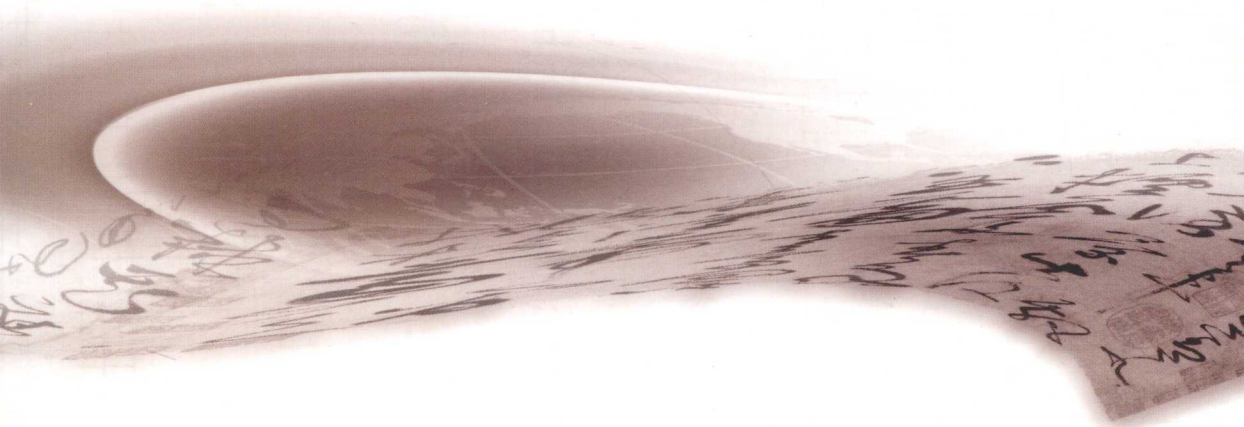


主编◎潘文国 陈勤建

# 中文研究与国际传播

(第1辑)



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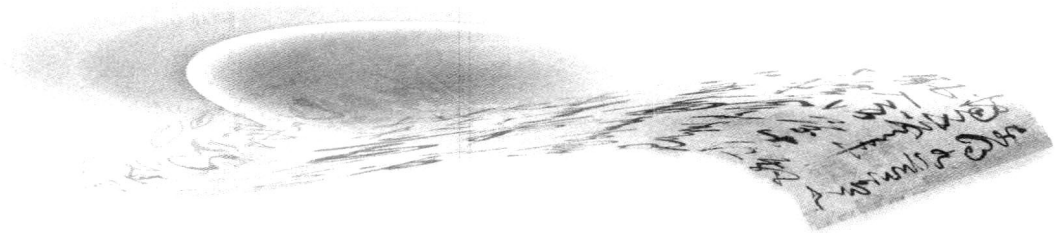
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# 《中文研究与国际传播》 编辑委员会名单

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## 发刊词

由华东师范大学对外汉语学院主编的《中文研究与国际传播》第1辑与大家见面了。这是当前国际汉语教学和中华文化传播的大好形势所催生的一个新的刊物。与其前身《国际汉语教育论丛》相比,本刊有一些新的思路和特色,主要表现为:

原刊在名称上突出汉语教育,新刊在注意汉语教育基础上还注意到了中国文化的研究和传播,从而能全方位地发挥我院教师学术研究的优势,同时更能体现国家对外传播汉语和中华优秀传统文化的大战略。

原刊侧重教育,新刊强调“研究”,因而提高了学术上的层次和要求。“中文研究”涵盖中国语言和中国文化,“国际传播”包括了对外汉语教学和中国典籍翻译,在内涵上都有所扩大和加深。

原刊基本上是同人刊物,以刊发院内教师论文为主,新刊将向正式刊物看齐,推向学术界,并将逐步提高采用外稿的比例,本刊用稿采用评审人(referee)制,以进一步保证稿件质量。

本刊设有专论、语言研究、文化研究、比较研究、汉语国际推广研究、教学研究等栏目。其中“专论”是郑重推荐的文章。本期特别推出英国汉学家曹青博士的英文论文《西方报导中国:视角、历史及研究方法》,该文分析了西方报导中国背后的话语霸权及其产生发展历史,这对我们了解外国人如何理解中国会有很大帮助,对于中国如何在国际上发出自己的声音也会有很大启示。专论的另一篇重头文章是文字学家曹念明的《世界文字发展共同规律是“表形—表意—表音”吗?》,他在讨论世界文字发展方向的“表形—表意—表音”和“表音、表意各自发展”的两种见解外提出了第三种思路,读来能给人很大启发。

在汉语国际推广栏目,本期要着重推荐的是印尼华文教育专家叶联强的文章《国际华文教学的构想与教材的编写》,他特别强调,“世界各国的汉语教学只是当地外语教学的一个组成部分,其发展终究取决于当地的教育政策以及当地教学机构对之的支持力度,而与中国‘汉语热’的说法没有多大关系。”这对我们来说不啻是帖清醒剂。他还从多年来在海外从事华文教育的经验出发,提出了一些教学上的根本问题,可以引起我们思考。

在汉语教学方面,我们着重介绍的是澳大利亚汉语教学专家周晓康博士的歌谣教学法,周博士的这一教学法是她的独创,近年来在国际上引起了很大关注。这是她专门为本刊撰写的文章。

本刊暂定每年一辑。欢迎海内外专家、学者和本院教师踊跃赐稿。来信来稿请寄:  
[yaomeiling1818@sina.com](mailto:yaomeiling1818@sina.com)

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## 【专论】

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# Reporting China: Perspectives, Patterns and Research Methods

## 西方报道中国： 视角、历史及研究方法

(英国)曹 青

(Liverpool John Moores University, 英国)

**【提要】** 长期以来，西方如何报道中国的问题一直引人关注。近年来随着中国国际地位的迅速上升，如何看待西方媒体塑造中国形象的问题更加显得重要。然而西方中国形象问题不仅仅只是国民感情问题及增进中西文明的沟通与理解的问题，它更多的是折射出中西政治文化的深层结构关系。正确地理解与深入探讨这种纷繁而复杂的结构性关系是我们更准确、有效、理性地研究与处理西方报道中国的相关问题的重要基础。本文以此为目标，着重探讨西方中国形象的文化根源。本文的基本观点是，要理解西方对中国的报道必须从宏观的历史文化角度去思考西方文化的精髓：以“现代性”(modernity)为统领的西方精神价值观及器物制度，而不能仅仅停留在狭隘的正面负面的量化分析及政治评判上。质而言之，西方中国形象是中西方文明力量博弈的重要缩影。影响西方中国形象最根本的因素是文明的力量对比和变化：谁更占据了文明发展的制高点，或者说谁更被普遍认为是占领了这个制高点。然而何为文明发展的制高点并没有、也不可能有一致的标准。于是语言的力量、舆论的力量、形象的力量便构成了表象世界角斗场中的利器，独立于政治、经济等领域物质性的较量之外。换言之，文化形象是软力量，而软力量之实质是价值观之争。

本文认为，源于西方的现代性观念给予西方极大的话语优势。西方媒体利用这一话语优势在世界上建立了“话语霸权”。媒体的现代性话语一方面为西方国家利益服



务,同时维护、强化、复制其文明制高点的地位。然而西方“现代性”话语并非是一个严密统一的话语系统,其价值观也远没有形成绝对的统一逻辑整体。宏观上看,“现代性”话语至少可以分为以现实主义为特征的“工业主义”与以自由主义为特征的“人文主义”两大分支。这两种现代性话语体系之间存在着巨大的矛盾:“工业主义”的宗旨是实现财富与国力的最大化,“人文主义”的宗旨是实现个人的尊严与自由。财富与国力并没有绝对的伦理向度,而个人的尊严与自由则代表着一种崇高的伦理理想。这种现代性话语的内在矛盾在西方报导中国中表现得淋漓尽致。例如,在报导鸦片战争时用的是“工业主义”现代性话语,将中国的失败归结为器物制度的落后;而上世纪九十年代中国工业化突飞猛进之时,西方媒体又以“人权”为核心的“人文主义”现代性话语批评中国。因而现代性话语已经成为西方媒体左右逢源、取之不尽用之不竭的话语资源库,视其需要而选取不同的价值标准丈量批评中国。

本文分为三个部分。第一部分剖析西方现代性话语的内在矛盾及其在报导中国时的运用。第二部分梳理西方中国形象的历史轨迹,以说明现代性话语运用的终极目标是为国家利益服务。第三部分探讨西方报导中国的方法论问题,提出以结构主义叙事理论为基础的分析模式,并附报导实例加以说明。结论部分对西方报导中国的现状进行了初步的评判。

**【关键词】** 西方报导中国 现代性话语 西方媒体 结构主义叙事理论 中西关系

## 0. Introduction

On 10th November 2010, the crucial day of the first visit by the British Prime Minister David Cameron, all five broadsheet newspapers in the UK highlighted human rights issues in China, sidelining a £750 million trade deal signed between the troubled British company Rolls-Royce and China Eastern Airlines. The headlines of these papers are significant — ‘PM to lecture China on value of democracy’ (*The Daily Telegraph*)<sup>①</sup>, ‘Political reform can boost China, says Cameron’ (*Financial Times*)<sup>②</sup>, ‘Cameron’s friendly advice: freedom will make you strong’ (*The Times*)<sup>③</sup>, ‘Cameron tells China: embrace freedom and the rule of law’ (*The Guardian*)<sup>④</sup>, and ‘Cameron confronts the biggest society: attack on China’s human rights record’ (*The*

① *The Daily Telegraph*, P. 1, 10 November, 2010. PM refers to the Prime Minister David Cameron.

② *Financial Times*, P. 3, 10 November, 2010.

③ *The Times*, P. 4, 10 November, 2010.

④ *The Guardian*, P. 1, 10 November, 2010.

*Independent*)<sup>①</sup>. These headlines, or macrostructure of news reporting (Van Dijk, 1988), invoke a typical dichotomous way of seeing China in a binary opposition between ‘Mammon’ (trade) and ‘God’ (human rights). But more importantly, they assume a particular moral position in looking at Sino-Western relations. The ‘trade vs. human rights’ debate dominated the American foreign policy toward China in the 1990s, but it has subsided gradually as a political discourse. Nevertheless, it has lingered on in the Western media, though much of the focus has tilted toward trade as China has accelerated its move to the centre stage of world economics and politics, especially following the global financial crisis and economic slowdown since 2008.

Western attitudes towards China are changing as the international order rapidly evolves, characterised by a shift of power from the Atlantic to the Pacific. On the one hand, the severe criticisms of China in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War have substantially eased; and on the other, there have emerged a much wider range of topics in covering China. China’s constant presence in the world media has become the order of the day — from trade, energy, climate change, international aid and currency valuation, to security, non-proliferation, anti-terrorism, pandemic, human rights, entertainment, fashion, media and arts. Moreover, reports about Chinese topics permeate all types of media from major network news such as the CNN and BBC to pages of major broadsheet newspapers and mass-appeal tabloids, because China has started to figure centrally in many of the most pressing issues of the world today, in addition to its weight in the global economy. And yet, the routine feed of such stories does not mean a thorough coverage of Chinese affairs for the Western audience/readers, given the complexities of the Chinese society and the momentous transformations that China has been going through, not to mention the looming important role it is going to play in global affairs. There is an apparent but significant gap between the changing realities of China and Western media coverage of China.

This article aims to address this mismatch by focusing on three different but related dimensions of Western media reporting of China. First, it attempts to delineate the pattern of underlying structures of Western media’s portrayal of China by examining its cultural foundations of looking at China. It seeks to explore a deeper understanding of principal perspectives in which China is perceived, understood and portrayed through an institutional practice of journalism. It argues that the ‘macrostructure’ of representing China is deeply rooted in a specific Western

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① *The Independent*, P. 1, 10 November 2010.

worldview reflected in a broad ‘modernity’ discourse — liberal democratic humanism and *realpolitik* industrialism. While Western media tend to apply a largely *liberal humanist* perspective of modernity in criticising ‘non-liberal’ practice by China, their historical patterns of covering China are inclined to follow Western material (political/economic/strategic) interests reflecting an *industrialist* version of modernity. This internal split of discourse constitutes a fundamental flaw in Western coverage of China.

Second, this article traces the historical trajectory of Western images of China, highlighting the different mix of the two versions of modernity within those images at different crucial historical junctures from the 19th to the 21st century. Specifically, it will look at the different ‘ages’ of Western popular portrayals of China that have oscillated between positive and negative poles. It is contended that the temporal vacillation of China’s images over the last two centuries reveals not only enduring national interests that have been served by the media coverage, but enduring values and identities deeply engrained in Western consciousness. The analysis is contextualised in the internal and external dynamics of transformation and evolving Sino-Western relations, including the current ‘age’ characterised by an acute sense of ‘uncertainty’ or ‘unpredictability’, if not uneasiness or even anxiety in covering China.

Third, the article discusses conceptual and methodological issues in relation to the study of Western reporting of China, focusing on textual features of news reporting that encode specific ways of looking at China. It aims to establish the link between a *linguistic* and *cultural* construction of the image of China. Based on a critical review of structuralist narrative theories, a tentative analytical approach is proposed illustrated with specific examples. This article argues that uncovering an underlying *mythic* structure of media narrative of China stories is highly productive, if not crucial, for a critical understanding of Western representation of China underpinned by a highly versatile modernity discourse. The article concludes with an assessment of Western reporting of China, highlighting the media’s role as a modern ‘bard’ in confirming, reinforcing and reproducing Western values, assumptions and cultural identities. It evaluates the current situation of media coverage of China when Sino-Western relations have entered a fresh stage of increased interdependency. Finally, the article discusses potentials and conditions of creating diversified images to contend with stereotypical portrayals in an effort to arrive at a more balanced representation of China at a time of profound changes both inside and outside China.

# 1. Western Representation of China: Underlying Perspectives

## 1.1 Modernity as the 'Grand Narrative'

To understand the primary dynamics of Western representation of China, it is important to appreciate the changing East-West relationship over the recent past. Since the meteoritic rise of Europe in the fifteenth century, the entire world has been radically and irreversibly reshaped in the image of the West. No societies in human history have generated and sustained transformations of such magnitude which are continuing today, only with an accelerated rate in the age of globalisation and information technology revolution. However, it is the global reach and the enormous but irresistible pressures for change forced upon *all* other non-Western societies that mark the rise of the Christen Europe in recent centuries from the rise of 'traditional' empires from the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Mongol and Ottoman. The rise of Western Europe since the 15th century also generated empires — the Spanish, Dutch, French, and British. However, the demise of these empires has not hindered the process of a global transformation of the rest of the world set in motion by the same enduring assumptions, values, institutions and practices that brought these empires to the pinnacle of their success measured primarily by the wealth and power they enjoyed. These assumptions, values, institutions and practices have long acquired a collective name — *modernity*. The all-encompassing, pervasive and omnipresent concept of 'modernity' has constituted the primary force that has been sweeping across the entire world, bringing down 'traditional' way of life and practices of non-Western societies. 'Modern' Western empires rose and fell, but Western 'modernity' has survived, prospered and made inroad into every corner of the planet. Civilisations, once diverse and distinctive, have come under sustained, and at times ferocious, pressure to change by the force, and/or in the name of 'modernisation' — a process of catching up with the West.

Modernity, however defined, represents practically what the West has gone through and achieved in the last five centuries. It not only defines the West but determines largely how the non-West is perceived, understood and ultimately represented as forcibly argued by Edward Said in his *Orientalism* (1978). The almost

totalising conceptualisation of the world through the lens of modernity and the ‘invincible’ clattering march of a ‘modernity’ discourse from the metropolitan West exerts a deep and far-reaching impact upon the world today. Nevertheless, critical scholarship has examined and critiqued the notion of modernity (Jameson, 1991; Harvey, 2010), its accompanying discourse (Hall, 1992, 1997) and the impact they have exerted on non-Western societies (Said, 1978). Taylor (2002:92), in particular, emphasises the consequences that the concept of modernity have in social science and argues that modernity has underpinned a new pattern of *social imaginary*:

Central to Western modernity is a new conception of the moral order of society . . .

It came to shape the social imaginary of large strata, and then eventually whole societies. It has now become so self-evident to us; we have trouble seeing it as one possible conception among others.

The pervasiveness of such social imaginary is most evident in the representation of the ‘other’, because the non-Western world is predominantly, if not exclusively, viewed through the lens of levels of ‘development’ or ‘modernisation’. Such a perspective gives the West profound discursive power in the symbolic world because ‘modernity’ originates in the West. Consequently the West represents the ultimate model for the rest to emulate. Said (1978) contends that the Western portrayal of the ‘Orient’ as incapable of modernisation constitutes an integral part of European imperialist control over the Middle East. Since the nineteenth century, from Marx and Hegel to contemporary authors such as Fukuyama (1989), this de facto portrayal of the non-West as technologically, socially and morally inferior has changed very little.

## 1.2 Two Versions of Modernity: Dual Perspectives and Double Standards

It is within this broad historical context and East-West relations that the representation of China has situated — from the Opium Wars, the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and emergence of Chinese communism, to the successive nationalist campaigns, the 1949 People’s Republic, Deng Xiaoping’s reform, the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2010 Shanghai World Expo. However, at a general level, there emerged two versions of modernity in Western media reporting of China — a history-oriented

capitalist industrialism and contemporary-based liberal humanism. The former tends to focus on such issues as technology, trade and economy. The latter, on the other hand, tends to deal with a range of topics associated with freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Typically, it focuses on human rights issues summarised by Alistair Michie (2007: 55) in what he calls the three 'Ts' reporting — Tibet, Taiwan and Tiananmen. These two strands of modernity discourse — industrialism and humanism — constitute the underlying structure of media coverage of China. Despite historical oscillation and contemporary variations, perspectives of seeing China are remarkably similar. China has been measured, by and large, by the level and pace of modernisation, either in its industrialist or humanist version in the popular representation in the Western media.

Seeing China through a modernity/modernisation lens functions to reinforce Western values and identities, while at the same time operates to serve national interests. This dual-function reflects the internal tension between the two versions of modernity — liberal humanism that seeks to enhance the dignity and freedom of the individual, and the *realpolitik* industrialism that aims to maximise national wealth and power. The dual-focus on the *national* and the *individual*, as well as the *material* and the *moral* has generated inherent conflict when it comes to reporting the non-Western societies. As we live in an 'anarchical society' where there is no world government with jurisdiction over nation-states, national interests are legitimate pursuit of all nations. Thus, national and material interests will inevitably have priority over the moral, with the consequences that the former is absolute and substantial and the latter is relative and superficial. Double standards have become inevitable — not the same criteria are applied to the West and the non-West. I will use differing formulations of 'technology' below to illustrate the selective use of modernity discourse as a way of enhancing Western power and perpetuate the unequal East-West relations.

### 1.3 Case Study: Discursive Construction of 'Technology'

In British television programmes, technology tends to be a major perspective of viewing China. Technology is seen as providing the driving force for progress in human society. Historical events in China are often contextualised in Sino-Western interactions and the rise of Western science, technology and power. In a prime-time

BBC television series, *Millennium: a Thousand Years of History* (BBC2, 1999),<sup>①</sup> for instance, a realpolitik account of the Opium War is presented along the line of technology as industrial modernity:

In the nineteenth century, the century of the machine, Western technology ... threatened to take over the world. Steam extends the reach of human power hurrying millions over continents and cross oceans ... Trade and opium led to war in China, changing the world's balance of power. Factories and machines changed landscapes and lives the world over.<sup>②</sup>

Technology, assuming the position of *grammatical subject*, is presented as operating on its own logic as an autonomous agent, leading to 'inevitable' consequences:

The West's fire power and mobility become unstoppable ... Here Europe's industrialised powers played out their own battle for the survival of the fittest ... The world had been transformed by the machines.

The central role accorded to technology and its constructed naturalness lead the audience to see European expansion as the inevitable consequence of industrialist modernity. Technology therefore serves as an enabling and legitimising repertoire, from which a modernity-defined *progress* can be actively drawn upon in either a de-ethicising or ethicising manner. Transforming history into nature, Barthes (1993, 129) argues, is precisely the function of a myth. Ethicising elements consist of, among others, the association of technology with social structures in a binary opposition of *advanced vs backward*, *open vs closed* and *modern vs traditional* structures exemplified by another programme, the *East is Red* (BBC2, 1985):

Though the old Dowager died, the old China still lived on, unable to meet the

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① A ten-part documentary series about the history of the past millennium, broadcast by BBC2 in 1999. These extracts are taken from *The Century of the Machine* (the ninth episode, which concerns the nineteenth century).

② Pre-title voice-over, *Millennium: A Thousand Years of History*, Episode 9, *The Century of the Machine* (the nineteenth century). Visual images accompanying this narrative are dominated by technology — trains, steamboats and machines of different kinds.

*demands of a modern era*, unprepared to face the challenge of the West, administratively, militarily, technically, but above all *culturally* and psychologically.

In a unified presentation of the *cultural* (closed and traditional), *technical* and *military* (backward and traditional), a discursive coherence is achieved whereby industrialist and humanist versions of modernity collapse into a neat concept of 'progress'. The ambiguous but effective phraseology of '*demands of a modern era*' *ethically* associates technology with modernity. Attributing colonising non-Western countries to their *own* inability to meet the '*demands of a modern era*' constitutes a core legitimising discourse of colonialism. Said (1978) has powerfully argued that colonialism as a 'civilising' exercise is discursively enabled through mythical links between technology/trade, 'progress' and culture. In *China Rising* (Yorkshire Television, 1992) the historical imposition of Western trade is linked to contemporary Chinese prosperity:

At the European trading bases in the port of Canton the *clash of cultures* continued. Despite any claims to *technological* superiority, European traders were simply buying from China with gold and silver and the Chinese were purchasing nothing in exchange . . . *Foreign trade was imposed on Shanghai by force* when the city fell to the English fleet in 1842. The Qing emperor said farewell to centuries of self-imposed isolation. Shanghai became what it remains, the greatest metropolis on the Asian mainland, and a monument to colonialism. *Many Chinese prospered, they made a good living from the trade with the West. To this day half of China's total exports pass through Shanghai.*

*Closedness* is therefore organically enmeshed with *backwardness*, contributing to China's downfall. A 'progressive' trade is implicitly established through sanitising the often violent colonialism and ethicising technology and trade as contributing to the arrival of industrialist modernity.

This dominant version of Western roles in China is seldom challenged in the popular media discourse, with the rare exception of *Mandate of Heaven* (ITV, 1991) — a programme that questions the West's self-proclaimed role of progress and the 'monopoly on the spirit of enterprise'. The programme's critique of the *technology-as-progress* myth takes a radical form of questioning Western traditions of



industrialist modernity, and sees instead Chinese values as an alternative moral order: 'The West still has to learn from the East — a way of cultivating its inner space, of accepting limits on desires and space in an increasingly finite world.' Technology, within this re-imagined Chinese moral order, plays a far less dominant role: 'However sophisticated and technologically advanced a society might become, its people could only be fulfilled through inner enlightenment and contemplation of eternity.' Like *Roads to Xanadu* (BBC2, 1990), the technological view is applied primarily in a historical dimension. That is, it emerges mainly in recounting traditional China and Western actions in China up to 1949. In dealing with contemporary China, however, the humanist version of modernity becomes a dominant perspective, in particular in the 1990s when China's images became highly negative.

## 2. Historical Patterns of Western Discourse about China

### 2.1 A General Temporary Pattern

Popular images of China in the West have never been stable, but in a constant state of change. Commentators (Isaacs, 1980; Mosher, 1990; Mackerras, 1999) have long noticed and documented a historical pattern of oscillating Western images of China. They provide a detailed account of fluctuating Western impressions of China. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, China was broadly perceived to be a land inhabited by calm Confucian sages. But with the defeat of China in the Opium War, the positive image was replaced by a negative picture of 'oriental despotism' and 'Asiatic mode of production' throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of the U.S as a new world power, China's images tended to be heavily influenced by the American perception of China. The negative/positive swing has intensified in the 20<sup>th</sup> century — there emerged eight different 'ages' of Western popular images (Isaacs, 1980; Mosher, 1990; Cao, 2007). They moved first from 'contempt' (beginning of the century) to 'benevolence' (1905 – 1937) and then to 'admiration' (1937 – 1944), but slid back to 'disenchantment' (1944 – 1949) and eventually descended into 'hostility' (1949 – 1972). However they bounced back to 'admiration' (1972 – 1977), though fell slightly back to 'the second age of disenchantment' (1977 – 1980) briefly. The last positive/negative cycle started with the 'the second age of benevolence' (1980 – 1989) but finished with 'the third age of disenchantment' (1989 – 2001).