



Contact: Paula M. Krebs
646 576-5102, awards@mmla.org

**MLA'S SCAGLIONE PRIZE FOR COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES AWARDED
TO HODA EL SHAKRY FOR *THE LITERARY QUR'AN*; MELISSA E. SANCHEZ
RECEIVES HONORABLE MENTION FOR *QUEER FAITH***

New York, NY – 14 December 2020 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced it is awarding its twenty-eighth annual Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literary Studies to Hoda El Shakry, associate professor of comparative literature at the University of Chicago, for her book *The Literary Qur'an: Narrative Ethics in the Maghreb*, published by Fordham University Press. Receiving honorable mention is Melissa E. Sanchez, Donald T. Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania, for her book *Queer Faith: Reading Promiscuity and Race in the Secular Love Tradition*, published by New York 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.

The prize is one of eighteen awards that will be presented on 9 January 2021, during the association's annual convention, to be held online. The members of the selection committee were Devin A. Fore (Princeton Univ.); Martin Harries (Univ. of California, Irvine), chair; and Wail S. Hassan (Univ. of Illinois, Urbana). The committee's citation for El Shakry's book reads:

Breaking down the divide between Francophone and Arabophone approaches to the literature of the Maghreb, Hoda El Shakry's *The Literary Qur'an: Narrative Ethics in the Maghreb* begins with a challenge to any rigid separation of the Qur'an from literature. El Shakry shows that the Qur'an has been an endlessly suggestive model for interpretation for writers across the Maghreb's linguistic divides. The book's structure pairs Francophone and Arabophone authors, illuminating literary experiments from the 1940s to the 1980s. Throughout, El Shakry traces a project in common: a commitment to producing literature—and particularly an engagement with readers—as an ethical practice that undoes such familiar binaries as those between the sacred and the secular or the private and the public. Readers in other fields will encounter a deeply thought and impressively learned introduction to a provocative set of texts; specialists may find themselves rethinking the very shape of their field.

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

Melissa E. Sanchez's *Queer Faith: Reading Promiscuity and Race in the Secular Love Tradition* brilliantly defamiliarizes well-known early modern texts by Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, and others by reading them alongside Pauline theology. Both Paul and the early modern authors Sanchez explores emerge in a new light, provocatively estranged and complexly queer. Paul, here the source for a theology and a theory that understands desire as unescapably promiscuous and selfhood as endlessly fragmentary, provides the canonical authority for a poetics of secular love that still looks radical. In a

set of careful and imaginative rereadings of frequently reread texts, Sanchez discovers an “ethics of promiscuity” in poems too often understood as normative in their erotic politics—or even as texts that produced some of these norms. Sanchez makes a compelling and surprising case for what she calls the “translatability of religious writing to queer theory.”

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 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).