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## SMC's Reading Series-30 Years and Going Strong

By Andrea A. Firth



Author Lysley Tenorio Photo provided

"It's a really glamorous reading series," says Brenda Hillman, Director of the MFA Program at Saint Mary's College in Moraga. For the past 30 years, Saint Mary's has hosted a creative writing reading series that invites poets and authors to share their work with the students and public. "It's a great opportunity for the members of the community to hear some really well-known writers in an informal setting," says Hillman. "We always have writers from all the three genres-poetry, fiction and nonfiction-that represent a great artistic diversity."

The 2012 series kicks off on Wednesday, September 12 with readings by two distinguished and internationally known poets: Robert Hass and Tom Meschery. Both Hass and Meschery are SMC alumnae and the evening is billed as a sesquicentennial event, part of the college's celebration of its 150th anniversary.

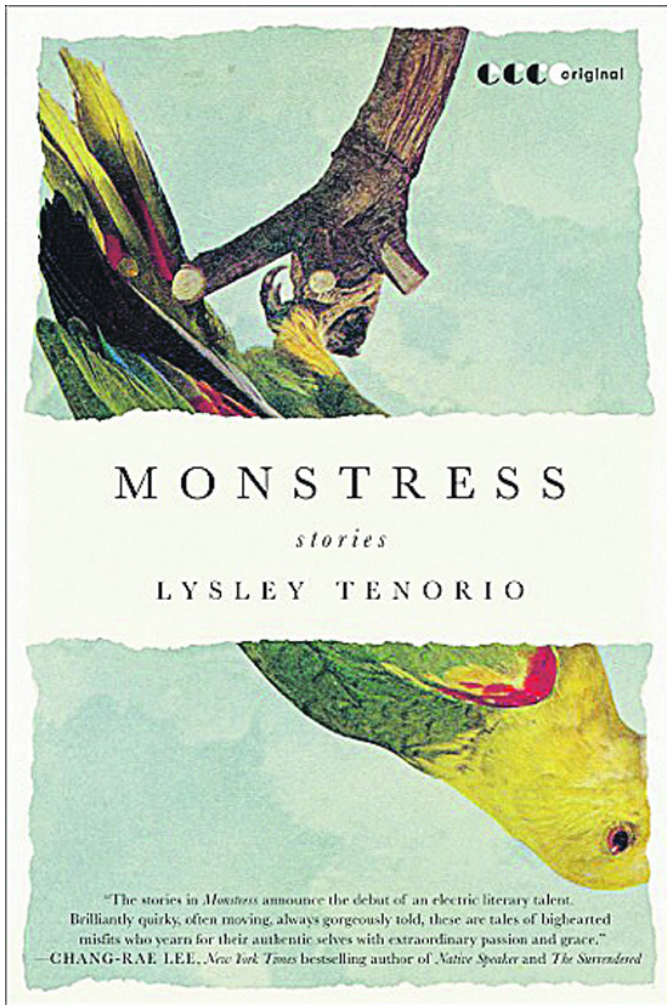
In October, award-winning fiction writer Lysley Tenorio will be reading. Tenorio is an Associate Professor at SMC, and his debut collection of short stories, *Monstress*, was published last spring and has been described as "brilliantly quirky, often moving, [and] always gorgeously told." In *Monstress*, Tenorio, a Filipino-American, explores the disparate cultures that comprise his background, but he says his stories are not biographical. "Like most writers, my

work is emotionally autobiographical," says Tenorio. "In other words, the emotional and psychological concerns of my characters are concerns that I've had in my own life, though my personal circumstances aren't nearly as interesting as those of my characters."

Tenorio's story collection is required reading for all incoming freshmen at SMC and for readers looking for a new, refreshingly unique Bay Area author. *Monstress*, the title story in the collection, is based on a really cheesy American sci-fi flick and an awful Filipino caveman horror film that were spliced together to produce what one critic described as the worst movie of all-time says Tenorio. An admitted sci-fi/fantasy movie and television junkie (his favorite TV show of all time is *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), Tenorio says this disastrous movie meld seemed like great material to explore. Despite the strange and outlandish plots and situations in Tenorio's book, he has been told that, at its heart, *Monstress* is a collection of love stories.

The SMC Reading Series also includes several craft talks. Held on Wednesday afternoons, the craft talks have working writers explore topics related to the writing mind and the process of writing says Hilman. "I think the craft talks are interesting for people who like reading contemporary literature or who are interested in writing themselves," she adds.

In addition to all the great visiting writers, the public will also have the chance to hear from five of the SMC MFA faculty who will be participating in Litquake, San Francisco's annual literary festival. SMC faculty members will be reading on Saturday, October 13 in the city. Check the Litquake website for the specific location and time at <http://litquake.org>.



Monstress is author Lysley Tenorio's collection of short stories. Image provided

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