STEPHANIE LEIGH BATISTE TO RECEIVE THE MLA’S WILLIAM SANDERS SCARBOROUGH PRIZE FOR DARKENING MIRRORS; META DUEWA JONES TO RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTION

New York, NY – 4 December 2012 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced it is awarding its eleventh annual William Sanders Scarborough Prize to Stephanie Leigh Batiste, of the University of California, Santa Barbara, for her book Darkening Mirrors: Imperial Representation in Depression-Era African American Performance, published by Duke University Press. Meta DuEwa Jones, of the University of Texas, Austin, has received honorable mention for her book The Muse Is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to Spoken Word, published by the University of Illinois Press. The prize is awarded for an outstanding scholarly study of African American literature or culture.

The William Sanders Scarborough Prize is one of fifteen awards that will be presented on 5 January 2013, during the association’s annual convention, to be held in Boston. The members of the selection committee were Thadious M. Davis (Univ. of Pennsylvania), chair; Madhu Dubey (Univ. of Illinois, Chicago); and Alexander G. Weheliye (Northwestern Univ.). The committee’s citation for the winning book reads:

Richly textured and finely nuanced, Stephanie Leigh Batiste’s Darkening Mirrors: Imperial Representation in Depression-Era African American Performance brings intellectual energy to the well-worked period of the 1930s. She persuades that seemingly nation-focused Depression-era texts reference a wider international world. By representing black performance as complicitous and dissenting in imperialism, Batiste moves her rigorous argument beyond critiquing instances of primitivism or exoticism as diasporic or transnational identifications. She demonstrates how a reinforcement of American imperialism in black performances helped strengthen black claims of national inclusion. Her layered approach to the relation of culture, aesthetics, and politics amply demonstrates the potential for interconnecting performance, postcolonial, and cultural studies to bring fresh insights to familiar literary texts. Batiste has produced a theoretically sophisticated and beautifully written reading of race in United States literary and cultural production.

Stephanie Leigh Batiste is an associate professor in the departments of English and black studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She received her PhD in American studies from George Washington University and her BA in sociology from Princeton University. Batiste’s interests encompass the relations of representation, performance, race, and power. Her research and teaching focus on how cultural texts and forms, from literature and theater to the lived performance of individual bodies, act as imaginative systems that help create identity, cultural values, and possibilities of justice. She has published articles in several journals and collections in theater and performance studies. Batiste’s interest in performance is reflected in both scholarship
and practice. She views performance practice as a mode of making theory. She writes, performs in, and occasionally directs dramatic works.

The committee’s citation for the honorable mention reads:

In a boldly written formal analysis of poetry and performance from the writings of Harlem Renaissance luminaries to the works of contemporary word artists, Meta DuEwa Jones relates African American poetics to histories of popular music and performance practices. *The Muse Is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to Spoken Word* places a broad variety of poets and performers in juxtaposition and in conversation. Incorporating gender and sexuality studies into the analysis of jazz poetics and performances, Jones explores gender subversion and queering in a tradition that is more typically read as masculine. Within this powerful tracing of interactive literary and musical traditions, Jones succeeds in expanding ways of understanding the innovativeness of African American poetry and in making a substantial contribution to literary, performance, and cultural studies.

Meta DuEwa Jones is an associate professor in English and African diaspora studies at the University of Texas, Austin. She has recently served as codirector of the Texas Institute for Literary and Textual Studies. Jones received her PhD from Stanford University. She has also received fellowships from the Rockefeller, Woodrow Wilson, and Mellon Foundations. Her articles, interviews, and poetry have been published in *Callaloo, Souls, Writer’s Chronicle, PMS: Poem-Memoir-Story*, and *Rattle*, among other journals. She has coedited special issues for *MELUS: Multi-ethnic Literature of the United States* and *African American Review*. Jones’s current projects include a book-length manuscript exploring poems about visual art by writers such as Natasha Trethewey and text painting by artists such as Glenn Ligon. She is also completing an essay examining form and politics in James Baldwin’s poetics as well as a chapbook of poems about the life and music of Alice Coltrane, entitled “Timbrel and Harp.”

The Modern Language Association of America and its 30,000 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 Boston is expected to draw 8,000 attendees. More information on MLA programs is available at [www.mla.org](http://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; and Lawrence P. Jackson. Honorable mentions have been given to Thadious M. Davis, Susan Gillman, and Daphne Lamothe.

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 Distinguished Bibliography; the Lois Roth Award; the Fenia and Yaakov Leviant Memorial Prize in Yiddish Studies; the MLA Prize in United States Latina and Latino
Highly Mentioned Authors

and Chicana and Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies; 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.