

# *The Hampton* **RENAISSANCE**

## *INFATUATION*



### **FEATURING**

*Amarah Ennis*  
*Dante Belcher*  
*Cheyenne Patterson*  
*Arianna Springer*  
*Ran Walkr*  
*Alex Dameus*  
*Zyen Smoot*



# *Table of* **CONTENTS**

<b>A note from the editor</b> .....	5
<b>Zyen Smoot</b>	
Gold Hoops .....	6
<b>Cheyenne Patterson</b>	
I'm Alone, not Lonely: The Power Within Romanticizing my Life and Loving Love Itself .....	8
<b>Zyen Smoot</b>	
Rodriguez Pt. 2 .....	15
<b>Dante Belcher</b>	
Poem #2 .....	17
<b>Ran Walker</b>	
Balloon .....	19
<b>Amarah Ennis</b>	
The Red Whale .....	20
<b>Arianna Springer</b>	
Dream Girl .....	22
<b>Alex Dameus</b>	
Just a Phase .....	25
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	27
<b>Who We Are</b> .....	28



# *A Note from the Editor*

**Dear Reader,**

Welcome to issue two! If this is your first time coming across our pages, thank you for taking time out of your day to check us out! If you're a returning reader, as always, thank you for your continued support in our magazine. Our goal at *Hampton Renaissance* is to provide a much needed space for the arts on Hampton's campus and all of our readers and contributors help us achieve that goal. So thank you. If you're interested in submitting your work, joining our editorial team, or just learning more about who we are and what we do on campus, join our mailing list at the bottom of this page or shoot us an email at [hurenaissance@gmail.com](mailto:hurenaissance@gmail.com). We'd be happy to answer any questions you may have!

This has been a long semester for everyone—that much I know to be true. This first full year back on campus has definitely come with its usual ups and downs, but it feels harder this year to push through to the finish line. It may be because for many of us it is the first time we're having to navigate college, in-person, in a while. For the first time in two years we have to balance in-person/hybrid academics and professional development on top of our social lives. Against the backdrop of a vastly polarized and deteriorating social climate, it makes sense that with this issue, in the midst of blooming spring, our minds were elsewhere. The theme for issue two is: Infatuation. In this issue's Call for Submissions, we asked, "what do you desire?" and that question made for some truly amazing pieces. From Professor Ran Walker's lovestruck Balloon to Cheyenne Paterson's reflection on love, singleness and being happy alone, appropriately entitled, "I'm Alone, not Lonely: The Power Within Romanticizing my Life and Loving Love Itself," every piece in this second issue provides a unique perspective on infatuation. I am so happy to be able to provide a platform for these amazing works. Take your time with these pieces. They will stick with you.

Have a wonderful, infatuated summer,

**Zoe J. Treadwell**

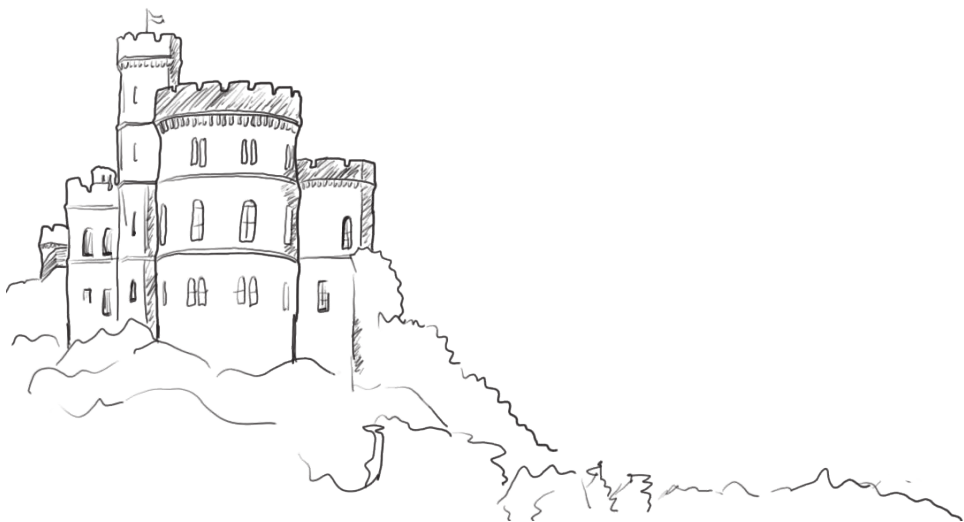


## **Gold Hoops**

*by Zyen Smoot*

She lost her earrings in your room last night  
They were left on a chipped confused dresser  
Knocked over, tumbled when you undressed her  
Sitting in dusted text messages right  
Of her bralette still warm from the first sight  
And aching in anonymous slurs  
That run from nostalgic aged lips once yours  
Now spore hushed kisses laced tongues taste slight

But alluring how magnetic they pull  
Soft breaths pressed against needed I love  
you's  
Drowning in inconsistent grey smoke pools  
Hiding against underdeveloped trues  
Fingertips running across lustful jewels  
Knock off gold hoops against cool floors, lost hues



## **I'm Alone, not Lonely: The Power Within Romanticizing my Life and Loving Love Itself**

by *Cheyenne Patterson*

Every 21 days, after continuously coaching myself that there is necessity and beauty within the gift of singleness, a gift I now can undoubtedly say I possess, the pang of reality that I was indeed in an enduring and unwavering space where love and romance were practically alien would penetrate my being and intrude on all my makeshift certainty.

That was, until about 6 weeks ago- recent, I know. But hear me out.

Since I was a little girl, I was consumed with the idea of love; I can recall watching completely age-inappropriate movies with my family and having my interest abnormally peaked by every scene that I was forced to watch through the spaces between my mother's fingers as they fought to preserve the innocence I so dearly now miss, an innocence that I, at the time, was so desperate to shed. I get it now.

The cinematic sounds of lips interlocking mingled with heavy, lusty breathing in conjunction with adlibs of sweet nothings first defined what I believed love to be: the erotic. The sensuality and intimacy of physical touch. I'd spend hours consumed by, "Flavor of Love," and, "I Love New York," only to leave dumfounded when the seasons concluded and the eligible bachelor or bachelorette would end up right back where they started: looking for love.



I think my budding rationale tried to warn me that pleasure had no relevance to adoration and emotional devotion, but in 2006, my brain just couldn't fathom the way that passionate public displays of affection only led to multiple seasons of dating competition shows rather than an exemplification of the nuclear family.

"They just kissed with the lights off and got naked, what do you mean they're not in love?" I'd ask any adult who could contain their laughter long enough to listen to a first grader philosophize love, romance, and where the longevity of the erotic lived between the two.

And after about 5 minutes of what I considered to be intense debating, they'd all sigh and say the same thing: "That's not love, baby."

Of course, after hearing this my brain would implode with a series of follow up questions, the most prominent being: "Then why the hell is it called for the LOVE of New York?"

I'm getting off track here. The point is, I was obsessed with the idea of Love as I understood it to be; comically overdone PDA, undressing in the obscurity of a dimly lit room, and of course, being the last woman standing in the race to win the heart of none other than Mr. Flavor Flav himself. Love was getting the last oversized clock that Mr. Flav had to offer, and I longed to feel chosen and deemed deserving after clearly proving my worth the way those girls had. I wanted what was on VH1, because to an impressionable kid with divorced parents, that's what love was.

Needless to say, a lot has happened between 2006 and 6 weeks ago. I mean, between the arrival of the menstrual cycle, to the introduction of heightened estrogen levels and the boys who took advantage of those hormones, I've practically lived at least 4 lives within the last 16 years.

Initially, I thought love lived in the erotic. I think this changed sometime within the last 6 years when I realized I experienced the same euphoric feeling I did in bed as I did each morning when my tongue acquainted itself with its routine first sip of Dunkin Donuts coffee for the day. I knew I loved coffee, but I knew the strong similarities of the feelings I had toward a caffeinated beverage and that of my first boyfriend was...strange to say the least. Love couldn't be defined by the erotic, not when the erotic was being stimulated every morning for the price of \$2.75. Coffee did (and does) make me extremely happy though.

Love didn't live in the erotic, so where was it? The 3.5 years I've completed in college has shown me that it didn't always live in men either. After countless attempts to embark on connections that surpassed the physical and conquered the emotional, I found myself overwhelmed with the failure that

I'd never experience love and romance the way I'd always dreamed. I'd never feel like Hoopz did when she won season 1 of Flavor of Love.

The first was sweet but talked way too much, to the extent he couldn't recall what's fact, fiction, and what's been retold for the 4th time this week. The next always coincidentally acted funny near my birthday and valentines day. I really like that one that followed, but he wouldn't commit to anyone but himself. The next was a perfect southern gentleman, but had a vocabulary that only spanned the height and width of an iPhone.

All these brief encounters left me single and increasingly frustrated. Why could none of them bring me the romance and chivalry that I'd always dreamed of? Was I not pretty, intelligent, and just the right amount of edgy with my facial piercings and colored hair?

When would I encounter the shit that my mother shielded me from? I spent years wondering this- that is, until 6 weeks ago when I decided that I would treat February as the most romantic month of my life. I committed myself to doing all the things I associated Love with; Day one, I got my hair done beautifully, put on my best makeup and treated myself to Crumbl Cookie. Day two. I cooked myself a divine salmon. Day three, I got my nails done, and so on and so forth.

As the days went on, I felt myself not only happier, but wiser; in my journaling I began to philosophize why, in my current solitude, had I never felt more romanced and adored than I did at that point in time; was I my dream man? Yes, but more importantly, I found that romanced lived in the indulgence of the aspects of life that make us feel special, whether that indulgence is prompted by yourself or an external partner is merely by chance and choice; you can wait for it, or you can take it by the balls and make it your bitch.

I chose option two. After 13 days of being the best lover I'd yet to experience, I was met with a man who, on paper, was everything I could've ever wanted. It's with great grief that I remind you that life is matriculated beyond the contents held by onyx colored ink on paper. Criteria means nothing in the absence of the spine-chilling, sweaty Palm passion that I've grown to appreciate.

But he looked the part, he talked the part, and unlike any other before him, he was romantic without having to be asked. He went out of his way to curate a depiction of his appreciation for who he'd perceived me to be in the most careful and chivalrous way possible.

I loved what he did, but I could not earnestly say I'd the same appreciation for who he was, and what we had the potential to be in relation with one

another.

In treating myself the way I'd always wanted to be treated (flower pick ups from Trader Joe's, door-dashing iced coffee so I could act surprised when I opened the door to leave the house, wearing skirts with tights every chance I got, drinking red wine with all evening meals, showering by candlelight, and riding around with The Five Satins blaring through the speakers of my Nissan Sentra) I had unknowingly retreated my pursuit of the love that I determined to only be achievable by way of relationships; I'd fallen in love with romance and the independence in which I'd found it.

I can recall sighing in bliss one night as I watched *Gilmore Girls* with a 4th glass of wine in hand; it wasn't men. It was Romance. That was what I wanted all along, and what better person to deliver it other than me? The only person outside of the divine ruler that would undoubtedly never flee.

For the first time since about 2013, I was content. I'd relinquished the desire for company, embraced the concept of romance, and determined that there was a Mount Everest sized disconnect between being alone and being lonely. I'm proud to declare I am in fact the former.

Unfortunately for he who should've been my knight in shining armor, I'd already fled the castle on the back of my own white horse. I don't know if or when I'll ever return to my state of waiting; as the power I've found and the peace it's brought are both way too precious to so quickly let slip through my fingers; unlike the slightly parted fingers that exposed me to the erotic in 2006, I've got a death grip on romance; we've only just begun.

In romanticizing my life, I've lost the desire for monogamy and commitment. I'm my primary lover, and all other parties are simply guest stars in the sitcom that is my 21st year on earth: visitors that though I enjoy while I'm in their presence, but do find myself relieved at their departure and the subsequent restoration of normalcy and routine that I really only obtain in -you guessed it- singleness.

When you realize you love love rather than desire to be in love, you can enjoy people as they are without the pressure to squeeze an intensity out of them that they more than likely, don't have the capability or capacity to deliver. You also realize that you can appreciate actions without appreciating the executor of said actions. I loved what he did, but as a non-transactional woman, the expectations these gestures projected upon me were unappealing and things in which I had no interest (i.e, not romantic).

More than anything, by the time he found me, I was tired. Tired of being deep with people who had only just scratched the surface level of their own

identities. Tired of the disappointment. Tired of talking; the verbalizing of my feelings and the routine of listening to the conveyance of those around me is simply not an activity I have any interest in as of now. Maybe I'll return when the self-awareness is fully developed. Maybe he'll return when I've built up enough stamina to speak and listen, and maybe then, I'll be ready to incorporate relation into romance.

But as for now, I'm ecstatic to be alone. There's an undeniable sense of safety and security here that I just know the contestants on Flavor of Love hadn't the privilege to experience. I may not ever get an oversized clock with my name on it as a token of one's affection, but the intangible gift of singleness and the ability to ward off the demons brought to the desperate is one I don't take for granted; dare I say it, I'm the victor.

I can recall a time I questioned whether chivalry is dead, never once stopping to consider that we could've made our acquaintance by way of me, also never considering the fact that it's self-sufficient women like me who scorn the hopeful hearts of men who still believe. I think both of these stories will conclude with the happiest of endings; this is a romance, after all.







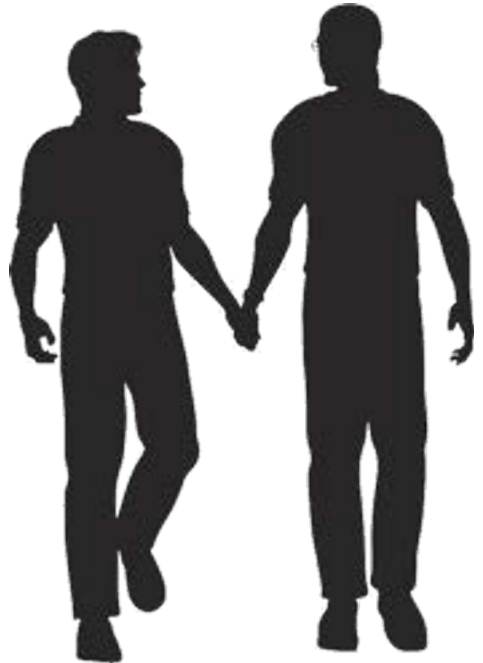


## **Rodriguez Pt. 2**

*by Zyen Smoot*

It's different because it's golden. It breathes. It exhales, it smells. It dances. It is naturally nostalgic. It warms. It lingers in my fingers through your hair. It smooths. It gets stuck and it sits. It marinated familiar melodies. It reflects in your eyes. It blinks my image. It presses. It pulsates heartstrings. It silences. It soaks in my mouth. It tastes, but it does not speak. It does not need to speak. It feels. It touched through chests, backs, hands. It moves. It shifts and it changes. It is me. It is you. It is real.



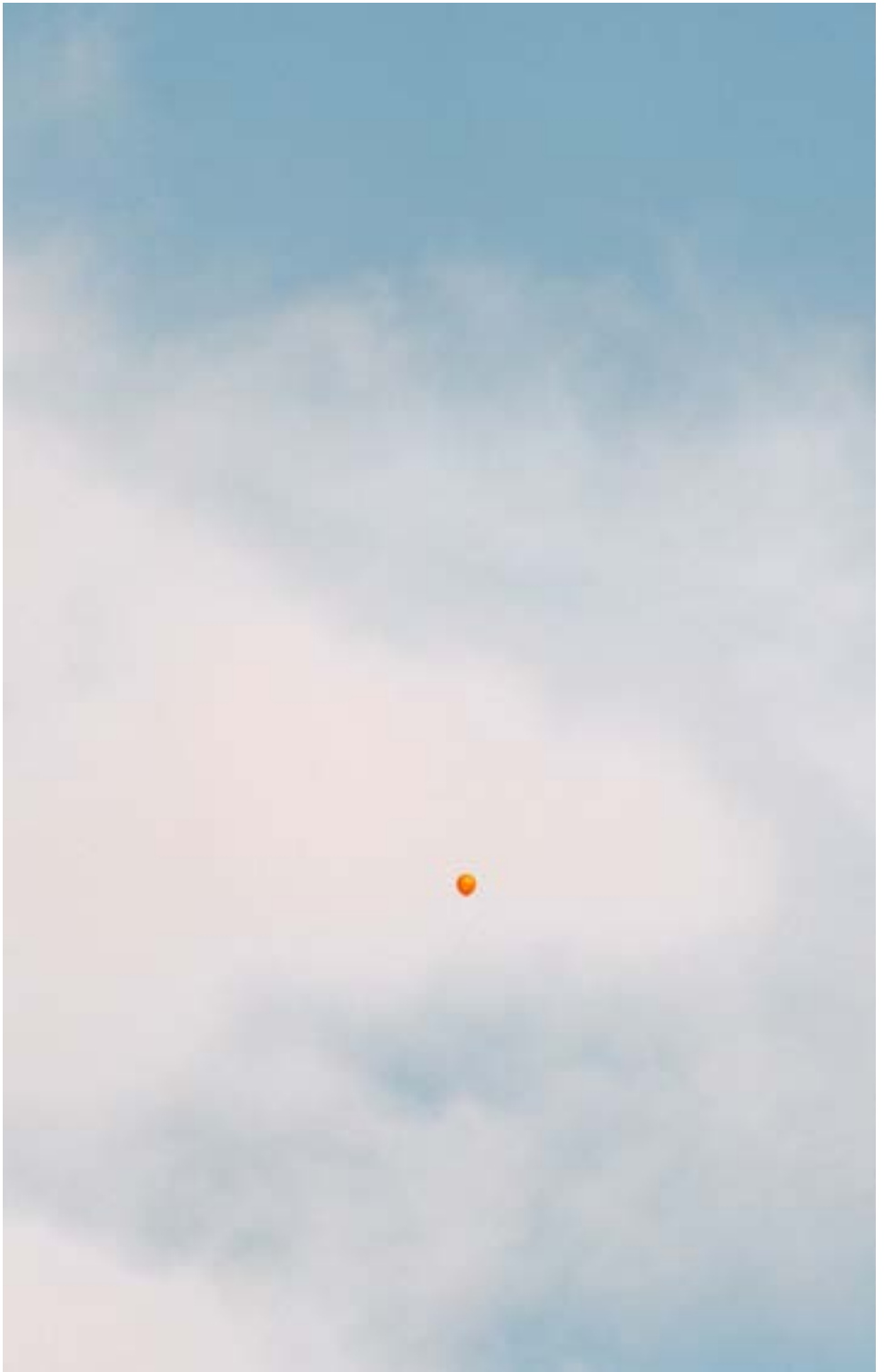




## **A New Love**

*by Dante Belcher*

i'm looking at me, at you  
at the mirror  
i see you everywhere i go  
people think i'm crazy  
but i see us  
i see you and me  
together  
you're always in my head  
like a song stuck on repeat  
you're always there  
and i always see you  
in person,  
in my dreams,  
in my head  
you're like a slow burn of fire  
soothing,  
warm,  
bright,  
intense,  
and i want you to know  
i want you  
and  
i love you



## **Balloon**

*by Ran Walker*

Alexander awakens on the ceiling each morning, his face pocked and flecked with pieces of the popcorn surface. He has to push himself down to his empty bed. This is what happens when he dreams of her. His body fills with love, like a balloon filling with helium, and he rises, the covers unable to contain or restrain him. He floats until he is unable to go any higher, and like that balloon, he dances along the surface of the ceiling each night, not wanting to dream of her, but unable to stop, wondering hopelessly if she's doing the same.

# The Red Whale

by *Amarah Ennis*

for months  
we have trailed him.

the red whale.

and the very air  
stinks  
of brine, and sulfur.

elusive, awful

waves jump into view  
and the sun-sets  
them aflame.

hair stuck  
wild with sea salt  
heat and fatigue we  
ready our harpoons.

be my anchor.  
i shall be yours and  
we will keep steady  
in this roiling tempest.

tonight we  
duel a demon  
the lord leviathan who  
boils  
the water he touches  
who crushes and swallows  
and swallows  
without teeth.

vanity save us  
make us immortal  
burn our faces  
in the crest  
of each wave  
our names  
in the roar  
of the sea

oh, but the devil  
will not be damned  
his ragged flukes  
a whip  
a shield  
a cannon.

hold my hand.  
we will shoot  
together  
at this beast that  
torments us  
in our waking hours  
in our dreams  
in our fantasies.

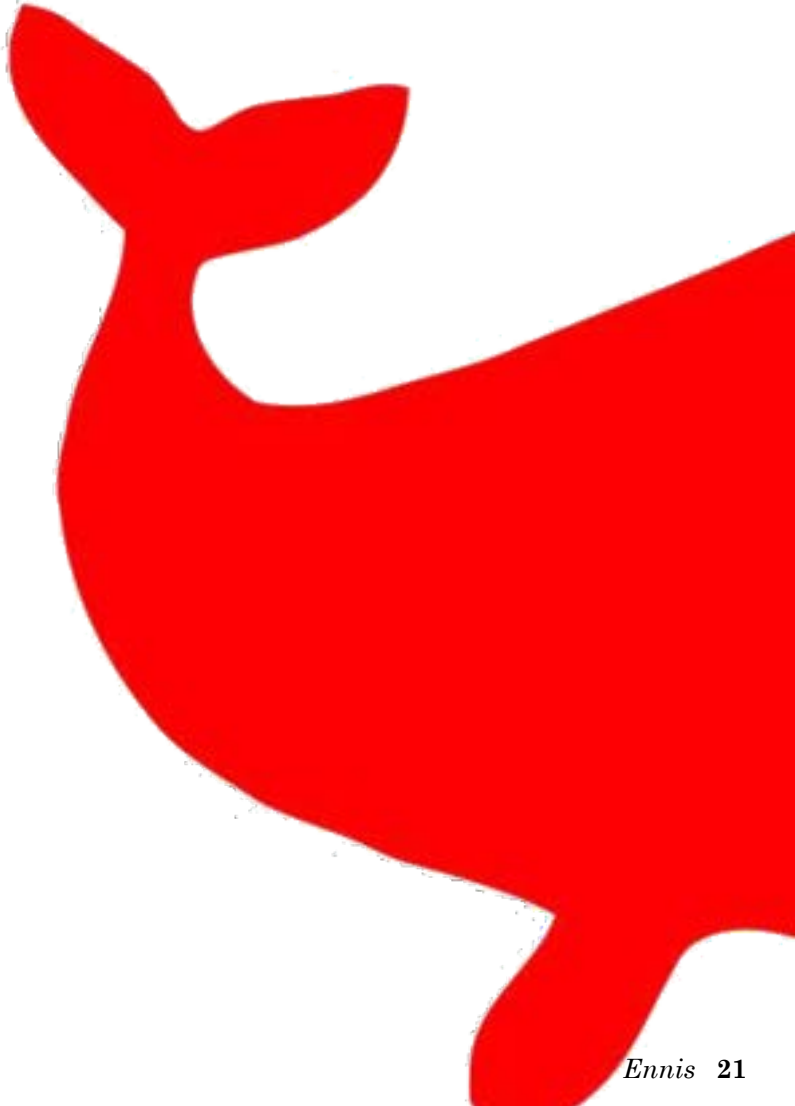
was it i  
or you  
who slayed that  
goliath?  
our pride is lost  
in water

churning red  
red  
red like blood like  
you  
plunging your hand  
into my chest  
me  
plunging my hand  
into yours.

lash the  
crimson king  
to the ship  
and so too  
will we wrap  
our chains.  
you to me  
me to you.

pull his crown of  
spermaceti  
from his head.  
we will swim  
against each other  
kings  
reigning over  
rich oil tides.

peel his ribmeat  
from his bones.  
we'll raise those  
ivory scaffolds as our  
wedding arches.





## **Dream Girl**

*by Arianna Springer*

“I don’t think I’ve ever been in love, but I get infatuated easily and this is my current muse. Right now, she is the most beautiful girl in the world to me, and gets more beautiful everyday. But infatuation is fleeting and just like a dream, and I can only wait to wake up or hope I get to live in my dreams forever “



Is the moon not illuminated with the Sun  
Allowing her light to brighten our face  
With each passing night a later and brighter moon is seen  
Until the moon shines brightly, lit of what it knows as love from the Sun  
Only to return to the lit without them  
Receding a New Moon



## **Just a Phase**

*by Alex Dameus*

Much like the phases of the moon,  
infatuation gives the temporary fill  
before we're left empty once more.



# *Acknowledgements*

First and foremost, I would like to thank our readers and our submitters. I am so grateful to be able to provide a platform for the amazing pieces we receive, so as always, thank you for continuing to give us your support. I would also like to thank Hampton Alum, Aubrey Dickerson for designing this issue's beautiful cover. Next I'd like to extend my gratitude towards our faculty advisor, Dr. Challenger for his patient guidance and enthusiastic encouragement throughout this entire year. He has helped this magazine grow from a tiny seed of an idea to the blossoming flower it now is. Additionally, I would like to thank the amazing Editorial Team: Alex Dameus, Amarah Ennis, Arielle Thomas, Erin Townsend, Jenay Conway, and Zyen Smoot, for all they do to make this magazine visually engaging and keep our website up and running. This wonderful team has remained so enthusiastic about the work we do and I cannot thank them enough.

Thank you all for reading and supporting Hampton Renaissance.

**Until next time,  
Zoe J. Treadwell + The Hampton Renaissance Editorial Team**

# Who We Are...



## **Dr. Scott Challener**

*Faculty Advisor, Managing Editor*

I'm a practicing poet and the managing editor and faculty advisor for the Hampton Renaissance. I joined the department of English & Foreign Languages as an Assistant Professor in 2021. I teach courses on twentieth and twenty-first century literature and critical theory. My poems and essays appear in *The Nation*, *Poetry*, *Gulf Coast*, *Lana Turner Journal*, *Mississippi Review*, *OmniVerse*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere.



## **Zoe Treadwell**

*Editor-in-chief*

Hi! I am Zoe Treadwell, a senior psychology major, English minor from Chicago, IL. I am the current Editor-in-chief of *Hampton Renaissance*. I love to read and write and am passionate about the work we do at *Hampton Renaissance*. We began this magazine in the spring semester of 2022 in order to create a space for the arts on Hampton's campus, and I am so proud of what we have made.



## **Zyen Smoot**

*Social Media Coordinator*

My name is Zyen Smoot and I am a third-year English major with a concentration on creative writing. In addition to my major, I am also the social media coordinator for the Hampton Renaissance. I am in charge of posting, promoting, and, initially, hosting the events. I was born in Varnado, Louisiana which is an hour away from New Orleans. New Orleans is a city known for its vibrant artistic expressions. Due to its closeness to my hometown me and my family often visited and since then I have always had a passion for the arts. I hope to create the Hampton Renaissance into a safe haven for all artists alike and help others find their passion for the arts.



## **Arielle Thomas**

Hi all! My name is Arielle Thomas and I am a second-year English major, on the pre-law track from NYC. In my spare time, I enjoy dancing, reading, practicing yoga, and exploring new hobbies. Currently, my professional goal is to pursue entertainment/real estate law and I also wish to study abroad. As a person who enjoys different ways to express that others express themselves, I am grateful for the Hampton Renaissance as a platform for artists of all trades to freely exhibit their literary works.



### **Erin Townsend**

I'm Erin, a second year English major with a concentration in creative writing from Atlanta, GA. My hobbies are painting, embroidery, and now editing literary magazines. I love publications that add a visual element to written pieces, and my work on the Renaissance makes sure the same is true for our literary magazine.



### **Jenay Conway**

Hello! My name is Jenay Conway. I am a third year English major with a concentration in creative writing from Fayetteville, North Carolina. My passions include creative writing, and sketching. I am proud to be a contributing member and editor for the Hampton Renaissance literary magazine.



### **Amarah Ennis**


Hey, I'm Amarah! I'm a junior journalism major, political science/theatre minor from Chesterfield, VA. In my spare time, I enjoy writing, writing, and more writing, in-between other non-writing hobbies like watching anime, playing video games, and talking to myself. I'm happy to be both a contributor and a staff member to the Hampton Renaissance, and hope to see even more visual and literary works from fellow students in the upcoming issues.




### **Alex Dameus**

Hello, I'm Alex  
Editor, Artist, Poet, Musician  
Biology Major, Pre-med track



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