Would Poetry Disappear?

Newcomb, John Timberman

Published by The Ohio State University Press

Newcomb, John Timberman.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/28377.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/28377
This book has been an odyssey to write. The journey has made a lot more sense because of the following people, and it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge them.

Initial thanks must go to two superb scholars of American poetry, Frank Lentricchia and the late Bernard Duffey, who first showed me that turn-of-the-century verse was so worth reading; and to the inimitable Barbara Herrnstein Smith, who showed me what “worth reading” might mean.

Very big thanks are due to Bruce Michelson and Robert Dale Parker, who read large chunks of the manuscript and gave suggestions both encouraging and exacting. Nina Baym brought her formidable attention to bear on the prospectus, for which I’m grateful. Bill Maxwell and Julia Walker offered positive comment on the introduction, while Janet Lyon enabled me to present a part of the book at a very timely moment. Conversations with Gardner Rogers, Leon Chai, Ann Abbott Barbieri, Philip Graham, Rick Powers, Gillen Wood, Merrill Schleier, Stephen Kern, and Cheryl Walker have meant much. Anyone who works on modern American poetry today owes a great debt to Cary Nelson; mine is greater than most, and not only because it includes so many delicious turkey dinners.

Researching this book was a true pleasure, thanks to the libraries and staffs of Duke University, West Chester University, Indiana University, the University of Delaware and above all the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, from which Gene Rinkel, Madeline Gibson, Bill Brockman, and Barbara Jones are due particular thanks. The staff overseeing the wonderful Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music at the
Milton S. Eisenhower Library of Johns Hopkins was a model of helpfulness. Those of the Newberry Library, the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago, the Museum of the City of New York, and the New York Historical Society helped greatly as well. I’m grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities and to West Chester University for multiple grants allowing me to travel to collections. The Campus Research Board at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign supplied a generous grant for illustrations. In these times of crisis in academic publishing, the Ohio State University Press, personified by Heather Lee Miller and Eugene O’Connor, has been exemplary from beginning to end.

I’m grateful for these fine colleagues and scholars, formerly and presently of West Chester University’s English Department, who showed that it could be done: Michael W. Brooks, Carol Shloss, Christopher Buckley, Cheryl Wanko, Carolyn Sorisio, Anne Herzog, and Robert Fletcher (who also helped with multiple versions of the prospectus). I’ll always be grateful to C. Ruth Sabol for putting so much faith in me. The world has been made friendlier by Luanne Smith, Chuck Bauerlein, Bill Lalicker, John Thomas Kelly, Karen Fitts, and the much-missed Alan France. Kristina Brooks helped me grasp the importance of Alice Dunbar-Nelson’s work. So many students have inspired me over the past dozen years that I can’t come close to naming them all, but I certainly must thank Andy Thomas, Chris Corbo, Amy Murray, John Dixon, Juliet McCarter Latham, David Amadio, and John Kerrigan. Fine scholars and colleagues, Paul Maltby and Lynette McGrath have also been the greatest of friends, helping me to get through difficult times, and enjoy good ones. And so has my best bud Michael Peich, who stuns and amazes me with his industry, his enthusiasms, his good taste, and his martinis (while Dianne Peich amazes me by putting up with us in such good humor).

Far-flung friends have given me lots of help, even when they didn’t always know it. Thanks to Suzanne Churchill, Christopher Breu, Celena Kusch, Miranda Hickman, and Alyson Tischler, my little Modernist Studies circle, for their seriousness and their jocularity. David Chinitz and Mark Morrissong helped at key moments as well. David Jarraway and Leonard Diepeveen have been ideal colleagues and steadfast friends. Adam McKible’s friendship is a great deal more than academic.

My exceptional family provides me so many examples of good lives. All my cool cousins continue to delight me, and Dick and Lois Humphrey keep me amused. My aunt Eleanor Newcomb Rice has offered advice and wisdom, photos and news clippings, volumes of
verse and framed poems. Telling me the story of my grandfather’s friendship with Edmund Vance Cooke, she inspired the dedication to my grandparents who, each in a different way, gave me something I truly treasure: a love of the past. My brother Christopher Newcomb inspires me with his dedication to his family, parishioners, and patients. I’m prouder of Chris, his wife, Amanda, and their kids, Kaelea and Daniel, than I’ve ever been able to tell them. My mom, Jane Timberman Newcomb, keeps on keeping on, making her world and mine a better place. And my dear dad, Charles Elwyn Newcomb, wasn’t able to keep on, but lives in the hearts of all who loved him.

Everything I accomplish finally comes from, and returns to, Lori Humphrey Newcomb. Our continuing adventure now spans three books, four states, five cars, six homes, nine jobs, nineteen years, and countless acts of love and support. May it never end.