

# NEWS from CavanKerry Press

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## IMPENITENT NOTES

Poems by

### Baron Wormser

Baron Wormser's ninth collection of poems, **IMPENITENT NOTES** (CavanKerry Press; March 2011; \$16.00, paperback) underscores the acclaimed poet's connections to the world in which he lives – a world of familiarities imbued with the individual response. Wormser is a realist who finds his poetic voice in the day to day, in popular culture, and in the emotional particulars that make us human. These poems, some of which first appeared in *Paris Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Sewanee Review*, and other prestigious literary publications, as well as on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and Poetry Daily, probe beneath the skin of ordinary folk, expressing a host of human concerns and observations, from aspirations and certainties to disappointments and defeats.

Time – both the opportunities it presents and the irrevocable losses it demands – is at the center of many of the poems in **IMPENITENT NOTES**. "You wished to make time have a stop/ but your betters knew better – / your hurt was an ever-available arrow" the poet writes in "Missile," a lyric to a misunderstood child who wreaks a violent revenge. Wormser evokes time's passage, be it the slow-ticking clock in "Hebrew School (1955)" when, "The afternoon trudged on – a caravan in a sandstorm," the temporal hyper-awareness of insomnia as, "Even at midnight it remained too hot to sleep" ("The Uses of Literature"), or the fraught timelessness of an "Abandoned Asylum, Northampton, Massachusetts." In "Ode to Time," the poet argues:

Time doesn't exist but is real.  
It took billions of years for the planet to make it this far.  
That's why people binge....

Time is a polluted, ugly river.  
Sorrow rains for days, the banks overflow.  
Corpses bob on the water.

Music drives many of Wormser's poems, its populist cadences expressing the feelings of a generation shaped by the rhythms of its soundtrack. A voice, perhaps Billie Holiday's, "Swings each uncoated, impenitent note" ("Indelible"), the memory of "one of those stringed plagues—/Mantovani" recalls an uncomfortable afternoon spent with a mother's "boyfriend" ("High Fidelity"), and college roommates, returning from a Thanksgiving trip where one has failed in his mission to come out to his parents, get "in an argument about what radio station/to play" ("Winning"). "I lay in bed at night and listened on my transistor," says the narrator of "DJ (1965)." "Radio waves seemed an active miracle and still do:/I can't believe the silent air brims/With those chattering arrows." In the hilarious "My Bands," four incarnations of an evolving amateur rock group signal the passage of time, from pimples to punk to country. Strains of "Peggy Sue" on the car radio can prove a tonic to a multitude of America's character flaws:

We keep tingling—savoring the pure thrall  
Of foreshortened American joy.  
He's the incalculable voice of poetry.  
Our beautifully engineered beast rolls on.

(from "Buddy Holly")

Wormser writes of darker themes—a mother dying of cancer, the bilking of Americans by the gurus of Wall Street, torture in Latin America, the faceless life of prostitutes, the anger and despair of the mother of a soldier killed in Iraq—but even in the most solemn of moments, he never fails to identify the absurdity, the fundamental quirk that accentuates our universal human imperfections. "Baron Wormser's incandescent, exacting, generous intelligence never allows him the luxury of detachment," writes Dennis Nurkse. "Like all real subversion, his poetry hinges on responsibility. If there's irony, it's the irony of reality, of tragedy: the only animal that claims to know itself can't save itself. Wormser can show you what's inside those emotions—hope, desire—whose outsides have names. Behind the playfulness, formidable technique and erudition; behind that, a mind that does not compromise. **IMPENITENT NOTES** is essential work."

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**About Baron Wormser**

Baron Wormser is the author of seven previous books of poetry, a poetry chapbook, a memoir, a book of short stories, and has co-authored two books about teaching poetry. He teaches in the Fairfield University MFA Program and directs the Frost Place Conference on Poetry and Teaching in Franconia, New Hampshire. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and in 2005 was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Maine at Augusta. From 2000 to 2005 he served as poet laureate of Maine.

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of any review or feature you publish about this book.

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