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ROBERT CHANDLER AND ELIZABETH CHANDLER RECEIVE THE MLA'S LOIS ROTH AWARD FOR THEIR TRANSLATION OF *STALINGRAD* BY VASILY GROSSMAN; VIRLANA TKACZ AND WANDA PHIPPS AND JONATHAN WRIGHT RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTIONS

New York, NY – 14 December 2020 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced it is presenting its thirteenth Lois Roth Award for a translation of a literary work to Robert Chandler and Elizabeth Chandler, of London, England, for their translation of Vasily Grossman's *Stalingrad*, published by New York Review Books. An honorable mention will be given to Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps, of the Yara Arts Group, for their translation of Serhiy Zhadan's *What We Live For, What We Die For*, published by Yale University Press, and to Jonathan Wright, of London, England, for his translation of Sinan Antoon's *The Book of Collateral Damage*, published by Yale University Press. The late Lois W. Roth worked for the United States Information Agency as an advocate for the use of literary study as a means of understanding foreign cultures.

The prize is awarded annually for a translation into English of a book-length literary work. From 1999 until 2016, the prize was offered biennially, alternating years with the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for a Translation of a Literary Work. The two prizes are now both offered annually. The members of this year's selection committee were Esther Allen (Graduate Center and Baruch Coll., City Univ. of New York), chair; Jeffrey Angles (Western Michigan Univ.); Thomas Oliver Beebee (Penn State Univ., University Park); Efrain Kristal (Univ. of California, Los Angeles); and Luiza Franco Moreira (Binghamton Univ., State Univ. of New York).

The selection committee's citation for the winning translation reads:

In its English version, Vasily Grossman's *Stalingrad* is a beautifully readable novel of considerable length, gripping from beginning to end as it moves seamlessly from the dramas of historical events to the small, intimate predicaments of family and everyday life while war is raging. Robert Chandler and Elizabeth Chandler's historical understanding and archival research made it possible to produce a book that salvages the novel from the fate of its mangled original, censored in the process of writing, editing, and production. Thanks to this English translation, *Stalingrad* is repaired and made available to readers of the original in Russian and to readers of other languages as well. This translation is both a literary achievement and a contribution to scholarship.

The committee's citation for Tkacz and Phipps's work reads:

What We Live For, What We Die For, a collection of poems written over the past two decades by the "rock star of Eastern Ukraine," as Bob Holman describes Serhiy Zhadan in the preface, is casually heart-stopping. The translation, by long-time collaborators and the cofounders of the Yara Arts Group, Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps, has an easy, in-the-moment orality that attests to the translators' long practice of live performance, as does its deadpan surrealism: ". . . you wander through a foreign country / stop near a

basketball court / watch teens poke at the sky / with metal rods trying / to get it to move along.” The collection moves in reverse chronology, a journey from more recent work into earlier poems, concluding with “The End of Ukrainian Syllabotonic Verse,” an evocation of a building in Kharkiv “where death begins and where literature ends.”

The committee’s citation for Wright’s translation reads:

Sinan Antoon’s *The Book of Collateral Damage* consists of, among other things, a sequence of epistolary exchanges between Nameer, a scholar and translator living in the United States, and Wadood, an Iraqi bookseller who has authored an Arabic text made up of colloquies that Nameer wants to translate into English. Thus, there is an argument, a wrangling between two languages at the very core of this text, which is deeply suspicious of translation and defies any translator to reenact it. Jonathan Wright meets the challenge like a fencer, on his toes, playing both sides in the linguistic duel and deftly ensuring that neither language meets with defeat in this novel about the unbearable and irreparable ravages of war.

The Modern Language Association of America and its over 24,000 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 meetings on a wide variety of subjects. More information on MLA programs is available at www.mla.org.

The Lois Roth Award is presented under the auspices of the MLA’s Committee on Honors and Awards. Other 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 Collaborative, Bibliographical, or Archival Scholarship; 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 Matei Calinescu Prize; 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, and for a Translation of a Scholarly Study of Literature; 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](#).

While a graduate student in sociology at Columbia University, Lois Wersba Roth won a Fulbright grant to Uppsala University in Sweden, after which she worked for the American Scandinavian Foundation in New York. Her only literary translation, *Roseanna*, the first of the Martin Beck series by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö to appear in English, was published in 1967, the same year that she began working for the United States Information Agency. While with the USIA, she lived abroad and learned Persian, Italian, and French. Her work was devoted to literary concerns, notably translations. She was instrumental in the establishment in France of the Maurice Coindreau Prize for best translation of American literature. The Lois Roth Award was established to enhance recognition of translation as a humanistic discipline. Lois Roth died in 1986. Her

husband, Richard T. Arndt, and David Lee Rubin, of the University of Virginia, established the award.