

*The Hampton*  
**RENAISSANCE**



**FEATURING**  
*Gabriel Crawford*  
*Zyen Smoot*  
*Amarah Ennis*  
*India'Ray Davis*  
*Layla Kennedy*

**EXPRESSIONS**  
**IN BLOOM**



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# *A Note from the Editor*

Dear Hampton Renaissance readers, writers, and friends,

I have had the honor of serving as the Editor-in-Chief of Hampton University's only magazine for the arts, Hampton Renaissance, since its creation in 2021. The past two years in this role have taught me so much about leadership, team building, and the transformative power of the arts. From overseeing our magazine's content, to managing a team of talented writers and designers, to collaborating with artists and performers on campus, I have been able to work alongside some of the most creative and passionate individuals at Hampton.

As I write this final note as the departing editor of Hampton Renaissance, my heart is filled with a mix of emotions. It has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to serve as your editor, and to have been part of a team that has worked tirelessly to bring you the best of the arts community. It has been an honor to be a part of this journey, to witness the growth of our magazine, and to be a voice for the arts in our world.

I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our team of writers, editors, and designers who have brought their unique perspectives and talents to every issue. It has been a joy to work alongside you, and I am constantly inspired by your creativity and dedication.

To our readers, thank you for your support and engagement. It has been a pleasure to connect with you through the pages of our magazine and to share the stories and creations of artists who inspire us all.

It has been an honor to have collaborated with such brilliant minds and to have been a voice for the arts at Hampton. As I leave, I do so with a heavy heart, but also with a sense of excitement for what the future holds. But most of all, I am grateful for the chance to have contributed to something greater than myself - a publication that celebrates the beauty and power of the arts. I ask you now readers, to continue to nurture and celebrate your own creativity, and to always remember the extraordinary impact that art can have on our lives and the world.

Lastly, please enjoy this issue! Most of the works in *Expression in Bloom* come from our amazing team of editors, in addition to a special feature from the winners of the William R. Harvey Library's Pirate Poetry Contest.

Thank you and Farewell,  
**Zoe J. Treadwell**

## Sentient Burden

by *Gabriel Crawford*

Citizens throughout the courtroom gossiped quietly, waiting for the defendant. When he arrived, his eyes were wide open as he broodingly stared down. With his mind racing in a crazed state, the sounds around him faded in and out. Every jolt his body made mimicked that of a psychiatric patient. The jury noticed how unstable he looked, each moment a potential opportunity for a breakdown. And it wasn't the profuse sweat pouring from his body, but instead the blue fluid that leaked from him causing them to judge.

"I just can't stand androids." The jury glared down at him, dismissing his human appearance. They saw only a hostile machine in the courtroom. The Artificial Life Act was passed decades ago to create peace in the twenty-second century amongst humans and the revolutionary androids: human designed and behaving robots that scientists created, with slight physical strength enhancements. But young Arlo's mind raced with sheer fear—not peace—in the courtroom, seeing he was surrounded by the very people who despised the act almost as much as him. He could almost hear his adopted mother in his memory storage, strengthening him; encouraging him; guiding his steps when he was first brought home from the machine orphanage. She always made him feel more than a construction of parts. He reminisced the lessons on being an upstanding citizen and treating others with love and respect no matter what society labeled him as. These lessons formed Arlo's moral compass and defined his character. And every second, he dwelled on his coming-of-age journey, with the reality of his situation continuously mortifying him. He knew no one would even try to believe his story of how things went.

Arlo was strolling on the sidewalk to a local homeless shelter the day before, no special occasion, or high school trip. He remembered a particular person he promised he'd visit that day who needed someone in his life to care. The feeling of joy had never moved through him so much. The feeling of pain though, was an opposing, distinct feeling that Arlo abruptly felt from a launching fist that caved in his face. A group of hands then threw him into a shady alley, with two other buildings crowding it, blinding possible witnesses from the view.

"You lost?" a hooded juvenile said, smirking.

“What the heck was that for?” Arlo said, standing to his feet.

“Trespassing,” a spiked haired guy replied.

“I wasn’t trespassing. I was walking along a public sidewalk.”

“A sidewalk?” the final person with a cut on his lip said. “What about our country? Our world? That’s the trespassing I’m talking about.”

“Look, I promise I don’t want any trouble. I don’t have anything against humans at all. I’m just trying to get to a homeless shelter to help.”

“Oh, that’s where you’re trying to go? My bad. You go ahead and handle that,” one of them abruptly said, as the other two made Arlo a path to exit from. Taking their offering, he headed for the path in a dash to leave the encounter.

**BAM!**

The next thrown punch to the face jolted Arlo, stumbling him back.

“We don’t care if you’re some self-righteous ‘wire-brain.’ You androids are all the same to us. Taking our parent’s job, being perfect in all aspects, acting as if you’re even real. I wish all of you would die!”

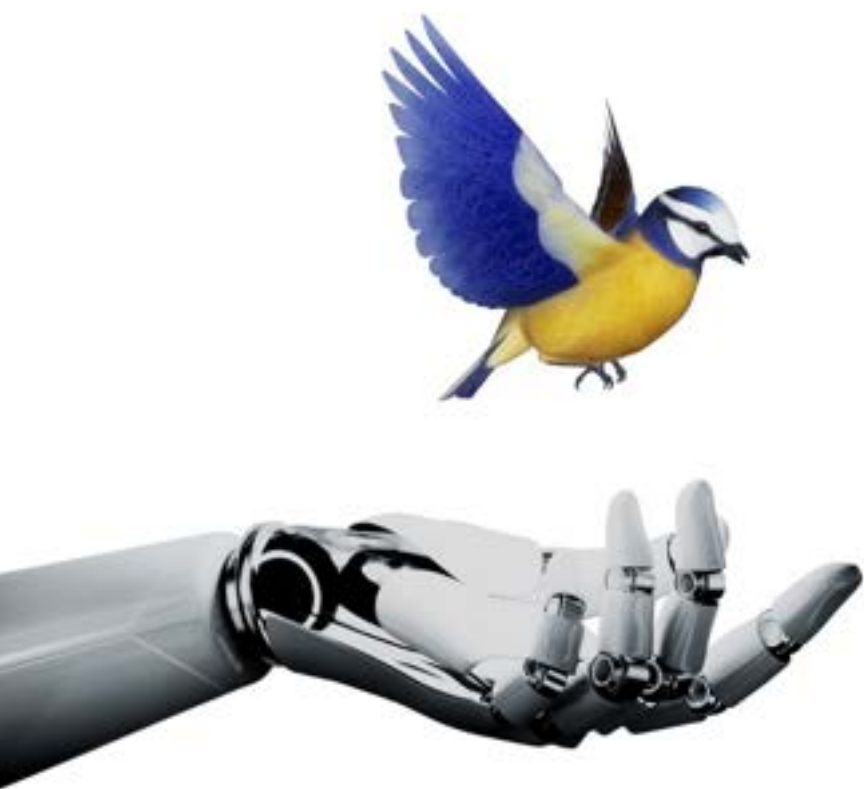
What ensued next was what Arlo only read about in stories. A vicious beatdown commenced, punches and kicks striking all over Arlo’s body in a heated surge of violence. He tried to avoid the attacks, resulting in all three assaulters landing clean shots every time he moved, and each blow to his head felt like a hammer.

“Stop! Please!” he begged, his body now twitching. It wasn’t physical pain, but relentless panic that coursed through Arlo, equally suffering him.

“Stop existing!” they said.

Arlo’s eyes began to spazz out. His head shook with aggression, something within him snapping—something going haywire. What’s happening? he thought, his digital vision now absent. Please stop! The beating was becoming deadlier with each hit; the attacks were taking an effect on his human shell—his schematics. I beg you, stop! All his functional systems quickly became drenched in the assaulters’ corruption.

“Stop!”





Right then, Arlo swiftly caught one of the thug's incoming fists, snapping the elbow with a single movement. The thug gazed at his arm, too fear-stricken to utter a word, falling with his bone protruding from his flesh.

"Woah!" the others called out in peril. Arlo then slammed the next guy into the wall, squeezing his shoulders with scary strength. His now transparent, maniacal eyes pierced into the assaulter's terrified soul before slicing through his neck with one shove of his elbow. He collapsed, with his neck like a popped water balloon.

"Please stop! I'm sorry!" the final guy said, retreating backwards. But the Arlo who longed to help and serve others was driven out. He grabbed him, holding him in the air with one hand.

"Please." one final plea from the regretful assaulter.

Arlo spoke only one sentence, "Protect myself."

His fist shot straight through his chest with his heart plunging from his anatomy. He flung his body off, standing amongst the bloodshed. He resembled a murder droid, spazzing and leaking. The injured thug fearfully crawled back with one arm, gazing at the android who murdered his friends.

"You're a monster!" he said. Those words were as daunting that day as they were in the courtroom, as Arlo overheard the term 'monster' by many in the jury. He couldn't fathom the hypocrisy from the people he encountered. People that committed evil and shifted the blame were the real monsters. And Arlo knew that two dead, and one injured was all that was needed against him. He glimpsed at his two-faced persecutor, observing him—hearing him encourage his conjoined oppressors to scorn him. It was then he recognized it wouldn't matter once he explained his self-defense malfunction. He understood the response of humans would always be the same to androids no matter the circumstance; a discriminating way of life he guessed his creators just didn't foresee. Finally, the case came to an end, and after thorough reports and descriptions, the judge confirmed all the speculation Arlo had.

"Guilty. Sentence: deactivation."

## **Word**

*by Zyen Smoot*

Oh, “word?”

Better than saying nothing at all

Keeping true to the radicalized call or the rolled-up sticky talk of the congregation we might blow into

“Word” is true

To the validation of statements laid upon us

Let it resonate into the high pitch of our hair

Turning faces and making black glares against blue traces we walk through

“Word.” And we splatter you.

“Word.” And the rapidity of our bodies no longer duck and dive.

We take the right and they take the left

No, we are not speaking democratically to the republic you rep

This is a revolution; we speak jive

“Word is bond.” And you run and hide.

“Word up.” To the light, we won’t be seeing tonight.

Word. And we keeping it high.

We keeping it right.

We keeping it real.





## To Know What It Is (At My Queerest Self)

*by Zyen Smoot*

To know what it is to love him

To know what it is

To feel the touch of all hands and all fingertips

And only one makes you lift your eyelids

To know what it is

To explore kaleidoscopes of visions: unclear

To blink at the brink of falling and then feel your atmosphere

To know what is

I've touched mountains, baby

Across the planes of the earth

I felt the soil of my skin bloom through the water droplets of you

Oh, to know what it is

To run across sirens in the revolution of your kiss I will be gladly arrested

To know what it is

Unbounded by scientists or what they call chemistry

Too long to put into a book, but so many definitions we make with each look

Something like a faith

Not initially making sense but putting a soul to your face you were heaven sent

Something like a wineglass surrounded by centuries of declarations soaking up words til I sip and taste it and know

Oh, I know

I'll walk across you again

In scents, in visuals, in colors, an experience

To know what it is

I know what it is

To love her





*William R. Harvey  
Pirate Poetry  
Contest Winners*







**Have You Seen This Girl?**

*by Amarah Ennis*

I'm a little too old for runaway fantasies.  
Too rooted to dream  
of picking up and leaving without saying goodbye.  
Not that I've ever said goodbye:  
you always left too early to give me a chance.  
I'm a little too old for runaway fantasies,  
Too modern to dream  
of rattling boxcars and baked beans over Lyfts and McDonalds.  
I'd be tracked down, anyway:  
my phone, my car,  
the bones of my face,  
all noted by onlookers and recited to you  
over a tip line,  
over the evening news,  
over the ever-expanding web.  
I'm a little too old for runaway fantasies,  
so now I dream  
of what comes after:  
missing posters,  
news headlines,  
empty caskets—  
bodies in ditches,  
bloated with rainwater and morning mist.

## **Emancipation Oak and Armstrong Slater are About to Have a Conversation**

*by Zyen Smoot*

I have never known trees to collect dust  
of histories never told I have never known a tree to grow so old  
I have never thought buildings could creek below ceilings could leak with  
laughter once  
overbearing now so meek  
Like the lights that shine over what was once yours, and once his, and once  
hers  
Creations for the expressions once restricted by 18th-century negligence  
I have never thought art could sigh like the wind that blows through the  
cracks of the windows  
I have never known that sculptures could create their own shadows, down the  
steps I had never  
seen sculptures wept  
But I do know trees have several branches, several faces looked at you, several  
faces chose a  
branch, a family tree  
I have never thought several faces took pictures of families, families piled  
into closed boxes  
forgetful memories of that tree—of you  
I have never thought that our history had to be hidden in order to be found  
Emancipation blows through the leaves and whispers to Slater  
“I’m not sure why they named you after me.”





## **2:31 in the morning**

*by India'Ray Davis*

I am not ripe enough for these things, for the life of a woman, I think listlessly.

I am but a starving lamb met with milkweed.

I sought companionship in men, never romance.

I knew that I presumed nothing past death.

I have come to terms with envy disguised behind the swan-necked weeds of lavender as attraction.

I do not have to concern myself with the affairs of gods that built me inferior

I desire to possess the traits that bewitch women

My whole life has been perceived by the sense of sight. I see words, I read

books, I see smiles,

my mouth bends high.

I am kin to an actress staring at her own muddled expression

She knows that she is nothing without something to live through- nothing

useful to superficial grandiosity.

Perhaps that is why my eyes felt ill-fitted for their sockets.

I saw girls with boys and I wanted a boy as a girl.

I saw religion and I wanted to believe in spirits.

I saw men enamor what despises them and I wanted them to myself.

Realization has gouged its thumbs into the beet that is my heart and exposed my carousel of rings to fresh air.

It has never been a stuntedness of self but a misplacement. I suppose it's easy to mix up

profession for ignorance, to ironically define the actions that make you feel like everyone else,

as talent.

You do not applaud a fish for swimming or a tree for bearing fruit

So why do I feel the eyes of millions?



## The Hours that Haunt Me

*by Layla Kennedy*

Here comes the infamous morning which I dread.  
Of all the things that are left unsaid,  
Wanting to know the monster that's under my bed.  
On a wrecked ship of the night terror's siren song,  
Of always believing that I am in the wrong,  
More of a broken puppet that is strung along.  
You manage to have me under lock and key,  
You break me with words and tarnish me to every degree,  
Do you like feeding me poison in my sleep?  
Always feeling one step further behind,  
A tunnel vision of your intentions yet I still feel blind,  
When everything is quiet yet screaming in my mind.  
But what happens in the night that ponders my awakened thoughts,  
Is it the gentle breeze that taunts me from the window?  
Or the way you circle through my mind more often than not?  
How do you creep through my skin, chilling my bones?  
Interfering my presence with your shadow and even so,  
You crash through my walls throwing sticks and stones.  
Am I just a pawn in your game of chess?  
Why you do this to me is anyone's guess,  
But it's slowly eating away at me nevertheless.  
Yet I long to play and want to be part,  
Of being lost in the loneliness, lost in the dark,  
Into the depths of the hole that lies in my heart,  
Now comes the infamous morning once more which I dread.  
Oh, how I wish we can meet in the dark once again.

# Who We Are...



**Dr. Scott Challener**

*Faculty Advisor and 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**

*Executive Editor*

My name is Zoe Treadwell. I am a third year psychology major, english minor and I am the executive editor of The Hampton Renaissance. We started the Renaissance in the fall semester of 2021



**Anthony Akins**

My name is Anthony Akins! I am a Chemical Engineering major from Cleveland, OH. I am an aspiring author for dark fantasy and sci-fi stories. I joined Hampton Renaissance in order to share my works with the world, one step at a time.



**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.





**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.



**Alex Dameus**


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




**Gabriel Crawford**

Hey! My name is Gabe Crawford, and I am an English major with a concentration in film. I joined the Hampton Renaissance because I am an enthusiast for writing and absolutely love creative expression! I am an aspiring author and screenwriter who loves writing sci-fi, action, and fantasy stories. I am eager to share my captivating storytelling with this magazine, and excited to welcome all artists who seek a space to express their creative freedom!



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