Minutes of the MLA Delegate Assembly

THE DELEGATE ASSEMBLY MET ON 5 JANUARY 2019 AT THE HYATT REGENCY CHICAGO. First Vice President Simon E. Gikandi presided. The assembly was called to order at 12:53 p.m. The chair made preliminary announcements about the conduct of the meeting and called for a demonstration of the electronic voting system to be used during the meeting and for an explanation of the light at the podium that would warn speakers when their allotted time was about to expire. The chair also explained that, because the meeting was open to all MLA members and to credentialed members of the press, speakers should have no expectation of confidentiality. He added that tweeting was allowed but that no photography or voice or video recording was permitted. The chair announced the quorum for the meeting, which was 84 delegates, because 168 delegates had signed in for the meeting at the beginning. [Note: Of the 298 delegates, 195 (65.4%) attended all or part of the meeting (see the list that follows for the names of the delegates in attendance).]

1. On behalf of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), Cheryl Narumi Naruse moved the adoption of the agenda that was previously distributed to delegates but with the following modification: item 9 (a), Emergency Resolutions, was to be deleted, since no such resolutions had been submitted. The chair asked if there was discussion of the agenda. Since there was none, the chair asked if there were objections to adopting the agenda as modified. There were no objections, so the chair declared the modified agenda adopted by unanimous consent.

Naruse then offered a motion on behalf of the DAOC that the rules presented to the assembly be adopted, except for the second sentence in rule 6 of the appendix, on individual speeches during the open discussion. This sentence was to be struck because the DAOC's plan for the open discussion did not include individual speeches. This motion occasioned no discussion and no objections. The chair therefore declared the modified rules adopted by unanimous consent.

Again on behalf of the DAOC, Naruse moved that the assembly approve the minutes of the January 2018 meeting as printed in the May 2018 issue of *PMLA*. The chair asked if there were corrections. Since no corrections were offered, the chair declared the minutes approved as published.

2. The assembly elected two of its members, Maria Chouza-Calo (Spanish, Central Michigan Univ.) and Sima N. Godfrey (French, Univ. of British Columbia, Vancouver), to the DAOC for three-year terms (from 7 Jan. 2019 through the close of the Jan. 2022 convention). Voting from a slate of nominees selected by the current officers of the association, the assembly elected Cheng-Chai Chiang (English, Univ. of California, Berkeley), Jacques Lezra (Spanish, Univ. of California, Riverside), Jacqueline Loss (Spanish, Univ.

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of Connecticut, Storrs), and Ifeoma C. Kiddoe Nwankwo (English, Vanderbilt Univ.) to the Nominating Committee for two-year terms (2019–20). Voting from a slate of nominees selected by the DAOC, the assembly elected the following persons to the Elections Committee for two-year terms (2019–20): Thomas Oliver Beebee (Penn State Univ., University Park), for region 3, Middle Atlantic; Rebecca L. Walkowitz (Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick), for region 2, New Jersey and New York; and Andrew Yale (Service Employees Intl. Union), for region 4, Great Lakes.

The assembly also elected César Aira; Tahar ben Jelloun; Samuel R. Delany, Jr.; Gish Jen; Elias Khoury; Claudia Rankine; and J. K. Rowling to honorary fellowship in the association.

3. The assembly was asked to confirm the automatic annual increase of 2.5% in the dues amount for every membership category, rounded to the next dollar, that the 2017 assembly had approved (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 3, May 2017, p. 762). The chair recognized Heather Willis Allen of the DAOC, who presented the chart below, showing the effect of the automatic increase on current dues amounts. She explained that the dues increase was needed to provide funding for new association projects aimed at strengthening member services, including professional development opportunities, and public outreach. She said that the increased dues amounts would become effective in September 2019 if the assembly confirmed the automatic increase.

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

On behalf of the DAOC, Willis Allen moved that the assembly confirm the scheduled dues increase. The chair called for discussion of the motion; no one came forward. The chair therefore asked the assembly to vote on the motion, which was approved by a vote of 139 yes and 27 no.

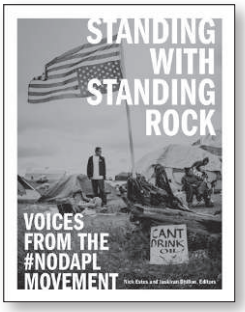
4. The assembly received a recommendation from the DAOC for a change in the fee for paid life membership that was in keeping with recent changes in the association's dues structure pertaining to both granted and paid life membership. Though the threshold for the unconditional granting of life membership had been changed from forty years of membership to fifty and the constitution had been amended to allow the assembly to align the provision for paid life membership with this new threshold for granted life membership, the assembly had never been asked to change the fee structure for paid life membership to specify a one-fifth reduction in the fee for each completed decade of membership instead of a one-fourth reduction. The one-fifth reduction was needed to align with the new fifty-year threshold for the granting of life membership. The chair recognized Maryse Jayasuriya, who presented the recommendation to the assembly and proposed a motion that the assembly approve it. The motion occasioned no discussion, so the chair asked the assembly to vote on it. The vote to approve the motion was 147 yes and 17 no. The chair announced that the change in the fee would become effective when the Executive Council confirmed the change, presumably at the council's February 2019 meeting.

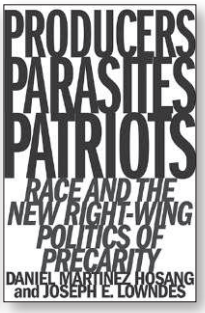
5. The chair called on Cheryl Naruse to present the DAOC's annual report. Naruse commented briefly on the DAOC's October meeting. Since no motions or resolutions had been submitted by the 1 October deadline, the committee's work focused on the report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures (see next item) and the topic of the open discussion. Naruse said that the DAOC endorsed the ad hoc committee's recommendations on resolutions and emergency motions and that she would have more to say about the open discussion topic, Power Differentials in Graduate Education, when the assembly arrived at that point in its agenda (see item 10, below). The chair asked if there were questions or comments on the report; no one came forward.

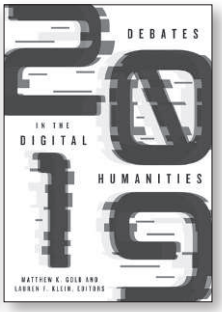
6. The assembly received a revised report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures

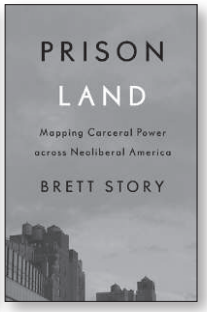
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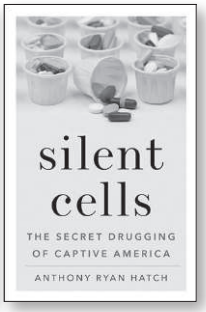
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that took account of the 2018 assembly's discussion of the ad hoc committee's initial report (see *PMLA*, vol. 133, no. 3, May 2018, pp. 762–64). The chair recognized Samer Mahdy Ali, a member of the ad hoc committee and of the assembly, to present the report. Ali highlighted the major change in the resolution process that the ad hoc committee continued to recommend: moving the council's fiduciary review of resolutions from the end of the process to the beginning, in the interest of streamlining the process and increasing membership participation. The ad hoc committee also maintained its recommendations on changing the submission deadline for resolutions and motions from 1 October to 1 September, on increasing the word limit on resolutions from one hundred to two hundred words, and on disallowing amendments to resolutions on the floor of the Delegate Assembly and continued to recommend increased attention to the many other forms of advocacy and collective action that MLA members can engage in throughout the year. The ad hoc committee changed several recommendations in response to the discussions held during the 2018 assembly meeting: the membership vote on resolutions would not be used to determine which resolutions the Delegate Assembly would consider but would be used, as it is now, for the purpose of ratifying the assembly's approval of resolutions and would be conducted as soon as possible after the assembly meeting; supporting signatures would be collected in two stages, ten signatures by 1 September and one hundred by 1 October, instead of requiring all one hundred signatures by 1 September, and signers would be assured that their names would not become public; and a new category of emergency motions would replace emergency resolutions, thereby allowing the assembly to address matters that arise after 1 September. Ali noted that the ad hoc committee's recommendations corresponded to constitutional amendments presented in the report from the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution (see next item), except for the recommendation on emergency motions. If the assembly's discussion of the ad hoc committee's report showed that the assembly wished to implement the recommendation on emergency motions, Ali said that the DAOC would ask the assembly to initiate the necessary constitutional amendment after action was taken on the amendments that the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution had already prepared for the assembly's consideration.

The chair thanked Ali for his presentation and called for discussion of the ad hoc committee's report, which was limited to thirty minutes. A speaker said there were two problems with the revised report. First, the ad hoc committee's recommendations did not correct the fundamental inequity created by the requirement that supporting materials for a resolution be submitted only by the resolution's proposers, an inequity that can be exacerbated when a resolution addresses a political issue about which MLA members may not be well informed. Second, there was no basis for the ad hoc committee's confidence in the ability of the members of the Executive Council and the DAOC to make an objective judgment about a resolution's being in the best interest of the association, especially if any of those members had a hidden political agenda. Since there was no further discussion, the chair asked delegates to turn to the next agenda item.

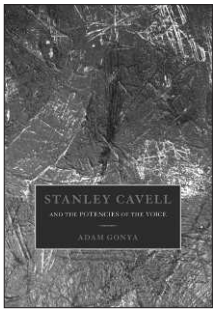
7. The assembly received a report from the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution that consisted of the three amendments to the constitution published on the MLA Web site in early October 2018. The amendments were initiated by the Executive Council (see *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 1, Jan. 2019, p. 206). The first amendment originated in the council. The second and third amendments were based on recommendations for changes to the association's resolution process from the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures. The chair recognized Michelle Brazier of the DAOC to present the report. She said that the amendments would be discussed and voted on separately and would, if approved by the assembly, be submitted to the membership in 2019 for ratification. She added that the amendments would be considered in an order that was different from the order used for the committee's report on the Web site to ensure that the constitution would still make sense if the assembly adopted some but not all the amendments.

On behalf of the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution, Brazier moved that the assembly adopt the first amendment presented in the committee's report, which clarified the scope of and distinction between resolutions and motions; added a provision that motions, like resolutions, may not contain "erroneous, tortious, or possibly libelous statements"; and added provisions stating that resolutions and motions do not place limits on the conduct of members acting as individuals. This multipart amendment to article 9, Delegate Assembly—Responsibilities, read as follows (language subject to change struck, and new language shown in boldface):

> C. The responsibilities of the Delegate Assembly shall be as follows:
>
> 10. In accordance with article 11.C, to formulate and submit to the membership for ratification resolutions on matters of public and institutional policy affecting the study and teaching of the humanities and the status of the language and literature professions represented by the association. Such matters may include proposed or enacted legislation, regulations, or other governmental and institutional policies**,** conditions of employment and publication~~, or~~**;** additional matters that affect the association, its members in their professional capacities, or the dignity of members' work**; or issues of shared concern to the members**. **It is understood that resolutions are not intended to limit the conduct of MLA members acting in their individual capacities but are statements that reflect the views of the organization, as voted on by the membership.**

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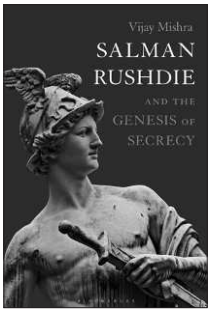


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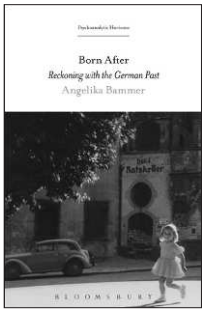


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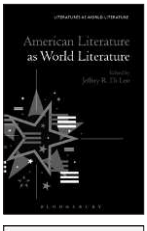


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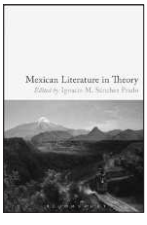


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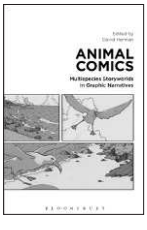
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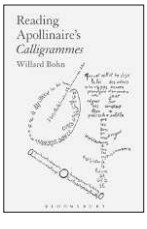


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11. To receive and act on motions. ~~Only~~ **M**otions ~~may be~~ **are** used to ~~call for~~ **recommend action by the Executive Council. Such action may include, but not be limited to,** the establishment of committees, **the formulation of policies,** or **the undertaking** of activities that require the expenditure of association funds. **No motion may contain erroneous, tortious, or possibly libelous statements. It is understood that motions are not intended to limit the conduct of MLA members acting in their individual capacities.**

The chair opened the floor for discussion of the amendment. A delegate repeated a question from the previous day's open hearing about the proposed addition of the phrase "or issues of shared concern to the members" at the end of the second sentence in article 9.C.10—Did the provisions of the first sentence in the article govern the "issues of shared concern," or could a resolution address any issue of shared concern?—and shared the answer given—that a resolution could address any issue of shared concern—so that delegates would understand what they were being asked to vote on. Since there was no further discussion, the chair asked the assembly to vote on the amendment. The assembly approved it by a vote of 132 yes and 25 no.

Again on behalf of the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution, Brazier moved that the assembly adopt the amendments to article 11.C, subsections 3 and 6, which were presented as part of the third amendment in the committee's report. The effect of these amendments would be to change the word limit on resolutions from one hundred to two hundred words; to change the submission deadline from 1 October to 1 September; to increase the required number of supporting signatures from ten to one hundred, to be collected in two steps; to eliminate emergency resolutions; and to prohibit amendments to resolutions on the floor of the assembly. The amendments read as follows (language subject to change struck, and new language shown in boldface):

11.C. Organizing Committee

3. The committee shall receive resolutions submitted by the members of the association under the following conditions:

a. No resolution may exceed ~~one~~ **two** hundred words.

b. All resolutions shall be accompanied by material that provides evidence in support of the resolutions' claims.

c. Resolutions submitted to the chair of the committee by 1 ~~October~~ **September** shall bear the signatures of at least ten members. **Resolutions must garner the signatures of one hundred members by 1 October to be considered by the committee and the Executive Council.**

~~d. Resolutions submitted to the chair of the committee after 1 October, but not later than twenty-four hours before a meeting of the Delegate Assembly, shall bear the signatures of at least twenty-five members. Such resolutions shall not name individuals or institutions in such a way that, in the determination of the committee, a response from the named party must be sought. Such resolutions shall not be acted on by the Delegate Assembly at that meeting unless three-fourths of the members present vote to take immediate action.~~

~~e. No resolution shall be accepted later than twenty-four hours before a meeting of the Delegate Assembly.~~

6. The Delegate Assembly may not propose new resolutions from the floor **or amend resolutions on the floor**.

The chair opened the floor for discussion of these amendments. Since there was no discussion, the chair asked the assembly to vote on the amendments. The assembly approved them by a vote of 127 yes and 30 no.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution, Brazier moved that the assembly adopt the amendments to article 7.B.3, presented in the committee's report as the second amendment, along with the amendment to article 11.C.7, which was presented in the report as part of the third amendment. The effect of these amendments would be to shift the Executive Council's review of resolutions from the end of the resolution process to the beginning and allow resolutions approved by the assembly to be forwarded directly to the membership for ratification. These amendments read as follows (language subject to change struck, and new language shown in boldface):

7.B. The responsibilities of the Executive Council shall be as follows:

3. To conduct a review of the constitutional, legal, and fiduciary issues posed by the language of each resolution ~~approved by the Delegate Assembly~~ **properly submitted in accordance with article 11.C.3**. ~~The~~ **After consulting with the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee and the proposer of the resolution, the** council will ~~then, in a timely manner,~~ either forward ~~to the membership~~ the resolution ~~as approved or with nonsubstantive modifications~~ **to the Delegate Assembly** or determine that it is unable to forward the resolution to the ~~membership~~ **Delegate Assembly** for one or more of the following reasons:

a. The resolution impedes the council's ability to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities.

b. The resolution contains erroneous, tortious, or possibly libelous statements.

c. The resolution, by itself or taken with other resolutions, poses a threat to the association's continuing operation as a tax-exempt organization.

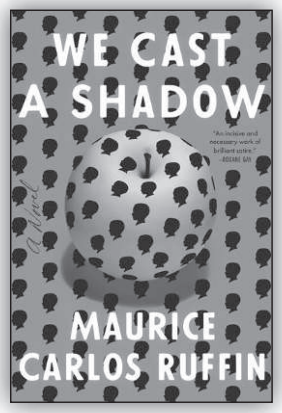
d. The resolution is not consistent with the provisions of articles 2**,** ~~and~~ 9.C.10**, and 9.C.11**.

If the council is unable to forward a resolution to the ~~membership~~ **Delegate Assembly**, it will, at the next meeting of the Delegate Assembly, present the reasons

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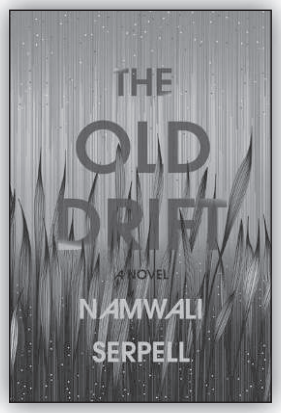


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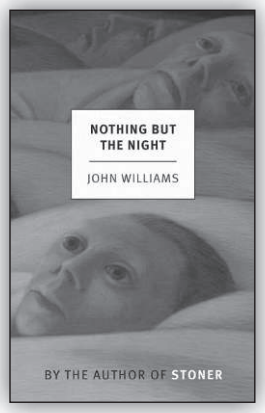


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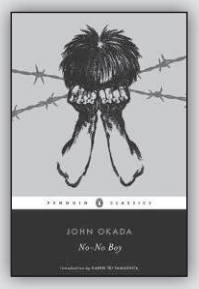


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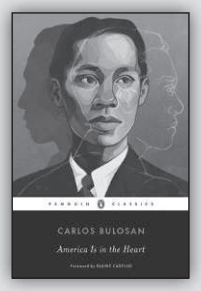
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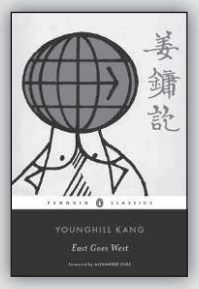
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for its action. The Delegate Assembly may then consider reformulating the resolution.

11.C.7. A majority vote of the assembly shall be required for approval of a resolution. Each resolution so approved ~~must be reviewed by the Executive Council. The council will then, in a timely manner, either forward to the membership the resolution as approved or with nonsubstantive modifications or determine, in accordance with the provisions of article 7.B.3, that it is unable to forward the resolution to the membership~~ **will be forwarded to the membership**. All resolutions forwarded to the membership must be ratified by a majority vote in which the number of those voting for ratification equals at least ten percent of the association's membership. ~~When forwarding a resolution to the membership, the council~~ **The committee** shall establish all relevant dates for the ratification process, including those for the distribution and return of ballots and for the determination of voting eligibility.

The chair opened the floor for discussion of the amendments; no one came forward. The assembly therefore proceeded to a vote on the amendments and approved them by a vote of 145 yes and 15 no. The chair noted that, in accordance with the procedure outlined in the constitution, all the amendments approved by the assembly would be forwarded to the Executive Council for fiduciary review.

8. As had been announced during the presentation of the report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures (see item 6, above), and following the provisions of article 13.A of the MLA constitution, the DAOC asked the assembly to initiate an amendment to allow for emergency motions. On behalf of the DAOC, Michelle Brazier moved that the assembly instruct the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution to formulate and bring before the 2020 Delegate Assembly an amendment to the MLA constitution that provides for emergency motions. The chair called for discussion of the motion. A speaker asked for clarification of the status of emergency resolutions. Brazier said that emergency resolutions had been eliminated and that the proposed category of emergency motions would allow members to submit proposals after the 1 September deadline. Another speaker argued against the motion because it blurred the distinction between resolutions, which are statements of sentiment, and motions, which are requests for action on the part of the Executive Council. Since there was no further discussion, the chair asked the assembly to vote on the motion. The assembly approved it by a vote of 106 yes and 57 no. The chair announced that the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution would be so instructed.

9. The assembly received the report of the executive director, the Finance Committee report, and annual reports from the following association committees: *PMLA* Editorial Board, Publications Committee, Committee on Scholarly Editions, Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*, Committee on Honors and Awards, Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, Committee on Information Technology, Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession, Committee on Community Colleges, Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession, and Committee on K–16 Alliances. The chair recognized Paula Krebs to present the executive director's report and the Finance Committee report. Krebs reviewed a number of items covered in the executive director's report: the debut of the full-text version of the *MLA International Bibliography*; the expansion of the consultancy services that the association offers to college and university departments in our fields; the new research grant and course-development grant programs that are funded through the Paving the Way campaign; and two areas of concern—a decline in book sales and a decline in convention attendance—that are being addressed. Krebs also announced the recent grant award of $1 million from The Mellon Foundation for the establishment of regional summer institutes focused on the integration of reading and writing instruction in developmental writing and first-year composition courses at community colleges and other access-oriented institutions. In closing, she noted that the full report would be published in the May 2019 issue of *PMLA*. The chair invited questions about and comments on the reports; no one came forward.

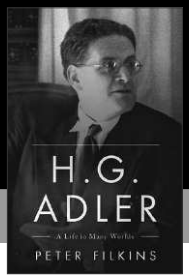
The chair then recognized Leah Richards of the DAOC and the Executive Council to present the reports from the association's committees. She encouraged delegates to read the reports and to send any questions to the MLA office. She also thanked committee members for their work throughout the year. Since there were no comments on or questions about the reports, the chair proceeded to the next item of assembly business.

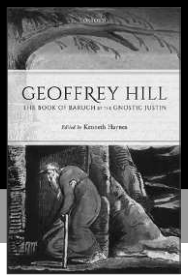
10. The assembly held an open discussion of the following topic: Power Differentials in Graduate Education. The chair asked Second Vice President Judith Butler to preside over the open discussion. After taking the chair, Butler recognized Cheryl Naruse and Michelle Brazier of the DAOC for an introduction to the topic. Naruse said that the DAOC began with the broad topic of power differentials in academia but narrowed the focus to graduate education to situate the discussion in an area that affects all MLA members at multiple points in their careers. Recognizing the sensitivity of the topic, especially for colleagues in more vulnerable positions, and the fact that the assembly floor was not the best place for people to share their personal experiences with power differentials, the DAOC developed an anonymous survey that would protect privacy, give voice to the membership, and provide a basis for the open discussion. Brazier provided additional background information about the survey and thanked all those who responded. She noted that the survey and the open discussion were only the first steps in a longer inquiry by the MLA into graduate education that the DAOC hoped would lead to the formulation by the MLA of guidelines for the profession. Brazier also

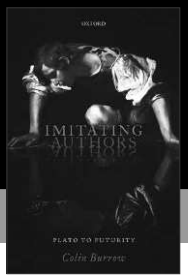
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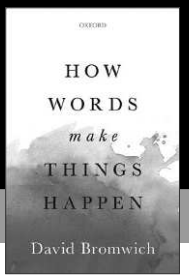
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explained that the DAOC's interest in pursuing a conversation about power differentials in graduate education led the committee to devise a new format for the open discussion involving breakout groups that would enable more interaction among all those in attendance.

Naruse then called on three DAOC members, Maryse Jayasuriya, Angelika Bammer, and Svetlana Tyutina, to present a *PowerPoint* summary of the survey responses detailing what respondents said would be most useful to them (e.g., transparency in terms of requirements, expectations, and processes; professional workshops for graduate students on publishing, modes of scholarship, and the job market; inclusion of graduate students in departmental governance; focused attention on alternative careers; serious preparations for teaching assignments; clear and enforceable rules against various forms of harassment and discrimination), what respondents said were the main problems in graduate education (e.g., arbitrary exercise of power by dissertation directors; lack of clarity about program requirements and rules and expectations for graduate students; inadequate preparation for teaching; lack of professional development workshops; exclusive focus on training for jobs in research institutions), and the main contexts where power differentials manifest themselves in graduate education (e.g., program requirements, teaching assignments and experiences, dissertation committees, preparation for the job market). Tyutina concluded this portion of the introduction to the open discussion by thanking the assembly members—Eileen Abrahams, Anastassiya Andrianova, Thomas Beebee, Jennifer Buckley, Monica Miller, Maria O'Malley, Sushil Oswal, Amanda Rector, Susanne Rinner, and Akiko Tsushiya—who had helped the DAOC process and synthesize the survey responses.

Naruse and Brazier concluded their introduction by asking delegates and observers to gather in groups of five to eight to address three questions over the hour of the open discussion. Twenty minutes was allotted for the small groups to address the first question: What concerns are you bringing to this conversation about power differentials in graduate education? During the next ten minutes of the discussion period, the small groups were asked to write down one or two sentences in response to the second question: What does your group see as the most pressing concern about power differentials in graduate education? After ten minutes, these responses were collected and read aloud by Jayasuriya and Leah Richards of the DAOC. Many of the groups identified the dismal prospects for the type of job that is still most valued as the source of the most pressing concern. This concern tied in with others: how to prepare graduate students for a variety of jobs, the need for appropriate mentoring, the lack of support structures that go beyond the student-adviser model. Several groups focused on faculty members who are disconnected from the realities that graduate students face and who themselves need to learn how to guide and provide support for their students. Also mentioned were faculty members who use their power to further their own interests and maintain a paternalistic system that ignores the needs of graduate students. Another area of concern that a number of breakout groups identified was the lack of transparency or clarity about expectations and procedures in many areas, including mentoring and advising, professional development, setting boundaries in the adviser-advisee relationship to avoid exploitation or abuse, and building structures to ensure accountability.

The small groups were then asked to reconvene for the final ten minutes of the open discussion period to address the third question, on next steps: What can or should the MLA do to respond to your concerns? Written responses were once again collected but were not read aloud at the meeting. In their responses, which were compiled after the meeting, the small groups identified a number of possible next steps, including the creation, perhaps by an ad hoc committee, of guidelines or a best-practices document covering relevant issues (e.g., advising, mentoring, teaching opportunities, preparation for the job market and a variety of types of employment, professional development). The MLA was encouraged to find as many ways as possible—including webinars, convention workshops, and model courses or proseminars—to share information about such topics as career options, résumé building, publishing, and mentoring. It was also suggested that the MLA develop a tool kit for directors of graduate study to assess and remedy problems in their departments and arrange a broader career fair for a range of academic jobs as well as nonacademic jobs.

Naruse thanked everyone for their participation and said that the compiled responses to the second and third questions would be shared with the assembly and the Executive Council, which would decide how to pursue the issues identified during the discussion.

The open discussion came to a close after fifty-eight minutes, at which point First Vice President Simon E. Gikandi returned to the chair.

11. The chair called for the announcement of other items of new business, noting that new proposals could be discussed but could not be voted on until the next assembly meeting. Paula Krebs responded to a question about difficulties that the exclusive contract with a single *MLA Bibliography* vendor creates for student access to the database. The chair once again called for the announcement of additional items of new business; no one came forward.

12. The chair called for announcements. No one came forward.

13. The chair declared the 2019 meeting of the Delegate Assembly adjourned sine die at 3:28 p.m.

Delegates in attendance:

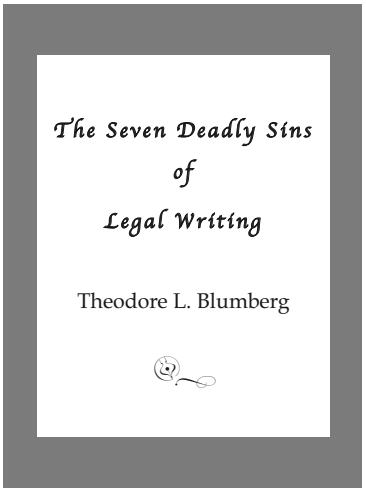
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Members of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee: Michelle J. Brazier, Maryse Jayasuriya, Cheryl Narumi Naruse, Svetlana Tyutina, Heather Willis Allen.

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