The Hampton Review

Issue Five

Winter 2026

Welcome to Issue Five of *The Hampton Review,* featuring the work of three writers: Violet Binczewski, Addy Sanders, and L. Roselle. This issue also continues our interview series, From The Desk Of, and will explore the work and process of our Issue Five contributors. These interviews follow their work.

Enjoy the new work and the inside stories of our writers.

The Hampton Review Staff

Editor: Sydney N.

Editorial Assistants: Julia F., Maggie J., and Leighanna R.

Faculty Advisor: Thomas Bender

Table of Contents

Tell me your diamonds

Violet Binczewski

She cupped the back of my neck when she said “tell me your diamonds”
I ripped open my jaw, the flesh teared and spit out the roars of a lion

Tell me your diamonds and tell me your pain
It’s music to our ears, the clink of your ankles and the metal chains

Tell me why you never lost your mind like me
Did you lose something else, like a picture in your wallet while I was learning how to scream

Tell me all the things you did to forget
And I’ll show you the scrapes behind my ears, the deeds I regret

It won’t be this beautiful for long
We’ll fade like everything else does
Into the facets of someone else’s life
Until it is nothing more than a ridge in the bark
Of roots that are too old to name
Tell me your diamonds,
Tell me your pain
Tell me what I want to hear and what I hate
Tell me before I forget our names

No one is going to come around here for a long time
These diamonds will be lodged in the crevices of our bones, sharp and soft, never to be mined

She never said “tell me your diamonds”
And I never lost my mind
I gleaned something sharp from the trunk of my throat
Something cut with clarity, something I will never find.

From The Desk Of, No. 4
Featuring Violet Binczewski

The Hampton Review: The line “tell me your diamonds” feels intimate yet mysterious. Where did that line come from, and what did it mean to you when you first wrote it?

Violet Binczewski: I first read the line “tell me your diamonds” in the book *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, and I was immediately drawn in by it. Diamonds are sharp and brilliant. They can cut you or they can make you feel elegant. They have different facets, just as we do. To me, it almost felt like saying “tell me your past, your flaws, the things you carry, the things you are proud of, the things that make you beautiful,” because that is what I took diamonds as a metaphor for: a product of varying facets.

THR: Given the significance of this line to your poem, I'm interested in what role intertextuality plays in your work. Do you find yourself reading powerful or lovely or haunting lines that serve as an opening into something you'll create? Do the lines nag you, wanting to be included? When you're in the middle of a work, how much does what you're reading impact what you write?

VB: Intertextuality definitely plays an important role. So many of the ideas that writers explore in certain pieces relate to the pieces of other writers, and so connecting them can be fascinating. I am always reading interesting lines or words in other writers’ work and almost try to put my own spin on it. Certain phrases that you read find a way to burrow into your head and refuse to leave, so you cannot help but explore them further. What I’m reading absolutely impacts what I write because certain ideas just bleed from your reading into your imagination. I’m sure my writing has been influenced by what I was reading at the time without me even realizing.

THR: There’s a lot of physical intensity in this poem — jaws ripping open, screaming, scrapes, bones. Did the poem start from an emotional or physical place?

VB: The poem started out as a mystery. In all honesty, I still don’t fully understand the meaning of the lines myself, it just sort of came out. But it definitely started from a place of deep, scathing emotion, and I wanted to articulate that feeling. I like to use bodily imagery in my writing because I think it allows the reader to grasp the intensity of the pain. Everyone knows what it means to feel physical pain because most of us are familiar with it. So when I was trying to describe a very intense feeling, I turned to violent adjectives and imagery to depict it.

THR: The speaker keeps asking questions throughout the poem. Do you see this as a conversation that never quite happens, or more of an internal dialogue?

VB: You could definitely see it both ways, but to me it is a conversation that never happened. Or rather, a conversation that you wish had happened. We often only say the things we want to in a flood of unheard conversation once it is too late, or once the moment has passed because we were too scared in the moment. Sometimes you get the opportunity to get to truly know someone, but they passed through your life before you could, and all you have left are the questions you never asked.

THR: This idea relates back to *Beloved*, the relationship between Sethe and Beloved, though the connection is not as direct as the specific line. I'm interested in when and why (was it assigned in school?) you read *Beloved*. And is this idea of "the unsaid" something you often read in literature?

VB: I read *Beloved* over the summer for school, and it is a book that will haunt me for the rest of my life. I've never read anything so raw and scathing, and I think Toni Morrison writes about the most violent kind of pain in a way that you feel you shouldn't even be reading because it is so horrid. It was so terrible that I couldn't put it down. As a result, "Tell me your diamonds" was directly influenced by *Beloved*. Sethe and Beloved's relationship and dynamic in the novel still leaves me trying to unravel the complexities of it all. They never knew each other despite being mother and daughter, and in a way the "unsaids" literally haunt Sethe through the ghost of her daughter. I love literature that not only explores what happened, but what never did. The unknown and regret can draw you in far more than a traditional story, so I definitely find myself exploring that type of writing.

THR: You move between tenderness and violence pretty seamlessly. How do you navigate that balance when you're writing?

VB: Something can feel both tender and violent at the same time. You can feel scathing pain but gentle affection for the same subject, person, or situation. I try to keep that in mind when I'm writing about two opposite entities, or thinking about how they relate to each rather than how they differ, because we rarely get to live in black and white. It is an emotional rollercoaster in a way. Things tend to be simultaneous, opposite and confusing, so I try to be truthful to that when I write.

THR: The idea of "diamonds" being both precious and painful runs through the poem. Did that metaphor evolve as you were writing, or was it clear from the start?

VB: The metaphor definitely evolved as I was writing. I started with just the prompt of "tell me your diamonds," but as I started to write, I started dissecting diamonds and what they could represent. I just started experimenting with different ideas and words until it evolved into a full-fledged metaphor. That only came to fruition through trying to articulate the emotions I wanted to portray, and realizing that a diamond could be the perfect vessel to do that.

THR: There's a strong sense of impermanence with the fading, forgetting names, becoming part of someone else's life. Was this poem written in response to a specific moment, or more to a general feeling of loss?

VB: This poem was written in response to a feeling that has followed me for years. Far too often when it gets late out and noise grows quiet, I find myself thinking about the people I once knew, or people I wish I had gotten to know. I wonder how they changed, if they are the same, and if they could still somehow fit into my life. I had a subtle feeling of missing what never happened, and I didn't know how to explain it clearly. I was finally able to explore those complicated ideas in "Tell me your diamonds."

THR: The ending comes back to the opening line in an interesting way. What does that final shift mean to you now, after the poem is finished and out in the world?

VB: I love poems with bookends in the first and last lines. Despite the fact that the speaker has spent most of the poem relaying this deep feeling and scathing experience, the end reveals that she doesn't feel she has the strength to say it. I think writers can get lost in that feeling, because often they write deep, raw pieces, but that reality only exists on the page. Because they can only say through their pen what they cannot say from their lips. I definitely fall into that trap. I want to share my work, but when it comes time to, I can never find the strength to let it out, bolted shut with fear of what people may think. But now that this poem is out in the world, I feel that in a way I have told some of my own diamonds.

Music
Addy Sanders

the songs on the radio are all okay
it's all music
music;
something i live, breathe
daily

grooves on a vinyl
a bright silver needle trekking through them
like a model on a runway
slow, but steady
every sound
instrumental
drum and bass
clear as liquid

or a cd
glaring rainbow at the right light
plastic or paper case
collectable art

music can be collected
listened
everywhere
every form
humanity, as a whole
cannot be
without music

From The Desk of, No. 5
Featuring Addy Sanders

The Hampton Review: This poem feels very lived-in. What's your earliest or strongest memory of music being part of your everyday life?

Addy Sanders: One of my first ever memories of music in my day-to-day life was my dad always playing Jimmy Buffet with me in the car, since I was a kid. Margaritaville, as my dad says, is "an experience that'll take you away." Margaritaville always helped my dad go throughout tough days, with the tropical themed music "taking him away" to an island. This really inspired me to get interested and to listen to more music. Music helps me calm down, pep up, or to focus; it's a huge aid to me, especially as a person on the neurodiverse spectrum.

THR: The poem moves through different formats — radio, vinyl, CDs. Were these choices drawn from personal experience, nostalgia, or a desire to show music's evolution?

AS: My choices of using different types of physical media were from my love of collection and listening to music. My most used item in my day-to-day life is my music player; it's an eight in one Victrola music player, which plays CDs, cassette tapes, vinyl records, and AM/FM radio. I've been collecting music for years now, I use these symbols as a form of nostalgia to myself.

THR: That runway image with the vinyl needle is memorable. Do metaphors like that come to you suddenly, or do you tend to sit with an image until it clicks?

AS: I get metaphors suddenly — I can't dwell on a metaphor. My mind is very spontaneous.

THR: You spend time on the physical side of music, such as records, cases, and album art. Do you think listening feels different when there's something tangible involved? Also, do you find that the art that accompanies music is a bonus, or is it integral to the meaning of the music itself?

AS: Listening to music is much more personal when something tangible is involved, like studying. Music helps me focus more on my work, and helps bring my mood up after doing something hard, like physics. It keeps me motivated. The art of music is a bonus; I like music with meaning behind it.

THR: The poem feels both simple and affectionate, almost like a quiet appreciation. What kind of mood were you in when you wrote it?

AS: I was listening to a new vinyl I got from my grandmother, Pierce The Veil's *Misadventures* to be exact, while I was writing this poem. I was struggling with ideas for this poem until the vinyl abruptly stopped to be flipped — and in the moment, I knew instantly what I was going to write about. My love for music.

THR: When you end by saying humanity can't exist without music, is that something you feel deeply personal to you, or something you notice in people around you?

AS: Music has given bonds and experiences all around the world that, without music, I'd never have. Recently, I went to New Jersey for my birthday, and while going to the Penn Station in Jersey, I took an Uber, with a driver from the Dominican Republic. With my somewhat poor Spanish skills, I was able to tell the driver to turn the music up, as I loved the reggaeton that was playing. She smiled, we sang together, and I don't think that I would ever get that experience

again without music. Music helps create global citizens; and I think, in a world where multiculturalism is immensely frowned upon, that music helps bring us all together. It's an art form — a way of protest against discrimination.

The Chapter After Happily Ever After
L. Roselle

At the end of every chapter
a new one begins
but at the end of a story
it could simply come to an end
Or maybe you might get a special book 2
where we continue the story and build on what we knew
and enter a whole new plot of love and romance

We could end up in a castle
in the middle of the world
where were dancing and prancing across the room in our ball gowns
Maybe I'm a princess lost from sea
and maybe you're the prince who came to rescue me
maybe I'm your little mermaid
and your my prince to be

This is our story to be told
like a great chapter book
written for our great unknowns
This is our fantasy realm
that we can build together
Who knows?
Maybe we'll be in each other's stories forever

From The Desk Of, No. 6
Featuring L. Roselle

THR: Was there a specific moment or experience that inspired the opening line?

L. Roselle: The line reflects my long-standing belief that endings are rarely final. As an imaginative reader, I've always viewed chapters as transitions rather than conclusions, a perspective that informs how I understand both stories and life.

THR: Why did you want to explore the difference between chapters and complete endings?

LR: I wanted to highlight the contrast between continuity and finality. Chapters imply growth and possibility, while endings suggest closure, allowing me to explore uncertainty rather than resolution.

THR: Did you imagine "special book 2" as a continuation of the same love, or a transformed version of it?

LR: I imagined it as a transformed continuation — suggesting that love can change form while still retaining its emotional significance.

THR: What drew you to the castle imagery instead of a more common setting?

LR: The castle reflects a familiar fairytale ideal many girls grow up imagining — a romanticized space associated with wonder and possibility. My imagery was influenced by *Beauty and the Beast*, particularly the library, which symbolizes both romance and imagination, making the setting feel personal while still timeless.

THR: What does being "lost" represent in the line "Maybe I'm a princess lost at sea"?

LR: Being "lost" represents emotional uncertainty and a search for direction rather than helplessness.

THR: Were the fairytale references intentional or organic?

LR: They emerged organically. Fairytale imagery provided a natural framework for expressing emotional distance and longing.

THR: Why end with "maybe" instead of certainty?

LR: Ending with "maybe" preserves ambiguity, allowing hope and realism to coexist while acknowledging the lasting impact of shared connection.