"Industrial Restructuring and the Transnational Movements of Workers: The View from a Century Ago"

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Much of the scholarly interest in both the impact of globalization and the development of transnational spaces has focused on the last third of the 20th century. In particular, the concern over deindustrialization in the northern "rust belt" has overshadowed the long history of manufacturing relocation caused by industrial restructuring. Moreover, the massive migrations of proletarians in the early and the late 20th century has tended to obscure the transnational migrations of workers for specific industrial occupations. What I propose to do in this paper is to examine the global restructuring of the glass industry that occurred at the end of the 19th century and its impact on the transnational migrations of skilled Belgian, French, German and English glassworkers as well as its impact on the communities they created. This paper will also suggest some parallels from other industries to suggest that this process is not new to the late 20th century.

Transnational perspectives are now becoming essential to contextualizing American history. Of course, in the fields of economic and immigration history this has long been the case, even if different words were used. World systems and internal colonial models alerted scholars of economic development to the global structure of their studies and immigration historians, beginning in the 1920s studied labor migrations in a trans-atlantic framework.[1] Thus, this paper will explore the global context of industrial restructuring in the late 19th century. I will also argue that exploring specific industries and the composition of their workforces gives us a more complex picture of the proletarian mass migrations, different from those studies that have focused on movements

from the peripheries to the cores of the Atlantic economies from 1880 to 1920. Historian Dirk Hoerder, in his magisterial *Cultures in Contact*, observes that most migrations occurred within a framework of major changes in labor and economic regimes that introduced new technological and mass production systems. Most labor migrants during this era entered international labor markets at the lower end. Generally, according to Hoerder, these migrations did not result in job competition but rather in stratified and segmented labor markets.[2]

However, alongside these major changes, some regions continued to train a surplus of skilled workers who filled key industrial positions in the spread of industries to new areas. Among those mentioned by Hoerder were German craftsmen, English technicians and Italian construction workers. One could easily add Welsh and Finnish tin-plate workers, Cuban cigarmakers, Anglo-Gaelic machinists, Lancashire textile workers and Cornish miners.[3] For centuries craft workers had moved within Europe, ignoring boundaries as they looked for work. The concentration of workers into factories in the 19th century typically brought together workers of different regions, nations, ethnicities, languages and religions. As they forged occupational groups, their identities had no single regional, national or ethnic character. Moreover, the factory and proletarianization did not obliterate all industrial skills and knowledge; many workers continued to move easily within occupational networks well into the twentieth century.[4]

The area around Charleroi, where the Belgian window-glass industry thrived, was one of those regions producing such a surplus of skilled workers. Their migrations differed from the much more numerous movements of unskilled workers. They moved within multi-ethnic craft communities across borders. In the U.S., for example, window-

glass communities mixed skilled workers of German, French, English and Belgian backgrounds. In the 1880s, glassworkers in these nations even forged a Universal Federation, hoping to control this skilled labor market in Europe and the United States.[5] Thus, their networks of migration were a blend of multi-national craft connections and regional or local chains.

At the same time, attention to glassworkers forces us to consider questions about the "transnational spaces" of skilled workers. Transnational spaces are what historian Ewa Morawska describes as the "economic pursuits, social relations, support networks, and civic-national identities and involvements" of migrants.[6] The intense and varied connections that glassworkers maintained with their home region complicated their attachments to communities rooted in their craft or class. Just as the experiences of Belgian glassworkers in international labor markets varied from the majority of labor migrants, so too did their transnational spaces. In contrast to the far greater numbers of Italian and Polish migrants, for example, most Belgians migrated in family units. Italian and Polish sojourners often lived in concentrations of "men without women." For them, steady work, inexpensive lodgings, and cash wages governed their decisions; most viewed their stay in their new country as temporary.[7]

Glassworkers constructed different transnational spaces, ones shaped in part by their privileged, skilled labor. They maintained connections to their home region through the frequent summer excursions they took with their wives and children when the furnaces shut down for the summer. Equally important, the international character of their occupational labor market forced all glassworkers to pay attention to conditions in the major centers of the industry; a strike in Belgium might improve their bargaining

position in Indiana.[8] But their transnationalism also shared some characteristics with most labor migrants of the time. They helped neighbors and kin from their home regions adapt to a new society, brought cultural traditions and special foods with them to their new homes, and kept close tabs on political and social movements in their former home, sustaining numerous versions of a "working-class internationalism."[9]

Consequently, as we explore the global context of industrial restructuring, we need to consider how craft and class programs add complexity to identities also shaped by ethnicity, region and nation. Between 1880 and 1920, Belgian "cinderheads" emphasized different facets of their social, cultural and economic backgrounds in response to new technologies, fluctuating labor markets, political opportunities, and national and international conflicts. Initially, transnational craft solidarity facilitated the efforts of Belgian window-glass workers to improve their lives through migration. Then, in the 1890s, the dramatic transformation of the industry introduced two decades of turmoil that shattered craft solidarity and left Belgians clinging to a particular blend of ethnic and regional traditions that facilitated experiments with cooperative production. This was a radically different class project, one that put Belgian-Americans at odds with other window-glass workers in the United States. Eventually, a new series of national and international events—world war, new technologies, and political reforms—reconfigured the identity of Belgian glassworkers once again. Attention to the mixing of craft, class, regional and national identities, then, helps to sharpen and distinguish the transnational stories of industrial restructuring in this crucial era.

The global restructuring of glassmaking began in the 1880s. Although still a craft-dependent industry, window glass manufacture was at the cusp of dramatic changes.

In the U.S., strong craft organizations had emerged in window glass; craftsmen joined Local Assembly 300 of the Knights of Labor. But the American industry accounted for only 42% of the domestic market, and lagged behind the advances in England, Germany and especially Belgium. There, manufacturers experimented with new technologies, particularly the Siemens furnace and the continuous tank, changes that allowed for a larger scale of production and greater control over labor markets for fewer, capital intensive producers.

Restructuring was kind to Belgian window-glass workers who lived in the towns around Charleroi. Industrialists rapidly adopted tank technology and concentrated the industry in larger corporations. In 1880, the Charleroi area had 40 glass plants employing 4,447 workers; by 1896 it had only 20 plants but employed 9,763 workers. Belgian employers used this concentration to increase their control over labor. They forced skilled workers to sign long-term labor contracts and increased the number of apprentices and the length of their apprenticeship, giving companies an ample supply of low-cost labor. The physical environment of the factories aided employer control; high brick walls surrounded their factories, allowing entrance only through a small gate or through a saloon owned by the firm. The heat and unhealthy atmosphere invited drinking, and drinks for thirsty glass workers were recorded in a huge ledger and then deducted from the worker's earnings.

Efforts to organize workers in the Belgian plants met harsh treatment by both companies and local government as well as infiltration by agents of the state. Belgium limited suffrage to wealthy property owners who made up less than ten percent of the male population, denying glassworkers a political voice. Political and social control at

home did not eliminate problems; companies faced stiff challenges in the European markets. Protective tariffs in Germany, France and other countries limited Belgian exports. Companies in the Charleroi area reduced wages to between one-fourth and one-half of American wages in order to be competitive, and still produced more than they could sell. As a result, they curtailed production, leaving some 1200 glassworkers without employment. Local Assembly 300 tried to help, sending money and setting up a subscription drive to "relieve the distress of the Belgians" even as the Belgian workers responded with a series of petitions and mass meetings.

Belgian restructuring contributed to a dilemma for American workers when craftsmen sought positions in American factories. When American companies first began efforts to expand their share of the domestic market in the 1880s, low-paid Belgian craftsmen offered an abundant supply of crucial skilled labor. Factories in Ohio and Pennsylvania, among others, imported Belgians in 1881 and 1882, incurring the wrath of LA 300. The union responded by petitioning Congress to halt the practice of contract immigration and by raising initiation fees to $100. Finally, LA 300 threatened to strike unless Belgian workers were replaced with union members.

More promising for the long-term future of glass workers, LA 300 sent emissaries Isaac Cline and Andrew Burtt to Europe to investigate conditions. Cline and Burtt recommended to LA 300 that it send an organizer to Europe to establish assemblies of the Knights of Labor among glass workers in Belgium, France, Germany and England and to create a Universal Federation of Window Glass Workers. The Knights quickly implanted the craft union culture of LA 300 in Belgium. The mid-1880s in Belgium was an inopportune time to create a stable, craft-union presence, however. Belgian glass

manufacturers demanded wage reductions of 15% and precipitated a series of disastrous strikes that nearly destroyed the Belgian union and led to the arrest of the leaders. The strikes nevertheless helped establish the Knights as an alternative pole of labor activity in Belgium, one that gained a reputation for militant, but politically unaffiliated, trade-union activity.

The unique character of the Charleroi labor movement came in part from the strong regional identity of the glass workers and miners in the area. Even the Socialists from the province who had national stature, Jules Destree and Alfred Defuisseaux, were seen as dissidents by the party leadership. Separation from the mainstream of the Belgian Workers' Party, however, did not mean a rejection of socialist ideas or politics at the local level. Charleroi workers supported working-class mobilization. They championed the general strike as an expression of solidarity, exemplified by the massive walkout of glass workers in 1895. Likewise, local workers participated in Socialist-led demonstrations that succeeded in obtaining universal male suffrage in 1894, and the city elected Socialist councilmen into the twentieth century. These political activities paid off in practical ways, helping workers achieve the eight-hour workday and wage arbitration settlements. Charleroi workers also developed a strong cooperative society, *La Concorde*, which had over 15,000 members and helped control prices for groceries and other commodities.

LA 300 had approached its European mission with conservative craft goals. Organizer A. G. Denny reported that his goal was "restraining contract labor from coming to this country." The experiment in transatlantic unionism really was a stab at international labor market regulation. In Belgium and the U.S., the Knights gained

control over “black sheep.” Transatlantic solidarity rested on the enormous expansion of the American window-glass industry, however. During the Belgian crisis, American plants doubled their pot capacity, recruiting some 600 to 700 Belgians with LA 300’s approval. Of course, once the floodgates were open, it became difficult to close them.

The ensuing decade brought a crisis of overproduction as the American window glass industry restructured. In addition to the arrival of skilled immigrants, American manufacturers finally began to adopt the technological improvements of their English and Belgian counterparts following a visit of Pittsburgh manufacturer James Chambers to Belgium. Plants using natural gas and the continuous tank technology increased their share of the market from just 8% in 1889 to 68% in 1898. This also led to a spatial reorganization of the industry, away from its concentration around Pittsburgh to larger factories in rural Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and eventually West Virginia. These changes triggered a flare-up of ethnic tension within LA 300, as Belgian and French immigrants grabbed the skilled positions in the burgeoning gas fields, and native-born craftsmen found themselves in the rapidly-declining outdated plants. The Panic of 1893 and the ensuing Depression enabled the industry to complete restructuring.

A second major challenge to window-glass craftsmen came from the formation of the American Window Glass Company, a trust that united many of the major producers. In 1903 AWGC began experimenting with a blowing machine that could produce glass cylinders mechanically, eliminating blowers and gatherers, the two largest crafts. Under these pressures—depression, spatial redistribution, corporate consolidation, and technological innovation—LA 300 splintered, destroying the industry’s regulation of labor markets. The industry magazine, *National Glass Budget*, blamed the growing

numbers of Belgians for the problem, accusing them of taking away American jobs, of introducing Socialist ideas, of increasing the factionalism within LA 300, and even of being disloyal to the U.S. in its conflict with Spain.

Thus as we turn the lens around, we can see small American towns being transformed by rising tariffs in England and Germany, by technological developments and managerial strategies in Belgium and in Pennsylvania, and by a labor organization headquartered in Pittsburgh but trying to establish branches throughout Europe. Thus, looking at specific industries pushes the time frame of globalization backwards. In fact, I could begin this restructuring story even earlier. The cylinder method of window glass manufacture, which by the 1870s had made Belgium the world leader, originated in Germany and was spread in England and France by the Belgian craftsmen who had learned it.

As the window glass industry restructured on a global scale, what implications did such a transformation have on the transnational spaces created by glassworkers? Because they were at the center of the industry, I will again use Belgians as my case study. Certainly their numbers are far fewer than those groups that were at the center of the "great proletarian migrations"; there were only 30,000 Belgian-born people in the US in 1900.[10] However, their experience illuminates the different transnational identities shaped by migrants from those areas that created a surplus of workers with particular industrial skills.

Glassworkers fleeing the turmoil of industrial conflict in Charleroi took a limited sense of a national identity with them. First, Belgium is divided both ethnically and linguistically, making a single national identity more problematic. The window-glass

industry was located in the Walloon-speaking South. Many Walloons reluctantly abandoned their dialects in favor of the more universal French language, but militant Walloons were angry that Flemish-speaking Belgians seemed unwilling to completely adopt French as the national language. Prominent political leaders from Charleroi, including Jules Destree, who combined both Socialist ideals and a commitment to French, became proponents of a Walloon movement at the turn of the century.[11]

A second factor was the presence of strong regional identities within the country. This, of course, was not unique to Belgium. Bretons in France, Bavarians in Germany, Calabrians in Italy, among a variety of others, identified as specific regional groups within the nation.[12] In Belgium, most glassworkers considered themselves Carolingians more than Wallonians. Although they shared the religion of the country (Catholicism) and the language of the people in the South, Carolingians considered themselves quite distinct as a group.[13]

The strike wave of the mid-1880s only reinforced the strong regional identity of Charleroi's glassworkers. The new Catholic government (elected in 1884) sent troops to put down the rebellion and drove local union leaders into exile. Many in Wallonia who resented the government's actions were no happier with the rise of a new Christian Workers' Movement. This movement's strongly Flemish and Catholic character made a single national labor federation difficult to achieve.[14] More specifically for Charleroi's glassworkers, regionalism and antipathy for the state even carried over to other national organizations; although several of the glassworkers' leaders were Socialists, their union ties remained with *Les Chevaliers du Travail*, independent of the *Partie Ouvrier Belge*.

Years of struggle against a repressive state instilled in few window-glass workers

a strong sense of national loyalty, although they loved Charleroi and traveled there frequently. For example, one Charleroi glassworker left Belgium both for opportunities and to escape army service. When he returned to Charleroi during the summer shutdown in 1900, he was arrested. To his dismay, "they even put a uniform on him," one that he gleefully took with him when he escaped across the border to France and returned to America.[15]

Because the glassworkers mostly migrated in family groups, they could at times seem clannish, forming self-contained "colonies." In Russia, for example, Belgians appeared to make little effort to integrate into their new home. This was a common phenomenon for labor migrants that moved "their home bases abroad" instead of leaving their families behind.[16] But the experience of glassworkers in Russia was intensified because the Belgians there were bringing the industry with them, not moving into established communities of window-glass craftsmen. Belgian glassworkers migrating to the United States initially moved with strong connections into existing multi-ethnic craft communities. Thus, for many Belgians, the United States offered a more welcoming rather than isolating environment.

At the same time, glassworkers took great pride in their cultural traditions. Although they refused to join the Belgian Workers party, glassworkers engaged in strikes aimed at expanding the right to vote and over the right to have a voice in the workplace. The militancy of their strikes was legendary, involving women as well as men. One of the enduring images from the strikes of 1886 was that of a line of women confronting the bayonets of the soldiers.[17] Countrymen in the United States kept up on developments at home by reading Charleroi newspapers and sponsoring *Le Bourdon*, a political and

economic journal edited by émigré political leader Albert Delwarte.[18] Thus, experiences in Belgium left glassworkers with an identity shaped by both regional characteristics and a particular occupational subculture.

In the United States, these Carolingians moved into established networks in burgeoning glass towns. Employers, in particular, anxiously welcomed skilled Belgian glassworkers, using them to expand capacity and capture a larger share of the huge American market. The *National Glass Budget,* a trade weekly, commented that they were "a social, jolly, jovial and sunny-souled set of people," whose sociability was "marked with fine touches of a high spirit."[19] Communities likewise welcomed Belgian glassworkers. Newspapers and local elites praised their work ethic and the new business that they brought to towns. Belgian glassworkers, in turn, contributed to the social life of their new homes, participating in (and even dominating) local community orchestras and bands as well as theater groups and clubs.[20]

The immigrants appreciated their new homes. Belgians bristled at suggestions that they might side with Belgium against America in the Spanish-American war. Instead, they joined in the "flag days" celebrating American patriotism that occurred in numerous glass towns, and proclaimed that they were willing to "take up arms against Alphonso and Leopold" if necessary to prove their loyalty.[21]

Belgian glassworkers quickly integrated into their new multi-ethnic craft communities. They shared in the privileges afforded German, English, and French skilled window workers in America—the camping trips, excursions, celebrations, union benefits and trips to Europe that came with high wages and summer shutdowns of the furnaces.[22] In glass communities, Belgians joined with Germans in the local turnverein,

or with English and American workers in branches of the Odd Fellows, and they added baseball contests to their annual summer picnics. In fact, the sociability of skilled glassworkers owed as much to craft as it did to ethnicity in such dense window-glass communities as Jeannette, Charleroi and Point Marion, Pennsylvania.[23]

Belgians also absorbed the gender norms of American craftsmen, quickly learning to exclude women from window factories, something not done in Belgium. In Charleroi, women comprised nearly one quarter of the workforce and performed important tasks such as moving glass cylinders to the flattening and cutting areas. Belgians not only accepted the presence of women in window glass, they supported their workplace demands and welcomed their participation during strikes and demonstrations.[24] In the United States, however, window-glass workers had eliminated women from the glass plants. When glass factories in Indiana tried to experiment with young female employees in 1899, male union members objected strenuously. Belgian men, who fondly recalled the "roguish" playfulness of young women in their short skirts and leather aprons in Charleroi, willingly banned women in America, happy to get the improved wages that LA 300 commanded as a result of its exclusionary policies.[25]

Belgian immigrants proved equally reliable to LA 300 in the political arena. Although many came with Socialist traditions, they followed the partisan politics of American window-glass workers. Generally, that meant supporting the GOP for high tariffs for glass and immigration restriction, both of which operated to the detriment of Belgium's glass industry. Still, Belgians often assumed leadership positions in local Republican clubs.[26] Occupational solidarity in their new homes outweighed both their transnational loyalties and any shade of proletarian internationalism.

This is not to suggest that Belgian integration into window glass communities was not without incident. Some craftsmen feared the loss of labor market control or easy access to apprenticeships for their sons. Others worried that traditions of labor militancy would upset the regulatory unionism of the Knights. Still others fretted that Belgians were gaining too much influence in the union.

The tensions accompanying the assimilation of Belgian window-glass workers became uncontrollable with the depression of the 1890s and the ensuing restructuring of the industry. Because American firms had expanded so dramatically, the depression caused a crisis; by 1898 American plants were operating at only 36% of capacity. This crisis hurt the older firms, where American-born craftsmen dominated. Thus, older immigrant and American union members, who had accepted a large influx of Belgians, began to complain of shrinking opportunities. Moreover, the concentration of Belgians in the newest plants gave their sons advantages over other groups, particularly in the most lucrative crafts of blowing and gathering.[27] In an effort to stem the flow of immigrants American-born union members sought the aid of the Belgian Window Glass Workers. Ironically, however, Belgians, who had witnessed the retreat of LA 300 into protectionism, had little sympathy for the American dilemma.[28]

Industry reorganization worsened the tensions. The largest firms formed a marketing trust, the American Window Glass Company, to gain control over the industry. At the same time, a tight labor market led to conflicts between the separate crafts in Local Assembly 300. Belgians played a central role in the conflict. Beginning in 1894, the large Belgian-controlled preceptories began an alliance with Simon Burns to wrest control of LA 300 from the Pittsburgh clique that had built the union. Upon achieving

victory, Burns rewarded his Belgian allies with a number of key positions. Burns also pursued union strategies that benefited blowers and gatherers (where Belgians were dominant) at the expense of cutters and flatteners. By the early 1900s, LA 300 had disintegrated into a number of factions that undercut the regulatory function of labor relations and threw both workers and manufacturers to the mercy of the marketplace.[29]

Then, in 1903, the firms that had formed the American Window Glass Company introduced the Lubbers cylinder blowing machine, which eliminated the need for blowers and gatherers, the two largest crafts. LA 300 appeared doomed, unable to control labor markets or maintain the standards of skilled workers. Because Belgians had comprised such a significant percentage of the new workers in the 1890s, many union veterans blamed them for the destabilization of the industry and the destruction of the union.[30] In the face of such criticism, Belgians turned to a different mix of ethnic and occupational traditions to maintain their livelihoods, one that reconnected them to Wallonia.

Belgian window-glass workers placed a new emphasis on cooperatives. Cooperative stores had played an important role in militant glass communities in the Charleroi area. In the United States, the threat of technological displacement forced glassworkers to think about cooperatives in new ways. Taking advantage of the high wages, the relatively low costs to begin the production of glass, and the openness of the American window-glass industry, Belgian immigrants launched a cooperative factory movement to preserve craft jobs. Although the additional productive capacity of the cooperatives hindered the regulatory control of the market, because Belgians had provided the backbone of the victorious faction of Local Assembly 300, they demanded

the union's support. By 1902 cooperatives controlled about 20% of the capacity in the United States plants.[31]

Belgian and French craftsmen provided the impetus behind the cooperative movement. Employers quickly recognized the threat; the voice of the manufacturers, *The National Glass Budget*, incessantly lambasted the cooperatives for disrupting the carefully controlled output of window glass. And because the *Budget* associated cooperatives with Belgians, it reversed its portrayal of the group and support the defeated faction of LA 300. It claimed that Belgians were "infidels" who were excluding American boys from the trade and illegally bringing their countrymen to work in the cooperatives. In fact, the *Budget* claimed that a typical Belgian window-glass worker frequently held more than one job, bouncing back and forth between the American Window Glass Company and one of the independent firms. Even worse, Belgians were "clannish" workers who learned economics "at the hands of the *Partie Ouvrier*."[32]

Belgians were not deaf to the criticism that they were "clannish." One cooperative leader in Pennsylvania denied reports that local workers were fighting among themselves. Nor were the cooperatives getting unfair advantages from the union. The cooperative paid its dues on a regular basis and also contributed its share of "market money" that the union used to help regulate output and maintain wages and prices.[33] Moreover, the federation of cooperatives, formed and led by Leopold Mambourg in 1902, proudly proclaimed that it strictly adhered to LA 300's terms on wages and working conditions. Belgians in the independent and cooperative plants actually rebuilt a union in 1909 that reunited the four crafts and even referred to it as LA 300.[34]

The introduction of the Lubbers cylinder blowing machine did concentrate Belgian influence, however. Belgians gravitated toward cooperative factories and small independent firms that relied on older hand methods of production. Thus, they moved out of workplaces that mixed ethnic groups and into communities where they constituted a majority of the skilled workers. Sociability, which previously had united everyone in the craft, increasingly revolved around ethnic identity and traditions brought from Belgium. The more isolated ethnic colonies of Belgian (and to a lesser extent French) glassworkers transplanted their own particular cultural activities and created truly "transnational villages."[35]

As a result of these decisions, Belgians turned in increasingly inward. In southwestern Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia these immigrant glassworkers emphasized the annual summer carnivals (*ducases*) that punctuated the end of the "blast" and brought together extended families that worked in the cooperatives. The carnivals, according to one remembrance, were "just like a county fair," but "only for the Belgians."[36] Belgians became increasingly defensive of their neighborhoods. Adrian DeMeester recalled that "We provided things for ourselves."[37] The defensiveness of these Belgian colonies could take a variety of forms. When Point Marion, Pennsylvania citizens complained about the drinking of Belgian glassworkers, Frank Criner replied that Belgian money had virtually built the town and its industries. He was "proud also to say that we, the drinking (?) people of Point Marion, are a God-fearing community, contributing to the support of churches, schools, etc."[38]

These Belgian glass communities developed a distinctive political hue. In the small town of Salem, West Virginia, Belgians constructed three cooperative window

factories, a cooperative store, a Socialist political party, and a neighborhood of homes that lay outside the town itself. In Clarksburg, just ten miles to the East, Belgians dominated two neighborhoods where one was more likely to hear French than English spoken on the street. These neighborhoods became Socialist communities, interweaving their ethnic culture with Leftist politics that made increasing sense for workers facing a rapidly-mechanizing, mass production industry. They loved Eugene Debs, the son of an Alsatian immigrant, and even elected a Socialist mayor in 1912 and 1915.[39]

Socialist politics had distinct limits for these Belgian glassworkers. They did not develop a proletarian class consciousness, but rather an exclusive and self-reliant mix of craft and ethnic/national identity. Belgians made little effort to join with other workers in local union alliances because they enjoyed the privileges of craft and control, even if those privileges were under assault. Likewise, they were hostile to blacks or other immigrants who intruded into their neighborhoods. Witnessing the hostility with which local newspapers treated Italians, Poles and African-Americans entering their towns, glassworkers worked hard to maintain their distance.[40]

Interestingly, World War I both intensified and destroyed aspects of this mix of ethnic/national and occupational identity. The German invasion of Belgium in 1914 trapped some glassworker families who had returned to Charleroi for the summer shutdown. In response, Belgian glassworkers volunteered for service and sought assignments that would take them to Belgium; glass towns raised funds for the restoration of their homeland and the reuniting of families; and the National Window Glass Workers loaned money to the union's counterpart in Belgium.[41] Thus, in many respects, the war

reinforced a transnationalism that superseded the particular regionalism that had been such a strong part of the identity of window-glass workers.

At the same time, the war years helped break down the insular communities that contributed to Belgian isolation. Glass towns used the war years to incorporate outlying neighborhoods and introduce such administrative reforms as the commission form of government, which diminished the voting strength of ethnic enclaves. Equally important, concern for their homeland brought Belgian glassworkers into patriotic, pro-war alliances that sapped their support for Socialism. Left-wing parties and newspapers disappeared from the Belgian colonies in West Virginia, Indiana and Pennsylvania. Furthermore, the policies of the U.S. Fuel Administration actually restored some semblance of stability and security to the older hand-blown portions of the industry, enabling Belgians to prosper during the war.[42] Certainly, the epoch of World War I dramatically upset the blend of nationalism, American patriotism, and class consciousness that virtually all immigrant workers in the United States sought to balance.[43]

Ultimately, the progress of window-glass technology spelled the doom of cooperatives and traditional methods of window production, forcing Belgians into the large, mechanized factories. During the war companies like Libbey-Owens-Ford and Pittsburg Plate Glass began drawing window glass in continuous sheets. By 1927, the National Window Glass Workers disbanded, and only window-glass cutters kept a semblance of their craft position, but their union numbered only about 1,000 workers nationwide.[44] Although diminished, the presence of Belgians in the glass towns remained. Many Belgians stayed in window glass, but as a small part of large, multi-ethnic workforces. Still when industrial unionism came to the industry just a decade

later, it would have a Belgian flavor.[45] Over the ensuing seven decades, the ethnic identity of their descendants has become more Belgian and less Wallonian or Carolingian, but these children and grandchildren are more interested in visiting Charleroi or Jumet than Brussels.

The story of Belgian glassworkers contributes additional complexity to the already differentiated experiences of labor migrants in the era of the great proletarian migrations. They differed from the far greater numbers of South and East Europeans who journeyed to new areas as common labor, frequently as "men without women."[46] Instead, they moved either within a craft fraternity or as workers recruited to bring critical skills in the expansion of the glass industry into new areas.[47] Consequently, they enjoyed privileges that the vast majority lacked. High wages, control over working conditions, and relatively easy integration into the sociability of expanding occupational communities made them desirable immigrants in the United States. Of course, the Belgians were not unique; Lancashire weavers, Cornish miners, and English machinists, among other groups of skilled workers, also shared some of the privileges that separated the glassworkers from many of the other labor migrants.

The transnational spaces constructed by Belgian glassworkers reflected some of the particularities of their experience. While the importance of regional identity was not completely distinctive, the divided character of the Belgian state perhaps enhanced that regional identity. Furthermore, the high wages they earned enabled the Belgians to move with their families and to visit the old country frequently, advantages that many labor migrants did not have. Obviously, these advantages facilitated the creation of transnational spaces, the "networks, activities, patterns of living, and ideologies" that

connected their home and the host society.[48] But the transnationalism of skilled workers was also a bit unusual. Pursuing the interests of the craft at times loosened some of the connections to the home country.

It is thus important that we add insights from particular occupational migrations where craft and class cultures intermingled with ethnic and national cultures and gave us a hybrid identity. In addition, we must explore how the ebb and flow of events, labor markets, technologies, corporate strategies and national politics might force groups to emphasize one facet of their identity over others at particular moments. In the case of Belgian window-glass workers, craft cultures and occupational identities helped facilitate their movements and improve their lives in the 1880s and 1890s. But global restructuring of the industry ushered in two decades of turmoil and intense competition that divided the craft subculture and left groups clinging to ethnic networks. Then, in 1914, a new series of global events—world war, technologies, and political reforms—reconfigured occupational and ethnic identities differently yet again, showing just how complex this process can become.

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[1] Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Comment: We Study the Present to Understand the Past," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18 (Summer 1999): 115-6; Jon Gjerde, "New Growth on Old Vines—The State of the Field: The Social History of Immigration to and Ethnicity in the United States," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18 (Summer 1999): 40-65; Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860: A History of the Continuing Settlement of the United States* (New York, 1961).

[2]Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millenium* (Durham: Duke University Pr., 2002), 344-345. See also his *Labor Migration in the Atlantic Economies: The European and North American Working Classes During the Period of Industrialization* (Westport: Greenwood Pr., 1985); and

"Struggle a Hard Battle": Essays on Working-Class Immigrants (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Pr., 1986).

[3]Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact*, 344; Gary Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Pr., 1987); Steve Babson, *Building the Union: Skilled Workers and Anglo-Gaelic Immigrants in the Rise of the UAW* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Pr., 1991); Sharron P. Schwartz, "Bridging the Great Divide: Cornish Labor Migration to the United States and the Creation of Transnational Identity," (paper presented at the "Citizens, Nations and Cultures" Conference, Maastricht, Netherlands, Oct. 2002); Mary H. Blewett, *Constant Turmoil: The Politics of Industrial Life in Nineteenth Century New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Pr., 2000).

[4]Nearly 25 years ago, Andrew Dawson called attention to this phenomenon in the United States in "The Paradox of Dynamic Technological Change and the Labor Artistocracy in the United States, 1880-1914," *Labor History* 20 (Summer 1979): 325-51. A more recent econometric study that confirms the importance of skilled worker migrations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is: Joshua L. Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work, Search for Workers: American Labor Markets During Industrialization* (NY: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 2002), ch. 4. Evidence of the ongoing importance of migrating craftsmen can be found in sources cited above.

[5]Details of these efforts, begun by the Knights of Labor in the U.S., are contained in the Joseph Slight Papers at the Ohio Historical Society, microfilm edition, Reel 7 (hereafter Slight Papers); in Norman Ware, *The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1895: A Study in Democracy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 198-199; and in Ken Fones-Wolf, "Immigrants, Labor and Capital in a Transnational Context," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21 (Winter 2002): 63.

[6]Ewa Morawska, "Immigrants, Transnationalism, and Ethnicization: A Comparison of This Great Wave and the Last," in *E Pluribus Unum? Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation*, ed. by Gary Gerstle and John Mollenkopf (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001), 176-77.

[7]Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Pr., 2000), 82-87; John J. Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did not Know Me: a History of Polish-Americans* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 1987), 22-23.

[8]Just a cursory look at the *National Glass Budget* and the *Commoner and Glassworker* emphasize the importance of maintaining information on the international character of the industry. See also, Fones-Wolf, "Immigrants, Labor and Capital," 59-80.

[9]See, especially, Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, chs. 4 and 5, for a discussion of the ways that the proletarian cosmopolitanism of migrants can encourage a working-class internationalism, even if somewhat different from the one predicted by Karl Marx. See also, Philip Cannistraro and Gerald Meyer, *The Lost World of Italian-American Radicalism* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 2003); and the essays in Hoerder's *"Struggle a Hard Battle."*

[10] Walter Nugent, in *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1914* (Bloomington, 1992), 41, notes that Belgium's emigration "was small in absolute numbers and in proportion to population."

[11]Chantal Kesteloot, "Growth of the Walloon Movement," in *Nationalisms in Belgium: Shifting Identities, 1780-1995*, ed. by Kas Deprez and Louis Vos (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 140-41; Hoerder, "An Introduction to Labor Migration," 16.

[12]See Leslie Page Moch, "Migration and the Nation: The View from Paris," *Social Science History* 28 (Spring 2004): 1-18, for the hybrid, but flexible identities that these regional groups developed within their national boundaries.

[13]Ronin, "Les Ouvriers Wallons," 86-92; Hilden, *Women, Work and Politics*, 43, 106-7, 254.

[14]Emanuel Gerard, "The Christian Workers' Movement as a Mass Foundation of the Flemish Movement," in *Nationalisms in Belgium*, 127-129.

[15] *National Glass Budget*, Sept. 1, 1900.

[16]For the comparison with Russia, see Ronin, "Les Ouvriers Wallons," 79-97; for a comparison with the Italians, see Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, 99-105.
[17]Carre, "Les Greves Tragiques," 10. Also, see Hilden, *Women, Work, and Politics*, 257.

[18]*National Labor Tribune*, Apr. 20, 1893, p. 1; *National Glass Budget*, Feb. 4, 1899, p. 3, Jan. 26, 1901, p. 2.

[19]*National Glass Budget*, Oct. 19, 1901, p. 8.

[20]Barkey, *Cinderheads in the Hills.*

[21]*National Glass Budget*, May 28, 1898, p. 4, June 18, 1898, p. 6; *Commoner and Glassworker*, June 18, 1898, p. 13.

[22]See, for just one example, the advertisement of the B&O Railroad, in *Commoner and Glassworker*, July 28, 1900, p. 4. Similar advertisements began appearing every spring as the end of the blast approached.

[23]U.S. Immigration Commission, *Immigrants in Industry: Glass Manufacturing* (Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1911), Part 12, pp. 181, 183-184; *Commoner and Glassworker*, Apr. 23, 1898; *National Glass Budget*, June 2, 1900, p. 1. For the Pittsburgh glass community and its sociability, see Francis G. Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), 31-50; Josephine McIlvain, "Twelve Blocks: A Study of One Segment of Pittsburgh's South Side, 1880-1915," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 60 (Oct. 1977): 352-357.

[24]*National Glass Budget*, Feb. 4, 1899, p. 3; *Commoner and Glassworker*, Oct. 26, 1899, p. 1. For the gender practices in Belgium, see Hilden, 145-47, 186-88, 254-257.

[25]*Commoner and Glassworker*, Oct. 28, 1899, p. 1, Nov. 4, 1899, p. 12. For the numbers of women in window glass, see U.S. Census, *Manufactures 1905: Part III: Special Reports on Selected Industries* (Washington: Govt. Print. Office, 1908), p. 844.

[26]*Commoner and Glassworker*, Dec. 25, 1897, p. 16, Dec. 23, 1899, p. 3, Feb. 3, 1900, p. 12, Apr. 21, 1900, p. 4.

[27]This is discussed fully in O'Connor, "Cinderheads and Iron Lungs," 142-155.

[28]LA 300, Minutes, June 3, 1899, Reel 7, Slight Papers; *National Glass Budget*, Nov. 12, 1898, p. 6.

[29]Details are in O'Connor, "Cinderheads and Iron Lungs," ch. 4. Ethnic aspects are covered in the *National Glass Budget*, Dec. 3, 1898, p. 1, June 16, 1900, p. 1, Sept. 28, 1901, p. 6.

[30]See, in particular, Fones-Wolf, "Immigrants, Labor and Capital," 68-73; O'Connor, "Cinderheads and Iron Lungs," chs. 3-4.

[31]*National Glass Budget*, Dec. 3, 1898, p. 1, Nov. 22, 1902, p. 1; LA 300, minutes, Sept. 1, 1900, reel 7, Slight Papers.

[32]*National Glass Budget*, Dec. 3, 1898, p. 1, June 29, 1901, p. 6, July 27, 1901, p. 1, Sept. 7, 1901, p. 6.

[33]*Commoner and Glassworker*, Apr. 28, 1900, p. 5.

[34]*Commoner and Glassworker*, Aug. 15, 1903, p. 1, Aug. 7, 1909, p. 6.

[35]An excellent example of this phenomonenon in a more recent context is found in Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Pr., 2001). However, Ewa Morawska, "Immigrants, Transnationalism, and Ethnicization," pp. 178-179 is correct that students of the recent transnational communities draw a false dichotomy between the migrations at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.

[36]Interview with George DelForge, in Barkey, *Cinderheads in the Hills*, 29.

[37] Interviews with Omar Lambiotte and Adrian DeMeester, in Barkey, *Cinderheads in the Hills*, 35, 26.

[38]*Clarksburg (WV) News*, Nov. 22, 1906; *Commoner and Glassworker*, Oct. 1, 1910, p. 14.

[39]Ken Fones-Wolf, "Work, Culture and Politics in Industrializing West Virginia: The Glassworkers of Clarksburg and Moundsville, 1891-1919," *West Virginia History* 58 (1999-2000): 16.

[40]*Clarksburg News*, Feb. 19, 1906, Aug. 21, 27, 1908. This is not unlike the consciousness of Belgian glassworkers in St. Petersburg, according the Vladimir Ronin, "Les Ouvriers Wallons," 79-97.

[41]For the response of one particular community, see *Salem (WV) Express*, Nov. 6, 1914, Apr. 9, 1915, Nov. 9, 1916. For the growing concern of the window-glass workers for Belgium, see, *The National* (organ of the National Window Glass Workers of America), Jan. 1916, p. 8-9, Oct. 1916, pp. 20-21, Nov. 1916, p. 11, Feb. 1919, p. 12.

[42]Ken Fones-Wolf, "A Craftsman's Paradise in Appalachia: Glassworkers and the Transformation of Clarksburg, 1900-1933," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 1 (Fall 1995): 76-79.

[43]See, especially, David Montgomery, "Nationalism, American Patriotism, and Class Consciousness Among Immigrant Workers in the United States in the Epoch of World War I," in Hoerder, *"Struggle a Hard Battle"*, 327-346.

[44]This is described in more detail in Fones-Wolf, "A Craftsman's Paradise," 76-77.

[45]This list was compiled from minutes of meetings and lists of local officers in the records of the Federation of Flat Glass Workers, Local 2 (Clarksburg, WV), in the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University.

[46]Robert F. Harney's phrase, "men without women," as explored in Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, 83-87. See also David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Pr., 1987), ch. 2.

[47]Hoerder, "Bibliographic Essay," in *Labor Migration*, 451.

[48]Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1994), 3-4; Morawska, "Immigrants, Transnationalism, and Ethnicization," 177.