

**CROSSING BETWEEN  
TRADITION  
AND MODERNITY**

EDITED BY  
KIRK A. DENTON

ESSAYS IN COMMEMORATION  
OF MILENA DOLEŽELOVÁ-VELINGEROVÁ  
(1932–2012)

KAROLINUM PRESS





## **Crossing between Tradition and Modernity:**

Essays in Commemoration of Milena Doleželová-Velingerová (1932–2012)

**Edited by Kirk A. Denton**

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Cover of *Exploring the Heart* (Xin de tansuo), by Chang Hong (Beijing: Beixin shuju, 1926).

The cover was designed by Lu Xun. Image courtesy of The Huntington Archive.

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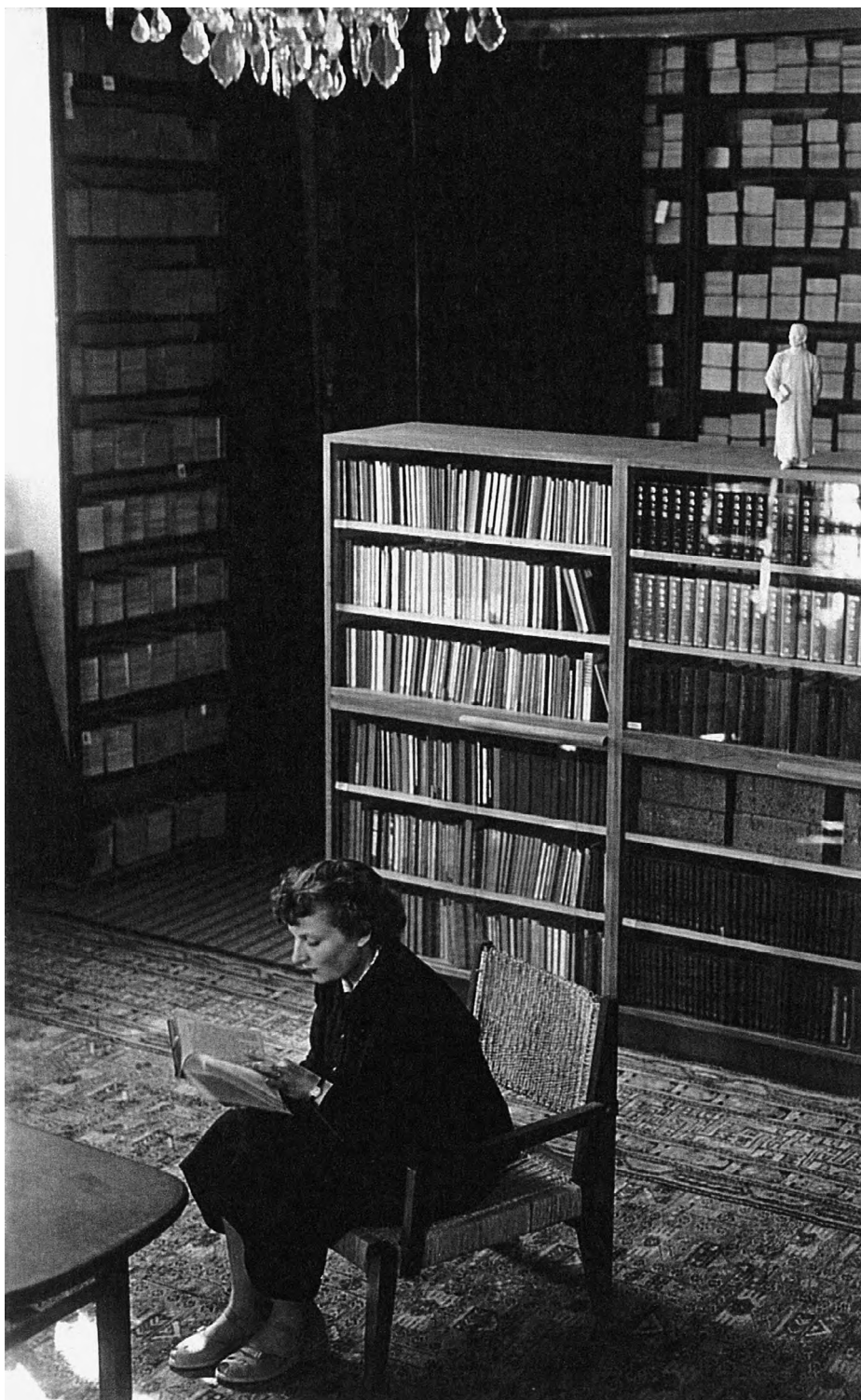
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Milena Doleželová-Velingerová (1932–2012), in the Lu Hsun Library, Oriental Institute, Prague, 1955. Courtesy of Milena Dolezel.

# REMEMBERING MILENA: A PREFACE<sup>1</sup>

CHEN PINGYUAN

TRANSLATED BY GRAHAM SANDERS

It was the evening of October 4th when I received a letter from Milena's daughter telling me that her mother had been taken to the emergency room, and asking her friends to write to her without delay. Xia Xiaohong and I immediately sent the following message:

Milena, we have just learned the news that you are in the hospital, and we are both very worried about you. You have always been so optimistic that we believe this time you will surely overcome your ailment and quickly return to health. We still plan to go to your cottage again as your guests; our previous visit there left us with such beautiful memories. Last month we were still proofreading the manuscript sent by Prof. Wagner of the English translation of *Modern Encyclopedic Dictionaries*. It is all due to your scholarly sensitivity that we even had this opportunity to collaborate. And, as it is a topic that we can continue working on, we await your further guidance. So please get well soon!

Although I spoke this way, I feared in my heart that her situation was fraught with danger. Just as I expected, I learned over the course of two days from various sources that Prof. Milena had indeed passed away in Prague on October 20th. According to the announcement made by her daughter they were planning to hold two memorial services, one in Toronto, where she had worked for such a long time, and one in Prague. We had no way to attend them, as they are so far away, so I felt it best to compose this short piece to convey our thoughts of mourning.

In 2007, Peking University Press published *Modern Chinese Encyclopedic Dictionaries*, edited by Milena and me. The brief author's biographies included this passage:

Milena Doleželová-Velingerová, born 1932 in Prague, Czech Republic. Employed successively at the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, the University of Toronto in Canada, and Charles University in Prague. She is currently a Research Associate at Heidelberg University in Germany. Her major publications in-

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1 Originally published in Chinese in *Wenhui bao* (Nov. 14, 2012).

clude: *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century*, *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, and articles such as "Lu Xun's 'Medicine,'" and "Narrative Modes of Late Qing Novels," among others.

I recall at the time that Milena herself provided a biography that was much longer than this, but I was forced to abridge it to keep it consistent with the rest of the work.

During my studies at Peking University in the 1980s, when writing my doctoral dissertation, "The Transformation of Narrative Modes in Chinese Fiction," I benefitted greatly from *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century*, edited by Milena. But the first time I was able to meet her in person was not until ten years later in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic.

In August of 1998, after having just taken part in the magnificent 100th anniversary of the founding of Peking University, I came to Prague to attend a scholarly event that was part of a series in celebration of the 650th anniversary of the establishment of Charles University, the oldest university in Central Europe. I was deeply moved that Milena was hosting this small but significant Sinology workshop with such high hopes. We arrived in Prague the day before the workshop, which happened to be the 30th anniversary of the invasion of the Czech Republic by Soviet forces. Strolling along the wide avenues of Prague, everywhere one could see advertisements for a photography exhibition called "1968." Milena had fled to distant lands after the Soviet invasion and had only returned two years ago to take up a position as a Visiting Professor at Charles University. She chose this particular time to hold the meeting not only to show her own strong feelings toward these events and transformations, but also in the hopes that we too would sense the lasting magic of the "Prague Spring."

Two years later, I, along with Professors David Der-wei Wang and Shang Wei of Columbia University, held an international symposium at Peking University called "The Late Ming and the Late Qing: Historical Continuation and Cultural Innovation." Milena in the end came and presented a paper titled "Creating a New World of Fiction: Chinese Short Stories, 1906-1916." Summer in Beijing that year was sweltering and, to make matters worse, the conditions of the meeting venue and the hotel were not very good. Many of the overseas Chinese scholars complained about it for days. But Prof. Milena, who was nearly 70 years old at the time, continued to talk and joke cheerfully both inside and outside the venue; everywhere one could see her tiny but vigorous figure. The reason I describe her this way is because in the middle of the meeting she came running up to "lodge a complaint": the students at Peking University tasked with running the symposium, seeing that she was the most senior scholar there, kept wanting to help her as she went up the stairs. She said she was not that old, that she could handle anything herself,

and that there was no need for others to help her. When she noticed that I was a little embarrassed by this, Milena added, “Next time you come to Prague, I will take you out in my car for some fun.”

After this, whenever we were at an international conference on late Qing literature, culture, scholarship, or thought, we would see each other again many times. And she really did take us out in her car for some fun just as she had promised, in October of 2006. After that conference, Milena drove her little red car to take Xia Xiaohong and me to her cottage in the countryside, an hour and half outside of Prague. The weather was quite cold, and I remember once we were inside the door, she set about lighting a blazing fire in the fireplace. Then she prepared a meal and we drank wine and chatted together. When we got up the next day, we toured nearby villages, and I watched as she and Xia Xiaohong wrangled playfully over choosing souvenirs. In the sunshine Milena’s lined visage appeared particularly charming, and I truly believed that she was not old in the least.

The “English manuscript of *Modern Encyclopedic Dictionaries*” I mentioned in my letter asking after Milena’s health was a major collaborative project she undertook with Prof. Rudolph Wagner of Heidelberg University, which was in press at that time [subsequently published in 2014 by Springer as *Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930)*]. Actually, this book began its life in 2007 when Peking University Press released *Modern Chinese Encyclopedic Dictionaries* (Jindai Zhongguo de baike cishu). In the introductory article I contributed as a preface, “Encyclopedias as ‘Cultural Projects’ and ‘Enlightenment Business,’” I mentioned: “This book is a collection of articles drawn from a workshop entitled ‘Early Modern Chinese Encyclopaedias: Changing Ways of Thought in Late Qing China’ held at Heidelberg University, March 26–28, 2006, for which I extend my sincere gratitude to the host, Prof. Milena, and the venue, Heidelberg University.”

That year, in late September and early October, I carried the newly published book, still smelling of fresh ink, as we attended a workshop on Modern Chinese Encyclopedic Dictionaries organized by Academia Sinica in Taipei. The whole journey—from settling on topics, organizing research groups, repeatedly discussing our trains of thought on writing, to our mutual deliberation and encouragement over completed drafts, translation into English, and final revisions—was completely strenuous. To tell you the truth, I came to have more than a little admiration in my eyes for Western scholars with such dedication and rigor.

On the very day the workshop officially began there was a big typhoon, which meant the local scholars had no way to attend; so the scholars who had already arrived from abroad, led by Profs. Milena and Wagner, made use of a meeting room beside the hotel to proceed with the workshop. Coming out of the meeting room we ran into violent winds and torrential rains, and Milena

was blown along by her umbrella until she fell down onto the ground. But she just gave a laugh, pulled herself up again, and continued on her way. That year, she was already getting close to 75 years old.

Early in the summer of 2009, I went to Budapest, Hungary to attend a workshop called “The International Symposium on the History and Present Condition of Cultural Exchange between China and Central and Eastern Europe,” jointly hosted by Beijing Foreign Studies University and Hungary’s Eötvös Loránd University. After the meeting, many delegates from China made a detour to Prague, and I was upset that I was unable to go with them and thus lost the perfect opportunity to get together with Milena to have a good chat—it really was a pity. Nevertheless, at the meeting itself I gave a talk titled “Between ‘Knowledge’ and ‘Friendship’—The Meaning of Průšek,” in which I raised the contributions of the European Sinologist Průšek, and Průšek’s students such as Milena, along with the challenges, revisions, and transformations faced by the next generation of scholars.

Scholars who participate in “international dialogues” are swayed by grand intellectual tides as well as being concerned with their personal contacts in everyday life. Near the end of last year, I published an article called “International Views and Local Feelings: How to Engage in Dialogue with Sinologists.” I once delivered the third section of the essay, “There Ought to Be Feelings Behind Research,” as a lecture in a classroom at Peking University, and the students were all extremely moved when they heard it. In it, I pointed out:

Two or three decades ago, exchanges between Chinese and foreign scholars were rare and it was difficult to meet face-to-face. Whenever we did have a chance, we were thirsty for a better understanding of one another. Because of this, we took great pains to make ourselves understood clearly, to listen to one another intently, to seek out common bases for research, to throw ourselves sincerely and deeply into a series of conversations where we might benefit from one another, and became lifelong friends in the process. Nowadays, international academic gatherings are as numerous as the hairs on an ox, and although it is very easy to meet other scholars face-to-face, it is rare to be able to put your heart and soul into a conversation with someone. It is not all about the articles and papers, it is about making toasts to friendship; but we tend not to care so much about the other person’s life beyond their scholarly work. If we are reduced to only caring about such things as the other person’s status and title, their symbolic capital, we are actually descending to a lower level.

In my article I mentioned a good many direct contacts with foreign scholars, including ones with scholars now deceased such as Ito Toramaru, Maruyama Noboru, Nakajima Midori, and others. They have all given me great amounts of sincere and selfless help.



And now, one more sinologist I admire, Prof. Milena, has passed away—dwelling on it makes me sigh with sadness. The scholarly environment today is so different from thirty or fifty years ago. It is very difficult for the younger generation to fully understand our generation and the ones that came before, why we so cherish the aid we received from each other during tough times, and the lifelong friendships that we built because of it.

That year in Prague, Milena gave me a slim, exquisite volume in English entitled *Wu Xiaoling Remembered* (Prague, 1998). She compiled it together with Prof. Patrick Hanan of Harvard University, and there were a dozen European and North American scholars involved in writing it. In an article entitled “A Chinese Scholar in the Eyes of Sinologists” (published in *Qunyan*, Dec. 1998), I said of the slim 117-page book “although it is not lengthy, it does warrant the phrase ‘profound in feeling and meaning.’” One should note that it is an exceedingly rare occurrence in European and American universities to have a collection published to commemorate a Chinese scholar. Milena came to China for her studies in 1958–1959 and received warm-hearted assistance from Wu Xiaoling, the famed rare book collector and research fellow of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. After that time Wu Xiaoling’s daughter, Wu Hua (Laura), also became a doctoral student under Milena’s guidance when she was at the University of Toronto. These sorts of charming anecdotes are all tiny ripples that should not be overlooked when telling the story of the great tides of international cultural exchange.

October 31, 2012  
While at The Chinese University of Hong Kong



# INTRODUCTION

KIRK A. DENTON

Prof. Milena Doleželová-Velingerová (hereafter Doleželová) was an important member of the Prague School of Sinology founded by her teacher, Jaroslav Průšek, in the 1950s. Like Průšek, Doleželová was that rare scholar who crossed fluidly over the May Fourth divide—that is, she worked with equal skill on both modern and premodern literature. She published on Song dynasty popular ballads (*zhugongdiao*), the late imperial autobiography *Six Records of a Life Adrift* (Fusheng liuji), late imperial drama and fiction commentary, novels of the late Qing, the modern writer Lu Xun, the Cultural Revolution novel *The Bright Red Star* (Shanshan de hongxing), and, in her later years, late Qing encyclopedia—a scholarly range of which few Chinese literature scholars can boast. In crossing over the premodern and modern divide, her scholarship embodies a healthy skepticism toward what can be called the May Fourth paradigm, which reduces May Fourth cultural modernity to a radical break from the imperial and Confucian past.

Well before “alternative modernities” scholars made it popular, Doleželová promoted the notion that late Qing fiction was modern and that the late Qing period (1894–1911) was an integral part of the early formation of modern Chinese literature. That the late Qing belonged to “tradition” was a notion propagated by May Fourth intellectuals themselves, part of a larger polemical rejection of the past and a form of imperious self-affirmation. With her edited book *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century* (1980), Doleželová questioned both the May Fourth’s own rhetorical strategies and prevailing scholarly views, as well as implicitly drawing attention to the fact that scholarship itself is driven by ideological motivations. She tackled the May Fourth legacy more forthrightly in her co-edited (with Oldřich Král) *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China’s May Fourth Project*.

Doleželová not only crossed the borders of scholarly disciplines and fields, she lived a peripatetic life that involved crossing national, political, and cultural borders: from Nazi occupation to Soviet domination; from Communist Czechoslovakia to Maoist People’s Republic of China in the 1950s; from Europe to the United States in 1967; from the U.S. to Canada the following year; and finally back to a now-postsocialist Czech Republic in 1996. Reflecting this multicultural background, Doleželová published in many languages, including French, German, Czech, English, Italian, and Chinese.

As Chinese literary studies entered, belatedly, the poststructuralist era, Doleželová's approach to literature was sometimes dismissed as outdated. It is true that she was influenced by the structuralism and semiotics of the Prague school, in particular the work of Jan Mukařovský, but she was rarely dogmatic or mechanical in applying them to the analysis of texts. Theory was for her a methodological tool more than an explanatory system. What structuralism and semiotics offered her was a view of literature as dynamic, constantly changing in response to both internal (literary) and external (social and political) factors—a far cry from the pure formalism with which structuralism is sometimes associated. They also instilled in her an abiding concern with language as the very fabric of literature. It should be said, furthermore, that Doleželová was at the forefront of introducing literary theory, and theoretical rigor, into Sinology, a field long characterized by its philological orientation.

A collection of essays by her students, most of whom gathered in June 2012 for a small conference to celebrate their teacher's eightieth birthday, the present volume honors Doleželová's career as a Sinologist and her contributions to Chinese literary studies. It also commemorates and carries on the legacy of the Prague School. More important, the collection exemplifies the scholarly values Doleželová herself stood for, in particular her broad range of intellectual interests, her crossing over of the artificial boundary between traditional and modern literature, and her abiding attention to issues of language, narrative structure, genre, and representation.

Doleželová's students, who teach in universities in Hong Kong, the Czech Republic, Canada, and the U.S., are specialists in both late imperial literature and modern Chinese literature. Very few teachers in our field can be said to have produced students who excel in these two fields. The diversity of Doleželová's own scholarship is therefore reflected in the work of her students generally and that included in this volume in particular. The essays range in temporal focus from the Tang dynasty to the present; they deal with mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diaspora; they focus on genres and artistic forms as diverse as the novel, short story, memoir, autobiography, landscape essay, film, theater, oral performance, and museums. They treat "texts" such as: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*; the Tang prose master Liu Zongyuan's *Eight Records on Yongzhou*; *zidishu* (Manchu Bannerman tales) adaptations of *Dream of the Red Chamber*; Wang Wenxing's experimental novel *Family Catastrophe*; the permanent exhibit at the National Museum of Taiwan History; Shi Tuo's short-story cycle *Records from Orchard Town*; fiction by Chinese-Canadian writers; and Zhang Yimou's films. Attention to the text—language, tropes, narrative structure, style, etc.—is common to all these essays.

After a "preface" in the form of a short memorial by the renowned Peking University literature professor Chen Pingyuan, the volume opens, appro-

priately, with Leonard Chan's essay on the Hsia-Průšek debate. This debate, which was instrumental in the early formation of the field of modern Chinese literature in the West, was also key to Doleželová's development as a sinologist in the 1960s. Although his views on the relationship between the literary text and history were not always consistent, Průšek guided his students to analyze texts both in their historical context and as part of a literary system. At the same time, Doleželová's careful close readings and literary interpretations—demonstrated, for example, in her essay on Lu Xun's "Medicine" (Yao)—show characteristics of Hsia's New Critical "close reading" approach to texts. Doleželová's attention to both the historical/literary context and the text is embodied in the essays in this volume.

After Chan's essay, which sets the historical scholarly context, the volume is organized into two parts. The essays in Part I, "Language, Narrative Structure, and Genre," reflect concerns that were at the heart of Doleželová's methodology and of the Prague School more generally. Although Doleželová was no formalist, she demonstrated in her teaching and her writing a detailed attention to the language and narrative structure of literary texts, as well as to the larger literary system with which they interact. Genre, a critical aspect of structuralist narratology, was also a key focus of her research, for example in her work on *zhugongdiao*, autobiography, and the narrative innovations of late Qing fiction.

Anthony Pak and Shu-ning Sciban demonstrate in their respective essays a strong concern for language and narrative structure that was central to Doleželová's scholarship. Pak presents a close reading of Liu Zongyuan's *Eight Records on Yongzhou*, with an eye toward delineating its key structural features as a sub-genre of prose writing—the landscape essay. In a gesture that reminds one of Doleželová's analysis of late imperial drama and fiction commentary, Pak draws from the discourse of Chinese landscape painting to dissect the structural workings of Liu's essays. Sciban's approach is linguistic, with a focus on the use of neologism as a key element of Wang Wenxing's modernist project in the novel *Family Catastrophe*. By looking at his neologisms in light of earlier examples of neologism, moreover, Sciban suggests that the modern—even the modernist—should never be seen as radically disconnected from tradition, an idea that Doleželová emphasized in much of her work and in her teaching. Doleželová insisted on seeing modern works of literature as part of a long-standing tradition, not simply as products of radical modernity or a modern impulse. Ihor Pidhainy's essay analyzes chapters 36 to 38 of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in which Liu Bei woos the strategist Zhuge Liang to his cause. This is a pivotal turning point in the larger structure of the novel, Pidhainy argues, in terms of marking a shift from the masculine militarism of the early chapters to a more feminine Daoist strategism in the later ones.

Alison Bailey's essay investigates the eruption of the personal in an unlikely text: *A Bodkin to Unravel the Code*, a seventeenth century legal and forensic text by Wang Mingde. Contrary to the generic norms of the forensic text, Wang weaves personal stories in and around the scientific description of "wounds, scars, and death." A malleable conception of genre is also at play in Dušan Andrš' essay on Shi Tuo's *Records from Orchard Town*. Through detailed analysis of the narrative structure and thematic patterns in the collection, Andrš describes the blending of fiction and prose into a literary work that is fresh and original in its structure and its lyricism. Literary texts, Bailey and Andrš show us, are not simply mechanical iterations of patterns determined by generic norms; they can, and often do, engage creatively with those norms to forge something new. Doleželová affirmed this kind of dynamic, organic view of genre and the literary system.

Li Zeng's and Ying Wang's essays are concerned with crossing over the borders between genres through adaptation. Zeng looks at the adaptation of fictional texts in two of Zhang Yimou's films and engages in an intertextual, "cross-cultural" reading by suggesting some interesting links between these adaptations and texts such as O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* and Stephen Foster's song "Old Black Joe." And Ying Wang analyzes in detail the *zidishu* (a form of folk ballad popular among the Manchus in the Qing) adaptations of *Dream of the Red Chamber* and their role in cementing the novel into popular consciousness. This crossing over from genre to genre was an abiding concern in Doleželová's own work, particularly her writing on the mutual interaction of elite and popular literature in *zhugongdiao* and of Western and indigenous Chinese literary traditions in late Qing fiction.

The topics and approaches of the essays in Part II, "Identities and Self-Representations," reflect to some degree new orientations that Doleželová herself was taking in her later work. In this sense, they mark the development of the Prague School into the era of cultural studies scholarship. At first glance, the "national" identities in post-martial law Taiwan addressed in Kirk Denton's chapter would appear to be centered on issues that were not major concerns in Doleželová's work. But the museum, which is Denton's focus, is a knowledge construct and a form of institutional historical memory that functions in ways not unlike the encyclopedia, which was a focus of Doleželová's work in her later years. In their essays, Hua Wu and Xueqing Xu analyze the complex issue of diasporic identities as expressed in fiction by a range of Chinese-Canadian writers. Although she herself lived a "postcolonial" and "diasporic" life, these topics were not central to Doleželová's work. But the imprint of Doleželová's influence can be found in the careful attention Wu and Xu pay to issues of language and narrative structure, even as they draw from poststructuralist, postcolonial theorists, such as Stuart Hall on the fluid and performative nature of identity and Andrea O'Reilly on the



construction of motherhood in literary texts. Gilbert Fung and Shelby Chan also cite Stuart Hall in their informative overview of the constantly shifting and hybrid identities of post-retrocession Hong Kong. They also, briefly, bring in Hong Kong translated theatre—often in the form of translations from English to Cantonese, but also from Mandarin to Cantonese—as an example of this hybridity. Although these postcolonial, post-structuralist notions of identity might seem to be far removed from Doleželová’s methodology, we should keep in mind that structuralism first recognized the unstable relationship between sign and meaning and the constructed nature of all linguistic representations.

The volume ends with Graham Sanders’ essay on *Six Records of a Life Adrift*, a text about which Doleželová herself wrote an influential essay published in 1972. Sanders brings this important autobiography into the digital age by discussing the relevance of its apparently disjointed style and paradoxical elements to our postmodern fragmented selves and loss of faith in notions of personal authenticity. Making a late imperial text speak to the postmodern present is a perfect way to end a volume about the crossing between tradition and modernity.

Individually, the essays constitute new and original scholarship on a wide range of important topics in imperial and modern Chinese literary and cultural studies. As a whole, the volume is a fitting commemoration of the life and work of Milena Doleželová-Velingerová, who will be missed greatly by her students and the larger Sinological community. Below, find a list of her publications as a tribute to her scholarly contributions to the field.

# MILENA DOLEŽELOVÁ-VELINGEROVÁ: PUBLICATIONS

## Books

- Editor/Translator [with James I. Crump]. *Ballad of the Hidden Dragon*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Editor. *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980.
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# 1 “LITERARY SCIENCE” AND “LITERARY CRITICISM”: THE PRŮŠEK-HSIA DEBATE

LEONARD K. K. CHAN

*An honest endeavor to grasp this whole complex process  
and to present it in an objective and unbiased way.*  
(Jaroslav Průšek)

*The literary historian's first task is always the discovery  
and appraisal of excellence.*  
(C. T. Hsia)

## THE PRŮŠEK-HSIA DEBATE

In a brief summary of his academic career given in the preface of his 2004 publication, *C.T. Hsia on Chinese Literature*, C. T. Hsia (1921–2013) recalls a literary debate of more than four decades earlier. He elucidates his “position as critic of Chinese literature” by citing his own words, which had appeared at the end of an essay: “a refusal to rest content with untested assumptions and conventional judgments and a willingness to conduct an open-minded inquiry, without fear of consequence and without political prepossessions” (Hsia 2004: xi–xii). The essay first appeared in 1963. It was an article written in response to a long review of Hsia’s *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1962) written by the renowned Czech scholar, Jaroslav Průšek (1906–1980). Hsia was greatly concerned with the debate; he repeatedly referred to it in his subsequent writings.<sup>2</sup> An important event in the history of modern Chinese literature, the Průšek-Hsia debate is worth re-examining because it illustrates a clash between two trains of thought in literary research.<sup>3</sup>

Hsia and Průšek were both pioneering researchers in the field of modern Chinese literature, and their works had a great impact on Western academia.<sup>4</sup> The two scholars are also immensely well known in the Chinese academy.

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2 Aside from the foreword in *C. T. Hsia on Chinese Literature* (2004), Hsia mentioned it in Hsia 2002: 135 and 1987: 26.

3 This point is made by Lee 1980: xi–xii; and Wang 2005: 51–56.

4 For a discussion of this impact, see Lee 1980: xi–xii; Wang 2005: 51–56; and Gálík 1990: 151–161.

Many of their works have been translated into Chinese and are frequently quoted. Before a discussion of the significance of the Průšek-Hsia debate, I briefly sketch the cultural and academic backgrounds of the two scholars at the center of the debate.

In late 1940s, before leaving for the US to pursue his Ph.D. in English literature at Yale University, C. T. Hsia was a tutor in the Foreign Literature department at Peking University (Hsia 2002b: 94–115). Not long after he had moved to the US, China experienced a massive change: the ruling Kuomintang was overthrown by the Communists in a bloody civil war. Many intellectuals of different political stances—including Hsia's elder brother, Xia Ji'an, who had worked with Hsia at Peking University—left the mainland and went to Hong Kong, Taiwan, or overseas.<sup>5</sup> After the communist revolution, Hsia gave up on his hope of returning to his home country. In the final years of his Ph.D. study, Hsia was recruited to work on a project of China study sponsored by the US government: he was assigned to write several chapters, among which one was on Chinese literature, for the handbook *China: An Area Manual*.<sup>6</sup> He subsequently decided to develop out of this chapter a project of his own—an entire book on modern Chinese literature. The major part of the book was completed in 1955 and then published with several enlargements and revisions in 1961. A second edition of the book appeared in 1971, and a third in 1999.<sup>7</sup> With the publication of this pioneering work, along with his other important book *The Classic Chinese Novel* (Hsia 1968), Hsia acquired a prominent place in the field of Chinese literature. He would go on to become Professor Emeritus of Chinese at Columbia University and a fellow of the Academia Sinica. He passed away in 2013. *C. T. Hsia on Chinese Literature*, which came out in 2004, is a collection of sixteen substantial essays that Hsia had written during his years at Columbia University.<sup>8</sup>

5 After leaving Beijing, Xia Ji'an stayed in Hong Kong for a short period of time, and then went to Taiwan to teach at the National Taiwan University. He launched an important periodical, *Wenxue zazhi* (1956–1960), which later became a camp for liberal intellectuals who advocated democracy and the autonomy of literature. C. T. Hsia gave his support by contributing articles from abroad (Mei 2006: 1–33).

6 The project was led by David Nelson Rowe (1905–1985), an “anti-communist” who was a professor of political science at Yale University. According to Hsia, the handbook had never been formally published; the chapter on “literature” had a clear focus on modern literature, but classical literature was also covered (Hsia 1979a: 3–5). The following book record can be found in the Library of Congress: Chih-tsing Hsia [and others], *China: An Area Manual* (Chevy Chase, MD.: Operations Research Office, Johns Hopkins University, 1954–), edited by David Nelson Rowe and Willmoore Kendall.

7 Liu Shaoming and his co-workers' Chinese translation of the book is based on the second edition. The book was published by Union Press in Hong Kong and Zhuanji wenxue in Taipei in the same year of 1979, and re-published by the Chinese University Press in Hong Kong in 2001. An abridged simplified characters version, by Fudan University Press in Shanghai, came out in 2005.

8 For details of Hsia's publications, see “Chih-Tsing Hsia (C. T. Hsia) Publications” 1985; and Lianhe wenxue 2002.



Jaroslav Průšek first studied European history at Charles University, Prague. Later, while studying abroad in Sweden (and then Germany), he switched to sinology. He went to China in 1932 on a scholarship and studied Chinese socio-economic history. During his stay in China, he made acquaintance with Chinese literary men and artists such as Hu Shi, Bing Xin, Zheng Zhenduo, and Qi Baishi. He also exchanged letters with Lu Xun. After two years in China, he visited Japan, and then went back to Prague via the US in 1937. The journey to China deepened his understanding of Chinese literature, as well as Chinese language, folk culture, and arts. Soon after his return, he published a Czech translation of Lu Xun's *Call to Arms* (Nahan), which had a foreword contributed by Lu Xun. He later published the journal of his China trip under the title *My Sister China* (*Sestra moje Čína*, 1940).<sup>9</sup> In 1945, Průšek started teaching at Charles University. His interests cover a broad range of areas: Chinese thought, history, literature, and arts. Yet he became a well-known sinologist in Europe mainly from his achievements in two areas: “Middle Age folk literature,” *huaben* fiction in particular, and “new literature” (*xin wenxue*). In 1953, he became the founding Director of the Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and devoted himself to promoting international exchange in the field of sinology. After the Prague Spring in 1968, he was expelled from the Communist Party and from the Oriental Institute and prohibited from publishing. He died in 1980. Průšek left behind a large collection of works.<sup>10</sup> His major publications in English are: *Chinese History and Literature* (1970), and *The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature* (1980).

From the above brief description, it is not difficult to discern the great disparity between Hsia and Průšek. A Chinese student trained at Yale University—a bastion for the American “New Criticism” school of literary criticism—Hsia uses the benchmark of European literature in his review of Chinese literature. His thinking tends towards Anglo-American liberalism, and he strongly resists Communism and Communist regimes. Průšek was primarily trained in the European theoretical tradition. That the curiosity and imagination he had for China grew into fond attachment and sympathy is not difficult to understand if we take into consideration his political thinking: he was first attracted by national liberalization, and later found his ideal in socialism. In the 1960s, Průšek lost confidence in Communism. After the Prague Spring in 1968, he was put under severe political suppression and eventually died in grief. The Průšek-Hsia debate had taken place before Průšek changed his political thinking. At that time, the Western camp, head-

9 An English (Průšek 2002) and a Chinese (Průšek 2005) were subsequently published in the early 2000s.

10 For overviews of his work, see Merhaut 1956: 347–355; Merhaut 1966: 575–586; Šíma 1994.

ed by the US, was in direct confrontation with the Russian-led Communist Eastern block. It was the beginning of the Cold War period. It should be recalled that the book Hsia was recruited to write and that initiated his career as a specialist in Chinese literature—*China: An Area Manual*—was a reference work for the US army, a product of the West's strategy of containment of the Communist camp.

In March 1961, Yale University Press published Hsia's *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, the first literary history of its kind in English. Previously, the major focus of western studies of Chinese literature was on traditional/classical literature; modern literature was seldom studied, and it was often treated as a branch of area studies and complementary to socio-political analyses (Link 1993: 4–6). Hsia's pioneering and voluminous book of 600 pages attracted much attention among scholars of sinology and received a very positive response. David Roy claims it to be "the best book" in the field (Hsia 1979a: 11). However, in the following year, in a very prestigious journal of sinology *T'oung Pao*, the book was the subject of a long [48 pages] and harsh review by Průšek (1962) called "Basic Problems of the History of Modern Chinese Literature and C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*."<sup>11</sup> Hsia, who had just started working in the Department of Chinese and Japanese (forerunner of the current East Asian Languages and Cultures) at Columbia University, found this review article potentially damaging to his budding career,<sup>12</sup> so he decided to write a rebuttal in the same journal titled "On the 'Scientific' Study of Modern Chinese Literature: A Reply to Professor Průšek."<sup>13</sup> As a sequel, Průšek's student Zbigniew Słupski (1964) also wrote a review article "Some Remarks on the First History of Modern Chinese Fiction" in the journal *Archiv Orientální*. This article seems to have gone without any notice from Hsia. However, I will refer to it because it is helpful for us to understand Průšek's basic thinking, and the differences between Průšek and Hsia.

In terms of the exchange of essays that constitute this debate, it is clear that ideology and personal grievances marred both Hsia and Průšek in their

11 This article is also collected in Průšek 1980: 195–230. A Chinese translation can be found in Průšek 1987: 211–253.

12 Hsia says in retrospect: "When *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* was published in March, 1961, I was little known in western academia, while Průšek had long been a spokesman for communist literature in Europe. He had written the long and harsh review on the sinology periodical *T'oung Pao* with an intention to strike me, to throw me to the ground and make sure that I won't be able to stand up again" (Hsia 2002a: 138). Also refer to Hsia 2004: xi.

13 Hsia 1963: 428–474. See also Průšek 1980: 231–266. But since the book is not edited in the highest standard and contains some mistakes, it is not used as main reference here. Hsia's article was later collected in *C. T. Hsia on Chinese Literature* (2004: 50–83). For a Chinese version, see Hsia 1979a. Quotations in this paper are based on the original passage in *T'oung Pao*, although the Chinese translation has also been consulted.

writing.<sup>14</sup> For instance, Průšek condemns Hsia for giving "a completely distorted picture" of the "ideological problems in the Liberated Areas during the War and of Mao Tse-tung's views, especially his 'Talks at the Yen'an Literary Conference,'" and that "the criteria according to which C. T. Hsia evaluates and classifies authors are first and foremost of a political nature and not based on artistic considerations." Had the author moderated his "political animosities" and concentrated on the grasping of "the great literary process which is [was] going on in China today," he suggests, the considerable information that the author has brought together in his work would have become more useful. Průšek's conclusion is: "Thus the value of his book is greatly depreciated, for practically none of it can be used without critical examination and reassessment. In many places, too, the book sinks to the level of malicious propaganda" (Průšek 1962: 370, 358, 402–403). Průšek's student Słupski later did a detailed examination of the two chapters on Lao She in Hsia's book. Citing Hsia's final statement of his book: "A literary history, to be meaningful, has to be an essay in discrimination and not a biased survey to satisfy extrinsic political or religious standards," Słupski protests that Hsia "never misses the opportunities of besmirching a leftist writer." He concludes by saying "[Hsia] substitutes for literary scientific standards his subjective political sympathies and antipathies," and the book is "a book of practically very little value" (Słupski 1984: 142, 151–152).

Hsia of course denies Průšek's accusation of "dogmatic intolerance," stating that "I am afraid it is Průšek himself who may be guilty of 'dogmatic intolerance' insofar as he appears incapable of even theoretically entertaining any other view of modern Chinese literature than the official Communist one." If there is any "intolerance" in his own work, he says, it would be intolerance for bad writing, which is a consequence of his commitment to "literary standards," not "political prejudices" (Hsia 1963: 431, 434).

Both parties accuse the other of political bias, and each declares himself defender of the artistic value of literature. Literature and politics thus intertwine in a most suffocating way in the debate. While the two debaters' ingenious and serious thoughts on "literature" and "politics" are indeed admirable, it is important to bear in mind that Cold War politics does play a significant role in the debate. In this essay, however, I do not delve into this issue in further detail. Instead, I focus on the disparate attitudes and stances Průšek and Hsia take regarding "literary research," and the insight we can gain from the disparity.

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14 Průšek says in the very beginning of his article that Hsia's work is saturated with "dogmatic intolerance," "disregard for human dignity." Hsia replies that it Průšek is advocating a "dogmatic scientific approach" (Průšek 1962: 357; Hsia 1963: 429; and Gálík 1990: 154–155).

## "LITERARY SCIENCE" AND "LITERARY PROCESS"

At the very beginning of his rejoinder, "On the 'Scientific' Study of Modern Chinese Literature," Hsia questions the validity of the "scientific" approach accentuated by Průšek:

I remain completely skeptical whether, beyond the recording of simple incontrovertible facts, the study of literature could assume the rigor and precision of "science" and whether, in the study of any literary period, an inflexible methodology could be formulated once for all. (Hsia 1963: 428-429)

He slights Průšek's search for "objectivity" as working in the confinement of "presuppositions" and "political prepossessions" (Hsia 1963: 459, 474), implying that Průšek's vaunted notions of "scientific method" or "objectivity" are a fantasy. Whether or not literary research should or can follow scientific standards of research is a topic that can be explored through different perspectives and approaches—I do not delve into the topic here. To understand Průšek's conception, we have now to examine the source of his literary theories.

Průšek returned to his home country from China in the autumn of 1937. He started teaching at Charles University in 1945. Before obtaining "habilitation," he had already joined the world renowned "Prague Linguistic Circle," which was based at Charles University, and had presented in the Circle's lecture series.<sup>15</sup> He shared the same theoretical conception with other key members of the Prague School, for example Jan Mukařovský (1891-1975) and Felix Vodička (1909-1974).<sup>16</sup> For literary theorists of the Prague School tradition, the words "science" and "scientific method" were standard fare and referred simply to an attempt to demystify the "literariness" of language. If we go over the "List of Lectures Given in the Prague Linguistic Circle (1926-1948)," we can find titles such as "Literary History and Literary Science," "The Science of Verbal Art and Its Relation to Adjacent Sciences," and "Method of Detailed Observation in Literary Science."<sup>17</sup> In the original titles, the Czech word for "science" is "věda,"<sup>18</sup>

15 Průšek presented twice in the lecture series of the Circle: "On the Semantic Structure of a Chinese Narrative" (1939.6); "On the Aspect of the Chinese Verb" (1948.12). See Kochis 1978: 607-622; Galan 1985: 207-214.

16 Regarding literary theories of the Prague School, see Chan Kwok Kou, "Literature / Structure / History of Acceptance—Felix Vodička's Theory of Literary Historiography" and "Literary Structure and the Process of Literary Evolution" in Chan Kwok Kou 2004: 326-361, 362-387. For Průšek's connection with the Prague Linguistic Circle, refer to Doležel 1994: 592-595.

17 J. V. Sedlák, "Literary History and Literary Science" (1929), F. Wollman, "The Science of Verbal Art and its Relation to Adjacent Sciences" (1935), and A. Bém, "Method of Detailed Observation in Literary Science" (1936). See Kochis 1978: 607-622.

18 Refer to "A List of Lectures on Poetics, Aesthetics and Semiotics Given in the Prague Linguistic Circle, 1926-1948" in Galan 1985: 207-214. Topics listed include both the original Czech version

which is equivalent to the German term “Wissenschaft.” The meaning of “Wissenschaft” is not limited to natural sciences; instead, it embraces a wider perspective and points to different systems of knowledge that are obtainable through hard empirical work.<sup>19</sup> The Prague School considers lifting the mysterious veil enshrouding literature to be the objective of “literary science,” in particular the “literariness” of language. For instance, in the words of Roman Jakobson, leader of the Russian Formalist school and later a key member of the Prague Linguistic Circle, “The object of study in literary science is not literature but ‘literariness,’ that is, what makes a given work a literary work.”<sup>20</sup> In the European tradition, literature is commonly accepted as a discipline of study or knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

A positive sense of the “scientific” research of literature is easily discernible in Průšek’s review. Right from the beginning of the essay, Průšek says: “it is only natural that the attitude and approach of every scholar or scientist is determined in part by subjective factors ... all scientific endeavor would be vain, should the investigator not aim at discovering objective truth.” Near the end of the review, he again proclaims: “The preliminary requirement for the author of such a work [i.e. a history of modern Chinese literature] would have to be, at the very least, an honest endeavor to grasp this whole complex process and to present it in an objective and unbiased way” (Průšek 1962: 357, 404).

From these assertions, we can recognize that for Průšek:

- (1) literary study is an earnest quest for knowledge; a scholar in this discipline is not really different from a scientist; and the aim of this quest is to uncover the truth of an objective nature;
- (2) the object of literary study is not a simple and easily discernible entity, but a very complex process that requires in-depth investigation.

The first point raises the issue of whether there is objective truth in literary study—a notion that Hsia dismisses. To Průšek, the history of modern

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and English translation. In Galan’s English translation, the term “science” is avoided and “study” is used instead.

- 19 Wellek (1960: 1–19) mentions that “Literaturwissenschaft” refers to systematic knowledge; he disagrees that it should be translated as “science of literature,” since “science” in English connotes natural sciences. See also in Wellek 1963: 1–20. Quotations hereafter are based on the latter.
- 20 Roman Jakobson, “On Realism in Art” (1921). This is quoted from Bradford 1994: 127. See also Warner 1982: 69–81; and Striedter 1989: 20–21.
- 21 In his translation of the preface in Werner Mahrholz’s *Literaturgeschichte und literaturwissenschaft* (1933), Li Changzhi (2006: 9–135) says that “Literature is also a ‘study,’ a specialized study, a science.” This helps to prove that “literary science” is a common concept in the European tradition. See also Wellek’s “The Revolt Against Positivism in Recent European Literary Scholarship” (Wellek 1963: 256–281)..

Chinese literature "exists" out there. It is the literary historian's responsibility to collect and investigate all the clues he can gather in order to uncover "objectively" the "real" process of literary development. That process is a complicated one, and an unbiased and honest attitude, suggested by the qualifier "scientific," is required to undertake such research. For Průšek, the scientific method is thus a legitimate strategy of research into literature, as it is for all academic disciplines.

The notion of "whole complex process" necessitates a thorough discussion. Imagining the entity of literature [and also of literary history] as a supraindividual complex is a conception derived directly from the Prague School aesthetics. The term "literature" refers not to a collection of literary works, but an abstract concept of "supraindividual relationship" and "system" or "structure" that can be defined in terms of a "part-whole" relationship. As Mukařovský put it, structure is a "whole whose nature is determined by its parts and their reciprocal relationships, and which in turn determines the nature and relationships of the parts" (in Galan 1985: 35). The Prague School's theory of "structure" comprises two central notions. First, it stresses the social character of literature and arts. "Literary structure" takes on meaning only when it enters into the social structure. Second, "structure" is dynamic, not static; "literary structure" is in constant flux, because it is locked in a dynamic, mutually-influencing relationship with different social and historical forces.<sup>22</sup> Průšek's "whole complex process" can be taken as a historical presentation of this pluralistic dynamic structure; it explains how Průšek arrived at his conviction about the social character of literature and the dynamic process of literary development.

With this theoretical background, we can better understand why Průšek criticizes C. T. Hsia for not being able "to give a systematic analysis of an author's work"; and he "facilitates his argumentation by laying stress on certain things and suppressing or remaining silent on others, or by attributing a significance to them which they do not possess" (Průšek 1962: 377-378). To Průšek, Hsia fails to grasp the concept of "whole." For instance, in order to study literary writers, Průšek suggests that:

We do not limit ourselves to accidentals, but submit his oeuvre to systemic analysis, seeing in its individual traits not isolated and chance singularities, but the components of a unified artistic whole, welded by the author's artistic personality. The order of importance of these individual elements is determined by the artist's intention, just as is the way in which he binds and makes use of all these elements for the realization of his creative conception. This intention—and also the artistic procedures employed for the realization of his conception—reflects the author's philosophical outlook, that

22 See Galan 1985: 33-36; Steiner 1978: 356-359; Chan Kwok Kou, 2004: 362-369.