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A formal portrait, like that of poet Paul Laurence Dunbar on our cover, is both fixed and open to interpretation. However *still*, it suggests the lively context of its making; not only the moment and setting but the circumstances, too. Why was the portrait taken and by whom? How did this American original see himself? How did he wish to be seen?

Capturing the essence of a face, a figure, is no easy task; but capturing the essence of a writer's gifts is harder still. In 1897, when Dunbar was 25, *Poet Lore* reviewed his work with bold incisiveness, finding in him "the spirit of the present"—bohemian, democratic, cosmopolitan—while other critics riveted attention on his dialect poems. In this special issue, scholar Melissa Girard explores the journal's progressive editorial culture ("Who's for the Road?"), reminding us that the challenge even now is to offer a vivid, if inherently unstable, portrait of new writing: to read without distraction, ignoring the noise and fashions that surround us.

Helen Clarke and Charlotte Porter founded *Poet Lore* with the conviction that great literature can enlighten as well as enchant. Seeking the universal in the luminous particular, they introduced Americans to new writing from around the world. In a 1966 overview of the magazine's beginnings, Melvin Bernstein described their inclusiveness: "Just as without argument [*Poet Lore*] published Russian literature in a decade of mounting Red fear, so in the same decade of anti-immigrant feeling, 100 per cent Americanism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Negroism, it published work on and by Yiddish writers, work on and by Negro writers."

Having edited this journal for a tenth of its long run, we recommit ourselves to their principles: openness, inclusiveness, depth, and authenticity. Believing poetry enacts what other texts can only describe, we'll continue to read each week in search of language that isn't merely "of" and "for" our moment but might outlast it. We'll expand on *Poet Lore*'s historic interest in translation through our "World Poets in Translation" feature, extending its reach to Africa, the Far East, and beyond.

We can't say what poetry provides—what meaning, what music—but we can show you. We open this issue with a chorus of poems on race (from harrowing *reportage* to meditations on labor, folklore, marriage), each voice, each "argument" distinct in tone and timbre. What drives the singing? Maybe it's what Cornelius Eady calls, in a poem about another kind of song, "love's unstoppable fuse."

# Essays

## AN INTRODUCTION:

To highlight *Poet Lore's* contribution to American letters over the past 125 years, we've asked scholars and poets to contribute essays about aspects of the journal and its history. In the pages that follow, you'll find their responses on a wide range of subjects. Melissa Girard explores *Poet Lore's* unconventional reaction to the rise of modernism and the editors' appreciation for Paul Laurence Dunbar's cosmopolitan bohemian poetry at a time when he was recognized largely for his dialect poems. Joan Hua examines *Poet Lore's* long commitment to publishing world literature in translation and highlights the journal's democratic openness to other cultures—sometimes in opposition to prevailing political and social currents. Megan Foley pays tribute to the creative partnership of *Poet Lore's* founding editors, Helen Clarke and Charlotte Porter. Bruce Weigl reflects upon the four years he spent writing a book-review column for *Poet Lore* in the early 1980's. And Rod Jellema—poet, teacher, and longtime friend of *Poet Lore*—champions the freedom of the writing process in three short takes on how poets follow undercurrents of sound and association to arrive at places beyond intellectual understanding.

Taken together, these essays offer a portrait of *Poet Lore* as a publication that has, for the past 125 years, pursued a path independent of passing trends, dedicated to presenting its readers with literature and criticism of lasting value. In the journal's first issue in January of 1889, Helen Clarke and Charlotte Porter wrote: "The approach to [beauty], like that to any other mystery... is a path one may search for as well as chance upon." That is the path we seek to find and follow as we carry their work forward.

—Jean Nordhaus, Review Editor

## "WHO'S FOR THE ROAD?": POET LORE, PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR, AND THE OPEN ROAD OF 19<sup>th</sup>-CENTURY AMERICAN POETRY

By Melissa Girard

### I.

Critics of American literature often treat the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a poetry salvage yard—swooping in to reclaim a handful of works that matter. There is little sense of a poetic milieu in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century America: literary or cultural institutions or practices that gave rise to a distinctive poetic idiom. Go ahead—take a minute. Try to name a school, movement, or mode of poetry that truly belongs to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century America. As Ezra Pound writes in "Portrait d'une Femme," "No! there is nothing! In the whole and all, / Nothing that's quite your own. / Yet this is you" (lines 28–30).

This is of course not the case for late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American fiction. The 1880's and 90's were particularly fertile ground for innovations in the form of the short story and novel. These two decades saw the publication of landmark works by Kate Chopin, Stephen Crane, Mary Wilkins Freeman, William Dean Howells, Henry James, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Mark Twain, to name only a few of the period's most familiar figures. With such fiction looming large and modernism waiting in the wings, it is perhaps unsurprising that we have been a little incurious about the poetry of this period.

Two poets often associated with the late 19<sup>th</sup> century—Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson—had collections of poetry published in the 1880's and 90's but composed decades earlier. They belong more accurately to that earlier period, although their ongoing afterlives and global reputations make it increasingly difficult to confine them to any one period or place.

A similar slipperiness has affected the reception of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry, which appeared throughout the 1890's in collections including *Oak and Ivy* (1893), *Majors and Minors* (1895), *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896), *Lyrics of the Hearthside* (1899), and *Poems of Cabin and Field* (1899). Dunbar is indisputably a major figure whose work belongs to this period. Yet, paradoxically, he is rarely discussed within the context of the 1890's. Like a few other influential figures who published books of poetry in this period—Edgar Lee Masters, Harriet Monroe, and Edwin Arlington Robinson—Dunbar is typically nudged forward into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What difference could a few years make?

In Dunbar's case, quite a bit. More than a century after his death in 1906, Dunbar is now remembered almost exclusively for his dialect poems, such as "When Malindy Sings":

Oh, hit's sweetah dan de music  
 Of an educated band;  
 An' hit's dearah dan de battle's  
 Song o' triumph in de lan'.  
 It seems holier dan evenin'  
 When de solemn chu'ch bell rings,  
 Ez I sit an' ca mly listen  
 While Malindy sings.

(lines 57–64)

Following Dunbar, the "sweetah" music of the black vernacular would inspire a century of poetic experiments by African American and Caribbean writers such as James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, Sterling Brown, Kamau Brathwaite, Lorna Goodison, and Michael Smith. It is in the company of these later black writers that Dunbar now most frequently travels.

But, despite the richness of these 20<sup>th</sup>-century connections, Dunbar also influenced and was influenced by his late 19<sup>th</sup>-century contemporaries.

His poem "To the Road," for example, which is written in Standard English, draws on one of the dominant poetic tropes of the American 1890's:

Who's for the road?  
 Vagabond he, all conventions a—scorning,  
 Who's for the road?  
 Music of warblers so merrily singing,  
 Draughts from the rill from the roadside up-springing,  
 Nectar of grapes from the vines lowly swinging,  
 These on the road.

(lines 10–16)

The poem fits squarely within a tradition of bohemian verse popularized in the United States by Bliss Carman and Richard Hovey's two *Vagabondia* volumes: *Songs from Vagabondia* (1894) and *More Songs from Vagabondia* (1899). Like Dunbar, they idealized the freedom and anonymity of the modern vagabond, as in their most famous poem, "The Joys of the Road":

A vagrant's morning wide and blue,  
 In early fall, when the wind walks, too;  
 A shadowy highway cool and brown,  
 Alluring up and enticing down.

(lines 3–6)

These poems of the open road represent an American adaptation of European bohemian discourse—specifically, the figure of the *flâneur*, a "solitary and thoughtful stroller" modeled by Baudelaire in *Paris Spleen* (20). *Songs from Vagabondia* appeared just before George du Maurier's novel *Tribby* launched a bohemian craze. Published serially in *Harper's* in 1894, *Tribby* nostalgically recounts *la vie bohème* in 1850's Paris. It thus introduced a new generation of Americans to a world popularized a half-century earlier by Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Victor Hugo's *Les*

*Misérables*, and Henri Murger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*. *Trilby* topped the first American bestseller list (in *The Bookman*) and went on to sell more than two million copies in its first two years.

Is it any wonder that we have had trouble locating the poetry of this period? In addition to its "mania" for fiction, late 19<sup>th</sup>-century America was also defined in large part by the idle wanderings and promiscuous longings of the vagabond poet. This was a poetry of open roads and open exchanges across the Atlantic, between historical periods, and among literary genres. "All conventions a-scorning," these bohemian poets epitomized not only freedom but also exile and alienation. Baudelaire characterizes the modern *flâneur* as one "on whom, in his cradle, a fairy has bestowed the love of masks and masquerading, the hate of home, and the passion for roaming" (20). This self-effacement and radical displacement continues to create problems for scholars and readers of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American poetry.

Take, for example, Dunbar's poem "The Garret":

Within a London garret high,  
Above the roofs and near the sky,  
My ill-rewarding pen I ply  
    To win me bread.  
This little chamber, six by four,  
Is castle, study, den, and more,  
Altho' no carpet decks the floor,  
    Nor down, the bed.  
My room is rather bleak and bare;  
I only have one broken chair,  
But then, there's plenty of fresh air—  
    Some light, beside.  
What tho' I cannot ask my friends  
To share with me my odds and ends,

A liberty my aerie lends,  
To most denied.

(lines 1–16)

Dunbar's bohemian poems, which also include "The Bohemian" and "The Dilettante: A Modern Type," provide an unstable ground on which to build a national poetry. Here is the poet whom Booker T. Washington would famously hail as the "Poet Laureate of the Negro race" playing the part of London exile and Wildean dandy. As Dunbar writes in "The Bohemian": "No conventional garb but I'll attack it. / (Come, why not don my spangled jacket?)." William J. Maxwell notes that Dunbar published these poems after returning from a six-month reading tour in London in 1897. At the time, London was second only to Paris in the bohemian imagination. Oscar Wilde had been famously tried and prosecuted in 1895, and Puccini's wildly popular *La Bohème* made its English debut just two months after Dunbar's arrival. While there, Dunbar followed in the footsteps of Mallarmé and other Symbolists, exploring the bohemian haunts of the old French quarter of Soho and visiting Cheshire Cheese on Fleet Street, an antique pub that represented a cosmopolitan blending of Parisian intellectual life and "homegrown Johnsonian gentility" (Maxwell 343).

In his introduction to *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, William Dean Howells, the former editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, who was then writing regularly for *Harper's*, encouraged Dunbar's readers to focus their attention on his dialect poems, "those pieces of his where he studies the moods and traits of his own race in its own accent of our English" (xviii). Dunbar's poems written in "literary English" are "very good," Howells explains, but not "distinctively" Dunbar's own. "What I mean is that several people might have written them," Howells continues, "but I do not know anyone else at present who could quite have written the dialect pieces" (xix).

More than a century later, it is difficult to know who the "several people" might have been: who were the vagabonds who joined Dunbar

on the open road of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American poetry? Thanks, in part, to Howells, Dunbar's dialect poems reside at the heart of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century African American literary canon. But his black bohemianism—an interracial, international poetics—remains mysterious to us. Here is an American poet longing for exile, well before T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, or Gertrude Stein—a black writer finding “liberty” in Europe, well before James Baldwin. So foreign is this American poetry, so contradictory its desires, that William Maxwell, in an article in *African American Review*, writes of “cracking Dunbar’s bohemian code” (343). Dunbar’s contemporaries, I would suggest, are the key to this nearly forgotten vision of American poetry and of literary modernity.

## II.

While Howells and Harper’s singled Dunbar out for the “distinctive” accents of his dialect poems, the literary journal *Poet Lore* offered a different estimation of his significance. Helen A. Clarke, who, along with Charlotte E. Porter, founded *Poet Lore* in 1889, first reviewed Dunbar’s poetry in *Poet Lore* in January 1897, following the publication of *Lyrics of Lowly Life*. Her review hails Dunbar as “a first poet of his race” and an embodiment of the modern *Zeitgeist* (301). She characterizes the “spirit of the present” as predominantly “democratic,” defined by the pursuit of “religious, social, or sex emancipation” and a general “*jolie de vivre*” (299). Although it is brief, Clarke’s review captures the essence of Dunbar’s bohemianism. She also disagrees with Howells’s claim that Dunbar’s dialect poems represent his most valuable work. Clarke admires the dialect poems, even reprinting “Song of Summer,” but goes on to say that she finds “the other poems,” those written in Standard English, to be equally “fresh” and valuable (301).

*Poet Lore*’s involvement in these foundational debates regarding race and modern poetry, as well as Dunbar’s place in the modern literary canon, would continue in the years to follow. In 1929, Thomas Millard Henry published a powerful essay on Dunbar, titled “The First

Black World Poet.” Henry places Dunbar second only to Whitman in the canon of modern American poetry, calling him the most important poet of the last 50 years and citing his global reputation as evidence. Indeed, Henry notes that critics in England and Central Europe had been quicker than Americans to recognize Dunbar’s greatness. (It is not surprising that Henry fails to mention Emily Dickinson, whose star then was only beginning to rise, in this assessment of modern American poetry.) However, Henry’s neglect of the so-called “new poetry” is unusual for this historical moment. In the late 1920’s, the most popular and well-regarded poets in America included Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Edwin Arlington Robinson; if we expand the field abroad, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein were already being hailed as leaders of a poetic revolution. Henry acknowledges that he is amid a poetry “Renaissance,” but chooses, instead, to look back to the American 1890’s, to Dunbar’s poetry, for the roots of this modernist transformation (303).

What is true of Henry’s essay is also true of *Poet Lore* as a whole in these early years: they were both more conservative and more progressive than our historical memory typically permits. In a detailed history of *Poet Lore*’s first three decades, 1889 to 1929, published in *Poet Lore*, Melvin H. Bernstein claims that the journal struggled “to catch the scent of modernism” (28). Bernstein notes, for instance, that, at the height of modernism, *Poet Lore* slighted James Joyce, André Gide, Ernest Hemingway, Sherwood Anderson, and Theodore Dreiser (29). The journal’s first mention of T.S. Eliot arrives in a 1937 essay by Cale Young Rice. Even at this late date, *Poet Lore* was still holding on to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “The ‘Renaissance’ of 20<sup>th</sup>-century poetry,” Rice writes, “really began much earlier than 1912, the date usually ascribed to it” (219). Rice hails “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and *The Waste Land* as landmarks in 20<sup>th</sup>-century American poetry but also highlights the “momentousness” of Frost, Robinson, Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, and Robinson Jeffers. These were poets who, like *Poet Lore*, did not define the break with the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Or, perhaps more accurately, they defined it differently from Eliot, Pound, and the so-called “new” poets.

*Poet Lore* did not miss modernism so much as disagree with its claims to “newness.” For instance, in 1917, Clara McIntyre challenged the accuracy of the term “new poetry.” She saw in Imagism the “impressionism” of Stephen Crane and in *vers libre* the democratic rhythms of Whitman. A few years later, in the Winter 1922 issue of *Poet Lore*, writing in the same year *The Waste Land* appeared, Florence Mary Bennett asked similar questions about the history of the “new” poetry:

It has not required a modern *furor* to show that rhyme and rigidly regular meter are not essential to poetry. Milton himself used rhyme under inner protest, the lover of the classical that dwelt in him expostulating against it, the musician in him instinctively recognizing that it added beauty to the monotonous stress-accent of the lines in lyric pieces. (547)

Bennett went on to argue that Latin folk songs and early Christian hymns displayed a tension between Greek quantitative and English accentual-syllabic meters that was similar to what one might find in the contemporary Imagist poems of H.D. (547).

*Poet Lore*'s response to the new poetry, in its first three decades and beyond, was complex and contradictory. The editors were skeptical of the new poetry, but they also defended E.T. Marinetti and Futurism, even translating some of his poems for their readers. “Marinetti’s poetry is not meant to soothe, but to stimulate,” Anne Simon writes, “His eloquence is torrential, his metaphors often monstrous” (740). Simon identified within the Futurist avant-garde echoes of Swinburne and Whitman. In 1918, *Poet Lore* failed to be impressed by Ezra Pound’s *Lustra*, mentioning it only in passing, but they devoted significant attention to the Japanese-born writer and Imagist poet Yone Noguchi in both the Winter and Fall issues.

Like other literary journals and “little magazines” from this era—*Broom*, *Crisis*, *The Dial*, *The Egoist*, *The Freewoman*, *The Little Review*, *Masses*, *Others*, *Poetry*, *Secession*, and *Wheels*—*Poet Lore* can thus provide us with a significant window into literary history. Of this long list of modernist pe-

riodicals, only *Poet Lore* and *Poetry* survive. *Poet Lore* is the oldest continuously published poetry journal in the United States, yet it has been sorely understudied. In recent years, it has become easier to access late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century periodicals than ever before. Many of these rich historical archives, including all of the early issues of *Poet Lore*, are now available digitally and are fully searchable. What you find in its pages will surprise you. They may have “struggled to catch the scent of modernism,” but they placed Paul Laurence Dunbar, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century African American poet, at the center of a radically democratizing world. It is a vision of modern poetry worth conserving.

### III.

In 1926, Charlotte Porter reflected on why she and Helen Clarke had founded *Poet Lore* nearly three decades earlier. In “A Story of Poet Lore,” Porter says that the journal was meant to be “an exponent of a larger catholicity than was then in vogue” (442). The editors’ goal from the beginning had been educational: to create, following Whitman, a “great audience” for American poetry, a more literate and engaged readership. In its early years, the journal regularly contained features like “The Study,” “Study Hints,” “Study Questions and Notes,” and “School of Literature,” all designed to encourage and aid readers in a sustained practice of literary scholarship.

*Poet Lore* had arisen out of the Browning Society of Philadelphia. Porter and Clarke were both extremely active in literary clubs, belonging throughout their lifetimes to the Shakespeare Society, the Boston Authors Club (at the time under the leadership of Julia Ward Howe and T. W. Higginson), the American Poetry Association (in which Clarke served as the first vice-president), the New England Poetry Club, and the American Drama Society (Bernstein 11). The Browning Society was a study group for women, founded under the auspices of the New Century Club, itself an off-shoot of Philadelphia’s Centennial Exhibition in 1876. The name referred to “the new century for women,” an oft-repeated tagline

from the "Women's Pavilion," which had played a controversial role in the Centennial. The Women's Pavilion was a separate physical structure, which had been built after a group of women were denied permission to exhibit within the Main Building. It thus became an emblem of society's ambivalence about women's rights and freedoms. Susan B. Anthony and the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) considered the Women's Pavilion to be a sign of segregation—an unacceptable compromise to women's claims for full participation in the Centennial. They delivered their famous "Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States" on July 4, 1876, to protest the Women's Pavilion and call attention to the invisibility of the suffrage movement at the Centennial.

But to members of the Browning Society and the New Century Club, like Clarke and Porter, women's clubs provided invaluable educational opportunities, practical training, and, perhaps most importantly, community. In an early history of the woman's club movement, published in 1898, Jane Cunningham Croly notes with pride, "The New Century Club is undoubtedly one of the strongest of the social and intellectual forces in the city of its birth, and has been the nursery of some of its noblest activities" (1028). The writer goes on to claim that the Browning Society of Philadelphia was "justly famous" for three reasons: "First, it is the largest literary society in the world, its membership numbering nearly a thousand; second, it is broadly democratic in principle and in workings, with no manifestations of the 'clique' tendency, either intellectual or social; third, it has always had a woman for its president" (1028).

*Poet Lore* fully embodied these principles. The journal took advantage of the rapid growth of colleges and universities and the concomitant professionalization of literary studies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century—the *Modern Language Association* (MLA) was founded in 1883—to attract a steady stream of talented contributors. *Poet Lore*, like the Browning and Shakespeare societies and the New Century Club, provided women with access to this newly professionalizing world, from which they were often otherwise excluded. In each issue, *Poet Lore* alerted its readers to trends

in literary publishing, provided them with transcripts and reviews of recent lectures, and modeled what professional literary scholarship looked like in this new era. A symposium on literary studies that the journal hosted in January 1894 illustrates their ambitions. They brought together Professors F.I. Carpenter and Oscar L. Triggs (University of Chicago), L.A. Sherman (University of Nebraska), Katherine Lee Bates (Wellesley College), and Hiram Corson (Cornell University) for a public discussion of the changing literary profession.

As Porter asks in "A Story of Poet Lore," "Did ever two women before dare embark so independently on publication of a periodical so unprecedented?" (438). Porter's recollections about the journal's early years were written just months after Clarke's death in 1926 and are resonant with her grief (she refers to herself as the "survivor"). The two women were life partners, and, as Porter recounts, had exchanged rings in a commitment ceremony (437–438). When Clarke characterizes the modern *Zeitgeist* as a spirit of "religious, social, or sex emancipation," she seems also to have had her own ambitions for women and her life together with Porter in mind.

This is the poetic milieu of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century America that we have often overlooked. *Poet Lore* and other similar periodicals—Bernstein claims there were 4,400 American magazines published in 1889—along with the literary clubs that supported them, were pursuing a newly democratic vision of American literature (30). In *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*, Henri Murger figures bohemia as an artistic finishing school, "A preface to the Academy, the Hôtel Dieu [hospital], or the Morgue" (Maxwell 344; Murger 45). For literary women in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century America, such as Clarke and Porter, literary journals and clubs took on this educational role. They were their foothold—albeit a tenuous one—on a changing literary profession.

The early issues of *Poet Lore* are filled with visions of bohemia and dreams of democracy. One article reflected on the relationship between Whitman and Murger (Horace Traubel had talked with Whitman about



Murger before the poet's death and shared his recollections in the journal) in January 1894; another analyzed multiple characters and aspects of *Tribly* in January 1897; reviews of Carman and Hovey's *Songs from Vagabondia* appeared first in 1894 and again throughout the decade. Carman and Hovey are, along with Josephine Preston Peabody, Whitman, Dunbar, Browning, and Shakespeare, among the figures most frequently published and discussed in *Poet Lore's* early years.

Although Carman and Hovey are now largely forgotten, they occupied a prominent place in the American poetry scene of the *fin de siècle*. Ezra Pound remembered them—along with Sadakichi Hartmann (who published an essay on modern Scandinavian poetry in the January 1891 issue of *Poet Lore*), Trumbull Stickney, Frederick Wadsworth Loring, and George Santayana—in the *Pisan Cantos*:

and as for the vagaries of our friend  
 Mr. Hartmann,  
 Sadakichi a few more of him,  
 were that conceivable, would have enriched  
 the life of Manhattan  
 or any other town or metropolis  
 the texts of his early stuff are probably lost  
 with the loss of fly-by-night periodicals  
 and our knowledge of Hovey,  
 Stickney, Loring,  
 the lost legion or as Santayana has said:  
 They just died They died because they  
 just couldn't stand it  
 and Carman "looked like a withered berry"  
 20 years after  
 Whitman liked oysters  
 at least I think it was oysters.

(Canto LXXX)

Pound was, of course, a strong proponent of magazine publishing, editing and contributing frequently to many of modernism's most influential periodicals. He knew that "fly-by-night periodicals" contained within their pages "our knowledge" of entire literary worlds. In a February 1938 article published in *Globe* magazine, "Responsibility? Shucks!" Pound wrote, "I can still get sentimental over Carman and Hovey; back in 1905 what was there native except 'Songs of Vagabondia?' I wonder what young have read them" (qtd in Surette).

Readers looking to find a record of clear successes in the early issues of *Poet Lore* will be impressed with many of their choices: Shakespeare, Browning, Whitman, Frost, Pushkin, Turgenev, James, Cather, Marinetti, Rilke, Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Pound. They are all there and many more.

But I am also drawn to what *Poet Lore* has to teach me about Carman, Hovey, and many other poets waiting to be rediscovered. These forgotten poets are arguably evidence of what Melvin Bernstein dismisses within *Poet Lore* as "editorial ladies' critical populism" (16). In his otherwise invaluable history of the journal's early years, Bernstein nonetheless reveals some of the biases of his mid-century American moment. He calls 19<sup>th</sup>-century club women "eager literary ladies" (13) and likewise describes Clarke and Porter as "the very pattern of model late Victorian literary ladies" (10). Readers investigating Clarke and Porter further—in the pages of *Poet Lore* or in Porter's extraordinary book of poems, *Lips of Music* (1910), which documents her love for Clarke—will have trouble finding anything "pattern" about them.

Bernstein also suggests that the broad scope of Clarke and Porter's interests—in poetry, drama, and fiction, from the U.S. and around the world, in the literature of the past as well as the present—was a weakness. "Perhaps to the harm of their fame," Bernstein writes, "no literary genre was alien to them" (10). But I am suggesting that this openness—even when it tends toward the undisciplined and unprofessional—is a testament to *Poet Lore's* liberal democratic principles.

As Paul Laurence Dunbar writes in "The Dilettante: A Modern Type,"

He scribbles some in prose and verse,  
And now and then he brings it;  
He paints a little, —gathers some  
Of nature's gold and mints it.

He plays a little, sings a song,  
Acts tragic roles, or funny;  
He does, because his love is strong,  
But not, oh, not for money!

He studies almost everything  
From social art to science;  
A thirsty mind, a flowing spring,  
Demand and swift compliance.

(lines 1–12)

"A thirsty mind" can easily be mistaken for an undisciplined one. Democracy, as Dunbar seems to know, often looks like dilettantism. And freedom may be the most unprofessional literary value of them all.

Who's for the road?

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## WITHOUT BORDERS: POET LORE'S EARLY ATTENTION TO WORLD LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

By Joan Hua

Although I don't understand a word of Turkish, a 2013 reading of Turkish poetry, cosponsored by *Poet Lore* and the Turkish Embassy in Washington, reminded me of translation's capacity to find the crossroads between two languages, two aesthetics, and two cultures. The reading revealed translation as both art and negotiation—a way of delivering otherwise inaccessible poetry to English readers so that they might grasp its original beauty while appreciating nuanced cultural and linguistic differences.

When translated literature first gained the attention of American readers, it offered a glimpse into unfamiliar worlds. The devotion to international literature by 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century journals such as *Poet Lore* helped cultivate literary translation and raise it to a developed form of art.

For many decades of its 125-year history, *Poet Lore* indulged the curiosity of American readers with generous quantities of translated works of drama, poetry, and fiction, as well as commentaries on international literature, spanning European, Asian, and Near-Eastern languages. It continues its devotion to "the comparative study of literature" (the journal's subtitle from 1889 to 1894) to this day with its "World Poets in Translation" feature, which in recent years has presented translation portfolios of the work of Dan Turèll (Denmark), Melih Cevdet Anday (Turkey), and U Tin Moe (Myanmar).

This commitment has long been in conflict with the trend of the times. In 1889, *Poet Lore*'s visionary founding editors, Helen A. Clarke and Charlotte Porter, began publishing international literature while the 19<sup>th</sup>-century literary current surged with American fiction. Comparatively apathetic to Mark Twain and Henry James, the editors included (in