"THE CHINESE AS I HAVE SEEN THEM": A DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS OF WESTERN PERCEPTION ON THE CHINESE IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

Valeria FRANCESCHI
University of Verona

Abstract

This paper aims at looking at how Western perceptions of China and the Chinese changed over the course of the 19th and early 20th century, as emerging from war, travel and life accounts written by anglophone expatriates, travelers, and military men. The analysis was carried out with a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach, drawing from corpus-assisted discourse analysis. The print books published between 1843 and 1919 were digitized using OCR software to make them readable by corpus analysis tools. Two subcorpora weree created, one including 2 2-volume books recounting the events of the first Opium War, and the second one including 6 books describing life and travel in China between 1897 and 1919. An analysis of selected keywords and their concordance lines, with the aid of Critical Discourse Analysis, attempts to shed light on how the perception of the Chinese on the part of Anglophone people has evolved between the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis; China; travel writing; corpus linguistcs; 19th century*.

I.   INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that around 12000 Westerners were living in the Chinese Empire at the end of the 19th century (Détrie 509). The increased presence of Western

expatriates, travelers and tourists at that time was the result of a progressive opening of China to Western commerce and missionary work that started with the British victory of the first Opium War (1839-1842) and the subsequent Treaty of Nanking (1842), which opened the first 5 Chinese ports to foreign trade. The Treaty of Nanking was the first of a series of what are known as the "unequal treaties" that increasingly allowed Westerners access to Chinese territories and to commercial trade in the country. British merchants and industrials had identified China as a profitable new market to be exploited and had been urging the government to act in order to open up China to commercial trade, also using military force if necessary (Klein 792).

At the time, Britain traded opium grown in India for silk and tea (Stockwell 75), which alarmed the Chinese government as opium use grew among the population and became a prominent public health issue. When imperial commissioner Lin Zexu (1785-1850) took a hard line against the trade and banned it, he did not take into account the foreign commercial and industrial interests involved. Despite a first success where he managed to seize opium from British Chief Superintendent Charles Elliot and drive the British away from Canton, eventually Britain took direct military action to defend these interests (Sabattini and Santangelo 598; cf. also Stockwell 2003). The British therefore obtained control of Hong Kong as well as other strategically important locations along the coast, such as Canton, Shanghai, and Ningbo. In addition, the British asked to obtain the status of "most-favored-nation" (Stockwell 77), so that any privilege given to other foreign countries would be automatically awarded to Britain as well. Soon after, the Treaty of Wangxia (1844) gave the US internal navigation and extraterritorial rights in addition to other benefits.

The second Opium War (1856-1860) further extended Western influences on China, with the treaties of Shanghai (1858) and Peking (1860) (Sabattini and Santangelo 600). The first treaty opened new ports and gave merchants and missionaries free movement within Chinese territories, while the second brought custom exemptions and the permission to establish foreign legations (607). Concessions were established between 1854 and 1864 as areas "set apart by the Chinese Government within which foreigners may reside and lease land" (Quigley 150), not subject to Chinese law. Commercial enterprises, maritime companies, industries such as textiles and food, banks, and other institutions are established by foreign powers, alongside increased efforts in railroad construction (Sabattini and Santangelo 608). These privileges for foreign citizens brought a number of Westerners to China: not only expatriates, merchants and missionaries, but also travelers.

It should be noted that the early Victorian age is what is commonly considered the beginning of the age of tourism (Morgan). Advancements to transportation technology such as the expansion of the railway and of steamboats

made leisure traveling more accessible (Bertho Lavenir). Travel soon moved beyond the European continent, bringing travelers to China where we start seeing the establishment of hotels and travel companies (e.g. Thomas Cook & Son), which offer a number of practical services for travelers and tourists. In this context, locals and Westerners learnt to co-habit, with the latter improving their quality of life thanks to the benefits acquired over the decades. However, both groups maintained their lifestyles, criticizing those habits they thought objectionable or downright barbaric (Détrie 509). Indeed, xenophobic behavior towards Westerners as a consequence of the unequal treaties was not uncommon in China and also involved armed action, such as the Boxer rebellion (1899-1901) (Sabattini and Santangelo 611) and the siege of the International Legations (1900).

These years, and these historical changes, were meaningful not only for China itself, as the decline of the Qing dynasty, the wars and the revolutions contributed to shaping modern China, but also for the evolution of Sino-Western relations. Considering the background outlined above, this paper aims at exploring how the discourse on China and its population has changed over the course of the 19th and early 20th century, as emerging from war, travel and life accounts written by anglophone expatriates, travelers, and military officers. The texts under investigation were published between 1843, right after the first Opium War, and 1919, the year of student protests following the disadvantageous – for China – Treaty of Versailles (1919) (Samarani 59).

The study adopts a corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach: this method of text analysis combines quantitative and qualitative analysis by employing corpus analysis tools such as keyword extraction and concordance with discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis techniques to identify language patterns that reveal underlying ideologies (e.g. Fairclough; Wodak). In this case, the power relationship between the West and China and the construction of the Chinese people as an exoticized, if not inferior, Other will be investigated.

2. CHINA IN THE EYES OF THE WEST: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The 19th century saw a shift in how the West perceives China, although the cultural consequences of the historic events that shaped Sino-Western relations have not been explored in depth, as per Fiske's claims. During the 18th century and the Enlightenment, China was perceived very favorably by Westerners and Britons in particular, and it played an important role in shaping "British Enlightenment ideals and Romantic sensibilities" (Fiske 215; cf. also Clifford 16, Kerr and Kuehn 3). The "cult of China" as defined by Dawson was based on a philosophical conception of China as an idealized "peaceful, Platonic, oriental state" (Fiske 216) and of the aesthetic appreciation of Chinese-inspired art, such

as "Chinese gardens, tea, porcelain and design" (Kerr and Kuehn 3). As Fiske points out, these idealizations of China entailed no knowledge or awareness of Chinese government, society, and culture (3). However, as the Industrial revolution led a new drive towards economic progress, the perceived immobility and stasis of previously-admired China started to be put into negative contrast with the developments in British economy (217). This stagnation and the inability to move forward of the Chinese was attributed to a "spiritual defeatism" (Stuart Mill in Fiske), an issue of custom, not of genetics, that could potentially be improved (Phillips 13) by opening to Western influences (Kerr and Kuehn 3). This need for improvement was employed as a way to justify Western action – including military intervention – in China (5).

Britain's victory in the first Opium War transformed China's ties with the empire: while it did not pull China directly under British imperialism, the country was not entirely "excluded from England's imperial identity" (Fiske 218), in a relationship that may be defined as "noncolonial imperialism" (Kerr and Kuehn 5). Indeed, China remained "formally independent", with Western powers apparently uninterested in acquiring territorial control beyond the concessions and privileges that the unequal treaties had already afforded them (Clifford 16). The positive visions of China that characterized previous centuries gave way to a view of China as inferior compared to the West, placing it in a different position than other areas such as the Islamic countries and Africa: the different historical and cultural memories characterizing Sino-Western relations gave rise to a "sympathetic Orientalism" towards China (16). Tsui and Berman (184) similarly claim that the traditional definition of Orientalism may not be entirely applicable to China and the West.

It should be noted that the British government was split over deciding to take military action against China in relation to the second Opium War (Phillips 7). As Phillips remarks, "the moral legitimacy of using violence as a means of vindicating the rights of British subjects, punishing 'barbarian' defiance and facilitating the civilizing spread of commerce and Christianity into China was […] vigorously asserted (Phillips 7). Action was considered indeed moral by a part of the government because they thought that bringing commercial activity and Christianity into China would improve the condition of the Chinese, who would become more civilized (Phillips 13). Not everyone shared that sentiment, however, questioning the morality of armed action and the hierarchical position that saw Britain ranking higher than China in terms of 'civilization' (21).

Nevertheless, China and the Chinese are constructed as Other by those experiencing and writing about the country. As by the 19th century the previously idealized vision of China had left room to a perception of the country as "backward and inferior" (Clifford 52), this view emerged in the writings produced at the time. Then like today, Westerners look at the Chinese through a "power

gaze" (Calzati), that perceives China and constructs it as Other based on the differences between their own backgrounds and the country they are describing. In Clifford's words:

> a trip to China, whether seen as a step back in time or a visit to a hopelessly alien and inexplicable people, helped to ratify a Western sense of superiority that had been far less evident a century and a half earlier. The relatively recent advantage of the West over the East had now become a fixed principle of history. (52)

Travel writing is a crucial source of material for those who research Sino-Western relationships, not only for the time frame under investigation in this study (Fiske 220). Travel writing is indeed paramount in the establishment of what may be defined as a contact zone (220), where we see authors "come to terms with different cultures (Kerr and Kuehn 5). This is a space where the two separate cultures meet and establish a relation of power, which "[binds] the traveller to the other" (Calzati n.pag.) and is in turn usually characterized by "coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Pratt 6 as quoted in Fiske 220). In this contact zone, Kerr and Kuehn assert, travelers may conceive the differences they encounter in extreme ways, either reducing and fitting them within their own framework, or exoticizing them to distance the Other from "the observing self) (7). Travel accounts indeed express in detail the feelings arisen during the experience (Bertho Lavenir 44), and often include multiple angles—political, ethnographic, social and cultural—that provide an interpretive framework for their readers (44). Such sources may be analyzed from different perspectives, fostering interdisciplinary approaches (Kerr and Kuehn 6).

For the reasons outlined above, travel accounts, alongside war accounts of the first Opium War, were selected as the source data for this study. The use of corpus analysis tools and of a linguistic perspective may contribute to shedding additional light on the discourse on China, highlighting patterns and tendencies in the way authors describe China and its population, and underlining differences in writer perception and description over time.

3. METHODOLOGY

The texts selected for this paper are part of the TaLitE project, which overall aims at "unveiling the evolution of China perception by Western travellers, its stereotypes and the characteristics of the text types examined even from a diachronic perspective"[1] by building a corpus of travel literature which includes

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[1] https://dh.dlls.univr.it/it/progetti/patrimonio-linguistico-culturale/#talite last accessed 18.07.2022.

print travel accounts and guides published between the 19th and early 20th centuries and contemporary travel vlogs. For the purposes of this study, 8 print texts, published between 1843 and 1919, were selected to investigate changes in the discourse on China in the decades occurring from the first Opium War, when China started its forced process of opening to foreign powers, to 1919, year of the May Fourth movement.

As all texts part of the TaLitE project, the selected works were transformed from digitized pdf. files to .txt files using OCR software ABBYY Finereader PDF 15, which supports optical recognition of both simplified and traditional Chinese in addition to English. This process was necessary in order to make them readable by corpus analysis tools and annotate them. Text preparation for corpus analysis involved the expunction of multiple, predominantly paratextual elements of the text, to prevent distorting frequencies and therefore keyness scores for certain words. Indeed, indexes, advertisements (where present), redundant strings of text (e.g., repetitions of chapter titles/book titles at the top of each page) were deleted from the texts alongside page numbers. Although not relevant in this study, it should be noted that texts that are part of the TaLitE corpus include XML (eXtensible Mark-up Language) tags to indicate the position of images (pictures, illustrations) and maps in the texts, to signal unreadable or unsure transcription of portions of texts, and to mark the presence of other languages, especially Chinese.

SketchEngine (Kilgarriff et al.) was chosen as a corpus analysis software due to both availability of multiple large English-language corpora to use as reference and the possibility to fine-tune settings for keyword extraction.

Two subcorpora were created, one including 2 2-volume books recounting the events of the first Opium War (1839-1842), and the second one including 6 books describing life and travel in China between 1897 and 1919, written by British and American authors.

The first subcorpus consists of four volumes and 504,529 tokens:

- Commander J. Elliot Bingham. *Narrative of the Expedition to China: From the Commencement of the War to Its Termination in 1842; with Sketches of the Manners and Customs of that singular and Hitherto Almost Unknown Country.* London: Henry Colburn, 1843, vol. 1. (001)
- Commander J. Elliot Bingham. *Narrative of the Expedition to China: From the Commencement of the War to Its Termination in 1842; with Sketches of the Manners and Customs of that singular and Hitherto Almost Unknown Country.* London: Henry Colburn, 1843, vol. 2. (002)
- Sir William Hutcheon Hall, William Dallas Bernard. *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis from 1840 to 1843, and of the Combined Naval and Military Operations in China, Comprising a*

> *Complete Account of the Colony of Hong-Kong and Remarks on the Character and Habits of the Chinese.* London: Henry Colburn, 1845, vol. 1. (003)
> − Sir William Hutcheon Hall, William Dallas Bernard. *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis from 1840 to 1843, and of the Combined Naval and Military Operations in China, Comprising a Complete Account of the Colony of Hong-Kong and Remarks on the Character and Habits of the Chinese.* London: Henry Colburn, 1845, vol. 2. (004)

The selected texts for this subcorpus may be defined as war rather than travel accounts; however, they still represent an appropriate source of data for both the TaLitE project and this study as they, in addition to narrating events involving Westerners in China also include, as the titles themselves detail, information about the "manners and customs" and "character and habits" of the local population.

The reference corpus selected for the extraction of keywords was the Gutenberg English 2020. This choice was made as the Gutenberg corpus includes older texts from the time period under investigation and, as a result, could contribute to reducing the presence of archaisms as keywords in the output. The simple maths option was set 100 to avoid Chinese words and city names to dominate the output; a minimum frequency of 5 was also indicated in the settings.

The second subcorpus consists of 6 volumes and 417,000 tokens:
- − Alexander Hosie. *Three Years in Western China: A Narrative of Three Journeys in Ssu-ch'uan, Kuei-chow, and Yün-nan.* London: George Philip & Son, 1897. (005)
- − Mrs. Archibald Little. *Intimate China: the Chinese as I have Seen them.* London: Hutchinson & co.,1899. (006)
- − William Edgar Gail. *A Yankee on the Yangtze.* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904. (007)
- − Alice Pickford Evans. *A Trip to the Orient; Leaves from the Note-book of Alice Pickford Brockway.* Philadelphia: The Griffith & Rowland Press, 1915. (008)
- − William McLeish. *Life in a China Outport.* Tianjin: Tiantsin press, 1917. (009)
- − Alice Pickford Evans. *Letters from the Far East.* Philadelphia, Boston: The Judson Press, 1919. (010)

Out of the first 100 keywords extracted for each subcorpus (see Appendix 1), relevant terms were selected that could help shed light on how the Chinese population is perceived by the writers of the texts, as will be detailed in the following section. Concordance analysis for all occurrences of the selected words was then carried out to identify instances in which the authors, by their own words

or by quoting other people's, express opinions and judgements on the country and on the local population.

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Keywords

Looking at the keywords for the two subcorpora, it is possible to discern immediately that the first subcorpus is primarily concerned with the military account of the hostilities between Britain and China during the first Opium War, and of the subsequent events after the end of the war (e.g. the cession of Hong Kong to the British). The keywords extracted include locations (e.g. Hong Kong, Macao, Ningpo), different types of vessels also used in water warfare (e.g. junk, steamer, ship, boat), other terms related to warfare (e.g. gun, attack, defence, artillery), geographical terms pertaining to the locations described (e.g. bay, city, river, shore), military and administrative positions (e.g. troops, officer, commissioner, mandarin), other activities pertaining to the reasons for the war and which were affected by the British victory (e.g. trade, factory), and the actors involved (e.g. Portuguese, British, Keshen, Lin, Elliot).

In the second subcorpus, which covers a much wider timeframe, keywords predictably appear to be more heterogeneous, with a preference for geographical indications of provinces and cities (e.g. Yunnan, Shanghai, Peking, Tientsin), parts of locations transcribed from their Chinese names (e.g. Li for Li Hung-chang and Li Tang Hsia, although several of these instances were found only in one text), locations (e.g. bridge, temple, pagoda), attempts to convert locals to Christianity (missionary, mission), and other terms that suggest the texts cover a range of topics pertaining to life in China (e.g, trade, rice, bamboo, insect). In this subcorpus, no terms are found for military ranks, a sign that hostilities between countries are not a central topic here, although administrative roles are mentioned (e.g. viceroy, mandarin), as well as terms referring to both locals and Westerners (e.g. European, Chinaman, foreigner). The heterogeneity of these keywords suggest that the texts do not focus on specific aspects of western travel and life in China, but include a plethora of different topics, which may depend on the author's own specific interests, their role, and travel itineraries. A first look at the 100 highest scoring keywords shows that, without a crucial event to recount in detail, the topics covered in the second subcorpus are much more diverse.

The selected keywords, which may be seen in Table 1 below, identify for each subcorpus nouns or adjectives that may refer to both Westerners and the Chinese:

First Opium War		Post Opium Wars	
Selected keywords	**Keyness**	**Selected keywords**	**Keyness**
chinese	29,837	chinese	24,12
mandarin	6,215	coolie	4,994
foreigner	5,98	foreign	3,954
officer	5,269	western	3,866
merchant	5,166	foreigner	3,751
commissioner	4,182	mandarin	3,302
barbarian	3,56	native	3,239
seaman	3,293	chinaman	3,053
native	3,03	european	2,387
inhabitant	3,016		
authority	2,751		

Table 1. Selected keywords for concordance analysis

The words include geographical provenance or location (chinese, chinaman, western, european, foreign, foreigner, native, inhabitant), epithets (barbarian, used by the locals to refer to Westerners), jobs (coolie, merchant, seaman), military or administrative position (officer, commissioner, authority, mandarin).

4.2 Discourse around the first Opium War

While the focus of these texts is on the illustration of the battles and hostilities between the British and the Chinese, the authors do not refrain from commenting on the character and disposition of the Chinese, both as a population and in reference to individuals. Judgement on the Chinese as a community and on individual people may be contrasting, as personal acquaintance with members of the local community may lead to a positive evaluation of a particular person whereas negative stereotypes may still be used to describe the Chinese in general terms. The Chinese attitude and behavior during military operations is often referred to in positive terms, as they are described as valiant adversaries.

(1)   Some of the Chinese officers displayed great gallantry. (002)

Chinese officers are also described as fighting with "determined bravery" (003) or meeting their death "boldly and nobly" (003), maybe as a way of highlighting British prowess in eventually defeating such strong enemies. At the same time, it emerges from the texts that the Chinese are no match for the British, as they're also described as being "unable […] to contend" with them (001).

> (2)   The military tactics of the Chinese must be regarded as far below mediocrity; and can it be otherwise with a people, among whom the recommendation of a general for employment is not his intimate acquaintance with the arts of war, but rather his acuteness to frame and his effrontery to utter the most unblushing falsehoods, in order to deceive his opponents? No deceit is too gross, no artifice too mean and dirty for a mandarin, whether soldier, magistrate, or statesman, to stoop to. (002).

Chinese authorities, however, are depicted as being untrustworthy in their management of relations with the British, being characterized by "treachery and duplicity":

> (3)   a renewal of hostilities would take place, probably ushered in by some act of treachery on the part of the Chinese. (003)

This view is also reiterated as bribes are said to be extremely common, Chinese statements are defined as duplicitous, and the Chinese are ready to "evade all regulation" (004) if it suits them. The Chinese are also described as violent to English prisoners, whereas civilians are, conversely, kind to foreigners.

> (4)   the most revolting and barbarous cruelties were practised by the Chinese on their English prisoners, even on the dead bodies of many of those who fell in the country. (001)

Other bureaucrats in the system are described in contradictory terms. The mandarins are often presented in positive terms as hospitable and courteous, as well as "brave men" (002). The opposite also emerges in the texts, with depictions of mandarins deemed "cruel, rapacious, and ignorant" (004), ignorance being reiterated in the other text under examination, as in the example below:

> (5)   Many of my readers may probably be ignorant of the numerous insults that have been heaped upon the British nation, through the gross ignorance and overbearing pride of the Chinese Mandarins. (001)

Their pride is also remarked upon in relation to the epithet the Chinese would use for the British, that is barbarians:

> (6)   despising all "outside barbarians," have ever wrapped themselves up in their own pride and self-sufficiency, flattering themselves that their "celestial empire" was at least the most, if not the only, civilized portion of the world; (001)

This description places the Chinese in a self-centered position that may be comparable to the British – and, by extension, other foreign powers' – position towards China, based on "the idea of civilizing mission and the assumption that the West had marked out the path of historical progress that others were destined to follow" (Clifford 3).

The contradictory descriptions continue in the texts as the Chinese are defined as liars, but also as hard working — "there are few idlers amongst the Chinese" (002) — and ingenious.

> (7)   But the most remarkable improvement of all, and which shewed the rapid stride towards a great change which they were daily making, as well as the ingenuity of the Chinese character, (003)

A link to the Chinese hard-working nature is also found in relation to their craftmanship skills, especially in reference to work carried out in Hong Kong after the city was ceded to the British.

> (8)   At the eastern end of Hong Kong there are capital stone-quarries, which are worked with skill and facility by Chinese labourers, so that building is much facilitated; (004)

References are made to the local population easily adopting western habits, and it is possible that the positive evaluation is made as the Chinese in Hong Kong that are now under the 'beneficial' British influence are "bettering" themselves and therefore more worthy of respect and appreciation. They are described as good at making bell-metal (004), woodcarving (004), and also ready to learn about the mechanical arts (004). A patronizing streak may however be noticed in Hutcheon Hall and Dallas Bernard's book, as in the example below:

> (9)   How many lessons have the Chinese learnt, and how many have they yet to learn! (004)

In this last quote, the sympathetic Orientalism mentioned by Clifford (16) may be noticed: a sense of superiority is clear in the second part of the sentence, where the author is commenting on the treatment the Chinese reserve for their prisoners, judged inhumane compared to how the British deal with their own prisoners. The

condescension on the part of the author is clear; however, the first part of the sentence also suggests that the Chinese may improve over time as they acquire knowledge and adopt the habits of the West, as they are not intrinsically inferior or barbarous, but "their condition was a transient by-product of misrule" (Phillips 21).

4.3 Discourse after the Opium Wars

The second subcorpus reveals more heterogeneous opinions about the local population rather than a focus on their military prowess and strategic abilities, as these texts were published after the Opium Wars; however, the Boxer Rebellion took place between 1899 and 1901, so hostilities between the Chinese and western countries were not altogether absent during the time frame for the second subcorpus.

      Not all authors indulge in the description and expression of their perception of the Chinese: it is texts 006 and 0007 in this subcorpus that provide the most information about the Chinese, whereas the other texts do not show many relevant occurrences of the terms under investigation.

> (10)   We love our native China too much to fail to realise the truth in your admission 'that a slavish adherence to Confucianism alone has done far too much to limit and confine the Chinese mind for centuries,' (006)

The example above shows that, while the writer's feelings towards the country are positive – "we love" –, a patronizing attitude persists whereby non-western philosophies and religion are not only considered inferior to the Western, but they can hinder the potential of the Chinese population. The implication is that if the Chinese could leave their wrongful ways behind and embrace Christianity and a Western way of life, they would overcome the stagnation that affects their country. This appears to match Hutcheon Hall and Dallas Bernard's thoughts as expressed in example (9), confirming that China is not considered "genetically" inferior, but that it can be "redeemed" thanks to a Western influence (Phillips 13).

      Clifford (181) states that earlier travelers tended to describe the Chinese as a population in general, or as representatives of classes or groups, and mentions in this respect Isabella Bird and Harry Franck, who published their works on China

respectively in 1899-1900[2] and between 1923 and 1925[3]. While this was more common in the first subcorpus – although there were multiple instances of descriptions of individuals, in the second dataset it was found that authors frequently separated generalized assessments, either positive or negative, from individual judgments on specific people, usually positive. William Edgar Geil (007) is especially prone to this type of observation, recording how "[t]he kind little Mandarin was very solicitous for [his] safety" and how one of the coolies he met during his travels was "kind-hearted". Mrs. Little also had positive words to share about a coolie, "a really brave, strong ex-soldier". More generalized comments on the Chinese are sometimes self-contradictory: while Geil tended to describe them in positive terms even when generalizing ("[t]he Chinaman knows a fool when he sees one"; "I must say I like the young literati of China"), although sometimes showing a condescending attitude ("I saw an unusually intelligent-looking Chinaman"), negative descriptions are also found in this and Hosie's texts:

> (11)   The nauseous things contained in the water thrown over this personification can never be imagined by a European, for a Chinaman is never over-particular about cleanliness. (007)

> (12)   A very little experience in an Eastern land teaches the traveller to discount native statements, (005)

While much more moderate than in the previous subcorpus, Hosie's statement also seems to point out that the Chinese cannot be entirely trusted. The greed (005), duplicitousness (005), "confirmed" tendency to lie (007) and lack of education (007) of the Chinese are also pointed out, alongside characteristics that are considered "almost pathetic", like loving flowers (008). Xenophobia towards Westerners was also widespread at the time, and it is indeed mentioned by the travelers:

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[2] Bird, Isabella. *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond. An Account of Journeys in China, Chiefly in the Province of Sze Chuan and Among the Man-Tze of the Somo Territory*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, & London: John Murray, 1899.

Bird, Isabella. *Chinese Pictures: Notes on Photographs Made in China*. London/New York: Cassell and Company, 1900.

[3] Franck, Harry A. *Wandering in Northern China*. New York/London: The Century Co., 1923.

Franck, Harry A. *Glimpses of Japan and Formosa*. New York/London: The Century Co., 1924

Franck, Harry A. *Roving Through Southern China*. New York/London: The Century Co., 1925.

(13)   The hateful cry of "foreign devil" greeted us on all sides; (008)

(14)   And I suddenly realised, with a choking sense of emotion, that the gates were shut, and I was within there with a whole cityful of Chinese so hostile to foreigners, and especially to foreign women, that it had not been thought safe to let me walk through them to the missionary's house. (006)

This hatred was apparently widespread among the Chinese, who blamed non-Chinese people and their nations for the unequal treaties China had to sign over the years (Stockwell 80).

The skills of the Chinese in various industries and crafts are also disputed in the texts. Their abilities are commended in various occasions, in relation to "pharmacopœia" (005), textiles and especially silk fabrics (007), engineering (007), architecture – in this case related to their "strong aesthetic sentiment" (006). However, Hosie wonders if they are "wanting in the faculty of invention" (005) and Little asserts that they "do not make roads sufficiently often to be good road-makers" (006).

Contradictory perspectives are found also in relation to the Chinese's appearance:

(15)   It only remains to add that whilst a roomful of Chinese ladies presents a very pretty appearance, from the exquisite gradations of colour of their embroidered skirts and jackets, the brilliancy of their head ornaments, and their rouge, yet, taken individually, probably no other nation is so deficient in charm, (006)

In the example above, Little constructs an exoticized Other by underlining her appreciation for the appearance of Chinese women's clothing, although the positive evaluation, which highlights the difference from Western styles, also includes a remark on the lack of charm of the women.

(16)   As to the colour–well, remember that beauty is relative. Is the ashen, consumptive look of the European as beautiful as a good healthy yellow? (007)

A certain degree of relativism appears to be found in Geil's text, as the writer removes himself from a West-centric perspective and provides the reader with an alternative viewpoint: much like Western clothing is seen as "indecorous" (006, remarks on Western clothing also in 005) by the locals, complexion may also be perceived differently by others.

5. CONCLUSIONS

While built on relatively small corpora compared to the plethora of accounts and narratives that have been published by Westerners in China over the timeframe

under consideration, this study contributes from a linguistic perspective to research investigating the evolution of Sino-Western relations over time.

In the texts under investigation the Chinese are constructed as Other, exoticized and often described in patronizing terms. The authors of the books in the two subcorpora appeared to show different attitudes towards the Chinese, with Geil's account demonstrating a more relativistic attitude that, while Othering the Chinese, also highlighted their strengths vis-à-vis the British ("But you ask, Are the Chinese such men as we are? It is a simple question to answer because in some respects they are our betters" (007)). Despite this observation, the texts feature contradictory – and even self-contradictory – affirmations, with authors expressing both positive and negative assessments of the Chinese, a result in line with Clifford's own extensive analysis on travel accounts to China in the 19th and 20th century. As already mentioned, the Chinese were not considered as an inherently inferior population by genetics, but on the contrary, they were recognized as an "ancient and highly literate civilization and a complex and sophisticated polity", thus deserving of respect (Clifford 16). At the same time, in Kerr and Kuehn's words, not all criticism can "be discounted as denigratory and serving a hegemonic agenda" (5).

Even when describing hostilities between the British and the Chinese, descriptions of the Chinese, either as a whole or as groups (e.g. mandarins, coolies) were never entirely negative. This may be due to the fact that the texts in the Opium War subcorpus were published after the British victory in the war; the writers may have therefore been more open to recognizing the Chinese's bravery and skill in the hostilities, and expect them to finally overcome their stagnation, thanks to a new access to "the benefits of Western institutions and Western science" (Clifford 25). In both subcorpora common trends can be found in the description of the Chinese, such as a tendency for deceit, and an appreciation for certain skills and abilities. The assessment, as discussed above, can take on a condescending, patronizing trait even when positive. This is a sign that, while China may have been seen as "redeemable" and not as backward as other territories where Said's (1975) definition of Orientalism could be more accurately applied, such as Africa and the middle East, it was still perceived as somewhat inferior at the time these texts were published. A shift in this attitude may be seen in the second subcorpus, where positive comments seem to be more common and, due to the different focus in the topic of the writings, ranging over diverse areas of Chinese life and society. In addition, as remarked by Clifford, in the more recent texts writers distinguish more clearly between overgeneralizations of the Chinese population and evaluations of individual people (Clifford 181). Another observation may be made of Geil's text (007), which, more than the others, contains observations that erode the biased dynamic that sees the West – in this

case Britain – as superior and China as inferior by introducing a more relativistic perspective. While a patronizing and othering attitude still persists in the text, a different, more equal viewpoint is introduced to the reader.

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APPENDIX 1: FIRST 100 KEYWORDS EXTRACTED FOR EACH SUBCORPUS

First Opium War		Post Opium Wars	
Keyword	**Keyness**	**Keyword**	**Keyness**
chinese	29,837	chinese	24,12
nemesis	15,005	china	16,535
canton	13,057	missionary	7,49
elliot	9,752	li	6,035
hong	8,401	shanghai	5,365
steamer	8,041	ch	5,36
captain	7,75	coolie	4,994
fort	7,725	province	4,982
china	7,403	yün-nan	4,926
junk	7,335	bamboo	4,914
macao	7,013	peking	4,828
troop	6,868	ssŭ-ch	4,811
vessel	6,742	temple	4,763
boat	6,462	uan	4,712

First Opium War		Post Opium Wars	
Keyword	Keyness	Keyword	Keyness
ship	6,248	emperor	4,619
chusan	6,223	city	4,521
mandarin	6,215	pieh	4,499
battery	6,189	lai	4,487
opium	6,156	mai	4,471
island	6,068	official	4,298
gun	6,019	ichang	4,21
foreigner	5,98	keh	4,139
river	5,965	yang-tsze	4,091
keshen	5,933	fu	4,056
kong	5,688	river	3,982
officer	5,269	foreign	3,954
modeste	5,237	ing	3,921
merchant	5,166	viceroy	3,912
proceed	5,149	opium	3,892
lin	5,018	ung-k	3,876
board	4,969	western	3,866
anchor	4,855	moung	3,826
squadron	4,805	tiao	3,804
attack	4,632	chieh	3,78
bogue	4,595	ka	3,765
trade	4,438	cash	3,757
tartar	4,425	foreigner	3,751
lieutenant	4,377	mountain	3,661
commissioner	4,182	ngi	3,612

First Opium War		Post Opium Wars	
Keyword	**Keyness**	**Keyword**	**Keyness**
amoy	4,117	vai	3,608
emperor	4,108	ta	3,457
imperial	4,097	chungking	3,442
harbour	4,067	rice	3,441
capture	4,037	wax	3,366
admiral	4,029	gate	3,362
defence	3,921	bridge	3,332
factory	3,891	mission	3,326
marine	3,872	kuei-chow	3,325
city	3,857	niang	3,325
bay	3,803	mandarin	3,302
gough	3,674	tea	3,27
british	3,633	village	3,261
flag	3,599	native	3,239
barbarian	3,56	inn	3,137
plenipotentiary	3,542	yamen	3,078
ningpo	3,431	hundred	3,061
majesty	3,397	chinaman	3,053
shore	3,355	tou	3,05
seaman	3,293	chiang	3,03
truce	3,209	trade	3,024
naval	3,175	chiu	3,013
hill	3,161	west	2,983
transport	3,155	hankow	2,959
blonde	3,153	kang	2,933

First Opium War		Post Opium Wars	
Keyword	Keyness	Keyword	Keyness
portuguese	3,142	road	2,901
arrival	3,105	nung	2,893
numerous	3,085	yi	2,845
whampoa	3,078	gorge	2,842
preparation	3,074	tael	2,813
fire	3,073	steamer	2,78
artillery	3,049	tai	2,779
tow	3,037	tibetan	2,762
madras	3,036	nai	2,762
native	3,03	plain	2,761
anchorage	3,02	tang	2,745
destroy	3,018	foot	2,701
inhabitant	3,016	tiu	2,7
commander	3,013	boat	2,698
force	3,006	ou	2,682
chuenpee	2,981	yunnan	2,671
pekin	2,978	thousand	2,614
pottinger	2,952	tientsin	2,569
passage	2,911	street	2,541
wellesley	2,91	canton	2,511
immediately	2,867	ang	2,509
channel	2,866	insect	2,498
canal	2,849	examination	2,494
advance	2,819	yangtze	2,481
proclamation	2,819	carry	2,457

First Opium War		Post Opium Wars	
Keyword	Keyness	Keyword	Keyness
operation	2,789	archibald	2,45
situate	2,787	pagoda	2,446
phlegethon	2,78	imperial	2,44
mile	2,772	tieh	2,438
ning-po	2,763	pang	2,434
nankin	2,755	chair	2,416
authority	2,751	koh	2,411
wall	2,749	mile	2,401
hugh	2,745	european	2,387
coast	2,744	outside	2,382
governor	2,734	stone	2,38

BIONOTE

Valeria FRANCESCHI is a temporary assistant professor in English Language and Translation at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of Verona, where she teaches at undergraduate and graduate level. Her research interests include English as a Lingua Franca, especially in relation to plurilingual practices and on the business context (BELF), corpus linguistics and, more recently, tourism discourse, with a focus on both professional and user-generated content.
Email: valeria.franceschi@univr.it