CREATIVE PACKET

Featuring Kim Blaeser

Poetry Reading

Wednesday, March 6, 7:00 pm

Murphy Auditorium, 2nd floor in Rockwell Hall (515 Hilltop Dr, Kent, OH)
Kimberly Blaeser, past Wisconsin Poet Laureate, is the author of five poetry collections including Copper Yearning, Apprenticed to Justice, and Résister en dansant/Ikwe-niimi: Dancing Resistance. Blaeser edited Traces in Blood, Bone, and Stone: Contemporary Ojibwe Poetry and authored the monograph Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition. A Professor at University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and MFA faculty for Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, Blaeser is also founding director of In-Na-Po—Indigenous Nations Poets. She lives in rural Wisconsin; and, for portions of each year, in a water-access cabin near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota.
GOODBYE TO ALL THAT
By Kimberly Blaeser

He could have taken you prisoner, of course when our two tribes were at war over whitefish and beaver territory and the Anishinaabeg chased your Indian ancestors from the woodlands he now brings you home to. Or your Dakota relatives might have waged a war party on their swift plains’ ponies to avenge your taking and bring you back from those uncivilized they named in disgust the rabbit-chokers. But those histories of dog-eaters and Chippewa crows are just a backdrop now for other stories told together by descendants of smallpox survivors and French fur traders, clan members of Wolf and of Water Spirit. And now you gather, trackers and scouts in new bloodless legal battles, still watch for mark and sign— for the flight of waterbirds.

ii.

Old histories that name us enemies don’t own us; nor do our politics grown so pow-wow liberal you seldom point out the follies of White Earth tribal leaders. (Except of course for the time our elected chair mistakenly and under the influence of civilization drove his pickup down the railroad tracks and made the tri-state ten o’clock news.) And Sundays behind the Tribune he seldom even mentions the rabid casino bucks or gets out his calculator and with lodge-pole eyebrows methodically measures beaded distances, results of territorial lines drawn in your homeland. And even though I have seen him sniff, glance over
he really almost never checks the meat in your pot,
nor reconnoiters the place of your rendezvous
just to be sure.

From *Apprenticed to Justice*. (Salt Publishing, 2007)
IF I LAID THEM END TO END
By Kimberly Blaeser

That old guy with the muskrat soup
slurps it loudly from the ladle
Hoowah, pretty good stuff!
You shift your weight on the stool
raise the bad leg just enough
and retrieve the red bandana hankie.
Talk still spills like sunshine
over the knife-marred counter
as slowly you wipe the can
push the cloth back in your pocket
and cough down the grape pop
glancing at the bobbing black head
where it surfaced in the pot.

The burned farm. That hungry year.
The long walk from Strawberry Mountain
warmed now with the weight
of fresh butchered wiiyaas in your pack.
Mum’s baking soda biscuits mixed and cut
lined waiting in the tin pan
like our little kids’ faces at the window.
Sure took the wrinkle out of our bellies that night.

One opening day when those two old fishermen
ended up drunk clinging to the canoe.
The hunt for diamond willow,
beaver camp on Easter weekend,
the whitefish feeding on wax worms,
the string of crappies slipped from your hand,
the missing outhouse floor,
training waaboose,
feeding the least weasel,
tales from working on the ships,
from boiling sap, planting trees, pounding, carving,
and then the cigar box memories
of those old time Indians
who could really tell stories . . .
From *Apprenticed to Justice*. (Salt Publishing, 2007)
HAIKU JOURNEY

i. Spring

the tips of each pine
the spikes of telephone poles
hold gathering crows

may’s errant mustard
spreads wild across paved road
look both ways

roadside treble cleft
feeding gopher, paws to mouth
cheeks puffed with music

yesterday’s spring wind
ruffling the grey tips of fur
rabbit dandelion

ii. Summer

turkey vulture feeds
mechanical as a red oil rig
head rocks down up down

stiff-legged dog rises
goes grumbling after squirrel
old ears still flap

snowy egret—curves,
lines, sculpted against pond blue;
white clouds against sky

banded headed bird
this ballerina killdeer
dance on point my heart
iii. Fall

leaf wind cold through coat
wails over hills, through barren trees
empty garbage cans dance

damp September night
lone farmer, lighted tractor
drive memory’s worn path

sky black with migration
flocks settle on barren trees
leaf birds, travel songs

october moon cast
over corn, lighted fields
crinkled sheaves of white

iv. Winter

ground painted in frost
thirsty morning sun drinks white
leaves rust golds return

winter bare branches
hold tattered cups of summer
empty nests trail twigs

lace edges of ice
manna against darkened sky
words turn with weather

now one to seven
derer or haiku syllables
weave through winter trees
Northern follows jig
body flashes with strike, dive:
broken line floats up.

From *Apprenticed to Justice*. (Salt Publishing, 2007)
WHAT I BELIEVE
By Kim Blaeser

after Michael Blumenthal

I believe the weave of cotton
will support my father's knees,
but no indulgences will change hands.

I believe nothing folds easily,
between time will crease—
retrain the mind.

I believe in the arrowheads of words
and I believe in silence.

I believe the rattle of birch leaves
can shake sorrow from my bones,
but that we all become bare at our own pace.

I believe the songs of childhood
follow us into the kettles of age,
but the echoes will not disturb the land.

I believe the reach of the kayak paddle
can part the blue corridor of aloneness,
and that eyes we see in water are never our own.

From Copper Yearning, (Holy Cow! Press, 2019.)