



# BYWAYS

Journal of Arts & Letters

Spring 2015

## BYWAYS

**Byways** - an interesting path for those who dare to take every letter of the alphabet and every color of the rainbow - toss it high into the air and watch it fall into untraceable patterns, the formation of personal thoughts, emotions, visions, and ideas.

**Byways** - of deep dream encounters revealed that were once secret to all, but the dreamer. It is the Byways of hope masked in wishes - willing the falling letters and rainbow palette of colors to capture the imagination of the substantial alliance of the mind, which is the heart, the ears, and the eyes.

**Byways** - the way of the artist who resist the temptation to relinquish creativity against the flow of critical charge which says, rubbish, a waste of time, selfish amusement, lunatic expressions, and chafe indulgence.

**Byways** - the participant's determinant scrambling of alphabets, symbols, shapes, and colors to produce magnum opus, complete to one's own satisfaction.

What then is Byways, if not to formulate imagination?

ADELE MARK

# BYWAYS

## JOURNAL OF ARTS & LETTERS SPRING 2015

### COVER ART *First Place Art*

*Another Shakespearean Tragedy* - OIL - ALYSIA GRUDIER

### POSTER ART

*Harbinger* - OIL - ALYSIA GRUDIER

### POSTER DESIGN

ALLYSSA AVILA

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DONNA DURAN for Page Layout  
CTC Printing JOANN MAXON



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# Mornings



- Artist: Alysia Grudier
- Medium: Acrylic on Canvas

# Awakening by Michelle Renee Rowland First Place Written

I stood alone and timid staring into the possibilities resonating from the entryway. This was my first day of kindergarten, and one more step was to trespass exposed and vulnerable into a foreign world. My mother stood beside me, but I was still very much alone. Preoccupied with my disorientation and faltering over whether or not I should cling to her apron strings once more in humility, I could hardly dare to embark as an adventurer on this alien terrain.

But I did.

Not of my own volition, of course.

# Awakening by Michelle Renee Rowland First Place Written

In a rushed exchange of welcoming and ushering limbs, I found myself staring with big round and inquiring eyes, at my newfound isolation in the midst of masses. There were swarms of them, I swear: little bug-eyed frantic beings, busying themselves with cardboard building blocks, fostering imitation infants, and the quest for the elusive neon-pink coloring utensil. The din continued and was suddenly metamorphosed into order as the lunch hour was upon us.

They descended upon their packaged feasts like hungry vultures, lured in by the gleam of sunlight off the plastic casing.



# Awakening by Michelle Renee Rowland First Place Written

Cautiously, so as not to disturb them in their feeding, I fumbled over the latch on my purple lunchbox. I laid out my meal meticulously before me so as to display my indulgence. But then I hesitated. Wrapped in two soggy paper towels were two large dill pickles. This was a meal prepared for a momentous occasion, enclosed within my most precious of belongings. Our house hadn't had paper towels in years, probably never. And pickles- I felt unworthy. They had been bought in celebration: in raptness with our recent prosperity. But here, they were an indication of my destitution.

In solemn silence, I ate.

Enlightened with my ostracism, I realized something I had never known before: I was different.

And then I bowed my head and said, "Thank you."



# A Journey



- Artist: Sierra Naclerio
- Medium: Acrylic and Oil on Canvas



# As Light as the Ocean



- Artist: Sierra Naclerio
- Medium: Acrylic on a Duck Feather
- Second Place Art

# The Five Friends with Pride

## by Mykia Hollis

### Third Place Written

This is the story of five friends with pride.  
They all have interesting names like Envy,  
Who is envious, and there's Lust  
Who is a bit too lustful, and there is Wrath  
Who's always angry. The pig of the group is Gluttony,  
And the one who always wants more is Greed.

Since I ended with him, let's start with Greed.  
Greed wants more, thanks to his pride  
For never settling, unlike Gluttony  
Who takes anything he can get. However, Envy  
Doesn't like Greed, and neither does Wrath.  
But someone who loves him is Lust.

# The Five Friends with Pride

## by Mykia Hollis

### Third Place Written

Actually, Lust loves everybody, but no one loves Lust.

They feel she's too sexual, especially Greed.

And who agrees with Greed is Wrath.

Lust makes Wrath mad, and he has too much pride

To figure out why. But Envy

Wants her looks, and the one who doesn't care is Gluttony.

He's more of an "I prefer to eat" kind of guy, that Gluttony.

Food to him is like sex to Lust!

And guess who is jealous of all the food he gets! Envy.

"Surprise, surprise," is what Greed

Says when he sees Gluttony eating. Gluttony has too much pride

To give a damn about him or Wrath.



# The Five Friends with Pride

## by Mykia Hollis

### Third Place Written

You see, it's very upsetting to Wrath  
That he can't eat as much as Gluttony.  
However, Wrath chooses to be mad (because of his pride)  
Instead of talking it out, unlike Lust  
Who seems to talk too much. So much in fact that Greed  
Makes her pay for him to listen. Who is begging to listen is Envy.

While the truth is exposed, Envy still claims to be best friends with Gluttony,  
And Wrath still pretends to accept Lust  
And Greed is still greedy, while Sloth is too lazy to have any pride.

# Which Way Will We Go?

## by Melissa Cabrera

This heart of mine, so powerful, I can't help but to love.  
I want to give all my love to you, you deserve to be loved.  
I can't help that I've grown close to you and it feels so real.  
I will mend your broken heart, I will help it heal.  
Let me love you and love you and love you, I promise to stay true.  
All this love I have to offer and I want it all for you.  
I think of you daily, I can't help but to smile.  
You give me this feeling that I haven't felt in a while.

# Which Way Will We Go?

## by Melissa Cabrera

Your touch is amazing, it brings my spirits to life.  
Your affection seduces me and it feels just right.  
This is no game, I'm not here to play around.  
My heart is truly beating for you and you know the sound.  
I am here to stay for as long as you let me.  
I'm all in for you, just don't ever forget me.  
Don't leave me hanging now, I'll fall flat to the ground.  
My heart would beat slowly if you're no longer around.

# Which Way Will We Go?

## by Melissa Cabrera

I didn't think I would fall in love with you but I want you to listen.  
As crazy as it sounds, you give me what I'm missing.  
If you walk away from me, I'll give up on love completely.  
You are as perfect as they come, no one else knows how to treat me.  
So here is my question to you, will you take my hand or say no?  
Or just remain as "friends", which way will we go?  
Just know that my huge heart has invited you in.  
Now it is up to you whether you want our true love to begin.



# Landscape



- Artist: Christopher Mendoza
- Medium: Oil on Canvas

# Boat



- Artist: Juana Rodriguez
- Medium: Oil on Canvas



# Moving Flowers



- Artist: Christopher Mendoza
- Medium: Oil on Canvas

# Sensitivity by Floyd Spiller

Born under the sign of Sagittarius  
As a good listener, I am notorious  
Going through life's dealing  
Often sacrificing my feelings

Feeling strongly about my lover,  
Have sworn to forsake all others.  
It's a promise made to myself,  
Intending to keep until my death

Sensitive people we Sagittarians are,  
Feelings easily hurts by far.  
Still resist hurting another's  
This practice not reciprocated by others

My lover hurt me today,  
When affection I was trying to show.  
Made it seem in such a way,  
Her feelings were the ones made low.



# Sensitivity by Floyd Spiller

Many times I've taken this twist,  
Chalking it up as a slap on the wrist.  
Sacrificing my own feelings,  
Adjusting to situations not appealing.

The answer is obvious.  
My feelings for her are strong  
And I've loved her for so long.  
To the hurt I've become impervious

One might think me quite foolish,  
Or be a man of timidness.  
Feelings easily hurt by far.  
Sensitive people we Sagittarians are.

# My Heart is on Fire

## by Devin Taitano

There is an instantaneous burning in your heart.

Your mouth goes dry.

You try with all your might to reverse the last couple of seconds to where your mind was in peace and everything was perfect.

But you can't and panic sets in.

You were in complete control and now you're losing all of it.

Instant regret. What did I do wrong? What could I have done?

What can I do now?

You can still feel the burning in your heart and you try to swallow...

But you can't.

# My Heart is on Fire

## by Devin Taitano

Your lips are dry now.

You want to cry but there are no tears.

You're desperate.

You embarrass yourself.

You embarrass yourself and now others are watching.

You close your eyes and hope it all goes away.

You take a shower.

You listen to music.

# My Heart is on Fire

## by Devin Taitano

You sleep.

But it doesn't work.

The feeling is still there.

The emptiness.

Someone just shot a hole through your heart and you weren't prepared for the blow.

If you've never felt your soul on fire you feel it now.

Feels like nothing can get better, only worse.

It's heart break.

It's bad heart break.



# Letters to Guns by Sasha Martinez

You are Metal formed to fit in our hands  
to protect us from our so called enemies.  
But I feel as if Its so easy to grip and  
load you with no sense of consequences.  
Irrelevant emotions make a blind man  
Pulling your hammer back.

BANG BANG

# Letters to Guns by Sasha Martinez

You have our Elders slowly watching us  
stand against each other, seeing  
us get our hands wet of others lives.  
Every where we go we see stains  
of another's pain on concrete.  
Changing a childs life because  
materialistic dreams lead our drive.  
And you seem like our resolution because  
you're just a quick solution to our pain.

# Letters to Guns by Sasha Martinez

We are trying to move up in the world  
as whole but you're dragging us down.  
This hate in us seems contagious.  
We try to get together after tears have  
fallen to stand strong and to stand against.  
But It seems that no matter how long it takes  
to look from our left to right there you are and  
there goes another one.

BANG BANG

# Trapped in a World of Cages

## by Devin Taitano

Trapped in a world of cages.

Countries preach aims for peace and progress yet condone a continuance of intolerance and hatred.

If this was a world of opposites we'd be heading in the right direction.

We'd have states of heads rather than heads of states and our dogs would be walking us on leashes.

Do we ever ask why those who preach and point to their children and their children's children as the only beacon of hope?

Is it because they know the path they have taken is the wrong one and that wrong one is leading down a slippery slope?

# Trapped in a World of Cages

## by Devin Taitano

Debt. Wars. No child left behind but every child left behind.

These cages that bind us place us in shackles and tie us by conformity by marginalizing us in to normality.

If you're poor you're reliant. If you're foreign you're unwelcome. If you're gay you're a sinner.

By repressing our identities and pushing out those with abnormalities we are striving for a society that doesn't exist.

We are creating a world that holds out it's arms but with empty hands holding empty promises.

But we can change.



# Trapped in a World of Cages

## by Devin Taitano

While all may seem lost in this world of empty cages there is still a way out. Hope is not lost. And the end is not resolute. Men grow old and die and our way of thinking changes.

If only we may lift open the latch that keeps us bound and unfree.

By breaking the walls between us, destroying the borders of our lands and the lands of hearts, by destroying the closets that keep souls from loving and by helping the poor with our poor souls in to rich with compassion we can break free.

Equality, the appreciation of or indifferences, and the accepting of all people are our only tools against fighting this backwards world.

# Trapped in a World of Cages

## by Devin Taitano

If we are a world of faith we must have faith in ourselves and in each other that we are a better people.

We are trapped but not locked in these cages by stigmas and at anytime we can choose to drop them. So let us drop them.

Cages are for beasts and monsters but not for us because we are not monsters. We are humans and we are people and this is our world.

# Unfolding by Amy Ashley

I didn't understand me-  
you were always asking.  
I never knew  
which way the me blew.  
Talk spun.  
Years ran.  
Tears numb a hot bed.  
Didn't get what I didn't get-  
you're cut and we've bled  
Too much.  
So much.  
Thoughts thought of old dreams.  
Past-led (I know what I mean.)

Unfolding so.  
Stretching yes!  
Becoming  
this girl.  
Hands upon skin  
yielding demons within.  
Knowing.  
Giving.  
Flipside of lockdown.  
Someone now.  
Yours now.  
Mine now.  
Done.

# Elephant



- Artist: Victoria Ward
- Medium: Charcoal
- Honorable Mentioned Art



# Lady Universe



- Artist: Stefani Reyes-Delgado
- Medium: Charcoal/Digital



# Catch of the Day



- Artist: Kristoffer Ian Celera
- Medium: Photograph

# Myth

## by Saelis Mercado

On the day that I realized that dragons were real,  
I saw smoke emerging from your ashen lips as you spoke.

You left

The air in our house feeling heavy.

You left

A dull and burning black cloud dangling  
Like a morbid garland from door to door,  
Draped and sticking along our walls  
Like a coal-coated spiderweb.

# Myth

## by Saelis Mercado

I was vermin and I crawled to escape your wrath,  
Lest my lungs swelled and boiled over.  
I had to keep my clean, weighted words sealed  
Behind my dry lips where they wouldn't be tainted and stolen  
Like the treasures you hoarded.  
You spit sparks,  
Firecrackers of words,  
Bright reds and poisonous blues  
That fizzled into a slow burn.

# Myth

## by Saelis Mercado

I think you hurt yourself with those words  
As you hissed them into our pores;  
Some of their embers must have fallen back onto your thick scales,  
Because I saw you weaken a bit somewhere deep within your eyes.  
I saw you wither a bit with the way that you were able to pepper the air with  
blood  
And a sorrow that left us heavy and sluggish and yet uncontrollably alive,  
With our veins brought to life by flashbacks  
And our hearts pumping with the dull drum of the adrenaline pulsating within  
our wrists.



# Myth

## by Saelis Mercado

No matter how many mornings I opened my window,  
Pouring sunlight onto my pale wooden floors  
Until they became a molten gold,  
The room remained dim,  
The walls closed in more tightly each day.  
The ceiling began to collapse  
Under the volume of words spoken and shouted.  
The wooden planks of the floors were barely visible beneath the weight  
Of emotions buried alive and settled as an indiscriminate mess  
Among dust bunnies, embers, and bread crumbs.

# Harbinger



- Artist: Alysia Grudier
- Medium: Oil on Canvas
- Poster Art

# Busy Bee



- Artist: Kristoffer Ian Celera
- Medium: Photograph



# Anxious

## by Saelis Mercado

### Second Place Written

I'm a wisp of a woman with metaphysical mind  
Who lives on the outskirts of space and time.  
I feel I'm inhuman, peering into your lives  
Like an uncertain dream seen within stardust eyes.

I'm a beautiful specter that picks at her rhymes  
and finds vacuous reasons to slowly kill time;  
To meet someone new without having to hide  
Makes me wither with terror but swell with pride.



# Anxious

by Saelis Mercado

## Second Place Written

*Anxious* is how I was born to survive,  
Compulsively hoarding what keeps me alive.  
Despite certain triggers, despite eggshell nerves,  
I am grateful when feeling the peace I deserve.

For I've rattled the bars of my cranial cage,  
Paced around and around, stamped my feet in a  
rage;  
My skin has been chafed, my skin has had scars  
From times spent contorted between iron bars.

# Anxious

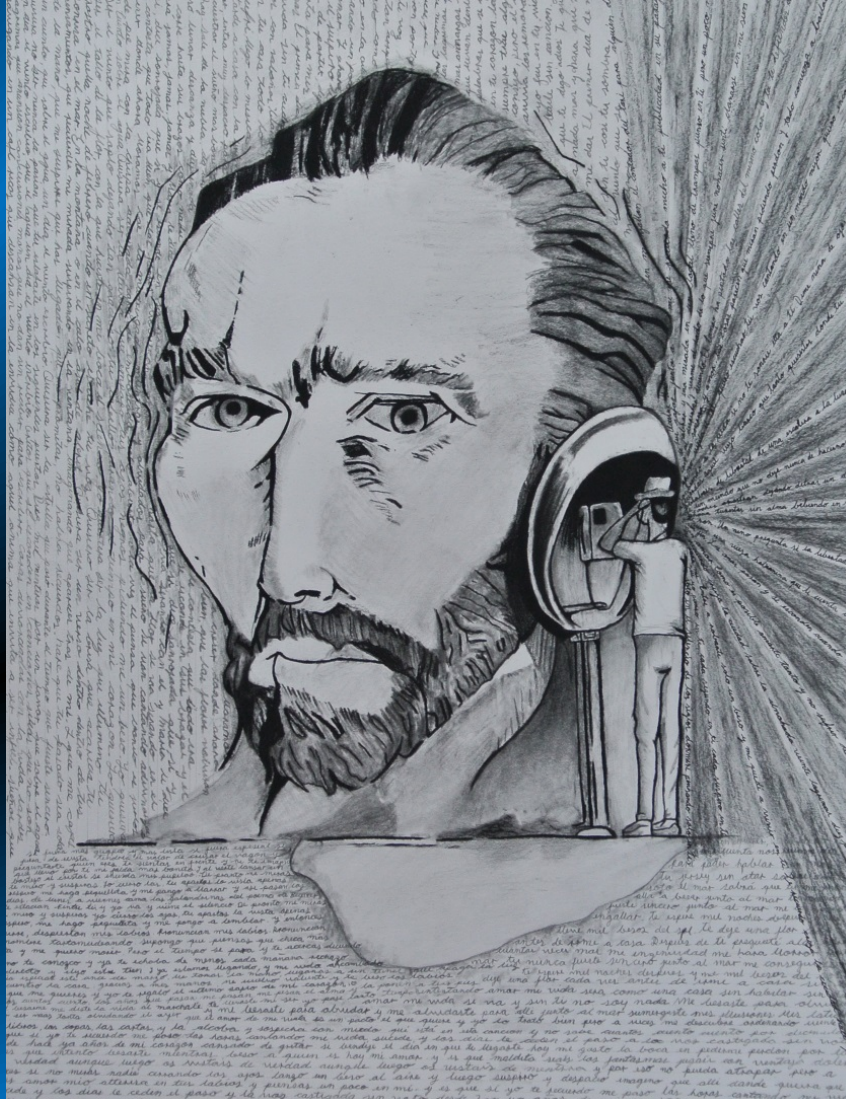
by Saelis Mercado

## Second Place Written

I've hidden in stalls, half alive, half insane,  
With adrenaline veins shocking heart, lungs, and brain;  
I've scattered like ash at my slightest mistakes  
While my black holes of pupils turned wide in their wake.

Though I'll crumble to pieces the more I survive,  
I have found that this is what keeps me alive.  
Though to some invitations I have to contrive  
An excuse that ensures I will never arrive,  
I've learned how to cope and I've learned how to hide.  
And yes, though I'm anxious, I know I can thrive.

# Van Gogh



- Artist: Juana Rodriguez
- Medium: Charcoal
- Third Place Art

# Asylum

by Amy Ashley

## Honorable Mention Written

I am a salt skull; the highways of a million tears stretch over hollow thoughts. I am unsure when my sanity went missing, but bravery led me to this asylum. I hoped bravery would feel less like fear. Faith-leaping moments should feel like cliff diving. Today feels like death. I white-knuckle the smallest piece of luggage I own. My knees knock as I pull the carry-on inwards. I packed what the facility listed acceptable: pajama pants with drawstrings cut out; alcohol-free toiletries in soft, plastic containers; and a few photos hastily printed on cheap paper. So much is not in this bag. My world is not inside this bag. Today, I give up my world to find me.

I wonder where I am.



# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

Of course, I am not the only crazy person here. A pacer walks the far wall. Across from me sit three twitchy ladies with shifting eyes. Mumbling is a part of the décor. Each hard chair holds another person bled dry of feeling but still feeling these waiting moments.

The man to my left mutters his endless spiel like auctioneer on acid, "Fifteen! Twenty-nine! No, Roger, Niner, Nixon, Hubert, No! That's the ticket. Fifteen! Fifteen! Yes, boy! I'll be rich, boy!"

I will not meet the eyes of the man on my right. I know his gaze holds a decade of guilt and commitment because he is why I am here and yet he is not why I am here at all. Love is complicated. I did not want to make this choice this way, or any hurting way. Sorry has not been kind. Bravery is not clean. We are here, though. Seeking this safety, as uncertain as it is, matters.

# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

Despite the San Antonio warmth, the room is a dense JELL-O of cold. The air is so thick I want to stop breathing, but I do not. I think: this is where I die. It is right now. There are months leading to this moment. Is it days, or years? I have lost count of my time. Maybe assigning the order of time to my downward spiral isn't essential. I whisper this lie into the back of my dry throat, and it is swallowed away.

Unfortunately, when they call my name and take my luggage, the questions start. These people, with bright medical scrubs and soft eyes, need to know when my crazy began.

"Have you had any suicidal thoughts?"

"Have you had any homicidal thoughts?"

"Do you have a history of severe depression?"

"Have you ever harmed yourself or attempted suicide?"

# Asylum

by Amy Ashley

## Honorable Mention Written

They ask so many questions my face hurts from weeping. I hate the answers I give, and I know what my answers mean. It's like taking a personality test and knowing how the results will turn out after marking A, B, or C. There is no answer rigging today. I do this right today, no matter how awful it feels. This ends here.

When dealing with suicidal people, offer paperwork in small doses. They bring in half a stack at a time, always with a rub on the back or arm and more Kleenex. With an alien dance the staff in-process me. I expected sorrow, and I am replete with aches. I expected rigidity, but receive empathy.

My heart races, and my head races. I imagined being open would be freeing, but admittance makes me vulnerable in a way no amount of Kleenex remedies.

# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

My husband comes to me one last time. Our shared moment is whole and awful with remembrance. I wish there was joy I could give, but all I have left is not running. I have no hope to hand over, so I touch his face with a palm full of tears and see his sadness. We will not always have this. Love is complicated, and letting go happens alone.

I am not permitted to pull my own small bag.

Enveloped by lush landscaping, patients smile as we walk the quarter of a mile to my building. The petite Hispanic woman pulling my luggage is brisk. She holds several folded papers in one hand, and I wonder what warning labels my question sessions have generated. The ornamental gardens and stone path fade from sight as we stop in front of two heavy steel doors operated by a complex system of locks.



# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

I am a prisoner. I signed papers to give them my life.

Inside, I sit and wait. My heart flutters like something dying, but I am far from dead. My intent is firm in my chest in spite of uncertainty. Will I be home in a week? Will I be home for my birthday mid-month? Will I be home at all? My hands grip each other because I have nothing else to hold. I wait. I relax my jaw. I relax my neck. Migraine flirts across my upper back and the edges of my skull-.

I sit across from the nurses' station, the central hub of the common area of this ward. The nurses, five that I can see, are busy out-processing two other patients. Soon after I arrive, patients drift in to sneak peeks at me. Only one person says anything, and I do not say much back. What would I say? She does not care whether I answer questions or not. Someone else turns the television up. I am not allowed to leave the room. I watch scenes around me unfold. My fists are stones. I look down to find red crescents on my palms. Anxiety wraps it's cord tighter every second.

# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

My luggage is behind the counter. I ask for lip balm and my book. A nurse has to retrieve them, but I am permitted to keep both items. I am afraid to ask for migraine medication. Each breath flops into the back of my mouth like a fish in shallows. High ceilings and a wall of windows lend spaciousness, but eyes creep along my hairline. A continuous stream of garbage spews from the television at high volume. Claustrophobia threatens. A generous fifteen feet from the nurses' station is a table and a mauve chair, so I sit, then run my fingers over the folded printer paper at the front of my book. I cannot look at these pictures yet. I cannot look at those small faces I will not see tonight. I am not ready to think the thoughts I am thinking right now, so I read a page over and over until my name is called.

# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

They lead me carefully behind the nurses' station and through a door, a nurse before me and a nurse behind me, so one anxiety thunder rolls into another in my head. Dry erase boards litter the walls of the narrow hallway we march down. Brightness surrounds: bright marker, bright scrubs, and bright tiles on the floor pointing the way for my care-worn eyes. The exam room I am led to feels too tight, and once more, my throat seizes.

When I am told to remove my clothes, I move slowly. Perhaps retaining a sock or my bra might keep some humanity against my skin. It does not. I am left with myself, the girl I am here to eradicate, and I do not like her.

"What is this tattoo of?"

"Do you have any piercings?"

"How many surgeries? Do you have any scars?"

"Do you have any birth marks or birth defects?"

# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

They draw pictures of my body with its individual marks and flaws. My fists clench and clench again. After so much tension today, my jaw is a dead thing in my face. I stand naked before them, and mostly they do not even look. I am ignorable, but I will not cry.

There is little dignity in dressing while being watched. There is little dignity in any of this, but I made a choice before I came here. I chose to seek safety in the madness of myself and of this place; to let it change me. Change is greater than fear. I am not who I am. I am who I will be. I choose who I will become, and there is dignity in that.



# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

No more waiting. I am greeted by my luggage and marched from the common area to my new room. A bed too narrow to be a twin straddles the floor across from two other beds. Bolted to the wall are an unequal number of drawers for three. The nurse turns and pushes my bag at me.

“Unpack.”

I do. Every item is inspected as I put it away. Toiletries will be kept at the nurses' station. My nurse provides a tub for these personal items. Each item is cautiously checked before it goes into the tub.

Medications have already been turned in. I will line up for medications at appropriate times. Items are confiscated: nail clippers, a pair of sweats, and a hoodie. The nurse is ready to take a pair of pajamas, but I ask if she can cut the drawstring. She offers to let me remove the mirror from my blush. I saw two people shuffling past in paper pants earlier, and I am grateful for these small decencies. My throat closes on tears I won't let fall.

# Asylum

## by Amy Ashley

### Honorable Mention Written

She takes the cosmetic bag and toiletries and leaves. I have a rule book. I know where the schedule is posted. There is a bathroom here with a flimsy door and no lock, which I must ask to use. For now, though, I have a few minutes of quiet.

Alone on the slim bed, I stare at my bedfellow: the creamy white book whose cover hides those hastily printed pages. Earthquakes shiver my fingertips while I open the pages. My throat constricts to nearly nothing as I see monkey faces and dimples, towels wrapped over knobby knees and elbows. So much does not fit into bags.

I did this for me. I will find me. I will be back for all of them.

# Silence of Domestic Violence

## by Phyllis Smith

He walked the floor all night long  
Could not understand where she'd gone  
He did remember hearing her cry and remembered himself saying goodbye  
But what on earth, he asked himself was  
The reason that she left  
He thought hard and long and knew something went wrong,  
But could not remember the exact facts  
However, he was sure an answer would come in time  
A sad and sleeplessness night he had, he felt disillusioned and almost mad  
Again he began to pace the floor,  
A few more steps, he was at the door  
To his dismay the sky was day, yet he failed to figure why she went away  
Sirens screamed, questions were asked, silver wrist cuffs were also flashed

# Silence of Domestic Violence

## by Phyllis Smith

The phone did ring, into a scene of horrible, red, bloody things  
Regardless of his cognitive confusion, this was not a dream  
Hands cuffed, Miranda read, a hand pushed down the top of his head  
Away they drove to a smaller space and a new bed  
And by the time he leaves there, he might be dead  
All in effort to silence domestic violence



# The Death Mask by Phyllis Smith

In the hallway of her work place, she saw his anguished face  
Sad, grief stricken and wearing a death mask  
Every fiber of her being felt compelled to ask  
Of the pain, the sorrow, the sullen eyes which seem to wince from humanity  
His obvious announcement of life's leakage was heartbreaking to say the least  
Nonetheless, she spoke in kind, and offered prayer to bring him peace  
Accepting of her compassion and grateful for the encounter, he walked away stronger  
With passage of time, he gently faded from her mind

# The Death Mask by Phyllis Smith

They would meet and greet months later  
And his will to live and energy seemed greater  
She was thankful for Gods' grace upon the man  
They spoke of the miraculous wonder, embraced and stood hand-in-hand

Another encounter found him in the best spirit  
Gleefully, he danced her about the lobby, without music  
Full of life, gleeful and appreciative of her prayer  
She left him smiling, as joy hung in the air

# The Death Mask by Phyllis Smith

Their next meeting afforded him a manicure

She opted for colored nails

Eccentrically, his attitude was kind toward those with personalities that seemed from hell

Dry, cold, sarcastic, and without his kindness, is where he allowed her to dwell

It felt surreal. How could this be? What a humiliating mess she sadly thought to herself

Despite a continued positive demeanor, she obviously failed if that was a test

Shortly thereafter, another chance meeting proved to be much the same

She questioned herself, if he was insane?

Then a thought came to mind

The problem could persist from back in time

He once held intimate feelings for her, but she offered friendship only and replied in kind

But, his brother loved her and he held much of her heart, too

Although, a future between the two were not in the stars and simply would never do

# The Death Mask

## by Phyllis Smith

Time slowly drifted and turned into years  
She was aware of him, there near his brother's shadow,  
But never expected to face such an unflattering matter  
Even so, he whom she prayed for continued to hold  
Some unspoken, dredged up anger, with a temperature so cold

Good turned to bad and morphed into an unfortunate, internal resistance  
She managed a calm and proper disposition, while he continued in acid displeasure  
Nature finally proclaimed they had no friendship to measure  
The fact that Grace removed the death mask, offering a second chance at life  
His decision, it seemed was to continue living in strife



# The Death Mask by Phyllis Smith

And though she never quite understood the very confused reason  
She did understand, they were clearly out of season  
Continued prayer was her only recourse for the case of the Death Mask

# Celebrate Their Passing



- Artist: Jennifer Walters
- Medium: Photoshop  
Cs6/Adobe Illustrator

# Cielo

## by Saelis Mercado

I used to watch you dance with your family,  
Swaying with the sunflowers on bright, breezy days.  
Some of you were yellow like sunshine and others were white like clouds.  
You looked like little fallen bits of sky  
That seemed untouchable beyond the fence in my yard:  
A clear-cut line marking wild grass and rustling whispers,  
A portal to your paradise.

# Cielo

## by Saelis Mercado

You left your paradise.

You must have decided you wanted a change of pace.

You must have decided to bring some sky to me,

Because in a split second--

So slight, a little glimpse of time--

You flitted inside of my house.

In the instantaneous moment my father opened the back door,

You waltzed inside

And glided straight for the warmth of the open oven.



# Cielo

## by Saelis Mercado

I could have carried you in my palms.  
You were so small, so fragile, so beautiful,  
Pure white wings withered into ash and swallowed down a hot, black throat.  
The path you'd flown left a lingering trail that diffused throughout the kitchen.  
The sunlight that poured inside between the slats of the window blinds  
Illuminated the ghosts of your particles with cold indifference,  
Particles that tasted bitter inside of my skull that was still  
Ringing and rattling with the peals of my father's rancid laughter.

# Cielo

## by Saelis Mercado

He called you *stupid*.

I remember we were baking ribs that day

And how my own ribs felt sore.

I remember how they felt like a pathetic shelter for my heart

That was rapidly wilting within them and settling,

Defeated,

In my queasy stomach among unshed stone tears.

Lunch tasted like grey ash that afternoon.

# Cielo

## by Saelis Mercado

A childhood friend once told me that they say white butterflies  
are the spirits of children.

I haven't seen your family since.

I hope your wings were clipped,

Your light snuffed,

Before you even felt anything;

I hope your consciousness slid smoothly into sleep

With the ease with which you languidly rolled into my house.

Cielo

by Saelis Mercado

Though your body was burned,  
Your memory lasts,  
Fluttering into my daydreams.  
But your soul I cannot control:  
Dear child, that day your soul was set free,  
And I only hope that you are at peace  
As a cloud or as mist,  
Ever missed, in the midst of the sky,  
A goodbye as you fell from the firmament.



## EPILOGUE

I have taken quite a few back roads, side streets, detours and byways in my time. Leaving my degree unfinished and going years without taking a class was one of them, but I am back on the highway, back at CTC full-time to finish my degree

One of the more interesting diversions from the main road that I've had at CTC since I returned is volunteering (or being "volun-told," as I like to playfully quip) to be a student editor of Byways, the journal you are reading right now.

Make no mistake, even with five editors working together, it wasn't easy. But, the joy of knowing that I have helped to bring a flood of student submissions together into one coherent body of outstanding work, one that will be distributed to and representative of CTC students worldwide, makes me want to come back and do it all over again next year.

And why wouldn't I come back? After my current degree is finished, there are certificates to be had, electives to be explored... in other words, back roads, side streets, detours and of course, byways.

The routes we lay out for ourselves are never as permanent as we think they are. To be closed to change is to run off the road at the first unexpected turn, so be alert, steer your vehicle in the direction you want it to go, and stay on course the best you can. Chances are, you'll get to where you're going, even if you have to take a few unexpected turns to get there.

CURT SWALLEY  
Student Editor, Byways 2015

"Maybe we are right, maybe we are wrong, but as for me, I've learned."

- Griffin

"If this was a world of opposites, we'd be heading in the right direction."

- Taitano

"You spit sparks. Firecrackers of words. Bright reds and poisonous blues."

- Mercado

"I am a salt skull, the highway of a million tears stretched over hollow thoughts."

- Ashley

"I've rattled the bars of my cranial cage."

- Mercado

"Someone just shot a hole through your heart and you weren't prepared for the blow."

- Taitano

"Didn't get what I didn't get."

- Ashley

"Lunch tasted like gray ash."

- Mercado

