

**MLA AWARDS WILLIAM RILEY PARKER PRIZE FOR ARTICLE IN *PMLA* TO  
KAMRAN JAVADIZADEH; EDGAR GARCIA AND LAURA E. HELTON EACH  
RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTION**

New York, NY – 4 December 2019 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced the winner of its fifty-sixth annual William Riley Parker Prize for an outstanding article published in *PMLA*, the association’s journal of literary scholarship. The author of this year’s winning essay is Kamran Javadizadeh, of Villanova University. His article “The Atlantic Ocean Breaking on Our Heads: Claudia Rankine, Robert Lowell, and the Whiteness of the Lyric Subject” appeared in the May 2019 issue of *PMLA*. Edgar Garcia, of the University of Chicago, is receiving an honorable mention for “Pictography, Law, and Earth: Gerald Vizenor, John Borrows, and Louise Erdrich,” which appeared in the March 2019 issue of *PMLA*, and Laura E. Helton, of the University of Delaware, Newark, is receiving an honorable mention for her article “On Decimals, Catalogs, and Racial Imaginaries of Reading,” which appeared in the January 2019 issue of *PMLA*.

The William Riley Parker Prize is one of eighteen awards that will be presented on 11 January 2020, during the association’s annual convention, to be held in Seattle. The members of the selection committee were Elizabeth Bearden (Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison); Christopher D. Castiglia (Penn State Univ., University Park), chair; Beth Piatote (Univ. of California, Berkeley); Melissa E. Sanchez (Univ. of Pennsylvania); and John H. Smith (Univ. of California, Irvine). The committee’s citation for the winning article reads:

“The Atlantic Ocean Breaking on Our Heads” rose gracefully from a comparison of a line appearing in poems written by Claudia Rankine and Robert Lowell to a far-reaching and sophisticated argument about lyric subjectivity and whiteness. Based primarily on insightful close readings of texts by Rankine and Lowell, Kamran Javadizadeh’s essay skillfully works those astute interpretations in a broader context involving the racial dynamics of various genres of twentieth-century poetry, particularly lyric verse (confessional and experimental). Javadizadeh’s exceptionally thoughtful essay has important implications beyond the two authors at its center, making a substantial contribution to the field of new lyric studies.

Kamran Javadizadeh is associate professor of English at Villanova University, where his research and teaching focus on poetry and poetics. He is the author of *Institutionalized Lyric: American Poetry at Midcentury*. His essays have appeared in the journals *Modernism/modernity*, *Arizona Quarterly*, and *The Yale Review* and in several edited anthologies. With Robert Volpicelli, he is coeditor of *Poetry Networks*, a forthcoming special issue of *College Literature*. He earned his PhD from Yale University and has also taught at Pomona College and Connecticut College. He is now in the early stages of a new book project, one that weaves together literary criticism,

memoir, translation, and the tangled histories of the United States, where he grew up, and Iran, where he is from.

The committee's citation for Garcia's article reads:

Edgar Garcia's interdisciplinary treatment of two underutilized archives—pictographs and indigenous constitutions—offers a keen analysis of the interface of law and literature, particularly in relation to race, nationalism, and decolonization. The breadth of Garcia's knowledge on these topics is truly impressive, and he synthesizes that knowledge into a compelling, perceptive, and gracefully written essay, a model for interdisciplinary scholarship. Pictographs constitute a highly original object of study, and "Pictography, Law, and Earth: Gerald Vizenor, John Borrows, and Louise Erdrich" is fascinating and persuasively analyzed. Garcia's pleasure in his topics and the ardor with which he investigates their social implications make for a powerful and illuminating essay.

Edgar Garcia is the author of *Signs of the Americas: A Poetics of Pictography, Hieroglyphs, and Khipu* and *Skins of Columbus: A Dream Ethnography* and coeditor of *American Literature in the World: An Anthology from Anne Bradstreet to Octavia Butler*. He is Neubauer Family Assistant Professor of English at the University of Chicago, where he also teaches in the Department of Creative Writing. Garcia holds a PhD from Yale University and a BA from the University of California, Berkeley.

The committee's citation for Helton's article reads:

Bringing the study of black print culture and information studies into much-needed conversation, Laura E. Helton's astute, passionate, and eye-opening essay uses the career of Dorothy Porter to explore the relations among aesthetics, categorization, and an "enlarged black print culture's field of vision." Using the "card catalog as a scene of reading," she argues for the importance of often-unacknowledged archivists and librarians in providing an interpretive infrastructure for literature. She herself exemplifying the research acuity and breadth of knowledge she admires in Porter, Helton's "On Decimals, Catalogs, and Racial Imaginaries of Reading" is beautifully written, skillfully organized, and generous as it unfolds as a complex and nuanced portrait of Dorothy Porter. Helton's commitment to this project has resulted in an insightful study that is a model of recovery scholarship.

Laura E. Helton is assistant professor of English and history at the University of Delaware, Newark. Her current book project, *Collecting and Collectivity: Black Archival Publics, 1900–1950*, examines the emergence of African American archives and libraries to show how historical recuperation shaped forms of racial imagination in the early twentieth century. Helton is coeditor of a special issue of *Social Text* titled *The Question of Recovery: Slavery, Freedom, and the Archive*, and her work appears in the edited volume *Against a Sharp White Background: Infrastructures of African American Print*. She is currently a scholar in residence at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

The Modern Language Association of America and its over 25,000 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;

the 2020 convention in Seattle is expected to draw over 5,000 attendees. More information on MLA programs is available at [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org).

The MLA's oldest award, the prize for an outstanding article in *PMLA* was first presented in 1964. In 1968 the prize was named in memory of a distinguished former editor of the journal and executive secretary of the association, William Riley Parker. Recent winners have been Enrique García Santo-Tomás, Paul Benzon, Toral Jatin Gajarawala, Tobias Menely, Margaret Ronda, Christopher Cannon, Gordon Fraser, Yasser Elhariry, Thomas C. Connolly, and Katherine Fusco.

The William Riley Parker Prize is awarded under the auspices of the MLA's Committee on Honors and Awards. Other awards sponsored by the committee are 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, 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.

William Riley Parker (1906–68) was executive secretary of the MLA and editor of *PMLA* from 1947 to 1956. In 1959 he was elected to serve as the MLA's sixty-ninth president. Internationally known as the founder and director (1952–56) of the MLA's Foreign Language Program and author of major studies and essays about foreign language education in the United States, Parker was a scholar of English literature and author of major books and articles on Milton and other British poets and writers. At the time of his death, he was distinguished professor and chair of the Department of English at Indiana University, Bloomington.