

# Neighbors or Strangers? Binational and Transnational Identities in Strasbourg

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Two modes of consciousness influence the current identities of Strasburgers. During the period when a French and then a German nation-state impinged on this frontier region of Alsace, there existed a binationalism. That is, the Strasburgers, whose “Double Culture” identity partakes of both Germanic and French strains, mostly remained where they were while different official and nationally-exclusive cultures, either from Paris or Berlin, washed over them. Since 1945, however, “The Construction of Europe” seems largely to have laid to rest Franco-German rivalry over Strasbourg, and the Strasburgers’ old binationalism is fading. At the same time, since 1945 but especially since 1962, the closing of the French colonial era has seen the settling in of large numbers of persons of color, followed by a considerable influx of Turkish citizens. Strasbourg now has, as do other major French cities, a significant “visible minority” population of people who draw their identities both from their Frenchness *and* from their lands of provenance. Thereby a whole set of novel Double Cultures is being engendered, in which Islam can be a high-profile component. With the shift from the earlier binationalism toward the newer transnationalism, a complex cultural uncertainty is making it difficult for Strasburgers to decide just what comprises their identity now. *Key Words:* binationalism, identity, racialization, Strasbourg, transnationalism.

Complex identities are the reality for inhabitants of the Rhineland city of Strasbourg, or Strassburg, capital of Alsace. One source of the complexity is that worldwide, over the past fifty or more years, decolonization and globalization have induced migration away from people’s home areas in poorer lands, engendering a human geography of unsettling-resettling to which the label “transnationalism” has become firmly fixed (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Crush & McDonald 2002; Ley 2004). So it is that the end of the French overseas empire has seen a “New Immigration” of unprecedented numbers of formerly distant ex-colonial subjects settling in French cities, including Strasbourg. Large numbers of Turkish workers have also arrived in Strasbourg. This process is a “transnationalism-by-displacement.” By doing something—moving, even if under constraint—people make this new transnationalism take form.

The fact that in this article’s very first sentence two spellings were given for the city’s name, however, and that neither is in fact in the native tongue of the locality whereby we would be referring in Alsatian to Strossburi, point to a singular feature of the cultural context. Long before there was any transnationalism in the contemporary sense of the word, there existed in the life of this particular city an established “binationalism.” That is, as opposed to moving, most Alsations and Strasburgers<sup>1</sup> stayed where they always had been and as it were “got transnationalized.” In violent contention, the two

greatest nation-states of Continental Europe washed over them: these German lands of the Holy Roman Empire were grasped and taken into the Kingdom of France; later the German Empire took them back; then the French Third Republic took them; then the Third Reich annexed them; and France finally repossessed Alsace in 1945.

In the most general of terms, I posit that the Strasbourg identity is experiencing the superposition of the new transnationalism upon the old binationalism. The old is ever-fading, its diagnosis a foreseeable diminution. The new is highly contentious: it offers possibilities of enriching cultural admixture; or the converse, alienation; or indeed both simultaneously.

During in-depth interviews in 2004 to 2006, 138 Strasburgers were asked to ponder their uncertain and dynamic cultural identity. First, then, this article builds a portrait of the old binational identity. A discussion follows, second, as to whether any distinction can in fact be made between old binationalism and new transnationalism. That is, there has always been immigration to Strasbourg—so what’s new about the New Immigration, the root of the new transnationalism? Do we really need this new, and currently so very popular, term “transnationalism” after all? The response is that yes, there are indeed a number of novel factors in play, and a central one is contemporary *racialization*: the marking of “people of color” and/or of visible cultural particularities.

Third, in assessing this process, my own marking arises: to what degree has the author's positionality implied his own taking on board current French understandings of "race" in the pursuit of this research? Clearly, however, this article is choosing to offer an ethnographic portrait of one city, rather than a discussion of the vast field of what "race" may or may not be in the light of transnationalism. So, fourth, the article then proceeds via interviewees' responses to depict three contrasting modes-of-being for Strasburgers of the New Immigration: (a) assimilation; (b) in-betweenness; and (c) uncommunicative withdrawal. Fifth and finally, contemporary Strasbourg is seeing an ongoing contestation or accommodation, or both, between the old binationalism and the new transnationalism. Such struggles born of the New Immigration are present in all French cities, as the unrest of Fall 2005 indicates. Yet, do not Strasbourg's Eastern Frontier particularities plus its very high Turkish population make it close to unique? The question arises: Does the old binational heritage of this singular city mean that those who are sprung from the New Immigration are here having, to put it at its simplest, a harder, an easier, or just a different time of it than elsewhere in France?

## The Old Binationalism

When asked to reflect on their city, Strasburgers are certainly being asked to ponder a complex place. If their new transnationalism, many realize, is shared with an ever-growing cohort of richer cities in France and in Western Europe, then their old binationalism of Alsace-Lorraine, many assert, is all their very own. Strasburgers are the inheritors of a hybrid identity that evolved at a strategic crossroads position central to Western Europe. Strasbourg thereby became a prize to be fought over during the era of state-forging nationalisms, be those French or German. Furthermore, the compact region of which Strasbourg is capital, Alsace, with its densely populated, agriculturally productive land, has long been particularly favored. A quotation that is a cliché to Alsatians concerns Louis XIV coming eastward from France in 1681 to coerce Strassburg into his Paris-centered imperium. From the crest of the Vosges pass he first takes in the generous Rhineland plain spread below, and is moved enough to comment "*Quel beau jardin!*"—what a fine garden!

Contemporary Strasburgers seem to share the Sun King's evaluation. *Convoiter*—to covet—is a verb that Alsatian Strasburgers frequently chose when alluding to the history of German, and also sometimes of French, designs on their homeland. Responses to open-ended

questions<sup>2</sup> asked of sixty-seven female and seventy-one male Strasburgers reveal an evident pride in this Roman-founded city, whose beauty in recent years has occasioned an ever-growing tourist industry. In 1988 UNESCO designated the medieval core of Strasbourg, set on an island embraced by channels of the River Ill (Figure 1), as a World Heritage Site. Private vehicular traffic has been strictly disciplined, and successful light-rail public transportation developed. Now that the great Manichaean question—is this place properly in France or in Germany?—has been safely put behind Alsatians with the past half-century's "Construction of Europe," what could be firmer than a Strasbourg identity based on so well-founded a pride-in-place? The city's icon is the magnificent cathedral, whose spire of red sandstone filigree is offset from the nave and thus provides a unique and immediately recognized asymmetric silhouette (Figure 2). Following the spire's completion in 1439, just about the time Gutenberg was inventing movable type beneath its shadow, this became the tallest building in Europe, and remained so until the nineteenth century. Of all this history Strasburgers are indeed proud.

To talk with these same Strasburgers is also, however, to encounter a pervasive uncertainty. Yes, so many agree that here in appearance is a most pleasing city, one whose scale is pretty much just right, a fine rich historic city to which one when here or elsewhere happily professes allegiance. Yet the identity today of Strasburger is rather slippery and difficult to delineate. Furthermore, for many of those whom one *prima facie* might assume to be sure of their city—the autochthonous, old-stock Strasburgers (*Strasbourggeois de souche*)—the real identity of Strasbourg is, they assert, fast dissolving. Its dissolution is a source of regret and sometimes of resentment. For what has occurred in Strasbourg over the past half-century, an at-first postcolonial and now an even more widely-ranging immigration, means that around 10 percent of the metropolitan population is now visibly from somewhere else. In the light of these developments, some "Old" Strasburgers take the complaining defensive stance that "*Nous ne sommes plus chez nous*" [This doesn't feel like home any more].

This sentiment is made the more sharp-edged by the belief that we here have for so long had to *suffer* to keep Strasbourg ours. The old remember the suffering, particularly during the Nazi annexation from the summer of 1940 until late November 1944: "France was occupied—but we were made Germans," said Mr. Roth.<sup>3</sup> "Alsace was martyred" is a hyperbolic phrase that one hears. And adding up the figures, one realizes that more people died in Franco-German conflicts in Alsace during the first forty-five years of the twentieth century than have

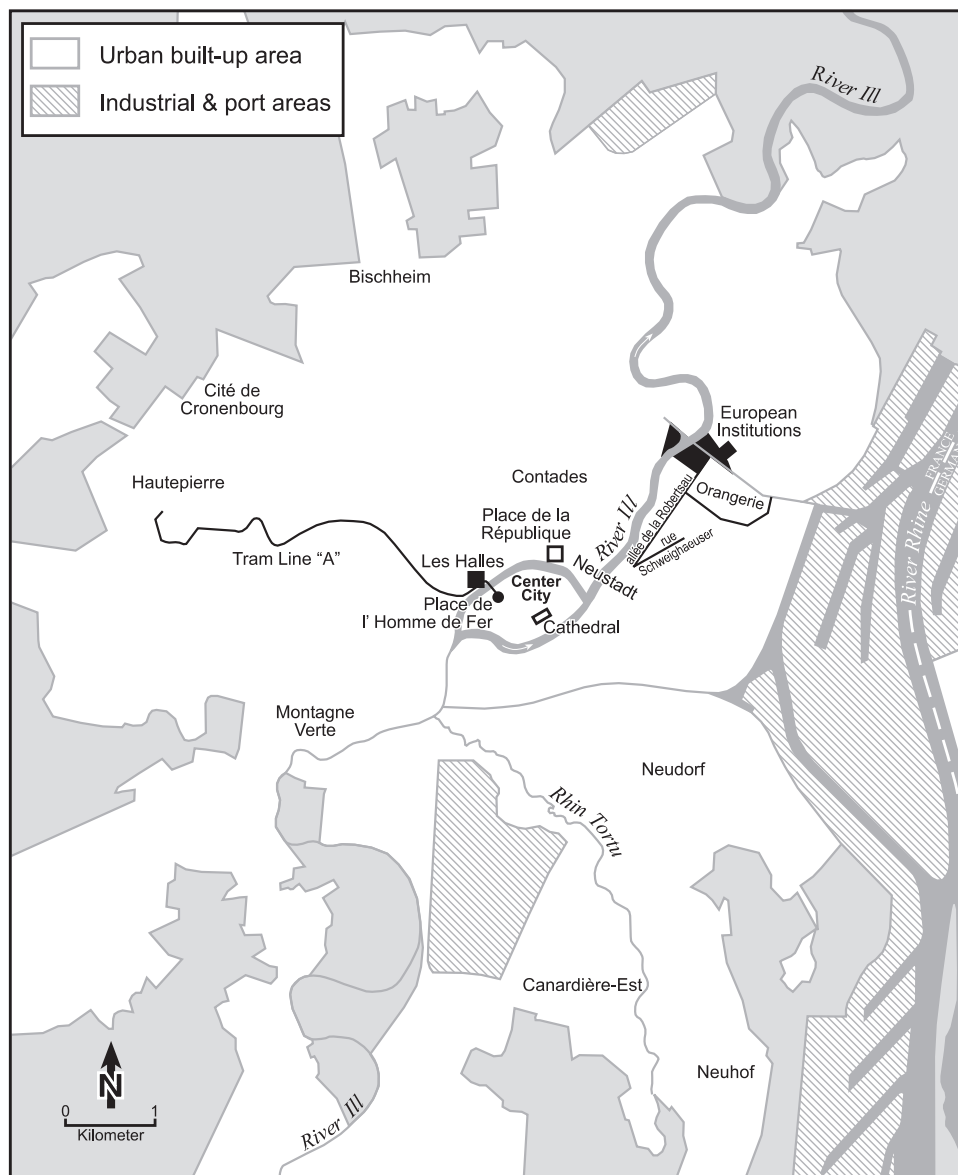


Figure 1. Strasbourg locations mentioned in the text.

died in, for example, the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts since then. To have gone through such times is to claim a medal of authentic Strasburgness.

Some of those who wear it have been only too eager to tell me of its significance and of their experiences. It is not only the wish to impress and inform the eagerly-listening, perhaps impressionable, stranger. It is also to complain, often bitterly, of the superior airs and yet the insouciant inattention of Paris. It is to vent, still, about the far greater wickedness of the Nazis, yet with the recognition that there's a certain Germanness in us Strasburgers. And there's some real virtue in that, even in certain ways some superiority to "the French-of-the-Interior" (as Alsatians have termed their fellow citizens

who live west beyond the crest of the Vosges mountains). It is to revisit the terrible dilemmas and sometimes the wrong choices of "collaboration." It is also to claim a scar whose ache the rest of France cannot possibly comprehend: that young Alsatian men, from a land annexed in 1940 and who thus by fiat became German citizens, were impressed into the Wehrmacht and sent to fight on the Eastern Front. There were 130,000 such young men, known as "Malgré-Nous," meaning "Despite Ourselves" or "Against our Will." They represented more than one-tenth of the regional population; 40,000 of them were killed. Finally, when certain interviewees voluntarily raised the topic of World War II, were they also perhaps diminishing the new multiculturalism of Strasbourg,



**Figure 2.** The cathedral from rue Schweighaeuser, one of a number of streets aligned by German Empire planners to provide such a vista in their Neustadt of the turn of the twentieth century.

which has evolved *after* the liberation of 1944–1945? That is, were one to claim that World War II has been Strasbourg's fundamental identity-confirming experience, then by definition this more recent postwar immigration cannot aspire to such a stamp of validity. For plenty of Strasbourg's established majority population, there is no rush to embrace any ever-becoming, post-colonial hybrid identity of the kind engendered since 1960 or so among some of the city's newly-arriving inhabitants. No, why be ashamed, certain old-timers said to me, to come out with it: "These new folks, they're not *real* Strasburgers."

To any Strasburger under sixty, the violence of past Franco-German enmity must appear almost curious. Certainly, they have heard tales from parents or grandparents, and in school a recitation of wars and injustices has doubtless been inculcated. But in the schools, and in the media too, the watchwords have for more than half a century been "reconstruction," then "reconciliation and accord," then "firm friendship." Franco-German relationships appear in general little more problematic than, say, Franco-Italian ones . . . and often less problematic than those with Britain or with the United States. Nonagenarian M. Weber, born in 1912 and thereby

having been first a German citizen, then a French one, German again, then French again, told me:

We were German for, oh, 700 years. After France took us in 1648 they tried and failed to really Francisize us, for 250 years. Five years of Hitler's Germany in World War II showed us what we'd lost. So we embraced France after 1945.

But the edge, the horror of this experience—which in M. Weber's case included being shot and wounded by Soviet soldiers after his Wehrmacht unit had already surrendered in Bohemia in 1945—is likely lost on younger generations: this past is a foreign country.

So it is now, as the old soldiers fade away, that state-approved evaluative discussion and a broader memorialization of World War II are really being formally instituted in Alsace. That is, recognition of those who perished fighting against Nazi tyranny has been easy; one assumes that not too many politico-moral complications arose in commemorating the Struthof concentration camp 50 km southwest of Strasbourg, where Resistance and other militant opponents were worked to death as slave labor in the adjacent quarry and to which President De Gaulle came to dedicate the memorial in July 1960. Recognition of war dead can be more complicated. Instead of the "Mort pour la France," which one finds chiseled on memorial after memorial all across the rest of the country, monuments in Alsace are more minimal: "À nos Morts" ["To our dead"]. The double pieta in Strasbourg's Place de la République (formerly Kaiserplatz) spells it out even more clearly. Across the lap of Mother Alsace lie the bodies of her two sons, who have died fighting each other: one for France, one for Germany. But it is only now, with the opening in June 2005 of a new museum-memorial at Schirmeck across the valley from Struthof, that the plight of Alsace from 1939 to 1945 and particularly of the *Malgré-Nous* from 1942 to 1945 has been aired. Until now, as a number of Strasburgers *de souche* averred with admiration, it had only been the satirist Germain Muller<sup>4</sup> who had dared speak frankly of World War II, in his cabaret-theater. Otherwise, one left well alone: the accusations and indeed realities of collaboration and opportunism and denunciation were too great. "Huh, just how much 'against their will' *were* some of those *Malgré-Nous*?" an elderly Jewish neighbor asked me pointedly. "This town is full of Collabos," growled another old Jewish man, now deceased, who bore the number 173357 on his forearm, being a survivor of Auschwitz. "*There are some very bad Alsations here*," he asserted. "I got back to my place, No. 7, Allée de la Robertsau, everything had been stolen, I



**Figure 3.** M. Fuchs, centenarian, discussing Strassburg's urban form at the time of his childhood. We are examining the *Elsäss-Lothringischer Atlas*, produced in 1930 in Frankfurt by a group of scholars dedicated to keeping alive Germany's claims to the territory. M. Fuchs' first language is German; now a French citizen, he learned French as a foreign language until 1918.

found other people in my apartment—and they didn't appear very apologetic."

With the opening of the Schirmeck memorial, however, the Summer 2005 issue of Strasbourg's quarterly *Les Saisons d'Alsace* announced "After 60 years of *mal-entendus*, now . . . the end of the silence" (Roquejeoffre 2005). It is symbolic that placed with precision in the center of the issue is a two-page spread on the reactions of some of the memorial's target population, namely local junior high school students. This particular group was from the small nearby city of Ribeauvillé, its very name Frenchified from Rappoltsweiler.

If no one can recall Nazi Germany's doings in Alsace with much approval, those very few old persons whose memories go back further—perhaps recalling also things that their own fathers and mothers had passed on to them—are not so prepared to denigrate the Kaiser's Germany of pre-World War I. I interviewed two centenarian gentlemen. One was particularly lucid (Figure 3), and was at pains to point out:

Before 1918 Alsace wasn't doing so badly. We had achieved proper *Land* status within the German Empire. And then we had to change. The language business. We had to accommodate. . . . At the end of the war we were wondering, could some autonomy be accorded Alsace? Lloyd George was for it. But Clemenceau and Poincaré were hard: the answer was no. I remember their entry into Strasbourg, the Place de l'Homme de Fer. There were Alsatian soldiers who never came home, others who came home mutilated. . . . There were people shouting "*Vive la France!*" With

others it was "*Vive la République!*" Only that. You get my meaning? That really struck me. People were throwing flowers. Yes, we wore flowers for the French troops . . . but there was so much misery mixed in.

I take it M. Fuchs wanted me to understand that unquestioning passion for France was not necessarily the most widespread or the deepest emotion in that crowd. I sensed in his tone some degree of ambivalence about the exchange of orderly Wilhelmine Germany for the France of the Third Republic, of that moment when "Alsace was given back to France." His verb was "*a été redonnée*": *given back*, in the passive voice. An object returned. He clearly was not speaking, in his opinion, of a moment of free choice, let alone of liberation.

A mid-nonenarian too, Maître Dietrich, a former Chief Magistrate of the city, spoke approvingly of Wilhelmine Germany's virtues: "The Alsations have a stronger sense of order, more than the rest of France. They get it from their Germanness—a lot of them were pro-German because of this. "*Ordnung ist das halbe Leben; und Ordnung die andere Hälfte!*" [Order is half of life; and order is the other half!] He lay the quote down in front of me with a small smile, but he was also uncompromisingly sending me the message, "Get it?—We're a proud mix."

The point here is not to establish whether this is purely revisionist wishful-thinking, or simple wrong-headedness, or a reaction to the clangingly inept missteps of the French state—"Paris"—as in the interwar years it moved to bind Alsace into France,<sup>5</sup> or whether this is a reaction to Paris's alleged post-1945 cultural misapprehensions (most notably, the state's prohibition of any speaking of the Alsatian language in the elementary schools of Alsace because it appeared too much like the German of the hated Occupier). No, the point is that among the very old I frequently found an insistence that what was Germanic could well be virtuous, something far too many "French-of-the-Interior" had been incapable of appreciating. M. Fuchs again:

The French always had a certain jealousy towards the Germans. They disrespected them. But in the other direction, we didn't talk like that. The Germans were still respectful of French culture. Now, you and I have talked of Hansi,<sup>6</sup> he was an excellent artist. But this Antigermanism in his politics was . . . [he searches unsuccessfully for the right adjective; so into the silence his son pitches 'd'hier' . . . (*yesterday's*)].

M. Fuchs also told of Alsatian school-friend families who voluntarily quit France for Germany in 1919 rather than live under Parisian rule. Both his son, quite an

eminent Strasburger, and I, pounced on this assertion. “Dad, you do mean these were not *Altdeutsch* [Germans resident in Alsace] but true Alsations?” “Absolutely,” the old man firmly replied. This self-exile of 1919 mirrors the 125,000 Alsations who chose exile in the other direction in 1871 rather than live under Berlin’s newly-established rule. Such was the past predicament of a Strasbourg/Strassburg where one was forced to choose to be “French” or “German” but could hardly openly express a wish to be neither or both. A German quasi-diplomat with Strasbourg’s Council of Europe passed an apt comment to me on the proverbial lack of openness of the Alsations: “Not really surprising, is it,” he observed with elegant irony (and in English), “that having been so eaten up by unwelcome guests, the Alsations seem maybe to have lost their welcoming touch?”

With the Construction of Europe during the second half of the twentieth century, however, the issue has become less insistent. Mme. Wanner provided a long and moving evening’s discussion of a life that for her began in the newly-French Moselle *département* in 1920, and which included a Germanization reeducation as a beginning teacher during World War II when Moselle (i.e., “Lorraine”) was reannexed to Germany in 1940 (whereas the Alsatian who later became her husband was taken into the Wehrmacht and survived both the besieging of Leningrad and the hard fighting around Montecassino). She happened to sum it all up in her reaction to a question about the rising costs in her Strasbourg neighborhood because of its proximity to the city’s pan-European institutions:

Some say the rents have gone up, *but Europe is a big idea, so you have to be prepared to pay for it*. You bet we’re in favor of Europe. After all that awfulness, it’s finally over [*C’est enfin la fin*].

In the summer of 1939 the French government had decided to evacuate Strasbourg in advance of any German invasion, and 400,000 Alsations were sent to regions such as Dordogne and Périgord in distant southwestern France. Wounding accusations of collaboration still rumble on regarding the at least half of the original evacuees who one year later chose to return to their homes and their livelihoods in the late summer of 1940 once it seemed, simply and evidently, that Germany had won the war. Germany, however, had also annexed Alsace-Moselle into the Reich. So, were the Alsatian returnees choosing quite understandably to settle back into their *Heimat*, or were they actively choosing Nazi Germany over Vichy France? For Mme. Wanner the sixty years of peace after the war have,

surely, now gradually soothed the anger that swirled around this issue. And with Alsace having undergone such a past, little wonder that an apparently solid Franco-German amity is seen by her as, quite simply, “a miracle.” She is by no means alone in her opinion.

Maître Dietrich was one of the minority of those evacuees who did not choose to return in 1940. He could not. He was Jewish. When at last, after hiding out in Vichy France for four years, he returned home in a truck in March 1945, this young lawyer who was destined to become Chief Magistrate of Strasbourg had this to say:

Am I a Strasburger? I feel myself a Strasburger to the very depths of my soul [*dans toutes les fibres de mon âme*]. Coming back, when we got close enough to see the spire of the cathedral, *the hairs stood up on the back of my neck*. I felt a rush of happiness [*enthousiasme et bonheur*]. They had burned the synagogue, but the cathedral was still standing there. . . . We Jewish people have been in Strasbourg for hundreds of years.

Thus, life began again in 1945. Yet so terrible had been some of the experiences of the war that many were the grounds for accusations and counteraccusations of bad faith, if not something approaching cultural treachery. This Strasburger identity in itself has partaken of both Germanic and French elements—a Double Culture—but has continually been battered by demands that it choose one set of elements to the exclusion of the other. Cultural pressure has been applied upon Alsations to these ends: a measure of leveraged Catholicization under Louis XIV, or Germanization under the Kaisers, or Edouard Herriot’s mismanaged Frenchifications in the 1920s, or Paris’s active erosion of the Alsatian language after World War II, or, most oppressively of all, Nazi Germanization from 1940 to 1944–1945, which a number of interviewees such as Mme. Wanner underwent; one of them experienced a punitive “reeducation” confinement (Roth-Zimmermann 1999). Only with the passage of the decades since 1945 have their nationally-ambiguous cultural features now for many Strasburgers *de souche* become grounds for a certain cultural self-congratulation. That is, their Double Culture, their Germanness-cum-Frenchness, their binationalism, have become repackaged for some at least: now a thing of complex richness as opposed to a vexatious predisposition toward a self-lacerating, irreconcilable antinomy. Paul, a high-level multilingual Alsatian functionary at the Council of Europe, said to me in English: “My mind is Cartesian and Latin, but at a deeper level there is a Mitteleuropa-Slavic-Germanic spirit in me. It’s what

drives us. *It's more than cool thinking, it's when we forget to think it all utterly through, it's what we do anyway.*"

The Alsatians, including Strasburgers, see this cultural patrimony as something special. In this they are not alone. French interviewees from the rest of France, the French-of-the-Interior, tended to agree that Alsatians have been and still are something particular. Alsatians, averred the other French I met, are Germanic, conservative, they hold to their traditions. They seem cold in manner, and are very watchful, probably because many seem deeply marked by their homeland's particularly terrible experiences during World War II. They are straight, they are hard-working and self-disciplined and punctual. But, claimed some of these French, they are so set on their own little nook of the globe, so proud and so cherishing of it; perhaps too much so. "They are so blinkered, even isolationist," alleged one *Français de l'Intérieur* from Picardy, and said he felt they had a chip-on-the-shoulder, being self-conscious of a provincial *plouc* (bumpkin) status vis-à-vis Paris.

Mme. Richler, a *Française de l'Intérieur* from Lower Normandy and Paris, observed:

Ah, Paris. They have a complex about that here. Resentment. I went into the bakery and they were speaking Alsatian and I said "Bonjour" with a smile, and they were really staring hard at me. They were evaluating, was my smile really genuine? Were they too ready to think I was being condescending? I don't like it [she looks genuinely pained] when people make such assumptions about me, because I speak standard Parisian French nicely.

The Alsatian chambermaid, with her hilariously clunky Germanic-French accent, is a stock figure in Feydeau farces. Even in the *Astérix* cartoons there is twitting of what interviewee M. Alphonse, originally from Champagne, called "that *épouvantable* (ghastly) Alsatian accent."

Probing more deeply, Mme. Richler also senses a fundamental psychological tension, that bitter internal antinomy, which seems akin to those issues Frédéric Hoffet broached a half-century ago in *Psychanalyse de l'Alsace* (Hoffet 1951): "There is a particularism here, but I wonder if one couldn't speak about it openly very much? Because then one might have run the risk of losing the political embrace of France, and would therefore be more vulnerable to the unwanted embrace of Germany?" Her listening husband contributes an apt thought. Raised in Montreal, and observing that the great Franco-German "national question" of Alsace-Lorraine is over, he speculates that could it not be a paradoxical source of frustration for today's Alsatians that they no longer matter? That is, Alsace is no longer

the prize that the two greatest nations of continental Europe dispute? Alsace no longer constitutes a problem for anyone important, it's just another EU region?

Such are the issues of binational identity that in modern times have heretofore been associated with Alsace. These issues are known to anyone with a passing familiarity with Strasbourg. Yet were Hoffet's classic to be rewritten today, there would be some major changes. In the fifty-five years since the book's publication, the Double Culture has been surely fading. In particular, the fundamental cultural marker of the Alsatian language has been immensely weakened. If Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Weber 1976) delineated the continuous efforts pursued from 1870 to 1914 to create a cultural cement for the French nation-state—specifically, a uniform, taught national language—then maybe an *Alsations into Frenchmen* awaits the writing. How after World War II "*c'est chic de parler français*" ([It's the thing to speak French], an official French government slogan) may have been the carrot; but that the stick (literally, as some interviewees have told) was also used in the schools, where any speaking of Alsatian was until at least 1982 strictly prohibited (Vogler 1994, 452). Mind you, after the awfulness of the Nazis' forced Germanization, Alsace was fertile ground for the implantation of French. French was of the liberator. More than one elderly Alsatian, however, spoke to me of the deep regret they now feel, that they themselves chose to withhold any teaching of Alsatian to their children in the home because, as a variant of German, it seemed associated with Nazi foulness. Now they sense the language could well be dying, for there's a whole generation who don't know it, and in the local elementary schools it is German not Alsatian that has started to be taught. Nor has the French government signed on to the safeguarding European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. And Tomi Ungerer, arguably the major contemporary cultural figure of Alsace, has been deeply troubled by Paris's perceived "suppression" of his linguistic patrimony (Ungerer 1997) (Figure 4).

It was in 1951 that Hoffet published his benchmark work on the binationalism of Alsace. If one had in that year asked "Who are the Strasburgers?" the answer would have been clear. They were those persons of European appearance and of Alsatian heritage (be it Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish) who were born there and most of whom spoke the Alsatian dialect.<sup>7</sup> Not only would there have been very, very few persons of Muslim heritage, but also the "of European appearance" is in retrospect critical. For in 1951 France still ruled vast expanses of west and central Africa; also the Maghreb, where Algeria was an integral-yet-overseas portion of



**Figure 4.** Tomi Ungerer's view of France, in her Revolutionary Phrygian Cap, suppressing the Alsatian tongue after World War II. (Ungerer 1997, 62)

France, comprising the three *départements* of Oran, Algiers, and Constantine, with 1 million French *colons* among 9 million Muslim *indigènes* (natives); also Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; and also even some limited territory, notably Pondicherry, in otherwise newly-independent India. Since 1951 persons from all these places and more have come to live in Strasbourg in significant numbers. Their physical appearance is considered "different" by the old-stock Strasburgers, and racialization has taken root, despite the opposition of a French state for whom the utterly equal citizenship of each individual is the sole and explicit national ideology (Weil 2002).

So now the Strasburgers' erstwhile binationalism is no longer the ruling mode. For the question of Germany-or-France has apparently been resolved, and the French state (and inter alia the French media) have culturally bound Alsace to France as never before. Even, a number of interviewees observed, the Alsatian accent is in retreat, in part because of Parisian television's ubiquitous reach. And to reiterate, the Construction of Europe has so defused the Franco-German contest that, in the borderless era of the Schengen accords and the Euro, it seems hardly to matter anymore. This is not now a tense frontier zone (and thereby starved of investment, as it particularly was in the interwar years) but a central place, a self-styled "Crossroads of Europe" set within the

proverbial Blue Banana<sup>8</sup> of EU economic prosperity, boasting EU and pan-European institutions plus the Franco-German TV cultural channel ARTE. Yes, by simply remaining in their own place, Strasburgers have seen their Franco-German binationalism mutate from a burden—and sometimes a cross—into a putative asset.

## The New Transnationalism

### "New" or Not? Authorial Positionality

I shall contend here that "transnationalism-by-displacement," the past fifty years' postcolonial immigration to Strasbourg from afar, represents a secular change. This New Transnationalism has introduced a new problematic to any Strasburger identity. Yet, has Strasbourg ever really had some settled identity? Has it not always, as a great Rhineland trading city for the past 800 years, seen a continual influx of persons? Thus in 1556 Sebastian Münster wrote: "There are hardly any persons native to this land who live here, but the majority are strangers, such as Swabians, Bavarians, Savoyards, Burgundians, and Lorrainers, who once they have tasted what this land can offer, never wish to leave it again" (Juillard 1968, 167–68; my translation). Again, such were the horrors of the Thirty Years War that half of Alsace's population had perished by 1648, an almost inconceivable scale of catastrophe, and some of the deeply-rooted Strasburgers *de souche* interviewed know their ancestors to be those who took the opportunity to come in to help repopulate. Two families pointed specifically to Swiss settlers of that period. There is no need, even, to go back so far into history: consider the cases of Strasburgers of Italian or Polish ancestry whose families came in the interwar years of French labor shortage sequent upon the carnage of World War I. Or again, even point to the Strasburgers not yet sixty years old who were born in poverty in rural Spain, Portugal, or Italy. The essential statistic in France is that one in four citizens has at least one foreign-born grandparent.

Consider the narrative of Carla d'Allesandro, Strasburger:

I was born in southern Italy in 1949, and came to Strasbourg as a little girl. I have lived in two worlds: the village of pigs and donkeys, and Strasbourg. Our village was really poor. I thought our French apartment when we got here was a palace! Daddy came as a contract worker, legally, with papers. His father was an artisan metalworker. My mother was a peasant; she was so scared to come to this faraway city. Her father was in the Spanish Civil War—he was dirt poor, Mussolini paid him to go fight there. No, he wasn't



already in the Italian army; he was simply a mercenary. . . . We started in Montagne Verte. That was the quarter I lived. We didn't come into the center much. A food truck used to come out from Center City with cheese and provisions. There were eight families in our *cité* [housing project] who didn't speak French. I became a translator for my family. Kids used to shout after me in the street "spaghetti-macaroni!" To see snow amazed me. Oh, we really were foreigners! France was our America. From my little village in Calabria, everyone left. They went to South America, to Australia, to The States, to France, to Switzerland. When we go back to the village there in the summer, I meet all these folks who have the same family name as me, but who speak it with an American or Australian accent. I actually have a cousin named Carla d'Allessandro in New York. . . . When I first came here people said "Look at the little dark kid!" Now I fit right in. Good. That's why I feel myself to be a Strasburger.

The evidence of such cases of assimilation leads the more sanguine among the interviewees to posit that there is thus no real problem with any New Immigration here, for has not Strasbourg always thrived on immigration? Carla again:

Once upon a time there were Alsations, and there were immigrants. And now you cannot tell. Just *who* is a stranger? Is this the way it is in all big cities? . . . Oh yes, I feel a Strasburger in my heart. Like when I come back, and see the cathedral, I say "*Strasbourg, c'est moi!*" [this is me!].

I shall however propose that the post-1950s New Immigration *does* represent some sea-change in comparison with the arrivals of previous eras. Three novel factors are in play. The first is the shift away from Carla's trajectory, that is, from an established model of migrant "assimilation" into the French "host society" toward instead the sense of the migrants' creation of some hybrid transnational identity, betokening "simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society" (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995, 48). There are many *degrees* of the latter, from the positive, close-to-celebratory facility to live biculturally and binationally, down to a sense almost of double entrapment, simultaneous *disembeddedness* if you will. Whatever the degree or nature of such in-betweenness, it runs counter to an assimilationist French state's espoused public ideology on immigration and citizenship, as we are to see.

A second factor is the New Immigration's context of ever-greater ease of spatial mobility (Vertovec 1999; Portes 2001). This is a commonplace of our era: what once would have been a definitive geographic renunciation (be it voluntary or involuntary) of the homeland has now sometimes become a mere departure "for a

season." Among the instances of this transmutation of settlers into sojourners, one exemplary case described in a following subsection (The Second Path) concerns a Portuguese woman for whom the accession of Portugal to the EU, then the establishment of the Schengen accords, the construction of freeways throughout France and Iberia (plus her own learning to drive), and the arrival of the Euro, have brought Strasbourg and her home village in the hills behind Oporto into vastly closer relation.

A third, and to this author's mind crucial, factor is *visibility*; in other words, the construction of visibility through racism. Münster's Swabians or Burgundians of 1550, the Swiss of 1650, or the Spaniards of 1950 were not markedly different in physical type from those they found already in Strasbourg. By contrast the majority of today's immigrants look very different to the locals, being much darker in skin color and possessing facial features that contrast with the stocky Germanic look associated by so many with the "Old Alsations" of the Rhineland. There is a second visibility: that of cultural style. There are unfamiliar customs, the use of some outlandish (to the locals) language; those odd ways of interpersonal interaction, of gesticulation, of dress; and, most unsettlingly for some, the visibility of religion, particularly of Islam. By contrast, Münster's Swabians of 1556 or the Italians of 1956 were after all from Christian lands, lands that are also closer geographically than most of the source regions of the new migration. Of course there was some Jewish immigration during these centuries, but the current debates about what might be said to constitute Europeanness so frequently come back to assertions of some ur-unity based on Christianity, some post-Christendom.<sup>9</sup>

With the pre-1960s, co-religionist, "Old" immigrations, the children of immigrants would learn the local ways. This new, Alsatian-born generation would enter into foreseeable marriages with locally-rooted partners. Thereby, a rapid cultural assimilation of Swiss or Swabian or Italian would seem eminently possible, for after the passage of one generation only, much of the phenotypic and cultural visibility (and thus much of the facilitation of exclusionary discrimination) disappears. The above case of Carla d'Allessandro, "the little dark kid" raised in Strasbourg city schools and now married to a Frenchman, would appear emblematic.

Yet, visibility is in the eye of the beholder. Is this New Immigration truly a secular change? Has the experience of recent migrants of "non-European" aspect really been qualitatively different from that of "swarthy" Calabrians, or Jews, persons deemed to "look very different" by Rhinelanders in the not-so-distant past? We are taught how to see particular others as "looking different." Only

sixty-five years ago the most powerful government in Europe, which ruled Alsace, was propagandizing a lethal point about how Jews “looked different.” Thus, is not the current situation simply one of a matter of degree, and not of kind, when compared with previous immigrations? Certainly, limited numbers of those sprung from the New Immigration, whether they are currently deemed to “look different” or not, *have* been able to pursue an Old Immigration path like Carla’s. I interviewed among others both a man of Moroccan birth and a man born in Strasbourg of Moroccan immigrant parents; both these men had intermarried with local *Strasbourgaises*, and both believed themselves to be real Strasburgers.

From where do notions of “looking different”—both phenotypically and in terms of culturo-religious attributes—arise? This slippery matter cannot be avoided in any consideration of how the present ethnographic research was pursued. Having never lived in France until the age of forty-six, I had to learn how to discern what “differences” might be salient for contemporary urban France. Simply put, that Finns might have looked different really didn’t matter socially. That Maghrebians—Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians: *Les Arabes*—looked different did matter. I had to pick up, by cultural osmosis from the middle-class “white” French milieu in which my family moved, how supposedly to tell such persons apart. Having not set foot in France since a schoolboy in 1964, save for a few hours at a time, I learned to me novel discriminations, novel sentiments of exclusion. During my first sojourns in France, in 1993–1994 and in 1997–2000, I was not pursuing academic research nor was I consciously trying to discipline myself to be critically reflective about such ethno-racial marking or about how such exclusionary differences might be constructed. I was instead an undergraduate teacher and for three years the administrator of an American academic program in a favored quarter of Strasbourg. Only when I was able to return three-and-a-half years later to actually do research in the city that I had believed I had come to know so well, did I realize that neither did I know it so well after all, nor did I know it in a manner free of personal racial thinking.

Wishing to explore what inhabitants thought of their city and of their own identity as Strasburgers, I started in late February 2004 to talk with a number of well-established Strasburgers whom I already knew. I had gathered that in Alsace matters of identity pertaining to the old binationalism could be extremely delicate. There were past Franco-German issues not to be talked of still. A measure of trust had to be a prerequisite. So one could not start by picking fifty names randomly from the phone book. Instead, these first Strasbourg interviewees knew



**Figure 5.** The Cité de Cronembourg on Strasbourg’s western outskirts.

me not for a social researcher or some opinion pollster, but as a neighbor or colleague or acquaintance of friends, a foreigner who seemed uncomplicatedly interested in their fine city. Thus I hoped to be allowed to plumb to perhaps some greater depth. In the nature of things, therefore, this was a rather self-selected sample. Only gradually by the snowball method did I find myself moving into for me less familiar territory. To be precise, it was after something over two months that on 1 May 2004, I had the interview that first opened my eyes to the newer Strasbourg and to a contending vision of the identity of Strasburger.

Ali was thirty years old, a young professional born to and raised by Moroccan parents in the suburban Cronembourg public housing complex (Figure 5). To the question, *Do you consider yourself to be an Alsatian?*, he quite straightforwardly replied, yes, I am. And to my follow-up question, he responded, yes, his mother-tongue was Arabic, not Alsatian. So what?

This response really set me back. I had always taken Alsations to be those ruddy-complexioned German-looking ones who had been here for generations. So had I been unreflectively adopting all this time an unconsciously exclusionary cultural viewpoint? The question answers itself. To have considered Ali, as had I, as visibly and essentially “Moroccan” was to have gotten it wrong, surely? And it is by worrying away at this question, it seems to me, that one might approach the nub of any contemporary Strasburger identity. For, who had access to the decision as to who gets to be accepted as a true Strasburger? How was it that I, an American Englishman who had come to the city without fully-formed presuppositions as to who might be whom, was led to adopt this commonsense notion of “Moroccan” or “Algerian” as opposed to “Strasburger?” Who possesses such a power of definition?

A first, unconsidered, reply—that it is possessed by the entire Paris-centered cultural apparatus of France, including the state—does not fit so well. For the consistently followed official line of the French state utterly eschews this mode of discrimination: race and/or ethnicity per se are not to be focused upon. It is, instead, citizenship that is central (Feldblum 1999). One is either a French citizen, or the citizen of another land. French government censuses, unlike those of the United States and (since 1991) of Britain, decline to ask for information as to whether any French citizens might consider themselves “Moroccan.” There are to be no official ethno-racial subsets among the French such as are used in the United States for affirmative action programs, no countenancing of subsets with differing entitlements among the category of French citizen. A person of the New—or any—Immigration may become truly, acceptably French if they fully follow the rules. For the individual the promise exists of classic insertion into French society, to assimilate into the life of a nation whose public culture claims to welcome such genuine new adherents. Such has evidently occurred for millions of immigrants to France since World War I. Seemingly unbeknownst to many in the English-speaking world, France has emphatically been a land of immigration.

Despite admirably accepting and nondiscriminatory official structures, however, the realities of life as lived today among the French are clearly tinged by a humiliating and frustrating racism. As Craig S. Smith (2005b), reporting in the *New York Times* (11 November), was told by a respondent: “I was born in Senegal when it was part of France, I speak French, my wife is French and I was educated in France. [The problem] is the French don’t think I’m French.” *Le Monde* (21 March 2006; my translation) commented on a just-issued official report that observed that in France racism and xenophobia were close to being conflated, whereby the term “foreigner very easily becomes immigrant, Arab, Maghrebian, or African”; plus, that fully one-third of a representative sample of 1,011 persons were prepared to call themselves racist. Memorably, in May 2002, over one in six of those who voted in the first round of the French presidential election voted for the explicitly anti-“immigrant” Extreme Right figure, Jean-Marie Le Pen. The very setting off of “immigrants” and of “minorities” is part of Le Pen’s project. So it was that, sixteen days after interviewing Ali, I realized for the second time that I had been more or less going along with a Le Pen-like worldview when I found myself talking with Harith Narasimhan. For, if one accepts as commonsensical the notion of “minority,” then inescapably its obverse is the term “diversity.”

Approaching the end of an interview with this affable Sri Lankan refugee, I directly inquired of Harith about the contemporary “diversity” of Strasbourg’s inhabitants. The term seemed to bemuse him. He looked utterly blank. This blankness was not so much refusal as it was incomprehension. After a silence, he asked me, what do you mean by diversity? Rather taken aback, I suspect I floundered a bit as I tried to explain that once upon a time everybody who lived here were “white” folks and, you know, when people from other parts of the world started coming here in numbers, then it became “diverse.” I recall thinking uncomfortably as I blathered on that “people from other parts” meant “people like, well, you”; and that could one even frame things thus without being somehow demeaning? Was the whole notion of diversity inherently insulting? Was this a White Man’s Question?

Eventually Harith made reply. With a smallish smile, almost as if to say “Do I dare pass this remark to you?,” he said “The Europeans were in our country, but now times have changed.” This echoes the celebrated mot of another Sri Lankan, the antiracist guru A. N. Sivanandan, who stated of the New Commonwealth immigration to Britain that, simply, “We are here because you were there.” The question arises, whence does my acceptance of “diversity” as unproblematic come, and whence does this associated consciousness of “minorities” arise? Why is it so widely shared among those whom I know in Strasbourg, whether or not they are themselves ostensibly “minority” persons? As it is not sanctioned by the French state or by the elite political class, then by whom has it been generated? This issue swirls around my own practice of the ethnography upon which this article is based, and to seek the source of such racialization must remain a fundamental question for human geographers and other social scientists to address.

Certainly we have been arriving at more complex understandings of “race.” First, geographers came to accept in the 1970s and 1980s that here was a plastic social construction: “Race varies, racial categories shift, new races are invented, and old ones retired” (Winant 2004, 189). Subsequently, over the past fifteen years or more we were stung into the recognition, by among others Bonnet’s lively critiques (1996, 1997, 2000) that for us “race” could not exist without “whiteness.” We had it pointed out to us that “Whiteness is . . . a standpoint: . . . a position of normalcy” (Kobayashi and Peake 2000, 394). This surely is what Harith Narasimhan was pointing out to me.

Consider also the burden of his observation that no longer was it the Europeans who were inviting themselves into his country of origin, but rather that he, a Sri

Lankan, had settled in Europe. By going to South Asia and other such lands, the Europeans helped to create themselves as such, as “Europeans,” as “whites.” This connection helps forge the link with current studies of transnationalism. It’s not simply as if differently-colored blocks are moving around on the world gameboard (Rouse 1991). When Latinos move into the U.S. South, their arrival changes the meaning of race (Winders 2005), hence their own identity. An Algerian in Algeria is not the same as an Algerian in Strasbourg—nor, I strongly suspect, as in Paris, or in Marseille (Mitchell 2006). Such “mutual construction of racialized identities and place” (Peake and Schein 2000, 135) was evident in, for example, apartheid’s active ghettoization of Cape Town, whereby if one lived in *that* neighborhood, by law one could only be “Coloured,” whereas if one was of identical appearance but lived in *this* neighborhood, one could only be white (Western 1978, 305). Thus whiteness is underwritten “by *occupying space* within a segregated social landscape” (Kobayashi and Peake 2000, 393; their emphasis). When those whom we take to be other-than-white approach our space, therefore, we may be likely, as do so many of the French and Strasburgers *de souche*, to see such immigration as a transgression. This here is *our* space.

### Three Paths Pursued

I move now to delineate three paths that those of the New Immigration appear to me to have been following in Strasbourg. First, I believe the Jacobin ideal of integration into true citizenship has definitely occurred for a minority of the New Immigrants, perhaps particularly in the case of those who cannot hedge their bets—that is, those whose homeland is no longer available to them and who have gained political asylum in France.

The second, more common path in Strasbourg is some kind of hybrid in-betweenness, the “simultaneous embeddedness” path of being engaged in both societies at once. For instance, persons adhere to a routine of regular visits to the society of origin, or continually make financial arrangements between both countries. One salient factor is the ages and locations of children. Depending on these factors, the balance may be in favor of France, as will be seen with a Serbian concierge, or of the land of origin, as will be seen in the case of a Portuguese housecleaner. But both France and the society of origin are integral parts of the migrant’s life. Such situations are fully anticipated in accounts of contemporary transnationalism and many examples were encountered among interviewees, whether Algerians, Mauritians, Pondicherrians, Togolese, or Turks.

There is also a third path, for which I have no direct interview material and thus am unprepared to speculate as to just how widespread it may be. This is the path of disappointment, of what was earlier termed the almost “simultaneous disembeddedness” in both societies. This path contains the cohort of persons of New Immigrant (and especially of Muslim) origins who are considered to have turned in upon themselves (*se replier*) in defense against a sensed racist rejection by the broader society. This tendency has become more acute after the passage of a generation. Suppose that the original migrant has married someone of the same background, perhaps under the family reunification provisions of the immigration laws. Regulations are otherwise restrictive, having been put in place after the oil crisis and economic downturn of the mid-1970s, at which juncture, for example, Maghrebian immigration was simply stopped on 3 July 1974 (Weil 2002). Furthermore, more stringent regulations on family reunification were being introduced for discussion in the French House of Assembly in February 2006. (A *New York Times* report of 12 February 2006 indicated that this concerned those from poorer countries.)

Children are then born who physically resemble their migrant parents. The parents continue to adhere in some measure to Islam, and the children are raised in some familiarity with it; certainly, the children will not think of themselves as quasi-Christian/Jewish. The family continues to live in a public housing complex at a distance from the in general more prestigious central city. The children go to French public schools, are taught the French syllabus, and are told that they are French (as indeed is their birthright) and that they are fully equal citizens. But they remain visibly marked as “*issus de l’immigration*” (of immigrant origins) not only by their own physical features, but also very likely by their language (e.g., the Arab-French *Beur* argot), their comportment, and their dress (especially in the controversial matter of the veil that some Islamic women may wish to wear). They will find it more difficult than others in these more difficult economic times to get and to hold a job, and they will suspect that a measure of racial stigmatization is in play. It is very likely so. Smith’s previously-cited report (2005b) in the 11 November *New York Times*, at the time of the recent French urban rioting, noted a 2005 study by Karim Zeribi, “who found that résumés sent out with traditionally French names got responses 50 times higher than those with North African or African names.”

From where has such racial stigmatization arisen? One articulate respondent, Djamila Krim, a young woman born in Neuhoof (a suburban zone with extensive public

housing) of Algerian parents, was prepared to point straight at the national media, and also at one particular mainstream politician:

We're getting the same problems as all the other big cities: the fear of the Other. We're being manipulated into it by the media. Sarkozy is trying to make us into a police state, what with the CRS<sup>10</sup> and all those surveillance videocams everywhere.

At the time of that interview (21 July 2005) Nicolas Sarkozy had been recently installed as France's Minister of the Interior. Sarkozy was known as a highly ambitious, highly intelligent, rule-of-law politician, favoring video-surveillance and tough policing in the *quartiers sensibles* [at-risk neighborhoods]. He had recently promised to "hose out real good" [nettoyer au Kärcher] one such cité (de Montvalon 2005) and in the days prior to my conversation with Djamila had also expressed his intent to expel from France any imams who preached hatred or called for assassinations (*Le Monde* 17 July 2005). Within four months of my conversation with Djamila, during the fall 2005 unrest, he had become internationally infamous for unrepentantly terming the suburban rioters *racaille*, variously translated as "scum" or "rabble" (Smith 2005a).

**The First Path: Voices of Integration and of Sanctuary.** Given France's disinclination for ethno-racial record-keeping on its own citizens, the officially-available figures for so-called minorities for metropolitan Strasbourg deal specifically with foreign citizens. In 1999, just over one in eight of the city's 265,000 inhabitants was a foreign citizen. Of these, 20 percent were Turkish citizens (many of whom would say they are Kurds), 19 percent Moroccan citizens, 8 percent Algerian citizens, and 6 percent Portuguese citizens. Trying to get beyond these figures proved tricky. In being inquisitive about people's claimed or felt (multi-)ethnic identities, I sometimes suspected I was viewed by some French colleagues as pursuing notions that were not quite proper, that somehow my agenda might necessarily lead to an abridgment of persons' rights to equal treatment or to equal socio-cultural honor. Maybe ethnicity was not to be reinscribed in academic social science writing—was this penchant not perhaps dangerously close to pandering to the exclusionary Le Pen mindset?

An interviewee, active in the local Socialist Party, insists in the following quotation that I try to grasp the importance of these issues. Armentières-born of Arabic-speaking Algerian parents in 1964—her illiterate father a miner then a steelworker, her mother the bearer of

eleven children—Nadia Abane lays out a political primer for me. She cleaves to the foundational, universalist values of French Republicanism, of the rights of the citizen.

*Légalité* [entitlement] is the most important of gifts: the right to habitation, the right to work, the right to residence. Less grandly, I'm active in local things: I was involved in the political battle to get the tram to Neuhof; and, it's getting there. . . . Why am I sure that I'm a Strasburger? I chose to come here. I read Schickel<sup>11</sup> before coming here. His being French in Germany, and German in France. And I thought, this is like me. I understand it. For I'm between France and Algeria. The Alsatians, it's me. . . . I love Alsace. Strasbourg is human-dimensioned. I can walk, I can cycle. I have a love affair with Strasbourg. I find Strasbourg beautiful. I love to hear people speaking Alsatian. I am very proud of Strasbourg. . . . And no one's going to take my Alsace from me. *I am a pillar of Alsace*—and of France. It's a question of will, of wishing to move the country forward.

I see the woman of politics in her now: an electricity, an emotion. Nadia's militant vision for a new France also brings to mind Renan's (1882) famous assertion, occasioned by the argument with Germany over Alsace-Lorraine, that the nation is the result of a daily plebiscite, of the *will*, the desire to live together.

A second component of France's universalist espousal of republican citizenship (Feldblum 1999) is the country's view of itself as a principled "*terre d'asile*"—a land of sanctuary. Political asylum had been accorded a number of interviewees whom I met, for which they understandably expressed gratitude. I give two instructive examples here. Harith Narasimhan, he who triggered the epiphany around "diversity" alluded to previously, was born in 1967 near the northern tip of Sri Lanka. Midway through his degree course at Jaffna University he fled the Tamil Tigers uprising, arriving in Germany on a false passport. Having relatives in Paris, he crossed clandestinely into France, and sought and received political asylum.

The French government could have sent me anywhere, it could've been Bordeaux, but I got sent to Strasbourg [1992]. It was very difficult here at first. I had to learn French at the *Foyer des Réfugiés* in Neuhof. But I learned it.

I asked him if he wanted to do our interview in English, and, no, French was better, he said. He had not spoken one word of French prior to his arrival. Now, this preference seemed to me to be an active and symbolic choice. *Do you consider yourself to be a Strasburger?* I asked Harith.

Yes. Now. I've fitted in, right? [*On a adapté, quoi?*] But do I consider myself an *Alsatian*? No, rather am I French. *Alsatian* isn't a language I know—though now I am learning some, from my customers.

And to my inquiry, *Do you expect to stay in Strasbourg?*, he replied, "Oh yes. How could I change now? The kids are at school here now."

M. Narasimhan continued:

I've worked all the time I've been here, I've never been unemployed, I pay my taxes. . . . If someone who comes to live here adapts to French ways, does it right, there's no problems, with *Alsations* or with anyone else. But there are others who come, who burn cars, who trash the buses, who do drugs, no wonder that gets people angry. It would be just the same reaction in Sri Lanka. *That's not racism, that's normal.*

Amin Shah Khan's story is more dramatic, and includes a high school education at the French Lycée in Kabul, flight with his family over the rugged mountains into Pakistan two years after the Soviet incursion of 1979 and after spies had been planted in the Teachers' Training College where he was an instructor, and then fine, saving medical care accorded to his wife immediately upon their arrival in France as political refugees. After almost twenty-three years here now, does he consider himself a *Strasburger*? He ruminates a little.

*Strasburger* could be a very broad term. Hmm. I'm a *Strasburger* by adoption, not by origin [*pas de souche*]. But my son, born here, *is*. For myself, I wonder how much right I have to participate in local voluntary associations or political life. I feel rather diffident about that.

So, *Can you consider yourself an Alsatian?* "Uh-uh." Amin is convinced that it's the language that makes you *Alsatian*—and that comes with birth. But then he ponders:

Well, my children were born, raised, and educated here, but not raised to talk *Alsatian*. Yet they know all the little alleyways of the city, so yes, they *are* *Alsatian*, aren't they?

Then, to the question, *Do you expect to stay in Strasbourg?* the answer is an undoubted "yes."

After twenty-three years one has established a certain link: economic as well as emotional. And when I retire I'll go look for fresh air . . . and that will be in France.

Some of the "Old" *Strasburgers* appreciate what "New" immigrants such as Harith and Amin can bring.

They cheer a perceived ongoing *ouverture* (opening up) in Strasbourg life. M. Alphonse, for example, now an octogenarian, married a *Strasbourggeoise* and came from the Champagne region to live in Strasbourg in 1958. He is a retired inspector of the city schools:

I think diversity is a good thing. If a human group lives all closed up in its own bubble, no. You've got to be confronted with new ideas—It's enriching. If you don't travel, if you stay in your little sphere, you're not getting to your potential. *Il faut la confrontation* [You've got to knock up against others]. You can't build The Great Wall of China. You've got to try to understand them, what's going on. They're coming in from places much less well-off than here. They're courageous, they've got will, perhaps they're more intelligent too. Globalization is unstoppable. . . . Ye-es, there's the problem with the concentration in Haute-pierre of these folks from all over the place. There's a segregation. They see the rich in the nice parts of town and there's a certain envy and bitterness. And the way out of it is via education. So, you're asking me, has Strasbourg been getting better or worse, and all I can say is, it's not the same.

From a very different age group, a Strasbourg University student from the Southwest and of Basque ancestry, who unlike M. Narasimhan but like M. Alphonse knew quite well to what I was referring when I asked the question about "diversity," responded:

It's a good thing because it cuts down the possibility of sclerosis. You don't want fifteen generations of *Alsations*. But you've got to get economic opportunity to these newer people, otherwise there's going to be trouble. Hey, culturally, they can keep their differences if they want.

I give one further example of migrant satisfaction in the context of normative French Republican citizenship: the Ouamrane family. He is a retired metalworker and union official, she a housecleaner. Both are *Kabylans* from the interior mountains of Algeria, who came to France respectively in 1959 and 1964, who married in Strasbourg, and had nine children. Mr. Ouamrane:

We both fully intend to stay in Strasbourg. Now that I'm retired, it's so nice that we can come and go as we please. We can more or less afford it. We're off to Kabylia for two months now, for May and June [2004]. We drive, and take the ferry across. We bought the biggest station wagon you can get. [It's a low-slung, old black Citroën (Figure 6)]. We absolutely load it up. We have a great vacation home. You must come and visit!

At first it seems, then, that the investment in this vacation home betokens a case of "simultaneous embeddedness" in France and Algeria, a transnational



**Figure 6.** In the Canardière-Est public housing scheme, M. Ouamrane and two of his daughters prepare to load the car for a two-month visit to their Kabyle vacation home. Many of the satellite dishes behind have been installed in order to pick up television programs from Turkey or from Arabic-speaking countries of immigrant origin.

consciousness rather than an assimilated orientation. It becomes clear, however, that the emphasis leans to the French, assimilated side. All the Ouamrane children, for instance, live in Alsace. A few weeks later, after the Ouamranes Sr. had gone off to Kabyle, I phoned across town to one of the daughters living in Strasbourg. She amusedly observed of her dynamo-driven father, newly retired, that

He's not busy any more. He's lost. I mean, they're fine out there, but they're bored. There's nothing to do. The grandchildren are here. There's always someone coming through the house here. All you do there, is the two of you just sit. They're bored. They want to come back now.

Time out, however, does not have to be taken in such big chunks, nor in so geographically strenuous a manner as to cross the Mediterranean. For M. Ouamrane has a local hideaway close to the public housing project of Canardière-Est where they have lived for over thirty years. He has a *jardin familial*, a Victory Garden, a pursuit shared by tens of thousands of fellow Strasburgers. To this municipally-allotted plot he has brought a fig cutting from his land in Kabyle, and it has taken. Now a little fig-tree stands alongside that most Alsatian of fruit trees, the *quetsch* plum. Surrounded by high hedges, his plot is one of seven little such gardens demarcated off near the Rhin Tortu backwater. Inside the locked metal gate to the compound are others' getaway spots. He enumerates them for me: a Turk, a Spaniard, a Yugoslav, two Algerians, an Italian, and an Alsatian—"C'est la cohabitation; c'est Strasbourg!" He roundly approves of this cosmopolitan comity.

The conversation continues, and his positive take on Strasbourg will not cease: "*Je vends ma ville en positif; elle me plaît*" [I talk up my city; it's a great place]. He has it seems also adopted the Alsatian view of the world; he's including himself in the "we" of the quotation that now follows.

The Alsace region is different from the rest of France, what with the Alsatian traditions, the Alsatian language. In Paris, they can't distinguish Alsatians from Germans. They think we're German. When I was there I heard a Parisian say "*Voilà les Schleu!*" [There are the Krauts!].

Here is an instance of a person emblematic of the New Immigration eliding elements of his identity into an old binationalism form. I then ask M. Ouamrane whether the arrival of the European institutions has profited the city.

You bet. It's enormously improved the image of Strasbourg. It's thanks to this that Strasbourg's famous now, all these international visitors. We've created beautiful buildings. Tourism's up. We're proud of our city.

He has become animated. "And crowds of people come to our Christmas market, the biggest in France." This is an extravagantly secularized Muslim! And in response to my final question: *Is there anything else an inquisitive stranger such as I should know about Strasbourg life?*, he proposes, genially, that I should "go out and eat a good Alsatian *choucroute* and taste a good Riesling!"

**The Second Path: Voices of Inequality and of In-Betweenness.** These positive accounts of apparently appreciative insertion into Strasbourg life, that the high-minded official French ideal of assimilation can deliver, for those of the New Immigration who would wish for it, are nevertheless to be juxtaposed with more unresolved, stressful, and negative ones. The virtues of a colorblind French Republicanism were able to do little to diminish the unpleasant economic realities of the latter portion of the twentieth century. The age of *Les Trente Glorieuses*, the Thirty Great Years until the mid-1970s, has gone, leaving France with an unemployment rate that hovers at 10 percent. Even in favored Alsace, along with the Île-de-France around Paris consistently the most economically buoyant of the country's regions, unemployment is now between 7 and 8 percent. In turn, in certain of the public housing complexes of Strasbourg, the rate is at least twice as high. In March 2006 the overall rate of youth unemployment in France was reported to stand at 23 percent. It was higher still for young men in suburban projects: as elevated as 40

percent, state Laurence and Vaisse (2005). Certainly in Strasbourg, one of France's better-off cities, there exists an undeniable gap between the rich, apparently assured lives of many in (as an interviewee termed it) "this old Protestant bankers' city," and the lives led by those of the *classes défavorisées*.

Many of the immigrant interviewees spoke of Strasbourg as a rich, bourgeois city (Gerber 2000; Sélimowski 2002), frequently complaining that the cost of living was so high ("The third highest in France, after Paris and the Côte d'Azur"), and usually putting it down in part to the presence of the European institutions and their allegedly generously-paid personnel. An elderly Italian Strasburger who came as a girl of eleven in 1942 to join a father already working in one of the city's factories, has over the years had plenty of opportunity to observe the city's comfortably-off, for she became by dint of much familial industry the long-term proprietor of an ice-cream stall. It is located in the formerly aristocratic park of the Orangerie, adjoining one of the most favored areas of the city, where so many of the international civil servants and diplomats associated with the various Euro-institutions reside.

It's a beautiful town, with much greenery. People live well here. It's good here, it's too good. These people are too rich. They have it all—and they go and ask for more.

In the same neighborhood, an Alsatian senior inspector of public education, whose work takes him throughout the *département* of Bas-Rhin (Lower Rhine) of which Strasbourg is the capital, avers: "The extremes of wealth and poverty are very great here, and they are greatest of all in Strasbourg itself; one sees an astounding spread [*écart*] here."

Also in the same neighborhood, in a *concièrge's* apartment, lives Dragana. She has opinions on the well-off among whom she lives, opinions expressed with a freedom at times bordering on the aggressive. She was born and raised in a Serbian provincial city, and is a strong, energetic, somewhat embittered woman. I have known her for a good number of years, and she was quite ready to offer me her views:

I was young, I had dreams, I wanted to be rich, and so I came here. I knew it was rich here, I came for the bucks [*les sous*]. We were allowed to go and work outside of Yugoslavia [by intergovernmental arrangements in the early 1970s]. I thought I could work for two years and get a car, and I never managed it. 'We'll stay fifteen years,' said a Yugoslav woman friend. Hah! I've stayed thirty. And then the children are born here, and you're trapped. . . . Yes, I wanted

to be rich, but you run so hard, the years rush by, and you find you're in the same place.

She looks around her at this well-set city, which is one of the more favored in Western Europe, she surveys the bourgeois *quartier* in which she has a toehold, and she sees that many others seem to have what she herself had sought after: wealth.

With Strasburgers, it's just money, money, money—but there's no richness in their hearts. The French are distant, and they seem so busy as not to take any notice of you. . . . It's nice and quiet in this neighborhood, but these people are snobbish, they are not warm. They're watchful of everything. *Chacun pour soi*—every man for himself. . . . The people who live in this building are spoiled, they think they can do what they like: "I want this. I want that. I want *that*." There's no give. "We've got money, so we can do anything we like" [*On a de l'argent, donc on peut tout faire*].

Similar accusations are made by a woman in her early thirties of Algerian heritage, born and raised in the working-class peripheral housing complex of Haute-pierre. She is seriously concerned about

this city I love. It's getting too bourgeois. And so the poor are getting set aside (*écartés*) to the suburbs and pushed out of the heart of the city, and the Center City becomes exclusive. Can you "go out for the evening" in Haute-pierre? [An ironic, rhetorical question.] And if you go out in Center City, you really only see a certain type of person, and a certain type of comportment is demanded. You can't make noise, you can't wear whatever you like. And so the city is not for everybody.

*And so you're saying that this is an injustice?*

Evidently this is an injustice! This is the embourgeoisement of Strasbourg. I really don't like this embourgeoisement. It could end up putting a division [*clivage*] within the city. *This could lead to real problems.*

She says this with decided emphasis. Then I ask: "Is one of the things that's associated with this, Islamism?" [i.e., "Fundamentalism"].

Absolutely. Oh, that's a whole other story. We could *really* talk about that. I'm at risk there. My old Haute-pierre school friends, who expected me to remain a real Muslim . . . and I go and marry a Frenchman! I should've married one of us. So am I a traitor? Even worse, I married a bourgeois Frenchman—I mean, his father works up on the top floors of CIAL [a major regional bank].

Even though she is so critical, Zohra is showing concern for a Strasbourg of which she feels herself a



citizen. She is, after all, French. Indeed, for her there is in fact no Algerian homeland to which she can with facility return, for she is the child of Harkis—that is, Arab Algerians who fought on the French government side in the war of independence and who thus had to flee, considered to be traitors, in 1962. In her family's case, there cannot be any oscillation back and forth to some Kabyle vacation home such as is possible for the Ouamranes.

As opposed to Zohra's engagement, I provide here examples of two other persons like her raised in straitened circumstances, but who have unlike her moderated their commitment to the city. Work—the keeping of body and soul together—may be in Strasbourg, but much emotional commitment is elsewhere (Clifford 1994; Vertovec 1999). The first person is Turkish-born M. Turgut, who with his father runs a smallish grocery (“Open seven days a week, 8 AM to 9 PM”)—in the vast Cité de Cronenbourg housing scheme. This is a life of work. M. Turgut, who has small children, is not one of those self-conscious consumers of Strasbourg's cultivated urbanity as were so many of my more professional or bourgeois interviewees. That's not to say that he or his father, the latter having been in the city for thirty years, are unaware of its beauty, but interviewing M. Turgut on Strasbourg only provides rather sparse observations. I form the opinion that he's not being actively reticent, but it's more that he feels there isn't that much to say. To the general question about his social life (*Where do you go for leisure activities, for worship, or to meet friends, etc.?*) he replies “I haven't the time; I work.”

*Where do you go during the between-term school breaks?*

We don't go anywhere; we've got to run the shop.

*Do you go to Germany from time to time?*

Not much.

*Has Strasbourg got better or worse over the years?*

Better. It seems to be a bit better. But—do you see?—I'm always here [and here only, i.e., minding the store].

*Is Strasbourg different from the rest of France?*

I don't know. I don't go anywhere. I've been in Paris two days in my life, on a school trip from here.

He was born in Turkey in 1978, and has lived in this same Cronenbourg neighborhood since the age of nine, yet “for the French I'm always a foreigner, despite the fact I went to school and all through lycée here.” *Where do you go during the long summer vacations?* “A month in Turkey in July; that's it.”

The second example is provided by that stereotype of urban France, the Portuguese charwoman. *Does she feel herself to be a Strasburger?*

No. Not that I dislike Strasbourg—it's okay. But Strasbourg's for work. It was work that brought me here. It's not my choice, now is it?

Mme. Justinho came here after marrying a man from her village who had himself come the previous year (1974) to seek work in France. Although *sans papiers* (undocumented), he was successful in landing employment (this was a dozen years before Portugal became part of common EC space). She then came without papers too, and they raised a family while he worked as a plasterer and she cleaned houses. After an unsuccessful return to Portugal in the early 1990s, they came back to Strasbourg with the eldest child, although only in the role of sojourners:

We're living in Bischheim now. The other three children stayed in Portugal with the grandparents, they're grown up and are now married there. *That's where our life really is.*

I ask her about recreational activities, sports, visits, walks, anything. “I'm telling you, I don't go off for strolls.”

*Where do you go for vacations?*

Three times a year we go to Portugal: Christmas, Easter, and three weeks in August. It's for family. It's not a vacation, it's for family.

*Anything else you want to tell me about Strasbourg, anything else in Strasbourg a stranger like me should know?*

Mine is a life of work. I go from cleaning one house on to the next. My husband doesn't speak French much. I don't know Strasbourg, I don't go around much. No, you probably know more of Strasbourg than I do, *la femme de ménage!*

This last self-deprecation is, as far as I can tell, not offered resentfully. It's a straightforward observation, even made with a nice smile, as when she also tells me:

I don't go out much. I don't have friends really, it's just my hubby and me.”

*Are you going to stay in Strasbourg?*

No. I've got five years to go until I get my retirement at 60. Pensions are better in France than in Portugal. Then we'll go back.

**A Third Path: Silences.** I cannot know what proportion of those of or descended from the New Immigration this third path might represent. Nor have these persons directly expressed themselves to me. I only know of this third path in Strasbourg via the observations of others who are closer to the situation. Take M. Turgut, for example, who first characterized his own transnationalism

in rather disconsolate terms, but then extended his quandary to those he sees around him in the Cité de Cronenbourg:

When I go back to Turkey, I'm a foreigner. Here, I'm a foreigner. How are the kids going to make sense of this? *We have no homeland*. And it's the same for the Maghrebians here. . . . Lots of young Turks, even the ones born here, do want to go back to Turkey, even though there's not much work there. They feel rejected. So you get the violence, the car burnings. *Les jeunes font toutes ces conneries pour se faire entendre* [The kids do all this crap so that people will take some notice of them].

Setting parked cars alight on New Year's Eve, a night of fireworks and street revelry, had become by the 1990s one of the national media's signatures for the Alsatian capital. As Djamilia Krim complained:

The media have made it into an annual institution! When I go to Paris, they say, "Ah, Strasbourg—that's where they burn cars!" And if I say here that I'm from Neuhoof, they say the same thing!

The *New York Times* confirmed that "The city where it [torching cars] first became an urban sport is Strasbourg" (Landler 2005). This is only the most high-profile of a range of "antisocial" activities surmised to have their source among those who have intentionally turned inward to their "own" community—anathema to the French Republican ideal of citizenship—in order to minimize vulnerability to the disdain they sense emanating from the broader society. This is the social predicament that, so many news reports suggested, was behind the sudden explosion of rioting throughout France's suburban housing projects during October and November 2005. But was Strasbourg, formerly the leader in car-burning manifestations of discontent, just another French city during the fall of 2005, merely a copycat to Paris? Contemporary reports indeed suggest so (Dossmann 2005). And why did Marseille, superficially the most "North African" of all major French cities, experience almost no rioting on this occasion?

I cannot answer these questions, in part because of the kind of response M. Turgut gave above. That is—again as news reports suggested at the time of the unrest—so many of "the youth" who live in the suburban projects do not venture outside of them much, and so have no basis for comparison with any other French cities. M. Turgut is not after all a "youth," being in his mid-thirties; he is also employed and does have an income. Yet, he has been in Paris just *two days* in his entire life! Confirmation comes from an in-depth ethnographic

study of the Canardière-Est housing projects undertaken by Sélimanowski et al. during 2000–2002. The young people there had locked themselves into this enclave via a firm sense of local territoriality. For the males, the ruling values were a cool edginess (*nervosité*), pride-in-place, solidarity, mutual support, and bravado, which burst into defiance and often conflict at the appearance of the police or especially of the CRS. Any "travel" simply consisted of taking the tram—it was a point of honor not to pay the fare—to the city center's Place de l'Homme de Fer or the Les Halles shopping mall. Otherwise they didn't go anywhere very much. Thus few had anything at all to offer on comparisons with other French cities (Sélimanowski et al. n.d., 9, 11, 16, 26–29).

These questions are also difficult for me to address because I have never really gained access. That is, the level of distrust and disengagement in such *HLM* (subsidized rental) public housing zones in Strasbourg means that many persons there would not be interested in talking with an interviewer such as me. Zohra, born and raised in Strasbourg's vast HautePierre suburban complex, has been the only one of eight children to gain her baccalaureate and to move out. Her Algerian widowed mother and all her siblings have remained there, and all have married there. None is rich; I hear that one may be associated with criminal activities; another brother has simply dropped out of sight. She agreed to approach the sister considered to be most likely to be prepared to discuss Strasbourg with me; the reply was no.

Similarly, the Ouamranes, the Kabylean-origin family in the Canardière-Est projects with whom I am on good terms, simply refused to send me on to any of their Maghreb-origin acquaintances: "No," says Mme. Ouamrane; and she means it (I've known her now for seven years). I look to him. "No," he says. I plead: "But you know something of me. Surely I'm not a threat?" "Can't do it," he says. "Will they think I'm a spy?" He laughs.

That's not the point. People have closed in on themselves. The Algerians have closed in. They don't want to talk to anyone. We're a liberal family.

"You see, I don't wear the veil," she explains. "Would you believe, a little boy of seven or eight came to the outside door the other day and took me to task for not wearing the veil!" M. Ouamrane develops the point:

We can have a hard time as a liberal family. If we sent you to nice enough people we know, the women would all leave immediately and hide in the bedroom. The man would talk with you, and then after you'd gone the women would

immediately come out again, and the man would call us up and say "Why on earth did you send that guy to us?" *You mean, he'd be really bothered [gêné] by it?*

That's it. Yes. Algerians have closed in on themselves. Life moves forward, and they are going backward. Their religion is much *stricter* than it used to be at home, it's a new kind. . . . I come here, I make my living here, I submit myself to the laws of France, I encounter French culture. I say to them, "This is the way you should do it." "No," they say. *Un refus* (refusal). They are *renfermés* [closed in]. "If you make your living here, then you cannot live on an isolated little island here," I reason. "No," they say. "No."

A twenty-six-year-old salesman, a Strasburger whose parents are Turkish (his father is a retired construction worker), offered confirmation:

Some of the young here are not participants in the life of the city. They are not integrated into its life, they don't feel as if they are French citizens. They feel excluded here. They wear T-shirts saying "Turkey" or "Morocco," but if they went there they would not fit in and would be excluded there too. They have no landmarks, no moorings [*repères*].

## Binationalism and Transnationalism Contend

Long-established locals do suspect that in their midst in Strasbourg are large numbers of such persons who have little or no interest in making their acquaintance. The verb is "to suspect," however, because many of them have little first-hand or close knowledge of their more recent fellow-citizens, about whom they instead experience an unfocused, generalized unease. A deep-rooted Alsatian Strasburger couple whom I have known for a dozen years readily arranged a wider family meeting for me in the well-set Contades neighborhood, and got comfortable for a good chewing-of-the-fat on their Strasbourg. Some frank statements were expressed:

We were born here. Our ancestors lie here. This is our native land (*terre natale*). It's so good to come back here [after a trip] to one's nest. . . . [But] when you take the tram in town you see how the population has changed. You don't see any real Alsatis in Strasbourg anymore.

Her sister interjects:

These new folks, they're not Alsatis for me. If I see on the news 'A well-known Strasbourg figure, Abdel Al-Hamid,' that really gets to me. What do they mean, 'Well-known'?

("Well-known to the police!") puts in her sister-in-law, to big guffaws.)

But all French cities are evolving this way. One doesn't live in a museum, *quoi?*"

"They can live the way they like in their own places," grumps her sister, "But if they're here they'd better adapt." (I gather she's referring to the ongoing controversy over Muslim public schoolgirls wearing the veil.) "No, it's not so simple as that," soothes her brother. "After all, they're here because we went there, to Algeria, to Africa. . . ."

My former neighbor across the street, someone I've observed over six years now to be at least superficially among the most equable and genial of men, a Lorrainer born in the Moselle *département*, a soldier in the Algerian war from 1958 to 1960, and a Strasburger for more than thirty years, replied to the question on the current diversity of Strasbourg's inhabitants thus:

Ah, Monsieur John. One wishes the good for each one among us. Each person is an enrichment—but *always on one condition: that this diversity respects the French Republic and Europe!* [His strong emphasis.] You've seen that big Muslim in London who's been criticizing Blair? What a nerve! You can't do that! If I give you asylum, you say "thanks indeed"—but, respect my customs. Yes, respect us, here. But you can't teach everyone manners. You can't go out anymore, not in Marseille, not in Strasbourg; it's unsafe. . . . They're not *real* French. They're blacks or Arabs. We'll have to wait one or two generations, forty or more years, then maybe they'll be up to it. Maybe. But Old Europe may not get around to changing its customs. . . . Monsieur John, these Muslims! There's going to be a Third World War. It hasn't been declared yet. But it's started.

A forty-year-old high-level administrative assistant who has always lived in Strasbourg, who is of deep Alsatian roots, and who has known me for seven years, replied with great candor. That is to say, she gazed at me for long seconds, in silence. She found it difficult to decide how to respond to this question on "diversity." She eventually raised her eyebrows as if to say, well, okay, here goes. And then she said:

Apart from Paris, I've seen no other city in France like this. I'm not of the Extreme Right. But, Neuhof, even the police don't go there. The street cleaners hardly go there, nor to Haute-pierre. And Les Halles on a Saturday afternoon<sup>12</sup> [Figure 7], is that "diversity"? You've got to be on the lookout there, or you'll get stolen from. I'm scared. I don't go there. It's not a question of racism, it's a question of generations. It's not a question of where people are from, it's a question of education. I've gone out with a Moroc-



**Figure 7.** Les Halles on a Saturday afternoon. Among the persons visible are those of apparently Cambodian ancestry (right), a group of men of North African origin (center-left), two women of African or Afro-Caribbean heritage, and old-stock Alsatians/French. The stylish tram (right) has since 1994 linked the peripheral complex of Hautepierre to Les Halles in only 20 minutes. This first line of the developing new tram network was in part intended as an element of social engineering to draw *la banlieue* (the poorer suburban housing projects) into closer relation with the more favored central city, an intent noted by a number of interviewees.

can. . . . The question is, are there jobs? No. Are there juvenile delinquents? Yes. I mean, my family was poor, but we were raised to live right.

Finally, a recently retired, Strasbourg-born senior police inspector spoke with me under conditions both of strict anonymity and in the guaranteeing presence of mutual Strasburger friends who had vouched for my responsible manner of reporting. For him the HLM *cités* spread around the Strasbourg metropolis were centers of infection of the urban body:

The great change for Strasbourg has been the coming of the *cités* all over, which have ended up as nests of undesirable folk. They are spread throughout the urban area: Neuhof, Hautepierre, Cité de Cronembourg. They are everywhere in French cities. The real mistake was when we let their [the immigrant workers'] women in and that started the families—and then gave us the bad kids.

Then I offer mildly that, surely, to get reasonable employment for the youth would go an awful long way to putting things right? “No,” he disagrees,

To get the employment situation right will *not* solve the problem. Because it's about Islam wanting to take us over. [The intensity of the conversation really begins to mount now.] I know what I'm talking about, from my job. They want to gather it all in to themselves. It's all a global plan to

federate under Islam. There's no such thing as *moderate* Islam. That's just powder-in-your-eyes [i.e., a smokescreen to blind you]. One thing is certain: Islam is *fanatic*.

Once again, directly looming behind such dour and unwelcoming testimonies by “locals” is that question, has Strasbourg been a significantly tougher locus of settlement than elsewhere in France for those of the New Immigration? Both the French-of-the-Interior, and the German quasi-diplomat (plus some Alsatians themselves) note the stoniness, the coldness conventionally attributed to the Alsatians. “The reality is racism,” alleged Asma, a young Kurdish woman. Yet above we have been told both the particular, “Apart from Paris . . . [there's] *no* other city [like Strasbourg]” versus the general “*All* French cities are evolving this way. . . .” Interviewees' opinions are thus not consistent. M. Narasimhan, indeed, felt that the reactions of Alsatians could be almost universalized, for would not Sri Lankans react in the same way in *their* country? He was explicit that such exclusionary reactions were “not racism.”

### The New Immigration from Within: Changing the Face of the Strasburger?

Others among the New Immigrants observe that there is indeed “racism”—but that it's perfectly comprehensible. One such is a Mauritian professional who came as a student forty-five years ago and who has achieved success and respectability by application and ability and following the rules assiduously; his is a conservative voice.

When I first came here people were nice and polite with strangers. They're not now. I've never suffered personally, but they're racists now . . . but then, you can understand it. They're forced to be! The Alsatians are very angry, and I can see why. Those children don't want to learn in school. You don't often see a Maghrebian who goes to a high level in academics; same for the Turks. Their neighborhoods are unsafe. I won't go to Neuhof—too many roughs [*voyous*]. The veil—these Muslims! In their own countries they're free to do what they want, but they come here and they want to make the laws? *Change France's laws?! . . .* Oh, and the least dispute you have with an Arab, out will come the knife. . . . But [he seems to catch himself] let me make this plain to you, this is wariness on my part, not hatred.

A Kurdish truck driver, settled in this same Neuhof since 1982, is conscious, in this place of ill-repute to many, of having there made an acceptable life for his family. He states he was given fair opportunities in

Strasbourg, on which he has capitalized through hard work:

The Alsations can be tough on foreigners. They can be racists—but I can see why. I mean, should you repair your car in the parking area in front of your house, or wash the carpets there, as if you were back in your country of origin? No. You've got to respect the ways of the folks here, you've got to take the same path [*chemin*] as them.

A far more critical view of life from within one of the disrespected suburban complexes, HautePierre, was offered by a young salesman of Turkish parentage, born, raised, and still living there. Bashir straightforwardly began his very first response with the unemployment rates. (This ended up becoming a three-and-three-quarter-hour evening's discussion, punctuated twice by his going to pray.) He insisted:

I want you to get the view from the 'hoods (*les quartiers*). It's a degradation. There's unemployment. Even here in the Bas-Rhin *département* it's between 7 and 8 percent. But in these *quartiers* it's up to 20 percent, especially among the young [this is in fact a real underestimate]. . . . France has not treated our parents' generation with respect—nor our cultures. There is a difference between the French Republican ideal and the reality on the ground.<sup>13</sup> By which I mean the day-to-day dealings of the French politicians, and the fact that if we were born here, we don't need to *be* integrated. It doesn't have to be *done* to us. This is the colonial mindset, the colonial past of France. Algeria was a particularly clear case. The white Algerians were "French"; you didn't have to "integrate" them. But the Muslims were termed "natives," and they had to be made to "evolve" [to French civilization]. The old top politicians still take that view: Chirac, Giscard. But, *here we are!* [*Nous voici!*] What's this need to *do* something to us?

Yet the outspokenly critical Bashir also is proud of his Strasbourg: "When I go elsewhere with our soccer team, I really play so hard for the Strasbourg colors." His wife Leila, of Moroccan parentage, adds: "Am I a Strasburger? Absolutely. *I was born, raised, educated, married, and made a child here!*"

This young couple, they are telling me, want to make their contribution to the city via being themselves, not being forced, as he had put it, to "being integrated" in some wise. Leila is a teacher's aide in a public school, in which work she is prohibited from wearing her veil as she would wish. "This veil thing," puts in Bashir,

*The French state is incapable of listening.* I have this friend [from Strasbourg] who went over to London on the Eurostar just recently and he was in a Hugo Boss store and

he heard this voice say "Can I help you, Sir?" and he turned around and there was this young woman assistant dressed in her veil! No problem. *Normal*. Fantastic! My friend couldn't believe it. Bravo London! You know—dare I say this?—when I think about that, I'm almost prepared to cheer on London for getting the 2012 Olympics over Paris!"

A Kurdish woman, Mme. Kut chooses to wear her turban as a marker of her faith. She enthuses to me about the feeling of Ramadan in Strasbourg, and the thousands of people who congregate for *Eid* to celebrate its conclusion, and continues: "but we need finer mosques here, to be openly seen, not in the cellars, the industrial premises, not hidden in the alleys, but as *croyants républicains* [French Republican believers]."

She also had some thoughts on the veil, which she couched in a story:

Suppose you have a father who comes here from Turkey, to escape political problems, works hard, spends twenty years getting himself established, is proud to have become a French citizen, and has got to thinking '*This is the country!*' And then his daughter, at school, gets all this hassle about the veil, on and on. Hah, as soon as she's able, she's off to London, where the Brits don't care about it. *It would break his heart.*

Then she adds, indicating that this is not necessarily some elliptical way of speaking of her own plans,

Am I a Strasburger? Yes! I *love* this city. Am I Alsatian? Well, I'm not Alsatian in origin or in culture, but I'm Alsatian because I love it here. I am Alsatian at heart [*de coeur*].

Recall that Bashir too had made a similar positive declaration; he went on to assert firmly: "Islam can be a cement helping Strasbourg to hold together. To be a good Muslim is to respect others, to participate in the life of the city."

Mme Kut chooses to take the long view on all this mixing and offers the comforting conclusion that "This diversity is not a new phenomenon, it is perpetuating what has been the history here. It can only be an enrichment. This is a city and a region that are blessed."

Djamila Krim, who when quoted earlier was making spirited condemnations of media stereotyping, had by the end of our long interview also become much more mellow, praising the novel intermingling in contemporary Strasbourg as in general "*très génial*" (really neat). She then offered a positive-spirited encapsulation of her

own transnational consciousness, characterizing those such as herself, of the second generation, as being

both from here and from elsewhere at the same time. . . . Maybe Strasbourg is down to, oh, I don't know, about 80 percent Alsatian now? Oh, but *I'm* Alsatian! And there again, there's more to me than that, than just Alsatian: I'm *bicultural*. There was what I learned at home, and there was school. The Oriental me is the giving of hospitality, the just turning up, when you'll always get a cup of tea and cake. As opposed to the Occidental me: being on time, or phoning ahead to ensure it's okay to pop by. [She pauses, and finds the terms she wants.] It's spontaneity versus premeditation.

Oh, John, go to the *quartiers* and you'll see the most incredible interminglings [*des métissages incroyables*]! I know one person who's Cambodian and West African on one side, and Alsatian on the other. We have a melting pot [*un brassage culturel*] on the go here.

Then, cleverly combining both literal and figurative meanings, she predicts "Fifty years from now, Strasbourg will have *such* a changed face!"

## Conclusion: To Fuse or to Feud?

The searing nationalistic dilemmas for which Strasbourg has been most known have been laid to rest by the European Union project from the 1950s until today. Paradoxically, during this selfsame period, the solving (or at the very least the profound assuaging) of the Franco-German, Double Culture, binational dilemma has simultaneously seen the creation of an altogether novel set of transnational Double Cultures. A number of the Turkish-, Algerian-, Kurdish-, or Moroccan-origin interviewees quoted above have in positive spirit attributed such heretofore unaccustomed Double Cultures of the new transnationalism to themselves. Such is the positive symbolism of Kabyle M. Ouamrane's garden, where fig-tree and quetsch grow together in the same Rhineland alluvium.

Yet how the matter proceeds from here one cannot predict. Are Djamila's "fifty years" of the upbeat final quotation too short a time for the majority of Strasburgers to be visibly changed, and thus for the phenotypic-racial mode of exclusion to be dissolved from within by intermarriage? Evident factors will be the adherence of further countries (notably Turkey) to an expanding European Union, and whether the EU's provisions for free movement of labor among more than twenty-five countries will be fully honored. Will France—and Germany, all of 2 km away—revive their economies enough to provide sufficient reasonable employment for Stras-

burgers? Also a demographic question: Will families of New Immigrant (noteworthy of Muslim) origin, comprise as many children as did those of the immigrant generation itself?

Will French persons raised in the Muslim faith gradually, as have their Christian and Jewish Strasburger brethren, become ever more secularized into a conventional, materialistic, consumerist lifestyle, thereby dissolving another visible marker (that of culturo-religious particularity) from within? If so, then intermarriage will surely be rapid, as it is already occurring in the lives of a number of the interviewees, and the faces of Strasburgers will surely change. Can one realistically hope that racism will be thereby disabled, despite its ever-protean nature? Can one realistically look for the evolution of some richly syncretic, neo-Strasburger culture?

Conversely, is there a staying-power in the new fundamentalist Islamism that will continue to gain adherents through its critique of a decadent and promise-breaking West? If this be so, and especially if violence attends either the righteous Islamic moral critique<sup>14</sup> or any equally righteous Western reactions, then there will be much more endogamy and less *ouverture* through intermarriage, more fear, more suspicion, and a continuing gap between rich and poor much marked by visible ethno-racial features. Such features will continue to have salience in France, "difference" will continue being inculcated, and the line will somehow be held against any further large-scale immigration from the markedly poorer lands of origin of such "different" persons.

Still, of those already in Strasbourg from such disadvantaged origins, a minority who gain academic and/or economic success may become integrated in the Jacobin sense, whether by intermarriage or not, and meld into France. But the majority will be on the wrong side of the continuing rich-poor gap. The gap will be perpetuated by the likely underperformance in public schools of their children, who will be extraproportionately children of color, for whom worthwhile jobs will not be waiting. A separation will come to exist both in affect and probably in space among fellow Strasburgers. There will be an ill-tempered standoff. In short, an informal urban apartheid.

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## Notes

1. English has historically used the spelling Strasburger for one from Strasbourg or Strassburg, as in for example Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, 1759. See a 1940 edition edited by James Aiken Work. New York: Odyssey Press, 270–71.
2. Of the 138 interviews, 118 (86 percent) were conducted in French, and 19 were conducted in English, fully 14 of these with "Eurocrat" international functionaries. One interview was conducted in both, this also with an Alsatian Eurocrat.
3. All names of individuals quoted are pseudonyms, taken from among typical Alsatian family names. Certain details have also been altered to disguise respondents' identities.
4. Germain Muller (1923–1994), poet, city councilor, and Director of the Alsatian music hall, Barabli. His most celebrated revue was titled in Alsatian *Enfin, redde m'r nimm devun* (Look here, let's speak no more of that), a reference to the voluntary decision by Alsatians to return to their home region after its annexation by Nazi Germany in 1940. Bernard Reumaux, editor of *Éditions du Rhin* in Strasbourg, considers that probably a good half of the evacuees returned (Interview, 1 July 2005). The displays at the Schirmeck memorial museum confirm this.
5. Among Paris's missteps of the 1920s, that which evoked perhaps the greatest resistance in Alsace (and was thus dropped) was the attempt begun in 1924 by Prime Minister Edouard Herriot to revoke the Concordat, whereby the state bore some responsibility for the conduct of the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religions, including the remuneration of ministers of religion from government funds. This unique arrangement continues to exist in Alsace within an otherwise secular French Republic.
6. Hansi ("Johnny" in Alsatian) was the nom de plume of Jean-Jacques Waltz (1873–1951), whose engagingly kitschy portrayals of idealized Alsatian village life are still everywhere to be found in the tourist's Alsace, on innumerable picture postcards, for example. He was also rabidly anti-German, an emotion that suffused his work.
7. "Most of whom," as opposed to "all," because Strasbourg, as headquarters of the French state in Alsace, has always had a complement of professional and upper-class persons (including government officials) who are francophone. Vogler (1994, 303) tells that a high proportion of those who chose to quit Alsace for France at the German takeover after 1871 were such persons. In contrast, in Alsace outside of Strasbourg the proportion of those whose first language was French as opposed to Alsatian usually was very small indeed. Therefore, based on information from French government archives of 1863, Map 3 on page 68 of Weber's (1976) *Peasants into Frenchmen* denotes all of Bas-Rhin as a region where "all or nearly all communes [are] non-French-speaking."
8. The term "Blue Banana" refers to the rich zone of elevated economic activity along a London-Milan axis that curves convexly down the Rhineland. The term first gained its wide currency in France when Montpellier geographer-planners drew it in blue on a study map in 1989.
9. This is an oft-encountered assertion. On the one hand it can be found in as unremarkable a spot as the introduction to a coffee-table book of aerial photographs of Europe (Morris 2001, 23–24). More important perhaps, it is a strongly held view of Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, President of France 1974–1981 and principal architect of the proposed new EU Constitution. In 2004 he stated, along with Helmut Schmidt, former Chancellor of West Germany, that Turkey was not a European country and its membership would mean "the end of Europe."
10. The CRS (*Compagnie Républicaine de Sécurité*) are the French anti-riot police units, who enjoy a certain reputation for muscularity.
11. René Schickelé (1883–1940), Alsatian poet, novelist, and dramatist, embodied the Franco-German Double Culture, writing in both languages.
12. Les Halles is a modern, middle-market mall in central Strasbourg, which on weekends sees an influx of customers and bystanders from throughout the metropolis. The crowd is very multicultural, many persons having come in by tram from the peripheral housing projects of Hautepierre.
13. See Weil (2002), who supports such contentions, and uses virtually the same phrasing: "confusion between the words of the law and the lived reality" (275).
14. In Frankfurt, Germany, in March 2003, four Algerians were found guilty of conspiring to bomb the Christmas Market throngs at Strasbourg cathedral. A high-level Finnish functionary at the Council of Europe has on more than one occasion confided his fears to me that any of the European institutions in Strasbourg—for example, the EU parliament, the Council of Europe, or the European Court of Human Rights—would make very appealing and very soft targets for international terrorism. Furthermore, the sudden storm that blew up in February 2006 over a Danish newspaper's cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed revealed once again how much potential volatility exists in Muslim-West relations.

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