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## Mo Yan in Context

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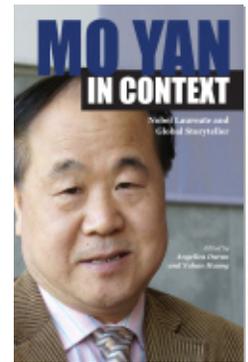
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## The Censorship of Mo Yan's 天堂蒜薹之歌 (*The Garlic Ballads*)

*Thomas Chen*

### Abstract

In "The Censorship of Mo Yan's 天堂蒜薹之歌 (*The Garlic Ballads*)" Thomas Chen examines literary censorship in China by analyzing the various editions of the formerly banned novel by Mo Yan. Chen analyzes the binary of a powerless writer pitted against an all-powerful state. By comparing the various editions of *The Garlic Ballads* published in Chinese and English, Chen challenges the traditional definition of censorship and questions the boundaries of where editing ends and where censoring begins and whether there is such a thing as an uncensored original text. In our age of transnational capitalism, one must reflect critically on the fetishism of censorship and the commodification of the titillating phrase "Banned in China."

"Banned in China" is a label that sells well internationally, and the reasons are obvious: it piques the interest, sometimes prurient, of readers who want to know what is forbidden in the "Forbidden City." To those in some nations, it reaffirms the notion of a "Red China" where freedom of speech and of the press is unheard of, and it conjures up the only possible escape for Chinese writers who are censored: being read and published elsewhere (especially the Western world) through translations. The banning of Yan Lianke's 2005 为人民服务 (*Serve the People!*), a novella in which a woman and her lover desecrate Mao objects such as statuettes and *The Little Red Book* for sexual excitement, would seem to indicate that the words and images of Mao Zedong could still not be taken in vain in the twenty-first century. The absence of the works by Chinese-born French national Gao Xingjian, the 2000 Nobel Prize in Literature Laureate, in his country of origin would indicate a nationalist sensitivity that affects literary availability. So what does it exactly mean to be banned in China today? What are the actual dynamics of literary censorship in post-Mao China? And what is censorship?

In the 1990s the theorization of literary censorship was nuanced, for example, in collections edited by Robert Post and Richard Burt (*The Administration*). The debates they engendered and perspectives they presented, the most important of which revolve around the constitution of subjectivity, have not, however, been applied to contemporary Chinese literature. This lack is felt all the more acutely because of the proliferation of cases of Chinese censorship, especially internet censorship and the attention to these cases by Western news media. After winning the Nobel Prize in 2012, Mo Yan addressed the question of censorship in the Chinese edition of the *New York Times* ("Mo Yan Heads" <<http://cn.nytimes.com/china/20121206/cc06moyan-press/>>). He stated that he is against censorship in general while acknowledging that no conditions of total freedom or total censorship are possible because the relationship between censorship and the practice of literature is a complicated one mediated by the extent to which the writer is "free inside" ("内心是否自由") to overcome one's own political and class stance. Another part of his answer can be derived from the censorship he portrays in *The Garlic Ballads*.

*The Garlic Ballads* (天堂蒜薹之歌) was inspired by a historical event, 苍山蒜薹事件 (the 1987 Cangshan Garlic Incident) in Mo Yan's native province of Shandong. According to the official account by the provincial Communist Party newspaper (省委机关报) *Mass Daily* (大众日报), there was an overproduction of garlic in Cangshan County that year and, coupled with the indiscriminate fees and fines levied by the "market administration" (市场管理) that obstructed sales, the price of garlic dropped dramatically (see Wang, Dazhong <[http://www.dzwww.com/2009/hrh/40/1987/200908/t20090825\\_5035128.htm](http://www.dzwww.com/2009/hrh/40/1987/200908/t20090825_5035128.htm)>). On 27 May 1987, a big market day in the Cangshan County seat, "acquisition points" (收购点) stopped purchasing garlic from the farmers, who then dumped their rotting garlic in front of the county seat government building. A riot ensued: people broke into and wreaked havoc on the government offices.

*The Garlic Ballads* was first published in book format under the title 天堂蒜薹之歌 by the Writers' Publishing House in April 1988 (henceforth *Garlic* 1988). The novel was banned in China a year later, however, because of another "incident," the 4 June 1989 Incident of Tiananmen Square, for "its sympathetic representation of an antigovernment riot" (Kraus 132). Four years later, it was unbanned, reissued in December 1993 by Beijing Normal University Press under a different title, 愤怒的蒜薹 (henceforth *Garlic* 1993) (*The Garlic of Wrath*; the title is a reference to *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, the 1962 Nobel Prize in Literature Laureate). Meanwhile, in Taiwan a version called 天堂蒜薹之歌 appeared in 1989 (henceforth *Garlic* Taiwan 1989). However, the sequence of publications of the novel does not end there. Mo Yan wrote the novel's final (for now) version when he revised it at the end of the 1990s, and now the Chinese version again goes under the title 天堂蒜薹之歌 (*The Garlic Ballads*), published by Shanghai Literature and Arts Publishing House (henceforth *Garlic* 2009). Therefore, the analysis of the aforementioned four

Chinese-language editions of the novel helps to elucidate the impact of censorship and its relation to the text. The novel has also been translated to Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Korean, Spanish, Swedish, among other languages, including English by Howard Goldblatt (henceforth *Garlic* U.S. 1995). I include only Chinese-language and U.S. editions because the former are in the original language of the novel and the latter has received the most global media attention.

One of the most distinctive details differentiating the various editions occurs at the very end of the novel: "Author's addendum: this book is purely fictional; if unfortunately it has similarities to a certain incident in real life, this is a random coincidence; the author does not bear responsibility for the feelings and health of those who automatically jump to conclusions" (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine) ("作者附记: 本书纯属虚构, 假如不幸与现实生活中的某个事件有相似之处, 则係偶然巧合, 作者不为自动对号入座者的心情和健康负责" [*Garlic* 1988, 298]). The note is followed by the dates of composition: 10 August to 15 September 1987. This supplement is found in the first three book editions of the novel: *Garlic* 1988, *Garlic* Taiwan 1989, and *Garlic* 1993. To the novel's first readers, Mo Yan's note could not help sounding tongue-in-cheek: the Cangshan Garlic Incident of 1987 had caused a stir nationwide and, especially given the dates of composition, it would not be difficult for Chinese readers to make the connection. Aside from this, Mo Yan's reference to the "feelings and health" of readers is an indirect commentary on a literary-political debate that persisted from Mao Zedong's 1942 "在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话" ("Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art") into the 1980s: the debate on how much responsibility authors should bear for the "social effects" that their works produce, whether the authors' intentionality should be taken into account, and the traits of "healthy" literature versus "spiritual pollution" for the socialist society. We can understand Mo Yan's caution in making these allusions when the book first appeared in 1988 and when it resurfaced in Chinese bookstores in 1993 after a four-year ban. The aforementioned supplement is absent from *Garlic* U.S. 1995, and we might presume the reason to be that all the oblique references would be lost on Anglophone readers. But it is also missing from the latest Chinese edition: *Garlic* 2009 replaces it with a separate "afterword" in which Mo Yan affirms that his novel is based on the real-life Cangshan Garlic Incident, which "impelled me to put aside the family novel I was working on, and in 35 days I wrote this novel filled with indignation" (促使我放下正在创作着的家族小说, 用了三十五天的时间, 写出了这部义愤填膺的长篇小说" [329]).

We might be tempted at this point to make the following claim: after two decades of censorship and the author's fear of censorship, Mo Yan is brave enough or the creative environment in China has relaxed enough for him to discard the mask that the censorship apparatus made him wear and to attest to the truth. This line of thinking might lead us to call *Garlic* 2009 the authoritative text, the text unmarred by censorship. But some of us, certainly, would argue that the first edition, *Garlic* 1988,

is the originary text. And there will be others, surely, who cast their vote for *Garlic* 1989. After all, how can there be free speech under the communist regime before or after the the crackdown following the 4 June 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident, (六四天安门事件)? Only in Taiwan will a Chinese author dare to speak fully his/her mind. The matter of the "uncensored original" must be kept in abeyance for the moment as we proceed to the second, and related, textual detail that deserves scrutiny. When we open up *Garlic* U.S. 1995, we are struck by a quotation placed before page one: "Novelists are forever trying to distance themselves from politics, but the novel itself closes in on politics. Novelists are so concerned with 'man's fate' that they tend to lose sight of their own fate. Therein lies their tragedy. —Josef Stalin" (*Garlic* U.S. 1995 n.p.) This epigraph is unique to this edition, but with qualifications. *Garlic* 1988 and *Garlic* Taiwan 1989 have the same quotation but attribute it as "words of a famous person" ("名人语录") and *Garlic* 1993 and *Garlic* 2009 drop it altogether. On this issue, there is, in fact, another published version of *The Garlic Ballads* that precedes all book editions. The story appeared in print in the first issue of the literary journal *October* in 1988 (十月, henceforth *Garlic October* 1988). In this new candidate for an "uncensored original," the quotation is also attributed to Stalin as it is in *Garlic* U.S. 1995.

Surely, the attribution to Stalin was too sensitive to be included in subsequent Chinese editions, and so the censor crossed out the Soviet dictator's name and replaced it with something more innocuous. But apparently this substitution was not enough for Chinese authorities. In the 1993 reissued edition the quotation is completely sublated, the author forced to voice subtly the "censored" quotation. That is why, we lament, Mo Yan can manage only this statement in the foreword to *Garlic* 1993: "I've always believed that a novel should distance itself from politics, but sometimes the novel itself closes in on politics" (我一贯认为小说还是应该离政治远些, 但有时小说自己逼近了政治) [1]).

In restoring the Stalin quotation from *Garlic October* 1988, Goldblatt and/or the editors and/or the publishers at Viking Penguin and/or anyone else who played a role in producing *Garlic* U.S. 1995 must have believed that he/they were restoring the intention of a suppressed author. Imagine our shock, then, when we read in Mo Yan's "afterword" ("代后记") to *Garlic* 2009 that the quotation was a complete fabrication. Mo Yan did not have access to Stalin's papers and he simply made up the epigraph: "After the novel was published, many people asked me: When and where did Stalin say these words? How come I've searched through Stalin's Complete Works and cannot find their source? These words were spoken by Stalin, with his pipe tapping on my forehead and in all earnestness, to me alone in my dream. He hadn't time to include them in his Complete Works, which is why you won't find them there" ("小说发表后, 许多人问我: 这段话, 是斯大林在什么时候, 在什么地方说的? 为什么查遍斯大林全集, 也找不到出处? 这段话是斯大林在我的梦中, 用烟斗指点着我的额头, 语重心长地单独对我说的, 还没来得及往他的全集里收, 因此您查不到" [*Garlic* 2009, 329]).

Outrage and accusations against the author committing "reverse censorship" on Stalin are fortunately forestalled by cooler heads, who note that in *Garlic October* 1988 the epigraph appears immediately before the text of the narrative begins. The quotation, thus, is part of the fiction. Perhaps we will then begin to consider explanations other than censorship for the transformations of this quotation across the various Chinese editions, such as lessening misunderstanding, which is what I believe Mo Yan is doing in the aforementioned excerpt from *Garlic* 2009's afterword, where, it should be noted, the quotation also appears in full. But is this the final verdict? No: where editing and revising end and where censoring begins is not always easy to pinpoint on the spectrum of writing. And now my interrogation has a new target: by placing the Stalin quotation four pages before the text of the narrative, what have Goldblatt and/or the editors and/or the publishers at Viking Penguin and/or anyone else who played a role in producing *Garlic* U.S. 1995 actually done with the intentions of the author? Has the publishing of *Garlic* U.S. 1995 under the triumphant red, white, and blue flag of freedom of speech and of the press allowed the censored author to say things he could not say in Red China? Or a better question that dismisses authorial intention and a still unfrozen Cold War mentality altogether: what new product have they created out of Mo Yan's novel? Could this be an instance of the "fetishism of censorship" that, as Richard Burt has astutely remarked, "involves the commodification of small differences meant to increase the text's value?" (29).

The differences of *Garlic* U.S. 1995 overflow the pages themselves. The front flap of the dust jacket of *Garlic* U.S. 1995 states that Mo Yan's novel was a "visceral tale of brutal beauty, one so inflammatory that it was banned in his homeland." When *Garlic* U.S. 1995 came out, *Garlic* 1993 had been unbanned for two years. But the past participle "banned" allows for this semantic loophole. Of course, one can also defend Viking Penguin by pointing out that *Garlic* 1988 was still banned in 1995: it was *Garlic* 1993 that had been unbanned. But once we start suspecting *Garlic* 1993's faithfulness to an urtext, can we exempt *Garlic* U.S. 1995 from such doubts? In the end, however, can we fault the U.S. publisher for not making fine distinctions in promoting the novel? Complexity does not fit within a book blurb: what sells are clear oppositions such as propagandistic and subversive, censored and free.

A comparison of a section from two editions of the novel complicates the opposition between being subversive and being tamed. Each chapter in the book begins with a ballad sung by the blind Zhang Kou. His ballads express both sympathy for the plight of the garlic farmers and criticism of how authorities exacerbate their conditions. The following are two versions of what he sings at the beginning of Chapter 16: "Arrest me if that's what you want ... / Someone read the Criminal Code aloud for me— / Blind lawbreakers get lenient treatment— / I won't shut my mouth just because you put me in jail!"—"You don't shut your mouth, I'll seal it for you!" a policeman in white said furiously, raising the two-foot-long electric prod in his hand.

The end of the prod crackled while spitting green sparks. 'I'll seal your mouth with electricity!' The policeman stabbed Zhang Kou's mouth with the electric prod. The incident occurred in a tiny lane around the corner from the county government compound on the twenty-ninth of May, 1987" ("你要抓你就抓 / 俺听人念过 '刑法' / 瞎眼人有罪不重罚 / 进了监牢俺也不会闭住嘴巴' — '你不闭住嘴巴，俺给你封住嘴巴！' 一位白衣警察怒气冲冲地说着，把手中二尺长的电警棍据起来。电警棍头上'喇喇'地喷着绿色的火花。'俺用电封住你的嘴巴！' 警察把电警棍戳在张扣嘴上。这是一九八七年五月二十九日，发生在县府拐角小胡同里的事情" (*Garlic* 1988, 232); and "Arrest me if that's what you want ... / Someone read the Criminal Code aloud for me— / Blind lawbreakers get lenient treatment— / I won't shut my mouth just because you put me in jail ... —from a ballad by Zhang Kou sung after being touched on the mouth with a policeman's electric prod. The incident occurred in a tiny lane around the corner from the county government compound on the twenty-ninth of May, 1987" (*Garlic* U.S. 1995, 221). Without looking at the citations, one would surmise that the second version has been censored. Who else but nervous censors would soften Zhang Kou's getting stabbed in the mouth with an electric prod that shoots green sparks to "being touched on the mouth with a policeman's electric prod"? Imagine our disbelief, then, when we note that the second version is found—and found only—in *Garlic* U.S. 1995: all Chinese editions have the first version. How do we explain this? One could expect *Garlic* Taiwan 1989 to contain this passage and even *Garlic* 2009 because of its distance of twenty years from the Tiananmen and Cangshan Garlic Incidents. But how does one account for the presence of this graphic dramatization of censorship in *Garlic* October 1988, *Garlic* 1988, and *Garlic* 1993? Why was this dramatization of censorship not censored in China? And why is it absent—and absent only—from *Garlic* U.S. 1995? Could the omission or rather the substitution be an editorial choice either by the translator, the editor, or the publisher? Even if any one of these were to provide an answer, it still leads to the question of where does editing end and censoring begin?

A dramatization of censorship occurs at the beginning of Chapter 19 as well.

County Chief, your hands aren't big enough to cover heaven! / Party Secretary, your power isn't as weighty as the mountain! / You cannot hide the ugly events of Paradise County, / For the people have eyes— / —At this point in Zhang Kou's ballad a ferocious policeman jumped to his feet and cursed, "You blind bastard, you're the prime suspect in the Paradise County garlic case! We've got you dead to rights!" He kicked Zhang Kou in the mouth, cutting off the final note. Blood spurted from Zhang Kou's mouth; several white teeth hit the floor. Zhang Kou climbed back into the chair; the policeman sent him back to the floor with another kick. Garbled speech spilled from Zhang Kou's lips, scaring the interrogators, even though they hadn't understood a word of it. The chief interrogator stopped the policeman from kicking him a third time, as another man bent down and sealed Zhang Kou's mouth with a plastic gag. (*Garlic* U.S. 1995, 259)

县长你手大捂不住天 / 书记你权重重不过山 / 天堂县丑事遮不住 / 人民群众都有眼—— / 一张扣唱到这里，一位虎背熊腰的警察忍无可忍地跳起来，骂道：“瞎种，你是‘天堂蒜薹案’的头号罪犯。老子不信制服不了你！”他跳起来，一脚踢中了张扣的嘴巴。张扣的歌声戛然而止。一股血水喷出来，几颗雪白的牙齿落在了审讯室的地板上。张扣摸索着坐起来，警察又是一脚，将他放平在地。他的嘴里依然呜噜着，那是一些虽然模糊不清但令警察们胆战心惊的话。警察抬脚还要踢时，被一位政府官员止住了。一个戴眼镜的警察蹲在张扣身边，用透明的胶纸牢牢地封住了他嘴巴。(Garlic 2009, 286-87)

The previous passage appears in all editions of the novel starting with *Garlic* 1993. While the ballad is the same as the one in *Garlic October* 1988, *Garlic* 1988, and *Garlic Taiwan* 1989, it is described only as the "ballad excerpt from Zhang Kou's interrogation" (张扣受审时歌唱断章) in *Garlic* 1988 (272). Could we then deduce that the depiction of police brutality was too sensitive for the China of 1988 and, apparently, for *Garlic Taiwan* 1989, given Taiwan's own recent history of bloody suppressions under Kuomintang martial law? Could we surmise that only starting in 1993 was the creative environment relaxed enough for this passage to pass censorship? But then we wonder why kicking and sealing Zhang Kou's mouth crosses the fine line of censorship, while jamming an electric prod in his mouth does not. Could the two different ballad descriptions be a matter of revision, Mo Yan editing the passage in order to make it better art, rather than a case of suppression or transgression? After all, accusing the county chief and party secretary of obstructing justice, present from the first edition, is not exactly toadying to officialdom.

Further examination of other details of the previous passage problematizes the definition of censorship. In *Garlic U.S.* 1995, only police interrogators are in the room with Zhang Kou, and it is inside an interrogation room that the brutality takes places—although this is not stated clearly in the translation—and it is the "chief interrogator" who stops a policeman from kicking Zhang Kou a third time. In the Chinese version, however, the man is described as a "政府官员" ("government official"). The designation is significant because the interrogation and beating are not conducted by police-toughs but presided over by an official from an unspecified level of government. If such a substitution of "chief interrogator" for "government official" occurred between two Chinese editions, we would cry foul at censorship. But surely Goldblatt is not a censor, and we attribute the modification instead to a choice of translation. And the differences do not end there: the Chinese text is not, as Goldblatt translates it, "another man bent down and sealed Zhang Kou's mouth with a plastic gag" (259). A more literal translation would be "a policeman wearing glasses squatted next to Zhang Kou and with transparent tape firmly sealed his mouth." Might Mo Yan be actually suggesting, in this dramatization of censorship, that "censorship" is not always so obtrusive as a "plastic gag?" Perhaps he is pointing out that censorship might not always take the blatantly violent forms of bans but that it might be more subtle and insidious in its

operations, as barely noticeable as transparent tape? These are nuances of meaning unavailable from *Garlic* U.S. 1995, where censorship is the thug who knocks books off bookshelves and kicks writers in the mouth.

Goldblatt is a translator within the system of the U.S. and the global publishing industry, and translation is a noble task, one which (so far) no Chinese (national) specialist has taken up in terms of Mo Yan's work. But if we are to use the traditional definition of censorship as "an act of external interference with the internally generated communicative, expressive, artistic, or informational preferences of some agent" (Schauer 150), then we necessarily have to group the task of translation into this demonized category. Criticism itself also becomes suspect. If we follow this definition, then "censorship was structurally complicit with what is often taken to be its opposite—namely, criticism" (Burt, "(Un)Censoring" 22). On the other hand, are we ready to limit censorship to acts of only the "government," however broadly the government may be construed? Then we would have to do away with Banned Books Week, that cherished celebration since 1982 on U.S. liberals' calendars, for doubtlessly the perpetrators are stodgy educators and backwater parents removing classics like *Huckleberry Finn* or *Harry Potter* from grade school libraries.

Perhaps limiting the discussion to texts in China can prove helpful. Can we centralize Chinese censorship upon the Party State? Yes, some would argue: although the writer acts as his or her own self-censor and the publishing house editor acts as a censor, these practices of censorship can ultimately be traced to one authoritarian Power. But even in a one-party state, can we locate Power in a center whether that center be depicted as the President or the President + the Premier or the Politburo Standing Committee or, since we are talking about Power over cultural production, the PSC + Judiciary + Ministry of Public Security + Ministry of Culture + Ministry for Information Security + Central Propaganda Department + State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television? If we have trouble describing Power within some center, however expansive or amorphous that center may be, what can we say about the Power to censor and about censorship? Studies of censorship in contemporary Chinese literature would do well to heed Judith Butler's call that "descriptions of censorship presuppose a more general theory of the subject of power" (247). Our subjectivities are constituted not prior to power (including censorious power) but through power. There is no preformed subject in which censorship intervenes from the outside.

We need to extend our dissection of censorship beyond a Foucauldian analytics of the anatomy of power. In the age of transnational capitalism, suppressed speech has much currency in the global economy. All industry executives know how well subversion in the East (Near or Far) sells in the West. Who is not curious about *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003), which became a #1 *New York Times* bestseller? More to the point, *Shanghai Baby* (2001) (上海宝贝 [1999]) was an "international bestseller" (front cover) and was "banned and burned in China" (back cover). "Free speech" and "censorship" lose their cachet and their respective marketability if they

are not labeled and divided. The fetishism of censorship is doubly profitable: only in the West can a free work be produced and only in the West can the original or the whole of a work banned or censored elsewhere be purchased. The more one scrutinizes the intricacies of censorship in a global context, the more one can readily see the logic of Burt's claim that "it operated in terms of complicity and collaboration between censors, authors, and critics rather than in terms of radical oppositions between dumb censors and intelligent literary writers" (Burt, "(Un)Censoring" 21).

In the foreword to the reissued edition of the novel after a four-year ban, *Garlic* 1993, Mo Yan calls attention to censorship: "Because I wrote this book, some people in a certain county got somebody to send me word that, if I dare step foot on their territory, they will ... I took much exception to this" ("因为写了这本书, 某县的一些人托人带话给我, 说我只要敢踏上他们的地盘, 他们就要 ... 我听了很不以为然" [1]). Here we see new players in the censorship game: not a Party fearful of losing its "monopoly on power," not a publisher fearful of getting its ISBNs revoked, but, presumably, some local officials (and their hired thugs) who did not appreciate Mo Yan's portrayal of the incident in Cangshan County. And presumably the threat did not stop and leave the rest to Mo Yan's imagination. Mo Yan, however, left the rest to readers' imagination. There is no need for the threat to be spelled out, especially after the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's 1990 visual images of police brutality for his outspokenness, including "Brain Inflation" (which Ai is careful to distinguish as atypical). The threat, a form of censorship, in Mo Yan's retelling to readers becomes also a dramatization of censorship. He needs not and, it is implied, dares not specify "some people," "a certain county," and "somebody," and his ellipsis points to his suffering of elision.

The major dramatization of censorship, however, occurs within the narrative of the novel itself, although again not in all of its editions. In *Garlic* U.S. 1995, one comes across a scene in the final chapter that is not found in the earlier editions: the blind minstrel Zhang Kou on a side street by the county government office building, is singing this time about censorship: "The common folk have a bellyful of grievances, but they dare not let them out. For the moment they open their mouths, electric prods close them fast" [*Garlic* U.S. 1995, 274]) ("老百姓满腹冤恨不敢说话, 一开口就给咱戳上电棍" [*Garlic* 2009, 303]). Several policemen approach him and warn him once again: "No more songs about garlic, do you hear me? Which do you think will give out first, your mouth or the electric prod?" (*Garlic* U.S. 1995, 277) ("记住, 唱什么都可以, 就是不要唱天堂蒜薹之歌。是你的嘴硬还是电棍硬?") [*Garlic* 2009, 306]). After the policemen leave, Zhang Kou shouts: "You black-hearted hyenas, do you really think you can shut me up so easily? Sixty-six years is long enough for any man to live!" (*Garlic* 1995, 278) ("你们这些人面兽心的畜生, 想封了我的嘴? ! 我张扣活了六十六岁, 早就活够了" [*Garlic* 2009, 307]). He continues to sing the garlic ballads. Several days later, his body is found in the side street, his mouth stuffed with mud.

The provenance of this scene, as well as the rest of the chapter, is a bit of a puzzle until we learn from the "Translator's Note" following the end of *Garlic* U.S. 1995 that "Parts of Chapter Nineteen and all of Chapter Twenty have been revised, in conjunction with the author" (287). We might then suppose that this dramatization of censorship, along with the martyring of Zhang Kou, was much too subversive either for the Chinese censor or for pre-1995 Mo Yan. That is why the scene appears only in the U.S. edition and then in the revised edition of *Garlic* 2009: the creative atmosphere relaxed gradually in China only after 1993. Yes, the various Chinese editions of the novel are the results of negotiations of what could and could not be published at particular times in the Chinese political or literary culture. But there may be another sense in which "negotiations" is apt. Could we see in the final chapter's dramatization of censorship, which appears in print for the first time in the U.S. translated edition, a negotiation—with all the business connotations of the term—through which the author, a writer in reformed China who no longer under state patronage needs to fend for himself in the globalized economy—wins a contract with Viking Penguin? Could we say that the depiction of the singer silenced forever was not so much suppressed by an authoritarian government as inspired by the Anglophone, primarily U.S., market? Is Zhang Kou the easily consumable symbol of the Chinese artist-cum-victim exercising his would-be First Amendment rights only to be squashed by a repressive regime? Like Mo Yan's *Garlic Ballads*, Zhang Kou's garlic ballads were "banned in his homeland."

We can answer yes or no or maybe, but one thing is certain: Mo Yan himself is a player and sometimes also a playwright of the drama of censorship (see He). The author ends the novel—or rather, all editions of the novel save one—with newspaper coverage of the garlic incident from the fictional *Masses Daily* (群众日报; my translation is meant to mimic the real-life *Mass Daily* [大众日报]), comprised of a news story, a commentary, and an editorial. It is a thinly veiled fiction. The title of the news story from *Masses Daily* reads: "Serious bureaucracy and dereliction of duty brought about consequences. Those mainly responsible for the Tiantang 'Garlic Incident' dealt with severely" ("严重官僚主义和工作失职酿成恶果 天堂蒜薹事件"主要责任者受到严肃处理" [*Garlic* 2009, 318]) with the lead sentence "CCP's Cangtian municipal committee's decision: discharge Tiantang county committee Party vice-secretary Zhong Weimin from his post, suspend and investigate county committee Party secretary Ji Nancheng; the provincial Party committee and the provincial government hereby announce to the entire province" ("中共苍天市委决定: 撤销仲为民天堂县委副书记职务, 县委书记纪南城停职检查; 省委, 省政府就此通报全省" [*Garlic* 2009, 318]).

And this is the official account of the Cangshan Garlic Incident from *Mass Daily*: "CCP's Linyi prefectural committee deals severely with those mainly responsible for the Cangshan 'Garlic Incident' brought about by serious bureaucracy and dereliction of duty: discharges Cangshan county committee Party vice-secretary Li

Changcun from his post and recommends his dismissal as county commissioner; suspends and investigates county committee Party secretary Yang Guosheng. The Shandong provincial Party committee and provincial government hereby announce to the entire province" ("中共临沂地委对由于严重官僚主义、工作失职酿成苍山"蒜薹事件"的主要责任者给予严肃处理: 撤销李常存苍山县委副书记职务, 并建议撤销其县长职务; 县委书记杨国胜停职检查。山东省委、省政府就此通报全省" [Wang, Dazhong, [http://www.dzwww.com/2009/hrh/40/1987/200908/t20090825\\_5035128.htm](http://www.dzwww.com/2009/hrh/40/1987/200908/t20090825_5035128.htm)]). Further, in the first three editions of the novel—*Garlic October* 1988, *Garlic* 1988, *Garlic* Taiwan 1989—it is Zhang Kou who hands the newspaper to the "author." The following is an excerpt of Zhang Kou's song that begins the last chapter of the first three editions: "If you ask the cause behind this case / Let me first smoke a cigarette of yours / After smoking I still won't talk / But give you a copy of *Masses Daily* for you to read—ballad excerpt sung to this book's author by the blind Zhang Kou" ("要问这案缘和由 / 先让俺抽您一支高级烟 / 抽了香烟俺也不开口 / 送一张《群众日报》您自己看—瞎子张扣对本书作者演唱片段 [Garlic 1988, 287]). In the first three editions, which do not have the scene of Zhang Kou's martyrdom, the blind singer becomes cautious at the end. He is censored and by ending his novel with the official newspaper account of the Garlic Incident, Mo Yan implies that this version will be the one preserved in the historical archives. His novel, on the other hand, against all odds of censorship, is the only site of the counterarchive that preserves the blind singer's songs.

There is a slight but important modification to the aforementioned excerpt in *Garlic* 1993. The lyrics are the same, but now the ballad is an "excerpt sung to this book's author by the blind Zhang Kou's disciple" ("瞎子张扣的徒弟对本书作者演唱片段" [Garlic 1993, 265]). In this edition, we see the hint of his eventual transition from circumspect cigarette mooch to martyr of the later editions. The cowardly disciple also poses no competition to Mo Yan's monopoly on the counternarrative. The newspaper chapter is the culmination of Mo Yan's novel. For the previous 200,000 characters (or nearly three hundred pages in *Garlic* U.S. 1995), Mo Yan has been singing of the garlic farmers, their toil and sweat in the fields, the consolation of a bumper harvest, and the long distance they have to trek to bring their garlic to the acquisition points only to be fined and stymied by officials who could not care less about them or their garlic rotting in the summer heat until their indignation catches fire, raging through the county government offices. Juxtapose this story with the formulaic, whitewashed, ideologically paralyzed account in the official newspaper, and one can easily see Mo Yan's design. Both the official corruption and the very language of officialdom are excoriated, its distance from the language and reality of "the masses" condemned. In the context of the work as a whole, the newspaper coverage, far from being a kowtow to the authorities (at the end of the novel, functions to foreground the Chinese government's failure to represent, linguistically and otherwise, the people.

However, the entire *Masses Daily* chapter is missing from one edition of the novel: *Garlic* U.S. 1995. Why? Was it a matter of space? Out of consideration for the Anglophone, primarily U.S., reading public? The irony of ending a tale of love and injustice with three news articles in the stilted, convoluted language of Party ideology might go over the heads of a U.S. audience, might it not? It might not, but then the bigger question is: is this omission a form of censorship, too? David Damrosch is correct about the mediation that occurs with translation: "To use translations means to accept the reality that texts come to us mediated by existing frameworks of reception and interpretation. We necessarily work in collaboration with others who have shaped what we read and how we read" (295). But does "mediation" soften the actual import of the process a bit too much? If an editor dumbs down a foreign work for Anglophone consumers because they would not appreciate its nuances of effect or meaning, is this censorship that sharply affects global readers? Where does editing end and censoring begin?

## Note

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