This final paper will be modeled after the mythic memoirs you read for class. They represent a hybrid form—memoir/autobiography married to research. It will allow you to weave together some aspect of your own life story with external source materials, and to make sure you understand MLA style.

The assignment:

Choose a myth or fairy tale or fable which has particular resonance for you. You might choose a well-known story, or you might want to go online and read several lesser known ones from the Brothers Grimm. You may choose a Greek myth or a myth from another culture, such as a Coyote tale. You might find inspiration in a longer poem (see “Little Seal Skin,” attached) or even in a film.

Do some research on your chosen tale. What is its root? Is there an earlier version? If it is, for instance, a Coyote tale, you might get some quotes on Coyote tales generally and their role in American Indian culture. You might also find interpretations of your tale by other writers, or writers on the meaning of fairy tales generally. (See the attached article from The New Yorker.) Feel free to be fluid about what you research, especially in relation to the core subject of your paper. For instance, if your autobiographical subject is leaving home, you might use some source material on immigration. If it’s divorce, you might find source material on that. Etc.
Figure out the connections between the tale and your own life story. I would suggest not trying to tell everything about your life, but to approach it—as the mythic memoirs we read for class do—from a particular frame. The story of a moral shift you might have made. The story of how you healed from a particular wound. The story of how you gained independence. The story of how you lost a love. Etc.

Write your paper, weaving together your memoir, the fairy tale/myth, and your research. How you do this is your call. All of the examples we read do some sort of retelling of the tale. They vacillate between that retelling, telling their own story, deepening the connection via some sort of research, and making their own connections between their lives and the tale.

Remember to seek patterns of Duende in your life and in the story you choose. How does the obstacle become the path?

The basics:

- Please consider your sources. Do not do research only on the internet, only by Googling your subject. Having learned about research in the library, please use full text articles, journal articles, books. Go with academic sources when possible.
- Double space the paper, using Times New Roman font
- Use MLA citation style. You can find this on the web and/or in any style handbook. This will include a “Works Cited” page.
- The paper should be approximately five pages long.
- You will be graded on the writing and content itself, your integration of quotations into the paper, and your use of MLA style.
- The paper is due Monday of Finals Week by 4:00 p.m. Please place it on the credenza outside my office (wooden desk-thing) at 211 Humphrey House.
- I am happy to look at drafts.