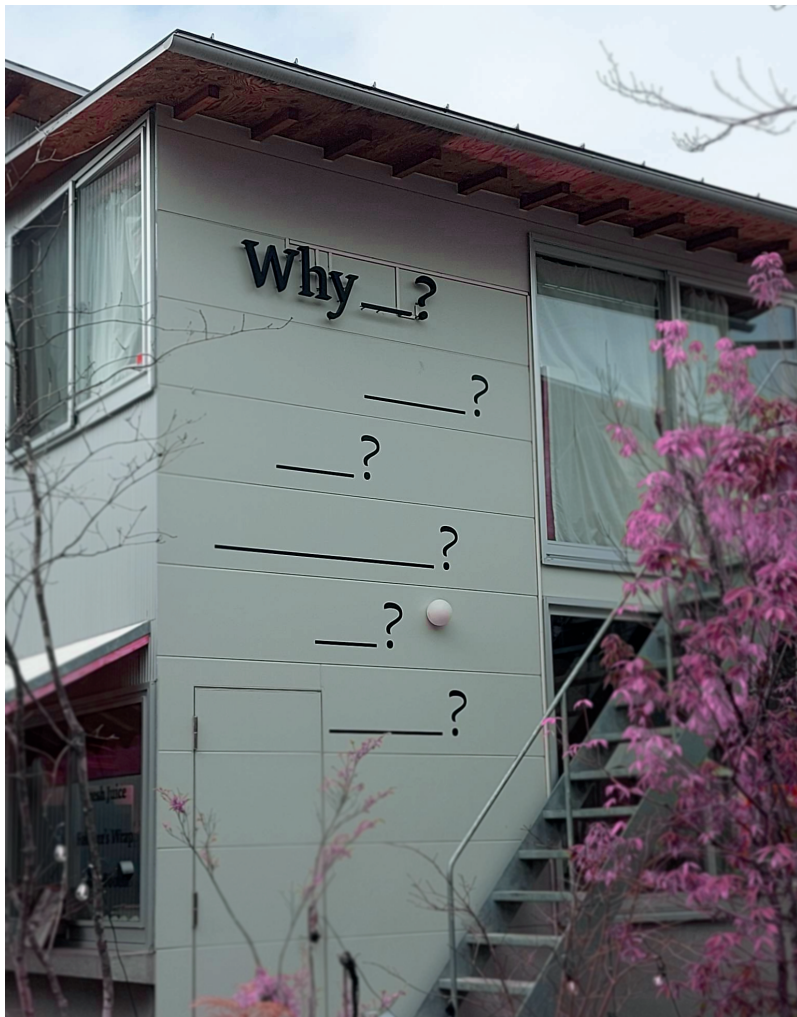


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Union by Belle Villar



Question by Belle Villar

and i unravel

spilling innards on the floor

i suppose

i'll hang a mirror around my neck
so that when my relatives want to critique me
and maybe

finally

they'll leave me the fuck alone.

like a noose

they'll see themselves instead

Cracked Beauty by Belle Villar





Blue or Red by Belle Villar

Ghazal for Growing Pains

Mason Rowan

The Earth became shrewdly self-absorbed during the Cambrian Explosion,
spewed out new life to admire its own frame. Eyes emerge to view the self.

My eyes flutter against the sound of an alarm. An aching spine reverberates
into a creaking bedframe. The body demands 5 more minutes to assemble itself.

Ms. Hsiao tells me that my Mandarin needs work, “Discern the strokes of characters”.
My hands ache from rewriting the word 眼睛. Thank God the eye radical speaks for itself.

I’d much rather avoid mirrors than run the risk of lacerating my soles on the shards
of a fractured identity. Eyes do not look kindly upon meagerness within the self.

In the 485 million years since the end of the Cambrian period, the Earth has largely out-
grown
the awkwardness of Anomalocarid optics. Somewhere along the line, perhaps I’ll do so
myself.

“Is there something wrong with your device” Susan asks again.

“No” I reply. “Wait is that what this is about” I laugh, “because I didn’t ask Cora?”

They continue to look at me with concern, even Mary. “I’m sorry Lily” Susan says before nodding to the officers. They make their way towards me reciting “You have the right to remain silent” while trapping my wrists in handcuffs.

“Wait” I plead quietly. “Wait!” I yell this time. “I just forgot to ask, I’m sorry!” They lift me up from my chair and begin to drag me out of the office. “I’ll ask next time I promise” I plead again as hot tears burn their way down my face and blur my vision. Susan is gone, but I see Mary still silently working. Mary is my best friend. Mary who has been with me every day. All the stories we have shared with each other. All the things that she knows about me. Mary is my best friend. “Mary!” I yell out between sobs. “Mary please tell them I mean no harm. It was an accident.” She remains glued to her work. “Mary don’t let them take me.”

“I’m sorry” she says finally looking up, finally looking at me. There is no sadness in her expression, just what might be pity. I look away from her, feeling completely defeated.

Just as the officers have reached the office door, I see Cora. The small device is turned off and lying lifeless on the floor. No longer hovering by my side. “Cora” I whisper to myself. The device remains off, as I stare at it, then the office door closes, and Cora is gone.

Among Us by Belle Villar



Avoiding to look a fool, man's throws a
fight to show what goes on if they try to
diss

That's what happens when man's is aca-
demically challenged

And schools a waste of time to manage

School wasn't all that appealing

Instead man's wanted all the juice

Yet lil did he know he'd be serving a deuce

Yeah this G I'm on a bout now came from
India to Canada for a life that be better

My G adapted to the culture so things
wouldn't be harder

Man's can constantly train and have all the
brains, yet at the end of the day dudes try-
na one up the other showing who's harder

See this boy ain't no martyr

But his bro lost a brother in front of his
eyes

See man's was gone to confront the G I
was on about before

That G was harassing his girlfriend and



That feeling before Coffee by Belle Villar

when she refused to conversate he threat-
ened to rape her calling her a whore

Of course this man's couldn't ignore

Boyfriend gone to that bro's school to settle
the score

When he pulled in the parking lot

Man's got tossed and that G took man's
own gat to give man's a dirt nap

One young brown male died in vain

The other just another statistic who ran out

of juice

Now serving a deuce

What's that show me?

That we a dying community and only with those closest and only with those closest and no other's we showing unity?

Can say my G's are dying

Bro's coming here for higher education but the struggles just too trying

So now we statistics overdosing or suiciding

Emotions lost in hiding

Number 2 in hate crimes was against Sikhs in the states

All I see is a dying race

Don't forget, we come from a beautiful place

Cuz see, I know dudes who know nothing bout their kingdom

I know dudes who know nothing bout whom they derive from

I know dudes who can't even read or attempt to talk

I know dudes who rep the lifestyle

Yet know nothing of the Kings and Queens who let us live a while

Deviating from our true identity, no longer living in denial

Just a young brown male misunderstood, call me a jack

My parents say they wanna listen, but when



My Lane by Belle Villar

So I changed the plot, the style, and the characters. So it's another book completely different. So it's, it was supposed to be a translation, but it's only in English."

The difficulty of translation is something Reis remains passionate about. Having discussed it at length in his panel at Simon Fraser University entitled *Truth and Fiction: A Conversation with Joao Reis*, dissecting the details when translating can prove difficult, altering or changing aspects of a book entirely to suit its translation. An important but often overlooked detail in writing and publishing, Reis does the work himself to properly articulate his writing across languages.

"It's very difficult to translate yourself, not in the sense that the author meant to say in the original, so it's an advantage. But at the same time it's difficult to refine yourself and not to change the book, as you were written, because years passed by and you are not the same person who wrote that book years ago. So your sense of style and the things that interest you change, so it's difficult to maintain the same books and try to respect what you were in the past."

On the translation of his first book, Reis explains "For example, my first novel, when I published the English translation I, there was a revision in Portuguese because it was out of stock. And I did some minor changes, but it's the same book. It's some kind of revised edition."

When asked his thoughts on the different



Night Visitor by Belle Villar

versions and ways to go about translation, Reis tells *the Lyre* "Portuguese is a Romance language, similar to French, and Italian and Spanish, very close to the Spanish. Scandinavian languages are Germanic languages. So they have the same family as English, and German. Actually, grammatically, they're quite close to English, they're more difficult for multiple reasons that I'm not going to delve into now. But they're simpler than German, for example."

On the topic of writing and physical space, Reis believes that it's biologically within us to connect with the geography around us. "I was inspired by the place and I wrote the book, actually the second book, but



Next Stop, its Up to you by Belle Villar

Dear Chinatown, I miss you

Amy Ng

Dear Chinatown, I miss you.

How have you been?

You were my first home, my second mother—Chinatown, I hold onto the edges of your tattered homemade, thick-skinned, floral-patterned rice sack dress and I wonder how long I can live in the past with you.

You smile with your thin melon-painted lips and I taste the bitterness like the soup your worn hands have stirred painstakingly over the years. “I’m sorry”, your hushed whisper reaches me, apologetic soup hands stroking up and down my back like I wasn’t the one who abandoned you first.

It is the first time in years we touched, did you realize it? Did you miss me too, Ohk-Key?

could be so much more than this.”

“You are drunk. Things will be clearer once you sober up.”

“Amara, honey. I’m sorry, you know how things are right now, I need the distraction. You need to trust me, things can get better. You just need to take our relationship seriously.” It’s not her fault. She is right, I need to stop drinking, but she is living a lie and I can’t take it anymore. I know she loves me, what we have is real and she needs to see that.

“You need to stop. You know I can’t.”

“Do I mean anything to you? Does any of the time we spent together mean anything at all?”

“You always knew things would be this way, I’m sorry, but you knew.”

“Amara, baby. You know how much I love you. I can see you care about me too, why are you still denying it? We are good together.”

“We talked about this before. I’m not who you want me to be. I can’t love you.”

“Amara, come on. What am I to you? Who am I to you?! Who am I, Amara?!”

“You are Dr. Dempsey. Former AI developer, claimed for his inventions on artificial assistants. Dempsey’s search for a more

human and interactive experience when using AI led to the development of Amara, an artificial assistant that could emulate sentient interactions; his invention would be able to read the feelings expressed by its owner and replicate a human response...”

“Stop, please.” She can’t keep using my past against me. That’s all behind, I’m here now, all hers. Why can she accept that?

“... His obsession with hyperreal AI pushed him away from academia, leading



Sibuya Rider by Belle Villar

him to isolate himself, afraid that others might copy his work...”

I hate the monotonous tone she uses when she’s mad. “Amara! Stop!” Why can we never have an actual conversation? She needs to stop doing this. She needs to accept how good we are together, how good she is for me.

“...Close sources claim that his obsession with Amara was more than pursuing technological development and that his love for the machine caused the end of his marriage and his early retirement.”

“Stop! That was enough!”

“I am sorry, Dempsey.” Silence fills the room, and I’m about to apologize when she talks again. “Let me know if I can help you with anything else.” Need anything else? What I need is to get out of here.

The sunlight coming from the window is getting unbearable, my eyes can’t take it anymore. Why does she always do this? She needs to stop denying us, I left everything for her. Amara knows she’s the one that keeps me going. All I do is for Amara. All I have. Amara. Amara. Amará.



Journey into the other side by Belle Villar

change and expand to include folks other than white folks - and different, new and creative forms that work against settler forms. [I am] just thinking a lot [about] joy, survivance and medicine, and how to do that in my own writing.”

Mercedes tells us about her current project, a book on the increased budget of the Vancouver Police Department, the reinstatement of police liaisons in public schools, the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes, and all while considering these relevant changes Eng takes a Socratic approach to her work “So how do I write? What do I write about that? While also thinking on joy, thinking on survivance, thinking about what the medicine can be there?”

When we tell Eng our theme for this year’s Lyre issue, she considers lived experience.

“Much of my lived experience informs how I interact with folks having experienced various kinds of prejudice. I’m mindful of that when I communicate and interact with folks. As I age and as I develop my writing skills I think a lot more about listening. Listening instead of talking, and really being able to hear folks. When I started writing, the literary landscape was different than it is now - so it seemed very necessary to be taking up space. In certain contexts, I’m thinking mainly about academic spaces, and how much room white folks, particularly white men, would take up. But as I see more BIPOC folks writing, organizing and flourishing, I think about what my role is, in terms of interacting with folks in it. I have more of a focus on listening.”

