Companion (which accepted three poems, including “The Flower Boat” and “Reluctance”).

In a discerning 1953 essay, Randall Jarrell, himself a distinguished poet and one of Frost’s most discerning critics, commented that “Frost’s best poetry – and there is a great deal of it, at once wonderfully different and wonderfully alike – deserves the attention, submission, and astonished awe that real art always requires of us.” This admiration still resonates, as Frost’s poetry echoes everywhere in American culture. Francis’s more personal assessment of the poet’s life and work complements Barron’s exploration of the cultural contexts that impacted his writing; together, they significantly advance Frost studies. Fruitfully complicating our appreciation (in all senses) of his work, these books remind us why Frost remains one of America’s touchstone poets, an innovator whose work rewards continuing exploration.

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Unlike studies which seek to place Stevens, the most solitary of American poets, in company or in context, Wallace Stevens among Others consists of a “collection of readings largely inspired by the work of Wallace Stevens” (13) — readings, across the genres, of poets Mark Doty, Barbara Guest, and James Schuyler; directors George Cukor, Alfred Hitchcock, and George Stevens; and novelists Michael Cunningham, Cormac McCarthy, Joyce Carol Oates, John Updike, and Philip Roth.

David Jarraway, whose twofold aim is to “distance the poet … from the more conventional reception of his work,” and to “recover the dissident American subject” (5), presents Wallace Stevens among Others as a synthesis of his two earlier and seemingly dissimilar books, Wallace Stevens and the Question of Belief (1993) and “Going the Distance”: Dissident Subjectivity in Modernist American Literature (2003). Wallace Stevens among Others completes the triad by identifying, in the “diva-dame” of Stevens’s “Adult Epigram,” a figuration of identity in which masculine Being cedes to feminine Becoming. Jarraway argues that Stevens has inherited “Whitman’s gender mantle” in affirming new and expansive forms of (sexual) identity (58): hence Stevens’s appeal to contemporary gay American writers like Doty and Cunningham. The latter’s novel, A Home at the End of the World (1990), is read here as a fictional extrapolation of Stevens’s “The Poem that Took the Place of a Mountain” — a gay man’s novel taking the place of a straight man’s poem, in the same way that, Jarraway proposes, poetry per se replaces the heteronormative mountain. Stevens “cues” Cunningham, Jarraway says, to explore “feminine temporality rather than patriarchal permanence” (48).

Since the diva-dame embodies a specifically “Deleuzian state of ‘becoming’” (20), Jarraway’s is also an exploration of “how Stevens’s stature as a writer magnifies

itself exponentially among ‘other’ contexts ... with the philosophical ruminations of Deleuze often as the guide” (11). Following Deleuze’s wayward lead, Jarraway makes “forays into contexts where the impact of Stevens is obviously less than direct” (11). Indeed, Jarraway concedes at the beginning of chapter 2 that “The collocation of Wallace Stevens and queer discourse, for some, is likely to be somewhat of a stretch,” because “[q]ueer is hot” whereas “Stevens is not” (57). Clearly, gay poet Doty is hotter than straight Stevens, “outdistancing” the latter, in the poem “Fish R Us,” “on the matter of a noncategorical and nonreferential approach to identity” (21). The “stretch,” however, may have more to do with Jarraway’s manipulation of the elastic quality of Stevensian discourse itself, the “sense of indeterminacy” and of repetition and change in which Jarraway identifies the “hallmark of reformative queer discourse” (53). Jarraway is more convincing when correspondences between Stevens and his Others are less evanescent; for instance, in his illuminating reading of Stevens’s camp correspondence with gay Cuban poet and editor José Rodriguez Feo, and in his extended and sensitive treatment of Stevens’s late poetic return to his early mentor at Harvard, George Santayana. Even here, however, there is a clutching at semantic straws: at the “queer assertion of humanity” in the title poem of The Rock (1954), for instance, the late sequence in which Stevens’s homage to Santayana, “To an Old Philosopher in Rome,” appears.

Throughout, a Stevensian vocabulary of the provisional and the possible is in tension with Jarraway’s own overdetermined latching on to “queer” keywords, to epigrams, and to epigraphs: an epigraph from Stevens’s “A Rabbit as King of the Ghosts” forms too tenuous a link between the poet and the Updike of the Rabbit tetralogy, for instance, and one wonders why Ernest Hemingway, in place of the unlikely trio of Updike, Roth, and McCarthy, does not appear among Stevens’s Others.

Despite its considerable gender- and genre-bending promise, Jarraway’s book doesn’t quite prove the adage from Stevens that it takes as its own epigraph, that “The theory of poetry is the life of poetry.” When Jarraway tells us that “if ‘incompossibility’ is now a means of communication (Deleuze, once again), it’s only because ‘the poem wants the impossible’ (Doty, once again)” (22), we may think twice about what Stevens called “The Pure Good of Theory.”

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In 1917 Horace Pippin enlisted in the 15th New York National Guard, soon to become the 369th Infantry Regiment of the American Expeditionary Forces, one of only eight all-black infantry regiments in America’s racially segregated military to see combat service in World War I. Better known to history as the “Harlem Hellfighters,” the regiment spent 191 days on the front lines of the Western