



Collection Development, Cultural Heritage,
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CRAFT BEER CULTURE AND MODERN MEDIEVALISM

BREWING DISSENT

by
NOËLLE PHILLIPS

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION: MEDIEVALISM AND CRAFT BEER

IT IS A warm, lazy day in the early summer of 2018; with half an hour to spare, it's the perfect time to hunt for a new craft beer to try. As I scan the labels in the craft beer corner of my neighbourhood liquor store, my eye is caught by bright green rows of bomber bottles at eye level on the centre shelves—they are Driftwood Brewery's Extra Special Bitter, Naughty Hildegard. On the label, the famous twelfth-century abbess is pictured in profile against an emerald green stained glass window, gazing contemplatively at a hop cone in her hand. According to some sources (including the label of this particular beer), Hildegard was one of the first people to recommend hops as a beer preservative and flavouring agent and thus has become somewhat of a legend in beer history. Surveying the surrounding craft beers, I notice the localized nature of their branding; this particular store is on the west coast of British Columbia, Canada, so many of the craft breweries whose products are on display draw upon west coast history, public figures, or wildlife in their marketing strategies. Naughty Hildegard is, like many of the other beers on these shelves, produced in southwestern British Columbia, and yet its branding has no connection to the province. Instead, it is connected to the past—a medieval, Western European past. And this connection is a relatively common one in North America's craft beer industry. The neolocalism that characterizes craft beer in general—its identity as the product of a small and distinct region—manifests itself differently in one segment of the market. Despite the fact that it is actually in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia that we find the true origins of brewing, the European and medieval replaces the contemporary and local in the narratives woven around a subset of craft beers and breweries in both Canada and the United States.¹ Modern medievalism thus informs, at least in part, the class and cultural identity formation processes at the heart of North America's craft beer industry. It may not be coincidental that medievalism as an object of academic study emerged during the same time period (1978–1979) in which President Carter legalized homebrewing in the United States and the craft beer industry rapidly expanded in both the United States and Canada.

This book examines a growing subgroup of the Canadian and American craft beer industry—medieval-themed breweries and brews—through the stories that craft brewers tell about themselves and their product. As a scholar of literature and book history, my interest is in how texts are transmitted, presented, and interpreted. In this case, the object of my study is how the discourse that has developed in the North American craft beer industry deploys medievalism in order to connect with consumers and to enhance product value. Such analysis reveals less about the craft beer industry itself or the Middle Ages, and more about North American cultural values and how we see ourselves in relation to an increasingly globalized world. Craft beer functions as another form of pop culture, even a strange kind of literature.

¹ To make this project manageable in the space of a short book, the craft beer industry outside the United States and Canada is not included. For ease of reference, I sometimes use “North America” to refer to Canada and the US together, even though this book does not consider the brewing industry in other North American countries.

Craft beer “literature” encapsulates a range of different texts, from images and icons to interviews with brewers to official origin stories to flavour descriptions. It is through such texts that a craft beer identity is shaped, one that is articulated as a heroic foil to the global beer corporations, those behemoth businesses that dominate the market and consume smaller breweries. As these corporations went through mergers and takeovers in the 1980s and 1990s, until finally one company controlled more than 80 percent of the international beer industry, the very concept of craft brewing seemed increasingly important and remains so today. The production and consumption of craft beer has been construed as a way to resist corporate hegemony. It is through discursive connections and embodied experiences, such as tastings/pairings, local fundraisers, and collaborations with local artists and vendors, that craft brewers are doing something different than the beer corporations, who by nature are disembodied and disconnected from local communities. The corporations exist in the market, as a generic term, but not in the community. Jeff Rice highlights the importance of connection and experience when he describes how craft brewers cultivate identity by “bypassing large-scale delivery methods” that would allow them to distribute their product more widely, “opting instead for a networked delivery practice and the usage of Connectors”:

When we retell the story of our first time drinking a beer with our dad on a hot day, we act as Connectors. When we aggregate styles or locations into a network of terroir, we act as Connectors. When I take a photograph of a beer I am drinking and upload it to a social media site, I am acting as a Connector. Connectors are a form of delivery.²

One of the primary Connectors in craft-brewing discourse is neolocalism, which is discussed at length in Chapter 3. However, my specific interest is the role of medievalism as a Connector and the features medievalism shares with neolocalism. Indeed, as I explore in more detail throughout this book, the desire to recreate, return to, or imagine a preindustrial past can evoke the same emotional response in a consumer as neolocalism does. Craft beer texts speak to our desire to belong and to escape—to find a place and an experience through which we feel the world has been righted. The craft beer industry in general invites us to think about purity, resistance, return, and democratic accessibility, and all of these conceptual lynchpins align perfectly with modern medievalism. Such idealism, however, may prevent us from recognizing some of the systemic, often unintentional problems of the industry, such as its heroized version of various histories (both medieval and modern) and the ways in which it subtly gatekeeps participation or inadvertently makes certain groups feel that they do not belong.

Medievalism, as the following section discusses in more detail, refers to post-medieval representations and interpretations of the Middle Ages. It has become a formal subject of academic study in recent decades, but it has been practiced—sometimes self-consciously, oftentimes not—for centuries. It is important to recognize that a study of medievalism, in all its variant practices, is not a study of the medieval era itself. Similarly, this book is not a study of the taste, production, or distribution of craft beer. Rather, it is an analysis of representation: how the craft beer industry represents itself, how it uses

² Rice, *Craft Obsession*, 149.

models of the past to craft that representation, and what these strategies tell us about ourselves. Any kind of storytelling and illustration, whether it is in a children's book, a novel, a cookbook, a news broadcast, or a craft brewery's beer label, is a representation of reality that has been cultivated to evoke a desired response in the reader or viewer, and to invite a specific interpretation of that object, figure, event, or product. It may, to some, seem silly to "analyze" these kinds of texts or discourses, but I disagree. The skill of critical thinking begins with the willingness to read carefully and to interrogate our immediate responses to what we encounter. Craft beer may appear to be a rather flippant choice for analytical engagement, but it is a movement deeply imbricated with our assumptions about purity, revolution, social justice, and equality. I think it's worth our attention.

Medievalism

The term "medievalism," briefly explained above, comes with a plurality of definitions, but most have a shared foundation: the idea that many postmedieval societies have used the Western European vision of "medieval" as a concept through which to understand their own world. Within the cultural products that deploy medievalism, such as films, comic books, slang, fantasy novels, advertisements, common analogies, etc., "medieval" is not so much a chronological period as an ideological category.³ Western leaders regularly label the ISIS as "medieval" or from the "Dark Ages" to illustrate the terrorists' failure to evolve morally or culturally. *Pulp Fiction*'s Marsellus Wallace famously used the phrase "get medieval on your ass" to convey the horrors to which he would subject Zed, his rapist.⁴ At the same time, the so-called chivalric values of the Middle Ages and knight and castle metaphors are predominant in various types of storytelling, political commentary, and news media.⁵ In the 2018 trial of the Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley (a Caucasian man) for the murder of Colten Boushie (a Cree teenager), the defense's opening arguments presented Stanley as a man guarding his "castle," thus rendering legitimate his violent response to Boushie.⁶ Countless animated films, from the Disney classics *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella*, to *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty*

³ Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism*, 3.

⁴ For a thorough discussion of the medievalism of *Pulp Fiction* and this scene in particular, see the final chapter ("Getting Medieval: Pulp Fiction, Foucault, and the Use of the Past") in Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁵ In his forthcoming book *Black Metaphors*, Cord Whitaker summarizes some modern public appropriations of "medieval" (pages 187–88). My thanks to Prof. Whitaker for allowing me to read portions of this book prior to its release.

⁶ Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, "How the Death of Colton Boushie Became Recast as the Story of a Knight Protecting His Castle," *The Globe and Mail*, February 13, 2018. www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/how-the-death-of-colten-boushie-became-recast-as-the-story-of-a-knight-protecting-his-castle/article37958746/. Last accessed July 17, 2019. Lawyer Scott Spencer's exact words to the jury were: "For farm people, your yard is your castle. That's part of the story here."

and the Beast, to the more recent *Tangled*, *Frozen*, and *How to Train Your Dragon*, set their stories in a vaguely medieval land with vaguely medieval clothing and architecture. Medieval historicity is discarded while the medieval aesthetic is embraced; medievalism is, as noted earlier, not equivalent to the medieval itself. Tison Pugh argues that this Disney version of the Middle Ages, in films as well as in Disneyland itself, uses the medieval to reflect and reinforce a sense of childlike innocence, a time and space without the problems of social injustice and class conflict.⁷ That innocence, however, has also been taken as ignorance in other contexts, with “medieval” used both to describe and condemn political foolishness.⁸ Indeed, “medieval” has come to represent a wide range of contradictory ideas and values: origin, romance, brutality, old-fashioned values, faith in God, primitive logic, freedom, and oppression. There is never just one Middle Ages; there is a plethora. Umberto Eco, who identifies ten versions of the Middle Ages in his essay “Dreaming of the Middle Ages,” points out that we have returned to all of these Middle Ages ever since the medieval era itself ended. Because modern Western society is structured by systems inherited from the Middle Ages, the period is seen as a point of origin, as Eco elaborates:

Thus looking at the Middle Ages means looking at our infancy, in the same way that a doctor, to understand our present state of health, asks us about our childhood, or in the same way that the psychoanalyst, to understand our present neuroses, makes a careful investigation of the primal scene.⁹

If the Middle Ages is a cultural origin, then it can be used either as a point of disavowal—our rejection of violence and our primal nature—or as a space of purity to which we can perhaps one day return. These conflicting impulses both to reject and to elevate the medieval are not new; as discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter, they emerged immediately after the medieval period was over (once it was an era officially in the past), but were also prominent during the nineteenth century, when the formal study of medieval history and literature emerged as viable academic subjects as opposed to mere dilettante hobbies.¹⁰ This simultaneous love for and disparagement of “the medieval” continues to this day, as representations of the Middle Ages shift in response to rapid social, technological, and religious changes.

The various Middle Ages represented in modern medievalisms reveal, of course, much more about the society producing the representation than about the medieval

⁷ Pugh, “Introduction,” 3–5.

⁸ Neal Gabler, “George W. Bush’s Medieval Presidency,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 2003, sec. Worldview, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/oct/05/opinion/op-gabler5>. Last accessed July 17, 2019.

⁹ Eco, “Dreaming of the Middle Ages,” 65.

¹⁰ See the following sources for further information about the introduction of literary studies—particularly medieval literature—into higher education: Alan Bacon, ed., *The Nineteenth-Century History of English Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998); Ian Hunter, *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education* (London: Palgrave, 1988); Noelle Phillips, “‘Texts with Trousers’: Editing and the Elite Chaucer,” *Review of English Studies* 61 (2010): 331–59.

era itself. However, medievalism as a mediating layer of cultural information has been largely invisible in mainstream academic scholarship until relatively recently. Medieval scholars before the late twentieth century generally did not formally study how postmedieval societies construed the Middle Ages, focusing instead on the Middle Ages themselves, and scholars studying later periods were not particularly interested in how the concept of “medieval” was deployed in postmedieval eras. Leslie Workman is the scholar most often credited with directing formal academic focus to the study of medievalism. In the 1970s, Workman was a young historian teaching undergraduate history courses. The more time he spent introducing medieval history to his young students, the more he realized how much the contemporary understanding of the period—and therefore the general sense of “medieval” overall—was shaped by nineteenth-century historians.¹¹ In pursuit of this realization, he organized a session at the Tenth International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan, titled “The Idea of the Middle Ages in the Modern World.” With Alice Kenney, one of his cohorts on that panel, he planned more conference sessions over the following year, and launched the academic journal *Studies in Medievalism* in 1979. In his editorial preface to that first issue, Workman proposed a working definition of medievalism that became a cornerstone of this newly recognized field:

Studies in Medievalism is concerned with [...] the study of scholarship which has created the Middle Ages we know, ideas and models derived from the Middle Ages, and the relations between them. In terms of these things medievalism could only begin, not simply when the Middle Ages had ended [...] but when the Middle Ages were perceived to have been something in the past, something it was necessary to revive or desirable to imitate.¹²

Workman’s articulation of medievalism highlights a key feature that remains central to the study of medievalism today: the notion of difference that at once separates and links. Medievalism could not exist until “medieval” as a category existed—until “medieval” was different from “now.” “Medieval” offers a point of reference and a contrast to “now,” whenever that “now” exists. At the same time, “medieval” can also represent an originary space, a time before the changes that transformed the Middle Ages into modern culture. While “medieval” must always mean different, sometimes that difference is one that symbolizes an earlier version of ourselves or our society, a version that is simpler and purer and easier to digest. In a strange form of nostalgia, we want to touch, recreate, and experience this past that is at once drastically different from our present and the ultimate source of it. The academic study of medievalism thus requires a somewhat uncomfortable level of self-awareness, since we are constantly reliant upon and working with postmedieval interpretations and reconstructions of whatever the “true” medieval was.

Workman and Kenney ardently toiled at dragging the concept of medievalism into academic visibility. They called themselves “not only enthusiasts, but crusaders,” thus visualizing themselves as conquering knights and (perhaps ironically) deploying the nostalgic

11 Verduin, “The Founding and the Founder,” 6.

12 Leslie Workman, “Preface,” *Studies in Medievalism* 1 (1979): 1–3 (1).

imaginary that medievalism itself interrogates.¹³ Workman refined his understanding of medievalism during these years, moving beyond the observation that earlier scholars had shaped historical interpretation, and emphasizing the power of historical representation itself upon the expression of sociocultural values. In a 1978 memo—in the midst of conference sessions being organized and the journal being launched—Workman defined medievalism as “the post-medieval study of the Middle Ages and the use of that study in a variety of contexts.”¹⁴ He stated it even more strongly in the eighth issue of *Studies in Medievalism*: “Medieval historiography, the study of the successive recreation of the Middle Ages by different generations, *is* the Middle Ages. And this of course is medievalism.”¹⁵ In other words, one could reasonably understand medievalism as beginning from the moment in which a writer, reader, or editor (the fifteenth-century printer William Caxton and his prefaces come to mind) presented the Middle Ages as a time separate from their own—a separation built into the very terms “Middle Ages” and “medieval.” The academic study of this field can therefore embrace cultural productions as old as Caxton or as recent as the Naughty Hildegard label or the newest *Thor* blockbuster.

I have paid particular attention to Workman because of the extent to which his ideas informed later academic attitudes to medievalism and were conditioned by wider academic discourses at the time. Workman’s definition of medievalism, for example, aligns with Hayden White’s influential work on historiography in the 1970s and 1980s. In his book *The Content of the Form*, White emphasizes that the imposition of narrative on historical events—historiography itself—moralizes those events and creates history; history cannot be disentangled from how we narrate it.¹⁶ Although medievalism and historiography are not the same thing, medievalism nonetheless contributes to the interpretation of history. Indeed, medievalism has been an invisible influence shaping even scholarly understandings of the Middle Ages. In his consideration of both Workman and White, Diebold insists that we must question the “hierarchy of creation over reception” when exploring medievalism, and goes so far as to suggest that the representation of the Middle Ages (medievalism) is all we have; there is no true medieval.¹⁷ Other scholars deploy the term “neomedievalism” to distinguish between those representations of the Middle Ages that attempt to recover some sort of reality, and those that consciously reject such representation in favour of a medievalism based upon temporal and cultural play.¹⁸ Richard Utz connects such “play” to Jean Baudrillard’s idea of the simulacra, noting that medievalism entails the “creat(ion) of pseudo-medieval worlds that playfully obliterate

13 Verduin, “The Founding and the Founder,” 7.

14 Cited in Diebold, “Medievalism,” 249.

15 Leslie Workman, “Preface,” *Studies in Medievalism* 8 (1996): 1–3 (1).

16 Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 1–26.

17 Diebold, “Medievalism,” 249.

18 See the 2010 issue of *Studies in Medievalism* (vol. 19) for a collection of essays focused upon neomedievalism. While I occasionally use the term in this book, I hesitate to claim there is a clear

history [...] with a simulacra of the medieval, employing images that are neither an original nor the copy of an original, but altogether ‘Neo.’”¹⁹ Many pop culture medievalisms, such as video games, the Medieval Times stage show, and Disney films, are more closely aligned with what Utz describes than with historical representations of the Middle Ages (which are still forms of medievalism, as stated earlier). These playful ‘neo’ versions of the medieval offer an emotional experience; they allow us to conceive of the Middle Ages as a time of reassuring simplicity.

This is especially powerful in our current sociopolitical climate, as we see increasing resistance to dissolving boundaries that we have long taken for granted, such as gender identity, gender roles, sexual orientation, and the function and definition of marriage. Pop culture medievalisms give us reassuring Caucasian versions of masculine men and feminine women, nuclear heterosexual families, and easily distinguished heroes and villains. As Amy Kaufman argues, this form of neomedievalism erases difference and distinction (from among decades, centuries, cultures, countries, experiences) of the historical Middle Ages and isolates and combines elements into one “essentialized incarnation of the Western imagination.”²⁰ I describe this phenomenon in Chapter 6 as “white medievalism.” White medievalism allows us to see the Middle Ages as a Platonic form—a pure, original version of nascent Western culture, characterized by assumed yet unspoken whiteness. On the other side of this unspoken whiteness, of course, is medievalism’s racialized (often in the form of orientalism) representation of nonwhite people or activities.

Finally, in pop culture medievalism’s essentializing of the Middle Ages we also often see the era reduced to a space of aggression that can be framed in a range of ways—as frightening, admirable, or funny. This aggression is sometimes cast in positive terms (chivalry, skill, duels, manly men), while in other cases “medieval” becomes synonymous with the brutal and the primal, as suggested earlier. Even when the medieval is romanticized, it is conceptually energized by its ever-present potential to collapse into violence. In some representations that violence is parodied or “gamified,” but the power of the parodic inheres in its reliance upon that initial presence of extreme violence—perhaps so extreme we refuse to take it seriously.²¹ The conflation of aggression and masculinity in medievalism’s construction of the Middle Ages often emerges alongside its narratives of whiteness and heroism, as Chapter 6 explores in more detail.

hermeneutic line drawn between medievalism and neomedievalism, and therefore I do not assume that these two categories are always distinct.

19 Utz, “A Moveable Feast,” v.

20 Kaufman, “Medieval Unmoored,” 8.

21 See just one example of violence made mild and palatable via gamification here: Paul Darvasi, “How Schools Spark Excitement for Learning with Role Playing and Games,” *Mindshift, KQED News*, February 20, 2019. www.kqed.org/mindshift/53071/how-schools-spark-excitement-for-learning-with-role-playing-games. Last accessed July 17, 2019.

Medievalism through the Ages

While medievalism has always been premised upon marking the boundary between the medieval and the current moment, it manifests differently across the centuries, from the mid-sixteenth century until today. Before proceeding to a discussion of the place of beer in medievalism, this chapter briefly elaborates on the various ways in which medievalism has emerged since “medieval” became the past.²² Because this book in general focuses upon the way in which Canadian and American society tends to see the Western European—and in particular British—Middle Ages as emblematic of “the medieval,” the following discussion of medievalism primarily engages with British medievalisms. For similar reasons, and in the interests of space constraints, Chapter 2 primarily engages with British medieval texts. I have no doubt that additional insights will be, and have been, generated by others; work on non-European and non-“Western” medievalism and medieval histories will certainly enrich my limited discussion here.

David Matthews is one of many scholars who have highlighted the significance of the term “middle” in our interpretation of what the Middle Ages was—and is. Matthews points out that “the ‘middleness’ of the Middle Ages could [...] only become evident when the period itself could be thought of as completed.”²³ Correspondingly, medievalism itself could not emerge before the Middle Ages became “middle”; because of the complexity inherent in separating one era from another, there is no single clear point at which medievalism as a cultural practice (not the scholarly study) begins. Stephanie Trigg suggests that incipient medievalism was evident at the end of the Middle Ages with Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*. Malory’s *Morte* is, she argues, a nostalgic fantasy of an earlier medieval England that never really existed—a version that has come to encapsulate one of the many Middle Ages that live in the modern imagination.²⁴ Mike Rodman Jones has identified the Elizabethan era as a key moment in the development of medievalism, as writers such as Shakespeare and John Foxe turned the medieval past into a source of fairy tales or childish naïveté.²⁵ Foxe’s 1570 *Actes and Monuments* referred to the “middle age” of the Church, thus suggesting that the Church had since advanced in understanding and reason, but also evoking the idea of “middleness.” Similarly, records from 1469 in Rome reveal the use of the phrase “media tempestas,” or “middle time.”²⁶ Although there is no clear date that we can identify for marking the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the medievalism that attempts to recover or reproduce it, the 100 years spanning the late fifteenth to the late sixteenth centuries appear to be when the transition occurs.

22 Given the vast breadth of this field, however, the discussion here is of necessity limited and introductory. For a far more comprehensive interrogation of medievalism, I direct readers to David Matthews’ *Medievalism: A Critical History* and the 2016 collection *A Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, edited by Louise D’Arcens.

23 Matthews, *Medievalism*, 32.

24 Stephanie Trigg, “Medievalism and Theories of Temporality,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. Louise D’Arcens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 196–209 (204).

25 Jones, “Early Modern Medievalism,” 93–100.

26 Matthews, *Medievalism*, 20.

One might argue that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literary engagements with Chaucer—that “auncient” medieval author—are a key example of the early emergence of medievalism. Through his construction as a literary father by late medieval writers such as Hoccleve and Lydgate, Chaucer was seen as an origin point for English literature and culture, coming metonymically to represent the Middle Ages to the next generation of writers and editors. Megan Cook explores how in Robert Greene’s late sixteenth-century account, his dream visitations from Chaucer and Gower embody at once the authority conferred by the past and an “ambivalent nostalgia” about that past.²⁷ In his late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century editions of Geoffrey Chaucer’s works, Thomas Speght prefaced the text with Speed’s full-page illustration of “The Progenie of Geffrey Chaucer” that cast Chaucer as a paternal origin, both literally and symbolically.²⁸ Speght’s editions were the first to refer to Chaucer as “Antient” and “Learned,” and Speght’s prefatory material and textual inclusions also constructed Chaucer as not only an *auctor* like Homer or Virgil, but as a literary courtier—a figure to be respected in Speght’s time.²⁹ Since Chaucer, as Speght’s 1598 preface states, was from “most vnlearned times and greatest ignorance” compared to the seventeenth century “wherein Learning and riper iudgement so much flourisheth,”³⁰ there was anxiety regarding how his medieval origins could be reconciled with his high literary status.³¹ For this reason, Speght’s editions of 1598 and 1602 reinforce Chaucer’s courtly associations, to the extent that he presented Chaucer’s family tree in such a way that aligned Chaucer’s nonaristocratic lineage with the aristocracy. The medieval Chaucer therefore became the figurative root of contemporary nobility, and the reproduction of his oeuvre in the form of printed collections attempts to recover a “complete” Chaucer, a Chaucer whose legacy was fully visible once he was relegated to a past time.

Due in part to these late medieval and early modern adaptations, Chaucer became one of the medieval icons, alongside Gawain and Arthur, around whom later notions of the Middle Ages developed. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century artists, writers, and readers, such as Walter Scott, the bibliophiles of the Roxburghe Club, and the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, dabbled in reproductions of medieval texts and medieval figures for decades before would-be scholars turned the Middle Ages into a subject of academic inquiry in the late nineteenth century. The renewed interest in a romantic Middle Ages at this time may have been, in part at least, a response to the developing fields of scientific inquiry; medievalism had a visual and moral appeal that science

²⁷ Megan Cook, “Nostalgic Temporalities in Greenes Vision,” *Parergon* 33 (2016): 39–56 (43).

²⁸ I refer readers to Megan Cook’s recent discussion of this portrait in her book *The Poet and the Antiquaries: Chaucerian Scholarship and the Rise of Literary History, 1532–1635* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 36–38.

²⁹ Derek Pearsall, “Thomas Speght,” in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul Ruggiers (Norman: Pilgrim, 1984), 71–92 (75).

³⁰ Thomas Speght, *The workes of our antient and learned English poet, Geffrey Chaucer*. 1598. STC 5079. *Early English Books Online*.

³¹ Tim Machan, “Speght’s ‘Works’ and the Invention of Chaucer,” *Text* 8 (1995): 145–70 (159).

lacked.³² A vaguely medieval aesthetic thus became increasingly popular throughout the nineteenth century, becoming visible in the anti-industrial arts and crafts movement, in neo-Gothic architecture, in the pre-Raphaelite paintings and poetry of mournful women and gentle yet strong armored men, and of course in public reenactments of chivalric events, such as the 1839 Eglinton Tournament in Scotland and the 1842 royal costume ball in which Victoria and Albert appeared as King Edward III and Queen Philippa. The latter event, in which medieval costuming was mandated for all members of the royal household, was intended to boost the English silk industry via its decadent clothing commissions.³³ The replication of medieval arts and crafts, in this case, was deployed as an investment in modern industry.

Similarly, the 1851 Great Exhibition in London featured a replica of a medieval court that essentially advertised the skills of English builders and craftspeople. Created by the famous architect and designer Augustus Pugin in partnership with firms such as George Myers of London and John Hardman & Co of Birmingham, the Medieval Court was at once an homage to preindustrial modes of craftsmanship and a display of contemporary skill.³⁴ The *Examiner's* review of the Medieval Court in its May 1851 issue is a breathless gasp of admiration at the overwhelming strangeness and sensuality of the exhibit, conveying a fascination with a time that birthed Victorian England yet also dwarfed it.³⁵ William Morris also attempted to recover the lost majestic aesthetic of the Middle Ages by producing medieval-style printed editions of medieval texts. As a socialist writer with interests in social justice, Morris was skeptical of the advances in science and industry and questioned how these would affect both workers and products. He therefore intentionally used "antiquated technologies" in his famed Kelmscott Press, a choice that revealed how aesthetics, politics, and economics intersected in the nineteenth century.³⁶ He expressed his intentions in aesthetic terms that evoked a model

32 Marsden, "Medievalism," 2.

33 "Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at the Bal Costume of 12 May 1842," *Royal Collection Trust*. www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/404540/queen-victoria-and-prince-albert-at-the-bal-costume-of-12-may-1842. Last accessed July 24, 2019.

34 John Ganim, "Medievalism and Orientalism at the World's Fairs," *Studia Anglica Posnaniensis: International Review of English Studies* 38 (2002): 184.

35 From the introductory portion of the review:

Before we close our notice for this week let us step for a moment out of the nineteenth into the fifteenth century. Here stands the Medieval Court. Here gleams around the antique art of bygone ages. Here the Gothic element presides supreme. It was worshipped of yore in the great stone books of the middle ages—the cathedrals. It reared itself in vast towers and fretted pinnacles—it flung itself into dark and shadowy aisles. It shaped vast arched and groined doors. It piled up, stone-like, the vistas of forest trees, and made a counterfeit presentment of the solemn glades where the Teuton nations sacrificed to their deities. All was vast, grand in conception, and gloomily vigorous in execution.

36 Aaron Donachuk, "After the Letter: Typographical Distraction and the Surface of Morris's Kelmscott Romances," *Victorian Studies* 59 (2017): 260–87 (263, 268).

of “recovery” medievalism common to much of the arts and crafts movement: “I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty. [...] I have always been a great admirer of the calligraphy of the Middle Ages, & of the earlier printing which took its place.”³⁷ Morris conceived of the Kelmscott Press’s “definite claim to beauty” as a contrast to the mass-produced texts that were the result of late nineteenth-century industrialization; in other words, his medievalism portrayed capitalism and economic interests as crushing taste and beauty.³⁸ Elizabeth Miller, making a similar point, argues that Morris’ editions “construct[ed] themselves as utopian spaces outside the ‘march of progress’ narrative” that resisted the homogeneity and the economies inherent to so-called social and technological advancement.³⁹

The patriotic yearning for a preindustrial time of colour, passion, and simplicity that characterized the earlier amateur love for the Middle Ages was also incorporated into the burgeoning academic interest in the medieval. The Middle Ages became a site of moral purity and a model for nation-building. This version of the Middle Ages, which coexisted along with conflicting visions of the medieval as barbarous, romantic, democratic, and innocent, is particularly evident in the Early English Text Society (EETS) and its editors, many of whom emerged from groups of amateur book lovers to become professional editors in new academic fields.⁴⁰ The 1871 EETS Committee’s Seventh Report emphasizes this association of medieval English literature with modern English culture: “Classical studies may make a man intellectual, but the study of native literature has a moral effect as well. *It is the true ground and foundation of patriotism.*”⁴¹ The chief EETS editor, Frederick Furnivall, argued that it is not “dilettante Antiquarianism” but rather “duty to England” that motivates the amateur scholars of the EETS.⁴² The delight and pleasure that etymologically and practically informed the development of elite medieval book clubs, such as the Roxburghe, Bannatyne, and Maitland Clubs, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were soon overtaken by the science-based field of philology that was being pioneered by German academics.⁴³ Even within the rationalist framework

37 William Morris, *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press*. <https://archive.org/stream/ANoteByWilliamMorrisOnHisAimsInFoundingTheKelmscottPressTogether/MdUZ232M87M831898#page/n0/mode/2up>. Last accessed July 24, 2019.

38 Donachuk, “After the Letter,” 263.

39 Quoted in Donachuk, “After the Letter,” 269.

40 See Antony Singleton, “The Early English Text Society in the Nineteenth Century: An Organizational History,” *The Review of English Studies* 56 (2005): 90–118; Richard Utz, “Academic Medievalism and Nationalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. Louise D’Arcens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 119–34; Phillips, “Texts with Trousers.”

41 Quoted in Singleton, “The Early English Text Society,” 94. Italics are original.

42 William Benzie, *Dr. F. J. Furnivall: Victorian Scholar Adventurer* (Norman: Pilgrim, 1983), 132.

43 Richard Utz points out that the use of the terms “dilettante” and “amateur” to describe the members of such clubs drew attention to the driving force behind the interest in medieval books: “Pleasure, delight, and curiosity have been among the main motivating factors for the reading and distribution of premodern texts” (“Academic Medievalism,” 120). However, he also argues that

of Germanic philology, however, the English scholars of medieval texts remained preoccupied with origins and the nationalist values that attend them. The myths of authorial genius permeated nineteenth-century medieval philology. For example, the now common practice of constructing a *stemma codicum*—essentially a textual genealogy in the form of a manuscript family tree—was systemized by nineteenth-century philologist Karl Lachmann, whose “common-error” method of recension was predicated on the notion of a common textual archetype, often speculated to be the author’s holograph or a manuscript copied from the holograph.⁴⁴ Such editorial practices, which were widely adopted by England and other countries emulating Germany, reveal an implicit investment in authorial purity and the value of origin, both of which reinforced English nationalism as the study of English literature developed.⁴⁵ This infusion of nationalism into medievalism became even more powerful as it emerged in fascist ideologies of the twentieth century and in the white supremacist movements of our current time.

The kind of recovery medievalism exemplified in so many nineteenth-century discourses was one which strove to recover ideals that supposedly existed in the Middle Ages and to cultivate them for modern use; such ideals included beauty, craft skill, literary prowess, bravery, love, and respect for women. The chivalric code encompassed many of those ideals in its insistence upon courage, skill in battle, self-sacrifice, and love of country, and the ethos of chivalry was popularized well into the twentieth century as two world wars destroyed the economies of countries and the lives of young men and women. Such medievalism is seen in various kinds of war poetry and war propaganda⁴⁶ and continues to emerge even now, in discussions of war and even of the protection of property, as identified in the accounts of the Colton Boushie trial mentioned earlier in this chapter. Andrew Lynch has demonstrated how integral war is to our vision and recovery of the Middle Ages, suggesting that the medieval is essentially unimaginable to

in the face of rapid developments in scientific fields, literary study required more “science-like” methods in order to keep up, and thus the amateur antiquarians were no longer sufficient to the task of interpreting England’s ancient texts (125).

⁴⁴ Bernard Coulie, “Text Editing: Principles and Methods,” in *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, ed. Valentina Calzolari (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 137–74 (143).

⁴⁵ In recent years, of course, scholars have become perhaps equally as interested in scribal activity as in the authorial text. Indeed, the goal of recovering the authorial archetype is sometimes seen as unrealistic, blinding us to useful information found in the process of textual transmission itself. In their introduction to their volume on the editing of medieval texts, Anne Hudson and Vincent Gillespie note that “there seems to be a consensus [in this volume] that the Lachmannian stemmatic approach should be abandoned as an unattainable ideal” (Anne Hudson and Vincent Gillespie, *Probable Truth: Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-First Century* [Turnhout: Brepols, 2013], 1). On the other hand, however, Lawrence Warner’s recent book *Chaucer’s Scribes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) points out that scholars still desire connection with the author, to the extent that we overlook weaknesses in logic and evidence when considering scribal attributions and their putative connections with Chaucer.

⁴⁶ Matthews, *Medievalism*, 41.

us without the presence of war.⁴⁷ The traction of medievalism's vision of medieval war is due to the former's appropriation of "supposed age-old and elemental antimonies of light and dark, good and evil, pure and polluted—the basis of most popular genre fantasy fiction and film."⁴⁸ The temporal distance offered by medieval accounts of war allows readers from later periods to impose an ideological coherence upon the violence, to insert war into a teleology that interprets the good and evil for us. Nuance is lost, uncertainty is gone. Tropes of medieval war thus can serve an ideological purpose in later centuries by consolidating support for a cause through aligning it with ancient honour even amidst blood and chaos. For example, Winston Churchill's 1956 account of the historical King Arthur uses language that allows readers to see the atrocities of World War II, from which Britain was still reeling, as part of the path to advancing Christian civilization, even though he does not explicitly reference contemporary events:

[Scholars] believe that there was a great British warrior, who kept the light of civilisation burning against all the storms that beat, and that behind his sword there sheltered a faithful following. [...] King Arthur and his noble knights, guarding the Sacred Flame of Christianity and the theme of a world order [...] slaughtered innumerable hosts of foul barbarians and set decent folk an example for all time.⁴⁹

Arthur here becomes an almost Churchillian figure, one who could be imagined as one of the Allied soldiers, who would (in Churchill's words), fight the enemy on the beaches, on the streets, on the hills, and never surrender. Indeed, scholars have noted the increase in Arthur's popularity as a national icon during twentieth-century conflicts, including both World Wars.⁵⁰ Narratives that identify a specific moment or individual who embodies the good of the Middle Ages—such as the wartime lauding of Arthur or editorial yearnings for Chaucer—perpetuate the idea that beneath the complexity of the Middle Ages, beyond its alterity, is a core of purity, a seed from which grows the goodness of the present; in Renée Trilling's words, medievalism offers "a pre-ontological wholeness and unity."⁵¹ This is a particularly valuable concept during times of technological and social change or conflict, during which the present feels unstable and a connection to the past is reassuring.

While war medievalisms present themselves as historically accurate, offering a connection with ancient heroes and a sense of stability within a teleological view of world events, the experiential or recreational medievalisms of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are self-consciously playful with the Middle Ages. In medieval video games, distinctions between eras, countries, and cultures are usually

47 Andrew Lynch, "Medievalism and the Ideology of War," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. Louise D'Arcens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 135–50 (136).

48 Lynch, "Medievalism," 139.

49 Winston Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples, Vol 1: The Birth of Britain*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rosetta, 2013, 1956), 46–47.

50 See Sørina Higgins, *The Inklings and King Arthur: J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and Owen Barfield on the Matter of Britain* (Berkeley: Apocryphile, 2017).

51 Trilling, "Medievalism," 218.

collapsed in order to make the medieval world more easily navigable. A simplified electronic Middle Ages allows people to create their own version of “medieval,” as is the case with *The Sims Medieval*, in which “you” (the gamer) get to “expand your kingdom and construct more buildings [...] Your Sims live in the lives of monarchs, knights, spies, magicians and more as you choose whether—or not—to [...] bring glory to the name of your kingdom!”⁵² There is a freedom here, an ownership over this imagined Middle Ages and what it can mean for the gamer. Through their interviews with gamers, Pugh and Weisl observe how the medieval games appeal because of their use of stock medieval concepts (“guys with big swords,” “knights on quests,” the “fun parts”); they offer a medievalized escape but “pose no questions of moral ambiguity that might disrupt one’s game play.”⁵³ We can laugh at what cannot be laughed at—violence—without risk and without moral pressure. This playful violence characterizes some forms of craft beer medievalism, as Chapter 5 discusses.

There are also embodied medieval recreational experiences across North America, such as the Medieval Times dinner show events, Renaissance Faires, Live Action Role Playing games (LARPing),⁵⁴ and the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) and other similar historical recreation groups.⁵⁵ These embodied experiences, like medieval video games, collapse chronological, geographical, and cultural differences in order to create a unified Middle Ages in which participants can play. The ludic nature of modern medieval recreation—its overturning of hierarchies and expectations—is perhaps the most medieval thing about it. Even the SCA, which attempts to create historically accurate reproductions of medieval arts, crafts, and practices, nevertheless prioritizes inclusion and unity over accuracy. The SCA is commonly called “the Middle Ages as it should have been,” a motto that openly reveals the SCA’s intentional reimagining of the medieval period; it stakes a moral claim that elevates modern morality over medieval historicity.⁵⁶ Shared social values, inclusion, and community are what make the SCA appealing, according to many participants. The Honorable Lady Jerusha Kilgore (her real name is Susan Farmer) is quoted on the main SCA website: “What is the SCA? Not only is it some of the most awesome fun that you’ll ever have, but the people you meet here will become the best family that you’ll ever have.”⁵⁷ This sense of community is reinforced in Deborah Parker’s doctoral thesis on the SCA, in which she emphasizes that its utopian yearning

⁵² Quoted in Pugh and Weisl, *Medievalisms*, 126.

⁵³ Pugh and Weisl, *Medievalisms*, 127.

⁵⁴ Although I do not discuss LARPing in any detail, the central website for LARPers, www.larping.org, reveals that medieval and/or fantasy/medieval themes are extremely popular for LARPers.

⁵⁵ I use the SCA as my primary example because it is arguably the largest and most widespread historical recreation group currently active in North America.

⁵⁶ “Society Seneschal,” *Society for Creative Anachronism Inc.* <http://socsen.sca.org/what-is-the-sca/>. Last accessed July 25, 2019.

⁵⁷ “What Is the SCA?,” *Society for Creative Anachronism Newcomer’s Portal*. <http://welcome.sca.org/about/>. Last accessed July 25, 2019.

for an egalitarian Middle Ages is a valuable and legitimate expression of contemporary community and even a path to political resistance:

Society members recognize that the ephemeral reality—free from the economic demands of daily life—makes it possible to take the time to engage with people differently, to emphasize the chivalric values. [...] The SCA has one foot grounded in historical reality and the other hovering over creative possibility. The weekend experiences promote alternate visions [of society].⁵⁸

The SCA attempts to balance its vision of a socially egalitarian Middle Ages with the hierarchies that must be acknowledged in any attempt to represent history accurately. However, its hierarchies are based on skill and hard work—meritocracy—rather than bloodlines; one can have a peasant “persona” but become a king or a knight, rather like Heath Ledger’s character in the neomedieval Hollywood film *A Knight’s Tale*. Shared democratic values as experienced through a shared imagined reality are integral to the SCA’s traction in modern society, and probably to most recreation groups’ ongoing popularity. The sense of community is crucial; as Renée Trilling says of popular culture’s imagined Middle Ages, “everyone may have been covered in shit, but at least it was communal shit.”⁵⁹ As we feel increasingly isolated in an increasingly connected world of endless communication, being part of a “real-life” community is incredibly valuable.

Renaissance Faires are slightly different than the SCA or other recreation societies, since they require no membership and historical accuracy tends to be discarded in favour of a whole-hearted embrace of imaginary neomedievalism. Although many of the larger Faires, such as the Valhalla Renaissance Faire and the Texas Renaissance Fest, identify their period as the sixteenth century, the aesthetics and activities of the Faires are rarely restricted to that era. Alana Bennett describes them as an “eclectic fusion of history, fantasy, and invention.”⁶⁰ Unlike the SCA, whose members are regular participants who take time to develop a medieval persona and work to hone their skills in fighting or crafts, Renaissance Faires are populated by anyone looking for a weekend activity. Participants are encouraged—and sometimes mandated—to come in costume (anything vaguely medieval will do). Pugh and Weisl describe how the photos advertising the Medieval Fair in Norman, Oklahoma are comprised of a bricolage of objects and icons that collectively equate “medieval” with “not mainstream,” using alterity itself as a symbol of the Middle Ages:

[The photos] feature ironwork forks and swords, people singing, jousters (male and female), Celtic jewellery, a giant stuffed bear, falcons, patrons dressed as pirates, women on stilts, and even fringed and coined scarves for belly-dancing on sale. This eclectic

58 Deborah Parker, “The Making of a Princess: The Role of Ritual in Creating Community and Identity in the Society for Creative Anachronism,” PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2017, 32–33.

59 Trilling, “Medievalism,” 217.

60 Alana Bennett, “Reinventing the Past in European Neo-medieval Music,” in *The Middle Ages in Popular Culture: Medievalism and Genre*, ed. Helen Young (New York: Cambria, 2015), 92.

mix from traditions well beyond the Middle Ages and Renaissance [...] shows an inclusive and unifying past that allows everyone to “be themselves” by dressing up as someone else.⁶¹

While Renaissance Faires are unconcerned with historicity, they share with the SCA an embrace of community and acceptance of individuality. Jamila Salimpour, a renowned founder of North American forms of bellydance, discovered that the Berkeley Renaissance Pleasure Faire (and similar events) was one of the few large-audience venues in the 1960s and 1970s that accepted bellydance as a form of entertainment.⁶² Salimpour followed the vague guidelines of the Faire, which directed that all entertainment acts should be “period,” and used her background with the Ringling Brothers Circus to create an orientalized version of medievalism—or a medievalized version of orientalism—that would entertain the crowds: “I patterned Bal Anat after a circus-like variety show which one might see at an Arabian festival, or a *souk* in the Middle East [...] which represented a cross-section of old dance styles from the Middle East.”⁶³ She was very conscious that her troupe was pastiche and not historical reenactment, however, and in her accounts of Bal Anat she made no attempt to hide this: “many people thought it was the ‘real thing’ when in fact it was half real and half hokum.”⁶⁴ Indeed, the Renaissance Faire model itself could be described as “half real and half hokum,” but its value is not based upon its historical accuracy but its ability to unify its participants under the umbrella of an imaginary shared past, to create a temporary community based on nostalgia and alterity.

Craft Beer and Medievalism

So how does beer fit into the cultural spaces of medievalism? In the preceding brief sketch of the ways in which medievalism has manifested over the centuries, I have focused on modes of medievalism that most clearly intersect with the ways in which we identify ourselves and our communities. Some very popular types of medievalism that I do not really discuss in this book, such as films and neomedieval architecture, position the individual on the outside, as an observer, and are less clearly related to individual self-expression and identity formation. Identity and community are critical features of medieval historical recreation, medieval game-playing, and the academic study of medieval texts, and I argue that our consumption choices also reflect or produce both individual identity and communal belonging. One’s choice of beverage is a particularly powerful

⁶¹ Pugh and Weisl, *Medievalisms*, 134.

⁶² Bellydance has had a long history of stigma in the United States, particularly among Caucasian audiences. Many Middle Eastern, North African, Turkish, and Greek clubs and restaurants had regular dancing in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, but these were generally not frequently patronized by what might be considered the “average” Caucasian American. Renaissance Faires were more likely to garner this kind of audience.

⁶³ Jamila Salimpour, “From Many Tribes,” *The Best of Habibi* 17 (1999): np. <http://thebestofhabibi.com/vol-17-no-3-spring-1999/from-many-tribes/>. Last accessed July 25, 2019.

⁶⁴ Salimpour, “From Many Tribes.”

marker of identity; consider the different assumptions we make about a person that arise from what they order to drink.⁶⁵ Tea, wine, champagne, Coors Light, craft beer, whiskey, milk, espresso—each of these choices would affect the external perception of the drinker in distinct ways. Drinking, whether alcoholic or not, is one practice of social connection common across many cultures, and therefore the beverage we choose is a performance of identity.

This is not a new observation, of course; many sociologists and historians have explored the implications of drinking behaviour.⁶⁶ Decades ago, Pierre Bourdieu pointed out the ways in which consumer tastes become “markers of class,”⁶⁷ demonstrating the tautology inherent in the link between high-culture products and the higher-class consumers who purchase them. Don Slater similarly argues that the modern Western opposition of “culture” to consumption/commercialism is fallacious, as it is predicated on the illusion that cultural value (in art, food, architecture, et cetera) exists objectively, apart from class hierarchies and economic systems.⁶⁸ One’s social and economic identity is an integral part of one’s overall public persona. The research on beer consumption bears this out: as Flack states, “the beer that a person drinks has become a sociological marker or symbol of self-definition.”⁶⁹ As Chapter 3 discusses in more detail, the drinkers of craft beer in particular see (and present) themselves as having discerning taste.

The narratives that shape the craft beer industry are at the nexus of the various discourses outlined in this chapter: medievalism as a mode of identity formation; the race, gender, and class implications of consumption; the social role of beverages (and alcohol especially); and the concurrent desires for individuality and communal belonging in modern North American society. The cultural resonance of beer generally is far more wide-ranging than that of wine; it encompasses the cheap, mass-produced beer that self-proclaimed “rednecks” swill with pride to expensive, small-batch craft beer whose scarcity and uniqueness make it (and its consumers) appear valuable and interesting. Craft beer, while still being relatively affordable, has also become a high-culture product, with beer tastings rivalling wine tastings in popularity and beer labelling and branding becoming its own art form. A 2017 article in *The Guardian*, for example, explored the recent UK intersections of the art world and beer branding, highlighting the collaboration between Textbook Studios and the Manchester brewery Cloudwater, and the beer art exhibition “Pumped” held at a bookstore in Leeds.⁷⁰

65 Mick and Buhl describe beverages as “highly symbolic and richly connotative product classes” for advertisers seeking to reach consumers. See David Glen Mick and Claus Buhl, “A Meaning-Based Model of Advertising Experiences,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 19 (1992): 317–38 (320).

66 For example, see Spracklen, Laurencic, and Kenyon, “‘Mine’s a Pint of Bitter,’” and Gefou-Madianou, *Alcohol, Gender, and Culture*.

67 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 2.

68 Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity*, 63–99.

69 Flack, “American Microbreweries and Neolocalism,” 46.

70 Tony Naylor, “Brew Period: The Craft Beer Labels That Are Works of Art,” *The Guardian*, September 3, 2017, sec. Lifestyle. www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/sep/03/brew-period-craft-beer-labels-works-of-art. Last accessed July 25, 2019.

The subset of the craft beer industry that uses medievalism, or even a vaguely preindustrial theme, to market its product therefore taps into a powerful current in contemporary Western culture. Even as technological gains increase monthly and options for communication and self-expression flourish, we are left wondering what we have lost. The utopian imagining of what we used to be but cannot fully become again is a Lacanian yearning that will never be satisfied. Medievalism purports to offer a partial recovery of that loss, a semi-return to our former selves, to a time before social media paradoxically isolated us and the technology designed to reduce workloads actually increased them exponentially. Renée Trilling describes this nostalgic medievalism as one that

looks to the past as an object that is both ever-present and always-lost, and that distances us from the object of longing even as it maintains that object, tantalizingly out of reach [it] can point both to a place of absolute alterity and a place that we recognize as our lost home—and those places can be one and the same.⁷¹

Beer has been associated with medievalism and its attendant desire for a return home for centuries. In the early eighteenth century, an anonymous ballad lauded an England defined by its beer and its once and future—and medieval—king:

Of good English Beer our songs let's raise,
We've right by our freeborn Charter,
And follow our brave forefathers' ways,
Who lived in the time of King Arthur.
Of those gallant days loud fame hath told,
Beer gave the stout Britons spirit;
In love they spoke truth, and in war they were bold,
And flourished by the dint of merit.⁷²

The virtues of those “gallant days” of our medieval “forefathers” are bravery, skill, and independence, all of which are owed to “good English beer.” These same medievalized values are central tenets of the modern craft beer industry, which is founded not just upon the courageous rejection of corporate globalization and mass production, but upon the idea of turning back—going home, back to where we belong. This is, after all, an industry in which the products are defined by their locality and the close proximity between product and place of production. When craft brewers deploy medievalism in their branding, the geographical is often subordinated to the temporal or cultural; in other words, medieval becomes “local.” Instead of (or sometimes in addition to) regional origin, these brewers posit a cultural origin. Medieval-themed craft beer invites its consumers to think of themselves as not just reaching back towards that tantalizing place of simplicity and origin, but as separate from modern society. Both modern and medieval become spaces of alterity for consumers of medievalism, and that tension offers unique possibilities for individuation.

⁷¹ Trilling, “Medievalism,” 218, 220.

⁷² Marchant, *In Praise of Ale*, 26.

The following chapters explore various ways in which craft beer culture and medievalism align with and reinforce one another. Chapter 2 provides historical context by highlighting the social and economic functions of beer during the medieval period (approximately 600–1600 CE). Because this book is an analysis of beer's cultural representations, Chapter 2 focuses primarily upon various literary and historical references to brewing and beer from Britain's early Middle Ages to the early modern period; it is an analysis not of economic records or recipes, but of how beer was conceptualized. Readers interested in a comprehensive history of beer in the Middle Ages will find references for further reading in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 begins by outlining the dual history of craft beer and corporate beer in Canada and the United States from the 1970s until the present. That history is then used to contextualize the exploration of craft beer ideology that follows, an ideology premised upon resistance, revolution, neolocalism, and independence. This ideology is particularly aligned with white masculinity within the beer industry (both craft and corporate), although that is slowly changing. Chapters 4 and 5, using specific examples from and interviews with various breweries, analyze different iterations of two major tropes in craft beer medievalism: monastic medievalism and militant or Norse medievalism and the hero narratives shaping both. The analysis demonstrates how beer medievalism reinforces the craft beer industry's vision of itself as identified in Chapter 3. Chapter 6 addresses some challenging issues: the lack of racial diversity among craft beer drinkers and brewers and how this might align with the whiteness—and the imagined white history—that characterizes much modern medievalism, from the innocuous to the malevolent. This chapter evaluates the less obvious and mimetic manifestations of medievalism in the craft beer industry by connecting medievalism in its various forms to the development and reinforcement of colonial values.

Finally, the brief concluding chapter considers why beer is important—why is this book not about the growth of sewing or knitting as craft industries drawn from the past, or homemade soaps, or the popularity of Etsy as a revival of the arts and crafts movement? Why should we bother talking about it at all? The central role of beer in Western society over the centuries is due in part to the symbolic and transformative power of alcohol cross-culturally. Alcohol has the potential to connect people; it can dissolve (or urge us to transgress) social boundaries. Through the theology of transubstantiation, alcohol can allow mortals temporarily to be one in body with God. It was thought to loosen the tongues of poets and inflame the courage of lovers. There is a mythology around alcohol that continues, regardless of our modern-day understanding of the health risks of over-indulgence, and it is worth recognizing the traction that mythology still has.

