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asylum

we use the phrase 無證 to say that someone is *undocumented* in Mandarin. 無 meaning *without*. 證 meaning *proof*. derived from 登 meaning *lantern. a body rising. a box of growing light*.

無證 is also a double homophone that means to be *unstable*.
 every immigration an exercise in doubling.
 every translation an exercise in duplicity.

meaning: my birth certificate is a license to open carry
 -on luggage without asking. passengers more dangerous
 than their transports gambled my last name with the sea.

at every port of entry, a customs officer has slit my throat.
 the same incision each time. memorial marks the rupture, my jugular
 torn at half-mast. the skin still flaps against my neck.

i drape my broken brain across a petition. immigration's illogic drips
 clean through the page. i drag the papers behind me & my name slickens with mud.