Introduction

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We are delighted to be able to introduce this special issue of the Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences, on behalf of the University of Exeter, the College of Humanities, and the Departments of English and Modern Languages. This special issue selects four articles revised from papers delivered at the inaugural Fudan–Exeter Colloquium, “Reading across Cultures: Global Configurations of Reception, Adaptation and Transmission”, held at Fudan University, Shanghai, from 23 to 25 June, 2014. Twelve academics from Exeter were hosted by colleagues in Fudan, and over the course of 3 days, twenty-six papers were delivered in eight themed sessions, as well as two keynote lectures by Dean Chu (“Linguistic diversity in trans-cultural communication”) and Dean Kaye (“Site Works: Archaeologies of Bay Area Performance, 1969–85”), respectively. The colloquium was a great success and cemented the relationship between Fudan and Exeter. We hope that it will be the first of many such collaborations between our institutions.

In the globalised academic world of the twenty-first century, questions of reception and adaptation take on a new urgency. Scholars are investigating the ways in which the literature, visual, and cultural artefacts belonging to one time and place are received by new audiences and adapted by new practitioners, across geographical frontiers as well as across historical eras. In the colloquium, “Reading across Cultures”, the meeting of Chinese and European scholars gave us an opportunity to make comparisons between the various forms of reception and

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adaptation taking place within each of these centres of civilisation. We considered some of the ways in which the cultures of China and Europe have reached out to and influenced each other, as well as considering how reception and adaptation operate within each culture and across different mediatic forms. Questions that were addressed include: How are literary texts and theatrical performances altered as they enter the translingual spaces between cultures? How do Chinese and European notions of a “classical” literature differ and agree, and what relations between classical, medieval, and later literatures can be traced in each culture? How and for what purposes have the cultural artefacts of the past been preserved for later generations, and what new significance have they acquired for contemporary audiences across the globe? What is the cultural significance of landscape art in China and in Europe, and how have the landscape arts of each culture been received and adapted in the other? How have art and literature in both China and Europe approached questions of the human body and of the relationship of the human to the animal? How do the concepts and the chronological placing of modernity compare across China and Europe, and in what ways has the modern literature of one culture been received by the other? As we explore these questions, we begin to build a new, globalised understanding of the processes of cultural reception, adaptation, and transmission.

The four papers gathered here approach these questions of reception, adaptation, and transmission from a variety of traditions and perspectives. Two papers deal with the adaptation and transmission of Chinese culture through European or “Western” cultures: Jane Spencer’s “The animals of China in the eighteenth-century British imagination”, and Corinna Wagner’s “Visual Translations: Medicine, Art, China and the West”. Two further papers look at questions of intermediality, reception, and transmission within the European, and specifically the French context: Emma Cayley’s “Between Manuscript and Print: Literary Reception in Late Medieval France. The Case of the *Songe de la Pucelle*”, and Adam Watt’s “Proust between print culture and visual art—Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s ‘Works in Fiber, Paper and Proust’”.

In her article, Jane Spencer examines British ideas of China filtered through descriptions of Chinese animals in eighteenth-century literary and epistolary accounts. Spencer focuses in particular on the accounts of natural historians, as well as Oliver Goldsmith’s fictional letters of a “Chinese philosopher” in *The Citizen of the World* (1762). Her discussion centres around the particular examples of the golden pheasant, the horse, the cormorant, and the cat, and her analysis offers a new perspective on the European Enlightenment’s somewhat ambivalent view of advanced civilisations. A similarly new perspective on Sino-British “entanglements” is offered by Corinna Wagner’s article which explores the fundamental ways in which aesthetic appreciations and considerations of the body are linked to the history of medicine. Just as Spencer uses the notion of the animal body to probe British understandings of other cultures, so Wagner develops her analysis through aesthetic and medical explorations of the human body. Wagner’s article takes as its body of evidence the collections of the Gordon Museum of Pathology at Guy’s Hospital, London, comprising several anatomical waxes by the Victorian “moulageur”, Joseph Towne, and adjacent to these, a room containing a series of

paintings of pre-operative patients by the Chinese artist Lam Qua. Produced in the same period on opposite sides of the globe, these artefacts nonetheless speak to one another across the cultural divide: What Wagner terms the “global exchange of aestheticized medical images”.

Moving to the European context, Emma Cayley and Adam Watt examine the multiple ways in which texts move and are experienced by new audiences across different mediatic and chronological spaces. Cayley’s article takes as its central case study a fifteenth-century French debate poem, the *Songe de la Pucelle* (Dream of the Virgin), and traces its reception across manuscript and early printed copies. This vastly popular dream vision poem demonstrates a curious divergence in the patterns of its transmission across these two traditions, with manuscript and printed versions seeming to target different audiences. Cayley probes this divergence through text and image, comparing fifteenth-century manuscript illumination with fifteenth- and sixteenth-century woodcuts. Through the multiple contexts: textual, material, and visual, of this one poem, she constructs a narrative of reuse and reframing. Watt’s article is similarly focused around a particular case study. Watt considers the “Works in Fiber, Paper and Proust” created by critic and theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950–2009) and first exhibited at Harvard University in 2005. This series of constructed objects, which include what are described by Kosofsky Sedgwick as an “accordion-book” and a “loom-book”, force the viewer/reader to reassess the relationship between the text and its traditional form of presentation. Through Sedgwick’s textile rendering of the words of the world-famous modernist French author, Marcel Proust, the audience is taken on a journey through his or her own mortality and comes to reflect on the materiality, not only of the textual/textile object itself, but also of the human body. In this sense, all four articles collected here form a series of contemplations on the body: textual, material, human, or animal and show how the body in all these forms produces new meaning as it moves from one cultural context to another. All four papers, as they present their new reflections on the theme “Reading Across Cultures”, have themselves been enriched by the cross-cultural dialogues that took place throughout the colloquium.

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Jane Spencer is Professor of English and Associate Dean for Research in the College of Humanities, University of Exeter. She is the author of *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (1986), *Elizabeth Gaskell* (1993), *Aphra Behn’s Afterlife* (2000) and *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon, 1660–1830* (2005). She is completing a study of eighteenth-century animal representation, *Writing About Animals in the Age of Revolution*.