

## Opening the Doors of Poetry: A Week-long Generative Workshop

When: June 27 – July 1 and August 6 – 10, 2018

Where: Montpelier, Vermont at Baron Wormser's house, 13 Loomis Street

Cost: \$975

Over the course of decades I have taught many dozens of workshops and have developed a sense, both practical and intuitive, about the value of using prompts as a springboard into writing. The notion is Buddhist and reminiscent of koans: be in the moment and respond to what occurs in the moment. There is nothing to plan and very definitely nothing to worry about. Each participant starts afresh with each piece of writing in search of new ways through the thicket of the self and welter of the world.

Each day, I will present two prompts, which means ten new poems during the week. After a discussion that speaks to what is occurring in the piece, participants use that prompt as a jumping-off point. Then, after a timed writing period, the group reconvenes to read aloud what they've written and discuss how their piece related to the prompt and where they went with it.

The workshop revolves around trust: trusting me as a teacher and trusting yourself to respond. Responsiveness is a great gift, a hallmark of our being alive. For my part, I started teaching at the Frost Place in 1992 and before that was teaching undergrads and high school students. I came to realize that prompts offer a chance to appreciate and engage with some nugget of art along with a chance to make something more of it, something personal. The prompts are a spur to writing but also a chance to further the conversation every writer needs to have about other writers.

There will be, over the course of the days, time to revise pieces. If a participant gets caught up with a piece of his or her writing and wants to stay with it, that's fine. The intention is to respect the opening of those inner doors. Although what comes up may be intense, there is no emotional agenda. The path each person takes in each piece is utterly up to the person.

Again, for my part, I have offered similar generative workshops over the years at various locales but can now do it in my own home, where my own library is present. My wife and I live in a cozy cottage of a house and the group will meet, as weather and inclination dictate, in our living room, our dining room, our patio, and our front porch. Our house is near downtown Montpelier so it's a very short walk from places to stay like the Montpelier Inn, Betsy's B & B, and the Capitol Plaza Hotel. Montpelier has many restaurants, an art cinema, a bar with over twenty craft beers on tap, independent bookstores, and a number of bakeries and cafes. There is plenty of hiking, kayaking, and swimming nearby. It's a lovely place to spend a week.

The cost for a week is \$950. The day runs from 8:30 (breakfast will be provided) to 3. Participants can sit and write in our house and on the grounds or porch or sit in a nearby café and write there. I am around all day to talk individually with each participant. Participation is limited to six people.

This workshop is geared for any level of writer. The point is to offer a chance to grow as a writer and bear witness to others' growth. Each day will unfold in a slightly different way because the prompts and the writing that the prompts generate inevitably take us down intriguing paths.

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What recent participants have said about the "Open the Doors" workshops:

"As a teacher, Baron held the space skillfully, offering both welcome and challenge. We were given the encouragement of imagination, and then inspirational poems and tools of craft to experiment with. Everyone was heard."

"You may be a daily writer. You may be well-read. You may even be well-educated and working in the field of communication or of education. You may have a diverse vocabulary and lots of good stories to tell. But beyond all of this, there is more.

What lies beyond is the practice of and ability to make your poetry more compelling. Learn in his sessions how to engage your own imagination, in conjunction with the stored imagery of the collective unconscious, (or the collective consciousness, whichever makes most sense to you).

Baron creates an atmosphere in which serious writers gather to do more with their interest and skills. His lifetime of experience, accumulated life skills, magnitude of familiarity with poets from the past and present, wide reading, pursuit of his own interests, and publications and presentations related to poetry and prose, are brought to bear on each moment of a carefully thought-out process.

The mirror will be held up to your work, both by Baron, with his wide range of useful perspectives on your writing attempts, as well as by the participants in your close group. Criticism plays no part in the process, but kindness and reflection does. Baron is asking, and encouraging, the expanded use of the imagination.

Think of the album cover for the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*. There is color, surprise, theater, and cohesion. There is complexity and magnetism. As we write, and revise, with the guidance of a master in these arts, we can bring our poetic efforts to a more full expression."