Manifestations of Cultural Change:
Alsatian Identity between 1871 and the Interwar Period.
Three Case Studies.

Submitted by Isaure Triby, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Modern Languages, October 2012.

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Signature:………………Isaure Triby………………
ABSTRACT

From 1871 up to the 1920s, Alsace, a region on the border between France and Germany, was forced to change its national affiliation several times. How, in this context, did the cultural identity of Alsace evolve? With what, and with whom, did Alsatians identify with, and why? In my exploration I will focus on three case studies. Their selection is determined by three criteria: one is that it is of importance to consider issues a vast majority of the population could relate to. Secondly, these case studies will mostly focus on Strasbourg. This is the capital of the region, its cultural centre and the location that France and Germany engaged with most. Finally, the selection is aided by the consideration that cultural identity is closely linked with the appropriation of particular spaces that are reconfigured according to changing socio-political contexts.

I will therefore first examine the historical development between 1871 and the 1920s, and embed into this the debate that surrounded the new imperial architecture in Strasbourg. This will be followed by an analysis of the promotional devices found in selected travel guides about Alsace that span several decades. Finally, I shall consider the more particular vision of Alsace promoted in caricatures by Hansi and Zislin, which draw upon regional attachments and national stereotypes and prejudices, but also determine clear and recognisable settings that Alsatians could easily engage with.

These case studies will show how Alsatian identity was promoted and challenged in daily life (and in specific spaces), which included, at times, propagandistic discourses, in order to make an assessment of the extent to which Alsatian identity evolved during a period of conflicting loyalties for the population.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 2

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................................. 3

List of Illustrations ................................................................................................................................. 5

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................... 7

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 8

State of Research .................................................................................................................................. 11

Identity, Memory, and Alsace .............................................................................................................. 18

## CHAPTER ONE

Setting the Scene: Strasbourg and Alsace from 1871 to the 1920s ...................................................... 31

1.1. The Franco-Prussian War, Propaganda and Assimilation ............................................................. 33

1.2. Writing Alsatian Identity ............................................................................................................... 44

1.3. From Réveil Alsacien to Malaise Alsacien: The Entrenchment of Sentiments? ..................... 52

## CHAPTER TWO

Defining Strasbourg and Alsace: Tourist Guides for Insiders and Outsiders .................................. 67

2.1. Curt Mündel, the Club Vosgien, and the Alsatian Travel-Guides ............................................... 69

2.2. Further Examples of Travel Literature ........................................................................................ 89

2.3. Promotional Literature about Alsace .......................................................................................... 96

## CHAPTER THREE

The Reinforcement of Identity: Imperial Architecture and its Inauguration ..................................... 102

3.1. The Imperial Palace (Kaiserpalast) and Kaisertage in Straßburg ............................................ 103

3.2. The Kaiserpalast's Legacy .......................................................................................................... 124

3.3. Further Afield .............................................................................................................................. 127
CHAPTER FOUR

Alsace in Popular Caricatures................................................................. 140
4.1. Shaping Identity: The Example of Jean-Jacques Waltz (Hansi)......... 141
4.2. 1871 to 1918: Winning Hearts and Minds?........................................ 176

Conclusion....................................................................................................... 200

Appendices.................................................................................................... 206

Bibliography.................................................................................................... 208