

Reflecting on “A Siren’s Song”

by

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When our instructor, Dr. Theodora Patrona gave us the opportunity to create something more artistic and freeform as an assignment for our class, I immediately seized the opportunity. Creative projects like this ignite a unique and enthusiastic feeling that makes you one with your creative work, so momentarily, you live inside your art. Moreover, the Oceanic Literature class had a major impact on my creative work since it inspired me through our texts and readings of Australian culture and literature to produce the love story of a mythical sea creature like the siren.

The myth of the siren has been present in many cultures surrounding seas and oceans, and their stories vary across different traditions. Mikal J. Aasved notes in his paper, that sirens “may have affinities with such other mythological creatures as the Valkyries of Teutonic mythology, who carried fallen warriors to Valhalla, or the Harpies, the other terrible bird-women of Greek myth.” (385) So, in a way, they exist all around the world but in different forms. Australia, surrounded by the vast and mysterious sea, also served as a source of inspiration for my story. You cannot help but bring to your mind the ocean whenever you hear about Australia. As John S. Ryan highlights in his book *Australian Fantasy and Folklore* “we need to experience realms where wonder is possible...” (23). To me, the sea itself is the greatest wonder in this world containing both mystery and beauty, and knowing how connected the Indigenous people of Australia were to it made me feel closer to those people and my story. In my creative work, I wanted to capture this sense of mystery and complexity,

blending the beauty of the ocean with the underlying tension and danger that it holds.

The captivating and dangerous siren became the perfect metaphor for these themes.

As, I was writing my story the idea of including a sea aesthetic throughout my whole creative work became increasingly appealing. Bearing always in mind the ocean and the history it holds of untold love stories as well as the dangers it contains, I wanted to create a bittersweet feeling for the readers of my story, so that is why I chose for my main character a creature both beautiful and dangerous, a siren. The influence of A.D. Hope's "Australia" inspired me to create a love story where the male protagonist falls deeply in love with the siren. Christina Stead's *From For Love Alone* resonated with me for its portrayal of a strong, independent female character. I was drawn to Stead's complex heroine and decided to center my story around a similarly powerful woman. At the same time, I began to reflect on the deeper historical and cultural significance of the siren. As the story evolved, I realized that she represented more than merely a mythical creature. Her character echoed the complexities of Aboriginal identity and the impact of colonization. This insight was shaped in part by the work of Cornelis Martin Renes who based on Martos Garcia states that: "The presence of the mermaid, often an ominous symbol of seduction, deceit, doom, and natural and human disaster in Western folklore [...], symbolizes the antagonistic worldviews of European and Indigenous Australia and the search for an Indigenous space of belonging" (53). Renes's words reminded me of videos our instructor shared in class, in which Aboriginal women spoke about their lived experiences. They discussed how they were often perceived as inferior and how their human rights had been violated, just as the siren's right to exist peacefully in the sea was constantly threatened by the pirate's obsession. The pirate's reckless love for the siren reflects the historical conflict between Aboriginal people and European settlers, while her eventual death at his

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hands symbolizes the inevitable consequences of colonization for the Indigenous population. In this way, the siren's story becomes not only a tale of love and loss but also a reflection of the painful and ongoing struggle for an Indigenous identity and space in a world shaped by colonization.

To sum up, I must confess that for this creative journey, I let my heart lead me. I started writing my story without a fixed plan, knowing only that I wanted a powerful female figure at its center; someone capable of standing alone, as the women in our Oceanic texts often did. The siren, with her beauty and danger, was the perfect choice. Inspired by my readings, I envisioned her as both a symbol of Indigenous strength and the tragic consequences of colonial encounters. The pirate, a settler in my story, is drawn to her despite knowing she belongs to the sea, just as European settlers were drawn to Australia, yet unable to truly understand or conquer it.

Works Cited

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