

BEMIS × CENTER



Collection of Poems

Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers

Poetry Workshop | June 8, 2024

Led by Kinsale Drake + Maritza N. Estrada

Table of Contents

Rachel Adams, <i>After Hasinai</i>	5
Jade Bailey, <i>Star Child</i>	7
Bill Bucy, <i>Untitled</i>	9
Brian M Dietrich, <i>Caddo Woman Warrior</i>	11
Kinsale Drake, <i>after "FLAGBEARER" by raven halfmoon</i>	13
Maritza N. Estrada, <i>Humming-womb</i>	15
Natasha Kessler, <i>Poem inspired by Raven Halfmoon's "Caddo Dancing in Binger, Oklahoma, 2018"</i>	17
Jillian Schley, <i>Our Mother Is a Gemini</i>	19

An **ekphrastic poem** is a vivid description of a work of art. Through the act of describing and reflecting on a work, the writer amplifies and expands its meaning.

Workshop funding provided by





Raven Halfmoon, *HASINAI (Caddo): Our People*, 2021.
Stoneware, glaze. Photo: Colin Conces. Courtesy of the artist
and Ross + Kramer Gallery, New York.

After Hasinai

Rachel Adams

Clay is haunting me

Coil built, enveloping my body. prickling at my senses.

It (the clay) is strong but quiet, like you. It (and you) do not speak much.

Maybe it is you that haunts me.

You,

Watch my tears leave red
streaks down my cheeks
Listen to my memories and all
that came before me

Maybe I should build that coil around myself

So you cannot haunt me anymore But you
peel back my layers and
make me blush

You will see me as I am most desperate to see you (again).

Star Child

Jade Bailey

i know there is memory in the blood —
trauma, too — embedded deep in the bones.
in the way, my mother teaches me to dip my
fingers in the water to smooth out the clay.

Red, the color of the earth
that molded us, the fabric between
the stitches, the Mississippi sun
that kissed my skin in summers long past.

in this way, ink becomes a ceremony
of remembering, an exertion of a
violent history that makes healing a possible
future, so the body can be more than
gendered violence imposed on the flesh.

star child, you are coming home.
so press upon paper the gift of a future,
your flag on the wall,
the face of your mother
staring back at you.



Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers (installation view),
Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, May 18, 2024 to
September 15, 2024. Photo: Colin Conces.



Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers (installation view), Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, May 18, 2024 to September 15, 2024. Photo: Colin Conces.

Untitled

Bill Bucy

I loved Queenie
Soft to the touch
Pleasant to the nose
Kind in her eyes

Twice each day
Gently washed her teets
Stroked her brown back
Whispered into her ear

Milk squirts into bucket
Aroma of barn-cow-hay
Sweet music of her gnawing grain
Warmth of her utters upon my hands

Caddo Woman Warrior

Brian M Dietrich

Caddo woman warrior, rendered in ravishing red,
Sitting astride a galloping horse
Bearing the amorphous markings
Of hands spiritually

passed

down

through the generations
looks out across the land.

Just as ancestors long since forgotten,
she sits proudly,
head held high,
resiliently facing forward

into

the

future.

Caddo woman warrior
oh how you scream the truth
of William Faulkner's immortal words:

"The past is never past;

it's not even past."

In her presence, hoofbeats

still

pound

the parched soil,

lightning

still

strikes,

and

thunder

still

trembles

Through the anxious air.



Raven Halfmoon, *Caddo Woman Warrior*, 2021. Stoneware, glaze. Photo: Colin Conces. Courtesy of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2024.20.



Raven Halfmoon, *Flagbearer*, 2022. Stoneware, glaze. Photo: Colin Conces. Courtesy of the artist and Ross + Kramer Gallery, New York.

after “FLAGBEARER” by raven halfmoon

Kinsale Drake

In the beginning, bodies brought the rain.
The earth stitched their ragged wounds closed
with clay. Mixed with water, a tender poultice,

of sorts. I miss the ground. That part of me
is gone. Four is our holy number, but I am
forever left in threes, unable to unify myself

under one flag. A realm where I am whole
is but a dirty dream. There is only deadwood,
red rivers, grief prescribed long before

my waking. At least, in the seed-dark,
the rot heals. It is an unvanishing
in the belly of the world.

Humming-womb

Maritza N. Estrada

Era un exhalación
Era una exhalación—song for womb.

We cradle our hips & press las palmas on
the abdomen to say, *There, there*
you are safe now.

That was then & here is now.

The greatest grief shot me down to the earth.
I gathered myself back up,
wounded-humming, dragging from red barro,
to the red earth, reaching for my red sun. So I
became sand.

Didn't they tell you I am glass, crystal,
beaming to the wind's vibration, womb-weaving,
mighty & firm
after succeeding endless agony.

Alegría!



Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers (installation view), Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, May 18, 2024 to September 15, 2024. Photo: Colin Conces.

Poem inspired by Raven Halfmoon's "Caddo Dancing in Binger, Oklahoma, 2018"

Natasha Kessler

We are four mothers,
 eyes stacked with story,
half-moons, quiet blood.
 Though we are silent now,
we've never known silence.
 Spice orange, summer's heat,
a feverish bouquet,
 we carry what we need—
skin gouged and glazed,
 cut through
with our children's constellations.
 We are four mothers,
more than invention,
 more than what keeps us
in this place.



Raven Halfmoon, *Caddo Dancing in Binger, Oklahoma, 2018*.
Stoneware, glaze. Photo: Colin Conces. Courtesy of Forge
Project Collection, traditional lands of the Moh-He-Con-Nuck.



Raven Halfmoon, *Star Sister I*, 2021. Stoneware, glaze.
Photo: Colin Conces. Collection of Mark McDonald and
Dwayne Resnick, courtesy of Ross + Kramer Gallery,
New York.

Our Mother Is a Gemini

Inspired by *Tsu'-Cus Iya'y I (Star Sister I)* by Raven Halfmoon

Jillian Schley

Our mother is a Gemini.
In her turning, we pressed together.
There was a time when our bodies sensed the earth.
Water trickled through ground, damp and sweet,
Inviting life to ornament the river's carving edge.
Apart, our particles scattered and pulsated
Down endless paths of vibrating possibilities.
We knew the gathering meadow, forest, and field.
But only river and sky sharpened our way.
The wheel of time creaked along its bed,
Spinning out new directions.
With each season of our journey,
The skirt of verdant passages grew shorter.
Deeper and colder still, we sank
From the river's lap to an icy, bottomless aquifer.
Churning, expanding, contracting, we merge.
Clinging to one another in a starless tomb,
The fear of infinite uncertainty compressing our nature.
Through a crack, our bodies slipped.
Tightening into drops we embraced.
Salted by cavernous walls we gripped.
In our thirst for light, we grew.
Fleck by fleck, we let go,
Longing for the glimmering pool of our kin collected at our feet.
A sliver of starlight marks the path of our journey.
River and sky, we meet again.

Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers is generously supported by



Additional support by



Michel Cohen,
Collection
Montparnasse



Funding for the Poetry Reading + Workshop with
Kinsale Drake + Maritza Estrada provided by



Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers is co-organized
by Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts and
The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.

BEMIS × CENTER

724 S. 12th Street, Omaha, NE 68102

GALLERY HOURS

**Wednesday–Sunday 11 AM–5 PM
+ until 9 PM on Thursday**