

**NEMLA Board Meeting, Boston**  
**Saturday, November 3, 2012**  
**Hyatt Regency Boston, 1:30 pm**

Board members present: Bill Waddell, St. John Fisher College, Past President; Ellen Dolgin, Dominican College, First Vice President; Carine Mardorossian, SUNY Buffalo, Past President-At-Large; Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University, *Modern Language Studies* editor; Suha Kudsieh, College of Staten Island CUNY, American/British Literatures Director; Giovanni Spani, College of the Holy Cross, Italian Language and Literature Director; Gillian Pierce, Boston University, Comparative Languages and Literatures Director; Cristina Santos, Brock University, Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures Director; Margarita Vargas, SUNY Buffalo, Cultural Studies and Film Director; Donovan Ramon, Rutgers University, Member-At-Large: Diversity; Barry Spence, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Graduate Student Caucus Representative; Rita Bode, Trent University, Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative.

Non-Board members present: Elizabeth Abele, SUNY Nassau Community College, Executive Director; Jackie O'Dell and Diego Millan, Tufts University, Graduate Student Liaisons for the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual NeMLA Conference, Lisa Perdigao, Florida Institute of Technology, NeMLA Special Programs Coordinator

Absent: Natalie Edwards, University of Adelaide, President; Daniela Antonucci, Princeton University, Second Vice President; Jennifer Harris, Mount Allison University, American/British Literatures Director; Moussa Sow, College of New Jersey, French Language and Literatures Director; Astrid Weigert, Georgetown University, German Language and Literature Director

**Welcome and Call to Order: Elizabeth Abele**

Announcements: Dinner to follow at 8 pm, Skype with Natalie Edwards, President

Introduction of Board members

**Local Representatives' Report: Jackie O'Dell and Diego Millan**

Jackie and Diego presented possible special events for NeMLA 2013 (13 with full descriptions and a longer list of options). Jackie and Diego suggested that they could move some options from the longer list onto the descriptions short list if the directors preferred. Elizabeth Abele asked about locations of the featured events and the discussion went to transportation; the accessibility of the T line before events was raised. Bus transportation was introduced as a possibility, with the MLA convention in Boston as an example. Cristina Santos mentioned a personal interest in Salem, MA which led to a discussion of including literature for independent travel there. The suggestion was made that if there is a company that does a tour, we could offer it and include transportation. Gillian Pierce suggested the Nathaniel Hawthorne house. Elizabeth raised the problem of acting as travel agent—instead, we can provide a link on the NeMLA website. Discussion led to the conclusion that more would do a day trip to Salem rather than visit the Hawthorne house alone. Other suggestions were the Mayflower site and the Black Heritage Trail. Rita Bode suggested that the WGSC put together a list of famous women's sites for members to visit on their own. Directors were encouraged to contact Jackie and Diego to provide information for their groups.

Elizabeth noted that cultural events (ballet, orchestra, and opera) are good options for members; we have great offerings this year. Elizabeth imagined we could sell at least 25 tickets for each event, not all on one night.

Suha Kudsieh noted that she was thinking of sponsoring an event. *A Raisin in the Sun* was a featured event last year in Rochester so there was a question if it was a good choice for this year. Don said that he'd be happy to organize the outing to *A Raisin in the Sun* if there was interest.

Elizabeth emphasized the strength of offerings in the area.

Diego referenced the list of restaurant suggestions he and Jackie provided and asked if they should compose a list of these recommendations. Barry Spence suggested making it available to the GSC rather than entire population. Elizabeth introduced the idea of an organized dinner. NeMLA arranged for a group block at Dinosaur Barbecue last year due to restaurant policy. She asked if we should organize a block for a restaurant and asked for ideas, meeting times and places, and suggestions/solutions.

Diego suggested that we could post tweets about the conference, using dinner as an example.

Elizabeth suggested that Brandi work on the Twitter idea. Directors can send information to Elizabeth to make it available.

Elizabeth noted that the next survey monkey will go out in the fall.

Bill Waddell introduced the approval of fall and spring Board minutes and called for questions/changes. Minor corrections were made.

### **Executive Director's Report: Elizabeth Abele**

Elizabeth introduced issues with finances involving Acteva. The money from Acteva was finally returned although it was later than it had been in the past. Elizabeth noted that they might have done extras in Rochester if they had funds available. Acteva did not respond to a Better Business Bureau request and did not put into writing why they changed their policy. They offered a \$1600 discount to continue to work with them but they held onto money for longer so Elizabeth decided to change companies. Most places were problematic with fees and policies.

Elizabeth praised the combination of the hotel staff and convention visitor's bureau, saying that they went above and beyond; NeMLA never had that level of excellence before. There were no surprises, and we even have extra money for next year, which will be useful because Boston will be more expensive; more will be charged for food, for extra rooms at the Ritz. Presently, she estimated for over 1800 participants. She reported that NeMLA is in a healthy financial position. She noted that NeMLA has only increased fees once and raised fees once in this time. Unlike SAMLA, we charge one fee, which some mistake for higher separate fees. NeMLA goes this route because it is easier maintenance to include both.

On the financial report, the transition from Acteva went smoothly. With RegOnline, credit card fees will be less. The switch to RegOnline will allow us to streamline organization; we can now check the database against receipts which has been a challenge. Two situations need motions from the Board for the accountant. Elizabeth referred to the Nonprofit Compliance and Whistleblower policy in Dropbox and asked about adopting the measure. Ellen Dolgin made the motion and Bill seconded it. All were in favor.

The second measure was that the accountant noticed that the IRS reporting year and fiscal year do not match. They suggest we switch our IRS reporting to match fiscal year basis rather than calendar basis. The budgets will then match. We need a 6 month audit of the year ending June 30, 2012 to catch up; then we will go on a regular system in six months. The requirements for a nonprofit involve a mini financial review. \$4000 is the cost for a regular review; ours

won't be as much but we were not told it will be half. Elizabeth asked for discussion. Laurence Roth made the motion and Rita seconded it. All were in favor.

Elizabeth spoke of the strengths of the convention, particularly the use of two spaces, suggesting its use as a model for Boston—we have the Ritz-Carlton, which is closer than the locations in Rochester. She made sure there was staff in other space to oversee things, performing that role herself, and connected events in the spaces. She suggested placing the Italian Leopardi sessions at the Ritz. In their second year, the workshops were strong.

Elizabeth asked about other points for discussion, what worked well and what did not. Bill noted that the off campus keynote was a success, and many directors agreed. Elizabeth mentioned the Toronto art museum and other ideas for spaces, noting that the test in Rochester can be a model for future conferences.

Elizabeth noted that, due to another event in Boston during the same weekend, we have difficulties securing rooms and rates. Bill circulated that information. She thought we need close to 2000. Elizabeth said she'd like more rooms at the Ritz and will start talking to the Hyatt Regency Cambridge. The Doubletree and Marriott are closest to the current rate. She noted that we could extend the blocks we have. She raised the possibility of the Boston Hostel 3 blocks away. The total subsidy is \$16,800. Elizabeth says that the numbers won't be this high again. This might be the last time that we can afford Boston due to the cost—this is what happened with Philadelphia and Baltimore.

The Hyatt Cambridge is at a distance but members can take a shuttle to the T. Parking is much cheaper than parking here. The Hyatt Cambridge will be promoted first to graduate students. The Ritz rate is low for the hotel. The \$50 jump is high between hotels so a \$25 subsidy will bring it to \$164. Elizabeth asked if that would be incentive to stay there or should we spend more to bring it down even lower? Elizabeth asked if it is worth the effort to subsidize Doubletree and Marriott if it is already close enough to that rate. She asked for single rooms at the Marriott rather than the extra charge for doubles.

Bill asked for objections. The subsidy deal was agreed to.

Barry asked about prioritizing Hyatt Cambridge rates to CAITY group and grad students. Elizabeth said we'd advertise to them first. Elizabeth says that we need to figure out how big the group is for the Hyatt Cambridge.

Elizabeth noted that the programs are fairly spare. We have a welcome reading, keynote, translations person coming in co-sponsored by Comparative Languages and French. The question was raised if that should be plenary or some other category.

In the discussion of workshops, Laurence noted that Scott Henkle is the replacement for Catherine Dent on the Creative Writing Task Force and that we should involve him in discussions of creative writing events.

Elizabeth said that, right now, we are losing money on workshops between offering food and paying fees. We need to keep the fees reasonable. Elizabeth noted that the MLA does not pay an honorarium to a keynote. We offer a free hotel night to those presenting already so they do not need an honorarium while an invited speaker is offered an honorarium. We have no set policy yet. If a speaker is invited, the maximum honorarium is \$500. Co-leaders can be offered \$350-400.

Board members discussed proposed workshops for 2013. Ellen asked about sending out a survey for ideas for future workshops, maybe once every three years.

In 2011, 3 workshops were offered; in 2012, 5 were offered but 3 of those workshops were undersubscribed. The question was raised if 5 workshops are too many.

Cristina suggested that we send out advertisements to listservs, to graduate directors to share with graduate students. Elizabeth noted a special auditor rate—to attend all sessions, workshop, for special rate.

Non-academic job searches will be a focus next year, and a workshop on getting articles published was suggested.

Elizabeth introduced the subject of second sessions, citing that we have guidelines for submissions—chairs need to have at least 12 proposals to request a second session. Seminar requests and second session requests were just in. We might have more than 40 seminars, leading to the creation of a partial second track on Thursday or session at 8 am on Sunday. Track 16 is split—some are at 8 and some at 8:30. If workshops are Thursday at 2:15, then Sunday at 8 might make more sense.

On the topic of 2014 conference planning, Elizabeth discussed the geography of Harrisburg and the rationale of rotating locations to build membership in different areas. NeMLA has not yet been to Harrisburg and the speaker base has not been utilized. Baltimore is not too far so we can think of speakers from that area. There is an American studies collection at Penn State Capitol Campus and the state library is another resource.

Elizabeth stated that we have Marriott has proposed that we consider a 3-year commitment from the Marriott. We are now finishing a 3-year commitment from the Hyatt. Among Marriott's proposed cities is Hartford. It features a new convention center and is well-served by air and train. The Baltimore Marriott is \$200/night (we're lucky if it goes down to \$189), and Philadelphia is the same. A suggestion is to continue to rotate from big city to small city.

Elizabeth cited the Professional Development Colloquium run by the regional ASA, a one day symposium on navigating academic careers today. 90 were in attendance—from GA and Boston. Graduate students and graduate student advisors were present. The regional ASA of New England could co-sponsor a similar event and we could initiate conversations with SAMLA to run an event. It cost \$500 to co-sponsor and offers us a model to look at.

Elizabeth introduced the topic of our search for a new host institution which will be discussed in greater detail by Bill Waddell. Brandi is continuing on as convention program associate. Like our work last year with students from URI, we have graduate fellows from Stony Brook working with her. We are providing graduate fellowships to students we know.

Brandi So, Kristin LeVeness, and Lisa Perdigao are working in support roles.

This year has been a challenge due to the situation with the president's change of home institution and distance. Elizabeth mentioned that she is disappointed with the lack of leadership, which had had an effect on the Board members and the Convention.

### **Past President's Report: Bill Waddell**

Bill provided information on the book award; we had 7 submissions as of last week and he is awaiting the final count. After gathering the list of titles from Brandi, Bill will distribute it to board members in order to begin the review process. It was also suggested to involve non-Board members, developing new volunteers and keeping past board members involved.

Bill updated the progress on the new home institution project. The committee identified the institutions we had most participation from in the past few years. Carine and Bill split the list of 13 to figure out which members were graduate students and which were faculty members and then weighted the participation of those members. SUNY Buffalo and Rutgers emerged as past host institutions that offered possibilities to pursue. 5 universities were at the top of the list: SUNY Buffalo, Rutgers, Princeton, UCONN, and UMASS. The next tier included Boston University, Fordham, SUNY Stony Brook, Binghamton, and Temple. The committee planned for 10 site visits.

### **First Vice President's Report: Ellen Dolgin**

Ellen noted the solid work from committee members Suha Kudsieh and Barry Spence as well as the strong candidates. A candidate for the French position came as a recommendation from Moussa Sow and Natalie Edwards.

A meeting for planning NeMLA 2014 was held at Susquehanna University with Laurence Roth and the English department. Ellen mentioned a possible theme with the river. The group has selected a speaker for the Thursday night reading: George Saunders. There are three theatres in the Harrisburg area. We also have the centennial of WWI that could feature as a theme.

There has been a problem with NeMLA summer fellowships and membership, guaranteeing continued involvement in the organization. A rule was proposed that proposals must come from 1-2 years member of NeMLA to submit application. It was confirmed that the committee can weigh involvement in the organization as the criteria.

Ellen proposed a motion that an applicant for a summer fellowship must be associated with NeMLA for at least one year. If they receive it, they need to remain a member for at least another year. Bill proposed an amendment of involvement in the organization for 2 years prior to application for fellowship. Don seconded it. It was clarified for any two years. All were in favor.

Ellen will let Daniela know that Barry, Suha, and Jennifer Harris will work on the committee.

### **Past President-At-Large's Report: Carine Mardorossian**

Carine returned to the topic of the new home institution project to detail the discussion with SUNY Buffalo. She met with Dean and Associate Dean at University of Buffalo to discuss the proposal. There is excitement at UB about the proposal. They have new Italian hires who could work on the journal.

Carine discussed the Board structure and assessment of the areas Comparative Languages, Cultural Studies and Film, and Pedagogy and Composition. She introduced the idea of changing other areas—for example, American Literature and Cultures. Elizabeth asked Carine to think about it, as Carine was on the Board when the positions were first created. We've lost Board positions—two in the past year, LGBTQ and CAITY. The question was raised about what we're missing and what we're adding. Diversity is a temporary area and position.

The discussion led to a consideration of different options for Comparative Literature—as Language and Theory or Literature and Theory. Carine mentioned that Buffalo focuses on continental theory and introduced Global Literature and Culture. Elizabeth suggested that we stay consistent with regional MLAs. Gillian said that we are using ACLA as a model and are updating our website to fit those descriptions. Carine noted the 2013 essay prize in Caribbean literature and timing with the Brand event.

### **Modern Language Studies Report: Laurence Roth**

Laurence introduced a new website for *MLS* created on WordPress site and different options for its design. The strengths are that students can manage it, and it doesn't require html editing. It is rather static though, and the message board would cost extra. Another possibility through WordPress is a \$99 upgrade, which is more dynamic and in color. Artwork can be included to complement articles. It can also provide links for conferences. The University of Washington's model offers some possibilities. He suggested that it is worth the \$99 upgrade. There would be a yearly fee of \$35 for [modernlanguagestudies.org](http://modernlanguagestudies.org) vs. WordPress address. A vote was taken on going ahead with the upgraded website option.

The upcoming issue of *MLS* will feature Trevor Cook's article. Lydia Davis' work will also be featured.

### **American Literatures Report: Lisa Perdigao reporting for Jennifer Harris**

Lisa stated that Jennifer is working on the Digital Humanities workshop for inclusion for 2013. Jennifer also put together a film event for the conference on Audre Lorde's Berlin years.

### **British & Anglophone Literature Report: Suha Kudsieh**

Suha introduced the proposals in the area. Three panels were withdrawn and she had second panel requests. They will not have a supporting speaker in the area but they will be supporting the keynote and plan to sponsor event—a play or another event. Suha noted that they have smaller panels than last year but the area remains healthy.

### **President's Report: Natalie Edwards**

Natalie was included in the meeting through Skype. She noted the keynotes and other special events, the welcome reading.

She stated that Buffalo offered a strong proposal for the home institution project. They are waiting for proposals from UMASS and Rutgers.

Natalie was asked about the contacts at Tufts University and said that she has worked with members of the English Department. She said that she has been trying to establish contact with members of the language programs. The Asian language program has been involved. The Associate Provost Gary Roberts is a former NeMLA member and English professor. Natalie said that she would pursue more contact with Tufts. The graduate student advisor at Tufts has had direct involvement with students.

Natalie noted the inclusion of David Bellos as a speaker. She worked with Gillian and Moussa to combine support.

### **Italian Languages and Literatures: Giovanni Spanni**

Giovanni noted the high number of sessions in the area. There will be five sessions on Giacomo Leopardi and they will have a keynote on Leopardi: Alessandro Carrera. They are also organizing a special event with the Italian consul. The Italian Teachers of New England will be organizing events.

### **Spanish/Portuguese Languages and Literatures: Cristina Santos**

They had 66 proposals in the area and accepted 45. Cristina cited the plan to increase the Portuguese side but also noted a wider definition of Portuguese—Lusophone. She noted that there are not always separate sessions—Latin American literature and culture is Spanish, Portuguese, and indigenous languages. She stated that we need to think of both “traditional” proposals and new approaches, new dialogues between the areas.

Cristina noted that they had a speaker had been funded by Spanish government, but the Spanish government has cut funding. She was approached for a special event on Cuban American writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with 3 invited speakers. They had no requests for honorariums. Elizabeth stated that it would be a pre-formed panel.

Maria Matz will be the new Spanish/Portuguese director

### **Comparative Languages Report: Gillian Pierce**

Gillian stated that they had 40 proposals representing different time periods and languages. She said that she would like to develop their offerings in Arabic and Asian languages. They had four world literature proposals. She wanted to work with Boston University but they'd consider work for next year. There are panels in Caribbean that offer a connection to Brand. Translation sessions offer a tie-in to Bellos' talk. They had 2 second

sessions on Caribbean literature and trauma. She combined resources with Moussa to offer support to the Bellos event.

### **Cultural Studies and Film Report: Margarita Vargas**

Margarita accepted 28 sessions out of 40 proposals. They have 20 panels, 6 roundtables, and 2 seminars. There were 4 requests for 2<sup>nd</sup> sessions. Douglas Morse is the featured speaker for a special event. Margarita noted that they have 3 times the sessions on cultural studies vs. film; this is a reversal of last year's numbers.

### **Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Report: Rita Bode**

Rita said that they have 25 panels in the area; 7 are roundtables. 38 submissions are cross-listed with Women's Studies. They have a second session on Irish women, and Rita noted that it is a new area to develop. Their speaker is Suzanne Matson from Boston College.

Rita focused on new and developing initiatives within the caucus. She circulated a sign-up sheet for the Shakespeare's Sister mentoring program. She also cited a fee reduction for membership as well as a women's studies gmail account to promote the identity of the group. 5 officers sent out emails with calls before September 30 to colleagues at different universities.

### **Diversity: Donovan Ramon**

Donovan noted that the proposals in the area are healthy, and he wants to encourage more diversity in participants. Their special event is on hip hop and pedagogy featuring speaker Emmett Price of Northeastern. They will host a social event after the keynote address. He noted cultural events and offerings in his report and focused on the Museum of African American History exhibit. He suggested key dates to note for future conventions: 2014 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brown vs. the Board of Education and we also have the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Civil Rights. Don suggested sessions on representing segregation and Civil Rights. Laurence noted that he did not see a panel on Jewish literature and suggested that we try to cover those absent areas in the program as well.

### **Theory and Literary Criticism Report: Barry Spence**

Barry received 37 proposals and had to cut 17; he was able to give 2<sup>nd</sup> sessions to two sessions. They ended up with 25.

### **Graduate Student Caucus Report: Barry Spence**

Barry reported that they are currently setting up the room/ride share board. They will be giving out travel awards in December, with awards ranging from \$100-\$275. He mentioned the graduate student essay submissions as well.

Elizabeth noted the Board positions to fill for next year: Italian, Graduate Student Caucus, German, Cultural Studies and Film, British, and Diversity. Rita suggested that outgoing directors reach out to possible replacements.

The group planned to discuss issues with 2<sup>nd</sup> session issues at the morning meeting. Rita suggested that they post the criteria online to make it explicit to the group. Suha said that directors could write out reasons for cutting/accepting sessions, detailing the criteria. Elizabeth suggested that we start the conversation now and then meet and discuss the plans and results in the spring to come up with policy for next year's submissions.