

Issue 2

Fall 2021

The Spectrum Spark



CSM's Queer-Focused
Literary and Art Journal

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Poetry

Malcolm Johnston *gray ace, aro, deminonbinary, white*

the little things

TW: references to violence

The little things make or break your day,
because the thing about the little things
is they're not really little.

It's like you're getting chased by a cheetah,
and you're running as fast your legs can carry you,
and you trip over a rock on the path in front of you -
sure, the rock can't hurt as much as a cheetah,
but it's the rock that's left you lying on the ground,
the cheetah closing its jaws around your throat.

Aidan O'Leary *bisexual, transgender woman*

The Woman Who Was Always There

Light touched the river
Now reflecting the woman
Who was always there

Leah Bandy

Pisces



Malcolm Johnston *gray ace, aro, deminonbinary, white*

the pits

TW: References to depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation

Sometimes it feels like someone
 tied little red threads around my fingers
 and around my friends' fingers,
 and I have to tug on those threads
 and feel a tug back and know
 that's enough for us when we're wandering
 somewhere in the mist
 taking every step carefully
 because we don't know
 when our boots will stop touching earth
 and we'll fall
 into one of the many pits
 lying around this place
 (or, worse yet, we choose to fall)
 and we tug so hard
 the string slips off the other's finger
 and disappears.

Please, I don't want to lose you.
 We'll all be memories eventually,
 and maybe somewhere down the road
 that'll be enough for us,
 but you don't need to be a memory right now.
 I don't want to forget the sound of your voice,
 the smile on your face, how it feels
 to sit next to you and know that I'm safe,
 to hear your laugh, hear you talk about
 something I don't know about,
 but I love it because you love it
 and you love me and I love you.

Stephanie Caulk *queer cis woman*

Then Again

If this dread and shame is a stone, then I think I'm letting go:
bury the cinder block and hope it's left behind --
I'll drown it in the reservoir, at last, once and for all,
and I'll finally put the subject from my mind.

If this doubt is like a pendulum, it's hypnotizing too,
and I'm exhausted oscillating 'tween extremes --
one moment all is settled, then the next it's foolish lies,
and the conflict leaves me tearing at the seams.

If my mind is just my body and my body is my mind,
then the ache of hesitation's in my bones.
I'll cradle concrete rubble 'till at last the lake is near,
then be ill-equipped to let my burden go.

If my thoughts are just transcriptionists, I'm giving them the slip,
or else a dozen voices slide through every scene.
They cluster and they surface just like oil on the lake,
and my aim is laser-focused on that sheen.

If this doubt is just a pendulum, and the pendulum's a stone,
I swing it with such force that it snaps free.
It flies above the reservoir, then smashes it like glass,
and the explosion cracks that shy epiphany.

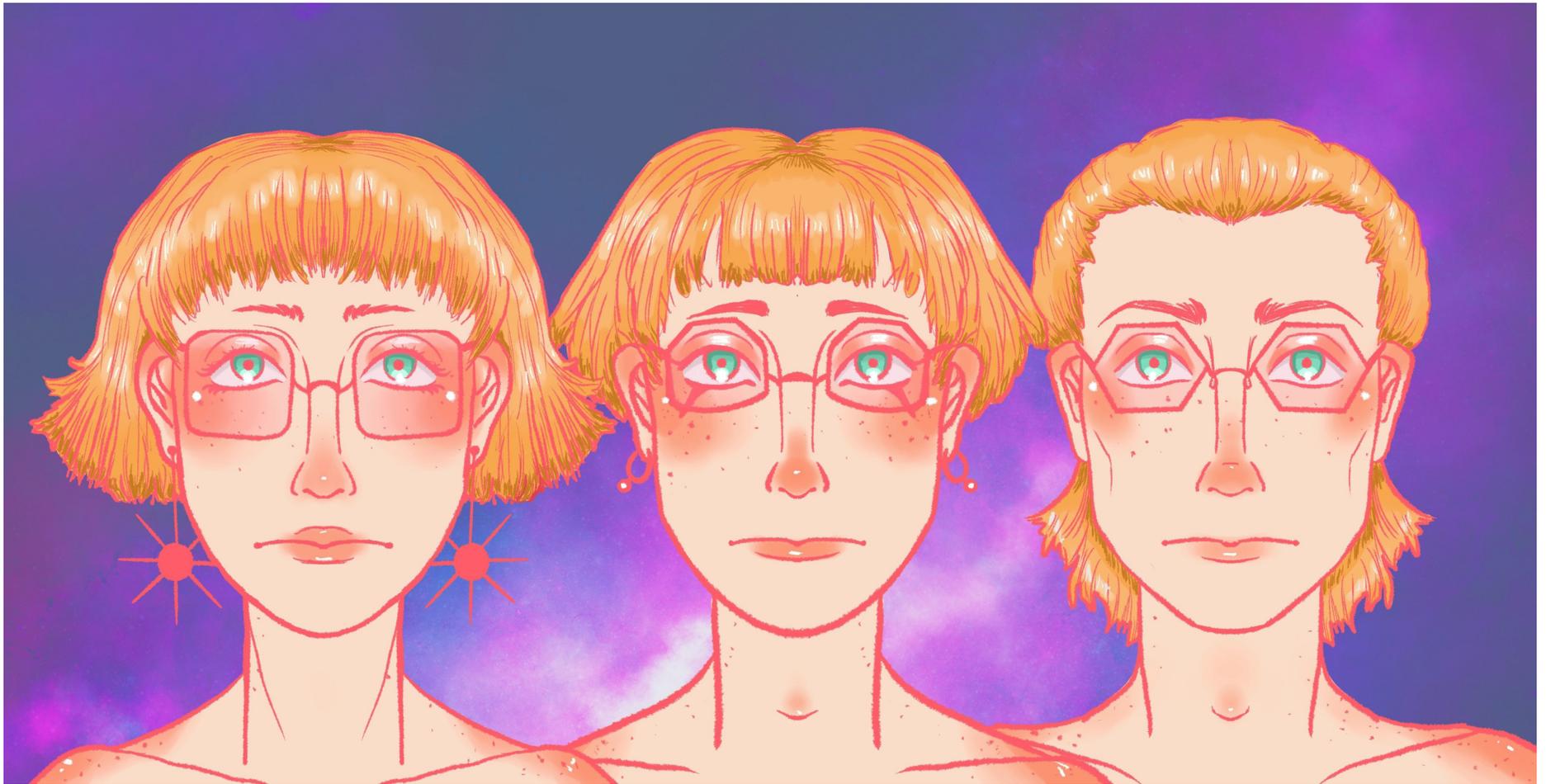
The world around me freezes in a bright shock of euphoria.
The spray hangs in the sky like it's a flare.
When it sizzles into vapor, my heart kicks and restarts,
and my astonished burst of laughter splits the air.

Stephanie Caulk *queer cis woman*

Then Again



In Pieces



Anonymous genderfluid, demisexual

Q&A

Now that we're publishing issues regularly, we figured we would spice things up a little bit and have the editing staff answer a couple questions. Read on if you'd like to learn a little more about us!

Question 1: If you could be any kitchen utensil, what would you be?

Stephanie Caulk: I'd be a coffee pot – people would always be glad to see me!

Courtney Van Kirk: Wooden spoon. Most useful thing I own, surprisingly.

Syd Thomas: I would be a tea kettle. I just really like tea.

Sam Major: I would be a spatula, because they can flip (almost) anything, and I love flipping people's expectations on their head.

Malcolm Johnston: I'd probably be a spork - you can use them like a spoon or a fork, but they're not especially good at being either of those, and I can relate to that.

Question 2: If you could have any super power, what would it be?

Stephanie Caulk: I'd want the power to speak and understand every human language ever spoken. Not animal languages though. I'd rather not know when the magpies are teasing me.

Courtney Van Kirk: As cool as localized time manipulation would be, I have at least one pact promising never to time travel, so that's out. I think I'm going to have to say flight – something about it has appealed to me since I was a kid, and I still sometimes dream of flying.

Syd Thomas: Shapeshifting. My childhood dream was always to turn into a dragon and just fly around.

Sam Major: I would choose flying as my superpower. The views would be amazing, and I would save so much on gas!

Malcolm Johnston: If I could freeze time, I'd be functionally immortal and I could get more sleep.

The Creators

Anonymous

I can find it frustrating trying to express myself in a way that is completely myself. My hair is too long, too short, my jaw doesn't look right today. As a genderfluid person, I always joke that it's as confusing for me as it is for other people, but it's completely true! "In Pieces" is all about the hidden beauty behind this struggle. With the completion of this piece, I finally have a visual representation of my own personal gender spectrum.

This issue also features art from Leah Bandy (she/her/hers) and Aidan O'Leary.

Find Us Online

You can find Stephanie Caulk's audio recordings of her songs "The Cartographer," "Sounds good now," and "Nothing" at our website, orgs.mines.edu/ostem/archive, which you can also access using the QR code below.



The Staff

Stephanie Caulk *(She/Her/Hers)*

Stephanie is a senior in civil engineering at the Colorado School of Mines and will graduate in December. She enjoys tap dancing and playing the ukulele, and identifies as a queer cis woman. She's served as oSTEM's media chair/webmaster over the last year.



Malcolm Johnston *(They/He)*

Malcolm is an amateur writer, poet, pianist, swimmer, and whatever they're interested in at the moment. A senior in chemistry, they're also part of the McBride Honors Program, and they are currently serving as the Vice President of Community Outreach 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 scripts for novels they're never actually going to write.



Syd Thomas *(He/Him/His)*

Syd is a junior in Engineering Physics. He identifies as transmasculine and bisexual/biromantic. He enjoys art, tabletop rpg's, and 3d printing. He loves space and his favorite video game is Outer Wilds.



The Staff

Sam Major *(They/Them/Theirs)*

Sam is a junior in the Engineering Physics department at Mines and is looking to go into fusion energy generation. They enjoy working in the GRLA machine shop, playing tabletop RPGs, listening to podcasts, singing opera, and scuba diving. They identify as nonbinary and pansexual/panromantic and have been a part of the queer community at Mines for the past few years. Their favorite podcasts are Welcome to Night Vale, The Adventure Zone, and Moonbase Theta, Out.

Courtney Van Kirk *(She/Her/Hers)*

Courtney is a sophomore in the Environmental Chemistry program at CSM. She identifies as being on both the aromantic and asexual spectrums, and spends her free time drawing, playing (mostly homebrew) table top RPGs, and listening to podcasts. She's currently knee-deep in Critical Role campaign 2, and other favorites include the Magnus Archives, I Am In Eskew, and other narrative horror podcasts.