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Selected Poems

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Ravine – Selected Poems

parted her thighs for my birth wun atid red sun day inscribed vowels on my chest

I did not find until later I am always looking for them in the bend of my fingers
in my failed pronunciations: jung wat amphur mueang

moo ban to grasp a tendril, astral, ancestral hum.
conjuring their bodies from ink and sound I see stunted cells

that do not know their blood has found me eager to plant stems
I watch for a deepening in my skin remedy for pocked face

fluency in tongue and memory of Syam before it was ever named—
memory of when they named me

Ravine – Selected Poems

dek pom daeng¹

I am red
a red child
a red boy who eats fire
half eaten
half child with a half life
the mark of white and red
rented a wife
rented half
split the rent in half
child eating red
red headed boy eating fire
half boy half
genitals that hang
when on all fours
step daughter
half sister half
brother one and a half
rented wife with a head
of fire

¹ “Red-haired child,” referring to the offspring of Thai women and white men conceived during sex tourism or military leave. Luk kreung, or “half child,” also refers to someone who is half Thai and half white.

Ravine – Selected Poems

Excerpt from *perm pew see kow sukapub dee: for healthy white skin*

kae piang

mer kong di chun lap fun
my mother dreams of pulling me by the hair. I shave my head and in her dream
she is strangled by muddy locks that grow wild like fire.
I wish to be that beautiful. suay suay jung

but then again, mai chai.
mai dai na kha I cannot change this blood.
luk kreung. one half, one half of a whole.

screaming is harder when it is halved,
when my white father screams at my brown mother,
when my brown mother screams at her white lies,
mua my face screams at my hands.

chun kit wa—kit gon—
your blood was eating at my bone.

Ravine – Selected Poems

kohn dieow

no one pays me any attention because I am not the beautiful Asian girl, I cannot make my tongue sound as though it was harvested here. I try by not speaking, by waiing, by being as quiet as possible—& then the only noise is that of the farang around the table waiting for food. the English language is like assault rifles here, where Thai teenagers read the newspaper & talk on their cell phones & laugh & share dtom yom ngung and pay in correct change

without a sound.

I try to be polite & this means I do not open my mouth.

only for ro tee, pad thai, guway dteow by the side of the street pet pet freeing my eyes from their sockets. I want to become smaller, browner, less noticeable, just like the other Thai girls on mopeds, small torsos & thin hips, in black skirts & white uniform shirts, clips in their hair, black black black long & straight & flying,

which is what I catch when I think about falling into them.

About the Author

Jai Arun Ravine is a trans-identified, multi-disciplinary writer, dancer, visual and performing artist of mixed Thai and white American heritage. Jai received an MFA in Writing & Poetics from Naropa University and a BA in Interdisciplinary Asian Studies from Hollins University. A Kundiman Fellow, Jai's first chapbook, *IS THIS JANUARY*, is available from Corollary Press. For more information, visit <http://jaiarunravine.wordpress.com/>

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