

NEMLA Board of Directors' Meeting, March 23, 2017
Marriott Waterfront, Raven Room – 8:00-11:00 am
Full breakfast served

Board Members expected to be present: Ben Railton, Fitchburg State University, Past President; Hilda Chacon, Nazareth College, President; Maria DiFrancesco, Ithaca College, Vice President; Simona Wright, Rutgers University, Second Vice President; John Casey, University of Illinois at Chicago, American/British Literatures Director; Emily Lauer, Suffolk County Community College, CAITY; Richard Schumaker, University of Maryland University College, Comparative Languages and Theory Director; Lisa Perdigao, Florida Institute of Technology, Cultural Studies and Media Studies Director; Vetri Nathan, University of Massachusetts-Boston, Member-At-Large: Diversity; Claudia Esposito, University of Massachusetts-Boston, French Languages and Literatures Director; Nicole Lowman, University at Buffalo, Graduate Student Caucus Representative; Gloria Pastorino, Farleigh Dickinson University, Italian Languages and Literatures Director; Angela Fulk, Buffalo State College, Pedagogy and Professional Director; Margarita Vargas, University at Buffalo, Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures Director; Susmita Roye, Delaware State University, British/Anglophone Area; Rachel Spear, Francis Marion University; Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative; Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University, Editor of *Modern Language Studies*

Non-Board members expected to be present: Carine Mardorossian, University at Buffalo, Executive Director; Brandi So, Stony Brook University, Associate Executive Director; Derek McGrath, University at Buffalo, Administrative Coordinator; Sarah Goldbort, University at Buffalo, Graduate Assistant; New Board Members: Emanuela Pecchioli, University at Buffalo; Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures Incoming Director; Alexander Pichugin, Rutgers, SUNY, German Language and Literature Incoming Director.

Absent: Christina Milletti, University at Buffalo, Creative Writing, Publishing, & Editing Director; Lynn Mary Kutch, Kutztown University, German Language and Literature Director

I. Introductions and Ribbons

II. Approval of Spring 2017 minutes: ED Mardorossian made a motion to approve the minutes for Spring 2017 minutes at 8:22 AM. Approved by unanimous vote with no adjustments

III. Reminders from Executive Director, Carine Mardorossian

- a. Please take pictures of your special events speakers
- b. Please take note of the new initiatives, especially the networking opportunities

IV. Language Director & Caucus Reports

1. Graduate Student Caucus – Nicole Lowman

Nicole was elected as President of the GSC. No nominations for Communications Director so they will have two Co-Vice Presidents (Claire Sommers and Christian Ylagan). The election results will be announced at the GSC business meeting.

We received 193 submissions and awarded 55 applicants for the travel award. We were exactly at our budget, but one of the recipients is unable to attend the convention due to a health issue. Award amounts ranged from \$200 to \$300.

For the essay award, the GSC received 12 submissions. The winning essay is “‘Now’ is Here: Disillusionment and Urgency in Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock*” by Amanda Lagji.

2. **Women's/Gender Caucus** – Rachel Spear

- a. Sponsoring a panel (“Gender in the Medical Humanities) and a roundtable (Teaching the Gendered Body in Literature and Film: Strategies, Methods, Theories)
- b. Guest speaker, Bernadette Wegenstein, on feminist documentary
- c. Shakespeare Mentoring program:
 - i. Last year we had 25 and this year we have 13
 - ii. Another low number: for the WGS award (we had 6 submissions, and the past it was in double digits)
 - iii. Rotating officers
 1. Encourage people to run for secretary

3. **Diversity Caucus** – Vetri Nathan

- a. Diversity is sponsoring a mixer at the James Joyce pub on Friday, March 24th
- b. Perhaps the area caucuses, including diversity, could have an increase in funds especially since some of the other areas got an increase
- c. Carribean studies award: Not high numbers of submissions—but it’s been consistently low (7 or so) Maybe we could promote all of the essay awards more. We could also advertise the essay awards with MLS

Winner was Kate Perillo, University of Massachusetts Amherst
 2017 Caribbean Studies Paper Prize for “The Speculative Caribbean:
 Technological Futurity in Nalo Hopkinson’s *Midnight Robber* and Beyond”

1.

4. **CAITY Caucus**—Emily Lauer

- a. Paper prize had about as many eligible entries as it has in the past (6 this year)
 - i. Are others having an increase in ineligible applications? Perhaps changes to the guidelines should be made to make things clear.
- b. Travel grants:
 - i. Way more applicants this year (last year around 45, and this year around 140)
 - ii. Going to ask that people list why they are eligible for CAITY (are they adjunct etc.?) and ask that perhaps they chair etc. Perhaps we will consider changing or clarifying eligibility for travel grants (to include non-papers? to include unsupported faculty at foreign institutions? Other concerns?); in future, offering stipends or similar to those acting as judges for contests, etc; distributing travel grant checks
- c. We have elections in person at the business meeting
- d. Distribute travel checks at the business meeting

5. **Pedagogy and Professional** – Angela Fulk

- a. We were below our targets in terms of panel submissions, but not drastically so in either area
- b. We have a lot of pedagogy sessions but not a lot of professional development sessions, so we need to figure out how to get more senior faculty members to lead these sessions (hard to recruit people to travel to be a mentor so better to rely on members attending already)
- c. We don't have a special event in the area this year
 - i. We were going to have a session on bias in academia but there's a panel that conflicted. When Marie-Eve Monette resigned as president of the GSC, this session also lost its leadership. The roundtable is still going forward, but with only one presenter (Emily Lauer of CAITY) who was involved in the original project. Under the circumstances, a Special Event status no longer seemed appropriate.
- d. We had a special session at MLA in Philly this year representing NeMLA and pedagogy which resulted in a published essay in the *Chronicle*

6. **French** – Claudia Esposito

- a. Consistent with previous years in terms of numbers
- b. Positive responses to the panel sponsored by "Women in French"
- c. Special event: The French and Francophone Special Event is an evening with poet, novelist, short story writer and critic Abdourahman Waberi.

7. **British/Anglophone**- Susmita Roye

- a. Special event: wanted to focus on modernism since there hasn't been a lot of focus on this as much (Professor Douglas Mao from JHU is the area's special event speaker)
- b. Happy with the quality of session proposals but not happy with the numbers. Not sure why there's a fall in numbers—perhaps city size?
- c. Question: Is there a way to reach out to the chairs via the website? A few sessions were cancelled and we can no longer see these sessions
 - i. ED Carine Mardorossian asked whether the issue is one of not having information or an issue of functionality for the database? She clarified that:
 1. NeMLA does not cancel sessions that are approved, but members do (they withdraw, or if there are two people on the panel and they can't find replacements then they cancel). So it's the members who cancel sessions.
 2. The functionality issue is that we can't see abstract numbers received and the content (abstracts etc.) for each session etc.
 3. We will have an early report about sessions that might fail so we can send that info out too
 - ii. Others: it would be nice to know which ones are at risk of folding so area directors can help earlier
ED Carine Mardorossian agreed and promised to make that happen
- d. Another issue is with chairs being able to group email (can only do it individually)

- i. Maybe it would be easier to at least see the individual email addresses to make copy and pasting easier even if we can't make group emails possible
- ii. Maybe we can share the database with everyone
- iii. A way to see the history of the email (but perhaps this is only possible with personal email because this is really for mass emailing)

ED Mardorossian explained that we just had data built about the different areas, and we can try to make accessibility easier for the area directors. This being said, she explained that we also worry about bombarding members with multiple emails. For that reason, she asked that area directors go through Carine Mardorossian first before sending out emails

- e. Two board sponsored sessions. For one of them the area got 12 out of 35 people presenting and is happy about that number. Susmita Roye is pursuing how she can help some of these papers can get published.

8. **Cultural Studies & Media Studies** – Lisa Perdigao

- a. We are up from our target numbers. We had 52 and our target was 45. We are down from last year, but up total in the last 3 years
- b. The titles themselves are interesting and a remarkable shift from last year. A lot of dystopias and narratives of apocalypse etc. MLA looks like it's going to be very political next year
- c. Co-sponsoring a special event with American Studies (Brian Norman)
- d. Moving ahead: remembering to be aware of panel titles so that they're broader and get more abstract submissions (and the titles can always be narrowed later to accommodate the submissions received)

9. **Comparative Literature** – Richard Schumaker

- a. Outreach in “neglected” literatures because panel members approached him
 - i. Turkish literature as well as South Asia—panels on Indian national identity
 - ii. Philosophy and social sciences are well represented as well

10. **Spanish/Portuguese** – Margarita Vargas

- a. Things are going very well in terms of numbers
- b. The themes of the panels are quite varied
 - i. Sex and gender, violence, liminal space, etc.
 - ii. We do have a handful in Latino/Latina literature
 - iii. Guest speaker: “Making Cuba Connections: Remix & Reactions” Ann Marie Stock, College of William and Mary

11. **American** –John Casey

- a. Numbers are stable
- b. Great Baltimore and Maryland topics
- c. Nothing on Fredrick Douglas, which was surprising
- d. Race and ethnicity well represented
- e. Surprised about the lack of panels on Women and Gender

- f. Disability studies ebbs and flows, and we still wants to emphasize it more
- g. This area wants to do more with class and labor too
- h. Pittsburg will be John Casey's last year and he is looking for a replacement
- i. Would like to see more interesting topics in this area (topics are a little stale)

12. **Italian** – Gloria Pastorino

- a. Target of 38 sessions, got second sessions granted
- b. 9 are special topics which is fine
- c. Special events: ANTHONY JULIAN TAMBURRI
- d. Immigration and new Italians (migrants to Italy) and Italian diaspora
- e. Italian American studies last year really robust, not so much this year, so Gloria stepped in.
- f. Antonio Cao, NeMLA member and Spanish scholar, will continue to be honored through a graduate-student travel award

V. **Officer and Committee Reports**

1. **Past President's Report**, Ben Railton

- i. Book Award
 - a. More standardization?
 - b. Two winners
 - c. The process of reviewing is difficult
 - i. Suggestions: first-tier of reviewing (not accepting all of them—for example, one was incomplete, one was an unrevised dissertation)
 - ii. We need a lot of readers & more time
 - 1. Perhaps having a established set of reviewers (a pool of readers or potential readers) so that the Past President doesn't have to find people, especially on short notice or maybe compensation
 - a. Maybe the Shakespeare mentors since we already know who they are
 - b. Maybe increase the turnaround time because 1-2 months is not a lot to review an entire manuscript
 - c. Perhaps we could give the readers recognition on the website ("Board of Readers")
 - d. Maybe we can move the deadline for book submission to September
 - e. Maybe compensation—membership, hotel night, \$100
 - f. Pooling caucus members should be considered
- ii. Open forum on Saturday on immigration executive orders. Hopefully it will provide practical information about what an organization like NeMLA or a university can do in response. 4:45pm in Falkland

2. **President's Report**, Hilda Chacon

2017 Convention, Baltimore

- a. The theme of the conference is timely and that's an accomplishment
- b. We've had great support from JHU
- c. We've secured two great and diverse speakers, well known, and can speak multiple languages

- a. Chilean-born artist and activist, Marjorie Agosín (Opening Night Speaker), and Mexican-born scholar and author Ilán Stavans (Keynote Speaker).
- d. We have a great conference and thank you for putting everything together, especially special events in harmony with the conference theme

3. **First Vice President's Report**, Maria DiFrancesco

2018 Convention, Pittsburgh

- a. Pittsburgh's topic is very timely—how it is that people use and appropriate space (didn't anticipate political atmosphere and how its related etc.)
 - i. We need to be thinking about resistance. How the citizens of particular areas become administrators of their spaces.
 - ii. Hopefully we'll have some presidential panels and board sponsored panels where we can work together on these topics
 - iii. Keynote: Professor John Patrick Walsh at U of Pittsburgh has been key in getting Rob Nixon (author of *Slow Violence*).
 - iv. Opening Speaker: Stewart O'Nan is doing a Q&A. There is also a read along with all of NeMLA reading his book *West of Sunset*
- b. Elections took place, and congrats to the following winners:
 - i. Second VP: Carole Salmon, University of Massachusetts Lowell
 - ii. Anglophone/British: Elaine Savory, The New School
 - iii. Diversity: Susmita Roye, Delaware State University
 - iv. German: Alexander Pichugin, Rutgers University
 - v. Italian: Emanuela Pecchioli, University at Buffalo
- b. **Summer Fellowships:** This is our first year having asked Summer Fellow recipients to do posters for a poster session. We will have posters available to view on Friday, March 24th, from 3:00-4:30pm in Exhibit Room, the Grand Ballroom 5. We have asked recipients for feedback on the new process of needing to hand in receipts and a poster by December 31st of the calendar year in which they receive the award.

3. **Second Vice President's Report**, Simona Wright

- Fellowship Reports

- 2019 Convention, Washington D.C.

- a. Summer fellowship award
 - i. Seven of them will be at the Sunday brunch
 - ii. 22 submissions total, 10 winners
- b. Workshops: 5 workshops on pedagogy
- c. NeMLA *Italian Studies* (a journal that started many years ago because members didn't find access in *MLS* when their submissions were in Italian)
 - i. New design to the journal
 - ii. She will mentor junior faculty who want to experience editing
 - iii. This year the journal will be on the Renaissance
 - iv. The next volume, XXXIX, *The Italian Digital Classroom. Italian Culture and Literature through digital tools and social media* (co-editor Tania Convertini), is underway with expected publication in 2017.
 - v. 2019 issue: 1943-48 Italy abroad during Fascism
- d. secured the sponsorship of Georgetown University as local institution for the 2019 Annual Convention in DC

4. **Modern Language Studies**, Laurence Roth, editor

- a. *MLS* continues in very good editorial health overall and our issue 46.2 (Winter 2017) went out on time. Our thanks to NeMLA President Hilda Chacon for helping organize

the mini-cluster on the convention theme and recommending the poet Luis Correa-Díaz.

- b. We are asking for nominations for Associate Editor for Pedagogy
- c. Moving forward on working podcasting into the journal's mission
 - i. Fiction and poetry—Patrick Henry—interviewed one of the featured writers

VI. Executive Director's Report

1. 2017 Convention

- a. we enjoy Baltimore—it's much easier than working with a convention center.
- b. we have reduced off site local events because there's so much in walking distance, etc.
- c. Shakespeare play (was sold out, but there's a few that are being returned) "Taming of the Shrew"
 - 1. Peabody library tour, providing a shuttle. The tour is sold out but there are spots on the shuttle if you want to tour by yourself
 - 2. African American—largest museum in the US. Guided tour available that we can join in on
 - 3. Check out the Visionary Art Museum
- d. Special events: thank you for the great speakers and securing speakers; encourage you to seek co-sponsorships from local institutions
- e. A small change: We've decided to work more with publishers and exhibitors at MLA and encouraging them to submit names of speakers for our events. We would like you now to piggy-back on that and reach out to publishers in your area and say "I'm from NeMLA, I'm an area director, the next four years, we'll be at ____, do you know of speakers in that area that you could suggest? We'd like to create a database of names, etc. They'd get exposure and book-signing capabilities."
 - 1. Publishers want to know how many people attend NeMLA so that they get an idea of promotion figures (which is 1600-1800); please email ED Carine Mardorossian before you send out emails so she can follow up and suggest edits/add-ons etc.
- f. Workshops:
 - 1. Perhaps we will go back to charging for workshops. \$5 because people don't show up and cancel last minute, etc.
 - ii. We've doubled the amount allocated for speakers because it includes travel (more for keynote speakers because that stipend comes from the host institution).
- g. CV clinic: all the slots should be covered now
- h. Meet the author initiative (Chasseur at 10:15 on Saturday)
- i. The seminars have increased from last year (we have 39) and we have approved second sessions

2. New Initiatives

- i. Scavenger hunt—thanks to Claire
- ii. Continue with photo contest—encouraging panels to get together after their panels
- iii. Networking tables in the exhibit room and at the Saturday night reception
- iv. New initiative: all of NeMLA reads a book (O'Nan's *West of Sunset*)

1. And then recommend sessions that speak to that book (it's on biofiction)
 2. Try to think of sessions that speak to other sessions or to the speakers etc.
 3. have some sort of application process for who will interview O'Nan (maybe it leads to a publication etc.)
 4. Copies of the book that we could hand out as door prizes (maybe we do this in the future?)
 - a. We don't have it in the budget, but maybe publishers will donate in the future?
 - b. Or maybe a discount for an ebook when you register for the conference it could include how to purchase the book
3. Tax exemption in MD
 - a. We got a tax exemption, which saves us at least \$17,000 (registering as a business etc.) It got rejected in NY first
 4. Board of Directors
 - a. We have to continue working on transitions for new board members
 - i. Read the bylaws
 - ii. Read past meeting minutes
 - b. If people want to organize an area director meeting we can do that in the future otherwise it will be after the brunch
 - c. If you can, go to the panels in your area and make sure things are running smoothly
 - i. We are sending fellows to your special events to make sure things are running smoothly
 - ii. Please submit a report on how things went
 - d. Pick up your bags
 - e. Advertise the next year's convention
 - f. The earlier we know about speaker's we can advertise etc. Contact publishers & contact ED Carine Mardrossian
 5. Finances and membership
 - a. Budget is good
 - b. Numbers are a little low—thinking of possibly having institutional memberships
 - c. CFP for April 29th is coming up
 6. Other: Send Carine the list of suggestions for changes/ideal functionality for website functionality for board members
 - a. Two things we need to be aware of:
 - i. Changes to the bylaws (just fyi):
 1. Board members who cannot make two meetings in a row will be asked to resign from the board
 2. Session chairs who fail at their responsibilities cannot be considered for a position on the board
 - b. Encourage people to run for the board
 - c. Please promote 2018, and look ahead for board sponsored sessions etc.
 - i. you have all year long to shape this convention in your area
 - a. Being attuned to which areas are underrepresented and which ones we want to promote etc.

- ii. Nicole from GSC asked: How do we get board sponsored sessions? propose a session as a board member, and serve as chair until a substitute chair is found later

VII. Associate Executive Director's Report:

Brandi So notes the following:

- a. We will be developing an aspect of the database where people can click into their interests and opt into networks for NeMLA
 - i. We can look at this for the Fall agenda
 - b. We're starting to change the website so that chairs could be reminded of deadlines, or maybe board members could promote essay awards.
 - c.

VIII. Other Business and Discussion

- A. A discussion ensued about best practices for promoting people who are nominated for board positions. Is endorsing particular candidates a good idea? Can one divorce oneself from their position on the board? What are the implications for endorsing them? The board members debated this point at length and agreed that board members will not endorse any particular candidate up for election.

Motion to Adjourn: at 10:45, approved unanimously.