The German Merchant in Late Nineteenth Century Japan:
Nationalism, Colonialism, and Contentious Masculinity in A. R. Weber’s Novel
_Kontorrock und Konsulatsmütze_

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In this article, I reconstruct late nineteenth century discourses on race, gender and nation as they intersect in the novel _Kontorrock und Konsulatsmütze_ [Office Coat and Consular Cap] (1886). The novel is set in Japan during the period of upheaval prior to and shortly after the Meiji Restoration (1868). It was written by Arthur Richard Weber, a merchant from the duchy of Schleswig, who had lived and worked in Japan during that time. My analysis shows how colonialism, stereotypes of gender and race, nationalist sentiment and anti-capitalism, as well as the anxieties of the narrator-protagonist as a member of the “late-coming” German nation, an expatriate, and a member of the merchant class—often stereotyped as greedy and egoistic—converge in this gendered construction of the expatriate German merchant and his Others. My rereading Weber’s novel from the viewpoint outlined above also implies reservations regarding the way in which it has been treated by some previous commentators, namely, as a straightforward source on the events surrounding the “opening” of Japan, on the history of Germans in Japan, and on life in the treaty ports. Such an approach has tended to coincide with, on the one hand, laudation of the author as an early Japanophile and, on the other, a lack of sensitivity to the racism, colonialism and misogyny implicit in this text.

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The text that I engage with in this essay is not a newly discovered source. _Kontorrock und Konsulatsmütze_ (The [Tradesman’s] Office Coat and the Consular Cap), subtitled “A Tale on Life Overseas”, was written by Arthur Richard Weber (1841-1920), a merchant from the duchy of Schleswig, under the pseudonym of Arw(ed) Solano. His “tale”, written from the perspective of the narrator-protagonist Herbert Flügge, draws on Weber’s own experience of life in Japan from the early 1860s to the mid 1870s. Since the book was first published in Hamburg in 1886, four new editions or reprints (Solano, 1890; Weber, 1939; 1973; 1981) as well as a Japanese translation (Bebê, 1997) have appeared.\(^1\)

_Kontorrock und Konsulatsmütze_ has been quoted unceasingly in German as well as Japanese literature, and beyond, as a source on the events following the
"opening" of Japan, on the history of Germans in Japan, and on life in the treaty ports. To be sure, large parts of the novel's storyline seem to be based on actual facts and experiences, and many of the characters are only thinly veiled representations of identifiable people. However, the sustained interest in Kontorrock und Konsulatsmitze as a historical source appears to be inspired not merely by a desire to reconstruct the facts, but at least in some cases, by a celebrative approach to the history of Japanese-German relations. The 1939 edition appeared in Tokyo during the years of the formation of the Axis alliance, namely, in between the conclusion of the Anti-Comintern Pact (1936) and the signing of the Tripartite Pact (1940). The timing of the second Tokyo edition (1973) is no less suggestive, as it was published to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the German East Asiatic Society. Although numerous critical works on the modern history of the Japanese-German relationship have appeared since the 1990s, the subsistence of a glorifying rhetoric is exemplified by recent praise of A.R. Weber's alleged "respect" for Japan and his effort to understand Japanese culture (Shippuru, 2006: 35). This kind of approach disavows above all the novel's pervasive sexism and racism, which I will highlight and discuss in this essay. Furthermore, it goes hand in hand with an extremely selective treatment of the source, which is epitomized by the amputations that the text has been subjected to since its first publication.

The narrated time of the novel spans the years from 1863 to 1877 (Weber, 1939: 361, 373; editor's footnotes), thus covering the most decisive and turbulent years in the nation-building history of both Germany and Japan. However, the text's concern with what constitutes a nation, the German nation in particular, is not, primarily, an effect of this setting (and, consequently, of the author's experiences in Japan), but rather a reflection of discourses of German national identity of the mid 1880s. As the author clearly states in his prologue, his book is intended as a colonialist manifesto and policy guide.

Germany's "belated" colonialism, which only in 1884 became an official, government-sponsored project, was characterized by victim consciousness toward the imperialism of other European powers that had, supposedly, obstructed German unification (finally achieved in 1871) and had rendered the German state "effeminate and impotent" (Zantop, 1997: 199-200). This was compensated for, on the one hand, by assertions of moral and cultural superiority, and, on the other, by aggressive affirmations of virility which, within the German nation, translated into a particularly strong emphasis on gendered spheres, class divisions, and ethnic or racial differences (Friedrichsmeyer et al., 1998: 22; Reagin, 2001).

Japan, on the other hand, seemed to be predestined to colonisation but escaped this fate by national unification (which was formally achieved three years prior to German unification), and by its tour de force of modernisation and industrialisation. From the German perspective, then, Japan could be viewed, ambivalently, as a fellow latecomer in terms of nation-building and modernisation and/or as an unruly colonial subject, or upstart.

Weber's novel provides an example of the inseparable nexus between colonial discourse and European inventions of the gendered, classed, and racialised, or ethnicised nation (Cooper and Stoler, 1997; McClintock, 1995; Pierson, 2000). More specifically, it documents one aspect of the late nineteenth century encounter between a European nation and an Asian nation who both deviated from the more typical patterns of nation- and empire-building, or ways of responding to imperialism and colonialism. While the text can be seen to partake in common Western interweavings of gender, nation, class and race, it also reveals notable differences, which may be traced to that particular historical constellation.

By analysing how contemporary categories of difference intersect in the ambiguous constructs of self and other that emerge from the narrative of Kontorrock und Konsulatsmitze, I endeavour to critically historicize this text.

II. Contradictory Images of the Expatriate Merchant

Previous research has demonstrated how colonialism
was implicated in – particularly bourgeois – politics of class (e.g., Thorne, 1997; Hall, 1992). Class politics was also gender politics, producing class specific femininities and masculinities. If one looks at how Weber’s novel constructs the expatriate German merchant, a complicated and contradictory web of gendered, classed, and ethnicised ascriptions emerges.

1. Virtuous Exemplars

At one level, the text portrays a very favourable image of the German tradesman. Dankwart, for example, the boss of the Yokohama branch office of the German trading house that the protagonist Flügge works for, is portrayed as an “immensely likeable” person, who “had in his whole being something that was aristocratically aloof and, at the same time, compelling, [a quality] that distinguished the merchant of intellect and self-respect” (38). Aristocracy, here, is not just a metaphor for social and intellectual refinement but is to be understood quite literally as matching (or even surpassing) the aristocrat in moral integrity, capability and social status.

Such a reading is supported by the characters of two German noblemen, who are introduced as opposites to Dankwart. One of them, von Felden, is the run-away son of a Prussian general, or at least that is what he claims to be. The Prussian consul von Stahl (who is the second one of the two aristocratic counterparts to merchant Dankwart) is at a loss in terms of what to do with von Felden, but Dankwart helps him out by offering to employ von Felden until von Stahl verifies the young man’s claim. Von Felden turns out to be arrogant, cynical and egocentric. He appears intensely humiliated by the manual labour he is made to perform by the “crowd of shopkeepers” (Krämervolk) (69), for whom he shows deep contempt. Consul von Stahl (i.e., “steel”), on the other hand, is portrayed as a true nobleman: selfless, honourable, brave, and humane. He is also the exemplary public servant, to whom “the honour of my country counts more than my own and other people’s personal interest” (76). At the same time, von Stahl is shown to depend on Dankwart, the tradesman, not just for personal favours but for information, for new ideas and for companionship.

This construct of a dichotomy between the merchant and the aristocrat, and the strategic reversal of the hierarchy implicit in that opposition epitomize the identity politics of the nineteenth century German bourgeoisie, at large. The same applies to how the relationship between expatriate merchants and missionaries is conceived, namely as one of “reciprocal hostility” (395) resulting from class difference. The missionaries’ supposed lack of “cultivation of the heart and mind” [Herzens- und Geistesbildung] (394), which they are said to compensate for by arrogance and pretension, is attributed to their being “recruited […] mainly from the peasantry” (395). Their arrogance, in turn, is rejected by the merchants, who “consider themselves to be far superior in terms of education [Bildung]” (395).

The text’s intense concern with the virtue and vice of the tradesman, which will be analysed in detail, below, is not just a manifestation of politics of class identity, but can be seen to refer to a discourse critical of laissez­faire-capitalism and its perceived epitome, the egoistic, self-serving entrepreneur. Anti-capitalism constituted a strong current in late nineteenth century German society, which was struggling with the social upheavals accompanying the transition to a market economy (cf. Lange, 2007).

In the novel, the protagonist in his mature stage represents the very model of the virtuous expatriate merchant, designed to oppose the image of the avaricious and exploitative businessman lacking in human qualities and cultural sophistication. Flügge prides himself on possessing bravery and self-reliance, insight, and “knowledge of human nature” (Menschenkenntnis) (262), all of which are necessary to succeed as a “pioneer of the European merchant class” (187). At the same time, he emerges as a knowledgeable Japanologist and true friend of the Japanese people, and a wise and well-informed advisor to the Japanese authorities. He is a protector of the weak against the strong, and by saving a battered woman from her violent husband, he proves himself as a true “Gentleman” (35). He involves himself in talks with European men of academic training and philosophical inclinations, immerses himself in reading “books, new and old”, and “initiate[s] further discussions” about what he has read (314).
In arguments with religious personalities, Christian and other, and at the deathbed of a friend, he turns out to be an eloquent philosopher and spiritual teacher. Moreover, he presents himself as the true patriot, which he deems “proven by the many sacrifices I made” to protect “the honour of my country” (345). He also stands out as the true German, who excels in the alleged German virtue of keeping the law and resisting any chance to rob and exploit, even in the “wilderness”, where there is noone to enforce such moral behaviour (212-213).

The protagonist’s own story can be seen as one of self-made bourgeois success, propelling the “striving man” (179) from social stigma and economic insecurity as a fatherless half-orphan (I) to respectability and affluence as an independent merchant, interlaced with elements of the German genre of the Bildungsroman, a narrative of individual growth (Kontje, 1993). The field where Flügge (i.e., “fledged”) has to serve his “apprenticeship” (119), prove himself and develop his potentials is constituted not only by the trading office but by the transoceanic world at large, represented by the remoteness of Japan, the strangeness of its customs, and the hazardousness of its political situation and natural environment. At the same time, the narrative reveals aspects of a quest for a better life beyond the struggles and contradictions of modern society. This quest was, in the Wilhelmine Empire, epitomised by the phenomenon of mass emigration, a social reality that was, again, reflected in the popularity of the exotic-ethnographic adventure novel (exotisch-ethnographischer Abenteuerroman), which described a pilgrimage into the exotic wilderness, providing healing power and a space where the hero finds and proves his true self (Berman, 2002; Jeglin, 2001: 38-44). Weber’s novel borrows important elements from this genre, and it seems no accident that on one of its very first pages (6) the narrator-protagonist refers to James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking series, which was first translated into German between 1824 and 1841 and constituted a prominent model of the exotic-ethnographic adventure novel (Jeglin, 2001: 40).

There are also other traces of literary traditions. The spontaneous moral behaviour of the protagonist, for example, which an amazed American character deems to be typically German and “no business for us from the States” (212), points to the motif of the ‘noble bandit’ which also influenced the late nineteenth century German adventure novel. In this popularized Kantian theme, the bandit, or the adventurer, constitutes a model of self-discipline, who abandons the pursuit of personal advantage and, instead, submits himself to the universal principle of moral reason, thus “represent[ing] the true collective will in the face of the imperfectness of the actual conditions” (Jeglin, 2001: 36).

2. The Roughneck and the Profiteer

However, the full realization of the heroic, civilized and moral image of the German merchant is thwarted by the appearance of diverging exemplars. These figures are not as easily identifiable Others as the complacent Dutch traders of the “old school” (109), or the ruthless American ship captain who recommends to “squeeze” and “pluck” the Japanese (212-213). The apparent problem with many of the less than positive incarnations of the foreign trader in Japan is that they are German themselves, and therefore enabled to contradict and sully the ideal image of the German merchant.

The two types that emerge in potential contradiction to the model German merchant may be referred to as the roughneck and the profiteer. With regard to the roughneck, what complicates the scheme is that this type is constructed as a developmental stage pertaining to the young clerk (including the protagonist during his early years in Japan), although some characters are shown to resist growing up even after having set up their own business. On the whole, the roughneck is constructed as a sympathetic character, disrespectful but not totally irresponsible. He romps around with his gang, the “bunch of German rascals” (deutsche Rasselbande) (135), and his escapades are directed toward the authorities of the foreign traders’ community, Japanese government officials and, at times, his own superiors. His activities are portrayed as deliberate breaches of law and order with the aim to scandalise and ridicule the establishment, to “outdo his rivals” (114), or to simply overcome boredom, but the suggestion is that these transgressions are justified by the unfairness and arbitrariness of the system or certain individuals.
While the roughneck thus appears exempt from harsh criticism, owing to his righteousness and youthful condition, he also stands for what the narrator describes as a typical trait of the expatriate merchant, namely, “self-containedness of character” (Abgeschlossenheit der Charaktere), or “originality” (87). Notably, “originality” and “self-containedness” are not valued as particularly favourable character traits. Although the narrator seems to regret that “people who, rather than retaining their original character, develop this character in all its aspects and express it with a vengeance” are hard to find in Europe (87-88), that same originality is considered to be responsible for the emotional isolation experienced by the protagonist. The self-contained personality of the expatriate is diagnosed to be the result of the “individual’s struggle against his surroundings” and of everyone’s “ruthlessly” pursuing “one’s own immediate interests” (87). Such behaviour is deemed imperative for survival at the frontier of trade, but, at the same time, it is revealed to be a basic flaw of the merchant class, which in Europe cannot be acted out “because, there, the individual class was not totally dissociated from the other classes of society and did not have to fend for itself like it did here […] in this settlement [Niederlassung] which only served [the interests of] trade and was dominated by trade” (87).

These thoughts on the individual, class, and society point to the above mentioned discourse of anti-capitalism and social-collectivism. They also reveal the contradiction inherent in the endeavour to, on the one hand, establish the superiority of the German “vanguard of trade” (236) and, on the other, to diagnose and heal the wounds inflicted and suffered by that “vanguard”. In the light of the narrator’s speculations, the roughneck emerges as the dupe of individualism, which is prescribed to him by his profession or class and by the circumstances of the trading colony: a victim locked into the prison of his own “originality”. The character in the novel that most closely corresponds to this idea is the protagonist’s friend, Ballerich. He is portrayed as the “most riotous” (109) of the Nagasaki gang, whom even the German consul “was secretly afraid of” (121). In contrast to most of his comrades, Ballerich never abandons the waywardness of his youth, and the image conveyed of the self-employed merchant in his thirties is that of a compulsive rowdy, who “had to join in every fight that he saw” (243). Nevertheless, Ballerich is not a villain. It is said that “his heart had remained tender” (285), and ultimately he emerges as a tragic character. When Flügge sees him again after a two years interval, he is horrified by how a “disruption of the nervous system” due to alcoholism has changed “this strong man” (235-236). Before long, Ballerich fights his last “battle” (284). At his deathbed, Flügge comforts him and, at the same time, sums up the tragedy of his friend’s life: “Are you so desperate to be able to continue your struggle as an individual [Einzelwesen] against everything and everyone around you?” (284). Ultimately, it is suggested that Ballerich’s tragedy is that of the tradesman as a class, and of modern man at large.

While the roughneck is characterized as a sympathetic rebel and victim, the second type that subverts the ideal of the German merchant is painted as almost unequivocally negative. This type, which may be called the profiteer, represents unrestrained materialism and egotism, the supposed cardinal flaws of the merchant class. He is most clearly personified in the figure of the “the typical honorary consul” (der echte Wahlkonsul) (350), whose insignia, the consular cap, appears in the novel’s title. Honorary consuls, also introduced as “merchant-consuls” (kaufmännischer Konsul) (53), were usually private businessmen, who officiated as representatives of their country in remote regions of the non-European world. The alleged crime of “the typical honorary consul” is that, instead of faithfully and impartially serving his nation and his expatriate countrymen, he “makes himself a henchman of his own private interests” (345) and abuses the knowledge and privilege that he has access to as a result of his function to outwit and harass his business rivals. Flügge’s associate Diedeler in Niigata exemplifies this type. He is portrayed as greedy and, at the same time, incapable and indolent, a combination that makes him all the more inclined to resort to dishonest and unfair methods. Moreover, Diedeler is shown to rely on nepotism, and to bask in the glory of his own authority to the point of absurdity, calling his compatriots “my subjects

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It should be noted that not all the honorary consuls appearing throughout the narrative are, in the above sense, "typical". Sometimes they are presented as dupes of the "deplorable system of investing [one among] business rivals as consul" (164). Also, the profit-seeking part seems to be one of two souls dwelling in any merchant's breast. Referring to himself, Flügge speaks of "the tradesman within [in mir]", who is "roused" in certain situations, thereby displacing more affectionate impulses and emotions (210). Similarly, the honorary consul residing in Hakodate is described as being divided between the inner "voice of the patriot" (urging him to uphold German national interests by turning "the whole of Jesso [i.e., Hokkaido] into a German colony"), on the one hand, and the "tradesman" within, who stands for the impulse to make quick money, leave the remote outpost and "return to his homeland as a made man", on the other (193). Notably, when his friend chooses the latter, the narrator does not condemn him, but comments: "Who would blame him? Not I, although it is still a pity!" (193).

As shown by the above discussion of the nobleman and the peasant-missionary as opposites to the tradesman, the purposeful juxtaposition of different types of merchants, and the narrator's deliberations on the nature of trade and the tradesman, the contentious identity of the merchant emerges as a significant and, as suggested by the "tradesman's office coat" in the title, intentional subject of the narrative.

In contrast, the male sex of the merchant and the almost exclusively male composition of the expatriate community remain unmarked up to the point when the protagonist rejoices upon hearing his "mother tongue form a woman's lips" (156), and mentions the "culturizing" influence of some recently arrived "beautiful ladies" (162). Nevertheless, Weber's construction of the German merchant's identity is also a discourse of male identity. Masculinity, indeed, attracts attention as a ubiquitous theme of Kontorrock und Konsulatsmütze. I view the emerging constructs of masculine identity as "contentious" (cf. Welskopp 2004: 273) in that they are self-consciously embracing and, at the same time, criticizing the values of "hegemonic masculinity" (R.W. Connell, 2005), which are embodied by the nobleman, the Prussian government official, and the established German bourgeois of the metropolitan centre. Masculinity as it is constructed in the novel, thus, echoes and contradicts contemporary class discourse. Furthermore, it intersects in numerous ways with the categories of nation and ethnicity, or race.

1. Masculinity as Struggle

"A man's dignity" (männliche Würde), according to one of the protagonist's friends, is determined by his being "proud of what he has made out of himself" rather than "what others have made him into" (382). However, this process of "making something out of oneself" is described as a constant struggle (Kampf). The "individual's struggle against his surroundings" (87) thus appears to be not just characteristic of the merchant class but constitutive of a "man".

The theme of struggle or contest pervades the text in diverse modes. One frequent pattern is the word fight, occurring between friends or peers as well as between foes. Among friends across nations and religious denominations it may take the form of an intellectual "controversy" (225) or "dispute" (314), serving to expound the narrator's worldview and, at the same time, establish his identity as an intellectual. Another repeated motif is a kind of bantering among peers, which may mutate into rather abusive molestations. Finally, between rivals like, for instance, Flügge and his associate, Diedeler, the word fight is portrayed as a veritable martial art, designed to wipe out the opponent by "let[ting] him make an absolute fool of himself" (333). Quick-wittedness and sarcasm are what the protagonist describes as peculiarities of his own character, and he maintains that the competitive and individualistic environment that he found himself in, in Japan, induced him "to sharpen [these peculiarities] into a weapon that enabled me to cut my way through life, and to clear away any obstacles" (88).

However, words are not the only weapons that come to use in the struggle of the "vanguard" or, literally, "those
who fight in the forefront (Vorkämpfer) of trade” (236).
In fact, there are many instances where the text seems to be linking masculine identity to the possession and use of physical weapons: Enfield rifles and hunting guns, revolvers and cannons; sabres and, of course, Japanese swords; as well as some less dignifying armaments like an axe and a club.

From the imagery of the axe and the club – the former being the tool by which an abusive drunkard kills his “poor, poor, miserable” wife (37), and the latter being used by ruffian Ballerich to scare the consul out of prosecuting him for some other violent lapse – it becomes conceivable that the link between weaponry and masculinity is not a straightforwardly positive one. Armed combat involving the protagonist and his companions, even if in self-defence, seems to be always either stopped short of actual occurrence, like when Flügge, “fortunately, resisted the temptation to make use of his revolver” against a stone-throwing Japanese crowd (204), or climaxing in a more or less comical disaster, like the enterprise of a multinational militia of foreign residents, which ends up going to battle against its allies instead of its enemy.

To be sure, the warlike pastime of hunting is imagined favourably, as an opportunity for a man to recuperate from the struggles of everyday life by re-immersing himself in nature. Moreover, stalking game together is portrayed as an occasion for the protagonist to enjoy friendship with men of different nationalities, races, religious denominations and social classes, as personified by his favourite hunting mates: a Japanese Buddhist priest, a French Catholic priest, and a group of Japanese peasants. Incidentally, “hunting fever” (323) is also described to occur when a human being is the object of the chase, but the situation changes when Flügge “side[s] with the game” (323) and thereby makes a decision that shall, eventually, determine his good fortune.

While there are, thus, positively connotated modes of struggle or contest like the intellectual debate or hunting, the majority are portrayed to be immoral, destructive or self-destructive and somehow against nature. Nevertheless, both appear to be part of the masculine condition. When the protagonist maintains that “life without struggle is inconceivable” (391), the implication of “life” seems to be “life as a man”.

2. Feminised Men
Although, on the surface, the association of masculinity with struggle prevails, the text keeps returning to something that appears to exist beyond the masculine propensity for competition and combat, like the capability to “act and feel kindly”, which may be concealed behind a man’s “rough façade” (75); “inner sensitivity behind outer crudeness” (96); or a “tender heart” behind a “rough outer appearance” (285). In the same vein, a man may have to “control” himself “in order not to break out into sobbing” (156); or his desperate effort to “suppress the sobbing” may not be successful, as “nature assert[s] her right” (285). A man’s tender emotions may surface on the occasion of parting from “places that were connected with joyful or painful memories” (400) or from an old comrade. Apparently, such emotions are associated with “nature”, which constitutes the great restorative and liberating Other to culture, or civilisation. In the above quote, nature is conceived as being buried within, but in other contexts it appears as “the great outdoors” (literally, “unfettered nature”: die freie Natur) (400) existing outside of the individual, who is fettered by civilisation in the guise of masculinity.

Also, in many of the cases when a man is shown to feel kindly or tenderly, these sentiments are associated with a woman. Notably, the woman that most frequently appears as the object of empathy and love is the mother, “who gave [her son] his life and guided his first steps with her loving hand” (285) or supported her son’s striving for independence. Closely associated with the image of the mother, and similarly connotated, is a man’s yearning for the “holy” (385) memories of childhood, home, and homeland (Heimat). As with nature, these women and these surroundings can be seen to exist (or to have existed) outside of the individual’s imagination, but in most of the cases they are represented as memories, and hence as reflections of the Other that reside within the individual, like “old dreams” (156), cropping up to the surface periodically. The chimerical character of these entities is also underscored by the fact
that the protagonist’s own mother was a “rough and harsh” woman, who had “no word of encouragement” and “no caresses” for her children (4), a lack that is, in turn, associated with the loss of her husband and the family home.

Significantly, it occurs only once that a man’s (namely, the protagonist’s) emotions toward a woman are described in terms of romantic passion. Moreover, these feelings end up being thwarted by their very object. Incidentally, the nationality of this unruly object is “not German but American” (361): although, outwardly, “Miss Belling, from New York” (358) seems to be a dream come true of beauty and grace, her target-oriented search for an eligible bachelor confirms the protagonist’s prejudice about American women’s “loose morals” (361). Noteworthy is the masculine quality of the exchanges between “Miss” Belling and Flügge that resemble the word fights between him and some of his male opponents. Ultimately, it becomes clear that this woman cannot soothe the protagonist’s feeling of “emptiness” (365). He concludes that he wants to get married, “but not to a Miss Belling” (366), and his wish “to establish my own home [Heim]” (365) converges with the desire to return to his German Heimat.

The Other to civilisation, society and masculinity, which emerges as the object of yearning, as an “old dream”, or as “paradise, luring from afar” (156), can thus be construed as an amalgam of nature, femininity, family (or the home), the homeland and the nation, components that mirror and reinforce each other. The male individual susceptible to this feminising “lure” is by no means a negative, emasculated figure. Rather, he is the true, albeit potentially tragic, hero, as personified by Ballerich and by the protagonist himself.

However, there are also feminine traits in men that are clearly intended to compromise the respective character’s integrity. The most conspicuous examples are Flügge’s rival, Diedeler, and Diedeler’s colleague van Kalv, the Dutch honorary consul in Niigata. Diedeler is characterised as “agile, small” (229), loquacious, and preoccupied with his outer appearance. His agility and loquaciousness seem to be symptoms of his weak-mindedness and of his inability to think and work methodically. By his adulatory speech he appears to be compensating for his “understanding and knowing nothing” (232) and for his ensuing dependence on others. Even more explicitly emasculated than Diedeler is van Kalv who, when ridiculed by his opponents, “starts to weep” and to “sob” (247) and, on another occasion, “has tears running down his cheeks” (254). His farcical attempt to “pull himself together” (literally, “to masculinate himself”: sich ermannen) (247) only underscores his effeminate disposition.

3. Images of Women and the Nation
The dichotomisation of femininity into a positively connotated, potentially restorative and redemptive but suppressed category, on the one hand, and a damaging, undermining category, on the other, is also reflected in how the protagonist portrays the few female characters that he meets in Japan. Archetypal representatives of the worthy but victimized type are two young mothers, who both meet their death either through the hands, or at the fault of their husband. One is a (presumably, American) woman who, when her killer-husband, an American pilot, beats her, accepts her fate, “quietly weeping” (35). The other one is Oharru, a “kind and modest” (218) Japanese woman, who follows her husband into death by suicide after he is executed for murder. At the other end of the scale, there are the man-eating “Miss” Belling and a second femme fatale, namely, Dorothea Sarah Rosalie Veitel, the self-professed widow of a Jewish shopkeeper. Although this character, who represents a ludicrous caricature of a Jewish woman, does not have a direct bearing on the protagonist as Miss Belling does, she is nevertheless shown to be a potential threat to men, blandishing them and appropriating their fortunes by false pretences.

More ambiguous and not quite matching either of the above categories are the representations of the only two among the women encountered in Japan that are explicitly identified as German (in contrast to the cursorily mentioned wives of some expatriate merchants, who may or may not be German). First, there is “Miss” (Fräulein) Brigitte, who is the housekeeper of one of the German merchants in Yokohama and has been secretly aspiring to marry her master. Her hopes are defeated, and she gets fired for voicing them at all.
The protagonist is not without sympathy for her, describing the meal she cooked as tasting “excellent” and “doing her credit” (79). Nevertheless, her attempt to gain recognition as a subject vis-à-vis a group of drunk men, her “reddened face […] framed by a white bed cap” (81) appearing at the window connecting kitchen and dining room, is rendered ridiculous. While her mistake seems to be one of class transgression, it is also suggested that her master, a confirmed bachelor, eager only to “amuse [himself] and enjoy life” (355), is not without fault.

The second of the two German women is “Missis” (Frau) S., who belongs to an American theatrical company that happens to make a stopover in Nagasaki. Mention of her German husband confirms her respectability, in spite of her dishonourable profession. In contrast to Fräulein Brigitte, who delights Flügge with her German cookery, Frau S. enthrals him with words, namely, by enabling him to hear his “mother tongue from a woman’s lips” and to listen to her “touching upon topics entirely different from what was usual in our circles” (156). Moreover, when she sings “some of those cherished German songs that were so familiar to us since our childhood”, the protagonist’s feelings are rendered “tender and melancholy” (156).

Similar to the pilot’s wife and Oharru, the two German women, in one way or another, represent the potentially redemptive but suppressed Other of the ailing masculine subject and society, the deprivation of the two German women can thus be seen to imply something about the condition of the German nation, which, like German femininity, has yet to come into its own. In this worldview, only a femininity that is restored to its allegedly natural state of domesticity and motherhood will be able to redeem the impaired and troubled male. And only a strong and healthy nation can bring about such transformations.

IV. The Part and the Whole

As suggested in the two previous sections, a central theme of the novel is the relationship of the individual or a particular group (e.g., the merchant class) to an imagined Whole. This Whole is frequently coined in quasi-religious terms, as “something sublime and omnipotent” (154), the “mental force” (390), or “divine energy […] that pervades the universe” (389), or as the great chain of life extending from “the ancestors” to “the many who will come after” (154). In its more worldly renditions, the Whole appears as an alleged “sense of a shared identity [Zusammengehörigkeit] of all Germans” (178), the “undeniable” fact of “being from the same stock” [stammverwandt] (125, 313) and, finally, after the protagonist’s “dream [of German unification] has come true”: the “Empire” that “can never wither now” (312).

An important concern of the narrator-protagonist is the expatriates’ belonging to this Whole, which he affirms by creating the impression of the emigrant community’s real-time participation in the German nation’s trepidation and exultation in face of the events leading up to the forging of the Wilhelmine Empire, and by emphasising the expatriates’ observance of ceremonies like “the Prussian King’s Birthday” and Christmas “around the lighted Christmas tree” (178).

The protagonist himself is fashioned as a prime sufferer of German disunity, being born as a member of the German-speaking majority of Schleswig, the duchy that, together with the duchy of Holstein, became the subject of the so-called Schleswig-Holstein question and successive wars over whether the duchies belonged to Denmark or to the German Confederation. When Flügge
enquires of the Prussian consul how he, as someone from Schleswig-Holstein (Schleswig-Holsteiner), should act in a certain situation, he is, to his great dismay, informed that “Schleswig-Holsteiners do not exist. [...] You are a Dane” (60). His excitement, “when the news of the peace agreement [Peace of Prague, 1866], the establishment of the North German Federation, and my fatherland’s [i.e., Schleswig’s] incorporation into Prussia reached us” (175), finds expression in a self-composed patriotic ballad.

However, the ideal relationship between the nation and the – male – individual or, more precisely, the expatriate merchant, is a contentious subject. On the one hand, imaginations of the perfect union of Part and Whole appear throughout the text. A vivid representation of this ideal is “the raindrop which, from its cloud, falls back into the ocean”, illustrating “the relationship of the human mind to the reasoning and ever striving divine spirit” (391). In more profane terms, this ideal is represented by the supposedly typical German who, of his own free will, submits himself to universal morality, or the collective will. On the other hand, there are numerous indications of a rather troubled relationship between the Part and the Whole, and even suggestions that the individual’s submission may not always be desirable.

One example is the statement of one of Flügge’s Dutch friends that “the German, for hundreds of years, has been accustomed to subordination and dependence to the extent that, even after having tasted freedom for a while, he will at once fall back into his inbred habits, as soon as the stimulus ceases, which had forced him to swim for himself in order not to drown” (382). Flügge counters that “I will never be able to forget how to swim for myself [...] to me, the uninhibited arm movement has become too much of a necessity of life” (382), thus implicitly consenting to his friend’s critique of submitting to a given collectivity.

Another instance of dissociation from the ideal of the Part’s merging into the Whole is the above quoted dilemma of the merchant-consul of Hakodate, between patriotic self-sacrifice and commercial self-interest. The narrator’s explicit abstinence from presenting a definite judgement concerning this problem points to a more general theme of an unresolved tension between patriotism and individual advancement, or between the nation-state and the male individual. Ultimately, then, the predicament of the “vanguard of trade” appears to be one manifestation of the dilemma characterizing the relationship between the Part and the Whole.

The key offered by the text to this seeming contradiction between a desire for assimilation into totality, on the one hand, and an emphasis on self-reliance, on the other, is that the choice may be constrained by the quality of that totality. Namely, the totality in question, i.e., the German nation, seems to leave much to be desired. This is suggested by the more or less deprived and homeless state of the two German women figuring in the novel, who, by virtue of their sex, should be embodying Heimat. It is also insinuated by the desolation of Ballerich, who, incidentally, shares the predicament of Frau S., as he is said to have emigrated to the United States before coming to Japan, and is thus labelled a “half-American” (121). The most obvious symptom of the nation’s ailment, however, is the appearance of veritable traitors of their country like von Felden and Diedeler. Honorary consul Diedeler’s unmanly personality and corrupt conduct, in particular, suggest that the condition of the German nation has not much improved, even after the foundation of the Reich in 1871. The accuracy of these symptoms, appearing on the nation’s most peripheral parts, is confirmed when Flügge’s decision to return to his Heimat is met with a friend’s warning to “be careful [...] not to be robbed” as “these days, everyone rushes forward by giant strides, and the next thing you know is that you are assailed and whatever you are not holding on to with a vicelike grip is whisked away” (383).

It appears, then, that however great the desire for unity and convergence, the political and social realities are frustrating these aspirations. Nevertheless, the prospect of this-worldly redemption is not abandoned. Rather, in a slightly perplexing move, the delivery of that promise is assigned to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck who, according to the protagonist, “knows what he wants and is solely at the helm”, and who “will bring about change despite all impending obstacles, for his adamant gaze is on the objective of welding Germany together
inseparably and making her great and powerful” (350). The introduction of this dele ex machina may seem astonishing also in so far as, according to my discussion in Section III, the redemptive Other of the alienated masculine subject is represented by feminine-connoted concepts, whereas the so-called Iron Chancellor to whom the protagonist finally turns is an epitome of masculinity.

It is the very figure of Bismarck that provides the clue to this puzzle. If one assumes that the Chancellor stands for the German state rather than for the nation, then a dichotomy emerges, which is familiar from the contemporary philosophical, political and popular discourse: between, on the one hand, a masculine-connoted, strong, protective and aggressive state and, on the other, a feminine-connoted nation, which, for all its magnetism and charm, seems fragile, unstable and in need of protection (cf. Blättler, 2000). Reflective of this duality are the masculine implications of some of the above quoted manifestations of the Whole: omnipotence; “mental force”; patrilineal concepts of “stock”, or lineage; and, not least, “empire”.

Harking back to the dilemma of the male individual, the lone fighter and adventurer, who longs for reconciliation with the feminine Whole but is prevented from doing so by the afflicted condition of the latter, it becomes clear that a strong masculine state is called for as the guarantor of the nation’s well-being and, thus, of the Part’s merging into the Whole. Furthermore, as shown by the literature on gender and nationalism, there is a link between gendered discourses of the collectivity, or nation, and the subjection and control of women (e.g., Hunt, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 1997: 45-46). The misogyny pervading all levels of this novel also points to this correspondence. Misogyny not only informs the portrayal of female characters and “effeminate” male individuals, but also is evident in the purported effeminacy of the ethnic, racial or national Other, which will be addressed in the following section.

V. Germany and Its Others

The text produces otherness, not only in terms of gender and class but, perhaps more conspicuously, by constructions of national character, ethnicity, or race.

1. Others Within the German Nation

This differencing strategy works not only to delineate the contours of the nation, but also to generate identities within, like “the crude Mecklenburger” or “the distrustful and sarcastic, but always good-humoured East Prussian” (71). Such characterizations can be read as sympathetic affirmations of Heimat, implying a horizontal alignment of regional idiosyncrasies within the greater German nation. However, there are also less appreciative constructs of difference, like that between the “Northerner” (Nordländer) and the “Lusatian” (Lausitzer) (i.e., man from Lusatia, an Eastern region divided between Prussia and Saxony, with a large Slavic minority, the Sorbs) (229). The latter is synonymous with Diedeler, which makes the Lusatian an identifier for all those negative and effeminate traits attributed to Flügge’s adversary. The Northerner is, accordingly, embodied by the protagonist who, in wilful and ironic contrast to the “mercurial” (230) Lusatian, portrays himself as “slow and systematic” (231). Notably, the topoi that establish the Lusatian’s otherness – for example, his propensity to bargain where the Northerner would prefer straightforward decisions (233) – are Orientalising as well as feminising.

Arguably, the strategy of identification and isolation of the Slavic Lusatian, with the objective to distinguish the true German, connects to the novel’s anti-Semitic tendencies. The “meagre Jews” scrambling hysterically for securities put up for sale by the “fat Jews”, at the Amsterdam stock exchange (15), the “Polish-Prussian Jew” by the stereotypical name of Abraham Veitel,9 who “resorted to various artifices in order to procure [the funds he was lacking]” (182), Sarah, the cunning “widow” of the latter, and, not least, the rendition of “Jesus” as someone “who belonged to a race that [the Western people themselves] do not think highly of” (225) foreshadow the blatant anti-Semitism of Überseer daheim (“Expatriates at Home”) (Solano, 1888; cf. Lange, 2007: 141-150), the sequel to Kontorrock und Konsulatsmüte.
2. Western Nations as Others

In contrast to the racialised representation of “Jewish filth” (Solano 1888: 299) and the Lusatian, other Europeans are addressed as “kinsmen” (Stammesbrüder) (286). Even the portrayal of their allegedly negative traits is, in general, more sympathetic, and subject to individual modification. While there are, for example, conceited Englishmen, who “are not to be messed with if one depends on them” (72), decadent and effeminate Dutchmen, and a “fanatic French imperialist” (45), these negative images are countered by characters like Trappers, the sincere and moderate British consul; three pro-German Dutchmen, whom the protagonist “learned to respect and to love” (313); and the French Jesuit Bertrand, who attracts Flügge by his idealism and his “refinement of sentiment and manners” (392). Such affinities are explained to be “Germanic” rather than just European, allegedly resulting from the German and the Dutch peoples’ belonging to the “same stock” (313), or from the “German blood” flowing in the Frenchman’s veins (393). This engaging attitude seems to represent a deviation or shift from common depictions of the colonialist arrogance and cruelty of other European nations as a background for assertions of German innocence, moral superiority and victimhood (Zantop, 1997: 95-97).

The relatively friendly portrayal of other European nations and the contrasting perniciousness displayed towards perceived internal enemies can perhaps be seen to mirror the contemporary political and popular discourse, which was epitomised by Bismarck’s diplomatic achievements on the European stage, on the one hand, and his simultaneous crackdown on minorities like Polish, Jews and Sorbs (or Lusatians), on the other.11

Strikingly, although “German blood” could have been attributed to many Americans, as well, positive characterisations of this nation are conspicuously absent from the text. Materialism, aggressiveness and immorality are not only displayed by “Miss” Belling but appear to be the main flaws of American men, as well. In particular, the Americans’ alleged lack of appreciation of nature as well as culture, and their cruel and depreciatory attitude towards the “Japs” (211) serve to, once again, affirm German idealism, cultural refinement, and humanitarianism. More than anything, and even more clearly than the Jew and the Lusatian, America represents the dark side of modernity, in which the merchant is also deeply implicated by virtue of his profession: the unconstrained struggle for survival, only to be won by the fittest and most ruthless.

3. Japan as Other

The anti-modern, anti-capitalist and, not least, anti-Christian12 romanticism by which German society reacted to the real and perceived pressures of its belated industrialisation, nation-building and empire-building also determines the narrator’s view of Japan. Stumpp (1993: 197) notes that, “in this book, which is set in Japan, Japanese men and women do not appear” – at least not as fully developed, individualized characters. She associates this lack with a “strategy […] to cope with [a presumably given] alterity”.13 My approach, in contrast, focuses on how and to what effect Japanese alterity is constructed, and I take at least partial obliteration into account as one mode of these constructions.14 In tracing the disruptions of these images, I also consider how they may mirror the contradictions of the worldview emerging from the text, as a whole.

As already mentioned, the construct of an alien Japanese nature, culture, and society provides the field for the protagonist to develop his personality and to achieve transcendence in the form of inner peace. Flügge attains the first goal and leaves Japan as a merchant who knows all the dodges, and as an intellectual, “worldly-wise” (prologue, no page no.) and well-respected man. In contrast, the outcome with regard to the second objective, which is most clearly stated in the opening scene of Überseer daheim, is that Japan did not give him “what I was yearning for with every fibre of my soul […] true happiness, that is, peace of heart” (Solano, 1888: 1). Indeed, the blame for this seems to be not only on the “merciless struggle as it arises between merchants, always and everywhere” (228), which constitutes the foreground of the narrative, but also on Japan as such.

Like the “merchant”, and like all other racial, ethnic, and gender categories established by the text, the “Japanese” and his relationship to the “German” or
“European” are also contradictory and unstable. The narrator’s enunciations regarding Japanese culture and society are those of “a tongue that is forked” (Bhabha, 2005: 122). This emerges clearly in his rendition of a family drama, which begins by a basically appreciative account of what he describes as a strictly regulated and hierarchical, and therefore “highly developed and self-contained” (217) Japanese family life, but which ends in a bloody and cruel tragedy of murder, execution and suicide.

This kind of double bind becomes even more evident when social and class relations are discussed. On the one hand, otherness is constructed in the sense of backwardness, ignorance and suppression, represented by rapacious or stone-throwing crowds, peasants forced into drudgery, villagers whose sympathy can be won by a drink of sake, and the custom of whipping and other cruel and despotic penalties. However, although these phenomena are associated with the “centuries-long oppression” suffered by the “lower classes of the natives” (97), their efforts to liberate themselves are not applauded. Rather, the deterioration of the lower classes’ respect toward “the law of the land” (153) and the “better-educated Japanese” (97) is identified with the decline of an “old culture” (224), or the “dying” of the “blossoms which were brought forth by the feudal state, and which we adroired the Japanese for, namely, loyalty to one’s lord, chivalry, […] and the readiness to sacrifice everything for one’s family” (353). Indeed, in a familiar topos, the “old cultural states [Kulturstaaten] of the East” (i.e., Japan and China) are contrasted to “the negroes in Africa […] the most primitive peoples” (396).

The impending extermination of this “old culture” is blamed on Christianity (being a teaching of individualism and equality) and capitalism. These “new ideas” (224) and the “substantial income that [the people] gained from commerce [with the foreigners]” (97) are maintained to foster a new scepticism and corrupt the populace. While Christian missionaries and Western businessmen are identified as the initiators of such intellectual and social changes, it is revealed in the course of the narrative that the new Meiji-government is instrumentalising the “European idea of people’s rights” in order to weaken and discredit the old regime and the traditional elites (224-225).

Years later, these developments are described to have turned Japan into a society plagued by “exactly the same competition as in Europe […] One tries to outrun the other and knocks everyone down who stands in his way […] just like at home” (354). The consensus seems to be that under such conditions, “it is not worth staying in Japan” (354) and, indeed, Flügge’s decision to leave is made shortly after this conversation. Significantly, during his last months in Japan the protagonist becomes the victim of machinations concocted by a deceptive Japanese businessman and a corrupt bureaucrat, but is saved by a former Samurai and enemy of the new regime, who is reminiscent of the “noble savage” in the novels of Defoe, Cooper, and their German counterparts (Jeglin, 2001: 39-43). In the book’s final scene, Flügge’s farewell from Japan is condensed into his parting with this noble and awe-inspiring character, who represents not just an “old but now […] fallen family” (402) but a perishing culture. However, even this glorification of an “old culture” is subverted by a grotesquifying reference to the custom of “slitting one’s belly” (402).

It becomes clear from this discourse that Japan cannot please, neither in its Westernized and modernized guise, nor in its traditional mode. While modern Japan becomes a screen for the projection of anti-modern anxiety and criticism of the Church, even traditional Japan falls short of a utopia. This twofold denial can be seen to reflect the pessimism, emerging throughout the text, with regard to the relationship between the Part and the Whole, or the possibility that modern man as represented by the expatriate merchant – condemned to nomadism and never-ending contest – will find peace and a home. Both modern and traditional Japan and, if we take Japan as a metaphor, foreign shores, or colonial lands, are thus disqualified as a place where the dilemma of the modern individual, or the wandering German, may be resolved. In contrast, hopes are maintained that the German nation – under the guidance of a strong state – may offer true Heimat and “peace of heart”.

Japan, having remained foreign and having failed to provide this peace is, in turn, castigated by isolation. By
downplaying direct Western impact on Japan’s perceived cultural decline, for instance, the text reduces this phenomenon to a dynamic internal to Japan and thereby sequesters its society and culture from global developments, seen to originate in the West. This strategy is even more clearly conveyed in the image of remoteness, irreversible separation and even erasure from the globe, when “the last glimpse of the land shrouded in mist passed from view like a shimmering cloud”, and the protagonist is surrounded only by “the blue waters of the ever pulsing sea” (Solano, 1888: 2).

Japan’s disappearance in the mist is ambiguous, however, as it may also suggest the gendered and Orientalising image of a veiled woman who eludes her suitor and defies intrusion, or penetration. Notably, the Japan we encounter in Knorrock und Konsulatsmüatze is practically devoid of Japanese women (cf. Stumpp, 1993: 205), who might either underscore or contradict this idea. The one character that seems to confirm the notion of withdrawal and elusiveness is Oharru. Of the few other Japanese females, who are only mentioned in passing, the “little Japanese wife” of a Dutch merchant, who has borne him seven children (109), evokes the image of the colonised or, rather, “voluntarily surrendered” (Zantop, 1997: 122) body of the native woman, whereas the merrily singing “geishas” (401) may suggest both surrender and withdrawal.

The common colonialist, or Orientalist, strategy of feminisation (Said, 1995; McClinton, 1995; Zantop, 1999) is also deployed toward male Japanese Others. These images, again, reproduce the dichotomisation of femininity, as they split into seemingly benevolent representations of the feminised male, epitomised by the devoted servant Katsuo, and more derisive versions represented, for example, by an armed assailant whom the protagonist disposes of by simply “grasping him with both arms” and “carrying him out of the house, in spite of his resistance” (209). Nevertheless, the general portrayal of Japan is that of an exceedingly homosocial, masculinist, and belligerent environment inhabited, with some exceptions, by antagonistic armies, hostile Samurai, corrupt bureaucrats, deceptive merchants, xenophobic townspeople, fanatic priests and rebellious peasants. This seems important, not only because it disavows the realities of “interracial intimacy” in the treaty ports and foreign settlements (Leupp 2002), but because it clearly diverges from the popular images of Japan prevailing in contemporary Europe and America, which during the two decades after the appearance of Knorrock und Konsulatsmüatze crystallised into the cliché of Madame Crysantème (Pierre Loti, 1888) or Madame Butterfly (Giacomo Puccini, 1904) (cf. Leupp, 2003: 167-180).

4. A Virile German Nation

Weber maintains in his prologue that “the book that I wrote evades the topic of love [and marriage]” which, according to him, dominates German literature; instead, he wants to give an “unmade-up” (ungeschminkt) account of “trade” (no page nos.). This juxtaposition of the male-identified subject of “trade” (presented without any womanish make-up) against the ostensibly feminine topic of “love and marriage” may be understood to simply affirm the superior value of Weber’s own piece of writing within the context of contemporary German literature. However, if, as I have argued, the construction of the true German and the assertion of Germany’s superior position among the European nation states are indeed central concerns of the narrative, then this recourse to masculinity can be seen to pertain to that familiar German strategy of national identity construction in terms of virility, in opposition to effeminate Others like the French (cf. Blättler, 2000), the Jews and the Slavs (Robertson, 1998 and 2000).

If love and marriage between “Peter” and “Lieschen” (prologue, no page no.), the proverbial German male and female, was a subject of minor value, then stories of Japanese courtesans must, at best, be third rate. To make historical sense of Weber’s explicit abstinence from a more overtly feminised or eroticised representation of Japan, it is important to remember that in many of the colonialist writings proliferating in the Wilhelmine Empire, German men’s sexual and cultural dependence on “native” women was denounced as a dangerous regression and loss of their German manhood (Kundrus, 2004; Wildenthal, 1997) and that, arguably, this kind of rhetoric gained prominence in Germany before it became dominant in England, France or Holland (cf.
Stoler, 1996). What this suggests is that "Madame Butterfly" would probably not have been an opportune motif in the context of late nineteenth century German colonial discourse. Paradoxically, then, it seems to be the masculinised Japan portrayed in Kontorrock und Konsulatsmütze, rather than the more common, feminised image, which served best to emphasise the masculine superiority of the colonising German subject.

VI. Conclusion

If one took Weber's novel as a straightforward historical source, one might be persuaded that there existed no sexual or other relationships between foreign men and Japanese women, in late nineteenth century Japan. However, colonial or post-colonial studies, which, arguably, offer the most comprehensive perspective among all domains of cultural studies, have shown that images of the colonial world are, in fact, produced by the discursive needs of the "colonising subject" (Trotter 1990). The resulting ambiguities, and the slippages between categories of difference (e.g., Bhabha, 2005; McClintock, 1995) suggest that the image produced in a text like Kontorrock und Konsulatsmütze is far from "historical reality" as it is understood by commentators like Meissner (1939), Szippl (Shippuru, 2006) and Sakai (1997).

Nevertheless, Weber's novel is a fascinating historical document – of the reciprocity between "historical realities" and imaginations, producing further realities and imaginations, all of which are still influencing our thoughts and actions, even today.

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Notes

1. The second edition, dated 1890, seems to have been a mere reprint, albeit with a different publisher. However, this has not been verified, as this was the earliest edition that I could get hold of. Unless stated otherwise, page numbers of quotes refer to that edition.
3. E.g., Krebs and Martin (1994), Krebs (2002), Kreiner and Mathias (1990), Kudo et al. (2009), and Spang and Wippich (2006). One monograph that focuses particularly on German images, or "discourses" of Japan is Pekar (2003).
4. Interestingly, even the reductions of 1973 do not indicate any awareness of the problematic aspects of Weber's account. Their main objective seems to be to omit somewhat lengthy passages as well as such parts that do not directly serve to throw light upon the history of Germans in Japan and of the author-narrator's view of Japan.
6. All translations from the German originals of Weber's works are my own.
7. The name Ballerich connotes rowdyism, as it can be associated with the verb ballern, a colloquial expression meaning to bang away (with a gun), or to slap somebody.
8. Von Felden constitutes not merely a trenchant caricature of the nobleman but, in pursuit of revenge and of his own interest, betrays his German compatriots and other European settlers, who have joined forces to defend themselves against an anticipated onslaught of Japanese government troops (30-42).
9. The Jewish family name "Veitel" acquired symbolic meaning with the success of Gustav Freytag's 1855 novel Soll und Haben (Debit and Credit), in which the villain, a stereotypically greedy, immoral Jewish businessman, bears that name (Lange, 2007: 43-65).
10. As suggested by Weber’s anti-Semitic treatise, Der Geheimbund der Börse (Solano, 1893), the perceived “world conspiracy of the Jews” eventually became his main concern (see also Lange, 2009).

11. The German government’s repression of Sorbian language and culture greatly increased from the mid-1870s; and in the mid-1880s tens of thousands of Polish and Jewish residents were ousted from Prussia.

12. This article leaves no space to discuss the implications of the newly religious metaphysical speculations expounded in Kontorrock and Konsulatsmütze. These are part of a widespread desire, in fin de siècle Germany, to “preserve a consciousness of the ‘connectedness of things’ in spite of the chaos of modernity” (Ulbricht, 2006: 8). This longing for wholeness, which also characterizes Weber’s novel, found expression in monistic, Buddhist-inspired, and ethno-nationalist (völkisch) ideas and forms of religion that were critical of the established Christian churches or of the Judeo-Christian tradition as such (Ulbricht, 1998).

13. Stumpp (1993) is the only author who deals with Weber’s novel in detail without reducing it to a source from which to retrieve historical facts.

14. Pekar (2003: 191-192) also treats “discourses ‘ignoring’ Japan” as one variant of “negative” discourses on Japan, and in a footnote he mentions Weber’s novel as one example.

15. Cf. Berman (1997: 74-84) on a parallel in the contemporary German adventure novel: the relationship between the German protagonist Kara Ben Nemsi and his Arab servant Hadsehi Halef Omar as it is portrayed in several novels by Karl May (1842-1912).

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