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See pages 3 and 4 for information on the 2011 MLA Annual Convention.



Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Carol M. Hightsmith Archive.

Nominations for 2010 MLA Elections

Second Vice President. The 2010 Nominating Committee has selected three nominees for second vice president of the MLA: Sandra L. Bermann, Princeton Univ.; Marianne Hirsch, Columbia Univ.; and Noël Valis, Yale Univ. The person elected will take office on 10 January 2011 and will automatically become first vice president in 2012, serving in that office through the close of the January 2013 convention, and president of the MLA in 2013, serving in that office through the close of the January 2014 convention. A biographical summary for each candidate can be found at the MLA Web site after 23 April (www.mla.org/nominations2010); members will receive voting instructions in the fall.

Executive Council. The Nominating Committee has selected seven nominees for the MLA Executive Council: Barbara K. Altmann, Univ. of Oregon; Debra Ann Castillo, Cornell Univ.; Frederick L. De Naples, Bronx Community Coll., City Univ. of New York; Ana Paula Ferreira, Univ. of Minnesota, Twin Cities; María Herrera-Sobek, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara; Susan B. Muaddi Darraj, Harford Community Coll., MD; and Sean Patrick Murphy, Coll. of Lake County, IL. The three candidates elected will serve four-year terms that will begin 10 January 2011 and run through the close of the January 2015 convention. Background information on the election as well as candidates' biographical summaries can be found at the MLA Web site after 23 April (www.mla.org/nominations2010); members will receive voting instructions in the fall.

Delegate Assembly. The 2010 Elections Committee has arranged contests to replace the eighteen special-interest delegates and the thirty-eight regional delegates whose terms in the assembly will expire on 9 January 2011. The term of office of those elected will be from 10 January 2011 through the close of the January 2014 convention. The names of all Delegate Assembly candidates can be found at the MLA Web site after 23 April (www.mla.org/nominations2010).

Right to Petition. Any member of the association may initiate a petition proposing additional candidates for second vice president, for the Executive Council, and for the Delegate Assembly. Procedures for filing petitions are described in articles 6.E, 8.A.2, and 10.E of the MLA constitution (www.mla.org/mla_constitution; Sept. 2009 *PMLA*, 1073–80). Petitions must reach the executive director before 1 July.



An Agenda for the New Dissertation

In my last column I presented a rationale for expanding the forms of the dissertation in languages and literatures. We will better prepare our graduate students to navigate a scholarly environment in which the modes of production are increasingly collaborative, the vehicles of scholarly dissemination increasingly interactive, the circulation of knowledge more openly accessible, and the audiences for which we compose purposefully varied. We will also better prepare them to develop supple and sophisticated pedagogies for teaching undergraduates whose habits of mind and attention, modes of learning, and repertoire of literacies are changing before us.

How might the dissertation be reimagined as an ensemble of forms? The most commonly proposed alternative to the long-form dissertation is the suite of (three or four) essays. A suite might involve a theme and its variations or include a set of distinct essays, probing different topics, mobilizing different analytics, employing different methods or theoretical frameworks. The emphasis would be on honing skills in the short form, precisely structured, persuasively argued, elegantly written, at once lean in purpose and compelling in the story told. Yet there are other forms that could be combined into an ensemble dissertation. Here are a few possibilities meant to suggest alternatives:

- Composing, displaying, and linking a digital project potentially valuable to other scholars, teachers, and students. As Kathleen Woodward suggests, such projects might be conceived under the rubric of curation rather than argumentation.
- Undertaking a collaborative project with other students or faculty advisers. Such projects might eventuate in a publishable essay, for example.
- Translating an original scholarly source or literary work, reflecting as well on the practice of translation.
- Pursuing a project of public scholarship, as sketched by Julie Ellison and Timothy K. Eatman in "Scholarship in Public," possibly undertaken in a community outside the academy or addressed to issues of public policy.

In imagining possibilities, we have much to learn from our colleagues in rhetoric and composition, who have expanded the range of topics their students pursue and the methodologies they mobilize. However we configure the new dissertation, our commitment must remain to the intellectual quality of the work, the rigor of the research, the elegance of conceptualization, and the significance of the intervention.

I know from responses to my earlier column that many are keen to see this expansion of forms; and from anecdotal evidence, I've learned that discussions about alternative dissertations are taking place on some campuses. I also know that introducing radical change in the concept of the dissertation and thus of doctoral education will not be an easy sell, because many see the current system as the only way to prepare students to write books (and get tenure).

As a former chair, however, I've seen many assistant professors begin their probationary period with the weight of the monograph dissertation on them. They have brought with them a demonstration of expertise, not the draft of a publishable book, no matter how bold or sophisticated or deftly written. They must refine the project's conceptualization, condense the research apparatus buttressing their arguments, pare down those arguments to the essentials, and subordinate disagreements with theorists of reference. When all this is done, the assistant professor in pursuit of a book may be left with the equivalent of one or two articles worth salvaging, anxiety about not yet knowing the large argument, and a sense of disappointment that more of his or her work hasn't entered scholarly conversations. Our doctoral programs could be preparing our graduate students to enter those conversations through multiple routes.

If we agree that an evolution in the dissertation is desirable, how can we make change happen? One or two departments could take the lead and pilot expanded forms of the dissertation. Directors of humanities centers and institutes across the country could inaugurate conversations about how expanded forms might fit into the vision of their institutions. Consortia of departments from peer institutions could meet to share concerns and assess options.

While colleagues in doctoral programs around the country begin serious discussions of this issue, the MLA can work to provide support for change, starting with an analysis of options and a tool kit for implementing alternatives to the monograph dissertation, as well as guidelines for evaluating forms of collaborative scholarship in the humanities. To that end, I am asking the Executive Council to appoint a Task Force on the New Dissertation. Since chairs will be the primary advocates for change and will need to make their case to deans, the MLA can sponsor workshops on the new dissertation at the ADE and ADFL summer seminars and at the annual convention. To track the experience of our graduates in the job market and in tenure-track positions, the MLA can plan for a longitudinal study of success

On the MLA Web Site

Fellowships and Grants Deadlines

Upcoming MLA Deadlines

2010 ADE Summer Seminars

2010 ADFL Summer Seminars

MLA Committee Meetings



and satisfaction rates of graduates of doctoral programs that have expanded the forms of the dissertation.

In its current form, “the dissertation is always looking over its shoulder,” as William Germano observes (14). Isn’t it time for it—for us—to look toward the future?

Sidonie Smith

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Some of the ideas in this column and the Spring *Newsletter* column appear in Sidonie Smith’s contribution to the *Chronicle of Higher Education’s* forum on graduate education (9 Apr. 2010).

Members are invited to comment on the president’s column at www.mla.org/fromthepres.

Suggestions Invited for *PMLA* Editor

At its meeting in February 2010, the MLA Executive Council appointed a subcommittee to oversee the process of selecting a new editor for *PMLA*. Since 1985, when the editorship was separated from the executive directorship, there have been six editors of *PMLA*: John W. Kronik (1985–92), Domna C. Stanton (1992–97), Martha Banta (1997–2000), Carlos J. Alonso (2000–03), Marianne Hirsch (2003–06), and the current editor, Patricia Yaeger, whose term began in 2006 and will end in June 2011.

The members of the subcommittee are Russell A. Berman (chair), Carlos J. Alonso, and Kathleen Woodward. The committee approved the following criteria for the next editor:

1. A wide range of intellectual interests, including a commitment to a variety of scholarly approaches and an understanding of more than one language
2. An awareness of contemporary literary scholarship and critical methods and an openness to new technologies and methodologies
3. An ability to work within the structure of the MLA and *PMLA*, including a commitment to the principles guiding current editorial policy and a recognition of the journal as the organ of a large membership organization reflecting diverse scholarly and critical views
4. Past experience with *PMLA* (as author, referee, Advisory Committee member, or Editorial Board member) or substantial editorial experience with another scholarly journal in the field

The subcommittee invites suggestions from the membership; suggestions should include information about scholarly credentials and editorial experience. Please send your suggestions to Judy Goulding (jgoulding@mla.org) by 15 August 2010.

New Division and Discussion Group Executive Committee Members

All of the MLA’s eighty-seven divisions and most of the forty-nine discussion groups added new members to their executive committees in elections held last year. The lists of division executive committee members and of discussion group executive committee members at the MLA Web site have been updated accordingly (www.mla.org/dandddg and www.mla.org/dgroupexcomm, respectively). Executive committee listings will also be published in the November 2010 issue of *PMLA*.

Convention Invitations

Invitations to the 2011 MLA Annual Convention in Los Angeles will be available online in early September. The invitation includes complete information about convention hotels, travel arrangements, and preregistering at member rates. Members will be able to register for the convention, reserve hotel rooms, and make travel plans quickly and efficiently through the MLA Web site (www.mla.org). Members will be notified by postcard and e-mail when online registration opens.

Allied and Affiliate Organizations Online

Allied and affiliate organizations are learned societies and professional associations whose purposes are closely related to those of the MLA. Many of these organizations hold sessions at the MLA Annual Convention, enriching the range and diversity of the convention’s offerings.

A directory of allied and affiliate organizations is available exclusively on the MLA Web site. The directory contains up-to-date information about organizations’ Web sites, officers and MLA liaisons, and e-mail and mailing addresses. Please visit www.mla.org/orginfo_directory to view the current directory.

Questions and requests for information about these organizations can be sent directly to the organizations. All other correspondence concerning allied and affiliate organizations of the MLA should be sent to Lorenz Tomassi (ltomassi@mla.org), coordinator of allied and affiliate programs.

Convention Interview-Suite Arrangements

The e-mail notification about reserving hotel suites for the convention in Los Angeles will be sent in mid-August to the person who is listed as department chair for 2009–10 on the ADE or ADFL membership record as of 1 June 2010. Departments must be members of the ADE or the ADFL and department chairs must be MLA members by 1 June 2010 to receive the early notification. This notification is a privilege of membership in these associations, but it is not a guarantee that a suite will be available. If you will be away from your office in mid-August, please alert a staff member to look for this e-mail message. ADE- and ADFL-member department chairs who want suites for interviews are urged to make reservations immediately because the number of suites is limited. Chairs should also make certain that, if a two-bedroom suite is requested, another MLA member is listed as a second occupant and that all suite or room occupants involved in a field related to the study of language and literature are preregistered for the convention. Once registration and housing are open to the entire MLA membership (two weeks after the e-mail message is sent to ADE and ADFL members), suites will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.

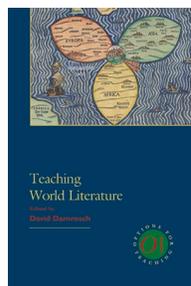
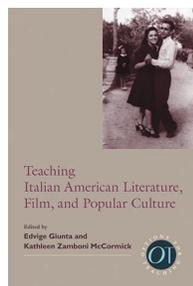
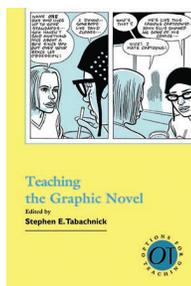
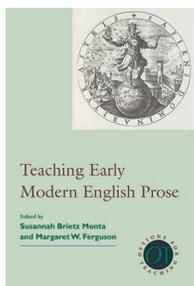
Nominating Honorary Members and Fellows

The MLA invites members and division or discussion group chairs to nominate individuals for honorary membership or fellowship. Honorary membership is given to distinguished foreign scholars, and honorary fellowship is given to distinguished men and women of letters, usually creative writers, of any nationality. A list of honorary members and fellows appears online at www.mla.org/honorary_members. Details on nomination procedures can be found at www.mla.org/nominations_hon, or you may contact Annie Reiser for additional information (646 576-5141; awards@mla.org). The deadline for submitting nominations is 31 January 2011.

Four New MLA Titles Released

- *Teaching Early Modern English Prose*
- *Teaching the Graphic Novel*
- *Teaching Italian American Literature, Film, and Popular Culture*
- *Teaching World Literature*

For complete information on these and other new titles, and to place orders, please visit www.mla.org/newtitles.



How to Be Included in the *MLA Bibliography*

The staff of the *MLA International Bibliography* invites you to submit information about your articles, essays, and books that appeared in 2010 and those from before 2010 that have not previously been indexed.

Bibliographic Information Services receives many of the periodicals on the Master List of Periodicals (searchable at the MLA Web site or through all our vendors). Authors of journal articles may assume that their material will be indexed if the MLA receives the journal; members should check with the journal editor to be sure it was sent to our office. Authors of monographs and articles in book collections (Festschriften, conference proceedings, books of essays, etc.) should ask the publisher to send a copy of the collection to the MLA. Authors in doubt about whether the MLA has received a journal or a book should send materials according to the guidelines found online at www.mla.org/bib_inclusion.

Address materials or questions to *MLA International Bibliography*, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789 (646 576-5053; fax: 646 458-0033; bibliography@mla.org).

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Contingent Faculty Members: More Alike Than Different?

Several readers wrote in response to my last *Newsletter* column, “Three Myths about the Academic Workforce: Let’s Get Real,” to suggest that contingent faculty members have more in common than I claimed. After all, contingency as a category must confer more commonalities than differences as far as working conditions go, correct? The answer depends in part on how you interpret existing data on the academic workforce, so let’s have a look.

First, let’s remind ourselves that non-tenure-track faculty members do the majority of post-secondary teaching today. In the MLA’s Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit, the 2008 study of the demography of the faculty in English and foreign languages shows that in “four-year

institutions, faculty members working off the tenure track, whether full- or part-time, make up about 60% of all faculty members in English and about 50% in foreign languages. In two-year colleges, the figure rises to approach 80% for English and almost 87% in foreign languages” (Laurence 2). In the issue brief released in February by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, figure 3 includes graduate teaching assistants and shows close to 75% of the instructional workforce in all fields in 2007 to be made up of non-tenure-track faculty members.

So what are the differences that lead me to say that all contingent faculty members are not alike? In the first place, not all faculty members off the tenure track teach part-time. The full-time non-tenure-track positions have been growing at a higher rate than any other employment category; between 1995 and 2005, across all fields in degree-granting two- and four-year institutions, the number of full-time non-tenure-track faculty members grew by 67.1%, compared with a 61.8% increase in the number of part-time faculty members and a mere 5.6% in tenured and tenure-track faculty members (2007 ADE Ad Hoc Committee 21). Estimates from the 1993 and 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) suggest that between the two surveys the number of full-time non-tenure-track faculty members teaching English and foreign languages grew by 10.5% and 69.4%, respectively, and constituted over 15% of those teaching in our fields in 2003, when data for the 2004 NSOPF were collected (2007 ADE Ad Hoc Committee 47). Those who teach full-time at one institution usually have a very different experience of department and university life than those who may teach only one course there. Those who teach one course and have full-time work elsewhere—and on the 2004 NSOPF 28.0% the entire non-tenure-track faculty in English and 17.7% in foreign languages reported having full-time jobs outside postsecondary teaching (Natl. Center)—might find their instructional duties more satisfying than those who string together classes at several colleges to make ends meet.

Another important consideration is whether faculty members have long-term or short-term commitments from the institution that employs them. Many of us in the field of Spanish, for example, know non-tenure-track faculty members (full- or part-time) who teach a limited set of courses (often first- and second-year language courses) on a continuing basis. Their students see them semester after semester; they often work side-by-side with their tenure-track colleagues in planning department activities and events.

These faculty members may do advising, attend faculty meetings, engage in curricular planning, and so on. (The MLA believes that all part-time faculty members should be compensated for the work they do in addition to teaching.) Perhaps the department or university has thought carefully about the role that these faculty members play and has created appropriate job descriptions and compensation packages. As long as the balance between the tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty is appropriate (see the MLA Executive Council’s recommended percentages), the current job system can work well in theory.

We also see differences among contingent faculty members in the statistics on earnings. On the 2004 NSOPF, part-time faculty members in the humanities reported earning an average basic institutional salary of just over \$10,000 in calendar year 2003. (All dollar amounts are in 2003 dollars.) Salaries ranged from \$2,000 on average for the bottom 10% of earners to \$22,000 for the top 10%. The graph shows salary ranges for part-time faculty members in the humanities in more detail; 28.1% earned less than \$4,000 in basic salary in calendar year 2003, while 14.0% earned \$20,000 or more. These figures are salaries from respondents’ primary postsecondary employers; some respondents earned additional income from teaching at other colleges and universities. Variations in household income further illustrate differences among contingent faculty members. Household incomes ranged from \$24,000 for the bottom 10% to \$125,000 for the top 10% in 2003. These wide ranges in salary and income suggest significant disparities in standards of living for contingent faculty members and thus in their experiences of contingency.

I hope I’ve indeed shown that all contingent faculty members are not alike in significant ways, but I don’t think our main problem lies in the accuracy of this perception. What is obvious by now is that the classification “non-tenure-track faculty” is too broad to describe all the experiences of those in contingent positions. We should be asking some pressing questions as the academic workforce goes through more changes. Should the majority of those teaching in postsecondary institutions go without the protections of tenure or its equivalent? What is the appropriate terminal degree for different levels of postsecondary teaching? Is the current four-tiered system (teaching and research faculty, tenure- and non-tenure-track faculty) appropriate for today’s students and for the kinds of careers we expect society to afford those who earn graduate

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degrees in our fields? I could go on, but there's one fundamental question I want to leave you with, one I ask myself every day: Can't we as a profession agree to do whatever is necessary so that all academic positions offer adequate compensation, job security, and professional dignity?

Rosemary G. Feal

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Comment on this column at www.mla.org/fromtheeditor.

Salary Ranges for Part-Time Humanities Faculty Members in 2003, by Percentage

