

**DEBORAH L. NELSON TO RECEIVE MLA'S JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL PRIZE  
FOR *TOUGH ENOUGH: ARBUS, ARENDT, DIDION, MCCARTHY, SONTAG, WEIL*;  
SUSAN SCOTT PARRISH TO RECEIVE HONORABLE MENTION FOR *THE FLOOD  
YEAR 1927: A CULTURAL HISTORY***

New York, NY – 5 December 2018 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced it is awarding its forty-ninth annual James Russell Lowell Prize to Deborah L. Nelson, of the University of Chicago, for her book *Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil*, published by the University of Chicago Press. Susan Scott Parrish, of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, is receiving honorable mention for her book *The Flood Year 1927: A Cultural History*, published by Princeton University Press. The prize is awarded annually for an outstanding book—a literary or linguistic study, a critical edition of an important work, or a critical biography—written by a member of the association.

The James Russell Lowell 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 selection committee members were Laura Schaefer Brown (Cornell Univ.), chair; Jay Clayton (Vanderbilt Univ.); Rita Felski (Univ. of Virginia); Sangeeta Ray (Univ. of Maryland, College Park); and Michael Rothberg (Univ. of California, Los Angeles). The committee's citation for the winning book reads:

*In Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil*, Deborah Nelson defines the school of the unsentimental through a beautifully written and compelling study of a diverse set of twentieth-century female cultural and political figures. In the writings and public identities of these women, the refusal of affect and a systematically austere response to reality—even to suffering—constitute a distinctive ethics and aesthetics. Nelson argues that this mode of facing reality—restrained, precise, even cold—reflects a powerful mode of being that offers a tough, concrete, analytic response to the traumas of the twentieth century. Nelson's close attention to these women helps us see the unsentimental as a serious philosophical and political intervention for our time.

Deborah L. Nelson is the Helen B. and Frank L. Sulzberger Professor of English and current chair of the department of English at the University of Chicago. She received her BA from Yale University, her MA from Columbia University, and her PhD from the Graduate Center, City University of New York. She is also the author of *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War America* and articles published in *PMLA*, *American Literary History*, *Contemporary Literature*, *Feminist Studies*, and several edited collections. Nelson led a Mellon-funded Sawyer Seminar called "Around 1948: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Global Transformation" and edited with Leela Gandhi a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* devoted to the topic. She is a founding member of the research collective Post45.

The committee's citation for Parrish's book reads:

Susan Scott Parrish provides a full and deep account of the most cataclysmic river flood in the history of the United States—the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. Her analysis engages with infrastructure, communication, entertainment, literature, race, class, politics, and collective memory to explain and overlay the multiple perspectives that manifest modern apocalypse. Parrish's account of the role of the press and the radio in making the flood into a media phenomenon, her documentation of the way the conditions for African American evacuees aroused allusions to slavery, and her sense of the profound impact of the flood on the creative imagination display the power and scope of this event. *The Flood Year 1927: A Cultural History* provides a model for portraying the impact of climate change disaster on cultural history.

Susan Scott Parrish is a professor in the English department and in the Program in the Environment at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Parrish's research addresses the interrelated issues of race, the environment, and knowledge-making in the Atlantic world from the seventeenth century through the early twenty-first century, with a particular emphasis on southern and Caribbean plantation zones. Her first book, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*, is a study of how people in England and in British-controlled America conceived of—and made knowledge about—American nature within Atlantic scientific networks. It won both Phi Beta Kappa's Ralph Waldo Emerson Award and the Jamestown Prize. A recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Antiquarian Society, and Harvard University's Charles Warren Center, Parrish has received the John Dewey Award and the University Undergraduate Teaching Award for her teaching at the University of Michigan.

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](http://www.mla.org).

First presented in 1969, the James Russell Lowell Prize is awarded under the auspices of the MLA's Committee on Honors and Awards. Recent winners of the prize have been Isobel Armstrong, Laura Dassow Walls, Phillip H. Round, Simon Gikandi, Stephen Greenblatt, Sianne Ngai, David Rosen and Aaron Santesso, Anna Brickhouse, Caroline Levine, and Branka Arsić. In recent years honorable mention has been awarded to Joseph Litvak, Andrew F. Jones, Leah Price, Michael North, and Ramie Targoff.

Other awards sponsored by the committee are the William Riley Parker 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.

James Russell Lowell (1819–91) was a scholar and poet. His first important literary activity came as editor of and frequent contributor to the *National Anti-slavery Standard*. In 1848 Lowell published several volumes of poetry, criticism, humor, and political satire, including *The Vision of Sir Launfal* and the first *Biglow Papers*, which firmly established him in the galaxy of American writers of his day. In 1855 he succeeded Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as Smith Professor of French and Spanish at Harvard. Lowell was the first editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* (1857–61) and was later minister to Spain and Britain. James Russell Lowell served as second president of the MLA from 1887 until his death in 1891.