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**MLA AWARDS WILLIAM RILEY PARKER PRIZE FOR ARTICLE IN *PMLA* TO EMMA MAGGIE SOLBERG AND TO SHANE VOGEL; HADJI BAKARA RECEIVES HONORABLE MENTION**

New York, NY – 7 December 2022 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced the cowinners of its fifty-ninth annual William Riley Parker Prize for an outstanding article published in *PMLA*, the association’s journal of literary scholarship. The authors of this year’s winning essays are Emma Maggie Solberg, associate professor of English at Bowdoin College, and Shane Vogel, professor of English and African American studies at Yale University. Solberg’s article “Imagining the Bob and Wheel” appeared in the January 2022 issue of *PMLA*. Vogel’s article “*Waiting for Godot* and the Racial Theater of the Absurd” also appeared in the January 2022 issue of *PMLA*. Hadji Bakara, assistant professor of English at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, is receiving an honorable mention for “Time, Sovereignty, and Refugee Writing,” which appeared in the May 2022 issue of *PMLA*.

The William Riley Parker Prize is one of nineteen awards that will be presented on 6 January 2023, during the association’s annual convention, to be held in San Francisco. The members of the selection committee were Carrie Hyde (Univ. of California, Los Angeles); Suzanne Parker Keen (Hamilton Coll.); Robert St. Clair (Dartmouth Coll.); and John H. Smith (Univ. of California, Irvine), chair. The committee’s citation for Solberg’s article reads:

Emma Maggie Solberg’s “Imagining the Bob and Wheel” represents the very best of sustained methodological attention to poetic form as it interweaves with cultural and literary histories. A beautifully written and compelling inquiry into the formal effects and complications, cultural and philological appearances, and allusive resonances of the metrical form known as the bob and wheel in medieval verse, this exceptional essay mobilizes the traditional tools and frames of literary analysis—from close attention to the prosodic grain of a work to the history of ideas and technologies that inform or complicate our understandings of it—to striking new ends, yielding stunning, and dazzlingly erudite, insights along the way. Solberg’s essay demonstrates the continued vitality of methods of close reading that combine formal analysis with cultural genealogies of a metaphorical motif in the literary humanities today.

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

Shane Vogel’s remarkable essay, “*Waiting for Godot* and the Racial Theater of the Absurd,” takes its point of departure in a brief though consequential cultural event in the world of New York theater: the 1957 Broadway adaptation of *Waiting for Godot* with an all-Black cast. Vogel takes up the adaptation of a canonical text in twentieth-century theater and teases out of this production a searching interdisciplinary reading that helps us grapple with—and theorize—the aesthetic forms of modernity as forms haunted by a history of violence, dispossession, and struggle, while persuasively restoring the Africana

absurd to its rightful place in the philosophical-aesthetic trajectory of modernism. Incisive instances of close reading combine with thoughtful, nuanced considerations of reception theory and transnational cultural historiography in this standout essay.

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

Hadji Bakara's "Time, Sovereignty, and Refugee Writing" tackles a complex series of issues at once political, theoretical, and textual—from political philosophies of sovereignty to phenomenological accounts of temporality and queer and utopian theorizations touching on the possibilities of thinking the collective, the individual, and the future *otherwise*—with theoretical nuance and political urgency in equal measure. Deftly mobilizing and navigating readers through a richly textured literary-testimonial and critical corpus, Bakara explores issues of temporality and ongoingness as they relate to the shifting, uncertain, and often contested legal, cultural, and personal identities of refugees in contexts of diasporic displacement, political upheavals, and the world-pulverizing forces of late-twentieth-century and contemporary globalization. Bakara reminds us of the crucial voices of literary scholars in debating issues at the center of the world we find ourselves in today.

The Modern Language Association of America and its over 20,000 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](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.

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, for a Translation of a Scholarly Study of Literature, for African Studies, for East Asian Studies, for Middle Eastern Studies, and for South Asian Studies; 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.