Between August of 1870 and May of 1871, the French and the Germans fought each other in a conflict whose effects reverberated for the next fifty years. The Franco-Prussian War, sometimes known as the “war that split France and united Germany,”¹ had its most long-lasting consequences in the region of Alsace-Lorraine (Fig. 1). Grudgingly handed over to the Germans by the French as one of the spoils of victory, Alsace-Lorraine became the focus of a complex cultural debate that continued at least until the end of World War II. Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France in 1919 (and—except for a brief re-annexation by the Nazis—has remained French territory ever since), but the legacy of its precarious geopolitical situation still can be seen today in the unique sets of laws, customs, and traditions that survive.²

In the decade and a half preceding World War I, the debate over the identity of Alsace-Lorraine and its ties to both France and Germany intensified with the appearance of the style known as Art Nouveau, particularly around the city of Nancy that was located barely thirty kilometres from the post-1871 border established by the Treaty of Frankfort. In Nancy, Art Nouveau became at once an emblem of defiance of the political reality that Alsace-Lorraine was now a German province and a rallying point for the hope that France might someday recapture these “lost provinces.” As the new rulers systematically began to physically and culturally rebuild Alsace-Lorraine after 1871 with a more recognizably German cultural character—bringing it in line with the rest of the Second Reich—many of the region’s residents resisted their efforts. In Metz and Strasbourg, the two principal cities of Alsace-Lorraine, the adoption of Art Nouveau

¹The phrase was used to describe the conflict due to the two other historical events that it immediately provoked, the Paris Commune and the birth of the Wilhemine Empire. See Asa Briggs, et al., When, Where, Why, and How It
²As testament to this, see Christopher Fischer’s recent monograph Alsace to the Alsatians (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).
around 1900 came to be seen in part as a way to combat and defy these efforts of the German conquerors, and in turn, to preserve both areas’ traditional links to France. As part of this resistance, the use of Art Nouveau architecture in Alsace-Lorraine came to be seen as a means of expressing the region’s unique heritage, especially the ways in which the area had long been a crossroads for the exchange and mixing of ideas and culture from various parts of Europe.

**The Effects of the Franco-Prussian War**

In the Treaty of Frankfurt that ended the Franco-Prussian War, the French ceded Alsace and the northern third of Lorraine (including Metz) to the Germans. Nancy became the major city in the part of Lorraine retained by France, and consequently underwent a series of rapid changes and growth. The Germans gave the residents of Alsace-Lorraine until 1 October 1872 to decide whether to become German citizens or immigrate to France. Many opted for the latter and settled around Nancy. As a result, Nancy’s population boomed over the next four decades, more than doubling between 1866 and 1900 and peaking at nearly 120,000 in 1911. These new arrivals included many prominent businessmen and industrialists with their employees. The newcomers were joined by many artists from the “lost provinces,” who over the following decades trained several of Nancy’s up-and-coming artists.

In February 1901 Nancy’s cultural scene reached its peak when the glass-worker and furniture maker Emile Gallé, along with several other artists, architects, industrialists, and writers, founded a group called the École de Nancy. It was designed to foster a collaborative

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5 See Barry, *op. cit.*, 398-432; and Sicard-Lenattier, *op. cit.*, 194-204.
effort among the diverse group of artists and artisans within French-controlled Lorraine, as well as the portion annexed by Germany. Politically, the group hoped that the French nation would exact revenge upon the Germans for the disaster of 1870 and find a way to recapture Alsace-Lorraine, but it grew ever-more dismayed with the refusal of the national government to take action on the issue during the 1870s and 1880s. They knew that as time passed, both the memory of the war and the opportunities to regain the lost provinces faded.

Keenly aware of the popularity of Art Nouveau at the turn of the century, the members of the École saw themselves as some of the most prominent purveyors of the style on the continent—made explicit in their preferred stylistic vocabulary—and promoted its use by other French artists and artisans. The group’s architects, including Lucien Weissenburger, Émile André, Georges Biet, Lucien Bentz, and Paul Charbonnier, filled the centre of Nancy with shops, hotels, brasseries, banks, pharmacies, cafés, apartment houses, and office buildings. Projects included the main branch of the Magasins Réunis, the only French department store chain based outside Paris, and the Chamber of Commerce of Meurthe-et-Moselle, the headquarters for the union of the city’s leaders in business and industry (Figs. 2, 3).

Nancy’s architects were aware of Art Nouveau’s international popularity and cosmopolitan character, but they also knew that in France it was highly controversial. The style faced competition from several other popular architectural styles as a suitable expression for French modernity. As Deborah Silverman has noted, at the end of the nineteenth century France was experiencing a revival of the eighteenth-century Rococo, with its light, gilded

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6 In English, the “School of Nancy,” and the “Provincial Alliance of Industries of Art.” For more on the École, see Christian Debize, Emile Gallé and the “École de Nancy,” trans. Ruth Atkin-Etienne (Metz: Serpenoise, 1999); Claire Aptel, et. al., Nancy 1900: Rayonnement de l’Art Nouveau (Thionville: Gérard Klopp, 1989), and Françoise Thérèse Charpentier, et. al., Art Nouveau: L’École de Nancy (Metz: Denoël/Serpenoise, 1987).


8 See the École de Nancy: Statuts (Nancy: Barbier & Paulin, 1901), 1-5.
arabesques and florid, natural imagery, that was viewed as an important component of national
patrimony. Some Parisian observers considered Art Nouveau to be a suitable expression of
the modern French craft tradition as well as the natural successor to the Rococo. In particular,
ecclesiastical architecture in fin-de-siècle France also drew heavily on the Gothic Revival, made
popular during the restorations of churches and secular medieval structures of the mid-
nineteenth-century and led by Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. French Renaissance
architecture was also favoured increasingly for public and private buildings at the end of the
century. Many designers viewed the style’s combination of picturesque conical towers, mansard
roofs, and simple, reserved, classical elements as an elegant hybrid between the French Gothic
tradition and the classicism the French had long drawn from Italian models.

Despite such competition, at the turn of the century Art Nouveau flourished in Paris,
where it became the official style for the 1900 World’s Fair. French Art Nouveau furniture
designers and manufacturers quickly sold many luxury items to foreign clients who valued their
high standards of craftsmanship. The style also helped launch the careers of several French
architects, including Charles Plumet, Xavier Schoellkopf, Jules Lavrilleux, Henri Sauvage, and
Hector Guimard, many of whom are known now exclusively for their Art Nouveau work.

Though briefly considered as a candidate for a new national artistic and architectural
style, however, Art Nouveau’s ultimate fate in France was not a happy one. Many Frenchmen
saw it as an emblem of socialist interests by the Paris City Council—who had commissioned
Guimard’s Métropolitain subway designs—or as a foreign import brought by Jewish

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9 Deborah Silverman, Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style (Berkeley: University of
10 On the French Renaissance Revival in the nineteenth century, see Benoît Mihail, “Nationalism and Architecture in
Nineteenth-Century France: The Example of the French Renaissance Revival,” in Sources of Regionalism in the
11 See Frank Russell, ed., Art Nouveau Architecture (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 293-313; as well as François, Loyer,
“From Viollet-le-Duc to Tony Garnier: The Passion for Rationalism,” in Art Nouveau Architecture, 103-35; and Gabriel
businessmen from Belgium and Germany. Eventually, Art Nouveau’s potentially foreign elements became too much for the capital’s patriotic artistic establishment, and the style virtually disappeared from the work of Parisian designers after 1905. It was replaced by an internationally renowned eclectic classicism, influenced in part by the Rococo and French Renaissance that derived from the academicism taught at the École des Beaux-Arts.\(^\text{12}\)

In Germany and Austria, Art Nouveau was initially greeted as a means to reform the crafts and decorative arts, and produce high-quality consumer goods that would practically serve the needs of a modern German society. It briefly became an emblem of modernity, partly due to its structural and ornamental basis in natural forms, which eschewed any reference to historical styles. But soon after 1900, German enthusiasts for Art Nouveau turned away from the style, believing its arabesques and whiplash curves to be less useful than other models for creating simpler, more practically designed goods, fixtures, and buildings. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Art Nouveau was replaced by an austere incarnation of Neoclassicism and a new admiration for the British Arts and Crafts movement, led by the architect Herrmann Muthesius.\(^\text{13}\)

Nancy’s architects, however, developed a conservative brand of Art Nouveau, drawing on the region’s own rich eighteenth-century Rococo heritage, and Gothic and Arts and Crafts influences. They often emblazoned their buildings with symbols used by the city’s artists to signify their twin desires to see Alsace-Lorraine returned to France and their province of


Lorraine reunited under the French flag. These emblems included motifs of thistles (from the city’s coat of arms), the Lorraine cross, and images of Joan of Arc—a native of Lorraine who was often seen as a protector of the region (Fig. 4). Meanwhile, in the suburban districts, Nancy’s architects constructed sumptuous villas for well-to-do professionals and industrialists, many of which were designed to recall the rural landscapes of Lorraine and Alsace (Fig. 5). Nancy’s artists also attempted to forge a closer relationship with their brethren in Alsace and northern Lorraine; in 1908 the École sent many of its artists to Strasbourg to exhibit their works, which were received favourably, but not with an overwhelming enthusiasm.

For many Lorraine residents, the École’s work represented the embodiment of modernity and proved that Nancy was at the forefront of cutting-edge European art. The alliance that the city’s artists and architects forged with the region’s industrialists came to fruition in the 1909 World’s Fair, the Exposition Internationale de l’Est de la France, held in Nancy. The fair’s conservative architecture—which appeared to be a cross between Rococo revival and Nancy’s conservative Art Nouveau—received overwhelming approval both locally and from the critics in Paris, who praised the fair as a manifestation of national unity and pride: “Nancy can offer to the artist, the observer, and to the tourist, an altogether complete and harmonious ensemble of the evidence of the genius of the race.” Parisian observers even compared the fair’s Art Nouveau


architecture favourably to their own architects’ efforts in the style, declaring that “[i]t is in Nancy that [Art Nouveau] after its somewhat-too-timid manifestation at the Paris World’s Fair, in 1900, seems to have found its voice.” Additionally, the Exposition Internationale de l’Est de la France was an event that specifically attempted to showcase the strong cultural and political links between France and Alsace-Lorraine. As a result, it also reawakened many of the animosities between France and Germany concerning the territories that had remained latent since the Franco-Prussian War and only grew stronger as the First World War approached. The development of a conservative brand of Art Nouveau based on the use of symbolic motifs, deeply engaged with regional politics, and supported by the union of local artists and industrialists of the École Nancy allowed the style to survive in Lorraine until 1914 even though it had long-since disappeared virtually everywhere else in Europe.

Metz and Northern Lorraine

Unlike the French, the Prussians viewed Alsace-Lorraine as German-speaking frontier provinces that they had reclaimed from centuries of Gallic influence. Due to its location on the French border, the Germans began to fortify the region, and the architectural developments of the cities in Alsace-Lorraine from 1871 to 1918 reflected their twin goals of cultural Germanization and militarization.

After 1871 the demographic situation in northern Lorraine changed dramatically. So many natives of the area left for the southern part of the province that by 1900, one popular

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20 See the penultimate note to this essay for the references pertaining to the Alsace-Lorraine question from 1910-1919.
saying reported that “Metz is no longer in Metz but in Nancy.”

Despite widespread French emigration, however, Metz’s population was sustained during the period after the war by German repopulation. In 1905 40 percent of Metz’s population was composed of natives of Alsace-Lorraine, while more than 53 percent came from states that made up Germany before 1870. When Metz began to expand geographically (beginning in 1903) to the south and east, German designers dominated the city’s architectural scene.

The Germans laid out new districts in the southern part of Metz that were crisscrossed by broad, tree-lined boulevards, much like those constructed under Haussmann in Paris, the Ringstraße in Vienna, or the contemporaneous development of the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin. Many of these new streets met at large open plazas or squares. Planners filled these districts with banks, hotels, offices, shops, large single-family villas and multi-storey apartment buildings (Fig. 6). Projects were built of stone in a variety of styles and colours, but often employed a mixture of a heavy, ornamental Rhenish Romanesque and medieval details, such as rounded arches, tracery, squat colonnettes, and steep, gabled roofs. Such designs drew on the sentiment of National Romanticism—then sweeping Germany and Scandinavia, whereby newly independent nation-states sought to justify their existence by constructing or inventing a mythical past that testified to a long line of a distinctly Nordic cultural heritage. In some cases, the German architects who built these structures applied Art Nouveau features, such as angular, twisted railings or stencil-like floral motifs on the flattened surfaces of façades; these fell out of

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26 This movement has been very well outlined by architectural historians in recent years. For a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon, see Lane, National Romanticism.
favour soon after 1900 as German architects quickly discarded the style.

The institutional structures in Metz employed similar decorative programs in line with National Romanticism, sometimes taking them to the extreme. Designed by Jürgen Kröger and built from 1908 to 1911, the new main post office is a perfect example of Romanesque revival architecture—with its rounded arches, squat columns, clustered colonnettes, and hipped roofs—recalling the architecture thought to be in vogue around the time of Otto I’s First Reich, the Holy Roman Empire during the tenth century (Fig. 7).27 Kröger’s Rhenish Romanesque train station in Metz is a similarly massive structure that took seven years to build, beginning in 1901 (Fig. 8). Its scale—which seems unnecessary for a city of merely 65,000 inhabitants—is due to the imperial government’s desire to use it for the quick deployment of troops to the city during military conflicts with the French, which the Germans (correctly) anticipated would occur in the coming years. Kröger brashly celebrated this aggrandizement of German militarism and nationalism in his designs for the column capitals on the train station. With their imagery of speeding locomotives and nomadic settlers, they make specific allusion to the strength of the German railway network and William II’s dreams of territorial expansion.28

Despite the ubiquitous presence of Wilhelmine German architecture in Metz, however, the city was not devoid of Art Nouveau influences from France. Nancy’s artistic dominance in the region can be seen by the fact that its artists were even able to receive a few commissions in Metz during this period. One member of the École de Nancy, the stained-glass artist Michel Thiria, was originally from Metz, and after 1871 managed to maintain branches of his shop in both cities.29 Likewise, one of the vice-presidents of the École, the furniture maker and architect Eugène Vallin, built two commercial structures in the city: the Watrinet apartments and the Café

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Moitrier. Both buildings show the marked influence of Nancy’s Art Nouveau. In the Café Moitrier, Vallin’s signature sweeping curved wooden mouldings, which in many ways resemble the thick shapes of tree trunks, dominated the interior structure. The dining room was decorated by dramatic murals of Lorraine landscapes, and was lit by sconces whose designs derived from groups of flowers in bloom, a common motif in contemporary Nancy interiors (Fig. 9).

Vallin’s wide, flattened arches reappear in the window mouldings of the upper floors of the Watrinet apartments. On the building’s ground floor, which functioned as a shoe store, the delicate wide curves of the ground floor window frames mirrored the shop windows that Vallin designed for Art Nouveau department stores in Nancy. The façade featured intricate Art Nouveau floral stencilling and its pointed, Gothic arches referenced Vallin’s training as a designer and restorer of Gothic church interiors (Fig. 10). Vallin was able to obtain these commissions because his patrons were wealthy long-time Lorraine residents whose families had opted not to move from the territories annexed after 1871. For them, the use of Art Nouveau was a “silent” protest against the German architecture that dominated the new construction in Metz at the turn of the century.30 Vallin’s work proved that despite the efforts to germanize the lost provinces and strengthen their ties to the rest of the Wilhelmine Empire, the new border remained quite permeable, and cultural influences from France still penetrated the lost provinces.

**Strasbourg and Alsace**

In Strasbourg, the capital of Alsace, the question of identity was more complicated—its residents felt themselves torn not only by loyalty to either France or Germany, but to Alsace as a region with a cultural heritage distinct from either country. Many Alsatians resented the status of

30 Pignon-Feller, op. cit., 451-52 and 542-43; idem., “L’art nouveau de Nancy à Metz, des allers-retours nostalgiques et ambigus,” 266-70. The Watrinet building still stands, but the Café Moitrier was unfortunately destroyed by fire in December 1969.
Alsace-Lorraine as an Imperial Reichsland—a conquered province administered directly from Berlin—and wished for greater autonomy within the Empire on par with that of other German states. Additionally, throughout the period of German control, many residents of Alsace yearned for the return of French rule, demonstrating this in their comparative portrayals of national holidays. Celebrations of the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War were often viewed as boring and pompous, while Bastille Day was seen as one of the happiest days of the year, when residents could travel to Nancy to partake in the festivities and receive a warm welcome from the Lorrainers.31

Meanwhile, many German scholars and professionals who moved to Alsace were devoted to studying the province’s cultural links with Germany and proving its Teutonic heritage. They rewrote Alsatian history, arguing that the real annexation of the province was Louis XIV’s conquest of the area in 1681, and the redrawing of the borders in 1871 was its liberation. Many in the Wilhelmine Empire felt that the region’s residents—many of whom spoke the Alsatian language, a dialect of German32—were more strongly tied to Germany than France, and their culture should be celebrated as unique within a German Reich.33 Still, others took the distinctiveness of Alsace to an extreme, arguing that the region was neither French nor German, but possessed unique heritage, customs, and culture that was unfortunately sandwiched between two larger nation-states that quarrelled over territory. Such Alsatians deplored both the French and Germans, but they had difficulty defining a clear conception of an Alsatian state wholly separate from either country.34

Unlike Metz, Strasbourg—a city of some 90,000 residents in 1871—suffered serious physical damage during the Franco-Prussian War, but due to its status as the largest and most

32 Alsatian is still a prominent spoken dialect in the region today, especially in rural areas, though French seems to predominate in Strasbourg.
34 Ibid., 6-10 and 29-36.
important city in the German-controlled territories, the new Imperial government immediately began to rebuild. As part of this program, it opened new areas to the north and east of the central core to residential and commercial development. The damage inflicted by the war allowed the Germans to construct new public buildings in central Strasbourg to house the governmental activities befitting the capital of a recently created territory within the Second Reich.\textsuperscript{35} These included the new Kaiserpalast (1884-89), built to house the German emperor when he visited Strasbourg,\textsuperscript{36} the National Theatre of Strasbourg (1888-99), and the National and University Library (BNUS,\textsuperscript{37} 1895) (Figs. 11, 12). Each of these buildings contains a colonnaded central pavilion flanked by wings or backed by a rectangular multi-storey stone block, a plethora of Baroque sculptural details, and heavy rustication that together recall the official Beaux-Arts classicism used for many contemporaneous Imperial German government structures, such as Paul Wallot’s Reichstag in Berlin, finished in 1884 (Fig. 13).

If the German government was not building in a Baroque classical mode in Strasbourg, it often turned—as in Metz—to a Rhenish Romanesque, German Rundbogenstil, Gothic Revival, or German Renaissance style.\textsuperscript{38} Strasbourg’s train station, designed by Berlin architect Johan Jacobsthal and built between 1878 and 1883, is a Rundbogenstil structure of red sandstone common to many buildings in Strasbourg, and designed—like so many historicist buildings in Alsace-Lorraine—in line with the sentiment of National Romanticism (Fig. 14). As part of claiming the myths of national heritage, the Germans also wanted to mark the territorial regions


\textsuperscript{36} This structure, which accommodated William II on twelve occasions during his reign, was used as a military hospital during World War I. Since then it has served a variety of purposes, most recently as the headquarters for the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine, which still occupies the building.

\textsuperscript{37} The acronym comes from its French name, the Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg.

to which this heritage extended, especially disputed areas such as Alsace-Lorraine.

The need for new official buildings largely ceased, however, by 1900. It was in domestic, institutional, and commercial architecture that Strasbourg architects experimented with other stylistic developments. Indeed, German National Romantic styles remained popular in these structures. But unlike in Nancy—where a conservative brand of Art Nouveau had become ubiquitous—in Strasbourg, Art Nouveau became just one of several options from which architects could choose, and it never assumed a dominant position among the preferred modes of design.39

Some of the Art Nouveau structures in Strasbourg reflect the influence of French and Belgian models, including those from Nancy. The firm of Jules Berninger and Henri-Gustave Krafft was the most notable to adopt such strategies. Both Berninger and Krafft were born in Strasbourg when the city was still a part of France (before the Franco-Prussian War), and had been trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.40 Krafft in particular wished to keep these ties strong: upon graduation he became a member of the Association Amicale des Architectes Diplômes par le Gouvernement (founded in 1877), and then its successor, the Société des Architectes Diplômes par le Gouvernement, the alumni association of the École des Beaux-Arts, to which almost all professional French architects—including those in Nancy—belonged.41

The Knopf department store in central Strasbourg (1898-99) shows that Berninger and Krafft digested well the lessons that they had learned at the École. Like Lucien Weissenburger’s Magasins Réunis in Nancy, the Knopf store reveals the strong influence of French department

41 See Membership Report #132 of the Association Amicale des Architectes Diplômes par le Gouvernement, n.d. [ca. 1890]; Membership Report #136 of the SADG, 27 October 1907; and a letter from Krafft to Georges Poupinel, Treasurer of the SADG, 26 October 1907 (all in Henri-Gustave Krafft dossier, Musée d’Orsay Centre de Documentation, Paris). Refer to chapter 2 of my Ph.D. dissertation, “Nancy as a Center of Art Nouveau Architecture, 1895-1914” (University of Pennsylvania, 2011) for more information on the training of Nancy’s architects.
store design. The iron-framed store rose four storeys, used repetitive rows of large shop windows, and its entrance was placed at the foot of the ovoid-domed corner tower (Fig. 15). The open-plan interior, organized around an atrium and supported on a set of iron piers, contained a dramatic central iron staircase bedecked with intricate whiplash ornaments that beckoned customers up to the upper gallery levels. At the foot of the staircase stands a bizarre rooster sculpture—perhaps a reference to the French Gallic cock—as well as tree-like candelabras reminiscent of those created by the Nancy ironworker Louis Majorelle for the Magasins Réunis (Figs. 16, 17). As in other French stores, a massive dome of coloured glass above the central atrium lit the interior.

The highly peculiar ornament of the Knopf store was accentuated by the extensive use of whiplash curves of iron on the doors, windows, walls, and ceiling surfaces of the structure, as if it were encrusted with twisted vines. This strategy resembled the ironwork and interiors seen in buildings by Victor Horta, Henry van de Velde, Hector Guimard, and many of Nancy’s architects—especially the buildings by the engineer Henri Gutton and the ironwork of Louis Majorelle. The influence of francophone Art Nouveau on Berninger and Krafft was noted by contemporary observers, who compared the ironwork from a department store in Frankfurt with the entrance gate to Gutton and Joseph Hornecker’s villa (1904) called the Parc de Saurupt in a garden suburb of Nancy. Implicitly, then, these critics suggested that either the Strasbourg architects had crossed the border and seen some of the developments in Lorraine, or they had viewed the Nancy buildings as they were disseminated in folios or other publications (Fig. 18).

Other Strasbourg architects drew more direct inspiration from Nancy. Auguste Mossler (1873-1947) was trained in Paris at the École des Beaux-Arts in the atelier of Louis Bernier. After receiving his diploma in 1901, he returned to Strasbourg and formed a partnership with Auguste Müller. In 1907 the pair designed the apartment building at 22, quai (quay) St.-

42 See chapter 3 of Clericuzio, op. cit., and Roussel, *Nancy Architecture 1900*, 1:64-65, for more on this building.
Nicholas, which, with its projecting oriel bay and its roofline pierced by a row of dormers, loosely resembles the Société Générale bank and apartment building in Nancy by Georges Biet and Eugène Vallin built four years earlier (Figs. 19, 20). The details of Müller and Mossler’s building also bear comparison with Nancy, as the ironwork fronting the fenestration appears to be nearly identical to those designed by Biet and Vallin for their bank (Figs. 21, 22). Even if Strasbourg was not a leading centre of Art Nouveau like Nancy, its architects had learned quickly from the pioneering Belgians and French, and were familiar enough with the style to produce respectable examples of it.

The notion of Strasbourg as a crossroads of European culture can be seen in the work of the city’s other architects, which borrowed elements from not only francophone designers, but also the many strands of Art Nouveau from central Europe. François (Franz) Lütke (1860-1929) and Heinrich Backes (1866-1931) were German-trained architects from Cologne and Bilburg, respectively, who both settled in Strasbourg. The apartment house at 56, allée de la Robertsau that they built for Georg Cromer in 1903, which also housed Lütke and Backes’ offices, exhibited many similarities with structures by Josef Maria Olbrich in Darmstadt and with Otto Wagner in Vienna (Fig. 23). In Olbrich’s Sezession Building in Vienna (1897) and his Franz Joseph Haus in Darmstadt (1900-1), portions of the façades are covered in a tight-knit, low-relief pattern of floral and plant-like ornament that emphasizes the plane surfaces, much like how the base of the Cromer apartments’ oriel bays are covered in low-relief patterns (Figs. 24, 25). Such decoration contrasts sharply with the more plastic floral ornament often seen in Nancy.

In the Cromer apartment house, an air of classicism is created by the fluted pilasters

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43 These similarities have been noted by Shelley Hornstein-Rabinovitch in her “Tendances d’Architecture Art Nouveau à Strasbourg,” (Thèse de 3e cycle, Université des sciences humaines de Strasbourg, 1981), 58.
44 This definitively refutes the early claims that while Nancy wished to influence Alsatian artistic developments during the belle époque, such attempts did not produce fruitful results, and no real artistic dialogue took place between the two centres. Cf. Françoise-Thérèse Charpentier, “Les Rélations Artistiques entre la Lorraine et l’Alsace aux temps de l’École de Nancy,” in Trois Provinces de l’Est: Lorraine, Alsace, Franche-Comté (Strasbourg/Paris: F. X. Le Roux, 1957), 287-92.
45 On Lütke and Backes, see Reiger, et al., ibid., 166, 169; and Hornstein-Rabinovitch, 50-53.
interspersed between the upper-storey windows, much like the pilasters that Wagner frequently employed on his buildings. The upper portions of the central sections of the façade, meanwhile, are covered in floral-patterned tiles, much like those seen on the upper parts of Wagner’s Majolikahaus of a few years earlier. Finally, in several places—such as the main entrance door—the ornament consists of multiple parallel lines incised onto a flat surface, as often seen in Austrian Art Nouveau (Fig. 27). If the Germans had failed to inculcate the residents of Strasbourg with a strict adherence to the eclectic building styles of National Romanticism, they were nonetheless able to instil in them a curiosity for modern stylistic developments on the eastern side of the Rhine.

While the Cromer apartments are preponderantly German and Austrian in their lineage, a few features remind one of French Art Nouveau. The plastic, high-relief mouldings over the windows on the third and fourth storeys and the flattened, bell-shaped curves of the window sashes recall the Rococo-influenced Art Nouveau of Nancy. Moreover, the three escutcheon-shaped dormers of the Cromer apartments appear quite similar to those created by Weissenburger for the Magasins Réunis in Nancy. Finally, the concrete balconies adorned with twisted ironwork can be compared with the contemporary Kempf apartment house (1903) built by Fernand and Félicien César in Nancy (Fig. 28). Thus, although Lütke and Backes seem to have drawn heavily on the Jugendstil of the German-speaking countries, they were clearly aware of Art Nouveau developments taking place to the west.

**Conclusion**

After 1914 the amount of literature evaluating the status of Alsace-Lorraine proliferated dramatically, with many writers both in Europe and in North America favouring the return of the “lost provinces” to France, despite the fact that the territory had been subject to German rule for
over four decades. The Allied victory brought Alsace-Lorraine back into the French fold, and 
initiated another violent economic and demographic shift. As Germans fled the territory, French 
citizens moved in to replace them. Nancy, which had been the dominant metropolitan centre in 
eastern France, was now eclipsed by Strasbourg, where the French now concentrated their 
economic, cultural, and military attention. Meanwhile, Art Nouveau—which had already 
vanished everywhere in Europe outside of Nancy and Alsace-Lorraine—now yielded to a 
resurgence of an international classicism as well as several competing versions of modernism, 
including the strands that would later be called Art Deco and the International Style. Although 
each of these strands vied for public approval, none of them drew comparable political 
associations with nationalist or regionalist concerns as Art Nouveau and other prewar styles. On 
the one hand, the Art Nouveau buildings and decorative arts in Nancy, Metz, and Strasbourg 
remind us today of an era when French nationalism remained a common political and artistic 
bond, providing residents on both sides of the Franco-German border with hope that one day 
these three cities would again be united under one flag. But they also remind us of the 
complicated cultural lineage of these territories, and the cosmopolitan nature of their urban 
centres—a history and collective memory that continues to be questioned, re-examined, and 
rediscovered a century later.

46 The volume of literature on Alsace-Lorraine from 1910-19, in both English and French, is immense. See Coleman 
Balch, The Question of Alsace and Lorraine, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane and Scott, 1918), 70-84; Herbert 
Co., 1918); Charles Hazen, Alsace-Lorraine Under German Rule (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1917); Gabriel 
est française par ses origines, sa race, son passé (Paris: Flammarion, 1919); Barry Cerf, Alsace-Lorraine Since 1870 
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1972). This is surely not an exhaustive list, either.

47 For more on this, see Catherine Coley, “L’effort moderne à Nancy dans les années vingt: Chronique du comité 
Illustrations

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- Yellow: Alsace-Lorraine (Germany, 1871-1919; France, pre-1871 and post-1919)
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