

# Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

*[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its May 2019 meeting.]*

THE COUNCIL MET ON 22–23 FEBRUARY 2019 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Simon E. Gikandi presided. The officers present were First Vice President Paula M. Krebs, Second Vice President Barbara Fuchs, and Executive Director Judith Butler. The Executive Council members present were Angelika Bammer, Eric Hayot (22 Feb. only), Jean Elizabeth Howard, Ann Kalscheur Suarez, Amanda Licastro, Elizabeth Mathews Losh, David Tse-chien Pan, Anjali Prabhu, Rafael A. Ramirez Mendoza, Leah Richards, Ramon Saldivar, Evie Shockley, Julie Shoults, and Dana A. Williams. The MLA staff members present were Director of Administration and Finance Terrence Callaghan, Director of Scholarly Communication Angela Gibson, Director of Programs and ADFL Dennis Looney, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Publisher of the *MLA International Bibliography* Mary Onorato, Director of Outreach Siovah Walker, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses. Controller Arlene Barnard was present for discussions of the MLA budget (see item 1, below); Head of Convention Programs Karin L. Bagnall was present for the discussion of MLA convention locations (see item 8, below).

On 22 February, the council first convened in executive session to review the council members' fiduciary responsibilities. Then the council convened in regular session to begin working through its agenda. After lunch, the council met in subcommittees to develop short lists for committee appointments. The Subcommittee on Administration and Finance (Simon Gikandi, chair; Ann Kalscheur Suarez; Amanda Licastro; Ramon Saldivar; Evie Shockley) considered appointments to six MLA committees; the Subcommittee on Projects (Judith Butler, chair; Angelika Bammer; Eric Hayot; David Pan; Leah Richards; Dana Williams) was assigned six MLA committees; and the Subcommittee on Meetings and Publications (Barbara Fuchs, chair; Jean Howard; Elizabeth Losh; Anjali Prabhu; Rafael Ramirez Mendoza; Julie Shoults) worked on short lists for five MLA committees. Following the subcommittee meetings and a brief regular session, the council held breakout group meetings related to development activities. At the end of the afternoon, the council reconvened in regular session to continue working through its agenda. On 23 February, the council held two regular sessions and adjourned at 12:42 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The council received the independent auditor's report and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2018, which showed that the association concluded the fiscal year with a deficit of \$258,951 in the

unrestricted fund. The members of the council’s Finance and Audit Committee had met with representatives of the independent auditor, EisnerAmper LLP, before the council meeting; they recommended that the council accept and approve the audit report and financial statements. The council did so.

The council also received the Finance Committee’s report, which reviewed the budget for the current fiscal year using four-month projections. The committee noted that the projected deficit (\$435,480) had increased since October 2018, primarily because of a shortfall in convention registration revenue.

The Finance Committee’s report also reviewed the schedule for the preparation of a budget for the fiscal year 2019–20. The council authorized the staff to prepare a balanced budget.

The council adopted the following resolution relating to financial management. [Note: The president certified the council’s action by signing the original document containing the resolution. The document was then stamped with the association’s corporate seal.]

WHEREAS, article 4, section F, of the constitution of the Modern Language Association provides as follows: “The permanent fund of the association and its other endowment funds shall be administered by a board of trustees composed of the association president and four other trustees appointed by the Executive Council. One of the appointed trustees shall be a current member of the Executive Council, and another of the appointed trustees shall be designated the managing trustee”; and

WHEREAS, the above-described board of trustees for 2019 is composed of Simon E. Gikandi (association president), Eric Hayot (Executive Council member), William Janeway, Domna C. Stanton, and Catharine R. Stimpson, and William Janeway has been designated the managing trustee;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that, upon the direction to Paula M. Krebs as executive director and Terrence Callaghan as director of administration and finance of any member of the board of trustees to effect the purchase, transfer, sale, or other disposition of any security or securities held in the permanent fund or any other endowment funds, the executive director and director of administration and finance be and hereby are authorized and directed to take all such steps and to execute and deliver all such documents as they shall deem necessary or appropriate to effect such purchase, transfer, sale, or other disposition; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the president of the MLA be and hereby is authorized and directed to certify this resolution to any third party requiring delivery of same in order to substantiate the proper authority for the disposition of the securities of the permanent fund or any other endowment funds.

Finally, the council appointed Ann Kalscheur Suarez and reappointed Eric Hayot to the council’s Finance and Audit Committee for 2019.

2. *Revision of the MLA Dues Schedule.* The Executive Council confirmed the action taken by the 2019 Delegate Assembly to revise the dues schedule of the association (see *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 3, May 2019, p. 678). The following table shows the new dues schedule, which will go into effect in September 2019.

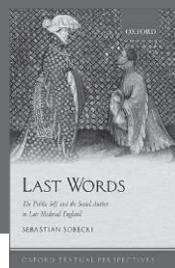
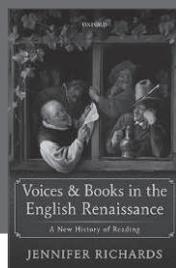
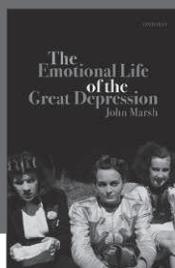
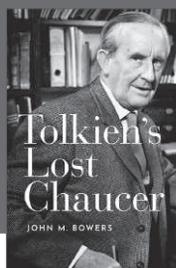
Dues Class	Current Amount	New Amount
B Employed Less Than Full-Time	\$26	\$27
1 Up to \$30,000	\$52	\$53
2 \$30,000–\$50,000	\$82	\$84
3 \$50,000–\$70,000	\$123	\$126
4 \$70,000–\$100,000	\$164	\$168
5 \$100,000–\$140,000	\$205	\$210
6 \$140,000–\$180,000	\$257	\$263
7 \$180,000–\$220,000	\$308	\$316
8 Over \$220,000	\$359	\$368
L Joint Secondary	\$52	\$53
E Student	\$26	\$27

The council also confirmed the assembly’s action to change from one-fourth to one-fifth the reduction in the fee for paid life membership for each completed decade of membership. The assembly took this action to align the fee structure with the new criterion for the granting of life membership after fifty years.

3. *Report of the MLA Trustees.* The council received the trustees’ annual report, which showed that at the end of the calendar year 2018, which they described as a challenging year for investors, the association’s endowment fund and the seven donor-restricted funds that support a number of association prizes had decreased in market value. The trustees reported that, in keeping with the council’s recently revised investment policy (see *PMLA*, vol. 133, no. 5, Oct. 2018, p. 1278), they had retained about 7% of the endowment fund and the largest donor-restricted fund in a socially responsible mutual fund and had transferred the rest to an equity instrument and a bond instrument in Commonfund, an asset management firm. On 1 February, at their annual meeting, they had discussed the performance of these instruments and of the overall market with two Commonfund representatives and were satisfied that Commonfund provides responsible oversight for the funds in which the MLA’s money is invested. The trustees also reported to the council that the current investment allocation between equities and fixed-income instruments was 61%-39% and that they had made the necessary arrangements for the council-approved drawdown from the endowment (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 3, May 2017, p. 741) for the current fiscal year.

4. *Review of Investment Policy.* In conjunction with the MLA trustees’ report, the council reviewed its

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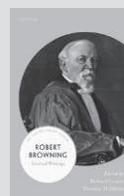
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statement on investment policy and decided that no changes were necessary.

5. *Approval of the October 2018 Council Minutes.* The council corrected the draft minutes of its October 2018 meeting and approved the revised draft for publication in the May 2019 issue of *PMLA*.

6. *Confirmation of Actions Taken between Council Meetings.* The council took two actions between its October and February meetings: (1) The council approved a statement on the closing of the Central European University. (2) The council transferred the responsibility for updating the *MLA Guidelines on Letters of Recommendations*, a document that originated in the council, to the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities and approved relocating the document to the committee's page on the MLA Web site, where related documents on the job search are posted. When these actions were proposed, the council's procedure for making decisions between meetings was implemented (see *PMLA*, vol. 125, no. 5, Oct. 2010, p. 1102), and the full council was given the opportunity to discuss the actions on its electronic discussion list. Since the council was unanimous in its approval of the proposed actions, its advisory committee did not have to act. At the present meeting, the council confirmed these decisions.

7. *Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities.* The council selected Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady, the founders of the Cave Canem Foundation, as the recipients of the 2019 Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities. Derricotte is professor emerita of English at the University of Pittsburgh and served as a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets from 2012 to 2017; Eady is the Miller Family Endowed Chair in Literature and Writing at the University of Missouri and has been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama and the National Book Award. The foundation is a national poetry organization that focuses on the artistic and professional growth of African American poets. Since its founding, it has become an influential movement with a renowned faculty and high-achieving national fellowship. The award ceremony will be held during the 2020 MLA convention in Seattle.

8. *Selection of Sites for the 2023 and 2025 Annual Conventions.* The staff presented detailed information on possible locations for the 2023 and 2025 conventions. For the 2023 convention, the council asked the staff to pursue negotiations on costs with one of the cities that had submitted a proposal and to solicit an additional proposal. The council will make a decision either before the May council meeting, using its electronic discussion list, or at the May meeting. The council selected New Orleans as the site of the January 2025 MLA convention.

9. *Departmental Reports.* Council members had no questions on the annual reports submitted by the MLA department heads, and the council accepted the reports with thanks.

10. *Consideration of the Open Discussion Held during the 2019 Delegate Assembly Meeting.* The council received a transcript of comments and recommendations that delegates made during the assembly's discussion of power differentials in graduate education (see *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 3, May 2019, pp. 684–86) and considered how to follow up on the assembly's recommendations. Council members agreed that the MLA could provide useful guidance to departments on a variety of issues (e.g., conflicted relations between advisers and graduate students, isolation and exploitation of graduate students, models for mentoring, preparation of graduate students for the realities of the job market) and so decided to establish a task force, whose members would be drawn from relevant constituencies and which would be charged and appointed in May. The council also drafted the following statement:

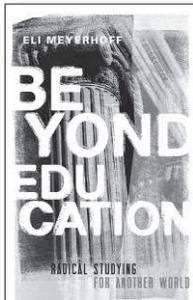
The Modern Language Association unequivocally condemns the exploitation of graduate students and abuses of power in academia. It is dedicated to promoting institutional transparency and fairness in all matters related to graduate education. Reaffirming the MLA's ongoing commitment to advocacy in these areas must include the voices of graduate students. In addition, the MLA recognizes an ongoing responsibility to helping departments and programs respond to the changing job market and the role of the humanities in public life. In response to the recommendations of the Delegate Assembly and the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee, the Executive Council is establishing a task force on graduate education and the changes in the profession. The membership of this task force and its charge will be announced in May.

For resources about the MLA's existing work in advocacy, professional development, and career training, please visit MLA Action Network (<https://action.mla.org/>), MLA Academic Program Services (<https://www.mla.org/Membership/MLA-Academic-Program-Services>), Connected Academics (<https://connect.mla.hcommons.org/>), and Career Resources (<https://www.mla.org/Resources/Career/Career-Resources>).

11. *Review of the Constitutional Amendments Approved by the 2019 Delegate Assembly.* As required by the MLA constitution (art. 13.D), the council reviewed the constitutional amendments approved by the 2019 Delegate Assembly and forwarded them to the membership for the required ratification vote.

12. *Election of a Council Member to the DAOC.* The council elected Anjali Prabhu to the DAOC for a two-year term (2019–Jan. 2021).

13. *Committee Renewal and Revision of Committee Charge.* Anticipating the expiration of its current charge in June 2019, the chairs of the Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession wrote a letter to the council requesting that the council renew the committee for an additional five-year term but with a revised charge that



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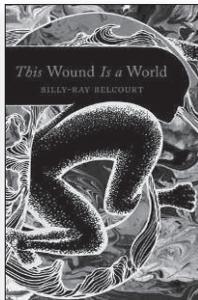
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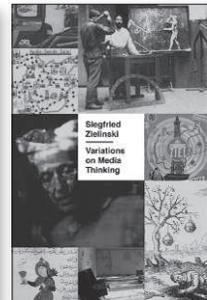
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reflects recent changes in the focus of the committee's work. The council renewed the committee for five years, through June 2024, and approved the new charge that the committee proposed. The revised charge appears below.

The Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession will consider a range of issues that affect teachers of modern languages and literatures in institutions of higher education who hold non-tenure-track appointments (e.g., salary and benefits, workplace issues and conditions of employment, demographics, participation in departmental and institutional governance, academic freedom, professional development). The committee will collect information useful to individuals and departments, identify effective policies and practices, and develop advocacy strategies to address higher education's growing reliance on contingent academic labor. The committee will organize convention sessions, will maintain a public-facing site on *MLA Commons* that can serve as a resource on the relevant issues, and should consider proposing association publications and other projects that address the concerns of non-tenure-track faculty members and the departments that employ them. To broaden the impact of its work, the committee will collaborate with other association

committees on issues of mutual concern and will identify possible collaborations with other organizations for the Executive Council's consideration.

14. *Request from Suspended Forum.* At its October 2018 meeting, the Executive Council suspended the forum LSL Germanic Philology and Linguistics because the executive committee had not supplied the information required for the forum's scheduled review by the Program Committee (see *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 3, May 2019, p. 676). When informed of the suspension, the executive committee decided to pursue an appeal, following steps laid out by staff members in the convention office. At the present meeting, the council received the materials for the forum's scheduled review and a supplementary explanation for the forum's original lack of response to the Program Committee. The council decided to lift the forum's suspension, effective immediately.

15. *Appointments to MLA Committees.* The council made fifty-six appointments to the standing committees of the association and appointed twelve committee chairs or cochairs and two council advisers. The names of all new and continuing committee members, chairs, cochairs, and council advisers will appear on the MLA Web site at the start of their terms.

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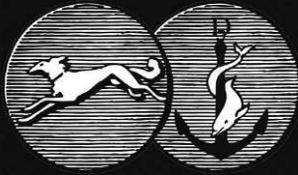
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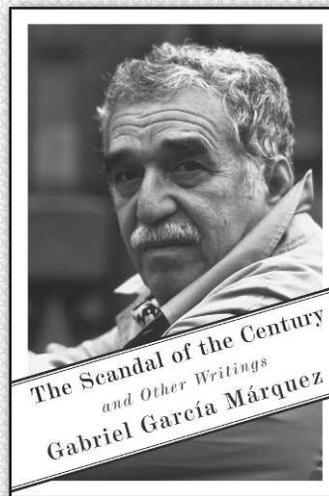
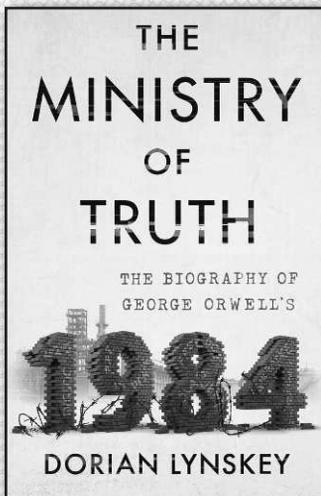
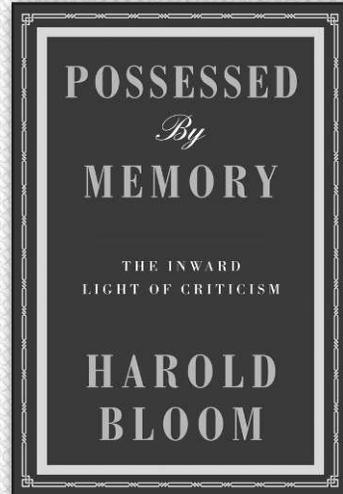
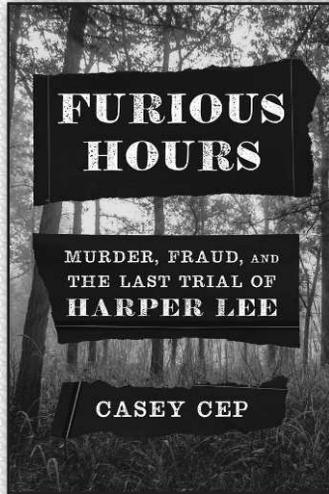
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