The Spectrum Spark

CSM’s Queer-Focused Literary and Art Journal
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Poetry

Nikolai Hadacek  
*transmasculine nonbinary, demisexual, white*

### Echoes

**TW: Religious themes**

The piercing ring  
A siren’s call  
High, light, a bell's tone  
Ringing resonance in my throat  
The memory of a tone long gone

The chords of my throat  
Strain against skin  
Clench in want against the atmosphere  
I inhale  
I want  
I love  
I need that again

I open my mouth  
But nothing  
Air freezes there  
A block of ice in my airways  
The atmosphere thick with reverence and desire  
Memories freezing reality half-built

In a block of sound, I break  
A tangle erupting from my throat  
A croak, then a thrum  
The growl and gravel of a rusted pipe  
Ill-kept and creaking  
Smoothing, slowly, to a smoker’s rasp
Poetry

Mary Amsler  
closeted queer cis white woman

Against that shining backdrop
The ringing soprano, clear, heavenly
Rips a sinful rasp
The devil grips me by the neck
And coaxes out his grinding song

The new voice is bourbon
Aged, wood-smoked
The crackle of flames beneath
The bobbing swell of the apple
Of Adam’s sin

I will never sing with the angels
The church bells will not ring in my throat
But the Devil has given me this velvet song
Of sin and smoke and burning liquor
Of jazz and flames and murmured secrets
And I, I think I’ll keep it

Technicolor Dreamcoat

“In your dreams, I’m the box in your basement,
But you remember Pandora too well --
The back of your mind casts a dim, dusty light
On my strange, unfamiliar shell.”

“In your dreams, I’m the chest in your attic
When you know not to look inside.”
(Now you’ll flinch at the thought of a wedding
And the remains of the Mistletoe Bride.)

“In your dreams, it’s a dark clammy labyrinth,
And I am the wild Minotaur,
And you are the terrified Pasiphaë
Daring not to walk this corridor.”

“In your dreams, you are Daedalus,
So I’m Icarus, bound for the sun.”
(From below, like a reflex, you’ll avert your eyes
When you look and realize what’s to come.)
Reflections on Golden
Mary of the Mountain

Looking at the landscape into which you read my fate
Like constellations in the mountainside
All the world begins to take your story’s twisted shape
And human fiction claims this natural divide

And this –
this earth
I thought inert –
You charge to make a Woman out of me
It lies in wait in tundra slopes
And wakened
Suffocates my hopes
Then slips ‘neath glassy snow so gracefully

Mary of the Mountain
With hips of rolling hills
With hair of pines and mossy modesty
Lain, since time began
Under the blanket of the land
To mark my place in it for all eternity

Do I hear it in the wind?
Woman Woman Woman Woman
Until semantic satiation numbs the sting
Until I’ve reached a different lookout
And she’s not there anymore

But still, I know you --
You’ll find her form in anything.

Soul-Burnt

TW: Religious themes, self-harm, references to depression
I stand at the altar, knees buckling and quivering.

It tears at my chest, my throat, on the way out. Living bile, scraping its way into the world through gritted teeth.
“Forgive me for my weakness. Forgive me for my rebellion.”

My fluttering heart trapped like a bird in those words.

My spine is bent, begging to straighten. The watchful eyes press it down.

My body is not my own. My will is not my own.
My soul writhes and strains, fights against my skin. Dark and pulsing and coursing with fire.

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I lay in my bed, feeling my bones weighed by the trickle of time passing by.
Every fallen obligation leaden in my chest.
My soul fights to rise, tightens my airway, shrapnel in my mind.
Weak
Pitiful
Unrepentant

I whisper softly, like fraying rope:

“My ribcage is my binding vow
To wade into the mist
No choice of mine to carry on
No choice but to persist

And if I find this mind of mine
unwilling to go on
Spurs can only bite so deep
I’ve lost the siren’s song

My bloodied will may falter
My limbs pulled on by string
My spine of steel bound tight with rust
Distant bells fight to ring

Years may pass but at long last
My heart and mind can heal
My soul will be tamed gently
Just one more day, my dear.”

I pause. The air weighs on me in its silence.

Coward
You fucking disgust me.

“Yeah. You’re telling me.”

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My lungs swell with the warm breeze. My soul drifts lazily on the thermals around me, swirling, spinning, playful. Such a fickle beast. It flits away occasionally to explore behind the odd rock.

The land is flourishing, verdant, unbroken by buildings for miles. My back straightens, unfettered by watchful eyes. I am free to breathe, to be. I’ve doffed the armor I wear, so often a badge of pride. Layer upon layer of identity, demeanor, and control. Sometimes it’s the only thing holding me together; sometimes it feels like it drags my bones into the ground. I had forgotten how light my body could feel.

I’ll return, later. Don my armor, stand at the altar once more. I’ll have to. But for today, skin bared to the sky, I stand unrepentant.
The Rings Venus Will Never Have
Poetry

Taylor Rossi  bisexual, cis man

remembering high school

My pink fingers,
Markered on and rubbed off
Before home.

My purple libido-
I look straight to bury it
Before home.

Bleeding heart,
My home holds close.
Only half naked there
To myself.

Still home

The Authors

Nikolai Hadacek (He/They)

Niko is a demimcule trans-man who’s gone by many labels in his life, but now sticks to bisexual and demisexual in addition to his trans identity. He is an engineering physicist, artist, author, singer, and leather worker whose hands are rarely still. He’s been out as one thing or another since he was twelve and has been active in the queer community since he came out as trans in 2016. He served as oSTEM’s President, Vice President of Campus Events, and Social Chair.

Lindsey Kartvedt

I have been teaching myself digital art for a few years now and have finally found an art style that I love. Creating The Rings Venus Will Never Have was a journey because the original character was one I had sketched out a few years ago, but abandoned until seeing recent NASA images of Saturn’s rings, and I was hit with a burst of inspiration to finish the piece. The painted woman’s story is one of love and longing, captured in the vibrant colors of the planets. Digital art has been a great escape from the Mines’ workload as I study towards my Computer Science degree which I’ll (knock on wood) finish this May. I’m excited to finally involve myself in something artsy here before I graduate. Thank you to everyone who works on the Spectrum Spark!

This issue also features writing from Taylor Rossi and Reed Flentge
The Staff

Lanie Breckenridge  *(She/They)*

Lanie Breckenridge is a Junior in Metallurgical and Materials engineering at the Colorado School of Mines. They identify as genderqueer and demi-bisexual and serve as the President for the Mines oSTEM chapter. They are also involved with the humanitarian engineering department and are involved in a program aiding Colombian mining communities, as well as serving as the Editor-in-Chief for the Spectrum Spark.

Malcolm Johnston  *(They/He)*

Malcolm is an amateur writer, poet, pianist, swimmer, and whatever-they’re-interested-in-at-the-moment-er. A junior in chemistry, they’re also part of the McBride Honors Program, and they are currently serving as the secretary of the Colorado School of Mines’ oSTEM chapter and as the Spectrum Spark’s layout designer. Deminonbinary, gray ace, aro, and gay, they’ve slowly come to terms with their sexuality and gender identity and have become a more active member of the queer community over the last several years. They spend their free time writing detailed scripts for novels they’re never actually going to write.

Mary Amsler  *(She/Her/Hers)*

Mary is a junior in civil engineering at the Colorado School of Mines and is interested in pursuing water resources engineering. Mary is new to oSTEM and identifies as a queer cis woman. Since she is not out yet, she has chosen to use the pseudonym Mary Amsler. In her free time, Mary enjoys playing the ukulele, violin, and piano.

Lauren O’Sullivan  *(She/They)*

Lauren is a first-year in environmental engineering and is considering a sustainability minor. She identifies as bisexual but is interested in exploring other labels. They hope to become more active in oSTEM through the next few years and is currently the Visual Media Editor for the Spectrum Spark. On campus, she is a member of the Vanguard Scholars and the Melodic Miners. She also enjoys camping and road-trips.