

In This Issue

- 1 2016 Election Results
- 1 Benefit for the Humanities Launches Fund-Raising Campaign
- 2 President's Column • *Diana Taylor* • Inside/Outside: Un-disciplining Disciplines
- 5 Editor's Column • *Rosemary G. Feal* • Advocacy in 2017: What We Can Do Together

Convention

- CFP for MLA 2018 4
- Get Ready for Chairs Registration 4
- New York City 2018: It's Been Waiting for You! 4

Governance

- Delegate Assembly News 3

Grants and Prizes

- MLA Prizes Awarded 3

Publications

- Forthcoming MLA Titles 6

2016 Election Results

In the elections conducted last fall, Simon E. Gikandi (Princeton Univ.) was elected second vice president of the association.

Eric Hayot (Penn State Univ., University Park), Evie Shockley (Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick), and Dana A. Williams (Howard Univ.) were elected to at-large seats on the Executive Council for four-year terms (9 January 2017 through the close of the January 2021 convention).

Fifty-two new representatives were elected to the Delegate Assembly. Sixteen delegates were elected to represent professional-issues categories in the assembly, and thirty-six delegates were elected to represent seven geographic regions in the United States and Canada. A listing of all members of the Delegate Assembly can be found at www.mla.org/del_assembly_members.

In addition, new members were elected to the forum executive committees. The listing of executive committee members at www.mla.org/forum-executive has been updated to include new committee members' names.

Benefit for the Humanities Launches Fund-Raising Campaign

To kick off a new fund-raising campaign, the MLA organized its first-ever benefit at the 2017 convention in Philadelphia. The Benefit for the Humanities, held on Saturday, 7 January, brought in contributions from individual donors and institutional sponsors in support of humanities education. Over one hundred attendees joined outgoing MLA president K. Anthony Appiah and executive director Rosemary G. Feal, who was honored for her years of service to the MLA. The evening included a memorable performance by special guest Anna Deavere Smith from "A Rap on Race," a 1970 conversation between Margaret Meade and James Baldwin.

The benefit is the first step in the MLA's ambitious new campaign, Paving the Way: For the Future of the Humanities, which aims to expand the association's advocacy work and provide greater support and opportunity for contingent faculty members and graduate students. Resources from the campaign will also allow the MLA to expand its national lobbying efforts and collaborate with other organizations to promote the importance of the humanities in our society.

To learn more about the Paving the Way campaign and how you can contribute to this cause, please visit the MLA Web site.



Members of the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession at the Benefit for the Humanities



Inside/Outside: Un-disciplining Disciplines

An undisciplined student, impatient with my high school classes at the British school in Mexico City, I used to jump over the fence a few times a week after roll call and walk home. I'd throw off my tie and blazer (the outward signs of colonial submission) and set about to learn in my own haphazard fashion. I loved Shakespeare but also the Mexican comic and philosopher Cantinflas. When I graduated from high school it was because *Dios es grande* (God is great), as people say in Mexico, and, as important, because students in the British system had to pass the General Certificate of Education administered out of the University of London. The exams were graded in London, where no one cared if I had jumped over the fence to escape school.

I passed: five Ordinary Levels and two Advanced Levels, in literature and history. Not brilliant, but it got me into college, where I learned to navigate the system enough to develop my skills and focus my passions.

This preamble allows me to reflect on the complicated but hopefully productive friction between the “inside” (academia, schools, disciplines) and the “outside,” the post-disciplinary and even the undisciplined approaches to knowledge that take us beyond the restrictive epistemic grids that some of our Eurocentric disciplines and practices have imposed on us. Knowledge (as opposed to facts) is not out there in the world, ready to be found or measured or ingested. Knowing, like memory, like identity, is a *doing* carried out in the present. Sometimes we have to jump over the fence to do it; sometimes we dance or read or write or debate or go to class. It's hard work that we do with others, many different kinds of others, in many languages, and in many places.

The fence, however, has also isolated and delegitimated knowledge. Colonization dismissed the noncanonical forms of knowledge as well as the people who practiced them. The Huarochirí Manuscript, written in Quechua at the end of the sixteenth century by Francisco de Avila, announced, “If the ancestors of the people called Indians had known writing in early times, then the lives they lived would not have faded from view” (41). That he could not see or understand their cultural productions did not mean they ceased to exist or have lasting value. Their rituals, fiestas, songs, architecture, and medical and agricultural systems prove that. But Western educational systems, products and beneficiaries of colonization, were built on the backs of the conquered, the enslaved, the indebted, and the excluded; and not simply because black slaves and indigenous workers built the universities in the Americas that would deny them entrance. These institutions organized knowledge into what the Brazilian legal scholar and sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls “monocultures” (24). He coined “epistemicide” to signal the damages to ways of knowing that fall outside neat divisions and classifications. Scholars across the humanities have

worked for decades to make our universities more inclusive in all ways. Still, there is much we need to unlearn of what our disciplinary regimes have instilled in us and much we need to learn again, differently. Rather than advocate an end to disciplines, I propose that we rescue and repurpose the valuable training from our fields to develop and encourage other, less bounded, decolonial models of critical thought.

Jumping over the fence may be a necessary first step, but it's only the first.

What might the “decolonization of knowledge” look like today? Educators and students have long argued about what we read, who we engage with, and how we structure our environments of learning. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o makes clear in all his work, decolonization includes revalorizing the autochthonous languages that allow us to know, think, and be. Some departments in the humanities are doing wonderful work diversifying their curricula and engaging transdisciplinary thinkers. In these coming years I suspect we'll hear a great deal about reaffirming the centrality of “Western civilization,” getting back to the “great-books program,” and insisting on “English-only.” Shakespeare is fine, but forget about Cantinflas. “Foreign” language departments and courses are disappearing as language requirements decline precipitously. Ethnic studies too have come under attack. The irony, of course, is that what defines the United States, what gives it its unique identity, is its break from Europe. The United States became what it is today because it is European, and indigenous, and African, and Latinx, and Asian. The decolonization of knowledge leads us to recognize and value that complexity and to study the literatures and languages as an inextricable part of the greater cultural, political, economic, and historical context.

Yet as we in the humanities push to liberate our institutions from colonial legacies and to make them more inclusive, we face the onslaught of the neoliberal debunking of education that pushes critical thought to the periphery. The inside-outside model is suddenly reversed. Our
(cont. on p. 3)

(cont. from p. 2)

traditional disciplines that participated in the exclusionary legitimating practices are themselves being excluded. The humanities are being underfunded and pushed over the fence, out of universities in an economic environment that sees more direct benefit from business management and the sciences. I agree with Terry Eagleton when he says that we lose the “university in the full sense of the word when the humanities exist in isolation from other disciplines.” The humanities need to reaffirm, again, the centrality of transdisciplinary critical thinking.

One productive approach to the inside-outside tension might be to embrace a more active and encompassing definition of knowledge that engages the potential of what eludes or troubles our disciplines but that also encourages

Delegate Assembly News

At its meeting on 7 January 2017 in Philadelphia the Delegate Assembly took the following actions.

The assembly conducted elections for the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee, the Nominating Committee, and the Elections Committee. The names of those elected can be found in the relevant committee listing at www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Committees/Committee-Listings.

The assembly received a report and a recommendation that required action. The report of the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution presented two amendments, which the assembly approved. The first amendment aligns the provision for paid life membership in article 3.C with the new criterion for the granting of life membership after fifty years. The second provides for the representation of part-time faculty members on the Executive Council. The amendments will be reviewed by the Executive Council in February and will then be forwarded to the membership for a ratification vote later this year. The assembly considered a recommendation from the Executive Council and the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee for three changes to the association’s dues structure. Delegates approved a restructuring of the dues categories, the adoption of a multiple-year purchase option, and, subject to confirmation by the assembly at its meeting each year, an automatic dues increase of 2.5% annually.

The assembly also received the report of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), a report from the Program Committee on new and revised convention session formats, the executive director’s report, the Finance Committee’s report, and annual reports from the association’s standing committees. Delegates had the opportunity to comment on or ask questions about these reports.

In other business, the assembly approved two resolutions. They will be forwarded to the Executive Council in February. Following the provisions of article 7.B.3 of the MLA constitution, the council will conduct a review of the constitutional, legal, and fiduciary issues posed by the language of the resolutions. If the resolutions do not pose any constitutional, legal, or fiduciary problems, the council will forward them to the membership for a ratification vote later this year.

A complete report of the Delegate Assembly meeting will appear in the May 2017 issue of *PMLA*.

us to come back to hone our critical capacities, pass our exams, and strengthen our institutions. It seems vital, to me, that we work both sides of the fence, now, more than ever.

Diana Taylor

Works Cited

Avila, Francisco de. *The Huarochiri Manuscript: A Testament of Ancient and Colonial Andean Religion*. Edited by Frank Salomon, U of Texas P, 1991.

Eagleton, Terry. “The Death of Universities.” *The Guardian*, 17 Dec. 2010, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/17/death-universities-malaise-tuition-fees.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. Routledge, 2016.

Comment on this column at president.commonsm्ला.org.



Diana Taylor awards the first annual Matei Calinescu Prize to Paul K. Saint-Amour.

MLA Prizes Awarded

The winners of nine annual and eight biennial awards given by the MLA were recognized at the January 2017 MLA convention in Philadelphia. Diana Taylor, then first vice president of the association, presented the prizes at the MLA Awards Ceremony on 7 January. A complete list of this year’s prizewinners appears at www.mla.org/prizewinners.

The MLA’s prizes are awarded under the auspices of the Committee on Honors and Awards, which appoints the members of the selection committees and determines procedures, deadlines, and criteria for eligibility for all prizes. Deadlines for upcoming prizes are online (www.mla.org/awards-competitions). To submit books or to obtain information about any of the prizes, call or write the coordinator of book prizes at the MLA office (646 576-5141; awards@mla.org).

New York City 2018: It's Been Waiting for You!

After sixteen years, the MLA Annual Convention is finally returning to New York City. What else do we need to say? One of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world, New York offers something for everyone, whether you're visiting for the first time or the fiftieth. From the Battery to the Bronx, from Brooklyn to Queens (and Staten Island too), you're invited to explore and enjoy the city's myriad restaurants, museums, theaters, and music venues.

From 4 to 7 January, the convention will be held at the Hilton New York, the Sheraton New York, and the Marriott Marquis in midtown Manhattan. As an attendee, you'll have opportunities to discuss new research, participate in workshops, browse through the book exhibit, and build your professional networks.

The convention features

- more than 800 sessions on a wide variety of topics in languages, literatures, and the humanities
- dozens of workshops, sessions, and consultations dedicated to professional development
- exhibitors showing their latest products and services
- excursions and exclusive tours of major cultural institutions

Visit www.mla.org/Convention to find out more.



MICHAEL MURAZ (VIA FLICKR)

New York City as seen from Brooklyn Bridge Park

Get Ready for Chairs Registration

Registration for the 2018 MLA convention in New York City will open in mid-August for MLA members who are chairs of departments that are 2016–17 members of ADE or ADFL. Chairs who wish to request hotel-suite accommodations in New York City should prepare now to ensure access to early registration for the 2018 convention.

Make sure your department's ADE or ADFL membership is current for the academic year 2016–17. For membership forms or information about your department's ADE or ADFL membership status, please contact Roy Chustek at the MLA office (646 576-5133; rchustek@mla.org).

Make sure your individual MLA membership is current. Join or renew your MLA membership at www.mla.org/join.

Chairs of departments whose ADE or ADFL member record is current by 1 June 2017 will be notified by e-mail between 15 and 30 August with instructions for registering and requesting hotel accommodations. The MLA urges hiring departments to use teleconference interviews to accommodate candidates who are not able to travel to the convention.

CFP for MLA 2018

The 2018 MLA Annual Convention will be held in New York City from 4 to 7 January. Information regarding calls for papers for both session organizers and session participants can be found at www.mla.org/conv_papers. Calls for papers may be submitted until 28 February 2017; calls will not be edited before they appear on the MLA Web site. A call for papers is not a session proposal; program-copy forms for session proposals will be available online by early March and must be submitted by 1 April 2017.

Entities (MLA forums, MLA committees, allied organizations) that want to organize more than one session must post a call for papers. Organizers of special sessions are not required to post a call for papers.

Please note that, because of the new forum structure (implemented for the 2016 convention), divisions and discussion groups now appear as forums on the calls for papers pages. The American Literature Section is included in the

list of allied organizations. An updated list of MLA forums can be found at www.mla.org/Membership/Forums.

Members should familiarize themselves with the guidelines for the MLA convention (www.mla.org/organizing-meetings) before writing to the organizers listed in the calls for papers.

Organizers are responsible for acknowledging all submissions and responding to all inquiries.

Participants must indicate their audiovisual needs when they respond to a call for papers and should check with the chair of the session or with the MLA convention office to be sure that the necessary equipment has been ordered by 1 April 2017.

Members without Internet access who need a printout of the calls for papers should write or call the MLA office to have a copy mailed to them (membership@mla.org; 646 576-5151).



Advocacy in 2017: What We Can Do Together

I write these words ten days after the forty-fifth president of the United States was inaugurated. The landscape for MLA advocacy has already registered the seismic shifts that the new administration set off when it issued executive orders to construct a physical wall between the United States and Mexico and to close United States borders to citizens of seven nations with majority Muslim populations, as well as when it threatened to eliminate the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Many of you wonder what role your scholarly association should play in these times. We all realize that issuing MLA statements on what promises to be a flood of worthy causes could dilute the

power of our collective voice and expend energies best directed toward other actions. At the same time, we recognize that silence can be interpreted as complacency, so as an association we commit to speaking out on those issues that intersect most directly with our professional interests. The MLA also joins with other scholarly associations in making statements that endorse or oppose particular causes (a recent case in point: the joint statement on threats to academic freedom and higher education in Turkey).

The MLA has formed strategic alliances to promote the interests of our members and to engage in advocacy efforts, especially at the federal level. Here are some of our key partnerships:

- The National Humanities Alliance (NHA). As a founding member of the NHA, the MLA has a central role in shaping the advocacy priorities of this Washington-based group. A coalition of more than 170 organizations and institutions, the NHA advocates for humanities education, research, preservation, and public programs. In addition to lobbying for humanities funding, the NHA works to advance policies that support the humanities, develops policy initiatives, and promotes public awareness of the humanities. MLA members can participate in the NHA's National Humanities Advocacy Day and learn how to lobby effectively on Capitol Hill and in their districts.
- The Coalition for International Education (CIE). A coalition of over thirty higher education organizations, the CIE works to support programs, like Title VI and Fulbright-Hays, that promote greater awareness and understanding of the world's languages and cultures. Through symposia, reports, videos, and other campaigns, the CIE educates policy makers, officials, and the media about the importance of United States global competence.

- The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS), a nonprofit education-policy organization with more than one hundred organizational members, works to “ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to learn and use English and at least one other language.” JNCL-NCLIS promotes awareness of language issues through its lobbying and publications and through events like the annual Language Advocacy Day and Delegate Assembly. The event draws language advocates who want to make the case for language education to Congress while learning more about programs and policy issues.
- The Conference of Executive Officers (CEO) of the American Council of Learned Societies brings together leaders from the council's member societies to discuss issues that affect humanities research, teaching, and scholarly communication. The CEO collaborates on policy documents and public advocacy statements, such as the recent statements about the January 2017 executive order on immigration.

In addition to participating in these organizations, the MLA frequently joins with other groups to speak out on specific issues. Recent MLA efforts include a briefing for congressional staffers on adjunct working conditions, led by the New Faculty Majority, and a panel at the Albert Shanker Institute on the emergence of the precariat.

The MLA is often called on to participate in policy discussions at the highest level. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences asked me to serve on the Commission on Language Learning, which has just completed its work. One of the commission's reports, *The State of Languages in the U.S.: A Statistical Portrait*, draws heavily on MLA research and analysis. I will be in Washington, DC, in late February, when members of the commission will present the report at a congressional briefing.

To help members keep track of the association's advocacy efforts and participate more fully, we will soon introduce an advocacy hub to our Web site. You expect the MLA to work hard to advocate on behalf of our common interests, and we commit to doing so with increased vigor in the months and years ahead. In a paper originally delivered at the MLA Annual Convention in 1977, the year I joined the association, Audre Lorde told us, “My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you” (41). I carried a sign with that famous second sentence at the PEN America Writers Resist event at the New York Public Library

(cont. on p. 6)

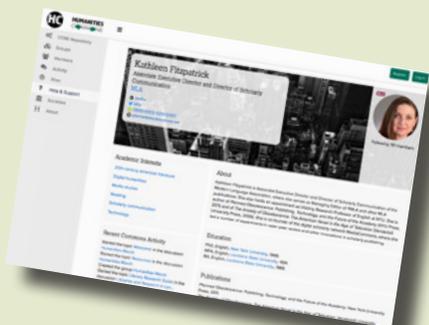
Now Online

2018 Presidential Theme

Humanities Commons

News from the MLA

MLA Bibliography Fellowships



(cont. from p. 5)

this past January, and I thought about the connection between language and action. “For to survive in the mouth of this dragon we call america,” Lorde said, we must speak out and be seen. “And that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which also is the source of our greatest strength” (42). May we recommit to speaking, writing, and acting out, and may you find in the MLA a source of strength.

Rosemary G. Feal

Works Cited

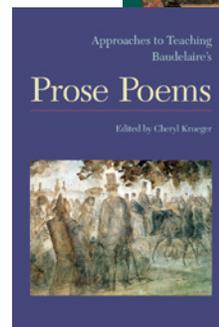
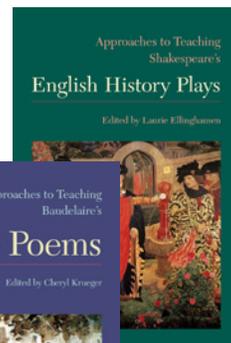
Lorde, Audre. “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action.” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Crossing Press, 2007, pp. 40–44.
The State of Languages in the U.S.: A Statistical Portrait. American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2016.

Comment on this column at execdirector.commonsm्ला.org.

Forthcoming MLA Titles

- *Approaches to Teaching Baudelaire’s Prose Poems*
- *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare’s English History Plays*

For complete information on these and other new titles, and to place orders, please visit www.mla.org/newtitles. MLA members receive a 30% discount on all titles. These MLA titles will also be available in e-book formats.



EDWARD SAVARIA, JR.



A Creative Conversation with the poet Lorna Goodison