

**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).

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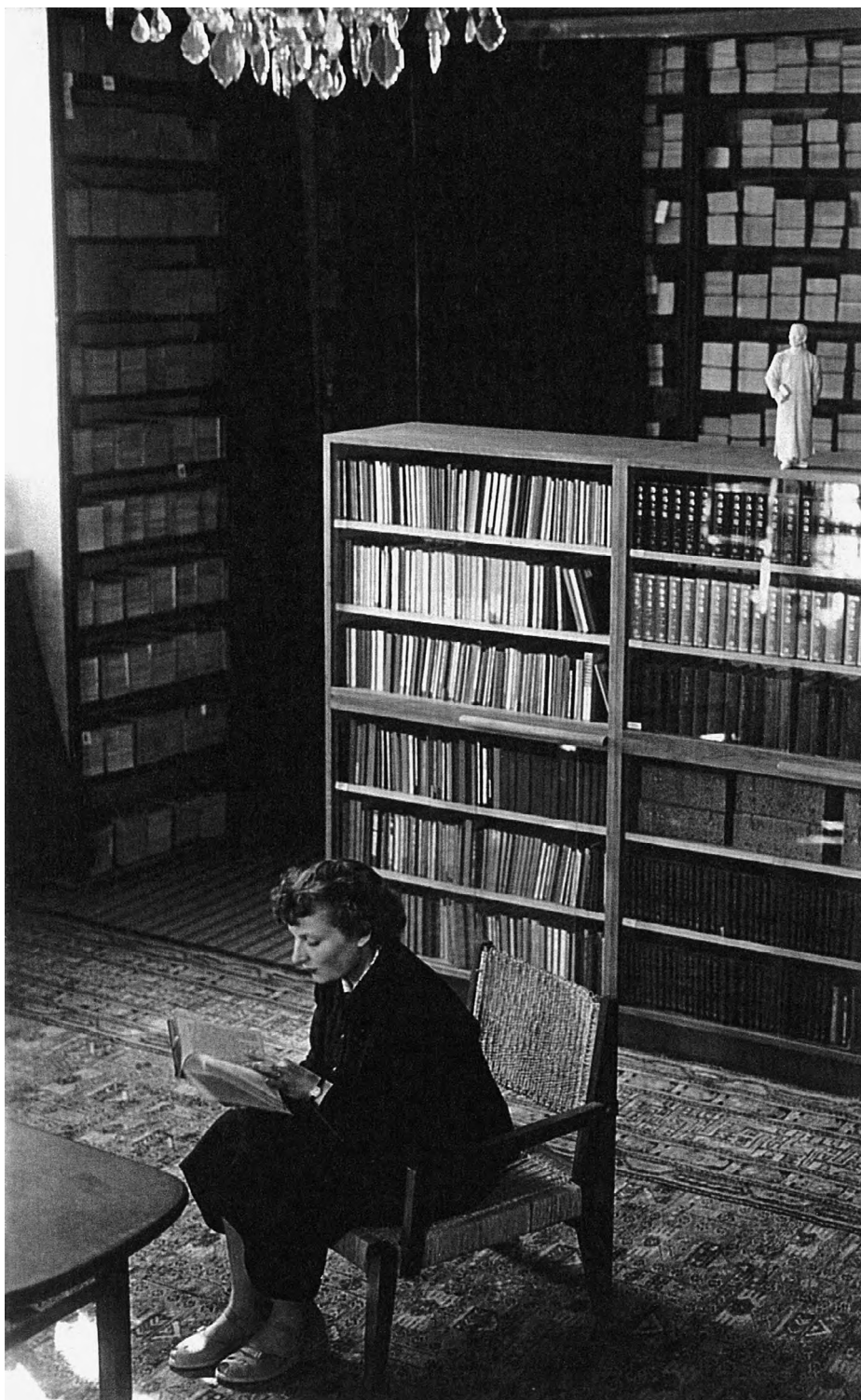
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Milena Doleželová-Velingerová (1932–2012), in the Lu Hsun Library, Oriental Institute, Prague, 1955. Courtesy of Milena Dolezel.

REMEMBERING MILENA: A PREFACE¹

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-

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