A Colonialist Laments the New Imperialism: Elisabeth von Heyking’s China Novels

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For more than a century, China has functioned as one of the signifiers creating anxiety about the West and its future. In the context of the 2008 Olympics, for example, the media filled our public and private spaces with images and narratives, both personal and political, that reconstructed for our gaze and our imaginations a China that was exotic, ancient, but also politically regressive. Even recent media coverage about the economic behavior of China invokes an age-old stereotype of the Chinese as untrustworthy. While we continue a longstanding tradition of worrying about China, contemporary scholars try to contextualize China’s «behavior» as, in part, a product of its colonial subjugation to the West. The Director of the Center on US-China Relations at New York’s Asia Society, Orville Schell, for example, reminded us that while «we often imagine ourselves to have escaped that history (of colonialism) – or that history somehow ended – it would be naïve to forget that we remain part of the equation» (33). Our contemporary preoccupation with China as both a threat and a fascination is not so far from how Germany imagined itself in relation to China at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the era of land-grabbing imperial/colonial politics to which Schell was referring. Here, I return to that history in the context of Germany’s particular participation in, and representations of, China. Although representations of China in German culture have a long history, late nineteenth-century discourses on China produce a particularly modern source of both anxiety and hope for Germany in this nation-making era.¹ On a methodological note, it is important to remember that attention to representational issues surrounding Germans reading/writing China is not synonymous with a plea for a truer image of China, or, as the editors of Sinographies suggest, it is not a «plea for the restoration of Eastern identity» (xi). It is instead an investigation into the conflicted experiences of the national self at a time in German history when Weltpolitik is definitive of national identity.

The importance of place to identity is crucial here, and as the editors of Sinographies point out, this place is «not only home but abroad, not only in relation to the expression of a colonialist or racist imperialism that claims to make statements about a nation or civilization «out there» but also a form of
self-expression and self-production the necessity of whose expression testifies to the felt gap between what you think is and what you wish it would be» (xi). Indeed, this very gap is the driving conflict in the three texts I will discuss here, texts focusing on China at the Jahrhundertwende and written by Elisabeth von Heyking, a Diplomatenfrau who was in China from 1896 until 1899.

Before moving to these texts, I want to give a short summary of the historical context at the turn of the century. Between 1896 and 1899, Germany pursued an aggressive military and diplomatic program in China as it acquired its concession in Qingdao, Shandong Province, as well as mining and railroad rights in the province itself. By 1900 the Boxer Rebellion, which started, in fact, in Shandong, complicated the picture for those who saw in Qingdao Germany’s place in the colonial sun. Klemens von Ketteler, Imperial Germany’s envoy to China at the time, was killed in the Uprising, an event that placed China at the center of German public attention and precipitated Kaiser Wilhelm’s Hunnenrede in which he vilified the Chinese as he sent off German military troops to rampage across Shandong into Beijing.

China was represented in a variety of media and genres at this crucial juncture. Texts concerned with China span the range from popular serializations to high modernist works. Elisabeth von Heyking wrote three works whose genesis is in part connected to her residence in Beijing as the Diplomatenfrau of Germany’s Imperial Envoy to Beijing preceding von Ketteler, Edmund von Heyking. Elisabeth von Heyking kept extensive journals while traveling and residing abroad in her role as Diplomatenfrau. They were published posthumously in a volume entitled Tagebücher aus vier Weltteilen. In this volume each chapter represents a country of residence, and they are ordered chronologically. The China chapters of the journal comprise two sections of the volume and make up the larger portion of the journal. As Heyking suspended travel writing, she began to write fiction, and in 1903 she published her first novel, Briefe, die ihn nicht erreichten, in which the Boxer Rebellion and China play a central role. In 1914 a second novel, Tschun, appeared and was set in China at the turn of the century.

Heyking’s literary output is particularly interesting now because the journal and novels so vividly dramatize the shifts in cultural identity and related representational strategies at a point in colonial/imperial history when contacts with China made it necessary to re-imagine what it means to be German, which in turn demanded a reordering of the meaning of China (Sinographies, xviii). The three texts I discuss here illustrate one particular author’s struggle with representational issues that emerge from a crisis in which China figured centrally as a place that shook foundational assumptions about self, nation
and colonialism. Initially Heyking saw in China a new opportunity for Germany to succeed in acquiring colonial territory. However, the transition at the end of the nineteenth century from colonialism to the New Imperialism became a barrier to Heyking’s representation of the European Self and the Chinese Other in colonial terms.² The ensuing collapse of Heyking’s belief in the German colonial enterprise in China made travel writing no longer tenable. Her turn to fiction represents a shift toward a mode of writing that was commensurate with a time in which the world had lost its transparency via colonial categories. Her first novel dealt with the loss of certainties that underpinned a preconceived notion of colonial privilege, and the second novel returned to China as a necessary reframing of the Chinese Other in terms that reject Western imperial categories.

Heyking traveled to many colonial settings in her role as Diplomatenfrau, including postcolonial Chile, Egypt, India, and China. Her travel writings from these various places were shaped by narrative strategies that depended on inherited positions of visual superiority and distancing of the Other.³ Her writing style was linked to territorial colonial desires that she expressed in her pre-China journal where she wrote that her dream was to be reincarnated as an English aristocrat in India. This fantasy erupts unexpectedly in her journal that had previously presented a virulent anti-British sentiment and is, I believe, an indication of a nostalgic desire for a pan-European colonial privilege that emerges later in her first novel. The major figure of the travel writing, aside from the narrator herself, is Edmund. He represents the very ground that made possible her travel narration, as the project of the journals is to embody the command of the writer over the colonized Other, yet is close enough to capture the «exotic» for the titillated home readership. Projected onto him are stereotypical notions of colonial masculinity whose superiority, knowledge, diplomatic finesse, and aristocratic decorum, she hoped, would produce territorial gains for Germany.

Her investment in local culture was typical for colonial representation, particularly in that her writing (re)produces a sense of two separate, unequal and incommensurable cultures. The journalistic voice maintains its equilibrium and distance from the Other via the use of conventional landscape and ethnographic descriptions in which the writing subject remains safely detached from its environment. The representational strategies of the early China sections were commensurate with such earlier journal entries. Arriving in a state of confident excitement about Germany’s future in China, Heyking believes that her husband will create a thriving German settlement there. Her optimism vis-a-vis colonial activity corresponds to her use of conventional landscape descriptions and lay ethnographic portrayals in her journal writ-
ing: «Von weitem sieht man die Hausböote kommen, und da die vielgekrümmte Wasserfläche durch die Ufer verdeckt ist, scheint es, als bewegten sich die Segel auf dem Lande. Fedora Bambusdickichte stehen auf den Dünen, im Schlamm am Ufer lagen grosse schwarze Wasserbüffel und der Himmel war von zartem Abendrot überhaucht, das sich im Wasser widerspiegelte» (183). Her ethnographic descriptions are consistent with the landscape idiom: «Chinesinnen, mit weiss und rosa geschminkten runden Gesichter, Orangenblüten oder künstlichen Schmetterlingen hinter den Ohren im glänzenden schwarzen Haar, sassen mit ihren niedlichen, in bunte Seide gekleideten Kindern und schlürften allerhand kalte Getränke» (184).

In sync with her colonial gaze, she defines Chineseness in the terms that had become accepted in late nineteenth-century Europe, terms in which China is defined as a stagnant culture, with a decadent and incapable ruling elite. In other words, despite its reputation for an advanced historical culture, a culture at one time considered far beyond that of Europe, Europe’s modern version of China had it fall in with other colonial territories as a «backward» place, in need of those cultures at the pinnacle of historical development in order to survive and prosper. However, these conventional tropes of colonial travel writing broke down in China under the pressure of the extremely competitive environment at the end of the nineteenth century, when New Imperialism rendered visions of territorial and settlement colonialism obsolete.

Here in the China sections, Heyking’s command over the landscape and the non-Western Other fails her. The masterful writing subject of the earlier journal chapters becomes sickly and melancholic when faced with the realities of the contact zone in late nineteenth-century Beijing. Landscape narration, for example, gives rise to a weakened subjective voice, a voice that has lost its mastery. While in the countryside outside of Beijing, she writes, «Schlingpflanzen ranken sich an der Steinpagode empor, und eine herrliche Weymouthskiefer hebt sich tiefgrün von dem Weiß der Pagode ab. Wäre es nur etwas kühler und fühlte ich mich etwas weniger krank, und hätten wir einen etwas besseren Koch, so wäre es reizend hier draußen» (194). Finally, the colonial fantasy that opened the China journals is shattered – making her travel writing no longer tenable. At the same time that her narrative strategies fall apart, she projects onto her husband, at first a hero of the German colonial enterprise, a loss of drive that otherwise would have driven the narrative to closure in national/colonial terms.

When the Heykings were moved to their next assignment, postcolonial, prerevolutionary Mexico, she continued to write in her *Tagebuch*, but the journal’s formerly masterful gaze had been lost, and she views her world from a claustrophobic place where she cannot breath, that is to say, from a place
from where she cannot imagine life: «Die Spezialität Mexikos ist, dass man herunterfahren muss, um ins Gebirge zu kommen. Oben auf dem Hochplattau, auf dem die Hauptstadt steht, hat man nie die Empfindung, auf den Bergen zu sein, denn alles ist eine einzige tröstlose Ebene, und nur an den Atembeschwerden merkt man die Höhenluft» (379) Mexico was the last location of travel writing for Heyking because the collapse of territorial colonialist ideology in China did not produce for her a new imperial vision. Instead, she began to write fiction. At the point where travel writing was no longer tenable, fiction better accommodated Heyking’s inability to represent the world via a totalizing colonial vision.

Briefe, die ihn nicht erreichten, her first novel, appeared in 1903 and became a bestseller in Germany; it was translated into several languages and, as one contemporary reviewer observed, was the talk of every literary salon from St. Petersburg to New York, and from Stockholm to Calcutta. Beyond its initial popularity, the novel has been sparsely studied until now. Its more recent treatment is taking place in the context of German transnational and colonial studies’ attention to China. In a recent monograph, Kulturelle Exklusion und Identitätsentgrenzung: zur Darstellung Chinas in der deutschen Literatur, Weijian Liu discusses the novel at length and includes Heyking, along with Alfons Paquet and others, as examples of writers who resisted the dominant negative view of China. Liu evaluates Briefe positively for its «Gesellschaft- und Machtkritik» vis-à-vis the foreign occupation of Chinese territories (211). He also concludes that Heyking demonstrates an intercultural awareness by understanding the resolution of the novel as an intertextual reference to a Daoist and Buddhist understanding of self. Here I want to reframe Liu’s argument and assert that the work’s critique is less an intertextual appropriation of Chinese culture than a melancholic farewell to colonialism and a simultaneous condemnation of the emergence of mass culture and global capitalism that she sees as responsible for colonialism’s demise.

Briefe, die ihn nicht erreichten is an epistolary novel set at the turn of the century in which a woman who is traveling from China via Canada to New York, then to Germany and back to New York writes letters to a man she met while residing in Beijing. The recipient, a Forschungsreisender, neither receives nor answers the letters as his whereabouts are unknown. Yet, in the letters, we learn that he represents the epitome of the humanist explorer who is trusted by the Chinese, who knows their culture and languages, and who is not driven by material greed or motivated by economic exploitation. The narrator is highly critical of practices associated with imperialism and exposes foreigners in China as greedy businessmen pressuring diplomats to close deals for land and rights; they are men hungry for power, rushing to gain ad-
vantage over and above their colonial competitors; people who use patriotism as a means to justify exploitative imperial ends. The novel also makes clear that such economic exploitation of the Chinese follows upon the loss of those humanistic values and ideals that her interlocutor embodies. Comprising the center of the novel is a sense of loss that is related to the disappearance of the mythical good colonizer, the humanist, scientist aristocrat, a man of integrity. This novel, then, is focused on Western identity in a transformative era in global politics, and China functions as the exotic backdrop that best stages the negative effects of imperialism as a replacement to colonialism.

The Boxer Rebellion plays a central role in the novel, and it has two major narrative functions. First, it allows the narrator to reframe the violence as a natural outcome of the inhumane treatment of the Chinese by materialistically motivated foreigners; and second, as the intermittent news of the violent resistance movement increases little by little, so does the sense of fear and loss associated with the missing interlocutor. In either case, the crass materialism that underlies the competitive search for markets and resources is at fault in the eyes of our narrator; thus the Boxer Rebellion is less an historical event than a literary metaphor for the disruption to pan-European colonial privilege, embodied by the narrator’s interlocutor, and caused by the new imperialist politics and the violent local reaction against it.

The novel’s rejection of the imperial enterprise is compounded by, and related to, the loss of national identity. The narrator travels to Germany and finds that it no longer embodies the home it once did. Instead, her former home is now a museum and it is full of *kleinbürgerliche* tourists from Berlin who want to see how the aristocracy once lived. She follows them as they are led on a tour through her erstwhile home. Indeed, toward the end of the travel journals, the narrator bemoans her complete sense of homelessness upon returning to Germany from China. In the novel, the image of homelessness is literalized in the sense that her former residence is being trampled through by the masses now empowered by the new economic order. The narrator thus leaves Germany to return to New York, where the emotional intensity of the letters increases as news reports indicate a worsening of the violence in China. She is frantic over the well-being of her lover. Just as the narrator begins to believe that he is alive and their future together is secure, the story cuts off in mid-sentence. The brother of the narrator takes over to tell of her suicide at the news that her lover was killed in the last battle of the Boxer Rebellion.

The novel’s antiimperialism has a double edge. While it rejects Western imperialism, it mourns the loss of the pan-European humanistic aristocrat that underpinned an earlier colonial ideology. Modern nationalism privileged national identity over class; it leveled difference in the interest of a unified na-
tional identity. The novel’s critique mourns the loss of the primacy of class identity over national identity. Indeed the novel renders national identity no longer viable for Heyking as she no longer knows who she is within modern categories. Her failed attempt to go home behind her, the narrator rejects her German heritage for New York’s immigrant mélange. In an ironic turn, the novel portrays Germany, akin to the former ideological positioning of China, as a place without a future. In contrast, New York represents a nostalgic nowhere, a transnational distraction from the stagnating German nation, and the promise to restore privilege in a modern, but nonnational setting. The ideology of individualism becomes the new belief system, America the place of a possible future. However, despite New York’s role as a refuge from modernity’s displacements, the narrative’s power resides in the overwhelming sense of loss and inability to go on, represented by the death of both lovers.

At the core of the novel is an identity crisis in which class anxiety manifests itself in terms of the gender relations embedded in the love story. The masculine colonial ideal dies, and its contingent feminine counterpart destroys herself in response. The finality represented by the death of these two figures can be seen as a response to the complexity of the situation that offers no other solution or vision for the future. Neither conventional gender categories nor nationality are presented as viable positionalities from which to imagine a self. Indeed, the demise of a link between the aristocratic feminine writer and the colonial heroic venturer opens up possibilities of inventing new discourses of feminine self-fashioning that do not necessarily secede to masculine heroes the condition for representational subjectivity. Read against the grain, the novel deconstructs colonialism’s linking of stable national, class and gender constructions, and Heyking’s move to a literary form represents an unintentional contemplation of the impossibility of a unified solution grounded in bordered nations and binary gender distinctions.

In this first of Heyking’s novels, China signified the location of the demise of colonialism, a process linked in the discourse of the novel to the appearance of greed and crass materialism associated with the New Imperialism. In her 1914 novel, Tschun: Eine Geschichte aus dem Vorfrühling Chinas, Heyking returned to China as part of a representational balancing act that, in view of the reordering of the Western self, required a redefinition of the Chinese Other. The rejection of imperialism in Briefe did not mean the end of Heyking’s need to understand China. Rather the question is: How is China construed in potentially noncolonial terms? Given the critique of the hierarchical production of civilizational superiority of Europeans over the colonial Other in Briefe, the question one brings to the 1914 novel, Tschun, revolves precisely around the novel’s redefining of Chinese cultures and their relation to Euro-
pean cultures. The novel takes place before and during the Boxer Rebellion, so that the very political conflicts that Heyking treats in both her travel journal and in her first novel are again the focus of a narrative reworking.

*Tschun* is a coming-of-age novel whose protagonist is a fatherless Chinese boy raised by his mother in Chinese Christian culture. Set at the end of the nineteenth century, when imperial powers were dividing China amongst themselves, Tschun is a figure placed between his relatives, who are defined by Confucian values (the cause of China’s stagnation according to the West), and Western diplomats, whom the young Tschun identifies as more sophisticated and progressive than his countrymen. After harsh treatment by his traditionally Confucian uncle, he finds work as a servant to a Western diplomat’s wife. In the course of Tschun’s employment in the diplomatic section, the Boxer Rebellion breaks out, and he and his mother take shelter in the Christian church to which they belong. The Boxers attacked the church fiercely – Chinese Christians were after all one of their defined enemies. Tschun emerges from the trauma of his mother’s death during the fighting with the realization that the foreigners were not superior, that in fact they are crassly materialistic, a finding in direct contradiction to Tschun’s original belief that the foreigners were striving altruistically for the betterment of China. On the other hand, the novel asserts that Chinese culture as defined by Confucianism and other traditional practices does not represent a viable direction for China’s future. At the conclusion of the novel, after the Boxer Rebellion has subsided, Tschun, in an expressionistic reverie, standing on a bridge between the city of Beijing and its closed diplomatic quarter, spurns the destructive influence of the foreign presence, rejects the outmoded traditions that have ruled Chinese culture, and awakens to the belief in a new, young China.

The narrative develops using the gaze of a young Chinese boy whose view of the world is prerational and naïve. As a member of the Chinese Christian community, Tschun is uniquely positioned as an in-between figure. However, at no time in the novel does the term «foreigner» mean anything more specific than European, an effect of Tschun’s youthful naïveté. Consequently Tschun knows no distinction between French, German, or English. On the other hand, Chineseness is also reduced to a stereotypical version of a monoculture stuck in historical time. This is accomplished via Tschun’s young voice and nontraditional positionality from which he observes a world in which everything fascinates him, Chinese and foreign alike. He is in awe of the nuns and priests of his mother’s religion, he observes the mores of his Confucian relatives with curiosity and fear, and his observations of foreign diplomats are equally imbued with youthful interest. In the early part of the novel Confucian rules governing family life are portrayed as cruel, backward, and supersti-
tious, a judgment in line with the dominant Western view of Chinese culture at the time. In contrast, Western diplomats appear to Tschun to offer a more rational alternative, and Tschun looks up to them for their belief in «das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung» (34). At the same time, Westerners are exoticized via Tschun’s curious gaze. For example, he comments on the way they jump up from their chairs and run wildly through the room, all this «beim Klang einer seltsam unverständlichen fremden Musik» (28), or he feels sorry for a women’s red curly hair because it was so ugly (14–15). As the object of Tschun’s gaze, the West is made strange, even if young Tschun idealizes Westerners for their more rational and advanced ways. His naïveté enables an ironic commentary in which the critique of Western imperialism is embedded. Tschun wonders, for example, why nuns and priests help the Chinese who are destitute (an act he asserts would never occur to the Chinese), and is especially amazed that they travel so far to do so. He concludes that the West must be a paradise with no destitute people (23–24). The critique of the West eventually enters Tschun’s consciousness as he observes that the foreigners are not as smart as he once thought. In fact, the longer he associates with them, the more he realizes that they are not at all astute observers of Chinese culture. He notes that they are not there to help the Chinese, but rather to profit from them in every way possible. Soon the reassignment of barbarianism has moved from the Chinese to the Western foreigners. It is through such observations and realizations by Tschun that the novel develops its critique of the foreign occupation of China. Through Tschun’s slow coming to consciousness, the novel gives the reader a critical portrayal of contemporary politics in China, including the emergence of nationalist republican movements. Tschun is surprised that the West did not seem to support the republicans as he thought it only logical for them to do so given their own values. He realizes, alas, that the foreigners had given up on China ever changing (103). The violence (The Boxer Rebellion) that constitutes the climax of the novel is shown to have been caused all along by the greed and stupidity of foreign imperialists and western missionaries. Nevertheless, the rebellion is portrayed in the novel as extremely violent and threatening.

Caught between Chinese culture as represented by a narrowly defined Confucian ethic and the Western imperial alternative, Heyking’s novel resolves its opposition by presenting an image of a Chinese third way. The narrative develops the resolution by using the gaze of the young, naïve protagonist who has at least passed through the West on his way to Chinese manhood. Tschun shows us the balancing act that a redefinition of China required. It creates a fictive world in China by using strategies that make a distant, threatening place rocked by recent violence more personal and secure. With a young boy
as protagonist, the world is sentimentalized via innocence and naiveté. The cultural fears that have accompanied the West’s preoccupation with China are placated. The otherness of Chinese culture, an otherness construed by the West, is no longer as strange and estranging. Tschun’s rejection of Confucian China, as well as his familiarity with Western ways, has created a China in which the *gelbe Gefahr* recedes. Although by the end of the novel the giant has awakened, the new China construed in the novel is not to be feared.

Is this a China that in its independence could be an economic, political and/or cultural interlocutor with the West? Just what is at stake in Heyking’s re-imagining of a new China in *Tschun*? What is the projected future that emerges from this new world order?

A more detailed discussion of the narrative voice and of the representation of Tschun’s enlightenment at the end of the novel will answer these questions. The positing of a racial divide, at first contested in the novel by Tschun’s mimicking behavior, is achieved from the first pages in the language of the novel. The narrator, who renders the fictive world via Tschun’s naïve perspective, also commands an omniscience that constantly creates a binary that is fundamental to the narrative. The foundational narrative opposition is based in a difference that homogenizes Chineseness via racialized characteristics. For example, the narrator constantly talks about «*ganz echte Chinesen*» (10). Descriptions of Tschun and other Chinese characters refer to physical differences. For example, the narrator doesn’t comment on Tschun’s eyes, but rather speaks repeatedly of his little slanted Chinese eyes (*Schlitzaugen*). Or when describing Tschun’s relatives, we are not told that children are born, but that «*kleine Chinesenmenschen*» (54) are brought into the world. The third way of the new China that closes the novel is thus also a product of race-based differences.

Relatedly, Tschun’s rejection of the West takes place as he realizes something about his own identity, namely, in his terms, which race he belongs to. The Boxer Rebellion over, Tschun turns decidedly against the foreigners as he conjectures that they will use the Rebellion as a pretense for taking more land. In an attempt to find the right expression, Tschun notes, «sie sind uns doch … fremd … fremd!» (370). By the end of the novel, Tschun rejects the foreigners completely as he formulates a bitter critique of imperialism. «All sein Glaube an die Fremden war dahin» (420), and Tschun, after a beating by foreign soldiers, escapes from his employers. Finally, Tschun looks around and sees his «Landesleute, Chinesen! –» (421) and turns the corner to the creation of a new and independent China. Although the novel ends with a passionate plea for an independent China, such a future is built on a foundation in which borders define mutually exclusive cultures and that retrospectively defines colo-
nialism/imperialism as a system that created a dangerous mixing of cultures and races. In line with early twentieth-century fears, Tschun’s unifying script transforms the instabilities of inevitable globalizing conflicts into an imagined stability. The conflict associated with the unequal mixing of cultures sees local resistance as an unwanted and threatening effect of colonialism. Indeed, the novel’s depiction of the Boxer Rebellion is so terrorizing that the end of colonialism comes as a relief.

Tschun constructs a time and space in which China, at the cusp of the twentieth century, erases not only colonialism (i.e., a Europe-centered world) but also its effects (a decentering world consisting of alternative modernities in conflict). So although our author’s life of many border crossings has indeed enabled what appears to be an antiimperial view of the Other, Tschun is meant also to calm nerves frayed by reports of the Boxer Rebellion and subsequent moves toward independence from imperial occupation.

Contrasting the three texts through time brings to the fore the adaptive strategies that Heyking used when her experience in China proved to be too «paradoxical» to fit into the existing system of colonial representations, especially via travel writing. Heyking managed the difficulty of taming reality in the contact zone by moving to imaginative literary forms, primarily the novel. Her first novel attempts to reorder her experience by staging the identity crisis of the western colonial woman against the backdrop of events in China, and her second novel ten years later reimagined not the colonial self, but China via the story of the novel’s protagonist, a young western-identified Chinese boy whose emergence into manhood coincides with China’s violent rejection of colonialism. The Western fears associated with these shifts are well managed by Heyking’s novels.

Notes

1 For a recent account of the history of German views of China, see Steinmetz, especially chapter six: «German views of China before Kiautschou.»

2 New Imperialism refers to a resurgence of colonialism between 1870–1914 that focused primarily on Africa and Asia. Characterized by a scramble for territories, it resulted in European control of 84.4% of the globe by 1914, according to Pietersee (179). Rather than creating larger territorial colonies, New Imperialism saw the creation of concessions and spheres of influence that gave mostly European countries control over markets and resources. In an analysis of the New Imperialism on literature, Chris Bongie contends that in the move to Weltpolitik, «the exoticist project confronts its own impossibility» (39).

3 For a more detailed discussion of the Heyking’s travel journal, see my essay «Diplomatenfrau between Two Worlds.»
«Die Briefe haben inzwischen das gebildete Lesepublikum der ganzen Welt erreicht und der Name der Baronin von Heyking bot eine lange Zeit in allen Salons, von Petersburg bis New York, von Stockholm bis Kalkutta, den interessantesten Theil des Tagesgespräches» (Kayser, 22).

Liu sees in the suicide that ends the novel a symbolic action that can be understand as Buddhist in the sense that the narrator frees herself from the ego-invested self. Further, «Mit diesem Hinweis auf das Nirvana steuert die Autorin eine neue Identität an, die durch den Eingang ins ‹Nichts›, die Überwindung des alten Ego, eine erneute Betrachtung der Diesseitigkeit hervorruft und mitfühlende Anteilnahme an allen leidenden Wesen an die Stelle des linearen, das ‹Weltweh› verbreitenden Fortschritts- und Erfolgsgedankens setzt» (221).

Historian Rudy Koshar writes about Imperial Germany, «The tragic element of the Kaiserreich […] stems from the transitoriness of its anticipated political futures» (497). Koshar sees cultural production as, in part, an attempt to deal with anxieties associated with the loss of future visions and past communities (503).

Arik Dirlik uses this term to deconstruct the binary between homogenous notions of European vs. Chinese culture, rendered particularly in temporal terms («Chinese History» 118). Also see Dirlik’s contrasting of globalization versus imperialism («End of Colonialism» 3).

Works Cited


