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# Tim Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness: An Oral History of the Park Royal Brewery* (Oxford University Press, 2019)

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despite living in a context of emotional suffering and class-based vulnerability, as reported earlier.

Reading this book inspires several reflections. The book is highly rich in data, and it uses numerous interesting cultural idioms in the Pashtu language. As someone who grew up in Afghanistan, spent time in Pakistan, and became a migrant-citizen in North America under similar conditions, I could relate to the participants of this research, and I applaud Nicola Khan for offering such a thick description of the multilayered challenges associated with being an Afghan migrant. Considering the recent regime change that has led to the displacement of thousands of Afghans, a study of Afghan migrants has never been more urgent, and this book makes a timely contribution to the literature.

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**Tim Strangleman, *Voices of Guinness: An Oral History of the Park Royal Brewery* (Oxford University Press, 2019)**

THERE HAS BEEN a good deal written about Guinness – about the family, about the beer, and about the brewery. But until the publication of Tim Strangleman's excellent new study, we knew little about Guinness's Park Royal Brewery in West London, England. That brewery stood from 1936 until 2005, and, for Strangleman, it serves as a "microcosm" of industrial change. *Voices of Guinness* contemplates how people and place were bound up in changing understanding of the meaning and memories of work, heritage, industrial citizenship, corporate paternalism, material culture, and deindustrialization.

The book is the product of a decade and a half of extensive research and traces Park Royal's evolution from its

opening, through its heyday during the "long boom," to its eventual closure and the subsequent demolition of the plant. Strangleman was permitted to conduct interviews with members of the workforce who remained in their jobs between the announcement of the plant's closing in 2004 and the final shutdown in 2005. These interviews serve as illuminating vignettes and also capture the lived experiences "from the enormous condescension of posterity." (104) Strangleman aims to make sense of these "meditations" without engaging in "smoke-stack nostalgia." (172, 80) Their narration, and his interpretation of it, is not uncritical but demonstrates the value of oral history in helping us to make sense of the industrial atmosphere that shaped workers and that they, in turn, helped shape.

At times, this is as much a cultural history of business as it is a social history of work. To trace how Park Royal's management reflected on the role of work, Strangleman turns to the in-house magazine, *Guinness Time*. The magazine ran from 1947 to 1975 and covered such topics as brewery life, community, work, and extracurricular activities, such as organized sports. Strangleman views *Guinness Time* through the prism of "industrial citizenship," which is understood as "a civic identity derived from employment and the social and political relationships of the work-place." (32) For Guinness, industrial citizenship was essential to creating a "model workforce." The magazine suggests that management was sincerely committed to corporate paternalism and a desire to create a "nurturing environment in which employees could flourish" and develop their individual character.

Although it is acknowledged that *Guinness Time* was largely a social construction on the part of management, its role in corporate image making nonetheless reveals the values, norms, and

expectations that shaped the relationship between management and the employees at Guinness. Strangleman notes that the intent of *Guinness Time* was more liberal than might be implied by notions of citizenship, as it stressed that workers should be afforded considerable autonomy and control in their working lives. These liberal ideals were enabled through a collective understanding of work that was embedded in the way that “social relationships overlaid and underpinned the mechanical act of labour.” (103) The sense of community among workers at Guinness thus provided the conditions for citizenship to prosper.

For many production workers, life was hard. Shift work at Park Royal was twelve hours long. Many workers started work before dawn, and when the day was done after dusk, they were exhausted. Brewery work was labour intensive and required muscle, dexterity, and skill. The work of brewing often involved manipulating the raw materials needed to produce beer, coupled with operating the many flow valves in the brewery’s complex web of piping. The cleaning that followed each stage of the brew was the hardest labour, involving heavy lifting in a hot and steamy atmosphere.

Nevertheless, at least before the 1980s, workers liked coming to work. The paternalistic management style contributed to a strong and vibrant workplace culture. Work structures were underpinned by a set of rules that were largely seen as fair. The tradition of subsidized social activities cemented camaraderie and bolstered the satisfaction of the workers with their jobs, even if the actual tasks that they were doing were not fulfilling. Much of the production line work was mind-numbingly boring, and so workers took breaks to keep their sanity. “Those little pauses in production made the job sustainable; they broke up the working day.” (90) Workers enjoyed one another and

grew. Pranks were played, stories of home were exchanged, and games were undertaken. When interviewed, workers were careful to frame their accounts of play at work as an activity that did not interfere with the work itself, but rather as something that was in some ways functional to the smooth running of the brewery (100).

During the 1960s and 1970s, Guinness management diversified into related and unrelated industries, including confectionery, newsagents, health clubs, vacation companies, publishing, plastics, and pharmaceuticals. Like a number of companies, Guinness diversified beyond what was optimal. At its bloated height, Guinness was an unwieldy combination of assorted assets. There was no discussion of how each business contributed to Guinness’s core competence. Like the feudal lords that Adam Smith scorned for trading their leadership for a pair of silver buckles, Guinness’s executives were myopic in that their decisions were aimed at increasing short-term earnings rather than promoting long-term growth. The diversification drive consumed so much of Guinness’s time and cash that it reduced the company’s ability to seize a number of opportunities that might have contributed to its core competency.

Due to these strategic blunders, Guinness’ profits fell precipitously. To clean up the mess, Guinness brought in an outsider, Ernest Saunders, who was appointed managing director in October 1981. This was, according to Strangleman, “a pivotal event in the company’s history.” (110) Saunders’s new corporate strategy was a “dramatic slash-and-burn” exercise in the disinvestment of one subsidiary after another. During his first two years, he sold off or closed 140 of the 300 subsidiaries. After divesting Guinness of many of its unprofitable holdings, he embarked upon an aggressive spending spree. At a time when London was awash in “hot money,” he expanded into

such related industries as leisure and spirits, buying Bell Whiskey in 1985 and followed in 1986 by his purchase of the Distillers Company. While Saunders was ultimately imprisoned for five years for insider trading, the changes that he made were long-lasting and had a profound effect on those working at the brewery. Organizationally, the effect of Saunders' changes was a reconceptualization of work.

With the growth – in the late 1990s – of Guinness into Diageo, a multinational beverage firm that was steeped in the new managerial theories, management steadily dismantled the previous era's paternalism. Jobs were cut, rationalization measures were put in place, outsourcing began, and automation and internal markets took hold. There were no more free meals and beer for employees, whose numbers dropped from a peak of 1500 to just 78 by the time the plant was closed in 2005. Many of the workers who were interviewed remembered the 1980s and 1990s as a period of continuous change and insecurity. Gone were the days of embedded employment – i.e., a time when workers felt they had a grip on their jobs. Work became dis-embedded, leading to a loss of industrial culture and the structure of feelings that had once made workers satisfied and secure. Thus, while the Park Royal site was continuously brewing beer for nearly seventy years, the organization of the labour and “the assumptions surrounding it” were radically different in 2005 than they had been when the plant opened in 1936. (131)

While something might have been said about the role of race and gender at the brewery, this is a superb book. It shows the value of historical study and stands in stark contrast to the sociological accounts of sterile, desiccated working lives reported by theorists such as André Gorz, Zygmunt Bauman, and many others. The fast-paced, extremely readable narrative

along with the sensitive and sure-footed analysis of the material will attract educated and generally interested readers alike. The book shows that work matters in multiple ways, and for that reason alone, it deserves a wide readership.

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**Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020)**

SLAVE REVOLTS WERE dynamic, murky, and complicated, and in *Tacky's Revolt*, Vincent Brown shows us it was that and much more. His comprehensive study maps Jamaica's 1760–61 Slave Revolt(s), otherwise known as Tacky's Revolt, across the Atlantic world's martial cartography. Between April 1760 and September 1761, during the Seven Years War, over a thousand enslaved people known as the Coromantee in the British colony of Jamaica initiated several insurrections across the island. Contrary to the known history of the insurrection, Brown reveals that what scholars have understood as a single episode led by an enslaved man named Tacky was rather a collective series of revolts led by many insurgent protagonists as part of the larger Coromantee War in Jamaica. *Tacky's Revolt* frames slave revolt as a transatlantic genre of warfare, which he terms “slave war,” consisting of intersecting histories and odysseys linked together by a web of inter-Atlantic warfare between Africa, European empires, and the Americas.

Brown's central thesis contends that the 1760–61 Coromantee Slave War was a war within a network of many wars. He argues that it was simultaneously an extension of African warfare, a race war between European enslavers and enslaved Africans, a struggle between Africans over communal belonging, political