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EXAMINING *MÍNZÚ SHĒNFEN* IN LAO SHE'S WORKS, WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON *XIAOPO DE SHENGRI*

Noah Weber

Mentor: Lingchei Letty Chen

The early career of Beijing author Lao She (老舍, 1899-1966) covers a wide range of genres and settings—from a realist romance set in London to a sci-fi satire set on Mars. Among these early works is *Xiaopo de shengri* (小坡的生日, *Little Po's Birthday*), a novella about Singaporean children written while Lao She lived in Singapore. The narrator of the novel fluctuates between a close third-person that attempts to reproduce its young protagonists' worldview, and a more adult-like perspective, which casts ironic distance on the children and their behavior. My paper's core claim is that the age discrepancy between the author and his characters is only one important factor explaining their distance. Differences of race (zhongzu 种族), nationality, and language also separate them. These make Lao She's attempt at close-third narration more difficult, and ultimately more flawed.