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editors’ note

Dear Readers,

The Winter 2019 issue of Soundings Art and Literary Magazine is here!

"Soundings" is a nautical term referring to depth measurement in a body of water. As the title of Saratoga High School’s decades-old art and literary magazine, “Soundings" refers to the depth that featured work reaches and the waves it makes throughout the creative world.

We are proud that we can serve as a forum for student expression throughout the school year, and we sincerely thank all those who submitted their photography, art, prose, and poetry.

Sincerely,

Soundings Staff

staff

Anishi Patel    Mathew Luo    Oliver Ye
Manasi Garg    Brandon Wang    Alex Wang

Front Cover: Piercing Planes
Oliver Ye

Fields of Gold
Angelina Chen
elixir
Kaitlyn Tsai

i. lover
my vial has lines
they threaten to tear it
apart, the fragments
cut my hands
my blood,
your blood,
our severed pinkies,
your broken promises
and i wonder where
the jars of cold hands
and warm breaths
and bittersweet nothings
are?
their dusty shards will suffice,
so i crush them in my hands
a fine powder
dissolved in hibiscus tea
i pour it in my vial.

ii. sister
my vial has lines
they look like the ones
in your heart
if i could smooth them,
soothe them,
place your heaviness on mine,
perhaps then i could squeeze
a drop
or two?
of salt water
to dilute this potion?
spinkle the ashes of these
words, unspoken
in my vial.

iii. kin
my vial has lines
they look like the ones
laughed into the corners of your eyes
so close,
so far.
your pain is his,
is mine,
the color of coffee candy
the flavor of rain,
(rain,
go away,
come again
another day)
other day
to kiss goodbye
(or is it hello?)
as i crumble the pieces
into my vial.

iv. memories
a drink, a kiss
so cold, so cold
it tastes like evening,
like stars hanging
against black curtains
they open
for the star of the show —
your cold hands and broken promises
your heaviness and lined heart,
your crinkled eyes and coffee candy
eternalized
in my love,
my laugh,
my tears.
elixir.

Dear, Grandfather
Hanna Fu

Old Home
Selina Chen

Mid-autumn moon festival
was the only time of the year that
brought me back to the serenity of
my grandparents’ house in South-
ern China. We called it Old Home.
The full moon liked to play hide-
and-seek behind the clouds, hesi-
tant to grace the land with his silver
cascade. We knew his naughtiness
and we were patient.

The table was loaded: spinach
and pumpkin porridge and chest-
nut chicken and — of course, grand-
pa’s signature dish – braised fish.
Before we can touch the food,
the ancestors must dine. We left
cigarettes and poker cards on the
plate for their entertainment. While
the unseen guests ate, I fetched
water from the well and cleansed
the yard. The gentle sweeping of my
bamboo broom was accompanied
by an orchestra of river and wind.
The living people took the seats.
Traditional wax berry liquor was
poured for adults; I was also given
a few sips. As if knowing what time
we finished eating, the moon poked
out his head just as we cleared the
table. Strands of cloud meandered
over the sky. All around us, ripe rice
bowed, lowering their spikes.
Grandma carried in a tray of
mooncakes, red bean, egg yolk, co-
cnut, or lotus seeds. I understood
little of my grandparents’ dialect.
But on those nights, I was glad to
hear them tell stories of the past,
stories that needed not to be com-
prehended, but needed to be felt.
In America, the mooncakes taste
different. But I know that the moon
we are looking at is the same. And
I trust him to deliver our warm
wishes to my Old Home far away.
Run home and don’t talk to your friends; sit down immediately and turn off your phone and hand it to me or leave it on the counter downstairs; unplug your earbuds and store them in the compartment under your bed; do physics homework first and focus on history afterwards; no talking to your friends on your computer; if I catch you, you are dead; you are to be an engineer or a doctor; you are to be the honor of our family; I cannot do this anymore; yes you can; you are not to argue with the adults during dinner; I want to be an artist; how much do artists earn per year?; you want to live on the streets?; wake up early in the morning at 7:00 AM every single day; eat a healthy breakfast of porridge with sliced pork chops and leave as soon as you can; watching him trot away makes me miss him; I want to sit down and talk to him; I don’t want to go home anymore; never ever make friends with naughty slackers, for they will kill you; don’t talk to the bulky men loitering outside the gas station; keep your head down and don’t talk to strangers; I didn’t feel this much stress when I was a teenager; I just want to draw; never talk too loud for you are to be humble; don’t laugh and guffaw like an animal; never tell anyone your pain, for your pain is yours; he can be an artist if he wants, but that is impossible; I hate everything; be a man and act like it; are you a woman?; I hope he understands; I will never understand; you can never be anything you want, understand?; you are an engineer, and you will never be anything else; go to your room and don’t talk to anyone, you pesky child; I want this to end; be quiet and no rap music when you do homework; what is that you’re watching?; shut it down right now and come downstairs. I’m sorry.
Creation Myth
Matthew Luo

From the log of the Tylderdine:

I had forgotten to close the refridgerbox, so the rambuns had evaporated again. Unserendipitously, my first mate Furdle had been quite enamored with them (he glorges himself and reblastinated the ga-domes of ferric Mar), and he rather viciously upturned me upon the head when he uncovered that they were all gone. The medi-drones in the medi-bay decanted the blood off my antennae and told me I would be uncommissioned to thinking-duty for at least six bells, but that was no consolation for my furi- ous second-in-command.

I reconsigned myself to cantankering out the window when I returned to my capsopod. Mars was now a million trillion fathoms away, and even the great adobe me-ga-domes of ferric Mar-tiandirt and reblastinated titanium were only specks on her great globe. We were headed to Terra, and she was yet ten million trillion fathoms still. It is quite queer to be thinking that all our Martian scientocists and philoso-cists and politocists are pinning their hopes upon the Tylderdine, but Furdle was concerned about ram-buns. The plasmas outside were winkling and the rockretras seemed to be languishing as they tumbled past.

Half a turn of the bell into my cantankering, Furdle shoofled up to me and apolomogized. He was unconditionally sorry for re-challenging me, Furdle said, and the decedict for his punishing lay solely upon my au-thority.

I had been cantankering long enough, so I did not grant him the silence-talk or a rigor- ous scolding. Instead I removed him into the resting-room and I told him his punishing would be a redialoguing of the Stories of Creation. Furdle folded himself and shook and wailed, for he was an agnosticist and not inclined to listen to the Great Myths of Lore.

But I heeded him no pay and began dialoguing:

“Once there was only The Great Blackness, writers in her hundredth reawakening, The Lady noticed how desolatory her cosmos was. So from her womb she birthed her plasmas to illuminate her canvas and her orbitra for her children to live on. From her anatomization she reconstructed her proudest children, the sapient critters of cri tterkind: from her appendages she made the corpsulates (of which I am of a kind), from her eyes the cadavralites (of which Furdle is a kind), and from her trunk the carcassians (of which there are two on the Tylderdine). She created the lesser critters from the Martian dirt and drew vegetations from the soil. She named our home Mars, fourth orbitra from the plasma Helios, and declamerded to everykind that we should confrat ermate in peaceomy.”

Upon hearing of peaceomy, Furdle disun-continued his expli-cation and acoustiziced, “This is all trifles! Are you unmembering the pan- demoniums of history or disregalling our cruelties and the untellable things past?”

I merely elucidated to him that I could requisition him to manual exer-citations before recontinuing: “To keep the peaceomy, The Lady circum-scribed upon a charter of rock her four vedicts and prested it upon the peak of Olympus Mons for all to see. They read:

Thou shalt not covet another’s prepossessions.
Thou shalt not strive with another.
Thou shalt not disrepect The Lady.
“Then from the mountainpeak she decanted the great rivulets of Mars, the Utopia and the Urusus, which wetcet her gardens and bore food and fruit to feed the proboscies of her children. From the trough of Olympus Mons the rivulets reconvened and rewounded…”

And again Furdle un-continued me, “Prepos terish! The Urusus decants often Olympus’s Westard slopes, but the Utopia the Eastard — surely, their convensions are the falla- tions of Myth!”

Eventuwhiles, I pon-tificated, the uncontinu-nings had to stop. So I declamerded to Furdle, “Be listening and be silent! Nevendently, you are disgrading the learnings I have relabored to you — The Lady’s Tale is yet unfinished, and yammer- ing, you may yet miss the boulders for the pebbles.”

Thus being spoken, I returned to explicating...

...the rivulets reconvened and rewounded into the innumerus Scorpio Majors and Minors that shuddered through the vast Martian canyons and valleys. There, in the valley, all her critters confraternated. Nokind strifed against otherkind, and the lands of Mars were fruitful and glorious.

“Knowing her work was done, The Lady returned to her slumber, and for many millennia her children lived together in beautifical harmony.

“But in time, The Lady’s vedicts were unmembered, and the polytribal breeds of misanthrops of every- kind drove her children into baser instinct. The cadavralites savaged the carcassians with terrible feromocity, the corpsulates struck the cadavralites with premiseduion ed atrocity, and the carcassians requestered for ever greater instrumens of death. The Lady’s garden lay in waste, and the har monies of Yesterday gave way to histories writ with crueltations.

“At last, The Lady awoke. But her first sight was not prosperomony, as she expected, but death and annihmilation.

“In her wrath, she struck down allkind who would make war with anotherkind, and their blood painted Mars ferric and red, and she ground their corpses and cadavers and carcasses to dust. The Lady buried her garden, wept for her children, and unwrote her vedicts from high upon Olympus.

“Then, in her bereave ment, she entered her final slumber.”

When I finished, Furdle was silent, reeding by the window, agazing at Mars. The Tylderdine’s entre-actors were unleasing burstings of blue flames every onceawhiles, and the plasmas and the other orbitras seemed to have been unmoved from the startings of my dialogu ing. The rockretras were still hurting by.

We are questering into the unknown. I hope Terra has an uncrueler past.

— Oplodamante
(Captain, AU 2453:1:12)
Shiver
Elise Phan

“I’ll always be waiting for you, so you know how much I need you”
- Coldplay, Parachutes (2000)

You never look to your left. You focus your eyes forward, always on the teacher up front - at least until the last five minutes of class, when you start sneaking sideways glances at the clock hanging above the door. Yet never to your left.

As the lazy afternoon sunlight oozes into the classroom, it pools around you, gathering in soft glowing streaks like a fuzzy halo over your flowing copper hair. Despite the sweltering heat, you refuse to tie up your hair, preferring to keep it curtained safely on the sides of your face. Keeping your gaze from wandering too far from the lecturer, or to your left.

A securely folded scrap of paper plops onto your desk. You blink up at the person sitting in front of you, a blushing but unapologetic boy with freckles. He points discreetly to the girl sitting diagonally behind you to your right, silently clapping his palms together in the form of a request. You roll your green eyes (not while he’s looking, of course) but comply anyways, handing the note back to the girl, offering a gentle smile for her benefit. You never pass in-class notes to your left.

The bell rings, a harsh, unforgettable blare. Students simultaneously spring up: scoop erasers, pencils, drool-marked doodles into their book bags; and dash out to catch up with their friends from other classes. You do the same but more slowly - tenderly tucking your books and notes away so they don’t become crushed later. Yet even then, you must leave; you have no questions to ask the teacher. You depart without a backward glance.

I alone remain in the classroom. My eyes skim over the desk where you sat less than a minute ago, just right of the desk where I used to sit - less than a year ago. To your left, where I would share secret smiles with you (my best friend), where I would dreamily regard you (my unconfessed love). But now, that’s all my ghost can do. Watch.

You never look to your left. Not anymore.
Handoween
Angelina Chen

I have always loved the overgrown field behind the post office. About two weeks ago, my parents planted god knows how many wildflowers there, which is probably why Annabelle spends so much time there now. She likes to lie flat on her back, her pale blue eyes soaking up the spectacle of the soft white puffs dancing above her head in the sky. Sometimes the wind picks up and her thin lavender hair flutters limply in the wind, swirling up around her face and hiding her spritz of freckles. Her shoulders shudder, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the sun’s kiss once again.

When we used to visit together, she would tell me what it might be like to dance among the clouds. She would ask me what it might be like to surf a gust of wind across the skyline. She would say what it might be like to dance among the clouds. She likes to lie flat on her back, her eyes closed as she fades shoes dart across the street riddled with potholes, and I enter George’s Italian Sandwich Shop after her wispy hair ducks in through the wooden door.

The ceiling is surprisingly high, complete with two metal fans that fill the store with a low buzzing and circulate the scent of American cheese and pepperoncini. Several stubby tables nestle themselves into spaces much too small for them and are decorated with blue and white checker-board tablecloths. A single glass display case fills half of the space, capped by a countertop that overlooks the sandwich preparing station and four rickety barstools to match.

Taking a seat at the heavily lacquered counter, Annabelle wraps her ankles around the legs of a maroon barstool and shifts her weight from one side to the other, causing the gold ends on the legs to make rhythmic tapping sounds. Her white dress, flawless skin, and baby blue eyes elevate her beyond comprehension. She is an angel floating in a dingy old sandwich shop. So why did she come here?

I follow her gaze to the chalkboard just beyond the counter: Rest in peace Oliver Tierman. You are forever in our hearts. The grainy picture accompanying the message washes out the boy’s striking features and comes from a fairly recent newspaper. He is a thing of the past, and the small picture reiterates this fact. Seeing my own face under that message on the wall never fails to startle me, but the look on Annabelle’s face as her eyes stare at the board might as well have killed me all over again. I love the hell out of that girl.

In one swift motion, Annabelle tears her eyes from my picture and quickly walks across the shop to the washroom. Twenty minutes go by and she still hasn’t come out. Suddenly, an older woman wearing an enormous white coat enters. She flings open the door, jangling the old bell in the doorframe and orders a ham sandwich, telling the grease-stained shirt behind the counter, “I’ll be back in a moment.” She disappears into the washroom. I glance up at the metal fans only to be interrupted by a soul scorching scream. A scream so loud, so jarring, that everything in the shop just stops and holds its breath for a moment. The blue coat runs out of the store, forgetting her sandwich completely.

I know what has happened instantly. For as much as I love Annabelle, she loves me back with more ferocity than the wind that tried to keep her from meeting her fate at this tired old shop. I have never cared for ideas of heaven and hell, but Annabelle has always held on to the idea that we might meet again in some sort of afterlife. I would never admit this out loud, but some part of me is entirely too excited to see Annabelle on the other side. To hell with hell! Today, we meet in heaven.

As ambulance sirens scream into my ears, Annabelle calmly steps back out into the store. She is as beautiful as ever, still wearing her white gown, and my feet fly across the floor to embrace her. Annabelle! I stretch my hand out to touch her but some part of me is waiting for her. But now nobody can hear or see her except for me. Despite all my skepticism about heaven and hell, I am forced to accept that we are each stuck living in our own versions of hell in some twisted parallel universe to each other.

Annabelle lies down to be waiting for her. But she ignores me. It is through my tear-eyed, foggy vision that I realize that not only can she not touch or hear me, but she can’t even see me.

Her hazy blue eyes widen in panic as she scans the shop before sprinting back across the street to the post office field. She is expecting me to be waiting for her. But I am waiting for you! But she can’t hear me. And now nobody can hear or see her except for me. The clouds above us melt into shapeless grey skies. The sun refuses to shower us in its golden rays. The wind sings to us in a monotonous tone of regretful despair. And Annabelle? My angel with the freckled face and lavender hair? Annabelle had escaped a living hell only to find herself even more lost in a dying hell. Annabelle will never dance among the clouds or surf a gust of wind or journey to the center of the sun. All she has is this field.
Wild World
Michael Tang

wildworld
whilewewhirled
fro and to
believe me—we flew!!
“checklist please;”
I checked but he’s
floundering
aroundweswing

the dashboard lit up in red
wildworld
whilewewhirled
fly—oh, it unfurled—
downanddown
sungtothesound
of “air-a-shoot!”
buttherewasmoot
(the point was moot)
dancetothewind
tastingthespin

the tail fishtailed
wildworld
criedandcurled
viscer-rolled
natal-fatal
—must we still pay, though?—
“air-a-shoot!”
“tear-through-it”
andthesunspun
andtheairflung

the blades caught a foreign fire
wildworld
“high load”
“air-a-shoot!”
twixtbuleandblue(it)
water-bound
sungtothesound
ofride
—but what a ride—
that
aside
lookslike—
bulls-eye
blue-hurled
viscer-rolled
criedandcurled
whilewewhirled
whilewewhirled
—and still it unfurled—
a wild world.
model

Kaitlyn Tsai

dress her in blood and the color of her skin, call that exotic, and laugh your eyes into hers, take her tongue and cut it with the glass from above her head, mold her body so it fits in your hands, squeeze until she is white, place her on a pedestal, furnish her with your glib flattery and fragmented promises, as lovingly, you carve into marble “chink”

Velcro

Christina Xiao

Like steel wool you are not that soft
I pull you apart with anxious fingers & you catch

Wipe you against my forehead & you leave raised red bumps and bruises delineating where I trusted you too much

Scratch me open because that’s what I would’ve done to you had I the chance

Monster

Hanna Fu
My father in the picture is not someone I can name, untouched by time he steams in his own glory. Cocooned in oyster’s pearl and smile cracking his oil dark skin, my father in the picture is the kind of man to eat unwashed fruit directly from the ground, the kind of man to throw a lit firecracker into the open window of his neighbor. Dangerous, he says, I was dangerous, dangerous, I ask, this thick haired, fish eyed boy? Yes, my father in the picture says. Dangerous the way young men with no bodies to surrender are, the way men who keep their life’s savings in glass jars and call their mothers everyday are. Dangerous the way men who fantasize about running away from home with nothing but a rifle and a book are, what good are water or a compass, my father asks, if I already have what I need to survive? Each year behind him blowing like bed linens in the hot Indian wind, so utterly important. Even from here I can see it in his eyes. The camera pins him down and I dissect him like it’s biology class, put a scalpel to his skull and peel.

My father in the picture is still so young, he has not yet learnt how beautiful he is. He does not know he is beautiful the way all young men are beautiful: the glint of light on the edge of a blade. A prayer forged from blackened steel, ready for the unbecoming.

### Golden Hour
*Anonymous*

sometimes I catch a glimmer in the mirror some small burst of life you can only see at a certain angle and I wonder if I have that blinding angle if anyone can see this blinding angle because sometimes, I can’t it’s golden hour and I can’t find my angle perhaps that’s because my eyes and nose and mouth don’t form a perfect triangle and from the worst angles, everything seems almost mangled but the longer I stare, the more angles I see and the less I am blinded by their version of beauty

### The Park Bench
*Helena Lee*

there is a bench at the edge of the pond beneath the weeping willow tree where golden sunlight and moss dapple the old wooden slabs and time just stops.

from the bench you can see dragonflies that perform for you and cattails that wave back at you and tell you to have a nice day.

the sun glows so softly a little past golden hour and it is wonderfully warm on your beautiful skin and your heartbeat and breath are the only things that matter at this moment.

there is a bench at the edge of the pond and now, you can return to it whenever you like.

### Evening Trips to the Library
*Veda Sethuraman*

Cigarette smoke of library smell, Cigarette smoke outside, the homeless men laughing, my dad tells me to hold my breath, but I inhale, I fill my lungs I love the smell of cigarette smoke I love it I love the smell.
The men are smiling and smoking, I love the smell, I inhale again, wooden bench, the statue curved shoulders reading copper turning blue with rain and- brick.

Brick path
Brick ground
Brick wall
Brick

Roly polys and smoking in the evening are my favorite evening library visits.

### Ben at the Apthorp
*Allison Hartley*

there is a bench at the edge of the pond where golden sunlight and moss dapple the old wooden slabs and time just stops, from the bench you can see dragonflies that perform for you and cattails that wave back at you and tell you to have a nice day. the sun glows so softly a little past golden hour and it is wonderfully warm on your beautiful skin and your heartbeat and breath are the only things that matter at this moment. there is a bench at the edge of the pond and now, you can return to it whenever you like.