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MLA PRIZE FOR A FIRST BOOK AWARDED TO ALLISON BIGELOW FOR *MINING LANGUAGE* AND TO ANNETTE K. JOSEPH-GABRIEL FOR *REIMAGINING LIBERATION*; HWISANG CHO AND ALIYAH KHAN RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTIONS

New York, NY – 6 December 2021 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced it is awarding its twenty-eighth annual Modern Language Association Prize for a First Book to two authors. Allison Bigelow, Tom Scully Discovery Chair Associate Professor of Spanish at the University of Virginia, is receiving the award for *Mining Language: Racial Thinking, Indigenous Knowledge, and Colonial Metallurgy in the Early Modern Iberian World*, published by the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and the University of North Carolina Press. Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel is receiving the award for *Reimagining Liberation: How Black Women Transformed Citizenship in the French Empire*, published by the University of Illinois Press. Joseph-Gabriel is currently an associate professor of French and francophone studies at the University of Michigan. Beginning in January 2022 she will be an associate professor of Romance studies at Duke University. Two honorable mentions are being awarded, to Hwisang Cho, assistant professor of Korean at Emory University, for *The Power of the Brush: Epistolary Practices in Chosŏn Korea*, published by the University of Washington Press, and to Aliyah Khan, associate professor of English and Afro-American and African studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, for *Far from Mecca: Globalizing the Muslim Caribbean*, published by Rutgers University Press.

The MLA Prize for a First Book was established in 1993. It is awarded annually for the first book-length publication of a member of the association that is a literary or linguistic study, a critical edition of an important work, or a critical biography.

The MLA Prize for a First Book is one of eighteen awards that will be presented on 8 January 2022, during the association's annual convention, to be held online. The members of the selection committee were Christopher M. Lupke (Univ. of Alberta); Su Fang Ng (Virginia Polytechnic Inst. and State Univ.); Brian Russell Roberts (Brigham Young Univ.); Karl Steel (Brooklyn Coll. and Graduate Center, City Univ. of New York); Mihoko Suzuki (Univ. of Miami), chair; Mikko Tuhkanen (Texas A&M Univ.); and Christophe Wall-Romana (Univ. of Minnesota, Twin Cities). The committee's citation for Bigelow's book reads:

Allison Bigelow's *Mining Language: Racial Thinking, Indigenous Knowledge, and Colonial Metallurgy in the Early Modern Iberian World* is a work of immense erudition and impeccable research. It examines Indigenous metallurgical knowledges in colonial archives to reveal the surprising ways in which technical language encoded cultural meanings, values, and practices of colonial subjects. The entanglement of mining communities of the Americas, Africa, South Asia, and Europeans unsettles imperial histories of science and technology. Bigelow refines the raw materials of her wide-

ranging archive with interdisciplinary methods equally wide ranging: comparative literary interpretation, historical linguistics, and visual analysis. This important account of cultural exchange and coercive appropriation, distortions and erasures, has profound implications for our present extractive age.

The committee's citation for Joseph-Gabriel's book reads:

In *Reimagining Liberation: How Black Women Transformed Citizenship in the French Empire*, Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel foregrounds francophone Black women and women of color from the Caribbean, Africa, France, and the African diaspora who skillfully turned their postwar citizenship in France's colonial empire into decolonial tools. Impeccably weaving historical, archival, biographical, and interpretive work, *Reimagining Liberation* gathers the better-known Suzanne Césaire and Paulette Nardal with lesser-known figures and analyzes how this decentered collective of Global South writers and thinkers contributed to key twentieth-century movements such as Négritude, surrealism, French communism, Gaullism, Pan-Africanism, the dissolution of French Equatorial Africa, and transnational Black feminism. Joseph-Gabriel has magnificently revived the thought, artistry, and political vision of a generation of women of color who breached imperial enclosures through transversal alliances and inventive decolonial practices.

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

The Power of the Brush: Epistolary Practices in Chosŏn Korea adds to our understanding of epistolary practice in sophisticated ways. Focused on the Chosŏn era, Korea's last dynasty, Hwisang Cho's study illustrates the tectonic move from traditional discourse to the early modern era, from a Chinese-dominated intellectual world to the internal concerns of Korea, and from court-based elite power networks to activities diffused across rural areas. Korean thought has long been considered beholden to Confucian philosophical thinking, but Cho's book offers a complex, variegated, and dynamic image of what Confucianism was and what it signified in Korean intellectual circles over time. Cho's interdisciplinary work weaves together narrative, letter writing, calligraphy, philosophy, and daily social interactions and has broad implications for several fields.

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

At once pathbreaking and paradigm shifting, Aliyah Khan's *Far from Mecca: Globalizing the Muslim Caribbean* asks us to redraw the parameters of postcolonial diaspora in the Caribbean by shedding light on the heretofore untold stories of Muslim experience in this complex region. Khan's close examination of a variety of texts introduces us to the images of the multivalent everyday Muslim subjects in the Caribbean, to the global Muslim community, and to how the life imperatives are to be reinterpreted in a context some distance from the traditional denizens of Islam. Told with clarity and concision, *Far from Mecca* complicates the concepts of creolization and hybridity that have been theoretical mainstays of Caribbean postcolonial discourse for several decades and represents an important intervention into broader intellectual debates on difference and marginality.

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.

Before the establishment of the MLA Prize for a First Book in 1993, members who were authors of first books were eligible, along with other members, to compete for the association's James Russell Lowell Prize, established in 1969. Apart from its limitation to members' first books, the MLA Prize for a First Book follows the same criteria and definitions as the Lowell Prize

The MLA Prize for a First Book is awarded under the auspices of the association's Committee on Honors and Awards. Other awards sponsored by the committee are the William Riley Parker Prize; the James Russell Lowell Prize; 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, 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](#).