

Mackenzie Lee

'These words bleed by the bite of loving teeth' (2025)

A landscape of language

Treelines around the space where my tongue rests
Paths branching out
from where lexicon is rooted

Traces of unfamiliar soil cling to me

Cling to the well of my footprint
If one spec of dirt lands on foreign ground,
does its home even miss it?

Bijeji-*ba* stains the horizon

Big red plum in the sky
My body is hungry
for a bite of its deadly heat

Seek, position, capture – that tripod look an awful lot like a rifle

Careful where you point it, *beragud*
Don't make a victim
and then call them a subject

Dance to the song of the *birdim-ba*

As it washes away the tread marks of your steps
Lower that focal eye
and adjust settings to: *see*

A still moment of living breath

Pulsing without movement, breathing without a chest
Soul tied
to its two-dimensional body

This ribcage is a meeting place

Memories drift into the *guyugwa* and emerge molten
Sparks that form words
too hot to swallow

There is a place where open meets closed

Minuscule overlap of space that contains an echo
A voice;
hiding, evading – caught

Mackenzie Lee is a queer First Nations poet currently living, working, and studying on Ngunnawal and Ngambri lands. With Gulumerridjin (Larrakia), Wardaman, and Karajarri ancestry, mixed with Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Anglo-Australian heritage, they are a creative whose ties to culture, country, and saltwater connect them to their storyteller ancestors. Lee writes a variety of poems in response and reaction to the world around them.