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MLA AWARDS WILLIAM RILEY PARKER PRIZE FOR ARTICLE IN *PMLA* TO SARAH WASSERMAN; JAMES MULHOLLAND RECEIVES HONORABLE MENTION

New York, NY – 14 December 2020 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced the winner of its fifty-seventh 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 Sarah Wasserman, assistant professor of English at the University of Delaware, Newark. Her article “Ralph Ellison, Chester Himes, and the Persistence of Urban Forms” appeared in the May 2020 issue of *PMLA*. James Mulholland, associate professor of English at North Carolina State University, is receiving an honorable mention for “Translocal Anglo-India and the Multilingual Reading Public,” which appeared in the March 2020 issue of *PMLA*.

The William Riley Parker 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 Christopher D. Castiglia (Penn State Univ., University Park); Carrie Hyde (Univ. of California, Los Angeles); Melissa E. Sanchez (Univ. of Pennsylvania), chair; and John H. Smith (Univ. of California, Irvine). The committee’s citation for the winning article reads:

Sarah Wasserman’s “Ralph Ellison, Chester Himes, and the Persistence of Urban Forms” is a beautifully written essay on the political and temporal paradoxes of what we now call gentrification. Wasserman provides a compelling account of the formal strategies that Ellison and Himes developed to show “how infrastructure registers urban change, congealing past and present” and thereby disrupting simple notions of loss, preservation, and progress. Instead of seeing Ellison and Himes as writing in antithetical genres, aesthetic registers, and fictional forms—pulp detective story versus psychologically realistic novel—we can understand them both as using “the conventions of the novel as a backdrop against which they plot formal changes and social transformations that remain incomplete.” Wasserman demonstrates that by examining treatments of objects and urban spaces, rather than explorations of human psychology, we can reevaluate the taxonomies we use to value and understand literature and the political histories it mediates.

The committee’s citation for Mulholland’s article reads:

James Mulholland’s elegant and erudite essay offers a new approach to the Anglo-Indian literary history by bringing together two orientations to colonial writing, translocalism (place-based relationships that extend beyond regional and national borders) and critical regionalism (understanding regions as permeable and conventional rather than as conforming to physically contiguous space). Mulholland examines three authors affiliated with the East Indian Company to revise our canons and definitions of imperial literature. As he shows, multilingualism, mobility, and women’s manuscript production were all central to anglophony’s origins. With clarity and conviction Mulholland turns us to new

archives and contexts for understanding the formation of anglophone literature, rectifying the exclusionary effects of traditional valuations of literature based on teleological frameworks such as influence, nation formation, or aesthetic brilliance. This essay offers a vital first step in the composition of new literary histories that resist national boundaries and their attendant hierarchies.

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 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.

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. A complete list of current and previous winners can be found on the [MLA website](#).

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.