Medieval Mermaids

Being studied today is how mermaids have changed over the years from medieval times to modern times and how this affects their mythology.

Melusine was the first medieval recorded mermaid. She was described as a wise queen who was also cursed to live the life of a half serpent on Saturdays. Mermaids in Greek mythology have been depicted as part fish part woman creatures who lounge on rocks combing their hair and doting on their beauty. This is in stark contrast to the mermaids what we know of today through movies and tv series. When did the depiction of mermaid's change? Has this affected their mythology?

Mermaids have been known in the modern world as creatures who lure men to their death through songs of seduction. A good example of the most recent take of mermaids is in Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides. Mermaids didn't come about in any mythology until Melusine in the 14th century. Before mermaids were Sirens. These were seen in Greek mythology as being part bird part woman and they would use their songs to lure men to their death at sea. They were specifically seen in the Odyssey. Different mythologies have their own take on mermaids as well such as Russians have the Rusalki who are women cast out the night of their marriage into the sea where they are transformed into mermaids, and the Mesopotamians have Kuliltu meaning "fish woman". There are also Selkies or Seal Women from Norse and Celtic mythology. These women would have the ability to transform into seals with a seal skin that if taken the woman would have to marry the person who took their skin to get it back. Times didn't start to change for mermaids becoming a mixed mythology of Siren and Mermaid till Disney's "the Little Mermaid" and in Syria woman would use mermaid themed jewelry to symbolize "independence, freedom and rebellion".

Because of Disney's retelling of mermaids into a mythological hybrid of a siren and a mermaid, society now views mermaids as having the ability to sing and lure men to their death bringing about their "darker nature" that most people are familiar with today.

Brown, G. M. (2021). The Selkie folk of orkney folklore. Retrieved April 08, 2021, from http://www.orkneyjar.com/folklore/selkiefolk/
C. (Director). (2017, October 1). *Pirates of the caribbean the mermaid scene full hd* [Video file]. Retrieved April 06, 2021, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zE4t6zomPPQ
Kotarbinski, W. (2015, August 03). Water Nymph [Digital image]. Retrieved April 07, 2021, from https://symbolreader.net/2015/08/03/rusalki-the-slavic-nymphs/
Nodot, F. (1698). Histoire de Melusine [Digital image]. Retrieved April 05, 2021, from http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/rbc/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Melusine.jpg
O'Donnell, S. (2018, August 06). The myths of The Mermaid: A guide. Retrieved April 08, 2021, from https://www.alexandani.com/blogs/the-wire/magic-and-myths-of-the-mermaid
Pavlova, Y. (2017, March 17). Screen sirens: Why do mermaids keep surfacing in the films of the New east? Retrieved April 08, 2021, from https://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/7933/screen-sirens-mermaids-surfacing-films-new-east