

Spring 2017



"What is imagination
But your lost child born to give birth to you?"

— ROBERT PINSKY

Tuesday, February 21
7:30 pm, Neilson Browsing Room

LAURA KASISCHKE



LAURA KASISCHKE writes trenchant, provocative light/dark poems, bending matter at will and transforming the commonplace into the luminous real. "The writing of poetry is its own reward," she says in an interview, "because poetry's so ancient and sacred and strange." These qualities are manifested throughout her work. The intricate universe of each poem allows Kasischke to embody the confessional in hundreds of different atmospheres and voices, which may be why *Boston Review* writer Stephen Burt described her as "the poet of high school cliques remembered and terminal wards observed"—her range truly spans from birth to death.

Kasischke is the author of ten collections of poems, most recently *The Infinitesimals* and *Space, in Chains*. A literary multi-talent, she has also written ten novels and a collection of short stories. The film adaptation of her novel *The Life Before Her Eyes*, starring Uma Thurman and Evan Rachel Wood, was praised by *Vanity Fair's* Graham Fuller as "a beautifully etched, haunting meditation on the choices young women make." Among her many honors are the National Book Critics Circle Award and a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation. Kasischke lives in Michigan and teaches at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Tuesday, March 7
7:30 pm, Neilson Browsing Room

TARFIA FAIZULLAH & JAMAAL MAY

In the words of Khaled Mattawa, a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, **TARFIA FAIZULLAH** "twines a seam where wounds are re-membered, fingers quivering, spooling and unspooling what we know of healing." On a Fulbright fellowship to Bangladesh, she interviewed some of the *birangona*—victims, during the 1971 Liberation War, of the most wide-scale atrocities committed against women in world history. *Seam*, winner of the Crab Orchard's First Book Award, mingles poems about the *birangona* with those that describe the speaker's journey, creating what poet Aimee Nezhukumatathil calls "a stunning double-portrait of the artist as the visitor and as the visited."



Faizullah's other honors include the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Prize, the VIDA award in poetry, and the Ploughshares Cohen Award. She has also been the recipient of fellowships from Kundiman and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. Along with co-directing the Organic Weapon Arts chapbook press and video series with Jamaal May, Faizullah is the Nicholas Delbanco Visiting Professor of Poetry in the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan. Her next book, *Register of Eliminated Villages*, will be published by Graywolf Press in 2017.



Winner of the Alice James Award, **JAMAAL MAY's** wildly successful *Hum* catalogues the anxiety and wizardry of machines. U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey calls this percussive and playful debut "a meditation on the machinery of living," and the *L.A. Times* praises it as "skillful and nuanced in its surprising approach to the nature (and nurture) of identity." May was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, the setting and centerpiece of his mechanical whirr and buzz. *Hum* also garnered a 2014 Notable Book Award from the American Library Association and a spot on *The Boston Globe's* list of best books in 2013. In his recently-released second collection, *The Big Book of Exit Strategies*, he revisits the stark beauty and pain of Detroit, and sets his gaze further afield to explore other moral and political challenges. *Publishers Weekly* marveled at the way "each line seems to turn the next, like a skeleton key opening an endless hallway of doors."

May has been a fellow at Cave Canem and the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Italy, and serves as contributing editor of *The Kenyon Review*, and co-founder, with Tarfia Faizullah, of the Organic Weapon Arts chapbook press and video series.

Tuesday, March 21
7:30 pm, Neilson Browsing Room

RENATO ROSALDO

Poet and anthropologist **RENATO ROSALDO** is the author of *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* and *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883–1974*, as well as two award-winning collections of poems. His most recent, *The Day of Shelly's Death*, recounts the tragic death of his wife in a Philippine village on the eve of their beginning field work with the Ilongot people. He has described the book—which employs poetry, prose, multiple speakers, sketches, and maps—as *antropoesía*, verse with an ethnographic sensibility. In Yusef Komunyakaa's words, it "becomes an inventive, lived trope for our time—not afraid of the human dimension."



Presented by the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, with support from the Poetry Center, the Department of Anthropology and the Smith College Lecture Committee

Tuesday, April 4
7:30 pm, Neilson Browsing Room

MEG DAY & the High School Prize Winners



MEG DAY is a stunning biographer of the body's co-existing selves, and, in the words of D.A. Powell, "a poet whose fearless heart is tethered to the world." An allegiance to betweenity and borderland spaces is a constant in Day's poems; in "When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail", Day builds a fervent argument against the assertion that "betweenity/merely broadcasts unfinished business." A scholar of Disability Poetics (and author of a number of ASL poems), Day's work in this area raises vital questions about access, interpretation, and reproduction of poems across different modes of composition, and aims to bring the work of Deaf poets to a wider audience.

A 2013 recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship and winner of the Barrow Street Poetry Prize for the full-length collection *Last Psalm at Sea Level* (selected by Afaa Michael Weaver), Day's work also includes two chapbooks as well as selections anthologized in *We Will Be Shelter: Poems for Survival* and *Troubling the Line: Trans & Genderqueer Poetry & Poetics*.

Supported by the Office of Disability Services

Thursday, April 13
5:00 pm, Poetry Center

ROSA ALICE BRANCO & Translator Alexis Levitin

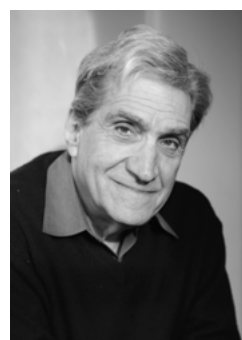
Portuguese poet, essayist and professor of Philosophy **ROSA ALICE BRANCO** has been translated and published widely throughout Europe and beyond. The poet Kevin Prufer called *Cattle of the Lord*, her latest in English, "a wild and sneaky book, filled with intelligence, wit, and theological anxiety," and her translator, Alexis Levitin, notes that "[Branco's] very syntax invites a multifaceted contemplation of the human condition. . . . We squirm and we learn." Prolific and exacting, Levitin translates works from Portugal, Brazil and Ecuador, including Clarice Lispector and Sophia de Mello Breyer Andresen. He is one of a rare breed: a non-poet whose translations are sheer poetry.

Presented by the Program in Comparative Literature, with support from the Poetry Center, the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, the Lewis Global Studies Center, The Five-College Faculty Seminar in Literary Translation, and the Smith College Lecture Committee

Tuesday, April 25
7:30 pm, Weinstein Auditorium, Wright Hall

ROBERT PINSKY

ROBERT PINSKY is the author of eight books of poems, translator of Dante's *Inferno*, and the only member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters to have appeared on "The Simpsons" and "The Colbert Report." For years a regular contributor to PBS's *The News Hour*, his honors include the PEN/Voelcker Award, the William Carlos Williams Prize, the Lenore Marshall Prize, Italy's Premio Capri, the Korean Manhae Prize and the Harold Washington Award from the City of Chicago. He teaches in the graduate writing program at Boston University. In Louise Glück's words, "Pinsky has what I think Shakespeare must have had: dexterity combined with worldliness, the magician's dazzling quickness fused with subtle intelligence, a taste for tasks and assignments to which he devises ingenious solutions."



Elected Poet Laureate of the United States in 1997, Pinsky's tenure was marked by ambitious efforts to prove the power of poetry—not just as an intellectual pursuit in the ivory tower, but as a meaningful and integral part of American life. To this end, he initiated The Favorite Poem Project. "I think poetry is a vital part of our intelligence, our ability to learn, our ability to remember, the relationship between our bodies and minds," he told the *Christian Science Monitor*. (See more on The Favorite Poem Project on reverse, in 'From the Director')

Supported by the Department of English Language & Literature, the American Studies Program, and the Smith College Lecture Committee



All events free and open to the public For more information: 413-585-4891
Bookselling & signing follow the readings www.smith.edu/poetrycenter
To receive e-mail reminders of events, send your e-mail address to: poetrycenter@smith.edu

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