

# The Penguin Book of Mermaids

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## Introduction

### *The Stories We Tell About Mermaids and Other Water Spirits*

The loveliest maiden is sitting  
High-throned in yon blue air,  
Her golden jewels are shining,  
She combs her golden hair;

She combs with a comb that is golden,  
And sings a weird refrain  
That steepens in a deadly enchantment  
The list'ner's ravished brain . . .

These stanzas of Heinrich Heine's poem "Die Lore-Ley" (1823), rendered here in Mark Twain's translation, "The Lorelei," encapsulate some of the most salient and lasting features of the mermaid as a beautiful and dangerous being who attracts men to their watery deaths. Evoking popular Western iconography, Lorelei, bejeweled and combing her golden hair with her golden comb, appears to sailors and sings them a tune, the sweetness of which is irresistible and fatally entrances them. By the end, "Lorelei's grewsome work" is done, and the water has engulfed "sailor and bark."<sup>1</sup>

Historically, Lorelei's tale emerged in the early nineteenth century as a local legend and cautionary tale connected with the dangerous waters and the echo heard in the vicinity of the tall cliff Loreley along the river Rhine in Germany. In a

version that predates Heine's, the beautiful maiden, betrayed by her loved one and accused of witchcraft, throws herself down from the cliff into the mirrorlike waters of the Rhine, where the echo of her name continues to be heard.<sup>2</sup> Faced with the prospect of living without the one she loves, Lorelei desires to end her life, or eventually to be reunited with him in the water. But her backstory and act of romantic loyalty are forgotten in later musical and poetic compositions,<sup>3</sup> in which she becomes emblematic of a widespread trope of femininity: a mermaid of alluring beauty who uses her sirenlike song to draw men to her and to water.

Mermaids: What and who are they? What do they look like? How are they different from sirens? How are they related to other water beings around the world? What are the cultural, religious, and popular beliefs that sustain specific plots of human-merfolk encounters? Why do we continue to tell stories about eerie mermaids and other water spirits in the twenty-first century?

*The Penguin Book of Mermaids* does not pretend to provide a definitive answer to any of these questions, but its more than sixty tales from a wide range of cultures and time periods illuminate our fascination with mermaids today. Our choices aim to broaden readers' knowledge of European mermaids; to encourage considering today's popular-culture mermaid in relation to her merfolk kin in belief tales across the globe, past and present; and to foster appreciation of the cultural significance of the tales, since mermaids and other water spirits raise issues of gender, voice, and sexuality, as well as knowledge, ecology, and spirituality—especially but not only in Indigenous contexts. Our interest, in other words, is to provide an opportunity to enjoy and reflect on the diversity across place and time of human experiences with the mysterious, nonhuman, aquatic other.

The tales in *The Penguin Book of Mermaids* are of folkloric or literary provenance, and our short introductions help to situate them historically and culturally, as well as to underscore that those circulating in oral tradition are not necessarily confined to the past. The multiplicity of languages in which mer-

maid and other water-spirit narratives are found and the variety of modes in which they are experienced present a huge challenge for a print anthology in the English language. It goes without saying that such a collection cannot represent all cultures or do justice to the nuances of the innumerable stories, so we have chosen to take on the challenge in ways that expand our expectations of what mermaids are and what they mean across languages and cultures. Notably, twenty tales appear here for the first time in English—translated from Estonian, Greek, Hawaiian, Ilocano, Italian, Japanese, Khasi, Persian, and Spanish. Furthermore, since mermaid tales are often repurposed for specific audiences and contexts, we have included two contemporary literary adaptations of "The Little Mermaid," one from Japan and one from the United States.

### Their Bodies, Our Anxieties

There is something deeply unsettling about a being whose form merges the human with the nonhuman. Whether they dwell in fresh or salt water, aquatic humanoids raise questions about what it is to be human and what lies beyond a human-centered world. Physically, they are both like and unlike us. They eat, sleep, and breathe in a realm that we can access only temporarily, but they can live among us, as they are often able to shed the nonhuman portion of their bodies and infiltrate the human world. And the shores and banks where we come across them, like the vessels on which we cross their waters, are thresholds between our world and theirs. We humans do not deal well with betwixt and between—liminality makes us anxious. We prefer our world organized into well-ordered and sharply defined categories, and we prefer to be in charge of it. Nonetheless, we are strangely drawn to the other who is in part a mirror image of us and appears within reach, even if mentally ungraspable.

Our anxieties about water beings are magnified by our attraction to them, and, even more so by the mermaid's seductiveness, which in many stories results in the human's loss of

control, self, and even life. Embracing a water spirit can prove lethal. Will the mermaid drag us beneath the water to drown us or to give us a new life? If we were able, with the help of magic, to survive in the merfolk's watery world, would we be their prisoners or their partners? And if a mermaid or maiden of the sea marries a human, will the relationship last, or will her otherness prevail?

Our ambivalence toward mermaids and other water spirits finds its representation in their bodies, which are often alluring, but can also be frightening. Perhaps most powerful is the image of the mermaid's hybrid body—her fish-human, super-feminized, but strange form. Descriptions of the merbeing's fishy lower half tend to be generic, but there are a few notable exceptions. Water spirits with the lower half of an ocean-dwelling porpoise are found in Oceania; human mixed with freshwater dolphin (or porpoise), dugong, or manatee bodies are found in the Amazon region. Other merbeings and water spirits are partly reptilian—dragons or water snakes. This hybridity may be a sign of superhuman, divine powers, as in the case of the mythic Oannes; or of lack and subhuman bestiality, as exemplified in the "Feejee mermaid" hoax.

Whether it has religious significance or is bestialized, the human-fish or human-snake hybrid is all the more a monster because its element is water, which is both a life source and a mystery that humans are transported by but cannot fully inhabit. Our use of the word "monster" here reaches back to the Latin *monstrum*, a "portent" or prodigious being that defies what is commonly found in nature and thus elicits both fear and awe. In contemporary cultural theory, we are reminded that "a construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically 'That which reveals,' 'That which warns.'<sup>24</sup> Biform water creatures are signs, then, that often serve both as admonition for humans not to cross borders and as incitement to do so.

Such admonition and incitement come in innumerable permutations across sexual, gendered, racial, species, ontological, and spiritual divides. For instance, reductive definitions of mythological Sirens as real-life "harlots outstanding in both

instrumental music and sweetness of voice" who "reduced passers-by to beggary" already circulated in Greek and Roman antiquity;<sup>5</sup> and the appellation of prostitutes as "mermaids" in early modern British culture<sup>6</sup> likewise attests to how a woman who oversteps the boundaries of gender propriety has, over centuries, risked being defined as monstrous. In contrast, as shown in Odysseus's encounter with the Sirens, it is manly, in fact heroic, to engage with their seductive powers, as long as one does not fall prey to them. Stories of merfolk and other water spirits thus provoke us to think about gender and our expectations of differently gendered bodies.

The representation of mermaids' bodies seems to have a stable history, but when we consider the etymology of "mermaid" we find that, even confining ourselves to the mythologies of northern Europe, "maidens of the sea" come as undines, selkies or seals, nixies, and sea nymphs in many shapes and forms, some of which are not even described. Furthermore, mermaids have been represented as having a single fishtail, marking them as having some control over their bodies,<sup>7</sup> or as having two tails, perhaps suggesting sexual availability. In current iconography, the mermaid usually has one tail, a fishtail that in its long and scaly shape is only somewhat reminiscent of the serpent's tail in some medieval stories.<sup>8</sup> Iconically appearing upright and bare breasted with her piscine half hidden in the water, the mermaid's body is often read as a sign of her mutability and duplicitous nature. The striking reversal in René Magritte's painting "The Collective Invention" shows a mermaid lying on the beach, on her side, facing viewers; she has a fish's head and side fins, while her lower body is human and naked. Does Magritte's rearrangement of the mermaid's body parts show how dehumanizing a patriarchal "collective invention" of the mermaid can be?

While some mermaids, merfolk, and other water spirits unsettle the human-nonhuman divide by their ability to inhabit different bodies at the same time, others do so by shape-shifting, for instance, from seal or reptile to human. Hans Christian Andersen's Little Mermaid's transformation into a human is the outcome of her pact with the sea witch. For other

merbeings, shape-shifting is a way of life: a seal woman may sun herself in either shape when she pleases. But her hybrid nature is more than skin deep: when access to her nonhuman body is taken away by a man who wishes to hold her on land, she is mutilated. As many tales about marriage between humans and merbeings suggest, interspecies romances are risky.

While some of the mermaids that real-life voyagers and explorers have reported seeing in their travels are not described as beautiful, in most narrative and visual accounts it is the beauty of the mermaid—in contrast to the siren's knowledge—that attracts men. In misogynist ways, such beauty is often connected with vanity, as the mermaid narcissistically holds a golden mirror while combing her long, flowing hair. Beauty can be a powerful weapon—a lure that draws us nearer, a temptation that we are unable to resist. It beckons us, whispering that it will give us what we want most, whether that be love, sex, or both. But what does our fascination with this dangerous yet desirable other suggest about us?

Answers to this question are found in the many tales that different peoples tell about water spirits. They reflect our fascination with and fear of female bodies and of water and our dread of predators or poisonous creatures that live in or near water. But such tales are also social and cultural commentaries about what it means to be human: they encapsulate our beliefs and mores, express our weaknesses and strengths, and expose our deepest fears and desires. Furthermore, stories of sirens, mermaids, and other water spirits consistently admonish humans for testing their place in the social and natural world by mingling with nonhuman or monstrous water beings.

### Story Currents, Crosscurrents, and Genres

Since ancient times, humans have noted that stories from discrete cultures around the world can be remarkably similar, and have tried to account for why the same motifs and themes occur globally. This is true of stories about water beings. To explain this phenomenon, various theories explore the origin

of traditional narratives, but they are difficult to verify. What bears keeping in mind is that the value of stories is not the degree to which they are authentically native, but the ways that they reflect the concerns or values of the group who tells and retells them.

The popularity of water-spirit tales also depends on the powerful material and symbolic role of water, without which life as we know it would be impossible. Given that everything we need to survive, in one way or another, depends on water, it is unsurprising that peoples across place and time have ascribed religious significance to water and developed water symbolism. But water is also a shape-shifter that is not easily grasped and that affects nearly everything it touches. Whether fresh, brackish, or salty, water holds a mystery that fascinates humans, has aesthetic qualities that delight our senses, and—like water spirits—is both attractive and destructive.

Stories move about in the world in ways that are comparable to ocean currents, following a course as they move. This is not to say that the flow of these story currents is a natural occurrence. While it is difficult to ascertain with certainty whether parallel stories are the product of diffusion, it is easy enough to imagine the historical forces behind the circulation of stories—human migration and dispersal throughout the ages, exploration, trade, the expansion of colonialism and empires, and our age-old fascination with humankind, which leads us to learn more about peoples and their cultures. The material and ideological forces of capitalism and colonialism, often in conjunction with sexist ideologies, may have caused localized and indigenous story streams across the world to dwindle and their currents to be diverted. Thus, mermaid and water spirit stories as a global phenomenon do not circulate in isolation from one another. Like the crosscurrents of rivers and oceans, they flow into and cut across one another; they cause whirlpools, run in overt resistance to a dominant current, or persist hidden under it.

All these forces come to bear on how a story is passed on. Thus the individuals who collected and recorded tales—and their culturally informed understandings of genre and the pur-

pose of genre—have also impacted the circulation and appreciation of tales locally, nationally, and transnationally. Thinking of currents and crosscurrents of stories encourages us not to compare and contrast them as separate and innately different, but rather to think of them in dynamic relation to one another. The cross-cultural dynamics of water-spirit stories can help loosen the hold of the all-too-popular reading of the siren or mermaid across time as a symbol of dangerous femininity.

Part of the attraction that keeps us telling and retelling merfolk and other water spirit stories lies in the mystery of these beings' existence and the lasting question, "Are mermaids and other water beings real?" Already in the first century A.D., the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder was writing in his book *Natural History* about sightings of the remains of nereids and tritons—sea nymphs covered in scales and fish-tailed men. Visual representations of mermaids in medieval bestiaries, or visual compendia of beasts, also offered an outlet for answers to this question. The small images introducing each section of this collection gesture to the varied ways in which we have imagined merfolk and other water beings over the centuries.<sup>9</sup>

Twenty-first-century people—whether in real life or through our imagination, as seen, for instance, in multiple *Little Mermaid* live-action films—continue to wonder. Thus, along with historical accounts of mermaid sightings, we have included some first-person accounts from recent or contemporary oral tradition of seeing or interacting with mermaids or other water spirits. Like any other narratives concerning one's personal interaction with the divine or the inexplicable, these tales are approached with respect, whether or not we share their sense of reality.

Mermaid stories did not emerge as fairy tales—that is, as fictions—but as myths and legends. Folklorists explain that, in different ways and in contrast to folk and fairy tales, myths and legends raise questions of belief—meaning not that every teller believes the events in the tale really happened, but that somewhere, at some point in time, people (not just one individual) believed or believe in the material and/or symbolic truth of the tale. Myths often narrate the beginning of all life,

as well as human life, and attempt to explain how and why things are the way they are and who is accountable for what. These stories have religious, spiritual, and philosophical functions and meanings, and feature gods as well as humans, often interacting with one another. While myths make accounts of early history believable or at least memorable, legends are grounded in a more recent and localized history that tells us how certain features of a place originated, or that situates events and their superpowered human protagonists within specific places and historical times. Place names and realistic details seek to verify the truth value of legends; folk and fairy tales (often called wonder tales), on the other hand, bolster our suspension of disbelief by staying away from specifics and following a magical logic of their own. However, this belief versus fiction distinction is not universally applicable when we consider how stories are relevant to the social group or community within which they circulate.<sup>10</sup>

### Plots, Gender, and Human-Nonhuman Relations

Whether they are historical accounts, myths, legends, or folktales, or they belong to other genres that unsettle these distinctions, we can identify three common plots in mermaid and merfolk tales: the first features a fleeting interspecies encounter, the second a mer(maid)-wife, and the third the abduction of a human into the water.<sup>11</sup>

Over the centuries, humans have reported encounters with "strange" water beings. These narratives do not tell of lasting relationships between humans and merfolk, but of their fleeting meetings, either in the water or at its edge. The portal between the two dimensions is wide open, but rather than crossing over into the other space to stay, merfolk and humans find themselves interacting temporarily in contact zones—what anthropologist and cultural critic Mary Louise Pratt described as: "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power."<sup>12</sup> Mermaids and humans belong to different worlds, ✓

✓ and an imbalance of power often informs these accounts. That said, when water spirits are approached with respect rather than being treated as bad omens, the encounter can have a positive outcome for the human. Some tales from Ulithi Atoll and Yap in the Caroline Islands, for example, feature female porpoises who remove their tails every night so they can come ashore as humans to watch islanders dance.<sup>13</sup> These kinds of interactions express an understanding that merfolk and water spirits are part of an animated universe, the powers of which are neither good nor evil but must be respected.

Such difference, power, and mystery also fire human desire for a lasting relationship, which all too often turns into a form of appropriation, the subject of the second common type of plot. Within a European context, mer-wife plots vary, but at the outset they often hint at or showcase the maiden's difference, and they rarely have a happy ending. At stake in these stories is the female merbeing's existence between worlds—her being and not being human; her living with humans while also participating in what we call a “supernatural” sphere; her ability to cross the threshold into the world of humans and “pass” there as human while never fully belonging. When she is a powerful water being, such as Mélusine, the maiden sets her own conditions for her marriage with a human and hides her difference of her own accord; but when she is a selkie or seal woman, a man marries her by stealing her animal skin or hood, thereby precluding her return to the water and her kin. In both cases, the mer-wife's difference remains hidden in the human everyday, and she proves to be a loyal wife and caring mother. And yet, it matters whether she keeps the secret of her identity, because it determines her agency in the tale and the power dynamics of her marriage. These tales speak to the discrepancy between men's longing for a woman unfettered by social mores and their attempt to control her by domesticating her. The mermaid is beautiful, and men yearn to possess her, but it must be on their terms and not the mermaid's.

In the plots where the mer-wife remains more than human, the union consistently fails due to the man's inability to keep his word, which in some stories is shown to amount to his

sexual betrayal. When the wife is instead an “animal bride” transformed fully into a human, the marriage fails because her domestication as a human wife and mother does not succeed in eradicating her ties with her water kin, or her desire to be in her own skin and element. While these tales have in the past often cautioned men not to marry an outsider, they also may be read as narratives of violence against women, in which the mer-wife must be considered the victim of an abduction.

In the final most common plot—a reversal of the second—mermaids, mermen, and water spirits are the active protagonists of tales about humans being held captive underwater. In some cases, the water being's taking hold of a young human is the outcome of a parent's binding words, a curse, or a promise; in others, it happens by chance. Regardless of the action's premise, sympathies do not lie with the captors, even if they are owed a human's life. Demonlike, they cannot be trusted and act stealthily; their hybrid bodies and the fluid ways in which they move in and out of the water are interpreted as duplicity. In most of these captivity tales, nothing is said of the human's experience with the merbeing. When dwelling with the mermaid symbolizes the sexual bewitchment of a forbidden liaison or an extramarital affair, the experience is conveyed as the man's disappearance from the human world—the only proper social world—into an abyss that is not described. This silence in the narrative furthers the perception of the captivating mermaid as monstrous.

In European traditions, the focus in all of these common plots is on the relationship between a human and a (somewhat unsettling) water being, with an emphasis on the human's desire and well-being. In other words, regardless of who has more or less agency in the stories, the merbeing's perspective is rarely presented and instead basically assumed: this is what “they” do, and we do not understand it. These narratives, then, reflect an anthropocentric view of the world and universe, in which humans hold a place of honor in a hierarchy of beings. In most cases, the framework is strongly patriarchal, and in some, it is also heavily Christianized, so that the (water) serpent is reduced to a demonic symbol of evil.

When investigating water spirits from societies that hold an animistic or all-animate view of the world, on the other hand, it is important to keep water's life-giving and death-dealing properties in mind, because as a collective these water spirits embody most, if not all, of water's attributes. Hawaiian stories about romances between female *mo'o*—Hawaiian reptilian water deities—and human males offer a glimpse into this worldview. Just as sirens and mermaids are notorious for their seductive songs that drive sailors mad with longing, *mo'o* are renowned for their loveliness. Significantly, there are no tales of men who try to tame their *mo'o* partners, because the *mo'o*, like the features of water they embody, cannot be contained or domesticated. Thus, the confluence of anthropocentrism and misogyny often found in the European tales is absent. The *mo'o* is, as in European tales, the ultimate dangerous but desirable other, and stories about *mo'o* seducing men are cautionary tales. But these accounts warn men to control their desires, to keep their wits about them in the presence of a "supernatural" beauty that represents, at the same time, the power of nature. Rather than cautioning men against the dangerous power of powerful female beings in the European tales, these tales enjoin respect for nonhuman life and divine power.

In other cases, stories are not concerned with sexual or romantic human–water spirit relations at all, but are transformation narratives in which a human becomes a water spirit as a punishment or as the result of love, or because a powerful water spirit wishes to have more helpers. And in other narratives, such as the Native American tale "The Woman Who Married the Merman," the significant interaction is between family members across species: the woman who is turning into a whale and her human brothers, whom she wants to support with food in exchange for arrows. In all of these tales, our place as humans in the world is negotiated within a set of social relations that are not limited to sexual or gendered dynamics, and encourage reciprocity and humility when interacting with other species and nature.

Water spirits, like water, are powerful, unpredictable, and

awe inspiring—that is, both terrifying and wonderful. In stories across cultures, they may seduce, punish, or reward humans, though their actions are ultimately outside of human grasp. Like water, they are shape-shifters that resist being contained.

### Mermaids Among Us Today

Cultural assumptions and beliefs about who and what we as humans are, should not be, and could be—or what our place might be in relation to other humans as well as nonhuman animate beings—are presented, tested, and transformed in these stories. So it is not surprising that reimagining mermaids and water spirits more generally is a global and vibrant phenomenon in contemporary culture. In the late twentieth century, riding the second wave of Western feminism, Andersen's Little Mermaid became Disney's Ariel, and her voice and songs memorably asserted her double betweenness as an adolescent mermaid. The much-anticipated twenty-first-century Disney live-action remake has other cultural waves and currents with which to contend. Nowadays, we find in North America alone thousands of professional mermaids as well as women and men mermaiding (i.e., wearing a monofin or costume mermaid tail to perform, swim, be photographed, have fun), and academia as well as popular culture is contributing to what some have called a "mermaid economy."<sup>14</sup>

This contemporary fascination with mermaids is not new, and the stories selected for this book suggest the range and depth of the ways in which this preoccupation has been adapted from folklore and religion for various artistic and entertainment media. However, the increased popularity of Coney Island's Mermaid Parade,<sup>15</sup> of the March of Mermaids in Brighton, England, of mermaid Halloween costumes, of celebrities wearing mermaid fashion, and of mermaid blogs focusing on spirituality, conservation, and mermaiding, all attest to the fact that these new embodiments of our fascination with

mermaids breathe new life and possibilities into the stories. The reimagined figure of the mermaid resonates for many today as fluid feminine self-possession or playful queerness. If the mermaid's overstepping the boundaries of gender or sexual propriety is transgressive, it is embraced as such, and not punished. And the exposure to new currents across cultures promises further unpredictable shape-shifting.

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### Notes

1. From Mark Twain's "The Lorelei" in *A Tramp Abroad* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1880), chapter XVI. There are variant spellings in German (*Lore Lay, Lore-Ley, Loreley*) and English (Lorelei, sometimes Loreley). We will consistently refer to this mermaid as Lorelei.
2. This is in the ballad by German Romantic Clemens Brentano, thanks to whom Lorelei's tale came into being just a couple of decades before Heine's poem was published.
3. The legend of Lorelei is now part of a local tourist attraction on the Rhine, but it also has its own resonant echo in globalized popular culture—as seen in "The Lorelei Signal," an episode from the first season of *Star Trek: The Animated Series* (1973). In this episode, Captain Kirk and the other male members of the *Enterprise's* crew are attracted by a mysterious signal to a planet where they are held captive by a group of women who keep them under their spell in order to take over the men's life energy. Notably, the *Star Trek* enchantresses stand on two legs, but then nothing is said in Heine's poem about whether Lorelei has a fishtail.
4. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 4.
5. These passages—one from Heraclitus in approximately the third century BCE and the other from "Servius's commentary on Vergil, compiled soon after 400 CE"—are quoted in Leofranc Holford-Strevens's "Sirens in Antiquity and the Middle Ages," in *Music of the Sirens* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 24.
6. Tara E. Pederson, *Mermaids and the Production of Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 25.
7. Misty Urban, "How the Dragon Ate the Woman: The Fate of Melusine in English," in *Melusine's Footprint*, eds. Misty Urban, Deva Kemmis and Melissa Ridley Elmes (Leiden, Germany, and Boston: Brill, 2017), 368–87.
8. See Frederika Bain, "The Tail of Melusine: Hybridity, Mutability, and the Accessible Other," in *Melusine's Footprint*, 17–35.
9. See Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (1855 English-language edition) as well as John Cherry's *Mythical Beasts* (1995) and Arthur Waugh's "The Folklore of the Merfolk" (1960).
10. See Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), Lianne Simpson's *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), and Marie Alohalani Brown, *Facing the Spears of Change: The Life and Legacy of John Papa 'Ūi* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 15–20, 27–29. Examples of how history and belief are conveyed through wonder abound in the "Merfolk and Water Spirits Across the Globe" section of this book, and the discussion of *mo'olelo* as a genre that straddles the belief/fiction distinction in Hawaiian culture furthers this point.
11. Strikingly, Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," currently the most popular mermaid tale, elaborates the interspecies sighting in a romantic way that does not fit either of the other two scenarios.
12. Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," in *Professing in the Contact Zone: Bringing Theory and Practice Together*, ed. Janice M. Wolff (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2002), 4.
13. William A. Lessa, *Tales from Ulithi Atoll: A Comparative Study of Oceanic Folklore* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).
14. Elizabeth Segran, "Inside the Mermaid Economy," *Fast Company*, September 9, 2015, [www.fastcompany.com/3050847/inside-the-mermaid-economy-2](http://www.fastcompany.com/3050847/inside-the-mermaid-economy-2). Segran notes: "If you're suddenly seeing fish tails everywhere, you're not imagining things."

15. Information about the parade on the Coney Island USA website reads: "The MERMAID PARADE specifically was founded in 1983 with 3 goals: it brings mythology to life for local residents who live on streets named Mermaid and Neptune; it creates self-esteem in a district that is often disregarded as 'entertainment'; and it lets artistic New Yorkers find self-expression in public," [www.coneyisland.com/mermaid-parade-faq](http://www.coneyisland.com/mermaid-parade-faq).

## Suggestions for Further Reading

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