

Remembering Monica Popescu



Monica Popescu and Sheila Giffen, Research Trip, 2011

Monica Popescu, Professor and William Dawson Scholar of African Literatures in the Department of English at McGill University, began a different journey on February 24, 2024. A leading voice in African and Cold War literary studies, her most recent monograph, *At Penpoint* (2020), won numerous prestigious awards, including an honorable mention for the MLA's Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literary Studies. Her ongoing projects at the time of her death reflected her continued commitment to comparative literature and the comparative method. She was working on at least three books, including a monograph on the rise of the world literature paradigm, a scholarly biography of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and an edited collection on the Global South. Monica was also a dedicated member of the ACLA, serving on its board as chair of the Publications Committee. Under her leadership, the committee adjudicated the Helen Tartar First Book Subvention Award and held workshops on publishing first (and then second) books. Monica demonstrated her dedication to the success of junior faculty working on comparative literature through her work with the ACLA.

Always an advocate and devoted mentor to her students, Monica is remembered for introducing them to all aspects of research, at home and also abroad in South African archives. Teaching students to read across diverse geographies, Monica's comparative approach illuminated the cross cultural influence of a Soviet imaginary in South Africa. Raised in Romania, Monica was uniquely

positioned to retrieve the weave of Soviet and postcolonial entanglement and to follow it in the archive as in its literary manifestations.

Thanks go to Victoria-Oana Lapascu and Sheila Giffen for this tribute.