



November 3, 2006

Dear

First of all, I want to apologize for the lateness of this letter. When I offered to write short critiques of July open submissions, it never occurred to me that we'd be seeing 1,000 manuscripts. As you can imagine, much as I love the endless discoveries to be made reading so many collections, the prospect was daunting. Writing many individual notes is a Promethean undertaking under the best of circumstances, but of course, I want to make good on the promise. So forgive me for taking longer than I'd hoped.

Also, please bear in mind that my intent was always *to give just a brief take on the work*, as there's no way to produce a lengthy, poem-by-poem response to so many. However, I am prepared to respond to and mark up each and every poem in your manuscript with my thoughts, reactions, and suggestions, exactly as if I were editing it for publication. Please see the next page for details; should you find that you are interested in that level of response.

Okay, enough about my work; now let's get to yours. _____ is an exceptional collection, filled with wholly original poems that are fresh, original, sensual, and, in many ways, beautifully realized. The manuscript as a whole is thoughtful, smart, and often, quite moving. Your voice is wise, and the poems show you to be an accomplished and intriguing poet with an admirable seriousness of purpose. There are lots of wonderful poems here. That said, I feel that you might be more rigorous with your language, more wary of the covertly "symbolic," find more music in it, and avoid closing down your poems – even the short ones, with orphic utterances. I understand that you're making conscious choices, but for my taste, some of the work does not live up to the exceptional promise announced in your best poems. I suggest that you think poem-by-poem about which poems you need, here, which you do not, and what you need inside each poem, and what you do not. Go poem-by-poem and consider how to present your lines so that the language works for you. Re-enter those places where you're doing your best work and use that to move through the manuscript.

Thanks so much for sending your terrific collection to our open reading period. You are well on your way with this manuscript, and with some thoughtful revision, I'm sure it will be ready. So, unfortunately, I cannot take your manuscript at this point, but I urge you to revise each poem as suggested above, think about your special gift for transcribing

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experience, and re-submit the manuscript to our Dorset Prize, where it will automatically skip over the first round of readings. (Think about the manuscript review—I believe that an exacting and dispassionate tour through your manuscript will work for you).

Now, if you have no interest in a full manuscript review (including, where appropriate, thoughts on the ordering of the manuscript) please just skip to the final paragraph. If you're still with me, and you'd like to participate, here's how it works: I will review and critique your collection – on the page, in pen & ink – on a first-come, first-served basis. Be prepared that what I'll give you is not a vague or general or overly-gentle commentary, but an honest, line-by-line critique, designed to get you to the next level. I'll take a hard look at your stylistic tendencies, your strategies, and your language. I anticipate that it will take me two weeks from the date of receipt to return your manuscript, as I spend about a half-hour on each poem.

If you want to participate in this full manuscript review, then you need to send your collection back to me (as I recycle everything once read and responded to), along with a pre-paid mailer (so that I can return your fully marked-up manuscript), and your check. I will charge \$295 (normally, I charge \$900 for a full manuscript review). Your check should be made payable to Jeffrey Levine (not to Tupelo Press, please), and mailed to me at:

Jeffrey Levine
Manuscript Review
PMB 350
1245 Farmington Ave.
West Hartford, CT 06107-2667

Please bear in mind that a manuscript review is just that: a thorough, poem-by-poem critique of your work. It does not represent a prelude to publication by Tupelo Press, though, of course, I do not rule out the possibility in some cases. Virtually everybody who has won a Tupelo Press competition has submitted several times, and manuscripts improve, sometimes dramatically so.

In any event, thank you sincerely for showing me your work. As a poet, you are engaged in the most sacred calling I know. I hope that you will continue to re-enter your poems, to give yourself over to the pleasures and discoveries implicit in close revision. You are already an accomplished poet. That said, I feel that you can get a lot better rather quickly. Enjoy the process, and when you feel the time is right, please do let us see your manuscript again at Tupelo Press.

Sincerely yours,

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