

Exiled Chinese poet shares influential work

Bei Dao's 'misty poetry' played a significant role in changing China's 1970s political climate

RACHEL LEE
FREELANCE REPORTER

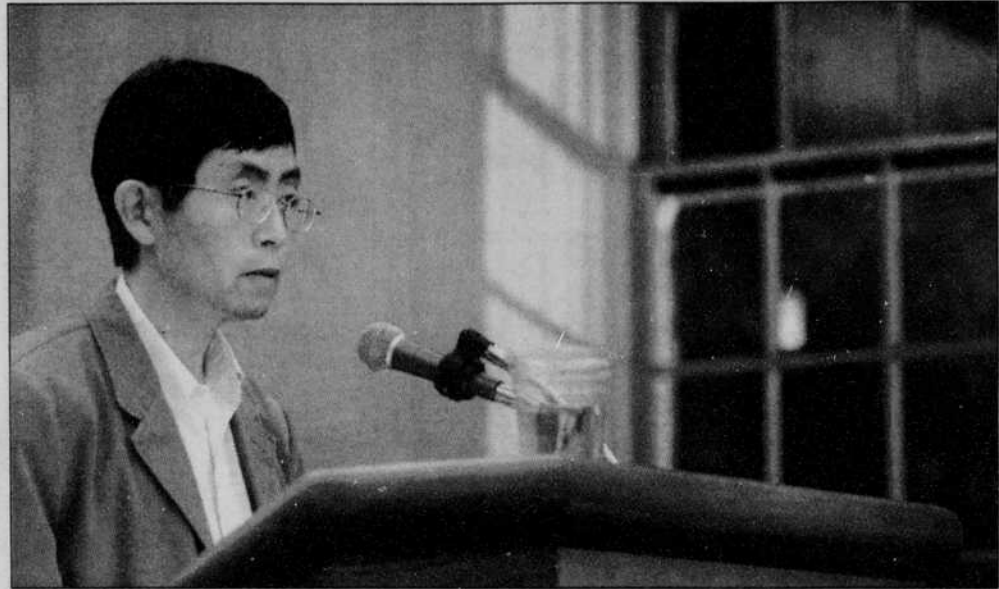
The Browsing Room of the Knight Library was packed Monday for the reading from Bei Dao, one of China's most treasured writers in the 1970s. In 1976, Bei Dao's poetry was instrumental in the formation of the April 5 Democracy Movement and later, the Tiananmen Square demonstration. Bei Dao was also the poet that started a particular style of poetry called "menglong shi" or "misty poetry."

"I first met Bei Dao in Denmark, at the University of Aarhus," said Wendy Larson, the Associate Dean of Humanities and a Professor of East Asian Languages and Literature. "At the time, I was a Fulbright and he was teaching. Funnily enough, both of us didn't know how to speak the language in Denmark, so we clicked as friends immediately."

"The two things that makes Bei Dao so successful is the fact that in the 1970s, his poetry broke apart the socialist model. Secondly, it is also because he has been so active, always keeping up to his writing, that he has done so much to introduce Chinese writing to the world," she said.

Bei Dao, whose real name is Zhao Zenkai, read from his published works in the Chinese language. After each Chinese reading, Garrett Hongo, a Creative Writing Professor, read the English translated version. The audience was mesmerized by Bei Dao's words as they echoed through the room.

"I just think that we are very fortunate to have him here with us tonight and hearing his poetry translated in English. Garrett did a good job," said Lori O'Hollaren, the Assistant Director for the Center for



A large audience congregated in the Knight Library on Monday evening as exiled Chinese poet Bei Dao read a selection of his poetry, saturated with political strife in unique and surreal language.

LAUREN WIMER
SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Asian and Pacific Studies. "I think the motivation for writing is always mysterious," Bei Dao said. "I can't really say what exactly got me writing but probably the many

conditions that were happening in China at the time. So with the political and personal that was happening, it all reached a climax that was my writing.

"During that time, political pressure was very hard. Everything, including writing, was banned. When I started writing, my father was very

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College basketball player quits team, Islamic religion

The Oregon resident now views her former Islamic beliefs a 'misstep' and has returned to Christianity

TAMPA, Fla. — A 22-year-old woman who created an uproar when she wanted to wear Islamic garb while playing basketball for University of South Florida has left the school and returned to Christianity.

Andrea Armstrong, who is from Lakeside, Ore., said in an Oct. 6 e-mail to The Oregonian that her conversion was a misstep caused by loneliness and estrangement from her home support system.

"It was my loneliness and forgetfulness of my past teachings that caused me to convert to Islam," she wrote.

Armstrong's story drew international headlines when she announced she left the team and lost her scholarship after coach Jose Fernandez told her she could not wear the religiously mandated long pants, top with long sleeves and scarf during practices or games.

Armstrong then met with Fernandez, university officials and a representative of Council on American-Islamic Relations, and officials agreed that the team would

accommodate her Islamic attire and reinstate her scholarship. The university also agreed to ask the NCAA for an exemption to its uniform policy to allow her to wear a scarf.

The following week, Armstrong met with Fernandez and quit the team, saying she didn't want the uniform issue "to cause further distraction." She withdrew from classes Sept. 23, according to the school's registrar's office.

Armstrong returned to her hometown after leaving USF.

"At the time, I thought Florida was what I wanted," she said in the e-mail to The Oregonian. "I did not realize that with this move I was slowly distancing myself from God, my family and friends.

"Had I recognized the emptiness that I felt for what it was — a homesickness for my family, friends, and home town — I would not have tried so hard to fill it with an unfamiliar religion. I take full responsibility for my actions and live in the certainty that God will forgive me."

— The Associated Press

IN BRIEF

Williams Bakery requests site-review zone change

Students and community members are encouraged to attend a public hearing on a zone-change request by Williams Bakery, Jeff Nelson of the Fairmount Neighbors Association said.

Located just east of campus, Williams Bakery, the targeted site for the University's new basketball arena, is looking to change zones from one requiring a site-review overlay to one that doesn't.

The Fairmount Neighbors Association unanimously passed a resolution earlier this month stating its opposition to the zone change request.

Nelson said he doesn't know why the request is being made but that the association is concerned about what a lack of a site review could mean for the

neighborhood surrounding the bakery.

"Site review is important because it does look at compatibility with the neighborhood," Nelson said. "Without the site review overlay you could just apply directly with the city and have no public hearing."

A proposal last fall to build a cell phone tower in the same neighborhood was subject to a site review and consequently turned down, Nelson said.

He said because the rezoning involves a neighborhood heavily populated by students, it is crucial students are aware of the request and the implications it could bring to the surrounding neighborhood.

"I think the students are underrepresented in this zone change," Nelson said.

The hearing will take place at 5 p.m. today in the Sloat Room of the Atrium Building, 99 W. 10th Ave.

— Meghann Cuniff

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