This manuscript aims to complicate notions of being, identity, and selfhood by examining the possibilities of the poetic "I." While much of this work is autobiographical in nature, this manuscript proposes construction of selfhood as being not just a single line of uninterrupted self-narration, but a trajectory scored with various adopted and discarded identities. The ephemeral tone and abstracted content of this work are an attempt to explore the fluidity of identity and the nature of experience in the context of language. The "I" functions as not only the poem's speaker, but the focal point to a moment in time, a feeling, a realization, and the culmination of cultural and historical affects.
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TAIWAN

Interminable, the 19-hour flight—United States and Ocean to tidal wave of thick, cloying humidity, falls over coalesce into dampness on skin. I on this day am ancestral cousin, definition thereof: shared history, shared language shared racial slurs leveraged—common kinship is not being scared away by SARS epidemic. Sing-song rises to ears from mouths, boxlike cars zip narrow roads, lush jungle vegetation floods wet concrete.

Neon-lit night markets until 2 am are a hoarder’s cheap electronics, clothing fallen apart with slightest wear, pig's blood soup acrid tofu candied strawberries neon sparkle hides greasy dirt and trash at night under vast choices joyous displays of iced coffees and teas.

*Liuwei*, a traditional Chinese night market dish. Strings of golden mushrooms clustered together like jelly fish, big blocks of tofu, some spongy tofu as thin as wrapping paper folded up like a towel, bean sprouts, clear rice noodles, scallions. Select dried ingredients, bring them to the street vendor—they are quickly boiled in unidentifiable thick broth and say how spicy? “Yi dien dien.”

Spices added, vendor dumps stir-fry mix into a plastic bag, hands it back with chopsticks traverse down dark cockroach-infested alleys navigating walls of scooters. Sometimes *liuwei* is dirty and unwashed, gritty, grating against the teeth like sand. Please avoid. A roulette event but there must be something to mother's Jesus piety. If the teeth are clenched tightly enough, the pattern may arise.

By day drab and smog-coated acidic rain and harsh sun, mud cakes cracks of once-white buildings, plants slowly creep out of bed overflowed into uneven streets, stenched rotten with eggs sewage seafood around corners stacked high. Plastic bottles and wrappers line gutters clog drains keep generous amounts of rain lingering in slimy puddles. Perpetual moisture in the air, surfaces slick with warm mold and bacteria sigh prosperously.
Buddhist monks draped in red and gold, sweeping small shrines on rooftops glimpsed from 13th floor, R Building paralleling ancient reverence in Longshan Temple (screened for SARS at entrance, 37 degrees). The gods and goddesses were trapped in cloisters, forced to hear kneeling prayers. Running across the flat plazas of downtown Taipei to the last train scarf trailing behind cinematically, sitting drowsy sated on the MRT.

Cockroaches and spiders share the sleeping palette, mammoth mosquito bites swell huge and leprous on the eyelid draining enthusiasm on all sides. Brown hairy arachnid, a catcher's mitt in proportions when humidity allows all to expand nightmarish sneaks beneath the door and ends in three minutes killed with a broom by a boy.

North to Taipei, Keelung. Ocean smell infuses skin pores with heavy scents, trash, plant life and car exhaust. A realization, flat and obvious, occurs: movement on an island—there are otherplaces. I did not know all things everywhere. Sprawled little buildings edged into the ocean by tall rounded humps of mountains, mountains like dark green slumbering giants. Endless blue sea pockmarked by fishing boats: squid crab fish-filled.

Inland Jiufen, always nine families and pioneers for nine mountain peaks. Mountainsides mottled with old buildings red lanterns moss-eaten stairs, teahouses traditionally architectured: sloping roofs made from bamboo poles, cherry wood carved into dragons tigers and phoenixes while sunlight plunges through open windows, and revelation is a coastline curling tentacle-like into the sea.

Driving back down to the sea in sharp corners narrow roads deep green beds sloping hills and misty coverage tempting total immersion: rolled down windows, the upper body driven precariously out.

Making dumplings on Milly’s rickety table by pinching pork-stuffed pockets doughy edges closed with powdered fingers boiling them in a hot pot and peeling eggs. China sifted in halting discussions—what is no recognition? The defined self country a world?
There is quiet solemnity in Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall on evenings. Dark fountains and murky koi, fragrant gardens only perceived and lonely glows. The specters of retreat and nationalism languished in night shadows always waiting.

Walking along the northern coast the waves powerfully faint on the rocks. Hopscotch played on them, going far out into the ocean edge of the world. A pack of wild dogs contentedly sun themselves against gray sand missing legs, patches of fur, ears and tails. Leaning out perilously over a swirling vortex of ocean eddies the foam is caught between a canyon of wet boulders.
"RED"

Pulpy heart, raw-hided gristled
viscous jelly, body-heated and copper sting
High tide, the haze tapers eye
and knows nothing else

Jubilant, bloomed and abundant
each step in the world is just
    meant to be
    so

Velvet skin thin-slitted, with flakes
of sweet scented fortune thorn thirsty

A slipping crushing fist
    and the other comes
    gently beckoning

In white, so dark, in black,
so bright, in yellow, alive
in blue,
bleed
we are moving and haven't dried
VANCOUVER

Seaside calling to the old chewed-up indelible bird
evergreen drags past illumined dunes, straggles over the sea-wall
we walk through it having never been

an emerald tree is sweet tangy green, waving a child of vital boughs
bending to snow peaked gatekeepers

memories come bleeding and raining
    in a collection of fog as fine as a screen
by deception like saltwater steadily fluted down the throat
cannot wrap passion in any word absolutely

lovers walk there among velvet rocks
daring and desperate against the waves
ANOTHER PLANE CRASH IN THE NEWS

On the treadmill walking away another year
reducing this hopeless mass

(per new regime: papaya enzymes,
carbs not to be taken with proteins, only
carbs and vegetables OR carbs alone
OR vegetables and protein
OR protein alone OR vegetables alone
BUT NOTHING
to be taken with fruit)

seeing night sea scenes
cloying and thick
wet with sweat, imagine

a vast cold curdle lost in the depths, the merge into the unending
shrunk to an inside of definition
sunk in the ink and dark of it

if my mouth opened it ran in to stopper me up for silence's sake

the bold red digital readout flicking tally lines rotely
until the effort was over

the search lights
cutting blind beams above me
**ROUGH ZIP**

*A Pink Eraser*

A frozen salmon touches the plate its blandness expurgates the white slick; coagulate and negative. Vacuum marble games and fewer and fewer samples. Roundly reduced no point exacting and transparent. Formed and forget. Now was then, then was negotiable (the Scientific Method has failed again).

*Knitted*

Hands in of it. Punctured repeatedly liking the reminder. Seeded string folding an event joined with, coloring dutied. Coloring muted also bold. In air, a weight, a heavy, solid. A real in tired. One proud real. Point is, is this, this is.

*The book*

Abhors and loving, being so reduced strung a long, long longing. A traction is not in paper. There were runs, not words.

*The page*

To run with it, bounding and leaped. In expansion, never ends but crimped by the breaths always. Starkly black and not, what a wash, words. Dancing and dead, rooted. Stringed and soiled, the dreads khaki palette. The green in the room and feebly attempted.

*The sense*

In the something. One that is and the other not. It is cold, hot. The table solid shaped, unknowable but for glancing it, altogether. Wormly difference is a niggling pink in the eyelid. The nig goes true to unstable, we to make true.

*The word*

What you are, aren’t. Admirably, a lesson and punishing. Is pushed along to breathe.
Awash in some imprint of origins, thirty-five years
of that droning white word

She'd say, what's this?
Too exotic for its word—Jebarah? No, no, no you're not improving
its container

laughing at such a thick tongue, the teachers at school chastised us
there is a right and a wrong to this, don't overextend
your self

lips spread over freakish perfect teeth, rictus grin, as if important
boys at home cut at their tongues for this

brow excavated down too important, which is to say
not you

just say zebra, zzzzz-zzzzz
the flaws erased in the drone of flies
PERUSING FATHER'S PHOTOGRAPHS

for Aunt Susan

Third and last, imagine you are like me most not really, just
gray, flat and square—maybe depth
  in turned away angles

a specter in aging photographs twenty-four years:
your melancholy mouth the refusal gaze

no one speaks you like a leftover crumb
you are there underneath this, a buried wallpaper

rising like chemical imprint on paper, makes you shaped
everything else secreted in a shell and slipped off ship

if heart is hazy, only so much capacity to fill with things
  what should they be?

nevermind that's not the point
too soon, how it burst
THE WEDDING

Young wife in love merely frightened, weighed 95 pounds and wore a blank dress

the husband's sister wore a dress
the same material as the curtains

the family often opened their mouths and made animal sounds

she didn't understand any of it except 'thank you'—so she was expected to repeat it over and over
WOODEN

Your kitchen: drawers of cooking utensils in black
warped plastics dripping polymer flakes like ragged hangnails
  smarmed grease slick from yesterday's fried eggs fat congealed
  pools spotting the pan the plastic cutting board abrasion scored
over and over again by sadistic knife

But the loath of wood! Its life absorptions and retentions
salmonellic juice, tomato sauce, garlic memories cannot sterilize them to well enough
  fearing their traces in others, my skin imprint in their grain
  from all the beatings your throat strangled in seething the wooden spoon
    in your hand shakes with it
His kindness on occasion disappears behind
peeled wine wrappers like thirsty batteries

—I almost hear the sputters

of summer evenings when the poor june bug gets caught
in the light fixture ramming his hard head against the glass
over and over like being in the same room
as a live wire
SISTER PORTRAIT

for Janet

Perched alert like a window watch cat to the under streets, its walk of pedestrians
(there was your skittish black one afraid of its self most—rightly too, mine had killed it)

your wrist-faded stripes are not unlike friendship bracelets or memories stitched up together
over commanded tendons, now you flex them to grip cigarettes
   every quarter hour, every day

the sense of you—open as sky, often rained, collapsing the self
spiting our safety lights (they cut), not all of us finding cover

you easily broke away like a loosened ribbon
desperate struggling of it, two tattered arms, and the moment a held breath before
   —leaps into the wind and soars
storm over the canyon, hope of a decision
waited too long upon, we said, "Icarus"

naked without our roofs, watched the sun break through mist a dissipated memory
many mornings smelling heavy with lingered burning

until, pooled to an onshore shipwreck pearls lost beneath
us husks will dream of it: one great drain
to reveal folded into the bottom all our lost shell casings
GENERATIONS OF DAUGHTERS

Belly as big as the world—rounded out turtle shell
we rest our cheeks on it inhale scent of it, peppered pores and absorb
   homogenous heat several generations run through

Mother makes the long leap across the Pacific when she can,
one: to find her own mother determining the origin of self
in heartless genes and blood
   if that were true, she would have returned less broken

Try my own hand at the divide, foolishly
going East-West to the North-South grasping for want of something
even licking the underside to a shark fin
on a dare, ignore a year's good luck

What connects? Every face is a mirror, nothing real
but the way all the shadows sigh, "If you found it, you would not even be aware enough
to know what it was."

there is still compulsion to—
I write them all—sometimes seeing words
emerging from different claws, empty reflection of the thing
weeding and weeded out

if failure to breach the gap (it expands always), the fractures must be accepted
they, at least, always meet
THE PROCREATERS

Janet had one: sixteen, so barely there herself
no one knew it was until the homeward trek challenge rebuke, the infant
swaddled and strange, that creature wasn't here yesterday
I am clumsy with him and all noisy things
    arthritic fingers trying to write out a world
as it was, what a wanting—he was soon gone
    his father is more suited to the art

cyst as big as a fist, I carried mine three months
    In school, they gave us bags of sugar
        sweet children with no complaints, the unwavering drawn-on smile
        self-sustained as granules
—this was just as quiet, a good baby
to nurse plump in my mind, kicking against my insides
the only child I would bring into this world, the little scars
purple and gristled on the belly, right ovary, crotch
    jockeying for splendor

after three or four, my mother left nothing to chance
tubes pinched shut, there might be regret but all girls!

    I would have liked a boy, maybe at least one
to break up all this potential
GENEALOGIES

A result lifetimes of recovery: the male components are stones unbreakable and impenetrable, mostly-polished or veined in raggedness, value calculated on the cut (each brooding craftsmen will gouge deeper than his predecessor, for quality assurance)
even the brightest is a little ugly—however, they will be so stable you could love one, with a little effort it would weigh heavy on your heart, it would never leave you

Quite contrarily its female joiners are abundant only to a mind's eye (and one soft gold ring, a present) still, eye-catchers in air A don't-have-this-here notion, so adaptable this one ends sooner than the other

you cupped it, breathed your self through short fingers, imagined a whole world thriving and your self, cradled

but to unearth it, ceases
4TH OF JULY

I.
The room a container of bready heat, scent of her meringues still linger on the walls
    Cool outside—even open windows didn't find it worth stealing

If New England weather builds character, chill shoring strength, then summers
    were tests of patience, which was brought here

avocados mashed to smithereens, the bowl looked like lobster offal, she gutted
limes, half an onion head dissected mindlessly
    so clean, the tomatoes protested drastically
    A miracle, the one into multiple

In the spearmint suckle of mojitos, the spear shrugged off the mint
we didn't have it, we have learned to live without

II.
Outside cheap charcoal created a smoking room, stoically withstood
when the lid of the grill was lifted, he was only famous for his coughing

the sky like coagulated smoke, it never rained. Its bullet palette made the summer
trees greener than green      I still don't know what that means

the meat was smoky
it presented in half-pound sealed packages, perfectly formed
    as if we were not to be trusted
III.
Secure in now objects, perils of yet to come pored over—it could not be comfortable
there was definiteness in the room not outside of it, the air conditioner rattled
away in the corner inefficient, the vacuum lines in the carpet freshly mowed

the new couch was old, solid relic from the 60's, an elegant iron monger
with crumbling yellow insides, it was the heaviest couch in the world
we moved it one week earlier, there had only been one small, cushioned chair

the room had been sparse of its defining objects, she wanted to appear more solid
or not always already about to make a run for it

I appreciated the qualities of weightlessness, I fantasized about shedding
solid things like some people
shake off embarrassment

IV.
Fifteen minutes before they ended, we remembered fireworks
got in the car and drove east, the vivid thread ends of light
popped over the tops of the thick black trees before crumbling as smoke

the streets were so bald, until other cars headed at us, bright headlights
swept up asphalt at us
smoke lingering in air
POEM

First, it unrolls like carpet
to be admired—pattern plush pile

inevitably, threads plucked there here

not satisfied until sometimes weaves expose
uneven vulnerable as a tortured Barbie scalp

declaring it done
when dismantled
LOVE POEMS

vi.
First set of instructions always misplaced

vii.
Love is the least amount of money in the bank
It has a keen sense of its own

viii.
It is not a conversion stopped up in crowded pocket jangles
instead, there is paint caked by the lake's edge for draining
crickets louder than trucks
each page sounds like fire spreading among the trees
their sole purpose is only to watch the world that flanks them

ix.
We use it to replace the "sincerely" at the end of our letters
when not writing to strangers

x.
I do not know how anyone knows how to do anything
with absolute certainty—every day we must gather our thoughts and push them
towards this thing

xi.
Your speckled skin is like mine
I am your eyes your nose your apple shape combination
your red-rooted saline nicks my vision
xii.
A bone picked clean
by philosophic pretenders to the throne

xiii.
Comes easy over merlot prelude to a warm rosy cheek
and night like a recorder running without tape

xiv.
He will always have teeth that call me
I would even stare mournfully at the corpse of him, seeing them
as if they had been always carried by light

xv.
His fingers like to travel along a cliff, my spine, again and again
they shake away only those things holding him up
—saccharine love feelings gross poems,
meaning mine—
until the cap breaks off, the silence running its wet silk over word shards
swept them up in loud water

xvi.
The unturned stones their nurtured moss beds, sunbathers on beach towels
playing dead, the air in leaf rattles, only there by its sound

xvii.
I do not know if saying it means I'll mean it or by saying it all the time
it will make it so

xviii.
Look at it sideways
if I try to capture it head on
it might not have ever been there
STILL SOME REDEMPTIVE QUALITIES TO SCIENCE

If sadness is nothing more than collection
regretful cells on our bodies, clinging to shores of dead skin

one day, you and I, will slough off old selves feel every thing
new again
PAST-HISTORY
DRUNK STARRY

The night I became this bottle of wine
the evening sky glutted
big jewel boxes

    a sea of thick velvet and mouthed
    hoary secrets
THIRD OF A BIRD

The third of the bird was not beautiful
not elegant

not two thirds choked back sick, was less
than half lurid but it

speared through the head with an incomplete crimson sawed tooth
and poisoned the body by proxy
DIONYSUS

Year by year we saw antiquity passing civilized nation splendor
purple grapes, golden corn—the simple deity on agricultural throne

Tearing a live bull to pieces and toss corn in the air
  his head or body showed the nature of grain
  from chaff

his father, in preceding chapters, forgot various invented stories
  how to represent a slain god

we may suppose
the human victim also
GREAT LEAP FORWARD

Sparrow heart aflutter fragile as a spider
fatigue clipped wings among clanging drums

we clot their brittle bodies into dusty piles
threw back to the skies all their sorrow
    sparrow smoke

our gazes met our feet, we looked
for gold while the locusts rushed in to soothe
our bellies with teeth
ABUNDANT FESTIVAL

The custom of sacrificing human representative fat
    makes a sacrifice exquisite

earlier, he lounged through the streets playing on his flute
puffing at a dying violent death in the same capacity

they kill him
open him
and eat him

harvest multitude now being probable
DIVINE INSPIRATION

She tells sea shells salvation
runs riveted your sweet blood divined

her palm mounds soft and warm in wool lulling
through her drum inside honeyless chest

"My own child, I'd do this even for her," she says
touching my throat

child, everything shines
DEUS

Fastly discovered no room at the inn—not with worldfuls of galloping sirens, rending river of screamings

its abhorrents: a wet drumstick,
that awful birthday refrain

your sweet milky container your bald bulbous bawling of mid-day scathings:
"La's! La's!"

determined to piece together bold seams
make myopic make sense contain it in promises
of wonderful constants
ALCHEMY

A mono-eyed moon monstrosity, all her hue trussed up
inside platinum strings

he has a butterfly net and engendered hysteria saline solution
also, a downy feather pen ink soaked—he is ready

poised to see lunacy beneath the pool,
its rippled sheen polished up afist

he can distill leaves of cement from gold
while her darned threads unravel in a cold sky
SUTI

Clean the wine between legs like an emptied cup, an unholy place
filmed with holy remains

if she could not see scabs flake or bones crumble like sugar
    or watch his body cook like chicken
what would be the point if she did not claim
propriety in the gaggle of smoke?
DREAM-BIRTHED

I am born like this:

you missed the carriage once
but caught the next one anyway
your head fell back against the sky in sleep

the monstrous eagle had a sharp critical eye
you thought it leftover from dinosaur epochs
an airplane-sized bird it circled
    you like prey

sliding between the air pockets mean with its feathers
oiled to a sheen, they trapped some of the dawn jealously
the anomaly, a superstitious portend
circling and circling, inexhaustible
THE SKY ILLUMINATED

"In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."
- Albert Camus

He might find little sustenance in this flattened palette
I have better found my way on cold winter nights

This sky provides brightest lights:
moon scrapes across snow, kindling
ground below with a spectral lantern draped in white lace
and snow will sing to sky no longer shackled
by short summer sights
RETURN
TO BIG CROSS COUNTRY FROM BOSTON

Going back to big cross country ruffles of short grasses twined with aluminum creasing the 71 up to the only adult store in two counties

all diesel trucks ignoring big yards big portions, the big trade farm with rumors of beaten horses

big shiny half-precious belt buckles reminding me of Granddad's rock tumbler its brackish water smelled like metal his jewelry strange geoprisms on the skin

choir voices belting songs from the crystal chapels, they are soundtracks in this enough room to roam, the big hair with a tease, boots and hats

big cross in that obsidian lake and the big pure Jesus face his big white hands lifting up to that old blue sky as if those are the size of his regrets

it was going to take big miracles the dreams of horizons, so bless your heart going to need bigger faith than this
SEA II

Tried to write this like the sea rather unsuccessfully but what it is, is amorphous gelatinously confined, the strange shapes and their gruesome feelers krill, tubeworms, algae, what curled tiny shrimps, anemones the forgotten evolved eyespots sensing in sea-dark, translucent as an infected spine

unholy child fear when tentacles of seaweed wrapped around my ankles on Hampton Beach
bad enough when it was rough as a hairbrush worse in the smooth glide bearers of primordial starts and finish

its ill salt rests on the bottom of the nostril, it only hives up when you remember it, in other words, you get used to it adapt not the sea you, I in breathtaking sad capacity
ROADTRIP

Hounds of hell unleashed in gleaming caravans no particular affiliation
bugs make noisy love to my windshield greasy innards hints of their passion
still yellow jelly on my eyelevel

I, a tender sack of belly in Silverado exoskeleton roaring and running
alongside interstately destined for Chicago maybe

Cannot recall—getting there isn’t mattering nor destination, not even the journey
I am not running away—I am a self, or always trying in here
I travel across space over time as
velocity personified to find the centripetal itch (rollercoaster force which returns
self to the self)

I promise I am not trying to see it in shallow puddles or in a tree petrified
against an open sky
SEA

All its debris in it the me of it, wide and its deep arms slipped past
the rush and hush of it towed where I was circled and stayed,
pried my breeze where the bird cracks a clam and guts it
sleek weed curls at my ankles, the prickly bed on the shallow end
where I choked on my brine, not seeing the bottom
and cherished it wavering, undulating, absorbing
GREEN LINE

I know we go, just not where loving to wince
—the hissing, screeching all through it
ironing metal tracks

    What a beast!

I spread my legs wide rocked side to side to forward progress
the unsettled standing soldiers in the car know it runs—a hope and prayer

Silently moved by chivalry the man popped up, embarrassed
to a freckled poppy face, the efficient trade of politeness exchanged

in dim fluorescent light the vagabond crumples the *Metro*
in his sweaty fist exchanges
it for pennies and two girls perform sign language
the muffled clap of their fingers
palms the squeezed pockets of stale air frantic in their gestures, talking

    like siphoned water from an unhinged tap
    their audience wants it intimate

The writing on the wall panhandles continued internet school, shop online
contact Harvard when we don’t sleep a map of our progress demarcating
us in isolated white dots
racing a green branch of veins