

1992

Mythologies

Kristina Kruse
Denison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kruse, Kristina (1992) "Mythologies," *Exile*: Vol. 39 : No. 2 , Article 26.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol39/iss2/26>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exile by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

Mythologies

I. Waiting for Venus

You stand on a carpet and wait for your feet to sink
Into the pile. You look at the artwork placed there
And there like quicksand. Venus lifts a garland to the sky,
Her eyes fixed on some god-awful horizon. She seems
To have a purpose. Her hair, sliced into her back
And shoulders, curls on her neck and molds itself
Around your ears as you stand. So you blink, and walk
To the next room, where you hear chanting and smell
Incense. Your body opens, breathing in sandalwood
And honey. You have to go back to her. Her waxy
Gray skin is the color of your bones, and its chill
Corrupts you, so you fall to your knees and conjure
The Lord to heal her. She falls lightly from the pedestal
And your arms surround a statue. Water condenses
And yields over her solid eyes, rounded torso, the stony
Tips of her breasts. And you pray that Venus has
Broken her marble cage and is free, you lying on your side
Next to an empty pile of shards, she a soaring blaze,
Intact and unshed in your veins. But you know the
Difference between life and dreams. So you shake her
Water from your body, wipe lamb's blood from your eyes.
And you leave that place of imprisoned, powerful ones
Whose bodies fit into your hands as if shaped for you alone.

II. Pallas

Every day is a rebirth of the one before.
Grass shivers. Atlas blows clouds over the sun.

He sees the world gravely. With her body
Athene circles me three times

and we fight, a dance of metallic clash and breathing,
there an angry roar, then we love.

With every cut of her knife I further swoon
to death. My skin slips off, an outgrown tunic.

I lie, loosen my blood to a carpet of earth,
while she wears my empty shell like a vision.

The sun finds every exposed nerve. Burning,
I watch her planets in the sky, spinning.

III. Psyche and Eros

Her skin shines in the moonlight as if spun from gold.
She twists her hair all the way around her neck until it's
all there is. The gods talk about splendor: look here. She lifts
her head, straightens her shoulders: the stars are your eyes.
She rubs her lips with oil, goes home to dream of you.

She sleeps: eyes turn into your face, submit with a smile,
your neck slopes to shoulders with arms cut into the sides.
Your fingers grace her body. Speak into her mouth, forget
about prophecy. Remember the danger of beauty without
love, and then dream only with her. Don't worry, Eros,

she could fill the box with a pyramid of wax, a mound
of earth, tiny chunks of myrrh. You could wed under the sea,
two fragile fish like the swimming ornaments in her hair.
Fall into her now as into blackest night, and stay, immortal,
while she lifts the lantern to your face, to see how

you change into ever-lovelier shapes under her fingers,
while your eyes are jewels under the lids, perpetually
growing. She will find you. The moon shines purer
than skin, even colder than the dreams of her god:
if this were not true, you would never have woken.

IV. Achilles Speaking to the Nereid Thetis

The day falls like rain under your grief.
What are the tears of a nymph
But a mere wet breaking of the old
Gray clouds on this ground of war?
Remember how falling, screaming,

(I stub out a cigarette
to watch it
scatter
exhale a last blue
cloud of smoke
I'm dead
warm
I walk to the door
and open it for air)

Huge, I tried to be born of you,
And how these fists held air
Until you grabbed my fat limbs
Like fruit and I choked and gagged
On water and life. Mother,

(in the silent urgency
of late night I am
enchanted by the
sound of dead leaves
in the wind
I think no longer of loving
it never even touched me)

Lover, destroyer of faith and men,
The water of Nereus eats stars
Like dates, then glows in the black
Black of a destroyed sky. This is
Why one waits and sees.

(sunrise
a hot star coming
with easy regularity
encroaching on a body
that will not await
a new rebirth
of wonder)

Howling to be made a man on this
Stretched, war-littered battlefield,
Bitter and mottled as the old
Gold filigree on my royal chariot,
I surrender to your immortality.

– Kristina Kruse '93