

I DRINK, THEREFORE I AM: THE AMERICAN CRAFT BEER
MOVEMENT IN THE POSTMODERN AGE

by

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ABSTRACT

While craft beer's placement within American society offers a plethora of specific and complex prospects in terms of the socioeconomic relationships between commodities provided to an industrialized culture, the economic competition between the macrobreweries and microbreweries of the beer industry is ultimately better for the consumer at the end of the day. Therefore, I intend to defend this thesis through an examination of movement's origin and development within American culture over the past three decades, encapsulated by a primary case study on craft beer in the state of Montana, with specific emphasis on the narrative of the Bozeman Brewing Company in Bozeman, Montana. In addition, I present the film *Crafty* as a visual companion to this written argument, with the ultimate intention of effectively communicating the thesis on multiple levels of textual representation. While the film itself seeks to dissect cultural inferences from the Montana case study in order to extrapolate norms applicable to the larger scale of the American craft beer movement, *Crafty* is meant to be the first installment of an ongoing series of programs that give credence to the individuality of each brewing company (both micros and macros). Therefore, *Crafty* should be viewed as a pilot episode of sorts; it exists as both a stand alone visual statement of the thesis and an introduction to something that is to be continued, something worthy of the continuing evolution of the craft beer and craft brewing companies in America. In addition, the intended episodic notion of *Crafty* will serve to punctuate the micro-narratives within the modern American craft beer movement because each brewery is the product of its own ongoing history that deserves recognition as a component of American culture.

INTRODUCTION

Beer is nothing new; in fact, it is as old as civilization itself. And while the general science of beer and its method of consumption have not varied much over the millennia, the cultural undercurrents and social implications of this potable are as fluid and ever-changing as the liquid itself. Throughout the ages, the beverage can be perceived as either an experience of liberation, or a method of control; a symbol of nationalistic pride, or a mark of cultural inability; a personal ascent, or a personal descent. Indeed, the social dualities are endless, but that is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of how the presence of beer affects specific cultures. Consider the America of today: beer is not just an industry; it is a culture at large, consisting of numerous subcultures that are the result of socioeconomic, ideological, and geographical factors. The current American Craft Beer movement is one of these beer-based subcultures, and arguably the most important and philosophically fluid. The movement represents not only a shift in the way we as Americans contemplate this class of beverage, but also how we think about ourselves as beer drinkers and culture beyond. It is more than just what brand we enjoy, what state/town/region we enjoy it from or in; it's about going to the source if we are able to, experimenting, and learning about what it is that makes us enjoy the beer or beers that we enjoy. The more knowledge and experience we have, the more we can define ourselves rather than being defined by a structured widespread consumer label indicative of the major beer manufacturers and the represented American ideological "powers that be."

The craft beer movement breaks from the traditional American beer industry structure and provides the consumer something the majors never traditionally offered: a “choose-your-own-adventure” of sorts, but based on variety and taste, not brand. The movement is, therefore, composed of a multiplicity of product scenarios for the consumer, keeping with the postmodern notion of favoring cultural micro-narratives by deconstructing the all encompassing social macro-narratives, which are an integral facet of our current cultural sphere. And while craft beer and its subculture are certainly not immune to the socioeconomic hegemonic forces present throughout American mainstream culture, their existence has unquestionably helped shape the *zeitgeist* beyond the beer industry by increasing the diversity of producer and consumer identity on both a communal and personal scope. If Descartes were still around to partake, he might be tempted to change his seminal axiom to “I drink, therefore I am.”

“PROLOGUE TO HISTORY”

THE GENERAL HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF BEER

Beer is arguably the oldest fermented beverage created by humans, and some might suggest that its presence in the archeological record reflects a sign of civilization itself!¹ The first traces of beer production actually appear in the Fertile Crescent, where human settlements began to develop around agriculture and collective social organization. Interestingly enough, the first beer came from a microbrewery, and that microbrewery was most likely a wet field! That is, once people started cultivating grain, it is conceivable that they accidentally left a barrel of it out in the rain. Maybe they forgot about it for a week or two, only to remember and return to an alcoholic porridge. Between the grain, the rain, and the presences of the microorganism yeast (that was most certainly abounding in a field), fermentation was possible, and a sort of beer was produced - I will explain more on the science of beer momentarily; therefore, beer sprang forth from the community on up.

Further written records of beer show up in ancient civilizations such as Egypt, which contributed to beer eventually making its way to Europe. Prior to Christianity's dominance over the continent, early European beer acted more as a narcotic, where various herbs were used to flavor the beverage and gift a more uplifting and even hallucinatory effect; this type of beer is known as gruit and was a common fixture throughout Pagan cultures. However, with the emergence of Christianity in Europe, and the church's agenda to suppress carnal temptation, hops became the primary flavoring agent of beer, and the beverage assumed the depressant status similar to the beers

representative of today (hence the term Brewers' Droop). This is particularly evident in the case of Trappist Monks, who brewed and quaffed barrels of the stuff during fasting.ⁱⁱ

From this point onward, beer was produced in basically the same way that it is now, a chemical reaction involving four essential elements: a starch source like malted grain, hops, yeast, and water. Water acts upon the starch source in a type hydrolysis, whereby starch is converted to sugars to form wort. Hops is then added primarily for flavoring, where the ingredient counteracts the extremely sweet wort with bitterness adjusted to the desired pallet. The main reaction, however, occurs when yeast is added. Yeast is a microorganism that comes in several varieties desirable for brewing: *Saccharomyces uvarum* (for bottom-fermenting lagers), *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (for top-fermenting ales), *Brettanomyces* (for lambics), etc. The yeast consumes the sugars in the wort, producing carbon dioxide and, more importantly, ethyl-alcohol. This actual process is called fermentation, and is responsible for the pleasing effect that keeps so many patrons coming back for more.ⁱⁱⁱ While there are countless varieties of beer in existence, and each with its own spin on the science (especially when it comes to flavoring), this scientific blueprint is essentially the same for all modern beer. But in this basic formula creativity can abound; and where a type of citizen science can take place.

Europeans eventually brought their brewing expertise to the New World, where beer and its production thrived. This was especially the case when immigrants from Germany, Belgium, and Great Britain settled throughout the continent (in particular the United States) and established breweries in their various communities. Once again, beer and brewing culture started from the micro-stages, but it eventually became a beverage of

nationalistic proportions for the United States.^{iv} Indeed, by the early 20th Century there were hundreds of breweries across the entire country. 1920, however, brought about Prohibition in the United States, rendering the production and consumption of all alcoholic beverages illegal and effectively killing the brewing industry. While some of the larger brewing companies were able to survive by adapting with the implementation of soft-drink production, the vast majority of breweries across the country suffered a swift extinction, and legal production of alcoholic beer was reduced to virtually nothing.^v

It is important to note that while I certainly admit that the full history of beer is far more complex than my brief summary, the scope of both *Crafty* and the thesis is on the modern American Craft Beer movement, which really only concerns the past thirty years.

“PEACE, LAND, AND BEER”

THE RISE OF THE MODERN AMERICAN CRAFT BEER MOVEMENT

Despite Volstead Act's effective termination of the brewing culture and industry in the United States, the law enabled a massive undercurrent of illegal production and trafficking of alcohol that undermined the act's puritanical agenda, causing more harm than good to American society. Fortunately, Prohibition was repealed in 1933, but the damage was extensive, leaving basically the entire industry in the hands of some well-known major companies.^{vi} These commercial juggernauts, appropriately known as macrobreweries, included Anheiser-Busch (Budweiser), Miller, and Coors, a trifecta that still dominates the national and international beer-scene today. With the local and regional competition either marginalized or nonexistent (thanks to the clean slate provided by Prohibition), the macrobreweries kept socioeconomic stranglehold over American brewing culture by employing a fierce campaign of ideological brand marketing. Essentially, the majors were battling over the identity of America's beer, paying little heed to regionalism that had been in place prior to Prohibition. This allowed for minimal elbowroom for any brewing company that had its sights set on anything less than the national stage, so it really became survival of the *biggest*. And while this economic environment may seem nothing short of Capitalism 101 and reek of apple pie, the consumer ultimately suffered.

Had the macrobreweries and provided a wider range of beer varieties to the consumer, the beer climate then might have been more productive and rewarding. Instead, the majors were in reality subjecting the consumer to the same type of beer, a

light lager made of adjunct ingredients (such as rice or other cereal grain in lieu of barley) projected for mass-consumption and no questions from the public. This type of beer is now known by its postmodern reference: the American Adjunct Lager (AAL), or more affectionately as “domestic swill!”^{vii} Regardless, the AAL became the *de facto* beer of the United States. And similar to the foundations of American's ruling theology: there was only *one* beer, and that beer was Beer. Hence, American beer acquired the international stigma of being something like making love in a canoe (ie., “fucking close to water”); in return, foreign brews were marked up and designated the somewhat derogatory “import” label. In the end, the war for America's beer was not based on taste, but rather brand. As American philosopher Charles Peirce would suggest, the sign completely engulfed the material referent; it wasn't about *what* beer you preferred (because there was only one beer), it was *whose* beer you preferred, and that became the crux of the argument of whose beer was more American.^{viii} Budweiser vs. Miller vs. Coors? As melodramatic as this may seem, the American beer consumer was genuinely missing out on the true potential of beer and all of its varieties.

Amazingly, all it took was one small action to sow the seeds of quiet revolution. That action came in the form of President Jimmy Carter and his signing of the House Resolution Bill 1337 in 1978. President Carter legalized homebrewing in the US once again. And even if each state still controlled its own liquor laws, the resolution provided at least a personal outlet for those fed up with the domestic macros, which certainly got the creative juices flowing. That being said, the floodgates for microbreweries didn't open overnight; some even credit the genesis of the American craft brewing movement

with Fritz Maytag (of the washing machine) and his revival of San Francisco's celebrated Anchor Brewing Company in the early 1960s.^{ix} Regardless, while it's true that microbreweries existed in the US prior to President Carter's seminal house resolution, the legalization of home-brewing essentially gave a creative power back to the people, which is why we see an indisputable spike in the number of craft breweries starting in the early 1980s and continuing to this day (there were less than a hundred microbreweries in America in the late 1970s, but that number began to increase since 1978 and now there are over 2,000).^x

“CHOOSE YOUR REVOLUTION”

THE CULTURAL FOUNDATION OF THE AMERICAN CRAFT BEER MOVEMENT

With the legalization of homebrewing on the doorstep of the 1980s, the American beer industry entered into an entirely new era that sought to rethink and retool the social conception of beer culture. Concurrently, American culture at large was undergoing an epistemological metamorphosis with the advent of postmodernity. Indeed, the thought of culture itself exhibited a massive critical overhaul. Like in the final act of Pink Floyd's 1979 concept album *The Wall*, the pale barrier that had been built up to represent American homogeneity was now being deconstructed a brick at a time.^{xi} Cracks in the America's social foundation were addressed and began to fracture, with various subcultures filling those voids; a multiplicity of micro-narratives were beginning to supplant the American ideological macro-narrative of a structure generalized *Americanism* to reveal a far more complex cultural landscape.^{xii} This type of thinking permeated every facet of culture including the beer industry, simply replace “narratives” with “breweries” and you get the picture. All in all, the time was ripe and the stage was set for America to reconsider its own alcoholic beverage of choice.

And although homebrewing itself wasn't exactly a call-to-arms to engage the macrobreweries in the battle over the future of American beer; as a freshly legalized avenue, it represented the democratization of creative brewing, albeit on a more personal level. Regardless, homebrewing provided in essence a form of decentralized citizen science where individuals were able to experiment, craft, and contribute to a larger cultural enrichment of beer science and brewing. From this phase of knowledge

enrichment and discovery arose a framework of both confidence and creativity, a clear antecedent to the initial post-1980 wave of microbreweries that made the first major stand for American produced craft beer.^{xiii} Subsequent microbreweries from this early period include: California's Sierra Nevada Brewing Company (founded 1980);^{xiv} Washington's Redhook Ale Brewery (1981)^{xv}, and Pyramid Breweries Inc. (1984);^{xvi} Oregon's BridgePort Brewing Company (1984)^{xvii}, and Widmer Brothers Brewery (1984);^{xviii} and of course Massachusetts' Boston Beer Company (Samuel Adams) (1984).^{xix} These groundbreaking stalwarts, along with the pioneering Anchor Brewing Company (revived in 1965), helped to establish a market for craft beer with an impressive arsenal of trendsetting beers that favored quality, flavor, and variety over quantity, brand, and uniformity. These companies successfully established themselves within the national beer market by “filling the gaps” that existed between the macrobrewiers and offering something previously unheard of in American beer circles: actual choice!^{xx}

While the initial identity of the craft beer movement might have been seen as being somewhat of a counterculture, the microbreweries operated well within the system to change it.^{xxi} The very presence of beer variety certainly turned the established classic American notion of *Beer* on its head. And despite the fact that the macrobreweries then (as now) retained the vast majority of beer market sales, microbreweries and craft beer were here to stay.^{xxii} As opposed to several companies offering a virtually identical product distinguished only by brand signage, each microbrewery offers a distinctive array of beer that may include several beer genres and cover multiple beer heritages. For example, Montana's Bayern Brewing Inc. (founded 1987) offers a dynamic range of

primarily German style beers,^{xxiii} while Colorado's New Belgium Brewing Company (1991), as the name would imply, puts an American spin on Belgian style beers (and then some).^{xxiv}

In addition, microbreweries can also offer a beer selection indicative of their geographical location (as opposed to classic Euro-centric beer heritage). America's Pacific Northwest is a perfect example of this. The region's notoriously wet and temperate climate is often associated with existential depression and the equally dreary 90s Grunge music scene; however, the excessive moisture is also responsible for on of the world's greatest hop-growing terrains. Consequently, the Pacific Northwest is a mecca for hop-heavy beers (most often associated with the India Pale Ale variety), and further represents one of the most productive brewing regions on Earth (let alone the United States)! Oregon's Full Sail Brewing Company (founded 1987)^{xxv} and Deschutes Brewery (1988)^{xxvi} both reside in the heart of this environment, and their beer is certainly suggestive of this. At the same time, both microbreweries remain conscientious of consumer diversity, and strive to deliver something for everyone.

And that, without contradicting myself, is the template for a typical postmodern American craft brewery. Microbreweries strive to provide a variety of high quality products for an equally diverse consumer base, with both sides of the equation representing a multiplicity of cultural reflections that interact and creatively feed off one another like a dynamic equilibrium equation in chemistry. In the end, craft brewing embraces the cultural kaleidoscope that is Americana, operating from the ground up and leaving no social stone unturned. Now how could you get more *American*?

“LE ROI EST MORTE... VIVA LE ROI?”

THE HEGEMONIC RESPONSE OF THE MACROBREWERIES

In considering the entire beer industry from the perspective that I have presented thus far, it seems like a no-brainer when assessing whether the macrobreweries or the microbreweries are more representative of America. However, the evolving reality of the beer industry is far more complex than a simple “David and Goliath” scenario. Firstly, the macrobreweries have always had the ability to brew quality beer, and this is an extremely important fact when we consider the absolute socioeconomic influence that these companies continue to maintain.^{xxvii} Secondly, those in charge of the macrobreweries are not a bunch of neophytes; on the contrary, they are some of the savviest and economically powerful people around, and they *have* truly taken notice of the marginal but *significant* effect of the microbreweries upon the American beer market. Therefore, if the craft breweries have given the major companies economic lemons to deal with, then there's no reason that the macrobreweries can't make a shandy of their own! But before getting into the specifics, we must first examine a couple of ideological philosophical concepts at the heart of American society.

The United States today consists of a multiplicity of cultural groups functioning together in a society that is generally *content* with the current social strata; and while the agenda of the ruling class might not fully resonate with the various lower levels of society, *all* groups are taken into consideration for the sake of a socially and economically stable existence. This concept, known as cultural hegemony, is better defined as “ruling by consensus,” and is an integral facet of American society.^{xxviii}

Hegemony is best sensed when a country's ruling economic class interacts with various subcultures that coexist in the same society. Subcultures, as defined by English cultural theorist Dick Hebdige, are social sub-groups in a society that exhibit cultural traits alternative (possibly subversive) to those of the mainstream culture (as defined by the ruling economic class).^{xxix} Through cultural hegemony, the ruling class might act to incorporate traits of a specific subculture into the mainstream culture in order to assimilate, ideologically neutralize, and ultimately exploit such subculture for economic profit.^{xxx} Conversely, the subculture might, to the best of its social ability, continue to operate as a culturally subversive alternative to the ruling class. These concepts of cultural hegemony and subcultures most certainly apply to the American beer industry, where the macrobreweries represent the ruling class and the microbreweries exist as a subordinate subculture. It is important to note, however, that this is not *exactly* a negative situation in the development of American beer culture.

The rise of craft breweries in the United States was relatively steady in the 1980s, eventually becoming a continuum of emerging companies by the end of the decade and continuing to this day. Even if craft beer sales were marginal at this point, competition was rising.^{xxxi} The macrobreweries were very much aware of this and responded with various hegemonic tactics. The initial tactic was fairly obvious: sheer capitalist takeover. The best example of this is when the Miller Brewing Company, somewhat ahead of the curve, purchased both the Blitz-Weinhard Brewing Company and the Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Company in 1988. Prior to the takeover, both brewing companies existed as regional craft breweries that had operated for generations and had ultimately survived

Prohibition – Blitz-Weinhard hailed from Oregon (1856)^{xxxii} and Leinenkugel originated in Wisconsin (1867).^{xxxiii} While this does not necessarily represent a macrobrewery assimilating a postmodern microbrewery, it does illustrate the fact that the major companies were directly addressing the rise of craft beer. Now, Miller had two well-established brewing fixtures, each with over a century of brewing credibility in their respective regions (the Pacific Northwest and the Mid West). On the positive side, however, Blitz-Weinhard and Leinenkugel were allowed to operate as their own companies, retaining their distinct image and original brewery location as something removed from their parent company. In addition, their beer was now available across the nation with the support of a macrobrewery's influential distribution (much like when the Walt Disney Company purchased Miramax in 1993). A more recent example of buying out the smaller competition occurred when Anheuser-Busch acquired the celebrated Illinois-based Goose Island Beer Company (founded in 1988) in 2011.^{xxxiv} In this situation, a major company did purchase a postmodern microbrewery, but once again the brewery was allowed to operate under its original livery. Despite these cases presenting a mostly positive outcome for both the breweries and beer consumers in general, a brewery's attachment to a major company does carry a somewhat negative (or at least suspicious) stigma in the craft beer world, especially when claims arise that the quality of beer has declined since the acquisition due to mass-production overtaking craft. While admittedly this can be arguable, craft beer culture is understandably defensive when it comes to its economic survival. Regardless, these breweries are now only culturally independent in their signage; economically, they are tied to the great American machine.

In addition to corporate takeovers, the macrobreweries have employed another hegemonic tactic against the microbreweries, one that is far more surreptitious. Whereas a corporate takeover of an existing brewing company generates a given date in history, and one that can make reference to a “pre” or “post” period, the complete “construction” of a new company would have no historical baggage. Furthermore, a created company could be designed to appear a certain way and provide a certain product. In essence, macrobreweries created their own craft beer lines that were packaged and marketed as being synonymous with craft beer and microbreweries in look, taste, and supposedly culture. Blue Moon Brewing Company is one of these ventures. Formed in 1995 in Golden, Colorado, Blue Moon markets itself as a producer of fine quality craft beer, which is technically true.^{xxxv} But guess what else in the beer world hails from Golden, Colorado? The Coors Brewing Company is also based out of Golden. Blue Moon is simply a banner for Coors' primary line of craft beer; it all originates from the same brewery. Yet this fact is not celebrated on the labels or in the marketing of Blue Moon beer; rather, it's buried in the fine print. Coors simply wants to sell a product to consumers of craft beer, and they would rather not associate their craft line with their own domestic line. This is the same case for Shock Top Brewing Company, with craft beer proudly produced in St. Louis, Missouri, located not so proudly within the creative marketing department of Anheuser-Busch since 2006.^{xxxvi} Both Blue Moon and Shock Top represent macrobreweries attempting to infiltrate the domain of craft beer by acting as a microbrewery (they are even stocked next to the microbrews in retail outlets). Some consumers are fooled and will buy into it, some know better and refuse to touch it, and

some know but will try it anyway because they might (God forbid) actually enjoy it. On a slightly humorous note: both Blue Moon and Shock Top actually mine a similar vein of craft beer (that being the American Pale Wheat Ale and Witbier category), making them greater competitors to each other as opposed to most microbreweries! Regardless, this somewhat clandestine effort might cause some anxiety for the microbreweries, but it ultimately provides a greater choice for the consumer, which means greater interest in craft beer. Positive feedback-loop aside, these macro “posers” are still a viable component of modern craft beer culture, even if it is more to keep the real micros on their toes.

“PROST IN THE MACHINE” GLOBALIZATION, INTERNET
MARKETING, AND THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN
CRAFT BEER MOVEMENT

If the stars aligned in the late 1970s/early 1980s to create the postmodern American Craft Beer Movement, then the stars aligned themselves once again in the 2000s to ensure the movement's survival. Indeed, the new millennium brought about many significant changes to American culture, but it is interesting to note how several fairly disparate historical, ideological, and technological circumstances contributed to the latest and unarguably the most interesting phase of the movement. This also serves as a reminder that something as seemingly straightforward as the American beer industry is in fact very much in tune to the fluctuations within society and culture, especially in the digital age.

The 1990s were a time of ideological deconstruction and de-contextualization for American culture as a whole. In terms of the American beer industry, it was actually a period of confusion. Despite the presence of more and more microbreweries, American mainstream beer consumers had not yet adjusted to the plethora of options before them. As a result, many were still content with what was known, and that was with the established lines of the domestics produced by Budweiser et al. Unlike other mainstream American food/drink choices (fast food, soft drinks, etc.), however, alternative beer choices were ever rapidly appearing from regional sources around the country counter to the mass-marketed providers. Of course, there was nothing exactly wrong with a period of trial and error, but the beer drinking public at large was simply not ready to step

outside its comfort zone.^{xxxvii} In addition, the microbreweries didn't have the marketing resources or the financial capital to compete with the macrobreweries in any of the contemporary conventional media outlets. The 2000s changed all of this. While it is true that the events of September 11, 2001 arguably muffled (albeit temporally) postmodern attitudes in mainstream America by reconstructing a macro American identity, the simultaneous rise of cultural and economic cybernetic communications (or organized informational flow) via the Internet provided a brand new democratizing environment that in some ways leveled the marketing playing field.^{xxxviii}

Similar to the legalization of homebrewing in the late 1970s and its effect on the local-scale of brewing creativity, the Internet provided a collective marketing home for the disparate microbreweries across the country. Even the ability to maintain a modest website was enough to establish literally a worldwide destination for a nominal cost. Obviously, the macrobreweries went immediately online, but they still answered to more or less a single URL designation (whereas more than one would be superfluous, really). This template repeats itself further on in the decade with the emergence of social media and its expert networking capabilities. Microbreweries now had a robust online community to showcase their products while consumers had an infinite database that they could learn from and interact with.^{xxxix} A typical microbrewery today, no matter the size or the age, will at least have a URL homepage, and will most likely have supplementary social media destinations. For many of the most recent breweries (post 2000), a constituted online community awaited, making initial marketing and hype incredibly easier than in pre-Internet culture. Oregon's Ninkasi Brewing Company (founded in

2006), is an example of a relatively recent microbrewery that experienced significant exposure and commercial development thanks in part to its aggressive web presence.^{xi} Simultaneously, older and more established microbreweries were able to bolster their popularity using the Internet. Veteran microbreweries like New Belgium, Deschutes, Sierra Nevada, and Samuel Adams all maintain websites and social media profiles that incorporate their unique legacies and product liveries into marketing campaigns that are nothing short of ingenious; it is little wonder, therefore, why these are among the most successful microbreweries in the United States and even the world.

The Internet has unquestionably been an invaluable tool that the microbreweries required to continue to erode the macrobreweries iron grip on the American beer market, but a tool is nothing without something that is willing to work with it. One reason the 1990s were such a confusing time for beer consumers is because they were presented with a myriad of products they had no clue about. As impossible as it may seem today, beer drinkers in the 1990s were largely uneducated about the true variety of beer and its numerous styles and flavors, which is again why so many were content with the domestic *status quo*. This is because most of them were raised in a time before craft beer was a “thing.” Domestic and imports were all that existed and all they knew, which is an narrow field of view. With the 2000s, however, the incoming generation of beer drinkers actually *knew* more about beer because they were raised when craft beer actually *was* part of the American *zeitgeist*.^{xli} They were also raised on digital culture and matured with the internet, where the information was immediately accessible. Therefore, this group of legally drinking neophytes were already better educated and ready and willing to try

whatever, and they only added to previous beer drinking generations that by this time were better educated in craft beer themselves.

One final comment on the 2000s and the decade's effect on the American beer industry involves the identity of America and Americans at this point. As previously stated, the immediate cultural fallout from 9/11 acted as a rallying point for a new America and a reconstructed national identity, and amid the utter disbelief there was a sense of unified patriotism. Had this feeling sustained for the entire decade, the fractured individualism of the craft beer community might have seemed more counter-cultural than ever, especially compared to the punctuated patriot fanfare of the macros. Of course, between two exhausting wars, an ineffective right-wing presidency, and the perfect storm that was Katrina, the decade unwound into a national air of disenchantment and anti-authoritarianism. On the national political and cultural level the country swung left, electing its first non-white president and feeling genuinely ashamed and awkward for its nationalistic actions. On a more local level there was a conscious movement to support local businesses and generally *live* closer to home (something only expedited by the economic collapse of 2008).^{xlii} These cultural shifts certainly applied to the American beer industry, particularly given the momentous actions of the macrobreweries. In 2002 Miller merged with the beverage conglomerate South African Breweries, forming SABMiller plc.^{xliii} Subsequently, in 2004 Anheuser-Busch merged with Belgian-Brazilian company InBev, forming Anheuser-Busch InBev.^{xliv} Finally, in 2005 Coors merged with the Canadian titan Molson Brewery, forming Molson Coors Brewing Company.^{xlv} While this trilogy of mergers was based purely on a platform of economic

strategy, the result is that all of the great American macro beer companies are no longer “American.” Suddenly, the Boston Beer Company (Sam Adams) became the largest American brewery; the micros *became* the domestics! Whether or not this economic reality will tug at the ideological hearts of mainstream American beer drinkers is yet to be determined. American patriotism might eventually catch up to these international macrobrewiers and supplant their beer sales for something more local and truly American, who knows? Regardless, the demand for microbreweries and craft beer is increasing, and that, from virtually any perspective, is ultimately good for the American economy.

CASE STUDY: THE BOZEMAN BREWING COMPANY AND *CRAFTY*

Throughout my thesis, I have kept my statements fairly broad. Despite my argument's aim to split and not lump, I felt it necessary to describe and honestly “lump” microbreweries into a collective faction relative to the macrobreweries. Furthermore, a broader perspective works better when discussing general societal trends in American culture (and I would also like this thesis to be as accessible as possible). But now that the sweeping statements and generalities are largely out of the way, I can get to the specifics and describe all the work I have *really* been doing! The following section chronicles my personal investigation into the workings of the American Craft Beer Movement, and the production of my thesis film *Crafty*.

My intention for *Crafty* was to fashion the film as a pilot episode of sorts for an ongoing series of the same name. The idea would be that each episode in the series would focus on a specific microbrewery and its unique identity, thereby supporting my thesis that the postmodern American Craft Beer Movement is comprised of a collective of individual entities that support one another by the virtue of creating infinite choice for beer drinkers. The pilot episode of this series, however, would need to set the tone and scope of the series; therefore, sections of the film are devoted to the broader subjects like the general history and science of beer. Regardless, the *Crafty* pilot's primary focus is on the Bozeman Brewing Company, and the majority of the following information is based off of first-hand employee interviews, personal observations, and material provided by the brewery itself. In addition, I have also included information based on research conducted by Dr. Caroline Graham Austin, an economics professor at Montana State

University in Bozeman. Between *Crafty* and this case study, I hope to support the more general claims of my thesis of the postmodern developments in American craft beer culture.

The Bozeman Brewing Company (colloquially known as “Bozone”) occupies a former pea-canning factory just north of downtown Bozeman, Montana. The location is a standard light industrial building made of wood, cement, and corrugated iron, and there is little to suggest of the brewery's existence aside from company logo and the sometimes strong fragrance of heated grain. Like so many other contemporary microbreweries, Bozone has re-purposed and transformed the significance of a location for the cultural enrichment of the local community. And while the building's exterior remains mostly unchanged, it is the interior that counts. A modest blue door acts as the grand entrance to the brewery, with the taproom on the other side. A brewery's taproom is the most immediate conduit between production and consumption; therefore, it is the heart of brewery's unique culture because patrons who attend the taproom to consume have done so with the intent of going straight-to-the-source of the beer from that specific brewery. There exists an unsung mutual respect in this: the brewery provides its freshest product on tap in a welcoming environment while the consumer willingly selects from the choices offered by that brewery alone (even if they could often acquire that product and many others at a convenient retail location). For Bozone, like numerous other brewing companies, the taproom is not their primary source of revenue, but rather a venue for the local community.^{xlvi} Even so, no expense was spared on its layout and construction. Built out of re-purposed material from the original canning factory and other fixtures

around the Bozeman area, Bozone's taproom celebrates the local community down to its very foundation, something that is also reflected in the beer.^{xlvii} All in all, the room feels very “anti-bar,” it is simply a nice place to sit and drink local craft beer with other people.

Todd Scott is the owner and operator of Bozone. He founded the brewery in 2001 and has been involved in every aspect of the production and business ever since.

Originally from Indiana, Todd's experience with beer and brewing spans almost three decades. He was even involved with the seminal Spanish Peaks Brewing Company, which was Bozeman's only microbrewery from post-Prohibition up until its relocation to California over a decade ago. Upon Spanish Peaks vacating Montana, Todd decided to remain in Bozeman and essentially fill the void left by his former employer, buying up much of the brewing equipment and establishing the new brewery in Bozone's current location. For the better part of the 2000s the brewery stood alone in the region, which provided precious time to develop itself.^{xlviii} Now being the oldest active brewery in the greater Bozeman area, Bozone is often regarded as one of the strongest craft breweries in Montana. While this might not sound significant, Montana is actually a beer drinker's paradise, with approximately forty active microbreweries in a state with roughly a million inhabitants!^{xlix} Bozeman alone now has three craft breweries, plus an additional five within a fifty mile radius of the town. Needless to say, Montanans love their beer, a refrain echoed by Bozone's manager Tucker Carlson. Tucker, who was born and bred in Billings, is quick to note that Montanans also love the fact the beer and its ingredients are also from Montana.¹ And this is something that speaks to the culture of the state.

Nestled somewhere between the Pacific Ocean and the Mid-West, Montana is very much a product of its environment. Despite being the fifth largest state in terms of area, Montana is sparsely populated due in part to its rugged terrain and harsh winter weather. To outsiders, Montana is somewhat of a mystery, mostly conjuring up visions of the romanticized Wild West. And while there might be some truth to this, I personally know never to judge a book by its cover now that I have lived in here for over two years. The sky is big, that's for sure, but the culture here is more dynamic than I had ever imagined. Creativity, heritage, and environment all coalesce in a cultural melting pot that is fathoms deeper than the stereotypes, and that can all be witnessed in the craft breweries that permeate the state.

I chose to showcase Bozone not only because it is Bozeman's oldest and one of my favorites, but because it is exemplary of what a brewery can stand for both in terms of Montana and the United States. Todd's original intention was to create a viable business that could service the local community while financially supporting its employees; he was not out to conquer the world. As a result, the brewery has experienced a slow but steady development over its tenure, which is the true definition of honing one's craft.^{li} But it is the beer itself, of course that is ultimately responsible for the Bozone's successes. With the addition of brewmaster Bill Hayland, a Boston-transplant with a penchant for intensely hoppy beers, Bozone earned its craft brewing distinction, which is clearly reflected in well-rounded portfolio presently on tap at the brewery. The brewery's mainstays include hefeweisen, porter, IPA, and the flagship Bozone Select Amber Ale. The flagship amber is an important beer for several reasons. First of all, to designate a

beer as your flagship means that this is your one (if only) offering to the world. If the ultimate goal of a brewery is to provide a product that will attract a consumer and keep them consuming, then you need something as accessible as possible. Like a pilot episode of a series, this will likely be the entry point for the consumer. If the consumer is pleased, then he or she might continue watching or try another type of beer; however, if the consumer is turned off, well they may not return, and second chances are hard to come by. Therefore, there is great strategy involved with selecting and crafting a flagship beer. Conceived personally by Todd at the brewery's inception, the Bozone Select was designed to be something flavorful yet simple, something that could ease curious beer drinkers into the Todd's beer logic.^{lii} This is typical of most craft breweries, with the flagship serving a “gateway drug” purpose, and an amber style beer is a logical choice. Currently, Bozone Select is the only Bozone beer available in small-package retail form, rendering it an armada of one in a supermarket beer aisle (which is why the beer's imagery is featured so prevalently throughout *Crafty*!).

In addition to the previously mentioned year-round beers, Bozone offers a wide array of seasonal and more “experimental” offerings. These include pilsners, saisons, stouts, Belgian triples, etc., anything to keep the creative juices flowing and retain the interests of the more adventurous clientele.^{liii} What's more, every single year-round and recurring seasonal beer has its own title and artwork, yet another common feature among craft breweries. Usually, the beer title and livery make reference to the local community in some form. Bozone's Plum Street Porter, for example, references a nearby locality in Bozeman, while the artwork depicts an actual building that resides on Plum Street. While

this exact reference might be lost on non-local beer drinkers, the intention is not one of pretension but of dedication to the local culture. Unlike the macrobreweries and their atonal nationalistic brand labels that dawn the majority of their products, microbreweries celebrate the individualism and multiplicity of their products, as if each one possessed its own unique narrative, and yet they do. Craft beer tends to source higher quality ingredients, which in turn have their own micro-narratives. On a typical microbrewery's website there are often character profiles for each beer. These profiles might describe a beer's unique brewing process, the specific ingredients used (what type of grain, what type of hops, from where, etc.), who first brewed the beer, and certainly the specs of the beer (alcohol content, bitterness, specific gravity, etc.). All of this information tells the story of the beer, and the brewery provides the cultural context. Tucker recently finished an extensive reconstruction of the Bozone website, and it is one of the finest of any Montana brewery. The Bozone homepage, along with various social media profiles, provides a virtual taproom of sorts for members of the community to communicate, comment, post pictures, and generally immerse themselves in craft beer culture.^{liv} Bozone's web presence, like countless other microbreweries, creates a cultural alterity for consumers anywhere, yet proudly grounds the brewery's primary activity back in the local community.

One final aspect of this case study remains, and that is the interactivity of the craft beer culture within the beer drinking community itself. Thus far I have discussed the individualism of Bozone, but now I bring the argument to include other breweries in the Bozeman area, and how they relate to one another. In *Crafty*, I attempt to address this

topic by asking my interviewees how they view the local market relative to the other breweries in the region. Tucker simply calls it a “competitive cooperative,” and that really says it all. The market is no doubt competitive because every brewery is obviously marketing itself to the beer drinking public; however, it is also cooperative because the proliferation of craft beer tends to lend itself to further consumer interest in craft beer.^{lv}

An excellent example of this economic cooperation is growler culture. A growler is larger container, usually made of glass that can carry roughly a pitcher of beer. Microbreweries sell these vessels like souvenir pint glasses, usually displaying a company logo. The purpose of a growler is to fill it with tap beer from a brewery so you can take it home or to a party and enjoy it later (this is especially desirable for seasonal or single-batch beers). The theory behind growler culture, however, is that you can take the container into any craft brewery and get it filled for a nominal sum, even if the growler was purchased at another competing brewery. Growlers are sustainable, reusable, practical, communal, awesome, and absolutely emblematic of the competitive cooperative that craft brewing culture truly is. But what about the consumer? According to Bill, it is impossible to define the modern beer drinker because it transcends all form of demographic description. For the consumer, craft beer culture is about discovering the different types of beer and the creativity behind it - “I don't care who you are, there's something you're gonna like.”^{lvi} Once again, beer style is championed in the place of company brand. With this in mind, it should not seem strange that microbreweries competing in the marketplace might assist each other in the production phase. Grain, equipment, or even just honest advice and constructive criticism can all be passed along

from one craft brewery to another.^{lvii} Todd summarizes that more craft breweries “just make the pool bigger, and there's plenty of room to swim.” The more variety of beer in the marketplace, the more the consumer is encouraged to try more beer. And at the end of the day, it's the domestic macrobreweries that are the real competition, not the neighbor you meet for coffee on the weekend.^{lviii}

“ET TU BACCHUS?”

DIVIDUALISM OF CRAFT BEER CULTURE AND CONCLUSION

Postmodernism, or the cultural production in the contemporary Western world,^{lix} is very much alive in America today and is reflected in the complex social variance that makes up our very industrialized and commodified culture.^{lx} Craft beer, regardless of whether beer drinkers at large like it or not, is now undeniably a fixture in American culture and has altered the social identity of the American beer consumer. As previously stated, between the increasing number of microbreweries and the ambitious macrobreweries attempting to infiltrate the craft beer market, there is more choice for the consumer than ever before. But what this means for the consumer is far greater than an individual preference. Just as postmodernism has unearthed the individual micro-narratives of individual cultures in society, it has also revealed (thanks largely to digital culture) the micro-narrative within individuals. This intrapersonal multiplicity, or “dividualism,” represents alternative personalities within a person's being.^{lxi} For the beer drinker, the choice extends beyond brand and even genre, but to an instantaneous desire. A consumer *can* enjoy the domestic swill, but the next round could be something robust. One moment you could champion wheat beers, while the next you might run screaming to an IPA; one's commitment can change on the sip. If *Crafty* is any indication, beer and its production, consumption, reception, and presentation can take on a multitude of “personalities.”

A single beer itself will embody multiple personalities depending on its brewing cycle, age, temperature served, and especially its serving conduit (on tap, can, bottle, etc.)

Even the type of glass used can alter a beer's performance!^{lxii} Further up and further in, a beer's taste will vary between the first sip to the last; from the initial nose on the tongue, through the pallet, and right onto the finish and lingering taste at the back of the throat. Each experience can be addressed or missed. Like hypertexts on the Internet, every sip of a given beer is a potential narrative that relates to previous or subsequent one, with no greater truth behind it other than the completely selective enjoyment of that beer.^{lxiii} Therefore, beer itself adopts a dividualist mentality that can be extrapolated to drinker, brewer, brewery, region, so on and so forth. There is no code, just a potential for sensations and experiences.

If there is one thing that can be said of the current American craft beer culture, it is that it truly is a collective of individuals bringing art out of science within society. Whether brewer or consumer, each component possesses its own array of micro-narratives that enriches the overall concept of beer and, in turn, culture in America. The future of craft brewing in American is bright, microbreweries continue to arise with each passing year, and there seems to be no signs of an end. As *Crafty* displays, craft beer is an extremely important and integral facet of American society; it may not be rocket science, but the sky is the limit. And even if it has been a hard won battle and hard kept, it *is* won and it *is* kept, and that is ultimately a credit to America.^{lxiv} Because, in the end, beer may be beer, but respect it, enjoy it, and then the concept of beer can become so much more, which is verity within verity, and story within story. It is time for America to get crafty!

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