's probably afraid, and the beautiful new animal in my head reminds me to comfort him. The human helpfully adds that I know more than him so I should be patient, and I respond by pressing my chest into his back and draping my newly-elongated arms over his. Good god, he feels so nice and warm. Something reptilian encourages me to curl around him. Even though I'm already covering as much of his back as my frame can manage, I cross my legs around his calf to accommodate. The new things living in my head have not come with any form of restraint and I'm quite sure that they've consumed a good amount of what I used to have. I don't deny myself very much anymore.

Exceeept,...! I grope his hands a little and purr up against his back, trying to get across the message that I'm being as gentle as I can. I'm being remarkably patient and restrained with him, even as he drives me wild. He's started breathing a little slower now, and while that means he's not pressing his skin into my teeth anymore, it satisfies another part of me all the same. Once I'm sure he won't struggle, the hunger in me hunger will shift. For now, his growing stillness is at the behest of old instincts. Instincts from things like rats and little horses, ancestors from times when *mammal* was synonymous with *prey*. All those small critters are telling him to stay still. After all, there's something with big teeth wrapping those teeth around his spine. It's good he stayed still. I'm not going to tell him this, but he's actually not the first one I've taken.

I'm very glad he is staying still. Just to be on the safe side, I make sure I'm not piercing him with any of my claws and I let my bite go a little softer. He has a thick neck and a big, round chest. His torso is huge, it seems like I could fit most of myself in it if he was hollow. Ooh, and his thighs! They're in jeans, which feel nice against my thighs, and they're similarly beefy. My legs are wrapped around one of his thighs to help keep him in place and I can barely cross them all the way around! I adore his body. The hair on his head is very soft and it goes in gentle, round curls. And the hair on his *chest* is thick and magnificently bristly.

I really want to keep him. Regret is building in my chest now and I hiss at myself for thinking about my mistakes. Penitently, I lave my tongue over the small cuts in his neck. The cuts I made. He has been quiet for a while now, breath settling into a shocky rhythm, and now I whimper. My hips cling to his and I curl my fingers around his biceps. Not groping, just holding.

"I'm being good, I promise," I mutter-growl as best I can. Frustratingly, my pronunciation has degraded with my changes, and the neck between my lips isn't doing much to help. *I'm being good*, I think towards him. Projecting the thought with all the passion I can muster. Trying to force it into that thick skull, convince him to relax. Suddenly giddy, I think *I won't hurt you any more than you ask me to!* The excitement that's flooding my

admittedly-janky endocrine system is revving me up and I purr louder than a motorcycle.

Though I fed recently, the memory of guts and muscle feels dry. I want more.

I whine, loud and pointed. Submissive. It's my answer to the wet and heavy whimpers he's been giving me. I'm returning the favor, just as the predators in my head rumble at me to. Again, I whine. This time, though, it's more guttural. It's more of a *moan*. *I want you, sweet one. Warm one, bodied one, strong one.* Another press of my breasts to his back muscles, an appreciative squeeze to his arms. While maintaining the delicate balancing act of not puncturing any crucial veins, I press my lips to his skin. A kiss. I didn't kiss very often, before I was new, and now kisses often escalate to devourings. Analytically human, my hippocampus supplies the understanding that most kisses do not involve a spine between the lips. I ignore this. More helpful, a beast proclaims that this is much more intimate than a 'normal' kiss and is therefore superior.

He doesn't respond the way I expect though. The scent of arousal remains disappointingly faint. He does not press back against my chest. He is only quivering and panting. I like quivering and panting, but not for this long. Not from him. Hunger is building in my stomach, rising past my lungs into my chest. The arch of my neck is extending slowly, vertebrae that do not match my skeleton pressing their way between spinal discs. Gentle as I have tried to keep my grasp on him, my nails are extending and curling. Without my attention on keeping them sheathed, they are cutting into his skin. His skin was pale but warm when I watched him, but now it is just pale. It makes me flighty, and that makes me crave. My growing ache has nothing to do with starvation but my maw is slaving all the same. I can feel warm spit dripping onto his neck. There is only remnant guilt keeping my tenuous control intact. Fear is spinning off him in seductive spirals, which does not feed my guilt nearly as much as it excites my appetite. Time is running out.