MLA AWARDS WILLIAM RILEY PARKER PRIZE FOR ARTICLE IN PMLA TO KATHERINE FUSCO; ERIC CALDERWOOD AND RICARDO MATTHEWS RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTION

New York, NY – 5 December 2018 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced the winner of its fifty-fifth 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 Katherine Fusco, of the University of Nevada, Reno. Her article “Sexing Farina: Our Gang’s Episodes of Racial Childhood” appeared in the May 2018 issue of PMLA. Eric Calderwood, of the University of Illinois, Urbana, is receiving honorable mention for “Franco’s Hajj: Moroccan Pilgrims, Spanish Fascism, and the Unexpected Journeys of Modern Arabic Literature,” which appeared in the October 2017 issue of PMLA, and Ricardo Matthews, of California State University, Fullerton, and the University of California, Irvine, is receiving an honorable mention for his article “Song in Reverse: The Medieval Prosimetrum and Lyric Theory,” which appeared in the March 2018 issue of PMLA.

The William Riley Parker Prize is one of eighteen awards that will be presented on 5 January 2019, during the association’s annual convention, to be held in Chicago. The members of the selection committee were Elizabeth Bearden (Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison); Christopher D. Castiglia (Penn State Univ., University Park); Paul North (Yale Univ.), chair; Beth H. Piatote (Univ. of California, Berkeley); and Melissa E. Sanchez (Univ. of Pennsylvania). The committee’s citation for the winning article reads:

Katherine Fusco illuminates the social and political tensions around the figure of Farina in the comic sandlot scenes of Our Gang film shorts produced between 1922 and 1931. Farina publicly probes the boundaries of racializing and gendering norms during the era of Jim Crow and lynchings of black men. The child bears the contradictions of this time in his/her ambiguous body, in an inability to develop, in kitsch tropes of black culture, and in a seemingly permanent diminutive size. In precise and elegant prose, Fusco writes a brief history of mid-twentieth-century film as a window through which the unconscious of the era could flirt with exposing itself. In the way it integrates biography, social history, aesthetics, and political analysis, “Sexing Farina: Our Gang’s Episodes of Racial Childhood” is a paradigm for cultural criticism.

Katherine Fusco is an associate professor of English and Crowley Distinguished Professor in the Core Humanities at the University of Nevada, Reno, who writes about the way different media forms shape identity and encourage us to be either cruel or kind to one another. She completed a BA in English at the State University of New York, Geneseo, and a PhD at Vanderbilt University,
after which she spent several years working as the assistant director of the Vanderbilt Writing Studio. Fusco researches and teaches courses on film, theory, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature. Her books include *Silent Film and U.S. Naturalist Literature: Time, Narrative, and Modernity* and *Kelly Reichardt* (with Nicole Seymour). She is currently completing a project focused on celebrity and identification in the 1920s and 1930s. Fusco also writes about pop culture for a number of national outlets.

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

In *Journey to Mecca*, the Moroccan writer Ahmad al-Rahuni promoted a hajj sponsored by Francisco Franco and at times, argues Eric Calderwood, subtly subverted Francoist propaganda to imply the supremacy of the Muslim world. The book did more than just chronicle the hajj; it turned Franco paradoxically into a proponent for Islam by, for example, making him speak in Qur’an-like phrases. A complex hermeneutic allows Calderwood to open the narrow view of Arab literature as no more than Egyptian novels to the complex crossroads of a Moroccan travel narrative. An example of penetrating textual analysis, “Franco’s Hajj: Moroccan Pilgrims, Spanish Fascism, and the Unexpected Journeys of Modern Arabic Literature” also shows that colonial literature can document entanglements between resistance and complicity.

Eric Calderwood is an associate professor of comparative literature at the University of Illinois, Urbana, where he also holds faculty appointments in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, the Program in Medieval Studies, the Unit for Criticism and Interpretative Theory, and the Program in Jewish Culture and Society. Calderwood is the author of *Colonial al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture*. He has published scholarly articles in such journals as *PMLA*, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, and *The Journal of North African Studies*. He has also contributed essays and commentary to such venues as NPR, the BBC, *Foreign Policy*, and *The American Scholar*.

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

Medieval lyric deserves a place in the theory of poetry, Ricardo Matthews argues in “Song in Reverse: The Medieval Prosimetrum and Lyric Theory.” To show why, he returns to one particular form, the mixed-genre prosimetrum, through which he writes a new genealogy for the lyric I, although accounts of medieval poetry usually deny such a thing existed. The lyric I was there but different from its Romantic counterpart. It was contextual, Matthews contends, since the very idea of an authentic source for a poem arose in the prosimetrum in the play between fictional prose and outbursts of song. This phenomenon between prose and lyric is given a new critical name: “the narrative actualization of song.” Immensely erudite and tightly argued, Matthews’s essay makes a strong case for a theoretical reevaluation of medieval lyric.

Ricardo Matthews is a lecturer at California State University, Fullerton, as well as a research associate at the University of California, Irvine. He earned a BA at the University of California, Los Angeles; an MA at Louisiana State University; and an MA and a PhD at UC Irvine. He recently published an essay in *The Chaucer Review* called “Arcite’s Overheard Song” about the creation of lyric subjectivity in Chaucer’s *The Knight’s Tale*. He recently finished his book *The Overheard Song: Medieval Lyric in the Prosimetrum* and has begun doing research on another, which explores the use of found songs in the prosimetrum. He is also working on articles about the nuts and bolts of poetry, including an essay on meter written from the perspective of a fifteenth-century French poet-prisoner learning English and its versification system, as well as another on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century experiments with the stanza by English poets writing in French poetic genres.
The Modern Language Association of America and its 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; the 2019 convention in Chicago is expected to draw 7,000 attendees. 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. Recent winners have been Nergis Ertürk, Enrique García Santo-Tomás, Paul Benzon, Toral Jatin Gajarawala, Tobias Menely, Margaret Ronda, Christopher Cannon, Gordon Fraser, Yasser Elhariry, and Thomas C. Connolly.

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. Mildenberger 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 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 Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies; the MLA Prize for Studies in Native American Literatures, Cultures, and Languages; the Matei Calinescu Prize; 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.