URI McMILLAN TO RECEIVE THE MLA’S WILLIAM SANDERS SCARBOROUGH PRIZE FOR AN OUTSTANDING SCHOLARLY STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE OR CULTURE; NADIA ELLIS AND ANGELA NAIMOU TO RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTIONS


The William Sanders Scarborough 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 Aliyyah Inaya Abdur-Rahman (Brandeis Univ.); David Ikard (Univ. of Miami), chair; and Magdalena J. Zaborowska (Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor). The committee’s citation for the winning book reads:

> With brilliant insights and deeply inspired textual analysis at every turn of the page, Uri McMillan’s *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* is simply dazzling. A tour de force, this study traces two centuries of black women’s performance practice, arguing that black women have masterfully converted experiences of objectification and objecthood into radical art praxis from the nineteenth century through the contemporary period. A model for effective and probing interdisciplinary analysis, *Embodied Avatars* charts new terrain in gender and sexuality studies, visual culture studies, black cultural studies, and performance theory. What it ultimately teaches us is how, under the most persistent and pervasive experiences of unfreedom, black women innovate artful practices of resistance, refusal, and radical self-possession.

Uri McMillan is an associate professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is a cultural historian who researches and writes in the interstices between black cultural studies, performance studies, queer theory, and contemporary art. He has published articles on performance art, digital media, hip-hop, photography, and nineteenth-century performance cultures in varied arenas such as *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian*
Studies, and e-miserica. McMillan has also lectured at art museums, including MoMA PS1 and the Hammer Museum, and published numerous essays on black contemporary art for the Studio Museum of Harlem. His work has been supported by the Ford Foundation and the Woodrow Wilson Foundation.

The committee’s citation for Ellis’s book reads:

In Territories of the Soul: Queered Belonging in the Black Diaspora, Nadia Ellis locates the queer elsewhere in both imagined and material terrains of what the Guyana-born British writer Mike Phillips calls the territories of the soul, or spaces where blackness is associated with land as much as with flights of creative spirit, by reworking José Esteban Muñoz’s notion of utopia to read writers as diverse as C. L. R. James, James Baldwin, George Lamming, Andrew Salkey, and Nathaniel Mackey. As harbingers of specifically diasporic aesthetics, their writings help us understand how the experience of loss always underpins any sense of belonging for those who record stories, sounds, and images of transatlantic scatterings.

Nadia Ellis is an associate professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. She received her BA from the University of the West Indies, her MPhil from Oxford University, and her PhD in English from Princeton University. Her work has appeared as book chapters and in journals such as Journal of Popular Music Studies, Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies, and Small Axe. She is the recipient of a UC Berkeley 2016 American Cultures Innovation in Teaching Award. Ellis is at work on a new book project about diasporic cities.

The committee’s citation for Naimou’s book reads:

Building on and expanding postcolonial and cultural theories, Angela Naimou’s Salvage Work: U.S. and Caribbean Literatures amid the Debris of Legal Personhood opens new pathways for understanding legal personhood in contemporary literature. Her unique interdisciplinary approach shines new light on why the impulse to define personhood is always already bound up with empire and cultural control.

Angela Naimou is an associate professor of English at Clemson University. She received her BA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and her MA and PhD from Cornell University. Her latest work is on contemporary literature and refugee timespaces. She currently serves as treasurer for ASAP: The Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present, is an associate editor of College Literature, and is on the editorial board for the journal Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development. Salvage Work: U.S. and Caribbean Literatures amid the Debris of Legal Personhood also received the 2016 ASAP Book Prize.

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.

The William Sanders Scarborough Prize was established in 2001 and named for the first African American member of the MLA. It is awarded under the auspices of the Committee on Honors and
Awards. The prize has been awarded to Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.; Maurice O. Wallace; Joanna Brooks; Jean Fagan Yellin; Alexander G. Weheliye; Jacqueline Goldsby; Candice M. Jenkins; Magdalena J. Zaborowska; Monica L. Miller; Lawrence P. Jackson, Stephanie Leigh Batiste, Erica R. Edwards, Samantha Pinto, and Anthony Reed. Honorable mentions have been given to Thadious M. Davis, Susan Gillman, Daphne Lamothe, Meta DuEwa Jones, Sara E. Johnson, Francesca T. Royster, and Mary Helen Washington.

Other awards sponsored by the committee are the William Riley Parker Prize; 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 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 Sanders Scarborough (1852–1926), brought up in the South, was a dedicated student of languages and literature. He attended Atlanta University and graduated in 1875 from Oberlin College, where he later received an MA. After teaching at various Southern schools, Scarborough was appointed professor of Latin and Greek at Wilberforce University. He later served as president of the university from 1908 through 1920. Scarborough’s published works include First Lessons in Greek (1881) and Birds of Aristophanes (1886) and many articles in national magazines, including Forum and Arena. In 1882 he was the third black man to be elected for membership in the American Philological Association. Scarborough’s areas of interest included classical philology and linguistics with an emphasis on Negro dialects.