

**NeMLA Board Meeting
March 21, 2019
Gaylord National Resort
DC Convention
Eastern Shore 1
7:30 AM-11:00 AM**

Executive Board Present

- Carine Mardorossian, University at Buffalo, Executive Director
- Simona Wright, The College of New Jersey, President
- Carole Salmon, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Vice President
- Brandi So, Stony Brook University, Second Vice President
- Maria DiFrancesco, Ithaca College, Past President

Board Members Present

- Benjamin Railton, Fitchburg State University, American Literature Director
- Elaine Savory, The New School, British Literature Director
- Katelynn DeLuca, Farmingdale State College, CAITY Caucus President and Representative
- Katherine Sugg, Central Connecticut State University, Comparative Literature Director
- Christina Milletti, University at Buffalo, Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Director
- Maria Matz, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Cultural and Media Studies Director
- Claudia Esposito, University of Massachusetts Boston, French and Francophone Language and Literature Director
- Alexander Pichugin, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, German Language and Literature Director
- Nicole Lowman, University at Buffalo, Graduate Student Caucus Representative
- Emanuela Pecchioli, University at Buffalo, Italian Language and Literature Director
- Maria Plochocki, City University of New York, Pedagogy and Professionalism Director
- Margarita Vargas, University at Buffalo, Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Director
- Rachel Spear, Francis Marion University, Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative
- Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University, Editor of *Modern Language Studies*

Board Members Absent

- Susmita Roye, Delaware State University, Member-At-Large, Diversity

Non-Board Members Present

- Derek McGrath, University at Buffalo, Administrative and Marketing Coordinator
- Alexandra Lindner, Georgetown University, Local 2019 Liaison

- I. Call to Order, 8 AM
- II. Introductions of Board Members
- III. Approval of Fall 2018 minutes and of the Spring 2019 meeting agenda

No corrections were requested. Minutes were approved.

- IV. Executive Director's Report

2019 Convention

Attendance: We have about 2,100 attendees who booked hotel rooms and about 1,850 registered attendees. The number of sessions seems to be increasing each year. Dr. Mardorossian wants to keep statistics over the years about which sessions are drawing attendees.

Staff: Staff for this year's NeMLA convention include Sarah Goldbort as Graduate Student Assistant, Claire Summers as Professionalization/Exhibitor/Job Clinic Coordinator, Brandi So as consultant, Solon Morse as Graphic Designer, Derick Ariyam and Michael Becker as Database Managers, and numerous Graduate Student Fellows, some of whom will be videotaping and photographing the convention, and almost all wearing white "Fellows" ribbons.

Funding and Benefits: For this year's convention, NeMLA used surplus money to offer members numerous perks, including videotaped event, professional headshot photographs, social media coaching, shuttles back and forth to the National Mall, free giveaways, and an Undergraduate Forum.

Undergraduate Forum: In fact, the Undergraduate Forum, happening later today at the convention, is already popular and successful: deans paid for undergraduates to attend, so they are not paying out of their own pockets. Dr. Mardorossian encouraged Area Director to attend the Undergraduate Forum. Some Board Members have already volunteered to serve as judges of the short poster presentations to determine winners of prizes. Dr. Mardorossian also asked Board Members to look out for undergraduates by the free buttons they are wearing, to mentor undergraduates—and to make sure to be welcoming to them.

Posters: The undergraduate posters and conference posters will be moving around so they can be seen in different locations.

Networking: Dr. Mardorossian encouraged Board members to be present at the Undergraduate Forum and other networking opportunities for early career faculty and students, including the nightly receptions and Sunday brunch. A discussion opened up with the Board members about how NeMLA will encourage follow-up after networking.

Dr. Mardorossian suggested sharing the results of the Undergraduate Forum with NeMLA members online and in the newsletter. As well, the Undergraduate Forum presenters are now listed as members, so they will continue to receive updates about NeMLA through emails and the newsletter.

Undergraduate Blog: A Board member recommended the Undergraduate Forum attendees organize their own blog about how their thoughts and feelings, the impact going to graduate school, and more so that they don't lose contact with each other. Dr. Mardorossian said that is something NeMLA can look into.

MLA Executive Director: Also, MLA's Executive Director, Paula Krebs, is in attendance at this year's convention.

Local Events: Usually, NeMLA sponsors reduced or free admission to local museums. However, because Washington, DC, has numerous museums with free admission, we instead focused on spending money on shuttles from the Gaylord to the National Mall.

Graduate Student Engagement: To give graduate students opportunities to professionalize, we again have recruited some of them to introduce our invited speakers. This opportunity allows the graduate students to network and to meet with notable scholars to discuss their own dissertations.

Workshops: There are a lot of workshops because of how popular they have been. We are charging because last year, lots of people signed up, but didn't show up, which meant that people in workshops on the wait list could not attend. We are hoping that the charge will mean that people who sign up and pay will show up.

Job Clinic: The job clinic has been expanded to include the mentoring and publishing initiative, thanks to Claire Sommers, who recently completed her PhD in Comparative Literature.

Social Engagement Activities: We are continuing with our social engagement challenges: people can get free registration next year if they submit photos of their panel. Our oldest NeMLA bag will also win free registration (as NeMLA is encouraging reusable totes).

Second Sessions: The second sessions were all accepted this year. We have a few that have 3-3.

Exhibitors: We have a problem with exhibitors this year: besides our regulars, two exhibitors paid for a package, a massage medical company and a travel agent. We are letting it happen. Let's see how this goes this year (these exhibitors do not make NeMLA any money), and let us know if these exhibitors present any problems.

Planning for 2023, Baltimore, and Future Conferences

The future convention will take place in Boston in 2020. Incoming President Carole Salmon has secured Boston University as local host institution, and Andre Dubus III and Maurice Lee as keynote and opening speakers.

Recruiting Speakers: Dr. Mardorossian asks that Area Directors survey their members after the 50th Annual Convention to solicit recommendations for future speakers. She also recommends that Area Director increasing efforts to have co-sponsors and collaboration with local institutions and cultural centers in the host city to bring in speakers and enhance the annual convention. Such collaboration also will increase the number of people available to help with the convention and help NeMLA network with other organizations.

Underrepresented Areas and Periods: Dr. Mardorossian also asks that the Board reconsider for the next convention how to handle Board-sponsored sessions. These sessions allow Board Members to propose sessions in underrepresented areas and time periods. Every year is different in terms of what area is going to be underrepresented, and sometimes these underrepresented fields are very major fields. The Board Members can propose sessions and find chairs later. It doesn't matter how many sessions the Board proposes.

Outgoing and Incoming Board and Board Nominations

We are looking for candidates for Second Vice President. This year, we had one candidate for Second Vice President, Bernadette Wegenstein, previously a NeMLA invited speaker and also a documentary filmmaker. Her partner was instrumental in helping NeMLA secure tax exemption in Maryland. We are trying to network to find someone from the location where the conference will take place. Dr. Mardorossian has surveyed membership for people from local areas this year without finding anyone interested at this time. Therefore, Board Members are strongly encouraged to recruit from the host city for the 2023 convention.

President Simona Wright suggested the Executive Board could be instrumental in deciding. NeMLA could potentially change the bylaws in light of the fact that it is difficult to match the hotel with the sponsorship. This topic should be discussed with the Executive Board before voted on by the overall Board. Second Vice President Brandi So added that, ideally, we would like two people from the local host city for the year where the convention is held.

New Journal

Dr. Mardorossian is planning a new film and media journal, potentially digital only, in conjunction with the University at Buffalo's Digital Media Program.

V. Officer Reports

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A. President's Report, Simona Wright

Dr. Wright thanked Dr. Mardorossian for being an asset to the NeMLA team, especially as she saw first-hand with Dr. So the work done in December during an on-site visit to the Gaylord National.

Dr. Wright thanked Georgetown for being generous and supportive, specifically the Italian Department, which is also providing some musical entertainment on Saturday night.

Special Events: Dr. Wright thanked Area Directors for recruiting wonderful speakers for the 50th Anniversary Convention. The opening address is Cameroonian author Imbolo Mbue, discussing her novel *Behold the Dreamers*, and the keynote address is Homi Bhabha. Dr. Wright also thanked Dr. Mardorossian for beautiful posters to promote these events.

Italian Events and NeMLA Italian Studies: NeMLA invited three poets from Italy who are going to speak and present their poetry on Friday. To coincide, the newest issue of *NeMLA Italian Studies* features eight Italian poets who publish in English, with each poet introduced by an introductory essay.

Meet the Authors: In addition to the Italian studies event, other sessions include "Transnational Italian Poetry" (Italian Studies), "A Conversation with Martine Sonnet: Ecrire Paris, habiter Paris" (French), and "Mame Fatou Niang and Julien Suaudeau" (Francophone)

Special Thanks: Dr. Wright thanked Laurence Roth for his leadership on NeMLA's journal *Modern Language Studies*, as well as being grateful for professionalization and social and cultural activities to help junior members and staff members who work so hard to succeed. An example of this is Claire Sommers presenting Homi Bhabha. It is important to recognize the work of these junior members. Dr. Wright finally thanked everyone for their work.

B. First Vice President's Report, Carole Salmon

New Board Members: Dr. Salmon began by welcoming new board members: Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Director Abby Bardi, French and Francophone Language and Literature Director Olivier Le Blond, and Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Director Victoria L. Ketz

Host Institution for the 2020 Convention in Boston: Dr. Salmon has been working with the Dean at Boston University in preparations for the 51st Annual Convention.

2020 Keynote Speaker for "NeMLA Reads Together": NeMLA has already confirmed its keynote speaker, Andre Dubus III, and as with last year, this "NeMLA Reads Together" event will offer free copies of his book for discussion, *Gone So Long*. Dr. Mardorossian

added that NeMLA will modify the book option: at the 2018 brunch, books by the 2019 opening speaker were given to members for free—which is counter to attracting independent bookstores in the local area, creating untenable competition. Therefore, NeMLA is working to have independent bookstores at the convention to sell the books at the end of any speaker's event.

Call for Proposals and Abstracts: Dr. Salmon encouraged everyone to network and remind attendees about upcoming deadlines.

Undergraduate Participation: Dr. Salmon hoped NeMLA could continue the Undergraduate Poster experience, so Board members were encouraged to reach out to their own undergraduate students over the next year, especially to mention that Boston is an excellent destination for undergraduates touring different graduate schools.

Inviting Speakers: Dr. Salmon encouraged Board members to collaborate to attract speakers. She also recommended contacting Boston's numerous consulates and embassies, especially speakers who may be visiting Boston at the time of our convention, thereby saving on travel costs for NeMLA.

51st Annual Convention Opening Speaker

Host Institution

C. Second Vice President's Report, Brandi So

Dr. So began by mentioning that she's been with NeMLA since 2010 and has been involved with every aspect. She is grateful for the Executive Board and the way that they offer mentorship.

Summer Fellowship: As in previous years, NeMLA has seen a relative decrease in the number of applications. But one fundamental change is that award recipients' engagement with NeMLA has seen dramatic improvement. Applications are extremely diverse, with applicants traveling to numerous countries. Dr. So is especially excited about the poster sessions next year and encourages the Board to consider how to enlarge and promote these poster sessions. Dr. So added that while there has been a problem engaging with Summer Fellows in the past, this year one of the fellows has been a NeMLA member since 2010, and all others have been members for at least two years.

Second Vice President Nominations and Host Cities: As Second Vice President, Dr. So offered her input on what goes into the position in order to encourage nominations for next year. The Second Vice President usually selects the host city for the convention the year when they will be President of NeMLA. However, this was not the case for Dr. So, as Philadelphia was already chosen as part of a multi-year agreement, which Dr. So says is crucial for NeMLA.

2021 Host Institution: With NeMLA in Philadelphia in 2021, Dr. So is seeking support from the University of Pennsylvania. NeMLA already has strong connections with the University of Pennsylvania: Jennifer Egan, the 2012 keynote speaker, is the writer in residence, and Charles Bernstein, a professor in English and Comparative Literature, was previously at NeMLA's host institution, University at Buffalo.

Non-Profit Pennsylvania Tax Status: Dr. So has been working hard to secure nonprofit status in Pennsylvania for NeMLA. Pennsylvania declined nonprofit status, even after an appeal, due to specific state regulations. Dr. So is contacting legislators and working with tax officers. Dr. So concluded that it is important for NeMLA to consider how we engage our membership and how regularly we go to certain cities, which may mean potentially incorporating in other locations.

D. Past President's Report, Maria DiFrancesco

Dr. DiFrancesco began by saying how honored she is to have served with NeMLA. She offered this advice to Board members: have compassion, support young people, set boundaries, and always be reflective and willing to strategize. Dr. DiFrancesco thanked Dr. Mardorossian, Dr. So, and NeMLA's Grad Student Fellows who have been instrumental to this conference.

Book Award: NeMLA received 15 submissions, fewer than the 19 manuscripts received in 2018. Therefore, NeMLA must work to reach out to those working on quality manuscripts and dissertations.

E. *Modern Language Studies* Report, Laurence Roth

Dr. Roth began by thanking Dr. Wright and Dr. Mardorossian.

Modern Language Studies will feature a special issue on "the specter of horror," currently being evaluated.

Dr. Roth asked Board members to encourage more submissions from their peers.

VI. Language and Caucus Director Reports

A. American Area Report, Benjamin Railton

Dr. Railton explained that he looked through gaps in the convention program to make sure to fill them in with sessions.

The American Area has cosponsored with the Cultural Studies and Media Studies Area and the Spanish and Portuguese Language Area for Saturday evening's talk by Aviva Chomsky. He encouraged continuing such collaboration for the Boston 2020 convention.

He also discussed the value to drawing upon the resources and opportunities available in Boston. He welcomed input and suggestions from Board members.

B. British/Anglophone Report, Elaine Savory

Dr. Savory reinforced the importance of diversity, and because the Anglophone world is tied closely to postcolonial studies, it seems NeMLA must consider interdisciplinary connections. She encouraged more attention to cross-listing Anglophone sessions with other areas, perhaps with environmental studies and transnational diasporas, as well as hosting a forums at future conventions to bring together people across disciplines. She wants to forward these recommendations to members for their input. She also emphasized that session and abstracts submissions were varied in topic and that few were declined on the basis of quality. Dr. Mardorossian suggested NeMLA may consider re-naming certain areas and suggested a formal proposal to the Board. Dr. Mardorossian also emphasized that new areas can be created by the Board as well to address new needs.

Dr. Savory also suggested greater outreach to book publishers.

C. CAITY Report, Katelynn DeLuca

Dr. DeLuca said that CAITY is considering offering its Travel Award in languages other than English.

Dr. DeLuca also announced that she is stepping down at CAITY President and Board Representative.

D. Comparative Literature Report, Katherine Sugg

The Comparative Literature Area will sponsor the roundtable “Comparative Literature Tomorrow.”

E. Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Report, Christina Milletti

While the Creative Area has exceeded the target number of sessions, this year the Area just met the target. Because of the sessions offered, Dr. Milletti thinks many writers were juggling which sessions to attend, which became an organizational issue.

Dr. Milletti praised this year’s speakers and encouraged all to attend the Annual Creative Writing Reception featuring fiction writer and performance artist Shelly Jackson.

Dr. Milletti also discussed options to have more book sales at the annual convention. She has been trying to organize a small press fair within NeMLA, featuring a table for small presses at the convention’s Exhibit Hall. Dr. Milletti refers to this as an essential area for development, especially for creative writing. She also discussed how the

Creative Area is working with an independent bookseller interested in representing books by convention participants, which could potentially include commission. The Creative Area also has put out calls to see whether attendees would like to sell their books at the conference. Board members were encouraged to speak with Dr. Milletti to help actualize these plans.

F. Cultural Studies and Media Studies Report, Maria Matz

Dr. Matz said the Cultural Studies and Media Studies Area had a strong presence at the 2019 conference, along with invited speaker Aviva Chomsky from Salem State University.

Dr. Matz expressed concern about the name of the area, "Cultural Studies and Media Studies," with Board members discussing how the area refers to two different fields. Dr. Mardorossian suggested bringing options to a Board meeting for a formal proposal for changing the name of any area.

G. French/Francophone Report, Claudia Esposito

Dr. Esposito said the French and Francophone Area came in below the number of intended sessions. She pointed out how broader session topics tend to attract more submissions, but narrower topics increase the breadth of what the Area can address.

Dr. Esposito mentioned that she is based out of Boston, looks forward to meeting everyone there, and thanking NeMLA for bringing the convention to her city.

Dr. Esposito added to Dr. Mardorossian's earlier point about Areas co-sponsoring special events, as it also reduces the number of special events and decreases competition so that attendees have less difficulty deciding which events to attend.

H. German Report, Alexander Pichugin

Dr. Pichugin said the German Area continues to improve, with now 20 sessions, more than the previous year. Dr. Pichugin credited close connections to women's and gender studies, music studies, and cultural and media studies, which is important to keep in mind for determining future special event speakers. He also invited all to attend this year's special event with Peter Wortsman Saturday at 6:30 PM.

Dr. Pichugin then pointed out the flyers and posters promoting the 2020 convention, which lists some areas of study such as "German literature." Dr. Pichugin emphasized that the German Area includes studies of more than just literature and suggested expanding the category on the flyer to "German Studies." Dr. Mardorossian said the flyer could be updated for its digital version. This opened discussion about other areas with similar questions about whether their area should be broadened in scope. Dr. Mardorossian pointed out some revisions can be made by changing the bylaws, as the bylaws referring to the Italian Area refers to it as "Italian Literatures and Languages." Dr.

Mardorossian then recommended a vote. Dr. DiFrancisco proposed the vote, with Dr. Wright seconding. The Board voted unanimously to approve changing the title to German Literature.

Discussion then changed to clarify whether the Undergraduate Forum begins at 1 PM, as the convention program lists it as beginning at 12 and 2 PM. Dr. Mardorossian clarified that the overall event begins at 12 PM, where attendees can look at posters set up, then the talk will begin at 1 PM followed by the workshop.

I. Graduate Student Caucus Report, Nicole Lowman

The Graduate Student Essay Award includes the opportunity to have the essay considered for publication by *Modern Language Studies*. However, the 2019 winner of the Essay Award, Miles Osgood, is under consideration to submit to another publication and is keeping the Graduate Student Caucus updated about where to publish.

The Graduate Student Caucus gave 49 Travel Awards. Ms. Lowman mentioned that many applicants are still not following guidelines. All applicants are required to submit their presentation's abstract and a 250-word statement how their presentation contributes to their field. The Graduate Student Caucus asks that the statement be accessible to scholars outside of the field. Ms. Lowman explained that awards are given on a score of 1 to 5 based on the abstracts and statements, and awards were given to applications with a score of 4 or higher.

Ms. Lowman identified an error in the convention program: the Graduate Student Caucus Meet and Greet is listed as Friday beginning at 8 PM, but its actual time is 9 to 11 PM. Dr. Mardorossian offered to have an email sent to graduate student attendees to inform them about this evening's Graduate Student Caucus Business Meeting at 6 PM and the corrected time for Friday's Meet and Greet.

J. Italian Area Report, Emanuela Pecchioli

Dr. Pecchioli explained that the set of initial accepted sessions focused on numerous varied topics. Unfortunately, some of those approved sessions were withdrawn due to too few submissions. Nevertheless, the Italian Area still hosts numerous sessions at the 2019 convention that differ considerably from each other. Renaissance studies is underrepresented but still has more sessions than last year.

Dr. Pecchioli concluded by thanking Francesco Ciabattini with the Department of Italian at Georgetown University.

K. Pedagogy/Professionalism Report, Maria Plochocki

Dr. Plochocki said she did not receive her predecessor's reports regarding the number of sessions in her area, but she will be able to offer a statement on how the Pedagogy

and Professional Area improved in 2020 once comparing 2019 and 2020 session numbers.

Dr. Plochocki said that this year's sessions in the Area engage with numerous contemporary issues, including integrating the other and cultural sensitivity and how to work such concerns into our pedagogy.

There is coherence and diversity in our current membership, but Dr. Plochocki also intends to increase membership in the Pedagogy and Professionalism Area to make it more accessible in light of people's financial and time constraints.

Dr. Plochocki also added that she understands how frustrating it can be for both NeMLA and applicants when guidelines are not followed, with many submissions declined for this reason. All of this is a focus of her concerns.

Dr. Plochocoki said she wanted to make the best use of resources to maximize turnout and attendees' interests. She reiterated her interest in collaborating with women's and gender studies and other areas to foster more inclusivity and flexibility.

Regarding the 2020 convention in Boston, Dr. Plochocki has a local person in mind to invite as a special event speaker. She wants to find a speaker who can address writing across the curriculum, balancing family and academia (personal and professional), and working as an adjunct, saying these are concerns whose interest among members must be sustained.

Discussion turned to the idea of greater collaboration between Pedagogy and Professionalism, CAITY, and the Graduate Student Caucus, perhaps hosting business meetings together. Dr. Mardorossian expressed concern about these meetings being at the same time, such collaboration undermining each group. She proposed discussing this topic later.

Discussion also turned to how important balancing life with academia is, a concern for graduate students as well and which the Board wants to address at social events and even a workshop on sharing strategies.

L. Spanish/Portuguese Area Report, Margarita Vargas

Dr. Vargas pointed out how interdisciplinarity has been key to all languages at the annual convention.

Dr. Vargas also mentioned that Mexican playwright Carmina Narro would be in attendance at Sunday morning's event "Academics and Artists Amidst Violence."

M. Women's and Gender Studies Area Report, Rachel Spear

Dr. Spear promoted the sponsored roundtable on social activism and the special event featuring Ricardo L. Ortíz and co-sponsored by the Comparative Literature Area.

Essay Award

The Women's and Gender Studies Essay Award had a decline in submissions. In previous years, there were at least 10 submissions, sometimes as much as 20. This year, there were only three submissions, the lowest number yet, despite emphasis made repeatedly at the yearly Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Business Meeting at the convention. Dr. Spear reiterated that she wants the award winner to recognize the accomplishment they have made. Therefore, the Women's and Gender Studies will continue to brainstorm how to increase the number of submissions.

This topic opened up discussion considerably.

Dr. Vargas recommended having chairs of sessions submit the best essay they heard at their panel to the contest. It was suggested that the essay submission could be automated for right after the session to make the work easier.

Dr. DeLuca asked whether posters promoting the Essay Award are displayed in any of the convention's meeting rooms. Dr. Mardorossian said that it is not possible to have a poster in each session's room, but that the call for submissions can be included in the Exhibit Hall's digital slideshow. Dr. Spear added that the Women's and Gender Studies Caucus does have flyers to advertise not only the Essay Award but also special events.

Dr. Mardorossian suggested sending an email to session chairs encouraging their participants to submit their essays to the contests towards publication. Dr. DeLuca recommended this email be sent to the Board as well. Dr. So pointed out that the current NeMLA database does track when sessions begin and end in real time, so there must be a capacity to automate emails to go out immediately after a session concludes.

Dr. DiFrancesco added that while the paper itself has to be in Women's and Gender Studies, the overall session may not, so it is important to reach out to as many presenters at this year's convention as possible. Ms. Lowell pointed out that the work involved to submit requires revising the presentation into an article intended for publication, asking whether reconsiderations must be made in light of changes in academia due to precariousness and time available.

Open Positions

Dr. Spear said that the Women's and Gender Studies Caucus accepts nominations for open positions of Secretary and Social Media Representative.

Mentoring Program

Dr. Spear said the Mentoring Program continues to thrive, as the Caucus determines new improvements. Dr. So asked whether the Caucus could count the number of attendees, and Dr. Spear answered that food always runs out.

VII. Meeting adjourned, 10:10 AM