MLA’S SCAGLIONE PRIZE FOR COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES AWARDED TO HAUN SAUSSY FOR THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF RHYTHM: ORALITY AND ITS TECHNOLOGIES

New York, NY – 5 December 2017 – The Modern Language Association of America today announced it is awarding its twenty-fifth annual Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literary Studies to Haun Saussy, of the University of Chicago, for his book The Ethnography of Rhythm: Orality and Its Technologies, published by Fordham University Press. The prize is awarded annually for an outstanding scholarly work that is written by a member of the association and that involves at least two literatures.

The prize is one of eighteen awards that will be presented on 6 January 2018, during the association’s annual convention, to be held in New York City. The members of the selection committee were Nouri Gana (Univ. of California, Los Angeles), chair; Carmen Nocentelli (Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque); and Robert Allen Rushing (Univ. of Illinois, Urbana). The committee’s citation for Saussy’s book reads:

Haun Saussy’s The Ethnography of Rhythm: Orality and Its Technologies is a major contribution to the field of comparative literature. Through a series of insightful readings that range from texts from ancient Greece, Rome, and China to the Cold War imaginary, Saussy argues that the emergence of the written word—and literature in particular—has always already been shaped by orality. That is, instead of being a primitive antecedent superseded by the written word, orality actually precedes it, or at least is independent from it. Orality is its own technology, an alternative means of inscription, a kind of writing intimately bound with the materiality of the human body. This is a beautifully written and highly erudite intellectual history of the perturbations the oral tradition has brought on the concept of literature.

After many cycling mishaps and hours spent in language classrooms, Haun Saussy is university professor in the Departments of Comparative Literature and East Asian Languages and Literatures, as well as a member of the Committee on Social Thought, at the University of Chicago. He has previously taught at the University of California, Los Angeles; Stanford University; and Yale University and benefited from a Guggenheim Fellowship. Among his publications are The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic, Great Walls of Discourse, a critical edition of the Fenollosa-Pound essay “The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry,” a collection of Paul Farmer’s writings on infectious disease and inequality, and the forthcoming Translation as Citation: Zhuangzi Inside Out. He is now engaged on an internally comparative literary history of premodern East Asia and a study of the fact in Russian formalism.
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; this year’s convention in New York City is expected to draw 7,000 attendees. More information on MLA programs is available at www.mla.org.

The Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literary Studies, awarded under the auspices of the MLA’s Committee on Honors and Awards, was presented for the first time in 1992. Recent winners have been Daniel Heller-Roazen, Sahar Amer, Alexa Huang, Donna V. Jones, Frédérique Aït-Touati, David Spurr, Carmen Nocentelli, Silke-Maria Weineck, Steven S. Lee, and Ayesha Ramachandran.

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 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, Languages, and Cultures; the Matei Calinescu Prize; the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prizes 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.

The Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Endowment Fund was established and donated by Aldo Scaglione to the Modern Language Association in 1987. The fund honors the memory of Scaglione’s late wife, Jeanne Daman Scaglione. A Roman Catholic, Jeanne Daman was headmistress of a Jewish kindergarten in Brussels, Belgium. When arrests and deportations of Jews began in 1942, she worked with Belgian and Jewish resistance units, helping to find hiding places for two thousand children throughout Belgium. She also helped rescue many Jewish men about to be deported as slave laborers by obtaining false papers for them. Jeanne Scaglione’s life and contributions to humanity are commemorated in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.

Aldo Scaglione, a member of the Modern Language Association from 1957 until his death in 2013, was Erich Maria Remarque Professor of Literature at New York University. A native of Turin, Italy, he received a doctorate in modern letters from the University of Turin. He taught at the University of Toulouse and the University of Chicago. From 1952 to 1968 he taught at the University of California, Berkeley, and from 1968 to 1987 he was W. R. Kenan Professor of Italian and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In 1987 he came to New York University as professor of Italian and then chair of the Department of Italian. Scaglione was a Fulbright Fellow and a Guggenheim Fellow, held senior fellowships from the Newberry Library and the German Academic Exchange Service, and was a visiting professor at Yale University, the City University of New York, and the Humanities Research Institute of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In 1975 he was named Cavaliere dell’Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana. Scaglione was president of the American Boccaccio Association and was a member of the MLA Executive Council from 1981 to 1984. His published books include *Nature*.