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Exploitation and Organizing in Artisanal Industries

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Résumé de l'article

Au cours de la dernière décennie, les entreprises se positionnant comme artisanales ont proliféré dans les environnements urbains du Nord mondial. Se propageant comme des centres communautaires, des voisins amicaux, des militants qui luttent contre les entreprises et des gardiens de l'environnement, les industries artisanales – brasseries, boulangeries, fabricants de vêtements patrimoniaux, etc. – se sont efficacement isolées de la critique. Cachés sous ce vernis, cependant, se trouvent les récits d'innombrables travailleurs détaillant leur expérience de harcèlement, de surmenage, de bas salaire et de discrimination. Motivé par l'orientation méthodologique de l'enquête ouvrière, cet article raconte l'attitude et l'expérience offertes par les artisans sur leurs conditions de travail, leurs motivations et leurs tentatives d'organisation dans les industries artisanales, en particulier l'artisanat brassicole. Le témoignage des travailleurs révèle une profonde déconnexion entre les mythologies industrielles optimistes offertes par le discours artisanal et les hiérarchies rigides, la division inégale du travail et les cultures toxiques que beaucoup observent sur leur lieu de travail. Contrairement à l'attrait artisanal omniprésent qui motive de nombreux travailleurs à chercher du travail dans la brasserie artisanale et les industries similaires, la recherche présentée ici suggère également de nouveaux niveaux de conscience et de solidarité de la classe ouvrière émergeant dans ces industries et décrit les tentatives des travailleurs des brasseries artisanales d'organiser leur lieu de travail et lutter pour améliorer les conditions.

ARTICLE

The Forgotten Labour of Craft: Exploitation and Organizing in Artisanal Industries

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Abstract: Over the last decade, firms positioning themselves as craft or artisanal have proliferated in the urban environments of the Global North. Selling themselves as community hubs, friendly neighbours, anticorporate crusaders, and environmental stewards, craft industries – craft breweries, artisanal bakeries, heritage clothing manufacturers, and the like – have effectively insulated themselves from critique. Hidden beneath this veneer, however, are the accounts of countless workers detailing experiences of harassment, overwork, low pay, and discrimination. Motivated by the methodological orientation of workers' inquiry, this article recounts attitudes and experiences offered by craftworkers and craftspeople about their working conditions, motivations, and attempts to organize in craft industries, particularly craft brewing. Worker testimony reveals a profound disconnect between the optimistic industrial mythologies offered up by craft discourse and the rigid hierarchies, unequal division of labour, and toxic cultures many observed in their workplaces. Contrary to the pervasive artisanal allure that motivates many workers to seek out work in craft brewing and similar industries, the research presented here also suggests new levels of working-class consciousness and solidarity emerging in these industries and profiles attempts by craft brewery workers to organize their workplaces and fight to improve conditions.

Keywords: craft, workers' inquiry, labour process theory, craft beer, craft industrialism, worker organizing

Résumé : Au cours de la dernière décennie, les entreprises se positionnant comme artisanales ont proliféré dans les environnements urbains du Nord mondial. Se propageant comme des centres communautaires, des voisins amicaux, des militants qui luttent contre les entreprises et des gardiens de l'environnement, les industries artisanales – brasseries, boulangeries, fabricants de vêtements patrimoniaux, etc. – se sont efficacement isolées de la critique. Cachés sous ce vernis, cependant, se trouvent les récits d'innombrables travailleurs détaillant leur expérience de harcèlement, de surmenage, de bas salaire et de discrimination. Motivé par l'orientation méthodologique de l'enquête ouvrière, cet article raconte l'attitude et l'expérience offertes par les artisans sur leurs conditions de travail, leurs motivations et leurs tentatives d'organisation dans les industries artisanales, en particulier l'artisanat brassicole. Le témoignage des travailleurs révèle une profonde déconnexion entre les mythologies industrielles optimistes offertes par le discours artisanal et les hiérarchies rigides, la division inégale du travail et les cultures toxiques que beaucoup observent sur leur lieu de travail. Contrairement à l'attrait artisanal omniprésent qui motive de nombreux travailleurs à chercher du travail dans la brasserie artisanale et les industries similaires, la recherche présentée ici

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suggère également de nouveaux niveaux de conscience et de solidarité de la classe ouvrière émergeant dans ces industries et décrit les tentatives des travailleurs des brasseries artisanales d'organiser leur lieu de travail et lutter pour améliorer les conditions.

Mots-clés : artisanat, enquêtes ouvrières, théorie du procès de travail, bière artisanale, industrialisme artisanal, syndicalisation

In November 2019, workers at Vancouver's Parallel 49 Brewing Company began meeting with organizers from an international union that represents retail workers in Canada. According to the worker organizers, union sentiment had been growing in the brewery since a failed union drive five years earlier.[1] This time around, front-of-house and production support staff were leading the charge and in November had started mapping their workplace and talking to their co-workers.[2] The effort was looking hopeful as dissatisfaction was rampant, with many employees reporting frustrations over favouritism, sexism, transphobia, and homophobia, as well as an abusive ownership and managerial team.[3] Unfortunately, as is sometimes the case, word of the organizing got out to management and workers began to disappear, reportedly being dismissed for a variety of reasons. Those fired tended to be among the most precarious – servers and retail associates mostly. According to workers involved in the organizing committee, between 6 and 10 workers (out of a total staff of approximately 90) lost their jobs during this period (management typically reported reasons other than the union campaign for their dismissal). Regardless of the numbers and justifications, it is apparent that it was a sufficient number to cool the campaign and put the idea of unionizing the brewery on hold for the second time in five years.[4]

Craft brewing is perhaps the most recognizable sector within what we might call craft industrialism, characterized by small-scale, local, quality-oriented productive enterprises, often staffed by small workforces. Craft firms are often lauded as being more socially conscious, sustainable, or community-oriented, standing out as an alternative to the faceless corporate monoliths that many picture when envisioning the 20th-century consumer culture.[5]

1. Jesara Sinclair, "Parallel 49 Craft Brewery Union Vote Result of 'Growing Pains,'" *CBC News*, 15 December 2014, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/parallel-49-craft-brewery-union-vote-result-of-growing-pains-1.2872594/.

2. Power mapping is a method by which workers study their own workplaces in order to identify power holders, leaders, and potential comrades in the lead up to a union drive. This typically takes place prior to card signing.

3. Benjamin Anderson, "'Beers and Fries, Please Don't Unionize!' Your Favourite Local Haunt Is Anti-worker," *The Mainlander*, 30 July 2020, https://themainlander.com/2020/07/30/beers-and-fries/.

4. As this paper was being drafted, on 26 February 2021, Parallel 49 announced the formation and certification of an employees' association for the brewery. Details about this development are not currently available.

5. See Christopher Mark O'Brien, *Fermenting Revolution: How to Drink Beer and Save the*

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Perhaps unsurprisingly, these assumptions begin to break down when one speaks directly with workers in these industries, especially workers who fall outside of the artisan category; the experiences of service staff and highly skilled artisans seem to be very much at odds. The former group – what I call craftworkers rather than craftspeople – makes up the majority of the workforce in scalable craft industries and, as we shall see, is often the most insecure. The disparate conditions experienced by craftworkers and craftspeople (in brewing, the brewers) often go unnoticed owing to the industrial mythology of the community-oriented, anticorporate craft brewery. As such, the craft brewing industry is particularly insulated from both critique and worker organizing. However, I contend that craftworkers are increasingly seeing through the industry's narrative façade and the paternalism upon which it is built. As will be made evident, craft breweries and similar craft industrial workplaces are highly stratified and use craft rhetoric and an appeal to craft values to obscure exploitation and often toxic conditions while simultaneously insulating themselves from organized worker action.

In the sections that follow, I recount perspectives offered by craft brewery workers about their working conditions, class positions, and the role of unions in craft workplaces. Foremost among my findings is the internal hierarchy of craft workplaces, moderated by both productive roles (production versus service) and identity (especially in relation to gender). Furthermore, workers reported attitudes much at odds with the typical mythologies of the craft food and beverage sector, particularly in the ways in which they envision themselves as workers rather than creatives or localist revolutionaries. Finally, both workers and owners reported generally favourable attitudes about unions and – given the spate of recent successful organizing drives in artisanal industries like craft breweries, specialty liquor stores, and coffee roasters[6] – an interest in working toward more equitable and, ultimately, organized workplaces. Taken as a whole, the findings reported in this article challenge us to reconsider both the composition of craft industries vis-à-vis the imposed craftsperson–craftworker hierarchy and the extent to which an individualized conception of craft provides a coherent alternative to the hegemonic forms of work characteristic

World (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2006); Sean Lewis, *We Make Beer: Inside the Spirit and Artistry of America's Craft Brewers* (New York: St. Martin's, 2014); Richard Ocejo, *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

6. Joe Eskenazi, "Breaking: Anchor Brewing Workers Overwhelmingly Approve First Union Contract," *Mission Local*, 20 December 2019, https://missionlocal.org/2019/12/breaking-anchor-brewery-workers-overwhelmingly-approve-first-union-contract/; Eva Uguen-Csenge, "Employees at Private B.C. Liquor Store Vote to Unionize, as Pandemic Profits Soar," *CBC News*, 23 August 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/employees-at-private-b-c-liquor-store-vote-to-unionize-as-pandemic-profits-soar-1.5696154/; UFCW, "Café Workers at Matchstick Coffee Join the Union," 16 November 2020, http://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=32829:cafe-workers-at-matchstick-coffee-join-the-union-ufcw-1518&catid=10218&Itemid=6&lang=en/.

of 21st-century capitalism in post-industrial contexts. By extension, I argue that the most recent wave of craft interest serves as a fetishization of artisanal labour that functionally obscures the material realities of work in craft industries.[7] Whereas industry celebrants see in craft brewing an alternative to the corporate dominance of brewing more generally, workers' experiences of overwork, low pay, harassment, and managerial overreach reveal the hidden excess of this craft fetish. In order to transcend this optimistically tinged shroud, it behooves us to listen to craftworkers and to support their efforts to collectively act in pursuit of their own interests – interests that both their bosses and craft discourse routinely ignore.

To demonstrate how this craft fetishization functions within the craft brewery, this article first provides an overview of its methodological orientation, workers' inquiry, and the role it plays in both the recording and amplification of worker interests. I then move on to critically assess contemporary craft rhetoric, particularly as this relates to the figure of the craftsperson and the purported fulfillment they get from their work. This figure will be carried over to an analysis of the artisanal allure at work in the craft brewing labour process and the internal division between craftspeople (brewers) and craftworkers to which it contributes. This division, it should be noted, is further reproduced along identity lines, with women, workers of colour, and gender-nonconforming workers generally falling lower on the vocational hierarchy than their white cisgender male counterparts. Finally, the article culminates in an overview of craftworkers' changing attitudes about their own class positions and interests and the manner by which they are beginning to organize in pursuit of more equitable workplaces.

Methodological Considerations: Workers' Inquiry and Craft Industries

Over a two-year period, from 2018 to 2020, I interviewed 35 craftworkers, makers, and business owners about the labour conditions and workplace cultures of craft industries.[8] My focus in this research was primarily on the labour process of craft workplaces and the entrepreneurial attitudes of self-employed makers and craftspeople. Although in this article I will draw upon the latter for examples and counterpoints, I will primarily discuss craftworkers' attitudes

7. Susan Luckman, *Craft and the Creative Economy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

8. Interviews included fourteen brewery workers (brewers, brewing assistants, servers, warehouse workers), five brewery owners (four of whom are also brewers), two health and safety specialists, seven workers in adjacent industries (artisanal coffee, heritage clothing manufacturing, artisan baking), and seven self-identified "makers." The brewing sample (nineteen) included thirteen men and six women, the vast majority of whom are white (fifteen). Of the thirteen breweries visited or profiled in interviews (all of which are located in Vancouver, Seattle, or Portland), four employed fewer than 10 workers, five employed between 10 and 30, and four employed between 30 and 100.

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about their jobs, how they relate to their own class positions, and what tactics they have begun to employ in organizing their workplaces. The project was built upon the methodological orientation of workers' inquiry, with the goal of, first, understanding the class dimensions of craft industries and how ideological narratives of entrepreneurialism and creativity obscure these.[9] Secondly, however, the goal of the project was to give workers a platform to speak on their own conditions and interests, in order to provide tools for current and future efforts to build solidarity and organizing capacity for workers in these industries. Accordingly, in the sections that follow, I pay particular attention to the latter goal, with only a brief foray into the former.

Since its formulation by Marx in 1880, the methodology called workers' inquiry (WI) has been a powerful tool in the documentation and support of workers' movements around the world in labour contexts as varied as call centre work, software and video game development, stock photography, food delivery, transportation, and education.[10] Marx's own intervention was the development of a questionnaire intended to gauge the experiences and perceptions of working people in the industrial formations of the late 19th century.[11] Since that time, the method has emerged as a strong unifier of theory and practice wherein the intellectual is able to use their vocational and class positions in order to intervene in working-class struggles.[12] Ideally this would likely resemble the researcher's use of institutional resources – grants and the like – to support those research initiatives identified by workers as particularly advantageous or strategically useful in their efforts to mobilize.

9. Robert Ovetz, ed., *Workers' Inquiry and Global Class Struggle: Strategies, Tactics, Objectives* (London: Pluto Press, 2020); Jamie Woodcock, "The Workers' Inquiry from Trotskyism to Operaismo: A Political Methodology for Investigating the Workplace," *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 14, 3 (2014): 493–513; Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

10. Enda Brophy, *Language Put to Work: The Making of the Global Call Centre Workforce* (New York: Springer, 2017); Jamie Woodcock, *Working the Phones: Control and Resistance in Call Centres* (London: Pluto, 2016); Jamie Woodcock, *Marx at the Arcade: Consoles, Controllers, and Class Struggle* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2019); Woodcock, "How to Beat the Boss: Game Workers Unite in Britain," *Capital & Class* 44, 4 (2020): 523–529; Seamus Grayer, "Stocksy United: A Case Study of Co-operation in the Cultural Industries," MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2020; Callum Cant, *Riding for Deliveroo: Resistance in the New Economy* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020); Dario Bursztyn, "*Camioneros*: The Argentine Truckers' Union That Can Paralyze the Country," in Ovetz, ed., *Workers' Inquiry*, 43–63; Patrick Cuninghame, "The Self-Organization of the Mexican Multitude against Neoliberal State Terror: The CNTE Dissident Teachers' Movement against the 2013 Education Reform," in Ovetz, ed., *Workers' Inquiry*, 148–173.

11. Asad Haider & Salar Mohandesi, "Workers' Inquiry: A Genealogy," *Viewpoint Magazine*, 27 September 2013, https://www.viewpointmag.com/2013/09/27/workers-inquiry-a-genealogy/.

12. Joanna Figiel, Stevphen Shukaitis & Abe Walker, "The Politics of Workers' Inquiry," *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 14, 3 (2014): 307–314.

The present research was undertaken to inform my doctoral dissertation and, as such, was not able to utilize the kinds of financial or institutional resources referred to above. As a result, the project reported here is not, necessarily, the kind of organic "workers studying themselves" design that would ideally drive a WI. However, this study was designed to give craftworkers a say in the direction and use of interviews. Although some questions were prepared in advance of the interview, participants often took discussions in the direction they saw fit. Participants were also invited to use the research relationship in their own efforts and campaigns, which usually took the form of inviting the researcher to organizing meetings, strategy sessions, and the like. The research also responded directly to worker actions as they occurred, particularly as craftworkers attempted to unionize or staged public displays against their employers. I spoke with workers involved in these actions – specifically, the social media campaigns @NotOurP49 and @NotOurCafes, the failed union drive at Parallel 49 Brewing, and the successful union drives at Matchstick Coffee, Turning Point Brewing, and Cartems Donuts – and gauged their interest in collaborating on additional public-facing actions and commentaries as well as connections between struggles.[13] This resulted in many cross-workplace collaborations (not reported here because of privacy and strategy concerns) as well as public commentaries and appearances.[14] At the time of composition, many workers involved in the various actions reported were actively circulating tactical information and lessons learned to other interested workers in similar workplaces and industries, both within British Columbia and beyond.

The Ambivalence of Craft: Limits to Industrial Labelling

Before delving too deeply into the conditions and interests revealed by participants, it would be beneficial to further unpack the assumptions that inform much of the discourse around artisanry, craft, and making. Most readers will have observed the preponderance of locally made craft commodities that seems to characterize an increasingly large productive segment in the urban economies of the Global North. From handmade leather goods, tools, and furniture to beer and sourdough, craft objects have become a seemingly contradictory reassertion of materiality in a productive moment commonly referred to as "digital capitalism," "the knowledge economy," and the "information age." However, these spheres are not as distinct as one might initially assume. As Australian cultural theorist Susan Luckman argues, the rise of

13. These two Instagram accounts garnered a fair amount of public attention in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada in the summer of 2020. The two accounts profiled worker experiences of harassment, sexism, transphobia, and racism at Vancouver's Parallel 49 Brewing Co. and Matchstick Coffee, respectively.

14. Anderson, "'Beers and Fries.'"

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craft and making activities is driven, at least in part, by the proliferation of digital platforms.[15] We see this, on the one hand, in the so-called maker movement, where amateur enthusiasts and professional craftspeople come together to use both traditional physical tools and new digital ones like laser cutters and 3-D printers.[16] On the other hand, we also see the connection between the popularity of craft and the development of craft-oriented internet platforms like the online craft marketplace Etsy, which gives aspiring crafters and artisans a venue through which they can gain public attention and sell their goods. What arises in the latter instance is a form of aspirant labour where the crafter's productive activity is supplemented by the imperative of self-promotion, and the individual crafter's creativity is often the discursive bedrock upon which their self-brand is built.[17]

It is in this sense that we can identify one of the central ingredients of popular notions of craft production: that its labour is inherently creative and that as creative labour it is singular and individual. Much of the recent interest in craft as a theoretical and sociological category has focused on the figure of the craftsperson/maker and the potentially autonomous nature of their work.[18] These accounts conceptualize the craftsperson as a skilled worker whose productive activity places them somewhat outside the dominant forms of work characteristic of both Fordist and post-Fordist capitalism. For scholars like Richard Sennett, the "craftsman" – his exploration being marked by this overtly gendered articulation – is anyone who goes about their work in pursuit of the best possible product.[19] The work of the "craftsman," in this sense, is of an ideal, individualized nature, hinging upon the tacit knowledge of skill in individual production. In an ideal sense, craft holds the keys to a more edifying, unalienated form of work, driven not by the imperatives of working life under global capitalism but by a return to traditional ways of making and being, informed by an ethic of care and a commitment to good work for its own sake.

Craft, in this sense, presents today's workers with a line of flight, a social and economic alternative to the disenchanting and overtly exploitative relations of contemporary capitalism. It is this escape potential that drives scholarly and popular accounts of craft passion. Portrayed as labours of love, artisanal

15. Luckman, *Craft*.

16. David Gauntlett, *Making Is Connecting: The Social Power of Creativity, from Craft and Knitting to Digital Everything* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018); Sarah R. Davies, *Hackerspaces: Making the Maker Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017).

17. Luckman, *Craft*.

18. Ocejo, *Masters of Craft*; Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin, 2008); Matthew B. Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work* (London: Penguin, 2009); Malcolm McCullough, *Abstracting Craft: The Practiced Digital Hand* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

19. Sennett, *Craftsman*.

vocations such as specialty mixology, holistic butchery, and craft distilling are envisioned as means by which today's young workers and entrepreneurs can reject dominant forms of work and forge their own paths, even as traditional employment grows ever more contingent and precarious.[20] Moreover, this stream of commentary would also have us believe that a return to a bespoke form of industrial production might serve as a remedy for the runaway certificatory inflation that precludes opportunity in the post-industrial economies of the Global North.[21] Driven by passion and dedicated to the development of skill, the craftsperson can escape from the dominant forms of working life while taking charge of their own fortunes.

At first glance, this seems appropriate when considering the making activity of the craft entrepreneur who makes things from home or on their own time – although, as Luckman demonstrates, even this activity brings with it often unforeseen levels of self-exploitation and hope labour.[22] Where it does not hold up, however, is when we consider scalable craft industries like breweries or artisan coffee roasters. The brewery is usually more than an individual operation, instead depending on workforces of varying size. According to the Brewers Association, the US industry association for brewing, a "craft brewery" is any brewery that makes beer, produces 6 million barrels of beer or less per year, and is not owned or controlled by a larger alcohol industry player.[23] What this means is that a craft brewery could have a workforce in the hundreds but maintain its craft designation and all of the assumptions about quality, localness, and creativity that come with it. And this is precisely what happens, as craft brewing continues to grow globally and especially in the Global North. What is particularly relevant here, though, is that the craft brewery workforce is very heavily weighted toward the service side. So, while a brewery might have ten production staff – including their creative virtuosos, the brewers – they will likely have just as many or more workers in front-of-house and support roles. As such, the craft brewing workforce is internally stratified, with brewers (who are predominantly white and men) enjoying greater institutional benefits and higher pay, while support staff, service staff, and retail staff (much more diverse groups) are often left out of consideration altogether.

20. Ocejo, *Masters of Craft*.

21. Crawford, *Shop Class*.

22. See Luckman, *Craft*. Hope labour, according to Kathleen Kuehn and Thomas Corrigan, is a form of unremunerated work taken on not for a wage but for future benefits in the form of qualifications, networks, certifications, and the like. In a sense, hope labour is the work we do to secure work in a highly precarious world. See Kuehn & Corrigan, "Hope Labor: The Role of Employment Prospects in Online Social Production," *Political Economy of Communication* 1, 1 (2013): 9–25.

23. "Craft Brewer Definition," Brewers Association website, accessed 15 June 2020, https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/craft-brewer-definition/.

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The Craft Brewing Labour Process: The Artisanal Allure

In simple terms, brewing involves the conversion of sugars, rendered by steeping grains, into alcohol through the use of yeast. The basic beer formula is made up of water, grain, hops, and yeast (although other ingredients are commonly added). Neither the process nor recipes are inherently complex, making beer brewing a common hobby activity for many.[24] At first blush, this might suggest that brewing and the industry built up around it is a simple, almost rote process, far from the artisanry celebrated in fields like furniture making, architecture, or ceramics. Moreover, the product in brewing – a fermented beverage – is not a durable good but a consumable, its flavours, aromas, and other traits seemingly ephemeral.

Combined, these assumptions about the relative straightforwardness of brewing might lead us to discount it as a craft process, concluding that the craft in craft brewing is nothing more than buzz intended to sell a consumer product. Although the latter is at least partially accurate, the skill involved in brewing becomes readily apparent when speaking with a brewer or watching one work. Brewers report varying levels of training and certification, but most ultimately point to the actual act of brewing as where skill develops. Skill is, of course, a concept that varies considerably with use.[25] However, in the particular context of brewing, it would likely include tacit knowledge about flavours and aromas combined with the technical knowledge of brewing. This knowledge is, according to multiple participants, developed incrementally through practice, often over the course of years of both amateur and professional brewing. In the sense that most brewers see their own work, it is this concerted effort toward skill development and the care exercised in pursuit of a high-quality product that categorizes their work as craft.

As we know from decades of research motivated by labour process theory (LPT), skill is a central ground upon which the capital-labour conflict is waged, with the craftsperson ultimately dispossessed of their control over both craft knowledge and the process of their work.[26] In the Taylorized workshop this involves the gradual but intentional and systematic replacement of skilled craft tasks with repetitive, simplified ones.[27] According to Harry Braverman, under Taylorist principles, "The labor process is to be rendered independent of craft, tradition, and the workers' knowledge. Henceforth it is to depend not at all

24. Charlie Papazian, *The Complete Joy of Home Brewing* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).

25. David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (London: Herbert Press, 1968).

26. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974)

27. "Taylorization" generally refers to the application of Frederick Taylor's principles of scientific management to the labour process, including the separation of planning and execution, the concentration of knowledge in the hands of management, and the removal of craft skill where possible. For a critical overview of Taylor's principles, see Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.

upon the abilities of workers but entirely upon the practices of management."[28] The result, in Braverman's analysis, is a labour process generally marked by deskilling and the dispossession of the craftsperson, the simplified process being more efficient, thus more conducive to the conversion of labour power into surplus value.

Craftspeople, one should note, did not simply disappear as a result of the Taylorist transformation of the labour process. In fact, Taylorism was not adopted universally, often leaving room for the proliferation of craft and the continued control of craft knowledge on the part of the craftsperson.[29] In some cases, the 21st-century labour process has even been considered as one that depends on the empowerment of skilled workers (albeit in the pursuit of valorization).[30] Such empowerment is on full display in the role the brewer plays in today's craft breweries. Far from the deskilled human automaton often envisioned as the prototypical Taylorized worker, the craft brewer enjoys a privileged position at the top of a workplace hierarchy reinforced generally by higher pay and more vocational respect than given to their colleagues. Although the brewing profession is internally stratified, industry data indicates that senior brewers are significantly higher paid than their support counterparts (brewing support, cellaring, and packaging being the other roles listed).[31]

In some sense, seeing the brewer as a member of a labour aristocracy in the contemporary craft brewery seems appropriate. They do, for instance, produce the industry's marquis product, often based on their own recipes and craft practices. For all of this privilege, however, industry reporting suggests that even brewmasters enjoy relatively low pay (on average, a bit under US$50,000 per year) and often limited benefits (limited sick days, inadequate or no health plan, etc.) compared with workers in similar occupations.[32] Brewer participants reported general levels of dissatisfaction with their salaries but also pointed to the importance of liking what they do in sticking with their jobs (though, as we will see, even this has its limits). In fact, as echoed by both production and support staff, part of the appeal of craft beer work is the intangible benefits seemingly on offer in the craft brewing industry.

At work here is a kind of artisanal allure. According to many participants – brewers, servers, owners – the cultural cachet of the craft brewing industry is what drove them to their jobs in the first place. Multiple, in fact, reported voluntarily taking on unremunerated work in order to demonstrate their interest,

28. Braverman, 113.

29. See, for example, Tony Elger's critique of Braverman: Elger, "Valorisation and 'Deskilling': A Critique of Braverman," *Capital & Class* 3, 1 (1979): 58–99.

30. Matt Vidal, "Contradictions of the Labour Process: Worker Empowerment and Capitalist Inefficiency," *Historical Materialism* 28, 2 (2019): 170–204.

31. "What Brewers Earn," *Beervana Blog*, 6 September 2018, https://www.beervanablog.com/beervana/2018/9/6/brewer-compensation-survey-results/.

32. "What Brewers Earn."

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passion, and commitment, aspiring to get their foot in the proverbial door. As one brewer from Portland recounted,

> I got my first gig volunteering at a brewery when I got introduced to the owner. Running their collaborator program and working on the side … I was able to talk myself up enough where I was able to overcome my lack of knowledge. Every day I would call my boyfriend to pick me up and he'd have to help me get into the car, work the seatbelt, every muscle screaming. I can't complain, I asked for this.[33]

Such a pervasive artisanal allure contributes to the valorization process in two primary ways. First, workers bring with them an impression that their job is desirable and that as a result they are inherently replaceable, being fortunate to have the job in the first place. This sense of replaceability at the hands of the external labour market compounds the threat of the reserve army while simultaneously driving workers to accept conditions, pay rates, and hours that they might not in other circumstances – say, if they worked a union job at a corporate brewery. Second, the artisanal allure contributes to the hegemonic power of the craft brewing labour process. Michael Burawoy famously demonstrated the manner by which consent drives the labour process in tandem with coercive management.[34] Burawoy's account locates the genesis of worker consent at the point of production itself. This is partially the case in craft brewing, where the industry's cultural allure and the arguably fun atmosphere of the workplace (complete with free beer, tasting events, staff pub nights, and the like) undergirds a kind of aspirational internal labour market where workers feel compelled to work hard and for longer periods. More commonly, however, this form of consent is driven by their externally generated view of the industry as hip, vibrant, socially valuable, or otherwise culturally desirable. Unlike the internal labour market, however, this impression is fleeting, especially when weighed against workers' own experiences of the labour process. As one brewing assistant (who also started out as a volunteer worker) put it, "The mystique of being a brewer doesn't exist. Nobody cares. At first I thought 'I'm a brewer and people will automatically respect this.' I don't feel that that is worth a dime. The mystique isn't padding my pocketbook."[35] He went on to quip that you may seem cool at parties when you say you work in brewing, but that coolness only goes so far in paying your bills.[36]

The artisanal allure is a characteristic recognized by others studying the industry, notably Chloe Fox Miller in her analysis of labour in Portland's craft

33. Participant interview, 2019.

34. Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

35. Participant interview, 2019.

36. This particular insight provides an interesting contrast to a perspective offered by a brewmaster who told Chloe Fox Miller (see below) that at parties they enjoy telling people what they do and the respect they receive in turn.

brewing sector.[37] According to Fox Miller's account, the perceived glamour of working in the craft brewing industry exacerbates precariousness as it reduces pressures to raise wages and improve contractual arrangements while simultaneously increasing demand for these same precarious jobs. Interestingly – and potentially of crucial importance for the prospect of worker organizing – Fox Miller's interview participants indicated a general trend away from the common view of brewing work as industrial labour in the 1980s and 1990s to a contemporary view of brewery work as creative and glamorous. My own research suggests that this shift might slowly be coming to an end, with several relatively recent industry entrants (working in craft brewing for five years or less) reporting that they identify as industrial workers more than as creatives. Although the implications of this particular observation will be unpacked below, it indicates that the artisanal allure, pervasive as it is, might also be showing some cracks that could be exploited through a concerted organizing effort by workers feeling misled by its promise of vocational glamour.

The Division of Labour and the Division of Workers

Tamara[38] spent a summer working as seasonal help at Factory Brewing (now MOD Beverage Inc.), a contract brewery in East Vancouver, British Columbia. Contract breweries are facilities that contract out to brew beers for other breweries because of their lack of capacity or prioritization of other beers.[39] In this case, the brewery effectively outsources production of one or more of its beers but still puts its own label on the resulting products. The labour process of a contract brewery is similar to that of any other craft brewery, but, as they are not brewing their own recipes, one could assume that the creativity motivation – and to a lesser degree the artisanal allure – is not as centrally important among its brewers.

For her part, Tamara worked in the warehousing and packaging division of the brewery. Coming from a background in construction and administration, she was most surprised by the heavy top-down means of management at the brewery paired with management's general disconnection from and relative ignorance of the actual process of production. Her job duties varied from day to day but mostly involved keg stocking, labelling, and packaging – keg work stood out as particularly rigorous, a sentiment shared by other participants

37. Chloe Fox Miller, "Craft and the Contemporary Geographies of Manufacturing: Local Embeddedness, New Workplaces, and the Glamourization of Work in the Craft Brewing Sector," PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2019; Fox Miller, "'Glorified Janitors': Creativity, Cachet, and Everyday Experiences of Work in Portland, Oregon's Craft Brewing Sector," *Geoforum* 106 (November 2019): 78–86.

38. Given the sensitive nature of some workers' stories, all participants have been assigned pseudonyms for this report.

39. Garrett Oliver, *The Oxford Companion to Beer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

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from different breweries. She had been recruited to work at the brewery by an industry celebrant but quickly recognized a strict and overt hierarchy within the facility wherein owners and managers called all the shots and treated support staff as interchangeable and replaceable. Tamara even noted that the majority of the staff worked in temporary or seasonal arrangements, as in her own case.

The workplace culture was not particularly conducive to community, but Tamara and some of her co-workers were still able to make the best of things – that is, until the owners hired a new production manager who had previously worked at a large national brewery. The new manager immediately set about transforming the company's labour process, imposing new disciplinary measures on employees, particularly to boost productivity and curb "abuse" of break times. As a result of the new manager's policies, breaks were heavily regimented and tracked, forcing many workers to actually skimp on their legally guaranteed break minimums. What was particularly troubling for Tamara was a simultaneous policy change that banned the use of personal water bottles in production areas and did not replace their use with any form of accessible hydrating station (e.g., a water cooler). Under the auspices of reducing workplace alcohol consumption (something that had never been an issue, according to Tamara), the ban effectively forced workers to only drink water on breaks. This policy, paired with the regimentation of breaks, led to serious health and safety concerns for workers, especially as it took effect during the summer months when the temperature in the production facility could reach above 30°C.

Tamara describes this new managerial regime as a force for cutting down comradery, reinforcing (often gendered) hierarchy, and imposing a clearer division between brewers and support workers. This is not to say that the workplace culture did not already have issues; Tamara's description of the preferential treatment enjoyed by male workers illustrates this very clearly. In our discussion, she returned to this division frequently, ultimately concluding that it led to a kind of clique culture: "It was really broken down by gender. The dudes would all go on smoke breaks together. There was more of a crew feeling and less of a unified class of workers."[40]

This is a sentiment shared by workers at other breweries. The experience of a gendered hierarchy was echoed by Geoff, who worked as warehouse support at Vancouver's Parallel 49 Brewing, a brewery that came under public scrutiny in the summer of 2020 for just these kinds of allegations.[41] According to Geoff,

> When you're working in the back you're left alone. I didn't experience harassment and I didn't witness it in the warehouse, but I think that played a function with the servers – especially if you're a woman, especially if you're trans. I think it played a role in setting the

40. Participant interview, 2020.

41. Anderson, "'Beers and Fries.'"

tone in keeping things moving. The gas-lighting and bullying and harassment from owners and from customers (which was never addressed), it was used to keep people in line.[42]

Geoff's account echoes that of service staff who were working at the brewery at the same time. According to these accounts, male workers, regardless of their roles, enjoyed preferential treatment in the brewery, whereas women and gender-diverse workers faced greater levels of scrutiny, discipline, and ultimately abuse.

In Geoff's account, the experience for men was generally positive and comradely, creating a kind of clubhouse atmosphere for the in-group. As he describes the situation,

As far as the bro culture, that was definitely the case in the back of house. The drivers, warehouse workers, brewers. If you're a male and not trouble for management, you were immediately in the club. You'd get the invite up to [one of the owners'] office and drink for free. There was a culture of those guys talking shit about the women they work with or taking part in harassment when they were drinking in the bar. It was a way of cutting into any kind of solidarity between the production side and front of house. Making it clear that there is a hierarchy based on gender and what you do.[43]

In both of these examples we observe a division of the workforce along two primary lines, as suggested by Geoff. First, there is a clear division between workers based on their role in the brewery. At Parallel 49 and at Factory, workers reported a hierarchy with brewing staff (brewers, assistant brewers, and brewing assistants) on the top and packaging and other support and service staff (warehousing workers, canning-line operators, custodial workers, servers, retail staff) at the bottom. Workers at other, similarly sized craft and contract breweries also reported this division by task or role. As a brewing assistant at a BC contract brewery recounted, "the brewing team and the packaging people don't really talk. We just go about our own thing and don't even really see each other."[44] He went on to admit that the warehouse and packaging staff worked largely on part-time and temporary contracts, as opposed to the brewing staff, who had mostly full-time, long-term roles. Moreover, while packaging and warehouse workers were expected to work at high speeds and with only the legally required breaks, the brewing staff was allowed a much more flexible schedule, with multiple breaks and periods of relative leisure. In this sense, the two divisions are distinguished in terms of both security and privilege within the labour process. Dividing workers up by role procedurally and culturally serves as a means by which the craft brewing industry is able to reinforce its artisanal narratives – in an industry that prides itself on the handmade nature of its product, it makes sense that there is an interest in drawing distinct lines of privilege for the celebrated artisan class of workers.

42. Participant interview, 2020.

43. Participant interview, 2020.

44. Participant interview, 2021.

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The division here is, once again, generally made between the craftsperson (brewer, brewing assistant) and the craftworker (support staff) and reflects a prioritization of the former over the latter. Of course, as we will see, this privilege is nominal in an industry that routinely underpays and overworks even its marquee workers, standing out in stark contrast to the unionized brewing environments of the macrobrewing sector.

Secondly, at each of the aforementioned breweries as well as at others visited for this research, workers reported an unspoken but pervasive workplace division along gender lines. Of course, this is not unique to craft brewing, as another former Parallel 49 worker acknowledged. According to this worker:

> I've definitely seen from my life experiences similar levels of patriarchy and misogyny in other industries, even non-profits, which are supposed to be more feminized. It's so ingrained in our interactions, it's just going to be there. If there's more cis men working in a place it's going to be more overt. It's just so normalized in breweries … With how things currently are I feel like the daily violence of capitalism and being a low-wage worker is just accepted as if there's nothing you can do, something you just have to be okay with, and the sense is that the misogyny on top of that is the problem.[45]

Although there are always exceptions to broad workforce generalizations, it is well documented that craft brewing is a particularly male-dominated industry.[46] Moreover, in the breweries visited (or documented through interviews) for this research (six in British Columbia, four in Washington, and three in Oregon), only one was directly co-owned by a woman.[47] The particular investor structures of the remaining twelve are slightly opaque, save that ownership seems to be predominantly held by men. On the next step in the hierarchy, most brewing staff in these breweries were also reportedly men, though at this level more women were represented. However, the less privileged and more insecure roles such as production and warehouse support and service demonstrated a gradual reversal of this pattern, with back-of-house support work generally reflecting a greater level of gender parity and service and front-of-house work falling mostly to women. It is worth noting also that nonbinary, transgender, and gender-nonconforming workers, according to interview participants, are broadly relegated to the latter group. In fact, nonbinary and transgender workers were reported to experience higher levels of workplace

45. Participant interview, 2020.

46. Julia Herz, "The Diversity Data Is In: Craft Breweries Have Room and Resources for Improvement," Brewers Association website, 14 August 2019, https://www.brewersassociation.org/brewing-industry-updates/the-diversity-data-is-in-craft-breweries-have-room-and-resources-for-improvement/; Bart Watson, "Brewery Diversity Benchmarking: A Foundation for Change," Brewers Association website, 14 August 2019, https://www.brewersassociation.org/insights/brewery-diversity-benchmarking-a-foundation-for-change/.

47. The decision to focus primarily on the Canadian context was driven by recent worker-led organizing and public activism campaigns. The US data largely confirm the Canadian data, especially in terms of the division of labour and worker attitudes about management and their own roles.

harassment and discrimination than their colleagues. Although the sample here is limited, it suggests a general trend in organizational structure toward reserving the more privileged craftsperson roles for men with more gender diversity manifesting through the ranks of craftworker roles, the majority of service and retail roles being held by women and gender-diverse workers.

This gendered division might be explained in part by pervasive attitudes about masculine and feminine working roles. In fact, one might assume that the service and retail work being so highly feminized springs from a characterization of service as an emotional, and by extension, feminine, form of work. Like the workers documented in Arlie Russell Hochschild's now classic work *The Managed Heart*, the disproportionately feminized brewery server workforce is expected to "put on a smile" while seeing to the needs and desires of patrons, co-workers, and owners alike.[48] In fact, we can see this clearly in one server's account of her termination from a BC craft brewery:

> What stuck out is that she [the manager] said recently some customers have mentioned to management that I have seemed unwell or have mentioned I'm not having a good day. She said we can't have that because that gives our customers the impression that we don't treat our staff well. Where that may be coming from is that my customer service style is very personable and real. So in the last week, when asked how I was, I was honest about not feeling great – but not in an unprofessional way. I didn't give any details or say it was related to work. This is also infuriating because I'd built so many relationships with the customers there and I'm on a first-name basis with countless of them, and have been able to do that by being real with them.[49]

In this worker's experience, neglecting the scripts of appropriate emotional labour or showing more than the appropriate level of one's affective dimensions was purportedly grounds for dismissal. This is the extra barb to the expectation of feminized emotional work: showing the wrong emotion or being too overt might actually jeopardize one's employment.

This is to say nothing of the racial composition of craft brewing. Craft brewing is also a predominantly white industry, in terms of both ownership and workforce.[50] The reason that the above description of the division of labour observed in this research does not list this particular nature of the workforce is that in the breweries observed, there was not a broad diversity on display – which, in a sense, communicates through absence. Of those interviewed, most were white; workers of colour made up a minority of the sample and, according to their reports, of the workforce generally. Those interviewed reported instances of tokenism and a culture of expected conformity wherein, while standing in as tokens, they were also expected not to make waves or be overly sensitive. The dearth of representation in the sample, however, does

48. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

49. Participant interview, 2020.

50. Herz, "Diversity Data."

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hinder any attempt to generalize about the craftsperson/craftworker division of labour along racial or ethnic lines.[51]

Although workers did not report pay discrepancies along these latter two lines of division, the same cannot be said of the front-of-house, back-of-house split, especially as this maps onto the distinction between the craftsperson and craftworker. Compounded here is the commonly temporary, seasonal, or simply part-time nature of craftworker roles. If we assume (likely reasonably) that gender and race generally map onto the craftsperson/craftworker division, it becomes evident not only that craft brewing has a highly hierarchical workforce but that its division of labour conforms to dominant societal-level trends in discrimination and exclusion.

Whereas craft brewing as an industry commonly heralds itself as a kinder, more responsible and progressive way of bringing consumers a drink they love, this narrative begins to fold under its own weight when measured against the actual practices on display in the workplace. Craft industrialism, as we have seen, makes a fetish of artisanal work, a fetish that simultaneously valorizes its commodity output while obscuring the labour process at work in the workshop, brewery, roasting house, and so on down the line. This valorization accords the consumer the opportunity to feel good in their consumption, perceiving a closeness to the producer albeit at an abstract distance. As a result, the worst excesses of the craft industry are hidden from view, with only the veneer of the handmade remaining in the eye of consumers. This is perhaps why instances of workplace harassment, overwork, and discrimination (such as those reported in the @NotOurP49 and @NotOurCafes Instagram accounts and commented on above) are so jarring and upsetting to craft consumers – they force one to see beyond the craft fetish and sit in the discomfiting view of the industrial realities of craft. Beyond the perception remains that same combination of exploitation and alienation characteristic of the corporate labour process, but here it is embossed with the image of a chainwheel, a hop floret, or a charmingly unpolished font – the markings of labour, nature, and handicraft.

From Rebel to Worker: Shifting Vocational Identities

The explosions of microbrewing in the 1990s and of craft brewing in the 2000s were both marked by descriptions of brewers and brewery owners as rebels who were challenging the concentration of beer production.[52] Breweries

51. It is worth noting that one participant actually requested that their comments about race be anonymized given the general homogeneity of Pacific Northwest craft brewing.

52. See, for example, Frank Appleton, *Brewing Revolution: Pioneering the Craft Beer Movement* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour, 2016); Steve Hindy, *The Craft Beer Revolution: How a Band of Microbrewers Is Transforming the World's Favorite Drink* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Tom Acitelli, *The Audacity of Hops: The History of America's Craft Beer Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013); Joe Wiebe, *Craft Beer Revolution: The Insider's Guide to BC Breweries* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2013); O'Brien, *Fermenting Revolution*;

and the movement more generally branded themselves as edgy and innovative, the movement as a whole often referred to as the "craft beer revolution." However, as J. Nikol Beckham argues, this resistance or rebellion often takes the form of individual attitudes and brand positioning that obscure the profit-oriented, hierarchical, and exploitative business processes that actually drive the movement.[53] We might even go so far as to posit that the positioning of craft breweries as rebelling against corporate brewing is a mask for the entrepreneurial ideology that drives enthusiasm for and investment in this sector. As Beckham contends, the resistant ethos "was not expressed as a commitment to an overarching economic philosophy, but rather was performed as a set of individual cultural practices that relied upon a slippage between the meanings of work and leisure."[54] She goes on to argue that the enactment of this entrepreneurial form of rebellion works to mask the neoliberal culture of craft brewing, legitimizing managerial practices through its cultural mythology and smoothing the material conflicts implicit in a heavily Taylorized labour process. The conflicting identities and interests of actors in the brewing industry reveal much about the porous seams of this industrial mythology. While many workers in the brewing sector identify with this mythology of resistance, many others reject it outright, seeing themselves as workers first rather than latent revolutionaries in the fight against corporate beer. For them, brewing or brewery work is not as much about rebellion or even creativity as it is a waged vocation.

The interviews conducted for this study indicate a surprising ambivalence among brewery workers regarding craft brewing's early narratives of resistance against the corporate control of beer. Craft brewers and brewery owners who got into the business in the 1990s often report a certain pride at being part of a movement that challenged large corporations. They might celebrate the "craft beer revolution" or talk about how craft breweries can exist as an autonomous alternative to corporate beer. While they also allude to some of the attitudes regarding the industrial nature of the work documented in Fox Miller's research, this was often tempered by a vision of the industry as a kind of political force.[55] In a way similar to the glamorization reported by Fox Miller and the artisan allure considered in the preceding sections, this aura of resistance might also be seen as obscuring actual conditions within the industry. Interestingly, though, younger brewers and brewery workers seem only rarely to share this perspective. In fact, many of these workers, especially

Lewis, *We Make Beer*.

53. J. Nikol Beckham, "Entrepreneurial Leisure and the Microbrew Revolution: The Neoliberal Origins of the Craft Beer Movement," in Nathaniel G. Chapman, J. Slade Lellock, and Cameron D. Lippard, eds., *Untapped: Exploring the Cultural Dimensions of Craft Beer* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2017), 59–79.

54. Beckham, 82.

55. Fox Miller, "Glorified Janitors."

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those who hold more menial or junior roles, argue that work in craft brewing is just another job and that the craft beer industry is not inherently resistant or radical – often echoing the perspectives of the veteran workers interviewed in Fox Miller's research on Portland's brewing sector. In fact, when asked, most non-owner participants indicated that they would absolutely take a job at a macro-brewery. Most cited the almost certainly higher wage, the increased benefits, or the ability to join or form a union as primary reasons why they would be open to such a switch.

Although some industry veterans might see this shift as a concerning depoliticization of the craft brewing workforce, it could also be read as the reverse. Attitudes about the industry voiced by participants in this study suggest that a relatively healthy working-class consciousness is being developed within the craft beer industry, despite the artisanal allure that brings many young workers to the industry in the first place. Several participants, independent of being asked, voiced their desire to join a union, and nearly all of the others reported an interest when asked. Perhaps this is a symptom of a dwindling belief in or loyalty to the resistance narrative so commonly mobilized by the old guard or of the commitment to the social capital mode of remuneration in craft brewing – the coolness of a job is fine, but material security seems to be a higher priority for many brewery workers. It is also likely a product of the sheer growth of the industry, whereby many new workers actually see themselves as workers in a pretty traditional manufacturing environment and, as such, expect the same rights and benefits that other manufacturing workers enjoy.

In recent years, this working-class orientation toward brewery workers' vocational identities has begun to materialize as collective resistance against currently existing conditions and contractual arrangements and collective organizing in pursuit of unionized workplaces. Union drives like those at Anchor Brewing in San Francisco, Turning Point Brewing in British Columbia, and Surly Brewing in Minneapolis represent a growing desire among brewery workers to have a larger say in the conditions under which they work, but the road to such an outcome is rocky, as the case of Parallel 49 demonstrates.

Craftworkers Organize

Beth had been working as a server at the Parallel 49 Brewing Co.'s tasting room for about six months when she found out that she "had a target on [her] back."[56] In April 2019, Beth was laid off without cause, after friends and colleagues had warned her that she was likely being singled out for her involvement in an attempt to unionize the East Vancouver brewery. Since January of the previous year, Parallel 49 workers had been organizing in an attempt to sign cards for membership in an international union. The organizing drive came five years after Parallel 49 workers voted against an attempt to join

56. Participant interview, 2020.

Brewery, Winery & Distillery Workers Union – Local 300 in December 2014, amid speculation that the drive had been undermined by behind-the-scenes managerial (owner) influence.

When she started her job at Parallel 49, Beth had a positive impression not only of the brewery but of craft brewing more generally, being drawn in by the narrative of glamour and artisanry discussed above. "I really liked the experience," she explained, recounting her first impressions as a customer, prior to joining the brewery's workforce. "It was different from bars, it was really cheap, it was inventive and really out there in terms of styles of beers."[57] Beth is far from alone in her positive memory. Craft breweries are commonly seen as cool, local alternatives to the mundane, mass-production-oriented macro-breweries that have dominated North American beer for decades.

Beth's attitude changed very quickly as she experienced the kinds of harassment and managerial abuse detailed in the @NotOurP49 Instagram account. She described instances of sexual harassment, gendered favouritism, and manager aggression toward workers, mostly in the tasting room and kitchen. After seeing colleagues subjected to belittling treatment, and experiencing it herself, Beth and some of her colleagues decided that they wanted to change their working environment. They began meeting outside of work to discuss forming a union, and before long they invited a union organizer to help them plan their union drive. Of course, as noted in the opening paragraph, this drive did not pan out.

There have been many false starts and speed bumps on the road to craft brewery worker organizing in the Pacific Northwest region. The failed efforts at Parallel 49 and the recent decertification of the union at Salt Spring Island Ales mark major setbacks in the fight to organize this industry. Fortunately for those who support workers' desires for union representation, on 27 October 2020, SEIU Local 2 (Brewery, General and Professional Workers' Union) announced that workers at Turning Point Brewery in Delta, BC, voted 93 per cent in favour of unionization.[58] Like many in craft brewing, Turning Point workers saw a massive spike in sales at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and while ownership initially offered a pandemic wage bump, it expired after only two months (workers unionized approximately eight months into the pandemic, having not been paid pandemic wages for the intervening six). As a whole, workers cited inconsistent pay and lack of managerial transparency as two of their core reasons for needing collective power in the form of a union.

Owned by Labatt, Turning Point is not a clear example of unionizing in a craft brewery, because its lack of independent status excludes it from formal

57. Participant interview, 2020.

58. SEIU Local 2, "Turning Point Brewery Workers Unionize with SEIU Local 2," news release, *GlobeNewswire*, 26 October 2020, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/10/26/2114727/0/en/Turning-Point-Brewery-Workers-Unionize-with-SEIU-Local-2.html.

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craft designation. However, matters are not quite so simple, as Turning Point is a contract brewery, brewing beers for a number of craft labels throughout their region. Additionally, its workers, like others in the industry, maintain various connections with their counterparts at other breweries – one worker playfully noted that he regularly debates with his craft beer friends about whether Turning Point should be considered "craft." In a sense, Turning Point's workforce of 60-plus is made up of craftspeople and craftworkers who are supporting the craft brewing industry but in a capacity that falls outside of the strict identification of being part of that industry. However, the brewery maintains many industrial interconnections, not least of which is the brewing of beers for craft labels. Moreover, as one participant reported, the social connections between Turning Point (and other contract breweries) and the rest of the craft brewing industry are porous, with many workers having worked together previously or sharing a social network.

In unionizing with SEIU Local 2, Turning Point joined at least two other corporate, craft-adjacent breweries in British Columbia – Granville Island Brewing and Okanagan Springs Brewery – that are already part of the union's ranks. A worker closely involved in the union campaign suggested that Turning Point might even serve as a kind of hub for worker organizing as well as an example for interested workers to follow.

That Turning Point, a corporate-owned brewery, brews beers for a number of craft breweries opens up a vector for the spread of organizing sentiment and energy. The previously mentioned Turning Point worker had this to say to industry colleagues who are considering union drives of their own:

> Reach out and talk to other people from other smaller breweries or similar sized breweries, and if the feeling is the same or if it is just their particular company … I know there is a lot of communication among the craft brewing industry as it is. If they want to do it, reach out to other people, talk about it, talk to a union rep or organizer. If it's the right fit, go for it … And with COVID, a lot of people are worried. Investors and bar groups generally don't care about their workers and think they can hire anyone off the street. Now that these groups own several different breweries, it might be a good idea for all of them to organize together if that's what their looking for.[59]

The worker went on to explain that breweries today are built to expand, and that part of expansion seems to be a corporatization of the workplace, which was one of the key catalysts for the union drive at Turning Point. Of course, the formula "bigger = easier to organize" should not be assumed to be universally applicable. More to this worker's point, the craft brewing industry is changing and small shops built upon a love of the beer and the craft are quickly becoming the exception rather than the norm.

Of course, the commonly referenced view of the brewery as a small family – a view shared by many people interviewed for this study – remains pervasive

59. Participant interview, 2020.

throughout the industry. On the one hand, this particular form of paternalism serves as insulation against worker action, as Beth attested:

> There was this one guy who worked in the production side. I spent so much time trying to get him into this and I actually got him to a meeting … He kept saying 'I'd like to talk to the owners first' … He used this analogy where he referenced a couple he knew – if a marriage is falling apart you want to talk about it first before you get a lawyer. He was really scared meeting with us because the owners could find out and he was betraying his friends.[60]

On the other hand, as a Turning Point worker suggested, when the view of management as friend or family is tarnished by a disengaged or overbearing managerial team, an intensification of work, or an unequal or otherwise unfair contractual structure, this betrayal of expectations can blow up into seemingly spontaneous worker resentment.

In the case of Turning Point, the spark that lit the amassed brush of dissatisfaction was a plant-wide meeting (done in shifts) called by management and promoted as the platform for an exciting announcement. As the worker explained it,

> It started not that long ago, maybe about a month ago now, where they brought everybody up by department or by shift for this meeting that they said was an exciting meeting. I went up to it, day shift and night shift together, basically to tell us they were giving us a raise. Everyone was happy about that until they said it was about 1 per cent, and we haven't had any cost-of-living wage increase since they bought us. A lot of people took that 1 per cent as a slap in the face.[61]

The period between that meeting and the successful union vote was under six weeks. Workers at Turning Point were justifiably insulted, especially as, according to the participant, brewery management had touted record high sales in the COVID period shortly before offering this pittance of a raise.

The speed of this unionization was a surprise to the workers, the organizers, and the employer alike. Coming only months after the second failed drive at Parallel 49, the Turning Point success could very well spark a spate of brewery and craft beverage campaigns. The same worker summed up the experience and the potential for future drives in the sector in a particularly concise yet poignant way:

> With the right determination, people can organize really fast. I was amazed at how fast we organized. Within one month we've got the vote, now we're prepping for bargaining. No one expected the pace or such a positive response. If you have loyal employees who want to remain loyal but who feel they deserve better, organizing is going to happen.[62]

This last observation is a critical one, especially when considered alongside the example of Parallel 49. Turning Point workers, who had played a major role in the creation of the brewery and largely spent years working there, had a vested

60. Participant interview, 2020.

61. Participant interview, 2020.

62. Participant interview, 2020.

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interest in sticking with their jobs and using their collective power to improve conditions. As the participant noted, this was especially the case for recent immigrants who do not enjoy the same levels of labour market flexibility as domestic workers.

By contrast, the labour process at Parallel 49 is arguably built on the insecurity of its workforce. According to Phil, a worker dismissed for his involvement in the more recent attempt to unionize the brewery, Parallel 49 has a revolving door of employment, especially for service and support craftworkers. One of the biggest frustrations that Phil faced as he attempted to organize at the brewery was how a breakthrough with a worker would often lead to the worker quitting their job. "The nature of the business is, though, if you're frustrated with your job, you'd just quit," Phil explained. "You'd bring someone on board, but then they'd have a blow-up and just quit. In three months, I think I saw six or seven people quit. I think that's a common theme with campaigns in places like that."[63]

Phil's frustrations suggest a particular challenge of organizing in craft businesses that operate under a model of temporary and seasonal hiring. As such, for the organizer or union supporter, a healthy cynicism may be in order when projecting the present moment as a potential upsurge in organizing, for not all workplaces are created equal in terms of how their conditions will translate to action.

Conclusion: Crafting the Fight Ahead

In July 2020 two Instagram accounts appeared: @NotOurMatchstick (referring to an artisanal coffee roaster) and @NotOurP49. Both of these accounts highlighted reports of racism, sexism, and transphobia in their respective workplaces, as well as instances of bullying, managerial incompetence, and unfair terminations. The idea for the accounts seems to have come from the @NotOurStellas campaign initiated by workers at the Stella's restaurant chain in Winnipeg (which is now unionized with ufcw Local 832).[64] The difference in Vancouver is that the reports brought forth at Parallel 49 and Matchstick were predominantly from former employees who over the previous five to eight years had either quit or been fired. This meant that it was difficult for this outpouring of grievance to translate to on-the-ground action, and the businesses made some gestures in response that seem to have swept the concerns under the proverbial rug. However, the accounts brought new attention and discussion to the working conditions of local chains and craft shops, ultimately leading some employees to consider organizing their workplaces. Owing to concerns over operational security, I cannot provide specifics

63. Participant interview, 2020.

64. ufcw, "Hospitality Workers at Stella's Sherbrooke & Osborne Join the Union – ufcw 832," *Directions Newsletter*, 4 January 2019.

here, but I can anecdotally affirm that at least a handful of workers reached out to unions in direct response to the Instagram tactic.

The tactic and the concomitant outpouring of support for these former workers actually resulted in a massive victory for workers at Matchstick, who turned their rage and their mobilized support into a successful union drive with UFCW Local 1518, becoming one of the first unionized artisan coffee chains in the Vancouver area. The Matchstick workers I spoke to for this project reported the same kinds of enthusiasm expressed by those at Turning Point; they feel that they finally have the means to force their employers to see them and consider their interests.

Moreover, in early summer 2021, a similar Instagram event took place when US brewery production manager Brienne Allan began amplifying similar anonymous stories of sexism and sexual harassment throughout craft brewing.[65] With such a wide-reaching and public outpouring of workplace misconduct, especially at the hands of owners and managers, one wonders to what degree both the artisanal allure and revolutionary origin story will weather the storm. Additionally, it would seem that the conditions are right for a massive industry-wide overhaul to root out the instigators and create a safer and more equitable working environment for all craftworkers. What remains to be seen, however, is what role workers themselves will take in this industrial recalibration and whether their efforts will force the industry to take more than the airbrushed, PR-inflected actions many of us have come to expect from publicly shamed figures and organizations. With increased public attention on and scrutiny of employers, and with an arguably emergent class consciousness on the part of craftworkers, it is plausible that workers might begin to take decisive action, following the lead of workers at Anchor Brewing, Matchstick Coffee, and Turning Point Brewing.

Regardless of the specific outcomes of recent successes at workplaces like Turning Point and the second setback at Parallel 49, the preceding discussion suggests that craft brewery workers, likely spurred on by the financial downturn and the global pandemic, are increasingly willing to take their working conditions into their own hands and to push back in pursuit of their interests as a class of workers. Moreover, much of this effort is coming from the less celebrated segments of the craft brewing workforce, the craftworkers, instead of craftspeople. These workers are aware of the heavily segmented nature of the craft brewing division of labour, and their actions are a powerful reassertion of the material underpinnings of production in craft industrialism and a reaffirmation of the role played by craftworkers therein.

65. Monica Burton, "The Craft Beer and Brewing Industry Is Reckoning with Sexual Harassment," *Eater*, 19 May 2021, https://www.eater.com/2021/5/19/22444336/sexism-abuse-harassment-craft-beer-brewing-industry-ratmagnet.

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