

Sweet words of isolation

An interview with poet, editor,
and M.F.A. alum Philip Memmer

By Raneë Ruble

The poems in Philip Memmer's first full-length collection, *Sweetheart, Baby, Darling*, (Word Press, August 2004) explore alternating moments of tenderness, strain, and isolation in relationships between men and women.

Memmer's poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Kestral*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The English Record*, and the anthology *180 More: Extraordinary Poems for Every Day*, edited by Billy Collins. He is also the author of two chapbooks: *For Resident* (FootHills Publishing) and *The Apartment* (Piccadilly Press).

Memmer is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Oregon's Creative Writing Program ('95). He lives with his wife and son in upstate New York, where he edits the literary journal *Two Rivers Review*. He is Director of the Arts Branch of the YMCA of Greater Syracuse and

founder of the Downtown Writer's Center, the Syracuse affiliate of the YMCA National Writer's Voice program.

Raneë Ruble: *Many of your poems remind me of Edward Hopper paintings for their descriptions of windows and light and the overarching sense of loneliness and isolation the poems evoke. There are numerous descriptions of the way sunlight filters through windows or the way the glow of streetlamps and storefronts illuminate a scene. The characters are often framed in windows, looking in or out into worlds they are shut off from. What is the fascination with windows and light in your work? What draws you to these images and why?*

Philip Memmer: Like many writers, I'm devoted to Hopper. For one thing, his paintings invite the viewer to invent narratives. But beyond that, I'm moved by his sense of light. In a painting like "Summer Evening," for example, you know as much about the characters from the way the light looks on the wall behind them as you do from their body language, facial expressions, or clothes.

In my own work, I don't think of light or windows in any particular metaphorical or symbolic way. Like most of the images in my poems, they are what they are. The light, for example, is never "Insight" or "Revelation;" it's sunlight moving across clothes scattered on a floor, or moonlight caught in the screen of a window behind a bed. Hopefully, though, there is enough pressure on the language that the images are pushed beyond themselves—that the way a window opens isn't just a detail, but something the reader will feel to be meaningful.



Phil Memmer

RR: *Another common theme I found in your work was the need for your characters to try to put miles between themselves and their grief, but they often find their grief still riding in the passenger seat. What are the connections between the miles of roads your characters travel and the destinations they're trying to reach?*

PM: My family moved every few years when I was growing up; Michelle and I have been married for 12 years, and in that time we've had seven homes in three states. As if that weren't enough, I've also had the unfortunate luck to have long commutes for most of the past 10 years. So movement has been a part of my life, and it creeps into the poems with regularity.

In a poem, the arrival of a character at a particular destination provides a dramatic moment: there's a potential for something to happen or for a realization

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News in Brief

First-year poet **Erika Mueller** was one of the winners of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs' 2005



Erika Mueller

Intro Journals Project Award. Her poem, "Sexlight," will be published in *Puerto de Sol*. The Intro Journals Project is a literary competi-

tion for the discovery and publication of new works by students currently enrolled in the programs of AWP.

Dorianne Laux will serve as the Acting Interim Director of the Creative Writing Program for the 2006 calendar year. Laux will stand in for current Director **Karen Ford**, who will be on sabbatical to work on her third book about race and form in American poetry, courtesy of a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies.

The Creative Writing Program welcomes two new office assistants, **Margaret Milligan** and **Peter Lytle**. Milligan is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska, and is in her freshman year at the University of Oregon. Lytle is a sophomore majoring in journalism and political science with a minor in business. He is from West Linn, Oregon.



Margaret Milligan



Peter Lytle

M.F.A. Graduate News

William Archila '02

William Archila's poems have recently appeared in the *Crab Orchard Review* and *Obsidian III*. His poem, "Bury This Pig," will be published in *Agni* in the fall. "Latest News," and "Immigration Blues, 1980," will be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Bilingual Review*.

Chi-Wai Au '99

Chi-Wai Au's chapbook, *Narcissus at the River and Other Poems*, was published in April 2005 by Aisarema, a nonprofit literary arts organization in Los Angeles. Currently, he lives and writes in Los Angeles and can be reached at au_chiwei@yahoo.com.

Tina (Eskes) Boscha '02

Tina Boscha was recently awarded a travel grant from the Center for the Study of Women in Society to support revision work on her novel-in-progress, *River in the Sea*, which she began while a student in the M.F.A. program.

Susan Rich '96

Susan Rich's second collection of poems, *Cures Include Travel*, is due out from White Pine Press (New York) in early 2006. Rich's recent poems have appeared, or are forthcoming in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Cimarron*, *North American Review*, *Talking River Review*, and *Poetry International*. She has been invited to read at Evergreen College and Central Washington University this spring. Rich is an editor at Floating Bridge Press and one of the five writers showcased on the Web site and promotional materials for the Hedgebrook Foundation, a retreat for women writers.

Brian Turner '96

M.F.A. graduate and Iraqi war veteran Brian Turner was named the winner of the 2005 Beatrice Hawley Award for his collection of poems, *Here, Bullet*, which will be published in November.

Ross West '84

After graduating, Ross West worked as a freelancer in Eugene, writing a little of everything—features articles, annual reports, video scripts, film reviews, and radio journalism—for various publications (*Orion Nature Quarterly*, *Clinton*

St. Quarterly, *ICON Thoughtstyle*, *Oregon Quarterly*, *The Journal of Recreational Linguistics*, *The Oregonian*) and clients. In 1995, he was hired as the science writer for the UO Office of Communications where he was editor of the university's research magazine *Inquiry*. He served as text editor for the *Atlas of Oregon* and had one of his pieces anthologized in *Best Essays Northwest*. He is currently managing editor of *Oregon Quarterly*.

Attention M.F.A. graduates: *Literary Reference* wants to hear from you. Tell us about new jobs you've taken, awards you've won, and stories, poems, or books that have been published or are forthcoming. Send updates to the editor at ruble@darkwing.uoregon.edu. ■

Literary Reference

Literary Reference, the newsletter of the Creative Writing Program, is published quarterly in conjunction with the University of Oregon Office of Publications.

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2005 Kidd Memorial Writing Competition Prizes Awarded

Kidd Tutorial Director, Robert Hill Long, and Head Kidd Tutor, Ashley Van Doorn, announced the winners of the 2005 Kidd Memorial Writing Competition in poetry and fiction on May 5, at the Gerald Stern poetry reading.

The Kidd Memorial Writing Competition, which is held each spring, honors talented poets and fiction writers who are enrolled as undergraduates at the University of Oregon. Certificates of achievement and cash prizes in the amounts of \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second place, and \$250 for third place were awarded to the winners listed below.

This year's judges were Susan Straight (fiction) and Gerald Stern (poetry). Past judges have included Frederick Busch, B. H. Fairchild, T.R.

Hummer, Rosellen Brown, Yusef Komunyakaa, Barry Lopez, Sharon Olds, Garrett Hongo, and Charles Baxter.

Fiction prize winners:

First Place: Daniel Flood, "King of Kings"

Second Place: Jeff Frawley, "They Fall from the Sky"

Third Place: Ryland J. Kayin Lee, "Lipstick" and Chris Gordon, "Blackbeard and Running Fish"



Kidd Prize winners: Daniel Flood, Jennifer Hill, Kayin Lee, Kelly McMinn, Amy Schimpf, Chris Gordon. Not pictured: Jeff Frawley

Poetry prize winners:

First Place: Kelley McMinn, "I Remember"

Second Place: Amy Mae Schimpf, "The Ballerina"

Third Place: Jennifer Hill, "Fighting in Northern Shaanxi" ■

Faculty News

Laurie Lynn Drummond's story collection, *Anything You Say Can and Will be Used Against You* was a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award and just won the Texas Institute of Letters Jesse Jones Award for Best Book of 2004. One of the stories from her collection, "Something About a Scar," won the 2005 Edgar Award for Best Short Story. A Finnish edition of her book (*Kaikkea Mita Sanot Voidaan Kayttaa Sinua Vastaan*) was published in April. Two of her essays, "Girl, Fighting" and "See For Yourself," have been nominated for a 2005 Pushcart Prize. She was recently awarded a Ucross Residency Fellowship and a residency fellowship to The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Laurie also presented two papers at the AWP Conference in Vancouver, B.C., in March. She gave readings at Louisiana State University and at Flint Hill School in Fairfax, Virginia. She's thrilled to be teaching the grad workshop this spring.

Karen Ford's new book on modernist lyric, *Split-Gut Song: Jean Toomer and the Poetics of Modernity*, was published

in May. She was recently awarded a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) to work on a third book on race and form in American poetry. The University of Oregon named Ford as a Williams Fellow, which recognizes outstanding teachers, and promoted her to full professor.

Ehud Havazelet recently gave a reading at the Downtown Writer's Center in Syracuse, New York. The center is an affiliate of the YMCA National Writer's Voice program, founded by M.F.A. graduate Philip Memmer, who said of Havazelet, "He's still brilliant." Havazelet continues work on his novel.

Cai Emmons's short story, "The Deed," was published in the spring 2005 issue of *Arts and Letters*. She gave readings at Wordstock at the Portland Convention Center in late April and the Tigard Library in June. She has just completed a new novel, *The Stylist*.

Garrett Hongo gave readings at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe,

the University of Wyoming, and the University of Georgia.

Dorianne Laux's poem, "The Germans," was published in the spring issue of *Ms. Magazine*. She also has poems forthcoming in *Calapooya*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Cairn*, *Sycamore Review*, and *The International Journal of Erotica*. Three of Laux's poems have been translated into Italian by Andrea Sirotti for publication in *Le Voci della Luna* this spring. Her poem, "Cello," was featured in *Dissident Voices: Collateral Damage, Poets Against the War* and was performed by the Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama school this winter. Earlier this year, Laux co-edited the 2004 Pushcart Prize with Jane Hirshfield. In April and May, she gave readings at the Looking Glass Bookstore in Portland, Multnomah Library in Portland, River Styx in St. Louis, Wordstock in Portland, and Tsunami Bookstore in Eugene. This summer, she will teach at Esalen in Big Sur, the Mendocino Writers' Conference, and the Truro Center for the Arts in Cape Cod. ■

Besley Selected for Miriam Starlin Award

Emily Besley is the recipient of this year's Miriam McFall Starlin Poetry Award. The award is designed to honor a promising female graduate student of poetry in the University of Oregon's Creative Writing Program. Associate



Emily Besley

Professor Dorianne Laux announced Besley as the winner at the Gerald Stern poetry reading on May 5. The Starlin Award was established in 1997 by the late Glenn Starlin, professor emeritus in theater and

telecommunications, as a surprise gift to his wife Miriam on her 80th birthday.

"[Miriam] has been concerned through the years that women poets didn't get enough recognition," said Glenn Starlin in 1997. "We were interested in helping someone who might be struggling a bit." Miriam Starlin, a poet

herself, has had a life-long dedication to writing poetry.

Each year she attends a luncheon with the winning poet and is presented with a bound manuscript of her work in progress.

"When Dorianne told me about this award, I simply couldn't believe it," said Besley. "We spend so much time in workshop hearing how bad our poems are, how much improvement they need, that to be honored for them is not only surprising but really flattering. I'm still in shock."

Besley is a native of Virginia and holds a B.A. in mathematics from Kalamazoo College in Michigan. She will graduate this spring with an M.F.A. from the UO's Creative Writing Program.

"We are gratified by the success and achievements of our Starlin Award winners and are proud to add Emily Besley to this growing list," said Associate Professor Laux.

Past Starlin Award winners include: Kate Lyn Hibbard, Sonya Posmentier, Jude Nutter, Alison Dubinsky, Lora Vahlsing, Becca Barniskis, Kate Westhaver, Laura Passin, and Sarah Seybold. The following are updates from past Starlin Award winners:

Kate Lyn Hibbard's ('96) first book will be published by Oregon's own Silverfish Review Press. She is the recipi-

"We are gratified by the success and achievements of our Starlin Award winners and are proud to add Emily Besley to this growing list."

--Dorianne Laux

ent of a Jerome Foundation Travel and Study Grant for Minnesota writers. Kate is an instructor of writing and literature at Minneapolis College. Her work has been published in *New Letters*, *Seattle Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *Crab Orchard Review*. She has also been awarded a McKnight Artist Fellowship in Writing

CROSSING AT CHINCOTEAGUE

My mother talked my father into buying that Airstream trailer we parked on Chincoteague Island the summer it rained steel and salt for days. We had to squint that morning to see the ponies crossing the channel through the downpour, thick gray necks straining above water, nostrils flaring, beating open for breath. My sister and I wore bright yellow rain jackets, sat hoisted up on our parents' shoulders in the crowd, fingers pointing at that line of froth and kicking legs as it moved slowly closer to shore. Somewhere there's an old photograph of all of us next to the silver camper: Mom, Dad, Penny and me – the two of us in pigtails, soaking wet. Taken just before my mother huddled us all in the green kitchenette for warmth, my father pacing back and forth between twin beds, his head bent, trapped. We look like we're standing on the edge of a high cliff, the sky so silver the Airstream nearly disappears behind us, as if one misstep could send us plummeting to Earth, grasping out

for anything to hold onto – rocks, plants, the veined roots of trees. When I went home this Christmas, the Airstream had grown into the grass in my parents' backyard, its rounded nose and plastic windows scratched now and cracked. My father hated camping, was too tired to face another childhood, though we never would have known it then, the way he helped my mother set the trailer hitch, fixed nightlights above our beds so we could sleep. He and I have the same forehead – in ten years, the same lines at the corners of the mouth, the bridge of the nose. You can almost see him aging there in that photograph, his hands resting on my mother's shoulders, as if she is all that steadies him against the pull of time, the years that lay ahead. I wonder tonight how many of those wild ponies never make it, are taken under by the other desperate bodies, the advancing row of wake. How did my father ever survive? What force kept those two sleeping girls at his feet from destroying him?

--Emily Besley

and a Provincetown Arts travel grant to study with Catherine Bowman.

Sonya B. Posmentier ('97) lives in New York City, where she is an English teacher and Director of Multicultural Affairs at Trinity School. She is the recipient of a 2003 Brio Award from the Bronx Council on the Arts, and her poems have appeared in *Hanging Loose*, *Phoebe*, *Seneca Review*, and *Lyric*.

Jude Nutter's ('98) poems have been widely published and received several awards and honors, including the Marlboro Review Prize for Poetry, the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Prize, and the Marjorie J. Wilson Award. Her first full-length collection, *Pictures of the Afterlife*, was published by Salmon Poetry, Ireland, in 2002. *The Curator of Silence*, her second collection, is forthcoming from the University of Notre Dame Press. In 2004-05 she spent time in Antarctica as a participant in the National Science Foundation's Writers and Artists Program. She teaches at The Loft in Minnesota.

Alison Dubinsky ('99) works as a freelance editor, writer, and proofreader in Portland, Oregon. Her poems have been published in *Inkwell*, *Hubbub*, *eye-rhyme*, and *Tin House*.

Lora Vahlsing ('00) lives in Eugene, where she works at Holt International Children's Services in the Post-Adoption Services Department. After graduating, she taught English at a language institute in Korea. Afterwards, she returned to her home state of Wisconsin and then moved back to Eugene. She stills writes poetry and has recently begun work on a memoir.

Becca Barniskis ('01) lives in Minnesota where she is Fine Arts Coordinator for Sheridan School in Minneapolis. Her poems have been published in *Verse Daily*, *The Northwest Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *The Red Rock Review*, and *Poetry Northwest*.

Kate Westhaver ('02) was a winner of the Pen Center West Boyden Residency, Rogue Woods, Oregon.

Laura Passin ('03) works as a freelance editor for Jones and Bartlett publishers and teaches part-time for Kaplan Test Prep. She lives in Seattle, Washington.

Sarah Seybold ('04) is a teacher of English Composition at Clark College and Chemeketa College. ■

Meet the Incoming First Years

Cindy Berger is from a small town in southwest Missouri called Monett (please, no French pronunciation) but has lived the past six years in Fayetteville, Arkansas, where she received her B.A. in Spanish and in English with an emphasis in creative writing. She writes poetry, travels when she can, works as a Spanish translator, and in a coffee shop, reads dark, Southern literature, and is getting married later this month. Berger will never admit that she hates Emily Dickinson, occasionally watches "Lost," and has never set foot in the Pacific Northwest.

J.T. Bushnell: I'm a fiction writer from Sisters, Oregon, the town with false-fronted buildings you find so dreadfully charming every time you pass through—so charming in fact that you've stopped once or twice to run your tongue over a tennis ball-sized lump of ice cream. You do this outside, on the sidewalk, taking in the sunshine and the charm, wandering, gazing, and finally pointing out to your companions that *ridiculously* large chair across the street, demanding they take a photo of you perched on its platform. You cross the street and wait for your turn among the other cone lickers, whose sunglasses have those neat contingency cords drooping down the backs of their necks, just like yours. For the photo you pose like you're making a toast with your cone. Afterwards, you don't bother to find a crosswalk because you're too busy recounting the photography adventure, and just as you press your tongue once more against your bulge of molten, tepid ice cream, the blare of a car horn sends you skittering backwards. You clutch your chest, glance up. A white Ford Tempo idles in the street, stationary, waiting impatiently for you to pass. Peering past the glare of the windshield, you can just make out the form of the driver. It's a young man. He's holding up his middle finger at you. That driver is me.

Roby Connor: I'll be entering the Creative Writing Program after an eleven-year hiatus from academia. I've spent the past seven years working for Internet Service Providers in various capacities. I've lived in small Texas towns for most

of my life with the occasional sojourn to Japan thrown in to mix things up. I'm a fiction writer, and I'm looking forward to concentrating my efforts on writing in an encouraging critical environment.

Tim Dalton: When not being mocked for his pretentious pen name, T.K. Dalton pesters deaf people in ASL, searches for inexpensive tofu, and plays Ultimate Frisbee on the National Mall. Born in Vermont and raised in Massachusetts, he has worked three years of odd jobs between leaving the Pioneer Valley and arriving in the Willamette. Commercial kitchens notwithstanding, he has earned actual American money following E.O. Wilson around the woods with a shotgun (microphone) and also by posing naked for strangers with sketchpads. As one art instructor noted, Tim also bikes a lot. He is psyched to be joining the fiction program.

Elyse Fenton: Over the past two years, Elyse has taught Literature in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, built trails in Oregon, and chased the chickens out of the radishes on an organic vegetable farm in Austin, Texas, where she currently resides. When not playing rugby, grubbing in the dirt, or daydreaming of fermented mare's milk, she writes poetry. She is neither accustomed to the Texas heat or to Texas-sized scorpions, and, when all is said and done, looks forward to the Oregon rain.

Kelsie Gray is a poet type person from Yukon, Oklahoma, where the claims to fame are a grain silo and Garth Brooks. Belligerently refusing to stay aboard "that godforsaken clod of dirt" any longer, she packed up her possessions and moved to the Indiana cornfields where she attended DePauw University, garnering a degree in trumpet performance. The Midwest has been nice, but less than scintillating as of late. Kelsie finds herself fantasizing about a wet, mossy place loaded with fat trout. She takes great pleasure in making lists of the things she likes most: animal welfare, bagels, Blue Moon Ale, Dylan, brown farm eggs, champagne, chandeliers, Cheez-its, Chet Baker, Cool Whip,

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2005 Fall Course Offerings

CRWR 241 Introduction to Imaginative Writing: Fiction

This four-credit course is for students interested in the techniques of writing fiction and in the development of a critical appreciation of the art of writing. *J. Bushnell, C. Emmons, C. Morris-Peabody*

CRWR 243 Introduction to Imaginative Writing: Poetry

This four-credit course is for students interested in the techniques of writing poetry and in the development of a critical appreciation of the art of writing. *K. Gray, R. Mehl, C. Roethle*

CRWR 244 Introduction to Imaginative Writing: Literary Nonfiction

This four-credit course is for students interested in the techniques of writing literary nonfiction and in the development of a critical appreciation of the art of writing. *R.H. Long*

CRWR 324 Intermediate Creative Writing: Short Story

Examination of the basic techniques and structure of the short story. Extensive analysis of student work and established models. Prereq: CRWR 241 or instructor's consent. *E. Havazelet, R.H. Long*

CRWR 341 Intermediate Poetry

Examination of the basic techniques and structure of poetry. Extensive analysis of student work and established models. Prereq: CRWR 244 or instructor's consent. *D. Laux*

CRWR 401 Research

Instructor's consent required.

CRWR 403 Thesis

Instructor's consent required.

CRWR 405 Writing and Conference

Instructor's consent required.

CRWR 411 Kidd Tutorial

The Kidd Tutorial Program represents an extraordinary year-long experience for selected undergraduate students interested in writing. *C. Berger, R. Connor, T. Dalton, E. Fenton, V. Norton, E. Rotterman*

First Year Reading



The first-year poets and fiction writers gave readings of their work on Friday, May 20, at the Francis M. Wilkins Shelter in Hendricks Park. Nearly 50 people were in attendance, including M.F.A. students, faculty, and the general public. Pictured at left are Jay Nebel and Amber Seifert.

CRWR 420 Craft of Poetry

Advanced instruction and practice in writing poetry. *G. Hongo*

CRWR 421 Craft of Fiction

Advanced instruction and practice in writing fiction. *E. Havazelet*

CRWR 503 Thesis

Instructor's consent required.

CRWR 601 Research

Instructor's consent required.

CRWR 605 Writing and Conference

Instructor's consent required.

CRWR 607 Seminar: Poetry

Selected seminars offered each year.

Instructor's consent required. *D. Laux*

CRWR 607 Seminar: Fiction

Selected seminars offered each year. Instructor's consent required. *D. Bradley*

CRWR 630 Graduate Creative Writing: Poetry

Concentration on student writing of poetry in a workshop setting. Instructor's consent required; graded. *G. Hongo*

CRWR 640 Graduate Creative Writing Fiction

Concentration on student writing of fiction in a workshop setting. Instructor's consent required. *L. Drummond* ■

Martone Named New Head Kidd Tutor for 2005-06

Paul Martone has been selected as the Head Kidd Tutor for 2005-06. The Head Kidd Tutor is responsible for advising Kidd Tutors, providing administrative support for the Kidd Tutorial Program, and acting as a liaison between the Director, the Kidd Tutors, and the CRWR administration and faculty.

"Paul brings a tremendous range of teaching experience to this role," said Robert Hill Long, Director of the Kidd Tutorials. "He exudes clarity and confidence and good cheer, and those qualities are likely to be not only cherished but imitated by the incoming Kidd tutors. In addition, Paul is equally comfortable discussing fiction and poetry.



Paul Martone

I'm glad to have an assistant whose versatility in genre and critical discussion I can count on."

Martone holds a B.A. in English from the State University of New York at Albany and a M.A. in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has taught courses in creative writing and English composition at the University of Oregon, Lane Community College, Linn Benton Community College, ITT Technical Institute, and Upward Bound at Pacific University. Martone is completing his second year of the University of Oregon's M.F.A. program in creative writing.

Martone will replace current Head Kidd Tutor Ashley Van Doorn, who will graduate this spring. ■

2005 Creative Writing Program Commencement Schedule

Friday, June 10: Second year M.F.A. candidate reading (part one) at Tsunami Books at 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 11: University Commencement Ceremony at McArthur Court at 12:30 p.m. More info available at <http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/commencement/index.htm>.

Saturday, June 11: Second year M.F.A. candidate reading (part two) at Tsunami Books at 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 12: Creative Writing Program department commencement ceremony at Gerlinger Alumni Lounge at 3:00 p.m. ■

First Years

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cowboys, flip-flops, giant catfish, hedgehogs, heirloom tomatoes, icebox pies, late night radio, magnolias, new pencils, paper lanterns, peacock feathers, polka dots, roadside peaches, spiral notebooks, Tupelo Honey, words with "oo" in them, and yogurt.

Paul Hood recently quit his job at a D.C. law firm. He'll be canoeing this summer in Missouri and looks forward to meeting a bunch of creative writers in September.

Caroline Morris-Peabody: I am a recovering lawyer and what is fondly referred to as a Beltway brat; I grew up in our nation's capitol. I've since lived in Maine, Arkansas, rural Massachusetts, and, most recently, New York. With the exception of Antarctica, I've been to all the continents, but have never set foot in the state of Oregon. I am currently on walkabout in South America. I like dogs the size of horses, horses, Democrats,

SCUBA diving, and ping pong. Oh, and I write fiction.

Jessica Murakami grew up in Aiea, Hawaii, before moving to the mainland to attend the University of Pennsylvania. She majored in psychology and philosophy and spent a year abroad in St. Andrews, Scotland, "the home of golf." After graduating, Jessica worked in Boston at a depression research center, where she discovered a talent for phlebotomy, and as a live-in counselor in a psychiatric halfway house. Currently, she is a first year Ph.D. student in the department of psychology at UO and will be pursuing a dual degree in creative writing. She finds that poetry keeps her sane.

Vanessa Norton: I'll be in the fiction program. I fled Buffalo, New York, after spending my first eighteen years there, for a series of trips, relationships, and mostly uninteresting jobs that took me all over the U.S. and Europe. When I was 27, I graduated from Bard College with a degree in Anthropology and Gender Studies. I'd been active in labor/glo-

balization/human rights issues and traveled to Iraq and Sri Lanka to work and write articles. After a year in NYC, I moved to Madrid to teach English and write. It's true: Spain rocks.

Chris Roethle is an incoming poetry student and graduate of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he majored in Creative Writing and Geography. A former resident of Southeastern Wisconsin currently living in East Tennessee, he is excited about the opportunity to experience yet another part of the country. He loves poetry, comic books, and has always wanted to visit Vancouver.

Eliza Rotterman: I've spent the last six years in Columbus, Ohio, studying, working, riding my bike around town. My favorite place is on top of the train trellis near my apartment. I love to garden and cook what I grow. I have a four-year-old Australian shepherd, Pola Bear. My favorite magazine is the *Believer* and I'd like to read Rachel Contreni Flynn's forthcoming book *Ice, Mouth, Song*. I'm gettin' hitched on June 25th and moving to Oregon at the end of July. ■

Philip Memmer

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to occur. It doesn't matter how long the journey is. Sometimes, as in "Noise," walking to the mailbox can be a substantial event. Whatever the destination is, something always changes upon arrival; and if nothing seems to change, then that unfulfilled expectation is itself the drama.

RR: *What subjects are you most drawn to in your work? How did the ideas for "The Triphibian Atomicar" or "Haunted Mini-Golf" come about?*

PM: My two most constant subjects have been isolation and relationships between men and women; and of course, the two often go together. But I rarely start out with those subjects in mind... I just usually wind up there, somehow.

"The Triphibian Atomicar" came from a trip to a used bookstore, where there was a tremendous pile of old Tom

PM: I don't have a set routine. And I don't write every day—though I do *read* every day, nearly without fail. At the risk of sounding mysterious, I've simply come to understand that my poems happen when they happen, and there's not much I can do to rush or force my creative process. Something—an image, or a possible title, or a hint of metaphor—gets stuck in my imagination. I play with it there in my head for anywhere from ten minutes to ten months, until (hopefully) I start to hear the music of a poem—then I can start actually writing. Once I'm actually writing the poem, I'm primarily concerned with the music of language; when I revise, I go back to see what, if anything, I've actually said. I attend to narrative and metaphor more carefully at that stage.

RR: *When did you first begin writing poetry? What was the impetus?*

PM: Growing up, I always wanted to be a writer, but I always assumed I'd write novels since novels were what I read. I

favorite poet. I also loved Chinese poetry—Tu Fu and Li Po especially, both of whom I first encountered in a terrific book of translations by J.P. Seaton. And Philip Levine—I love his idea of the "invisible word," that the language in a poem should of course be powerful, but should also not call undue attention to itself. More recently, I find that I read a lot of James Wright and Stephen Dunn. But those are all literary influences, and there are many other kinds. I'm sure that the amount of moving around I've done in my life is a huge influence on my work; I have a general feeling of never quite being "at home" which shows up in the poems frequently. And I have a one-year-old son, Henry Owen, who has quickly established himself as a tremendous influence.

RR: *You applied to the University of Oregon's Creative Writing Program as you were completing your B.A. in Radio, TV, and Motion Pictures at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Tell me about your decision to pursue an M.F.A. in poetry. How did the desire arise? Why did you choose the UO?*

"What I had to learn after leaving Oregon, though, was even more important: independence. A workshop is a wonderful thing, but it's also a crutch; the truth is that you could stop writing tomorrow, and nobody would much care."

--Philip Memmer

Swift and Hardy Boys books, many of which I'd read as a kid. The poem started by playing with the language associated with those types of books—the terrific titles, standard plots, etc.

"Haunted Mini-Golf" is the name of a local tourist attraction: a miniature golf course that usually has a pirate's cove theme, but converts to spooky décor every Halloween. I've only seen the place from the road, and I've never stopped to play a round, but I liked the idea of trying to do something with the combination of miniature golf and horror, which seemed to be both incongruous and quintessentially American.

RR: *Can you describe your process of writing and your approach to revision?*

didn't find my way into poetry until I was in college. I was playing in bands and writing song lyrics—poor ones—and took an introductory poetry class thinking it would be helpful. The class was taught by a terrific grad student; in the first few weeks, we read Wallace Stevens, Lucille Clifton, and Stanley Kunitz. I was hooked for good.

RR: *Who or what were your early influences? What are your influences now? How have your influences changed over the years?*

PM: When I first began writing poems, I was very interested in forms, both traditional and self-invented. I was especially taken with Robert Frost; he's still my

PM: I knew I wanted to learn more about writing poems; I had taken tons of creative writing and English courses at UNC, and by the time I graduated, understood that my heart was much more in poetry than film. I chose the University of Oregon for completely inartistic reasons: Michelle, my fiancée then, had grown up in the south, and I had grown up in the northeast and Midwest. We both wanted a change of pace. So I applied only to schools out west, where neither of us had spent much time. UO offered me a Teaching Fellowship, so two weeks after our wedding, Michelle and I packed up her Hyundai with our clothes, our puppy, and the wedding presents, and drove from North Carolina to Eugene. Complete madness!

RR: *Describe your experience with UO's Creative Writing Program. Who was teaching then? How was the program structured? How did the experience shape you as a poet?*

PM: Garrett Hongo, Dorianne Laux, Terry Hummer, and Connie Hales were the four poets I worked with at UO. It was an exciting, demanding program. There were 11 or 12 poets in the work-

shop each year. We'd have a highly intellectual workshop with Terry, an almost physical workshop with Garrett, and a serious but somehow more relaxed workshop with Connie or Dorianne.

Overall, the combination was tremendous. Dorianne joined the faculty at the start of my second year in the program, and she became my thesis advisor; given the poems I was trying to write, I was very fortunate to work with her.

I think the most valuable thing I took away from my time in the program was a strong sense of narrative, and how narrative can be used effectively even within a lyric poem. That balance is still something I work on quite a bit.

What I had to learn after leaving Oregon, though, was even more important: independence. A workshop is a wonderful thing, but it's also a crutch; the truth is that you could stop writing tomorrow, and nobody would much care. After graduating, I went almost a year and a half without writing a new poem (though I read quite a bit, and also did a little revising). I needed to figure out how to be a poet without the benefit of a roomful of people waiting for my next draft. Finally, I sat myself down on the couch with a pen and a pad and gave myself some instructions for a nonce form; the resulting poem was "Three Poems for Point Breeze," which is included in the book. I've been at it more or less steadily ever since.

RR: *Tell me about your work as the director of the Arts Branch of the YMCA of Greater Syracuse.*

PM: The Arts Branch is a large, county-wide arts program serving around 3,000 people each year. I oversee a staff of about 60 part-time artists and teachers at eight program locations. We do everything from music lessons to visual arts courses to inner city after-school programs to summer camps. It's wonderfully rewarding work.

My favorite part of the program is the Downtown Writer's Center, which is the Syracuse affiliate of the YMCA Na-

tional Writer's Voice. I founded the DWC in 2001; we now offer about 50 creative writing workshops each year and host readings by 15-20 visiting authors. Recent guests have included Brigit Pegeen Kelly, Cornelius Eady, W.D. Snodgrass, and UO's own Ehud Havazelet.

RR: *In addition to your work with the YMCA of Greater Syracuse, you've served as the editor of Two Rivers Review for eight years. How has your work as an editor impacted your own creative work?*

PM: It's remarkable to see the variety of writing out there, both in terms of style and quality; that in itself is an education that you can't get any other way. I think editing also helps you to clarify what it is that you want from writing—not just from other people's poems, but from your own.

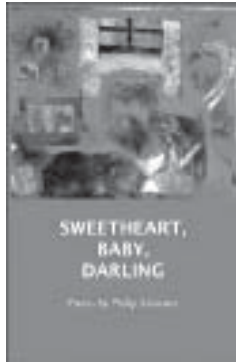
But the real reward of editing is the personal connections you make. Some of my best friends are people I probably never would have met had they not decided one day to send some poems to *Two Rivers Review*.

RR: *What advice would you give to poets who are just starting out?*

PM: The great cliché answer is "read everything." It's still the best answer, as far as I can tell. It's nothing at all to me to go a few weeks without writing; but if I go two days without reading, I start to get antsy.

RR: *What's next for you?*

PM: More poems, I hope! I do have a second book manuscript that is nearly complete; I'm hoping to finish it by the end of the year. ■



SWEETHEART, BABY, DARLING

I'm behind the county road-kill truck
again, nowhere to look for miles

but straight in its full bed.
Where does it go? What field or pit or fire

do we tend for the deer
and raccoons, the smashed-beyond-telling?

The closest, a doe, rests her chin
on the very edge of the bed—

no, she's dead, she's not resting,
though back at the house my oldest dog

could be sleeping this way, her neck
at a slightly more natural angle, and my wife

could be there beside her, cooing
sweetheart, baby, darling, this bed

*is broken, there's too much gravity
for just one dog.* With each bump,

the deer seems to startle, then ease.
Gravity—we want the earth, and the earth

wants us, even the good ground
of the mattress, the loud ground

of the truck bed. The men in the cab
are talking, lifting coffee

in styrofoam cups. Every day
they do this. As the passenger gestures,

I pretend he's telling the story
of his hatred for the county's tools—

the pitchfork and shovel, the gloves
and the weighty boots—how he spites them,

lifts each of the shattered in his arms,
then goes on living. I pretend

he knows how to do that, he's known
for years. All I need to do

is follow close, hold my breath, and overhear.

--Philip Memmer

2005 Summer Course Offerings

CRWR 199 Special Studies: Character and Point of View

Whose “story” is it, which character should tell the “story,” what does your character yearn for, how do you create “real” characters the reader can care about, and more. *One credit, June 20 – 24, MUWH, 6:00 – 8:20 p.m., M. Sleiter*

CRWR 199 Special Studies: Plot, Narrative Drive, and Structure

Plot, narrative drive, and structure are separate, yet interdependent, elements in fiction, and they present many options—and potholes—for the writer. *One credit, July 5 – 8, UWH, 6:00 – 9:20 p.m., M. Sleiter*

CRWR 199 Special Studies: Time, Scenes and Flashbacks

Scene, summary, flashbacks, backstory, and transitions are some of the elements that will be covered in this module. *One credit, July 18 – 22, MUWH, 6:00 – 8:20 p.m., M. Sleiter*

CRWR 199 Special Studies: Style, Detail, and Dialogue

Style – the words you choose, the sentences you craft. Detail – much more than showing versus telling. Dialogue – it is character. *One credit, August 1 – 5, MUWH, 6:00 – 8:20 p.m., M. Sleiter*

CRWR 199 Special Studies: Fiction Workshop

We’ll start with the seeds of stories: an image, a character, a snatch of dialogue. Through writing exercises and constructive class feedback, we’ll help students grow these seeds into longer expressions and ultimately, stories. Students will produce two stories for the workshop, along with a number of short exercises. The workshop is open to writers at all levels. *Four credits, June 20 – August 12, UH, 6:00 – 8:20 p.m., R. Ruble*

CRWR 199 Special Studies: Poetry Workshop

Open to beginning and experienced writers interested in generating and revising up to four new pieces. Student poems will prompt conversation about form, style, structure, and other technical and not-so-technical aspects of the art. We will learn to recognize a poem’s intention and to revise accordingly. Classic and contemporary models will be introduced only as they illustrate composition strategies that emerge from student work. *Four credits, June 20 – July 15, MUWH, 3:00 – 5:20 p.m., J. Pierce*

CRWR 199 Special Studies: Science Fiction/Fantasy

Through writing exercises, constructive class feedback, and reading and discussion of the genre, the course will give students a firm grounding in the basics of science fiction and fantasy writing. *Four credits, July 17 – August 12, MUWH, 3:00-5:20 p.m., M. Brodie*



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