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**MLA'S SCAGLIONE PRIZE FOR COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES AWARDED  
TO RALPH R. BAUER FOR *THE ALCHEMY OF CONQUEST*; MONICA POPESCU  
RECEIVES HONORABLE MENTION FOR *AT PENPOINT***

New York, NY – 6 December 2021 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced it is awarding its twenty-ninth annual Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literary Studies to Ralph R. Bauer, professor of English and comparative literature at the University of Maryland, College Park, for his book *The Alchemy of Conquest: Science, Religion, and the Secrets of the New World*, published by the University of Virginia Press. Receiving honorable mention is Monica Popescu, William Dawson Scholar of African Literature and associate professor of English at McGill University, for her book *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War*, published by Duke University Press. The prize is awarded annually for an outstanding scholarly work that is written by a member of the association and that involves at least two literatures. Books published in 2020 were eligible for the award, as were books published in 2019 but submitted in 2020 while the MLA offices were closed because of the pandemic.

The prize is one of eighteen awards that will be presented on 8 January 2022, during the association's annual convention, to be held in Washington, DC. The members of the selection committee were Martin Harries (Univ. of California, Irvine); Natania Meeker (Univ. of Southern California); and Wail S. Hassan (Univ. of Illinois, Urbana), chair. The committee's citation for Bauer's book reads:

Ralph Bauer's magisterial *The Alchemy of Conquest: Science, Religion, and the Secrets of the New World* revises our understanding of the relation between the historical fact of conquest and the paradigm of discovery in scientific and legal discourse. Drawing on an impressive range of material from Greek philosophy and medieval scholasticism to early modern literatures in Spanish, English, and French, Bauer demonstrates that, contrary to conventional wisdom, conquest preceded discovery. That is, the modern paradigm of discovery was made possible by the convergence, through the language of alchemy, of science, religion, and geopolitics in the early modern period. Bauer's work knits together the late medieval and the early Renaissance period to forge a new understanding of the relation between science and the state, even as it makes a crucial intervention in modern discussions of the role of colonialism and imperialism in the production of knowledge.

The committee's citation for Popescu's book reads:

Monica Popescu's *At Penpoint: African Literature, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War* makes the compelling and conclusive argument that the Cold War created a forcefield—one that postcolonial studies has largely neglected—that fundamentally shaped African literature. Through lucid, incisive, and well-documented readings, Popescu demonstrates how African writers were caught "in the crossfire of Cold War

imperialisms”—and yet postcolonial scholars have prioritized the relationship between African cultures and Europe while paying scarce attention to Third World solidarity movements that coalesced around the 1955 Bandung Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement inaugurated in 1961, organizations such as the Afro-Asian Writers Association, the training of many African and Third World writers and artists in the Soviet Union, or the activities of the CIA-sponsored Congress of Cultural Freedom. While it takes African literature as a case study, the book has equally far-reaching implications for the study of Arabic, South Asian, and Latin American literatures, as well as for Global South and world literature studies.

The Modern Language Association of America and its over 23,000 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](http://www.mla.org).

The Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literary Studies, awarded under the auspices of the MLA's Committee on Honors and Awards, was presented for the first time in 1992. 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 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, Languages, and Cultures; the Matei Calinescu Prize; the MLA Prize for an Edited Collection; the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prizes 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](#).

The Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Endowment Fund was established and donated by Aldo Scaglione to the Modern Language Association in 1987. The fund honors the memory of Scaglione's late wife, Jeanne Daman Scaglione. A Roman Catholic, Jeanne Daman was headmistress of a Jewish kindergarten in Brussels, Belgium. When arrests and deportations of Jews began in 1942, she worked with Belgian and Jewish resistance units, helping to find hiding places for two thousand children throughout Belgium. She also helped rescue many Jewish men about to be deported as slave laborers by obtaining false papers for them. Jeanne Scaglione's life and contributions to humanity are commemorated in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.

Aldo Scaglione, a member of the Modern Language Association from 1957 until his death in 2013, was Erich Maria Remarque Professor of Literature at New York University. A native of Turin, Italy, he received a doctorate in modern letters from the University of Turin. He taught at the University of Toulouse and at the University of Chicago. From 1952 to 1968 he taught at the University of California, Berkeley, and from 1968 to 1987 he was W. R. Kenan Professor of Italian and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In 1987 he came to New York University as professor of Italian and then chair of the Department of Italian.

Scaglione was a Fulbright Fellow and a Guggenheim Fellow, held senior fellowships from the Newberry Library and the German Academic Exchange Service, and was a visiting professor at Yale University, the City University of New York, and the Humanities Research Institute of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In 1975 he was named Cavaliere dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana. Scaglione was president of the American Boccaccio Association and was a member of the MLA Executive Council from 1981 to 1984. His published books include *Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages* (1963), *Ars Grammatica* (1970), *The Classical Theory of Composition* (1972), *The Theory of German Word Order* (1981), *The Liberal Arts and the Jesuit College System* (1986), *Knights at Court: Courtliness, Chivalry, and Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance* (1991), and *Essays on the Arts of Discourse: Linguistics, Rhetoric, Poetics* (1998).