

Chinese Poet Awarded Neustadt Prize at OU

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NORMAN, OKLA. – An international jury representing nine countries selected critically acclaimed Chinese poet Duo Duo as the 2010 laureate of the \$50,000 Neustadt International Prize for Literature, sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and its international magazine, *World Literature Today*. The decision was made during deliberations on Oct. 22 on the OU Norman campus.

Duo Duo (Li Shizheng) was born in Beijing in 1951. He started writing poetry in the early 1970s as a youth during the isolated, midnight hours of the Cultural Revolution, and many of his early poems critiqued the Cultural Revolution from an insider's point of view in a highly sophisticated, original style. Often considered part of the "Misty" school of contemporary Chinese poetry, he nevertheless kept a cautious distance from any literary trends or labeling. After witnessing the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, Duo Duo left China and did not return for more than a decade. Upon his return to China in 2004, the literary community received him with honor and praise. Duo Duo currently resides on Hainan Island and teaches at Hainan University in China.

Chinese poet Mai Mang (Yibing Huang), who currently teaches Chinese literature at Connecticut College, served on the Neustadt Prize jury and nominated Duo Duo for the award. He notes that "Duo Duo is a great lone traveler crossing borders of nation, language and history, as well as a resolute seer of some of the most basic, universal human values that have often been shadowed in our troubled modern time: creativity, nature, love, dreams and wishful thinking." Robert Con Davis-Undiano, *WLT's* executive director, adds that "Duo Duo is foremost among a group of first-rate Chinese poets who deserve serious attention and recognition in the West."

The Neustadt Prize, awarded every two years, is the only international literary award from the United States for which poets, playwrights and novelists are given equal consideration. It is widely considered to be the most prestigious international prize after the Nobel Prize in Literature and, in fact, is often referred to as the "American Nobel" because of its record of 27 laureates, candidates or jurors who in the past 39 years have been awarded Nobel Prizes following their involvement with the Neustadt Prize. Duo Duo is the 21st Neustadt laureate and the first Chinese author to win the prize. Duo Duo will visit OU in fall 2010 to accept the award.

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