Diplomatenfrau between Two Worlds: Elisabeth Heyking's China Journal

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At the end of the 19th century China occupied the German imagination as both a place of opportunity and as a dangerous giant. Germany had just secured its concession in China when the Boxer Rebellion broke out and clouded the horizon for those who saw Germany's imperial future as linked to its ability to compete with other colonial powers. After the murder of the country's ambassador to China, the German press, fueled by Kaiser Wilhelm's "Hunnenrede," carried on a smear campaign against what was commonly called the "gelbe Gefahr." In the context of German colonial representations of China, the following analysis focuses on the travel journals of a *Diplomatenfrau*, Elisabeth von Heyking. Heyking, the wife of Germany's representative to China from 1896–99, lived with her husband in Beijing where she wrote extensive journals while her husband played a key role in securing the port of Qingdao. Indeed, Heyking's travel journals cover the entire period of her husband's diplomatic posts (from 1886–1903), but her China journals are particularly important because it is here that the conventions of colonial travel writing broke down under the pressures of the international competition for concessions in China, where an existing centralized imperial government, though weak, made for a formidable opponent. This essay examines Heyking's travel text as a mapping of her desires, anxieties, disavowals, and related shifts in textual strategies that manage the transition at the end of the nineteenth century from the Old to the New Imperialism.[1]

The main contention here is that Heyking's text is symptomatic of the vicissitudes of this era by virtue of classed and gendered self-fashioning goals with which she began her travel and which she believed would restore her damaged reputation at home. The ground that made possible her colonial narration is a stereotypical notion of colonial explorer masculinity projected onto her diplomat husband, Edmund von Heyking. Edmund plays a large and heroic role in the journal as the best kind of German diplomat who through superior negotiating skills can advance the cause of Germany. The collapse of her belief in the German colonial enterprise in China is related to a crisis in her faith in

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Edmund, which, as I show here, underlies Heyking's shift from colonial travel writing to fiction writing. Her turn to fiction is a shift toward a mode of writing that is, then, commensurate with a time in which the world had lost its transparency. Fiction better accommodated her inability to understand the world via a totalizing colonial vision, yet it also had the related effect of destroying fixed gender positions, thus opening up the possibility of new textual positions for femininity and opportunities for the female writing subject.

In what contexts can we understand the importance of the travel journals of this lonely *Diplomatenfrau*? Colonial travel writing is not just an individual recording of impressions from abroad; rather journals and diaries are texts through which we can see the mechanisms and strategies of a particular colonial culture at a particular time with respect to constructing racial and geographical hierarchies as well as their inevitable collapse in the contact zone. With this backdrop in mind, we turn to Heyking's journal in part because there has been little attention played to Germany's presence in China as it established its concession there. In a recent article in *German Life and Letters*, Yixu Lu, noted that "in the growing body of scholarship on German colonialism the popular fiction which echoes the presence of Imperial Germany in China has been unaccountably neglected."(78)[2] Attention to Heyking's writing offers a corrective to this understudied chapter in Germany's cultural history. It is little known, for example, that in 1903 Heyking published the best-selling German novel of that year, in which China and the Boxer Rebellion figure prominently.[3] In contrast to Yixu Lu's analysis of German popular writing on China at the turn of the century, in which she asserts the texts she studied produced an alarmingly similar set of clichés about China, Heyking's journal offers us a more ambivalent text. Whereas Lu came to the conclusion that these turn-of-the-century works "serve to emphasize Said's . . . point, namely that colonial discourse is self-generating in the sense that it is often impervious to correction by first-hand experience," Heyking's journal, in my view, is instead a seismograph of the place and time in which she lived.[4] Of course, it is not difficult to find evidence in Heyking's journal to back up Lu's assertion that "the stereotypes are as crude and dehumanizing as anything mainstream European colonial literature produced," but Heyking's China journal is of interest here because it is so anxious and conflicted that it cannot replicate stereotypes in an unambiguous way.[5] Indeed, Heyking's attempts to produce a unified Germanness rooted in stereotypical racial and cultural superiority are undermined by conflicts and contradictions that emerge in the earlier Egypt section of the journal and erupt and overflow in the China segment.

The China context is crucial because it is there that her presumed command over her subject, the non-Western Other, and her fantasies of German colonialism fail her. The discrepancies between her visions for power attached to a belief in German Empire and the competitive realities associated with the rise of the New Imperialism in China cannot be bridged.[6] The particularities

of Heyking's subject position are important here because they produce a set of textual strategies, providing us with an especially clear view of the identity confusion that accompanied the foundational shifts in colonialism and narration at the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, we have in this case the perspective of a woman whose writing differs from many of the paradigms associated with women's travel writing. Indeed, much scholarship dealing with women's travel writing has been interested in women who travel as a means of escaping traditional feminine constraints in the homeland. Women's journals show how travel writing constructs the female traveler in discourses that allow the nineteenth century woman to negotiate an independent subjectivity that still had to distinguish itself from appearing masculine. Early interest in such texts sought, as well, a gender-based critique of colonial attitudes and power relations. In the case of Heyking, however, we are dealing with an aristocratic woman who, until a life-altering scandal threatened her integrity, was quite complacent about her class and gender status in Germany. A granddaughter of Bettina von Arnim, Heyking was educated in the arts and, it seems, expected to live a conventionally class-privileged life as wife and mother. This trajectory was interrupted by the suicide of her first husband, apparently as a reaction to her romantic affections for another man. After a lengthy court fight with his parents over the custody of her children, she married the man in question, Edmund von Heyking. However, three years of tabloid-like reporting on the familial crisis destroyed her reputation at a time when respectability was synonymous with Germanness, as George Mosse has well demonstrated.[7] Her eventual marriage to Heyking promised rehabilitation (as aristocrat, as woman, and as German) via a route that had been used by male intellectuals for centuries, namely travel to other, exotic places as a means of first deconstructing and then reconstructing a coherent subjectivity that was founded in the relation of knowledge to power. But there are differences here as well: first, Heyking is a female aristocrat, dependent on her husband to find the route that would lead to the rehabilitation of her status at home, and secondly her husband is not a "homeland German," but a former Baltic Russian, newly naturalized as a German citizen whose own political ambitions aimed to confirm his legitimacy as a subject of the Empire. With his appointment as a diplomat working for the Foreign Office (Auslandsamt), he would represent the Kaiser in foreign lands from1884–1904, a time when Germany was poised for a late entry into the colonial enterprise.

Swayed by the ideological and political passions of Kaiser Wilhelm, Germany's late participation became for the Heykings a particularly loaded enterprise because their self-fashioning as good Germans was synonymous with helping Germany's successful arrival into the arena of European colonialism. However, Elisabeth Heyking does not travel by choice or out of a desire to break from conventional constraints on her gendered positionality. Nevertheless, travel as a *Diplomatenfrau* offered her the possibility of linking

a re-fashioned Germanness to her privileged class status and to her femininity as her husband's helpmate. Thus she was necessarily invested in her husband's successes abroad as a vehicle for her own class and gender reconstruction. However, beyond her dependence on her husband's successes, there was a conventional area in which she could actively pursue her own self-fashioning, namely travel writing. Surely aware of the empowerment of colonial travel for women if they wrote effectively for the public at home, travel writing became for her a space in which to constitute her persona.

Colonial travel writing had to keep a balance between distance and closeness to the Other. For the home audience the travel writer was in close proximity to the exotic, but the conventions of travel writing encoded racial and geographical superiority through writing conventions that maintained distance from the Other. In Heyking's journal this balance is at first formed in conventional ways, ways that render distanced gazing synonymous with travel writing and has the function of keeping the narrative subject safe. As theorized by Mary Louise Pratt, colonial landscape descriptions aestheticize a scene as if in a Victorian painting, at the same time that the painting subject's vantage point, distanced and overlooking, make him the master of what he sees.[8] Exemplifying this tradition of colonial landscape description, Heyking writes, traveling in Chile, in the first chapter of her journal: "Seltsam zerklüftete Felsen mit abenteuerlich wilden Formen, von der Sonne, die durch das graue Gewölk hindurchschien, in ein zartes, silbernes Licht gehüllt. . . . Die Felsenketten haben etwas seltsam Ursprüngliches, als ständen sie dem Schöpfungstag viel näher als andre Erdstriche. Es ist ein seltsames Gefühl, so endlose Gegenden vor sich zu sehen, die so gut wie ganz unexploriert sind." (51) The aestheticizing, distanced gaze that is conventional for colonial landscape description constructs a geography as un-peopled and ahistorical, which, as Pratt has shown, is a mode that senses no limitation on interpretive powers.

The stability of her narrative voice is dependent in Heyking's case on her husband's successful acceptance into diplomatic spheres, where his aristocratic decorum and ability to charm succeeds in creating for Heyking the ground that produces the condition for her narrative authority. This writing strategy only works, however, until the political conflicts that are associated with the competition among Europeans in the era of New Imperialism emerge and embroil Edmund in situations that alienate him from assuming his stance as an active narrative force, pressing the story of the Heyking's to closure as agents of Germany's assumption of colonial power. This narrative development reaches its highpoint in China.

The China chapters of her travel journal consist of two sections from the volume, *Tagebücher aus vier Weltteilen*. Each chapter of the journal represents a country of residence and they are ordered chronologically.[9] In the beginning pages of the China section Heyking creates an initial state of plenitude in which colonial fantasies produce a definition of Germanness as stable, strong,

and secure: "man sieht hier ein so rühiges und selbstbewußtes Deutschtum, daß man wieder Zutrauen zu seiner Zukunft bekommt." (187) She asserts at the point of her arrival in China the centrality of her husband as a central figure for securing Germany's stability for the future and imagines that one of his first tasks will be to transform the German concession there into "einem blühenden Settlement," an Old Colonial fantasy to be sure. (187) This original state of plenitude links her constructed gender and national identity with the land both through her use of organic metaphor (blossoming settlement) and in connecting stability with agricultural settlement fantasies.[10] In these opening pages of the China section we also see how Heyking's Old Colonial optimism for Germany is accompanied by conventional landscape description. Her first painterly descriptions are similar in mode to her earlier landscape narration: "Von weitem sieht man sie (Hausbote) kommen, und da die vielgekrümmte Wasserfläche durch die Ufer verdeckt ist, scheint es, als bewegten sich die Segel auf dem Lande. Fedrige 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 wiederspiegelte." (183) Here again, Heyking occupies the position of the distanced observer as she "captures" China from her perch. Her first descriptions of Chinese people are also consistent with a pattern already established in earlier sections of the journal. Her object is usually women, describing their exoticism from her distanced and singular vantage point: "Chinesinnen, mit weiß und rosa geschminkten runden Gesichten, 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)

However, after these first representations of China that appear as the Heykings traveled through Shandong, their arrival and settling in Beijing undermine the safe pleasures of Heyking's narrative control. The idealized scenarios that began the China journals will soon be disrupted by the political realities of European conquest in China, where the existing empire, unstable though it was, was nevertheless an influential player in the international conflicts that emerged with the land-grabbing politics at the end of the nineteenth century. There is no less likely place or time to accommodate fantasies of settler colonialism than in China, where New Imperialism's prevailing mode is not the establishment of settlements, but rather fierce competition for economic dominance through the creation of markets and access to natural resources via contracts for concessions and areas of influence.[11]

A series of difficulties emerge in Beijing that spatially and politically contain Western power: Whereas her experiences in India or Chile, for example, confirmed her expectations as a privileged colonial aristocrat, she confronts here the limits to western freedom of movement as the Chinese government confines diplomats' residences to one particular area of the city

and restricts westerners' ability to move about Beijing. The literal space limitations transform into political and social constriction that the narrator complains about almost immediately after arriving in her diplomatic residence. Armed with conventional civilisationary rhetoric ("daß dem Lande nichts Besseres passieren könnte, als unter europäische Kontrolle zu kommen, und dass sich die Chinesen dabei sehr bald viel glücklicher fühlen würden,") (185) this discourse has the status in China not of superiority, but rather it functions as a weak defense against her stated frustration that the Chinese appear nonmanipulable in a highly competitive politics in which the English, French, German, Russians, and Japanese are all vying for concession rights. [12]

Spatially Heyking is stuck. Her positionality relates to her complaints that her husband can make no progress in negotiations with the Chinese foreign office. Offering the stereotypical assessment that Chinese diplomats function only through empty formalities, she bemoans (within days of arriving) the apparent impossibility for reasonable negotiations. She reports, however, that Edmund has found one "civilized" diplomat among them, Li Hung Chang, who had attained the status of reasonable individual due to his travels and knowledge of the West, including Germany. His status as mimic à la Bhabha shows that his surface ability to act like a Westerner shows up later as an even stronger threat to Heyking's ability to represent colonial totality than the other exoticized diplomats. At this point, her husband's influence as agent is negligible. The Chinese have a power that Heyking had not yet encountered in his diplomatic work, namely the power to represent and name their world. This is illustrated by her husband's report that the Chinese foreign ministry's diplomats have given a meaning to his name "Edmund" by reading it via a Chinese sign system, a meaning which they do not share with him and to which he has no access. Edmund's talents are constructed in the journals as those of the Old Colonial humanist whose influence as a diplomat is based on his personal style and ability to make others fond of him. Here, in China, these qualities are not useful, given the inaccessibility of the Chinese and the high stakes of competition among imperial powers.

The rhetorical strategies employed to reconcile Heyking's preconceived notions of colonial privilege with the experience of conflict, competition, and lack of authority "in the field" deserve attention, given the singularity of her position in a colonial space. In the center of conflict, namely in Beijing, she stays in the house in order to avoid what she calls the dirt and stank. In place of landscape description, the narrator muses nostalgically about her youth. However, in the summer she takes up residence in the countryside, leaving her "Pekinger Käfig." (195) In a return to her "normal" activities of painting and writng, she attempts to recapture the voice of privilege, a move marked by the return to landscape description. However, landscape narration gives rise instead to a weakened, subjective voice, a voice that compromises her sense of mastery: "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 alles reizend hier draußen." (194) She fantasizes her ideal life, using the visual tools at her disposal to alter the landscape. Alas her landscape description cannot resist the encroachment of reality. The disembodied narrator of landscape and indigenous peoples is now made visible as a weakened and sick reflection of her object of narration. The universalizing perceptual apparatus of colonial privilege that was able to create beauty, knowledge and power in the act of representation is now a highly compromised and anxious subjectivity. The evolving centrality of the ailing body is indeed a mark of feminine travel narration, but in China its ramifications extend from the narrating feminine self to the secretions of a body part of the indigenous Other, the visibility of which, as we shall now see, signals the demise of colonial gazing.

Back in Beijing after her first period in the countryside, and for the first time in the China journal, a Chinese man appears as an individual, and not as an anonymous part of the landscape. However, in this case, Edmund's reports of a "civilized," reasonable Chinese diplomat, Li Hung Chang, are marred by a messy detail: "da er sich die Nase mit den Fingern reinigt und dies dann in einen silbernen Becher tut, welchen ihm ein Diener extra dazu hält." (197) What happens when the journal comes face to face with Li Hung Chang? I read this textual figure not as one more in a line of negative racial stereotypes about the Chinese and China, but rather as a Zizekian tiny detail, with which an encounter is always traumatic, minimally obscene, and most importantly, cannot be integrated into one's universe.[13] In *The Abyss of Freedom*, Zizek remarks on just such a detail, a detail that destroys a narrative flow—that is an unassimilable point. It punctures the façade of the narrative and the narrator's presumptions about control and power vis-à-vis the objectified subject of the text. If landscape and ethnographic depiction have until this point intensified central perspective, then the nose and its excretions represent a new reality that does not "lend itself effortlessly to our molding." (24) In fact, from this point on in the journals, Heyking loses control over her landscapes and exotic scenes and resorts to using a variety of strategies to abject the uncontrollable substances. Once the nose blows, the distance that the perceiver has to the object in its original idealization is lost. The ultimate problem, so Zizek, "is precisely how to 'contain' that threat inside from 'spilling out' and overwhelming us." (24) Indeed, Li is an influential figure in the journals; he figures as one of the main negotiators between Germany and China, and his nose is a manifestation of a political process that disrupts Heyking's fantasy. The nose is thus a synecdoche, a textual figure that destabilizes a representational system whose historical underpinnings are in transition. In the face of this shift, what strategies does the journal use to manage the effects of the collapse of her idealized vision for German colonial power?

Heyking's narrator takes up a position that can be characterized as "in-between," and from here she vacillates between discourses of colonial dominance which assume authority and discourses of New Imperialism which are fraught with constant power shifts and political posturing. Where her colonial discourse in the form of landscape and ethnological narration reappear, they are altered. As I have already mentioned, the subjective, insecure voice emerges to reveal the speaking subject. At other times, the narrator projects her growing melancholia onto the landscape: For example, she represents her first impression of Qingdao, the very site of a successful German concession, as "zwar recht malerisch, aber doch sehr öde und verlassen." (227) Conventional landscape depiction reappears at times, but only when she travels from Beijing for other, what she characterizes as more European-friendly places, like Shanghai, where her visions of Pan-European elitism can be rekindled. And finally, at the end of her period in China, the narrator returns to re-assert her ability to "capture" China for her readers. She notes, as she prepares to be received by the Empress Dowager, "Zum ersten mal, dass China so aussieht, wie man sich China vorgestellt hat." (277) The visit to the Empress Dowager was, of course, staged for the western gaze, as she had become a fascinating object for the German press, allowing Heyking, in anticipation of her home audience, to reconstitute her spectatorial subjectivity. Appearing like a mirage in the middle of the desert, imperial culture finally returns China to the realm of the colonial exotic via Heyking's last attempt to control the perceptual field.

But in the competitive, alienating environment of the New Imperialism, a different pre-occupation emerges to replace her more feminine recording of "natives" and "landscape," namely the fiercely competitive discourse of political maneuvering. Here she assumes a more masculine discursive position as she rails against French/Russian alliances, unleashes civilizational rhetoric against the Chinese when they refuse to comply with German demands, and praises her allies, particularly Japan, the "superior" Asian race in her view. It is in this sphere that her husband plays a central and determining role. Rather than assume the masculine, political position directly, she often puts the words in her husband's mouth. Everything, now, depends on his success as a negotiator, which for her means that he has become their only hope for a future, both personally and nationally. In this moment the individual and the nation are linked inextricably. We know that Germany was finally successful in securing the Port of Qingdao, as well as railroad and mining contracts in the province of Shandong, and Edmund is portrayed in the journal as the German envoy responsible for Germany's success. However, the narrator complains vociferously that her colonial hero is denied recognition from Germany's official offices, a complication that derails the hero from his place as the active agent pushing toward national closure—namely a return to a strong, stable Germanness that opened the China section of the journal with visions of co-

lonial conquest. Instead Edmund is convincingly positioned as a victim of the bureaucratic state apparatus—which shows how dispensable this man of aristocratic, pan-European privilege had become for New Imperialism's economistic enterprise.[14] Heyking presciently names the new order as the ultimate problem: "Die Banken sind manchmal viel unerträglicher wie die Chinesen." (291) By the end of the China journal, Edmund's transformation from hero to victim precipitates a more complete breakdown in Heyking, whose vision of nation had depended on her husband's masculine ability to be in control of both the political sphere and his image. Heyking writes, "Die Sehnsucht nach Taten and nach der Gelegenheit sich auszuzeichnen scheint bei ihm (Edmund) ganz vorüber zu sein, und er wünscht sich nur Ruhe. Er hat nicht diejenige Charakterhärte, die nötig wäre, um es in Peking auszuhalten [. . .]" (287) By now, all systems have broken down: conventional travel narration and the safe place of the aristocratic feminine writer; visions of German empire rooted in colonial territory; the belief in the ability of the European man of action whose destiny it is to push the national narrative to its successful conclusion. The China journal ends in defeat, despite the historical fact that Germany procured its most successful concession in this episode.

I have shown here how Heyking moves back and forth between conventionally feminine narration and masculine discourse; she shifts between desires for Old Colonialism and a competitive stance vis-à-vis the difficult political terrain of the New Imperialism; she moves from a construction of her husband as a hero in colonial terms to a man thrown into despair by his circumstances, leading to her loss of faith in him. All of this results, as well, in a changing relationship to Germany. Her shifting emotions and developing fears about China can be seen as displaced anxieties about Germany as the nineteenth century draws to a close. The journal substantiates this claim. When she arrives back in Germany, Heyking finds herself alienated from a place she once called home. Her construction of Germany depended all along upon her secure place in a narrative in which the strength of the nation is transported from outside back into its borders. With both her place and the colonial enterprise in dissolution, national identity is no longer an anchor. Moreover, travel writing is no longer a genre that suffices as an adequate means to represent the new era via a totalizing vision. Although she persists in writing during the course of one more of her husband's diplomatic assignment, here Mexico, a look at her continued travel writing only confirms that the personal and political fantasies that drove her journal's investment in an identity first as a European transnational aristocrat and as a German colonizer are no longer viable.

Landscape description in post-colonial, pre-revolutionary Mexico, though present, expresses her buckled subject position: "Die Spezialität Mexikos ist, dass man herunterfahren muss, um ins Gebirge zu kommen. Oben auf dem Hochplateau, auf dem die Hauptstadt steht, hat man nie die Empfindng, auf den Bergen zu sein, denn alles ist eine einzige trostlose Ebene, und nur an den

Atembeschwerden merkt man die Höhenluft." (379) Her formerly masterful gaze from above is transformed into a place where she cannot breathe, which is to say a place from which she cannot imagine life.[15] Moreover, her husband no longer assumes a major presence in the journal, thus depriving it of its narrative trajectory. It should be noted here that the journal's vision-less narrator creates a lonely, destitute rhetorical center despite the fact that at this point in history, Germany, led by the diplomacy of Edmund von Heyking, enjoyed a surge of prestige and military contracts from Mexico.[16] But for the feminine narrator, the collapse of Old Colonialism does not produce a New Imperial vision, but rather a collapse of the possibility of travel writing altogether. Here she begins to write fiction.

Heyking's first novel, *Briefe, die ihn nicht erreichten*, was published in 1903 and became an immediate best-seller in Germany and abroad.[17] Helen Carr characterizes this period of colonial travel writing as one in which the colonial referent via ethnological verisimilitude is less important than marketplace demands for exotic writing that sells. Borrowing from Carr, one could say here that Heyking's "[. . .] projects failed in every way except as a source for another best seller." (75)[18] Indeed, the novel's utter success greeted Heyking on her post-Mexico return to Germany.[19] Colonialism has failed, but the literary market at the turn of the century teeters on the edge of despair as it hungers for the distractions via the colonial exotic. For Heyking, the new frontier is purely in her hands and in her realm, independent of her husband's failures or successes as a man of action. "Der Erfolg meines Buches, der andere vielleicht unerträglich eitel gemacht hätte, genügt gerade, um mich vor dem völligen Untergehen in Hoffnungslosigkeit zu bewahren."[20] In line with the modern world of the turn of the century, art replaces politics, and the feminine begins to assert an independent power vis-a-vis the masculine, a shift in representational and institutional systems that were crucial for envisioning any future at all.

Briefe is an epistolary novel set at the turn of the century in which a woman who travels from China via Canada to New York, then to Germany and back to New York, writes letters to a man she met while in Beijing. The man, who remains nameless, is a *Forschungsreisender* and is still working and traveling in China. The letters are sent to Shanghai, where he will presumably retrieve them when he breaks his travels there. But as it turns out, the addressee neither receives nor answers the letters; the interlocutor is only imagined. Yet we discover in the letters that he is the epitome of the humanist colonizer: he is trusted by the Chinese because he understands their culture, treats them kindly, and speaks their language. Above all, he is not driven by material greed or motivated by economic exploitation of their land or resources, as are the "real" colonizers in Beijing. Early in the novel, the narrator reminisces about her experiences in Beijing and is highly critical of practices that are associated with imperialism, including: greedy businessmen pressuring the

diplomatic process to help close deals; the rush to gain more power over and above one's colonial competitors; the use of patriotism to justify exploitative colonial ends. The narrator's critique is systemic and pessimistic. The novel makes clear that such economic exploitation of colonial lands follows upon the loss of those humanistic values and ideals that her interlocutor embodies.

His absence is created as an effect of the epistolary genre, a one-way communication that embodies its constituting lack. A perfectly melancholic narrative, it constructs at its center an insufficiency by creating an absence of the mythic good colonizer. This man, who remains nameless, represents the embodiment of masculine humanism that is a last hope for resisting newer economistic, materialistic imperial practices. The narrator writes to him of her assessment of the new era, knowing he is at one with her: "und darüber ist das Höchste und Beste in uns gestorben, das Kostbarste ist verlorengegangen. Und nun ist es zu spät!"[21] The novel's anti-imperialist critique has a double edge: while it rejects the ideology of Western superiority, it transfers its status anxiety to class issues at home. The absence of the "good German colonizer" in the novel is also a critique of nationalism as a viable identity position. For that reason, the narrator cannot go home, since the good Germany was an effect of colonial discourse, and now the nation has become the vessel for the development of the crass materialism of modernist capitalism.

A relatively short trip to Germany illustrates the loss of nationalism as a viable category for the novel's narrator. We read that her husband, mentally ill and hospitalized for several years, has died, opening the door to a legitimate relationship with her interlocutor, with whom she is clearly in love. His death precipitates a visit to Germany, including her childhood home. However, she finds her homeland and her home no longer inhabitable for her. The residence of her youth, a small estate outside of Berlin, is now a museum that exhibits how the aristocracy once lived. A mere shell of its past, it is overrun with lower middle class Berlin tourists whose presence and commentary denigrate beyond repair the meaning of domestic and upper-class values it embodied for the narrator. The class changes created by modern capitalism had destroyed all that our narrator valued. For that reason, she returns to New York, a place where she is part of a varied group of immigrants, a mix made up of idiosyncratic, often wealthy individuals. America is construed as the place of the future, a place of autonomy and opportunity. There she has freedom of movement and in the absence of her lover, a life of self-reliance. New York represents a nostalgic nowhere, a transnational distraction from the stagnated German nation and the promise to reestablish privilege in a modern, but non-national setting.

However, shortly after her return from Germany the news of the Boxer Rebellion begins to come in. The emotional intensity of the letters, and their frequency, increase as reports on the rebellion worsens. She is frantic over the well-being of her interlocutor/lover, whose whereabouts she does not know. Just as the narrator begins to believe that he is alive and that they have a future

together, the story cuts off in mid-sentence. The brother of the narrator takes over to tell of her suicide at the news that he, her beloved, was killed by the Boxers in the last battle.

Heyking's critique represents a typical anti-modern position, and even though it expresses its nostalgia by using an outdated genre, ironically the genre is also suited for a modernist juxtaposition of styles, and a mixing of facts, observations and anecdotes, an impressionistic form that refuses totalizing narration. As opposed to many anti-modern writers of the colonial era, its anti-capitalism does not develop into religiosity or fantasies of escape to the country-side. Although replete with the longings of unfulfilled love, the absence that drives the text is not resolved; instead it critiques the new age of imperialism without developing a replacement vision.

Briefe is an elegy for a vision of empire that at one time promised refuge from the perceived negative aspects of modernity. The explorer hero, which the interlocutor of the novel embodies, was a figure of Old Colonialism. He embodied, as Chris Bongie has written, "[. . .]the sovereign individual and the exotic 'outside' in which he was to have acted."[22] Heyking's novel stages his loss and therewith the disappearance of a vision for a future that protected the self from perceived threats to her place in the world, a place protected by class, gender and race categories. But the novel represents more than just a turn of the century pessimism. The masculine colonial principle dies, and its contingent feminine counter-part destroys itself as a response. Not only do both characters die, but the narrating brother, who goes back to Beijing in order to look for tokens of their life there, finds absolutely no trace of their existence in China. The finality represented by the death of these two figures can be read against the grain as a closure that by virtue of the complexity of the situation offered no individual solutions. At the same time, the obliteration of the link between the feminine travel writer to the colonial heroic venturer opens up possibilities of inventing new discourses of feminine self-fashioning that do not secede to masculine heroes the ground for their own subjectivity. Indeed, the literary texts that follow *Briefe* demonstrate that the largest representational transformation in Heyking's work is in the area of gender. In terms of class, Heyking's short stories and novels are invested in maintaining hierarchies, but in terms of gender, the female characters are independent protagonists. The short story, "Tag der Anderen," published shortly after *Briefe*, takes place in America and centers on the lives of two sisters and a niece. One sister represents an old, decadent European aristocratic femininity, while the other is an American-style new woman who works to save her niece from the stagnated culture of Prussian aristocracy by marrying her off to a young, practical and economically successful American. The main character operates independently from a masculine counterpart and actively sets about to change the old world expectations that she and her sister inherited. In two other novels, the worlds that come into play also show the effects of the failed

vision that led to the demise of journal writing. In her roman a clef, *Ille mihi*, Heyking constructs a female protagonist who marries into the stifling culture of the Prussian, land-owning aristocracy. She is saved from a life of oppression under that patriarchal order by escaping to the home of her father's former housekeeper, a politically active feminist.[23]

The opening of subjectivity to fragmentation deconstructs colonialism's linking of stable national, classed, and gendered constructions. Although Heyking's writing does not support contentions that women were more sensitive to exploitation and thus more critical of colonialism, they do show us that her positioning as a colonial writing woman was anxious, and that her journal's nervous attention to the threatening detail lead to a breakdown of conventional colonial representation. Her move to literature represented, among other things, an unintentional contemplation of the impossibility of a unified solution grounded in bordered nations and binary gendered distinctions. We continue to investigate and analyze the myriad ways in which such openings closed down again, but in the era of New Imperialism under investigation here, Heyking's texts allow us to make visible the cracks in colonial ideology and representations that accompanied Germany's colonial enterprise at the end of the nineteenth century.

[1] 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 Jan Pietersee (179). Rather than creating larger territorial colonies, such as England in India, New Imperialism saw the creation of concessions and spheres of influence that gave European countries control over markets and resources. See Jan Pieterse, *Empire and Emancipation: Power and Liberation on a World Scale*, (New York, Westport, London: Praeger, 1989). See also Chris Bongie for an analysis of the impact of the New Imperialism on literature. His main contention is that "With the coming of the New Imperialism, the translation of liberal politics into Weltpolitik, the exoticist project confronts its own impossibility." Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siecle* (Standford: Standford University Press, 1991) 39.

[2] Yixu Lu, "German Colonial Fiction on China: The Boxer Uprising of 1900," *German Life and Letters*, 59.1 (2006) 78–100.

[3] A contemporary critic wrote: "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." Dr. V. von Kayser, *Die Zukunft*, 54 (1905–06) 22.

[4] Lu, "German Colonial Fiction" 92.

[5] Lu, "German Colonial Fiction" 97.

[6] Andrew Zimmerman writes of the impact of the New Imperialism on the field of anthropology. He observes "How in the late nineteenth century, the global networks of imperialism intensified dramatically, thus threatening to collapse the cool distance that German humanists had previously kept from societies outside of Europe." (3) *Anthropology and Anti-humanism in Imperial Germany*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[7] George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (NY: New American Library, 1985).

[8] See MaryLouise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 204–5.

[9] The chapters are: Chile (1886–1889), India (1889–93), Egypt (1894–96), China I (1896–97), China II (1897–1899), Mexico (1900–1903). See: Elisabeth von Heyking, *Tagebücher aus vier Weltteilen, 1886–1904* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang) 1926.

[10] For a discussion that links colonial women with the ideology of settlement colonialism, see Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001). Her work shows the links between the ideology of settlement colonialism, a discourse of conservative Germanism, and an anti-urban (modern), pro-agrarianism.

[11] For a discussion of this era, see: Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Peterson, *Globalisation: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005) 81ff.

[12] See also Roy Bridges who writes about late nineteenth-century travel writing: "Perhaps there was a subliminal realisation that all the annexations of territory in Africa and the wresting of concessions from China were signs of weakness rather than strength." (66) Roy Bridges, "Exploration and Travel Outside of Europe (1720–1914)" *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 53–69.

[13] Slavoj Zizek, *The Abyss of Freedom. Ages of the World. F.W.J. von Schelling*, (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1997) 25.

[14] Edmund von Heyking's lack of recognition by the Foreign Office supports George Steinmetz' assertion that although the nobility were overrepresented in the colonial bureaucracy, success was dependent upon the master of bourgeois skills. See: George Steinmetz, "The Myth of an Autonomous State: Industrialists, Junkers, and Social Policy in Imperial Germany," *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870–1931*. Ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996) 257–318.

[15] 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 an attempt to deal with the anxieties associated with the loss of future visions and past communities. (503) See: Rudy Koshar, "The *Kaiserreich's* Ruins: Hope, Memory, and Political Culture in Imperial Germany," *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870–1931*. Ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996) 487–512.

[16] See: Warren Schiff, "German Military Penetration into Mexico during the Late Diaz Period," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 39.4 (1959) 568–579.

[17] Elisabeth von Heyking, *Briefe, die ihn nicht erreichten* (Berlin: Verlag von Th. Knaur Nachf. [n.d.].

[18] Helen Carr, "Modernism and Travel (1880–1940), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 70–86.

[19] The novel was published anonymously, which surrounded it with much mystery. The mystery extended to the story itself in its weaving together of two exotic topics: one public (China and the Boxer Rebellion and New York) and one private (an intimate love story). Most reviews were taken with the voyeuristic pleasures of a story that wove together the old (China) with the new (New York) with the intimate.

[20] Heyking, *Tagebücher aus vier Weltteilen* 396.

[21] Heyking, *Briefe, die ihn nicht erreichten* 39.

[22] Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin-de-Siecle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) 43.

[23] Elisabeth von Heyking, "Der Tag anderer," *Erzählungen*, (Berlin: Verlag von Gebrüder Paetel, 1905). Also, Elisabeth von Heyking, *Ille mihi. Roman*, (Berlin: Verlag von Gebrüder Paetel, 1912)