

Three Peaks Review

Black Hills State University's
student-run literary magazine



2021 | Issue 3

Three Peaks Review



Black Hills State University's
undergraduate literary magazine
featuring a collection of students'
poetry, fiction, and visual art



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STATE UNIVERSITY

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Another year around the sun and the third edition of *Three Peaks Review* is here. This is our second magazine published during the COVID-19 pandemic, and although we felt more prepared this time around, like most student organizations, this year was full of challenges. In a span of months, our meeting sizes were cut in half, and due to quarantine restrictions, attendance was unpredictable. Even with extensive outreach, our submission numbers had decreased significantly. While it was once nearly impossible to find a seat at one of our literary open-mic nights, because of social distancing guidelines, there are now only a few people in attendance. Yet, with the endless support of our members, the school, and the literary-arts community here in Spearfish, we persevered. So, my first big thank you goes out to those who attended even our smallest events, shared our social media posts, and kept us running as a club even when the rest of the world seemed to have stopped. It is because of you that we were able to successfully produce another issue of *Three Peaks Review*. Thank you.

My next big thank you goes out to the 3PR members themselves who remained light-hearted and kept their sense of humor even on our most stressful days. I couldn't have chosen a better group of people to work with during an international pandemic. Another thank you goes out to our advisor, Matt Bauman, who, as always, remained flexible under all circumstances, and continuously encouraged us to keep moving forward, especially when it felt the hardest to do so. I also want to thank Audra, Carley, Hiro, Emma, Josh H., and Josh E. for reaching out individually and offering their help in a time when it was most certainly needed. For that, I am truly grateful.

A major thank you goes out to BHSU for supporting us as an organization. In particular, I want to thank Student Senate for reaching out to us and helping us gain recognition over the course of this year. A special thank you goes out to the Activity Grants Committee who not only helped us advertise for our events and contests but also provided us with the funds to publish *3PR*. Along with the AGC, I specifically want to thank the BHSU Print Center for helping this third annual issue come to life.

My final thank you goes out to the BHSU students themselves who had every reason to stop creating in these past few months but chose to do so anyway. Your poetry may sound a little quieter when spoken through a mask, but it remains just as powerful—especially at a time like this.

With that being said, I hope you enjoy your read.

Sincerely,

Jo

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Cover Photo: Transparency | *Kathryn Jones*

TO THE SPIDER IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM

Morgan Chamberlain | Poetry

Our old house watched the river,
nestled between Farmer Brown's
pecan trees and cypress marshes where
dragonflies danced. The oak hollow
hosted squirrel families that cussed
at our cats, the ones always prowling for
trouble around the rotting picket fence.
Every summer, the thornbush sprouted
millions of Devilhorses, black foaming mouths,
buzzsaw legs and dead eyes.

Do you remember?

There, above the washing machine,
at your little window overlooking the backyard?
I was all bouncing curls and sticky fingers,
asking why the sky was blue, playing with imaginary friends.
Pawpaw had a basket of clothes to wash,
I followed like a duckling.
Look at this! He picked me up so I could see. That's when
I met you. You were a tangled black ball with
so many legs I thought that maybe you were
a sea urchin that took a wrong turn somewhere.
Pawpaw said you protected us from mosquitoes,
so you stayed. Mama, show me your babies,
I would beg when Pawpaw helped me up to your
castle in the sky. I told you hello every time I
pranced out the back door to find roly-polies.

Do you remember?

You were there when we buried the cats,
when I started kindergarten, when Father
Reardon came by train with gifts and
fairy tales. You watched the cypress fall
down and the boxes leave one by one when
we ran out of money and said goodbye.
In that old, tangled web of yours,
how many dragonflies did you catch?
How many giggles and scraped knees
and Goodnight, I love yous and Sorrys
are trapped, forgotten flies on that sill?
How many more little girls did you love?



NOSTALGIA

Anne Skaug | Digital Photography



RIPPLE REFLECTION

Kala Wallace | Digital Photography

AMBER

Sydney Berger | Poetry

We had been swimming within the body of a shiny silver
metal culvert, the water filling the tube half full,
ribbed and speckled and bright. The water rushing back
then sloshing forward, back
We swam where our feet brushed stones and grit
then drifted to the depths. The water got colder
as we got closer to the bottom.
The sand and silt on the creekbed floated up
into the whirls our bodies made
then settled back to the bottom, unseen.
We felt like we had a whole group together,
all our friends,
laughing and drinking in the beams of sun
coming through the mobile home skylights
while we twirled thickly through the green current.
I was lying on my back, floating across the top,
outside the culvert, right where the sun hits
when I remembered I had left the oven on at home
Four hundred degrees, and we were making corn tortilla chips.
I remember telling you
then we rushed into our towels and got home the back way.
The shortcut was bumpy and my skin was condensating
Smelling like reeds and the water
The air was sweaty and the frogs were loud
And the whole time you kept both of your hands
in the same positions
And your knees looked sharp in your jeans.
I remember arriving home and getting out to unlatch the wide gate
And you pulling through
in the pickup
driving up to the porch
shifting into park and stepping out the door
at the same time
forgetting to turn the engine off
You went inside to check the oven
And I stared after you into the hallway,
the lines in the white wood
looking like a funnel stretched out
And you at the narrow end
Opening doors and stepping in.

MOTHER BEAUTY

Tessa Vandersnick | Poetry

I must return to her. Dense thickets with blankets of morass greet curling toes as a pale body ventures on. She calls to me with a voice of howling wind and pleads of thunder. A heaving chest burns for a rest while numb legs ache with the need for relaxation. Shaking hands grip at wooden fingers that protrude from the dying green that surrounds me. Shades of emerald and earthy ichor are hypnotizing. I can feel her sorrows with every tear that falls from the darkened skies; the weeping crows silence a bluebirds' song. The fierce roars quake the earth beneath my feet which drowns my screams into the ocean above me. Light clouds carry me freely through feverish dreams of fame.

Exhaustion pulls heavy knees to the ground and the tunnel of my mind narrows. Worshipping eyes pierce the dirt which crumbles underneath open palms. She is the mother of all beauty and the mother of all life. The beating soil that man cruelly walks upon is the body of temptation. Within her are veins of crude oils and glistening minerals; we harvest her organs so carelessly. Mighty oaks become embers in a furnace of greed while the beasts cry pitifully. Our mother is left hairless because we spawn from avarice. Humanity sacrifices her treasures to nurture measly apes to perfect covetousness.

My eyes blend into the skies which loom threateningly above. I am suffocating. Blackened smog creeps into lungs desperate for the release of freshened air. Stars flicker helplessly to send warnings to the people who listen with deaf eyes. The world is being swallowed by the filthy residues left by towering industries that pierce the sacred heavens. Why does no one heed our call? The blinking spirits soon wither behind the blankets of death yet now the roaming cities below finally gaze into the abyss. Where have the stars gone?

Gravity drags a once weightless body deep into the crevices of our mother. Her caves bury sins made of flesh and poisoned roots carve into flakey skin. Metal pipes pour a bubbling sludge that seeps into my every pore; the contaminated seeds scatter across my exterior and bud fruits which bare grief and disease. My fields are plowed and sprayed endlessly with harmful shrouds of venom. Humans feast on the harvest of unnatural produce with praise to the celestials who watch from overhead. Gnashing teeth consumes the generous pastures until only a barren land is left withering. Our mother is left with unfertile lands to cultivate mankind.

Streams of crimson tears trail down riverbeds that erode into puffy cheeks. Every droplet of perspiration fills the craters of my sunken eyes to create vast and unexplored fantasies for the restless minds of my children. Jagged white spears protrude from gummy caverns that swallow sunken ships. They nurture the fires of a pulsing stomach which throbs with the blunder of man. Fragments of great discoveries tumble through the turtles' wave causes asphyxiation to the gills that flourish in my veins.

We all return to our mother upon the last breaths being drawn from

quivering lips. Our bodies become the very soil that feeds our offspring to come. The adventurous souls which once pilot our flesh become what drives curious lives and will guide the prosperous generations to come. Come with me and save our mother. Give yourself to her and together we will experience the pleasure of our beings living on for eternity. You cannot escape her; the angels of death will always deliver.

AUTUMN

Isabel Litzen | Poetry

I.

After the rain came you dragged me
through the muddy puddle
that once reflected our faces
and together we were gallivanting
through hours and prowling through days.

My dreams poured out of my mouth
and I couldn't stop dancing,
taken by the hallucinogen of your grasp,
inebriated by the unforeseen
engrossment of a stranger.

You danced with me
like I was the only one who could sway
back and forth to your rhythm.

Your lips are soft pink roses
and when we kiss mine bleed
from their thorns.

II.

Reality returns in her most ghastly configuration.

But I remember those days,
when the radio plays only
the sweet symphony of static.
And I stare placidly through the
bug-speckled car windshield,
trying to decipher where I'm going
because memory fades like
a wooden fence in summertime.
And it is difficult to thrive in darkness.

But if the sun decides to sleep forever
does that mean so should I?

I wonder if the dawn will break in color or in black and white.

III.

Regret.

It itches like a feral cat.
When I scratch tears of vibrant
red stream down my puffy cheeks.

It's a road infected with twists
and infested with divisions
and it's unclear and unmarked.

My booted steps are the only sound
save the gentle drizzle of the weeping sky.

I only notice the ravenous monsters
inhabiting my insides,
eating what is left of me bit by bit.
And I'm failing like a single sump pump
during months of consistent rain.

But soon I succumb to the numbness
that persists within me.

IV.

When the lightning storm quits
and the deadly dragon transforms
into an angel, I sit and draw
chalky rainbows on the driveway.

A backdrop of rolling hills blanketed
with the moist, vibrant green grass
of morning. An evenly divided sidewalk
sandwiched between decorated boulevards.

My chin points at the sky
like a birder who sits in a place
where golden eagles soar free.

I wouldn't trade August, even if it meant
I wouldn't be dealt my lifetime of Septembers.

POOL DAY

Kaylee Kalmbach | Poetry

I was five years old and
in the backseat of my friend's parent's car when
we were coming home from the pool and
I saw they were holding hands.

I thought it was odd, even uncomfortable,
like when someone smokes a cigarette
next to a newborn baby.
I had never watched you two hold hands.

I held hands with my brother walking home from school,
or with my cousin while we played hopscotch.
I didn't realize, until then, it was something
married people were supposed to do.

I walked inside, locked eyes with both of you, and asked
Why don't you ever hold hands?
The room smelled like chlorine from my hair and
feel silent as stone.

Both of you were looking for anything else to say
you would rather give me the birds and bees talk
or try to explain politics to me
than talk about your marriage.

My mom said
Let's get you showered, honey.
But she really wanted to say
We'll never talk about this again.

Because you would be forced to talk about how
rubbing nickels and dimes together
was only starting fires and it really doesn't matter
who made coffee the morning before.

I should have pressed you two together
with so much strength
you had no choice but to
melt into an answer.



CRACKED

Kathryn Jones | Digital Photography



CYBER QUEER LOVE

Sage Dausch | Golden-cut Linoleum

SHADOW

Adam Brehm | Poetry

A ghost of a chance, a weak smile against chilly yellow day. Stand around for a year or two, contemplating the embryo of your own eyes, lips curdled jam. Coffee is not comfortable, quick and easy, it seems that's all we knew, the odd way home. Gamble the little things, night away, that grin from a panther, prowling not bark or twisted devil crow. Tuesday is a dice roll cherry coke delight just slightly off a cocaine hit times two. This stance is my orchid blossom shield, my dainty seaweed sonography, I hear messages in sounds and wonder. Clear as day and shiftless night horn of fawn, elk and faerie folk, tune a sweetly lute. But never cared to caress darked skin of undead worth, vampire lady doomed to earth. I'd kill for just one more show, to stand out over Georgia skylines painting my skewed eye. I'm asking you out to dinner, to the races, bet on the dogs, bet on winter's leaving. Breakfast at 2 pm cracking a bottle of wine, foreplay our saddened retreat, Ah and greet the guests, me. So these odysseys are not true, what's new? A land locked boot or seabound crew? Who cares enough to really know. As sickly pale as my skins presented I'd hardly know I'm black, beige or even of a shade at all. Within a tabloid live, thrive, a story still and not reality, to cut the roots at the heart. Crimson black-blue I'm coming over the hill, the shire mourning to collect my month's due. Shiver the night's long trench coat, a fiend, clasping memoir the black skinned locket, not to sleep or move again.



**LONGTERM MENTALITY
SHORT-TERM LUXURY**

Kady Jo Dufloth | Collage

THE CLOSEST THING TO A LOVE POEM I WILL EVER WRITE

Kylee Meyers | Poetry

I have found a home

Between the streetlights
Hiding inside one-way roads

I found home in a nameless Midwest city, where there is no judgment
You come as you are and leave it at the door

The stale odor of secondhand stores and the scratch of a vinyl record
Cigarette smoke and cheap drugstore scents

I found a home where the wallflowers grow, where it was never a phase
And by the way, Punks not dead. We just can't get out of bed

With florescent lights that turn neon once the sun goes down
The click of a camera as a mosh pit forms

I found a home, of misfit toys that welcomed me as their own
With loud guitar and even louder laughs

In a nameless, Midwest city that we can't wait to leave
But can't bear to lose

A long intro carries me into a brief heaven
And the world is lifted off my shoulders.

HOW TO PRETEND YOU'RE HEALING

Jo Mitchell | Poetry

Begin with telling everyone
that you're spending time outdoors
when the only air you know is your recycled breath
in a bedroom where you are severed from the sky
through window-glass like a house bird. Tell them
that you've gotten back into gardening
after buying all the half-dead plants on the clearance rack
at Walmart because they reminded you of yourself
and now their leaves have coiled back into themselves
like worms on hot concrete in the summertime.
Next, assure your roommates
that you are getting back out there soon despite the fact
that every Friday night you find yourself tangled
in bedsheets like a butterfly in children's netting,
destined for deep sleep inside a mason jar.
Make sure to let your doctor know
that you've started exercising again and don't tell him
it's in the form of running until your spine nearly gives out
like a water snake trailing through wheatgrass.
Make sure to also tell him that you are healthy now
and eating again, not avoiding the grocery store
for weeks on end because your stomach sinks every time
you pass by the tired lobsters in the live tanks
who are fighting harder to stay alive than you ever have.
Don't forget to tell your professors and parents
that you've been writing again
when in reality, every creative idea you have dies
before it meets its life on paper like a stillborn colt.
And when your therapist asks how you've been sleeping,
tell her anything but how often you dream
of animals mounted in museums with eyes pried open
like your own in the hours before dawn,
each pupil burning beneath reruns of old sit-coms.

Lastly, tell yourself you're soul searching
by binge reading novel after novel
when they're never anything but distractions

from the pressure you put on yourself,
from the fawn you once saw walking with a broken back leg,
who couldn't keep up with her herd
or herself or everyday life,
so she curled down on the ground to rest.



THREE SEERS

Hope Christofferson | Watercolor

WINDY DAYS

Brittany Birgen | Poetry

Sweet, hot, golden
Buffalo grass
Lay down with your brothers
Against the undulating
Ocean of inspiration.

Padfoot frolicking in
Chaotic Conundrum.
Which way shall I lay?
The currents confuse

Endless supply
Of unyielding inspiration,
Yet worthless to me
Under force

Blackouts come too easy
Call the dog before he gets too lazy.
Best find a hide-away
How do you deal with a windy day?

WALKING AT NIGHT

Andrew Toft | Poetry

Air waves of loneliness.
Gusts of wind-bite.

I walk a snow drenched alley where
Flurries are driven by an unseen guide far to the North.
My footsteps are one half of Noah's pigeons,
And my trail is left behind,
Hidden by a gathering storm.

Brick and marble homes line maple strewn patios,
I see glowing lights behind glass-sliding doors.

Summer winds of happiness are far and distant.
I have lost my heart,
I have lost my way.
Once I had words, rhythm, meaning
Now I am like a broken typewriter,
Tapping my work into an infinite void.

Left step, right step, breathe, shiver.
A youthful tempest of radioactive snowflakes
Swirls into drifts around me,
Piles of wayward adventures laid to rest,
Drafted by a force they will never see.

Airborne strangling.
Bitter gales of iced breeze.



LOST COAST
Hope Christofferson | Watercolor



UNTITLED

Keegan Baatz | Digital Photography

LAST NIGHT

Juli Teasley | Poetry

Time is gone,
missing in space,
where dreams are laid to rest.
Stars scatter your ashes
onto soft peaks,
of warm covers. Welcoming
sweet oblivion to the mind.
Ah.
Together again.
Our young souls
in the grass of our favorite childhood home,
braiding together daisies and dandelions
and singing songs of the sun.
A crown for you, a crown for me.
Simpler years.
A temporary lapse of the loss;
the abyss that has taken over my daylight.
Protection, the stars whisper,
Until mourning.

FOR A FORMER FRIEND

Zachary Zwaschka | Poetry

By the time we could walk, we were the desperados of daycare,
dashing across the fenced lawn
with our hands pressed into tiny pistols.
Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, partners in crime
stealing extra fruit snacks while the babysitter was in the bathroom.

At nine, we turned Power Rangers to Nerf gun targets,
had sleepovers with pillow fights and popcorn.
At nineteen, we moved into our filthy apartment,
a place of gunk encrusted dishes and filled trashcans
spilling like cornucopias.

We listened to Led Zeppelin as our communication broke down,
and I watched our friendship become moldy
as the curtains of our shower.
We passed around blame like a church collection basket
for the hot Cheetos in the carpet and the beard clippings clogging the sink.

We each waited patiently for the other to pitch in,
to wring the loose hairs from the drain
and bring the slimy heap to the dumpster.
You moved back to Nebraska so fast
you forgot your pair of worn Reeboks.

My mom threw them away and I picked up the last of your things,
a wooden chest, a blue blanket,
the crust covered Yamaha keyboard I played “Stairway to Heaven” on.
I only knew the right-hand part,
and with that same hand,

I closed the door of the outside closet where I stashed them,
forgotten.
The plant we bought together died,
but the burn holes from your incense
still sits in the wood of the kitchen table.

The other day I cleaned a stain
of something syrupy and viscous on the second row of the fridge
and I thought of you, unkindly, I must admit.
I cursed your name and swore to a God I don't believe in
that this puddle of amber muck was your handiwork,
a symbol of your lasting spite.

And I remembered, you moved out
almost a year ago. The stain was mine to claim,
and I scrubbed it
like dried blood from a murder scene,
or a pile of ash from our burned bridge, never rebuilt.

AUBADE

Sarah Schaeffer | Poetry

After the time clock,
I walk to the elevator
and wave my badge, bleary-eyed.
Every shift I wait until I remember
to push the button instead,
then stumble out,
opening the last three fire doors with my hip
or forearm.

Finally outside,
always look left down the hill:
bright swaths of orange and pink
stretch across the plains horizon,
freshly painted by some hand and
burning away the night
with the preemies
who know no other home,
with the drunks and their seizures,
with the ED,
where only God knows
what is coming, no matter
what the ambulance phones in,
with the babies brought in
without breath,
with the fifth floor
where hearts are fragile, and the SICU
where everyone is a timebomb
waiting to be defused.
Or not.

On the midnight shift
everything
everywhere is an
emergency,
especially when the nurse forgets
and the drips run dry.

No matter
who was born or died and
who lives in that uncertain middle ground
the purgatory of the hospital,

there is this:
a visual reassurance
different every day
but steadfast all the same.
Its warmth piercing my heart.
A new day.
A clean start.
A simple truth sometimes
coaxing a tear.

Time to drive home
and sleep off the night
shift.

Head to the hills,
the same sunrise
falling behind in the rearview.
Sometimes,
if I am lucky,
it peers up over the peaks
as I tuck into bed, tugging my heart
a second time.



BROWNS POINT

Ben Parks | Digital Photography

ANCHOR

Em C. Zimmer | Poetry

Seas, gull-grey and
ice-tipped, saw
the horizon. Oyster-
skies and pearled sun
watch distantly. Winds
caw and crash
against hollow lighthouses.
Seas, hallowed and
gravity-damned,
pull us down. Planks
groan and sails scream.

I sing sailor songs,
for home is close
and closer still. The
silky void will
welcome me soon
like warm sands
catch cold seagull feet.



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For questions and submissions, contact us at threepeaksreview@gmail.com