

Professor nominated for two poetry awards



Dorianne Laux explains the relationship of a fire hydrant and its symbolism to creative writing.

Sarah Kishler
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Dorianne Laux, a University assistant professor in creative writing, writes poems about the daily life of an ordinary American mother. As the mother of an 18-year-old daughter, it is a life she knows well.

The sensitivity, which she brings to her work, has led her to become one of five finalists in The National Book Critic's Circle Award's poetry division for her collection *What We Carry*, which was released last May.

A 27-member award panel will make its final selection Feb. 25.

As of this year, the University's Creative Writing Department has had the good fortune to have Laux on staff. She recently moved to Eugene from the bay area, where her poetry garnered a nomination for the Bay Area Book Reviewer's Award in 1990. She is also a nominee this year for *What We Carry*.

As a member of the Creative Writing faculty, Laux enjoys the acquaintance of faculty members Garrett Hongo, Terry Hummer and Chang-Rae Lee, all of whom she feels are fine writers and contribute to making the Creative Writing Program outstanding.

Laux teaches CRWR 343 Poetry Writing and CRWR 407, a poetry seminar titled "Writing from the Body," in which she teaches the work

of three prominent women poets — Jane Hirshfield, Marie Howe and Kim Addonizio — who are also her personal friends.

Because her poetry is about the ordinary life of a working mother, Laux has earned the reputation of "a working woman's poet" in literary circles, which is something she says she finds very humorous.

PROFESSOR PROFILE



Dorianne Laux

An occasional series

Two of the strongest influences on her work are poets Sharon Olds and Carolyn Forché — Olds because she has written about family and domestic issues, and Forché because she excels in the art of crafting images and language into something beautiful and precise. Because Olds and Forché were both women writers about Laux's age, she feels they opened doors for her and gave her the "permission" she needed to write.

"[Poetry] has been a pretty male-dominated art form for many years, and they were both very visible and doing very well," Laux said.

Another major influence in her life, she said, is the renowned poet Philip Levine, who wrote the introduction to her first volume of poetry, *Awake* (1990). In addition to being a model writer, he has been a personal friend and a great help in getting her career underway. Laux said she is pleased to be one of his peers in the National Book Critic Circle Award Finals, as he is also one of the five nominees.

"I wouldn't mind losing to Phil at all," she said.

Laux recently co-wrote a reference manuscript titled *The Poet's Companion* with Addonizio and is currently in the process of finding a publisher.

"I'm really tempted to come out and do a reading in a hard hat, big boots and a tool belt ... and pull my poetry out of a metal lunch box," she said.

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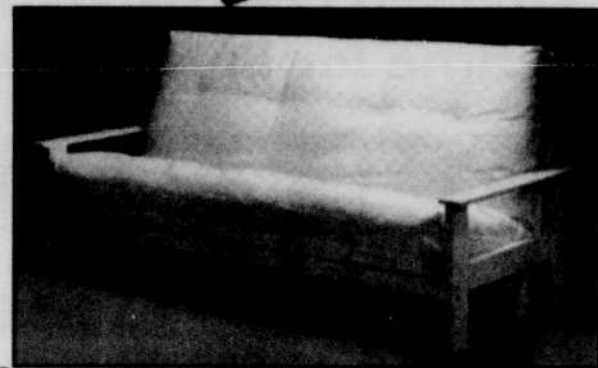
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