

**NeMLA Board  
Fall 2020 Meeting Minutes  
November 7, 2020**

11:00 AM Eastern, Zoom/Web conference

**Board Members Present:**

**Executive Board**

Past President, Carole Salmon

President, Brandi So

Vice President, Bernadette Wegenstein

**Board of Directors**

British and Colonial/Postcolonial Studies Director, Thomas Lynn

Comparative Literature Director, Katherine Sugg

Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Director, Abby Bardi

Cultural Studies and Media Studies Director, Maria Matz

French and Francophone Studies Director, Olivier Le Blond

German Studies Director, Charles Vannette

Italian Studies Director, Tiziano Cherubini

Professionalization, Composition, and Pedagogy Director, Maria Plochocki

Spanish and Portuguese Studies Director, Victoria Ketz

US and Transnational/Diaspora Studies Director, Ben Railton

CAITY Caucus President and Representative, Francisco Delgado

Diversity Caucus President, Jennifer Mdurvwa

Graduate Student Caucus Representative, Dana Gavin

Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative, Justine Dymond

Editor of *Modern Language Studies*, Laurence Roth

**Absent:**

Second Vice President, Joseph Valente

**Non-Board Members Present:**

Executive Director, Carine Mardorossian

Graduate Assistant, Ashley Byczkowski

Exhibitors and Promotion Coordinator, Claire Sommers

**I. Executive Director's Report, Carine Mardorossian**

**A. Approval of Spring 2020 Board Minutes**

- a.** Dr. Railton made a motion to approve the minutes for Spring 2020 at 11:15 AM. Approved with no corrections. Maria Plochocki seconded the motion and Justine Dymond abstained since she was not present at the Spring 2020 Board Meeting.
- b.** ED Mardorossian listed and thanked the **NeMLA Staff and Fellows**

- i. Derek McGrath: Administrative Coordinator
  - ii. Ashley Byczkowski: Graduate assistant
  - iii. Claire Sommers: Professionalization and Exhibits
  - iv. Solon Morse: Graphic Designer
- c. Fellows
  - 1. Macy McDonald, Whova
  - 2. Cassandra Scherr, Whova
  - 3. Dana Venerable, Social Media Fellow
  - 4. Jiwon Ohm, Whova Fellow; Graphic Design
  - 5. Dipanjan Maitra, Special Events Fellow
  - 6. Callie Ingram, Exhibits Fellow
  - 7. Joelle Carota, Undergraduate Forum Fellow
  - 8. Valentina Ospina, [Archives Fellow](#)
- d. Local Representatives from UPenn
  - i. Pauline Carbonnel
  - ii. Lauriane Guihard
  - iii. Professor Andrea Goulet from Romance Languages, UPenn

## **B. 2020 Boston Convention**

- a. Professor Mardorossian explained that in light of the circumstances of the pandemic, it was nothing short of a miracle that NeMLA 2020 took place, was as successful as it possibly could be, and was spared the dire consequences of other gatherings. There were 1600 attendees, and she only received positive feedback.

## **C. 2021 “Philly” Convention**

- a. VIRTUAL vs HYBRID NEMLA
- ED Mardorossian explained why it would have been impossible to run a hybrid convention. NeMLA has neither the staff nor the budget to run two conventions simultaneously (one on site, one hybrid), not to mention that it became clear that the pandemic was not a context in which to risk anyone’s health.
- ED Mardorossian explained why the digital event management platform WHOVA was chosen for the conference (powerpoint)
  - Allows both video streaming (from youtube) and zoom
  - Allows for the pre-recording of presentations to add to the longevity of the convention
  - Accessibility: maybe turn NeMLA into a training ground for their ASL students in training (for small sessions)
  - Member engagement- live Q&A. Participants can interact with each other through community boards, bulletin boards. Gamification to encourage member engagement. Members can create their own surveys, etc.
  - Whova allows tracking numbers we cannot track in a live convention.
  - The pre-recording option is in an attempt to give members as many options as possible to feel most comfortable with this virtual platform.

- HYBRID NEMLA:
- two HYBRID events working closely with the University of Pennsylvania's local representatives, Professor Andrea Goulet, Romance Languages (ED Mardorossian thanked Second Vice President Professor Valente for helping make the networking with UPenn possible) and graduate students Pauline Carbonnel and Lauriane Guihard who will help, should circumstances permit, to make the following Special Events a HYBRID and collaborative UPenn-NeMLA affair on site at UPenn:

+ **Opening Speaker:** Professor Jed Esty

+ **Diversity/American, Colonial/Postcolonial, Diversity, and Women's & Gender Studies Special Event** Grace Louise B Sanders Johnson, University of Pennsylvania will possibly be hybrid.

ED Mardorossian thanked board members for the 6 remarkable speakers in the areas. She will be in touch about asking speakers to pre-record their presentation and making their Q&A be live.

**Keynote:** Jennifer Egan's keynote and interview with President So will be videotaped in Brooklyn. Egan offered to visit classrooms where anyone is teaching her texts.

- VIRTUAL NeMLA: Professor Mardorossian went over the number of sessions (same as last year), abstracts, and formats. NeMLA members came through and are excited to participate in a virtual conference.

#### **D. MEMBERSHIP**

- a. The virtual conference: Different demographics with more graduate students this year than ever before:
  - i. Graduate students: 945 + 39 postdocs
  - ii. Faculty: 798
  - iii. CAITY: 330

## Participants Come From:



- a. **Wider geographic spread** than the usual 30.
- b. This global representation will have implications for scheduling (time zones)

## E. REGISTRATION

Discounted by half

## F. MARRIOTT PHILADELPHIA

- a. Professor Mardorossian recounted the circumstances that led to renegotiating Philly for 2025.

## G. FUTURE CONVENTIONS

- a. ED Mardorossian reminded everyone of future conventions Baltimore, working with Bernadette Wegenstein (2022), Niagara Falls (2023) and Philadelphia (2025)
- b. 2024: No host yet but considering Boston. This is an important year as the MOU with UB will come up for renewal.

## H. WEBSITE

ED Mardorossian discussed revamping the website over the summer

## I. DATABASE:

ED Mardorossian went over the new functionalities

## J. BOARD ELECTIONS:

**ED Mardorossian encouraged everyone to vote in our board elections and expressed gratitude for the highest number of nominees in each category**  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LXBMTMZ>

- K. **ED Mardorossian went over the BUDGET** and explained that NeMLA was probably coming out of 2021 with a slight loss and may look at losing money in Baltimore if the event planning world's prediction about Covid was true.

## **L. NEW BUSINESS**

### **The board discussed the following and voted**

- 2024 Local Host Institution
  - ED Mardorossian will approach institutions in view of securing a new institutional host for NeMLA
- Book award: volunteers needed to help Past-President Dr. Salmon.
  - 10 manuscripts received
  - Two manuscripts were creative pieces, the possibility for a separate prize for Creative Works/Fiction was discussed.
- Auditors: proposal to change the fee to \$20 with an institutional option (\$500)
  - Dr. So suggested that this could be a wonderful opportunity for more people to become a part of NeMLA.
  - ED Mardorossian confirmed that this would not include membership (mailings) but in response to a question posed by Dr. Plochocki, Dr. So confirms that auditors would be added to the digital/email list.
- Donations: new functionality to be added to the database but we need to brainstorm about what exactly could be fundraised for. Options:
  - Sponsor a summer fellowship grant
  - Sponsor an undergraduate student prize or registration
  - Sponsor a graduate student registration
  - Sponsor a dissertation fellowship (collaborate with both host institutions to identify candidates)
  - Sponsor one of the essay awards, more essay awards
  - Dr. Salmon suggested sponsoring an international faculty/student
  - Dr. Plochocki suggested sponsoring contingent faculty member
- Essay Awards: have more awards in the Areas
  - Katherine Sugg added: Comparative Lit/studies would be interested.
- Name change: Postcolonial area (Thomas Lynn)
  - Renaming of areas that both had postcolonial in them, the new names are presently “British and Colonial/Postcolonial” and “US and Transnational/Diaspora.” The vote was to change “British and Colonial/Postcolonial” to “British and Global Anglophone.”
  - Tom Lynn made a motion to change the name, approved by all and seconded by Francisco Delgado.
- CAITY fee change proposal (Francisco Delgado)
  - Dr. Delgado pointed out that the fee for registration and membership for adjuncts is \$140, which is the same as faculty at two-year institutions, while independent scholars pay \$110.

- Dr. Delgado suggested that NeMLA should consider changing the fees so that adjunct and contingent faculty pay the same as independent scholars: \$110 for membership and registration.
- Dr. So suggested raising the fee for independent scholars instead because such a break of \$20 for adjuncts would have a huge effect on NeMLA's revenue which NeMLA could not sustain. She offered to work with Professor Delgado on reworking fees.
- No decision was made since the numbers would need to be ran before NeMLA could vote to change fees.

## II. *MLS* Report with Laurence Roth

- a. Submissions are great.
- b. To save money on printing, next issue should be online. The issue after that would be in print and combined into one, and would appear just before the in-person conference.
- c. *MLS* about to hire a web-editor for the journal, a graphic design professor at SU to have a more developed *MLS* website to have a convenient pay portal and the podcast.
- d. Patrick Henry, fiction and poetry editor shared how we could get involved with Submittable, \$125 a year, to start running contests to charge Submittable fees (\$2,\$3,\$5).

## III. Second Vice President Board Report

- a. Joe Valente's report indicated that due to COVID the 2020 Summer Fellowship Awards were postponed with the ability for last year's winners to take their trips in 2021. 2021 Summer Fellowships will be awarded all the same.

## IV. Vice President Board Report with Bernadette Wegenstein

- a. The 2022 NeMLA conference theme is CARE.
- b. **Valeria Luiselli** is confirmed for keynote, author of *LOST CHILDREN ARCHIVE*
- c. Opening speaker: hoping that **Judith Butler**, author of *THE FORCE OF NON-VIOLENCE*, would agree, also as JHU's Alexander Grass Humanities Institute speaker for a collaborative event; she is currently being contacted about this.
- d. The interim Dean at Johns Hopkins said yes to funding 5K.

## V. President's Report to the Board with Brandi So

- a. NeMLA will do a pre-recorded interview with Jennifer Egan with live Q&A. Ms. Egan is offering to *visit any class that is reading her work throughout the Fall and Spring Semester.*

## VI. British and Post/colonial Studies Area Report with Thomas Lynn

- a. Received 29 proposed sessions, with 27 approved and 2 declined.
- b. Of the 27 approved sessions, 26 had received enough abstracts to run.
- c. 16 are panels, 6 are roundtable, and 4 are seminars.
- d. The current proposal for this Area is "British and Global Anglophone Studies."

**VII. Comparative Literature and Theory Area Director Report with Katherine Sugg**

- a. Comparative Literature received 62 proposals and is running 58 total, with several double panels, seminars (11) and roundtables (8).
- b. Comparative Literature is collaborating on the Special Event with Spanish and Portuguese (Victoria Ketz) to host Professor Sophia McClennan of Penn State University. who will speak on “What does Latin American Cinema Teach Us About Cultural Globalization? How an interdisciplinary case study can offer a new critical paradigm.”

**VIII. Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Director Report with Abby Bardi**

- a. Of a total of 24 CWEP sessions proposed this year, 19 were accepted and 5 were declined. (This marks an increase from 17 total and 11 accepted from last year.) Of the sessions that were accepted, 16 have enough participants to run.
- b. One of the CWEP panels, “Thieving the Past: Integrating History into Creative Work,” includes a craft discussion of Egan’s *Manhattan Beach*, this year’s “NeMLA Reads Together” work

**IX. Professionalization, Composition, and Pedagogy Director Report with Maria Plochocki**

- a. For the 2021 convention, 81 sessions were proposed within Pedagogy and Profession, of them 55 accepted; in Rhetoric & Composition, 14 sessions were proposed, and all but one accepted.
- b. Dr. Michael Berube, of Pennsylvania State University, has accepted our invitation to speak at the 2021 convention

**X. French and Francophone Studies Director Report with Olivier Le Blond**

- a. The French and Francophone area had a target of 26 sessions. 27 sessions were proposed and by the October 11 deadline, 21 had received a sufficient number of abstracts to make. Past the October 11 date, all 21 sessions were finalized. Four session chairs requested a second session. One of them had received so many proposals that I was able to cobble up a new session based on the abstracts the session chair had rejected. There is now a total of 26 sessions for the 2021 virtual convention.
- b. The 2021 Virtual Convention French and Francophone Area Special Event will be given by Julien Suaudeau who has already been the Special Event Speaker in Pittsburgh and Participated in the Meet the Author in D.C. with Mame-Fatou Niang. Their talk “Reinventing Universalism for Postcolonial France” will explore issues of what they call a “pseudo-universalism” and how equating it to antiracism is “a superficial, sterile, and dangerous commonplace” and propose to “reconcile the universalist project with both postcolonial studies and the humanistic wisdom of Montaigne.”

**XI. Italian Studies Director Report with Tiziano Cherubini**

- a. 31 sessions for next year.
  - b. Italian Studies Event is with Dr. Alessandro Vettori. His talk is titled “Dante, Lady Poverty, and the Donation of Constantine.”
- XII. Spanish and Portuguese Studies Director Report with Victoria Ketz**
- a. About 60 sessions running with only 7 that are not cross listed.
  - b. Shared special event with Comparative Literature to host Professor Sophia McClennan of Penn State University. who will speak on “What does Latin American Cinema Teach Us About Cultural Globalization? How an interdisciplinary case study can offer a new critical paradigm.”
- XIII. CAITY Caucus President and Representative Report with Francisco Delgado**
- a. This year, CAITY is happy to co-sponsor (along with Pedagogy and Professionalism and the GSC) a talk with Dr. Michael Berube. This event speaks to constituents’ interests in learning more about the state of profession, as was expressed in the CAITY business meeting in March.
  - b. The area is sponsoring a roundtable, #18969, “The Value (and Struggles) of Public Engagement,”
  - c. CAITY Conference Paper Prizes, applicants must be scheduled to present a paper on a panel at this year’s conference and must email the following information to [caity@nemla.org](mailto:caity@nemla.org) under the subject, "CAITY Conference Paper Prize" The deadline to apply is January 6, 2021 the original date that Travel Awards were due. The recipient(s) will be asked for their mailing address for check distribution.
  - d. CAITY will still offer the CAITY Essay Award for an article-length paper that was presented at the 2020 conference in Boston. The deadline for the Essay Award is January 10, 2021.
- XIV. Diversity Caucus President Report with Jennifer Mdurvwa**
- a. In collaboration with US and Transnational/Diaspora Studies and Women’s and Gender Studies Caucus, the area is sponsoring Grace Johnson, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at Penn, as our Special Event Area Speaker.
  - b. **Undergraduate Forum**
    - i. has received 17 abstracts so far, which is lower than where we have been at this time in the past, so we’ve extended the deadline to Nov. 15. Could be extended again.
- XV. Graduate Student Caucus Representative Report with Dana Gavin**
- a. Four (4) GSC-sponsored sessions submitted and accepted
  - b. Two (2) of the proposed sessions have been empaneled (1 roundtable, title TBA; 1 roundtable, “Re-imagining Transferable Skills: Professional Development in a Post-COVID World”)

**XVI. Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative Report with Justine Dymond**

- a. The WGS Caucus (WGSC) is currently sponsoring two sessions, a panel and roundtable:
  - i. Building Solidarity Across Women's, Gender, and LGBTQ Experiences (WGSC-sponsored panel, chaired by Rachelann Copland and Forrest Johnson)
  - ii. Been There, Survived That: Strategies for Navigating the Profession (WGSC-sponsored roundtable, chaired by Justine Dymond).
- b. For this year's special event speaker, the WGSC is collaborating with the American Literature and Transnational / Diaspora Studies Area and the Diversity Caucus, the WGS Caucus to sponsor Grace L. Sanders Johnson, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.
- c. The Women's and Gender Studies area program for NeMLA's 1<sup>st</sup> virtual convention ever to be held March 11-14, 2021, currently consists of 77 sessions.
- d. Looking for ideas for the yearly Membership Brunch.

**XVII. Exhibitors and Promotion Coordinator Report with Claire Sommers**

- a. **Numbers:** Dr. Sommers explained that there was high interest from exhibitors and several of our regular exhibitors have decided to continue with NeMLA in this new format.
- b. **Virtual Packages:** two new NeMLA across-the-miles packages, at the basic (\$250) and sponsor (\$350) levels were designed. So far, all exhibitors have signed up for the sponsor level. These packages include promotions on the new Whova app, as well as a curated list of convention panels that will be of special interest to the exhibitors.
- c. **Exhibitor Workshops:** Last year, a new NeMLA initiative was introduced that entitled each exhibitor to organize a workshop. We had four workshops, and one of these (on publishing) featured 5 exhibitors.
- d. **New Elevator Pitch Program:** newest exhibits initiative. Members will have the opportunity to sign up ahead of the convention to pitch their book proposal to specific exhibitors and receive feedback.
- e. **MLA Recruitment of exhibitors:** will continue
- f. **Book Signings:** investigating the possibility of having one or more virtual book signings at this year's NeMLA.
- g. **Job Clinic:** The Clinic will continue to offer support for Cover Letters, CVs, and Mock Interviews and focus on pairing mentees with mentors who share their research interests. The Job Clinic is one aspect of NeMLA that will be easier now that the convention is virtual, as mentors and mentees will now be able to set up a Zoom time that does not overlap with the convention and these meetings need not have any time constraints
- h. **Publishing Mentorship:** This past year, we had the third cohort of the publishing mentorship, and we will be opening applications for the 2021-22 program in

December. There will once again be a roundtable at the 2021 convention where participants can discuss their experiences.

- i. Undergraduate Research Forum:** The forum continues to be a highlight of the conference and this year, there are four sessions to which undergraduates can submit their proposals.

**XVIII. Meeting Adjourned**

- a.** Many thanks and gratitude were shared on this historical day where the new president elect was announced during the meeting.
- b.** The motion to adjourn was made by Victoria Ketz at 2:01 PM and Bernadette Wegenstein seconded the motion.