



# Medieval Fantasy as Performance: The Society for Creative Anachronism and the Current Middle Ages

*Michael A. Cramer*

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In this book, Michael Cramer views the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), an organization that studies and recreates the middle ages, as a case study for a growing fascination with medieval fantasy in popular culture. He explores the act of medieval re-creation as performance by focusing on the SCA, describing the group's activities, investigating its place in popular culture, and looking at the SCA not so much as a historical society but as an on-going work of performance art; a postmodern counter-culture riff on what it means to be 'medieval.' Cramer examines the group's activities, from persona and character development to theatrical performance and personal interaction; from the complex official ceremonies to full contact armored combat with mock broadswords. He explores the SCA in detail to discover how its members adapt and employ ideas about the Middle Ages in performance, ritual reenactment, living history, and re-creation, analyzing the performance of identity through ritual, sport, drama, and personal interaction, and he focuses on the reconstruction of the medieval 'king game,' a game in which a mock king is chosen to reign over a mock court. The book also studies various ideas about medievalism, including the contrast between reenactment and re-creation, and places these activities in the context of contemporary American society. With three appendixes, a bibliography, and a selection of photos, Cramer demonstrates how and why medieval fantasy is increasingly used in popular culture and analyzes the dissatisfaction with contemporary culture that leads people into these realms of fantasy.

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