

# PROET

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#### Preface

The collaborative works in this book were inspired by artist and poet Kimberly Blaeser. For years, Blaeser has conducted her own research into the relationship between words and images. She refers to the resulting artworks as, "pictopoems". This term became a launching point for students in the Studio Art course, The Constructed Photograph, and the English course, Advanced Creative Writing: Poetry, to consider responding to each other's medium. Blaeser visited with both classes and gave lectures about her pictopoem explorations. Students were then assigned groups and a poem by Blaeser to study and respond to using either photography or words. They were then asked to respond to each other's images and poems. The resulting artworks are assembled in this book.

Blaeser encouraged students to think beyond merely illustrating each other's work. She advocated using images and language to "break open" or capture an "illusive beckoning" that an experience may hold. Her visits with students were a call to get inside a moment and speak to its ethos.

The works in this book are the result of many edits and drafts. Students made dozens and dozens of photographs. Many wonderful poems didn't make the cut. It is worth noting that this collaboration between students and Kimberly Blaeser occurred entirely remotely. Students made this work in the spring of 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the resulting art is inevitably a reflection of that experience and the limitations it put on what kind of art it was possible to make.

Thank you to Kimberly Blaeser for sharing her work and inspiring our students.

Thank you to our students for attempting what is normally a very difficult undertaking in very trying circumstances. We hope you enjoy the book.

James Armstrong Roger Boulay

# **PART ONE**

Selections from *Copper Yearning*Poems by Kimberly Blaeser

#### Pica

Eat the upside down Vs of forest ^^^,
Each small stuttering----dash of rustic roads.
My pedals devour miles; my shaded eyes,
Names: Big Foot Beach, Devil's Lake.
The taste of mythology on my tongue,
This cartographic hunger. Now tip
The tiny cups µµµµ of lakes
The blue spilling veins of ancient rivers.
Pause for fill at each crisscross view
///// of bridges, of tattered railways
vanishing into planted fields of forever.
Inhale lingering scent of wild on onion—
this papyrus, this map of belonging.

#### Of Nalusachito and the Course of Rivers

#### For Louis

I would have gone to him then—in the lost river.

The character who lived haunting the edge,
his keen raw in the night, a scream decades loud—
the mixedblood scream that opens us.
Like male rain always falling in the stories
Streaming myth and planting seeds of shadows.
Those dark and true near beings, who lean
always a whisper step away—kin to desire.
How long this dark cast of shadow, bodies
emptied of light; this dry bed of absence, waters
a remnant disappearing from sight? No measure
for this—for us, beneath the patient moon.

Such shapes, not figment nor pacing shade of panther—but the thin pen of hunger hunting names stolen, erased, buried. Half-forgotten half-remembered. Bifurcated. But refusing each printed erasure: treaties, maps, formulas—complicated calculations, destiny in degrees. Here inscribe soul math, of latitude and blood. Yes, I would unbury the bones of story lie down beside them in nameless river bottoms, rivers dried and waiting for Thunder those beings of myth and copper-laced ether, those harbingers—those Ancients.

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#### Prairie Thunder

Bleached Bones. Their empty eye sockets still seeing the sacred prairie—this brown fecund earth round and heaving like a buffalo's back.

Mashkode-bizhiki—skulls 180,000 deep,
dem bones rising more that four men tall
to the exact height of color id indifference.
Bison herds. Their thunder tall
and gone.
Mine on this page—loud
like memory of rifles from trains
or clatter of 50 million skel etons
bison becoming fertilizer and fine bone china.
This evil, brilliant as the strategy of Kit Carson:
the genocidal slaughter of Navajo sheep—
each the slaughter of a livelihood.

Herd after butchered her of grassland bison did not become shield or shelter, become par fleche bags or travois. Martyred tatanka bodies—not harvested for pemmican or soap in this insatiable buffalo war. No rawhide for drums, for stirrups, moccasin soles, or saddles; no sturdy hair for rope, horns for implements. No stitches taken with sinew. No arrows launched from buffalo bow strings—the majestic skulls of these exterminated will not grace altars in sacred ceremonies.

#### Canyon on the Edge of Years

An infinity of rims. My sight adrift pursuing the sand-colored rust-lined heather-hued peaks. Ancient. Land that diminishes The tiny rubble of electronic dailyness. A tuning of shadows, of geometric patterns. An ageless dance as second by copper second light spills itself, recklessly now plunges to the tiny sliver of riveryes, the carving Colorado a taper of history. And we inert and anxious, boot-clad unweathered in our lotioned, minute humanity. Hopi call you Ongtupqa. Sacred land. Place of emergence. Here the dark crags and whorls of becoming, precipice upon precipice receding beyond simple sight-(breath in landscape) this impress of lost gods. Dream hands that whittle, the pitch of songs in caves, wing colors on rock wallsinscribe me here in mountain regalia.

#### **Bronze Lumen**

tick of sap dripping, now flutter-drum of partridge palette of spring trees.

copper crane bodies ride impossible stilt legs across fields of June

ghosts in ocher light.



when snow swirls like breath vague gusts rise on flat expanse—

#### Winter Aurora

Boots under bath robes we huddle in the Wisconsin night, here, too, we whistle to stalagmite points of light. Sky shimmers neon flickers green purple greenwaasanoode ancient woodland spirits. The torch of your feet A northern pathway, each footfall a spark, a call to beckon us to the land of makwa. There somewhere in solar wind. Niibaashkaa, dark travelers lift their muklaks high dance sky.

## **PART TWO**

Photographs and poetry by Winona State University students



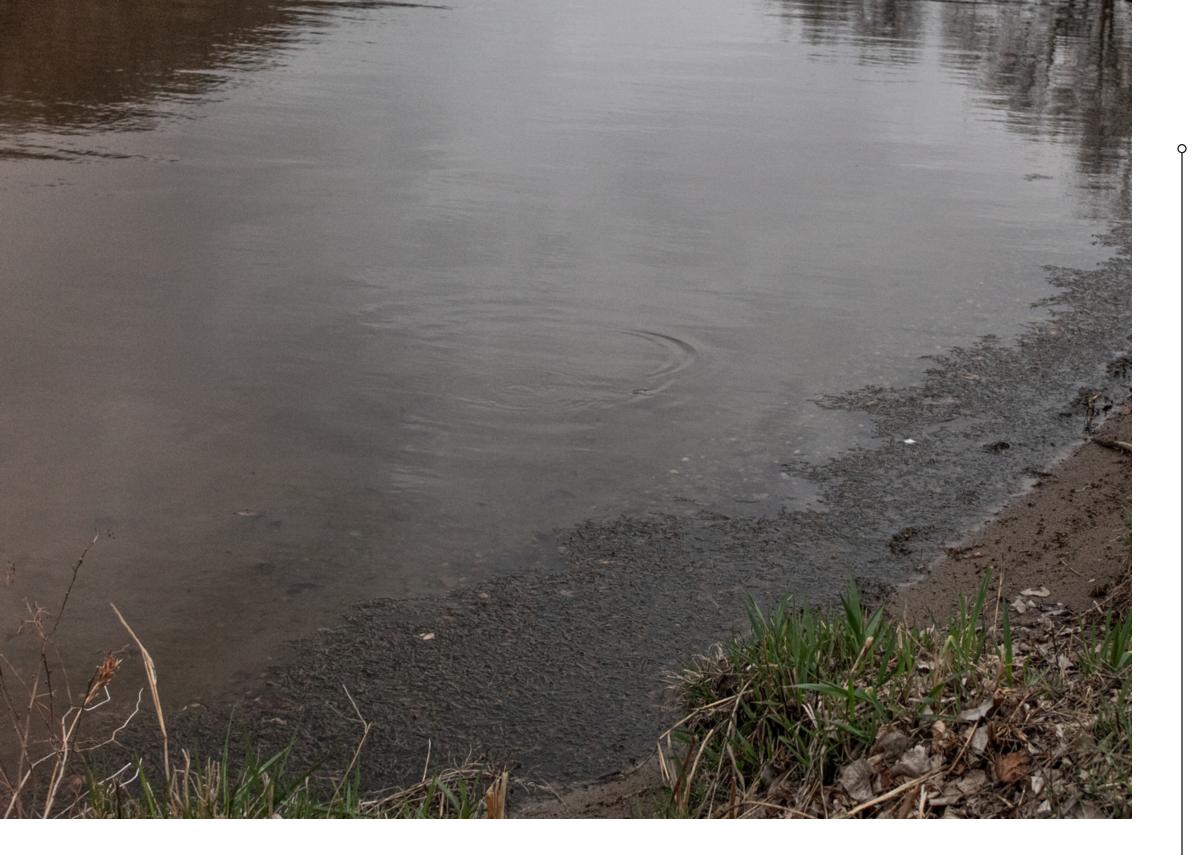


#### curious

a squirrel claws her way up stiff branches, bristly fur illuminated by living flame, rushing water, an ancient anxiety that has kept her alive at least this far.

she sits there, twitching,

staring down with open eyes toward the vast expanse of a world in which it is best not to be curious.



#### Overflow of Pain

I find myself walking through the fields of flowers,

no direction or true end point. My lost mind brings me

to the smell of the lake and my feet find their way to the edge. I look at the calm water and take in a breath.

The water brimmed close to the top of the grass it was bordering on overflowing but the embankment held strong. I wish my eyes were that strong but the tears continued to fall down my face. Imagining my body slipping into the water and letting myself float on the top like a duck before it dives under for food. If only it was that easy to let myself drop down to the bottom, feel the floor of the lake on my feet and watch the fish swim around me.

Forgetting the pain in my heart and silencing the voices in my head. But the water is too high no swimming allowed today.



#### Apple Pie

Wash your hands.
Take the knife.
Make sure to cut the Wolf River apples correctly and miss your fingers.
The sound of the 'slice'

Fills the Room.

The blade goes through the skin and then the meat. The sweet smell of freshly cut apples lingers in my nose.



Ice and the Snow

I can speak of the ice and the snow that reigns in the North. But in truth we do not speak. We do not speak of the snow. We do not speak to the ice. I could tell you all about the romance of the winter. How lovers find time to keep each other warm for a chilly day fuck, when a pair of summer sweethearts find a wilted flower encased in some frost.

They hold it to their hearts, and wishfully say 'somethings survive in winter see' But I would be false in saying that the glimmer of the ice keeps us warm.

For the lovers will drift apart. And that frost will not always protect that bloom. Even the goddman snow will be your end—the drunk man who got lost in a blizzard can tell you the same thing. When we found him in the morning, there was a smile on his face. Oh, the beauty he must have seen! To be part of a blizzard. Once the frostbite melts from his tongue, and his stiff hand can clasp the bottle once again I'm sure he'll tell the lovers that they'll be okay in the end.



#### Coming Home

Broken, splattered, plastered across three states which one is safe to call home?

I have crashed to the floor like a glass of red wine. Sending veins

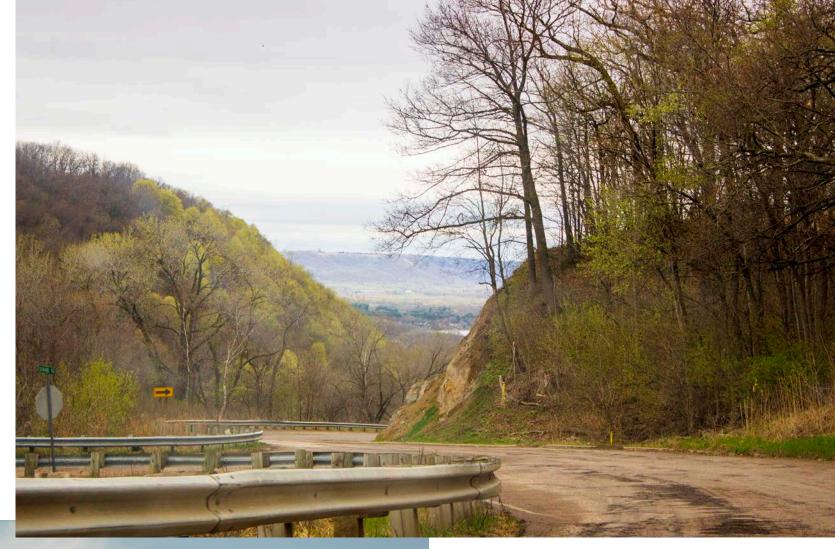
> of blood to spread through the carpeted floor.

I am the wine
I am the stain
I am the shards of glass
I am the whole damned mess

but

I pick up the pieces and try to create something completely brand new.

A messy mosaic, an indistinct scene a woman who finds home in her own presence.







#### Stampede to Change

Hooves clomp on the ground as herds of wild beasts

trample the dirt below. Crushing everything in their way.

No care in the world over what harm they are causing that the real damage appears.

Isn't that how it always is? We don't stop to see the the damage is already done. One small action, a co occurs, and something drastic changes. One beast A stampede of beasts can cause the world to crumb



#### **Butterfly Stitches**

I can count the tethers and threads holding my emotions hostage behind the façade of a fake smile and jokes about needing coffee in the morning for your safety, on one hand. Fissures creep along the cobble-banded walls I have built up around myself in a tightly swaddled cocoon, and soon enough, that dam will break; I'm not sure what will happen then. Will the nightmares win?

I'm the Boogeyman and I'm coming to get you.

My mother always asks why I'm so tired all the time,
as if the dark circles under my eyes aren't evidence
enough of the effort I put into making it through each
day of mindless schoolwork and psychological warfare.
"You look like you got punched" she'll say – yeah, and
I feel like that would hurt a lot less than the barbs and insults.

#### You can't see me!

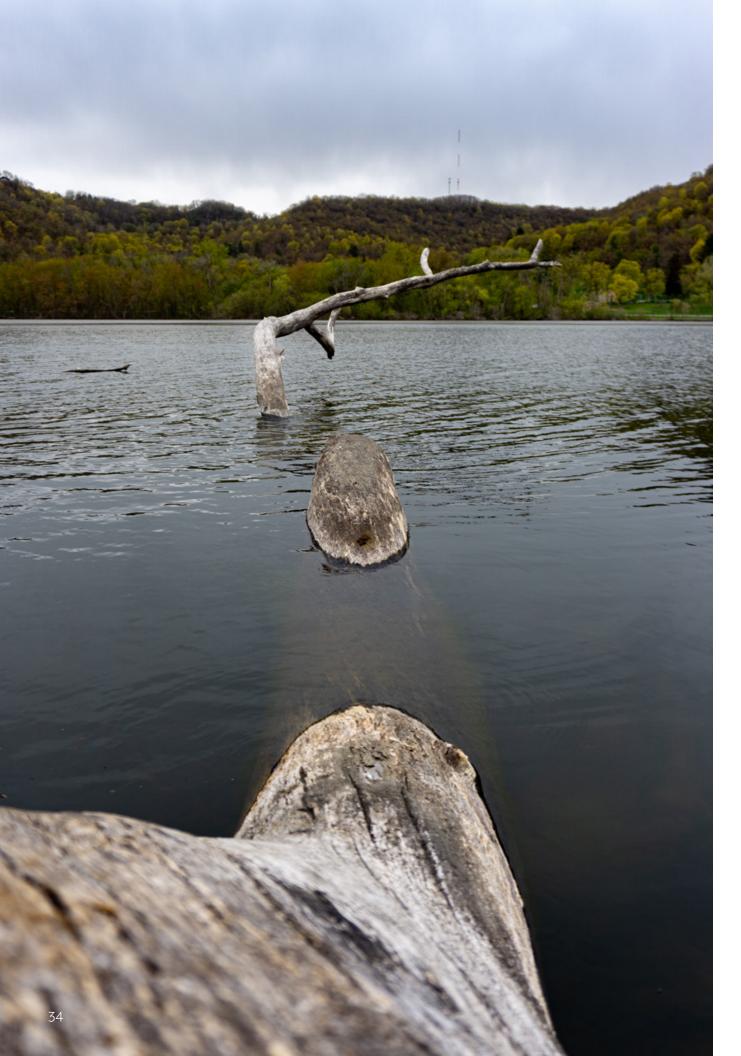
I chant, over and over, hoping that one day I may will myself invisible from judging eyes and the isolation. I pray that the voices will one day come seeking me out and I could say "you can't see me" and have them brush right on by me – no effect. No pain. No tears left staining my pillowcase at night like sweat stains or piss after a nightmare.

It doesn't matter what your name is.

Pride. Anxiety. Insecurity. Nagging Endless Depression. It all spells out "pained" anyways. Does naming it really change anything? A diagnosis on paper doesn't stop me from living with it. Highschool is cruel, but my mind is crueler.

You're not good enough. Nobody cares how you're doing. You should just stay in bed. Give up!





#### drakes

two lives suspended in a time on water a place that not even the slightest tragedy could kiss them or blow it's bleary-eyed 2 a.m. cigarette smoke at their lackadaisicality

with no words between them, they allow their hackles to lower again perhaps internally musing on the passage of confidence that ambushes in the intimate moments leaving you dry-mouthed as you converse of past nights, sharper nights

the satin slip of smooth water beneath their evening feet quiet chatter, crickets on lily pads fingers in the grass and a deep long sigh as the breath of one becomes another two sincere confessions of universal nescience

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