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Bart Eeckhout and Lisa Goldfarb, eds. 2017. *Poetry and Poetics after Wallace Stevens*. New York: Bloomsbury. 273 pp. ISBN: 978-1-5013-1348-6.

Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan
Universidad de Valladolid
guerrero@fyl.uva.es

Bart Eeckhout and Lisa Goldfarb have compiled a collection of essays on the broad and loose topic of poetry after Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), *after* here having both a temporal and a modeling sense. These two senses define the basis of the book, although Eeckhout and Goldfarb's aims go well beyond an attempt to define the ways in which critical work on Stevens may be integrated in broader research on modern and contemporary poetry. This is not Eeckhout and Goldfarb's first edited collection on Stevens' work. Apart from coediting *Wallace Stevens, New York and Modernism* (2012), they are the editor and assistant editor respectively of *The Wallace Stevens Journal*, and have each written or edited extensively on Stevens independently.

The issue of influence is debatable and slippery. Critics write about the influence of one author on another quite lightly, too frequently forgetting Robert Louis Stevenson's piece of advice: "But of works of art little can be said; their influence is profound and silent, like the influence of nature; they mould by contact" ([1887] 1924, 63). "Mould[ing] by contact" implies that reading an author regularly can leave traces of his/her work in the reader's writings. Stevens was well aware of this fact as he wrote to José Rodríguez Feo in January 22, 1948. It is a sort of paradoxical poetic justice that a number of poets have been willfully influenced by Stevens as can be read in *Visiting Wallace: Poems Inspired by the Life and Work of Wallace Stevens* (Baronne and Finnegan 2009) and in this book.

The book opens with an insightful essay on Stevens and Frost by Bonnie Costello. She continues the discussion that Marjorie Perloff started in 1982 when she posed the question: "Pound/Stevens: Whose Era?" Costello gives an overall view of Stevens's poetry that serves as an introduction to the book, for which she relies on the work of Howard Nemerov (1957; 1978; 1988; 1993) and Richard Wilbur

(1968; 1976; 2004; 2009). By reading these two poets against Stevens's poetry she is able to argue the extent to which American poets of the 1950s and 1960s challenged Stevens's poetics.[1]

Eeckhout's essay explores the imprint that Stevens may have left in Sylvia Plath. For this purpose, he first discusses Gregory Machacek's article "Allusion" (2007), concluding that his approach is a "combination of *stylistic assimilation* and *creative adaptation*" (44; emphasis in the original). Most of the essays in the book, in fact, deal with these two concepts. What has been traditionally termed *influence* is, in fact, a way of reading an author's work, an idea that Jorge Luis Borges devised in "Kafka and His Precursors" (1951), and that Rachel Galvin brings back in her chapter on Olive Senior and Terrance Hayes. While Eeckhout is concerned with the way a female poet reads a male poet, and concludes that the connection between the two is structural and organizational rather than phraseological, Galvin is concerned with political readings of a white poet by two black authors. Her approach is postcolonial and explores Senior and Hayes' recreation of Stevens's poetry by pointing to what was absent or silenced in it. Both Senior and Hayes play the role of literary cannibal to remind readers of the intricate web that poetry has created and of the political facet of this web, made of readings, misreadings and recreations. Connected to Galvin is Lisa Steinman's essay on African American authors. She is interested in finding echoes of Stevens's poems to show the ways these authors shed light on some aspects of his poetics that he could have never anticipated.

There are other chapters devoted to Stevens and American poetry; for instance, Al Filreis's broad survey of Stevens's legacy in America in the second half of the twentieth century. Filreis notices that most poets frame the imagination disaffectedly into the domestic space that they create. He also points to the fact that Stevens's poetics is diffuse and can barely be identified, and if it survives it is largely owing to John Ashbery's poetry. On the issue of Ashbery and Stevens, Charles Altieri writes an insightful essay on the uses of "As" in Ashbery's poetry. Drawing on his theory of "aspectual thinking" that sustained his book *Wallace Stevens and the Demands of Modernity* (2003), Altieri explores how Ashbery transforms Stevens's imagination to modify the world or to "produce senses of mystery, fluidity, and connectedness within the activity of writing as it engages aspects of the world" (187).

Angus Cleghorn analyzes Elizabeth Bishop's use of prose rhythms through rhetorical conversation. It is not simply that she learnt from Stevens's use of blank verse but she also kept Stevens's concept of the mind in action as an important part of her poetics. At first sight, it may look as if she had simply borrowed part of Stevens's rhetoric, but a more in-depth reading shows that she engaged Stevens's poetics contemporaneously to expand gendered forms.

[1] The reader who might be interested in learning more on Frost and Stevens can turn to the 2017 Spring issue of *The Wallace Stevens Journal*, edited by Stevens Gould Axelrod and Natalie Gerber.

Edward Ragg weaves through George Oppen's poetry and Louise Glück's essays to prove that in the last stage of his career Oppen addressed themes that Stevens had already addressed. Glück's essays reveal the importance of Stevens's poetics, dismissing the idea that for Glück Stevens was simply an "aloof, linguistically exclusive artist" (129), an issue that has pervaded Stevens's work, and which other contributors have also dealt with.

Joan Richardson and Lisa Goldfarb both explore Susan Howe's approach to Stevens in their essays. Goldfarb breaks new ground by reminding us that Howe always wrote appreciatively on Stevens. Richardson uses the Emersonian idea of self-disappearance to introduce her stimulating idea of poetry as an "*over-hearing*" (172; emphasis in the original). Juliette Utard writes on Stevens, A.R. Ammons and late style. She takes as a starting point the late poetry of both authors, *The Rock* (1954) and *Glare* (1998), and analyzes it while at the same time reviewing and challenging current theories of late style. Rachel Malkin stresses the importance of community in both Stevens and Hass, and how imagination can make communities. Together with this, Hass also explores Epicureanism and everyday life in a way much like Stevens.

Luckily, the book is not provincial and looks towards Europe. Lee M. Jenkins draws also on Perloff's article to explore "two strands of poetic Modernism, the Other Tradition and the Symbolist Tradition" (27). The reception of Stevens in England was seriously hindered by T.S. Eliot's literary policies, although not being regarded as a "serious" poet may have helped Stevens's reception in some respects, the playful Surrealists turning towards him in their attempt to move beyond the insularity of the Movement poets.

The reader can find a broad survey of the reception of American poetry and culture in Czechoslovakia. Although Justin Quinn focuses on Stevens in that country, his survey might be easily transported, with minor adaptations, to other countries beyond the ex-communist nations, or even countries of Western Europe. Quinn investigates how American humanist scholarship was used to counterattack the communist propaganda prevailing in Europe during the Cold War. Axel Nesme investigates Henri Michaux's poetic fictions by making use of the imperatives "It Must Be Abstract," "It Must Change" and "It Must Give Pleasure." In particular, he analyzes *Ailleurs* (1948) and *La vie dans les plies* (1949). Despite Michaux's surrealist stance, he manages to keep imagination connected to reality as Stevens claimed. Finally, George Lansing deals with Seamus Heaney's discovery of Stevens in the 1960s. Reluctant at first, it took Heaney a while to understand that Stevens could be a model for the new Northern Irish poetry. It was the accusation that Heaney endured of irrelevance for not writing political poetry that brought him close to Stevens. Stevens served him as a model both to define the nature of political poetry and to defy public expectations to remain faithful to his own poetics.

This is an outstanding collection of essays on Stevens, both for the quality of each contribution and for the broad range of issues that the authors deal with. Even though

in many cases the reader learns more about the poets that have been "influenced" or of the cultural climate in their countries than about Stevens, in the end reading all these poets "against" Stevens opens new ways of understanding a poet who is still meaningful and haunting, as these essays show. It is not a book about Stevens's influence on other poets, albeit this is a topic that is present, but rather a book about the pervading presence of Stevens in the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first, and how variously he has been read, interpreted and adopted, in many cases resisting and challenging the political and social circumstances in which the poets lived.

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Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Valladolid. He has published on the reception of Edgar Allan Poe, Percy Bysshe Shelley and T.S. Eliot in Spain. He has also translated some of Henry James's short stories and edited an anthology of nineteenth-century American short fiction. At present his research is focused on Walt Whitman's prose works.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad de Valladolid. Plaza del Campus Universitario, s/n. 47011, Valladolid, Spain. Tel.: +34 983423000; ext. 6730.