

WORD

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Word!

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# A Word or Two

By: Geoff Becker

I've been visiting Baltimore City schools this past year as part of a program where the students get free books, followed by a visit from the author (sponsored by the PEN/Faulkner Center in D.C.). It's been a great experience; the kids are, for the most part, eager to talk, full of questions, and just, well, interesting. Most recently, I agreed to visit a different sort of "school," down in D.C.—a correctional facility for juveniles. I had to go through screening to get into the building, and was not allowed to bring anything beyond a copy of my book. Their teacher, Toni, apologized immediately; it seemed that many of the kids she'd distributed books to were now gone—a couple released, some moved elsewhere.

"Every day, it's different," she told me. "You got to be flexible." She introduced me to various people as we moved down the hallway toward the pods where the kids—aged 12 to 18—were housed. A guard, an enormous man with a shaved head, shook my hand and told me he'd played football for Towson. "Go Tigers," I said.

We entered a room that had inspirational quotations on the walls, and which, except for how small it was, could easily have been any of the painted cinderblock classrooms I remember from my own childhood. Toni had brought treats—popcorn, chips, Kool Pops—to keep the kids interested. They dug in. "You the author?" the kids wanted to know. My photo was on the wall. A poster with my image on it stood out in the hallway. It was a strange feeling—my visit was being treated as a very big deal.

One boy, who clearly had trouble keeping his attention focused, asked me if my book was about me. I started to explain that no, it wasn't, it was a book of stories, but as I answered he simply got up and walked out of the room carrying his popcorn.

"Let's talk about you," I said, realizing that in spite of all the preparation on the part of my host, the gulf between what I might represent about the world, and the actual world in which these boys lived, could not be bridged in so brief a time. "Would you ever want to write something?"

*(Continued ...)*

## *(Becker, Continued...)*

Another boy, older, with tattoos all over his neck and arms, raised his hand. "I want to write an urban novel," he said.

"All right," I said. I asked and he told me his name was Marcus. "That's great. What would it be about?"

"It wouldn't be long. I don't like long books."

"I don't either," I said.

"You got any tattoos?" he asked me.

I said I did not.

This seemed to perplex him. "You should get some."

I told him it just wasn't a thing with people my age.

"What advice do you have for us?" he asked. Maybe it was the kind of question he felt was supposed to ask.

"Have goals," I said. "Want something. That makes all the difference. You may not get that exact thing, but at least you'll be in motion, you'll have direction."

"I get out of here," he said, "I'm going to get me a well-paying job, some more tattoos, and a nice car. A Lexus, I think."

"Man," said another kid, "you ain't get no well-paying job all covered with tattoos."

"I am," said the older boy. "And then I'm going to write my urban novel. And I'm going to make a lot of money!" His comment was greeted with good-natured laughter, and someone threw a piece of popcorn at him, which brought the attention of one of the three guards in the room.

In comparison with my other school visits, this one was thin on literary discussion. No one cared much about how I'd become a writer, about how much re-writing I did, about the specifics of particular stories they'd read (they hadn't read any). When we were done, they all lined up to get their books signed. I asked each boy to spell his name so I'd get it right. I carefully tried to inscribe something encouraging and upbeat—"Great meeting you! Good luck in the future!" I felt hopeful. It was clear to me that even if I was myself something of a curiosity, this object they'd been given, my book (and free!), had real meaning. Perhaps they'd carry it around with them after they got out, wherever their lives took them. Perhaps a month from now, or a year, or even ten, they might open it up and try out a story or two. And maybe someday Marcus would write that urban novel, and in the back of his mind be thinking, *Yeah, just like I told him I would.*

# *PRWR Students Present at the Annual CEA-MAG Conference*

By: Lena Ampadu

Students from the Master's in Professional Writing Program—Maryanne Akers (January 2015 graduate); Laurel Rotter; Andrea Ruggeri; and Carolynn Washington—presented papers at the College English Association Middle-Atlantic Group Conference (CEA-MAG), held at Montgomery College, Rockville, MD, on Saturday, March 7, 2015. An outgrowth of research begun in Dr. Lena Ampadu's PRWR 612, Rhetorical Grammar class during Fall 2015, the panel, "Rhetoric and Grammar Across Disciplines," nicely aligned itself with the Conference's overall theme, "Imagination and Creation." Presenters and their topics were as follows:

**Akers**—"Creating Great Cities: The Rhetoric of Jane Jacobs"

**Rotter**—"The Skillful Use of Rhetorical and Grammatical Conventions to Analyze Hip-Hop Culture"

**Ruggeri**—"An Underneath Analysis: The Language and Patterns of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"

**Washington**—"Imagining Womanhood in Jean Toomer's Cane: A Grammatical and Rhetorical Analysis"

*CEA-MAG, an organization of teachers and scholars from English and the humanities, hosts an annual one-day conference and welcomes papers in literature, language, technology, pedagogy, and composition and rhetoric. CEA-MAGazine, the official peer-reviewed journal of the organization, offers a venue for publishing scholarly research, as well as short fiction and poetry. You can find out more information about the organization from Dr. Lena Ampadu, longtime Executive Council member, and on its website:*

<http://www.umes.edu/CEAMAG/Default.aspx?id=48493>

# Imagination and Creation

## *Observations from the 2015 CEA-MAG Spring Conference*

A beautiful, quiet species migrate annually to the central region of Montgomery County, MD, though they have been spotted on a range of Mid-Atlantic grounds in earlier migrations.

They are a gentle and warm and welcoming variety-the College English Association Middle Atlantic Group, quite similar in appearance to the Librarian species, but a much friendlier flock. The outside observer does not see the tedious preparative capabilities of the CEA-MAG that culminate into a fine tuned orchestra for one day each spring. Rare sightings have been documented of the Harried Science professor scurrying through the territory, but the migrators move in slow, methodical rhythms as their internal thoughts and external conversations follow the precision of The Schedule.

And in the midst of humble displays of intellectual virtuosity, they feed their young. One can only partially decipher the meanings of sounds of higher language coming from the Keynote Speaker when feeders are stocked with shrimp wraps. Shrimp!

Even the Bookworm, although a common sight, found usually with head probed deeply in the terrain of fresh pages, will rise up to witness the continued generosity of this genus as they offer a gift basket to their pregnant member, an award to a rising scholar, and a raffle of books for all to forage. What a spectacular family.

But their deepest of generosityies may easily be overlooked even as the veterans of panel discussions sail calmly through captivating presentations like Dr. Ewers' "If I had a Boat: Imagined and Real Nautical Adventures in Literature and Boat Advertising." An unspoken, unwritten language pushes the air in a silent cheer- a call to the novice presenter, "Flap, just flap!"

Gratefully relieved to stand before a small family, we flap, we flap- we stumble and flap again.

*Sincere thanks to Dr. Ampadu.*

***Andrea Ruggeri***

*(Pictured, right. Photo credit: Magooby's)*



# Jolene Carr

*A Thesis Complete and an Award Won*

By: Karyn Spellman

*Jolene Carr, a recent Professional Writing Program graduate, won Towson's Graduate Student Research Award for Spring 2015. Her thesis, "The Rhetorical Sites of Polonian Women's Collaboration and Consciousness-Building in Baltimore: In Factories and Agriculture, They Worked and Gave Strength to our Culture," was directed by Dr. Zosha Stuckey.*



**Q: Could you tell us a little about yourself?**

A: I graduated from Elmira College, a private liberal arts school in the southern Finger Lakes area of New York, in 2009, then moved to Baltimore in 2010 to attend TU. My undergrad degree was English Literature, with Minors in French, Women's Studies, and History. I actually went into the PRWR program with an interest in journalism, but then took Dr. Stuckey's Rhetoric: The Pursuit of Eloquence course and found a passion for that. I graduated just this past winter.

**Q: Were you surprised by the award, and how do you feel about winning?**

A: I feel honored to have won one of the awards, especially alongside the other graduate winners who all sound so accomplished! I also feel honored to have gotten to work with strong mentors: Dr. Stuckey, Dr. Angeli, and Dr. Brown, who were on my thesis committee.

**Q: How did you choose your thesis subject, and what sparked your interest?**

A: I took an independent study with Dr. Stuckey and worked on a paper in which I presented a walking tour of the Polish immigrant women in East Baltimore. After exploring Canton and Fells Point, I was intrigued by the canneries and the beautiful churches like St. Stanislaus Kostka and St. Casimirs, and I'm Polish on my mom's side of the family. This paper eventually developed into the first chapter of my thesis after I realized I had much more to say about these women.

**Q: How long did it take you to complete your research?**

A: I decided to extend the thesis over two semesters, so I'd say the whole process took about a year. I feel proud because I generally approach papers in a "do or die" fashion, and my thesis helped me become more disciplined as a writer and practice the process of drafting and revising.

*(Continued...)*



*(Carr, Continued...)*

**Q: Do you plan to continue researching in this area?**

A: Yes definitely! I'd like to more specifically explore these women's role in the community, like advocating against the thruway on the east side, or develop a more critical lens on their connection to land-marks like the Pulaski Monument and the National Katyn Memorial.

**Q: What does the award mean for you as a student and researcher—is your work submitted elsewhere now for other awards or publication?**

A: I feel like it helps me tell the story of these Polish immigrant women to more people who generally here only the stories about the "old white guys" associated with our history. I'm currently working on submitting my thesis to different Rhetoric publications, either in its entirety or by chapters.

## Announcements

Congratulations to faculty member **Angela Pelster**, whose book of essays, *Limber*, was shortlisted for a PEN American Center literary award.

**Dr. Cheryl Brown**, along with two PRWR graduates, **Chen Chen** and **Margaret DeLauney**, recently presented at the 2015 Composition and Communication Conference. Dr. Brown spoke on "Who Owns First-Year Writing Programs?: The Movement of Multimodality and the Breath of Opportunity." Margaret DeLauney presented "Retaining the Physical in Multimodal Composition." Chen Chen, currently pursuing a Ph.D. from North Carolina State University, presented "Introducing Digital Literacy and Engaging Students with Multi-modal Composition at Two-Year Colleges."

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### Submission Opportunities:

#### Bellevue Literary Review Award

Genre: Health, healing, illness, the mind, body

First prize is \$1,000 in each category.

Deadline: July 1

[www.BLReview.org](http://www.BLReview.org)

#### Bartleby Snopes Literary Magazine: Dialogue

Only Contest

Genre: Fiction

Deadline: This summer.

[www.bartlebysnopes.com](http://www.bartlebysnopes.com)

#### The Briar Cliff Review

Genre: Poetry, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction

Deadline: Aug. 1-Nov.1

[www.bcreview.org](http://www.bcreview.org)

#### Rattle Poetry Prize

Genre: Poetry

Application fee: \$20

Deadline: July 15

[www.Rattle.com](http://www.Rattle.com)

#### The Greensboro Review: Robert Watson Literary Prizes

Genre: Fiction and poetry

Application fee: \$14

Deadline: Sept. 15

[www.greensbororeview.org](http://www.greensbororeview.org)

#### Livingston Press: Tartt Fiction Award

Genre: Fiction (first collection of short stories)

Application fee: \$20

Deadline: Dec. 31

[www.livingstonpress.uwa.edu](http://www.livingstonpress.uwa.edu)

#### Methodist University: 25th Southern Writers Symposium

Genre: Fiction and poetry

Application fee: \$15

Deadline: Aug. 15

[www.southernwriters.submittable.com/submit](http://www.southernwriters.submittable.com/submit)