

# THE HOPWOOD NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2024



ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE  
**HOPWOOD AWARDS PROGRAM**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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Kemp Powers

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## Greetings from the Hopwood Room

“Dear Winner of a Hopwood Award,” begins a note sent by R.W. Cowden, Director of the Hopwood Awards, from the Hopwood Room on October 30, 1939. “The Hopwood Committee has decided to send you, two or three times a year, news of Hopwood affairs in the form of a brief review of important developments to date, and items of interest from other members of the group.” This mimeographed letter was the first Hopwood newsletter. It shared news of current and former Hopwood winners and tidbits about goings on in the Hopwood Room. “Our most recent gift to the Hopwood Room is a splendid portrait in oil of Professor F.N. Scott,” Cowden writes in the original newsletter, referring to Avery Hopwood’s writing instructor. “It now looks down from the north wall upon the old black table at which Professor Scott used to sit and listen and listen until students strangled themselves in their own logic.”

For 80 years, Hopwood program staff gathered news of former Hopwood winners and shared it with other Hopwood laureates. The Hopwood Newsletter was discontinued in 2020, in part because social media and the Hopwood website provided far more efficient ways of sharing contest and publication news, and in part because, although there are now thousands of Hopwood laureates with more than a hundred added each year, the Hopwood Program continues to support only one full-time staff member. Still, each year I hear from Hopwood laureates who miss the newsletter and long to share their news with other Hopwood winners.

I’m grateful to Hopwood Intern Matthew Buxton, a first-year MFA student in poetry in the Helen Zell Writers’ Program, for taking on the task of editing this year’s revival of the Hopwood newsletter. In this issue you’ll find a long list of books published in the last few years by Hopwood laureates as well as publication and other news by and about Hopwood winners. Although we know that this list is incomplete, we are grateful to everyone who shared their news and hope that you will enjoy seeing the evidence that Hopwood winners are continuing to produce and publish wonderful work.

Also in this issue is an interview Matthew conducted via email with the 2024 Hopwood Lecturer, Kemp Powers, a Golden Globe-winning and Academy Award-nominated screenwriter, playwright, and director. We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Powers to Ann Arbor.

Congratulations to our newest Hopwood winners and warm wishes to all of our Hopwood laureates.

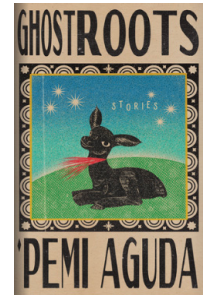
Rebecca Manery  
Hopwood Program Manager



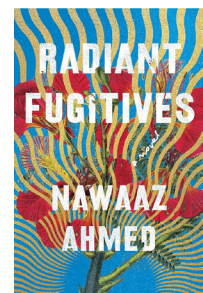
# HOPWOOD ALUMNI UPDATES

## BOOKS AND CHAPBOOKS

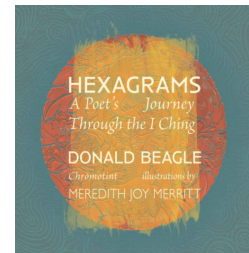
**Pemi Aguda** (2019) *Ghostroots* (W. W. Norton, May 2024)  
*The Suicide Mothers* (W. W. Norton, Forthcoming)



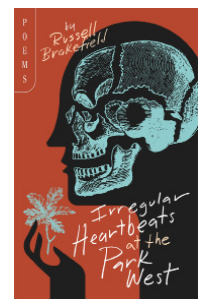
**Nawaaz Ahmed** (2011) *Radiant Fugitives* (Counterpoint, 2021)



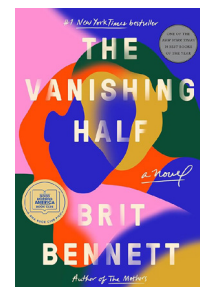
**Donald Beagle** (1977) *Hexagrams: A Poet's Journey Through the I Ching*  
(Library Partners Press, April 2023)



**Russell Brakefield** (2011) *My Modest Blindness* (Autofocus Books, 2023)  
*Irregular Heartbeats at the Park West*  
(Wayne State University Press, 2024)

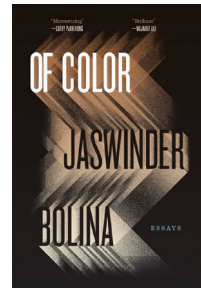


**Brit Bennett** (2013) *The Vanishing Half* (Riverhead Books, 2020)

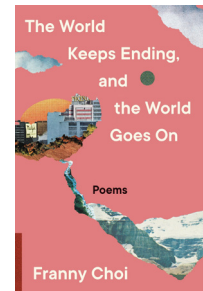


# HOPWOOD ALUMNI UPDATES

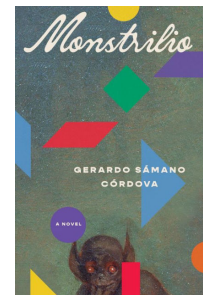
**Jaswinder Bolina** (2003) *Of Color: Essays* (McSweeney's Publishing, 2020)



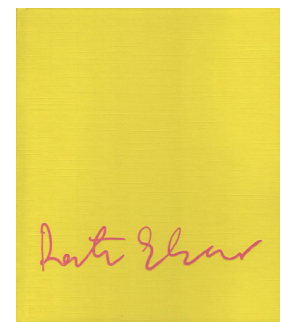
**Franny Choi** (2017) *The World Keeps Ending, and the World Goes On* (Ecco/Harper Collins, 2022)



**Gerardo Sámano Córdova** (2018) *Monstrilio* (Zando, 2023)



**Maia Elsner** (2022) *Dante Elsner* (Guillemot Press, 2023)  
*Overrun by Wild Boars* (flipped eye, 2021)

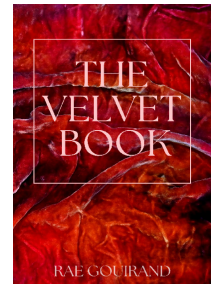


**Nathan Go** (2013) *Forgiving Imelda Marcos* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023)

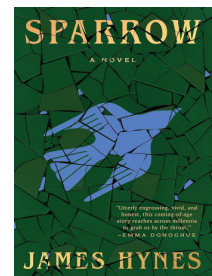


# HOPWOOD ALUMNI UPDATES

**Rae Gouirand** (2001) *Little Hour* (Swan Scythe Press, 2022)  
*Tough Sequence* (Seven Kitchens Press, 2023)  
*The Velvet Book* (Cornerstone Press, 2024)



**James Hynes** (1976) *Sparrow* (Picador, 2023)



**Perry Janes** (2009) *Find Me When You're Ready*  
(Northwestern University Press, September 2024)



**Airea D. Matthews** (2012) *Bread and Circus* (Scribner US, 2023)

**Karyna McGlynn** (2006) *50 Things Kate Bush Taught Me About the Multiverse*  
(Sarabande Books, 2022)

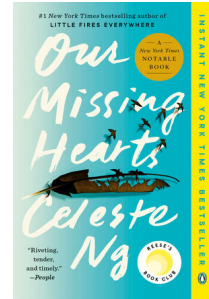


**Caroline Harper New** (2022) *A History of Half-Birds*  
(Milkweed Editions, January 2024)

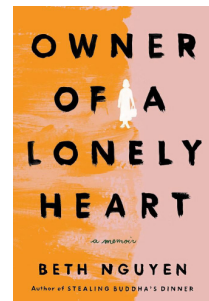


# HOPWOOD ALUMNI UPDATES

Celeste Ng (2006) *Our Missing Hearts* (Penguin, 2022)



Beth (Bich Minh) Nguyen (1993-1998) *Owner of a Lonely Heart* (Scribner, 2023)

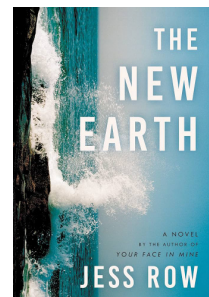


Rachel Richardson (2002) *Smother* (W. W. Norton, January 2025)

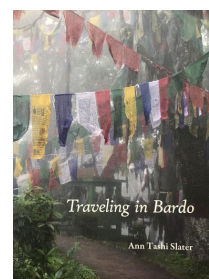
Monica Rico (2020) *Pinion* (Four Way Books, March 2024)



Jess Row (2000) *The New Earth* (Ecco, 2023)

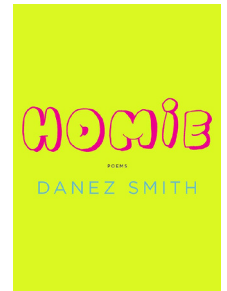


Ann Tashi Slater (1990) *Traveling in Bardo* (Hachette Go, 2025)

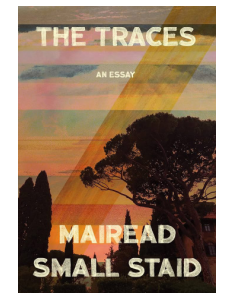


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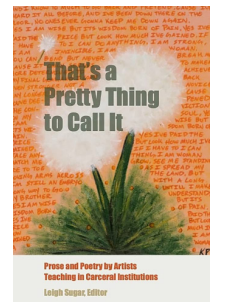
**Danez Smith** (2016) *Homie* (Graywolf Press, 2020)



**Mairead Small Staid** (2014) *The Traces: An Essay*  
(A Strange Object/Deep Vellum, 2022)



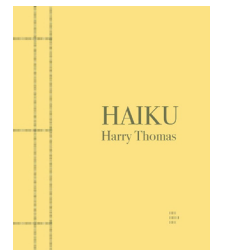
**Leigh Sugar** (2013) *That's a Pretty Thing to Call It: Prose and Poetry by Artists Teaching in Carceral Settings* (New Village Press, 2023)  
*Freeland* (Alice James Books, 2025)



**Courtney Faye Taylor** (2016) *Concentrate* (Graywolf Press, 2022)

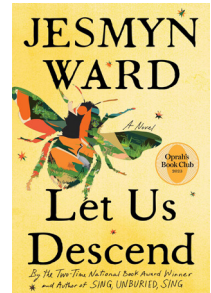


**Harry Thomas** (1981) *Haiku* (Un-Gyve Press, 2020)

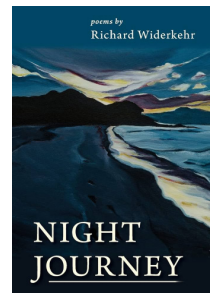


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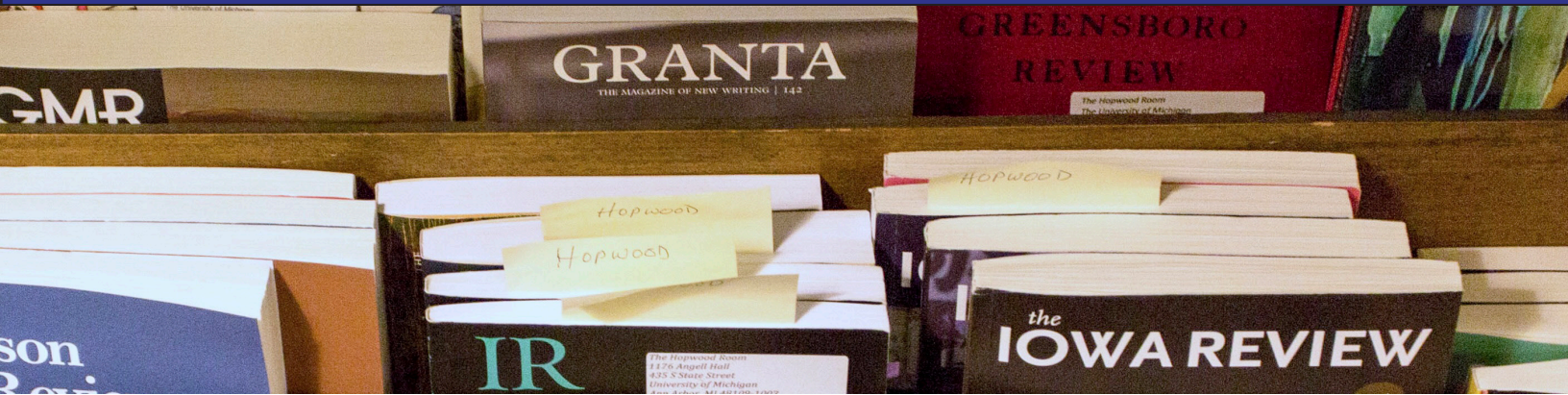
Jesmyn Ward (2005) *Let Us Descend* (Scribner, 2023)



Richard Widerkehr (1966) *Night Journey* (Shanti Arts Press, 2022)



# HOPWOOD ALUMNI UPDATES



## PUBLICATIONS

**Sébastien Butler** (2021) Poems: “Outdoorsman” *Pleiades*, “There Are Things They’re Not Telling You” *Black Warrior Review*, “Shroud (w/ Mayflies & Trash Cans)” *the minnesota review*, “Gospel” *Southeast Review*, and “Sky Tongued Back with Light” *Narrative Magazine*. Three poems currently out in *Four Way Review*, Issue 28: “Ars Poetica” “Nocturne w/ Lilacs & Rain” “Like the Shadow of a Wing”

**Thea Chacamaty** (2018) Short stories: “Sun Damage” *Southern Review* and “Harm Reduction” in *Michigan Quarterly Review* (2023)

**Barry Garelick** (1971) Short stories: “No Leaders,” “The Invisible” *Fiction on the Web*, “Elizabeth,” “Pretty Girls Who Never Wear Lipstick,” “The Strong Faith of Others,” “How Has 1973 Been for You?” *CaféLit*

**Mariam Reda** (2019) Poem: “in arabic” *Stirred Stories*

**Monica Rico** (2020) Poems: “Tomato & Lettuce” *The Atlantic*, “A Lesson From My Father About Electricity” *Poem-A-Day*; “Owls of Saginaw” *Guernica*

**Ann Tashi Slater** (1990) Writings found in: *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Narrative*, *Guernica*, *Catapult*, *Tricycle*, *The Penguin Book of Modern Tibetan Essays*, and *Wanting: Women Writing About Desire* (*Catapult*)

**Harry Thomas** (1981) Poems: “Lament,” “I Have a Worthy Rooster” *Literary Imagination*, “Mother Johnson” *A Clubbable Man*

**David Joez Villaverde** (2022) Poems Forthcoming: *The Kenyon Review*, *FENCE*, *AGNI*

**Richard Widerkehr** (1966) Poems Found in: *Atlanta Review*, *Permafrost*, *Door Is A Jar*, *Open: A Journal of Arts & Letters*, *Sweet Tree Review*, *Naugatuck River River*, *Cirque*, *Third Wednesday*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Main Street Rag*, and *Crack The Spine*.



# HOPWOOD ALUMNI UPDATES

## AWARDS

**Pemi Aguda** (2019) 2022 O. Henry Prize for “Breastmilk,” 2023 O. Henry Prize for “The Hollow”

**Kevin Dreyfuss** (1992) 2017 and 2020 *Emmy* for Best Short Form Series, 2021 *Critic’s Choice Award* for Best Short Form Series

**Michael O’Ryan** (2023) Finalist in *Narrative Magazine’s* 15th Annual Poetry Contest

**Monica Rico** (2020) “Five Things Borrowed” was selected for *Best New Poets 2023*. Winner of the 2022 Moveen Poetry Prize.

**Juliana Roth** (2014) selected as one of the 2022-23 Susan Kamil Emerging Writers by *The Center for Fiction*, nominated for Best Drama Writing by the *International Academy of Web Television*, Selected as a VIDA Fellow with *Sundress Publications*, Shortlisted by Rob Doyle for the *Red Line Book Festival’s* TU Dublin Short Story Competition

**Mitchell Salley** (2022) Arthur Miller Creative Arts Award 2022 at the University of Michigan, Dark Drama Finalist, Texas Short Film Festival 2022 Best Actress, Best Michigan Made Film, Motor City Nightmares International Film Festival 2023, Official Selection for Lake Michigan Film Festival 2024

**Ann Tashi Slater** (1990) Writings found in: *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Narrative*, *Guernica*, *Catapult*, *Tricycle*, *The Penguin Book of Modern Tibetan Essays*, and *Wanting: Women Writing About Desire (Catapult)*

**David Joz Villaverde** (2022) Matt Clark Editor’s Choice Prize in Fiction, *New Delta Review*

**Richard Widerkehr** (1966) poem “The Possum on Irving Street” won an award in the Sue C. Boynton Contest

# HOPWOOD ALUMNI UPDATES

## GENERAL NEWS

**Dean Bakopoulos** (1997) co-created and executively produced the series “Made for Love,” which aired for two seasons on HBO. He is now associate professor of cinematic arts and head of screenwriting at the University of Iowa.

**Kevin Dreyfuss** (1992) currently serves as Governor in the Television Academy.

**Maeson Linnert** (2023) *Where Orion Went*, Hopwood Drama Winner, opened on 11/16 with support from the RC Players.

**Beth (Bich Minh) Nguyen** (1993-1998) is currently a professor in the creative writing program at the University of Wisconsin Madison.

**Juliana Roth** (2014) *Final Curtain Call*, recently had an Academy-qualifying run at Lumiere Cinema in Los Angeles and is under consideration for the 2024 Oscars.

**Jess Row** (2000) is currently teaching at NYU in the English Department and Creative Writing Program.

**Barbara F. Seiden** (1968) Screenplay, *Appointed Rounds* is in Development on Slated.com. Seeking investors, producer, director.



# IN MEMORIUM

Lee Gerlach (1920-2016)

*won the Hopwood Award in Poetry (1954)  
for *The Nether Shore: A Volume of Poems**



# 2024 HOPWOOD LECTURER KEMP POWERS

This year we are remarkably lucky and grateful to be visited by Academy Award-nominated American playwright, screenwriter, and director Kemp Powers. He is a writer of immense talent and range, with projects spanning from *One Night in Miami* to Pixar's *Soul* to most recently (and a favorite of mine) *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* which was nominated for best animated film at the 96th Academy Awards. We are honored that he took the time to share some of his very own advice about writing, researching, and the industry. It was a great privilege and pleasure to have been able to interview Mr. Powers and I know that his wisdom will help all of us writers here at the University of Michigan! Enjoy!



Matthew Buxton

*What inspired you to pursue a career in playwriting, and how did you discover your passion for storytelling through the theater?*

I have theater to thank for my entire creative career. Growing up in Brooklyn, New York, theater was as much in the background of my youth as the emerging hip-hop scene of that time (the 1980s). Shakespeare wasn't just something we studied in class, but it was also something we experienced regularly on city stages and in the park. And I still remember vividly my first visits to Broadway musicals with my mother. I think the theater both opened me up to a variety of different stories as well as having a focus on interesting characters as I dove into my own writing as a young man.

*How do you approach the creative process when developing a new work? Can you walk us through your typical writing routine?*

In the early stages of my writing, I'm very much a morning person. Creatively, I'm most inspired early in the morning into the early afternoon. After lunch, I rapidly lose steam, so I have a tendency to step away from the computer by 3pm. However, as I approach my deadlines (more on that later), I weirdly switch to nighttime writing. As I close in on the end of a first draft, as well as subsequent revisions, it's not unusual for me to get started as late as 7 or 8pm and work well into the late hours of the night. I have no explanation why I work this way. Maybe I use a different part of my brain for different parts of the process?

Another odd difference. With screenplays, I am a hardcore outliner, and I won't write a single line of dialogue until I've hammered out a very detailed outline. However, with stage plays, I'm much more free-form and likely to jump into the script without any formal outline. I think that's because screenwriting has such a formalized structure.

*Hopwood*  
HOPWOOD AWARDS PROGRAM

# 2024 HOPWOOD LECTURER

## KEMP POWERS

*How do you handle challenges and setbacks during the writing process? Are there particular strategies or techniques you use to overcome creative blocks?*

Having a deadline has always been key for me. Also, the aforementioned outlines. If I ever hit a wall in my script, the outline allows me to jump to a different section I'm more interested in writing, which keeps my flow going.

*What advice do you have for aspiring writers who are just starting their journey in the world of creative writing?*

Well, it IS a journey! I'd remind them that the first draft is just that. It's the first draft. And writing really is rewriting and rewriting. Don't be discouraged when your good idea in your head ends up looking not so great once you've got it down on the page.

*How do you stay connected to your audience and remain relevant in a constantly evolving creative landscape?*

The wonderful thing about theater is that I get to sit in the back row with my audience and watch how they are responding to the work. They may not realize it, but their natural reactions to what's on stage is informing me as I dive into my own revisions of the work. With film, I'm lucky to have a large group of peers I've come to know over the years whose feedback helps me greatly as I work. As for relevance, I have no control over that. I don't even have any social media, so I remain happily in the dark on that front. When I'm irrelevant, the industry will let me know by no longer producing any of my work!

*Can you discuss the role of research in your writing process?*

It's tremendously important. Before writing creatively, I was a journalist for nearly two decades, so what I used to call "reporting" (conducting research, interviewing people, visiting locations) is now what constitutes my "research" on new projects on stage and screen. In fact, I think my previous career as a journalist contributed tremendously to my strengths as a playwright and screenwriter.

There's a lot you can learn from reading about a topic, but that should only be the starting point. There's an experiential component to research as well. Once, I was planning to write a play that was set on a Louisiana plantation. I learned so much from books and interviewing people. But then I made it a point to travel to rural Louisiana and actually visit several plantations. And what incredible, rich details did I pull from those visits! The scents in the air. The textures of the warped wood. The stifling Summer humidity. Those little details all managed to weave their way into my play in a way they never would have otherwise. And what a great excuse to travel, see the world, and meet different kinds of people! See? my journalism side is kicking in again!

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS AND FINALISTS OF THE 2024 HOPWOOD AWARDS!

A complete list of winners and finalists, along with the program for the 2024 Hopwood Award Ceremony, can be found on the Hopwood Program website: <https://lsa.umich.edu/hopwood>.

**Hopwood 2024 Awards Ceremony**

THE AVERY HOPWOOD AND JULE HOPWOOD AWARDS IN CREATIVE WRITING  
Academy of American Poets Prize / Joshua Slocum Prize / Arthur M. Hays Sulzberger Prize / University of Michigan Daily News Scholarship Award / Philip Henslow Prize / Christopher Award / Charles Wright / Ezra Douglas Award in Fiction / David Porter Award for Excellence in Journalism / Dennis Montano Prize for Distinction in Journalism / Playwriting / Frank and Gail Eisner / Spontaneous Poetry Contest / James Gustafson Prize / Robert J. Taft Prize / Philip Henslow Prize / William J. Reilly Award for Excellence in Poetry / Leonard and Blanche Newman Writing Prize in Dramatic Writing / Leonard and Blanche Newman Writing Prize in Fiction / Maurice R. Support / Award in Poetry / Whiting Darrow Award / Michael S. Schwartz Award in Poetry / Morris Schwartz Library Award / Paul and Sophie Schwartz Award / Peter F. Tuttle Award in Fiction / Robert J. Taft Prize / Play and Helen Moskowitz Award / Roy W. Cowden Memorial Fellowship / Stanley S. Schwartz Prize / Technology Corporation Prize

**The 2024 Hopwood Awards Ceremony and Lecture**  
Wednesday, April 17  
5:30 p.m.  
Rackham Auditorium  
LECTURE BY KEMP POWERS

**AN EVENING WITH KEMP POWERS**  
Thursday, April 18  
5:30 p.m.  
Rackham Amphitheatre (4th floor)

Kemp Powers is a Golden Globe Award-winning and Academy Award-nominated screenwriter, playwright, producer, and director. His credits include *Spider-Man: Across The Spider-Verse*, *Soul*, and *One Night in Miami*.

BOTH EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.  
The Rackham Building is located at 915 E. Washington Street in Ann Arbor.

**M LSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE HOPWOOD AWARDS PROGRAM UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN** [lsa.umich.edu/hopwood](https://lsa.umich.edu/hopwood)

## Hopwood Program Events in 2023-24

It's been a busy year in the Hopwood Room! In addition to our regular hours for visitors and weekly teas on Thursday afternoons, the Hopwood Room provided space for the Next Drafts works-in-progress workshops for English faculty; meetings of the MFA Poetry Exam Reading Group, the English Grad Group, and the Residential College Creative Writing Forum; and launch parties for two issues of the Michigan Quarterly Review. Here's some of what we got up to in 2023-24:

"Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book."  
— Dwight D. Eisenhower

**HOPWOOD BANNED BOOKS TEA**  
THURSDAY OCTOBER 5, 2023  
3:00 - 5:00 PM  
1176 ANGELL HALL

- Enjoy coffee, tea and light refreshments
- Come and bring a copy of a banned book
- Check out books banned and censored from the Hopwood Library
- ALL ARE WELCOME!

**M LSA HOPWOOD AWARDS PROGRAM**

**HOPWOOD HALLOWEEN TEA**  
Thursday, October 26 | 3:00 - 5:00 pm  
1176 Angell Hall, Hopwood Room

"Cider and donut holes plus candy galore!"  
"Halloween music, games, and book ratings!"  
"Costumes optional but welcome!"

**GHOST WRITERS**

**M LSA HOPWOOD AWARDS PROGRAM**

**PASS THE MIC**

A VIRTUAL OPEN MIC EVENT  
FEATURING STUDENT CONFERENCERS AND LSA CHAIRS  
KALEY KUHMAN  
MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW  
NOAH REISCHMANN

**NOV 8 7-8:30PM**

UP STUDENTS: FEEL FREE TO REGISTER AS A WRITER/ARTIST/POET/PSYCHOLOGIST/PHILOSOPHER/...  
LAW UNDERGRADUATES CAN SIGN UP BY EMAILING THE HOPWOOD PROGRAM AT [HOPWOODPROGRAM@UMICH.EDU](mailto:HOPWOODPROGRAM@UMICH.EDU) BY NOV 2

**M LSA HOPWOOD AWARDS PROGRAM**

**Hopwood SUBMISSIONS FORUM**

Learn about the Hopwood Awards submissions process and get ready for the January submission deadline!  
Ask or discuss in person (in-person only required)

November 16th 10:00-11:00 AM  
November 22nd 10:00-11:00 AM  
<https://lsa.umich.edu/submit>

**M LSA HOPWOOD AWARDS PROGRAM**

**Hopwood Celebration Tea**  
February 1, 2024 | 3:00-5:00 p.m.  
Hopwood Room (1176 AH)

Join us for a celebration of new publications by English faculty! Featuring readings from:  
Kelly Huffer | Molly Lynch  
Karyn McQuinn | Meg Sweeney

**M LSA HOPWOOD AWARDS PROGRAM**

**HOPWOOD BOOK LOVERS TEA**

Join us for tea, coffee, specialty treats and a Blind Date with a Book!

**02.15.24 3:00 - 5:00PM**  
Hopwood Room 1176AH

## Hopwood Program Staff

Meg Sweeney, Hopwood Director

Rebecca Manery, Hopwood Program Manager

Emma Behrendt, Hopwood Program Assistant

Matthew Buxton, Hopwood Intern and Newsletter Editor

Nora Sullivan, Hopwood Intern and Webpage Editor

We hope you enjoyed this newsletter. Hopwood laureates can send news about publications, awards, and other milestones at any time to [hopwoodprogram@umich.edu](mailto:hopwoodprogram@umich.edu). We buy books by Hopwood laureates when we can, but are also grateful to receive complimentary copies for the Hopwood Library. Please send to: Hopwood Program Manager, 435 S. State St., 1176 Angell Hall, Ann Arbor, MI 48109. Thank you!

