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## Booklover-Mo Yan

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Curating Collective Collections Endnotes

1. **Paul Metz** and **Caryl Gray**, "Public Relations and Library Weeding," *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, v. 31, no. 3, pages 273-279.
2. **Bart Harloe**, "Politics of Weeding: New Myths and Old Realities," *Academic Libraries: Myths and Realities*, Proceedings of the Third National Conference of ACRL, (1984).
3. **Sam Demas** and **Mary E. Miller** have written two practical articles on developing collection management plans: "Rethinking Collection Management Plans: Shaping Collective Collections for the 21st century," in *Collection Management*, v. 37, issue 3-4, 2012, p. 168-187; and "What's Your Plan? Writing Collection Management Plans" in *Against the Grain*, v.24#2, February 2012.

Little Red Herrings  
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account for my own work and argue its inferiority, one of my friends is an award-winning author for several different books. We were all uniformly treated with contempt.

I point all this out because I believe this is the kind of shabby treatment that forces writers to by-pass conventional publishers, driving good, fine, but small publishing houses out of business. While I think I have a viable manuscript on social networking (call me!), I am certain my friends have excellent ones (Legalization of Marijuana, Gay Marriage). But none of us will ever again write for this publisher.

Maybe this is where digital publishing is taking us. Smallish publishers get bought out by larger conglomerates (as this one was during my sad experience). Those conglomerates starve off or ignore once-robust firms to push other ventures. That's their business, of course, but a word here or there would be most helpful. In my case all someone had to do was talk to me and tell me what was going on. No one ever did.

I realize writers are a dime a dozen, or I should say writers like me are. But even those of us who write academic versions of penny dreadfuls (I speak only for myself) should be treated fairly and cordially.

Is that really too much to ask? 🍷

Booklover — Mo Yan

Column Editor: **Donna Jacobs** (Research Specialist, Transgenic Mouse Core Facility, MUSC, Charleston, SC 29425) <jacobsd@muscedu>

*Ju Dou*, the 1990 Chinese film directed by **Zhang Yimou**, was banned in China for several years after the pro-democracy stance at Tiananmen Square. When the film played in the Basic Science Auditorium at the **Medical University of South Carolina**, as part of a university film series, there was not an empty seat in the auditorium. Every Chinese student, post-doctoral fellow, and professor at the university was most likely present to watch this film. **Zhang Yimou** became my favorite director that day after watching this tragic story unfold in vivid technicolor on a screen in an auditorium surrounded by his countrymen. The story is set in a dye mill, and **Zhang** uses the color red to his complete and commanding advantage.

This memory flooded in after learning that **Mo Yan** had been presented the **2012 Nobel Literature Prize** and discovering that his 1997 novel, *Red Sorghum*, had inspired a **Zhang Yimou's** film of the same name. I immediately ordered the book and patiently waited its arrival. **Amazon** is relatively quick with delivery so soon I was immersed in the saga of three generations of a Shandong province family and surrounded once again by the color red.



On the opening page **Mo Yan** greets the reader: "With this book I respectfully invoke the heroic, aggrieved souls wandering in the boundless bright-red sorghum fields of my hometown. As your unfilial son, I am prepared to carve out my heart, marinate it in soy sauce, have it minced and placed in three bowls, and lay it out as an offering in a field of sorghum. Partake of it in good health!" This is a tough read, but so beautifully written that I found myself stopping to reflect on the ability to craft words in such a way that even the horrid is a pleasure to read. I will share this excerpt from the Chapter entitled Sorghum Funeral:

*"What is love? Everybody has his own answer. But this demon of an emotion has spelled doom for more valiant men and lovely, capable women than you can count. Based upon Granddad's romantic history, my father's tempestuous love affairs, and the pale desert of my own experiences, I've framed a pattern of love that applies to the three generations of my family. The first ingredient of love — fanaticism — is composed of heart-piercing suffering: the blood flows through the intestines and bowels, and out of the body as feces the consis-*

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*... tency of pitch. The second ingredient — cruelty — is composed of merciless criticism: each partner in the love affair wants to skin the other alive, physically and psychologically. They both want to rip out each other's blood vessels, muscles, and every writhing internal organ, including the heart. The third ingredient — frigidity — is composed of a protracted heavy silence. Icy emotions frost the faces of people in love. Their teeth chatter so violently they can't talk, no matter how badly they want to."*

In an interview after the **Nobel Prize** announcement **Mo Yan** related that "his greatest challenge as a writer has been to reflect the social realities of his native China without allowing personal political opinions to suppress his work." Nevertheless, one of his works, *The Garlic Ballads*, was also banned in China during the post-Tiananmen Square time. I felt oddly duty-bound to seek out and read this novel. I downloaded it onto my Kindle and discovered yet another beautifully written tough read with controversial overtones.

**Mo Yan**, which means "don't speak," is the pen name for **Guan Moye**. He was advised not to speak his mind because of the potential

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outstanding reference works during the era.<sup>13</sup> The main difference between the *Littre* and the *Grand Larousse* was that the latter was in reality an encyclopedic coverage. However, within his encyclopedic reference work **Larousse** often inserted his own unobjective frames of reference. For example, his dictionary listed two references for the historical figure of **Napoleon**; one under “B” for **Bonaparte** and another under “N” for **Napoleon I**. According to the article on **Bonaparte**, he died on the eighteenth of Brumaire, the very day which he crowned himself **Napoléon I of France**. The modern descendant of **Larousse’s** original *Grand Dictionnaire*, the *Grand Larousse encyclopédique en dix volumes*, is one of the most consulted French dictionaries in North America.<sup>14</sup> Today **Larousse** publishing is known as a world leader in reference materials, hosting [www.larousse.com](http://www.larousse.com) and offering students easy and fast access to over twenty online dictionaries.

In 1964 **Paul Robert**, working with **Alain Rey**, **Josette Debove**, and a network of lexicographers, produced the *Alphabetical and Analogical Dictionary of the French Language* (*Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française*), or what is more commonly known as *Le Robert* or *Grand Robert de la langue française*.<sup>15</sup> This dictionary, much like the *Larousse*, soon became a modern household name in the French-speaking world. *Le Grand Robert* was originally published in six volumes but was soon reissued with a supplement in 1970. In addition to containing all words accepted by the **French Academy**, it included scientific and technical terms, commonly used colloquialisms, and archaic words that appear in classical French literature. Lengthy quotations from contemporary French writers demonstrate historical changes in the use of words and draw on modern-day examples to clarify usage. *Le Grand Robert*, together with the ten-volume *Grand Larousse*, are two of the more widely-held single-language, encyclopedic French dictionaries.

Fortunately for students and researchers, many of these historical and contemporary dictionaries are available online. In addition to improving access through digital facsimiles of historical dictionaries, there are other online tools that further support academic research in these areas. The *Grands corpus des dictionnaires* is a subscription database maintained by **Classiques Garnier Numérique**.<sup>16</sup> This online resource covers the ninth to twentieth centuries and offers over 900,000 historical entries, from **Frédéric Godefroy’s** *Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du 9e au 15e siècle* (1881-1902) to the **French Academy** dictionary and many other works that provide important evidence of the historical development of linguistic tools. In addition to subscription database resources, the **University of Chicago’s ARTFL Project** also plays an important role in providing public access to early works such as the *Dictionnaires d’autrefois* as well as **Diderot’s** *Encyclopedie*.<sup>17</sup>

Dictionaries offer important starting points to a deeper understanding of French language and culture. They represent monumental efforts to codify and describe usage and context of a language, and their design and diverse structures remain extremely useful in research. **Julie Coleman**, in “Using Dictionaries and Thesauruses as Evidence,” suggests that dictionaries provide today’s linguists with at least five major areas of evidence.<sup>18</sup> She notes that in addition to their more obvious use as references, they also provide linguists with positions and evidence to argue against, as well as assistance researching attitudes toward language, social anxiety, and linguistic changes over time. While many of the historical resources cited here are more appropriate for the advanced undergraduate, graduate student, or researcher, their digital availability and deep scholarly relevance make them suitable for anyone interested in French language, grammar, literature, or historical records. 🌿

consequences that would be imposed on him due to the era’s politics. He was born to a family of farmers in 1955 in the Gaomi area of the

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\*Editor’s note: An asterisk (\*) denotes a title selected for *Resources for College Libraries*.

Shandong province — exactly the setting for his generational saga *Red Sorghum*. He was awarded the prize for a writer “who with hallucinatory realism merges folk tales, history, and the contemporary.” A perfect description for both of these novels elegantly translated by **Howard Goldblatt**, a Research Professor of Chinese at the **University of Notre Dame** from 2002-2011. 🌿