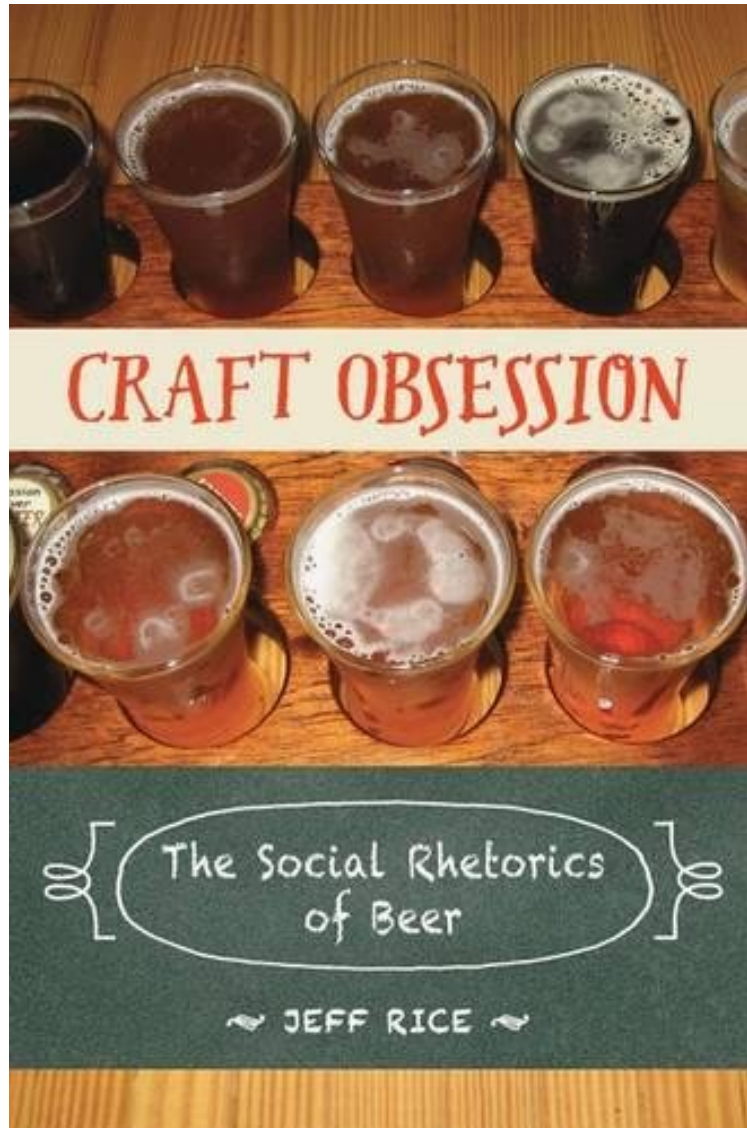


Craft Obsession: The Social Rhetorics of Beer

Jeff Rice

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Jeff Rice : Craft Obsession: The Social Rhetorics of Beer before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Craft Obsession: The Social Rhetorics of Beer:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Verbose and Repetitive By Paul D. Holeva As a social scientist, home brewer, and craft beer enthusiast, I was really excited about this book. Unfortunately, the execution left a lot to be desired. The book is generally exploratory as the author attempts to better understand his personal experiences with craft beer ratings and social media by comparing them to current and historical narrative models. An interesting idea, however the writing is repetitive and verbose, and many of the arguments or comparisons are weakly constructed. An

early example includes a spatial comparison of three locations associated with the narrative of his first rating experience. The author uses these 3 locations to make a very loose connection to the Star of David (the three points make a spatial triangle, which the authors identifies as half of the Star of David) to launch into a diatribe on historic Jewish community brew houses. While it was an interesting piece of brewing history, its association to the authors experience was questionable and offered nothing towards a better understanding of the current rhetoric of craft beer on social media. The book is full of such questionable tangents and ultimately left me feeling like the author stretched some interesting philosophical thoughts into 300 pages of pompous navel gazing. With a little more rigor it could have been an interesting academic piece; with a more approachable writing style it could have been an interesting personal memoir that most craft beer drinkers could have associated with. As is, I think it will fall short for most readers in either category.

Denied access to traditional advertising platforms by lack of resources, craft breweries have proliferated despite these challenges by embracing social media platforms, and by creating an obsessed culture of fans. In *Craft Obsession*, Jeff Rice uses craft beer as a case study to demonstrate how social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter function to shape stories about craft. Rice weaves together theories of writing, narrative, new media, and rhetoric with a personal story of his passion for craft beer. He identifies six key elements of social media rhetoric— anecdotes, repetition, aggregation, delivery, sharing, and imagery—and examines how each helps to transform small, personal experiences with craft into a more widespread movement. When shared via social media, craft anecdotes—such as the first time one had a beer—interrupt and repeat one another, building a sense of familiarity and identity among otherwise unconnected people. Aggregation, the practice of joining unlike items into one space, builds on this network identity, establishing a connection to particular brands or locations, both real and virtual. The public releases of craft beers are used to explore the concept of craft delivery, which involves multiple actors across multiple spaces and results in multiple meanings. Finally, Rice highlights how personal sharing operates within the community of craft beer enthusiasts, who share online images of acquiring, trading for, and consuming a wide variety of beers. These shared stories and images, while personal for each individual, reflect the dependence of craft on systems of involvement. Throughout, Rice relates and reflects on his own experience as a craft beer enthusiast and his participation via social media in these systems. Both an objective scholarly study and an engaging personal narrative about craft beer, *Craft Obsession* provides valuable insights into digital writing, storytelling, and social media.

"Combining micronarratives of his own history with craft beer and the intersections of his relationships with beer, family, and friends across multiple social media platforms, as well as the relationship of craft brewers with social media, Rice gives key insights into the operation of narrative in creating sense across many real and imagined fragmented global villages. Not a 'traditional' academic text, this book will resonate with anyone interested in the digital landscape (or craft beer, for that matter)." —John M. Sloop, author, *Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture* "In a fascinating exploration of the role and function of social media, Jeff Rice uses his own obsession with craft beer to show readers how networks function as sites for invention and expression, information exchange and aggregation, and identity formation. This book is critical reading for anyone who is interested in social media platforms, sociotechnical networks, and the rhetorical elements that structure working and living today." —Stuart Selber, author, *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* "Craft Obsession taps into two powerful trends in contemporary American life that might seem to be at odds: social media and craft. One is optimized for speed and fragments attention. The other seems to represent a craving to go slow and invest attention. But in this extended essay of demonstration, Rice brings focus to the parallels between craft and social media: how each breeds obsession, invites assumptions and interruptions, thrives on participation, repetition, and sharing. The result is a book that performs the network dynamics it seeks to index. Best to enjoy it with a beer. Pairs well with a Belgian pale, a little wild, a touch spicy, and a clean dry finish." —William Hart-Davidson, coeditor, *Rhetoric and the Digital Humanities*