

Issue 3

Spring 2022

The Spectrum Spark

CSM's Queer-Focused
Literary and Art Journal



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open letter

One of the Children *cis lesbian*

An Open Letter to Greg Abbott and Ron DeSantis

TW: references to suicide

I'm sorry you're so insecure with yourself you need to destroy others' happiness. I'm sorry you're so ashamed of who you are you have to attack those who live freely. I'm sorry you've been so deprived of love that you cannot bear to see love in its truest form.

We have something you don't. We have clarity about who we are, who we love. Because you don't, you wreak havoc and pain. You say you're doing this to "protect the children." Well, I am one of the children. You're creating a world in which I fear to be myself. You're causing pain on a level I cannot describe to you.

You see, you've never been told you cannot talk about an essential part of who you are.

You see, you've never been told you're immoral for simply existing.

You see, you've never been told that your LOVE - the very thing that makes us human - makes you other.

You have no experience that allows you to relate. You cannot empathize.

So, all we can do is scream from the rooftops. You're "protecting the children," but, just as you cannot relate to our experience, you cannot protect us. We already live in a world filled with hate. We've learned to protect ourselves. We find safety in each other's stories. We find solace in each other's arms. We grieve with each other's tears. We do not need your "protection." Just as you cannot empathize with us, you cannot protect us. You only harm.

You have taken our safety away. You are harming us. You are wounding us. You are killing us. As the suicide rates increase - because they will - know our blood is on your hands.

Nobody *aro, gray ace, nonbinary*

Personal Gender

TW: gore, depersonalization, dysphoria

pronouns aren't the same thing as gender,
but most people think they are,
so it's easy to pin a label on my shirt
and rip it off and stick another on one
as many times as I need to,
which is all the time these days -
he/him to most people, he/they
to anyone who does an internet search,
they/them to myself and a few friends.

it's still me (well, mostly me,
because honestly when I'm using he/him
it feels like I'm cosplaying
as my doppelganger, some white boy
who loves capitalism, is humble and kind,
patient with everything and everyone,
some A+ overachieving gifted adult,
who lets you say horrible things
because otherwise it might be awkward
and he might say something in response
that he'll regret later, not because
it was wrong to say something in response, but because

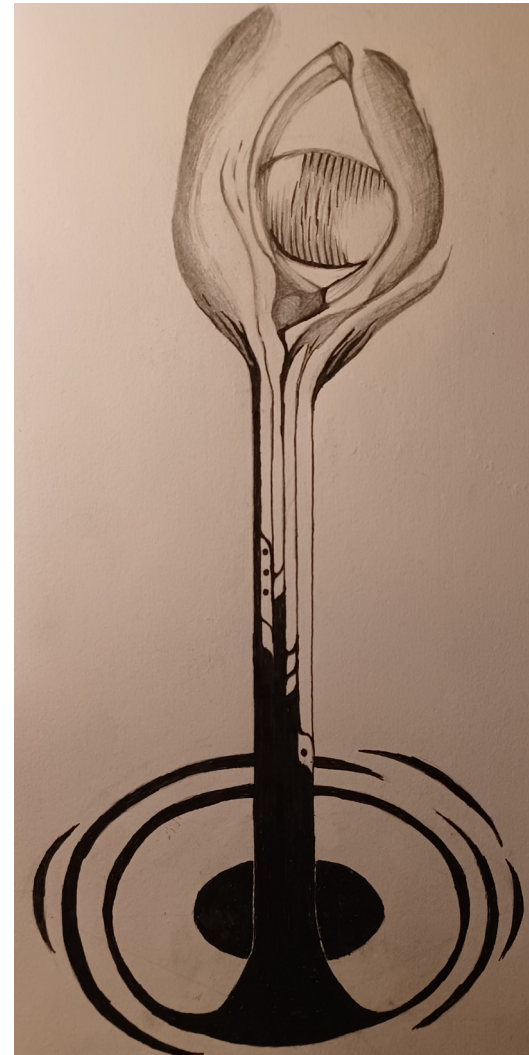
it'd be wrong for *him*, perfect
blameless pure innocent white boy, to say it)
and being me is good enough for me,
even if I'm nudging what's left
of my masculinity off a cliff,
even if other than nonbinary
I don't really know what to think of myself,
because I can't see myself as anything
at all, no face name voice body,
like I'm floating around
until someone says my name
and all my organs fly back together
and my skin covers my bones like a zipper
and I open my mouth long enough to say something back
before I dissolve again,
and frankly I'm not a big fan
of my acne or the bags under my eyes
or how I can't smile
or how my hair kind of clumps together
or how I can't get a good picture of myself
or even know what that would look like
(people say they like my smile,
maybe I should just be a smile),

and if I could ditch this body
 or any body, I might do that,
 and honestly I'm surprised any time
 anyone uses they/them to describe me
 because I'm used to hearing he/him,
 but also I'm not sure any of these pronouns
 work for me anymore, they all sound vaguely wrong,
 like I should just give up on pronouns,
 but I don't know what that would look like
 and I'm not sure if I want to try right now.

long story short, I'm happy
 with a personal gender, I just
 wish I knew what that gender is,
 if it's anything at all.

Lucy Utke *she/her*

Stranger in the Mirror



R.M. *nonbinary (agender)*

Dear God

TW: religious themes

Dear God, I've never known outside of books and bloody holy wars,
I think I might've found the answer to a question I've been looking for.
For ages now I've been lost and now I'm found alive and well
I'm sorry it wasn't you that I was searching for.

It's been a while since I'd known the body I existed in was mine and mine alone,
I've been drifting through the bitter truth of loneliness and broken homes
And now I live a lie inside myself, I'm me without the endless pain
Of existing in a house I never really lived in outside of my own brain.

Dear God, I've found the answer to a question I didn't know I had
Until I knew you wouldn't guide me back to places I've only been in dreams.
Forget the stupid hope and fear of passing years as a duo locked in domestic Hell
I wasn't in the right state of mind so just ignore me like you do so well.

And I've grown into this mold I've made to fit two hearts, two minds, two souls,
And now I'm more of a person than I ever was before you left me broken,
Sitting alone at lunch tables without a conversation to keep
My mind off the pain that haunted me.

Dear God, I've found a friend I never thought I'd get to know.
They're perfect, pure, and all I'd ever wanted in a life I've had to live alone.
For all the shit I've done and been through and now am better for,
I'm glad I've found the love that I was waiting for
Without the help of you.
I love the way I love myself instead of you.

watercolor, pen

Syd Thomas *transmasculine, bisexual*

Clouds



poetry

Christopher Comeaux *they/them*

Quiet Fires

I stand before a cache of fireworks with a lit match searing my fingers

“I dress in quiet fire.”

If the colors are bold

The pants are straight

And the sleeves short.

Highlighter presentation,

Bright but commonplace.

It is only when the colors mute am I made mutable too.

Unconventional adornment

That burns the eyes of others

But burns with quieter fires.

Campbell Beals *AMAB nonbinary*

He
*They

I overhear them
And they are wrong, but
I dare not correct them.

Because in our culture
Of pot-smokers and vagabonds
Intelligence, even emotional
Is not seen as a virtue.

If I were to tell them
Would they look at me different?
Probably not
Probably I would get the same polite
“Damn! I’ll get it next time”
I’m always met with.

And why should I?
In our small world of dirtbag machismo
I benefit!
From the way they see me.

The empty spaces bellow our names
Where ____/ ____ could so easily fit
Does, however
Feel like a weight that grows
With every “thank ya sir!” and “preciate ya
Man!” from the most well-meaning and
Understanding customer base on the planet.

But why should I?
Sharpie it in or print a label when
The awkward apologies and professions
That they are trying, make me just as uncomfortable
As hearing my name used to reference a person
And a body, that is not quite me.

Even outside of this enclave
That is my passion project menial job
It’s almost always the same, almost
Always, but
When I turn my head away from them
To check the messages I just received
I see I was mentioned.

“_____ told me the other day that
He...”

...

“*They”

She corrects herself quickly just like
Fixing a grammar mistake, no explanation
That she is still getting used to this new
Particle of speech that allows me a breath
Of fresh air through the speaker’s lungs,
Just swiftly making the wrong
Right.

So why should I?

Not.

Lexi Collins *bisexual, she/her/hers*

Certain Things

Certain things I will never see the same again
Like that silver ring
The moon and the sun
The night skyline in my hometown

Certain things I will never be able to say again
“I love you more than the moon loves the stars”
“I adore you”
To say what should have been said

Certain things I will never forget
Like the way she laughed
How her eyes glittered when she smiled
How soft her hands were in mine

Certain things I need to let go
Like the void that she left
The tears which have been shed over and over again
And the painful ache in my chest

Certain things remind me of myself
Embroidered suns stitched in the back of jackets
Bottles of nail polish emptied to the bottom
A test tube

Because that is what I was
At least to her

A place to experiment

Q&A

Question 1: What's your favorite element on the periodic table?

Courtney Van Kirk: Nitrogen, if only for the explosion potential!

Sam Major: Tungsten. Almost as dense as me.

Syd Thomas: Thorium.

Lauren O'Sullivan: Bismuth! The crystalline structure is so cool!

Malcom Johnston: Probably argon, because inert atmospheres make for much easier experiments and oxygen and water are very inconvenient.

Lanie Breckenridge: Fluorine. It's just the most attractive.

Question 2: What is your favorite physics equation?

Courtney Van Kirk: $dG = dH - TdS$. Simple but neat, and shows up in some interesting places. (I'm also chemistry, not physics).

Sam Major: The Dirac equation, the equation that predicted antimatter.

Syd Thomas: Wien's Displacement Law

Lauren O'Sullivan: Newton's Second Law, $F = ma$

Malcom Johnston: Bragg's diffraction equation.

Lanie Breckenridge: Arrhenius equation.

Question 3: What crime would you commit if you were a worm off the string?

Courtney Van Kirk: Minor petty theft of nearby shiny rocks.

Sam Major: Sneaking into the Pentagon. What would I do there? No one knows.

Syd Thomas: Steal the Declaration of Independence.

Lauren O'Sullivan: Jay-walking. Just for funsies.

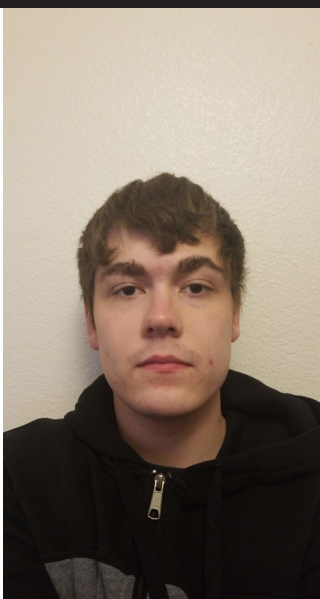
Malcom Johnston: Arson, to destroy the homes and business of the people who put me on the string in the first place. The sweetest revenge isn't living well, it's actually acts of incredible violence.

Lanie Breckenridge: I would stalk the night, as might the moonlit panther, hunting my prey. I would flicker in the shadows, a blur of motion, a little tuft of purple fuzz tucked into your bed at night. My flickering, haunting presence a mockery of your weak conceptions of the meaning of will. And when you see me standing over you, mania in my plastic eyes, you will know the meaning of mortality, and weep. Also white collar crime, 'cuz who doesn't like a little embezzlement?

The Staff

Malcolm Johnston *(They/He)*

Malcolm is an amateur chemist, writer, poet, pianist, and whatever-they're-interested-in-at-the-moment-er. 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 Editor-In-Chief. Deminonbinary, gray ace, aro, and gay, they've slowly been coming to terms with their sexuality and gender identity over the last several years, and now they're trying to be a more active advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. They spend their free time writing scripts for novels they're never actually going to write.



Syd Thomas *(He/Him)*

Syd is a junior in Engineering Physics and is the current oSTEM Social Chair. 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.

Lanie Breckenridge *(She/They)*

Lanie Breckenridge is a senior 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 outreach officer for the Spectrum Spark.

The Staff

Lauren O'Sullivan

Lauren is a sophomore in Environmental Engineering. They identify as bisexual and hold the Layout Designer position. Lauren enjoys camping, road trips, spontaneous hair colors, and cooking (especially vegetarian meals for her roommate). Outside of the Spectrum Spark, they also participate in the Melodic Miners and Miner Dissonance, 2 acapella groups, as well as the Mines Green Team and the Vanguard Scholars.



Sam Major *(They/Them)*

Sam Major is a senior in the Engineering Physics program here at Mines, graduating in December 2022. They identify as non-binary, agender and pansexual and serve as the writing editor for the Spectrum Spark. In their free time, Sam enjoys listening to podcasts, scuba diving, singing opera, and nerding out about physics with anyone that will listen.

Courtney Van Kirk *(She/Her)*

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

The Creators

Lucy Utke

She prefers drawing pictures of foxes, but figures that abstract representations of self perception are fine too every now and then.

This issue also features works from Christopher Comeaux, Campbell Beals, Lexi Collins, and other anonymous creators.

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