



September 20, 2012

Mr. John Barr, President  
Poetry Foundation  
61 West Superior Street  
Chicago, IL 60654

Re: Modern Poetry Association History

Dear John:

Thank you for hosting the tour of Poetry's new home for Yale Club members this past Tuesday. Your and John Ronan's remarks gave me an appreciation of the building's complex and thoughtful design and its intimate relationship to the Foundation's mission.

After the tour, it occurred to me that my Aunt Julia Bowe's memoirs (enclosed) might usefully find a place in the Foundation's archives, given its stewardship of *Poetry's* history. The memoirs were privately published for my extended family in 2011.

In writing the preface to this work, my research had taken me to The Newberry Library and the boxes of documents and memorabilia of Julia's husband, Augustine J. Bowe. To my surprise, I found that the Poetry Foundation had helped make possible the inventorying of these papers. The inventory itself is so useful that it was made an appendix to the memoirs.

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The Foundation's support in indexing the papers was no doubt because of the role Julia and Gus Bowe played in the ongoing drama of financing *Poetry* after Harriet Monroe's death. Julia and Gus had stepped into the financial crisis faced by *Poetry* in 1941. Thus began decades of never-ending fundraising struggles. The biography of Augustine J. Bowe at the Newberry has this to say about that their era of involvement with *Poetry*:

Writing poetry was another passion of Bowe's. He became involved in *Poetry* through Inez Boulton, friend of he and his wife Julia and a Chicago society woman who taught poetry workshops and was a reader for the magazine. Boulton introduced the Bowe's to then editor George Dillon in 1940. *Poetry* was in dire financial straits at this time in the wake of Harriet Monroe's death, and the contentious removal of previous editor Morton Dauwen Zabel. Julia and Augustine Bowe came to the rescue of the floundering journal, Julia by offering her expertise in fundraising and Bowe with legal advice. In 1941 they helped form the Modern Poetry Association as a not-for-profit organization whose board members undertook financial responsibility for the magazine. Julia acted as secretary to the board, and continued to organize highly successful fundraising events throughout the 1950s and 1960s. These years were not without controversy, and the Bowes were privy to a series of editorial and organizational turnovers that nearly undermined the magazine. Bowe initially published his work in *Poetry*, but ceased to submit his poems after becoming president of the Modern Poetry Association. He continued to write daily, filling hundreds of legal pads and typed pages with his poems. A book, *No Gods are False* was edited by friend and fellow poet John Frederick Nims, and published posthumously in 1967.



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The index to the papers also has this description of contents that pertain to *Poetry*:

Of particular note is what appears to be an attempt by Julia Bowe to write a biography of Augustine Bowe. This incomplete memoir contains her perspectives on the Bowes' involvement in saving *Poetry* financially, and the controversial changing of the guard at the magazine, both administratively and editorially, during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Thank you again for the tour. I hope to see you this season at one or more of the Wayfarer events.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Bill'.

William J. Bowe  
Executive Vice President and General Counsel

Encl.