Watched on the Rhine

The “Germanization” of Strasbourg, 1871-1918

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It is fitting that Strasbourg's German experience begins with a siege. The fifty-five-day siege of Strasbourg was medieval as soldiers, *franc-tireurs*, and National Guardsmen manned the fortified city's walls that had been designed and built by Louis XIV's famous military engineer, the Marquis de Vauban. Those civilians inside the city suffered Prussian and Badanese shelling from their cellars, sharing the space with cesspits, in wooden housing that regularly caught fire even in peacetime.[1] A medieval city having its walls shelled by besieging Krupp artillery, it was a sign of things to come.

Following 190 years of French rule, Strasbourg's annexation into the newly unified Germany created a fundamental issue of identity for those both outside and within the city's walls. French rule had given Strasbourg, historically a free city in the Holy Roman Empire, a unique identity. Many claim that the new *Altdeutsch* (meaning old German, the term for those Germans who immigrated to Alsace and Lorraine after 1871) administrators and residents attempted to remove this unique identity through a process referred to as "Germanization." Although accepted by contemporaries and historians, "Germanization" means little beyond changes in the city that occurred during the 41 years of German rule. For French historians, the term signifies every oppressive act that Strasburgers were forced to endure; for Germans it is every step in the modernization and growth of the city. There is no agreement about "Germanization" beyond two fundamental claims, 1) that it existed, and 2) that changes to the city between 1871 and 1918 made the city more "German." By examining the city's *fin de siècle* experience, placing its urban development in a transnational framework, and considering the issues of urban and national identity in the German Empire, this essay hopes to explore

[1] Rachel Chrastil, *The Siege of Strasbourg* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 58, 64.

Strasbourg's urban development between 1871 and 1918 as part of a wider European phenomenon that made the city neither French nor German, but modern.

Despite its experience as a center of Protestantism and a free city within the Holy Roman Empire, by 1815 Strasbourg was as French as Lyon or Lille. The city was the center of French Protestant life from its annexation, hosting major Protestant institutions and the majority of French Protestants.[2] Strasbourg was also critical in French defensive planning, being host to the aforementioned fortress designed by Vauban. However, the city was principally a border town, with historian Anthony Steinhoff describing how "one could see a Parisian company perform at the opera one night, and participate in a conference about the latest German medical discoveries the next."[3] The multilingual nature of the city's bourgeois residents had done well for the city, as Strasburger translators had worked tirelessly since the Enlightenment as some of the most industrious French-German translators in Europe.[4]

Strasbourg's bourgeois residents were often able to switch with ease between Parisian French, high German, and the local German based Alsatian dialect. The majority of the city's working class operated primarily in Alsatian and many were able to competently handle French.[5] Starting in the 1850's the Imperial regime of Napoléon III began strictly enforcing the usage of French in all primary schools, and it can be assumed that most students from the imperial years would be rather competent in French from its use as the language of instruction.[6] There also existed a sizable number of Badenese from across the Rhine who lived, worked, and visited the

[2] Anthony J. Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City: Protestantism and Religious Culture in Strasbourg* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 39-55.
[3] Ibid., 32-33.
[4] Ibid., 27.
[5] Chrastil, *The Siege of Strasbourg*, 21.
[6] Stephen Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1860-1940* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 33-43.

city on a regular basis and who contributed a *Schwäbisch* influence to the city.[7] In such a multilingual city, it was usually religion that served as the best indicator of someone's linguistic abilities.

Despite being a center of German Protestantism during the reformation Strasbourg's population was majority Catholic by 1870. In Strasbourg many bourgeois Catholics were French-speakers while most working class Catholics spoke the dialect and would later constitute a significant force in the later *Reichsland*.[8] Lutherans and Reformed Protestants were overall a minority but a majority in terms of the local elite, Protestants tended to speak German at home, which would later open them up to accusations of loyalty to the Germans during the Franco-Prussian war and early occupation.[9] Finally, Strasbourg was home to a thriving Jewish community, whose linguistic flexibility was a requirement of life, with Yiddish also being included in the list of languages one needed to thrive in the city. This is all to say that despite being on the German side of the mythical linguistic frontier, Strasbourg was a multilingual city in which the language used depended on age, social status, and religion.

This linguistic diversity was not apparent to the German *Bildungsbürgertum*, who found themselves moved by Heinrich von Treitschke's famous *Was fordern wir von Frankreich?* in which he elaborates the nationalist case for the historic, German character, not just of Alsace, but of Strasbourg specifically. Citing the city's close relationship to traditional German history – as opposed to its relative distance from traditional early modern French historiography – and the Alsatian dialect of the era, Treitschke's argument was persuasive to many, although not to Otto von Bismarck. The great German diplomat did, however, desire to annex Strasbourg for

[7] Chrastil, *The Siege of Strasbourg*, 17.
[8] Christopher J. Fischer, *Alsace to the Alsatians? Visions and Divisions of Alsatian Regionalism, 1870-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.
[9] Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 55-56.

strategic purposes – a move backed by both the Prussian military and Wilhelm I – and saw Treitschke's arguments as useful for persuading public opinion towards annexation.[10] The surrender of Strasbourg on 28 September, followed by its annexation in the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871) would make Treitschke's demand a reality. Still, the German nature of the city would quickly become disputed, not only by *revanchards* looking to return the lost provinces to France, but by Germans citizens and German bureaucrats themselves, looking to make sense of how Alsatians fit into boarder German identity.

That broader identity that this essay revolve around is that "Germanness" exists as a kind of supra-nationalism. Benedict Anderson argued in *Imagined Communities* that national identities are exactly that, imagined constructs in which we imagine those who share in our community do the same as we do.[11] This image breaks down when discussing Germany and the very German conception of *Heimat*. *Heimat* – literally homeland – is part of the buffet of German words that do not translate well into English. *Heimat* is similar to *patrie* but taken to the logical extreme. The *Heimat* of Alsatians is neither France nor Germany, but Alsace. *Heimat* creates a subnational identity, where one finds loyalty not in the nation as an imagined community, but rather in imagining one's fellow co-linguists as a race. This is why *Volk* is integral to German national imagination, which envisions Germany as a nation of *patries*.[12]

[10] Dan P. Silverman, *Reluctant Union: Alsace-Lorraine and Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), 30-31.
[11] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Press, 1983), 6-7.
[12] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1990), 5-10.

Built into the German national imagination is a wide tolerance for diversity that does not exist in other nationalisms.[13]

Alsace's experience with nationalism began in the French Revolution when the Parisian regimes deemed it necessary to culturally integrate the peripheries of France and to enforce the Parisian language without scruple, a tendency that reached its pinnacle under the Third Republic.[14] French national identity has historically been a highly centralized affair when compared to the generally decentralized nature of German cultural identity.

This contrast has been part of the rich historiography of Alsace and Strasbourg which informs our understanding how "Germanness" interacts with Alsace in modern memories. The Franco-German enmity that dominated 1871 to 1945 created a wealth of propagandistic "history" that came to a head during World War I with the publication of dozens of books and pamphlets citing the Treaty of Frankfurt as a historical wrong of epic proportion and claiming, as did one American book published to promote sympathy for the French cause, that "[b]y Germany's insistence upon the cession of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 and by these repeated protests of the people of Alsace-Lorraine against that act, a new and highly disturbing element was introduced into the history of Europe, nor has it yet been eliminated."[15] So long as Alsace and Lorraine remained an issue – and allied opinions remained hostile towards Germany on the matter – the historiography of Alsace and Lorraine remained dominated by nationalist grievances and myth making.

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[13] Jennifer Jenkins, "*Heimat*, Art, Modernism, Modernity," in *Localism, Landscape and the Ambiguities of Place in German-Speaking Central Europe, 1860-1930*, edited by David Blackbourn and James Retallack (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 62-63.

[14] Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 262.

[15] Charles Downer Hazen, *Alsace-Lorraine Under German Rule*, (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1917), 19.

Since the dawn of European cooperation, however, French and German historians have both accepted an anatomist perspective of Alsace. Alfred Wahl, a native of Colmar, is the most famous for his work on Alsace, focusing on the continuity of issues that Alsace faced during periods of German *and* French rule.[16] German historians have done likewise, with Klaus Nohlen's monograph on the politics of buildings in the *Reichsland* conceding that there exists a specifically Alsatian architecture that defies both German and French conventions.[17] However, while the Franco-German historiography has come to accept the peculiarities of Alsatian history, the same cannot be said of the English language world.

In "Les historiens anglophones et l'Alsace," historian Alison Carrol considers some of the themes that have become standard in English language histories of Alsace. The "Anglo-Saxon" focus on transnationalism, she posits, has caused English language historians to consider Alsace in the same national context as the old French and German bureaucrats, attempting to place a "national" character onto the region.[18] Christopher Fischer's *Alsace to the Alsatians?* is one of the few "Anglo-Saxon" histories that deals with Alsace as a distinct and culturally independent entity. However when writing about Strasbourg the opposite appears, French and German historians tend to impose national concerns onto the city while English-language writers are more likely to accept the city as peculiar, like Alsace as a whole.

Viviane Claude is perhaps the most infamous thanks to her "La germanisation de Strasbourg après 1871." By arguing that Strasbourg was "Germanized" through the decisions of imperial urban planners engaging in slum clearance and other modernizing improvements, she

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[16] Alfred Wahl & Jean-Claude Richez, *La Vie Quotidienne en Alsace: Entre France et Allemagne (1850-1950)*, (Paris: Hachette, 1993), 238.
[17] Klaus Nohlen, *Baupolitik im Reichsland Elsass-Lothringen 1871-1918*, (Berlin: Mann, 1982), 45.
[18] Alison Carrol, "Les Historiens Anglophones et l'Alsace : Une Fascination Durable," *Revue d'Alsace* 138 (2012), 267.

demonstrates one of the fundamental assumptions of French historians about Strasbourg, that there was a significant difference between French and German urban planning. Claude has been rightly criticized, interestingly by English language historians, for this bizarre assumption that modernization made Strasbourg more German, but she is not alone.[19] Stéphane Jonas makes a similar case, arguing in his article "Strasbourg 1900, ville de frontière et d'innovation," that the urban planning that German planners engaged in was distinctly "German," and left a "German" mark on the city.[20] Sociological studies of the Neustadt (the area of the city developed during the German period) have failed to support these claims, not finding a singular dominant understanding of the area and its place in the city's history.[21]

The University of Strasbourg is perhaps the most famous example of how national concerns have been imposed on the city by both its contemporaries and historians. The university is famous for the number of important individuals who have passed through – Goethe and Metternich in the institution's first incarnation and, after 1918, Marc Bloch as a professor – but it is equally famous for its national "Germanizing" – later "Gallicizing" – mission, causing historians to ignore the university in wider Strasburger society. John E Craig's *Scholarship and Nationbuilding* attempts to examine the university in Strasburger society but falls into the trap of viewing the university as a national project, not fully considering its regional and local significance.[22] Stéphane Jonas provides an excellent example of how French historians also fail to engage with the university on a local level in his monograph on the university, he examines

[19] Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 96, offers a fine critique of Claude's article.
[20] Stéphane Jonas, "Strasbourg 1900, ville de frontière et d'innovation (1890-1918)," *Revue des sciences sociales de la France de l'Est* 19 (1991-92), 13.
[21] Johannes Dahm, "Le « quartier allemand » à Strasbourg : la perception actuelle des traces architecturales (1871-1918) par les habitants et les passants," *Pays germanophones* 8 (2015), 132.
[22] John E. Craig, *Scholarship and Nationbuilding: The Universities of Strasbourg and Alsatian Society, 1870-1939,* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), pages 12-17. For analyses of the monograph see Carrol, "Les historiens anglophones et l'Alsace," 275.

the friction inside the university as part of the process of German immigration – "Germanization" – to the city.[23] These issues also arise when examining the literature on primary and secondary schooling in Alsace generally, particularly regarding the language of instruction.[24] Anthony J Steinhoff, thanks to his focus on Strasburger Protestantism, is the only listed historian who succeeds in avoiding this trap. Through his research on religious education he is also able to highlight a critically important aspect of Strasbourg's local culture – religion – and examine education in a manner which Strasburgers in the *Reichsland* were distinctly concerned about.[25]

Steinhoff is not the only notable historian of religion in Strasbourg, "Le Clergé Catholique alsacien et la politique" by Christian Baechler does an excellent job of examining Alsatian Catholic particularism against a Protestant German administration *and* a secularizing French one. Catherine Maurer and Gabrielle Ripplinger also do an excellent job by examining the care given to Strasbourg's orphans that was provided by the churches until 1919. In both cases they examine Strasbourg in relation and competition with its central government, highlighting the region's particular situation and cultural desires.[26]

Strasbourg's historiography is littered with exceptions to the general trends described above.[27] French historians will occasionally publish articles about Alsace that one would be

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[23] Stéphane Jonas, Strasbourg, capitale du Reichsland Alsace-Lorraine et sa nouvelle université, (Strasbourg: Editions Oberlin, 1995), 9-10.

[24] Stephen Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1860-1940*, (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 66.

[25] Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 105.

[26] Christian Baechler, "Le Clergé Catholique alsacien et la politique, 1871-1939," *Revue d'Alsace* 111 (1985), page 125. and Catherine Maurer & Gabrielle Ripplinger, "Destitute Children in Alsace from the Beginning of the Twentieth Century to the End of the 1930s: Orphan Care in Strasbourg, in between France and Germany," in *Borderland Studies Meets Child Studies: A European Encounter*, edited by Machteld Venken (Berne: Peter Lang, 2017), 57.

[27] One highly aggressive trend among certain French historians such as Uberfall, Jonas, and Claude is the reference of Strasburgers at *autochtones*, the word meaning 'native,' but in a pejorative sense, as one would refer to tribesmen

more likely to find in an English language publications, Éric Ettwiller as well as Julien Fuchs and Sébastien Stumpp whose articles on sport tourism and the German colonial society end up examining Alsace from the perspective of Berlin are well written but fail to engage with Alsace as a unique region.[28] Likewise, there are occasionally articles about Strasbourg that are in conversation with the historical reality that is the city and region's unique status, Dominique Huck manages exactly this in his article about the Alsatian Theater in Strasbourg.[29]

In sum the failure of historians to examine Strasbourg with the same tolerance for the city's unique history, except in some cases, has caused a hole in the historiography that has yet to be filled in any language. François Uberfall's *La Société Strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne* comes the closest, however Uberfall comes up lacking, attempting to use immigration and "intermarriage" statistics to discover if the city had been truly "Germanized."[30] A gap in the historiography therefore exists which requires the changes that took place in the city to be examined, first outside of a national-cultural framework, and only after examining those changes relationships with national-cultural understandings of the city. It is this gap that this essay seeks to fulfill.

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rather than locals of a city. Their uses of the term imply, at least to this author, that the local people were the victims of colonization in the same form of France's Senegalese victims.

[28] Éric Ettwiller, "La diffusion du colonialisme allemand en Alsace-Lorraine par la Gesellschaft für Erdkunde und Kolonialwesen," *Revue d'Allemagne* 48 (2016) and Julien Fuchs & Sébastien Stump, "Frontières politiques, frontières symboliques. La difficile implantation des associations sportivo-touristiques allemandes en Alsace avant 1914," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (1954-), vol. 60, no. 3 (July-September 2013).

[29] Dominique Huck, "Le "Théâtre Alsacien de Strasbourg" et la production dramatique de ses fondateurs (1898-1914)," in *Culture et Histoire des spectacles en Alsace et en Lorraine: de l'annexion à la décentralisation (1871-1946)* edited by Jeanne Benay & Jean-Marc Leveratto (Berne: Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2005), 197.

[30] François Uberfall, *La Société Strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, (Strasbourg: Publications de la Société Savante d'Alsace, 2001), 11.

As a new era dawned on Strasbourg the damage that the city had sustained through the siege became the most immediate problem that needed to be solved. The fortress was the most apparent issue to the now German military who had pressed for the city's annexation. Vauban's walls were never meant to hold against modern artillery, and it would make little sense for them to be simply returned to their pre-war state. The Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke desired a "*steinernen Panzer*" – stone armor – which was fulfilled with a ring of fortifications around the city, costing 15.5 million Marks and expanding the urban area of Strasbourg by just under 400 hectares between 1875-82.[31] These newly created urban spaces provided the real estate to locate a large portion of German building projects that would be centered around the modern day Neudorf and Neustadt. Projects were also undertaken in the historic Grande Île (*Altstadt*) to make the city hygienic and modern.

The Society of German Hygienists was created in 1869 with the express purpose of promoting reforms that would improve the health of the German nation.[32] Strasbourg became the playground for these German hygienist theories because of its propaganda value – as city that the whole world was watching for examples of German rule – and the *Reichland*'s lack of autonomy in the early years after annexation, local influence in decision making would be limited until the 1887 Constitution.[33] Strasbourg was also favored by reformers thanks to provisions in the Treaty of Frankfort which, for the sake of those living in the *Reichsland*, kept all French laws and

[31] Stefan Fisch, "Planung als Eigentumsbeschränkung in der Obrigkeitsstaat: Bemerkungen zur Straßburger Stadtentwicklung, 1871-1918," in *Stadtentwicklung im deutsch-französisch-luxemburgischen Grenzraum (19. U. 20. Jr.). Edited by Rainer Hudermann and Rolf Wittenbrick* (Saarbrücken: SDV Saarbrücker Druckerei, 1991), pages 179-80. & André Sayous, "L'Évolution de Strasbourg entre les deux guerres, 1871-1914," *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale 6* (1927), 1.

[32] Viviane Claude, "La germanisation de Strasbourg après 1871," *Les annales de la recherche urbaine 37* (1988), 39.

[33] The nature of who held power in Strasbourg – like the rest of the *Reichsland* and all of Germany until 1945 – was muddled with overlapping claims of power between Berlin and regional leaders in Strasbourg, for an exploration of the conflict see Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, pages 65-90.

regulations until they were specifically replaced by German ones, as a result the drafting of new laws and regulations were often with the most modern ideas in mind.[34]

One of the most glaring modernizations made to the Grande Île was "*la grande Percée*" which was the centerpiece of the 1880 extension plan led by Grosser Druchbruch.[35] A large S-shaped boulevard, the *grande percée* (now primarily the *Rue de la Mésange*) was designed to allow light and fresh air into the city center. This was accompanied by the creation of a city garden, meant to provide citizens with natural spaces that German reformers felt necessary for good social order.[36] The *grande Percée* and garden were not without their problems. Property lines needed to be redrawn and land acquisitions were forcibly made despite local objections. As a result of these forceful actions, some French historians have chosen to read them as acts of German oppression although the process in which they were carried out were much more humane than the suffering caused by Hausmann's Parisian boulevards.[37] However, the majority of the *Grande Île* was left untouched by German planners, who instead chose to focus their energies on the new areas that had been opened up by the creation of a new ring of forts. They housed the less flashy, but more important, housing blocks that were being built to coincide with the slum cleanings.

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[34] One of the most interesting examples of this is Bismarck's test of a German state tobacco monopoly in Strasbourg. The French state maintained a tobacco monopoly at the time of annexation and there existed a manufactory in Strasbourg at the time of the annexation, thanks to the legal situation surrounding Alsace-Lorraine the manufactory fell into the hands of the German state which would attempt to use as a starting point for a Reich-wide monopoly. Unfortunately for Bismark, mismanagement of the plant and opposition from liberals and the German tobacco lobby forced the government to attempt to sell off the plant, although due to its lack of profitability it never was. Reported in Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 180-185.

[35] Jonas, "Strasbourg 1900," 24.

[36] Ibid., 24.

[37] Ibid., 41. & Harold Hammer-Schenk, "Die Stadterweiterung Straßburgs nach 1870. Politische Vorgaben historischer Stadtplanung," in *"Geschichte allein ist zeitgemäß": Historismus in Deutschland*, edited by Michael Brix and Monika Steinhauser, pages 121-41 (Lahn-Giessen: Anabas-Verlag Kämpf, 1978), 123.

Strasbourg was surrounded by slums. The siege had done serious damage to the area *extra muros* as the residents attempted to find safety away from German cannons, furthermore despite the previous decade's Rhine-straightening projects, malaria had yet to be eliminated and flooding was still an issue faced by the most vulnerable slums.[38] The expansion of Strasbourg's city limits provided the opportunity to create the *Neudorf* just to the south of the old city walls. The attempt to make a "new and proper quarter" was not an act of ghettoization as has been suggested but rather a genuine attempt by German urban planners to develop municipal poor relief.[39] The building projects were significant. In one 36-month period between 1908 and 1910, 2,200 people were provided with new homes, and the Neudorf never failed to lose its bustling construction throughout the entire German period.[40] The Neudorf, as well as all of Strasbourg, used water wells, which German urban planners sought to replace with piped water, making way for "water modernity" as one historian has referred to it. This "water modernity", however, would prove to be one of the more contentious issues in the historiography of Strasbourg.[41]

The provision of piped water was one of the central goals of German hygienists seeking to create a modern city. Throughout 1871 hygienists from Berlin began researching Strasbourg's properties for information about the provision of water, light, and other factors deemed important for a "*Saubere Stadt*," this research would prove vital for urban planners who used the collected data to organize the new sewer system.[42] The provision of piped water and sewage was not immediate however, the last traditional well was not closed until 1918 and French historians

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[38] Marc Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography, 1815-2000* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 65-66.
[39] Claude, "La germanisation de Strasbourg après 1871," 44 & Steinhoff, *City of the Gods*, 97.
[40] Jonas, "Strasbourg 1900," 26
[41] Christoph Bernhardt, "Urbanizing a River in a Bicultural Region: Strasbourg and the Upper Rhine on the Way to Water Modernity, 1789-1925," in *Rivers Lost, Rivers Regained: Rethinking City-River Relations,* edited by Martin Knoll, Uwe Lübken, and Dieter Schott (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), 150.
[42] Claude, "La germanisation de Strasbourg après 1871," 42. & Bernhardt, "Urbanizing a River in a Bicultural Region," 148.

claim it is because francophone residents resisted the imposition of "German technologies."[43] The claim should not be accepted without skepticism, Viviane Claude claims that the attachment felt by Francophones for traditional wells was a resistance to "foreign" technology, however, pipe capacity was always inadequate as German planners always failed to reach their goal of 150 liters of water per day per person and traditional wells filled that gap.[44] Language and nationality have been inserted into issues around "water modernity" as newer constructions were also more likely to have modern sewage than older, refurbished ones, which also happen to be the places where *Altdeutsch* (Germans from across the Rhine) immigrants tend to live.[45]

The issue of *Altdeutsch* immigration has become the focus of several French historians examining the city's massive growth between 1871 and 1910, increasing from 85,000 to just under 180,000 residents.[46] These statistics do not tell the whole story as Anthony Steinhoff description of Strasbourg being more akin to "Sparta than Athens" is accurate, at any given time in the city's history after 1815 around 10 percent of the population were soldiers stationed in the frontier city.[47] During the German period the city was was the garrison of the German XV Corps and most of its subordinated units. Immigrants were also almost exclusively *Altdeutsch* who moved to the city as it expanded to fulfill its new administrative functions and later on other roles in the city, making up close to 30 percent of the population in 1880.[48] Despite this Steinhoff claims that a clear majority (around 65 percent) of Strasburgers were native residents

[43] Bernhardt, "Urbanizing a River in a Bicultural Region," 148. & Claude, "La germanisation de Strasbourg après 1871," 42.
[44] Bernhardt, "Urbanizing a River in a Bicultural Region," 148. & Claude, "La germanisation de Strasbourg après 1871," 43-44.
[45] Uberfall, *La Société Strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne*, 79.
[46] Steinhoff, *City of the Gods*, 99.
[47] Ibid., 99.
[48] Ibid., 101.

of the city itself.[49] However, this trend has disturbed historians like François Uberfall who examined that around 23 percent of Strasburger marriages were "mixed," between Strasburger/Alsatian natives and *Altdeutsch* immigrants, suggesting that just because someone is *autochthone* they might still be more German than Alsatian.[50] This focus on "mixed" marriages brings back into focus one of the central themes in Alsatian and Strasburger history, "Germanization."

The creation of the Neudorf, *grande Percée*, and "water modernity" were not thought of as "Germanization" by those who were instrumental in their creations and there is no evidence to suggest that they did. Rather it appears that these improvements were part of the general trend towards modernization that was occurring throughout Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries. When planning to bring "water modernity" to Strasbourg, German planners looked towards the English Public Health Movement for ideas and techniques to employ.[51] German urban planners and municipal engineers were not nominally agents of German hegemony, but, like their French and English counterparts, progressives who wanted to make cities healthy places to live.[52] French urban planners, despite lagging behind their British and German counterparts, had the same fundamental goals, during the *belle epoch*, for example, socialist French mayors would attempt urban improvement schemes that often conflicted with conservative Parisian *préfets*.[53] Slum clearance and "water modernity" were not French nor were they German but they were part of a trend across the whole of the industrialized world to make cities fit for the 20th century. This is not to say "Germanization" is a French myth, rather that

[49] Ibid., 98
[50] Uberfall, *La Société Strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne*, 151.
[51] Claude, "La germanisation de Strasbourg après 1871," 39.
[52] Brian Ladd, *Urban Planning and Civic Order in Germany, 1860-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 38-43.
[53] John M. Marriman (ed.), *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981), 230-246.

claims of German chauvinism in slum clearance and "water modernity" were rather part of a wider European trend.

The Berlin government did, however, desire to "Germanize" Alsace in order to ensure the borderland's loyalty. Bismarck did not believe in Treitschke's claim that Alsatians were long lost Germans and therefore sought to ensure their loyalty to Berlin with carrots and sticks.[54] The cultural integration that did occur has also been called "Germanization" and "Germanizing" projects were taken up in several areas of the city, notably the Kaiserplatz in the Neustadt and Imperial University. As discussed above a single German identity is hard to come by because of its tolerance for diversity, the integration should be seen as "Alsatianization," which sought to reinforce a separate Alsatian identity that would ensure that loyalty was not found in Paris but rather in one's *Heimat*, which can be seen as "Germanization."

The Kaiserplatz (now the *Place de la République*) was the most obvious symbol of Strasbourg's membership in the new German Reich. The Kaiserplatz became the center of the Neustadt whose creation mirrored that of the Neudorf except its residents tended to be *Altdeutsch* immigrants rather than the inhabitants of recently cleared slums.[55] The Kaiserplatz was designed from the ground up to be a symbol of German imperial power as well as a center for German nationalist celebrations, in this manner it is fundamentally unlike the *Palais universitaire* or Alsatian Museum (see below). The *Kaiserpalast* (*Palais du Rhin*) was built for a visit from Wilhelm I who desired to "strengthen the relationship between himself, the residents, and the rest of the Reich"[56] A baroque building, the *Kaiserpalast* reminds one of French palaces found

[54] Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 36-37.
[55] Nohlen, *Baupolitik im Reichsland Elsass-Lothringen*, 29.
[56] Ibid., 45.

around Paris and served as a reminder to Strasburgers that despite the fact that a republic had been declared on 4 September, Alsace still had an emperor.

Alongside the *Kaiserpalast* several other new governmental structures were established, the most interesting of which was the *Landesaschußgebäude*, the home of the regional parliament (the *Landesaschuß*). The *Landesaschußgebäude* maintained the same imperial-baroque aesthetic and was located just north of the *Kaiserpalast*. Its designers were consciously aware of the buildings intended use when designing it as the home of a regional parliament. Despite this, it was considered more important to have symbolic continuity with the *Kaiserpalast* to symbolize from where power was derived, as such, more democratic designs for the *Landesaschußgebäude* were rejected.[57]

These concerns did not follow the (re-)creation of the Imperial University in 1872. Shuddered because of the French Revolution the historic university was re-founded by the new German administration in part to resurrect the idea of a German Strasbourg. The *Gebäude der Universitäts* (now the *Palais universitaire*) was built on compromise whose design, although baroque with many classical flourishes, was designed with the goal of using history as a reference.[58] Its design of the building was intended to bring into form the transnational nature of the old university despite the fact that the new university itself was not; it served a nationalizing mission that John Craig described as "Germanization."[59] The commission that established the university was led by the Badenese Franz von Roggenbach despite the great importance Prussian administrators placed in the university. To both the Berlin government and German university reformers the new university would be a model that would abandon the historic emphasis on

[57] Nohlen, Baupolitik im Reichsland Elsass-Lothringen, 60.
[58] François Loyer, "Le palais universitaire de Strasbourg : culture et politique au XIXe siècle en Alsace," *Revue de l'Art 91* (1991), 11.
[59] Craig, *Scholarship and Nationbuilding*, 29-41.

Bildung for technical studies and help integrate the *Reichsland*'s bourgeoisie and cultural elites into the rest of Germany, citing the university of Bonn's success in integrating the Rhineland into Prussia.[60] The university of Strasbourg received special attention from the Berlin government and was even awarded special funding despite attempts by states in the *Bundesrat* (to which Alsace-Lorraine sent no representatives) to limit the university's funding.[61]

The university was provided with generous funding to create a premier university in the hopes that Alsatian families would send their children to a German university rather than across the Vosges mountains to France which had established the dueling University of Nancy after the establishment of the University of Strasbourg.[62] Despite this high funding the university failed to secure the top-tier professors it desired by Roggenbach. He had decided while preparing lists of his preferred chairs and professors that there would be a certain number of Alsatian native professors to demonstrate that the university was not a German imposition.[63] Furthermore, when job offers were being sent throughout 1871/2 Strasbourg was still a wreck from the siege and Germans – especially Badenese, who had fired the first shots of the siege from Kehl across the Rhine – were not greeted with open arms, the social costs of moving to a war torn city were one was viewed as a foreign conqueror was higher than the generous salaries being offered.[64]

Classes were usually given in German with the exception of the medical school, which was adjacent to the university although not a part of it.[65] It was decided to allow professors in the medical school to continue teaching in French, this same privilege would later be extended to

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[60] Ibid., 30.
[61] Ibid., 60.
[62] Ibid., 103.
[63] Ibid., 59.
[64] This should be seen in contrast to the establishment of the French university in 1919 where professors were encouraged to teach in Strasbourg as part of their duty to the *patrie*, ibid., 57.
[65] Marie-Noël Denis, Anelise Gérard, Francis Weidmann, & Stéphane Jonas, "Strasbourg et son université impériale, 1871-1918. L'université au centre de la ville," *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine, 62-63* (1994), 152.

Alsatian professors at the university. These lectures could sometimes lead to conflict. One particularly feeble francophone professor's classes were known to dissolve into nationalist posturing between French and German students, one instance even devolved into a nationalist showdown that gripped French and German newspapers for several days.[66] The fact that Alsatian professors were allowed to teach in French was not unusual for the *Reichsland*, Alsatian schoolchildren were instructed in the majority language of their classroom within certain requirements, revolving around the number of francophone students in a class as well as the religion classes taken by said students.[67] All primary education in Strasbourg was in German as all primary schools failed to meet the minimum criteria for French language classes.[68]

The university also includes a faculty of Protestant theology although Roggenbach originally wanted it to be accompanied by Catholic and Jewish (!) theology faculties, in a recognition of the importance of area's religious diversity.[69] The government in Berlin rejected a Jewish faculty but accepted the proposal for a Catholic theological faculty. A Catholic faculty was never introduced, however, as the Bishop of Strasbourg demanded the right to name all members of the faculty and, being an Ultramonite, he would certainly only appoint those he felt to be sufficiently partisan.[70] This, followed by Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, killed any hopes for a faculty of Catholic theology, and the university was left with just its Protestant faculty.

The issue of religion becomes quickly tied up in Strasbourg's politics. Alsace was the center of French Protestantism but after its annexation it became the most Catholic region in

[66] Craig, *Scholarship and Nationbuilding*, 131-133
[67] Harp, *Learning to be Loyal*, 77-86
[68] Steinhoff, *City of the Gods*,105.
[69] Craig, *Scholarship and Nationbuilding*, 46.
[70] Ibid., 42.

Germany.[71] The city itself was dominated by liberals and during the Second Empire Strasbourg was always considered a republican town.[72] After the annexation, Strasburgers faced two separate religious-political events that would drive their city away from Germany, the *Kulturkampf* and the reorganization of the Lutheran churches. Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* was formative for Alsace's Catholics who, in Strasbourg, were already more likely to be Francophiles. The great struggle caused a stagnation in Catholic society since, when church functionaries died for example, their positions were much harder to fill and concessions that would have been granted by the German state – such as a faculty of Catholic theology – became politically impossible.[73] The Alsatian Catholic clergy, despite promoting the Alsatian language against "Gallization" by the Second Empire, would quickly turn against the German state, causing many Alsatian Catholics to never come to terms with their new German co-patriots.[74]

The second religious-political struggle was immediately after the annexation when Strasbourg's Lutheran churches were folded into the German-wide Evangelical organizations. Strasbourg's protestants, being of a more liberal disposition, had a much greater liberal representation on their *Oberkirchenrat* (councils governing religious matters), however, when being integrated with other German churches that did not share this liberal disposition the German state attempted to place its preferred, much more conservative representatives, onto the *Oberkirchenrat* which scandalized Protestant Strasburgers who saw it as an example of German imperialism.[75] The outrage ran so deep that in order to keep immediate peace, Alsatian

[71] Fischer, *Alsace to the Alsatians?*, 2.
[72] Steinhoff, *City of the Gods*, 65.
[73] Ibid.116.
[74] Baechler, "Le Clergé Catholique alsacien et la politique," 128-131.
[75] Steinhoff, *City of the Gods*, 68-69.

Lutherans were kept organizationally separate from the rest of Germany.[76] Strasbourg's liberal Protestants would come into conflict with the German state more than once though. In the first decade of the 20th century the *Deutsche-Evangelische Fraubund* (German Evangelical Women's Alliance) successfully pushed for women's suffrage in church elections and the *Oberkirchenrat*, the first to do so in Germany.[77] The decision was not solely in the hands of Alsace's Lutherans however as French laws from the Second Empire governing Lutheran religious matters had never been revoked, therefore Berlin would need to approve the measures. While the idea of women's suffrage found support among Alsace's Lutheran men the same cannot be said of Berlin's officials who saw this as a slippery slope towards women's suffrage in political elections and quickly vetoed the matter.[78]

Despite these religious confrontations with the German state not all religious matters were defined by conflict. Care for orphans was in the hands of religious authorities who worked with the city and urban planners to design orphanages that would provide them with healthy childhoods, provided their parents were residents in "good standing."[79] While in orphan care children were provided either Catholic or Protestant schooling based on the child's choice and would be taken care of by both Catholic nuns and Lutheran workers.[80] One important element in the raising of orphans was the provision of occasional stays in the Vosges mountains, introducing them to a natural Alsace which was part of the general trend towards "Alsatianization."

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[76] Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 107-108

[77] Anthony J, Steinhoff, "A Feminized Church? The Campaign for Women's Suffrage in Alsace-Lorraine's Protestant Churches, 1907-1914," *Central European History*, vol. 38, no. 2 (2005), 231.

[78] Steinhoff, "A Feminized Church?," 231-245.

[79] Maurer & Ripplinger, "Destitute Children in Alsace," 48.

[80] Ibid., 51.

The city was littered with projects that would bring Alsace to Strasbourg. One interesting example is the *Elsässisches Theater Straßburg* (Alsatian Theater of Strasbourg) which performed plays at a low price in the Alsatian dialect.[81] The plays themselves were written by Strasburgers and Alsatians and the performances proved to be popular as the theater was able to stay profitable, generally performing for a proletarian audience, without the need for public assistance.[82] The plays provide an insight into how Alsatian regionalism had survived throughout both French and German rule, *D'r Herr Maire* by Gustave Stoskopf was particularly popular and utilized the multilingual nature of the city for comedic effect.[83] The Alsatian Museum – which still stands today under the same name – is another example of how Alsatian natives attempted to present a timeless Alsace that was neither French nor German. Opened by a group of Alsatian autonomists that included Stoskopf, the museum received enough attention and visitors to remain operational and, perhaps fortunately for such a small institution, little controversy.[84] The development of an Alsatian identity in Strasbourg was being born.

Despite these Alsatian institutions in Strasbourg there were also German associations being established at the same time. The most interesting example is the *Gesellschaft für Erdkunde und Kolonialwesen* (Society for Geography and Colonial Affairs) which peaked at over 620 members before 1914 compared to Munich's nearly 1,000 – a city more than three times Strasbourg's size.[85] The *GEK* was similar to most other *fin de siècle* colonial societies in both form and function, membership was limited to Strasbourg's bourgeois residents but included many Strasburger notables including Otto Back, one of the town's most important

[81] Huck, "Le "Théâtre Alsacien de Strasbourg," 202-203.
[82] Ibid., 206.
[83] Ibid., 214.
[84] The most famous example of a controversial Alsatian site was the restoration of the Hohköningburg. Fischer, *Alsace to the Alsatians?*, 60-64.
[85] Ettwiller, "La diffusion du colonialisme allemand en Alsace-Lorraine," 111.

mayors of the period. The city also hosted the *Vogesenklub* which was the regional version of the German Alpine societies. The *Vogesenklub* attracted sports-tourists from across the German speaking world and successfully integrated many of Strasbourg's members into wider German alpinist society.[86] In both cases we do not know how many members were *Altdeutsch* bringing Germany to Alsace and how many were Strasburger/Alsatians embracing German culture, different historians have found different answers with no conclusive answer in either direction. Leaving these aspects of Strasbourg's integration up for debate.

What is Strasbourg left with? The fundamental question – did the *Altdeutsch* attempt to "Germanize" Strasbourg? – cannot be answered because there is no consistent definition of 'Germanization." It is an artificial term just like the *Reich* itself, created by the "shotgun weddings" that were the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars. Germany's creation was the result of Prussian victories and hegemony, not the willing consent of the minor German states and because of this, Prussian bureaucrat sought to ensure their control by enforcing Prussia as the ideal German state. When defined without tolerance for *Heimat*, "Germanization" can be more accurately called "Prussification" whereas "Germanization" and "Alsatianization" can be synonymous. But not every project undertaken in Strasbourg after 1871 was "Prussification," "Germanization," or "Alsatianization." "Water modernity" and slum clearances were technocratic improvements without nationalities that have had their national importance imposed on them by zealous historians. Genuine attempts at both "Germanization" and "Gallization" have been examined – such as the University – but these have often been from the perspective of Paris or Berlin, never Strasburgers themselves. Despite attempts by Alsatians throughout the

[86] Fuchs & Stump, "Frontières politiques, frontières symboliques," 93.

twentieth century to define themselves as separate from both France and Germany the trend continues as Strasburgers are no longer being examined through the lense of national governments, but from their super-national government located just north of the Neustadt.

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