Hopkins Society Officially Formed at ALA Conference

The 2009 American Literature Association Conference saw the birth of an official author society devoted to the life and work of Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins.

The conference, held May 21-24 in Hopkins’s hometown of Boston, Massachusetts, featured two separate roundtable panels dedicated to Hopkins. Both established scholars of the author’s work and new voices contributed to the discussions of “Hopkins as Novelist” and “New Contexts and Works in Progress” in Hopkins studies.

Following these well-attended sessions, interested members met to approve an organizational charter written by Dr. Lois Brown (Mount Holyoke College). The lively meeting, facilitated by April Logan (Haverford College) also included reflections on the history of Hopkins Studies from Dr. John Gruesser (Kean University). Officers pro-tem were chosen: Lois Brown, Chair; Alisha Knight (Washington College), Secretary; John Gruesser, ALA Liaison; Mary Frances Jiménez (University of Maryland), Newsletter Editor. A By-Laws Committee was also selected to establish the operating structure for the Society: Lois Brown, Dworkin (American University in Cairo), and prose selections by Hopkins herself. Additionally, the website will serve as a hub for announcements of publications and conferences related to Hopkins studies.

Drs. Gabler-Hover and West invite submissions of new material and announcements for the website; they may be reached by email at engjgh@langate.gsu.edu and engejw@langate.gsu.edu.

Hopkins Website Features News and Texts

Even before the Hopkins Society was formally created at the 2009 ALA conference, Drs. Janet Gabler-Hover and Elizabeth West (Georgia State University) launched a new website centered on work by and about Pauline E. Hopkins.

The website, [http://paulinehopkinsociety.gsu.edu](http://paulinehopkinsociety.gsu.edu), features a thorough Hopkins bibliography compiled by Dr. Ana Nunes (University of Coimbra, Portugal), a biography of the author’s life by Dr. Ira Dworkin (American University in Cairo), and prose selections by Hopkins herself. Additionally, the website will serve as a hub for announcements of publications and conferences related to Hopkins studies.

Drs. Gabler-Hover and West invite submissions of new material and announcements for the website; they may be reached by email at engjgh@langate.gsu.edu and engejw@langate.gsu.edu.
Thoughts from the Chair pro tem

It was absolutely fitting that the launch of the Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins Society took place in Boston, the city in which Hopkins became a powerful creative force, passionate public intellectual, and forthright political activist. It was a momentous moment when we gathered for the May 2009 meeting of the American Literature Association [ALA] that featured two dynamic and well-attended panels that testified to the national and international community of Hopkins scholars and the intriguing and deftly nuanced elements of Hopkins literary and artistic work.

As we mark the sesquicentennial anniversary of Hopkins's birth, it is deeply gratifying to see how her writings, performances, activism, and networks continue to sustain and to generate vigorous global dialogues. Since Professor John Gruesser of Kean College organized the first Modern Language Association panel on Hopkins in 1992, there have been panels on Hopkins at international conferences and annual academic meetings, a steady number of Ph.D. dissertations on Hopkins, a multitude of essays focusing on illuminating aspects of her diverse career and canon, well-received scholarly biographies, a welcome edition of her collected *Colored American Magazine* writings, and incisive volumes of collected essays on Hopkins and her world. Scholarly work on the African American intellectual tradition and the nature of nineteenth- and twentieth-century race work is enriched by study of Hopkins’s multifaceted assessments of social justice, race history, equal opportunity, and the unmistakable political and cultural power of art and literature. The continued focus on African American women’s history, feminism, and activism consistently highlights and assesses the pioneering contributions that Hopkins made to her New England and national sisterhood. In addition, scholars, curators, activists, and artists continue to delineate the key upbuilding role that Hopkins played as she documented the work, ambitions, and accomplishments of her peers and the national women’s movements of which she was a part.

The vital business associated with building a sure organizational foundation for the Pauline Hopkins Society has continued since the May 2009 ALA meeting. University of Maryland at College Park doctoral student Mary Frances Jimenez has continued her steady management of the Hopkins list-serve and has created the first of our society newsletters. Professors Janet Gabler-Hover and Elizabeth West of Georgia State University continue their invaluable stewardship of our Hopkins website. The by-laws committee consisting of Professors Alisha Knight, April Logan, Eric Gardner, Tanya Clark, and myself convened in Philadelphia and we look forward to submitting the by-laws to the society for approval when we gather in San Francisco for the May 2010 ALA Conference and our second meeting of the Pauline Hopkins Society. John Gruesser, our society’s ALA liaison, has ensured that the San Francisco ALA meeting will feature two engaging society-sponsored panels, one of which will feature distinguished senior scholars reflecting on the evolution of Hopkins scholarship.

The life and works of Pauline Hopkins inspire a substantial array of scholarly work, innovative pedagogy, and archival research. As a society, we can look forward to building on our shared interests in Hopkins and to participating in continued debates about the literary and cultural politics of her activism, to attending to the nuances embedded in her diverse activities in the public sphere, and to hoping for the continued discovery and elucidation of illuminating primary documents.

We have the welcome opportunity to sustain a vibrant society, to make continued advancements in Hopkins scholarship, and to think together about critical teaching tools and resources. As a society, we look forward to making strategic and productive partnerships with organizations in and beyond New England and to capitalizing on our shared appreciation of Hopkins’s unwavering creative intensity, professionalism, and race work. We also will be working to make more of Hopkins’s work accessible and to supporting diverse conversations, teacher institutes, special publications, and online resources. We will continue to think about how best to mark the milestones of Hopkins’s life and works and how we might use these important moments to call attention to Hopkins’s powerful legacy as a gifted race woman and the continued impact of her life and work on critical literary, political, race, gender, and pan-African, and global issues.

The work before us as members of the Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins Society is a transformative "upbuilding." We have agreed to move together in collective work that reflects our shared and individual intellectual, scholarly, and community passions, all of which are rooted in the spirited work and enduring legacy of Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins.
I. Call to Order

April Logan called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

II. Addendum to the Agenda

“Announcements” was added to the agenda.

III. Overview of the Pauline Hopkins Society

John Gruesser historicized the past twenty years in Pauline Hopkins studies, beginning with the reprinting of her work in the Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers series in 1988, a 1990 NEH summer seminar that included study of Hopkins’s work, and a 1992 MLA conference panel devoted to Hopkins. We have also witnessed the publication of *The Unruly Voice*, additional MLA and Collegium for African American Research (CAAR) panels, books by Hanna Wallinger, Ira Dworkin and Lois Brown, the Hopkins listserv and website, and finally this organizational meeting. Gruesser added that he believed the Pauline Hopkins Society should provide opportunities for Hopkins scholars to gather on a regular basis and provide a means to promote Hopkins’s work.

IV. Presentation of Resolution to Found the Pauline Hopkins Society

Lois Brown read a resolution, which stated in part, that “we establish the Pauline Hopkins Society and dedicate this organization to the advancement of Hopkins scholarship, to the growth and continued prominence of scholarly work on the Hopkins canon, her world, allies, and peers, and to meaningful considerations of contributions that Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins made to literature, the arts, American and African American culture, journalism, politics, civil rights, pan-Africanism, and the women’s club movement.”

The motion to accept this resolution passed.

V. Presentation and Discussion of Survey Results

April Logan provided an overview of the survey John Gruesser conducted last fall in order to gauge the amount of interest in a Pauline Hopkins Society:

14 people responded to the survey.

46.2% of the respondents believed a “full society” should be established, while 61.5% believed a more modest organization was in order.

100% were interested in having a newsletter, 65% would contribute to it, and 41.7% would help edit it.

41.7% were willing to serve as officers, 53.8% were not, and 92.9% were willing to serve as committee members.

April Logan also reviewed some of the comments that were submitted with the survey responses. For example, the Hopkins Society should be linked to a more established organization (like MLA), and the Society should work on establishing a Hopkins memorial.

There was a brief discussion about the listserv. Mary Frances Jiménez reported that approximately 30-40 email addresses are currently listed. The listserv is advertised on the Hopkins website, but it receives very little traffic (posts).

Attendees discussed the survey responses and the need for a Hopkins Society. A few individuals observed that
while a formal society was in order, the organization’s activity level could be as moderate or extensive as the members desired. Considering the extent of Hopkins's career, and the fact that there is no society devoted to a nineteenth-century African American woman writer, a Hopkins Society should be viable.

A few other factors point to our ability to sustain a formal Society. Linking the Society to ALA has practical advantages, and the roundtable format enables attendees to see the range of Hopkins scholarship that is being produced. There was some debate over whether or not to have a Hopkins panel every year or just every two years when ALA is in Boston.

A few suggestions for the newsletter were discussed, like including John Gruesser’s opening remarks and Lois Brown’s resolution, making the newsletter digital, using it to recognize current work and demonstrate the vitality of Hopkins scholarship, including pedagogy and abstracts of conference papers, and using the newsletter to promote the work of graduate students. Hanna Wallinger added the newsletter should be used to keep the Society’s records, and she stressed the need for it to be available on the Hopkins website.

Strategies for utilizing the Hopkins website were also discussed, including the possibility of publishing an online collection of essays from the roundtable papers. April Logan mentioned a Wiki site as another possibility for online contributions. Lois Brown added that we could get outside funding for e-publications, which could circumvent the longer timeline and expense of traditional publishing. Elizabeth Ammons cautioned that we needed to be careful of junior, untenured faculty’s publication needs. Giulia Fabi noted that e-journals can be refereed and have an ISSN. She also encouraged the group to consider contributing Hopkins articles to special issues of journals like *African American Review* and *New England Quarterly*.

VI. Nomination and Election of Chair pro tem, Secretary pro tem, and ALA Liaison

There was some discussion about the role and responsibilities of the Secretary. There was a consensus that this office should be separate from Newsletter Editor.

Motions to elect the following individuals to office were approved:

- Lois Brown, Chair pro tem
- Alisha Knight, Secretary pro tem
- John Gruesser, ALA Liaison
- Mary Frances Jiménez, Newsletter Editor pro tem

Nominations for Treasurer were put on hold and deferred to the Bylaws committee. Other issues that were discussed but eventually deferred to the Bylaws committee include term limits, the office of Vice President, electronic elections, and the membership period.

VII. Appointment of the Bylaws Committee

The following individuals were appointed to the Bylaws Committee:

- Lois Brown
- Tanya Clark
- Eric Gardner
- Alisha Knight
- April Logan

VIII. Discussion of the Membership Structure

There was a general consensus that the Society should offer membership levels, like Lifetime Member ($500) and Graduate Student Member ($20). Eric Gardner also recommended that we establish a fund for graduate student travel. There was some further debate about the membership period. While a two-year period would cost more, it would provide more continuity. A three-year term, however, would avoid alienating members on the west coast who could not attend the Boston ALA conferences. Further discussion considered whether or not we should require conference presenters to pay membership dues. On the one hand, the dues would help fund the panel and other
administrative costs; on the other hand, not charging dues could lead to a more committed Society membership. The Bylaws committee was charged with continuing this discussion and determining an appropriate dues policy.

IX. Selection of Date, Time and Location of Next Meeting

The bylaws committee will meet in October at the SSAWW conference in Philadelphia.

X. Announcements

[The Hopkins walking tour of Beacon Hill was announced at the beginning of the meeting.]

XI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alisha Knight
Assistant Professor, Washington College
Secretary pro tem

Resolution to Establish the Pauline Hopkins Society

Whereas we gather on this 23rd day of May in Boston, Massachusetts, where Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins established herself and became known, celebrated, and respected as a gifted artist, prolific writer, astute social critic, dynamic public intellectual, informed citizen, ardent advocate of civil rights and equal rights, enterprising journalist, and active member of the national club women’s movement, we propose to establish a literary society that honors the substantial commitment that Pauline Hopkins made throughout her lifetime to the performing arts, music, journalism, belles-lettres, political activism, anti-lynching movement, women’s club movement, pan-Africanist movement, and international racial solidarity and racial justice.

Whereas we, as individuals who bring scholarly, artistic, political, and activist interests to bear on our engagement with the works, careers, alliances, and accomplishments of Pauline Hopkins, her distinguished family and ancestors, and the work and efforts of her allies, peers, and colleagues, we dedicate ourselves to creating a society that hosts forums that facilitate meaningful debate and advance scholarly engagement throughout and beyond academe on the artistic, critical, cultural, gender, literary, political, racial, and theoretical issues that emerge in the broad, diverse, and sophisticated Hopkins canon.

Whereas we strive to honor the breadth and scope of the writings and activist work of Pauline Hopkins, we propose to establish this society as one that honors and invites considerations of Pauline Hopkins and her world. We also agree to establish this society as one that supports ongoing critiques and assessments of the local, regional, national, and international histories, communities, movements, and issues that informed, shaped, and enriched the work of Pauline Hopkins.

Be it resolved, then, that on this 23rd day of May in the year 2009, we establish the Pauline Hopkins Society and dedicate this organization to the advancement of Hopkins scholarship, to the growth and continued prominence of scholarly work on the Hopkins canon, her world, allies, and peers, and to meaningful considerations of contributions that Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins made to literature, the arts, American and African American culture, journalism, politics, civil rights, pan-Africanism, and the women’s club movement.
I see a twenty-year arc in Hopkins studies. Although there was certainly critical attention devoted to Hopkins before the publication of the Schomburg volumes, edited by Richard Yarborough, Hazel Carby, and Elizabeth Ammons in 1988 and 1990, the accessibility to Hopkins's fiction that these books offered to scholars and students began the process of rescuing her from obscurity.

I was introduced to Hopkins in 1990 through Eric Sundquist’s National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar on the Problem of Race in American and African American Literature 1860-1930 and instantly became fascinated by her life, writings, and career. This led me to organize a Modern Language Association (MLA) Convention Special Session on Hopkins in 1992. The robust response to my call for papers culminated in the publication of The Unruly Voice in 1996, the first book devoted exclusively to Hopkins, which featured contributions by Lois Brown, Jennie Kassanoff, Carole Doreski, Liz Ammons, Nellie McKay, Kate McCullough, Kristina Brooks, Cynthia Scharger, and Malin Pereira.

By then there was no stopping the wave of interest in Hopkins—essays, dissertations, and book chapters devoted to her were appearing in increasingly larger numbers.

Sometime in the late 1990s I received an email about Hopkins from Hanna Wallinger of the University of Salzburg. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship. Through Hanna I became involved in the Collegium for African American Research (CAAR), meeting Hopkins scholars from Europe as well as the United States.

Serendipitously, exactly ten years after the first MLA Special Session on Hopkins, in 2002 there was a second, at which I met members of a new generation of Hopkins scholars, including Jill Bergman and Ira Dworkin.

The last four years have seen the publication of three immensely significant books on Hopkins—Hanna’s biography, Lois’s biography, and Ira’s collection of Hopkins’s nonfiction. Clearly there can be no doubt: Hopkins has arrived and she’s here to stay.

Perhaps five years ago I hit on the idea of forming an author society—something I knew absolutely nothing about. At the CAAR Conference in 2007, Hanna and I organized two sessions on Hopkins, one of which was devoted to exploring the idea of creating a Hopkins Society. Perhaps twenty people attended and expressed their support for such a society. Mary Frances Jimenez kindly volunteered to establish and manage a Hopkins listserv, and Janet Gabler-Hover generously offered to create a Hopkins Society website with her Georgia State University colleague Elizabeth West. If you have seen the website, you know how good it is.

The American Literature Association Conference in Boston in 2009, the sesquicentennial—I think (there’s been some controversy about this recently)—of Hopkins’s birth, seemed an appropriate place and time to formally establish the Society. Alisha Knight and Alfred Bendixen encouraged me to attempt to organize as a big a launch as possible—major Hopkins scholars, special events, etc. Fortunately, people responded enthusiastically—and here we are.

What do I see a Hopkins Society doing? Lois has said it better than I ever could in her Resolution. I would only add that at a minimum I see the Society as providing 1) an opportunity to gather on a regular basis to share our ideas about and discoveries relating to Hopkins, and 2) a means to promote Hopkins and scholarly interest in her in a wide variety of ways. As for other possibilities for the organization, I am reluctant to prognosticate. Not only is Hopkins herself the most unpredictable of writers but who could have foretold twenty years ago that through Hopkins I would have the chance to meet so many wonderful people—black and white, European and American, male and female, young and not so young, and that we would be meeting here today to celebrate this black daughter of the revolution who used her distinctive, unruly voice to write and agitate for humanity.

“Clearly there can be no doubt: Hopkins has arrived and she’s here to stay.”
American Literature Association 2010

The Pauline Hopkins Society will sponsor two panels at the ALA Conference to be held May 27-30, 2010 in San Francisco, California.

Pauline Hopkins Then and Now: Hopkins Scholarship and Pedagogy since the Schomburg Volumes.
Chair: John Gruesser, Kean University
1. "Pauline Hopkins and the Problematics of Literary Canonization," Richard Yarborough, University of California, Los Angeles
2. "Why John Brown?" Elizabeth Ammons, Tufts University
3. "Some Thoughts about a Hopkins Literary Legacy," Maryemma Graham, University of Kansas
Respondent: Lois Brown, Mount Holyoke College

Open Topic Panel on Pauline E. Hopkins.
Chair: John Gruesser, Kean University
1. "Contending Voices: Locating Emerson and Du Bois in Pauline Hopkins's Contending Forces," Sydney Bufkin, University of Texas
2. "Strange Tales of Romantic Happenings in This Mixed Community": Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins's Winona as a Rewriting of The Last of the Mohicans," Jacob Crane, Tufts University
4. "Hopkins and the 'New' Abolition," Teresa Zackodnik, University of Alberta

2009 ALA Conference Roundtables Explore
New Directions in Pauline Hopkins Studies

Two dynamic roundtable-style panels formed the backbone of the Hopkins Society’s events at the 2009 American Literature Association meeting. Established scholars were joined by graduate students in conversations that celebrated “Hopkins the Novelist” and “New Contexts and Works in Progress” in Hopkins Studies. The list of participants follows; full conference abstracts may be found at our website, http://paulinehopkinssociety.gsu.edu.

Panel I: Hopkins the Novelist
Moderator: Alisha Knight, Washington College

“Pauline Hopkins’s Educational Argument in Contending Forces,” Robin Mangino, Tufts U.

“Winona and Environmental Justice,” Elizabeth Ammons, Tufts U.


“A Northern Borderland in a Tale of the South and Southwest: The Figure of Canada and Hopkins’s Neo-Abolitionist Project in Winona,” John Gruesser, Kean U.

“Ethiopianism and Black Constructs of Blackness in Pauline Hopkins’s Of One Blood,” Elizabeth West, Georgia State U.

“Re-viewing Pauline Hopkins’s Novels Through 21st Century Graphic Narratives,” Marla Harris, Independent Scholar

Panel II: New Contexts and Works in Progress
Moderator: Lois Brown, Mount Holyoke College

“New Contexts: Pauline Hopkins and Boston’s Cultural Community,” Carla L. Peterson, U. of Maryland

“The Stress of Impulse’ and Other Mysteries in the Colored American Magazine,” Hanna Wallinger, U. of Salzburg

“Pauline Hopkins: Middle-Class Clubwoman or Double-Agent Bohemian,” April Logan, Haverford College

“Hopkins, Technology, and Race,” Mary Frances Jiménez, U. of Maryland

“Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child: A Book in Progress,” Jill Bergman, U. of Montana

“Quilting the Race: Hopkins, the Colored American Magazine, and the African American Family: A Book in Progress,” Tanya Clark, Rowan U.

Welcome to the first issue of the Pauline E. Hopkins Society Newsletter! At the formational meeting of the Society, attending members imagined this newsletter as a space to maintain organizational records, a platform to announce publications and conferences dedicated to Pauline Hopkins, and a forum for sharing new ideas about promoting Hopkins and her era through our teaching and scholarship. Future issues of the newsletter might explore Hopkins in the undergraduate and secondary classrooms, Hopkins works-in-progress, and abstracts from recent and future conferences featuring Hopkins scholarship.

We need your submissions! Write to newsletter editor pro tem Mary Frances Jiménez at mfj@umd.edu with your ideas for an article, essay, or special issue of the Hopkins Society Newsletter. We are also eager to publish calls for papers related to Hopkins’s work and era, as well as announcements of your recent Hopkins-related publications.

Requests to join the HOPKINSSOCIETY listserv may be submitted to Mary Frances Jiménez, listserv administrator and newsletter editor pro tem: mfj@umd.edu

To submit information for possible inclusion on our website, please contact Janet Gabler-Hover and Elizabeth West: engjgh@langate.gsu.edu and engejw@langate.gsu.edu.