

*Through an Ale Glass, Palely:
Mermen, Neptune/Poseidon and Tritons
as motifs in beer brands and product labels*

Alex Mesker
Macquarie University
alex.mesker@mq.edu.au

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ABSTRACT: While the merman has been a minor figure in modern popular culture — in marked contrast to his gender counterpart, the mermaid — the figure has begun to enjoy a resurgence in several cultural niches in recent decades. One of the most notable of these has occurred with regard to the branding and marketing of types of beer and, in particular, with the burgeoning ‘craft beer’ movement that has taken off in North America, Europe and Australasia (in particular) since the early 2000s. After an introduction to the merman in popular culture, this article analyses the use of mermen and related fish-tailed mythological males in brewery names and symbols, on beer bottle labels and in related marketing material. The article considers the product image created by such symbolism and the manner in which it might be modifying the role and perception of the merman and related figures in contemporary popular culture. It furthermore aims to illustrate ways that contemporary abstract, naïve, camp and kitsch depictions of mermen are embraced by breweries to situate themselves as culturally engaged, environmentally oriented, or anti-establishment agitators.

KEYWORDS: Mermen, Neptune, beer, hybridity, folklore, product labelling

Introduction

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (Bible 1 Corinthians 13:12 [King James Version])

Like his female counterpart, the mermaid, the merman is a composite creature with the upper torso of a human and the lower body of fish. Unlike the mermaid, the merman’s prominence has been marginal in 20th and 21st century film and television and various

forms of visual media. Indeed, the mermaid's ascendancy was paralleled by the merman's retraction from the public sphere for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Analysing the highly limited number of representations of mermen in 20th and early 21st century film and television, Hayward (2016: 151–66) characterised their marginality with reference to Freudian/phallic discourse, identifying the lack of visible genitals on mermen's tails as marking them as problematically unmanly. Discussing the few examples of mermen that have maintained some faint presence in film and television, he characterised three principal types: aged and bearded patriarchs (ibid: 152), transformative teenage mermen (ibid: 155–8) and queer mermen (ibid: 158–66).¹ As he characterises, none of these are equivalent to the types of adult heterosexual males typically represented in mainstream cinema and popular culture more generally. In age terms and sexual proclivity, they are also markedly different from the highly standardised archetypal mermaid, represented as a highly attractive and often highly amorous young adult. But however accurate Hayward's characterisation of the lack of mermen on-screen (and of this being a result of their lack of phallic agency within the masculinist/heterosexual visual regime of western audiovisual media culture — ibid: 12–16); the situation is less schismatic and polarised in other aspects of contemporary popular culture. Jilkén (2018), for instance, has provided a study of the merman in a range of modern illustrations primarily — although not exclusively — produced for male homosexual consumers. His case study suggests that lack of phallic agency is simultaneously less marked, more ambiguous and of less consequence in such material than in the audiovisual material Hayward profiles. This article aims to complement these authors' studies by providing a case study of representations of mermen and related fish-tailed male figures in beer brand product imagery (and on beer bottle labels in particular). Before proceeding with an introduction to that area of commodity production, a note on the inclusion of Neptune imagery in this study is required. Neptune, the Roman god of the sea and freshwater systems, and his Greek equivalent Poseidon, have traditionally been depicted in fully human form and have often been represented as wielding a trident and/or bearing a flowing beard. Representations of the gods in fish-tailed form are less common in antiquity but Poseidon is closely associated with his multiple offspring, the tritons — originally male and female figures with lower fish-tailed bodies but increasingly from the Medieval period on as male figures, often seen blowing conch shell trumpets. However, over the last century variants of his form, variously called King Neptune or King Triton have appeared in various Disney productions (Hayward, 2017: 35–7, 152), blurring the distinction between the fully human figures of Neptune and Poseidon and fish-tailed tritons and mermen. A similar pattern can be seen in representations of Neptune (in particular) in beer brand imagery and, for this reason, Neptune and mermen are considered together in this article.

The Contemporary Craft Beer Movement and the Rise of Artisanal Beer Brewing

Growing globally since the 1980s, the craft beer movement typically refers to the production of beer by independent and small-scale breweries that use traditional methods and focus primarily on the flavour and quality of the product. While the term itself is somewhat nebulous, the 'craft beer' designation is typically aligned with terms like 'micro', 'nano', (and occasionally 'pic0') which are used as prefixes to 'brewery' to indicate the scale at which beer is produced and ascribe a somewhat neolocal/locavoric distance from the production scale and far reach of 'macro' equivalents. As much as craft

brewing draws from tradition in terms of ingredients² and practices, craft brewing is also an area of vast experimentation, with many breweries working in conjunction with hop growers to showcase experimental hop hybrid varieties, as well as draw on new production technologies³ created for the brewing process. While beer typically consists of four ingredients — water, malt, hops and yeast — differences in the ingredients and how they are used in the brewing process leads to broad diversity in the final product. The articulation of difference has led to the categorisation of dozens of beer styles,⁴ most often relating a beer's visual appearance, taste, ingredients and production methods. Historically, many beer styles have an association with 'place' and are named in relation to their origin, as local water chemistry, availability of ingredients (including malt, hops and other herbs or spices), yeast strains, and regional approaches to the brewing process have great impact on the resulting product, and consequently are a crucial factor in defining style.

Given their frequent independence and small production scale, craft breweries are more able to experiment with batches than their macro counterparts, and as such are largely responsible for the resurgence and diversity in the less-produced beer styles. With craft breweries often approaching the creation of beer as an artistic endeavour, several breweries furthermore seek to augment and redefine existing conceptions of classic beer styles as well as revive historical locational variants. In addition to the definition of craft brewer by scale, independence and adherence to traditional brewing ingredients and techniques, craft brewing also resonates with some alternative cultures and anti-corporate movements. The United States' Brewers Association also suggests that a modern hallmark of craft brewing is innovation and social engagement, suggesting that craft brewers "tend to be very involved in their communities through philanthropy, product donations, volunteerism and sponsorship of events" (nd: online). The reclamation of historical styles, adherence to traditional practices, social engagement, and 'slow beer' ethos has resonated with those who are passionate about quality and taste and those whose ideals are represented by the brewery themselves. The frequent association with 'micro' also resonates with some alternative cultures and anti-corporate movements.

Parallelisms: Craft Beer Movements and Hipster Subcultures

While the two are not synonymous, craft beer culture parallels many traits of hipster culture on both surface and deeper levels. Aside from shared similarities in terms of the archetypal visual style of men involved in them — such as beards and other stylised facial hair, tattoos and retro chic — both embrace neolocalism, artisanality, a rejection of the 'mainstream', and notions of 'small-scale' and 'hand-made' as emblems of authenticity. Articles on the rise of craft beer in recent years highlight similarities between slow-food-style descriptors that recur in the communities, with adjectives like 'craft', 'artisanal', 'micro' and 'nano' considered as "cult adjectives" (Day, 2015: online). Like the hipster movement's rejection of mainstream culture, craft beer culture rebels against mass-produced beer and craft beer epitomises the pursuit of "individuality, heritage, tradition, exploration, and taste and smell captured there in the glass" (ibid). Modern craft beer cultures reframe the brewer as artisan, and craft beer's association with hipster subcultures is frequently portrayed in beer branding and beer label art with several labels depicting characterisations of consumers in hipsteresque styling and regalia.⁵

With 'hipster chic' as the cultural brand for 'indie', it is also the case that mainstream breweries attempt to co-opt the indie marketplace with similar depictions and through engagement with and commercial perpetuation of the hipster mythos, consequently contributing to the marketplace appropriation of the hipster (see Arsel and Thompson, 2011). For mainstream breweries, these mirrors may represent a flirtation with hipster culture, or aim at satirising the subculture, but also may be co-opted to add indie cachet to a brand. As Arsel and Thompson suggest, as the hipster "became more visible in the American public sphere, parodies and critiques of the hipster icon emerged as a result of reflexive public engagement with the narrative" (2011: 796).

Beer Branding, Sexuality and Gendered Stereotypes

Although this article concentrates on depictions of the mermale form in beer branding, it is important to acknowledge the prevalence and recurrence of mermaids — and the female form more broadly — in beer brand imagery.⁶ Mermaids are used as the icon of several beer brands,⁷ as well as motifs on several beer labels. The mermaid frequently emerges as temptress/seductress or in roles of servitude (brandishing or offering beer to the consumer),⁸ which perpetuates gender stereotypes that "women advertise and serve beer, rather than enjoying the consumption of beer" and further, that when labels "do show some agency among female figures, their bodies remain on display" (Kappele, 2015: 27). As temptresses, the use of assertive female sexuality is described by Steward as "a sexual double standard in the act of consumption" that links objectification of the feminine form (and the gendered personification of the beer in the taproom) to the objectification of the feminine form in ship figureheads, with the underlying metaphor being that "both brewery and bar are male-only domains, just as surely as an 18th Century ship was" (2018: online). Mermen, by contrast, are frequently depicted as a caricature of the brewer, or in an idealised masculine form. These kinds of depictions reinforce beer as a means of consumption-based masculine identity formation (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005), or echo Kappele's identification of the objectification of the female form for the male gaze — suggesting that label art presents to the drinker as something attainable through consumption. The depiction of the merman perpetuates the idea that "the female body and masculinity are attainable through beer consumption" (Kappele, 2015: 54). As this article aims to illustrate, modern depictions of the merman reinforce certain gender stereotypes of beer as a male-only domain.

Numerous examples of anthropomorphic adjectives recur in beer terminology. Human traits have long been ascribed to beer (such as 'head', 'body' and 'legs' used to describe characteristics of the beer), and gendered connotations emerge in several beer styles. With the increased diversity of styles available in craft beer circles, styles such as blonde, red and brown ales are frequently personified as women in artwork (echoing Kappele's assertion that label art acts as conquest for the consumer), and deeper hues frequently invoke exoticisation of dark-skinned women. Similarly, personifying descriptors like 'naughty', 'cheeky' and 'tart' (see Megginson, 2010; Pour Curator, 2011; and Steward, 2018) are frequently used as misogynistic double entendres. As well as being shown in roles of servitude, mermaids are occasionally rendered as sirenic,⁹ depicted luring consumers (depicted as sailors and divers) to the abyss. As an example, Coronado

Brewing (whose brand icon is a swimming mermaid brandishing a beer glass) produce a 'Mermaid's Red' that is promoted with the tagline, "The Siren's Calling", and a description that reads:

Inspired by the siren song, Mermaid's Red lures you in with sweet toffee malts and seductive red hue. But don't be fooled, this hoppy red is dry-hopped with a blend of Pacific Northwest hops for big citrus and pine aroma and a lingering dry finish.¹⁰



Figure 1: Examples of beer label art illustrating objectifying and misogynistic themes (source: Steward, 2018: online)

While a broad discussion of gender disparities and misogyny in product branding goes beyond the scope of this article, there are notable ways in which depictions of mermaids and mermen are used to reinforce gender stereotypes in the brewing industry. While mermaids are frequently depicted as objects of *desire* on beer labels, mermen are instead framed as objects of *identification*. Characterisations of mermaids frequently depict mermaids as *servers* of beer, or as slender and beautiful barmaids in the form of semi-naked figures brandishing glasses of beer. Depictions of mermen, however, tend to show either the muscular male figure as *consumer*, or in caricature form as the beer's *creator/brewer*. Kuehn and Parker (2018) highlight that such stereotypic portrayals exist in the wider brewing community, and such are not only perpetuated by male-run breweries.

In an attempt to recognise and highlight continuing demographic shifts in craft beer culture, festivals such as Beers With(out) Beards promote and celebrate diversity within and surrounding the brewing industry. Aiming to highlight how common perceptions of what the typical brewer looks like set women back in the industry, festivals like this celebrate women-owned breweries, breweries 'helmed' by female brewers, the growing number of female beer drinkers, and broader shifts within craft beer culture.



Figure 2a (left): London artist Sam Taylor’s depiction of the less well-represented female beer brewer, laden with kegs, as icon of the ‘Beers With(out) Beards: A week of Women in Brewing’ festival in New York (2018). Figure 2b (right): Kailah Ogawa’s art for the event’s official festival shirt depicting under-represented diversity in the craft beer community

Shifts in Beer Label Art

Alongside festivals that recognise and celebrate shifts in the industry and community, there are movements around craft beer culture that recognise shifts in the way craft beer is presented in terms of brand imagery and label art. In craft beer circles, the branding of beer is often colourful and playful and beer art has itself become a gallery space for designers and artists. The *Oh Beautiful Beer* blog draws inspiration from Instagram culture and “celebrates remarkable graphic design from the world of beer”, through image-oriented blog posts that sideline the brewery (and the product itself) in favour of showcasing bottle and can art and design portfolios (favouring links to designers in place of links to breweries). Festivals like ‘Pumped’ — run as part of the 2017 Leeds Indie Food Festival — celebrate the art and design of beer labels that break with traditional brewing imagery. With the exception of abstract art, depictions of place and space are regular staples, as is local mythology,¹¹ with the visual communication of these traits ultimately lending authenticity to the product. Becky Palfery (a facilitator of the ‘Pumped’ beer art exhibition) describes yesteryear’s real ale packaging as “ludicrous” and replete with a clichéd “lingua franca of craggy moors, steam trains, adolescent fantasy imagery and lazy sexism (blonde pinups on blonde ales etc.) [that] defined good beer as a middle-aged, male pursuit” (Naylor, 2017: online).

While modern craft beer labels are not devoid of sexually charged imagery, the embrace of original and contemporary artwork in beer labelling is an attempt by some breweries to distance beer from some of its misogynist past and suggests a wider contemporary shift away from beer-associated masculinity.¹² The approach that many modern craft breweries take in transforming beer in terms of flavour and style is reflected in shifts in the branding, with artwork that is increasingly asexual, inclusive and urban (ibid). Alongside the endeavour of a brewery’s self-expression emerging through their beer, breweries playfully brand their beers in attempt to construct authenticity or to resonate with an audience

through the use of tongue-in-cheek or pop and meme culture. Naylor (2017) suggests that this break with traditional brewing imagery and consequent ‘makeover’ of pump clips, bottle labels and packaging is a pivotal aspect of craft beer’s appeal.¹³ Nick Dwyer (a 27-year-old creative director at Beavertown brewing in North London) describes the “shared visual language of graphic novels, old Star Wars comics and cult movies” and unashamed embrace of nostalgia that frequently emerges on the brewery’s label art as one that “build[s] trust and intimacy with an audience of a similar age” (ibid). Furthermore, Dwyer suggests that the incorporation of quirky visual non-sequiturs helps establish inclusive shifts in craft beer demographics, given that “with skeletons and aliens you don’t have to think about gender, race, [or] age” (ibid). Many modern breweries attempt to “alienate the aesthetic from its [historical] misogyny by emphasising an appropriation from an ‘historical context’ for a knowing, ironic, non-sexist contemporary consumer” (Pursuitofabbeyness, 2018: online) with an aim to redefine the boundaries erected around ‘beer’ as a male-only domain. Modern craft beer art therefore still aims to provoke but does so in post-modern, self-referential and ironic ways. The following survey of mermen in beer branding highlights both of these contentions, highlighting beer branding’s shift towards modern mashup and meme culture, as well as the perpetuation and reinterpretation of traditional gendered stereotypes surrounding beer culture.

Contemporary Beer Lore, Mythology and the Sea

Beer and sea travel have significant historical associations.¹⁴ The India Pale Ale beer style, characterised as “a special, highly hopped, high alcohol beer brewed specifically to survive the ocean voyage to India” (Steele, 2013: 23) was, according to legend, invented by George Hodgson at the Bow Brewery in the early-mid nineteenth century. The Bow sold beer to the nearby East India Company’s captains and commanders who shipped it to merchants and expats internationally. Given that beer destined for India occasionally arrived spoiled, the origins of the style are frequently referred to as an accidental style, or one that was situationally determined.

The story of its genesis is likely an early example of myth and marketing in beer production. Much contemporary popular belief about the style is that Hodgson’s approach of creating a beer with a higher than normal alcohol by volume (ABV) and an increased amount of hops — a bittering herb used in the boil to offset the beer’s sweetness — acted as a preservative, resulting in a beer that was resistant to spoilage over long journeys. The length of the sea voyage and elevated temperature that the casks were exposed to additionally hastened the maturation of the beer. This practice of higher hopping rates and an increase in ABV give rise to this style of India Pale Ale. However, this legendary and often-perpetuated tale of the beer’s creation (sometimes framed as the accidental invention of the India Pale Ale style) is itself somewhat of a myth. In beer judging circles, style guidelines¹⁵ for the India Pale Ale acknowledge Hodgson as a well-known exporter of the style (and a person whose name first name frequently mentioned with its popularity) but acknowledge that accounts of its origins vary:

The attributes of IPA that were important to its arrival in good condition in India were that it was very well-attenuated, and heavily hopped. Simply because this is how IPA was shipped, doesn’t mean that other beers such as Porter weren’t also

sent to India, that IPA was invented to be sent to India, that IPA was more heavily hopped than other keeping beers, or that the alcohol level was unusual for the time. (BJCP 2015: 22, emphasis added)

While the demand for the export-strength¹⁶ style of pale ale developed around 1840 (see Daniels, 1996 and Cornell, 2008a), beer historian and author Martyn Cornell argues that strong, well-hopped beverages brewed for the East and West India Climate had existed long before this time in the form of porters. Uses of the term IPA (India Pale Ale) and EIPA (East India Pale Ale) also predate the commonly proffered story that identifies Hodgson as the creator of the style. Foster (1999) also suggests that while the IPA was slightly higher in ABV than other popular beer styles of the time, it would not have constituted a strong ale, and suggests that the notion that early IPAs [were] stronger than other beers of the time [such as porters] is a myth. Steele (2013: 26) suggests that the perpetuation of the myth can be attributed to William Molyneux's (1869) volume *Burton-on-Trent: Its Histories, Its Waters, and Its Breweries* that dubiously attributes Hodgson with the invention of the India Pale Ale. Furthermore, he suggests that the attribution and alignment of Hodgson and the Bow Brewery with the development of the IPA style largely lies in the brewery's "reputation for producing excellent beer that arrived in great condition ... the reliability of the beer supply, [given] the brewery's proximity to the East India Company Docks", and the ruthless business acumen of the Hodgson family (ibid). Advertisements for Hodgson's "Beer as prepared for India" emerged in the 1820s, some 50 years after the company began exporting beer to India (Steele, 2013: 27). Given Hodgson's successful shipping of porter to India in the eighteenth century, Steele suggests that "This evidence deflates the theory that a pale strong beer with heavy hopping was the only beer that could be successfully shipped to India" and posits that rather that "considering the hot and humid Indian climate, dark, sweet ales were simply not preferred, and beers brewed with pale malt suited the climate better" (ibid). Given that the beers were shipped in wood, they would likely have been more well attenuated, due to the continued fermentation by wild yeast and bacteria present in the wood casks.¹⁷ The perpetuation of this myth is often recounted as it makes for a good story. Brown's *Hops and Glory* (2010) playfully examines the mythology behind the style's origins through re-enacting a voyage to India by boat with a keg of Burton IPA in tow. It's likely that history adds legitimacy and connotes exoticism to a modern pleasure in that there's "something about IPA that just captures the global beer imagination — part of it is the story, the legend, the myth" (Brown, in Smith, 2011: online).

While there is evidence of an historical link between sea travel and beer,¹⁸ as well as a frequent perpetuation of nautical themes in beer branding,¹⁹ the modern India Pale Ale is somewhat distanced from its historical definition, given that the modern style has little direct connection with its sea travelling ancestor.²⁰ While English and American IPA beers share similar traits (as comparatively strong hopped beers) their styles are notably distinct. 'IPA' has become somewhat of a catch-all for several beer styles, typically strong hoppy ales. The BJCP even suggests that the contemporary term for the beer term 'IPA' is "intentionally not spelled out as 'India Pale Ale' since none of these beers historically went to India, and many aren't pale" (BJCP, 2015: online). Despite the above, the link between the IPA style and the sea is frequently depicted in the label art. While IPAs are enjoying a prolonged popularity (given that continued experimentation in craft beer gives rise to variations on the style), it is interesting to note that a significant proportion of the beers identified in this article are classified as part of the IPA class of beer styles.

The Merman in Beer Label Art and Branding

The following section discusses characterisations of mermen and mermale figures in beer branding, and highlights recurring themes in beer styles, brewery locations, and their roles in significations of hybridity. As noted earlier, with regard to parallels between craft beer and hipster movements, contemporary depictions of mermaids and mermen often align with notable signifiers present in contemporary hipster cultures. Characterisations of mercreatures frequently depict mermaids²¹ adorned with tattoos (often verging on rockabilly stylisation), and mermen (and mermale Neptunes/Poseidons) are depicted in varied ways, from classical and quaint, to humorous, modern and metrosexual.

This research outlines a taxonomy of how the merman is used in beer labels, and finds that depictions and presentations of mermales carry several meanings. As with Garrido, Bendrups and Hayward's suggestion that traditional aquapelagic folklore is occasionally deployed in modern scenarios for artistic and/or political purposes in regional communities (2019: 53–74), aquatic humanoids appear on beer labels as artistic place-binding metaphors for coastal locations of breweries, as well as used as metaphors of the sea and hybridity. The use of the merman manufactures 'history' for a brewery, and despite craft beer's embrace of the 'local', the universality of the figure enables a globalisation of brand. The following textual analyses of mermen in beer branding suggests that the merman figure is typically used to represent hybridity (in a range of soft-to hard-masculine forms) and to represent elegance and strength; with its presence recurring in coastal breweries as a motif representing a form of locational authenticity or terroir, representing not only the coastal proximity at which the beer was made, but also, the coastal cultural ideals of the brewery.

Neolocalism: The merman as icon of local identity

Holtkamp et al examine neolocalism and its embrace in craft beer culture, describing it as "a conscious effort by businesses to foster a sense of place based on attributes of their community" (2016: online). In addition to depictions of mermen, several breweries draw on mythological figures, such as Neptune/Poseidon, and other romanticised iconography (e.g. tridents, ships, anchors, divers, pirates etc.) as a means to construct identity. The incorporation of mermaids and mermen into coastal breweries' iconography often echoes Hayward's (2018) assertion that the prevalence of mercreatures in local lore relates to coastal communities' engagements with their aquapelagic locales. In other cases, merfolk are used to invoke a largely imagined history and function as novel constructions of identification with coastal locales.

The 'Merman XXX' (Figure 3) was a 4.8% ABV Scottish Export Ale brewed by Caledonian Brewery²². Although no longer in production, the 'Merman XXX' was typically served in cask and bottle, accompanied by pump clip and label art that showed a clothed merman reclining on the banks of the River Forth, gazing at boats on the water. Unlike classical depictions of mermen, the Caledonian merman is wearing a coat and Quakers' hat, holding a beer and smoking a pipe, and his presence on the label is coupled with the tagline "Safe were the ships who would see the Merman of the Forth".²³ The

likeness of the merman conjures up an entirely fictional mythology behind the beer itself. While Caledonian Brewery was established in 1869, the merman functions as a marker of neolocal authenticity for the modern beer — in terms of place, local mythology and beer's history — and plays into the historical mythmaking of the importance of safe and timely sea travel in the distribution of export beer. In contrast to the portrayal of the siren as saboteur, this casts the merman as protector. Although Rose (2001) suggests that in Medieval Europe mermen were thought to cause violent storms that sank ships, what is curious here is framing of the merman as sign of good fortune in local mythology, in contrast to other sea entities from Scottish mythology²⁴.



Figure 3: The Caledonian ‘Merman XXX’ (2012–2015) label art depicting an atypically clothed merman, reminiscent of a jolly publican, on the rocks of the River Forth.

The Scottish Swannay Brewery — located on the north-westerly tip of Orkney's mainland — draws heavily on maritime themes and Orkney's history in the naming and label design of their beer range. Self-described as being “proud of our exposed location and our reliance on the sea”, the brewery lies in an area with a rich agricultural history and close proximity to the coast, “showered in spray from the Atlantic Ocean in the winter and surrounded by fertile farmland in the summer” (Swannay Brewery, nd: online). The Brewery's ‘Orkney Blast IPA Barleywine Hybrid’ depicts a merman offering a pint to a mermaid (Figure 4a) and while the imagery reflects the brewery's proximity to the ocean, the beer's name and label design are derived from the masthead of Orkney's WW2 forces newspaper *The Orkney Blast* (Figure 4b). The use of the merfolk here serves two purposes: first, the merman and mermaid figures suggest hybridity of beer styles — an IPA that merges fruity American hops with spicy European hop varieties, supported by a strong malt body, reminiscent of a barley wine; and secondly, the label art highlights the historical significance of the locale in which the beer is made.



Figure 4a (left): Label art for Swannay Brewery's Orkney Blast, showing a merman brandishing a pint of beer riding a hippocamp or 'sea-horse'. Figure 4b (right) *The Orkney Blast* masthead (1944).

Western Australian brewery Gage Roads (whose name is derived from a coastal basin and shipping lane between Perth and Rottnest Island) incorporate a piscine Neptune and the trident in their branding (Figure 5a). The recurring figure is used to position the company both geographically (based in Fremantle on the south-westerly coast of Australia, adjacent to the Indian Ocean) and metaphorically — as a deity that holds a position of power over the ocean. The brewery adopted the icon to position themselves as a new brand of uncompromising brewers that would stand out in a crowded market.²⁵ Although Neptune has legs in traditional mythology, the stylisation of the figure takes on some creative license and depicts the character with tail. The company's beer names and artwork similarly draw on the brewery's coastal location and surf culture. Launched as a one-off brew on Australia Day 2013, the brewery created a somewhat anti-seasonal²⁶ beer: an 7.2% ABV Australian Strong Ale named 'The Convict', brewed with all-Australian ingredients. Intending to be provocative in terms of both artwork and style,²⁷ the beer alludes in imagery and name (Figure 5b) to Australia's penal-colonial past²⁸ and the voyages that Australian convicts had taken by sea. 'The Convict' frames the Neptune character as an incarcerated mermale, breaking through his shackles, framing the beer as the embodiment of strength, and as one that challenges the norm by bucking with convention. The label reads:

Australian beer drinkers, you've been locked up by bland, watered down lagers for too long. Never fear — the fussy bastards at Gage Roads are here to set you free! You won't find a boring, run-of-the-mill lager here. This is a BIG Australian ale. A boatload of Aussie ingredients: 6 specialty ale malts, 4 of our finest hops. The Convict is rich in flavour, soaked in tropical aroma. Dry hopped with an insane amount of Summer, Stella and Galaxy hops, this in an ale that could bend even the strongest bars at Freo Prison. Break off the shackles with Gage Roads The Convict Australian Strong Ale.



Figure 5a (left): Gage Roads' icon of piscine Neptune brandishing a trident. Figure 5b (right): 'The Convict' Australian Strong Ale label art with a convict mermaid breaking from its shackles

Neptune emerges again in several New York-based breweries located around Manhattan and Brooklyn. Neptune Brewery — who lay claim to being New York City's first microbrewery — was an early (and short-lived) operator in Manhattan's initial brewpub boom. The brewery opened in the mid-1990s, pushing craft beer practices at a time before they were fashionable, but closed a few years later. The brewery released several beers depicting Neptune rising out of the Hudson river brandishing a trident and tankard in front of New York's iconic city skyline (Figure 6). Similar themes are echoed by Liverpool-based micro-brewery Neptune Brewery,²⁹ whose branding features a trident, and beer names draw thematically on sea voyage and mythology.

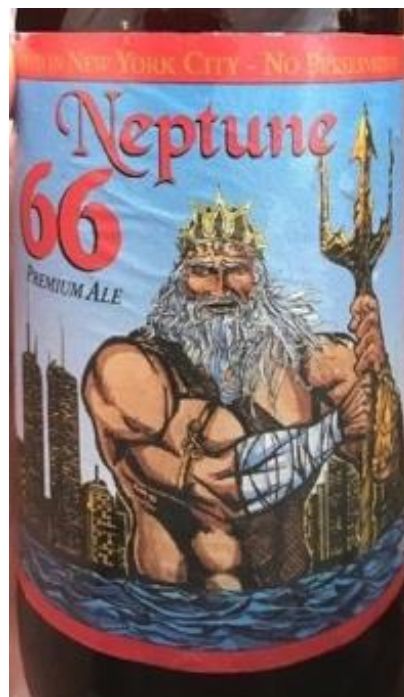




Figure 6a (left): label art for New York micro-brewery Neptune Brewing's 'Neptune 66 Brown Ale'. Figure 6b (right): The brewpub's beer mat artwork.

In more recent years, the merman and mermaid figures have been adopted by Coney Island Brewing Co., likely due to the brewery's proximity to Neptune and Mermaid Avenues and the strong association of the area with the annual mermaid parade which commenced in 1983. The brewery's 'Mermaid Pilsner' is a light-bodied lager supported by a balanced fruity, floral hop aroma, replete with label art (Figure 7a) depicting a mermaid with kelp-like hair adorned in pearls, starfish, and tattoos (and occasionally, posing with the Coney Island boardwalk in the background). In 2016, the brewery experimented with a stronger version of the 'Mermaid', creating the limited release 'MerMan Imperial Pilsner' (Figure 7b), centre) In a similar fashion to the 'Mermaid', the 'MerMan's' label art shows as mermale Neptune, bearing a trident and crown. The merman icon became a mainstay when he was recast as the figure of the brewery's 'MerMan NY IPA' (Figure 7c, right).



Figure 7a (left): Coney Island Brewing Co.'s 'Mermaid Pilsner' label art. Figure 7b (centre): the brewery's special release 'MerMan Imperial Pilsner' and Figure 7c (right): the brewery's mainstay 'MerMan NY IPA'

In addition to the brewery's location, the brewery has also become affiliated with the area's famous annual mermaid parade — an annual art parade enabling self-expression of New York residents.³⁰ As presenting sponsors of the mermaid parade in recent years, Coney Island Brewing Co. embraces local culture and folklore in the branding of its Mer-beers stating:

Mermaids, those mysterious aquatic lovelies, have popped up all over the world in legend since 1000 BC. No scientific evidence has ever surfaced to support their existence, but we're not ones to argue with folklore. (Coney Island Brewery, nd: online)

The merman and mermaid figures re-emerge in the brewery's 'Pride 365 IPA' — a beer brewed collaboration with a local Gay Craft Beer Lovers Meetup Group — highlighting their embrace of inclusivity and diversity within craft beer culture (Figure 8). Several layers of meaning are signified here, with the beer showcasing a hop variety called 'Super Pride', and promotional marketing for the beer reframing the merman and mermaid characterisations as icons of LGBT pride. Further abroad, the beer emerges as a vehicle for social change with the Satellite Room DC club donating a portion of the beer's sales to The Trevor Project, the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organisation for LGBTQ youth.



Figure 8a (left): a banner featuring the Coney Island Brewing company's merman and mermaid imagery used to promote the brewery's support for and involvement in the NYC Pride March. Figure 8b (right) promotional material for the Satellite Room club's 'Pils For Pride' event.

With beer label art acting as instructive fictions for consumers, examples such as those identified above illustrate craft beer's deviation from beer's traditional heterosexual male-dominant domain. Aside from beer label art acting as a representation of locale, these forms of signification show inclusivity through emerging styles of *identification through consumption* in craft beer culture, and beer as vehicle for social change.

In a similar vein to New York's mermaid parade, the Neptune Festival of Virginia Beach, Virginia is an annual celebration of the heritage of the city, celebrating local beach culture, food, arts and music. The festival is overlooked by a statue of Neptune that was erected in 2005, and in recent years has been augmented with a coastal craft beer festival, intended to showcase local Virginia beers, as well as regional and national craft beer as part of the state's craft beer month celebration. As icon for the festival, characterisations of Neptune

are part of the festival branding (Figure 9a), but are restyled in the coastal craft beer festival's branding, with Neptune's trident replaced with a beer bottle (Figures 9b and c).



Figure 9a (left): the Neptune Festival icon. Figures 9b and c (centre and right): images of Neptune used on festival glassware with the figure's trident replaced with a beer bottle.

Several Virginian breweries incorporate imagery of the iconic sculpture of Neptune into their label art, with Back Bay Brewing Company — supporters of the festival — using a hybridised duck-billed Neptune logo (merging their brand icon with the festival's icon) on the label for their 'Neptune's Nectar American Wheat' beer, brewed for the festival in 2017 (Figure 10a). The figure emerges again as a fixture of place in local micro-brewery Two Fathers Beer's 'King Neptune India Pale Ale', named after Neptune and with label art featuring the bronze Neptune statue on the boardwalk at Virginia Beach (Figure 10b).

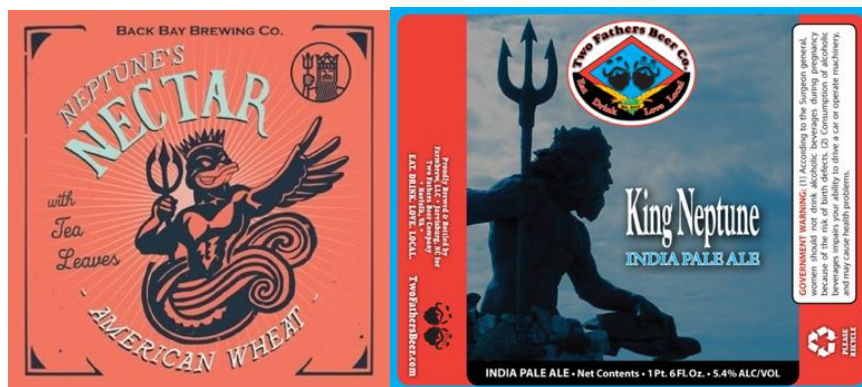


Figure 10a (left): Back Bay Brewing's 'Neptune's Nectar American Wheat' depicts the brewery's duck mascot in Neptune form. Figure 10b (right): Two Fathers Beer Co's 'King Neptune India Pale Ale' with artwork of the silhouetted Neptune statue on the Virginia Beach boardwalk. (The left panel of the label also shows images of the bearded brewers, accompanied by the brewery's tag line: 'Eat Drink Live Local'.)

The themes detailed above have been echoed by San Diego-based Coronado Brewing. A pioneer in the San Diego craft brewing scene, the company's branding attempts to convey a "soulful legacy" of "delicious beer, great food, and coastal lifestyle — all captured in the spirit of the mermaid".³¹ While the mermaid features regularly in their beers' branding, the male form makes an occasional appearance in the form of Triton, who appears on the brewery's 'Coastwise Session IPA' (Figure 11) a session strength beer (denoting a lower ABV than IPA's typical range) brewed in collaboration with The Surfrider Foundation.

The brewery's alignment with The Surfrider Foundation, which describes itself as a "community of everyday people who passionately protect our playground: the ocean, waves, and beaches that provide us so much enjoyment" (nd: online) raises awareness of its ties to the coast and its ongoing contribution beach clean-ups, and consequently allows drinkers to consume and perform the brewery's identity work. As messenger of the sea, the iconography of Triton frames the beer as a vehicle for ecological awareness; through its consumption, drinkers promote and enact future oceanic conservation.



Figure 11: San Diego-based Coronado Brewing's *Coastwise Session IPA*, brewed in collaboration with Surfrider Foundation. (The shape of tail on the rear of the can also connotes stemmed glassware.)

Caricatures of Masculinity and the Merman as Beer Brewer

Mermen are sometimes portrayed as idealised masculine holotypes, but also emerge in caricature form, echoing pop culture references, and occasionally as beer-bellied caricatures of the brewer and consumer.³² Consequently, the presentations of merman as beer brewer and beer consumer emerge as tools for constructing modern masculine identity. In contrast to Kappele's idea that the label presents the consumer a with masculinity attainable through beer consumption, the use of caricature reinforces a subtly different kind of attainable masculinity distanced from a male gaze by presenting the viewer with a caricature of self, or of the typical bearded pot-bellied, beer aficionado. While this still constitutes a form of attainability through consumption, it is inward-focused and perhaps more an example of satirical realism than consumerist idealism.

San Diego based Karl Strauss Brewing Company uses themes of elusiveness and rarity in their marketing of their Holiday Series IIIPA,³³ using the mythological status and rare appearance of mermen as a marketing strategy to construct a mythological status for their seasonal beer:

Locals swear they can catch a glimpse of them every year. Sailors remember the very first time they saw them. Some people can't even recount their experience without being brought to tears. Yes, legend has it that every

holiday season, the Eight Merry Mermen hit the San Diego shores with what the people want most: beer! The 8th instalment in our “Twelve Days” holiday series is ... the perfect beer to enjoy with friends whether they have feet or fins. (Karl Strauss, nd: online).

The imagery here (Figure 12 a and b) constructs the brewery's own neolocal lore, and depicts the jovial Santa-like merman as beer brewer, replacing his trident for a mash paddle.



Figure 12a and b: a jovial merman ‘brewer’ (depicted with a mash paddle and pint glass) featured on the label of Karl Strauss’ ‘8 Merry Mermen IPA’

Also based in San Diego, California, Ballast Point Brewery emphasises its strong ties to environmental conservation and its local community. The brewery's iconography and branding frequently incorporate themes of the sea and, despite their sincere messages of conservation and social responsibility, the company occasionally exercises a tongue-in-cheek playful streak in the naming and presentation of their beers. Released in a limited run in late 2016, Ballast Point's 'The Bearded Merman' was a pale, unfiltered Saison, heavily dry hopped with Amarillo. While the company regularly draws on the art of local beer-enthusiast Paul Elder in their nautically-themed branding — typically of 'glimmering fish and haunting seaworthy skeletons' (Ballast Point, nd: online) — the small-scale production of 'The Bearded Merman' beer resulted in minimal need for a prominent visual identity.³⁴ Instead of engaging Elder, the brewery elected to represent the beer in tongue-in-cheek fashion, embracing viral 'dudeoir'³⁵ imagery of Joshua Varozza cavorting on the beach dressed as a merman (Figure 13). Varozza, a California bail agent, had risen to 'Facebook fame' after being photographed in various roles for a 'God Bless America Dudeoir Collection' calendar in aid of the 'Wheeler's for the Wounded of California' charity organisation (Hayward and Thorne, 2018). The same images of Varozza later served as inspiration for a charity calendar featuring bearded Newfoundlanders cosplaying as mermen³⁶, with the imagery symbolising "the gradual modification of regional stereotypes of masculinity" (ibid) in an island area long viewed as a quintessential folk setting. (See Hayward and Thorne, 2018)

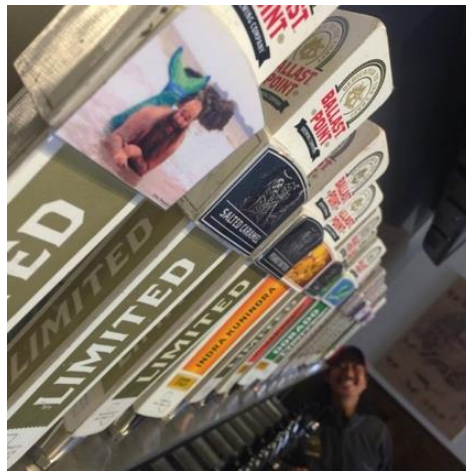


Figure 13a (left): pump clip art for Ballast Point’s limited release beer ‘*The Bearded Merman*’. Figure 13b (right): Tami Bear’s original ‘dudeoir’ photograph of Joshua Varozza as a merman³⁷.

Similarly, caricatures of merman masculinity and references to pop-culture exist in other breweries and collaborations, such as ‘Merman’ (2016–) a 5.20% ABV Sour IPA brewed as a collaboration between Swedish and English micro-breweries Brewski and Siren Craft Brew, that marries the hop-forwardness of the IPA style with the puckering sourness of bacterial fermentation³⁸). Siren Craft Brew — whose branding typically features the mermaid and appears to reserve its use of the merman in labelling for collaborations with other breweries — describes its goal to “discover ways to excite people’s curiosity and share our knowledge of our craft” using the theme of the sirens’ call, suggesting that “Our sirens exist to the share our message and open people’s minds”.³⁹ As the ‘Merman’ beer is not bottled — but rather distributed in kegs for draught dispensing — the visual imagery and branding of the beer does not feature prominently and is reserved for pump clips, and depicts a caricature of Derek Zoolander’s emasculating role as beautiful merman in the 2001 film *Zoolander* (Figure 14).⁴⁰ The label perpetuates in-jokes and meme culture amongst its consumers, and more subtly, the description of the beer as “elegant” and “fruity” frames the beer as a feminine form of the IPA and hints at themes of metrosexuality and emasculation associated with the scene from where the concept is derived.



Figure 14a (left) artwork for Brewski and Siren Craft Brew's 'The Merman'. Figure 14b (right): photograph of tasting notes that describe the beer as 'elegant' and 'fruity'.⁴¹

Siren employed a different stylisation of merman in their collaboration with Dutch brewery De Kromme Haring for 'The Crooked Nykk', a honey and citrus kveik, a beer brewed with a Norwegian traditional farmhouse yeast (Figure 15). With breweries plundering beer's rich history and stylistic diversity in terms of ingredients and terroir, the kveik 'style' is enjoying a resurgence, along with its own invented mythology. A kveik is not a style as such, but rather an emerging popular approach to beer making that uses a non-purified traditional Norwegian farmhouse yeast to ferment wort. Interestingly, the word 'kveik' has a gendered meaning in Norwegian, both literally as 'yeast' (the feminine form) and 'rebirth', 'reawakening' or 'new strength' (the masculine form).⁴²



Figure 15a (right): bottle of De Kromme Haring and Siren Craft Brew's 'The Crooked Nykk', a honey kveik with citrus. Figure 17b (left): artwork used in promotion of the beer.

Gender: Mermen and Sexuality/Asexuality

As Hayward (2016: 151–66) suggests, depictions of mermen in popular culture present a problematic view of masculinity within Freudian/phallogocentric discourse due to the lack of visible genitals on their lower bodies. In contrast, Jilken (2018) suggests that mermen's archetypally feminising components of exposed bodies, exoticisation and excessive beauty

present them as examples of “marginalised masculinity” with respect to normativity within modern myths of gender and sexuality created in our culture. The following examples are illustrative of such marginalised masculinity, and soft masculinity.

Chicago-based Pipeworks Brewing Co., which got its start through a Kickstarter campaign, and quickly earned a cult status by catering to a niche market of craft beer connoisseurs,⁴³ uses a recurrent theme of quirkiness, postmodernism, irony and camp in its branding and imagery.⁴⁴ Despite the brewery’s evolving beer list that appeals to the ideologies of craft beer, one of the brewery’s mainstays is the ‘Glaucus Belgian IPA’, named after a mythological Greek mortal-turned-deity, part man and part fish. Unlike the siren who lured ships to the rocks, the Glaucus came to the rescue of sailors and fishermen in storms. The beer label’s description suggests that the name is a metaphor for the beer’s hybrid style, one that it says “marries bold spicy Belgian yeast with bright citric American hops in a way even the gods would adore”. Beejay Oslon, co-founder of Pipeworks Brewing Co. notes that the name and style of the beer emerged from research on merman after seeing the naïve artwork of Chicago local Emily Cunningham (Figure 16a), who was the inspiration for the beer, suggesting that the imagery “just seems so beery, and I knew right away that I had to use that label ... What’s important for us is to get a variety of imagery ... This is a fun image, and we’re a fun brewery”. (Beer Advocate, nd: online). Cunningham echoes the importance that imagery plays in craft beer communities suggesting that “A label is probably the thing that most people base their decisions to try a new beer on ... Since most drinking is done in public or at least with company, it’s a sort of self-expression, like a pair of shoes [and] part of that is definitely visual” (ibid).



Figure 16a (Left) Pipeworks Brewing’s Glaucus Belgian Style India Pale Ale, artwork by Emily Cunningham c2012. 16b (Right): Pipeworks Brewing’s 2013 rebranding of their Glaucus Belgian Style India Pale Ale.

In 2013 the brewery rebranded ‘Glaucus’ and upgraded the label art to depict a hyper-masculine rendering of a hipster merman, replete with pipe and trident (Figure 16b). The artwork by Jason Burke⁴⁵ bears a passing resemblance to Oslon himself — who is both bearded and adorned with tattoos — and its framing is somewhat reminiscent of the works of the artist Touko Valio Laaksonen (best known as ‘Tom of Finland’). While the ‘gay gaze’ and homoerotic overtones may not be intentional in the artwork, the stylisation has characteristics that undermine notions of heteronormativity in beer labelling. Given that much of the brewery’s recent label art draws on movies and shared nostalgia, memes and playful references to pop culture — with frequent use of unicorns, ninjas, rainbows,

skeletons and zombies — the use of the merman figure here falls within the idea of shared nostalgia, but also aligns with Cunningham's notion of identity formation and self-expression through consumption. Although the label is not genderless, its use arguably adheres to Palfery's assertion that craft beer's contemporary aesthetic of genderless pop and meme-culture icons of skeletons and aliens represents a shift in label art toward asexual orientation, inclusivity and urbanness.⁴⁶

Mermen as Icons of Hybridity, and Metaphors for the Sea

As with several beers introduced earlier, Two Chefs Brewing's 'Crying Merman' is similarly a beer that defies existing categorical beer style boundaries.⁴⁷ The beer is a double IPA inspired by a Gose and quite literally inserts the sea into the beer, listing seawater among beer's traditional ingredients on the label. Described as having "the salty flavors of the northern latitude sea water [with] twice the bitter, [but] twice as fresh, twice as delicious" the beer marries two beer styles that are somewhat at odds given the Gose style typically has subdued hop bitterness, flavour and aroma compared with the IPA's typical emphasis on hop-forward characteristics. The label art of a merman (Figure 17a) — depicted head in hands cupping his lush beard — serves a dual purpose here. In one sense, the merman whose tears are becoming sea water symbolises the sea water in the beer. In another sense, it connotes a forced hybridity: the mermale characterisation echoes the chimeric nature of beer's mash-up style. The Dutch brewery aims are to "provoke the conventional and ... to stick out our tongue to the familiar" (Two Chefs Brewing, nd: online) and in place of a description of the contents within, the bottle label presents an absurd account of the *mise -en-scène* on the label:

Crying Merman. They kidnapped me, blindfolded me and took me to some place below sea-level. Now I'm stuck here with a tail and fin for legs and all my friends are laughing at me. Please make it stop.



Figure 17a (left): Two Chefs Brewing's 'Crying Merman', a double IPA brewed with sea water. 17b (right): DC Brau and Baxter Brewing Co.'s 'The Daughters of Poseidon', a black IPA brewed with oysters.

Several other breweries incorporate ingredients from the sea and use mermen as illustrative metaphors, such as DC Brau and Baxter's collaboration 'The Daughters of Poseidon', a black IPA brewed with oysters (Figure 17b). Although Poseidon was not a

human-fish hybrid, he is depicted here with some artistic license in mermale form, bearing a giant clam and trident.

In addition to mermen as icons of style hybridity, several merhybrids emerge on beer labels as icons of brewing collaborations or as symbolic representations of breweries' neolocal identities. Coronado Brewing and Bear Republic's 2016 collaboration beer 'MerBear Rye IPA' — a "love child of SoCal icon Coronado Brewing and NorCal heavyweight Bear Republic" (Brewbound News, nd: online) — mixes iconography associated with the Californian hills with the ocean, merging both breweries' iconic mascots representative of place (Figure 18a, left).



Figure 18a (left): Promotional imagery of a MerBear reclining in a scallop shell for Bear Republic and Coronado's 'MerBear Rye IPA' collaboration beer. Figure 17b (right): Western Newfoundland Brewing Company's MerSasquatch logo.

In order to construct unique local identities, other chimeric fictionalisations occur. Western Newfoundland Brewing Company constructs their own merhybrid, the MerSasquatch as a means to embody the significance and wildness of Newfoundland's environment. According to brewery co-founder Jim MacDonald, the mythological MerSasquatch figure represents "the best of both worlds, from the tops of the mountains to the bottom of Bonne Bay" (Collins, 2018: online).⁴⁸

Conclusion: Mermen, Symbolism and Constructions of Meaning

With beer branding acting as an instructive fiction for its consumers, bottle art and labels have the power to perpetuate or arrest coherences in the categorisation of sex, gender and sexuality typically associated with beer consumption. This taxonomic account of the ways that the merman is used to construct meaning in beer labelling finds that the embrace of merman mythology is used by breweries to highlight locational identity through the merging of local lore and a historical universality of mercreatures in popular culture across the world. As Kuehn and Parker note, with respect to craft beer labelling more widely, "authenticity and place attachment are the main stories told" (Kuehn and Parker, 2018: online). The merman adheres to this approach, portraying roles that establish local

identity, caricaturises brewers and consumers, and satirises notions of masculinity and strength. In addition (echoing Galman's [2018] suggestion that the mermaid acts a symbol of hybridity, challenge and contradiction), the merman often appears in beer branding as a symbol of hybridity, challenge and contradiction, as well as a motif for strength and as an illustrative fiction for breweries and consumers. The mermale emerges as metaphor for the brewer, occasionally with his trident exchanged for mash paddle, invoking poetic and metaphoric interpretations of the brewer as artisan, or one with dominion over the sea and other waters.

Although many modern craft breweries' approach to beer labelling aims to be asexual, and inclusive, beer's history as a male-dominated product runs deep in the way beers are branded and results in recurrent metaphors in branding. Despite many contemporary breweries' aims to make modern craft beer circles inclusive⁴⁹ through their embrace of shared nostalgia, memes and references to pop culture in place as a means to distance beer imagery from its often-misogynistic past, gendered portrayals of figures on beer labels still emerge and while tendencies remain to perpetuate certain gendered stereotypes⁵⁰, the embrace of abstract, naïve, camp and kitsch is illustrative of a continuing shift in representing audiences through consumption as a means of identity formation and identity performance. While depictions of mermen may re-enforce gender stereotypes, mermen allow breweries to flirt with portraying modern masculinities. The merman allows beer brands to establish themselves within beer's male-dominant history, as well as embrace modern masculinity. The merman embodies several key features of craft beer culture: neolocalism, slow-food movements, fluidity/hybridity, and defiance of the mainstream. The 'hipster merman' for example conveys a class-based masculinity aimed at males in the craft beer consumer demographic. Given the use of classical depictions of mermen and modern re-interpretations with kitsch and camp overtones on beer labels allows breweries to assert a subtly different one, and consequently assert both hypermasculinity and hypomasculinity, as well as hard-, active- and soft-, passive-masculinities.

Using a shared visual language of unicorns, ninjas, rainbows, skeletons, zombies, sideshow performers, and other examples of kitsch, craft breweries use such non-normative imagery to convey themselves as "anti-establishment agitators" (Banks, in Naylor, 201: online) in many cases. In countries such as Australia, liquor retailers frequently segregate beers into 'Domestic' (indicating 'normal' local mass-produced beers), 'International' (imported mass-produced beers) and 'Craft' (local and imported beer brewed on smaller scales) categories. Such categorisation similarly allows craft beer to perpetuate itself as the non-normal 'other', and this divide is assisted visually through quirky label art that adds to identity formation of its consumers. Given that all branding is effectively the mythologising and construction of identity, Kuehn and Parker (2018) suggest that "craft beer tells a comparatively more progressive and inclusive story of authenticity, diversity and local community", but still one that primarily "persists as a male cultural form" (2018: online). Depictions of mermen present new ways for breweries to represent maleness, where the merman manifests itself as a parodic figure of a historically male-dominant culture and illustrates a shift behind beer-related masculinity in contemporary craft-beer cultural movements.

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Bionote: Alex Mesker is Associate Lecturer in the Department of Media, Music, Communication, and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. His research interests span music, technology, multimedia and popular culture. Alex's PhD examined the changing nature of soundtracks in television cartoons of the 50s, 60s and 70s. He is a home-brewer and a recognised judge in the BJCP, and has a beard but no tattoos.

Endnotes

- ¹ Hayward also included a fourth, highly singular — and, thereby, aberrant — category, the young adult, attractive and heterosexual “outlier merman” who has a fleeting presence in the micro-budget short feature film *Eve and the Merman* (Chev Royton, 1965, USA).
- ² Alongside the rise in craft beer has been the rise in experimentation with traditional practices and ingredients in small-breweries and home-brewing circles.
- ³ Such as supercritical CO₂ extraction of hops to create hop resins.
- ⁴ Groups such as the Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) and Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) attempt to educate brewers and drinkers through the formal definition beer styles based on shared traits and brewing techniques.
- ⁵ While hipster maleness is conveyed through beards and tattoos, and hipster femaleness is also conveyed through tattoo culture and anachronism (verging on rockabilly). Some depictions go hand-in-hand with wartime aesthetics of pin-up seductresses and appropriation from historical contexts. See Steward (2018).
- ⁶ There is much research on gendered stereotypes and sexism in the brewing community (see Kappele, 2015; Dunn, 2017; Kuehn and Parker, 2018; and Darwin, 2018), as well as case studies of gender representations in the beer branding (Iijima Hall and Crum, 1994, Kappele, 2015; Bell, 2016; and Vorel, 2016), and depictions of mermaid figures in wider alcohol branding warrants further examination.
- ⁷ See Coronado Brewing and Siren for example.
- ⁸ See Siren Craft Brew's branding aesthetic, for example: <http://www.sirencraftbrew.com/beers>
- ⁹ See Crooked Fence's 'Sirène Mortelle' (the 'deadly mermaid' as saboteur, depicting a mermaid cutting a diver's air-line) or the label art for Fish Brewing's 'Full Blast Summer Ale' (depicting a modern siren luring ships into the rocks through song) for example.
- ¹⁰ <https://coronadobrewing.com/coronado-beer-series/core-series-2/>
- ¹¹ Themes of the sea emerge in the branding of many beers and breweries. While this study focuses on the merman, several recurrent themes relating to sea, place and local mythology were identified throughout this research. Several beers are named after mythological sea creatures, including Tangaroa (Maori god of the sea), Iku-Turso (a malevolent sea monster in Finnish mythology), Thalassa (the primeval spirit of the sea in Greek mythology), Mac Lir (a sea deity in Irish mythology) and Ægir (a sea *jötunn* from Norse mythology) to name a few. Pirates are similarly a staple (both within beer branding and alcohol branding beyond), with piratic terms, mythos, characters, 'grog' and ships drawn on for artistic fodder.
- ¹² Despite signs of a contemporary shift, craft beer culture struggles to distance itself from a pervasive “minority current of immaturity and misogyny” (Vorel, 2016: online) associated with beer culture in general.
- ¹³ Craft beer's embrace of quirky art likely resonates within image-sharing social media circles (such as Instagram and Untappd).
- ¹⁴ See Blakely (2017).

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- ¹⁵ According to the Beer Judge Certification Program's [BJCP] 2015 style guidelines. The BJCP is a non-profit organisation whose purpose is to promote beer literacy and to "encourage knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the world's diverse beer ... styles" (BJCP, 2015: online).
- ¹⁶ 'Export' is an appellation that means was the beer was good enough to send overseas, and is frequently used denote beers with a slightly elevated ABV for the style.
- ¹⁷ The improvement and maturation of the IPA at sea style is somewhat contradictory to contemporary consumption preferences, where breweries almost always recommend that this style of beer is enjoyed fresh, not cellared (as the fresh 'hop' character tends to fade and is commonly described as making the beer 'muddy'). The practice of dry hopping in this style additionally tends to make the beer oxidise faster than other styles.
- ¹⁸ See Smithsonian Libraries (2017) and Steele (2013).
- ¹⁹ As evidenced in the off-topic thread about alcohol branding with nautical themes — started in 2015, with over three thousand replies and is still actively contributed to — on the *Sails of Glory* game's online discussion forum (BoardGameGeek, nd).
- ²⁰ Given the emergence of the English India Pale Ale style goes back to the early nineteenth century, and common consensus is that the American IPA emerged in the mid 1970s. In contrast to the English India Pale Ale, American IPAs are described as "decidedly hoppy and bitter, moderately strong [interpretations of] American pale ale, showcasing modern American or New World hop varieties. The balance is hop-forward, with a clean fermentation profile, dryish finish, and clean, supporting malt allowing a creative range of hop character to shine through" (BJCP, 2015: 37).
- ²¹ Not only as icons for individual beer label branding, but also as brewery motif in the case of Coronado Brewing.
- ²² A long running brewery established in 1869 and presently a subsidiary of the Scottish & Newcastle/Heineken following a number of takeovers in the late twentieth century. Despite its present status as a macro brewery, the Caledonian has a long history and lays claim to one of the last remaining direct-fired coppers still in use in Britain. <http://scottishbrewing.com/breweries/edinburghandlothians/caledonian.php>
- ²³ The 'Forth' alludes to the River Forth, a major waterway in Scotland through which beer was historically transported.
- ²⁴ Such as the blue men of the Minch (see Beck, 1973: 242) or the Brounger, both malevolent spirits that could capsize boats and drown sailors, and whose sightings were an omen indicative of storms at sea. Orkney lore also has its own mythological therianthrope seal-human, the selkie.
- ²⁵ Personal communication with Paul Bailey from Egg Designs, the company behind the visual identity development for Gage Roads.
- ²⁶ In the sense that lower ABV 'session strength' beers are usually suited to beer consumption in the summer months.
- ²⁷ As described by the brewery's general manager of operations, Aaron Heary in <https://www.theshout.com.au/news/beer-cider-news/gage-roads-releases-the-convict/>
- ²⁸ Similar themes recur in several Australian breweries, such as in the beer ranges of James Squire and The Rocks Brewing Company.
- ²⁹ See artwork at: <https://www.neptunebrewery.com/the-beers>
- ³⁰ See Hayward and Milner's (2018) discussion of the parade's evolution since its inception.
- ³¹ As described by creative director Scott Mires at <https://coronadobrewing.com/announcing-brand-refresh/>
- ³² Although this imagery verges on caricature, depictions of mermen as the maker or consumer of the beer (in contrast to comparative depictions of mermaids) reinforces existing gender stereotypes and perceptions in the beer industry (see Kuehn).
- ³³ Frequently, stronger IPAs are named Imperial/double IPAs (or IIPAs). '8 Merry Mermen IIPA' is a triple IPA (indicating a strength over 10% ABV).
- ³⁴ Similar to the Bearded Merman, Ballast Point released a small batch of 'Merman IPA' (available only on tap at their San Diego gastropub) for National IPA Day several months later. The beer was a one-off brew and aside from the 'Merman' name, no visual identity was given to the beer.
- ³⁵ Tongue-in-cheek erotic photography, or boudoir photography of men.
- ³⁶ Incidentally, one of the calendar's promotional pictures is of a group of mermen drinking beer in a bar, see <https://mymodernmet.com/merbys-mermen-charity-calendar-newfoundland-beard-moustache-club/>
- ³⁷ See Bear's website (<https://www.artisticphotographybytami.com/dudeoir>) and Facebook feed (https://www.facebook.com/pg/Artistic-Photography-by-Tami-190637041791/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10153576227421792) that show galleries of Varozza engaging in 'dudeoir' photography.
- ³⁸ Although not recognised as a conventional beer style in the BJCP style guide (as its traits defy existing categorisations of styles) the 'sour IPA' is a hybrid style that is gaining momentum in craft beer circles. Given

- that hops provide bitterness to counteract malt sweetness, IPA beers typically lean towards the bitter side. European sour ales in contrast, mostly “have low bitterness, with the sourness of the beer providing the balance that hop bitterness would otherwise contribute” (BJCP, 2015: online).
- ³⁹ <https://www.sirencraftbrew.com/about/our-story>. The brewery calls their beers ‘Sirens’, personifying them as “adventurous but drinkable, designed to be accessible to those lured into craft beer, yet flavourful enough for those seasoned beer fans to return to time and time again”.
- ⁴⁰ See Hayward (2018: 161) for discussion.
- ⁴¹ The tasting notes (written in Norwegian) indicate that the beer is “a delicious and fresh beer with elegant acid. A nice fruity aroma that is balanced with delicious sourness. The perfect summer beer.”
- ⁴² See <http://www.garshol.priv.no/blog/380.html> for discussion.
- ⁴³ Through an agile brewing approach of creating a continuously evolving series of one-off brews, a format that echoes the ‘release early, release often’ software development philosophy that promotes tight feedback between producer and consumer with the aim to better conform to user requirements.
- ⁴⁴ The brewery’s taproom and bottle-shop is named ‘The Dojo’ — effectively a training facility for growth in beer knowledge and experience, aimed at an audience that grew up watching martial arts films in the 1980s–90s. A comprehensive collection of the brewery’s beers and artwork can be found at: <https://pdubs.net/beers-1>
- ⁴⁵ The artist behind many of the brewery’s recent beer designs.
- ⁴⁶ See Naylor (2017) for discussion.
- ⁴⁷ One that would likely be classed as a Specialty IPA.
- ⁴⁸ Curiously, some mer-iconography and sea-mythology inspired naming of beer appears arbitrarily selected, such as Australian inland-brewery Granite Belt’s ‘Storm King Kolsch’ where the label art represents neither hybridity, coastal proximity, nor other historical or folkloric associations, see: <https://www.granitebeltbrewery.com.au/product-page/storm-king-kolasch-24-x-330ml>
- ⁴⁹ In terms of supporting pro-social and progressive movements, accommodating varied ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations of consumers.
- ⁵⁰ While it did not specifically set out to focus on gender portrayals in the craft beer industry more broadly, research for this article follows Kuehn and Parker’s findings that the reproduction of gendered tropes in beer art are prevalent and “reproduce and maintain craft beer as a culture of [white] middle-class maleness” (2018: online)/