

**MLA AWARDS WILLIAM RILEY PARKER PRIZE FOR ARTICLE IN *PMLA* TO  
YASSER ELHARIRY**

New York, NY – 6 December 2016 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced the winner of its fifty-third 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 Yasser Elhariry, of Dartmouth College. His article “Abdelwahab Meddeb, Sufi Poets, and the New Francophone Lyric” appeared in the March 2016 issue of *PMLA*.

The William Riley Parker Prize is one of seventeen awards that will be presented on 7 January 2017, during the association’s annual convention, to be held in Philadelphia. The members of the selection committee were Laura Anne Doyle (Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst); Nergis Ertürk (Penn State Univ., University Park); Toral Gajarawala (New York Univ.); Enrique García Santo-Tomás (Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor), chair; and Paul North (Yale Univ.). The committee’s citation for the winning article reads:

Yasser Elhariry’s “Abdelwahab Meddeb, Sufi Poets, and the New Francophone Lyric,” a beautifully written essay that offers a sophisticated reading of the Tunisian French writer Abdelwahab Meddeb (1946–2014), provides an exemplary model of cross-cultural literary history. Elhariry weaves a fine-grained analysis of the political, religious, and historical contexts in Meddeb’s poetry even as he captures the way poetic language works in all its untranslatability and interlinguistic registers. Elhariry’s description enriches our sense of the geopolitical dimensions of literature and reminds us how criticism can do justice to world histories and to the imaginations of authors shaping contemporary literature in and across several languages. Finally, displaying keen attention to the subtleties of language and the problems of reception, Elhariry’s careful prose mirrors the nuances of Meddeb’s verse.

Yasser Elhariry is an assistant professor of French at Dartmouth College and writer in residence in the Frederick Lewis Allen Room at the New York Public Library. A native of Cairo, he earned his PhD from New York University. His research focuses on the language of French and francophone poetry and its relation to classical Arabic literature and Mediterranean studies. He is the author of the forthcoming *Pacifist Invasions: Arabic, Translation, and the Postfrancophone Lyric* and is coediting a volume on the modern Mediterranean, to be titled *Critically Mediterranean*. Elhariry has authored several essays on comparative French, francophone, and Arabic poetry, poetics, and translation, focusing on such figures as Edmond Jabès, Abdelfattah Kilito, Abdelwahab Meddeb, Habib Tengour, Salah Stétié, Ryoko Sekiguchi, and Assia Djebar, that have appeared in journals and as book chapters. He is editing the November 2017 special issue of *Expressions maghrébines*.

The Modern Language Association of America and its 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; this year's convention in Philadelphia is expected to draw 8,000 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 Lorraine Piroux, Pauline Yu, Nergis Ertürk, Enrique García Santo-Tomás, Paul Benzon, Tobias Menely, Margaret Ronda, Christopher Cannon, and Gordon Fraser.

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 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 Chicana 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.