Rydholm, Lena. "Cosmopolitan and vernacular dynamics in modern Chinese fiction and Lao She's satirical novel *Cat Country*." *Vernaculars in an Age of World Literatures*. Ed. Christina Kullberg. Ed. David Watson. New York,: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. 153–180. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501374081.ch-006>>.

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Cosmopolitan and vernacular dynamics in modern Chinese fiction and Lao She's satirical novel *Cat Country*

Lena Rydholm

This chapter contributes to the discussion about theorizing the vernacular through a study of cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamics in modern Chinese fiction in the early twentieth century. With his studies of vernacularization in southern Asia, Sheldon Pollock showed that “[t]he very idea of vernacularization depends upon understanding something of the world against which it defines itself” (1998: 6). Following Pollock’s example, I have applied an expanded timeframe to include cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamics in Chinese literary culture in pre-modern times before considering this dynamic in modern times, and in the analyses of modern literary works. Of course, the Western concepts of cosmopolitan and vernacular were not used to discuss literature in pre-modern China. However, applying these concepts to Chinese literature in both pre-modern and modern times generates results that may be relevant for theorizing the vernacular in world literary studies. I apply Pollock’s definition of the terms: “*Cosmopolitan* and *vernacular* can be taken as modes of literary (and intellectual, and political) communication directed toward two different audiences, whom lay actors know full well to be different,” written in “a language that travels far and one that travels little” (2000: 593).

The first and second sections of this chapter deal with cosmopolitanism and vernacularization in pre-modern Chinese literature. However, including all genres and literary works that may be relevant to discuss in this context during the past 3000 years in Chinese literary culture is well beyond the scope of this study. I provide examples from only a few genres, mainly prose fiction, that I find relevant for the discussion of a cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic in pre-modern times, and how these relate to this dynamic in modern times. I also compare

my conclusions with Pollock's in his studies of the Sanskrit cosmopolis and the vernacularization in reaction to it that took place in South Asia (1998; 2000). The third and fourth sections of this chapter, before my conclusion, deal with the vernacularization in China in the early twentieth century, and is based on analyses of two literary works. Section three deals with a kind of "cosmopolitan vernacular" of the new elite, based on the results of my study of Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary" (1970 [1918]), which is included in volume 3 of this series (Rydholm 2022) and briefly summarized here. The fourth section contains the main focus of my study, an analysis of the vernacular in Lao She's *Cat Country* (1933). I will also show how Lao She's multiglossic vernacular differs from Lu Xun's, being much closer to oral literature, spoken language, and dialect. This chapter shows that we cannot leave oral literature out of the picture when theorizing the written vernacular in China, as opposed to the case in Pollock's study of vernaculars in South Asia (2000: 606), since it has played an important role in the vernacularization of Chinese literature in pre-modern as well as modern times.

Widening the timeframe: The development of a "cosmopolitan" *wenyan*

The vernacular movement in China in the early twentieth century was not a reaction against any of the foreign imperialist languages. It was a response to the Chinese classical literary language, *wenyan* 文言 (embellished words), the major vehicle for traditional culture and Confucianism. This literary language was the written language used in the imperial administration and in high literature, history, philosophy, poetry, and non-fictional prose in China, and it was a "cosmopolitan" language in East Asia for almost two millennia.

Wenyan had developed and gained its position to a large extent through its alliance with imperial rule. The First Emperor of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), ordered the unification of the script system for use in the imperial administration to cope with dialectal diversity and to facilitate the ruling of the empire (Rydholm 2014; 2021). During the subsequent Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), Confucianism became state ideology. The anonymous preface (allegedly by one of Confucius' disciples, but probably written during the Han dynasty) of the ancient poetry collection *The Book of Poetry Shijing* 诗经, became the doctrine for a "didactic view" of poetry as "moral instruction and social comment," that regarded poetry as being vital for the rule of the empire (see Liu

1962: 65–6). This view, which became a paradigm in mainstream literary theory, was summed up in neo-Confucian Zhou Dunyi's 周敦颐 (1017–1073) famous words: *Wen yi zai Dao* 文以载道 (Literature is the vehicle of the [Confucian] Way). To gain office in the imperial administration, men of means studied the Confucian Classics for the civil service examination, which also secured the position of *wenyan* as the standardized written language used for official, scholarly, and literary purposes, even while most of the population was illiterate (Rydholm 2014; 2021).

The standardized lexical and grammatical rules of *wenyan*, which developed during the Qin and Han dynasties, were based on the written language in prose works from the latter part of the spring and autumn period (770–476 BCE) up to the end of the Han dynasty (Norman 1988: 83). It was based on the written language of philosophical and historical works, such as *The Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, *Mr Zuo's Commentary*, and *Records of the Grand Historian* (Norman 1988: 83). According to Jerry Norman, the languages in these works were not uniform and “almost certainly based on the vernacular language of the period which it was produced in” (1988: 83). However, after the Han dynasty, if not earlier, *wenyan* diverged more and more from the contemporary spoken languages (Ge 2001: 10). This division of speech and writing was facilitated by the Chinese logographic script. Ping Chen points out that “the lack of direct association between sound and graphic forms in the Chinese writing system gave *wenyan*, as a written language encoded by such a writing system, a degree of accessibility across times and space” (1999: 68). Literary Chinese texts could be pronounced in local languages and dialects; *wenyan* became, to use Wiebke Denecke's and Longxi Zhang's term, the *scripta franca* of East Asia (Denecke and Zhang 2015: vii–viii).

For almost two millennia, *wenyan* was the written medium of communication between the elites of Japan, Vietnam, and Korea, who adopted the Chinese script and literary language for scholarship, law, administration, high literature, and other important communication (Denecke and Zhang 2015: VII). Literary Chinese became the main vehicle for what has been called cosmopolitan Confucianism, under the patronage of the Manchu emperors of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911/12 CE):

Eighteenth-century Confucians ... saw themselves as citizens of a world-encompassing empire. This is because the only way their principles could be validated was for them to be universally valid, leaving little room for discourse

on localism. Mid-Qing Chinese Confucians were servants of a multilingual, multiconfessional and multiethnic empire.

(Guy 2016: 51)

The cosmopolitan political-literary formation in China shares certain similarities with what Pollock calls the Sanskrit cosmopolis that developed in South Asia during the first millennium (Pollock 1998; 2000). Pollock studied Sanskrit inscriptions commissioned by royal courts and how Sanskrit became “a vehicle of political expression” with a standardized grammar (1998: 14). Sanskrit inscriptional culture spread to Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos (Pollock 1998: 11).

Wenyan, as a vehicle for political will and with a standardized script and grammar, became a kind of “cosmopolitan” language in East Asia, so in that sense we may call it the *wenyan* cosmopolis, with reference to Pollock’s Sanskrit cosmopolis. Pollock remarked on similarities in the literary cultures using Latin and Sanskrit: writers learned standardized rules of writing, emulated the literary canons and “masterworks of systematic thought,” and “both Sanskrit and Latin were written to be readable across space and through time” (2000: 600). This description fits with *wenyan*, a highly standardized written language readable across time and space, the vehicle of a Confucian value system. In his comparison between *Latinitas* and the Sanskrit cosmopolis in the first millennium, Pollock states,

Two vast, historically influential supraregional cultures and their associated conceptions of power—*imperium sine fine* (power without limit) and *diganta rajya* (power to the horizons)—came into existence at either end of Eurasia. They were discursively embodied ... in a new literature that ... was composed in a language that traveled everywhere.

(2000: 614–15)

The corresponding concept of power in the Chinese imperial context is *tianxia* 天下, which literally means “all under heaven,” that is to say, all of the world under Chinese imperial rule by an emperor ruling by the mandate of Heaven. Pollock argued for the existence of a kind of “empire-model” with “imperial cultural politics” in pre-modern times, the corresponding equivalent of the national language and nation-building in modern times (1998: 13–14). The creation of a standardized written language that became a vehicle of cosmopolitan Confucianism, which spread and became a kind of “*wenyan* cosmopolis” in East Asia for two millennia, may be said to be linked to empire-building. However, this

requires further study and consideration of the literary cultures and languages in East Asia affected by *wenyan* in pre-modern times, such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Different Chinese dynasties cannot be treated as one singular imperial formation either. The first emperor of the Qin tried to erase Confucianism, and Confucianism itself was never “pure” and static but developed over time, assimilating traits from other philosophies and religions. The Yuan dynasty Mongol rulers put a temporary stop to civil service examinations and *wenyan*’s elevated position. There was no single, coherent imperial-cultural strategy promoted by the Chinese rulers of all dynasties that persisted for two millennia.

The *wenyan* cosmopolis and Confucianism had a profound influence in East Asia on Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. However, the Sanskrit cosmopolis and Buddhism also influenced Chinese literature in pre-modern times. Literary cultures and languages in Asia interacted through trade along the Silk Road, China’s tributary system, wars, migrations, and missionaries. Buddhist missionary monks came to China in the first century CE (Schmidt-Glintzer and Mair 2001: 160), and the Buddhist canon was translated into Chinese. The prestigious form of Tang dynasty Recent-style verse, included in the civil service examination and greatly appreciated and imitated by elites in East Asia, owed much of its defining features, its sophisticated tonal prosody, to Sanskrit (Mair and Tsu-lin Mei 1991).

Within the Sanskrit cosmopolis there was, according to Pollock, a “division of linguistic labor”: Sanskrit was used for “the public literary expression of political will”; vernaculars were limited to practical functions (1998: 11). In China, we also find “division of labor,” or what Ferguson calls diglossia. Ferguson’s description of “High language” fits with *wenyan*, in being a “highly codified ... superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature ... which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used ... for ordinary conversation” (Ferguson 1964: 435; Norman 1988: 250).

The Low language in China was the written vernacular, *baihua*, used, for example, in prose fiction, in novels during the Ming and Qing dynasties, with roots in oral storytelling. However, neither *wenyan* nor *baihua* were pure or static but were according to Gang Zhou mutually influenced: “many texts in Classical Chinese display the clear influence of the contemporary vernacular: ... it is impossible to find a pure vernacular literary work. Vernacular texts are usually permeated with elements of classical Chinese” (2011: 18). Still, as Zhou points out, “every language choice made by a language user is a socially bounded

act, reflecting his or her understanding of the rules as well as the social context” (2011: 10), and “men of letters were certainly aware of the distinction between classical Chinese and the vernacular, and they used these two language varieties for different purposes” (2011: 18). The official attitude among the cultural elite towards the vernacular was that of disdain: “*wenyan* was considered refined and elegant ... ideal for high-culture functions ... *baihua* was despised as coarse and vulgar, suitable only for low culture functions” (Chen 1999: 69). Up to the May Fourth Movement in 1919, according to Norman, *baihua* “was considered fit only to be a vehicle of popular entertainment, and totally unsuited for the expression of elevated and serious thought” (1988: 246). It was not a vehicle for *Wen yi zai Dao* (the Confucian Way), the criteria for high literature. The cultural elite still enjoyed reading and writing vernacular prose fiction, as I will discuss in the next section, but the status of *baihua* remained low until the 1920s.

A widened timeframe: The rise of traditional vernacular, *baihua*

Several early narrative genres, such as *zhiguai* 志怪 (supernatural stories) of the Six Dynasties (317–589 CE), were written in *wenyan* and modeled on historiography. *Soushen ji* 搜神记 (*In Search of Spirits*), a collection of supernatural stories, often regarded as the beginning of Chinese fiction (Rydholm 2014), was compiled by Han dynasty court historian Gan Bao 干宝 (d.336). However, fiction *xiaoshuo* 小说 (small talk), a form of entertainment and not the main vehicle for the Confucian Way, had a very low status. Ban Gu’s 班固 (32–92 CE) famous statement on *xiaoshuo* is usually summed up as *jietan xiangyan* 街谈巷语 (street talk and gossip of the alleys). Hence editors would often claim that the collected supernatural stories were true (and thus history or biography) and based on oral or written material as Gan Bao did (see Rydholm 2014).

Supernatural stories merged with Buddhist tales on miracles and karma (Schmidt-Glintzer and Mair 2001: 170–1). In the Eastern Han dynasty, vernacular elements appeared in written texts, in translations of Buddhist writings (Chen 1999: 68). Many translators did not master *wenyan*; they included oral expressions in their writings, which were often used in public performances (Ge 2001: 18). Buddhist monks preaching in public and using semi-vernacular prosimetric narratives, *bianwen* 变文 (transformation texts), for relating events such as Buddhist miracles and Buddha’s reincarnations

through oral performances, influenced the development of vernacular fiction and drama in China (Schmidt-Glintzer and Mair 2001: 161–7). The alternating between prose and verse in *bianwen* is seen in several performative genres and later vernacular fiction (Ge 2001: 22), and these genres were also influenced by Buddhism.

By the late Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), a new kind of written, vernacular language had emerged called *baihua* 白话 (“unadorned [plain] speech”), with vocabulary and grammar close to contemporary spoken language (Chen 1999: 68). Chen calls this “traditional *baihua*,” to distinguish it from “new-style *baihua*” of the early twentieth century. Traditional *baihua* was used in popular culture, scripts for stage performances, storytellers’ tales, Buddhist teachings, and the like (Chen 1999: 69). Famous novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties were written in traditional *baihua*, of which several include karmic retribution and Buddhist imagery, such as *Journey to the West* (Schmidt-Glintzer and Mair 2001: 168). In spite of the low status of popular genres, novels in traditional *baihua* were incredibly popular and read by “emperors and school children alike” (Chen 1999: 69).

Liangyan Ge claims the development of the written vernacular to be the result of an “interaction” between oral and written culture, through public entertainment, popular drama, and storytelling since the Tang dynasty (2001: 20). As Ge points out, although vernacular prose was not “equivalent to written colloquialism ... in its early stage, the written vernacular must always develop in close contact with living orality, typically appearing in either a notation of or a composition for an oral performance” (2001: 21). Ge claims that vernacular prose mainly developed from the Southern Song (1127–1279 CE) up to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 CE) (2001: 32). By then, the written vernacular, traditional *baihua*, had become a “full-fledged literary language” and a genre convention in fiction, with famous novels such as *Shuihu zhuan* (*Water Margin*), *Sanguo yanyi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), *Xiyou ji* (*Journey to the West*), and *Jin Ping Mei* (*The Golden Lotus*) (Ge 2001: 2). This period, according to Ge, coincides with the “textualization” of the most crucial novel in this regard, *Shuihu zhuan* 水浒传 (*Water Margin*) (1540 CE), China’s “earliest full-length fictional narrative in the true vernacular prose” (2001: 3). The heroes of Mount Liang in *Water Margin* appeared in story-cycles at least as early as the Southern Song dynasty and were re-used in performance arts and storytelling through the ages (Ge 2001: 6). In his book *Out of the Margins*, Ge shows *Water Margin* to be the long-term, cumulative result of interplay between orality and writing. He uses the term “textualization” for the “long process punctuated with successive

written versions, both notational and compositional, each representing a certain point on the axis of transition from voice to print,” and of writing not “in” but “toward” a mature, written vernacular prose (Ge 2001: 7).

In China, *wenyan* continued to dominate until it was replaced by the modern vernacular in the 1920s. However, Ge claims that “in narrative literature that revolutionary change had started a few centuries earlier” (2001: 2) and we may speak of a “vernacularization movement” in China since the Yuan dynasty (2001: 27). The status of *wenyan* learning suffered during the Mongol-ruled Yuan dynasty (1206–1368), when civil service examinations were stopped. Men of letters had to seek a livelihood writing fiction and plays in the quarters of oral performance and theater, so popular at the time (Zhou 2011: 20). In the subsequent Chinese-ruled Ming dynasty, civil service examinations were resumed and *wenyan* gained value. Still, educated men who failed the examination turned to popular entertainment and vernacular fiction-writing, which offered commercial possibilities as the printing industry developed, literacy increased, and a “middle-brow readership” emerged (Ge 2001: 8).

According to Ge, *Water Margin* was textualized first because men of letters identified with the fate of the “rebels” on Mount Liang and voiced their own grievance through them. Many of the rebels in the story were government officials or army officers, unjustly treated and forced to become outcasts, fighting for just causes or revenge, still deeply loyal to the emperor (Ge 2001: 167–78). *Water Margin* was a work in the tradition of *fafen zhushu* 发愤著书 (venting indignation in writing) (Ge 2001: 174). Socio-political circumstances and social protest played a part in the development of vernacular prose fiction. According to Ge, “the frustrated men of letters revolted against the craft literacy in the *wenyan* tradition” with a “defiant spirit of rebellion” (2001: 8). Ge further stresses the narratological difference between prose fiction in *wenyan* and traditional *baihua*. *Wenyan* tends to “level” dialects, individual voices, and speech among different social groups (Ge 2001: 184–6). *Water Margin*, on the contrary, according to Ge, “took over from the oral tradition the manner of dramatizing speaking voices, which became a convention in vernacular fiction” (2001: 197). Storytellers would strive to attune the character’s speech to “portray a character’s unique ideology in his or her own discourse. That is precisely what Chinese vernacular fiction inherited from its oral antecedents” (Ge 2001: 187). According to Ge, *Water Margin*’s life-like characters were created through the dramatization of their speech, through “linguistic mimesis,” citing Gérard Genette’s statement that “mimesis in words” actually is “mimesis of words” (1980: 164).

In southern Asia, according to Pollock, “starting around 1000, but in most places by 1500, writers turned to the use of local languages for literary expression in preference to the translocal language that had dominated literary expression for the previous thousand years” (1998: 6). Today when we talk about vernacularization in China, most scholars refer to the vernacular movement in the twentieth century and the new-style *baihua*. A broadened timeframe reveals that “traditional *baihua*” developed in China during the second millennium, just as the vernacular did in Europe and southern Asia, and culminated in the mature written vernacular we find in such works as the 1540 CE edition of *Water Margin*. However, at the time China was still an empire in East Asia. The vernacular movement was not initiated to achieve independence from a foreign cosmopolitan imperial order and establish local geo-political entities or nations. It developed in response to different socio-economic circumstances than those in Europe and southern Asia. It was, as Ge showed in his study (2001), partly a social protest: neglected “men of letters” created a literary space to vent frustrations, but they were still loyal to the emperor. The situation would change with the semi-colonization of China by Western imperialists starting in the mid-nineteenth century with the Opium Wars, which led to demands for political and cultural reforms and the development of new-style *baihua* in the early twentieth century. This was a vernacular movement that started with the late-Qing reformists, at a time when traditional vernacular fiction thrived due to the increasing readership of popular literature in the wake of growth of areas such as urban culture, the print industry, and the public media (see Wang 1997). The subsequent New Culture Movement’s influential manifestos calling for vernacularization and the May Fourth writers’ literary practice finally raised the status of the vernacular. This process, and my conclusions regarding cosmopolitan and vernacular dynamics in Lu Xun’s “A Madman’s Diary,” from volume 3 of this series (Rydholm 2022), is briefly summarized in the next section.

The development of new-style *baihua* and Lu Xun’s “A Madman’s Diary”

After defeats in the Opium Wars and in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895 CE), and after the 1911 revolution, the Qing dynasty fell, along with the Manchu government criticized for being weak and unable to withstand foreign aggression. A “national salvation” discourse had developed among intellectuals,

many whom had studied abroad (Rydholm 2022). They demanded reforms to build a strong, modern nation able to resist foreign imperialists and based on “Western learning” in areas such as science, technology, and democracy. Many Late-Qing reformists were inspired by the vernacular movement in Japan’s Meiji period (1868–1912 CE). In Japan, the traditional written language had been largely divorced from speech, as was the case with *wenyan*, and the replacement by a written language based on the vernacular had resulted in increased literacy and facilitated political reforms and modernization (Chen 1999: 70). In 1898, Qiu Tingliang wrote that “there is no more effective tool than *wenyan* for keeping the whole population in ignorance, and there is no more effective tool than *baihua* for making it wise” (Chen 1999: 70). In 1902, Liang Qichao published a manifesto promoting fiction as the best means to influence and educate people, along with the use of *suyu* 俗語 (vulgar [vernacular] language).¹ The vernacular movement also entailed raising the status of prose fiction as a vehicle for political expression, not simply popular entertainment (Rydholm 2014). The journal *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (*New Youth*), started in 1915, published the New Culture Movement’s manifestos, such as the chief editor Chen Duxiu’s attacks on the *wenyan* of the traditional scholarly elite and demands for a simple, written vernacular for the people (see Rydholm 2018b). The New Culture Movement viewed the abolishment of Confucianism, traditional culture, and *wenyan* as a pre-requisite for modernization (Rydholm 2018b). Nation-building required a national language in the vernacular, a language for Western learning and political reforms (Rydholm 2022). Hu Shi’s 胡適 (1891–1962) 1918 manifesto in *New Youth* forged a slogan that became popular during the May Fourth Movement of 1919: 國語的文學, 文學的國語 (A literature in our national language; A national language for literature). According to Hu, *huowenxue* 活文學 (a living literature) cannot be created when using *siwenzi* 死文字 (a dead written language), by which he refers to *wenyan* and

If China wants to have a living literature, we must use the vernacular [*baihua*], we must use our national language, we must create a literature in our national language

中國若想有活文學, 必須用白話, 必須用國語, 必須做國語的文學

(Hu 1970 [1918]: 347).

¹ Translations of quotations in Chinese into English in this chapter are my own unless otherwise stated. For a short summary of reformist discourses on language and literature in Late Qing and the New Culture Movement, see Rydholm (2018b).

The New Culture Movement's struggle against *wenyan* was also a battle between the worldviews and value systems (Rydholm 2018b; 2021). As Ping Chen points out, "*wenyan* was taken to be synonymous with traditional Chinese values," but by the time of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, "*baihua* was assumed to be the only appropriate linguistic vehicle for the whole set of new, mostly imported Western concepts subsumed under democracy and science" (1999: 79).

Wenyan took a first major blow when the civil service examination system was abolished in 1905, and after the May Fourth Movement, in the 1920s, it was replaced by the vernacular in official areas such as education and administration. However, establishing a national language was not so easy; there was no standard for the written vernacular at the time and no consensus as to what such a standard would look like among writers.² Several types of writing were in use. There was "traditional *wenyan*" of pre-modern texts and "modern *wenyan*," with some colloquial expressions and foreign loan words (Chen 1999: 76). There was also "traditional *baihua*" of the famous vernacular novels from the Ming and Qing dynasties, discussed above. But these novels were written in different times and regions, with differences in vocabulary, grammar, amounts of words in *wenyan*, and dialect (Chen 1999: 76). The fourth type, the May Fourth style *baihua* or "new-style *baihua*," was "a general name that referred to the various types of the new style that reformist writers were experimenting with at the time" (Chen 1999: 76). May Fourth writers and other reformists were often trained in *wenyan* but had studied abroad and engaged in translation, from Japanese, English, German, French, or Russian into written Chinese (Rydholm 2022). Their written vernacular often included foreign loan words and neologisms, phonetic transcriptions of foreign names and terminology, and Europeanized grammar and syntax, in addition to remnants of *wenyan* and their own dialect, resulting in "an awkward mixture of styles" (Chen 1999: 78). The May Fourth writers aimed to create a written vernacular close to the spoken language, but their 1920s new-style *baihua* was "still quite removed from the actual speech of any group of speakers" (Chen 1999: 77) and the product of a foreign educated elite. According to Shu-Mei Shih, a May Fourth writer was: "a *double translator*, translating Chinese vernacular into a more scientific and 'modern' language, while translating Western and Japanese languages into Chinese. His or her

² Several reformists advocated changing to an alphabetic writing system to increase literacy; see Norman 1988: 257–63.

heavily Europeanized and Japanized (translated) vernacular might in effect be as alien to the ordinary reader as *wenyan*" (2001: 71).

The May Fourth writers have been variously praised and criticized through the years. They have been criticized as Westernized elitists who destroyed traditional culture and, more recently, for having internalized orientalism (Rydholm 2022). They have also been criticized for having repressed Chinese modernities. (Wang 1997). However, according to Zhou, the May Fourth writers worked in "uncertainty" and their "*proper abode* was extremely *shaky* and *precarious*," for which Zhou coined the term "Shaky House" experience (2011: 77). May Fourth literature belongs, in Zhou's view, to "the specific kind of vernacular literature produced at certain historical junctures of linguistic upheaval, whose writing begins with a revolutionary language choice, and whose literary medium manifests dramatic language change and is replete with linguistic tension and precariousness" (2011: 97). This Shaky House situation also opened up for linguistic experimentation and creativity. Some of the most influential works in modern Chinese fiction were created at the time. This was the case for Lu Xun's 鲁迅 (1881–1936 CE) *Kuangren riji* 狂人日记 ("A Madman's Diary"). It was published in *New Youth* in 1918 and is regarded as the first instance of modern Chinese fiction in the vernacular. In his efforts to promote reforms and the written vernacular, Lu Xun turned fiction into an arena for the battle between languages and ideas (see Rydholm 2018b; 2021). The narrative structure in "A Madman's Diary" is constructed as a "diglossic battle" between the preface and diary (Rydholm 2022). The preface, by the fictional narrator and friend of the madman, is written in traditional *wenyan*. The diary is written by the madman in the new-style *baihua*, the vehicle of national-language and nation-building discourse of Hu Shi (Rydholm 2022). Through their allegiances to competing worldviews and ideologies, Chinese and Western, *wenyan* and *baihua* are the main contestants, and what Zhou calls "a deadly language war" broke out (2011: 85). As I have shown elsewhere, the binary opposition between the preface and the diary is undermined, ideologically and linguistically, by a third contestant, by what Lydia Liu calls Western "translated modernity" and "translingual practice" (1995), turning the story into a skillfully constructed, multiglossic hybrid that implicitly supports the Madman's call for change, for the modernization of culture and society (Rydholm 2022).

As Pollock has pointed out, culture and power are often linked, and "vernacular literary cultures were initiated by the conscious decisions of writers," and "using a new language for communicating literarily to a community of

readers and listeners can consolidate if not create that very community, as both a socio-textual and a political formation” (2000: 592). Lu Xun chose to write in the vernacular, and he chose the genre of prose fiction, which Liang Qichao had already pronounced to be the best vehicle for influencing people and changing their minds (see Rydholm 2014; 2018b). Vernacular prose fiction turned from being a vehicle of popular entertainment into a medium for social criticism and political will that continued the tradition of ascribing a didactic purpose to literature, *Wen yi zai Dao* (literature as the vehicle for the Way) (Rydholm 2014). However, the Way no longer referred to the Confucian Way, but to the enlightenment discourses of the New Culture Movement, and vernacular prose fiction was elevated to the status of high literature (Rydholm 2014). The new-style vernacular did not appropriate the grammar, syntax, and rhetoric of *wenyan* to elevate its status, in the way the vernaculars had adopted those of Sanskrit in southern Asia (Pollock 1998). However, new-style *baihua* still relied heavily on the paradigm *Wen yi zai Dao* in literary tradition to reach its new and elevated status.

In China, the vernacular, as we have seen, had a historically low status. The vernacular movement Liangyan Ge described in his study (2001) did not aim to overthrow the empire or *wenyan*; writers sought their livelihood, an outlet for their creativity, and a place to vent their grief in vernacular fiction and drama. The semi-colonization of China by foreign imperialists in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, by contrast, sparked a “national salvation” discourse and demands for vernacularization. The vernacular movement in the twentieth century “was carried out by Chinese intellectuals as part of their modernity and nation-building enterprise, following the lead of foreign nations” (Zhou 2011: 5). However, in the sociolinguistic situation of diglossia in China, the support for *baihua* was not a reaction against English, Japanese, or any language of the imperialists; it was a reaction against the traditional *wenyan*. Late Qing reformists were inspired by the Japanese vernacular movement, while May Fourth reformists, such as Hu Shi, emulated the European Renaissance (Zhou 2011: 131). In addition, in *Translingual Practice* (1995), Lydia Liu shows how Western “translated modernity” was mediated via Japanese, a language with deep roots in Chinese script, and Western terms could, for example, first be translated into Japanese using *kanji*, Chinese characters, and then assimilated into modern Chinese. Benedict Anderson’s model of vernacular movements and nationalism in *Imagined Communities* cannot account for the complexity of the vernacularization process in non-European countries (Zhou 2011), and

presumes as well a rather passive reception of unmediated Western influence, affording too little agency to Chinese writers in this process (Liu 1995: 22). This was evident in my analysis of diglossia and multiglossia in Lu Xu's "A Madman's Diary (Rydholm 2022)" and it is also evident in my analysis of Lao She's multiglossic *Cat Country*.

The vernacular in Lao She's *Cat Country* and the ridicule of everything

Lao She 老舍, pen name for Shu Qingchun 舒庆春 (1899–1966 CE), is one of the most beloved writers of modern Chinese fiction. He grew up in poverty in the run-down neighborhoods of Beijing and often depicted the lives and hardships of the poor and working class, as seen in his most famous novel *Luotuo Xiangzi* 骆驼祥子 (*Camel Xiangzi*) about a rickshaw puller. Growing up, he spent much of his free time in the local teahouse, listening to storytellers. In his literary works, the written vernacular is interspersed with colloquial expressions and Beijing dialect to paint a vivid picture of the city of Beijing, its inhabitants, and the local customs. A strong influence of the storyteller's art is evidenced in his works, and he has been called "China's master storyteller." He received a traditional education in the Confucian classics, sponsored by a Buddhist relative, and became a teacher. He then studied English at the Christian Church in Beijing and moved to England, where he taught Chinese at the University of London's School of Oriental Studies for five years, during which he read novels by Charles Dickens, James Joyce, Jonathan Swift, and Joseph Conrad and also started to write his own. Returning to China in 1930, he worked as a teacher in Jinan, a city that had experienced a massacre in 1928 followed by Japanese occupation until 1929 (Vohra 1974: 60), and in 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria.

Lao She was deeply influenced by what he learnt about the 1928 Jinan Incident and he became an advocate for writers' resistance against Japanese imperialism. In the novel *Cat Country*, according to Ranbir Vohra, the foreign soldiers invading Cat country refer to the Japanese (1974: 63). *Cat Country* (*Maocheng ji* 猫城记; literally "Notes on Cat City"), first serialized in the journal *Les Contemporains Xiandai* (in vol. 1 [4–6] and vol. 2 [1–6] 1932–33) (Słupski 1966: 106), is a hybrid novel, with features of both Chinese and Western fiction. It has roots in storytelling and traditional vernacular novels in China. However, it is also one of China's earliest science fiction novels, inspired by H. G. Wells' *The First Men in the Moon* (Lao She 2013 [1935]: 187). The novel is

a dystopian satire, according to Vohra, “a vitriolic satire of China, and gives an unrelieved and a totally pessimistic picture of a nation in the throes of a death struggle” (1974: 61). In the novel we also find the farcical element from Lao She’s earlier novels and mimicry of grotesque and greedy characters, inspired by Dickens’s but in animal form (Wang 1992: 136). The novel is also clearly inspired by Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, particularly Gulliver’s visit to the Yahoos (Wang 1992: 136). In *Cat Country*, a spacecraft crashes on the planet Mars. The surviving Chinese man encounters the Cat people, learns their language, and starts to study them, taking notes and commenting on their civilization in an orderly manner. Like Swift, Lao She also creates a fictional language, Felinese. Cat country has huge socio-economic and political problems and is on the verge of being invaded by foreigners. Lao She claimed it was “disappointment in the state of the nation, military and diplomatic failures,” that made him write the novel (Lao She 2013 [1935]: 185). At the time, China was under threat from both Western and Japanese imperialism. In my view, Lao She, as well as Lu Xun (see my discussion about Lu Xun, in Rydholm 2022), were working within the “national salvation” paradigm, and in addition, heavily influenced by the Social Darwinist discourse of the time. Many intellectuals regarded Social Darwinism as the main justification used by foreign imperialists for invading China, thus reformists were pushing Chinese people to change their culture and society, and build a strong, “modern” nation. However, due to his portrayal of the Cat people’s deficiencies, Lao She has been criticized for internalizing Orientalism. *Cat Country* ends with foreign invasion and extermination of the Cat people, and the traveler cries out:

This was the punishment for the Cat people not strengthening themselves.

这是猫人不自强的惩罚

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 287)

Lao She was accused of encouraging pessimism with this novel at the time instead of offering solutions, a critique Lao She addressed in an essay in 1935:

It is undeniable that the Cat people are terrible. But it is also undeniable that I exposed their evils out of my love for them. I am sorry I could not think of a solution for them, thus I am equally terrible!.

猫人的糟糕是无可否认的。我之揭露他们的坏处原是出于爱他们也是无可否认的。可惜我没给他们想出办法来。我也糟糕！

(Lao She 2013 [1935]: 187)

The mockery of young Communists in the novel was politically sensitive. After 1949 it was criticized for “serious political mistakes,” among other failings (Sheng 2010: 381–5). In a later preface to the novel, Lao She claimed it to be simply “a nightmare” he had “due to indigestion” and that “the Cat people had nothing to do with the Chinese” (Lao She 2013 [n.d.]: 141). In 1951, Lao She stopped further publication (Sheng 2010: 382).

Lao She was among the first to write full-length novels in the vernacular in the late 1920s. He is considered “a master of language” and a distinguished writer of fiction in the Beijing dialect, his maternal language (Cui 2015: 67). In a quantitative study, Cui Yan 催燕 distinguished eight linguistic styles that deviate from the standard vocabulary or syntax in the modern Chinese language developing at the time, and she finds the occurrences of these eight styles in ten of Lao She’s novels written between 1925 and 1962 (Cui 2015). Cui’s study suggests that Lao She for the most part adhered to standard modern Chinese, which is perhaps not surprising, considering he was a teacher of Chinese. However, Cui also shows that Lao She’s literary language is a *hunhe yuyan* 混合语言 (hybrid language). Beijing dialect is frequently used in the ten novels according to the study (Cui 2015: 192–3). Few writers within the cultural elite at the time were willing to use dialectal words used in daily speech by housewives and people with no education (Cui 2015: 71). Lao She reported on some initial difficulties in finding written characters to represent colloquial and dialectal words (Lao She 1981 [1945]: 235), a problem not uncommon to authors of vernacular fiction in earlier periods (Ge 2001: 339).

The result in Cui’s study shows that in *Cat Country*, formal, written language is the most common of the eight linguistic styles, followed by colloquial language, and Beijing dialect.³ *Cat Country* has the lowest proportion of Beijing dialect of all the ten novels in the study (Cui 2015: 196), perhaps not surprising for a novel set on Mars, though it is still used. Not having counted each word, as Cui did, my impression is that the Chinese traveler uses most of the words in Beijing dialect, hence he is likely from Beijing (as is the author). He often uses Beijing dialect when making bitter comments about the Cat people. However, in a monologue in which an angry Cat widow pours her heart out, she uses some dialectal words

³ *Cat Country* (ca. 95,000 characters), contains the following occurrences of the eight linguistic styles: formal written language (*wenyan* words that remained in modern Chinese in writing but not in speech) 1,686; colloquial language 1,350; Beijing dialect 551; *wenyan* 23; Southern dialect 15; rare or self-made words 112; Europeanized syntax 55; deviations from standard syntax 58 (Cui 2015: 194–6).

and expressions (Lao She 2013 [1933]: 209–14). This recalls language used by women in Beijing in Lao She's *Camel Xiangzi* (Rydholm 2018a) and, as stated above, housewives were expected to use dialect. My conclusion is that the Beijing dialect in *Cat Country* is not intended to add a "Beijing flavor." It is rather to add vividness to outbursts of emotion by the narrator and some characters, outbursts often of moral rage; thus Beijing dialect becomes the language for the ostensibly objective, normative evaluation of morals in *Cat Country*.

Cui found 112 "self-made" words in *Cat Country*, thus being the novel with the largest proportion of such words of the ten novels included in the study (Cui 2015: 196). However, Cui does not explain the reason for this and does not mention Cat speech. In my view *Maoyu* 猫语 (Feline) is the most interesting language in this multiglossic novel. Words in the fictional language Feline are "translated" into Chinese by the traveler in his notes, sometimes using semantic translation (of meaning), thus creating new words in Chinese, such as *miye* 迷叶 (magic leaves), the national food in Cat country, addictive leaves initially brought by foreigners (a metaphor for opium). Some words in Feline, supposedly adopted from other languages on Mars, are translated by the traveler into Chinese characters using phonetic transcription, in the same way Cat people supposedly transliterated foreign terms into Feline, as discussed below. Feline turns out to be a caricature of the Chinese language, used by Lao She to mock both *wenyan* culture and the new-style *baihua*, and which is described by the traveler as "childish":

Four or five hundred words changed back and forth could say everything. Naturally, many phenomena and principals could not be clearly explained, but the Cat people had a way of dealing with this: not talking about it ... Just memorizing a few nouns is enough to have a conversation, most verbs are expressed through gestures.

四五百字来回颠倒便可以讲说一切。自然许多事与道理是不能就这么讲明白的，猫人有办法：不讲。……其实只记住些名词便够谈话的了，动词是多半可以用手势帮忙的。

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 162)

The traveler gives an example of a sentence in Feline through the question he asks his friend Big Scorpion:

"In that case, why do you still plant magic trees?" I used Cat speech—according to correct Feline, the sentence goes like this: A twist of the neck (to signify "in that case"), pointing my finger (you), rolling my eyes twice (why) tree (verb) tree? There is no word for "still".

“那么，你为什么还种树呢？”我用猫语问——按着真正猫语的形式，这句话应当是：脖子一扭（表示“那么”），用手一指（你），眼球转两转（为什么），种（动词）树？“还”字没法表示。

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 163)

This description of how the question in Feline is communicated gives a comic image of the person talking and gesturing. Lao She's dramatization of the character's speech shows inspiration from storytelling and performative genres. The traveler also gives a description of the Feline script:

They also have a script that looks like small towers or pagodas, very difficult to distinguish; most of the Cat people can only remember ten or so of these.

他们也有文字，一些小楼小塔似的东西，很不好认；普通的猫人至多只能记得十来个。

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 162)

Here, Lao She is ridiculing the Chinese logographic script, criticized by many reformists for being difficult to learn and contributing to low literacy at the time.

In *Cat Country*, the traveler meets with three groups of scholars and students in Cat country, distinguished in their speech through linguistic stratification (Lao She 2013 [1933]: 233–9 and 268–70). First, he meets the older generation of traditional scholars. The astronomer proudly announces he is able to study the stars with his own eyes without having to use “gadgets and mirrors” like the foreigners. He is also able to divine good and bad fortune by the stars, another deficiency in foreign astronomers. The historian studies ancient forms of torture and advises the government in such matters. The philologist claims philology holds the answers to all questions. However, their proud and dignified appearance is soon shattered when they start arguing over who is the foremost scholar. They curse at each other in the crudest street slang, calling each other “bastard” and other obscenities (Lao She 2013 [1933]: 236). The philologist threatens to “screw the head off the neck” of the historian, who owes him magic leaves. The historian, unimpressed by this threat, gives in only once the philologist threatens to delete his family name from his *Record of Ancient Family Names*. The historian is still only able to repay half his debt, so the philologist threatens to steal his wife. Then everyone becomes upset about the fact that scholars are only allowed one wife each; they need at least three. United in common interest, they stop arguing, and the philologist produces an argument to support their claim:

Just judging by the character itself, in ancient times when the character was created it included several women radicals [referring to a semantic part of the characters in Chinese logographic script], which indicates that one should have several wives.

就以字体说吧, 古时造字多是女字旁的, 可见老婆应该是多数的。

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 237)

In this passage, Lao She mercilessly mocks some traditional Chinese scholars of the time, averse to science and technology, and seeking answers to contemporary problems in ancient history, philology, and cosmology. The wives-joke is based on the Chinese logographic script, as word games often feature prominently in performance arts. The traditional Cat scholars seem to be mainly concerned with status, money, and women. When they start cursing each other in the crudest street slang, their true characters are revealed: they completely lack the Confucian virtue and morality that traditional scholars in China should embody.

Next, the traveler in the novel meets the young scholars of Cat country. They utter strange sounds, presumably phonetic transcriptions of foreign words from languages on Mars, and the traveler complains:

I did not understand a word! ... I only heard some sounds: Gulu-baji, didong-didong, huala-fusiji ... what kind of word game was this?

我是一字不懂!我只听到一些声音: 咕噜吧唧, 地冬地冬, 花拉夫司基.....什么玩艺呢?

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 239)

The traveler asks his other friend, Little Scorpion, what they said, and he replies:

“Huala-fusiji”? There is also everything-fusiji ... There are so many! They just string together a couple of nouns in a foreign language and speak, no one understands them, and they don't understand these words themselves, but it sounds exciting. Those who can talk like this are considered to be modern scholars.

“花拉夫司基”? 还有通通夫司基呢.....多了! 他们只把一些外国名词联到一处讲话, 别人不懂, 他们自己也不懂, 只是听着热闹。会这么说话的便是新式学者。

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 239)

Through these statements about the vocabulary of the young scholars of Cat country, Lao She is ridiculing young scholars and writers of the May Fourth

era, educated abroad, and their new-style *baihua* (Vohra 1974: 66), which was interspersed by phonetic transcriptions of foreign names and in-vogue Western terms. As Ping Chen stated, some May Fourth writers used a “Europeanized style, producing texts that read like literal translations from a foreign language” (1999: 78). It is through Lao She’s highly satirical linguistic stratification and dramatization of their speech that this group’s ignorance and superficiality is revealed.

Finally, the traveler meets a group of young students, kneeling down in front of a big stone in worship of Mazu Daxian 马祖大仙 (Father Marx the Great) and debating his *shenyan* 神言 (sacred words). Many Cat people support a foreign, revolutionary political ideology called *Dajia-fusiji* 大家夫司基 (Everybodyovskyism).⁴ This ideology was summarized by Little Scorpion for the traveler, earlier in the novel:

Society is a big machine and everybody is a worker in that big machine, a happy and safely working little nail or gear wheel.

社会是一个大机器，人人是这个大机器的一个工作者，快乐的安全的工作着的小钉子或小齿轮。

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 247)

“*Dajia-fusiji*” is, according to Vohra, intended by the author to mock both Socialism and Communism (1974: 68). Kneeling by the holy stone in the novel, a student leader shouts to the group:

Long live Father Marx-ism! Long live Everybodyovskyism! ... We will overthrow our fathers, overthrow our teachers ... We will overthrow the emperor and implement Everybodyovskyism ... We will capture the emperor, then we will kill our fathers and teachers, kill them all! Once we’ve killed them, we’ll have all the magic leaves, all the women, and all the people will be our slaves! ... Father Marx the Great said: Puluo-pulou-pulapu is didong-didong of the yaya’s upper class and lower class hua-lala! Let’s go to the palace!

“马祖主义万岁！大家夫司基万岁！”……“我们要打倒家长，打倒教员……我们要打到皇上，实行大家夫司基！……捉到了皇上，然后把家长教员杀尽，杀尽！杀尽他们，迷叶全是我们的，女子都是我们的，人民也都是我

⁴ “*Dajia*” 大家 in Chinese means “everybody,” “*Fusiji*” is an ending (also used by the young scholars) indicating that it is a phonetic transcription from a foreign language on Mars. This ending is identical in sound to the Chinese characters pronounced “*fusiji*” 夫斯基, often used in transcriptions of the Russian ending “-вский” into Chinese (in English “-vsky,” e.g. Dostoevsky). Vohra translates “*Dajia-fusiji*” as “Everybodyovskyism” (1974: 68).

们的，作我们的奴隶！……马祖大仙说过：扑罗普落扑拉扑是地冬地冬的呀呀者的上层下层花拉拉！我们现在就到皇宫去！”

(Lao She 2013 [1933]: 269)

In this farcical scene, Lao She clearly mocks some young Communists at the time for what he saw as preaching Marxism without having a clue about it, treating it as a religion, aiming to use Marxism only to gain power and wealth for themselves. The Cat students, just as the young Cat scholars, shout slogans with foreign transliterated words they do not understand. Again, it is through linguistic stratification and dramatization of their speech that the students' ignorance and self-interest are revealed.

It is interesting to compare *Cat Country* with Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary" with regard to the ideological conflicts that play out in these works, but even more so because the battles between ideologies in both works are carried out through specific language varieties in these authors' multiglossic, literary worlds.⁵ Both made use of the linguistic and ideological tensions of the time. Choosing a language could be seen as a statement, with different language varieties "aligned" with certain worldviews and ideologies, and in opposition to each other. Lu Xun launched an ideological and linguistic battle between the traditional scholars' Confucian worldview and the May Fourth reformists' modernization project, through pitting the preface in *wenyan* against the diary written in *baihua* (Rydholm 2018b; 2021). Lu Xun's story favors the New Culture Movement and the new-style *baihua* promoted in *New Youth*. Lao She attacks *both* traditional Confucian scholars and the modern, Westernized May Fourth elite in addition to some young Communists, using the fictional Feline language to ridicule them all. The former group is critiqued for seeking answers to China's problems in the Classics; the latter two for adopting foreign concepts and ideologies without understanding them. Lao She was highly skeptical of the prospect of "Western learning" saving China (see Rydholm 2018a). In *Cat Country*, foreigners and foreign learning only brought misery to the Cat people of Cat country. *Cat Country* is linguistically more complex than Lu Xun's story, including at least eight linguistic styles. In addition, Lao She created the fictional Feline language, a language for the ridicule of everything and everyone,

⁵ For all the criticism of tradition, several of Lao She's literary works, as well as Lu Xun's, still display an inclination towards some Confucian core values, such as the importance of moral education and of "benevolence" (or humanity) *ren* 仁 (Sheng 2017: 136; Davies 2013: 233).

which he used to launch into battle with both traditional *wenyan* culture and Westernized, new-style *baihua*.

In these examples from the novel, each of the three groups of scholars and students spoke in a certain linguistic style, reflecting their socio-economic status, age, and education as well as their worldview and morals. The traditional scholars used vulgar street slang, revealing their morals. The invented, phonetic transcriptions from foreign languages and nonsense words used by young scholars and students betray their ignorance and superficiality. It is not just *what* they say, but *how* they say it that reveals their true character and makes them appear ridiculous. In an essay on “Language and Style,” Lao She stressed the importance of letting the characters speak in their own voice in order not to sound like the author himself:

In the dialogues one must use the language of everyday life ... We must know our fictional characters very well, what they say must suit the occasion and how they say it must be in line with their personality.

对话必须用日常生活中的语言……我们应当与小说中的人物十分熟识，要说什么必与时机相合，怎样说必与人格相合。

(Lao She 2013 [1936]: 231)

The dialogues should be vivid, include gestures and responses by the listeners, and “make people feel like they’re truly listening to two people talking to each other” (Lao She 2013 [1936]: 231). For creating dramatic effects and speedy action, he also advocated the use of short sentences (one action per sentence), and alternating speech and action. He found just one novel to be successful in this regard, *Water Margin* (Lao She ([1936] 2013: 229–30). Lao She drew inspiration from the dramatization of characters’ speech and actions in *Water Margin* and from performative genres, and later he wrote several plays.

In terms of the Western analytical tools used in this study, with regard to substance and form, Lu Xun’s new-style *baihua* was the vehicle of cosmopolitan ideas and translated modernity, supporting Western learning. His writing has been labeled a “cosmopolitan vernacular” by Wang Hui and others (see Davies 2013: 250). Lu Xun’s vernacular was distinct from *wenyan*, but it was still a vernacular from above, written by and for an educated elite. Although they both wrote in the vernacular, Lao She chose to base his on the talk of the streets and the local dialect, rooted in oral storytelling and traditional vernacular prose novels. It is a vernacular from below and does not fit the label “cosmopolitan vernacular,” used for Lu Xun’s work. Although Lao She was a foreign-educated

and well-traveled writer, he still wrote from the margins. In so many of his novels, most evidently in *Camel Xiangzi*, he wrote from the perspective of the non-elite. In *Cat Country*, he wrote against Western learning in China, as opposed to Lu Xun's stance. Angela Taraborrelli uses the concept of "cultural cosmopolitanism from below," in which "authors who occupy a wide range of positions" write "*pars destruens* and a *pars construens*" (2015: 91). The former refers to writers who:

make several criticisms of contemporary cosmopolitanism such as that being contaminated by abstract universalism, of expressing western values and ideals—including an idea of progress and unilateral and one-dimensional modernity—of ignoring relations of social and political power that this presupposes and the new forms of exclusion that it produces, as well, finally, as of being elitist.

(Taraborrelli 2015: 91)

Lao She's "cosmopolitanism" is that from below, written much in the same sense as Taraborrelli's *par destruens*, against the Westernized cosmopolitanism in China at the time; we may perhaps regard it as a kind of "vernacular, cultural cosmopolitanism from below."

Cosmopolitan and vernacular dynamics in Chinese literature and theorizing the vernacular

In this study, I used the Western concepts of cosmopolitan and vernacular as analytical tools in the analysis of Chinese literature in order to contribute to the discussions of theorizing the vernacular in world literary studies. This study confirms the need to apply an expanded timeframe, as Pollock in his study of vernaculars in southern Asia, to gain a better understanding of vernacularization in China during the twentieth century. Vernacularization in China was not simply a case of passive reception of Western languages and modes of literary-political communication, which awards too little agency to the writers in this process, as pointed out by Liu (1995). Lao She's vernacular, as opposed to Lu Xun's, was grounded in the talk of the streets and his local dialect. Lao She developed a vernacular from below and a cosmopolitanism in opposition to Western languages and "Western learning" in China, a cosmopolitanism from below and from the margin, which we may call a kind of "vernacular, cultural cosmopolitanism from below," in contrast to Lu Xun's "cosmopolitan vernacular from above."

As the study shows, neither cosmopolitanisms nor vernaculars as modes of literary-intellectual or political communication can be discussed in the singular, and with regard to both substance and form, they are rarely, if ever, pure, and static. As Ge pointed out, “No work in the entire history of Chinese literature is in a ‘pure’ vernacular, a ‘pure’ type of *wenyan* is equally nonexistent. What we have instead is a whole spectrum of different mixtures of *wenyan* and *baihua* ingredients” (2001: 17). *Wenyan* and *baihua* interacted and developed over time, and, in addition, assimilated influence from other languages, literary cultures as well as worldviews and ideologies, such as the influence of Sanskrit in pre-modern times and Japanese and Western languages in modern times. Lydia Liu rightly stated, “to draw a clear line between the indigenous Chinese and the exogenous Western in the late twentieth century is almost an epistemological impossibility” (1995: 29). This study shows how, in the multiglossic literary worlds of Lu Xun and Lao She, several language varieties, real and fictional, evoking Chinese or foreign authorities, are skillfully manipulated and launched into the linguistic-ideological battles of their time.

In theorizing the vernacular, I consider both the cosmopolitan and the vernacular, since they are mutually constitutive, as Western analytical tools. They are both modes of literary-political communication in translocal or local languages, languages that travel far or travel little, in Pollock’s words. They are defined by both substance and form, content and language. From the point of substance and based on my limited study, I would say that it is possible that any language variety could become the vehicle of “cosmopolitan consciousness” or “nationalist discourses” if power claims it. From the point of language, what distinguishes the vernacular *baihua* from *wenyan* is a much closer relationship to the spoken language and dialect, as a conscious language choice made by the author. Lu Xun’s ambition was to contribute to the creation of a language for the masses (Davies 2013), even though his new-style *baihua* was a vernacular from above, perhaps as “alien” to people as *wenyan*, as stated by Shih (2001: 71). Lao She’s vernacular, by contrast, was a complex, hybrid language. Lao She chose to write in a vernacular from below, including the talk from the streets, the colloquial as well as the dialectal, and additionally incorporates features from oral storytelling and traditional vernacular prose fiction. This contributed to his successful portrayal of characters in the novels, and gained him the epitaph “The people’s writer.” Like Lu Xun, Lao She chose to write in the vernacular as opposed to in *wenyan*, and both contributed to the development of modern vernacular prose fiction in China. Both of their works display hybridity and multiglossia to various degrees, each one experimented with language and style

in the contemporary vernacular and thrived in the Shaky House situation. This shows the huge capacity of the vernacular to easily assimilate different language varieties, including fictional ones, and translations from foreign languages as well as the colloquial and dialectal. *Wenyan* is less flexible in this regard.

The vernacular is never a finished product; it is always in a state of change and development, in *statu nascendi*, as Kullberg and Watson discuss in the Introduction to this volume. Chinese vernacular prose fiction in pre-modern times as well as in modern times, as seen in Lao She's novels, developed and thrived much through its close relationship to and interaction with spoken language, performative genres, and storytelling. Thus, these factors are also relevant to consider when theorizing the vernacular.

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