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May Manuscript Consultations :: Accepting Fiction and Poetry

1 message

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May Consultations

During the month of May, Black Lawrence Press authors **Brandi George** and **Leigh Camacho Rourks** are on board to critique poetry and fiction manuscripts.

Brandi is the author of *Gog* (Black Lawrence Press), which won the gold medal in the Florida Book Awards, and the play in verse, *Faun* (Play Inverse). Her poems have recently appeared in *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Fence*, *Gulf Coast*, and *Forklift, Ohio*, also winning first place in the Dana Awards and the Zone 3 Poetry Awards. Brandi has been awarded residencies at Hambidge Center for the Arts, the Hill House, and the Time & Place Award in France.

Leigh is a Cuban-American author who is the recipient of the St. Lawrence Press Award, the Glenna Luschei Prairie Schooner Award, and the Robert Watson Literary Review Prize. Her fiction, poems, and essays have appeared in *Kenyon Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *RHINO*, *TriQuarterly*, *December Magazine*, and *Greensboro Review*.



Brandi George - Poetry

Statement of Purpose

I approach each manuscript I read with humility, an open mind, and a willingness to be swept into another's vision. I consider it my job to hone that vision, eliminating any clutter that prevents the reader from connecting to the text. Connection is at the heart of my aesthetics, and I believe that all writing is a conversation between text and reader, past and present, living and dead, self and abyss, human and habitat. The more ways the writer is able to connect with other art forms, disciplines, poetic traditions, narratives, myths, political/environmental concerns, and nonhuman life, the more powerful the work becomes. To me, the best poetry balances on the edge of what the writer is capable of, ever reaching beyond. This struggle will maximize the tension in the work.

I also believe that form is a vehicle for the transformation and transmission of ideas. I not only celebrate free verse, but poetic forms, including rhyme royal, terza rima, blank verse, lyric sequences, sonnets, ballads, villanelles, sestinas, ghazals, odes, erasures, golden shovels, bops, and other more recently invented forms. Experimental, hybrid-genre and medium work, and conceptual writing is welcome in addition to prose poems, narrative poems, persona poems, novels in verse, plays in verse, language-driven prose, and lyric essays. My comments will include line edits (line length and cohesion, efficiency of language, sentence structure), and large-order concerns (structure, format, narrative if applicable, image sets, and conceptual/theoretical framework), as well as suggestions for further reading. Be sure to include any particular questions or concerns in your cover letter.

Some of the questions I ask of a text:

1. VISION: What are the rules to this universe? Once I identify this, I am usually able to discover ways to help the text teach the reader how to read it, by means of reorganizing, reformatting, cutting, or expanding the text to make the writer's vision more perceptible.
2. CONNECTION: How does the text contribute to a larger conversation (literary, political, social, cultural, religious)? If there are texts that would help the writer connect more strongly to these larger conversations, I will provide you with a list of reading suggestions.
3. TENSION: Does the writer achieve a balance between chaos and order, wildness and form? Are there places where the writer could increase the amount of tension (between line and sentence, form and content, everyday language and lyricism)?
4. WILL: Is the work alive? Does it have fire? Does it have its own will and life-force? If not, you have not pushed yourself hard enough, and I will suggest some methods for radical revision.

[Click here to send your manuscript to Brandi.](#)



Leigh Camacho Rourks - Fiction

Statement of Purpose

One of the most exciting things about storytelling is that it is not a one-size-fits all discipline. The cornerstones of narrative—character, place, plot, language—are shaped not simply by perfecting rules, but by exploration, by finding and pushing boundaries or playing within in them or even shattering them. It is the story's voice that helps readers understand the shape of a narrative, that guides readers into a story that can and might do anything at all. It is the voice of a story that keeps them there. So as a reader, I approach a manuscript as openly as I can, and I let it teach me where it wants to go and (perhaps more importantly) where it could go. And while there is no element of narrative that I take preference over, I do believe that looking closely at the voice of a manuscript will better guide its revision, so that is where I begin both my own exploration of the manuscript and my discussions with the author.

Once we have a better idea of how the narrative voice is functioning, we can use that as a lens through which to examine the other elements that make up the story, for they are all interconnected. For example, the voice is the lens through which readers see characters, and characters are both products of place and makers of it. Revision of a narrative, then, must take into account these interactions, it is rarely an act of brute force overhaul. Instead, I am a fan of looking at revision as a two-step process, first we see where the path we have laid out best travels, and then we fine-tune it to get it there. A good example of this method is to consider imagery—is there an image or set of imagery that is serving the story and its characters well? If so how best can we amplify it, make it resonate?

I love stories that surprise me, but I am also amazed by the quite stories that may not shatter my expectations, but instead just color them slightly. In other words, I like all kinds of stories, all genres, all voices. It is the diversity of narratives that I truly love. So, my goal is to help you find and fulfill the potentials of your unique story, instead of simply remaking it to fit my expectations. I am happy to read both realism and genre fiction (and all the possibilities in between).

[Click here to send your manuscript to Leigh.](#)

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