

Literary exile living at Glendon Campus

by Josh Rubin

The pain in Duo Duo's face is all too evident.

The Chinese poet, currently teaching at Glendon College, chooses his words carefully when answering questions from the audience at his reading.

Duo fled China following the massacre in Tiananmen Square, and, of course, has yet to go back.

"It makes me very sad to not be able to go home," said Duo. "In the past year alone, I have slept in 18 beds, taken 50 airplane flights and given 30 readings."

He claims, though, to have gotten used to the monotony of living on the road, adding "It's a nice challenge."

As part of a group of poets who challenged the political status quo in China following the fall of the Gang of Four, Duo is deeply concerned with the current dearth of literary activity in his country.

"It is silent. All the voices of poetry have been stopped," Duo said.

Surprisingly, for someone as politically-minded as Duo, much of his work focusses on nature. In works such as "Northern Sea," "Walking Towards the Winter" and "The Nights of the North," Duo infuses his writing with vivid images which transcend any linguistic barriers.

But many of Duo's poems are undeniably political, so it comes as no surprise that his work is banned in China.

Indeed, one poem, written several years before he left, proved to be quite prophetic. In it, Duo talks of "children [who] died; Chinese children."

Yet Duo plays down the political aspect of his work as much as possible. "Even though my writing may be political by necessity, that is only secondary," he said.

Writing has long been a way of life for Duo, even before he was involved in poetry.

During the mid 70s, he wrote a number of articles for a worker's newspaper in Beijing.

Increasingly, he became more active in his opposition to the government orthodoxy. As Ian Martin, who works with PEN Canada put it, "They [Chinese poets] didn't want to be true believers. They just wanted to say 'No we don't believe.'"

Finally, Duo, who was already scheduled to leave China for readings abroad, left the country the same day as government tanks crushed the pro-democracy demonstrations.

After giving several readings in Europe and the U.K., Duo came to the attention of John Ralston Saul, the president of PEN's Canadian chapter.

Saul's organization is part of what he calls "a disinterested Canadian interest in international affairs."

PEN is most well known for its letter-writing campaigns, which are a literary version of Amnesty International's more publicized program.

Duo, however, is at Glendon as a result of PEN's fledgling writer-in-residence program, which sees exiled novelists, poets, playwrights and journalists placed in a host institution with lodging and living expenses for one year.

Duo says his placement in the program is a nice change, one which gives him some well-needed stability and allows him more time for creative activities.

Yet come September, Duo's term at Glendon will come to a close. "I don't know what I will do afterwards," said a distressed Duo.

Although one source said the possibility of an extension exists in the PEN program, most people who Excalibur spoke to thought Duo wouldn't be likely to get one.

"There's just too many other people out there for PEN to support one guy twice. It's not designed as a long term program," said one guest at a Glendon reading Duo gave in December.



André Souroujon

Chinese poet Duo Duo is an exiled writer in residence at Glendon campus after fleeing China during the Tiananmen Square massacre.

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1991 GENERAL ELECTIONS

MARCH 12 & MARCH 13

POLLS OPEN

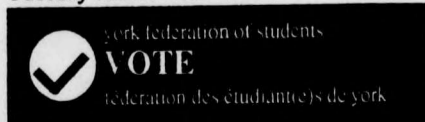
10:00 am to 5:00 pm:

Bethune College	Calumet College	Curtis Lecture Halls
Fine Arts	Founders College	Glendon College
East Bear Pit	McLaughlin College	Stong College
Osgoode Hall	Steacie Building	Stedman Lecture Halls
Vanier College	West Bear Pit	Winters College

5:00 pm to 8:30 pm:

Atkinson College

Tuesday March 12th 1991



Wednesday March 13th 1991



When you vote, Remember to bring your Sessional validation card.

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Status:	Undergraduate
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