

Praxis Independent Study: JackLeg Press Editorial Internship

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About JackLeg

JackLeg Press, founded in 2011, is an independent press publishing poetry, literary fiction, & creative nonfiction. They specifically focus on “authenticity, collaboration, and bold thinking” in their work.

Overview of Work

Our work for JackLeg was remote & located on the press’ Submittable platform, where we would access submitted partial and/or full manuscripts to review. Alongside this, we attended bi-weekly zoom meeting with staff.

A Focus on Poetry ... How to Read a Poem?

I worked solely in the Poetry Department during my internship. I spent the majority of my time reading “Stage 1” submissions; these submissions are around 10-15 pages & comprise only a selection of poems from a larger collection. Towards the backend of the semester, I began reading submissions in “Stage 2,” meaning they were selected to progress further in the review process by sending the complete manuscript of the work. JackLeg uses a standardized ranking system for reviews (from 1-5) of both stages. My evolving approach to reviewing the poetry was the heart of my broader experience. It was my confidence in the reviewing process that changed the most.

At first, needing to quantify my opinion on a submission was a daunting task, one that called on me to be decisive & trusting in my editorial eye. Over time, as I read more, I became more comfortable with “evaluating.” Reading & evaluating poetry is like a juggling act because of how subjective & abstract a poem can be; I needed to learn how to balance critical analysis with gut instinct in order to produce reviews that, while informed by my own perspective, were largely “unbiased” – a goal both impossible & constantly strived for. The submissions I ranked highly couldn’t only be writing that I was aesthetically drawn to, but creative works that pushed a boundary with craftsmanship.

“Craftsmanship”

Learning to identify the successful craftsmanship of a poem is possibly the strongest skill I have learned from my time with JackLeg. It was truly this professional environment based on the assesment of writing that pushed me hardest to understand what makes something stand out as a successful manipulation of language & poetics. I was the most attentive I have ever been to the usages of line & stanza breaks, image-making, & “clarity” of thought (whether that be explicit or more atmospheric).

Following a Manuscript

One submission in particular was at the center of this growth for me. It was a query I had read in both Stages 1 & 2, meaning I was able to ground myself in the initial selection of work before then reading the manuscript in its entirety. The overall time I spent reading the poet’s work drew me inside the world of this book in such a way that I was able to balance the minute & the big picture effects of the poetry.

Highlight: AWP!

The opportunity to attend the Association of Writers & Writing Programs Conference in Baltimore through JackLeg was an incredibly valuable aspect of the internship. It was an environment unlike anything I’d ever experienced: a space dedicated to writing & all the many outlets that support writers, such as presses, lit mags, & literary organizations. As both a chance for networking & a general celebration of the writing world, attending AWP gave me insight into the realities of what this world looks like.

