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Harry Levin Prize (best first book in comparative literature)

Committee:

- Chair: Seth Kimmel (Columbia), 2023-2026
- Gal Gvili (McGill), 2024-2027
- Janet Poole (University of Toronto), 2025-2028

Winner: *Forms of Mobility: Genre, Language, and Media in African Literary Cultures*
(Northwestern University Press, 2024), by Stephanie Bosch Santana

Studying the production and circulation of works in English and Chichewa/Nyanja within and between Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa, *Forms of Mobility* follows literary texts, authors, and spatially dispersed yet clearly delineated communities of readers on the move. The texts comprising the book's corpus date from the mid-twentieth century to the present and often take shape in weekly newspaper columns, literary magazines, blogs, digital diaries and other short-form genres accessed electronically. To study these materials, Bosch Santana shows, literary scholars must find ways to criss-cross print and digital media and to examine literary cultures at multiple scales, not to mention abandon any narrow generic and linguistic focus on the African novel in English or French. Likewise, authors and their fictional characters traverse national borders even while remaining within the region's commercial and cultural networks, revealing lateral spatial relations and migrations that unsettle a simple narrative of travel to or from the imperial metropole. Although globally famous diasporic writers make appearances, by locating literary cultures that emulate and reconfigure local modes of everyday speech at center stage, *Forms of Mobility* reimagines the maps and tools of literary comparison with admirable creativity, precision, and elegance.