Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its October 2007 meeting.]

THE COUNCIL MET ON 18–19 MAY 2007 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Michael Holquist presided. The officers present were First Vice President Gerald Graff, Second Vice President Catherine Porter, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Carlos J. Alonso, Charles Altieri, Dorian F. Bell, Marilyn Gaddis Rose, Anne Ruggles Gere, John Guillory, Jane Harper, Francis Abiola Irele, Yolanda Martínez–San Miguel, Paula Rabinowitz, Hortense J. Spillers, and Priscilla Wald. Executive Council members Mary N. Layoun and Guy Stern were absent. The MLA staff members present were Director of Operations Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Director of Foreign Language Programs Nelly Furman, Managing Editor of MLA Publications and Director of Publishing Operations Judy Goulding, Director of Financial Operations Amilde Hadden, Director of Convention Programs Maribeth T. Kraus, Director of English Programs David Laurence, Director of Book Publications David G. Nicholls, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses.

On the morning of 18 May, the council convened in regular session to begin working through the reports and action items on its agenda. In the afternoon, the council first convened in executive session to review the policy documents that pertain to the MLA staff and the working environment at the MLA headquarters office. Following the executive session, the council reconvened in regular session to continue working through its agenda. On 19 May, the council convened in executive session for the annual review of the executive director and then convened in regular sessions both before and after lunch to complete work on its agenda. The council adjourned at 2:00 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

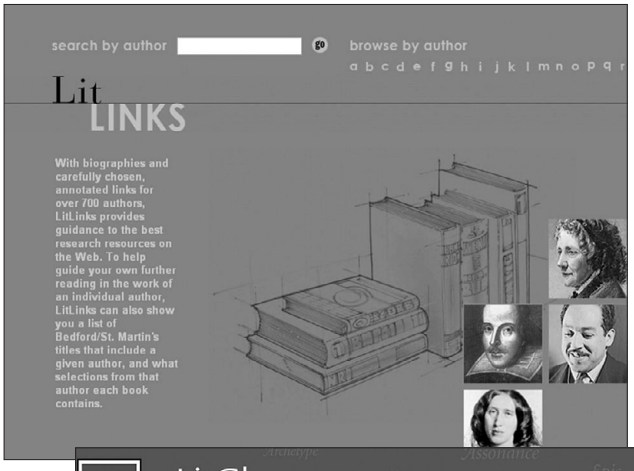
1. *Administration and Finance.* The Finance Committee presented a midyear report on finances with a summary of association income and expenses in the fiscal year 2006–07 after seven months. The committee projected a deficit in the association's unrestricted fund that was smaller than the deficit projected in October 2006. The reduced deficit was attributed to lower association expenses and higher association revenues overall. Rosemary Feal drew the council's attention to membership income, which was lower than projected. She provided statistical information that showed a variety of membership trends (e.g., the renewal rate among current members was down one percent, but the number of new members was up by five percent; income from members in the lower dues categories was down, but income from members in the

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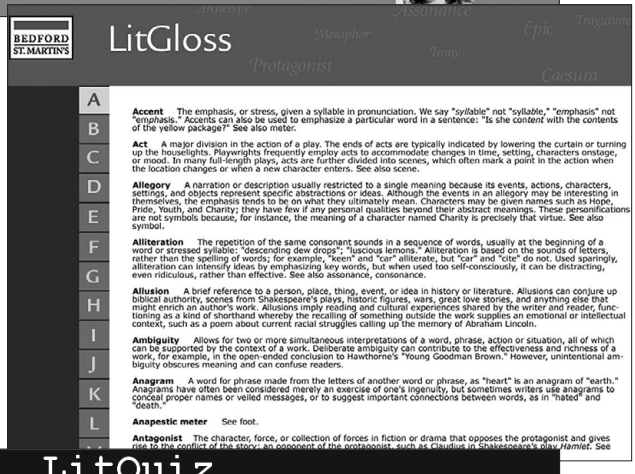
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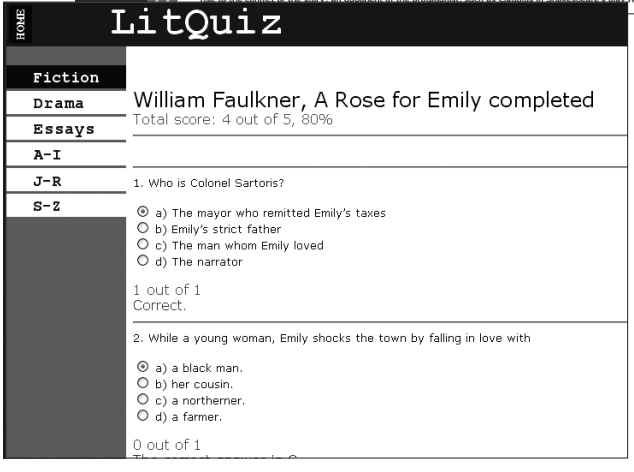
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higher dues categories was up), and she said that the staff would research possibilities for enhancing renewal rates.

The Finance Committee also presented to the council a tentative budget for the fiscal year 2007–08 that projected a surplus of $467,040 in the association's unrestricted fund. The surplus was attributed to the release, during the fiscal year, of the third edition of the *MLA Style Manual* and the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook*. After reviewing the tentative budget for the fiscal year 2007–08, the council voted to approve it.

The council took an action related to its Audit Committee. The council established this committee in May 1988, but no formal statement of the committee's charge was adopted. This omission came to the attention of the MLA staff during the audit conducted by Eisner LLP in the fall of 2006. The staff therefore drafted the following charge for the Audit Committee, which the council reviewed and approved:

> The Audit Committee of the Executive Council of the Modern Language Association of America is charged with overseeing the quality and integrity of the MLA's accounting, auditing, and reporting practices. The committee will hold at least two meetings each year: a preaudit meeting with the independent auditor to define the scope of the audit to be performed and a postaudit meeting to review the association's audited financial statements with the auditor. Results of these meetings will be reported to the full council at the council's next meeting. Additional meetings may be held as the committee or the council deems necessary.
>
> Pursuant to a council action in October 1993, the members of the Audit Committee are the president, the two vice presidents, and one or two other Executive Council members appointed by the council.

The council also reviewed the specific responsibilities that the Audit Committee's oversight role entails.

Finally, the council designated Eisner LLP to audit the association's fiscal year 2006–07 accounts.

2. *Approval of the February 2007 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its February 2007 meeting for publication in the October 2007 issue of *PMLA*.

3. *Confirmation of an Action Taken between Council Meetings.* At its February 2007 meeting, the council reviewed and began to revise a draft response to the report issued in September 2006 by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education, which had been appointed a year earlier by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (see Oct. 2007 *PMLA* 1656). The council also made plans to use the draft response for a second purpose: to comment on the Department of Education's plans to expand its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to include information from colleges and universities on the accountability measures they use. After the meeting, the council made additional revisions to the draft response using its electronic discussion list. Then, following its procedure for making decisions between meetings (see Jan. 2005 *PMLA* 278), the council again used its electronic discussion list to review the final draft of the response and to discuss using it to comment on the proposed changes to IPEDS. Since all council members approved both the final draft and its use, it was not necessary to ask the council's advisory committee to act on the council's behalf. At the present meeting, the council confirmed the decision it made using its electronic discussion list.

4. *Message to the Membership.* The council reviewed information it had received about a debate over the Department of Education's proposed revisions to the federal rules governing accreditation. Of particular concern were proposals that could be seen as requiring accreditors to impose the Department of Education's preferred assessment measures on colleges and universities. Because the Department of Education was opening its proposed rule changes to public comment, the council decided to send an e-mail message to the membership informing members about the situation and asking them to consider whether they wished to comment on the proposed rule changes during the comment period.

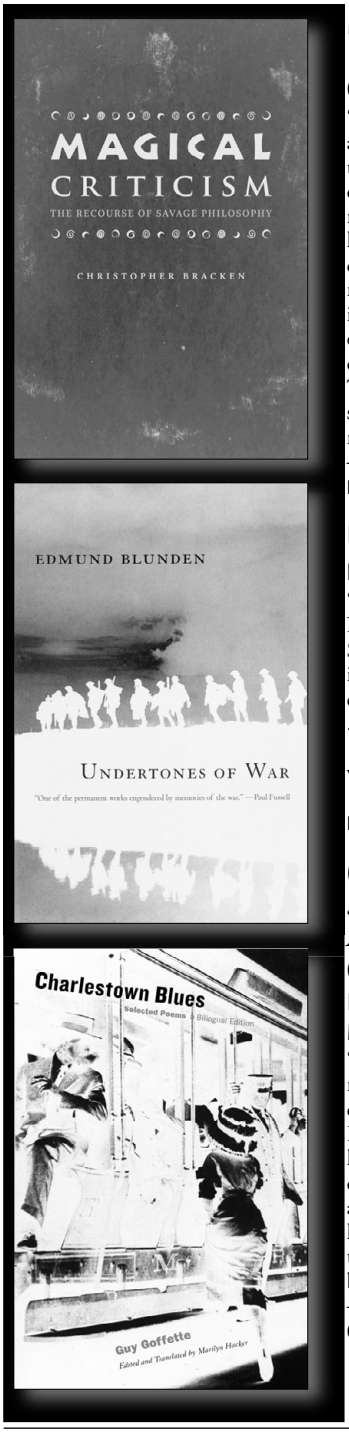
5. *Discussion of a Document Addressing Teaching and Learning in the Humanities.* The council held the discussion it had planned at its previous meeting of a document that would elucidate the values of a humanities education and the criteria that inform teaching in the humanities (see Oct. 2007 *PMLA* 1656). Council members identified a possible tripartite structure for such a document: a frame, a list of the criteria that inform college and university teaching in the language disciplines, and a discussion of appropriate means of assessing student learning. The council charged its existing subcommittee (Gerald Graff, chair; Anne Gere; John Guillory; and Hortense Spillers) with drafting a new statement for the council to review at a future meeting.

6. *Electronic Voting.* The MLA staff consulted with the association's attorneys about the steps to be taken to allow the association to implement electronic voting and confirmed that the MLA's charter and constitution must be amended. The association's attorneys determined that the council could, by a majority vote, approve the necessary amendment to the MLA's charter. They therefore prepared the following resolutions, which the council approved:

> WHEREAS, the Modern Language Association of America (the "Corporation") desires to conduct elections for the Executive Council and to permit members to decide other issues before the membership using electronic voting;
>
> WHEREAS, the Executive Council has determined it needs to amend the Corporation's Certificate of Incorporation in order to provide for electronic voting as described in the foregoing paragraph;
>
> NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED, that the Corporation is hereby authorized to add the following new Paragraph 5 to its Certificate of Incorporation:
>
> > "5. Members of the corporation may take action or consent to any action by electronic transmission."
>
> and it is further
>
> RESOLVED, that the appropriate officers of the Corporation are hereby authorized to sign and file a Certificate of Amendment of the Certificate of Incorporation of the

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> Corporation and to sign such other documents and take such other actions on behalf of the Corporation as such officers may deem necessary or appropriate to carry out the foregoing resolution.

To take care of the necessary constitutional amendment, the council, in accordance with article 13.A of the MLA constitution, proposed an amendment to allow for electronic voting.

7. *Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities.* The council selected Richard J. Franke as the recipient of the 2007 Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities. Franke is chair and CEO emeritus of Nuveen Investments, Inc.; founding chair and director emeritus of the Chicago Humanities Festival; and a past vice chair of the Yale Corporation. The award ceremony will be held during the 2007 MLA convention in Chicago.

The council also adjusted the frequency with which the Phyllis Franklin Award is conferred from every two years to every three years to avoid an overlap in award years with the MLA Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement.

8. *Nomination of an Honorary Fellow.* The council received a recommendation from the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA) pertaining to the nomination of an honorary fellow. Acting on the CHA's recommendation, the council nominated Albert Wendt for honorary fellowship in the association. In accordance with article 3.D of the MLA constitution, the election to honorary fellowship will be conducted during the 2007 Delegate Assembly meeting in Chicago.

9. *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages.* The subcommittee charged by the council with drafting a public document based on the council's discussion of the ad hoc committee's full report and recommendations (see Oct. 2007 *PMLA* 1656) presented its draft to the council. Council members proposed some revisions, and the council authorized the release of the revised document to the public. Council members also identified possible follow-up steps (e.g., the development of an implementation document) and topics for further discussion, including the role of language resource centers on campuses and the common ground shared by English and foreign language departments.

10. *Report and Request from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention.* The council received a second interim report from the ad hoc committee, which met for the third time in March 2007. After securing the approval of the Delegate Assembly and the Executive Council for its initial proposals, one on changing the dates of the annual convention to the first Thursday through Sunday following 2 January and one on eliminating two late-evening paper-reading sessions (see Oct. 2007 *PMLA* 1656), the ad hoc committee had turned its attention to issues related to the structure of the convention and access to the convention program. It presented two new proposals to the council, one for reallocating guaranteed convention sessions and eliminating scheduling inequities and one for developing two new kinds of sessions. Both proposals were prompted by the ad hoc committee's sense, after a year of study, that the current convention program is not flexible enough to accommodate changes that have occurred in MLA members' varied fields of study, to allow for experimentation with new intellectual paradigms, and to encourage work by emerging scholars.

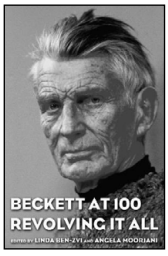
The ad hoc committee's proposed reallocation of sessions would affect all entities that have guaranteed space in the convention program: MLA divisions and discussion groups, allied and affiliate organizations, and MLA committees. According to the ad hoc committee's proposal, MLA divisions and committees would have two guaranteed sessions instead of three, and allied organizations would have one guaranteed session instead of two. Discussion groups and affiliate organizations would retain one guaranteed session. To balance these reductions, the ad hoc committee suggested allowing each entity to submit proposals to the Program Committee for up to two additional sessions. These additional sessions would be awarded competitively and thus would not be guaranteed. In addition, any entity's second proposal for a nonguaranteed session would have to be for a collaborative session involving two separate entities (e.g., a division and a discussion group, two divisions). The ad hoc committee also outlined possible criteria that the Program Committee might apply in adjudicating among proposals for additional sessions. The ad hoc committee also explained the scheduling changes that would accompany the reallocation of sessions. First, the special time slot currently set aside for meetings of allied and affiliate organizations would be eliminated, so that all entities could be on an equal footing with respect to the scheduling of sessions in all available time slots. Second, new evening time slots would be available to accommodate regular sessions as well as social and special events.

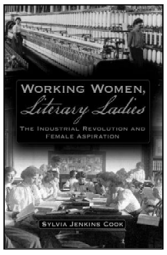
The ad hoc committee's second proposal is to add two new session types—poster sessions and workshops—to the three major types of existing sessions (paper-reading sessions, roundtable discussions, and forums with up to two linked sessions). A poster session is one where stations are set up around a room and session attendees circulate freely among them throughout the session. The presenters at the stations demonstrate projects or resources and foster discussion among attendees who stop by. The workshops that the ad hoc committee proposes would focus either on professional-development activities or on professional, disciplinary, governance, and administrative issues of import. The first type of workshop would be scheduled during special time slots at the beginning of the convention and would require participants to preregister and in some cases to pay a fee. The second type would find its place among the regularly scheduled session offerings.

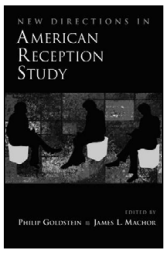
The ad hoc committee asked the council to comment on the proposals and also to authorize the committee to present the proposals to the Delegate Assembly along with a motion that the assembly endorse them. After making generally positive comments, council members asked about poster sessions and their status in comparison with formal paper-reading sessions. In response, Rosemary

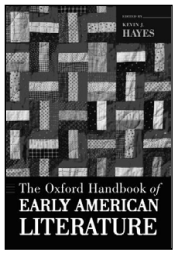
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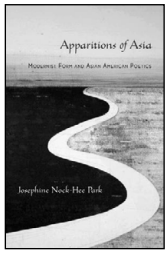
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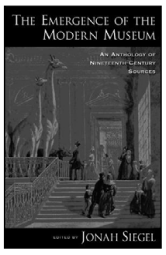












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Feal noted that the 2007 convention program included several poster sessions, which could be highlighted so that members could familiarize themselves with the format. At the conclusion of the discussion, the council authorized the ad hoc committee to seek the endorsement of the two proposals by the 2007 Delegate Assembly.

11. *Follow-Up to Request from the Committee on Community Colleges (CCC).* At its February meeting, the council did not approve the CCC's request for a travel fund to help pay the convention expenses of members who teach in community colleges and asked the CCC to reconsider its request in the light of suggestions from the council aimed at increasing the involvement of community college teachers in MLA activities (see Oct. 2007 *PMLA* 1658). At the current meeting, Rosemary Feal reported to the council on the CCC's discussion of the council's suggestions. Though the CCC was still interested in the establishment of a travel fund, committee members fleshed out several ideas related to the convention: opening to the public the sessions sponsored by the committee and the Discussion Group on the Two-Year College; sending a letter to community college faculty members in the Chicago area to inform them about the sessions; scheduling two of the sessions back-to-back and scheduling a reception for convention attendees from two-year colleges right after the sessions; using the letter to community college faculty members in the Chicago area to encourage them to apply for the association's existing travel grants; sponsoring a 2008 convention workshop for community college faculty members on an appropriate topic and offering $200 stipends to fifty participants. The committee's ultimate goal is to encourage community college faculty members to become MLA members. The council welcomed the committee's work on these proposals.

12. PMLA *and* Profession. Following up on an October 2004 council action (see May 2005 *PMLA* 948–50), the staff asked the council to consider eliminating the listing of members in the September issue of *PMLA*, now that the online listing was more visible and user-friendly, and printing the contents of *Profession* in that issue instead of in a separate volume. The staff reported that an article in the *Newsletter* asking for comment on a possible shift to an online-only membership listing had received mixed responses from members. The council was also asked to consider a more general question about the growth of the four scholarly issues of *PMLA*, which had come about through a higher acceptance rate for submitted articles in recent years and through the development of the special features that were added to the journal with the council's approval during the past ten years.

The council's discussion began with the first question, but the connection between the two questions quickly became apparent. It was noted that moving *Profession* into *PMLA* would, in a sense, add another special feature that falls outside the regular submission process. The council decided to defer a decision on the first question until it could explore more fully the issues raised in connection with the second question. It also appointed a subcommittee (Carlos Alonso, chair; Hortense Spillers; Priscilla Wald) and charged it with examining the issues raised and reporting back to the council in October. In addition, since coverage in JSTOR was mentioned as an advantage of incorporating *Profession* into *PMLA*, the council instructed the staff to approach JSTOR about including *Profession* in the JSTOR archive, which already includes *PMLA*.

13. *Recommendations from the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA).* The CHA forwarded three recommendations to the council. The first recommendation had to do with the new grant program that provides partial travel reimbursements to part-time and contingent non-tenure-track faculty members and unemployed members who attend the annual convention. The committee proposed two changes aimed at increasing the pool of eligible applicants: allowing members in the second-lowest dues category (income from $15,000 to $20,000) to apply, not just members in the lowest dues category (under $15,000), and changing the designation "part-time and contingent non-tenure-track faculty members" to "non-tenure-track faculty members." The council approved both changes.

The second recommendation was to reestablish separate prize-selection committees for the Mildenberger Prize and the Shaughnessy Prize and to make the Mildenberger Prize a biennial instead of an annual prize because it attracts a lower number of submissions each year than the Shaughnessy Prize. The council approved the reestablishment of separate prize-selection committees but deferred a decision on changing the frequency of the Mildenberger Prize. The council suggested trying to increase the visibility of the prize and thereby encourage more submissions.

Finally, the CHA, noting that the Kovacs Prize excludes books written in Spanish, recommended that the association seek funding from the king of Spain for a new prize that would honor books on Spanish or Latin American literatures and cultures published in North America and written in Spanish. The council did not approve this recommendation, because the proposed funding source would be unacceptable to some members of the field to be served. The council asked the CHA to investigate the issue of prize recognition for members who publish books in languages other than English (e.g., Spanish) and to explore funding sources for any potential new prize.

14. *Request from the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession (CSGSP).* Anticipating the expiration of its current charge in June 2008, the CSGSP reported to the council on its past accomplishments and current and future projects. It requested that the council renew the committee for a five-year period with a revised charge that includes an explicit reference to the diversity of graduate programs in language and literature. The council renewed the committee for five years, through June 2013, and approved the revised charge proposed by the committee. The new charge reads as follows:

> The Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession is charged with considering a range of

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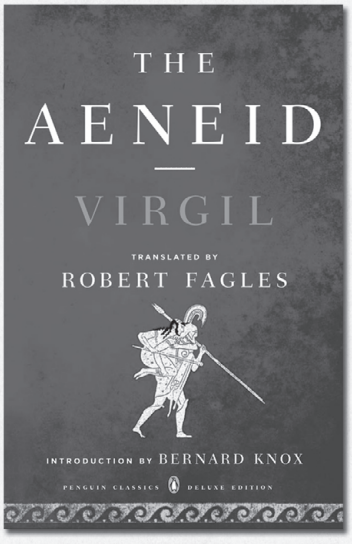
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curricular, intellectual, and professional issues that affect both MA- and PhD-seeking graduate students studying language and literature at different types of academic institutions. The committee should organize convention sessions and consider association publications and other projects that will assist students while they pursue their education, gain experience as teachers, seek employment, and make a transition to the workplace. The committee is also charged with bringing issues that concern graduate students to the attention of the staff, the Executive Council, and other MLA committees that deal with activities that affect graduate students (e.g., the Job Information Service).

15. *Selection of Sites for the 2008 and 2011 Annual Conventions.* The council selected San Francisco as the site of the December 2008 convention and Los Angeles as the site of the January 2011 convention.

16. *Review of Policy on Filming at the MLA Convention.* In response to two expressions of interest from documentary filmmakers in recent years, the council decided to add a provision to the association's existing policy on videotaping and audiotaping at the annual convention. The modified policy, with the new provision added at the end, reads as follows:

- All requests to tape at the convention must be made through the pressroom.
- Only background taping is allowed, not the taping of an entire session.
- A member of the pressroom staff will accompany the people doing the taping.
- Speakers who might be taped must give their permission.
- The presider at a session where taping is being done must make an announcement. If anyone objects, taping will not be allowed.
- A notice at the podium in each meeting room will remind presiders of the need to make an announcement about taping.
- Requests to film the convention as part of a creative or documentary project must be submitted to the Executive Council no later than 15 October.

17. *Recommendations from the Program Committee.* The council received and acted on the Program Committee's recommendations regarding allied and affiliate organizations, divisions, and discussion groups. Five organizations—American Portuguese Studies Association, Asociación de Escritoras de España y las Américas (1300–1800), Association of Departments and Programs of Comparative Literature, Modernist Studies Association, and North American Society for the Study of Romanticism—applied for and received allied organization status. The council renewed for seven years the allied organization status of seventeen societies: Association des Amis d'André Gide, Children's Literature Association, Paul Claudel Society, College English Association, Conference on Christianity and Literature, Joseph Conrad Society of America, Council of Editors of Learned Journals, Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, Dante Society of America, Dickens Society, Feministas Unidas, Robert Frost Society, Margaret Fuller Society, GL/Q Caucus for the Modern Languages, Goethe Society of North America, Nathaniel Hawthorne Society, and George Sand Association. Of the four allied organizations whose reviews had been deferred for one year (see Jan. 2007 *PMLA* 368), three were renewed for the stipulated six years: American Association of Teachers of Italian, American Conference for Irish Studies, and Samuel Beckett Society. The Program Committee will present its recommendation on the fourth organization, American Association of Teachers of Yiddish, to the council at a future council meeting. The council also renewed for seven years the affiliate organization status of two organizations: Association of Writers and Writing Programs and John Clare Society of North America.

The council agreed to defer the review of two allied organizations—American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and Ellen Glasgow Society—until the 2008 Program Committee meeting. In the first instance, the deferral was requested by the society. In the second instance, the Program Committee needed more time to complete its review of the society and obtain answers to questions raised by the materials submitted by the society.

In actions relating to divisions and discussion groups, the council did not approve requests for name changes from the Division on English Literature Other Than British and American and the Division on Anthropological Approaches to Literature. Because the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention is moving toward recommending a process for a thorough reevaluation of division rubrics, the council thought that it was not appropriate to make name changes now. However, the council approved the Program Committee's proposal to ask the membership of the Division on English Literature Other Than British and American to participate in the reevaluation process by joining in a discussion—through e-mail and at a session at the 2007 convention—of division rubrics in general and the place of this particular division in the overall division structure. Finally, the council did not approve a request for division status from the Discussion Group on Scottish Literature but did grant permanent discussion group status to the Discussion Group on Mexican Literary and Cultural Studies.

The Program Committee also reported on its discussion of the handling of requests for memorial sessions. The committee distinguished between sessions that had no intellectual content and those that focused on the scholarship of the person being memorialized. The first type of session could be accommodated during the evening time slots that will become available once the structural changes proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention are implemented. For a scholarly memorial session, it would be appropriate to submit a special session proposal.

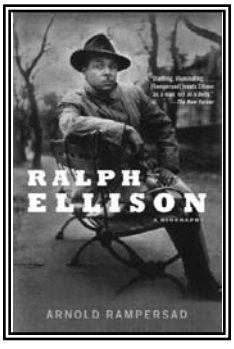
18. *Council Meeting Schedule.* The council approved the following dates for its meetings in 2010: 26–27 February, 21–22 May, and 29–30 October.

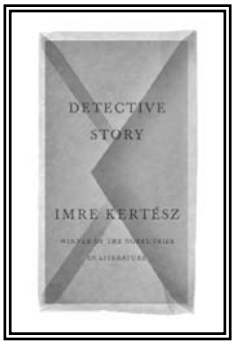
19. *Committee Appointments.* The council made one additional committee appointment. The name of the new committee member appears in the listings of MLA committee members in the September 2007 (Directory) issue of *PMLA* and at the MLA Web site.

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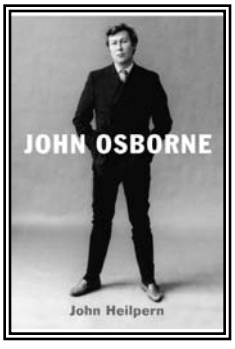
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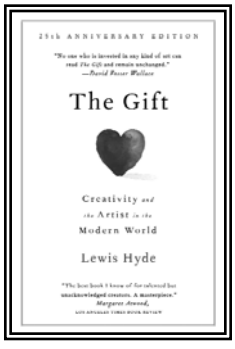
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