

XII

De Ulixi et Sirenibus

Ubi Ulixes insulae Sirenum appropinquavit, divinae illae virgines in litore, quod mira copia florum vestitum erat, sic cantabant: "Naviga huc, Ulixes, clarissime rex, cuius laude terrae et maria completa sunt. Carmina nostra sunt dulciora quam mel. Omnes curae etiamsi gravissimae sint, leniuntur carminibus nostris. Advola: invitamus et rogamus te. Nos omnia scimus. Audies de laboribus periculisque belli Troiani; cantabimus de incendio Troiae, quo illi labores finiti sunt. Oboedi et audi, ut omnes nautae nobis oboediebant." Sic Sirenes cantabant.

De Ulixi et Sirenibus

Vocabulary

Ulixēs, is/ī, m	the Latin name for Odysseus, Engl. Ulysses, the second best hero after Achilles among the Greeks in the Trojan war, king of Ithaca. He was the son of Laertes and Anticlea (according to later tradition: of Sisyphos), husband of Penelope, father of Telemachos and Telegonos. He was known for his wit and eloquence. He went with 12 ships against Troy, and it took him ten years to find his way back to Ithaca. The famous Trojan Horse (not mentioned in the Iliad) was his idea.
īnsula, ae, f	island
Sīrēn, ēnis/ēnos, f	Gk. Σειρήν, a Siren. The Sirens were mythical birds with virgins' faces, who enticed sailors by sweet songs and then destroyed them.
appropinquō 1 (+dat.)	to approach, to draw near
dīvīnus 3	divine; excellent
ille, a, ud, -īus	he, she, it; that, the well-known, the former
mīrus 3	wonderful, amazing, astonishing
cōpia ae f	abundance, plenty; riches
flōs, flōris, m	flower, blossom
vestiō, 4, īvī/īī, ītus	to dress, to clothe; to cover
hūc	hither, to this place
clārissimus 3	(superlative of clarus)
clārus 3	clear, bright; illustrious, famous
laus, laudis, f	praise, glory, excellence
mare, is, n	sea
compleō, 2, ēvī, ētus (+acc. +abl.)	to fill (up), to complete
carmen, carminis, n	song, poem, magic formula ¹
dulciōra	(comparative of dulcis)
dulcis, e	sweet, pleasant, charming
quam	than (in comparative usage)

1. . *Carmen* was traditionally compared to Greek κῆρυξ, and further to Skt. *carkarti* 'mentions praising'. Recently, by Beekes and others, this comparison has been challenged. More research is needed.

mel, mellis, n
 cūra, ae, f
 etiamsī (+ind./coni.)
 gravissimus 3
 gravis, e
 lēniō, 4, īvī /iī, ītus
 advolō 1
 invītō 1
 sciō, 4, īvī/iī, ītus
 labor, ōris, m
 perīculum, ī, n
 incendium, ī, n
 Trōia, ae, f
 fīniō, 4, īvī/iī, ītus
 ut

honey
 sorrow, anxiety, trouble
 even if
 (superlative of gravis)
 heavy, difficult, serious
 to mitigate, to ease
 to fly to, to hasten towards
 to invite, to incite
 to know (of)
 hardship, distress, toil
 trial, danger
 fire
 Troy
 to end, to finish
 as, like

De Ulixi et Sirenibus

A bridge to Italian

Ulixēs, is/ī, m	Ulisse
īnsula, ae, f	isola
Sīrēn, ēnis/ēnos, f	sirena
appropinquō 1 (+dat.)	appropinquare, appropinquarsi
dīvīnus 3	divino
ille, a, ud	il, la, lo
mīrus 3	miro
cōpia ae f	copia
flōs, flōris, m	fiore
vestiō, 4, īvī/īī, ītus	vestire
clārus 3	chiaro
laus, laudis, f	lode
mare, is, n	mare
compleō, 2, ēvī, ētus (+acc. +abl.)	compiere, compire
carmen, carminis, n	carne (letterario)
dulcis, e	dolce
mel, mellis, n	miele
cūra, ae, f	cura
gravis, e	grave
lēniō, 4, īvī/īī, ītus	lenire
invītō 1	invitare
sciō, 4, īvī/īī, ītus	sciente, scienza
labor, ōris, m	lavoro
perīculum, ī, n	pericolo
incendium, ī, n	incendio
Trōia, ae, f	Troia
fīniō, 4, īvī/īī, ītus	finire

De Ulixi et Sirenibus

Grammar

Morphology:

Declension of Ulixes:

	Ulixes
	Ulixem/-en
	Ulixis/-i
	Ulixei
	Ulixi
Voc.	Ulixi/Ulixis/Ulixes

Declension of Siren (Gk. Σειρήν)²:

Siren	Sirenes
Sirenem	Sirenes
Sirenis/-os	Sirenum
Sireni	Sirenibus
Sireni	Sirenibus

Personal pronouns (pronomina personalia)³:

ēgō	tū	is	ea	id
mē	tē	eum	eam	id
meī ⁴	tuī	ēius	ēius	ēius
mihi	tibi	eī	eī	eī
(ā) mē	(ā) tē	eō	eā	eō

2. . The word usually is written with capital initial. There exists also plural because the Sirens usually appear as *two* young maids.

3. . The 3rd person pronouns (is ea id etc.) are also called *pronomina determinativa*.

4. . This is the genitive case of the personal pronoun, not to be confused with the respective possessive pronoun. An example from poetry is: "parte meliore mei" ('with the better part/side of my person/my self'). The case in the 3rd person is similar: eius and eorum. They are used when the subject and the possessor are not identical. E.g. mater filiam eius laudat 'the mother praises his/her (another person's) daughter'.

nōs	vōs	iī/eī	eae	ea
nōs	vōs	eōs	eās	ea
nostrī/nostrum ⁵	vestrī/vestrum	eōrum	eārum	eōrum
nōbis	vōbis	iīs/eīs	iīs/eīs	iīs/eīs
(ā) nōbis	(ā) vōbis	iīs/eīs	iīs/eīs	iīs/eīs

We met “mecum” (‘with me’) and “tecum” (‘with you), in syntax as *ablativus sociativus* in Lesson V. The forms are:

mecum	nobiscum
tecum	vobiscum
secum / cum eo	secum / cum eis

Possessive pronouns:

Pronomen possessivum: meus, -a, -um etc. Each pronoun receives the appropriate endings in the given contexts. Eius and eorum have been taken from the genitive cases of the *personal pronouns* and do not change. Etymologically *suus* belongs to sē (‘him[self]’, ‘her[self]’ etc.) to which a clear parallel is Russian свой (svoj) meaning ‘his [own]’, ‘her [own]’ etc. Several rarely used Greek pronouns (σφεῖς, ἑ) etc. are related. Greek Φός, ἑός originate in *swos, *sewos, to which Skt. svá is a parallel, together with Lat. *suus* (see DELG 307).

meus	noster
tuus	vester
suus / eius	suus / eorum

5. . Except for the rare cases when a word governs genitive, the translation of “nostri”, “nostrum” is approximately ‘after/about us’ for the first, and ‘(from) among us’ for the second. “Vestri”, “vestrum” are similar.

Comparison of adjectives: comparatio

1. gradus positivus	–	positive (degree)
carus, -a, -um		‘dear, precious’
2. gradus comparativus	–	comparative (degree)
carior, carius		‘dearer’, ‘more precious’
3. gradus superlativus	–	superlative (degree)
carissimus, -a, -um		‘dearest’, ‘most precious’

In comparative degree the adjectives follow the third declination:

carior:

carior	carior	carius ⁶	cariores	cariores	cariora
cariorem	cariorem	carius	cariores	cariores	cariora
carioris	carioris	carioris	cariorum	cariorum	cariorum
cariori	cariori	cariori	carioribus	carioribus	carioribus
cariore ⁷	cariore	cariore	carioribus	carioribus	carioribus

One means of comparison is with *quam*:

Carmina nostra sunt dulciora quam mel.

Superlative:

The usual ending is –issimus the declension of which is regular:

"Naviga huc, Ulixes, clarissime rex" (vocatives).

Exceptions will follow later.

6. . The ending –us is neutral.

7. . Normally, the ending is –e, but in some cases –i appears: a priori, a posteriori.

Imperative:

We have seen the whole system of imperative for the 1st conjugation in active voice in Lesson 4.

In this lesson “oboedi”, “audi” are more imperatives together with “advola”.

The imperative for all four conjugations in active and passive voice under exclusion of the deponent verbs:

I.		act.		pass.	
	Imp. I.	ama amate		amare amamini	
	Imp. II.	amato amato	amatote amanto	amator amator	----- amantor
II.		act.		pass.	
	Imp. I.	dele delete		delere delemini	
	Imp. II.	deleto deleto	deletote delento	deletor deletor	----- delentor
III.		act.		pass.	
	Imp. I.	age agite		agere agimini	
	Imp. II.	agito agito	agitote agunto	agitor agitor	----- aguntor
IV.		act.		pass.	
	Imp. I.	audi audite		audire audimini	
	Imp. II.	audito audito	auditote audiunto	auditor auditor	----- audiuntor

The imperative (active voice, 2nd person) of dico, facio, fero, eo, duco (partly anomalous verbs) is:

dico: dic

facio: fac

fero: fer

eo: i

duco: duc.

Imperative of sum:

Imp. I:	I.2.	es
	II.2:	este

Imp. II:	I.2.	esto	II.2.	estote
	I.3.	esto	II.3.	sunto

Syntax: concessive clauses

“Omnes curae etiāmsi gravissimae sint” – this sentence has the particle (conjunction) *etiāmsi* meaning ‘even if’.

Etiāmsi contains “*sī*” ‘if’, and its use, in general lines, takes the same cases of “*si*” in conditional clauses. *Etiāmsi* can stand with indicative if introduces a statement of fact (certainty), and if less vivid (uncertainty), is constructed with subjunctive. The personal deliberation of the writer may be operative.

Examples:

With indicative: *Ista veritas etiāmsi iucunda non est, mihi tamen grata est* ‘Though not pleasant, that frankness is still precious for me’.

With subjunctive: *Etiam si (=etiāmsi) quod scribas non habebis, scribito tamen.* ‘Even if you [shall] have nothing to write, still write’.

Other concessive conjunctions to be dealt with in detail later are:

quamquam:	with indicative,
etsi, tametsi (together with <i>etiāmsi</i>):	with indicative or subjunctive
quamvis, licet, ut, cum:	with subjunctive

Some of these conjunctions have also other syntactic functions.

Ablativus copiae and inopiae:

In the sentence “*cuius laude terrae et maria completa sunt*” “*laude*” is ablative and stands governed by “*completa*”. In traditional grammar, this instance is called *ablativus copiae and inopiae* (ablative of abundance and want, *ablativus copiae*, *abl. copiae* for short). It is used with verbs like *compleo*, *expleo* (‘to fill up’, ‘to complete’) and *careo*, *egeo*, *vaco* (‘to be without’, ‘to want’, ‘to be devoid of’).

Traditionally, the frequent construction *opus est* + abl. (‘it is needful/necessary’, ‘is needed’) is categorized under *abl. copiae*:

Non verbis sed factis opus est ‘not words but deeds are needed’.

Ablativus copiae corresponds to Greek genitivus copiae (and inopiae) which is found with adjectives and verbs like πλήρης ('full of') and δεῖ ('needed', 'necessary') like in the sentence: δεῖ δὲ χρημάτων 'there is need of money', 'you need money'.

In a further refinement, *copiae* appears to be akin to *ablativus limitativus*, and *inopiae* to *sēparatiōnis*, for which see later.

An example from poetry:

"nil opus est" dixit certamine Romulus "ullo:
magna fides avium est, experiamur aves" (Ov. Fasti IV 814–5).

'Romulus said, "There needs no contest. Great faith is put in birds.
Let's try the birds" ' (Loeb Edition).

A short survey of pronouns – Review and Systematization:

Pronomen personale + pronomen determinativum – personal and qualifying pronouns

egō	tū	is	ea	id ⁸
mē	tē	eum	eam	id
meī ⁹	tuī ¹⁰	ēius	ēius	ēius
mihi	tibi	eī	eī	eī
(ā) mē	(ā) tē	eō	eā	eō
nōs	vōs	īī/eī	eae	ea
nōs	vōs	eōs	eās	ea
nostrī ¹¹ /nostrum ¹²	vestrī/vestrum ¹³	eōrum	eārum	eōrum
nōbis	vōbis	īīs/eīs	īīs/eīs	īīs/eīs
(ā) nōbis	(ā) vōbis	īīs/eīs	īīs/eīs	īīs/eīs

Pronomen reflexivum, reflexive pronouns, sg.–pl.:

–		Nominative does not exist (cf. <i>ipse</i>)	
sē			
suī		Cf. <i>potēns suī</i> ‘able to control oneself’, ‘one’s own master’	
sibi			
(ā) sē			

8. . Personal pronouns for the third person (like *he she it*, or *er sie es* in German and other modern languages) are somewhat unusual in Latin and Greek. Indeed, even in Modern Greek, “he, she, it”, if used in presence of the named person, are understood as *impolite*. For this reason, and also because of semantic overlappings, these pronouns are also called *pronomina determinativa* (‘marking’, ‘qualifying’, ‘designating pronouns’).

Like *is ea id* are declined *īdem*, *eadem*, *īdem* (‘this/that/the same’, ‘identical (with that previously mentioned)’), and *ipse*, *ipsa*, *ipsum* (‘him/her/itself’ etc., ‘for his/her etc. part’, ≈ ‘in person’, ‘the actual him/herself etc.’; and also in cases where *sē* is ambiguous or impossible), partly similarly. To *īdem* cf. Skt. *idām*. See *īdem* separately.

9. . This is the *genitive case* of the personal pronomen “ego”, rare in Latin, since prepositions rarely govern, unlike Greek or Russian, genitive. Another issue is if, sometimes, this form serves as possessive pronoun. A good example from literature is the *Peroratio* (the end) of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: “parte [...] meliore mei super alta perennis | astra ferar [...]” (‘[...] my better part I shall be borne immortal far beyond the lofty stars’, Book XV, 875–6, Loeb Edition, by Frank Justus Miller). Here, *mei* is *not* possessive pronoun which would be *meā*, and is to be understood as “(a) part (=piece) from me”. In *translation*, still, “my (better) part” is acceptable.

10. . See *meī*.

11. . See the previous footnotes. “*Nostrī*” would mean, if independent, something like ‘with regard to us’, ‘about us’.

12. . “*Nostrum*” means ‘from among us’. Again, this *nostrum* is not to be confused with the neuter form of the possessive pronoun: “*Mare nostrum*” (‘Our sea’ = the Mediterranean Sea).

13. . Cf. *nostrī/nostrum*.

Pronomen possessivum – possessive pronouns:

meus, -a, -um	declined like adjectives
tuus, -a, -um	
suus, -a, -um	cf. ēius

noster, nostra, nostrum	
vester, vestra, vestrum	
suus, -a, -um	eōrum

Pronomen demonstrativum – demonstrative pronouns:

hic, haec, hoc 'this (here)',
 iste, ista, istud 'that (by you)',
 ille, illa, illud 'that (there)/ by him'

hic	haec	hoc	ille	illa	illud
hunc	hanc	hoc	illum	illam	illud
hūius	hūius	hūius	illīus	illīus	illīus
huic	huic	huic	illī	illī	illī
hōc	hāc	hōc	illō	illā	illō
hī	hae	haec	illī	illae	illa
hōs	hās	haec	illōs	illās	illōs
hōrum	hārum	hōrum	illōrum	illārum	illōrum
hīs	hīs	hīs	illīs	illīs	illīs
hīs	hīs	hīs	illīs	illīs	illīs

iste, ista, istud follows ille, illa, illud:

iste	ista	istud	istī	istae	ista
istum	istam	istud	istōs	istās	ista
istīus	istīus	istīus	istōrum	istārum	istōrum
istī	istī	istī	istīs	istīs	istīs
istō	istā	istō	istīs	istīs	istīs

Īdem eadem idem ‘the same’ (*is* etc. + *-dem*) is similar to *is ea id*, and is called also pronomen determinativum:

īdem	eadem	idem
eundem	eandem	idem
ēiusdem	ēiusdem	ēiusdem
eīdem	eīdem	eīdem
eōdem	eādem	eōdem
īīdem	eaedem	eadem
eōsdem	eāsdem	eadem
eōrundem	eārundem	eōrundem
īīsdem/eīsdem	īīsdem/eīsdem	īīsdem/eīsdem
īīsdem/eīsdem	īīsdem/eīsdem	īīsdem/eīsdem

ipse, ipsa, ipsum ‘himself’, ‘he himself’ etc.:

ipse	ipsa	ipsum
ipsum	ipsam	ipsum
ipsīus	ipsīus	ipsīus
ipsī	ipsī	ipsī
ipsō	ipsā	ipsō
ipsī	ipsae	ipsa
ipsōs	ipsās	ipsōs
ipsōrum	ipsārum	ipsōrum
ipsīs	ipsīs	ipsīs
ipsīs	ipsīs	ipsīs

pronomen relativum – relative pronouns:

quī	quae	quod	quī	quae	quae
quem	quam	quod	quōs	quās	quae
cūius	cūius	cūius	quōrum	quārum	quōrum
cuī	cuī	cuī	quibus	quibus	quibus
quō	quā	quo	quibus	quibus	quibus

Pronomen interrogativum – interrogative pronouns:

quis	quid
quem	quid
cūius	cūius
cuī	cuī
quō	quō

Pronomen indefinitum – indefinite pronouns:

aliquis, aliquid ‘someone’, ‘something’ + a number of other forms with quis/quid, follow the above paradigm (quis, quid; and for the oblique cases those of quī, quae, quod).

alius, alia, aliud¹⁴ ‘other’, ‘different’:

alius	alia	aliud
aliū	aliā	aliud
aliī/alīus/alterīus	aliae/alīus/alterīus	aliī/alīus/alterīus
aliī/aliō	aliī/aliae	aliī/aliō
aliō	aliā	aliō
aliī	aliae	alia
aliōs	aliās	alia
aliōrum	aliārum	aliōrum
aliīs/alīs	aliīs/alīs	aliīs/alīs
aliīs/alīs	aliīs/alīs	aliīs/alīs

(Some of these forms are rare or poetic).

14. . Cf. to this Greek ἄλλος (<*aljos) with assimilation.

De Ulixi et Sirenibus

Loquamur Latine!

Censor et Aulus

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---------------------------------------|
| C. | Quod nomen tibi est? | A. | Nomen mihi est Aulus Gabinius Macer. |
| C. | Esne tu maritus an caelebs? | A. | Maritus sum. Habeo uxorem. |
| C. | Esne tu paterfamilias? | A. | Ita. |
| C. | Quod nomen est uxori? | A. | Nomen uxori est Sulpicia. |
| C. | Habesne liberos? | A. | Habeo. |
| C. | Quot liberos habes? | A. | Duos filios et unam filiam. |
| C. | Habesne fratres sororesve? | A. | Unum fratrem et unam sororem habeo. |
| C. | Habesne alios cognatos? | A. | Unum avunculum et tres amitas. |
| C. | Vivuntne adhuc parentes tui? | A. | Sane. |
| C. | Quis domi tuae habitat? | A. | Uxor et liberi et eorum avus aviaque. |
| C. | Mea sententia, habes familiam admirabilem. | A. | Sic ego quoque puto. |

avunculus
amita

maternal uncle, a mother's brother
paternal aunt, a father's sister

De Ulixi et Sirenibus

Exercises

Translate:

Ulysses and his companions were drawing near to the island of the Sirens. These divine virgins were very dangerous for the sailors. With their songs they captivated and killed everybody. The Sirens allured Ulysses in this way: "Come, brave Ulysses, we beg you, we know everything. Our songs which you'll hear are sweeter than honey. With this, your anguish will be calmed down. You will hear about the Trojan War and the great fire with which all the suffering came to an end".

Words:

companion	comes, itis, m/f
draw near to	appropinquō, 1 + dat.
dangerous	periculōsus + dat., perniciosus + dat.
captivate	capiō, 3, cēpī, captus
kill	necō, 1
allure	alliciō, 3, lēxī, lectus
brave	fortis, e
come	veniō, 4, vēnī, ventus

Pronomina personalia:

How are the genitive cases of "I", "you" etc.?

Comparatio:

How are the three grades of the adjective *carus*?

What is *ablativus copiae/inopiae*?

De Ulixi et Sirenibus

Mythology

The Siren Vase in the British Museum

(The mistakes with the Greek words in the English text have been corrected)



The Siren Vase (Source: Public Domain, downloaded 28.7.2019)

Object type

stamnos

British Museum number

1843,1103.31

Title (object)

The Siren Vase

Description

Pottery: red-figured stamnos.

(a) The ship of Odysseus passing the Sirens. The sea is represented by a narrow space in the foreground shaded in thinned black, and with a wavy outline of the same colour. In this the ship moves to left, propelled by oars, of which six are seen on the port side; the heads and shoulders of five bearded rowers are visible above the gunwale; the fourth and fifth are seated on the same thwart: the stroke oar looks round to left at no. 2; the rowers of the second and fifth oars are not shown, and there is a seventh port near the bows which is not occupied by an oar. High up in the stern seat sits the steersman between the two steering-oars (πηδάλια, pl.), which work on cords attached to the ship's side; with his left hand he steers, his right is extended, and his mouth open, as if he were encouraging the rowers; he is bearded and has an himation around the lower part of his body. This figure and the first two rowers are wreathed, the other rowers have a fillet. Over the aphlaston (ἄφλαστον, τό) a fringed piece of drapery decorated with crosses is hung (as ensign or σημεῖον?). The fore part of the hull is formed like the snout of a boar, with a large eye of archaic form painted in black; above it is a raised platform or forecastle formed of crossed spars, which reaches to the mast. Near the top of the mast is the καρχήσιον, probably of metal, as it is shaded differently from the mast, with two projecting eyelet holes (τροχιλῖαι) in which the halyards (ἱμάντες) run. The yard, with sail attached to it by a rope (coloured brown), is hoisted to the top of the mast, in a position oblique to the keel, and is kept in position by two braces (ὑπεραι), of which one is attached at the bows, the other at the stern, immediately in front of the steersman. The sail is brailed up along its whole length, the brailing ropes (μηρύματα καλωδίων) indicated by brown lines here and there on the sail, and attached on deck within the steersman's reach. Odysseus, wreathed and bearded, is fastened against the bottom of the mast, facing the stern, with his arms behind his back lashed to it. His head is thrown back, looking upwards towards the Sirens. On each side of the scene a rocky promontory projects over the sea, with a Siren standing on the top. The Sirens are represented as birds with woman's heads, their hair looped up with a dotted stephane (στεφάνη), a single tress hanging beside the ear (parotis, παρωτίς): their lips are parted as though singing. The one on the left flaps her wings: over her is inscribed ΗΙΜΕΡΟΠΑ, Ἰμερόπα. The one on the right stands still with folded wings. In front of her a third Siren flings herself down from the edge of the cliff, and falls headlong with closed eyes, as though already dead.

(b) Three Erotes (Ἔρωτες) flying over the sea. The sea is represented as in a. The Erotes fly in single file to right, the foremost inscribed ΗΙΜΕΡΟΣ,

Ἰμερος, carrying in both hands a long taenia (ταινία) decorated with key pattern and fringed ends; he looks round at the others, who carry a long tendril and a hare respectively. Their type is that of a full-grown boy, with long hair coiled above the neck (cf. E67) and hanging over the ear, and a fillet. Beside each of the second and third figures is inscribed ΚΑΛΟΣ, καλός ('beautiful').

At the bottom of the foot an incised character.

Purple rigging of ship, wreaths, fillets, and inscriptions. Brown inner markings, shading of the sea and sails, gunwale of boat, feathers of Sirens, earth in b, pinions of wings, and skin of hare. Eye in archaic form (both angles slightly open). Each design is enclosed in a panel, formed by (below) sets of three maeanders separated by chequer squares, (above) tongue surmounting egg pattern, (at sides) net pattern. In b the design partly cuts and is partly cut by the border at the top.

Producer name

Attributed to: The Siren Painter

Culture/period

Attic

Date

480BC-470BC (circa)

Production place

Made in: Attica

(Greece)

Findspot

Excavated/Findspot: Vulci (said to be from)

(Italy,Lazio,Viterbo (province),Vulci)

Materials

pottery

Ware

Red figure

Technique

painted

Dimensions

Height: 34 centimetres

Width: 38 centimetres

Depth: 29 centimetres

Acquisition name

Purchased from: Alexandrine Bonaparte, Princess of Canino

Acquisition date

1843

Department

Greek & Roman Antiquities

Registration number

1843,1103.31

Though mythologically important, this side has not to do with sirens if not the wings? The symbolism (hare, tendril, taenia) is not expected.



Here follow scanned pictures (Tables II, III, XII and XIII) from K. Marót's *Die Anfänge der griechischen Literatur. Vorfragen* 1960 ('The Beginnings of the Greek Literature. Basic Issues 1960'). Clearly, the singing of the sirens had originally another function, and the Homeric tradition is a special case, kept however as an authoritative one due to the importance of the epic tradition.

Tafel II



Fliegende Sirene mit Lyra

K. Marót. Die Anfänge der
griechischen Literatur. Vorfragen.
1960.

Taf. II, III, XII, XIII.

Flying siren with lyre
(Table II)



Siren with lyre and a man listening to her
(Table III)



Tod der Prokris



Sirene

a, Death of Prokris (Table XII)

(We met Prokris in Lesson IX, in the Mythology section "Cephalus et Procris". Prokris' soul is leaving the body in the form of a bird that reminds of sirens)

b, Siren with wings and female head (Table XIII)

Encouraged by the article “Seirenes” (Hans von Geisau, in: *Der Kleine Pauly* 5, 1979: 79–80), that attributes to the shape of the sirens a wide mixture of traits (mermaids, sea demons, death demons, harpy-eagles [*Thrasaetus harpyia*], Aegean–Eastern origin considered), here is an idea by the present writer for one more possible source for the concept of the Sirens. The following are complemented from the respective Wikipedia–article and other online sources.

Depicted is a vulture or a griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) with headless figures on a wall painting. Such representations are frequent in Çatal Höyük. Be reminded that the Sirens in the Homeric tradition (cf. Odysseus–Ulysses returning from Troy) the Sirens killed those who were unthinking enough and landed on their island.

Çatalhöyük (Turkish pronunciation: [tʃaˈtaɦœjyc]; also *Çatal Höyük* and *Çatal Hüyük*; from [Turkish](#) *çatal* "fork" + *höyük* "[tumulus](#)") was a very large [Neolithic](#) and [Chalcolithic proto-city](#) settlement in southern [Anatolia](#), which existed from approximately 7500 BC to 5700 BC, and flourished around 7000 BC. In July 2012, it was inscribed as a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#).

Çatalhöyük is located overlooking the [Konya Plain](#), southeast of the present-day city of [Konya](#) (ancient [Iconium](#)) in [Turkey](#), approximately 140 km (87 mi) from the twin-coned volcano of [Mount Hasan](#). The eastern settlement forms a mound which would have risen about 20 m (66 ft) above the plain at the time of the latest Neolithic occupation. There is also a smaller settlement mound to the west and a [Byzantine](#) settlement a few hundred meters to the east. The prehistoric mound settlements were abandoned before the [Bronze Age](#). A channel of the [Çarşamba River](#) once flowed between the two mounds, and the settlement was built on [alluvial clay](#) which may have been favorable for early [agriculture](#).

The rooms were kept scrupulously clean. Archaeologists identified very little rubbish in the buildings, finding middens outside the ruins, with sewage and food waste, as well as significant amounts of ash from burning wood, reeds and animal dung. In good weather, many daily activities may also have taken place on the rooftops, which may have formed a plaza.

In a report in September 2009 on the discovery of around 2000 figurines Hodder is quoted as saying:

Çatalhöyük was excavated in the 1960s in a methodical way, but not using the full range of natural science techniques that are available to us today. Sir James Mellaart who excavated the site in the 1960s came up with all sorts of ideas about the way the site was organized and how it was lived in and so on ... We've now started working there since the mid 1990s and come up with very different ideas about the site. One of the most obvious examples of that is that Çatalhöyük is perhaps best known for the idea of the mother [goddess](#). But our work more recently has tended to show that in fact there is very little evidence of a mother goddess and very little evidence of some sort

of female-based matriarchy. That's just one of the many myths that the modern scientific work is undermining.

On the griffons' role the following can be stated (underlinings mine):

The tightly flexed burials at Çatalhöyük mean some sort of pre-processing of the corpse was done prior to burial. At the very least, because of rigor mortis (which would have prevented people from flexing the deceased's limbs), bodies were likely kept somewhere for a day or more. Vultures are very good at removing flesh and keeping ligaments and tendons intact. This would explain the fact that the skeletons at Çatalhöyük were connected anatomically rather than being just a pile of bones. Vulture excarnation would have reduced the odor of decay, which is important when burying the dead in a small, enclosed space under a house floor, such was common at the site. Wall paintings at Çatalhöyük include representations of vultures attacking headless bodies, and there are skulls of griffon vultures embedded in plaster walls in some of the houses. Other ancient Anatolian sites also appear to have vulture iconography. This strongly suggests some sort of symbolic relationship between the ancient culture and the vultures.



(Downloaded from the Public Domain, 6.9.2019)

As a curiosity, I have found Heinrich Heine's *Die Lorelei* (1822), having a similar topic, translated into Latin and English (downloaded from the site "ingeb.org", 7.9.2019). Here is the painting Loreley (=Lorelei) by the Austrian Eduard Jacob von Steinle (1810–1886); the three texts follow after:



Complementary remarks from the online source *myfairyland.jimdo.com*:

Who is Lorelei (sometimes Loreley)? Some say she is a mermaid, for some she is a nymph, for some a water spirit or siren. Lorelei is actually a huge rocky cliff (about 120 m above the level of the water) in Germany. It's placed on the left bank of Rhine and inspired one of the most popular legends in Germany.

Lorelei is actually a huge rocky cliff (about 120 m above the level of the water) in Germany. It's placed on the left bank of Rhine and inspired one of the most popular legends in Germany.

The meaning of the name Lorelei

Lorelei, sometimes spelled Lorelai, Lorelei or Loreley, is girl's name which can be literally translated as 'murmuring rock' or 'lurking rock' depending if we explain the first part of the name with 'lureln' or 'luren'. Probably best possible translation would be 'Temptress'.

[This explanation needs be verified. German has no verb *"luren" or *"lureln" and English 'lure" which might have been in play is a borrowing from French. Still, some older German forms (loden) as well as modern (ein)laden 'to invite' remind of the construction. A rhotacism d>r for the case would be possible but must be proved. "Water spirit" or "Siren" recall the Greek mythology. If the interpretation "Temptress" is correct, then the Lorelei is nothing less than the Siren is, "the ensnaring one", A.L.K.].

*Heinrich Heine, 1822
(1799-1856)*

1. Ich weiß nicht, was soll es
bedeuten,
Daß ich so traurig bin,
Ein Märchen aus uralten
Zeiten,
Das kommt mir nicht aus
dem Sinn.
Die Luft ist kühl und es
dunkelt,
Und ruhig fließt der Rhein;
Der Gipfel des Berges
funkelt,
Im Abendsonnenschein.
2. Die schönste Jungfrau
sitzet
Dort oben wunderbar,
Ihr gold'nes Geschmeide
blitzet,
Sie kämmt ihr goldenes
Haar,
Sie kämmt es mit goldenem
Kamme,
Und singt ein Lied dabei;
Das hat eine wundersame,
Gewalt'ge Melodei.
3. Den Schiffer im kleinen
Schiffe,
Ergreift es mit wildem Weh;
Er schaut nicht die
Felsenriffe,
Er schaut nur hinauf in die
Höh'.
Ich glaube, die Wellen
verschlingen
Am Ende Schiffer und
Kahn,
Und das hat mit ihrem
Singen,
Die Loreley getan.

1. Ignoro, quid id sibi velit,
Tristissimus cur sim,
Antiqui aevi fabellam
Cur saepe volverim.
Vesperascit et frigescit,
Et Rhenus leniter it,
Cacumen montis lucescit,
Dum Phoebus occidit.
2. Sedet in summo montis
Virgo pulcherrima,
Auro nitet gemma frontis,
Se pectit auricoma.
Aureolo pectine pectit,
Carmen canens procul,
Mirandum id habet modum
Nec non virilem simul.
3. In cymba navitam mille
Angores feri tenent,
Non videt scopulos ille,
Ocli non si sursum vident.
Opinor undas devorare
Nautam cum navicula,
Effecit solo canendo
Lurleia id dea.

Tr. Frank 1998

1. I cannot determine the
meaning
Of sorrow that fills my
breast:
A fable of old, through it
streaming,
Allows my mind no rest.
The air is cool in the
gloaming
And gently flows the Rhine.
The crest of the mountain is
gleaming
In fading rays of sunshine.
2. The loveliest maiden is
sitting
Up there, so wondrously
fair;
Her golden jewelry is
glit'ning;
She combs her golden hair.
She combs with a gilded
comb, preening,
And sings a song, passing
time.
It has a most wondrous,
appealing
And pow'rful melodic
rhyme.
3. The boatman aboard his
small skiff, -
Enraptured with a wild ache,
Has no eye for the jagged
cliff, -
His thoughts on the heights
fear forsake.
I think that the waves will
devour
Both boat and man, by and
by,
And that, with her dulcet-
voiced power
Was done by the Loreley.

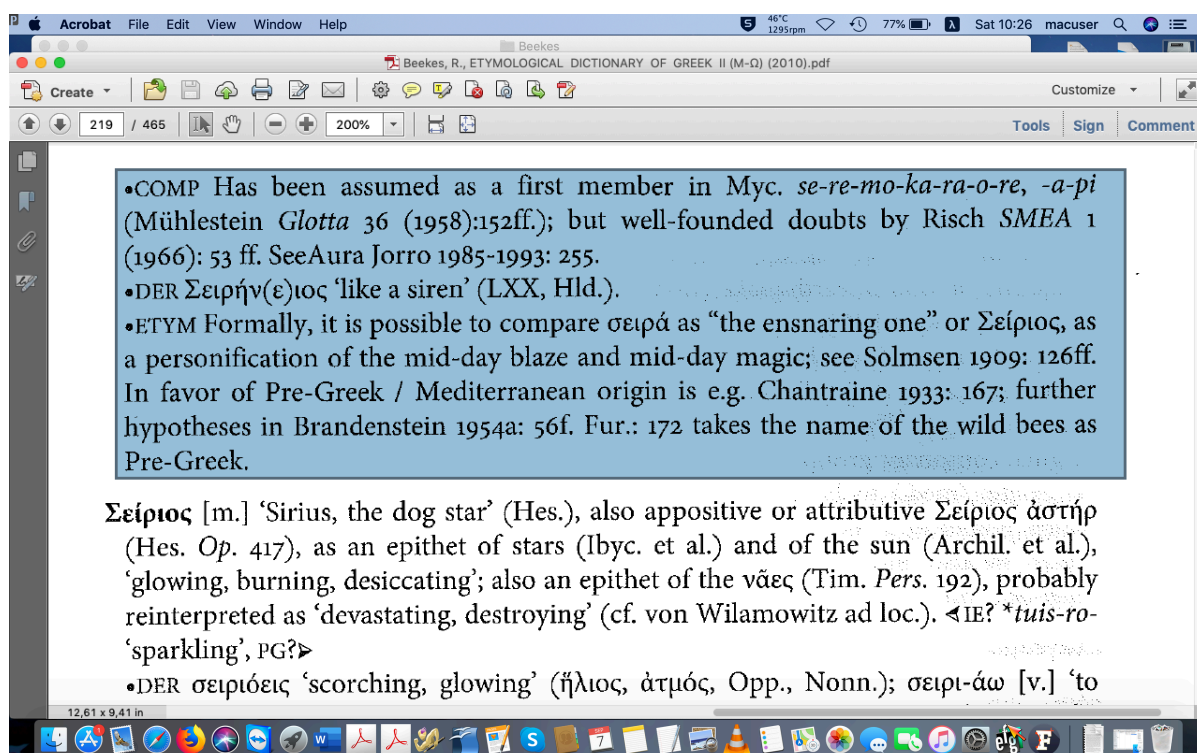
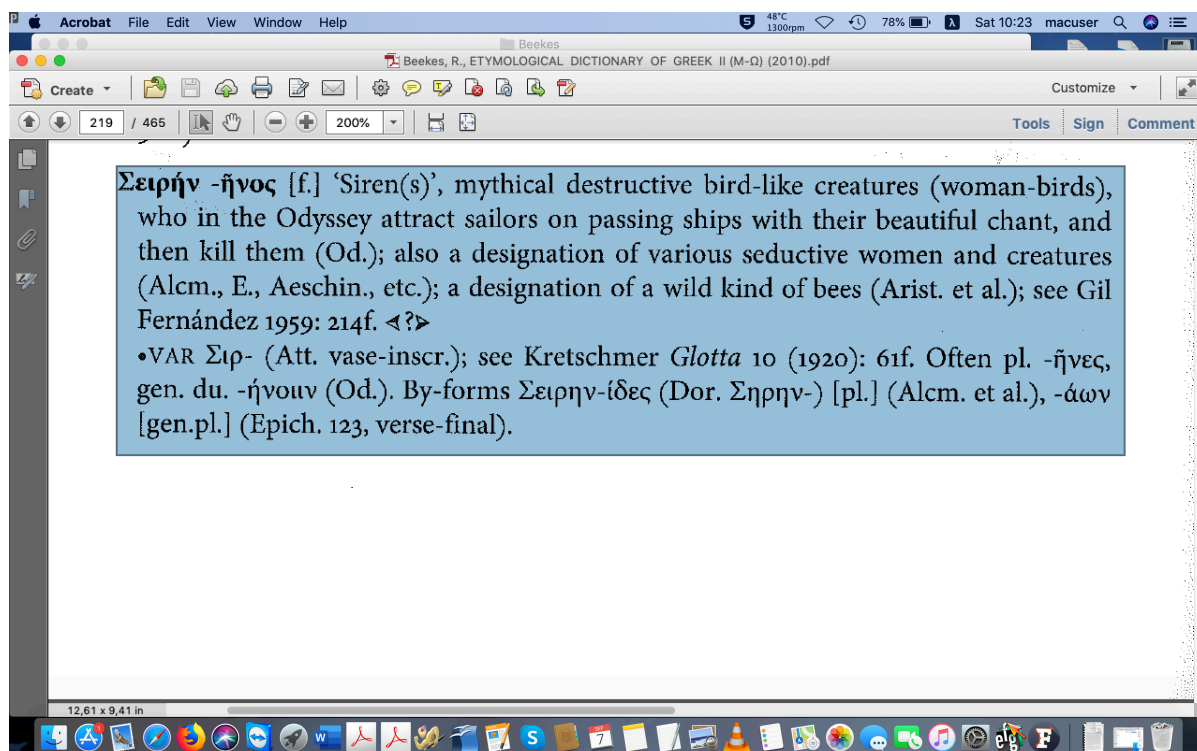
A different understanding of Siren by John William Waterhouse (1849–1917);
a piece of Victorian Art:



(Downloaded from the Public Domain, 6.9.2019)

Etymology of the name

This is what Beekes II 2010 1316–1317 writes:



Traditionally, the word is connected to σείρά the original meaning of which is ‘cord’, ‘rope’, ‘snare’, ‘lasso’ (see Beekes *ibid.*). The interpretation as “the ensnaring one” is plausible, but it is not exact what Beekes writes, viz. that the meaning ‘line’, ‘row’ is late (see LSJ s.v.). Certainly however, what survives until today is the second meaning, i.e. ‘line’ or ‘row’.

An interlacement of meanings is well possible given that the Greeks – without linguistic foundations in the modern sense – were keen on semantic couplings based on superficial coincidences or similarities (a practice ridiculed already by Aristophanes).

The semantics, then, would be that 1, the ‘cords’ can be a dangerous trap, but 2, the ‘cords’ can have also “sounds” (=beautiful tunes’) which, in turn, are either attractive and delightful only, or – secondarily – also a vile entrapping.

The classical pronunciation of the word was [se:‘rɛ:n], the post-classical one [si:‘rɛ:n] which gradually arrived at [i] in both cases. Latin preserves this pronunciation whereas today the word is pronounced with two [i]s.

Σείρά itself has a convincing IE etymology and leads ultimately to Sanskrit *dhur-* ‘yoke’, ‘pole of a carriage’ (for details see Beekes s.v.) [A.L.K.].