Tupelo Press Manuscript Conference Work Plan

Prior to the conference, poets will be given a full set of pre-conference assignments to complete and bring to the conference for review with faculty. These assignments are designed to help the poets think through and conceive the shape of their manuscripts, their strategies on the page, the concerns and ideas expressed by the poems as a whole, and also, and importantly, to develop a realistic personal evaluation of the manuscripts’ relative strengths and weaknesses as a whole (as expressed generally by the writing itself) and to take a careful, evaluative approach to the individual poems. In addition, poets will be asked in advance of the conference to think carefully about what makes each poem “matter,” about how each individual poet goes about revealing (or occluding) what matters to the poem, the speaker, the poet, and the book.

At the conference:

Day One

Participants will work in two small groups and faculty will rotate between those two groups.

Each group will spend the first part of the day working through the pre-conference assignments, as guided by the faculty, and the second part of the day reviewing intensely the annotations made on the manuscript by the faculty in the course of the pre-conference manuscript review.

The faculty and participants will jointly develop the significant threads from the commentary into a work-plan for polishing the draft, or for final-revision, or for a new revision leading to a publishable manuscript.

Where applicable, the faculty will discuss with each participant whether the book is “ready” (i.e., publishable), and otherwise, what the poet will need to concentrate on in order to make it so.

Day one will conclude with a significant homework assignment, in order to prepare each participant further for the following day’s work.

Day Two

The first part of the day will be a continuation of the previous day’s work, and further, will address the “homework” brought to the session by each participant.

This day will be devoted to shaping the manuscript, to learning how to become a dispassionate reader of one’s own work (and book), and how to “listen” to the poems in order to determine which poems want to be with (precede or follow) other poems—to understand how poems talk to each other. We will also explore the art of titling a manuscript (and individual poems).

Finally, we will generate a plan for each participant on how, when and where to send your manuscript, and how, when and where to send those of your individual poems that are not yet published.