Moving in with Trauma (NeMLA 2023)

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We have always lived with trauma, but how do we embrace trauma into our lives and create a meaningful life in the world we live in?

In recent years, critical considerations of aesthetics or beauty have been de-emphasized in literary criticism. There is a certain taboo about the notion of beauty, as Elaine Scarry has neatly pointed out: "many people have either actively advocated a taboo on beauty or passively omitted it from their vocabulary, even when thinking and writing about beautiful objects such as painting and poems" (117). There has been many talks about how aesthetics demeans a work's values—serving as Bourgeois distractions from the real social issues we face, which rightfully remains as an important critical consideration.

However, representation of trauma (individual and culture) calls for issues regarding aestheticizing trauma and its influences to the public discourse. When disassociation and complete freedom from a world of inevitable violence and suffering is unattainable, it highlights the impossibility of innocence when it comes to aesthetics. The very notion of creating and writing calls for an essential collaboration of aesthetic practices engaging with trauma. How do individuals and communities then, contextualize trauma in a contemporary worldview? How do we move in with trauma in consideration of the value of beauty in trauma narratives?

This panel seeks papers on representations of trauma in literature that consider how aesthetics frame trauma narratives, how writers use different forms of beauty to represent trauma, and how the intersection between beauty and trauma changes the world for the better, and room for better representations moving forward.

Submit abstracts online via the NeMLA portal: https://www.cfplist.com/nemla/Home/CFP

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