

DOWNLOAD PDF SIRENS IN ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

LEOFRANC HOLFORD-STREVENS

Chapter 1 : The siren: a medieval identity crisis â€œ Mittelalter

Sirens in Antiquity and the Middle Ages Leofranc Holford-Strevens 2. "Teach Me to Heare Mermaides Singinge": Embodiments of (Acoustic) Pleasure and Danger in the Modern West Linda Phyllis Austern.

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the ancient aquatic origin of our species and all of earthly life. Although never widely accepted, a mid-twentieth-century theory of evolution even suggested that our more immediate predecessors--to whom we owe our smooth skin, strategically distributed layers of fat, and "emotional" salty tears--had returned from land to water before giving rise to us. The human ability to speak and thus to sing was particularly connected to this aquatic hypothesis, as if some siren-like being could have been our foremother, some missing link in our evolution. They sing on compact discs and in film and music video, as explored by several contrasting essays in this volume. Widespread fascination with the idea of living sirens also continues to the present day; fake mermaids still materialize in major museums and collections, where they stare mutely back at viewers along with stuffed ibises and empty nautilus shells. These spaces are the substance of myth and the arts, severed from Western-style science by the "Scientific Revolution" of the seventeenth century, and even more so since the "Age of Enlightenment" a century later. The song of the siren belongs to the threshold between time and eternity, the plane of reference for the metaphors of myth. To consider the sirens is thus largely to consider cultural constructs of performance and audition, diverse links between sounding body and hearing body. Narrative and absolute musics from many cultures and for many sorts of performance have further envoiced even the otherwise most silent of those beings, as Henry John Drewal with Charles Gore and Michelle Kisliuk and Inna Naroditskaya show in their essay. However diffuse or improbable their bodies, with or without souls, the song of the sirens has often been the most memorable aspect and principal locus of their tremendous power. In the words of a global favorite of today, an English playwright from the age of colonial expansion: In some ethnic myths and legends, the mermaid and other siren-like figures such as the Germanic nixie and the Andean sirinu can adopt male or female form and seduce earthly women as well as men; the regional prototypes of the Russian rusalka are male-female couples. But his was never the realm of seduction or death, enchantment or prophecy, between his mythic space and the human world. The positive, productive musical powers of legendary male figures, such as the mythic Orpheus or Arion and the biblical David, have been rendered strongly masculine by artists and exegetes, often set in opposition to the destructive powers and false promises of the sirens. Water has long suggested bodily interiority to many peoples, the ebb and flow of female cycles, the realms of conception and birth, and male heterosexual satisfaction. In Western cultures, where the siren has most often been a dangerously seductive water-woman whose song envelops its listener in an open void, both space and the immaterial art of music have most often been conceived as feminine. The siren and her sisters may therefore be creatures whose vocal beauty obscures the perils and dangers of embodied union, serving as a metaphor against trusting the ear above the eye. One of the tensions presented throughout this book is between constructions of the siren that emphasize unity or disjunction between sight and hearing, and the concomitant danger of loss of self or utter dissolution for those who misread the "true" sensory signifier. As Linda Phyllis Austern points out, the earliest sirens who have left traces in visual art and written reference are probably descended from pre-Olympian and Semitic aquatic deities of creation and destruction. His essay provides a catalogue of the classics, each describing a slightly different sort of being: These are the creatures that most influenced later visual and written narratives, directly as in the case of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century classically influenced works described by Stephen Buhler and Elena Laura Calogero, and less immediately as in the more distant hybrids discussed by Drewal with Gore and Kisliuk and by Henry Stobart. Sometimes she is a serpent, sometimes a woman-spirit, a fairy, or the whisper of a dream. The siren, mermaid, rusalka, or their sisters in this book may drown sailors or dwell among suicides. Or they may sing eternal harmony and bestow everlasting life. The only constancy is a human-like voice. Their bodily form mattered far less than their diverse musical capacities: They made such melodious harmony that they enchanted poor admiring sailors, who were wrecked upon the rocks of Sicily. Boccaccio says that the sirens lived in pleasant fields with the bones of the dead scattered around them, but Xenophon writes that the Sirens sang the praises to people of conspicuous merit whose virtues had gained them universal approbation. In the Bolivian Andes, music may be traced originally to them. Calogero contrasts heavenly and earthly sirens in a tradition that draws from the contrasting neo-Platonic and Homeric heritage. Naroditskaya shows how the

water-spirit rusalka became more artistically significant than the bird-like sirin during the historical transition from the old landlocked Rus of the time before Peter the Great to the great naval empire of Russia. In fact, with their ability to traverse disparate geographical areas and allure travelers, sirens and their sisters have often served as emblems of empire and dominion. Many sailing ships from the age of global exploration and colonialism bore the image of the sea-siren as their figurehead. Rusalkas entered the literary world at the end of the eighteenth century as inhabitants of lakes, rivers, and seas, becoming markers of territory and political expansion. In Germany, the birth of the literary Lorelei signifies the beginning of romanticism and the rise of nationalism. A woman with a fish tail, the Polish syrenka, carries a shield and raised sword on the Warsaw coat of arms, embodying Polish nationalism. The siren Parthenope serves a similar purpose for Naples, to which she also serves as mythic protector. In the transition from oral to written narrative, or between various forms and styles of either, writers and other creative artists have continually modeled their sirens on others, combining physical and intentional elements at will. The siren therefore epitomizes hybridity, both in her physical body and in her role as the traversor of cultural, ethnic, and regional spaces. Her music is no less hybrid, combining African music with various non-African styles of melody, rhythm, instrumentation, and performance. The sirinu of the Bolivian Andes are in some ways reminiscent to their Iberian counterparts but have clearly indigenous ancestry; the same can be said of the Russian sirin and her Greek bird-bodied namesake. The literary Lorelei of the nineteenth century has German folkloric roots and American popular cultural descendents, as Annegret Fauser demonstrates. Many of the beings in these pages, often counterparts or adaptations of the multiply hybridized Greek sirens, can be deathly or angelic, Christian or pagan--or some paradoxical combination of all at once. Nonetheless, they share an essential feature--their powerful voices--which render them desirable objects for poets, visual artists, and musicians to describe or emulate. Just as the siren has most often been female, until the twentieth century, when women reclaimed her image in unprecedented numbers, the artists who accomplished her transmission from the oral to the written realm were, for the most part, men. Fashioned into an innocent, lonely Lorelei, a soul-seeking Little Mermaid, or a morbid rusalka, the sirens of this book often provide their creators with as much angst as desire, offering dreams of virgin-whores to make the men who market or consume them feel intensely alive, aroused by sex, fear, and music. Across many cultures, the siren has been a sort of hallucinogenic stimulant that gives the sensitive man a feeling of fullness in life--by paradoxically killing him. A virtually undefeated seductress, she rarely completes her sexual act, and her promises are usually unfulfilled. For her lover, fulfillment would mean a loss of hope, the end of the road, everlasting depression, and the extinguishing of desire as well as his mortal body. But it is not the sweet pleasure of love that the siren bestows upon her men. Does he die because sexual fulfillment would leave him no dreams, or because he realizes that his desire will never be fulfilled? But, according to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century musical and literary conventions, death also signifies the completion of the sexual game. The siren epitomizes the love-death of romanticism, as Kramer and Naroditskaya show in these pages. But an encounter with a siren is not always about sex. It may be about creativity, the dream, artistic transgression--or the nature of music itself. The hero of the Homeric Odyssey is, in fact, first told of the sirens by one of his female lovers, the mighty sorceress Circe, who turned many men to beasts. By that point in his narrative, he had already been seduced by a seaside musical enchantress, the semi-immortal Calypso, whose body he had enjoyed along with her song. The song itself, and its poetic promise, embodies prophetic knowledge and the meaning of life and death. She, the song, may be the key to immortality and omniscience. Victorious Odysseus, surviving his encounter with sirens, maintains silence about their music. Did he actually hear nothing? Perhaps the sirens did not bother to charm the self-restrained hero. Perhaps, tied to the symbolically explicit mast, he is metaphorically turned into a woman, "all ears," vulnerable to the penetration of seductive voices, as one twentieth-century scholar suggests. Kramer registers the modern disappointment with Odysseus through the poets and philosophers of a skeptical era: Adorno and Horkheimer, Kafka and Nietzsche and Rilke, all men concerned with the power of sound and word, and with male usurpation of the creative process. So sometimes there is no song as there is no siren. Sometimes there is

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a man, who, swimming in his dream, reinvents himself as a siren.

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Chapter 2 : Aulus Gellius : Leofranc Holford-Strevens :

one Sirens in Antiquity and the Middle Ages Leofranc Holford-Strevens The first and still most famous manifestation of the Sirens in Greek literature is in the twelfth book of the Odyssey.1 In lines , Circe warns.

November Ah, sirens. Fishy ladies with nice voices who like to eat Greek sailors, or the strident sound and strobe of emergency services: Your choice of either may depend on your recent reading, or slight recent deafness, but you know that both mean trouble. As time has gone on, this siren has increasingly lost confidence. Never entirely sure whether it was male or female – though gender-binary normativity was a harsh mistress in the ancient world – in the middle ages it stopped knowing whether its human bits went with bird, dragon, snake or fish bits. This triggered a slow decline into confusion with mermaids and sea-monsters. In this post we trace the sad medieval history of the siren for the first time, and try to understand where it all went wrong. We first meet the siren early in Greek mythology, where it is a flesh-eating part-bird, part-human demon. It happily ignores the question of which bit is which, and what gender the whole should be called. This allows it to make sweet music and lure in handsome men sailing by. The siren and its sisters are either the daughters of the river god Achelous or the sea god Phorcys, and are well-established in Greek literary monuments such as the *Odyssey* in the eighth century B. No problems there so far. With the advent of Christianity, our siren enters adolescence, starts wearing metaphorical black and discovers evil. In the second-century Greek translation of the Bible it comes to represent the desolation of Babylon: Now beasts make their home there and an empty echo is heard in the houses. Sirens have their habitation there and demons dance. This sounds nice but was a bad thing by that point in history: But wild beasts shall rest there, and their houses shall be filled with serpents, and ostriches shall dwell there, and the hairy ones shall dance there: There is no doubt that it is evil – as evil as huge flying snakes, which is what dragons were thought to be in Christian late antiquity and the early middle ages. We have an indication of this from the influential seventh-century encyclopedia of Isidore, Archbishop of Seville and patron saint of the internet, in which he lists dragons as members of the snake family along with basilisks, vipers, asps and lizards. By associating sirens with snakes, Jerome compares them to Satan, who as the serpent in the Garden of Eden seduced Eve with his siren-like voice and words into eating the forbidden fruit. It appears in the *Physiologus*, a text that describes the habits of various kinds of animals: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS , fol. The siren has changed again, we note, this time from dragon to snake-woman. Although this drawing is usually thought to be the first known image of a siren with a fish tail, its coils actually resemble the tail of the snaky salamander, as shown in another image from the same Bern manuscript underneath the distressed devil in a tub, to which we will come shortly: Devil in a tub and salamander. Whether the ninth-century artist thought he was drawing a snake or a fish, he was making a conscious or unconscious mistake: Or was he simply copying the picture from an earlier manuscript, and so repeating an earlier mistake? We may never know, though the eighth and ninth-century renaissance of Latin and bible study under Emperor Charlemagne makes attempts at correction not only possible but likely in many manuscripts. When it does, the stag swallows it whole: The dragon and the devil are linked again! The salamander, on the other hand, is said to put out the fire in an oven, and make a hot bath go cold, if it crawls in. So our little mournful devil is either in the process of being drowned, or sitting in chilly water, or both: But we digress again. The siren in the Bern *Physiologus*, whether fish-woman or snake-woman, is not the earliest known fishy lady. One famous and earlier fish-woman is to be found in the Gellone Sacramentary, a manuscript made around near Meaux or Cambrai, France: Strictly speaking, however, there is no indication that this figure was thought to be a siren. To try to answer this question, we must look back to the misty strangeness of years B. There were plenty of fish-bodied beings in the ancient world, among them the Mesopotamian god Dagon; a fish-bodied goddess from Israel, thought to be the Syrian deity Derketo or Atargatis; and Oannes, a mythical teacher of wisdom in third-century B. Stones from as far back as – B. The sides of the second-century statue of the goddess Artemis Ephesia at Caesaria in Israel are

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covered in mermaids holding their tails. Most of these representations were associated with the great Mother Goddess, with fertility and femininity. So by the time Pliny the Elder came on the scene in the first century A. The nereids never had a chance. But there is no easy inheritance left by Pliny to the *Liber monstrorum*. In the section of the *Natural History* dedicated to birds, he casts doubt on the existence of sweet-singing, flesh-eating bird-sirens from India. It is likely, though unproven, that such cultural mixtures come about partly because different kinds of texts can bleed into each other quite easily. The siren has come a long way, suffering many a sea-change: Its identity crisis remains sadly unresolved. This did not stop one medieval artist, however: Austern and Naroditskaya *Bloomington*, , pp.

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Chapter 3 : Aulus Gellius - Hardcover - Leofranc Holford-Strevens - Oxford University Press

Leofranc Holford-Strevens (born 19 May) is an English classical scholar and polymath, an authority on the works of Aulus Gellius, and a former reader for the Oxford University Press.

The subjects covered include history, law, geography, philosophy, but above all grammar in its broad ancient sense of linguistic and literary studies; a persistent theme is the relation between Greek and Roman culture. At the time, the literature and the language of pre-Augustan and particularly pre-Ciceronian writers were much in vogue; Gellius abounds in quotations from early texts not otherwise preserved, but at the same time gives a vivid picture of intellectual life among a bookish elite and displays an engaging authorial personality. The work is written not in the functional prose of technical authors but in accordance with the literary fashion of the age, with archaic words and constructions alongside neologisms.

General Overviews The first modern study of Gellius outside reference books was Nettleship ; after a long period of neglect, he returned to greater prominence toward the end of the 20th century. Brief accounts were given in Schmidt and Holford-Strevens ; monographs were published in Astarita and Holford-Strevens , which remains the most comprehensive discussion. Anderson enters into dialogue with the first edition of Holford-Strevens and is answered there. Modern literary theories are applied to the text and to Holford-Strevens in Gunderson *A miscellanist and his world*. Edited by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase, 1997 Berlin and New York: *Aulus Gellius and the fantasy of the Roman library*. In *Dictionary of literary biography*. Edited by Ward Briggs, 2006 A brief overview for the general reader. An Antonine scholar and his achievement. Attempts to be comprehensive in its coverage of facts and probabilities. A revision and expansion of *Aulus Gellius* Chapel Hill: A corrected paperback, with a brief appendix, was issued in Holford-Strevens, Leofranc, and Amiel Vardi, eds. *The worlds of Aulus Gellius*. Wide range of topics. The individual essays are listed here under the appropriate headings. *The Noctes Atticae of Aulus Gellius*. *American Journal of Philology* 4: Clarendon, , pp. In *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur*. Edited by Klaus Sallmann, 1998

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Chapter 4 : Aulus Gellius - Classics - Oxford Bibliographies

Middle Ages.4 The central part of this article focuses on a striking comparison with sirens in a music theory treatise of the fourteenth century and argues that only by considering the range of meanings for the siren can this reference be understood.

Whilst, in his first manifesto, he had highlighted the primary role of automatism, which made itself apparent in the uncontrolled recording of thoughts and attempts to lay open the essence of the subconscious, the Surrealism of the nineteen thirties gave particular attention to seeking the wellsprings of erotic desire. In his opinion, the manifestation of true freedom is achieved thanks to the releasing of suppressed desires. Thus the Surrealist design for emancipation led to the repudiation of morality as being a source of oppression and alienation. Richard Searver and Helen R. Lane, Chicago, , p. On many an occasion it was a zone of violence and rape, taking the artists into the sphere of identifying art with pornography. The sketch presents elements of the female organs in place of a female face; breasts in place of her eyes, navel in place of her nose and pubic hair in place of her mouth. Here, the mythic image of half-woman, half-fish, with its deep cultural roots, has been rejected and reworked, her femininity reduced to the role of genitalia exposed to the sphere of the complete liberation of the male imagination. The beautiful mermaids and sirens were a mythological merging of the female body with fish or birds, respectively. In the bestiaries, they were manifestations of licentiousness, debauchery and carnal temptation, whilst all kinds of legends and myths told of their enticing men into the unfathomable, watery deeps, luring sailors with their magical singing and leading them along the pathway to their deaths. Removed from the water, the hybrid figure with the legs and hips of a woman and the torso and head of a fish lies, lifeless. Like the figure in *Le Viol*, she has no developed organs of speech. This inability 2 Cf.: Susan Gubar, *Representing Pornography. Feminism, Criticism, and Depictions of Female Violation*, [in: *Rene Magritte and the Surrealist Publications*, [in: *In The Odyssey*, the classical hero overcomes their deadly singing by instructing his sailors to plug their ears with wax and ordering that he himself be bound to the mast so that he might listen intently to the rare sensuality of their voices. Odysseus, consciously and resolutely sets out for the encounter in order to see them, but, not hearing their singing, merely glances at them and then ignores them. It is he who beguiles the sirens and they who ultimately suffer death. Her piscine, animal constituent predominates, emphasising her dependency upon the aquatic space. Yet the power, the giving of life, the fertility and the purification which water symbolises do not pertain to her. In this way, Magritte inverts and reworks another myth which was also to be a frequent presence in the pop culture classics which were to follow. The motif of ideals of feminine beauty lying on the beach and emerging from the sea can be found time and again in film narratives. Clad only in skimpy bikinis, they emerge from the ocean waves and set the masculine imagination ablaze with their eroticism. Both instances imbue the depiction of the female body with a sacred quality, rendering it idealised and sensual. *Kafka and the Sirens*, [in: This, first and foremost, is no figure created by God. Neither does the conglomerate of fish and woman thus depicted appear in any of the earlier mythologies within the Indo-European region. The fish symbol is the symbol of the first Christians and the embodiment of the figure of Jesus Christ, whilst water is the embodiment of baptism, of anointing and of the cleansing of sins. The female legs and genitalia appended to the piscine torso and head are blasphemous in nature. They assail the greatest of sanctities. Removed from the water, the half-woman, half-fish lies lifeless on the shore, but her naked legs, hips and slender form, as well as the dark triangle between her legs, are still an incitement to sexual pleasure. She calls to mind the figure in *Le Viol*, upon which a man performs an act of rape. Deprived of her face and her lips for the kissing, her femininity is identified solely by a meaningful part of her body; the vagina. In the views held by misogynists, that which determines female sexuality, that which is an attribute of woman and of woman alone, is the body from the waist down. It has nothing of the sensual or erotic about it. Laid out frontally to the viewer, or torturer, she is exposed to the sphere of necrophilic fantasy, becoming the terrain for an escalation of sexual

deviation. Seduced, then put to death, objectified and stripped of the qualities of beauty, subject to utter degradation, yet she is still the object of carnal lust. The nakedness of her legs and her exposed vagina continue to magnetise and unleash the craving to slake sexual needs. Every work is, in its own way, a biographical fact, giving voice to the conscious and the unconscious. Dagon was half-man, half-fish and was repeatedly portrayed as a figure with a piscine head and torso and the lower limbs of a human being. Nonetheless, this was not a character of the female sex. When Magritte was thirteen years old, his mother drowned herself in the Belgian stretch of the River Sambre. Considering the anti-mermaid within categories of the first and most powerful object of sexual desire, in other words, in this case, the mother, the radiant sun might bear testimony to the presence of the father, source of prohibitions and law. In the pornographic representation, primary law, such as the prohibition of incest or other social taboos, is not binding. It might be considered as a visual manifestation of the surrealist inclination toward the degradation and fragmentation of female bodies. Melanie Klein and Modernist Melancholia, Durham The figure of the anti-mermaid, however, is an exceptionally degrading, desacralising and demythologising image of woman. In juxtaposition with the piscine torso and head, it takes on a uniquely blasphemous appearance. It calls into question the culturally rooted representations of mermaids and the birth of Venus and assails Christian symbolism. She is stripped not only of the mythical qualities and values of the voice, but also of the mythical incarnations of beauty. Put to death where the foaming waves meet the shore, she still does, however, possess her genitalia and through that, she arouses masculine lust. The unleashing of drives and freeing of intellect in literature and art were to bring in their wake the consequent liberation of humankind from repressive bourgeois culture. His paintings from the nineteen fifties and sixties are of a different nature and although fish, mermaid and siren motifs appear in them, they no longer have a pornographic undertone. These depictions are divested of violence and far removed from associations degrading the female body. Catherine Porter, Ithaca , p. Here, Magritte presents two anti-mermaids seated on a rock; a couple. Even though they give an impression of being petrified, they seem to be living monuments to love. Nestled against one another, they hint at a depiction of two loving beings cherishing one another and also, perhaps, at a depiction of two beings singing a love song together. These oppositions can also be observed in the titles given to the paintings. The pornographic depiction typical of the Surrealism of the nineteen thirties has here been transformed into a dream of returning the cultural source of representations of sensuality. Oscillating around the pornographic representations of the female body, they overturned the myths rooted in culture, proposing a new view of the world of liberated desire. Their questioning of the tendency to imbue woman with a sacred quality led toward the putting to death and degrading of the mythical sirens and mermaids and of the mythical Venus. Through this, the attempt to unleash the libidinal energy was bound up with masculine power and its abuse, as was evidenced by the Surrealistic trends toward the objectification of woman, rape and necrophilia.

Chapter 5 : Music of the Sirens

Sirens in Antiquity and the Middle Ages Leofranc Holford-Strevens 2. "Teach Me to Heare Mermaides Singinge": Embodiments of (Acoustic) Pleasure and Danger in the Modern West Linda Phyllis Austern 3. Devils, Daydreams, and Desire: Siren Traditions and Musical Creation in the Central-Southern Andes Henry Stobart 4.

Chapter 6 : The Digital Walters

Introduction: singing each to each / Inna Naroditskaya and Linda Phyllis Austern --Sirens in antiquity and the middle ages / Leofranc Holford-Strevens --"Teach me to heare mermaides singing": embodiments of (acoustic) pleasure and danger in the modern West / Linda Phyllis Austern --Devils, daydreams, and desire: siren traditions and musical.

Chapter 7 : The Worlds of Aulus Gellius - Leofranc Holford-Strevens; Amiel Vardi - Oxford University Press

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Leofranc Holford-Strevens's wiki: Leofranc Holford-Strevens (born 19 May) is an English classical scholar and polymath, an authority on the works of Aulus Gellius, and a former reader for the Oxford University Press.

Chapter 8 : Project MUSE - Music of the Sirens

due attention to the text, sense, and content of individual passages, and to the use made of him by later writers in antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and more recent times.

Chapter 9 : Aulus Gellius: An Antonine Scholar and his Achievement - Leofranc Holford-Strevens - Google

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