

**MLA'S KATHERINE SINGER KOVACS PRIZE AWARDED TO JOANNE
RAPPAPORT AND TOM CUMMINS; NADIA R. ALTSCHUL RECEIVES
HONORABLE MENTION**

New York, NY – 3 December 2013 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced its twenty-third annual Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize for an outstanding book published in English or Spanish in the field of Latin American and Spanish literatures and cultures. The winners are Joanne Rappaport, of Georgetown University, and Tom Cummins, of Harvard University, for their book *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes*, published by Duke University Press. Nadia R. Altschul, of Johns Hopkins University, received honorable mention for *Geographies of Philological Knowledge: Postcoloniality and the Transatlantic National Epic*, published by the University of Chicago Press.

The Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize was established in 1990 by a gift from Joseph and Mimi B. Singer, parents of the late Katherine Singer Kovacs. The prize is one of sixteen awards that will be presented on 11 January 2014, during the association's annual convention, to be held in Chicago. The members of the selection committee were Román de la Campa (Univ. of Pennsylvania); Sibylle Maria Fischer (New York Univ.); E. Michael Gerli (Univ. of Virginia); José Antonio Mazzotti (Tufts Univ.); and Stacey Schlau (West Chester Univ.). The committee's citation for the winning book reads:

Before the arrival of the Spanish, the indigenous cultures of the Andes did not possess pictorial, alphabetic, or hieroglyphic literacy. Engagement with European literacy and symbolic systems altered their worldviews and everyday lives, making alphabetic and visual literacy key tools of colonial domination. *Beyond the Lettered City* constitutes a landmark contribution to the field of Latin American and Spanish colonial studies. Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins's study traces the way northern Andean peoples received, preserved, and challenged the conventions of European literacy by accommodating them to their own traditions. It is a major work of cross-disciplinary scholarship that scholars interested in the development of Spanish and Latin American culture can ignore only at their peril.

Joanne Rappaport is a professor of anthropology and Latin American literature and cultural studies at Georgetown University. She received her BA from Kirkland College and her MA and PhD from the University of Illinois, Urbana. She is the author of *The Politics of Memory: Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes*, *Cumbe Reborn: An Andean Ethnography of History*, and *Intercultural Utopias: Public Intellectuals, Cultural Experimentation, and Ethnic Dialogue in Colombia*; coauthor of *¿Qué pasaría si la escuela . . . ? Treinta años de construcción educativa*; and editor of *Retornado la mirada: Una investigación colaborativa interétnica sobre el Cauca a la entrada del milenio*. She coedited a special issue of *Collaborative Anthropologies*,

and her articles have appeared in journals such as *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* and *Latin American Research Review*. “The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada” is forthcoming in the spring of 2014.

Tom Cummins is Dumbarton Oaks Professor of the History of Pre-Columbian and Colonial Latin American Art at Harvard University. He received his BFA from Denison University and his MA and PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of *Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Kero Vessels*. His coedited volumes and catalogs include *The Inka Empire Revealed: A Century after the Machu Picchu “Discovery”* and *The Getty Murúa: Essays on the Making of Martín de Murúa’s “Historia General del Piru,” J. Paul Getty Museum Ms. Ludwig XIII 16*. His articles have appeared in journals such as *IFAR Journal* and *Journal of Art Historiography* and edited volumes such as *Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and Moon* and *Lexicon of the Hispanic Baroque*. *Beyond the Lettered City* received the Bryce Wood Book Award from the Latin American Studies Association.

The committee’s citation for the honorable mention reads:

Geographies of Philological Knowledge: Postcoloniality and the Transatlantic National Epic, an original, informative, and sophisticated work of scholarship, reveals the many contradictions that subtend the practice of medieval studies in the postcolonial context and underwrite the racial ideologies of transatlantic philology—Spanish and Spanish American philology in particular. Encompassing a well-focused case study of the intellectual history, reception, and scholarly destiny of Andrés Bello’s nineteenth-century edition of the *Poem of the Cid* (completed in 1834 but not published until 1881), Nadia R. Altschul’s book constitutes a commendable and profound exploration of Bello’s work and his place in the context of the development of Hispanic philology, nineteenth- and twentieth-century transatlantic cultural relations, and the unspoken ideologies and dogmas that may animate the claims of all academic disciplines.

Nadia R. Altschul is an assistant professor of Spanish at Johns Hopkins University. She received her BA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and her PhD from Yale University. She is the author of *La literatura, el autor y la crítica textual* and coeditor of *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of “The Middle Ages” Outside Europe*. Her essays have been published in numerous journals such as *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, *Hispanic Issues Online*, and *Textual Cultures*. She is executive editor and cofounding editor of *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* and managing editor of the Hispanic issue of *MLN (Modern Language Notes)*. She is currently working on a book project that examines the medieval character attributed to Spanish and Portuguese colonization in the Americas.

The Modern Language Association of America and its nearly 30,000 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; this year’s convention in Chicago is expected to draw 8,000 attendees. More information on MLA programs is available at www.mla.org.

Recent winners of the Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize include Catherine Julien, Georgina Dopico Black, Francine R. Masiello, Noël Valis, Diana Taylor, Sibylle Fischer, Rubén Gallo, William P. Childers, Rolena Adorno, Nicolás Wey Gómez, Lisa Beth Voigt, Stephanie Merrim, and E.

Michael Gerli. The prize 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 Morton N. Cohen Award; the MLA Prize for a Scholarly Edition; the MLA Prize for a Bibliography, Archive, or Digital Project; 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 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; and the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Publication Award for a Manuscript in Italian Literary Studies.

Katherine Singer Kovacs completed her undergraduate studies at Tufts University, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and her MA and PhD (in 1974) at Harvard University. She is the author of *"Le Rêve et la Vie": A Theatrical Experiment by Gustave Flaubert* and articles and reviews on Latin American literature, culture, and film and on comparative literature. Kovacs was a specialist in Spanish and Latin American literature and film. She taught at Stanford University, the University of Southern California, and Whittier College. She was associate editor and coeditor of *Humanities in Society*, a member of the executive committee of the *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, and a consultant for *Latin American Perspectives*. Kovacs died in May 1989.