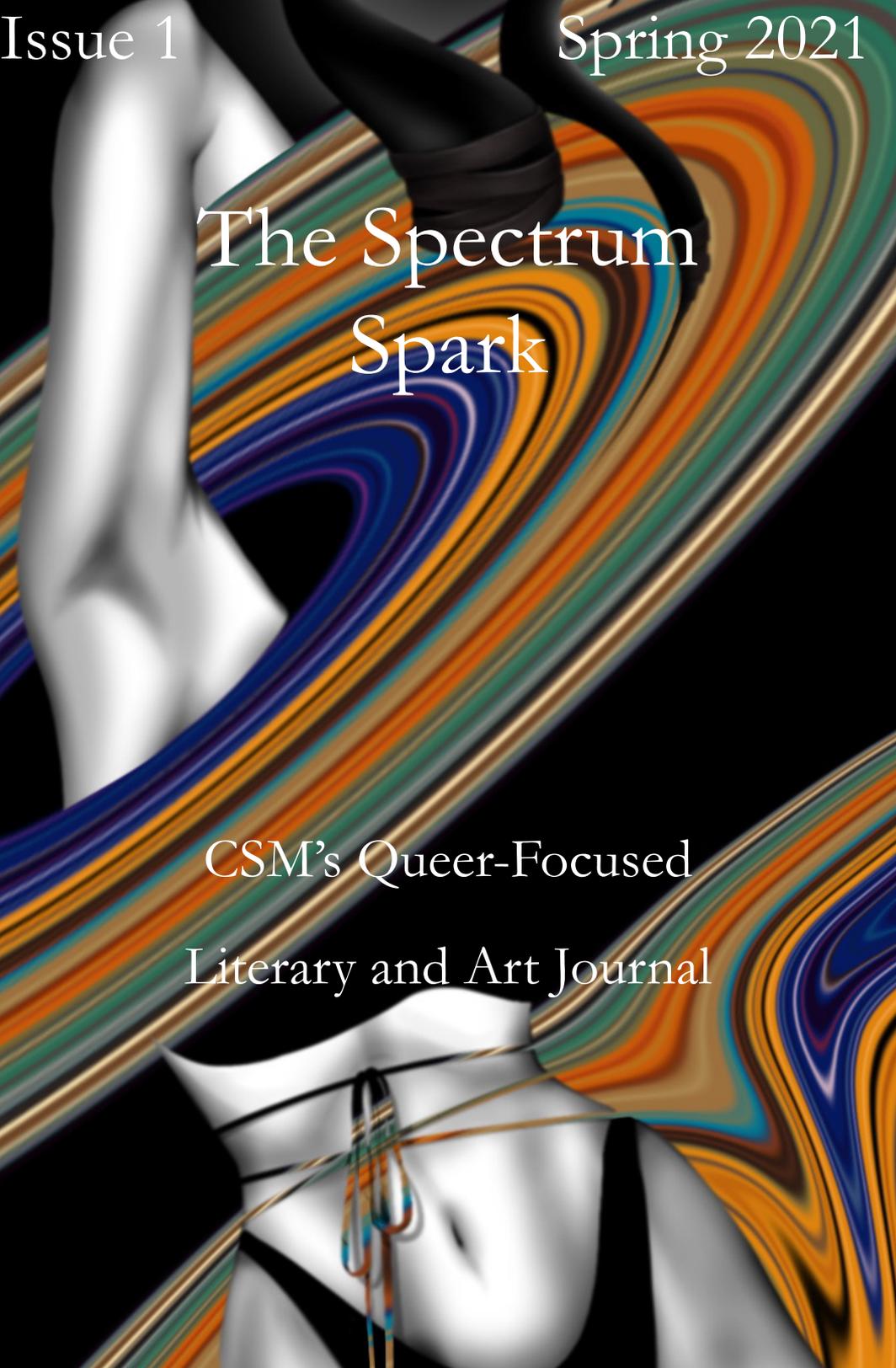


Issue 1

Spring 2021

# The Spectrum Spark

CSM's Queer-Focused  
Literary and Art Journal



Nikolai Hadacek *transmasculine nonbinary, demisexual, white*

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## 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

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

## Poetry

Mary Amsler *closeted queer cis white woman*

## Technicolor Dreamcoat

TW: Reference to religious text

“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 Amsler *closeted queer cis white woman*

## 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.

Lanie Breckenridge *demibisexual, nonbinary, mixed race*

## 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 nails press sharp into my arm. Biting. Tearing.  
 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

*Short Story*

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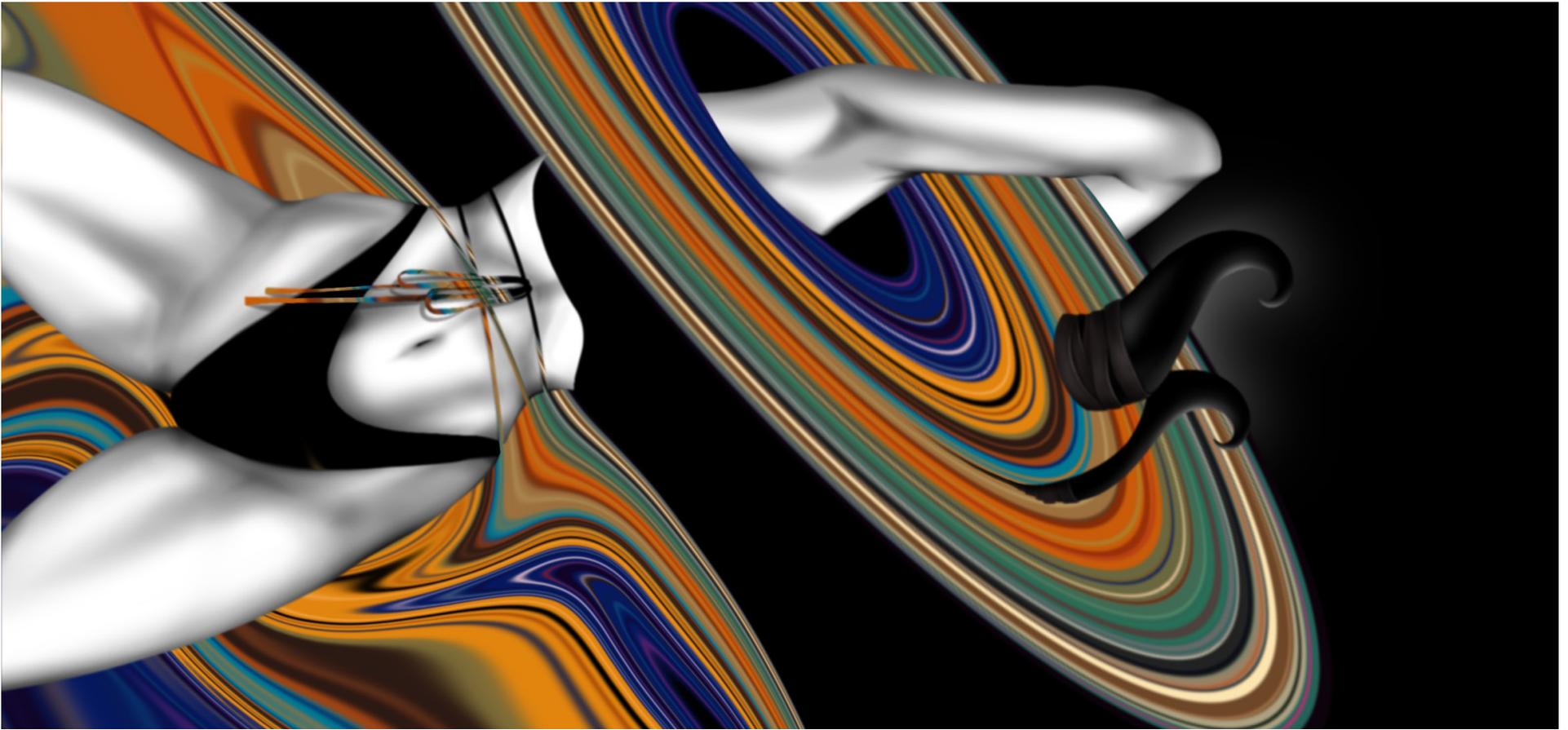
My lungs swell with the warm breeze. My soul drifts lazily on the thermals around me, swirling, spinning, playful. Such a fickle beast. It flits away occasionally to explore behind the odd rock.

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.

*Short Story*

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



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 demimale 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.

