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**MLA'S MATEI CALINESCU PRIZE AWARDED TO ROWENA KENNEDY-EPSTEIN
FOR *UNFINISHED SPIRIT: MURIEL RUKEYSER'S TWENTIETH CENTURY***

New York, NY – 6 December 2023 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced its eighth annual Matei Calinescu Prize for a distinguished work of scholarship in twentieth- or twenty-first-century literature and thought. The winner is Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, associate professor of English at the University of Bristol, for *Unfinished Spirit: Muriel Rukeyser's Twentieth Century*, published by Cornell University Press.

The Matei Calinescu Prize was established in 2016 in honor of Matei Calinescu, a Romanian poet and scholar who taught at Indiana University, Bloomington. The prize is one of twenty-two publication awards that will be presented on 5 January 2024 during the association's annual convention, to be held in Philadelphia. The members of the selection committee were Jonathan P. Eburne (Penn State Univ., University Park); Paula M. L. Moya (Stanford Univ.); Jed Rasula (Univ. of Georgia), chair; and Lisa Siraganian (Johns Hopkins Univ.). The committee's citation for the winning book reads:

What if the moment of modernist poetry had been named the Rukeyser era rather than the Pound era? *Unfinished Spirit: Muriel Rukeyser's Twentieth Century* persuasively imagines this alternative history. In her audacious book, Rowena Kennedy-Epstein upends the customary single-author study, focusing on the archive of Rukeyser's unfinished, rebuffed, and disregarded projects. In refreshingly forthright terms, Kennedy-Epstein chronicles an era of patriarchal dismissals and institutional indifference to the intellectual life of women. Rukeyser emerges as a seriously underserved major author, and the unique investigative approach opens up a new perspective on what archival research has to offer. *Unfinished Spirit* is both an exegesis and a meditation on how to "nourish the process" extolled by Rukeyser, extended here in a work of sympathetic investigation that transforms the way modernism, the twentieth century, the Cold War, and communism are understood.

The Modern Language Association of America and its over 20,000 members in 100 countries work to strengthen the study and teaching of languages and literature. Founded in 1883, the MLA provides opportunities for its members to share their scholarly findings and teaching experiences with colleagues and to discuss trends in the academy. The MLA sustains one of the finest publication programs in the humanities, producing a variety of publications for language and literature professionals and for the general public. The association publishes the *MLA International Bibliography*, the only comprehensive bibliography in language and literature, available online. The MLA Annual Convention features 750 scholarly and professional development sessions. More information on MLA programs is available at www.mla.org.

The prize is presented under the auspices of the MLA's Committee on Honors and Awards. Other publication awards sponsored by the committee are the William Riley Parker Prize; the James Russell Lowell Prize; the MLA Prize for a First Book; the Howard R. Marraro Prize; the Kenneth W. Mildener Prize; the Mina P. Shaughnessy Prize; the MLA Prize for Independent Scholars; the Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize; the Morton N. Cohen Award; the MLA Prizes for a Scholarly Edition and for Bibliographical or Archival Scholarship; the Lois Roth Award; the William Sanders Scarborough Prize; the Fenia and Yaakov Leviant Memorial Prize in Yiddish Studies; the MLA Prize in United States Latina and Latino and Chicana and Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies; the MLA Prize for Studies in Native American Literatures, Cultures, and Languages; the MLA Prize for an Edited Collection; the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prizes for Comparative Literary Studies, for French and Francophone Studies, for Italian Studies, for Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures, for Studies in Slavic Languages and Literatures, for a Translation of a Literary Work, for a Translation of a Scholarly Study of Literature, for African Studies, for East Asian Studies, for Middle Eastern Studies, and for South Asian Studies; and the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Publication Award for a Manuscript in Italian Literary Studies. A complete list of current and previous winners can be found on the [MLA website](#).