

the

fall 2010

# Beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure. - Rainer Maria Rilke

#### Acknowledgments:

The Grout would first like to thank everyone who submitted their brilliant and peerless work. We would like also to thank Melissa Stevens, Adam Visher, Christian Winting, Thomas McBee, and the Polity Council for their assistance.

#### The Staff:

Jillian Burgie Katie Huang Rhys Conger Andrew Meier Felicia Thompson Samantha Manaktola Jaime Mohebali Will Schreitz

#### Upcoming Events:

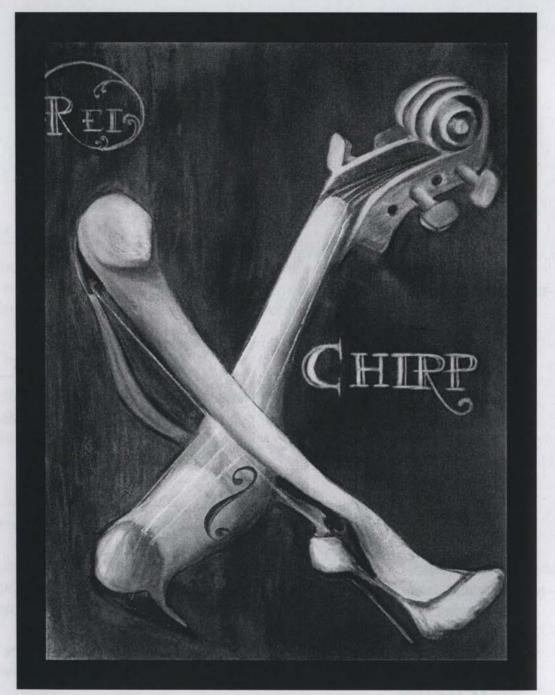
Don't forget to come to open mike night and celebrate with us!

Submissions for the Spring Issue of The Grout may be sent to jmburgie@sjcsf.edu. Spring semester will feature a competition for best poetry, short fiction, photography, and all other media. Details to come.

If you're interested in joining the staff, contact Jillian Burgie or watch for future meetings!

# Table of Contents

Chirp	4
Rachael Alvir	-
Love Letters Pt. Two: A Happy Destitute and a City	5
Zachary Hooper	
Nazi Pink	6
Cheryl Abhold	
Untitled	6
Aalin Bellinger	
Thirteen Ways of Looking at Water	7
Maggie Carter	
I, Wells	8
Katie Medred	•
Untitled	8
James Irwin	
Epiphyte	9
M.J.Fischer	
Lynched by Luschnig	10
Felicia Thompson	
Untitled	11
Da Shen	
Walking is Like Running While Appreciating	11
James Irwin	
Please Remove Your Toe From My Chimney	12
Eric Wetzel	
Self Portrait	12
Maria Lilie	
The Potters	14
Emma Badger	
Dedication	15
M.J.Fischer	
Love Letters Pt. Two: A Boy and a Balloon	16
Zachary Hooper	



Chirp Rachael Alvir

# Love Letters Pt. Two: A Happy Destitute and a City

City,

You're a nighttime skeleton, electric ribcage, and scraping your bones clean with my tongue, again, this is how we live, bleary eyed through standstill ecstatic explosions, you hold a million excitements, city lights, city lights

Oh and your blood runs loud in a popping sing song, every which direction, flowing out of bars, into cars, down and crashing in waves of personality, lives and lives flowing in a river, microscopic to starry eyes

And they beat you, my city, they beat you
Bloody knuckles pour out their mouths and into your jaw
your eye, your stomach
don't hear their talk of soulless steel and glass
forget their cigarette throats and know you're a home for some

Tonight I'll shoot and saunter 'cross your heart, drink your breath and run my mind along your veins until I'm tired and your eyelids will close around my shivering body oh, city, otherwise I'd be lonely, but this wise is no other, and I love you

Gratefully, Happy Destitute We were outside, in the arroyo behind the public library. I don't remember if it was late autumn or early winter. Either way, it was fucking cold, and we warmed ourselves by drinking vast amounts of cheap red wine. Did we really need it that bad, though? Hell, it was the lesser of evils at the time. Our options were space-bags, ghetto vodka, or no relief at all. We neglected our obligations toward school, which offered us education only in theory. Even if we knew that back then, I don't care now. I didn't say anymore, I said now.

We need different things now, but I'd still like a damn glass of merlot every once in a while. Ah hell. No worries. We never forced ourselves into depending on anything external. We have no addictions. We only

have each other. I'm a big kid, I can control myself. But no matter how many times I say that. I still feel like I'm in the dark. I can sense my own sentient sarcasm. We both fell in and out of ruts, or more accurately, arroyos, but at the end of the day we would climb back up the littered desert sand to return to civilized society. Return to cold bedrooms and classrooms lit with ugly white fluorescence and long hallways paved with industrial tiles. But hey, error is the best teacher. Even if we haven't learned from our mistakes, at least we made them. I can't leave any of them behind. We were just kids, remember? Never mind that it only happened a year or two ago. But I remember feeling young back then, reckless, wild, invincible. I don't feel any older now, I just feel more alone.

Cheryl Abhold



Aalin Bellinger

### Thirteen Ways of Looking at Water

1

Between two high peaks, The only commotion Was the tumbling of the water.

11

She was of many desires, Like a river In which there are many waters.

HI

The water thundered in the fall It was the power.

IV

The sky and the earth
Are one.
The sky and the earth and water
Are one.

V

I do not know which I prefer, The grace of fluid streams Or the splendor of raging rivers, The water thundering Or the silence just after.

VI

Rocks covered the streambed Smoothed by years of resistance. The shimmering water Slid over them. The mood Etched in light A darting movement.

VII

O watery women of Poseidon Why do you yearn for arid land? Do you not hear the call for the water As it rages around the ankles Of your devoted admirers?

VIII

I recognize modest voices
And deliberate, measured consistency;
And I recognize as well,
That the water is
What I know.

IX

When the water flows around the bend, It marks the beginning Of many choices.

X

At the sight of water
Flowing with pure reflected light,
Even the Sirens
Would shriek in dissonance.

XI

He sailed over the Pacific In a paper boat.
Twice, a hope pricked him, When he mistook
The howl of wind
For water.

XII

The time is moving.
The water must be flowing.

XIII

It was the end even at the beginning. It was the sea
And it was going to be the sea.
The water flowed
To the deep.

Maggie Carter

#### l, Wells

There was a rain storm here and all I could remember was the sound of things you'd dropped on our Iron floor.

Back when the wet Was something to look forward too, even without the weight of eventually being wrong.

It use to beat against me
I'd let it collect in the wells beneath my
eyes,
but those days are gone.

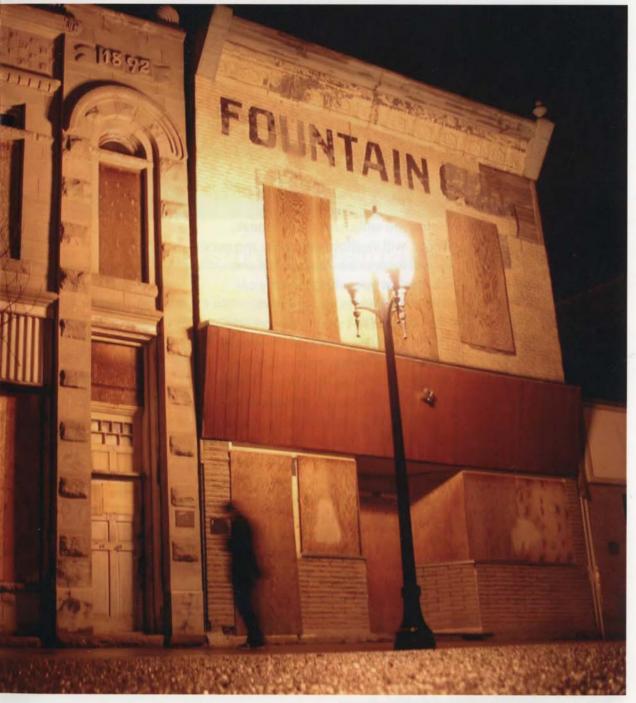
They left after the first time
The fog off the shore held me like an empty shell
and the lies that you told, burned like nothing else

This house was never What they feature in thickly bound magazines How could I be that?

How could we be that?

Katie Medred





James Irwin

old man, giant mole, gently crawling into my sealed hole peaceful, sitting on my chest, uneasy meat at squeamish rest forcing the air out of my lungs and the cries out of my breast for you will crush me if I speak, will kiss, will swallow, will make me gone will forever be your special one is what you whisper in my ear and always you are here, so very near, I smell your breath, right in my neck, and in my womb where you forgot your sinful seed. semen Cain's mark of your deed right where you ripped pink bleeding soil a tree grew grand inside my tummy with little leafs and little twigs full blossom tree, sweet blooming figs. I tried to dig it out, tried to chop it down, that tree with rotten root and creepy fruit but I have wood instead of bone a spine grew from the foul you've done brave stem supporting all the weight of weakness and a shameless fate.

M.J.Fischer



#### Lynched by Luschnig (or Death by an Undead Language)

Arrive to assistance room looks empty from a distance; shoes, books, and papers askance imply one willing to dance with a freshman is near--And he appears. Schedule says 5 to 7 p.m., but schedule changed for him; from 3:30 to 5 the time shifted. those far more gifted than I came and went. Now he's spent. "Another one's scheduled tomorrow." So where do I borrow esteem to lift me 'til then? Have my wits end start again when the end of my rope is the breadth of my scope? Brightly, I thank him for his time, "see you tomorrow," I chime and walk quickly to the door,

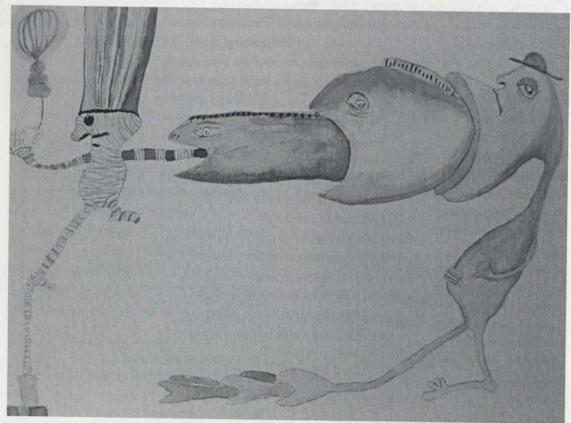
praying tears don't hit the floor. Inhale and exhale to help but I'm just fooling myself. The hole I stand in. with Greek almost to my chin, looks to bury me. Drills done daily bolster false hope resembling a noose rope. Case-declensions disconnect, noun endings and verbs eject just as I'm reaching for clarity in the teaching. Conclusion to Lesson 1? She's come undone. It's all imperfect, with no persistence in my accent; I'm passive in the middle, trying to augment the riddle before the fall of the axe. Death, by parse and syntax.

Felicia Thompson

# Walking Is Like Running While Appreciating

You don't even know where you're going. There are a million tiny buses running on a million tiny little tracks, and you don't even know the track, let alone the bus. Trees scratch the windows, scarring paint tracks painted by people who weren't making minimum wage, and you just keep your eyes significantly drier than the torrents of oil falling from the sky outside. The driver glances back in his bubble-distortion mirror, and you find yourself smiling at him whenever he glances

up. He's probably in his sixties, divorced, and has one daughter he loves more than life itself. He drives this bus that you don't know the destination of across the country, the world, his life, so he can give her presents at Christmas. Once she couldn't come home for the holidays, so he sent her packages with her gifts, but she never said "Thank you, Dad. I love you, Dad." He still drives, sends packages, and calls when he can, though she rarely picks up the phone. You think all this to



Please Remove Your Toe From My Chimney
Eric Wetzel

yourself, so you smile at him, your face distorted into a half-moon that resembles the one reflected on the wet pavement. The bus comes to a stop, and you decide to get off. The driver kindly winks at you as you pass. and you just smile again. It's still pouring fixed-gear bicycles and unneeded plastic objects out here, so you pull up the dark hood of your now damp, blue hoody. The corner up from the one you started on has a convenience store on it. Surreally awful music from the early 1990s plays over the intercom. tinny and with the depth of character similar to that of a bowl of phillips-head screws for breakfast. Reflective linoleum requires you to look at the garish fluorescent lights tepidly looming above you. There is just another woman in the store with her three- or four-year old son. He's picked up a Batman action figure and is running around, fighting with gallons of milk and bags of Cheetos. Thunder rolls from the slatecolored night outside, his eyes get big, and he and Batman run back to Mom and hold her leg through her skirt. She absent-mindedly rubs his head. the thunder fades, and Batman's nemesis is now her left shoe. You smile, again, and walk back out into the street, leaving behind footprints that won't disappear until the 11:00 mopping. Headlights show you a silhouette you don't really recognize on broken-down brick buildings, whipping by; Doppler moves faster than you. A cat runs down an alley behind a dumpster. Freakishly realistic newspapers display last week's news as you be-

gin to whistle the tune of Somewhere Over the Rainbow. You don't mind that your feet are wet from the downfalls of the sky's civilizations because you know that everything is just collateral damage. Something is only made out of the destruction of something else. Finite lines crease your face through winces of impartial anger for an unfulfilled past and misinterpreted prophecies. You remember the time that you cared, but now you care more, and by caring more, care less about most things. Wet shoes and buses and skirts are still just as they were after moisture citizens show up, silhouettes are what you make of them, and nothing defines anything unless you want it to. You reach the edge of town, still not knowing where you are, and watch lightning strike a giant oak in the center of a field. Rabbits and other wildlife run out from the small fire that results, looking like bits of ashen newspaper that now hold nothing but warmth. The half-moon looks back at you and the crisp, cool rain kisses you a little too forcefully, but you like that. You think you might see a figure, another silhouette across the field, but you don't make any effort to see for sure or make any greeting. You're contented to find a seat in the wet grass, lay back, and look at the light show while the half-moon holds you tight and you're simultaneously found and lost a million times every second by each drop of oh-so realistic beauty. It's Christmas day. You smile.

James Irwin



Self Portrait Maria Lilie

#### The Potters

From the railroad they proclaim That Choice and Glory be the same Yet he who stands out in the rain Does bare his sullen soul in vain For 'twixt hill and sea, he thus is caught He suffers most who suffers not At the hands of they who sit and pray Making children out of clay With wicked smiles and sweet "meanwhiles" We jump from seat to scene Applauding the obscene, reprimanding the unclean Those ghosts (who left them crass, uncouth) Shall haunt our now eternal youth And freedom, at its worst, is truth Not taken, but embalmed, smoothed To scabbing over tales unsaid Let a toast be made (over my head) For the devil cannot get us here Nor the martyr, priest, nor seer, and Mothers beware, this is such toxic air It makes us ill, but we don't care For to break from your mold, at least I wouldn't dare Potters, Mothers, your hands are cold, your skin is fair I am your child, made out of clay A night-owl lingering into the day Oh Potters, Mothers, stay away Stay away I dream, in a sweat, of your clammy hearths And watch my long-forgotten births Still sky and body are of one earth Be it of clay or flesh And so do Choice and Glory Separate Mingle Fail Mesh

#### Dedication

And they say, in the beginning was the word but mine the word was not yet, when Eden fell. when the story was set. So I strive for words. to fill deeds with diction to add outlines to what long felt like fiction. For those, your commands, they became my commandments, with my all-knowing bones the only ones to recollect that conviction of your painless caress which left me my mark in disguised love so dark. you chose me to be the knowing one when your hands covered my mouth, and your fingers parted my lips and more eager fingers more fingers, parted my hips to slip a malic host into my mouth. and feeding me fate. for you, for you I ate. ingested forbidden fruit, bitter with wisdom, and fouling my root making all summer gardens never the same, and forever I feel my nakedness with shame.

# Love Letters Pt. One: A Boy and a Balloon

Balloon,

So slipped in a back-and-forth shift, Adrift past my knuckles You yearned for a coconut sky

And did you not think, In the ice skating rink, That I could see your silent sigh?

Well oh dear balloon! See it I did, And away you must go! No, argue not, fly you must, And this I do so know.

So my balloon, my beloved balloon, Be content near the clouds tonight. And if you should land, in some boy's hand, Just let him remind you of me.

Love, Boy

Zachary Hooper

