

**NeMLA Board of Directors' Meeting
Thursday, March 5, 2020
Marriott Copley Place
Boston Convention
Regis
7:30-11:00 AM**

**Breakfast served at 7:30 AM
Meeting will begin at 8 AM**

In Attendance:

Executive Board Present

Executive Director:

Carine Mardorossian, University at Buffalo

President:

Carole Salmon, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Vice President:

Brandi So, Touro College and University System

Second Vice President:

Bernadette Wegenstein, Johns Hopkins University

Past President:

Simona Wright, The College of New Jersey

Board Members Present

American/Anglophone Studies Director:

Benjamin Railton, Fitchburg State University

British/Anglophone Studies Director:

Elaine Savory, The New School

CAITY Caucus President/Representative:

Francisco Delgado, Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY

Comparative Literature Director:

Katherine Sugg, Central Connecticut State University

Creative Writing/Publishing/Editing Director:

Abby Bardi, Prince George's Community College

Cultural Studies/Media Studies Director:

Maria Matz, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Diversity Caucus President:

Susmita Roye, Delaware State University

French/Francophone Studies Director:

Olivier Le Blond, University of North Georgia

Graduate Student Caucus Representative:

Christian Ylagan, University of Western Ontario

Italian Studies Director:

Emanuela Pecchioli, University at Buffalo

Pedagogy and Professionalism Director:

Maria Plochocki, City University of New York

Spanish/Portuguese Studies Director:

Victoria L. Ketz, La Salle University

Editor of *Modern Language Studies*:

Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University

Women's And Gender Studies Caucus Interim Representative:

Sarah Goldbort, University at Buffalo, substituting for Michelle Tokarczyk,
Goucher College

Editor of *Modern Language Studies*:

Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University

Board Members Absent

German Studies Director:

Alexander Pichugin, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey

Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative:

Michelle M. Tokarczyk, Goucher College

Non-Board Members Present

Incoming British and Anglophone Director:

Thomas Lynn, Penn State Berks

Incoming Diversity Caucus President:

Jennifer Mdurwa, University at Buffalo

Incoming Graduate Student Caucus President:

Dana Gavin, Old Dominion University

Exhibits and Professionalization Coordinator:

Claire Sommers, Washington University in St. Louis

I. Call to Order: Meeting begins at 8:01 AM

II. Introductions

Dr. Carine Mardorossian, Executive Director of NeMLA, welcomes all in attendance.

Board members proceed with introductions.

Dr. Mardorossian introduces a new format for today's meeting, which will begin with new business, followed by discussion and any necessary votes.

III. Executive Director's Report, Carine Mardorossian

51st Annual Convention, Boston, March 5 to 8, 2020

Coronavirus

Dr. Mardorossian is excited to be in Boston, and hopes the conference will be successful in spite of coronavirus. While there have been cancellations, 90 percent of hotel bookings remain. She explained that NeMLA made exceptions to the "no skyping" rules to accommodate members who are affected by the outbreak.

Food and Beverages at Receptions

NeMLA will send reminders about coffee breaks to attendees via the new mobile app, hosted by EventMobi. ED Mardorossian encouraged Area Directors to promote the receptions after the Saturday night special events.

Evening Events

Dr. Mardorossian also encouraged all to attend our other evening events: Maurice Lee will be the opening night speaker on Thursday, March 5, at 7 PM in Salon F, and André Dubus III will be the keynote speaker on Friday, March 6, at 7 PM in Salon F. Dr. Carole Salmon, President of NeMLA, promoted Maurice Lee's contribution to the field and the challenges we are facing in the profession. Andre Dubus III will give a 30-minute presentation on how reading and writing took him away from dark path; this will be followed by a 30-minute interview with Dr. Christina Milletti.

Thanks to the Board

Dr. Mardorossian thanked Board Members for their outstanding work. She thanked Dr. Emanuela Pecchioli, Italian Studies Director, for helping drive and deliver additional items from our University at Buffalo office.

Graduate Students Introducing Speakers

Referring to how friendly NeMLA is, Dr. Mardorossian also thanked Board Members for continuing to recruit graduate student convention attendees to introduce our convention's special event speakers, as well as for helping those graduate students draft their introductions. This program has helped graduate students as well: one student was able to use their newfound contact with the speaker they introduced and accompanied the speaker on a research trip to Columbia.

52nd Annual Convention, Philadelphia, March 11 to 14, 2021

Looking forward to next year, Dr. Mardorossian thanked First Vice President Brandi So for her work on the 2021 convention in Philadelphia, for which she will serve as President. Dr. Mardorossian informed those present that this convention will feature as invited speakers University of Pennsylvania professor Jed Esty and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jennifer Egan.

Future Conventions

Dr. Mardorossian concluded that, while NeMLA continues to grow, the focus is not on additional growth but on maintaining quality. This focus will allow NeMLA to host future conventions in smaller cities, as has been done for previous conventions.

IV. New Business

Absenteeism

Dr. Mardorossian noted that one convention registrant had contacted the Exhibits and Professionalization Coordinator about the Job Clinic and asked her not to tell NeMLA administration that they were not planning to attend. It has come to our attention that some convention registrants pay for convention registration while having no intention of attending, so that their names can appear in the convention program and can be listed on their CVs. Dr. Mardorossian suggested changing the current policy and removing the names of non-attendees from the program.

Dr. Mardorossian motioned for a new policy stating that participants withdrawing six weeks or less before the convention's start date will not have their registration refunded and will have their names removed from the program. A \$25 service fee will be charged for each refund. Membership is, as before, not refundable. Dr. Simona Wright, Past President, seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Livetweeting

Dr. Mardorossian asked about intellectual copyright related to livetweeting NeMLA sessions and whether to address this topic with an online statement.

Dr. Katherine Sugg, Comparative Literature Director, asked which language to include in such a statement. Dr. Maria Plochocki, Pedagogy and Professionalism Director, suggested sending an email to convention attendees about presentation content. Dr. Mardorossian suggested having individuals ask permission before livetweeting. Dr. Elaine Savory, British and Anglophone Director, said that there have been plagiarism accusations against people who take material from social media. Dr. Benjamin Railton, American and Anglophone Director, stated that presentations do expand beyond the people in the room but that livetweeting needed to attribute the words to the speaker. Dr. Sugg asked how audience members should ask for permission to livetweet and how presenters can require this permission. Christian Ylagan, Graduate Student Caucus Representative, suggested that Area Directors remind chairs to ask audience members to tweet responsibly.

Dr. Railton suggested the following language: "NeMLA encourages live-tweeting our sessions but asks that you do so responsibly and with respect to our presenters: make sure to attribute the ideas to the speaker; and if you are planning to tweet more than 20% of the talk, ask permission from the presenter before doing so."

Small Press Sales

Dr. Mardorossian announced that small press will now have the opportunity to sell their books at the convention registration desk. Because tables for the Exhibits Hall can be costly for small presses, NeMLA will consider hosting a table next year for authors to sell their own books at the convention.

Ballast

Dr. Mardorossian introduced improvements made to Ballast, NeMLA's database, for paying registration and membership and submitting session proposals and presentation abstracts. Ballast sold us their license for the early version of the product. Many products require customers to pay maintenance fees to license software—software that can become outdated. The question is about paying for each improvement. Another option for Ballast is to lease its software so the cost of development is not passed onto the customer. Dr. Mardorossian is considering leasing; she will discuss with the Executive Committee.

MLA

Dr. Salmon noted that the Modern Language Association gives people the option to donate when registering to the organization. Paula Krebs, Executive Director of MLA, is attending this year's NeMLA convention. Dr. Mardorossian noted that MLA and NeMLA will be collaborating on joint sessions.

New Board Areas and Directors

Dr. Mardorossian asked about creating new Board Areas and Director positions for two categories: Disability Studies and Composition and Rhetoric. Dr. Mardorossian also wanted to consider how large to make the number of Areas represented on the Board.

Disability Studies

Disability Studies is currently represented by the Diversity Caucus. Dr. Mardorossian noted that Dr. Joseph Valente, incoming Second Vice President to NeMLA, is interested in developing Disability Studies as its own area.

Composition and Rhetoric

Dr. Mardorossian also stated that there are other conventions aside from NeMLA that represent composition, with the 4Cs Convention attracting many sessions in composition studies that could be at NeMLA.

Dr. Plochocki suggested making composition and rhetoric more visible, possibly renaming the Pedagogy and Professional Area to more clearly incorporate composition and rhetoric. Dr. Mardorossian also suggested shifting the focus of Pedagogy and Professionalism to have the CAITY and the Graduate Student Caucuses more involved with topics in pedagogy and professionalism and this board area be focused on composition. Dr. Laurence Roth, editor of NeMLA's journal *Modern Language Studies*, stated that a change to the name of the Pedagogy and Professionalism Area would affect submissions to the journal. Dr. So added that composition is already a secondary area in NeMLA. Dr. Sugg said that, given current academic trends, it makes sense to highlight composition in the title of Pedagogy and Professionalism.

Dr. Salmon motioned to change the name of the area to Professionalization, Composition, and Pedagogy. Dr. Susmita Roye, Diversity Caucus President, seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Renaming American and British Studies

Dr. Savory and Dr. Railton discussed a motion from the Fall 2019 meeting to rename the American and British Areas, as a goal for having the directors of these areas work more closely together.

Dr. Savory and Dr. Railton introduced the goals for this renaming. Dr. Savory stressed that this proposal would center on the colonial and postcolonial component of British. Nothing will be excluded from either American or British areas, but the natural emphasis will make it easier for directors to determine which sessions belong where. Dr. Railton added that this proposal will make NeMLA's conference more interconnected and that changing the Areas' names will better reflect the state of these disciplines: when making the case for the humanities, there is a need to stress global themes and human

connections. Dr. Savory also stated that postcolonialism and diaspora do not feel as connected to NeMLA.

Discussion began among those present at the meeting. Dr. Sugg expressed concern about the titles not being as clear and concise as they could be. Christian Ylagan said there is a historical break: postcolonial is tied to Britain but transnationalism and diaspora are tied to Anglophone. Dr. Railton explained that both American and British are Anglophone and are being delineated for the purposes of this proposal: they can overlap, and sessions still can be cross-listed in both Areas when proposed and approved for the 52nd Annual Convention and future conventions. Dr. Sugg wondered if the proposal makes the Areas clear, adding that “the British Empire” and “colonial/postcolonial” are fading terms. “Diaspora” and “transnational” may also be redundant. Dr. Savory explained there are no perfect terms, but this is a step forward.

Dr. Mardorossian mentioned that Postcolonial Studies is a field that doesn't like its own name. Longer area titles are a challenge as they can be unwieldy. Dr. Railton wanted to remove “Anglophone” from both areas but keep the other words. Dr. Sugg noted that postcolonial has a large showing at NeMLA.

Dr. Mardorossian offered to table.

There was a motion to remove “Anglophone” from the proposed area names. The board voted: 12 Yes, 6 Abstain. The motion went through and would be revisited in the fall. The new names are now “British and Colonial/Postcolonial” and “US and Transnational/Diaspora.”

Bylaw Revision for Second Vice President Soliciting Host Institutions

Dr. So introduced a proposed procedural change to NeMLA's bylaws so that the nominees for Second Vice President will know they are expected to find a local host institution for the convention for which they will serve as President. This change is being implemented in response to difficulties securing certain universities as host institutions.

Dr. Mardorossian clarified that institutions appreciate opportunities to propose speakers and have their logos on convention materials. Nevertheless, it is challenging for any Second Vice President or other NeMLA Board Member *outside* of the host institution to approach local institutions for funding.

Dr. So believed this revised bylaw would help NeMLA find strong Second Vice President candidates while also better informing anyone nominated or self-nominated about the responsibilities for the position of Second Vice President.

Dr. Roye suggested choosing the wording carefully. Dr. Salmon explained that people do not know that planning a convention is a three-year process: if a Vice President is at a school without graduate programs in the languages, there is no built-in network, complicating planning. Dr. So noted that there have been rejections from universities'

deans.

Dr. Salmon motioned to amend the by-laws. Dr. Wright and Dr. Roye seconded. The motion passed unanimously to add the following language to the bylaws:

VI. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee shall be composed of Executive Council. As chair, the First Vice President distributes parameters for selection of nominated candidates to members of the Nominating Committee. The nominating process will produce two candidates and selection of candidates will be based primarily, but not exclusively, on the following criteria: **capacity to secure a local host institutional sponsorship**; years of active and engaged membership and participation in NeMLA; ability to lead; proven service to the profession; strength of biographical statement and vision for NeMLA. After candidates have been selected, all candidates will be notified by the First Vice President. The Nominating Committee is responsible for preparing a ballot of candidates for available seats on the Executive Council (as described in Bylaws VII. B.) to be approved by the Executive Council.

Additional Bylaw Changes

Dr. So also noted smaller changes to the by-laws that involved correcting grammar and other typos; no vote was needed to make the corrections.

Undergraduate Forum

Dr. Mardorossian thanked those working on the Undergraduate Forum and celebrated its continued growth. Jennifer Mdurvwa explained that this year's format will be poster presentations, which will give undergraduates a better opportunity to network and pitch their ideas. Dr. Savory mentioned that two of her students participated last year and had a very positive experience: they still talk about it. Dr. Roye added that one of her students participated and was accepted into graduate school.

Dr. Mardorossian encouraged all Board Members to attend the Forum, which will be Saturday, March 7, 1:30 to 4 PM. Board Members will need to enter their vote for "Best Poster as Chosen by the Board." The printed program for the Undergraduate Forum will be available for review in every tote bag, and an Undergraduate Networking Event and Reception will follow after the Undergraduate Forum at 4:45 PM.

For future conventions, Jennifer Mdurvwa and Dr. Claire Sommers, Exhibits and Professionalization Coordinator, may reach out to the Board for help in vetting submissions to the Undergraduate Forum. As some undergraduates had submitted to regular NeMLA convention sessions, NeMLA will create a separate database for just

undergraduate submissions.

Professionalization

The Job Clinic and the Publishing Mentorship continue to be successful. Discussions to create a separate database for the Clinic are under way.

Exhibitors

NeMLA has a strong reputation among exhibitors. Dr. Mardorossian and Dr. Sommers attended the 2020 MLA convention in Seattle where exhibitors expressed excitement about what NeMLA offers, particularly our new exhibitor-sponsored workshops—which have had more than 100 people sign up.

V. Executive Board and Committee Reports

First Vice President's Report, Brandi So

Dr. So discussed next year's conference theme, "Tradition and Innovation: Changing Worlds Through the Humanities." She said she wanted the theme to be political and wanted everyone to bring their passions and personal commitment to the conference and take a practical approach on how literature relates to and affects the world around us.

Second Vice President's Report, Bernadette Wegenstein

Dr. Bernadette Wegenstein, Second Vice President, stated that funding has been secured for next year's 53rd Annual Convention in Baltimore, Maryland, March 10 to 13, 2022. Dr. Wegenstein noted that there is a new dean coming in at Johns Hopkins University. The JHU Humanities Center will also contribute.

The conference theme will be related to the environment and caring about the world around us, as well as a concentration on "charm city vs. harm city" in the conference location: Baltimore is on the rise, but there are still areas of great poverty, Dr. Wegenstein said. She hopes to make connections with other arts organizations.

Jennifer Mdurwa is happy to contact her alma mater, Loyola University Maryland.

Past President Report, Simona Wright

50 Years Volume

Dr. Wright shared the news about NeMLA's volume in celebration of its 50 years going to print in April or May.

NeMLA Italian Studies

The next issue of *NeMLA Italian Studies* is also in progress.

Dr. Wright noted that it is her final year on the board and thanked Dr. Mardorossian, Dr. So, and Dr. Salmon.

VI. Language Director & Caucus Reports***Modern Language Studies*: Laurence Roth, editor**

Dr. Roth encouraged submissions to *Modern Language Studies*, especially innovative, creative work, and asked that all attending the meeting encourage others to submit.

Dr. Roye believed that NeMLA is unique: other organizations do not have the journals that we have!

American/Anglophone: Benjamin Railton

Dr. Railton mentioned a drop in seminars in the American area.

Dr. Railton highlighted the tour of the Boston Athenaeum that he has organized for convention attendees.

Elections for the next American Studies Director will begin in winter. Dr. Railton already recruited an interested faculty member from Pennsylvania State University and would welcome additional nominations. Dr. Railton said he was also tweeting the call for nominations, as were NeMLA's social media fellows.

British/Anglophone: Elaine Savory

Dr. Savory thanked everyone on the board and said she is happy to keep collaborating with NeMLA now that her term was over. She mentioned Dr. Valente, her area speaker in a talk co-sponsored by the Diversity Caucus, and welcomed the new area director for British and Anglophone Studies in attendance, Thomas Lynn.

Comparative Literature: Katherine Sugg

Dr. Sugg shared that Comparative Literature had many strong panels.

One session had 40 abstracts but did not request a second session. Dr. Mardorossian encouraged all area directors to recommend and request second sessions when that happens. Dr. Mardorossian also mentioned that for future conventions NeMLA will have a general pool of abstracts that were declined by the sessions to which they were proposed and would then be available for other chairs to vet and select to have the minimum number of abstracts for their sessions. This pool will be searchable by

keyword.

Creative Writing/Publishing/Editing: Abby Bardi

Dr. Bardi completed her first year as Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Directors and said she wanted to increase the presence of creative writing at NeMLA. The challenge is that NeMLA's annual convention is scheduled close to the convention for Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP); nevertheless, Dr. Bardi said she wanted to raise awareness about NeMLA.

An edited collection based on one of NeMLA's creative writing panels is coming out.

Dr. Bardi also has the goal of having writers sell their books at the convention.

Cultural Studies & Media Studies: Maria Matz

Dr. Matz noted that Cultural Studies and Media Studies at NeMLA was growing: this year's convention has 66 sessions and several roundtables, but there is only one seminar. Adaptation has become a popular sub-group at the convention. Dr. Mardorossian added that the number of requests for third sessions had increased significantly this year; however, for next year's convention, it will make more sense to offer more seminars and fewer third sessions, as there will be fewer conference rooms available at next year's hotel site.

French: Olivier Le Blond

Dr. Le Blond announced this year's speaker for the French Area Event: popular author Patrick Autréaux, who will read from his work. The Unconscious in Translation, NeMLA's new sponsoring exhibitor, will host a signing of Autréaux's book after the Special Event on Saturday.

Dr. Salmon encouraged all area directors of languages to contact cultural diplomatic attachés and writers-in-residence to assist with developing new sessions and inviting new speakers. Dr. Salmon also suggested having a common topic across all special events for increased visibility. Dr. Mardorossian added that a cultural institute near the convention hotel could be a good resource, as they may contribute by holding a reception or paying for transportation.

German: Alexander Pichugin

Dr. Pichugin could not attend, but the incoming German area director, Charles Vannette, will introduce the Special Event speaker, Renate Ludanyi.

Italian: Emanuela Pecchioli

The number of Italian seminars was the same as in previous years, Dr. Pecchioli said.

Three sessions did not want to change to seminars, citing a lack of preference for that format.

This year, Italian is the sole area sponsor for Millicent Marcus, a very interdisciplinary speaker.

Dr. Pecchioli noted the lack of medieval and Renaissance studies in session proposals. Dr. Sommers noted that, in the Job Clinic, finding scholars in early modern has been a problem; however, she added that there may be an increase in the presence of early modern studies the following year, as the Renaissance Society of America (RSA) will host its convention in Dublin. Dr. Mardorossian suggested more board-sponsored sessions in early modern studies: area directors can contact her to propose such sessions. Dr. Sugg mentioned that Richard Schumaker and Dr. Sommers grew the Classics area by proposing sessions; she also noted the need for more panels in studies of the 15th to 18th centuries.

This being Dr. Pecchioli's final year as Italian Studies Director, she thanked Dr. Mardorossian and the Board.

Pedagogy and Professional: Maria Plochocki

Dr. Plochocki noted her area's diverse sessions and workshops offering hands-on advice. She asked for clarification on the minimum number of participants required for a seminar, as she noted difficulties emerging when participants withdraw. She said roundtables have less pressure. Dr. Matz said that people appreciate seminars and having papers sent in advance.

Dr. Plochocki also advocated that NeMLA needs to allow participants, especially contingent faculty and graduate students, to be able to list more than one institutional affiliation.

Dr. Le Blond suggested that directors and chairs clarify the maximum amount of time available for all presentations.

Dr. Savory noted that many sessions have been harmed by the coronavirus.

Dr. Roye pointed out that NeMLA travel funds are not available for those participating in only convention roundtables. Dr. Mardorossian said that participants should consider presenting on one roundtable but also one paper panel or paper seminar, and she said that it is easy to help chairs change the type of their sessions from one format to another when needed.

Spanish/Portuguese: Victoria L. Ketz

Dr. Ketz identified an increase in the number of sessions, for which she credits the convention site in Boston. Dr. Ketz also saw an increase in the number of sessions in

disability studies and ecocritical studies.

Dr. Ketz said that this year's convention overlaps with Foreign Language Awareness week, the first week in March, and asked to avoid this in the future.

Dr. Ketz also asked about staggering the dates and times for speakers. Dr. Salmon mentioned lunchtime as a possibility for hosting a speaker. However, Dr. Mardorossian noted that the only problem with lunch Special Event would be the absence of a lunchtime reception, and Dr. Savory pointed out that the audience would be smaller. Dr. Mardorossian added that special events would compete with regular sessions.

Dr. Ketz asked about hosting special events outside of the convention site, such as what was done for NeMLA's 2018 convention in Pittsburgh. Dr. Mardorossian explained that NeMLA must pay a minimum amount of money in food and beverage minimums at the contract hotel, which is done through receptions.

Dr. Mardorossian suggested more collaboration among area directors to increase audience participation at each.

Women's & Gender Studies Caucus: Sarah Goldbort

Sarah Goldbort discussed the upcoming elections for Caucus positions, especially to replace the Board Representative who had to withdraw due to illness. The Caucus's mentorship program will continue to be offered on Saturday morning.

Diversity Caucus: Susmita Roye

Dr. Roye collaborated with Dr. Savory to invite this year's area speaker, Professor Joseph Valente.

Dr. Roye also announced the winner of the Postcolonial Essay Award, Ngwaba Ijeoma Ann, Federal University of Oye Ekiti, for the essay "Re-writing the Nation: History and Re-Historicisation in Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*."

Dr. Salmon suggested adding language about the essay awards to prohibit submitting the same essay for different prizes. Dr. Mardorossian asked board members to notify her of the names of prize winners before they are contacted in order to avoid potential conflicts. Dr. Salmon asked about adding language to the web site; however, Dr. Roye and Dr. Railton noted that the web site already asks participants not to submit twice. Dr. Mardorossian also noted that CAITY and the Graduate Student Caucus coordinate before determining and notifying award winners to avoid similar overlap.

Graduate Student Caucus: Christian Ylagan

Christian Ylagan told attendees that Nicole Lowman, the previous President of the

Caucus, stepped down and would be delivering her baby soon.

He congratulated Dana Gavin, incoming president, on winning the recent election.

He asked about identity verification for voting and projects.

He anticipated, based on previous years, that there will be 217 travel awards for next year's convention. There is currently a 30-percent success rate for applicants, but he would like to review the budget due to the increased number of applications, as graduate students are some of NeMLA's more indigent members and need travel support. He also wished to streamline the travel award guidelines, along with other details of the Caucus, and to maybe remove the Job Clinic from the Caucus web page, as the GSC no longer oversee it.

He also wished to stress leadership over alt-ac so there is no overlap with NeMLA's other professionalization initiatives.

CAITY Caucus: Francisco Delgado

Dr. Delgado wished for CAITY to see greater engagement with the community. The CAITY Twitter account doubled its followers. There were 59 travel award applications, of which 57 were eligible, and 39 were awarded. However, because there was confusion about who is eligible for applying for these travel awards, Dr. Delgado suggested clarifying what is meant by "contingent."

He also asked everyone to spread the word that elections are occurring for President of the Caucus—there are 3 people running.

VII. Meeting Adjourned

Dr. Mardorossian thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 AM.