

**PARADIGMS OF AUTHORITY**  
**IN THE**  
**CARVER CANON**

by

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## INTRODUCTION

At the center of interest of the present essay is a tool of representation that seems strikingly efficient when describing a particular writing strategy but becomes rather elusive once we aim at defining it. *Reduction* as a means to the intensity of aesthetic effect is a fundamental element in all types of creative process. While there are reasons to consider artistic creation as an *expansion* of reality by challenging the limits of communication and hence, expanding what is communicable, as long as representation is among the goals of the creative process, an element of reduction is inevitably present both in the choice of the particular means of representation and in the scope, as well as the multiplicity of the world represented. Therefore, an understanding of reduction *per se*, as an artistic tool, is made difficult by the apparently irreducible complexity of its connotations.

The same difficulty arises even if we turn to a particular type of artistic representation that puts reduction in the focus of its aesthetics. Even though *literary minimalism* is justifiably considered as a distinct artistic movement that, among others, contributed to an unprecedented flourishing of the genre of short story in the latter-day history of American literature, its focus on reduction has remained either the target of criticism or the source of the most diverse approaches that range from seeing it as an ideological stance to attributing it to a fundamental distrust in communication.

The understanding of the artistic tool of reduction is also burdened by the difficulty of pinpointing its particular limits and goals, especially if we are to conceive them with regard to the similarly elusive notion of *minimum* as they appear within the critical context of literary minimalism. It seems that the idea of reduction is difficult to grasp in itself because it refers to

a process of transformation in which the source, as well as the result of the process are undefined.

However, the argument that reduction *does* stand in the focus of minimalist writing seems difficult to refute and it makes the term, reduction appear similar to that of minimalism, in that they both can prove efficient in designating a particular mode of writing despite their apparent indeterminacy. For these reasons, i.e. that reduction is difficult to conceive alone and that it still appears relevant in discussions about literary minimalism, the following argumentation sets out to present reduction in a particular context in which it is illuminated by a unique phenomenon of latter-day literary history, that of the controversy dominating Raymond Carver's reception history.

Raymond Carver's reception history can be seen as a narrative that is anything but minimalist in nature. His role in the discourse on literary minimalism is clearly substantial and his writings are seen as prime examples of reduction applied as a means to the efficiency of representation. The central position of Carver's work in the tradition of literary minimalism is one of the reasons why the peculiar critical debate about the authenticity of some of his most characteristically minimalist short stories has attracted so much attention.

What has become known as the Carver controversy, a set of unsettling concerns about the extent and the aesthetic merits of the contributions of Carver's influential editor, Gordon Lish to the writer's first two major collections, now seems to dominate Carver's reception and to give rise to a narrative in which the act of writing and the creation of a writer's legacy are seen as collective social acts of manufacturing. The eventful narrative begins with Lish's influence first appearing as a literary rumor, then coming to light in 1998 in a *New Yorker* article, that is followed by more than a decade of scholarly agitation in which Carver is either reconsidered as a minimalist writer or questioned as a writer with an authentic voice. The

narrative ends with the controversy resulting in the active recreation of the writer's literary canon in 2009.

The Library of America, the publisher set out to document the literary heritage of the United States by editing and publishing canonical volumes of collected writings by classics of American literature, published the canonical volume of *Collected Stories* by Raymond Carver. The collection featured an unusual parallel publication of different versions of some of his signature stories by including the manuscript version of *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*<sup>1</sup> (*WWTA*), the volume that brought wide recognition to the writer in 1981, under the title *Beginners*. The parallel publication of the two collections clearly brings Carver's more minimalist texts back into the focus of attention. After the years of scholarly agitation created by the controversy, during which the first, larger half of the writer's career was increasingly neglected due to concerns about his authority over the early stories, the publication of the canonical collection can be regarded as a new chapter in Carver's publication and reception history.

Discussions about the influence of the new canon on the evaluation of the writer's work and his literary merits, as well as about the theoretical corollaries of his unusual cooperation with his editor are likely to be dominating Carver studies in the upcoming period. While this paper intends to contribute to these discussions, the underlying concern of the argumentation remains the effort to map out some of the characteristics of reduction as a primary tool of representation in literary minimalism.

What makes Carver's reception history a relevant context for explorations about the working of reduction is the fact that Lish's textual interventions that constitute a major challenge in the recent reception history were primarily aimed at the reduction of various elements of Carver's manuscripts. Most importantly, he omitted more than half of the words

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<sup>1</sup> *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. New York: Knopf, 1981.

of the original version of Carver's breakthrough collection, *WWTA*. In addition to substantial omissions, Lish pared down Carver's stories on all levels of syntax, word choice, onomastics, and plot "cutting everything down to the marrow, not just to the bone,"<sup>2</sup> as the writer put it retrospectively when asked in an interview about his former style.

Lish also largely contributed to the atmosphere of *menace* often mentioned as a major element in Carver's stories. By reducing most of the introspection of the characters, such as important flash backs, monologues, references to emotional state, as well as changing the endings of many of the stories Lish actively participated in the creation of a narrative world filled with obscure motivations and unaccounted feelings of threat. The very act of cutting some of Carver's stories in the middle, and adding a few powerful but enigmatic lines of closure to the end, in itself is responsible for much of the effects of menace associated with Carver's stories, and also offers a clear example of aesthetic effect reached by means of reduction.

Therefore, by considering the textual interventions performed by Carver's controversial editor, what appears to be the source of an irresolvable tension in the evaluation of the writer's literary legacy, may also be considered as a unique chance to gain insights into the goals and effects of reduction. The new canonical volume not only allows us to read the fuller versions of some of Carver's stories but, by means of comparison, to clearly identify Lish's editorial contributions that are primarily reductive by nature. For this reason, in the following argumentation enquiries about the concept of reduction are associated with those about the concept of authority that are in the center of the Carver controversy.

In order to describe and contextualize Lish's reductive textual strategies we shall look at their effects on the formation of authority at work in the reception of the edited stories and the writer's entire oeuvre. If we look at the complex publication history of Carver's stories we

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<sup>2</sup> William L. Stull and Marshal Bruce Gentry, eds. *Conversations with Raymond Carver*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990. p. 44.

may see that the writer's work shows the traits of numerous interventions that resulted in a proliferation of versions both during and after his lifetime. Carver is known as a writer who published several versions of his stories as a result of his *revision* of former publications. The appearance of new stories and new versions did not stop with the writer's death. The posthumous *recovering* of unpublished and uncollected stories may also be considered as a major influence on the formation of the Carver canon and is included in the discussion to show the particular shift of authority from the writer to his editors after his death. The latest event in the narrative of different influences forming Carver's work is the *restoration* of the manuscript versions of some of his most reviewed stories in the new canonical collection.

All of these types of textual intervention clearly affect the various concepts of authority at work in the Carver canon. The practice of revisioning makes the writer's image a dynamic construct allowing readers to see his authority in the making. Recovering and restoration are editorial contributions that actively interfere with the writer's legacy and exercise concepts of authority that are clearly beyond the known intentions of the author. Thereby, these textual interventions, all contributing to the forming of the writer's work, can be regarded as different *paradigms of authority*, in the sense that they "exhibit" different "patterns" of authority as the term, paradigm suggests.

It is in this context of multiple paradigms of authority at work in the creation of the Carver canon that we shall consider Lish's contributions and their implications in terms of the particular paradigm of authority his editions represent. Since his contributions are primarily reductive in nature, and in order to differentiate them from other forms of editorial work, in the present paper Lish's versions are referred to as *redactions* and shown within the network of the four different paradigms of authority. By inserting the textual practices of redaction into the multiple network of influences we may see that Lish's contribution is only one of the

major influences on the writer's work and hence, the anxiety over his concealed presence in the Carver canon is not necessarily justifiable.

Therefore, the following argumentation sets out to present Lish's redactions within the network of different paradigms of authority at work in the formation of the Carver canon in order to reach two apparently different objectives. The first is an effort to offer an approach to the writer's work in which the tension in the writer's reception history created by the Carver controversy is reduced by revealing the multiplicity and the mutual interdependence of the various influences upon his work. The second goal of the argumentation is to present reduction as an autonomous and legitimate textual strategy that is inseparable from Carver's literary legacy. The two objectives combined point towards a possible "emancipation" of Carver's early stories, in the forms they were first received by the general public, and create an approach to a heterogeneous concept of authority at work in the act of writing seen as a collective process that may result in a literary canon with equally authentic and legitimate multiple versions. Another possible result of this approach is an understanding of the textual strategy of reduction as a primarily *relative* concept that does not function as an end in itself, only as a possible means to an end.

In order to reach these objectives, the following argumentation first explores the relationship between the strategy of reduction and the concept of authority by claiming that issues of authority are indispensable when trying to define the goals and limits of reduction. The second chapter offers a brief overview of the Anglo-American and the Hungarian reception and publication history of Carver's work with special attention paid to the publication and reception of the different versions of his stories, as well as their Hungarian translations. The Carver controversy that is at the center of the writer's reception history is introduced together with the scholarly agitation it gave rise to in order to show that the controversy over Lish's

contributions has been fuelled by the various paradigms of authority at work in the formation of the Carver canon. The publication history of the Hungarian translations shows that a seemingly arbitrary context, such as the publication of translations is also influenced by the same paradigms of authority that are detectable in the original canon.

The third chapter is devoted to a discussion of the four major paradigms of authority at work in the formation of the Carver canon. The textual interventions of revision, recovering, restoration, and redaction are presented in their mutual influences, within the context of various conflicting paradigms of authority, and the narratives of Carver's publication and reception history are interpreted as examples of a complex network of influences contributing to the collective social discourse of literature. These considerations conclude in the presentation of redaction as a dominant paradigm in the Carver canon, a recognition that paradoxically reinforces the central significance of reduction as a textual strategy in his literary legacy.

The final argumentative chapter offers exemplary readings of some of Carver's stories in order to show the working of different paradigms of authority on the textual level. The interpretations begin with a reading of one of Carver's signature stories, "So Much Water So Close to Home" that allows us to establish the major characteristics of the differences between the redacted and the original versions of Carver's stories. The parallel reading of the two versions shows that they provide ground for significantly different and authentic interpretations and it proves the legitimacy of their inclusion in the canon and illustrates the co-existence of different paradigms of authority in the writer's work.

The next reading features another signature story published under the titles "The Bath" and "A Small, Good Thing." This reading focuses on the unusual case of *three* different authentic versions created by the multiple paradigms of authority: a redaction, a revision, and a restored manuscript version. Since it is the only story with three canonized versions, the

reading focuses on the complex mechanisms by which Carver's revision that he considered as the definitive version, processes Lish's redaction by both eliminating most of the editor's changes while authorizing some others, thus creating an authorized version that is at the intersection of various influences.

The third reading revisits the differences between the redactions and the restored manuscripts by looking at a story, "Want to See Something?"/"I could See the Smallest Things." As opposed to "So Much Water So Close to Home," however, the original version of this story was only made available by the restoration of the manuscript in the Library of America volume. Therefore, this comparison allows us to see the reductive changes Carver authorized by *not* restoring them in his lifetime. At the same time, the manuscript version and the reading it induces illustrate the working of restoration as a paradigm of authority and presents it as yet another legitimate textual strategy.

The last reading focuses on Carver's most anthologized story, "Cathedral" that is the only story with one version included in the interpretative chapter. This story represents Carver's writing after he broke away from his relationship with Lish and it is inserted to show the strategy of reduction applied as an integral part of Carver's writing style. While the story illustrates the creation of another level of the writer's authority that finally placed him among the classics of American literature, it also *thematizes* the process of a person's regaining his voice and authority. Therefore, the reading of "Cathedral" points towards a synthesis, in terms of presenting Carver's authentic mode of writing as a result of his artistic development in which Lish played a crucial role, and also by showing how the various strategies of reduction may be applied to create the aesthetic effect of a larger construct of cognition appearing behind the elliptical structures of the narrative.

It is only after the seeming detour of considering the multiple paradigms of authority at work in Carver's literary legacy and facing the challenges of the Carver controversy, may

one venture to evaluate the mature stories of the writer and see their position in his career. The same context of multiple paradigms also allows reduction to be seen as a legitimate strategy of representation and at the same time, a central element in Carver's writing style.

## 1 THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY IN REDUCTION

The most often quoted slogan of minimalism, “Less is More”, does not only describe a reductionist principle but also illustrates the way this principle works. The efficiency of this extremely simplified statement has been convincingly argued for by John Barth<sup>3</sup> when he made his readers compare his lengthy definition<sup>4</sup> of the minimalist doctrine with the same slogan.

What he made clear by this demonstration was the fact that even the most complex statement can both be radically simplified *and* loaded with potential meanings, as in this case, by means of abstraction. The key to the success of Barth’s argument is that abstraction is based upon the very same reductionist approach that the slogan captures: “what can be explained on fewer principles is explained needlessly by many”<sup>5</sup>, that is, simplification is a means to the efficiency of communication. Other than that, however, abstraction and the minimalist approach do not seem to have a lot in common. The minimalist world in literature is not deprived of its details in favor of a set of generalizations, as an abstract mode of thinking requires; on the contrary, it is a collection of details apparently without any ground for generalizations. What is then, the source of efficiency in literary communication achieved by means of reduction?

Being an admitted *maximalist*, Barth does not hide his preference for “the high calorie delights”<sup>6</sup> literature can offer by writers taking the path opposite to that of minimalism. He creates a positive image of maximalism by comparing it to “the *via affirmativa* of immersion

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<sup>3</sup> John Barth. “A Few Words about Minimalism.” In *Further Fridays – Essays, Lectures, and other Nonfiction*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co. pp. 64-75.

<sup>4</sup> “...artistic effect may be enhanced by a radical economy of artistic means, even where such parsimony compromises other values: completeness, for example or richness, or precision of statement.” Barth, 64.

<sup>5</sup> Barth, 74.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

in human affairs”<sup>7</sup> and contrasting it with minimalism, seen as “the *via negativa* of the monk’s cell, the hermit’s cave”<sup>8</sup>. This bias can be detected in his definition referred to above, when considering the possibility of enhancing artistic effect *at the expenses of* completeness, richness, and precision. By claiming that these are compromised by the “radical economy of artistic means,” Barth implies that the artistic effect of the minimalist reduction emerges from elsewhere than these “other values.”

Yet, the efficiency of the minimalist literary work appears to be inseparable from the idea of a calculated accuracy, as is made clear in Carver’s words on writing:

That’s all we have, finally, the words, and they better be the right ones, with the punctuation in the right places so they can best say what they are meant to say.<sup>9</sup>

Carver’s insistence on precision suggests that he regards accuracy as a prerequisite to the efficiency of reduction. At the same time, Carver’s most successful stories show that accuracy is only possible to be conceived if it is measured to or aimed at some idea of completeness so that the right words fall into the right places. And once they do, Carver suggests, precision and completeness together can create the possibility for richness of expression as well:

It’s possible, in a poem or a short story, to write about commonplace things and objects using commonplace but precise language, and to endow those things – a chair, a window curtain, a fork, a stone, a woman’s earring – with immense, even startling power. It is possible to write a line of seemingly innocuous dialogue and have it send a chill along the reader’s spine – the source of artistic delight...<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Barth, 69

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Carver. “On Writing.” In: *Fires: Essays, Poems, Stories*. Santa Barbara: Capra, 1983. p. 16

<sup>10</sup> Carver, 15

The notion of being able to point beyond the apparent confines of language comes through this passage most often quoted from Carver. It also illustrates the fundamental difference between considering reduction as a mere alternative to excess, a reoccurring fashion in art, as Barth does,<sup>11</sup> or relying on it as an effective means towards precision, completion, and even richness.

The debate about the meaning of the slogan “Less is More”, and whether it has any meaning at all, characterized the beginning of the reception history of literary minimalism. Despite the apparent distance present in Barth’s view of minimalism, his approach seems rather affirmative, especially compared with other critics, such as Madison Bell<sup>12</sup> or James Atlas<sup>13</sup> who claim that there is no way to resolve the paradox in the slogan: less will always end up being less.

Bell identifies minimalism as a distinct school in contemporary American short fiction whose

representative work contains, as if by prescription, a number of specific elements: a trim, “minimal” style, an obsessive concern for surface detail, a tendency to ignore or eliminate distinctions among the people it renders, and a studiedly deterministic, at times nihilistic, vision of the world.<sup>14</sup>

It is easy to see that Bell considers the reductive strategy of minimalism as leading to a loss. It appears as if reduction stemmed from an obsession driven by a deterministic/nihilistic ideology. This supposed ideological stance is then made responsible for the characters’ difficulties in expressing themselves. Bell’s accusing Carver of “dime-store determinism”<sup>15</sup> and of “presenting [his characters] as utterly unconscious one moment and turning them into

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<sup>11</sup> Similarly to Raymond Federman, who claims that “every period of retrenchment in history produces such diminishing art.” Raymond Federman. “A Short Note on Minimalism.” *Mississippi Review* 40–41 (Winter 1985): 57.

<sup>12</sup> Madison Bell. “Less is Less: The Dwindling American Short Story.” *Harper’s* (April 1986): 64–69.

<sup>13</sup> James Atlas. “Less Is Less.” *The Atlantic*. (June 1981): 96–98.

<sup>14</sup> Bell, 65.

<sup>15</sup> Bell, 67.

mouthpieces for his own notions the next"<sup>16</sup> seems harsh and provocative, but in retrospect, it may be interpreted as a desperate gesture of a maximalist artist – Bell, himself was a successful novelist by then – irritated by the “rising tide of minimalist fiction.”<sup>17</sup>

Whatever his motivations, Bell’s criticism illustrates a certain reservation towards the “radical economy of artistic means”<sup>18</sup>, a fear that reduction would jeopardize the very idea of literariness. A similar criticism is voiced by James Atlas who registers Carver’s achievements in terms of precision, admitting that he “supplies necessary information with unobtrusive care”<sup>19</sup>, but when discussing the communication of Carver’s characters, he expresses similar concerns to those of Bell:

It is all very accurate. People *do* talk this way; haltingly, without eloquence or variety. But after a while the lackluster manner and eschewal of feeling become tiresome. There is nothing here to appease a reader’s basic literary needs – no revelations, no epiphanies...<sup>20</sup>

Basic or not, our literary needs that may remain unsatisfied seem to be in the center of the worries about simplicity and the resistance to the idea of reduction.

This resistance is in the focus of attention of Cynthia Hallett who describes it as deriving from a “social stigma”<sup>21</sup> that unjustly dominates over the reception of a literary style:

The problem seems to lie in a negative connotation that is a cultural rather than literary construct: certain people in certain cultures have determined that to have less or to be short is to be inferior.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Wynn Cooper. “About Madison Smartt Bell.” *Ploughshares*. (Winter 1999-00) Available: <http://faculty.goucher.edu/mbell/About%20Madison%20Smartt%20Bell.htm> Access: 12 Jan 2010

<sup>18</sup> Barth, 64.

<sup>19</sup> Atlas, 97.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Cynthia J. Hallett. “Minimalism and the short story.” *Studies in Short Fiction*. 33 (Fall 1996): 487-95.

<sup>22</sup> Hallett, 1996, 488

In her writings<sup>23</sup> Hallett tries to defend minimalism against this cultural prejudice and aims at offering ways to define its efficiency by positive terms. Such is her repeated argument that the very genre of the short story operates under the same principles of reduction and it is one of the reasons for the success of the minimalist short story.

Hallett also formulates a commonly held position that the minimalist slogan refers to a displacement of the contact zone between the production and the reception of the literary work of art. That is, limiting the writer's contribution is designed to stimulate the reader's active participation in the process of literary communication.

At first reading, many minimalist narratives can seem internally disconnected-sentences seemingly detached from one another; the ending as much a beginning as the first line--but when read closely, the oblique references and dim designs combine into a complex trope. These fictions are but shells of story, fragile containers of compressed meaning.<sup>24</sup>

She proposes close reading to discover the complex tropes hiding behind the limited structure but also acknowledges the fragility of relying on the reader's contribution. As John Biguenet puts it, "the reader, like a child with crayons hunched over a coloring book, authors the story."<sup>25</sup>

A brief overview of some of the characteristic critical responses to the tension between efficiency and reduction may already point out that views on the status of reduction determine the attitude towards minimalist writing. For those – like Atlas, Bell, and to some extent, Barth – who express their suspicions about, or openly refuse to accept the potentials of reduction, minimalist writing remains the prisoner of ideology and directly influenced by social or historical constructs. They regard reduction primarily as a loss in terms of literary

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<sup>23</sup> Most exhaustively, in her book, *Minimalism and the Short Story: Raymond Carver, Amy Hempel and Mary Robison* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1999)

<sup>24</sup> Hallett, 1996, 488

<sup>25</sup> John Biguenet. "Notes of a Disaffected Reader – The Origins of Minimalism." *Mississippi Review* 40-41 (Winter 1985): 44.

merit and emphasize the first half of the minimalist slogan. While those – like Hallett and Carver himself – who focus on the “More”, consider the “radical economy of artistic means”<sup>26</sup> as a powerful tool of efficiency and view reduction as an autonomous strategy of representation that is free from non-literary (ideological) or thematic (social/historical) determination. Hallett’s arguments also made clear that the potentials of reduction are better understood by weeding out the negative connotations of reduction (in minimalism) from its true characteristics as a literary device. Free from the burdens of defense, arguments in favor of the efficiency of reduction need to rely upon positive factors contributing to the success of this mode of writing. So far, the possible synergies in the natural relationship between the short story form and the idea of reduction, and the reconsideration of the function of the author have been mentioned.

It appears that in order to affirm and understand the true potentials of reduction one needs to rely upon a context in which it is linked with a set of possible points of reference, in order to resolve the tension between the method and the truth this method allows one to see, and to provide orientation in terms of the goals, limits and possible procedures of reduction. Despite its apparent retreat from various segments of the text, the role of the author seems as such a possible point of reference. Highlighting the author’s contribution is essential to justify reduction as an autonomous strategy because of the vital importance of *authority* over the risky job of reduction: if the author withdraws from controlling the narrative world, it is only because he summons his powers to perform the surgical task of reduction.

It is the question of authorship that arises inevitably along the project of mapping out the domains of literary communication apparently left unattended by the spectacular withdrawal of the author during the minimalist reduction. The diminishing of authorial control over the text is recognized in the popular argument that the elliptical structures in

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<sup>26</sup> Barth, 64.

minimalist writing are designed to effectively bully readers into filling out the gaps by activating their own subjective world of references, and that this heightened subjectivity will then be responsible for the enhanced artistic effect in the moments of insight. This argument, even if it seems in synch with a reader-oriented approach to literary interpretation, fails to specify the mode by which the withdrawal of the authorial presence can still function as an effective tool in manipulating that is, exercising control over the reader's responses. In addition, the argument does not state much beyond the obvious: a reliance on readerly imagination and hence, the subjectivity of references in interpretation are factors relevant in the discussions of just about any types of literature.

Another reason for the fact that the authority over reduction cannot be transferred to the reader is that it is him who needs it the most. The reader can only let his imagination loose, and do the work of close reading in order to fill the gaps, if he can *presuppose* the presence of some kind of authority. Even if – or precisely because – this authority is needed to cover up the blind spot, that is, making the reader benevolently forget that after all, it is his own self that he has to gain control over and “authorize” in the act of reading. For this reason, the authority over reduction has to come from elsewhere, and it is an altered concept of authorship that may assist and be the first step in understanding the strategy of reduction.

## 2 PUBLICATION HISTORY & RECEPTION

### 2.1 AMERICAN PUBLICATION HISTORY & RECEPTION

Despite the compulsory registering by early reviewers of its indeterminacy in terms of relevance and scope, the term *minimalism* has had an astonishingly quick and successful career in literary studies. What is more, its success seems to derive precisely from its apparent relevance and identifiable scope. Even though “fiction can be minimalist in any or all of several ways”<sup>27</sup>, the term minimalism has proved efficient in identifying a particular mode of writing and it also succeeded in defining a group of authors whose insertion into the critical discourse on minimalism was fruitful and benefited their reception.

The narrative of a number of creative terms competing at the outset of the critical discourse, with minimalism coming out victorious, has become a prime example of the principle of reduction at work. In his introduction to the ground-breaking thematic issue of *Mississippi Review* devoted to minimalism, Kim Herzinger documents the process of choosing minimalism as the clue word in their call for papers.

We finally settled for ‘minimalism’ in our solicitation, because that configuration of letters on the page seemed to have the best chance of cluing in our prospective contributors to the kind of fiction we were thinking about.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the admitted arbitrariness of the choice, since then, debates on the applicability of the term have become a closed chapter of critical history, and the term minimalism “is now a permanent fixture in the history of American literature.”<sup>29</sup> The term also had a vital role in the

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<sup>27</sup> Barth, 68.

<sup>28</sup> Kim A. Herzinger. “Introduction: On the New Fiction.” *Mississippi Review* 40-41 (Winter 1985): 7.

<sup>29</sup> Hallett, 1999, 137. Qtd. by Arthur F. Bethea. *Technique and Sensibility in the Fiction and Poetry of Raymond Carver*. Major Literary Authors, Vol. 7. William Cain (ed.). New York: Routledge. 2001 p. 296.

canonization of authors and works labeled as minimalist by “reviewers and journalists who coined the term and retailed it ceaselessly.”<sup>30</sup> The only name functioning equally as a trademark for this writing style is the name of Raymond Carver.

Carver’s outstanding role in the canonization of literary minimalism is not only an undisputed fact but a very unique phenomenon of critical history. He is most often referred to as the father of minimalism or the master of generations of writers, “the chief practitioner of what’s been called ‘American minimalism’.”<sup>31</sup> His name serves as a clue for a literary style, and the critical discourses about minimalism and about Carver often seem inseparable and “much of the debate about Carver’s merits centers around a similar debate about minimalism.”<sup>32</sup> It appears that Carver’s authority points beyond his own work and authorizes the existence and reductive strategies of literary minimalism.

It is true, even if Carver’s entire oeuvre does not fully qualify as straightforward minimalism. In his essay quoted above, published a year after Carver’s death, Adam Meyer suggests that Carver’s career shows a certain pattern of development:

his career... has actually taken on the shape of an hourglass, beginning wide, then narrowing, and then widening out again. In other words, to answer the question "Is Raymond Carver a minimalist?" we must also consider the question "Which Raymond Carver are we talking about?," for he did not start out as a minimalist, and he is one no longer, although he was one for a period of time in between.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll. “Prolegomena to Any Future Carver Studies.” *Journal of the Short Story in English*. 46 (Spring 2006): 13.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Gorra. “Laughter and Bloodshed.” *Hudson Review* 34 (Spring 1984): 155. Qtd. by Adam Meyer. “Now You See Him, Now You Don’t, Now You Do Again: The Evolution of Raymond Carver’s Minimalism.” *Critique*. 30 (Summer 1989): 239.

<sup>32</sup> Meyer, 239.

<sup>33</sup> Meyer, 239-40.

Meyer goes as far as identifying Carver's minimalism as a transitory stage between two other phases "far removed from that style."<sup>34</sup> This apparent change in style – especially the one where he loosened the grip of reduction – has been noted by many other reviewers of Carver who usually attributed it to changes in the living conditions of the author. The fact that he recovered from alcoholism and his new, inspiring relationship with fellow writer, Tess Gallagher, seemed to stand behind Carver's turn to – or, as it later became clear, return to – a richer style applied in the collection *Cathedral*.

The commonly held belief that changes in the writer's circumstances were to be seen behind the writing of less pared-down stories was also fuelled by Carver himself. In an interview with the French literary journalist Claude Grimal, he was asked about the altered tone of his writings in his new collection. In his answer Carver clearly reinforced the relevance of biography in the evaluation of his career as a writer.

**RC:** [...] My style is fuller, more generous. In my second book, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, the stories were very clipped, very short, very compressed, without much emotion. In my latest book, *Cathedral*, the stories have more range. They're fuller, stronger, more developed, and more hopeful.

**CG:** Is this something you did intentionally?

**RC:** No, not intentionally. I don't have any program, but the circumstances of my life have changed. I've stopped drinking, and maybe I'm more hopeful now that I'm older. I don't know, but I think it's important that a writer change, that there be a natural development, and not a decision.<sup>35</sup>

The minimalist phase of Carver's career had to be reconsidered ten years after Carver's death, when D. T. Max published his article in the *New York Times Magazine* under

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<sup>34</sup> Meyer, 240.

<sup>35</sup> William L. Stull. "Prose as Architecture: Two Interviews with Raymond Carver." *Clockwatch Review* (10/1-2) Available: <http://www.iwu.edu/~jplath/carver.html> Access: 12 December 2009

the title “The Carver Chronicles”<sup>36</sup> in which he claims that a substantial proportion of the textual features generally identified with Carver and minimalism are to be attributed to Carver’s former editor and friend, Gordon Lish.

Max describes the findings of his research in the Lilly Library at Indiana University, where Lish made Carver’s writings available “in versions from manuscript to printer's galleys”<sup>37</sup>. What he finds was shocking for the contemporary audience. Lish’s contribution to two of Carver’s iconic volumes, that paved the way for minimalism, went far beyond the traditional job of an editor.

In the case of Carver's 1981 collection, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," Lish cut about half the original words and rewrote 10 of the 13 endings. "Carol, story ends here," he would note for the benefit of his typist.<sup>38</sup>

Max writes that Lish “was constantly on guard against what he saw as Carver's creeping sentimentality,”<sup>39</sup> he cut out “most of the descriptions and all of the introspection.”<sup>40</sup> It seemed that Lish was also to be seen behind many of the famously enigmatic endings of Carver’s stories. “Other times, he cut away whole sections to leave a sentence from inside the story as the end.”<sup>41</sup> Max gives account of how Lish insisted on his editorial changes even when Carver was asking him in a letter not to publish the edited version, saying that some of his friends and colleagues had seen his original version, and asking “How can I explain to these fellows when I see them, as I will see them, what happened?”<sup>42</sup> All in all, Max views Lish’s contribution as substantial.

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<sup>36</sup> D.T. Max. “The Carver Chronicles.” *New York Times Magazine*. (August 9, 1998) Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/09/magazine/the-carver-chronicles.html?pagewanted=1> Access 22 Sept 2009

<sup>37</sup> Max, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Max, 6.

Some of the cuts were brilliant, like the expert cropping of a picture. His additions gave the stories new dimensions, bringing out moments that I was sure Carver must have loved to see. Other changes... struck me as bullying and competitive. Lish was redirecting Carver's vision in the service of his own fictional goals.<sup>43</sup>

The critical discourse on Carver had a very careful reaction to Max's assertions. In 2006, eight years after Max came out with his findings, William Stull and Maureen Carroll still note, that since then "scholars and general readers have been uneasily aware of what has come to be known as the Carver controversy."<sup>44</sup> They also register the importance of finally facing the challenges posited by the insecurities threatening the authority of Carver.

Where, in the lurid light of the Carver controversy, do Carver studies stand? For the scholar as for the general reader, questions about the substance, form, and intentionality of Carver's work are so fundamental as to be ontological in nature. Who was Raymond Carver and what did he write?<sup>45</sup>

What they propose is a systematic revision of Carver's work including a thorough analysis of the differences between the different versions of the stories Carver published after restoring some of Lish's changes. They also propose to shift the center of attention in Carver studies with Carver and his work put back into the focus, and compare this shift to the Copernican revolution in philosophy by Kant, as they indicate in their title.

Such a thorough analysis was carried out by Enrico Monti in the 2007 issue of *Carver Review*.<sup>46</sup> In his revision of Lish's contribution he is fully aware of the scope of the authority at stake when he clarifies at the beginning that "[it] is precisely in relation to [...] minimalism

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<sup>43</sup> Max, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Stull, 2006, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Stull, 2006, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Enrico Monti. "Il Miglior Fabbro? On Gordon Lish's Editing of Raymond Carver's *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*." *The Carver Review*. 1 (Winter 2007): 53-74.

that we shall reconsider the role played in the collection's final output by Gordon Lish."<sup>47</sup> His findings suggest that the editorial work of Lish contributed directly to the basic characteristics identified with minimalism by its most influential critics.

Operating at different levels (syntax, lexicon, plot) Lish emphasized several aesthetical features of literary minimalism, defined by Kim Herzinger in terms of "equanimity of surface, 'ordinary' subjects, recalcitrant narrators and deadpan narratives, slightness of story, and characters who don't think out loud" (7) and "spareness and cleanness" (14); or again as "terse, oblique, realistic, or hyperrealistic, slightly plotted, extrospective, cool-surfaced fiction," in the words of John Barth.<sup>48</sup>

Monti also notes that Lish particularly focused on heightening "the peculiar sense of bleakness which pervades Carver's stories"<sup>49</sup> and by this, he successfully pointed out the way Carver's stories should be changed.

Having identified the force of Carver's prose, Lish moved on to sharpen it, editing those stories (at least) twice, rewriting titles and endings, and cutting out several pages of the original versions, thus pushing his vision of the now well-known "less is more" aesthetic to its limits.<sup>50</sup>

Even though Monti does not go any further in clarifying where those limits were, he asserts that there are phases in their collaboration when Lish managed to give Carver's writing "a deeper intensity."<sup>51</sup> However, especially towards the end of their relationship, Lish's influence "in its most aggressive form [...] comes across as a challenge on the verge of

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<sup>47</sup> Monti, 53.

<sup>48</sup> Monti,

<sup>49</sup> Monti, 55

<sup>50</sup> Monti,

<sup>51</sup> Monti, 71

excess, and the risk of slipping into a pretentious, tiresome provocation is sometimes palpable.”<sup>52</sup>

Monti’s conclusion is that with Lish’s substantial contribution Carver’s career reached a turning point where reduction as a strategy stopped playing a central role because it was a “dead-end point in many respects, for his style appears to be exploited to its limits (and possibly beyond them).”<sup>53</sup>

Considering Carver’s role in the legitimation and the shaping of the critical reception of minimalist literature it appears that Raymond Carver has a certain *discursive authority* at work in the perception of the reductionist mode of writing. This working of this authority can very well be detected in the debates over the authenticity of some of his writings stirred by the Carver controversy.

More than a decade after Max’s assertions the critical discourse did not fully managed to overcome the shock of a serious loss of authority essential in the discourse on literary minimalism in general and the affirmation of the legitimacy of the reductionist principle in particular. What was registered by Meyer as early as a year after Carver’s death, that his writing career shows the peculiar traces of a tight grip in the middle, later proved to be the grip of a force from outside. In his writing Max is already concerned with the consequences of his findings and agrees with Don DeLillo who suggested Lish not to expose Carver. He quotes DeLillo’s letter:

Even if people knew, from Carver himself, that you are largely responsible for his best work, they would immediately *forget it*. It is too much to absorb. Too complicated. Makes reading the guy's work an ambiguous thing at best. People wouldn't think less of Carver for having had to lean so heavily on an editor; they'd resent Lish for complicating the reading of the stories.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Monti, 70.

"In the meantime," he ended, "take good care of your archives."<sup>54</sup>

It seems both Max and DeLillo were right in their predictions because they instantly realized "how central the idea of authenticity is to our literary culture."<sup>55</sup>

The Copernican turn proposed by Stull and Carroll appeared to be less fruitful so far, since further studies of the authenticity of Carver's most minimalistic phase have only fuelled the suspicion, that the "radical economy of artistic means", that Barth defined as the core of minimalist writing, is not to be attributed to the exceptional talent of a writer but to the exceptional talent of a literary agent. Reduction appeared to be what it looked like for those who opposed minimalism all along: a simple act of brutal editing. Due to the irresolvable tension of authority the Copernican turn seemed to move Carver studies away from his most stripped-down stories and also diminish the importance of minimalism in his legacy. As a consequence, relevant debates about the status and limits of reduction as an artistic tool also came to a halt.

In 2009, however, the publication of Raymond Carver's *Collected Stories* by the Library of America created a turning point in the writer's reception history. The volume sets out the canonical versions of his writings including the manuscript version of Carver's most minimalistic short story collection, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, under the title, *Beginners*. The volume aims at the restoration of "lost" material with the promise to fill in the ellipses left in the most minimalist stories by the redaction. However, the publication of the manuscript versions of *Beginners* together with the redacted versions appearing in *WWTA*, not only allows one to discover about the originals of the stories but it also makes the accurate identification of Lish's contributions possible. Hence, the new canonical collection has a contradictory effect on Carver's oeuvre: while it is regarded as a completion of the Carver

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<sup>54</sup> Max, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Max, 9.

canon, it also opens up the writer's oeuvre for discussions about the aesthetic merits of the different versions and contributes to a heterogeneous literary legacy.

## 2.2 HUNGARIAN PUBLICATION HISTORY & RECEPTION

The publication history of the Hungarian translations of Carver's work presents itself as another rather complex area where the working of the various paradigms of authority can be detected. Since the publication of translations, by definition, involves an editorial choice, and is also influenced by other factors, such as the translator's taste or the availability of original versions, we might think that the different paradigms at work in the Carver canon are distorted by the apparent arbitrariness in the publication history of their translations. However, a closer look at the publication history of the Hungarian translations of Carver's work proves that, regardless of its arbitrariness, it *has* an identifiable pattern and also shows the symptoms of the multiplicity of the different paradigms at work in the original Carver canon.

The fact that the chronology of the publication of the translations differs from the chronology of the genesis of the stories is a natural consequence of the process of translation, in which the order of publication is detached from the writing or the first publication of the original stories. This appears to be a unique characteristic of the act of translation that is, in a sense, the fullest form of re-creation. However, the particular publication history of the English versions of Carver's stories shows that the publication of the originals is also detached from the genesis of the stories due to the influences of the different paradigms of authority on the writer's work. Therefore, the publication history of the Hungarian translations can be considered as a valid context in which the working of these influences may be introduced before we turn to the in-depth analysis of the paradigms of authority at work in the formation of the original canon.

If we take a look at the chronological bibliography of the Hungarian translations<sup>56</sup> we can see

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<sup>56</sup> See, Appendix 2.

that it starts with one of the latest stories of Carver, “The Blackbird Pie.”<sup>57</sup> The story was first published in English in July 1986 in the *New Yorker* and the Hungarian translation appeared shortly after in March 1987. Since the original story was only included in the late collection of *Where I’m Calling From*<sup>58</sup> (WICF) in 1988, the Hungarian translation must have been based on the first periodical publication. In that sense, the beginning of the Hungarian publication history entered the Carver canon towards the end of the writer’s career.

This entry was made more obvious by the following translation that appeared two years later in the same periodical, *Nagyvilág* and featured “Errand,”<sup>59</sup> the last story Carver published in his lifetime and is generally considered as one of his most mature writings. The fact that the publication history of Carver’s Hungarian translations started with the late works of the writer shows that it was first motivated by the idea of contemporaneity and intended to introduce the author in his lifetime, without the compulsion to offer a comprehensive picture of his, by then, substantial work. The concept of contemporaneity maybe considered as a minor paradigm of authority working in the process of translation that functions as a direct link to the writer’s authority and claims authority for itself based upon a temporal connection.

Two years after the writer’s death, what was then believed to be a closure of his oeuvre, *Nagyvilág* published two more of Carver’s stories, and this time, they offered insight into the earlier works by translating “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,”<sup>60</sup> and “Popular Mechanics.”<sup>61</sup> Since all of the stories were available for the editors of *Nagyvilág* to choose from, with the exception of the stories recovered in 2000 and the manuscripts restored in 2009, their choice of two of the most characteristic *redactions* can be considered as a significant decision with regard to the forming of the writer’s image in the Hungarian

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<sup>57</sup> “A levél,” [“Blackbird Pie”] Transl. Mária Borbás, *Nagyvilág* (March 1987): 307-318.

<sup>58</sup> *Where I’m Calling From: New and Selected Stories*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988.

<sup>59</sup> “Megbízatus,” [“Errand”] Transl. Gyula Csák, *Nagyvilág* (March 1989): 357-366.

<sup>60</sup> “Míról beszélünk, ha szerelemről beszélünk?” [“What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”] Transl. Anna Nemes, *Nagyvilág* (March 1990): 337-345.

<sup>61</sup> “Mechanikai ábécé,” [“Popular Mechanics”] Transl. Mária Borbás, *Nagyvilág* (May 1990): 665-666.

reception. Both stories bear Lish's titles and were first published in *WWTA* the exemplary minimalist volume of the writer.

Interestingly enough, the publication of the translation of "Popular Mechanics" also created a pattern in the Hungarian reception that resembles the original publication history, since it was followed by two other translations<sup>62</sup> of the same story. This makes "Popular Mechanics" the only story that is translated by three different translators and the publication history of the versions overarches the Hungarian publication history. While here, the original source is the same, the redacted version of the story as it appeared in *WWTA*, the different translations result in a proliferation of versions that is also characteristic of Carver's original work. The motivations behind the multiple translations can only be speculated. The fact that it is the shortest story by Carver may be one of the reasons, but the repeated translation may also suggest that the tight, pared-down language taken to the extreme in this story poses considerable challenges to the translators, and that might explain the repeated effort to provide different solutions.

In 1993 the periodical, *2000* started its long project of publishing Carver stories that is carried over to this date. The editors of *2000* first contributed to the Hungarian Carver canon in a way of creating a parallel version by publishing a new translation of "Blackbird Pie."<sup>63</sup> Even though there had only been four stories translated by then, and this short story was one of them, the editors of *2000* also decided to introduce the writer by one of his late works. Their intention to present the late Carver is also detectable in their next publication, a translation of "Boxes," a story from among the new stories included in the late volume, *WICF*, also written towards the end of the writer's career.

In 1997 the Hungarian publication history of Carver's work was given momentum by the publication of the only short story collection in Hungarian dedicated entirely to Carver's

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<sup>62</sup> "Csináld magad," Transl. Béla Polyák, ["Popular Mechanics"] *2000* (March 1998): 28. and "Mechanika kezdőknek," ["Popular Mechanics"] Transl. Júlia Gárdos, *Kalligram* (May 2008): 30-31.

<sup>63</sup> "Ég a házad ideki," ["Blackbird Pie"] Transl. András Barabás, *2000* (May 1993): 23-30.

work. The collection came out under the title *Nem ōk a te férjed*<sup>64</sup> [*The're Not Your Husband*]. The volume offers an overview of Carver's career in a more or less chronological order, ranging from the stories from the first major collection, *Will You Please Be Quiet Please*<sup>65</sup> (*WYPBQP*) until the new stories from *WICF*. There are three stories from *WYPBQP*, one from *Fires*,<sup>66</sup> nine stories are taken from *WWTA*, seven from *Cathedral*,<sup>67</sup> and three more from the new stories in *WICF*. The collection includes two stories republished from periodicals, "Boxes" and "Blackbird Pie," and also offers a new translation of "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love." If we look at the proportions of the different original collections we may see, that the Hungarian publication history of Carver's was dominated by the redacted versions appearing in the first two English language collections.

However, the translation of "So Much Water So Close to Home" featured the longer version Carver restored in his revisions. In this case, the editor of the volume had a choice between the long and the short versions, both published in Carver's lifetime, and the choice fell on the revision. This editorial decision made one of Carver's signature stories appear in its form close to the manuscript, and in that sense, the Hungarian reception was paradoxically successful in unknowingly editing out Lish from this story, an effort that required the problematic practice of restoration in the original. While none of the translations published in periodicals were accompanied by critical context of any kind, Carver's only Hungarian collection featured an "Afterword" by Róza Vajda, one of the translators of the volume, who gave a brief introduction into Carver's writing style.

The following publication history of the translations from 1997 to the present included six new stories and three stories formerly published that were new translations. In addition to

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<sup>64</sup> *Nem ōk a te férjed*. [*The're Not Your Husband*] István Géher, ed., Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997.

<sup>65</sup> *Will You Please Be Quiet Please*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.

<sup>66</sup> *Fires: Essays, Poems, Stories*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1983.

<sup>67</sup> *Cathedral*. New York: Knopf, 1983.

“Popular Mechanics” a story translated in three versions altogether, “Feathers”<sup>68</sup> and “Tell the Women We’re Going”<sup>69</sup> appeared in different translations from the ones included in the collection of *Nem ők a te férjed* [*They’re Not Your Husband*].

Since these are the last two stories published to this date, we can say that the publication history of the Hungarian translations of Carver’s stories moved towards a similar multiplication of versions that characterizes the English versions of the stories. There are five stories in multiple translations that is a considerable amount, considering that some of them are among Carver’s signature stories.

As it has been mentioned before, the periodical, *2000* has been carrying out a long project of Carver translations that started in 1993 and their last translation was published in March 2010. In this periodical the publication of the translations indicates the source of the original text in footnotes that has proved to be a rather significant piece of information, given the multiplicity of the versions of the original stories. The only one story where the editors of the periodical failed to include the source of the original version is the very last story translated, “Tell the Women We’re Going.” The publication of this translation follows the publication of the Library of America volume in which the manuscript versions of some of Carver’s stories are included and the new translation of the story clearly appears as a translation of the manuscript version of the original.

The act of publishing a translation of a Carver manuscript without indicating its source, the recently published Library of America volume, is symptomatic of the insecurity caused by the complex paradigms of authority at work behind the publication of the original stories. The effects on the Hungarian reception of Carver’s work are similar to those influencing the reception of the original stories. Since a translation of “Tell the Women We’re Going” had been included in the Hungarian collection of *Nem ők a te férjed* [*They’re Not*

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<sup>68</sup> “Pávatoll,” [“Feathers”] Transl. András Barabás, *2000* (Nov. 2009): 37-47.

<sup>69</sup> “Csak beszélok a csajoknak, hogy elhúznak,” [“Tell the Women We’re Going”] Transl. András Barabás, *2000* (March 2010): 46-53.

*Your Husband*], that may be considered as the centerpiece of the Hungarian Carver canon, after the publication of the new translation in 2010, readers are left uninformed about the relationship of the two stories. Since the first translation is based on the short version redacted and cut by 55 percent by Lish and the new translation features the restored manuscript version, the Hungarian readers have to face two completely different stories. What makes the translations of the different versions even more problematic for the Hungarian reception is the fact that, unlike in the original, the title does not help readers identify the stories, since the two translations bear rather different titles.<sup>70</sup> It is a clear instance of the controversial effects of different, co-existing paradigms of authority that remain concealed and unexplained in the Hungarian reception.

In that sense, the publication history of the Hungarian translations of Carver's stories recreates a set of patterns present in the publication history of the originals. Not only there are parallel translations that echo the existence of parallel versions of the original stories but these parallel translations are sometimes based on the different versions of the originals. The overall shape of the writer's forming image in the Hungarian reception surprisingly shows the same hour-glass pattern characterizing the original publication history of Carver's work. The Hungarian translations began with the late stories that were more rich in detail and moved towards the more pared-down stories of the redactions, and finally the translation of Carver's work moved towards the restoration of the manuscript version of his stories, even if this move has remained unaccounted for. In that sense, the hour-glass metaphor, coined by Meyer to describe the writer's artistic development, and later proved to be also applicable to describe Lish's influence on the writer's career, does seem to appear relevant in describing the Hungarian publication, too. However, this hour-glass is turned upside-down, so to say, in that it shows the pattern of an inverse chronology.

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<sup>70</sup> Readers with a command of the Hungarian language can instantly see the difference in tone and possible associations between the two titles: "Szólj az asszonyoknak, hogy elmegyek," and "Csak beszólok a csajoknak, hogy elhúzzunk."

While Carver has been present in the Hungarian critical reception, the concerns raised by the Carver controversy have not yet been explicitly dealt with. The most extensive account of Carver as a writer is provided by Zoltán Abádi-Nagy as a part of his project of introducing American minimalist fiction to the Hungarian critical reception in several books<sup>71</sup> and a number of critical texts both in Hungarian and English.<sup>72</sup> In his book, *Az Amerikai Minimalista Próza [American Minimalist Fiction]* that is the only comprehensive account of American literary minimalism in the Hungarian reception to this date, Abádi-Nagy begins the discussion of sixteen authors with a chapter devoted to Carver. The chapter offers an overview of Carver's writing style and introduces the collections of *WETA* and *Cathedral*.

While the book was published well before the beginning of the Carver controversy, Abádi-Nagy finds Lish's influence worthy of mentioning and chooses the two characteristically different volumes that later turned out to be the representatives of Carver's work *with* and *without* Lish's editorial contributions. The longest interpretation in the chapter focuses on a comparison of "The Bath" and "A Small, Good Thing"<sup>73</sup> that allows the author to describe the apparent change in the writer's style. While Abádi-Nagy registers the scale and the direction of the change that later turned out to be a shift in the paradigms of authority determining Carver's writerly development, he also points out the fundamental indebtedness of the mature writer and hence, of his entire oeuvre to a generally minimalist writing style.

Abádi-Nagy's introduction of Carver as a characteristically minimalist author

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<sup>71</sup> Most extensively in his book that particularly focuses on American minimalist fiction: *Az amerikai minimalista próza. [American Minimalist Fiction]* Budapest: Argumentum, 1994., while minimalism is also mentioned in his comprehensive overview of American fiction: *Mai amerikai regénykalauz, 1970-1990. [A Guide to Contemporary American Fiction, 1970-1990]* Budapest: Intera, 1995.

<sup>72</sup> Zoltán Abádi Nagy. "Minimalism vs. postmodernism in contemporary American fiction," *Neohelicon* (Jan. 2001): 129-143. "The narratorial function in minimalist fiction," *Neohelicon* (Febr. 2000): 237-248. "Plot vs. secondary narrative structure in contemporary American minimalist fiction," *Hungarian journal of English and American Studies* (Jan. 1995): 143-151. "Tér és idő a mai amerikai minimalista prózában," ["Time and Space in Contemporary American Minimalist Fiction"]. *Irodalomtörténet* (1995/1): 146-56. "Minimalizmus és narratív technika," ["Minimalism and Narrative Technique"] *Irodalomtörténet* (1993/1-2): 311-323. "A mai amerikai minimalista próza: kategória-használati és definíciós helyzetvázlat," ["Contemporary American Minimalist Fiction: A Sketchy Survey of the Terminological and Definitional Confusion"] *Studia litteraria* 30 (1992): 87-107.

<sup>73</sup> A prime example of the working of the different paradigms of *redaction* and *revision* as it will be argued in Chapter 4.2.

influenced the Hungarian critical reception. Carver's essay "On Writing" together with an 1987 interview<sup>74</sup> made by Michael Schumacher were published in Hungarian translation in a special issue of the periodical, *Helikon*<sup>75</sup> dedicated to minimalism. The *Helikon* issue clearly positions Carver in the minimalist canon and Carver's essay serves as the leading text in the collection. The interview also offers interesting insights into the writer's habit of revising his stories as well as about an emerging type of institutionalized relationship between writer and editor that is influenced by marketing considerations.

It seems that the different paradigms of authority at work in the formation of the original Carver canon also influence the writer's Hungarian reception. While Lish's influence on Carver's early stories was registered before the controversy became public and the change in the writer's style was also interpreted, Carver's minimalism has never been questioned in the Hungarian reception.

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<sup>74</sup> Michael Schumacher. "After the Fire, into the Fire: An Interview with Raymond Carver," *Reasons to Believe: New Voices in American Fiction*. ed. Michael Schumacher, New York: St. Martin's, 1988. pp. 1-27.

<sup>75</sup> *Helikon* 2003/1-2.

### 3 PARADIGMS OF AUTHORITY

In order to see the multiplicity and the major characteristics of the paradigms of authority functioning in the reception of Carver's work, it seems reasonable to first offer a brief overview of the publication history of his short stories. In particular, the publication of stories in different versions seems relevant here because of the various approaches it offers to the concept and the working of authority. The very existence of parallel versions makes us reconsider, among other things, the concept of the authoritative version, the role of publication in defining the authentic text, the potential dynamism in Carver's authority to exercise control over his *revisions*,<sup>76</sup> as well as the goals and limits of editorial contribution both in *recovering*<sup>77</sup> or *restoring*<sup>78</sup> manuscript versions by Stull and Carroll and in *redacting*<sup>79</sup> them by Lish.

The first question in mapping out the publications of Carver's short stories arises when trying to simply count the number of stories published under his name. In order to arrive at a number, it seems necessary to identify the different versions of the same stories to avoid counting a story twice. In doing so, decisions are to be made about the status of each story by evaluating the various types of modification they underwent. At first sight, it appears that out of the four basic forms of textual intervention mentioned above, the editorial works of recovering, restoring and redacting possess the authority to produce texts that are to be added to the writer's oeuvre, while the versions seen as outcomes of the author's process of revising are excluded from the overall count. This implies that a basic function of authority, that of identifying the writer's corpus, does not fall within the control of the writer, but rather, that of

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<sup>76</sup> See Chapter 3.1

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 3.2

<sup>78</sup> See Chapter 3.3

<sup>79</sup> See Chapter 3.4

the editors.

The most comprehensive chronological bibliography available was published in *Collected Stories*, compiled by William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll. They trace down the publication history and the variations of 72 stories.<sup>80</sup> This number includes 67 stories published during Carver's life, exclusive of his revised publications, and 5 stories recovered from their manuscript form and published posthumously.

However, in an interview for the *Library of America Newsletter*,<sup>81</sup> Library of America editor Rich Kelly asks Stull and Carroll about the "publication of Raymond Carver: *Collected Stories*, which collects 90 of his stories."<sup>82</sup> At the end of the interview, Stull and Carroll confirm the same number when summarizing the merits of the collection:

All the materials are here: 90 authoritative story texts, Notes on the Texts of six collections (one presented in two complete versions), and a Chronological Bibliography of every story's first appearance, alternate titles, and inclusions in Carver's books.<sup>83</sup>

When Kelly refers to "90 of his texts" and Stull and Carroll speak about "90 authoritative story texts" they count the seventeen stories "presented in two complete versions" in *WETA* and *Beginners* twice, plus add the fragment "From the *Augustine Notebook*" also published in the collection. Thus, including seventeen stories in two versions, and one story, "The Bath"/"A Small, Good Thing," in three versions, the editors expand the size of Carver's work from 72 stories to 89 "authoritative story texts" (exclusive of the fragment). Still, as we have seen, when enumerating "every story's first appearance" in the volume's Chronological Bibliography, Stull and Carroll identify 72 stories. It appears that including different versions

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<sup>80</sup> William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll. "Chronological Bibliography." In Raymond Carver. *Collected Stories*. Library of America, 2009. pp. 1005-1012.

<sup>81</sup> Rich Kelley. "The Library of America Interviews Tess Gallagher, William L. Stull, and Maureen P. Carroll about Raymond Carver." *Library of America Newsletter*. Available: [http://www.loa.org/images/pdf/LOA\\_interview\\_Gallagher\\_Stull\\_Carroll\\_on\\_Carver.pdf](http://www.loa.org/images/pdf/LOA_interview_Gallagher_Stull_Carroll_on_Carver.pdf) Access: 14 March 2010

<sup>82</sup> Kelley, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Kelley, 11.

in the overall number of stories does not eliminate the need to refer to the first appearances that the bibliography may be based upon. This tension between the concepts of *original* and *authoritative* texts results in an indeterminacy in terms of the very size of the writer's oeuvre.

The evaluation of parallel versions is made more difficult by the fact that all of the stories published under Carver's name during his life, were published several times, in some cases, four or five times. By looking at Carver's Chronological Bibliography it appears that stories written in the first two decades of the writer's career were usually published more than twice, while from the publication of his collection, *Cathedral* in 1983, Carver turned to a more conventional practice of publishing his stories only twice, first in a periodical and later in a collection. The same change is recognizable in the publication of different versions: stories written until 1981, the year *WWTA* was published, are available in multiple versions, while the later stories were included in the collections unchanged compared to their former publication in periodicals. This major turn in the practice of multiple publications as well as the publishing of different versions can be clearly related to Carver's breaking out from under the influence of Lish between the publications of the two volumes mentioned above.

Yet another difficulty appears when mapping out the publication history of the stories due to the particular sequence of publication of the different versions that is different from the order of writing them. A typical pattern of this sequence starts with a publication of the original version in a minor periodical, followed by the inclusion of the Lish-edited version of the story in one of the first two collections (*WYPBQP* and *WWTA*), then either a revision is published by the writer in one of the latter collections (*Fires*, *Cathedral*, and *WICF*), or a restoration of the story's manuscript form appears posthumously (*Beginners*). Thus, the publication history of the different versions of Carver's stories shows a pattern somewhat resembling a Moebius-strip, in which both the concept of linear chronology and that of a stable authorial identity are challenged.

This pattern was further twisted by the reception history of the stories, because in most cases the first appearances of the stories gained critical attention only after their Lish-edited versions were published in the first two major collections. Therefore, the heavily edited versions were considered as original texts for a long time, with Carver's longer versions published later seen as revisions. The originality of the Lish-edited texts was challenged in two steps. First, when the periodical publications revealed that the fuller versions were actually written earlier, and hence, Carver's revisions published in his later collections appeared more like restorations of the first versions. The second and more radical challenge to the originality of the short versions was posed by the controversy over Lish's contribution.

An overview of the publication history of Carver's stories shows that basic constituents of this history, such as the corpus, the chronology, or the authenticity of the works, are destabilized and set in motion by the existence of multiple versions. It also appears that in this movement a transition in the concept of authority is illuminated from different angles in the reception history of Carver's fiction. In order to find out more about the particular shifts in this transition it seems reasonable to focus on the major modes of textual intervention responsible for creating this diverse and multi-layered network of literary legacy.

By looking at Carver's *revisions* we may see that the different versions produced and published during his life expanded the writer's authority, enabling it to account for the modifications and influence the reception of the stories. This process created a public image of the writer as an artist continuously polishing his works and at the same time, it allowed for the proliferation of the versions of his stories. Thus, Carver's revisions had opposing effects on the concept of the writer's authority: they created an expanded image of a conscious and perfectionist writer and simultaneously, they opened up his works for enquiries about textual production seen more as a process of manufacturing in which the concepts of originality or authenticity may be reconsidered.

By focusing on the process of *recovering* that took place after the writer's death, we turn towards what could be seen as the afterlife of the writer's work. In this process editorial intervention presents itself as a conventional act of continuing the writer's efforts to publish his works. However, the collecting of formerly *uncollected* stories and the publication of *unpublished* stories may also be considered as two major steps in the shift of authority from the writer to the editors. In addition, the posthumous publication of early stories further widen the gap between the genesis of the stories and their reception history, that was already created by the unusual publication history of Carver's revisions. Therefore, the publication of recovered stories can be seen as the working of another paradigm of authority in which the writer's practice of collecting and publishing his works is surpassed by an idea of completeness in the writer's image constructed by his editors.

Processes of *restoration* provide an even richer material for considering the scope of editorial contribution. By directly overwriting the author's known intentions regarding his literary legacy in order to restore his artistic intentions supposedly coded in the manuscripts, restoration also results in opposing effects on the functioning of authority. The first is a clear effort of searching for authenticity; an effort capable of producing valuable texts to offer ground for further explorations of the writer's style and the genesis of the stories. The other effect, however, is the creation of a literary legacy in which the author is put under the custody of his editors who set out to positively rewrite the author's work in the name of restoring it.

From the perspective offered by these three paradigms of authority above, the editorial work of *redaction*, that appeared to be the source of anxiety in Carver's reception, may be seen in a new light. Considering the processes of revision, recovering and restoration allows us to look at Carver's oeuvre as a multi-layered network of versions in which the concepts of chronology, originality and authenticity, as well as writerly gestures of authorization stop

functioning as absolute markers of his literary legacy. This approach allows us to eliminate major difficulties in the way of considering and evaluating Lish's contribution. The publication of the manuscripts of *Beginners* along with the stripped-down versions of *WWTA* in the canonical volume of *Collected Stories* not only offers valuable insights into a yet undiscovered segment of Carver Country but, by means of contrast, it also brings Lish's redactions into the focus. By looking at the strategies of redaction free from the anxiety dominating its reception history, we are also offered an approach to the minimalist strategy of reduction within a possible frame of references its understanding seems to require.

### 3.1 REVISION

Revision may not only be considered as a practice very close to the act of writing, but rather, as an essential part of the writing process itself. Carver himself was admittedly keen on revising his stories and claimed that important elements of the text revealed themselves only in the process of revision. When asked in an interview<sup>84</sup> about the way he writes and closes his stories, Carver emphasized the importance of revision.

For the ending, a writer has to have sense of drama. You don't miraculously arrive at the ending. You find it in revising the story. And me, I revise fifteen, twenty times. [...] I like the physical labor of writing. I don't have a word processor, but I have a typist who gives me back clean corrected texts . . . then I revise them and revise them. Tolstoy rewrote *War and Peace* seven times and he kept revising right up to the last minute before printing. I've seen photographs of the proofs! I like this concern for work well done.<sup>85</sup>

The apparent contrast between Tolstoy's maximalism and Carver's world is only one of their differences. In Carver's career, revision was not only a crucial part of the writing process *before* printing; he was a writer who did not stop revising his own texts even after their publication. By the publication of different versions of his stories, his oeuvre, even during his life, became a complex network of versions that made readers consider and evaluate different styles and writerly solutions.

As it has been mentioned before, the reception of Carver's revisions shows a certain duality created by the fact that the revisions first appeared to be longer versions of the stripped-down stories, while their actual originals, published before the Lish-edited texts, were only paid critical attention later. For this reason, Carver's revisions were first regarded

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<sup>84</sup> Claude Grimal. "Stories Don't Come out of Thin Air." *Clockwatch Review*. 10/ 1-2 (29.01.1999), available: <http://www.iwu.edu/~jplath/carver.html> access: 12 December 2090

<sup>85</sup> Grimal, op. cit.

as the outcomes of an active process of rewriting motivated by the writer's perfectionism, while later, when the first appearances showed that the Lish-edited versions are actually revisions themselves, they appeared to be more like acts of self-correction characterizing a continuous search for writerly voice. In any case, in the writer's lifetime Carver's revisions largely contributed to an expansion in the scope of the writer's authority that allowed him to repeatedly recreate his works in their different variations and influence their reception.

### *Revision Seen as Re-Writing*

The first multiple-version stories that gained public attention were the ones Carver republished from *WWTA* – the collection most heavily edited by Lish – in longer and fuller versions in later volumes.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, Carver's public image as a self-conscious writer and editor of his own works was created in the light of a spectacular turn away from the extreme reductionism that brought him recognition. The revising of former stories yielded some insecurity in terms of the status of the different versions, but the gesture of re-writing provided them with an authority that seemed to transgress the line between production and reception, and expand the author's control over what is usually seen as the afterlife of the stories. Comparing their different versions seemed as an obvious and tempting possibility to gain insight into the way Carver developed as a writer and the forces that were to account for this change.

Similarly to the reception of the less reductionist style applied in the later stories, the general approach was to read the revisions in the context of the personal life of the author. By means of simple analogies, presupposing that a more fulfilling life yields more valuable art, this approach resulted in an overall affirmation of the revisions.

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<sup>86</sup> "Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit" appeared as "Where Is Everyone?" in *Fires*; "The Bath" appeared as "A Small, Good Thing" in *Cathedral* and *Where I'm Calling From*; "After the Denim" appeared as "If It Please You" published by John Lord Press in 1984; "So Much Water So Close to Home" appeared in *Fires* and *Where I'm Calling From*.

The feelings of distance, loneliness, and despair [...] have been replaced with those of warmth, compassion, and understanding [...] and this shows how a change for the better in Raymond Carver's life led to the same in [...] his stories.<sup>87</sup>

To focus on biography, and see a newly found hope in life behind the revisions, made some critics – like William Stull, in his influential article “Beyond Hopelessville: Another Side of Raymond Carver”<sup>88</sup> – go as far as seeing them as motivated by “a final vision of forgiveness and community rooted in religious faith.”<sup>89</sup>

In his comparison of “The Bath” and “A Small, Good Thing”, Stull asserts that Biblical allusions in the revision combine “into an understated allegory of spiritual rebirth.”<sup>90</sup> Stull's reading for Christian allegories was challenged by others, like Runyon<sup>91</sup> or Aubrey<sup>92</sup> claiming that Carver's biblical illiteracy does not support this argument. Runyon also noticed that the search for another, much greater authority may be one of the motivations for this approach. “What I'm criticizing about Stull [is] that he reads into Carver's story the haunting presence of a prior narrative (by another Hand in this instance)”<sup>93</sup>, Runyon asserts, and adds that the first version (as it appeared then) is not to be considered more than the raw material for the revision. Therefore, he proposes to take into account the “very real possibility of irony in Carver's recycling here of the Christian foundation myth.”<sup>94</sup>

Despite their apparent opposition in considering references to Christian symbolism as direct or ironic, both readings point towards a greater authority at work behind the act of revision. The focus on Carver's revising of the Christian foundation myth makes revision seen

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<sup>87</sup> Mark Yaeger. “A Comparison of Two Raymond Carver Short Stories.” *Associated Content*. October 31 2006 Available: [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/77278/a\\_comparison\\_of\\_two\\_raymond\\_carver.html?cat=38](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/77278/a_comparison_of_two_raymond_carver.html?cat=38) Access: 12 April 2010

<sup>88</sup> William Stull. “Beyond Hopelessville: Another Side of Raymond Carver.” *Philological Quarterly* 64 (1985): 1-15.

<sup>89</sup> Stull, 1985, 11.

<sup>90</sup> Stull, 1985, 12.

<sup>91</sup> Randolph Runyon. *Reading Raymond Carver*. Syracuse University Press, 1994.

<sup>92</sup> Bryan Aubrey. “Critical Essay on ‘A Small, Good Thing.’” *Short Stories for Students*. Thomson Gale, 2006.

<sup>93</sup> Runyon, 151.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

as a process authorized by the primacy and intactness of an underlying narrative. In this relationship the notion of authorship emerges as the descendant of a greater authority assigned to the original narrative. Carver's revising of his stories is evaluated in the light of him fathering the original texts, and reflecting on the underlying narrative of his biography, while the exemplary debates about the religious allusions focus on the relevance of an absolute authority deriving from a basic grand narrative as a prime mover of revision. In such a context, and by considering the changes inevitable in the act of revision, authority is seen as a dynamic construct that is born out of a set of relations. These relations transgress the lines between production and reception, the artwork and the author's biography, as well as literature and ideology.

When asked in an interview<sup>95</sup> about the differences between the same stories ("The Bath" and "A Small, Good Thing"), Carver tried to separate the reception of the two versions. His authorial gesture of talking about the revision in an interview was aimed at reducing the apparent tension in his authority over the two versions and diminishing the relevance of dynamism in authorizing them.

In my own mind I consider them to be really two entirely different stories, not just different versions of the same story; it's hard to even look on them as coming from the same source.<sup>96</sup>

Obviously, Carver's intention to reduce the weight of comparison and to eliminate the concept of originality of source is given a new meaning retrospectively: they appear to be the symptoms of a very special *anxiety of influence*, that of Lish's unrevealed contribution. The quotation starts with a clear reference to a unanimous authority ("In my own mind") and ends

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<sup>95</sup> Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory. "An Interview with Raymond Carver." *Mississippi Review* 40-41 (Winter 1985): 62-82.

<sup>96</sup> McCaffery et al. 66.

with a denial of this very unanimity. Carver even makes clear efforts to alter the perception of originality in the relation of the different versions.

The story hadn't been told originally, it had been messed around with, condensed and compressed in "The Bath" to highlight the qualities of menace that *I* wanted to emphasize.<sup>97</sup>

Even though he authorizes the emphasis on "the qualities of menace" by presenting it as *his* intention, the passive voice and the apparent hostility in referring to the alterations, as in "it had been messed around with", give away his anxiety created by a more fundamental split in his own perception of authority.

For the contemporary readers of *Mississippi Review*, however, these symptomatic references remained in the shadow of a dramatic shift in the development of his writing style and in the course of his life. Therefore, another narrative unfolded itself in this gesture: that of perfectionism. In the same interview, Carver described his motivations for the revision by claiming that the versions in *WETA* appeared to him, in retrospect, as imperfect and unfinished.

But I [...] felt there was unfinished business, so in the midst of writing these other stories for *Cathedral* I went back to "The Bath" and tried to see what aspects of it needed to be enhanced, re-drawn, re-imagined.<sup>98</sup>

Interestingly enough, right after his claim that the original story "had been messed around with", Carver presents his revision not as an act of *restoration*, as it would appear later, but that of enhancing, re-drawing, re-imagining, in short, as an active process of writing, thus claiming authority over all of the versions. For this reason, despite his intentions to diminish

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid. (italics mine)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

the significance of the parallel versions, Carver gave way to a more powerful narrative of perfectionism that authorized his control over the reception of his stories.

Carver's revisions were first seen as a continuation of the writer's characteristic insistence on revising his stories during the writing process. The fact that the various versions created at different stages of the process of revising were actually published, made Carver's revisions appear as unique possibilities to gain insight into the writer at work. Therefore, what could be viewed as a challenge to the authority of the writer, i.e. the existence of multiple-version stories, started to function in its favor. The revisions served as a basis for mapping out the writer's strategies of representation as well as his development in style. Carver's authority as a writer did not diminish by revealing some of the mechanics of writing in the processes of revision, on the contrary, it was seen as a dynamic construct that is capable of justifying both the changes in his style and his active intervention into the reception history of his works.

### *Revision Seen as Restoration*

Carver's references to an altered chronology of the different versions became clear only later in the reception history of his multiple publications. After the revisions published by major publishers, the authentic originals of the stripped-down stories of *WWTA* also gained critical attention. Since all of the stories had been published in periodicals and a small collection,<sup>99</sup> the narrative of a first and a second revision was created. Meyer's formulations about the shape of the writer's career, compared to that of an hourglass mentioned above, became a dominant approach to Carver's oeuvre shortly after his death.

The new perception of originality not only rearranged the chronology of writing the stories, but also altered the concept of revision itself. What had appeared as active revising of

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<sup>99</sup> Raymond Carver. *Furious Seasons*. Santa Barbara: Capra, 1977.

the stories, now seemed more like an effort of self-correction to restore the originals. Several critics, like Hiromi Hashimoto<sup>100</sup> or Keiko Arai,<sup>101</sup> noted the obvious similarity between the versions before and after the exemplary minimalist volume of *WWTA*. However, it never occurred to them that they might actually be the same versions. By their insertion into the chronology *within* the author's development, the richer versions were seen as the beginning and the end of a detour in Carver's career path.

It is interesting to see, how later, in the growing shadow of Lish's presence, the interpretations of the first (minimalist) revisions tried to maintain Carver's authority over the reductions, therefore leaving Lish's influence in the blind spot. As early as in 1995, three years before Max published his findings, Hashimoto clearly refers to Lish's influence on the short versions, quoting William Kittredge, who claimed that "[Carver] had written the story, but his editor Gordon Lish had cut it down to the short version."<sup>102</sup>

Despite Lish's influence offering itself as an obvious explanation for the heavily edited versions, Hashimoto mostly disregards this fact when conducting a detailed analysis of the revisions in order to understand why "Carver stripped down and minimalized the original stories for this collection."<sup>103</sup> In an effort to provide answers, Hashimoto presents Carver's recovering from alcoholism not only responsible for the turning *towards* a richer style in the second round of revisions, but also for turning *away* from it in the stripped-down stories of the Lish-edited volumes.

After miraculously getting over alcoholism (in 1977), separating from his first wife (in 1978), trying to begin a new life, Carver must have felt like deleting all his past. [...] Carver felt what he had gone through was too hard and tough

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<sup>100</sup> Hiromi Hashimoto. "Trying to Understand Raymond Carver's Revisions." *Tokai English Review*, No. 5 (December 1995), pp. 113-147.

<sup>101</sup> Keiko Arai. "Who Controls the Narrative?: A Stylistic Comparison of Different Versions of Raymond Carver's 'So Much Water So Close to Home'." *Style*. 41 (Fall 2007): 319-341

<sup>102</sup> Sam Halpert. *Raymond Carver: An Oral Biography*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995, 152. Qtd. by Hashimoto, 112.

<sup>103</sup> Hashimoto, 113.

to share with ordinary readers. He was focused only on describing squalor, absurdity and menace in life with a masochistically minimalistic, pared-down style.<sup>104</sup>

This obviously speculative, therefore somewhat weightless argument, side-by-side with clear references made to Lish, make this approach a spectacular example of the functioning of authority in motion. Hashimoto feels obliged to refer to Lish at the beginning of his enquires, then discusses the revisions solely within the frames of Carver's contribution, and finally returns to Lish in his conclusions. At the end, he suggests the use of the term *precisionism* to replace that of minimalism, by attributing the first to Gardner's and the other to Lish's influence.<sup>105</sup> The outcome is an apparent lack of balance in the argumentation: the analysis of Carver's revisions seems ungrounded and also inconsistent with the context in which it is presented.

Another example of this special anxiety of influence – characteristic of a long phase in Carver's reception between noticing Lish's influence and facing its corollaries – can be detected in a more detailed analysis of the different published versions of “So Much Water So Close to Home” by Keiko Arai. Almost ten years after Max's article, Arai sets out to discuss “the nature of Carver's ‘revision,’”<sup>106</sup> and finds that it “can be regarded as his continuous experiment on textual representation.”<sup>107</sup> At the beginning he lays down two contexts that serve as the background for the analysis of Carver's revisions: the first focuses on the critical debates about his career showing a self-conscious development from minimalism to realism (or a vacillation between them), and the other is the question of Lish's influence.

Even though these two contexts seem to contradict each other, Arai appears to overlook this tension and offers a meticulous analysis of the “discourse structure and speech

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<sup>104</sup> Hashimoto, 128.

<sup>105</sup> Hashimoto, 141.

<sup>106</sup> Arai, 319.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

presentation”<sup>108</sup> of the different versions. Unlike Hashimoto or Meyer, he does not pay much attention to the sequence of publications, and simply deals with shorter and longer versions. By this gesture, Arai implicitly denies the relevance of a detailed chronology of writing and hence, the possibility to identify a clear career path on its basis. Instead, he focuses on differences in narrative control, and finds that in the longer version “the layered mind structure of the narrator [...] permeates the whole narration”<sup>109</sup>, while the shorter version

offers a more controlled, tighter, and less dramatic narrative, where the implied author rather than the narrator has narrative control, making the narrator’s power limited and, partly in a metafictional way, making the reader conscious of the narrative frame.<sup>110</sup>

This is a loaded observation, because while it seems to be remaining within the analysis of a writer’s changing style, it clearly resonates to speculations about a change in the scope of authority of the writer over his writing. That is, what Arai finds in the micro-structure of the versions – by looking at textual elements, such as sentence structures, personal pronouns, and reporting clauses – appears to be informative in considering Lish’s influence, too. Seen from this latter perspective that is implied but never fully considered by Arai, in the longer version, Carver’s presence may be detected in the “layered mind structure” and the omnipresent control of the narrator. At the same time, the narratorial control in the shorter version is replaced by that of the *implied* author and the exposure of the narrative frame. These considerations may point beyond the context of Carver’s authority, and make the act of *implication*, as well as the revealing of the narrative frame seem as the outcomes of Lish’s external influence. By emphasizing, and thus highlighting the narrative frame, Lish might have contributed to the formation of the implied author. And this time, the latter is clearly distinguishable from the ‘historical’ author.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Arai, 334.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

At the end of his enquiries Arai seems to be aware of the impossibility of maintaining traditional narratives about Carver's career development, but instead of stepping out of this frame of reference, he offers a somewhat vague explanation for Carver's revisionism.

Repeating textual revisions, therefore, is essential in Carver's literary career, and, in this respect, the change in his literary style cannot be regarded merely as the one-way development or as the pendulum-like movement between two styles but rather as something reflecting Carver's continuously changing, experimental quest for the essence of his works.<sup>111</sup>

The striking lack of references to Lish in the conclusions – in contrast with his influence shown as a relevant context at the outset – is symptomatic of another level of anxiety in the critical perspective taken by Arai. While references to Lish's significance made Hashimoto's arguments only less convincing and coherent, Arai – however implicitly – seems to formulate the findings of his analysis in a way to serve the purposes of two fundamentally different approaches at the same time, thus maintaining an underlying undecidability in his critical discourse. This apparent undecidability is what becomes so obvious in the nearly meaningless cliché at the end of his above quotation.

The second phase of the reception history of Carver's revisions, when the stripped-down stories turned out to be revisions themselves, was a period when Carver's minimalism underwent a necessary reconsideration. Realizing that the extreme reductionism applied in the first two collections (*WYPBQP* and *WWTA*) was only a transitory phase in the chronology of revisions, required a rethinking of the writer's development. For this reason, an expanded concept of authority was assigned to Carver that reinforced his image as a self-conscious artist for whom writing is a continuous act of manufacturing in order for the desired effect. This unique authorial image allowed Carver to claim control over his texts in all of their varieties.

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<sup>111</sup> Arai, 335.

The power of this new authority is clearly seen in the way interpretations of the revisions left Lish's significance in the blind spot even after its exposure. Even though the traditional concept of authority, in which the author's contribution ends with the beginning of reception, was already challenged by the revisions, the new authorial image of an experimenting and perfectionist author prevented critics from realizing an even greater shift in the concept of authority. That which points towards an active deconstruction of this authorial image, and places the acts of writing and editing in the context of a collective social act of manufacturing.

This perspective, however, only became clear by the publication of the manuscript versions of the most heavily redacted short stories in *Beginners* by the Library of America. The restoration of the original versions sheds new light on the revisions because it allows us to identify Lish's redactions by comparing them to the manuscript versions and hence, to locate the changes Carver *did* accept from his editor, in addition to restoring most of the original stories in the revisions. For this reason, after first seeing Carver's revisions as expansive re-writings and then, as restorations of the original versions, the publication of the manuscript versions makes us reconsider the writer's revisions and see them as clear signs of Lish's influence: both in having to restore the original textual elements and in accepting some of the changes in the redactions.

### 3.2 RECOVERING

The second step in the forming of the complex network of versions of Carver's stories was also a step towards yet another shift in the concept of the writer's authority by introducing a new paradigm, that of *recovering*. More than a decade after Carver's death the posthumous collection of *Call If You Need Me*<sup>112</sup> was published almost simultaneously by Harvill Press in Great Britain and by Random House in the US. The collection includes four early stories and the fragment "From *The Augustine Notebook*", all of which had appeared in periodicals in Carver's lifetime and in another posthumous collection of uncollected writings, *No Heroics Please* in 1992. Another five stories, found in manuscript forms after Carver's death and published in periodicals in 1999 and 2000, were also included in *Call*. By the publication of stories that Carver did not include in any of his collections, especially in *WICF* that was consciously designed by an authoritative gesture of creating his own legacy, the editors, Stull and Carroll, in co-operation with Tess Gallagher took a proactive role in defining the work of the writer. However, by publishing formerly unpublished stories the editors went even further and created an approach to the writer's work in which manuscripts were given primacy over published versions. This approach clearly paved the way for the publication of the manuscript versions of the stories of *WWTA* in *Beginners* by the Library of America, and created the image of a writer whose authority is operated beyond the control of his known intentions.

Out of the major forms of editorial contribution discussed in this chapter, the work of recovering appears to be the least aggressive mode of intervention into the writer's work that is driven by the motivation to correct his practice of publication in order to complete his oeuvre. The act of recovering seems even more justifiable when considering Carver's tendency to repeatedly revise his stories. As we have seen, in this process of continuous re-

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<sup>112</sup> Raymond Carver. *Call If You Need Me: The Uncollected Fiction and Prose*. London: Harvill Press, 2000.

writing or self-correction the act of publication stops functioning as a definitive gesture to designate the authentic version. Thus, if authentic versions may be created *after* the first appearance of a story by revision, the recovering of unpublished stories only expands the process of authorization to a phase of writing *before* the act of publication. As a result, tensions due to the presupposed incompleteness of the recovered stories are mitigated by the various levels of completion already rendered to the different versions of revisions.

Regarding the incompleteness of the recovered stories as only a lower level of completion is an approach that appears in Tess Gallagher's foreword to the collection: "Ray would sometimes take a story through thirty rewrites. These stories had been put aside well short of that"<sup>113</sup>. Even though Gallagher seems to emphasize that the stories are unfinished and "had been put aside," her argument rather supports the insertion of these stories into the writer's work as parts of the series of versions characterizing his writing process. In addition, the fact that the volume offers insights into the early works of the writer creates a context in which these stories appear as markers of the beginning of the writer's career, thus making the act of recovering seen as an effort to explore the origins of Carver's writerly style.

The early stories of the writer had already been revisited with the author's consent before his death, when a limited edition volume came out under the title *Those Days: Early Writings by Raymond Carver*.<sup>114</sup> In his "Preface" to this volume Carver commented on the experience of rereading these stories after a long time.

The thing is, if a writer is still alive and well (and he's always well if he's still writing) and can look back from a great distance to a few early efforts and not have to feel *too* abashed or discomfited, or even ashamed of what he finds he was doing then – then I say good for him. And good, too, whatever it was that pushed him along and kept him going. The rewards being what they are in this

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<sup>113</sup> Tess Gallagher. "Foreword." *Call If You Need Me: The Uncollected Fiction and Other Prose*. By Raymond Carver. 2000. New York: Vintage, 2001. XI.

<sup>114</sup> Raymond Carver. *Those Days: Early Writings by Raymond Carver*. William L. Stull ed. Elmwood: Raven Editions, 1987.

business, few enough and far between, he ought perhaps even be forgiven if he takes some little satisfaction in what he sees: a continuity in the work, which is of course to say, a continuity in life.<sup>115</sup>

In Carver's obvious gesture of reauthorization of his early writings he apparently relies on an idea of coherence in his work provided by the continuity of his development and the implication that this development is an organic process, as the reference to the "continuity of life" shows. As his condensed remark on his early works, "[n]ot bad, considering"<sup>116</sup> indicates, Carver himself was not against a holistic view of his oeuvre and, as it has been seen in his practice of revisions, he confirmed the approach of an active reconsideration of his former works.

Despite the fact that recovering was made more acceptable by a context already characterized by multiple versions and that it was motivated by offering a complete picture of the writer's work through his early stories, this type of editorial intervention certainly goes against Carver's authorial gesture of "putting aside" some of his stories. The disregarding of known authorial intentions seems to have different implications when recovering aims at the collection of uncollected stories or at the publication of unpublished texts. However, the composing of a volume in which newly found and uncollected stories appear together and collectively shed light upon an early stage of the writer's development, creates a context of interpretation in which the publication of unpublished stories is automatically authorized by their insertion into a collection. Thus, the seemingly less aggressive editorial gesture of collecting uncollected stories paradoxically justifies the more problematic practice of recovering unpublished stories.

The relatively low number of uncollected stories shows that Carver attributed special significance to his collections and viewed them as a means to exercise further authority over

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<sup>115</sup> Raymond Carver. *Collected Stories*. Library of America, 2009. p. 988.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

the stories. Publishing his revisions in consecutive collections has already been presented as a characteristic practice Carver applied to influence a story's reception. Being a short story writer and a poet, collections were also the only way for Carver to come out with volumes with his name on the dust jacket. The fact that he quickly lost interest in writing his only novel, *The Augustine Notebook*, made his short story collections the longest artistic compositions of his oeuvre. As a writer known for the meticulous care in designing his stories, Carver is also considered as an artist utterly conscious in composing his collections. This image, along with the natural mode of reading stories in each other's proximity, have often made readers interpret his short stories in a collection as parts of a neatly woven network of motifs and references detectable in the composition of the volume. In the French interview quoted before Carver reinforces this approach to his collections.

**CG:** When you write your stories, do you write with the idea of a set, a whole that will be a collection? Or do you consider them independently of one another?

**RC:** I think of them as a set. I write them and little by little the idea of a whole takes shape.<sup>117</sup>

Even though the answer is somewhat ambiguous, because a gradual and passive taking shape of the design is much different from any preliminary "idea of a set" suggested by the interviewer, Carver clearly allows for and authorizes any efforts to read his collections as the outcomes of conscious composition.

Therefore, by the publication of the posthumous collection of *Call If You Need Me*, the editors did not simply make some of the early stories of the writer available, but also provided them with an interpretative context in which cross-references in the volume could not be

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<sup>117</sup> William L. Stull. "Prose as Architecture: Two Interviews with Raymond Carver." *Clockwatch Review* (10/1-2) Available: <http://www.iwu.edu/~jplath/carver.html> Access: 12 December 2009

disregarded even with the obvious lack of authorial intention behind the composition of the collection.

Reading the volume as Carver's collection inevitably creates a tension between a presupposed function of authorship at work in the design of the composition and the fact that Carver never had a chance to authorize the volume. The reading of the newly found stories within the whole design of the collection, however, seemed too tempting to allow critics to face this inconsistency, and therefore the reading of the stories as parts of a greater design contributed to another shift of authority in the reception of Carver's work. From this perspective, the publication of unpublished stories seems a more justifiable practice, since it maintains the idea of an intact authority derived from the originality of the manuscripts, where only the act of publication goes beyond the intentions of the author. But the composing of a collection positively creates a layer of interpretation above the story level that is clearly alien to anything the writer authorized, and should be regarded as an active editorial intervention.

A characteristic example of disregarding this split in the authority at work in the publication of *Call If You Need Me* is Paul Runyon's insightful reading of the unpublished stories in the collection. He not only sets out to find an underlying design connecting the stories but intends to operate his interpretative approach applied in his readings of earlier collections.<sup>118</sup> By this he implicitly establishes a continuity in the strategy of composing Carver's collections. He summarizes his former approach in his reading of the new volume.

In *Reading Raymond Carver* I argued that the stories in *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, *What We Talk About When We Talk about Love*, and *Cathedral* (and the poems in *Ultramarine* as well) each repeat elements of their immediate predecessor as dreams, according to Freud, recycle day residue from the events of the day immediately preceding the dream, using it as raw material

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<sup>118</sup> Randolph Paul Runyon. *Reading Raymond Carver*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992.

for the disguise with which the unconscious will clothe its suppressed wishes. Each story and each poem are like a dream, and then become the equivalent of day residue for the next.<sup>119</sup>

Runyon's approach is a clear effort to identify a possible design behind Carver's strategy of composition. He refers to the context of dreams as meta-narrative connecting the stories and relies on the Freudian theory of interpretation in describing the mechanics of this narrative. In and of itself, this approach is symptomatic of an effort to locate an underlying narrative that may authorize a particular reading of the composition of the collections. In this case, the particular discourse of psychoanalysis and the emblematic figure of Freud function as sources of this authority. To some, this may look as a somewhat vague effort to subordinate Carver's stories to an arbitrary frame of references that is both rigid in its indebtedness to the canonical discourse of Freudism *and* speculative due to the elusiveness of dreams as points of reference. However, Runyon's approach is put to a test when applied to a yet unknown part of Carver's work.

In his reading of the collection Runyon enumerates the motivic relationships between the dreams presented in the short story "Dreams" and the plot of the story itself, then he extends this context to the reading of the other stories in the collection. The true potentials of authority are illustrated in the characteristic gesture of Runyon speculating about how Carver would have completed the frame of references if he had had the chance to collect his stories himself.

Similar connections may have eventually arisen between "Dreams" and some of the other newfound stories had Carver lived to complete them and the book their collection would have made. Yet their actual arrangement in *Call If You Need Me* is quite interesting and suggestive, whether because Tess Gallagher

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<sup>119</sup> Randolph Paul Runyon. "Dreams and Other Connections among Carver's Recovered Stories." *Journal of the Short Story in English* 46 (Spring 2006): 5.

intuited Carver's intentions, because she arranged them according to her own principles, or simply by chance.<sup>120</sup>

By reading the newly found stories of *Call If You Need Me* under the paradigm of consecutive dreams Runyon does not only presuppose the relevance of an overall design in a posthumous collection but claims that it is the same design that was relevant in the collections published in Carver's lifetime. It makes Runyon's interpretation a spectacular example of the multiple paradigms of the authority at work in Carver's oeuvre: both the editorial contribution in collecting the stories and the pre-established critical stance in reading the collections are incorporated in the approach.

As we can see, the recovering of some of Carver's early stories is based on a paradigm of authority that is capable of expanding the writer's work on various levels. While the publication of formerly unpublished stories increases the overall count of the writer's literary legacy, the creation of a new collection adds a new intratextual composition in which the unpublished and uncollected stories are inserted in structure that cannot help but appear coherent.

Another level on which the recovering of Carver's early stories appears as an act of expansion is suggested by Arthur F. Bethea who claims that the early stories present a narrative world with more fully rounded characters than the other Carver stories.

Although critics such as Paul Gray see the posthumous stories "set unmistakably in Carver country and populated by Carver people," this fiction in fact demonstrates an amazingly expanded world with characters much more

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

economically, intellectually, psychologically, socially, and even spiritually capable than what was previously seen in Carver's work.<sup>121</sup>

It is important to note, that Bethea does not make his observation in comparison with the redacted stories Lish published in the first two major volumes but in relation to the entire work of the writer. Therefore, the recovering of Carver's early stories does not only pave the way for the publication of the manuscript versions in *Beginners* by exercising a paradigm of authority beyond the known intentions of the author but also by creating the image of the writer's early works in which they are seen as the representatives of a fully developed and unmistakably Carverian style.

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<sup>121</sup> Arthur F. Bethea. "Now This Is Affirmation of Life: Raymond Carver's Posthumously Published Stories." *Journal of the Short Story in English* 46 (Spring 2006): 89.

### 3.3 RESTORATION

Due to the multiple sources of influence on Carver's work and the complex publication history of the different versions of his short stories, the intention to *restore* various textual elements or complete stories has always been present in the formation of the writer's canon. The effort to restore parts of stories that were published in their redacted version in one of the first collections was a major motivation behind most of Carver's revisions.

When arguing for the publication of the manuscript versions of the stories in *WWTA*, the editors of the *Collected Stories* claimed that the restoration they carried out was actually motivated by the intention to continue Carver's similar efforts in his revisions.

*Beginners* completes the restoration that Raymond Carver began—a restoration cut short by his too-early death. As the twentieth anniversary of Carver's death draws near, publication of his stories in original form is overdue.<sup>122</sup>

While Carver's revisions were truly centered on the restoration of most of the textual elements Lish omitted or altered in his redactions, it is difficult to suppose that the writer was carrying out a long term plan to regain all, or even most of the stories that had undergone Lish's redaction. Due to the significant role Lish played in the beginning of the writer's literary career it would have required a complete re-publication of nearly all of his stories written in the first, longer half of his career.

In addition to restoring some of the most heavily redacted stories, Carver also republished some of the stories in their redacted form. In the volume, *WICF* that the writer published at the end of his life, he included twelve stories from *WYPBQP* and eight stories from *WWTA*. Out of these twenty stories, all redacted by Lish to various degrees, only two were fully restored in the writer's revisions: "A Small, Good Thing" and "So Much Water So

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<sup>122</sup> William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll. "*Beginners* Book Description and Sample Comparisons." Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/Carver.pdf> Access: 09 September 2009

Close to Home.” Even the title story of *WWTA* was republished in *WICF* under the title and mostly in the form Lish published it, including the famous closure of story that turned out to be Lish’s insertion: “I could hear the human noise we sat there making, not one of us moving, not even when the room went dark.”<sup>123</sup>

The publication of *WICF* was a conscious effort of the writer to arrange his literary legacy. If we compare the twenty stories republished from the first two major collections (*WYPBQP* and *WWTA*) with the eight stories Carver included in *WICF* from *Cathedral*, the volume that symbolizes his regained authorial integrity, we may also realize the extent to which the redactions dominated Carver’s own selection of his best stories. For this reason, Carver’s practice of republishing and revising his stories does not entirely support the argument that the writer started a systematic restoration of his manuscripts during his lifetime.

Despite the apparent insecurity in justifying the posthumous publication of the manuscript versions by references to the author’s intentions, restoration as a paradigm of authority heavily depends upon a complex narrative of authority transferred from the writer to the editors. In this particular case the editors of Library of America gain extra legitimacy for their project by claiming that they actually intend to *restore* the writer’s authority formerly compromised by Lish. In the Kelley interview referred to before, with the writer’s wife and the editors of the Library of America volume, Tess Gallagher formulates the narrative of Carver’s intentions to restore his most redacted stories right after their publication in *WWTA*.

While it is true that Ray’s work was already clean and honed, he loved detail and believed a story was invested in the richness of its tones and colors. When these were shorn away, I do think he felt the story had been violated. I recall how he answered my dismay when he handed me the published *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* as the first literary gift of our relationship. It was obviously not the book he had written during those months of our living

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<sup>123</sup> *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 322. and *WICF*. p. 185.

and working together. He said, “Don’t worry, babe, we’ll get those stories back.”<sup>124</sup>

While Stull and Carroll only infer that Carver would authorize their efforts on the basis of the writer’s revisions, Gallagher provides the personal narrative about the genesis of this paradigm of authority that serves as a proof for Carver’s intention to restore Lish’s redactions. At the beginning of her argument, Gallagher acknowledges the similarity between Carver’s writing style and the direction Lish took in his redactions but also points out their apparent difference in richness of detail, tones and colors.

The central statement of the argument, “the story had been violated,” provides legitimacy for the act of restoration. It is introduced by the phrase “I do think he felt” that shows the complexity of creating the new paradigm: the strength of the verb “think” as opposed to “felt,” as well as the emphasis added by the auxiliary “do” all serve the emergence of this new authority that draws momentum from that of the writer and, as we can see, implicitly aims at surpassing and weakening it.

The second part of Gallagher’s argument emphasizes her role in the creation of the paradigm of authority justifying the act of restoration. Carver not only answered *her* dismay in his promise to reclaim his stories but the entire narrative is inserted into the context of their personal and professional relationship, as in “living and working together,” in which the redaction of the volume actually affected his “first literary gift” for her and therefore, the writer’s final statement is understood and also formulated as a man’s promise to his woman. This may also be regarded as a weakening of the writer’s authority since it shifts the focus from him as a conscious author of his works towards a personal image of a man in a creative relationship with his partner.

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<sup>124</sup> Kelley, 4.

Tess Gallagher's role in the formation of the paradigm of authority legitimizing the restoration of Carver's stories is outstanding and her co-operation with Stull and Carroll can be seen as a guarantee for the paradigms of authority behind the intentions of the editors. She not only owns the rights to the writer's literary legacy but actively participated in the act of recovering some of his lost stories as well. However, even Gallagher's attitude towards the publication of Carver's manuscripts both in recovering and in restoring his early stories shows the symptoms of multiple paradigms of authority influencing the writer's work. When Max published his findings in the *New York Times Magazine* he described Gallagher's role in concealing the extent of Lish's contributions.

[...] only a few Carver scholars have examined the Lish manuscripts thoroughly. When one tried to publish his conclusions, Carver's widow and literary executor, the poet Tess Gallagher, effectively blocked him with copyright cautions and pressure.<sup>125</sup>

Max repeatedly asserts that Gallagher aggressively defended what she conceived as the best interest of her late husband and contributed to the circulation of the widely accepted cover story for the spectacular change in the tone of Carver's stories. Referring to the writer's recovering from alcoholism and his new marriage, Max claims that the "redemptive story was burnished through countless retellings by Tess Gallagher."<sup>126</sup>

Max, who considers the role played by Gallagher with obvious reservation, points out the conflict of authority between Lish and Gallagher that was already present at the beginning of the couple's relationship. He goes as far as claiming that Gallagher's influence in Carver's life was actually what ended the writer's hopeless fight against Lish's tyranny because it was

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<sup>125</sup> Max, 10.

<sup>126</sup> Max, 2.

Gallagher who “taught him to say no to Lish and ultimately to free himself from him, winning the long tug of war for Carver's soul.”<sup>127</sup>

Max's reservation is explained towards the end of his article where he discusses Gallagher's claims over some of Carver's literary merits.

But in the 1992 PBS documentary "To Write and Keep Kind" and in a series of unpublished interviews, Gallagher emphasized that she had given Carver the original idea for "Cathedral" – or, more accurately, that he had stolen it from her. The story focuses on the discomfort that a husband feels when his wife brings a blind friend into their home. Tess herself had a blind acquaintance whom she talked about with Carver; she said she was planning to write a story about him when Carver "scooped" her. In addition, Gallagher claimed that she had written or helped shape several key lines. She spoke of the story as a joint effort.<sup>128</sup>

Although there is no reason to question and no way to justify Gallagher's claims, Max's presentation of Gallagher's self-authorizing gestures suggests that the conflict of the different paradigms of authority is a characteristic element in the formation of the Carver canon. Gallagher's indirect struggle with Lish over Carver seems not only an effort to defend the writer from the violation of his authorial integrity by his editor but also an act of filing another claim for a share in the authority of the writer; as Gallagher suggested in an interview, “people's ideas about authorship are perhaps a bit fixed and unimaginative when it comes to what really happens when two writers live together.”<sup>129</sup>

While Max's assertions about Gallagher's active interference with the writer's authority were made at the beginning of the critical history of the Carver controversy, the further development of the Carver canon has proved his point. Together with Stull and Carroll, Gallagher played a crucial role in the recovering the writer's early stories – she found Carver's unpublished manuscripts when going through the papers he left behind – and also

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<sup>127</sup> Max, 7.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Qtd. by Max, 8.

authorized the restoration of the manuscript version of *WWTA* and the inclusion of *Beginners* in Carver's canonical volume. In that sense, the restoration of Carver's manuscripts can be seen as a final effort to edit out Lish from the writer's literary canon by creating a paradigm of authority, that of restoration, that is designed to counter the effects of the paradigm of authority behind Lish's redactions.

The intention to restore the writer's legacy by correcting the redactions is the primary source of legitimacy behind the publication of the manuscripts. In order to justify this intention it is inevitable to compare the aesthetic merits of the two versions and point out the weaknesses and limitations present in Lish's changes. In his review of the Library of America volume, Stephen King does not fail to do so.

Carver himself says it best. When the narrator of "The Fling" finally faces up to the fact that he has no love or comfort to give his father, he says of himself, "I was all smooth surface with nothing inside except emptiness." Ultimately, that's what is wrong with the Ray Carver stories as Lish presented them to the world, and what makes both the Sklenicka biography and the *Collected Stories* such a welcome and necessary corrective.<sup>130</sup>

King's argument claims that the ultimate problem with Lish's redactions is that they are emptied out of content in favor of a "smooth surface." The redactions are made to seem like the outcome of an unsuccessful formal experimentation that Carver himself warned against in his essay "On Writing." When he speaks up against experimentation as a license "to brutalize or alienate the reader,"<sup>131</sup> Carver describes a similarly deserted landscape created in such writing.

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<sup>130</sup> Stephen King. "Raymond Carver's Life and Stories." *New York Times* (November 19, 2009)  
Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/22/books/review/King-t.html>

<sup>131</sup> Raymond Carver. "On Writing." *Collected Stories*. p. 729.

[...] a few dunes and lizards here and there, but no people; a place uninhibited by anything recognizably human, a place of interest to a few scientific specialist.<sup>132</sup>

Even though Carver was obviously not talking about Lish's redactions, the fear of the dehumanizing effects of formal innovation is also a major concern in King's criticism of Lish's interventions.

However, if we consider the sentence King chooses to illustrate his problems with the redactions, we may see the fundamental difficulty in editing out Lish from Carver. King's quotation, "I was all smooth surface with nothing inside except emptiness" is taken from the manuscript version of the story "Sacks" as it appeared in *Beginners* under the title, "The Fling" and it is actually a sentence omitted from the redaction. Instead of making it clear by means of the narrator's introspection, Lish chose to illustrate this "emptiness" by the elliptical structures created after cutting the manuscript by 61 percent. In a sense, he followed the "show, don't tell" principle Carver also advocated. Therefore, King's argument paradoxically points out the possible adequacy of Lish's act of emphasizing a writing style that is in apparent congruence with the narrative world the writer described. Choosing a sentence from Carver's textual world to illustrate the style of Lish's redactions seems to be a somewhat risky argument because if "Carver himself says it," as the beginning of the quoted passage claims, then it will be a matter of judgment to decide who "says it best."

Another peculiarity of evaluating the merits of the restored versions stems from the reversed order of publication compared to the chronology of writing the stories. Since the aesthetic effect of the redactions stemmed from their extremely pared down and elliptical style, for many readers the publication of the restored manuscripts appears as a unique chance to gain insight into a lost world of the writer's original narrative goals.

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<sup>132</sup> Carver. "On Writing." *Collected Stories*. pp. 729-30.

[...] as we move through the manifold little tragedies at the heart of the ordinary - so much at the core of Carver's work - new layers, new nuances, new meanings reveal themselves. Where the Lish / Carver collaboration cut this collection to the 'linguistic bone', these fleshier stories say what was previously unsaid, filling in the narrative silences that have both inspired and mystified readers for so long. *Beginners* is a fascinating insight into the aesthetic of a literary great and, in the questions it raises, may just spark off one of the great cultural debates of our times.<sup>133</sup>

As we can see, the writers of the “Introduction” to the British edition of *Beginners* realize the marketing possibilities in the unusual publication history of the volume: the promise of providing authentic solutions to the challenges posed by the redactions seems as an effective tool to raise interest for the book. However, filling in the silences that “inspired and mystified readers” may also sound like a questionable project for some, and it shows the scale of expectations surrounding the reception of the manuscripts. The passage seems to refer to the questions the restoration raises in its ultimate argument in favor of the volume: *Beginners* is both valued for the aesthetic insights it provides and for “the great cultural debate” it may spark off, even though these two approaches seem to contradict each other.

The publication of the manuscript versions of some of Carver’s most heavily redacted stories in the canonical Library of America volume can be considered as an effort to restore the writer’s authority. The restoration and the publication of the manuscripts, however, inevitably leads to the emergence of another paradigm of authority that is operated in the absence and without the approval of the writer. If the paradigms of authority behind the *revision* and the *recovering* of Carver’s stories were powerful enough to expand the writer’s oeuvre, the

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<sup>133</sup> Introduction to the British publication of *Beginners*. Available: <http://www.bookdepository.co.uk/book/9780224089289/Beginners> Access: 21 March 2010

*restoration* performed on Carver's work even goes beyond the previous paradigms and ventures to actively redefine the Carver canon.

Even though the publication of the canonical volume of Carver's *Collected Stories* raises a number of questions regarding the authority behind Carver's writings and the different forms of editorial intervention influencing his works, its appearance may definitely be considered as a significant and potentially positive turn in the writer's reception history.

*Raymond Carver: Collected Stories* is the definitive collection of Carver's short fiction. Editors William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll, the country's foremost Carver scholars, have done the literary world a remarkable service in what had to have been an immense labor of love. We see all the familiar (and, in some cases, very rare) Carver stories, wonderfully annotated with the editors' commentary, and with the inclusion of Carver's original *Beginners* manuscript, the Carver canon seems complete.<sup>134</sup>

Schumacher's words about the volume clearly indicate the emergence of a new paradigm of authority that is intended to balance out the oppressive presence of Lish in Carver's literary career. The editorial contribution of restoration described as "immense labor of love" is in clear opposition to the image of the commanding editorial work of "Captain Fiction."<sup>135</sup> As an ultimate argument for the success of the volume Schumacher announces its primary achievement, the completion of the Carver canon.

His argument, however, also indicates the fundamental heterogeneity of this new canon: Schumacher claims that it consists of the familiar Carver stories, the editorial commentaries, and the original *Beginners* manuscripts. Realizing that some of the most *familiar* Carver stories are actually the redacted versions in his first two major collections, and also considering that the commentaries and the restoration of the manuscripts are

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<sup>134</sup> Michael Schumacher. "'Collected Stories' of Raymond Carver — or Gordon Lish?" *Shepherd-Express* (Nov 13 2009) Available: [http://fwix.com/milwaukee/share/e28da5ae62/collected\\_stories\\_of\\_raymond\\_carver\\_-\\_or\\_gordon\\_lish](http://fwix.com/milwaukee/share/e28da5ae62/collected_stories_of_raymond_carver_-_or_gordon_lish) Access: 7 January 2010

<sup>135</sup> As Lish referred to himself during his years as editor at *Esquire* magazine.

primarily editorial contributions, we may see that the Carver canon as we know it, is the result of a number of competing paradigms of authority, none of which alone allows for a consistent approach to the writer's work.

### 3.4 REDACTION

The first three paradigms of authority, *revision*, *recovery* and *restoration*, are referred to by the terms generally applied in Carver's reception to the particular textual practices discussed in the previous chapters. In order to insert Lish's editions into this taxonomy and reconsider his contributions within the complex network of influences on the writer's work, the term *redaction* appears suitable to designate the type of textual intervention Carver's first editor performed. First of all, the term *editing*, generally applied in referring to Lish's work, does not allow us to differentiate it from the other editorial influences we have discussed. Recovering and restoration are also editorial contributions with significant effects on the writer's work, and even Carver's revisions were textual practices motivated by editorial decisions due to the writer's peculiar intention to edit out Lish from some of his stories.

The term *redaction* not only allows us to see Lish's contributions within a multiple context of editorial work, it also offers insightful associations to grasp some of the characteristics of and possible approaches to the changes Carver's stories underwent at the outset of his literary career. Even though the term, redaction is used rather rarely compared to editing, it has a specific meaning in the legal context, where it refers to the removal of sensitive names and details from a text in order to lower its level of confidentiality. Lish's redactions often involve the changing of proper names to common names, such as using the impersonal "the birthday boy" instead of "Scotty" in one of the most heavily redacted stories, "The Bath"/"A Small, Good Thing." The general tendency to omit or heavily reduce background information, flashbacks, introspections and emotional reactions is also present in Lish's redactions and may be viewed as an effort to reduce the "confidentiality" of the stories that would otherwise offer more unsettling insights into the characters' conflicts, fears and prior failures and hence, would create an even more uncomfortable vision of American lower class existence.

The literary connotations of the term, redaction are also suggestive in discussing Lish's contributions. The term primarily refers to the "revision or editing of a manuscript"<sup>136</sup> with the aim to "express appropriately writing inappropriately phrased."<sup>137</sup> A secondary meaning of the term implies "a digest of a longer piece of work, or a new version or edition of an older writing."<sup>138</sup> Therefore, the term redaction seems to be more applicable and accurate than the general term, editing because it refers to a close connection with the manuscript, especially in terms of *rephrasing* it, and implies the focus on textual *reduction* in its practices. The fact that redaction may result in a new version also seems relevant, since the status of the different version is one of the major concerns of the reception of Carver's work. Another context associated with the term, redaction is the philological practice of identifying the redactor's perspective by the analysis of his strategies of redaction. The term, redaction in this context presupposes an active editorial work that presents itself in a coherent set of changes and thus, allows for the latter-day reviewers to identify the redactor's stylistic preferences and aesthetic principles or even ideological dispositions.<sup>139</sup>

Seen from this perspective, an overview of Lish's redactions should offer us insights into his overall literary goals and editorial intentions. As we have seen in Monti's analysis discussed above (p. 14-15.), such an overview may show that these literary goals strikingly coincide with some of the major characteristics of literary minimalism. Monti also suggests that Lish was "pushing his vision of the now well-known "less is more" aesthetic to its limits."<sup>140</sup> This argument is used in Monti's rhetoric to offer a balanced view of Lish in which the act of pushing the minimalist aesthetic to its limits results in a vacillation between expanding and transgressing these limits which explains why his redaction often seems as a

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<sup>136</sup> C. Hugh Holman. *A Handbook to Literature*. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1972. p. 440.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> In Biblical studies *redaction criticism* focuses on textual interventions interpreted as indicators of the editor's theological stance.

<sup>140</sup> Monti, 55.

means to “deeper intensity,”<sup>141</sup> while other times it appears as a “pretentious, tiresome provocation.”<sup>142</sup> However, the efforts to push the “less is more” aesthetic to its limits may have other, more positive, implications as well, if we compare them with the very idea of artistic effect “enhanced by a radical economy of artistic means”<sup>143</sup> identified by Barth as an ever-present inspiration behind any minimalist aesthetics. Lish’s controversial efforts to radically alter Carver’s stories by reducing them on various levels, can be seen within the context of a productive but unusual co-operation that offers a unique chance for the reviewer to see the act of writing and that of the reduction of the textual world, otherwise inseparable in minimalist writing, separated by the different paradigms of authority behind them.

Therefore, by using the term, redaction when discussing Lish’s contributions we may also profit from its obvious etymological connection with *reduction*. As we have seen, editorial contribution in general does not necessarily involve the reduction of the manuscript. Restoration, recovery, and in Carver’s case revision, all resulted in the expansion of the textual material available under the writer’s name. It is in Lish’s redactions alone, where the stories were reduced in size and detail, as well as in syntactic complexity and word choice. For this reason, by referring to Lish’s editing as *redaction*, we may emphasize the primarily reductive strategies he applied in his editorial decisions. Before taking a closer look at these decisions in the exemplary readings of some of his signature stories in Chapter 4, we shall overview the particular characteristics of and concerns raised by redaction as the last paradigm of authority that revealed itself in Carver’s reception history.

The unsettling questions about the extent and the artistic qualities of the redactions that have been at the center of the Carver controversy may now be revisited after the publication of the canonical volume of *Collected Stories*. As we have seen, the publication of *Beginners* in the

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<sup>141</sup> Monti, 71.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Barth, 64.

Library of America volume was motivated by the Copernican turn proposed by the editors of the volume who intended to provide Carver studies with authentic material in order to see clearly “about the substance, form, and intentionality of Carver’s work.”<sup>144</sup> The reception of the volume, however, instantly showed that their efforts to restore Carver’s undistorted image resulted in a collateral effect of bringing Lish’s contribution into the focus. Since the redacted stories appearing in the first two major collections are inseparable from the writer’s oeuvre, the publication of the manuscript version of *WWTA* was only conceivable *together* with the Lish-edited versions. By the insertion of a set of parallel versions into the canon, the editors of Library of America put the seventeen stories of *WWTA* into the center of the volume and marked out the obvious interpretative approach, that of comparative analysis. Therefore, the restoration of the manuscript versions in *Beginners* not only provides insights into the material lost in the extraordinary co-operation between writer and editor but can be considered as a restoration of Lish’s redactions, too.

Due to the novelty of the manuscript versions in *Beginners*, the reception of Carver’s *Collected Stories* invariably focuses upon the comparison of the parallel versions. The first reviews of the canonical volume create the impression that the efforts of its editors are actually counter-productive, and the otherwise celebratory act of positioning Carver among the canonical authors of American literature is undermined by the focus of attention shifted onwards Lish’s contributions to creating both Carver’s unique style and the literary discourse of minimalism.

The first reactions also suggest that the editorial effort to put an end to the Carver controversy remains unsuccessful and the volume, with its parallel versions, becomes the very proof of the relevance of the questions raised along the controversy about the authenticity of Carver’s stories, as well as the historical influence and the artistic value of his work.

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<sup>144</sup> Stull, 2006, 13.

When Carver's award-winning volume, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, was published in 1981, the stories had Lish's fingerprints all over them—too much so, according to critics who have turned Lish's influence and editing into a controversy over authorship and authority.

This controversy burns in the core of *Raymond Carver: Collected Stories* (Library of America).<sup>145</sup>

Even though Schumacher, a devoted critic of Carver's work, welcomes the volume as “the definitive collection of Carver's short fiction,”<sup>146</sup> he leaves its readers with what he calls “maddening questions,” such as “are they Raymond Carver stories? Is Lish an editor or co-writer?”<sup>147</sup> These considerations are very much like the questions raised by Max in his *New York Times* article that set out the controversy more than ten years before.

For some reviewers, these uncertainties, that proved to be irreducible by the heterogeneity of the canonical volume, appear subversive and unsettling: “the book cast a disquieting shadow over his career and work.”<sup>148</sup> For other critics, the publication of Carver's desperate letter written to Lish in an effort to stop the publication of *WWTA* dominates the impact of the volume: “There must be few story collections whose footnotes offer more melodrama than the main text.”<sup>149</sup> What is in common in the points the reviewers tend to make, is a clear acknowledgement of the extent of Lish's contribution.

Does the emergence of the “real” stories undermine the reality that the most Carveresque of Carver's books has had for almost thirty years in the minds of readers? Characters who appear sane turn out to have been mad originally.

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<sup>145</sup> Michael Schumacher. “‘Collected Stories’ of Raymond Carver —or Gordon Lish?” *Shepherd-Express* (Nov 13 2009) Available: [http://fwix.com/milwaukee/share/e28da5ae62/collected\\_stories\\_of\\_raymond\\_carver\\_or\\_gordon\\_lich](http://fwix.com/milwaukee/share/e28da5ae62/collected_stories_of_raymond_carver_or_gordon_lich) Access: 7 January 2010

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Frank Kovarik. “It's All Right to Cry: Restoring Raymond Carver's Voice” *The Millions* (February 4, 2010) Available: <http://www.themillions.com/2010/02/its-all-right-to-cry-restoring-raymond-carvers-voice.html> Access: 22 February 2010

<sup>149</sup> David Propson. “Before and After Stories.” *Life & Style* (September 10, 2009) Available: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203440104574403194069512878.html> Access: 30 November 2009

Characters who smoke didn't do so in 1980, on their entry into the world. They are the children of Raymond Carver, but their identities were altered by the midwife, Gordon Lish.<sup>150</sup>

Campbell clearly voices his concerns about the editorial intentions behind the publication of the volume. His doubts reflected in the quotation marks in referring to the manuscripts as the authentic versions are contrasted with the status of reality he assigns to the readerly imagination set in motion by the redacted versions. The quotation ends with a surprising analogy in which the relationship between the writer and the editor is compared to that of a mother and a midwife thus, however implicitly, the comparison makes Carver appear somewhat powerless, uninformed and even passive.

Paradoxically, the extent of Lish's contribution appears to be the most significant recognition that dominates the insights made possible by the restoration of the manuscripts. As the reader carries out the comparison, curious about the author's solutions to the riddles in the earlier versions, "Story after story reveals the extent of Lish's influence."<sup>151</sup>

The volume of *Collected Stories* also makes the critical reception reconsider the implications of Lish's influence on the writing style of literary minimalism as well as his role in the forming of Carver's image as the master for a generation of writers.

[...] it was *What We Talk About*, issued by a major publishing house and given a full publicity blitz—thanks to Lish on both counts—that established Carver's reputation. The writing in these stories was as flat and spare as anything written by Hemingway, and in the aftermath of the book's publication and attendant hubbub, a new minimalist movement was born in short American fiction.

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<sup>150</sup> James Campbell. "The real Raymond Carver – How an editor's pencil created an author's literary style – and how an author's wife has undone it." *The Times Literary Supplement*. (July 29, 2009) Available: [http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/the\\_tls/article6731684.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/article6731684.ece) Access 2 August 2009

<sup>151</sup> Campbell, op. cit.

Ironically, as a comparison between *Beginners* and *What We Talk About* illustrates, none of this would have happened without Lish's intervention.<sup>152</sup>

Schumacher's claim makes a connection between the different means of influence Lish exercised in the publication of *WWTA*, implying that Lish's contribution was not only significant in redacting the texts but in marketing them as well. Thus, the author seems to suggest that the marketing objectives of the literary agent might have influenced his editorial decisions. Considering that one of the most obvious effects of literary minimalism was the unprecedented rise of the popularity of short fiction, this implication is a rather tempting one.

The critical reception of the Library of America volume also registers the former inconsistencies in the reception of the different versions of his stories and in Carver's artistic career constructed on their basis.

For a Carver loyalist, it's a tough pill to swallow that so much of the bold, bracing impact of the early stories would have been lost without Lish, and that much of the apparent arc of Carver's development really was the result of his prose's no longer being cut back so harshly.<sup>153</sup>

In his argument DeLuca implies that Lish influenced Carver's work on different levels. Lish's contribution not only resorts to the redaction of the early stories but the editor's hidden influence was also responsible for the distorted reception of the writer's artistic career. While DeLuca characterizes Lish's editing as a harsh reduction of the originals, he also acknowledges the "bold bracing impact" of the redactions. The possibility that the redactions represent artistic value itself raises the question of authority.

The comparison of the different versions in terms of literary merit is an inevitable effect of the parallel publication of the different versions. The judgment about the quality of

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<sup>152</sup> Schumacher, op. cit.

<sup>153</sup> Dan DeLuca. "Collected Stories by Raymond Carver." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 17 (November 2009)  
Available: <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/review/115901-collected-stories-by-raymond-carver/> Access: 21 December 2009

the redaction contrasted with the manuscript necessarily involves questions about the authority assigned to the writer and the editor.

*Beginners* proves the point, long accepted among scholars, that the more expansive style of Carver's later collections was the result of a change of management, rather than of personal transformation. But as even Carver well knew, Lish's versions were frequently cleaner, more vigorous and more memorable than his originals. When he selected his favorite stories for the collection *Where I'm Calling From*, he chose to restore only three of his original versions while reprinting many of Lish's edits in their entirety.<sup>154</sup>

Martin argues that the redactions are often better than the originals. The author's finding the redactions "cleaner" and "more memorable" than the originals may show that he is under the influence of the first reading experiences associated with the redactions. Therefore, his argument is made more convincing by referring to Carver's gesture of authorizing some of the redactions in his last collection. Again, the considering of the possible merits of the redactions brings the issue of authority into the focus.

The parallel publication of *WWTA* and *Beginners* in the canonical volume of Carver's work highlights the tension created by the restoration of the manuscripts. The reconsideration of the writer's career becomes problematic because the status assigned to the two collections will determine our understanding of Carver's writerly development.

*Beginners* is published for the first time in *Collected Stories*, and although it comes at the end, it can't help but function as a centerpiece. That's either as it should be or a significant problem, depending on your perspective, but regardless, it skews the way the collection showcases Carver's career.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Tim Martin. "Beginners by Raymond Carver: Review." *Telegraph* (30 October 2009) Available: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/6460630/Beginners-by-Raymond-Carver-review.html> Access: 12 Dec 2009

<sup>155</sup> David L. Ulin. "Raymond Carver revisited in 'Collected Stories.'" *Los Angeles Times* (September 6, 2009) Available: <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/sep/06/entertainment/ca-raymond-carver6> Access: 12 January 2010

Ulin points out the problematic position of the manuscript version in the volume of *Collected Stories*. The insecurity created by the editorial decision of inserting the manuscript version of *WWTA* at the end of the volume is not only unsettling because it is undoubtedly in the focus of the volume. Similarly to being a centerpiece due to its novelty, *Beginners* also “can’t help but function” as a collection of juvenilia restored from the beginning of the writer’s career and attached to the end of his work. Although, as the next chapter intends to illustrate, the manuscript versions do represent fully developed textual worlds, the comparison with the redactions puts the manuscript versions into an unjust competition in which they are measured against the long-canonized versions. The title may even, somewhat maliciously, make readers take it as a reference to Carver himself appearing as a *beginner* in these stories that he had written before he learnt to write from Lish.

Although Ulin does not go as far as regarding the manuscript versions as the writer’s juvenilia, he clearly points out that our judgments in terms of aesthetic quality are closely related to issues of authority.

The purpose of a retrospective is not so much to highlight individual stories as to trace how a writer's aesthetic has grown. Here, the prominence of "Beginners" adds a subtext that threatens to subvert the larger arc. That's because, in the main, the pared-down versions of the stories are better, which opens the question of where authenticity resides. Are the unedited drafts more essential because they represent the truer Carver? Or is the point the continuum of his writing, developed through the intersection of internal and external influences?

Ulin convincingly argues for the subversive effect of the publication of *Beginners* on the entire volume. Acknowledging the artistic values of the redactions inevitably raises the question of authenticity and the fundamental dilemma comes to the surface between approaching Carver’s work from the perspective of production or reception. If we insist on a

traditional image of authority, and focus on “the truer Carver,” the writer’s work will suffer a loss in terms of artistic value, Ulin argues. However, if we acknowledge the central position of the redactions in the Carver canon, the writer’s image loses sharpness of contour.

At “the intersection of internal and external influences” the image of the author is under the influence of various paradigms of authority. While his *revisions* first appeared to be motivated by “internal influences,” such as a clear progress towards richness and depth in his stories, later they appeared as Carver’s efforts to regain authority over his works that is, to reduce the effects of “external influences”. It implies that Carver’s revisions are centered around and therefore dominated by other paradigms of authority: rather than being an act of re-writing motivated by the writer’s artistic development, Carver’s insistence on publishing revised versions of his stories is driven by his intention to restore the original versions after their redaction. The *recovering* of some of his early stories was the first paradigm of authority that explicitly showed the signs of “external influences” because it created the legitimacy of editorial intervention into the writer’s work. As we have seen, the *restoration* of the manuscript version of *WWTA* and the creation of a canon with multiple versions is another editorial intervention with significant consequences to the writer’s image. By *editing out* Lish from Carver, Stull and Carroll actively interfere with the reception of his oeuvre and create a complex image of the writer that provokes our traditional understanding of authorship. When the first news came out about the process of restoration of the manuscript versions, the legitimacy of the restoration was instantly questioned by critics like Luebering.

[...] there’s no real Carver any more than there’s a fake Carver or, perhaps, a half-real Carver. (Or would that be a half-fake Carver?) There are multiple Carvers, each one an appropriate object of study and interest. What *Beginners* would present, if it’s published, is not the real Carver. Instead it would

present the real opinion of one pair of readers (Stull and Carroll) about what they think Carver might have written early in his career.<sup>156</sup>

Luebering clearly states that the multiple influences on the writer's work result in a heterogeneous image of the author and any effort to restore the homogeneity of this image inevitably results in the proliferation of perspectives. He also points out the relative nature of authority behind the editorial intention to restore the originals. Seen from this angle, the restoration of the manuscript versions appears as yet another instance of a radical and questionable editorial intervention.

The criticism of the Library of America volume does not fail to point out the conflict between the known intentions of the author and the act of restoration. Although it is a concern already raised by the recovering of Carver's early stories, the restoration of the manuscript versions makes the significance of editorial influence even more obvious.

The debate about whether the minimalist works are paradoxically richer – because of what they conceal – than the later, more bountiful ones will continue. Although he reclaimed his artistic integrity after *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, Carver never wanted his stories to go out into the world free of editorial influence. Even in 1982, as the two men discussed *Cathedral*, Lish was “the best editor there is.” In restoring *Beginners*, Stull and Carroll have “transcribed Carver's typewritten words that lie beneath Lish's alterations in ink on the typescripts” – itself a form of distortion, in the absence of the author's validation.<sup>157</sup>

Referring to restoration as a “form of distortion” clearly shows the paradoxical situation created by the parallel publication of the manuscript versions and the redactions. Campbell focuses on the authority shared by the different phases of editorial intervention and argues

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<sup>156</sup> J.E. Luebering. “Raymond Carver and Gordon Lish, Again.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica Blog*. (December 28, 2007) Available: <http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2007/12/raymond-carver-and-gordon-lish-again/> Access: 21 October 2009

<sup>157</sup> Campbell, op. cit.

that there is no reason to attribute more authority to the editors of the Library of America volume than to the editor of the redactions.

The conflict of authority that Campbell points out can clearly be detected in the decision of Stull and Carroll to publish Carver's long letter to Lish written in a state of despair in which the writer struggles to withdraw the redacted versions from the process of publication.<sup>158</sup> The dramatic tone the writer uses and the complete lack of its effect on Lish make their co-operation seem as unhealthy relationship, in which a weak identity, a person still fighting with the demons of his near past, is tyrannized by the merciless editor. In addition to offering insights into the controversial relationship between writer and editor, the publication of the letter serves the purposes of diminishing the authority assigned to Lish by presenting his influence as external and aggressive. Since this is an image created by another editorial decision, that of Stull and Carroll, it is difficult not to consider the publication of Carver's desperate letter as an effort to diminish Lish's authority and therefore, as sign of conflict between the different paradigms of authority exercised by the editors of Carver's work.

Some of the reviewers of the volume accept the invitation of Stull and Carroll to revision the image of Carver's influential editor. Christopher Benfrey, for instance, compares Lish to one of the title characters in the redacted stories.

It is tempting to read the story as edited by Lish, which he renamed "Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit," as an allegory for the working relationship of the manic storyteller (Mr. Coffee or Mr. Carver) and the patient fix-it man, Lish himself.<sup>159</sup>

The story the title of which Benfrey reads allegorically is one of the two stories, along with "The Bath"/"A Small, Good Thing," that Carver explicitly refused to publish in their redacted

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<sup>158</sup> Carver's letter to Lish written on July 8, 1980, included in "Notes on the Text," *Collected Stories*. pp. 992-96.

<sup>159</sup> Christopher Benfrey. "Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit." *The New Republic* March 13, 2010 Available: <http://www.tnr.com/article/mr-coffee-and-mr-fixit> Access 3 April 2010

forms. “I would not want “Mr. Fixit” (Where Is Everyone?) in the book in its present state.”<sup>160</sup> Carver also published these stories in their longer versions shortly after their appearance in *WETA*, making them the first instances of his revisions aimed at the restoration of his stories.

Comparing Lish to Mr. Fixit is only one of the possible allusions one may find in Carver’s stories to artistic creation seen as a co-operative process. A more benevolent approach to Lish’s contribution presents itself if we compare it to the influence the blind man had on the insecure personality of the husband in Carver’s signature story, “Cathedral”. While the multiple contexts of interpretation of the story will be in the focus of analysis only later, “Cathedral” can clearly be perceived as a parable about the detour one needs to make in learning somebody else’s language before becoming able to master his own. In this context Lish’s hand on Carver’s does not suggest a relationship of dominance but rather, that of mutual dependence in which the editor relies on the vision of the writer but the former is also able to push the latter towards a greater vision of his own.

In considering the possible role of Lish’s redactions in Carver’s successful efforts to find his own voice, we are made to compare the original aesthetic goals of the writer with the principles behind Lish’s redactions. The first have been formulated in Gigliola Nocera’s insightful essay on the image Carver presents about the cultural and historical context of America. Nocera argues for an understanding of Carver’s writing style by referring to the speaking name of the author.

Carver’s onomastic fate felicitously predisposed him to chisel the surface of language in search of the right linguistic *vena* “vein”: his name evokes the idea

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<sup>160</sup> “Notes on the Texts,” *Collected Stories*. p. 993.

of a sculptor, an engraver, someone wielding a scalpel or some such “extractor.”<sup>161</sup>

Nocera compares Carver’s style of creation to that of the sculptor. Regardless of the playfulness of the association, it is a suggestive metaphor in which the act of writing is seen as a process of removing the surplus, that of continuous redaction.

The metaphor of the sculptor seems to highlight the similarity, if not the inseparability of the tasks of the writer and the editor, both of them trying to “extract” a meaningful pattern from a superfluous material. Nocea continues by comparing this effort to a general concept of discovery as a goal of writing.

The rhetorical fulcrum of this assumption rests precisely on this act, a way of proceeding through which the writing becomes a discovery: a vigorous progression through the incrustation of the linguistic Babel that separates the writer from his goal. In order to reach it, he will have to work with scalpels and increasingly sharp chiseling tools. He will do so not for the purpose of enriching the page with verbal arabesques but with the intention of cleansing, removing, and subtracting. Only by cutting away at the petrified surface and carving underneath will there emerge in full an intuited yet uncharted territory: a hitherto unknown geography that will transform the journey into a discovery.<sup>162</sup>

Nocea’s presentation of the writing process highlights a particularly reductionist approach to artistic creation identified with Carver’s style. The writer’s primary goals of *cleansing*, *removing* and *subtracting* not only echo the minimalist aesthetic but also suggest the possible adequacy of Lish’s approach in redacting Carver’s stories. If writing is an act of discovery achieved by cutting through “the linguistic Babel that separates the writer from his goal,” Lish’s redactions can be considered as clear instance of such discovery.

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<sup>161</sup> Gigliola Nocera. “Raymond Carver’s America profonda.” *Journal of the Short Story in English*. 46 (Spring 2006): 165.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

As it has been illustrated by the characteristic concerns the publication of *Beginners* raised in the critical reception of the *Collected Stories*, the restoration of the manuscript versions of some of Carver's canonical stories does not seem to entirely achieve its aims, however benevolently set out by the editors of the volume. Since Carver's work was formed under the influence of a number of different paradigms of authority, the effort to restore the authentic image of the author seems to inevitably result in the illumination of a set of other paradigms at work in his oeuvre. For this reason, however, the restoration of the manuscript versions of Carver's redacted stories can also be seen as a unique possibility to identify the complex network of mutual influences these paradigms exercise on the writer's work.

Seen in retrospective light, the redaction of Carver's stories seems to be functioning as a fundamental paradigm of authority that has been implicitly dominating the other paradigms. The writer's characteristic practice of ceaselessly revising his stories even after their first publication is given a new meaning in the context of a conflict of authority between the writer and his editor. By publishing the revisions of his most redacted stories Carver intended to regain authority over his works while he also authorized and hence, paradoxically appropriated some of Lish's redactions when including them in his last collection, *WICF*.

In addition to Lish's redactions, the other significant editorial influence on Carver's work is related to the contributions of Stull and Carroll. By recovering some of his early stories in *Call If You Need Me* and restoring the manuscript versions of the stories of *WWTA* in *Beginners* Stull and Carroll not only opened up the writer's work for an active redefining of his oeuvre but created a counterpoint to the controversial influence of Carver's first editor. While their efforts to recover and restore Carver's stories are motivated by the intention to create a rich body of authentic texts, the story versions they inserted into the writer's oeuvre all pertain to the early phase of Carver's career, the same period in which Lish played a crucial role. In addition, the paradigms of authority functioning in the practices of recovering

and restoration also seem as efforts to gain control over Carver's early works by explicitly disregarding the writer's known intentions. In this context the parallel publication of *WWTA* and *Beginners* in the canonical volume of *Collected Stories* shows the symptoms of a conflict of authority between the two opposing editorial influences. This conflict resulted in a literary legacy that the writer clearly could not have authorized, especially considering the fact that Carver always concealed the extent of Lish's influence on his writing. In that sense, what DeLillo was warning Lish against, to expose Carver, was paradoxically performed by the restoration of the manuscript versions of *WWTA*.

When asked by Stull in an interview conducted in 1986 for *The Bloomsbury Review* about the reasons behind the extremely pared down stories in *WWTA* Carver makes a clear effort to authorize the redacted versions of his stories.

**TBR:** Gardner and Lish may have taught you not to waste words, but you carried verbal economy to new extremes revising the stories for *What We Talk About* from their magazine versions. You've said that you cut your work to the marrow, not just to the bone. [...] What led you perform such a radical surgery in the first place?

**RC:** It had to do with the theory of omission. If you can take anything out, take it out, as doing so will make the work stronger. Pare, pare, and pare some more.<sup>163</sup>

The fact that Carver's unusually strong statement follows their discussion of Lish's influence on his work shows the depth of the writer's struggles for his authority. However, his reference to the "theory of omission" also indicates that he identified with Lish's radical approach and the minimalist aesthetic seen behind the redactions became a part of his self-fashioning.

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<sup>163</sup> William L. Stull and Marshal Bruce Gentry, eds. *Conversations with Raymond Carver*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990. p. 182.

## 4 PARADIGMS OF READING

### 4.1 “SO MUCH WATER SO CLOSE TO HOME”

This short story is one of the signature stories of Raymond Carver. Considering that the writer published it six times during his life and it also appeared in the posthumous collection of *Beginners*, it may well serve our purposes to investigate the changes the story underwent in order to find out about the shaping of the author’s signature. The publication history of the short story is a characteristic example that seemed to support the hour-glass theory.

The first, long version of the story appeared in a minor periodical<sup>164</sup> in 1975. It was followed by the publication of an abridged version in *Playgirl*<sup>165</sup> in 1976. The *Playgirl* editor presumably applied extensive reductions and added the final sentences that never appeared elsewhere: “I begin to scream. It doesn’t matter any longer.”<sup>166</sup> It is unclear who made these editions but Lish’s influence may be suspected behind this version: “Not only did Lish publish Carver in *Esquire*, he got Carver’s work into *Harper’s* and *Playgirl*”<sup>167</sup> The first version was then collected in *Furious Seasons*<sup>168</sup> in 1977 without any changes. In 1981 the story underwent Lish’s heavy editing and appeared in *WWTA*.<sup>169</sup> Another publication took place in the collection *Fires*<sup>170</sup> in 1983, in a version almost identical to the version published

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<sup>164</sup> *Spectrum* 17.1 (1975): 21-28.

<sup>165</sup> *Playgirl*. (Feb. 1976): 54-55, 80-81, 110-11.

<sup>166</sup> Quoted in: *Collected Stories* p. 1001.

<sup>167</sup> Joel Turnipseed. “Carver-Lish Revisited, Revisited.” *Hotel Zero*. (Oct 27, 2007) Available: [http://hotelzero.typepad.com/hotel\\_zero/2007/10/carver-lish-r-1.html](http://hotelzero.typepad.com/hotel_zero/2007/10/carver-lish-r-1.html) Access: 12 January 2010.

<sup>168</sup> *Furious seasons and other stories*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1977. pp. 41-61.

<sup>169</sup> *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981. pp. 79-88.

<sup>170</sup> *Fires: Essays, Poems, Stories*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1981. pp. 167-86.

in *FS*. The version in *Fires* was later collected in *WICF*,<sup>171</sup> and the same version was collected again in *Beginners*<sup>172</sup> published by the Library of America.

Despite the variations, the complex publication history of the story features around two basic versions. The texts in *Spectrum* and *FS* are almost the same as the manuscript version published in *Beginners*, the differences lie mostly in punctuation, while the versions in *Fires* and *WICF* are also nearly identical to that in *FS*. Despite their minor variations, these five publications feature the longer version of the story and their chronology of appearance reaches over the publication history of the short story from the beginning to the end. The abridged version published in *Playgirl* has not become part of the reception history of the story and critics only focused on the *WWTA* publication when discussing the shorter version.

Even though a comparison of the different versions may primarily focus on the shorter and the longer versions, the particular pattern of publication history is also worth attention. While it was clearly the version published in *WWTA* that attracted public attention, the fact that the story had appeared in two periodicals and another collection before, made it a story that served the ground for the hour-glass theory created by Adam Meyer<sup>173</sup> mentioned above. In his analysis of Carver's revisions Meyer devotes a long passage to this story claiming that there are three versions that mark the three phases in the writer's development first towards, then away from the strict minimalism characterizing the short version. As we have seen, Meyer does not have the insight provided by the revealing of Lish's contribution, therefore he fails to realize that the long versions published before and after *WWTA* are not only similar but maybe considered as actually the same versions.

Interestingly enough, the only differences between the 1983 version published in *Fires* and the 1988 one published in *Where I'm Calling From* are the

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<sup>171</sup> *Where I'm Calling From*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988. pp. 160-77.

<sup>172</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. New York: Penguin Group, 2009. pp. 864-83.

<sup>173</sup> Adam Meyer. "Now You See Him, Now You Don't, Now You Do Again: The Evolution of Raymond Carver's Minimalism." *Critique*. 30 (Summer 1989): 239-51.

changing from the former to the latter of “afterwards” to “afterward,” of “whisky” to whiskey,” and of numbers to blank elliptical spaces for section divisions. Most likely these were all editorial decisions, conforming to various in-house publishing styles.<sup>174</sup>

The realization that these minor differences do not make different versions out of the publications before and after *WWTA*, was only made completely clear by the publication of the manuscript version of the story in *Beginners* which proved that all of the publications of the long version are actually faithful to the manuscript itself. For this reason it seems justifiable to differentiate between the versions closer to the manuscript and the other version that Lish edited for *WWTA*.

The approach of considering only two versions has been present in the reception of the story but, as it has been shown before, comparative analyses of these versions have mostly viewed the differences within the context of Carver’s revisions even after the coming to the surface of the scale of Lish’s editions. Leaving Lish’s contributions in the blind spot has been presented as a characteristic symptom of the anxiety of influence due to Lish threatening the authority of Carver’s work. However, this blindness also forced critics, like Meyer, Stull, or Hashimoto mentioned before, to interpret the differences between the short and the long versions as signs of a conscious development on the part of the writer, and putting them in a chronology even if the linearity of the publication history was broken. What this approach did not allow critics to do was to read the two versions free from the burden of the concept of *development* and hence, the compulsion to be careful in their evaluations of the changes in the story due to a respect paid to Carver’s authority. This respect made most of the reviewers voice their preferences for the longer version simply because the longer versions of the story appearing in the later collections were associated with a more improved style.

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<sup>174</sup> Laurie Champion. “So Much Whisk(e)y So Far from Home: Misogyny, Violence, and Alcoholism in Raymond Carver’s *Where I’m Calling From*.” *Studies in Short Fiction*. (36/3): 246.

Latter-day reviewers, aware of Lish's influence, gave up the quest for a sense of development and resorted to make decisions about which is the better story, and their choice simply reflected their preferences for Carver *or* for their preconceptions about minimalism.

As a rule, though, Carver's "Beginners" stories are weaker for their extra detail. What is merely implied in Lish's spare edit of "So Much Water So Close to Home", about three buddies who find a woman's body on a fishing trip and don't report it until the weekend is over, is needlessly spelled out in Carver's original.<sup>175</sup>

This characteristic standpoint shows an insistence on the preconceived idea of ellipsis in minimalist writing and shows the symptoms of a reversed anxiety of influence in which the reader's image of Carver's work is threatened by the intrusion from the author himself.

In order to be able to weed out these distortions and biases of perception one may look at the two basic versions of the story as offering a unique possibility to gain insights into the working of redaction by considering the versions as two clearly distinct approaches to the idea and limits of reduction.

Despite the publicity created by the Lish-edited version in *WWTA* the plot of the story "So Much Water So Close to Home" became widely known in its adaptation by Robert Altman in his movie, *Short Cuts*. Even though this adaptation falls beyond the scope of the present analysis, a contrast can be established between Altman's considering the story as an account of the fishermen finding the dead body of the girl in the river and failing to report it, and the focus of both of the written versions of the story in which the difficulties of the wife to

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<sup>175</sup> Dan DeLuca. "Collected Stories by Raymond Carver." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 17 (November 2009)  
Available: <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/review/115901-collected-stories-by-raymond-carver/> Access: 24 November 2009

process her husband's deeds and their consequences on their relationship are in the center by the writer making her the narrator of the story as opposed to Altman's omniscient camera.

In both of the written versions of the story Claire's perspective is rendered but the fundamental difference between them becomes evident by first looking at the different endings of the two versions. The long version ends with the wife's refusal of her husband's sexual advances as a clear sign that her dilemma throughout the story, whether things have to go unchanged regardless of her alienation from the husband, does not conclude in a clear solution. Her last words in this version, "For God's sake, Stuart, she was only a child"<sup>176</sup> reinforce that she cannot overcome the shock caused by having to face her husband's indifference, even his latent violence towards the dead girl in the river and his more manifest violence towards his wife at home. In the short version, however, the solution of her dilemma is a gesture of succumbing to her husband's desires and thus, her imprisonment in her dysfunctional marriage is made more obvious.

Both versions dramatize a tension between moral consciousness and the dulling effects of habit and human need, but in the second pared-down version, need and habit are given the final emphasis.<sup>177</sup>

The difference in the ending of the stories is also crucial because in this case, it does not come from Lish's cutting the story somewhere in the middle to make it more elliptical but from an active rewriting of the ending by the insertion of the last lines. Therefore, in addition to cutting more than seventy percent of the story, the work of redaction here goes further than in most of the cases and yields a complete recapturing of the plot and the displacement of its focal points. In order to understand more about this displacement and the redactive strategies

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<sup>176</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 883. (For the longer version references are made to the manuscript version as it appeared in the publication of *Beginners* in *Collected Stories*.)

<sup>177</sup> Martin Scofield: "Negative Pastoral: The Art of Raymond Carver's Stories." *Cambridge Quarterly*. 23/3 (1994): 247.

applied to achieve it, a detailed analysis of the omissions, changes and insertions Lish applied in editing the story could be offered.

In his analysis of Lish's editing<sup>178</sup> of *WWTA* quoted before, Enrico Monti differentiates five major forms of alteration Lish generally applied in his editions. These include titles, cuts, syntax, lexical changes, and endings. All of these changes have important roles in this particular case of edition, except for changing the title. Considering the titles Lish added to Carver's stories, including such famous ones as "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," "Popular Mechanics," and "The Third Thing That Killed My Father Off" we may say that here Carver must have satisfied Lish's expectations by taking a line from the story and making it an unusually long and captivating title.

The title also offers a clue to the interpretation of the story. It calls attention to the central motif of water and its connection with the motif of home and marital relations. Water's first occurrence as a destination of the fishing trip on the Naches River makes the image of water seen as characteristic reference to the pristine wilderness it symbolizes in the context of North American culture. The five miles walk that the men have to take to get to the river also emphasizes its distance from civilization and makes it seem as a well deserved recreation for the four "decent men [...] responsible at their jobs."<sup>179</sup> However, finding the dead body of a young girl in the river gives new meaning to this pristineness, and effectively creates the connection between water and the fragility or even the peril of feminine existence.

In the rest of the story the motif of water occurs at significant places designating the wife, Claire's insights into the "wild and unpredictable"<sup>180</sup> nature of her circumstances. When she drives across the mountains to the girl's funeral and is approached by the menacing figure

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<sup>178</sup> Enrico Monti. "Il Miglior Fabbro? On Gordon Lish's Editing of Raymond Carver's *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*." *The Carver Review*. 1 (Winter 2007): 53-74.

<sup>179</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 865.

<sup>180</sup> Martin Scofield. "Closer to Home: Carver versus Altman." *Studies in Short Fiction* (Summer 1996): 393.

of a truck driver, she hears “the river somewhere down bellow the trees.”<sup>181</sup> This connection between the water and the violence suggested by the approaching male figure becomes clearer in the wife’s daydreaming during the funeral about the dead girl.

Then I imagine her journey down the river, the nude body hitting rocks, caught at by branches, the body floating and turning, her hair streaming in the water. Then the hands and hair catching in the overhanging branches, holding, until four men come along to stare at her. I can see a man who is drunk (Stuart?) take her by the wrist.<sup>182</sup>

This passage not only shows her identifying with the victim of a possible rape and murder but makes clear reference to envisioning her husband as a rapist, an association haunting her throughout the story. Her effort to understand the significance of this association becomes evident in the lines immediately following her vision:

Does anyone here know about that? What if these people knew that? I look around at the other faces. There is a connection to be made of these things, these events, these faces, if I can find it. My head aches with the effort to find it.<sup>183</sup>

Even though this central motif seems to be as an essential clue to understanding the story, most of these references are entirely cut out of the short version. However, in the ending of the short version, in the sentences Lish added to the story, the significance of the motif of water is also made evident. “He says something else. But I don’t need to listen. I can’t hear a thing with so much water going.”<sup>184</sup> Since this remark immediately precedes her yielding to her husband’s amorous approach at the end of this version, her efforts to see the “connection to be made of these things” highlighted in the long version seem to remain unsuccessful.

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<sup>181</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p.879.

<sup>182</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p.880.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *WETA*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 279.

Here, the flowing of water, with all of its connotations of menace and uncontrollable male violence, entirely overwhelms the woman's consciousness indicating the hopelessness of her quest to come to terms with her situation.

Realizing this fundamental difference between the two versions, i.e. Lish's omission of most of the references to water and inserting the same motif in the crucial scene of the ending, allows us to tap into the difference of the approaches to the conflict presented in the two versions. One way of looking at this difference was offered by Charles E. May.

What gives the shorter version its life is the basic, mysterious and unarticulated reaction the wife makes to the image of the dead girl. The second version is made longer by the drive toward explanation of what the discovery of the dead girl means – a drive that becomes so pervasive that the narrator makes explicit expository assertions: “Two things are certain: 1) people no longer care what happens to other people; and 2) nothing makes any difference any longer.” The sense of life in the longer version is more reassuring, more filled with information than the shorter version, less fraught with mystery, less dependent on the pattern of the story and more dependent on simple explanation.<sup>185</sup>

What May points out is a difference quantitative by nature. Even though he made these formulations long after Lish's role in writing the story came to light, he completely ignores this insight, and his approach is still dominated by an effort to see the longer version, mistakenly referred to as the second version, as Carver's revision. Despite his seemingly neutral effort of differentiation, May also seems to devalue the merits of the longer version by making it seem like being driven by a need for “simple explanation”.

Others like Meyer, take an opposing perspective, claiming that the short version fails to assist the reader in mapping out the complex network of references necessary to understand

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<sup>185</sup> Charles E. May. “Putting yourself in the shoes of Raymond Carver.” *Journal of the Short Story in English* 46 (Spring 2006): 33.

the narrator's disposition. Referring to the ending of this version, without knowing that it is an insertion by Lish, he claims:

Her motivation here is unclear, made even more so by its having been so understated in the earlier parts of the story. We do not understand what has caused her to change her mind about Stuart, and why she is seemingly willing to return to the status quo. The ending is not ambiguous, like the ending of "The Bath," but it is rather illogical and unconvincingly forced.<sup>186</sup>

While the two critical approaches apparently differ in their evaluations of the short version of the story, they share the approach of presupposing a more or a less spelled out account of the wife's processing of her situation.

This approach maybe justified by considering Lish's systematic omissions of most of the details related to the minor characters of the story.

For example, Carver's revision of "So Much Water So Close to Home" eliminates an important scene, in which the couple's son, Dean, questions his father, only to be told to be quiet by his mother. More significantly, Carver dramatically redraws his portrait of the victim. Although it seems like a minor detail, there is a world of difference in the reader's perception when a character is called Susan Miller, rather than "the body."<sup>187</sup>

Although Meyer convincingly argues for the relevance of details appearing only in the longer version, the crucial significance of both of the son's appearance and the naming of the victim is only evident if we read the story as a series of insights into the wife's continuous efforts of self-reflection. This reading, however, is only productive in considering the longer version. But due to Lish redacting almost all of the introspection of the wife, the shorter version lacks a number of passages pertaining to her reconsidering her entire life in the process of understanding her relationship with the husband.

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<sup>186</sup> Meyer, 245.

<sup>187</sup> Meyer, 244.

The first of these omissions appears at the end of the opening paragraph: “Something has come between us though he would like me to believe otherwise.” This line maybe read as her initial lack of knowledge about the fishing affair but considering its crucial position in the narrative, it seems more like an account of her overall situation in her unsatisfying marriage that only she senses out of the couple. In most of his stories the last lines in Carver’s opening paragraphs have the function of a preliminary summary and a point of orientation for the reader. This is evident in stories like “Cathedral”<sup>188</sup>, or “Why Don’t You Dance”<sup>189</sup>, or “Where I’m Calling From.”<sup>190</sup>

By Lish cutting this line from “So Much Water So Close to Home,” another sentence takes up the crucial role of projecting the focus of the story: “He shrugs, and goes on eating.”<sup>191</sup> The difference between the two versions is obvious and provides a spectacular example of redaction as an active interfering with the composition of the story. In the longer version Claire’s insight points towards a reading of the story that focuses on her efforts to understand and process the shock of awakening to their alienation, while the line from the shorter version foreshadows the impossibility of changing the situation and even prepares the final scene of her succumbing to his physical needs as a sign of terminal subordination.

The same contrast is maintained by a number of omissions Lish applies in his redaction. When the couple is discussing the significance of leaving the dead girl in the water she tries to raise the awareness of her husband in the following dialogue:<sup>192</sup>

"She was dead, dead, dead, do you hear?" he says after a minute. "It's a damn shame, I agree. She was a young girl and it's a shame, [a]nd I'm sorry, as sorry

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<sup>188</sup> “A blind man in my house was not something I looked forward to.” *Collected Stories*. p. 514.

<sup>189</sup> “[...] – nightstand and reading lamp on his side of the bed, nightstand and reading lamp on her side.” *Collected Stories*. p. 223.

<sup>190</sup> “‘This has never happened to me before,’ he says. He means the trembling. I tell him I sympathize. I tell him the shakes will idle down. And they will. But it takes time.” *Collected Stories*. p. 452.

<sup>191</sup> *WWTA* in *Collected Stories*. p. 273

<sup>192</sup> In the following parallel quotations the underlined words designate the parts omitted from the short version with the punctuation maintained and new sentences as well as variations in word choice indicated by square brackets.

as anyone else, [b]ut she was dead, Claire, dead. Now let's leave it alone. Please, Claire. Let's leave it alone now."

"That's the point," I say. "She was dead. But don't you see? She needed help."<sup>193</sup>

As we can see, the redaction of the passage seems to leave intact the essential conflict between them. Stuart's repetitive language only emphasizes his vague effort to restore his moral integrity so it is somewhat redundant and therefore its omission does not seem to affect his position. However, Claire's extra sentences in the long version clearly show her own perspective intertwined with that of the young girl because of the unusual reference to a dead person in need of "help".

Similarly, Claire's process of introspection falls victim to Lish's edition throughout the story.

I close my eyes for a minute and hold onto the drainboard [sink]. I must not dwell on this any longer. I must get over it, put it out of sight, out of mind, etc., and "go on." I open my eyes. Despite everything, knowing all that may be in store, I rake my arm across the drainboard and send the dishes and glasses smashing and scattering across the floor.<sup>194</sup>

In the short version Claire's desperate and provocative move seems like a sudden eruption, while the longer version not only renders her feelings leading to this move but also introduces the narratorial voice, as in "etc.", that points beyond her feelings and reveals the essential task behind telling the story, that of trying to gain control over her own insecurities.

This approach of eliminating the wife's struggle with herself and putting the friction in their relationship in the focus instead, can be detected in an increasing manner as we go along the story. The introspection of Claire dominating the narration of the longer version also becomes more apparent by the clear narratorial remarks in the redacted passages.

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<sup>193</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 864. & WWTA. in *Collected Stories* p. 273.

<sup>194</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 865. & WWTA. in *Collected Stories* p. 273.

"What is going on?" I said, alarmed.

"Sit down," he said slowly. His fingers scraped, scraped against his stubble of whiskers. "I have to tell you something. Something happened while we were fishing." We sat across from each other at the table, and then he told me. [It was then that he told me what I just told you.]<sup>195</sup>

In addition to presenting the husband's increasingly alienating presence, the addressing of the reader directly is a further important difference between the two versions because it makes the narrator's effort to understand *and* explain her case more obvious and invites the reader to participate in this process of self-revisioning.

What follows is a two pages long rendering of background information from the press about the murder together with the discussion of her relationship with Stuart's mother. "She gives me the feeling that she is always judging, judging."<sup>196</sup> Both of these themes, entirely omitted in the short version, further emphasize the focus on Claire's efforts to situate the event within her network of relationships with the husband. While this is the first really extended cut, there are even longer omissions in the rest of the story adding up to the radical cuts that exceed seventy percent of the manuscript. From the next longer passage omitted the reader finds out about Claire's violent outburst against her husband that nearly makes him hit her, a scene that prepares for the husband's aggression aroused at the end when she refuses to yield to her approach in the longer version. This passage ends by the husband accusing his wife of being selfish:

"You're not being fair to me," he says later in the car. Fields and trees and farmhouses fly by outside the window. "You're not being fair. To either one of us. Or to Dean, I might add. Think about Dean for a minute. Think about me. Think about someone else besides your goddamn self for a change."

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<sup>195</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 867. & WWTA. in *Collected Stories* p. 275.

<sup>196</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 869.

There is nothing I can say to him now.<sup>197</sup>

The husband's tedious call for liability is apparent in this passage but also his recognition that his wife's focus shifted towards herself is a threatening process for their relationship as well as for the status quo in the family. Claire's answer is a sign that she knows he has tapped into the essence of the proceedings and that her self-scrutiny puts an end to their communication.

The longest unbroken passage entirely cut from the manuscript version takes up about four and a half pages (1730 words). In this passage Claire's process of self-reflection not only becomes apparent but dominates the narration. She first formulates her central question concerning the controversy of change in the course of one's life.

Look at what has happened. Yet nothing will change for Stuart and me. Really change, I mean. We will grow older, both of us, you can see it in our faces already, in the bathroom mirror, for instance, mornings when we use the bathroom at the same time. And certain things around us will change, become easier or harder, one thing or the other, but nothing will ever really be any different. I believe that. We have made our decisions, our lives have been set in motion, and they will go on and on until they stop. But if that is true, what then? I mean, what if you believe that, but you keep it covered up, until one day something happens that should change something, but then you see nothing is going to change after all. What then?<sup>198</sup>

Claire's dilemma is clearly stated in these lines. Considering that this passage functions as a meta-narrative to the story, we can confirm what has been implied before, that her self-reflections are in the focal point of the longer version and are essential in understanding both her character and the ending of the story.

In the same extended omission she also renders her past in third person that makes the separation of the voice of the wife from that of the narrator complete. "The past is unclear. It's

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<sup>197</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 870.

<sup>198</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 871-2.

as if there is a film over those early years. I can't even be sure if that the things I remember happening really happened to me. There was a girl who had a mother and a father [...]"<sup>199</sup>

The long retelling of her life gives account of her time spent in a mental institution, from which she escaped, and the beginning of her relationship with her husband. The third person narrative leads up to the present, maintaining this separation of voice even when arriving to the actual situation she has to understand: ". . . He continues to bowl and play cards regularly. He goes fishing with three friends of his."<sup>200</sup>

This alienation from herself is the effect of her intensive self-reflection that makes her see herself from the outside, in a way recalling another famous narrative of a woman trying to cope with her alienating conditions by means of a schizophrenic transgression of identity depicted by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. This possible allusion was convincingly argued for by Sandra Lee Kleppe.

A brief comparison with a story that has a similar protagonist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), published almost a century before "So Much Water," should bring out some of the gender and health issues that the stories share despite their distance in time. Both are narrated by a married American woman with one child who has been diagnosed with mental illness. Both husbands have patronizing attitudes toward their wives, and will not listen to their worries, which are expressed in strikingly articulate terms in both texts. Finally, both women identify and in their minds fuse with another woman who is the symbol of their contemporary society's ill treatment of women in general.<sup>201</sup>

Kleppe proposes a feminist reading of the story and highlights the significance of creating a female narrator in Carver's work that has, somewhat unjustly we should add, been criticized for the unsympathetic treatment of women in his stories. The same approach of feminist

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<sup>199</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 872.

<sup>200</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 873.

<sup>201</sup> Sandra Lee Kleppe. "Women and Violence in the Stories of Raymond Carver." *Journal of the Short Story in English* 46 (Spring 2006): 117.

reading was taken by Vanessa Hall when claiming that “the female protagonist’s ability to imaginatively relate to a drowned woman enables her to see how her own adherence to traditional gender roles is causing her to live a kind of death in life.”<sup>202</sup> While a feminist approach is obviously relevant in discussing Claire’s quest to understand her life, it is a context that concerns only the longer version and thus, in our discussion it merely serves as one of the points of reference in differentiating the two versions of the story.

In addition to Claire’s reflections on her past, the same extended omission renders the son’s enquiry about his father’s adventure mentioned before, the materialization of the dead girl by being shown on television, and another unsuccessful attempt of the husband to seduce his wife. The omitted part ends with Claire’s decision to sleep in the living room, out of the reach of Stuart, who registers the growing distance between them by an apparent hostility in his voice: “I’m thinking you’re making a big mistake. I’m thinking you’d better think again about what you’re doing.”<sup>203</sup>

All these pieces of information, giving account of the wife’s gradual alienation from her husband and her self, are considered irrelevant for the purposes of Lish’s recapturing of the story. The long passage in the manuscript is replaced by a simple sentence in the redacted version: “I sit for a long time holding the newspaper and thinking.”<sup>204</sup> Should we consider this as an extreme example of ellipsis, a call for the reader to figure out some or all of what has been left out? Certainly not. Considering the incommensurability of the two passages, Lish’s redaction cannot be regarded as an act of trimming or paring the story down to the bone and marrow of the plot but rather as an active *revisioining* of the story’s focal points and overall directions.

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<sup>202</sup> Vanessa Hall. “Influences of Feminism and Class on Raymond Carver’s Short Stories.” *The Raymond Carver Review* 2/1 (Spring 2009): 67

<sup>203</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 875.

<sup>204</sup> WFTA. in *Collected Stories* p. 276.

The remaining longer passages cut out by Lish reinforce the wife's increasing feeling of threat posed by the men approaching her on her way to the funeral. The first encounter is a more concealed situation of menace in which Claire is offered help by a gas station attendant, "a forty-year-old mechanic with a moustache"<sup>205</sup> who first invades her privacy by asking her what the purpose of her trip is. He then suggests that the drive through the mountains is not safe for a woman and indicates that he would give her a ride if he was not busy. While the attendant is a person Claire knows by his name and is apparently very helpful, the overall attitude and insistence of the man does not make Claire feel comfortable. "He leans against the fender. I can feel his eyes as I open my purse."<sup>206</sup>

A more obvious scene in which she is approached by a man with a possible ulterior motive takes place on her way through the mountains along the valley of the Naches River. This scene is not entirely cut out of the short version but it is made substantially shorter. A man follows her in a green pick up car, the same color as that of the car by which the dead girl was presumably kidnapped. When the man, "a crew-cut man in a blue workshirt,"<sup>207</sup> finally passes her and then returns after she pulls over, an awkward scene evolves, in which the latent violence so apparent in the situation nearly comes to the surface.

"Open the door, all right?" he says, as if he isn't listening. "At least roll the window down. You're going to smother [choke] in there." [¶] He looks at my breasts[, my] and legs. [I can tell that's what he is doing.] The skirt has pulled up over my knees. His eyes linger on my legs, but I sit still, afraid to move.

"I want to smother," I say. "I am smothering, can't you see?"

"What in the hell?" he says and moves back from the door. ["Hey, sugar," he says. "I'm just here to help is all."]<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 877.

<sup>206</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 878.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>208</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 879. & *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 278.

As we can see, the short version emphasizes the threatening figure of the man, especially in the last line inserted by Lish, while in the longer version Claire's desperate move to repel him is in the focus when claiming that she is smothering in her car. This is an unusual word choice, altered in the short version to the more neutral "choke", which calls attention to her general state of mind and maybe considered as an allusion to her identification with the dead girl.

In the short version of the passage Lish combined omission with insertion in order for the desired effect that is also a strategy applied in another scene when Claire discusses the murder case with a woman outside the funeral home.

Sunlight glances off [p]olished hoods and [polished] fenders. My head swims. "He's admitted having relations with her that night, but he says he didn't kill her." She snorts. "They'll put him on probation and then turn him loose."

"He might not have acted alone," I say. "They'll have to be sure. He might be covering up for someone, a brother, or some friends." [They have friends, these killers. You can't tell.]<sup>209</sup>

The effect of the short version is clearly more shocking in this passage by bringing together her visionary state of mind induced by the polished car parts and her allusion to her husband when referring to "these killers" having friends.

As we have seen before, the most significant difference between the two versions is their ending. The last one and a half pages of the manuscript were cut out of the story by Lish and replaced by a few lines with entirely different meaning. The omitted passage features the husband's last effort to make love with his wife and his violent reaction to her refusal. The scene is induced by the following dialogue:

Stuart, I'm so afraid, so afraid, I say, leaning against the door.

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<sup>209</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 881. & *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 279.

What are you afraid of, Claire? Tell me, honey, and maybe I can help. I'd like to help, just try me. That's what husbands are for.

I can't explain, I say. I'm just afraid. I feel like, I feel like, I feel like. ...<sup>210</sup>

While this conversation seems like Claire's final effort to make herself understood and the husband's sympathetic attitude towards his wife's insecurities, the actual effect of the scene is the contrary. By this time the reader suspects that Claire's worries are closely related to her marriage, namely that she is afraid of no other than her husband and therefore, Stuart's consoling words just seem to reinforce her fear and prevent her from being able to tell him about it.

Another striking characteristic of this passage as appearing in the manuscript version is the disappearance of the quotation marks from the dialogue. After the previous separation of the narratorial voice from that of the wife's character created by the narrator's direct addressing of the reader and also by referring to herself in third person, this typographical change in the story designates a final collapsing of this difference. At the beginning, the wife's perspective dominated over the narrator's insights, and then this unanimity was made problematic by the separation of their voices. In this third step at the end, the lack of a clear disassociation of narrator from character, the narratorial voice formerly permeated by her self-reflection, is superimposed on the character's position.

This movement from identity, through a schizophrenic separation, towards a reunion on another level, also resembles the process of the pathological awakening depicted in Gilman's narrative formerly mentioned. There, the wife first projects herself into the wallpaper, then identifies with the female figure she conjured up behind its patterns that puts an end to her alienation from her husband and her previous subordination.

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<sup>210</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 881.

Considering that this typographical change was not present in the version of the story as it appeared in *WICF*, we can see that Carver *revised* both Lish's redacted version and his own manuscript in the volume that he intended as a final gesture of authorization. For this reason, the publication of the manuscript version in *Beginners* by Stull and the editors of the Library of America volume should not only be regarded as an act of *restoration*, aimed at the elimination of Lish's influence but also as an act of *recovery* making the original version available regardless of the author's known intentions to publish the story together with his revisions.

After the aggression of the husband aroused by his wife's refusal the last extended omission also details Claire's final effort to physically separate from her husband. She moves to another bedroom but Stuart breaks the lock on her door in the middle of the night "just to show [her] that he can."<sup>211</sup> But then he is paralyzed and cannot go on with his aggression: "he doesn't do anything when the door springs open except stand there in his underwear looking surprised and foolish while his anger slips from his face."<sup>212</sup> In addition to being yet another allusion to the "Yellow Wallpaper" in which the husband is presented in a similar moment of paralysis upon breaking the door to his wife's room, this scene shows both the unquestionable power the husband has over his wife and the limits of this power in trying to penetrate the wife's growing alienation. Realizing this, Stuart resorts to drinking: "I hear him in the kitchen prying open a tray of ice cubes."<sup>213</sup>

The theme of drinking does not only appear towards the climax of the story but is motif saturating the entire narrative in both versions. It does not only refer to a general attitude of escapism present in the men's life in this story but is associated with violence and sexuality. The critical reception did not fail to register this association present in many of Carver's stories.

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<sup>211</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 882.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

[...] degrees of alcoholism can be found in “Are These Actual Miles?,” “Vitamins,” and “So Much Water So Close to Home.” Interestingly enough, male alcoholics in these stories embrace sexist attitudes expressed through various degrees of desires to possess women sexually and acts of violence toward women. In these stories, degree of psychological and physical abuse of women correlates positively with the extent to which alcoholic behavior is manifested in males.<sup>214</sup>

As Champion also notes, “while Claire perceives Stuart’s insensitivity, she does not attribute it to alcoholism.”<sup>215</sup> Her husband is also completely unaware of his drinking problem and towards the very end of the longer version he asks his mother to stay with them for a few days. It is a clear effort to put her under the custody of his judging mother due to Claire’s supposed mental conditions.

Her mental problems and their treatment by Stuart’s family have been referred to in the longer version of the story before. When the husband informs Claire about asking his mother to come by, the longer version of the story concludes in the following lines:

I wait a minute, thinking about this, and then hang up while he is still talking. But in a little while I dial his number at work. When he finally comes on the line I say, It doesn’t matter, Stuart. Really, I tell you it doesn’t matter one way or the other.

I love you, he says.

He says something else and I listen and nod slowly. I feel sleepy. Then I wake up and say, For God’s sake, Stuart, she was only a child.<sup>216</sup>

This passage reinforces the reading of the long version as a gradual awakening of the wife to her radical imprisonment in her marriage and also her final alienation from her husband. The communication between the couple breaks down by the end and Claire’s voice remains

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<sup>214</sup> Champion, p. 237.

<sup>215</sup> Champion, p. 246.

<sup>216</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. pp. 882-83.

dominated over by the self-reflexive insights of the narrator. Considering her identification with the victim of the murder, her reference to the girl being “only a child” can also be read as a kind of age regression in which Claire recognizes that her victimization started by getting married to Stuart at an early age. The theme of the destructive consequences of early marriage is not only a reoccurring pattern in Carver’s stories – most dramatically presented in “Mine” / “Popular Mechanics” – but a motif present in the writer’s biography as well.

The ending in the Lish-edited version is not only much shorter but completely different from the conclusion of the manuscript. Here Claire is also presented as if in an altered mode of consciousness but her reaction to Stuart’s sexual advances is the opposite.

He reaches an arm around my waist and with his other hand begins to unbutton my jacket, and then he goes on to the buttons of my blouse.

“First things first,” he says.

He says something else. But I don’t need to listen. I can’t hear a thing with so much water going.

“That’s right,” I say, finishing the buttons myself. “Before Dean comes. Hurry.”<sup>217</sup>

The significance of the motif of water reoccurring in this final scene of the short version has been mentioned before as a sign of Claire’s losing of consciousness. Her participation in the action, as in “finishing the buttons myself,” shows her final subordination to her husband’s invading her privacy. By this gesture of undressing herself and getting naked she also identifies with the dead girl but not on a mental/emotional level, as in the long version, but rather on a physical level making her quest throughout the story appear as a process objectification. Referring to their son in her last words makes this scene resemble a usual marriage in which having sex requires the everyday logistics of a couple with children. This

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<sup>217</sup> WWTA. in *Collected Stories* p. 279.

reference puts her unconscious subordination to her husband into the context of presenting this marriage as business as usual.

Even though the version of the story as it appeared in *Playgirl* has not been in the focus of our analysis due to its being neglected in the reception history of this short story, the ending of that version seems to be a combination of the two characteristic versions. The line “I begin to scream. It doesn’t matter any longer,”<sup>218</sup> both refers to her emotional agitation and an altered consciousness recognized in the longer version and it also suggests her final surrendering to her situation dominating the Lish-edited version. Considering that the two different endings of the canonized publications designate a fundamental difference in the focal points of the story, this indeterminacy in the *Playgirl* version in terms of a clear ending might have contributed to the fact that this version faded out of the publication history of the short story.

Due to the complexity of the publication history of the short story and the differences appearing in the various versions, “So Much Water So Close to Home” can be regarded as a short story that shows the signs of all of the paradigms of authority discussed in the previous chapter. The form of the story published posthumously in *Beginners* has been presented as the outcome of the process of *restoration* aimed at restoring the author’s intentions in order to produce an authentic version labeled as “original.” The analysis attempted to prove that this version offers ground for a characteristic interpretation, in which Claire’s process of awakening to the threat represented by her husband seen as the cause of discomfort in her marriage, was not entirely undermined by the ending of the story. In the focus of this version we may first find the separation of the perspectives of the narrator and the character of the

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<sup>218</sup> Quoted in: *Collected Stories* p. 1001.

wife that gives way to a reunion of these perspectives at the end with the dominance of the self-reflections represented by the narrator's insights.

However, as we have seen, the editors of Library of America not only restored the first version of the story as it appeared in its early publications but also *recovered* textual features, i.e. the significant omission of quotation marks in the final part of the story, that was an act of overwriting the author's known intentions represented in his publication of the story in *WICF* together with the final quotation marks. This act of recovering not only followed the path, in terms of an editorial control exercised over the writer's work, laid down by previous recoveries resulting in the publication of formerly unpublished stories, but it also contributed to an autonomous interpretation of the story in which the narratorial insights are gradually dominating over the wife's position.

Carver's *revision* of the story is represented in the version published in his authoritative volume of *WICF*. Considering its apparent similarity to the early publications, this version appears as an effort to restore the original version. But seen retrospectively, with the manuscript version in sight, we may reinforce looking at this version as the outcome of an act of *revision* because the author did not entirely restore the manuscript version but rather revised both Lish's abridging of the story and his own version by including the quotation marks in the crucial scene of the ending. Hence, we may consider the author's revisions as an in-between version, that is obviously much closer to the manuscript but apparently weaker in terms of clear interpretive insights into the dynamics of the main character's transition. Therefore, the interpretation of the revision of the story reinforces the general status of revisions that prevented them from being included in the overall count of the number of authentic versions in Carver's oeuvre.

As it has also become clear, Lish's *redaction* cannot be considered as a textual intervention aimed at the reduction of the story based on an unclear editorial intention to

make it more streamline or effective but rather, as a process resulting in an autonomous version. By removing much of the narratorial introspection Lish recaptured the focal points of the story and made it seem primarily as a dramatic conflict between husband and wife in which the chances for reconciliation or for the final awakening of the wife are moved out of sight. This makes the insertion of Lish's redaction in the oeuvre of the writer justifiable and productive and hence, creates an approach to redaction in general in which it is seen as a legitimate strategy of textual representation.

#### 4.2 “THE BATH” / “A SMALL, GOOD THING”

The publication history of this short story is not less complicated than that of the story discussed in the previous chapter. As we have seen, the publication history of “So Much Water So Close to Home” exemplifies the hour-glass theory, in that it first appeared in its long version based on the manuscript, then it underwent Lish’s heavy editing in *WWTA*, and later it was revised and restored to the long version in several publications. The publication history of “The Bath”/“A Small, Good Thing,” shows a characteristically different pattern and therefore, it offers additional insights into the working of the different paradigms of authority.

The major difference between this story and “So Much Water So Close to Home” is that its first publications featured the redacted version. The story first appeared under Lish’s title “The Bath,” in a periodical.<sup>219</sup> This publication was the result of his first redaction of the manuscript. A more redacted version was included in *WWTA*<sup>220</sup> reducing the manuscript by 78% altogether. Shortly after its appearance in his second collection, Carver revised the story and published it in *Ploughshares*<sup>221</sup> under the manuscript title, “A Small, Good Thing.” In this version Lish’s redactions were eliminated from the text and most of the manuscript was restored except for a several pages long passage of flashback. The following revisions in *Cathedral*<sup>222</sup> and *WICF*<sup>223</sup> were light revisions of the version in *Ploughshares* but also included several changes suggested by Tess Gallagher.<sup>224</sup> Finally, the manuscript version was published posthumously in *Beginners*.<sup>225</sup>

Before the publication of the canonical volume of *Collected Stories*, the reception history of the story first focused on two versions, the redaction appearing in *WWTA* and the

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<sup>219</sup> “The Bath.” *Columbia* 6 (Spring-Summer 1981): 32-41.

<sup>220</sup> “The Bath.” *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981. pp. 47-56.

<sup>221</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Ploughshares* 8.3-3 (1982): 213-40.

<sup>222</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Cathedral*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983. pp. 59-89.

<sup>223</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Where I’m Calling From*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988. pp. 280-301.

<sup>224</sup> “Notes on the Texts.” *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. New York: Penguin Group, 2009. p. 1000.

<sup>225</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. New York: Penguin Group, 2009. pp. 804-30.

revision in *Cathedral* and *WICF*. As we have seen, when the first publications of Carver's stories in periodicals gained public attention, critics generally had to reconsider the extended versions, close to the manuscript, as the originals of the stories. In this case, the story's first publication is also closer to the manuscript version but it had already undergone the first redaction by Lish. Therefore, what appeared as the true original and was considered as lost and then recovered as in Hashimoto's detailed analysis referred to above,<sup>226</sup> was actually the first version in the process of redaction.

The fact that the first publication of the story was an in-between version compared to the manuscript and the most redacted version in *WWTA*, also had an influence on the reception of Carver's revisions. Since they were longer than the first publication, due to being closer to the manuscript as it turned out later, the upcoming publications of the story appeared as clear examples of the expansive revisions Carver made not only to restore what was believed to be the "original," i.e. the first publication half-way redacted, but even to go beyond it in terms of scope and detail. After the publication of the manuscript version in *Beginners* by the Library of America in 2009, however, the complete chronology of the shaping of the story was revealed, and a reconsideration of the status of the versions became possible.

The complex publication history features two *redactions* (appearing in *Columbia* and in *WWTA*), both of them by Lish, two *revisions*, one by Carver alone (published in *Ploughshares*) and another revision by him and his wife (appearing in *Cathedral* and *WICF*), and the posthumous *restoration* of the manuscript by the editors of Library of America (appearing in *Beginners*).

Both the redaction (by Lish) and the revision (by Carver) of the story took place in two phases, and in both cases the product of the first phase appeared in a periodical, then a second

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<sup>226</sup> Hiromi Hashimoto. "Trying to Understand Raymond Carver's Revisions." *Tokai English Review*, No. 5 (December 1995), pp. 113-147.

phase of redaction or revision preceded the collection of the story version in a canonical volume. For this reason, looking at the versions of the short story from the perspective of the paradigms of authority, we may distinguish three major paradigms of authority at work, redaction, revision, and restoration, that resulted in three major, canonical versions appearing in *WWTA*, *Cathedral/WICF*, and *Beginners* respectively. The canonical position of these three versions is recognized and also reinforced by the fact that Carver's *Collected Stories* published by the Library of America includes three versions of this story alone, as they appeared in *WWTA*, *Cathedral*, and *Beginners*. It makes "The Bath"/"A Small, Good Thing" the only story that exists in three, equally recognized versions and therefore, the analysis of the differences among the versions may illustrate the working of three major paradigms, those of redaction, revision, and restoration, within the frames of one short story.

In the following analysis references will be made to three canonical versions, referred to as the "redaction", meaning the story under the title, "The Bath" as it appeared in *WWTA*, the "revision", meaning the version appearing in *Cathedral/WICF* under the title "A Small, Good Thing," and the "manuscript version" restored and published under the same title in *Beginners*.

As one may expect, due to the extensive omissions in the redaction, the manuscript version and the revision of the story are much closer to each other both in length and scope of associations. Therefore, the most apparent differences among the versions are to be found between the stories under the two titles, "The Bath" and "A Small, Good Thing." When describing the longer version of the story Arthur Bethea remarks, "'A Small, Good Thing' would fit as well in *What We Talk* as a bull in a china shop."<sup>227</sup> Bethea is correct in registering the obvious difference between the short and elliptic texts Lish published in *WWTA* and the

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<sup>227</sup> Arthur Bethea. *Technique and Sensibility in the Fiction and Poetry of Raymond Carver*. New York: Routledge, 2001. p. 113.

extensive rendering in “A Small, Good Thing” of a couple’s worries above the bed of their dying son. Another comparison highlights the difference between the two versions of the story: “Irving Howe found the difference between “The Bath” and its original, “A Small, Good Thing,” like the difference between “second-rate Hemingway” and “Sherwood Anderson at his best.”<sup>228</sup> Although one may wonder which version is made to look better by this comparison, the first part seems to refer to the limits of artistic potential while the second highlights a writer’s success in fulfilling those potentials. Therefore, in retrospective light, the images of both Lish and Carver are also conjured up in the comparison.

Although all of the three versions give account of a family tragedy in which a young boy is hit by a car and falls into coma while his parents try to cope with the trauma, there are substantial differences among them. The most obvious difference is between the redaction on one hand and the manuscript and the revision on the other, in terms of their length. It seems that this is one of the stories where Lish cut the text somewhere in the middle by a note to his typist “story ends here,”<sup>229</sup> omitting not only the conclusion but the climax of the original story, and created a 7-page long text out of the 27 pages the story takes up in the manuscript. As a consequence, the story is not only much shorter in the redaction, but it is actually one in which the focus of the story is shifted from the end to the middle of the original version. This is achieved by the fact that the child’s death and the reconciliation at the end of the story are omitted, in and of themselves taking up 14 pages of the manuscript version. This radical editorial decision makes Lish’s redaction a peculiar example of taking a text and elevating another story from it by redefining its focal points, all preparing for a climax towards the end in the original, and making them appear as parts of a complete pattern with a new climax created at the end of the redaction. This is a clear example for the creative potentials of redaction, revealing that the act of omission does not simply leave the text more elliptic, but it

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<sup>228</sup> Quoted by Rich Kelley, editor of Library of America in his interview with the editors of the *Collected Stories* referred to above. Kelley, op. cit.

<sup>229</sup> Max, 2

necessarily rearranges the emphases in the redaction and recreates the possibility for a coherent narrative world with altered focal points.

Compared to the radical approach Lish took in the redaction, a less substantial difference can be found between the manuscript version and Carver's revision of the story. In this case, the publication history of the story, i.e. that the manuscript version had not been published before, allowed the writer to freely choose between the solutions in the different versions and therefore, Carver's choices, represented in *Cathedral/WICF*, can be regarded as the writer's acts of authorization. Weeding out his changes from those of Lish became possible by the publication of the manuscript version. The comparison of the three canonized versions not only offers insights into Lish's redaction by comparing it to the manuscript but it also casts new light on the revision by making it seem as the writer's final word in his debate with Lish over the short story.<sup>230</sup> As in most cases, Carver's revision aimed at the restoration of the manuscript version: he re-inserted the ending of the story including both the boy's death and the consoling final scene at the baker's, as well as the lengthy descriptions of the couple's time spent in the hospital. But he also applied major changes compared to the manuscript, and since some of these coincide with the solutions in the redaction, they are obviously influenced by and therefore authorizing Lish's editorial decisions.

The most important of the changes Carver accepted is the omission of a several page long flashback of the wife in the manuscript that reveals the source of the wife's feelings of insecurity that hauntingly accompany her obvious state of despair caused by her son's accident. The references to this unusual feeling of insecurity appear both in the redaction and the revision but only the manuscript version offers insight into the mother's feeling of guilt aroused by her unsettling suspicion that she *would* be able to come to terms with the death of her child.

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<sup>230</sup> Carver wrote to Lish in his letter about the editing of *WFTA*: "I thought the editing, especially in the first version was brilliant, as I said. The stories I can't let go of in their entirety are these. "Community Center" (If It Please You) and "The Bath" (A Small, Good Thing)". "Note on the Text" in *Collected Stories*. pp. 994-95.

This she learns during a former experience, rendered in the *manuscript version* alone, when their son, “Scotty had been lost and they’d been afraid he’s drowned.”<sup>231</sup> Thinking about this past event is a clear effort to process her present situation and face the possible loss of her son.

The thought was monstrous, so unfair and overwhelming that she couldn’t hold it in her mind. But she felt it was true, that he was in there, in the culvert, and knew too it was something that would have to be borne and lived with from here on, life without Scotty in it.<sup>232</sup>

This passage in the flashback of the mother expresses the major dilemma in her present situation. While the first sentence shows that the idea of the possible trauma is incomprehensible and unacceptable, in the second sentence she *presupposes* her son’s death and immediately *draws the consequences* with regard to her life; both of which are clear signs of comprehension and acceptance. Although she registers it, the contradiction seems to be beyond the understanding of the mother and therefore, it yields a feeling guilt in her.

The horror of the men and equipment working at the mouth of the culvert through the night, that was what she did not know if she could endure, that waiting while the men worked under powerful lights. She would have to somehow get past that to the limitless sweep of emptiness she knew stretched beyond. She was ashamed to know it, but she thought she could live with that.<sup>233</sup>

The first sentence of the quote, describing the impossible situation of waiting in uncertainty, is a clear reference to her situation in the hospital. Having to find the child in the culvert is in parallel with the efforts of bringing him back from his present state coma where he is lost in the depth of his consciousness. The difficulty of “waiting while the men worked under powerful lights” also conjures up the image of an operating room with the doctors examining

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<sup>231</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 818.

<sup>232</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 819.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*.

the child. The second half of the passage describes the task of coping with the death of the child. Life after the trauma is compared to “the limitless sweep of emptiness” that appears more bearable than the state of uncertainty experienced in the present and that becomes the true source of her guilt.

Since the flashback of the mother is in central position in the manuscript version and omitted from both the redaction and the revision, the publication of the manuscript not only provides ground for the comparison of the two former canonical versions but it becomes an authentic version of its own right. Offering a parallel narrative for the understanding of the mother’s difficulties in her present situation not only puts Ann’s figure in the center of the narrative but also reveals the paradoxical nature of her situation “that she did not know how she could get through the waiting part to that other part.”<sup>234</sup> It is the same dilemma that she, and also the other characters have to face the main narrative.

The memory of this past experience and especially her guilt raised by the feeling that she would be able to accept the loss of her son are also central in the manuscript version because they offer background to understand the unsettling effects of the baker’s calls. What provides the feeling of haunting menace throughout the story, in addition to the obvious despair aroused by the family tragedy, is the subtext created by the repeated phone calls from the baker, reminding them of Scotty’s birthday cake left in the bakery. This narrative is in the foreground in all of the versions and is presented in juxtaposition with that of the development of the family tragedy. The contrast between the incomprehensibility of the boy’s accident and the insignificant affair of the forgotten cake presents the relationship between the two narratives as a reminder of the blatant fact that life goes on, in however irritating ways, even under such traumatic circumstances.

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

The connotations of the baker's narrative and thus, the overtones of the above recognition, are substantially different in the three canonical versions. The baker's story is clearly the most dominating narrative in the *redaction*. Lish cuts the story at the moment when the mother goes home to take a bath, only to be harassed by the baker. This way, the menacing words of the baker become the closing lines of the entire narrative: "'Scotty,' the voice said. 'It is about Scotty,' the voice said. 'It has to do with Scotty, yes.'"<sup>235</sup> The baker's narrative becomes central in the redaction by taking the position of the climax of the story. This major difference in overall focus explains the title of the redaction. Lish's title, "The Bath" emphasizes the subversive dominance of the seemingly insignificant narrative of the wife's experiences outside the hospital, during a short trip home to take a bath, with the frightening calls from the baker in their focus.

The most important differences in terms of major omissions among the three versions may be summarized in the following way. The manuscript version renders the story of the accident, the time spent in the hospital, the menacing phone calls from the baker, the mother's flashback, the boy's death, and finally the couple's making friends with the baker. The redaction tells the story without the flashback, the death of the child and the reconciliation at the end. The revision restores the original title, bringing the ending back into focus together with the death of the child, but leaves the mother's memory omitted. Looking at these major differences we are offered a first impression about the basic network of relationships among the three versions.

Due to the omission of the second half of the story, the primary focus in the *redaction* falls onto the contrast between the scale of the family tragedy and the irritating insistence of the baker. Without knowledge about whether the boy would wake up from the coma, the ominous words of the baker seem to refer to the possible tragedy to come and also raise an

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<sup>235</sup> "The Bath." *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 257.

unexplained sense of guilt. The *revision* restores most of the original story and renders the development of the increasing tension between the two narratives, that of the baker and the parents, and offers a sense of relief at the end of the story. Here, the focus falls onto the ending where the two narratives are reconciled and a moment of harmony is achieved by their sharing of the freshly baked bread. By the *restoration* of the manuscript version, however, the editors of Library of America offered another frame of references for the reading of the story by re-inserting the mother's realizations made during her flashback. In this version, the emphasis falls on the mother's processing the idea of essential loss and the contradiction between the feelings of guilt and consolation associated with the ability to survive a trauma. Therefore, the reconciliation of the two narratives at the end becomes less harmonious and the "small good thing" of eating remains charged with a sense of ambiguity because in addition to bringing relief, it also points towards an inevitable acceptance of the boy's death, a possibility that had seemed so unsettling for the wife before her son died.

A similar set of differences can be detected if we look at the appearance of the names of the characters in the story. The *redaction* eliminates all names, except for the character of Ann. The other characters appear as the husband/father, the dog, and most significantly, Scotty's name only appears on the birthday cake and in the menacing calls of the baker. The narrator refers to him as "the child," "the boy" or "the birthday boy" and it makes the tragedy unfolding from his accident substantially more distanced. Mitigating the tragic aspects of the narrative of the accident not only seems as a logical consequence of the fact that the boy's death is omitted in the redaction but also allows the baker's narrative to come to the foreground. The presence of unnamed characters has a similarly alienating effect on the entire story as well. As Philip Carson notes, "these characters seem to be undefined, permanently locked in individual spheres, what turns the narrative into something sketchy and

impersonal.”<sup>236</sup> Given the alienation of the other characters the repeated appearance of the mother’s name as Ann or Mrs. Weiss, emphasizes the focus on the woman and thus, the effects of the baker’s calls on her state of mind.

As opposed to the impersonal portrayal of the characters in the redaction, the *manuscript version* renders the names of all of the major characters. The parents are referred to as Ann and Howard throughout the story and the boy appears as Scotty. Even the dog becomes more animated by the name Slug, and a stronger presence of the dog provides a further reference to the theme of having to continue to live their lives despite the trauma.

The narration in the manuscript version obviously makes the accident more shocking by referring to the victim as Scotty instead of the birthday boy. If we compare the *manuscript version* with the *revision* we may see the direction Carver took in his final version of the text.

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On Monday afternoon [morning], Scotty [the birthday boy] was walking home from school with a friend [another boy]. They were passing a bag of potato chips back and forth and Scotty [the birthday boy] was trying to find out what his friend was giving him for his birthday that afternoon. Without looking, he [the birthday boy] stepped off the curb at an intersection and was immediately knocked down by a car. He fell on his side with his head in the gutter and his legs out in the road. His eyes were closed, but his legs began to move[d] back and forth as if he were trying to climb over something. His friend dropped the potato chips and started to cry.<sup>237</sup>

Most of the changes in the revision concern the references to the boy. Changing his name, Scotty to the impersonal “the birthday boy” repositions the narrator’s point of view somewhat further away from the scene. The effort to eliminate personal references to the boy appears

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<sup>236</sup> Philip Carson. “Carver’s Vision.” Available: <http://www.library.spscc.ctc.edu/electronicreserve/swanson/RaymondCarverSpring2003.pdf> Access: 12 March 2010

<sup>237</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 805. and “A Small, Good Thing.” *Cathedral*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 403.

even more striking, when the revision changes the personal pronoun, “he” to “the birthday boy” in the sentence that introduces the accident. A similar act of distancing can be seen in changing the reference to the other character from “a friend” to “another boy.”

The revision also changes the time of the accident from the afternoon to the morning. This is a change that appeared in the redaction first, and was accepted in the revision. The reason behind this change is the passage immediately preceding the account of the accident in which the end of the mother’s visit to the baker’s is rendered. The passage appears without any changes in the *manuscript version* and the *revision*.

The baker finished printing the information on the special order card and closed up the binder. He looked at her and said, “Monday morning.” She thanked him and drove home.<sup>238</sup>

Even though these lines are identical in the two versions, their significance becomes considerably different if we compare them with the rendering of the accident in the different versions. In the revision of the text Carver inserted a section break between the two paragraphs quoted – in a reversed order – above. The silence created by the break after the baker’s words amplifies the unsettling experience of the mother in the baker’s shop: “He made her feel uncomfortable, and she didn’t like that.”<sup>239</sup> The baker’s last words become charged with a sense of expectation that is fulfilled by changing the opening line of the passage about the accident from “On Monday afternoon” to “On Monday morning.” The link between the baker’s ominous calls and the boy’s condition is obvious in all of the versions but it is only in the revision where this link is made obvious before their narratives take shape.

The above quotations show a particular example of the mutual effects of various paradigms of authority at work. The changing of the time of the accident was introduced in

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<sup>238</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 805. and “A Small, Good Thing.” *Cathedral*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 403.

<sup>239</sup> “A Small, Good Thing.” *Cathedral*. in *Collected Stories*. p.402.

the redaction and then adopted in Carver's revision. However, the link between the baker's last words and the time of the accident is only established in the revision, since the redaction cuts out the ending of the narrative that describes the mother's visit to the baker's shop together with the baker's words referring to Monday morning. Therefore, the revision not only adopted the change in the redaction but recontextualized the new time reference by inserting it into the original narrative that is, the restored paragraph before the accident. To put it short, Lish changed the time of the accident in the redaction, Carver gave this change a new meaning in the revision by inserting it into the restored elements of the manuscript version.

Given the fact that in his *revision* the writer restored almost the entire narrative word for word, Carver's final decisions about the time of the accident or the names of the characters are significant because here he accepted some of Lish's changes and combined them into a new network of references that supports the approach to consider the revision as an authentic version. As we have seen, one of the most important changes Carver accepted from the redaction and applied in his revision is the naming the child "the birthday boy" instead of Scotty. It is a significant change in that it puts the emphasis away from the accident, indicating that it is not the tragedy but the trauma it causes that will be in the center. When Scotty is in coma in the hospital – where Lish changes his references to the more neutral "the boy" and the manuscript keeps referring to him as "Scotty" – the revision changes these references to "the child." This is still less personal than the manuscript, reinforcing that the story is not about Scotty, or whether or not he would wake up. At the same time, it expresses the boy's overall function in the story that is, his role as *the child* in the central narrative of the parents.

The narrative of the parents is also emphasized in the revision by Carver re-inserting their names, Ann and Howard in the revision. The parallel narratives of the father and the

mother, their ways of trying to gain control over the events and regain their composure are highlighted both in the manuscript and the revision. In both versions they also experience rare moments of communion upon realizing that they are connected by sharing the same problem. However, the focus on the parents becomes sharper in the revision due to eliminating most of the other names, such as the child's and the dog's.

The following comparison between the *manuscript version* and the *revision* points out the difference between the dog's significance in the two versions.

She pulled into the driveway and cut out the engine. Slug ran around from behind the house. In his excitement he began to bark at the car, then ran in circles on the grass. She closed her eyes and leaned her head against the wheel for a minute. She listened to the ticking sounds the engine made as it began to cool. Then she got out of the car. She picked up the little dog, Scotty's dog, and [could hear the dog barking inside the house. She] went to the front door, which was unlocked.<sup>240</sup>

As we can see, in the manuscript version the dog's happy welcoming of the mother is in clear contrast with her state of mind and that appears as something to comprehend for the mother when she tries to compose herself behind the wheel. Soothing herself by the sound of the cooling engine seems as an effort to reconcile and gain control of the opposing impressions caused by the trauma and the inevitability of a life beyond it. It is also mentioned only in the manuscript version that the dog is Scotty's. It makes the dog an actual embodiment of the inevitability of a life to be continued without the child.

The *revision* of the passage removes the reference to the dog from before the moment of contemplation and thus, makes the mother's staying in the car appear more as a general sign of exhaustion and a hopeless effort of self-composure. The dog is not only deprived of its

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<sup>240</sup> "A Small, Good Thing." *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 816. and "A Small, Good Thing." in *Where I'm Calling From*. p. 391.

name in the revision but it does not even appear in the scene only through barking from inside the house. When the mother enters the house to spend some time by herself, away from the hospital, she also enters her own world of fears and worries aroused by the present situation. In the manuscript version the mother picks up Scotty's dog before entering the house as if she was naturally taking the child and his remains with her. The revision puts the dog inside the house making it appear as a reference to the problems related to the loss of the child that await the mother upon entering her house.

The *redaction* of the same passage not only offers insights into what Carver actually changed in his revision compared to both of the versions but it also highlights the general differences between the versions.

She pulled into the driveway. The dog ran out from behind the house. He ran in circles on the grass. She closed her eyes and leaned her head against the wheel. She listened to the ticking sound of the engine.

She got out of the car and went to the door.<sup>241</sup>

In this version the dog also has the function of representing an external reality to be closed off for a second, as in the manuscript version. But without a name and the positive reference to his excitement, the dog's presence becomes more irritating than in the manuscript version. The fact that the mother leaves the dog outside the house offers another difference to consider among the versions. While the mother takes the dog inside the house in the manuscript version, and in the revision it is already there barking, in the redaction the dog is left outside. Even if it is only made manifest in the manuscript, the obvious connection between the dog and the child may express the different functions the child's narrative plays in the three versions. In the manuscript, he is inevitably in the center and his loss becomes a task to be processed by his parents like a dog that needs to be taken into the house. In the revision,

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<sup>241</sup> "The Bath." *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 257.

where the dog is barking inside the house, the child's story appears as a part of the problem, a source of irritation for the mother to be conceived. In the redaction, where the dog is left outside, the child's narrative falls out of the focus of the story. Here the focus is on the encounter between the mother and the baker and the child's narrative is only a part of the external circumstances.

In addition to the names of the main characters and the dog, another name is changed in the revision. This name appears in an episode that is included in all of the versions. The episode shows the mother when goes home for a bath and passes in front of a room where a family is waiting for their son in the operating room. While both the manuscript version and the revision mention a "Negro family," a reference Lish omitted from the redaction, the revision changes their son's name from Nelson to Franklin. The renaming of the character along with the re-establishing of his ethnic background, signals a unique effect of the working of various paradigms of authority. Carver seems to have to rename his character in his revision because the name, Nelson has been deprived of its ethnicity in the redaction – in a way made colorless, if not white – by Lish before.

By looking at the naming of the characters in the three canonical versions we can see more about the general differences in their focus. By rendering the mother's name alone and mentioning Scotty's name only in the context of the baker's narrative, the *redaction* emphasizes the mother's narrative of coping with the trauma and focuses on her unsettling feelings induced by the menacing calls from the baker. The *manuscript version* populates the narrative world with more lively characters all referred to by their names and it creates the context of multiple narratives running parallel with each other and meeting occasionally. The recognition of communion under traumatic circumstances creates a bond between the husband and the wife, as well as between Ann and the family in the waiting room. This unexpected feeling of community is also in the center at the end of the story when the seemingly

incommensurable narratives of the couple and the baker are reconciled. In his *revision* the writer accepts some of Lish's changes and leaves the boy's accident more in the background by keeping the impersonal reference of "the birthday boy" applied in the redaction. At the same time, the revision creates a new focus on the couple by rendering both of their names. Therefore, the revision seems to reinforce the general shift of focus, applied in the redaction, from the family tragedy towards the parents' efforts to cope with it, but it does not go as far as placing only the baker and the mother in the focus.

In addition to the major omissions and the different strategies of naming the characters the differences among the three canonical versions of the short story can also be illuminated by the apparently different practices of sectioning the text. All of the versions apply the method of blocking out the text into sections and thus highlighting the macro-structure of the narrative and therefore, differences in sectioning provide valuable insights into the overall structural differences among the versions. The *manuscript version* inserts three breaks in the narrative, dividing it into four parts. The first section renders the story until the mother's leave from the hospital. The second section gives account of the mother's time spent away from the hospital with the call from the baker. This section concludes in the long flashback of her memory omitted from the other versions. The short third section informs about the death of the child of the other family the mother met on her way out of the hospital, and also renders the dramatic scene of Scotty's death. The longest final section of the manuscript version features the couple's struggles to process the loss of their child, with their anger projected on the baker, and the final scene of reconciliation.

As we may see, the four sections in the manuscript version are constitutive of a narrative structure in which the perspectives of the mother, the father and the baker are measured against and reconciled by the unexpected tragedy of the child. Rendering the death of the child in the shortest section, preceded by the news about the death of the boy in the

other room who served as a parallel character to Scotty, makes the unexpected tragedy of the child highlighted and seen in contrast with the longer sections devoted to the other characters' efforts to process the events of their lives. The first section serves as a long introduction to the dramatic situation and introduces all of the narratives of the child, the baker and the parents. The second section highlights the significance of the difficulties the mother has to face, including the inevitable guilt associated with the effort to cope with the trauma. The last section offers answers to her questions raised along the narrative about the possibility and the consequences of moving on from the shock caused by the trauma by reinforcing the newly found bond between the husband and the wife as well as presenting their moments of understanding with the baker.

As it is a strategy frequently applied by Lish we should not be surprised to find significantly more sections in the *redaction* despite the fact that it is considerably shorter. Inserting twelve breaks in the seven pages long narrative suggests that sectioning in the *redaction* is not intended to mark out large but coherent sections in the text but it is rather a tool of creating emphasis by the very act of rupturing the text at strategic places. As a consequence however, the thirteen short sections created, none of them longer than a page, appear as mosaics of a composition with not particular center or sense of development. The focus of description created by the sectioning indiscriminately falls on textual elements of various significance. Devoting separate short sections to less significant incidents, such as the self-consoling thoughts of the father or the appearance of a nurse among the more powerful sections describing the accident or the mother's encounter with the other family, makes the narrative appear as the collection of various disconnected insights contrasted by the unexpected trauma. The intensive sectioning applied in the *redaction* also contributes to the fragmentariness of the narrative and thus, prepares for the abrupt but suggestive ending of the story.

The *revision* keeps all the breaks from the manuscript, accepts some of the new breaks introduced in the redaction, and it also includes a few breaks that do not appear in the other versions. The breaks in this version of the story, that is only a few pages shorter than the manuscript, divide the text into ten sections. It indicates that Carver generally accepted Lish's approach to intensively sectioning the text as a means of creating emphasis and the effect of suggestive fragmentariness, rather than trying to reveal the larger units in the structure of the narrative by a few significant breaks. While the revisions edit out some of the breaks introduced in the redaction and therefore, it still has fewer sections than the much shorter version published in *WWTA*, some of the most important breaks at the beginning of the story are the same in the revision as they appear in the redaction.

The first two breaks Lish includes in the redaction mark out the short account of the boy's accident and falling into coma. Although the rendering of the boy's story is strikingly short and powerful in all of the versions, it is only the redaction where this episode is elevated from the rest of the narrative by becoming a section of its own. In the revision of the story Carver keeps the first break from the redaction that introduces the accident but omits the second break Lish suggested that would mark it out as a separate section. Thereby, the sectioning in the revision directly connects the boy's accident to the next episode in the narrative featuring the father's leaving the hospital for a bath and receiving the first calls from the baker. The end of this section is marked by another break that the revision maintained from the redaction: the section ends with the father answering the baker's call for the second time with growing irritation. The sectioning applied in the revision puts an emphasis on the father's character and his struggle to cope with the situation by highlighting his encounter with the baker at the end of the section, that was an editorial decision recorded in the redaction. However, unlike the redaction, the revision renders the narratives of the child and

the father in one longer section, indicating the relevance of the father's perspective in the overall theme of processing the traumatic experience.

However insignificant these changes in sectioning the text may seem, they provide a clear example of the mutual influence of the different paradigms of authority at work in the formation of the three authentic versions of this story. As we can see, Carver applies the tool of sectioning in his revision in a new manner compared to his manuscript as a result of redefining the goals and the possible extent of its application, a change in the mode of writing clearly suggested by Lish's redaction. However, the actual scope and the particular details of the influence of the redaction over the revision only become accessible due to the restoration of the manuscript version by the editors of the *Collected Stories* that allows one to compare all of the versions and find out the origins of the solutions in the revision. The restoration of the manuscript thus has a rather contradictory effect on the status of the revision. It shows the extent to which Carver restored the original text in his revision, apparently refusing the majority of the changes applied in the redaction, but at the same time, the restoration also highlights the changes that appear between the revision and the original, pointing out the editorial decisions Carver did take from Lish's redaction.

Having looked at the general differences among the three canonical versions of the story, such the major omissions, the naming of characters, the timing of the narrative, and the sectioning of the text we can see that the three paradigms of authority are capable of producing three canonical versions with recognizably different emphases and ranges of connotation. The *redaction* focuses on the conflict between the baker and the mother by placing their telephone conversation in the climax of the story where it ends without any reconciliation or a chance to comprehend the forces that drive them. The impersonal references to the characters elevate the abstract connotations of the conflict centered on the menacing possibility of an unexpected and devastating turn of one's life and the

incommensurability of the perspectives of people, such as the baker and the mother, alienated from their lives for different reasons. The sectioning of the text in the redaction also highlights the abstract connotations by fragmenting the narrative and creating short and powerful sections as well as adding emphasis to various textual elements by the frequent breaks inserted into the text.

In the *manuscript version* the narration is more continuous and personal with only four long sections and all of the names of the major characters, it also includes an important passage that is omitted from the other versions. The mother's flashback functions as a key to understand the conflict behind her worries between the feeling of timelessness experienced during the shock caused by the possible tragedy and the recognition of the inevitable temporality in coping with the trauma. Her desire to get "through the waiting part to that other part" is fulfilled in the manuscript by the short rendering of the boy's death and the description of the first hours of the parents' life after the trauma. What she preconceived as "the limitless sweep of emptiness" turns out to be an existence filled with the possibilities of breaking out from her alienation and limited perspective. While the calls from the baker exemplify the irritation and the feeling of menace induced by the irrelevance of his insignificant narrative, the ending of the short story presents this insignificant narrative as the source of consolation. Thus, the disturbing details of their lives, like having to feed the dog, take a bath, or answer the calls of the baker not only force the parents to move past their traumatic experience but are also compared to the inevitability of eating that is a "small, good thing in a time like this."<sup>242</sup>

While the redaction and the manuscript version provide another example for the fundamental differences in focus and characterization due to the extensive cuts in the redaction, the *revision* of the short story shows the traces of the mutual interdependence

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<sup>242</sup> "A Small, Good Thing." *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 829. and "A Small, Good Thing." in *Where I'm Calling From*. p. 424.

among the three canonical versions. Seen from the perspective of the chronology of writing, the revision offers insights into the writer's gesture of restoring much of his original narrative that also results in authorizing some of the changes applied in the redaction. The revision preserves some of the elements of the redaction, such as the naming of the characters, the time of the accident or the frequent sectioning of the text, and then redefines the meaning and function of these elements by inserting them into the original narrative and thus, creating an authentic version of its own right. However, if we look at the three canonical versions from the perspective of the reception history of the short story, we may see the significance of the restoration of the manuscript version: it sheds retrospective light on the textual practices applied in all of the versions and make the revision seem as an example of Carver's effort to regain authority over his story along with the inevitability of Lish's influence on the final version published in the writer's lifetime.

#### 4.3 “WANT TO SEE SOMETHING?” / “I COULD SEE THE SMALLEST THINGS”

Even though the publication history of this short story is much simpler than that of the stories previously discussed, it also offers us valuable insights into the two major paradigms of authority, *redaction* and *restoration* at work in Carver’s oeuvre. The first publication of the story took place in *Missouri Review* in 1980.<sup>243</sup> It was the product of Lish’s editing of the story from the manuscript version by cutting 56% of the story and changing its ending. In the second editing published in *WWTA* Lish altered the title to “I Could See the Smallest Thing.”<sup>244</sup> The story never appeared again in Carver’s lifetime, therefore the first publication of the longer version of the story was its appearance in *Beginners* published in the *Collected Stories*.<sup>245</sup>

Considering that the story was redacted in two steps, first it was substantially reduced and then the title was changed, we may regard Lish’s contribution as a gradual gaining control over the story. What is striking in the first step, is that here the process of reduction did not resort to cutting more than half of the words but included the insertion of a substantial amount of lines, including a radical changing of the ending of the narrative. The insertions also changed the overall tone of narration, making it more vernacular and, at most places, sound harsher.

The omitted parts, ranging from a few words to page-long passages, render information about the background of the neighbor’s, Sam Lawton’s life and past, his marriage with his late wife, the departure of their daughter to become a flower-child, his second wife, and the albino baby born out of this new marriage. The omissions also include the narrator’s name Nancy, together with her introspections about her life getting derailed at one point. The

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<sup>243</sup> “Want to See Something?” *Missouri Review*. 4.1 (Fall 1980): 29-32.

<sup>244</sup> “I Could See the Smallest Thing.” *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981. pp. 31-36.

<sup>245</sup> “Want to See Something?” *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. New York: Penguin Group, 2009. pp. 781-87.

most important omission at the end of the story describes the narrator's unsuccessful effort to wake up her husband Cliff, and her telling him about the insights she had during this unusual night spent awake as well as about their relationship.

If we simply look at the extent and the content of the omissions we may see that the two versions appearing in the two collections are again, substantially different in terms of focus and the range of possible connotations. This difference can best be grasped by comparing the titles of the two versions, especially if we consider that Lish redacted the story twice and in the second time he changed nothing but the title, as if he had drawn the conclusions from his previous redaction.

The apparent difference between the titles "Want to See Something?" and "I Could See the Smallest Things" seems to capture the different perspectives offered by the two versions. Carver's title, "Want to See Something?" sounds like an invitation for both the narrator and the reader to participate in the mapping out of the Nancy's mind set that reveals itself during a sleepless night. Her waking up in the middle of the night, realizing that their gate is open appears as a situation in which a rare chance for self-scrutiny is offered for Nancy aroused by the awkward conversation with her neighbor about the slugs that seem to invade his garden.

Lish's title also appears in the story but only because he changed the line as it appeared in the manuscript from "Everything lay in bright moonlight, and the smallest things came to my attention"<sup>246</sup> to "Everything lay in moonlight, and I could see the smallest thing."<sup>247</sup> Instead of being a call for insight, the new title seems to refer to a registering of the narrator's perspective in which details are given significance by the sharpening of the focus of the woman's vision. It is also rather tempting to see the difference between the titles as an overall difference in the focus of interest of Carver and Lish, the first being an opening up

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<sup>246</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 781.

<sup>247</sup> *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 240.

towards yet unheard of terrains of human experience, while the other trying to map out the limits of human consciousness.

The story starts with a rendering of the perceptions of the narrator during a sleepless night. Even though it appears as the description of the world outside her house, this scene also conjures up the beginning of an exploration that takes place within the woman's consciousness.

I was in bed when I heard the gate unlatch. I listened carefully. I didn't hear anything else. But I heard that. I tried to wake Cliff, but [h]e was passed out. So I got up and went to the window. A big moon hung [laid] over the mountains that surrounded [went around] the city. It was a white moon and covered with scars[.] easy enough to [Any damn fool could] imagine a face there—eye sockets, nose, even the lips. [¶] There was enough light that I could see everything in the backyard, lawn chairs, the willow tree, clothes lines strung between the poles, my [the] petunias and the fence[s] enclosing the yard, the gate standing [wide] open.<sup>248</sup>

While the changes do not seem substantial, the difference between the tones of the two versions becomes apparent instantly. Changing the words “hung” to “laid,” and “surrounded” to “went around,” or “my petunias” to “the petunias” makes the narrative more impersonal and less elevated in style. The redaction also shifts the reference to the opening of the woman's consciousness in the image of the open gate from the beginning of the passage to the end. In the long version we find out about the gate being open in the first sentence (“unlatch”), while Lish omitted this reference and then emphasized it in the last line by inserting that it is “wide” open.

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<sup>248</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 781. and *WETA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 240.

The shift of focus is supported by the fact that Lish cut the passage into two paragraphs by inserting a break in the middle. This changes the closing line of the first paragraph from the reference to the gate, to the reference to the face appearing in the image of the moon. As we have seen before, the endings of the first paragraphs in Carver's stories usually have special significance because they function as a preliminary conclusion for the rest of the story and therefore, an orientation for the reader. Lish seems to be aware of this significance because he made this line much stronger by inserting the words "Any damn fool could...", and thus the reference to human consciousness becomes clearer due to the obviousness of a human face appearing in the moon. Even though it may have a similar function to that of a gate left open in terms of referring to self-reflection by the opening up of the consciousness of the narrator, the redaction makes the woman's realization of herself more dramatic and forced, as in "Any damn fool could imagine a face there."

The next paragraphs make this difference between the focal points of the versions more perceivable. The manuscript version emphasizes the hesitant but voluntary engagement of the woman with her immediate circumstances and her increasing willingness to understand her position among them. By relating herself to the traumatic past of the neighbor, she is offered a unique moment of insight into her own life and it makes her become able to compose herself and express her feelings to her sleeping husband. The redaction takes the path of exploring the woman's reactions to a set of alienating insights, conjured up by the neighbor's manic fight with the slugs in his garden, that make her face the inevitable discomfort in her life together with her inability to change or to communicate it.

The image of the open gate is directly followed by the paragraph in which the title sentence of the redaction appears. The difference between the two titles has been discussed before but the change in the sentence in which the redacted title appears is also informative about the general difference between the two versions. If we look at the change of tone

between the two sentences, “Everything lay in bright moonlight, and the smallest things came to my attention”<sup>249</sup> and “Everything lay in moonlight, and I could see the smallest thing,”<sup>250</sup> we see that the manuscript expresses a more passive and receptive position as in, “came to my attention,” within circumstances positively illuminated by an unusual insight as in, “bright moonlight.” In this sentence, the “smallest things” appear as a new dimension offered by the involuntary change of focus. The redacted sentence, however, takes away the *brightness* of the vision, and makes the perspective offered by the moonlight seem unusual without any further quality. The second part of the sentence makes the act of perception more active as in, “I could see,” and focused on the performance behind the ability to see “the smallest things” appearing more as the limits of one’s perception and consciousness.

In both versions, the process to understand the vision offered by the moonlight starts with the narrator’s effort to shift her focus of attention from herself to the things that surround her, suggesting that the understanding of the self maybe achieved by the apparent detour of understanding others.

I put my hands on the cool glass, hiding [to block out] the moon[.] and [I] looked some more. I listened. Then I went back to bed. [¶] But I couldn’t [get to] sleep. I kept turning over. I thought about the gate standing open[. It was] like an invitation [a dare].<sup>251</sup>

Considering the differences, however, the act of “hiding” the moon can be seen as a tentative effort to avoid facing herself in the exploration of her vision. While the effort to “block out” the moon, i.e. to prevent from facing herself as the source that illuminates this vision, makes the gesture much stronger and seem like a compulsion. The reference to the open gate as an “invitation” that only appears in the manuscript reinforces our understanding of the title as an invitation for the narrator, as well as the reader to the exploration of Nancy’s self. Lish’s

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<sup>249</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 781.

<sup>250</sup> *WETA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 240.

<sup>251</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 781. and *WETA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 240.

changing this word to “dare” is another sign of a more dramatic and challenging process of self-understanding that is in the focus of the redaction.

The second reference to the open gate is immediately followed by the definition of the husband’s role in the process of self-perception.

Cliff’s breathing was ragged [awful to listen to]. His mouth gaped [open] and his arms hugged his pale, bare chest. He was taking up his side of the bed and most of mine. [¶] I pushed and pushed on him. But he just groaned.<sup>252</sup>

In the manuscript version the husband’s presence is less alienating. The difference between his breathing being “ragged” and “awful to listen to” shows that the narrator’s attitude is more neutral in the long version as opposed to the hostility apparent in the short version. While the second sentence remains unchanged in the redaction and thus, in both versions it reveals that the husband dominates over the woman’s world, her effort to free herself by pushing her husband back to his side of the bed becomes more emphasized in the redaction where it appears as a separate paragraph.

The scope of the narrator’s exploration is also quite different in the two versions.

So I found [got] my robe. [¶] Then I went to the back door. I looked and could see the stars, but it was [t]he moon that drew my attention and lighted [up] everything—houses and trees, utility poles and power lines, the entire neighborhood [whole world].<sup>253</sup>

However broad perspective she needs, to see the “entire neighborhood” in the manuscript, she has to cope with her immediate circumstances. In the redaction her attention is expanded when Lish replaces the expression with “the whole world,” implying that the “smallest things” the narrator gets to see, become apparent at the limits of perception where the totality of the vision is revealed. The redaction also has a sharper focus on the moon by cutting out

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<sup>252</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 781. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 240.

<sup>253</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 781. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 240.

the process of the narrator's attention being drawn to it. At beginning of a new paragraph, the image of the moon comes to the center as an objective, external perspective offered to perceive the "whole world."

The introduction to the narrative of the woman's unexpected process of recognition ends by her moving out of her passive state of observation towards the gate that provoked her awakening: "I started toward [for] the open gate,"<sup>254</sup> In the redaction this line is followed by a new section in the text and it emphasizes the importance of this initial movement of self-discovery by experiencing the limits of one's perception. In the manuscript version the emphasis is on "open," indicating that the experiences to come are made possible by the opening up of the woman's psychic world.

The following lines introduce the narrator's encounter with her neighbor. Sam Lawton's remark to her question whether he saw anything unusual makes the relationship between the open gate and her consciousness more obvious but it is an association that only appears in the long version.

"I've been out here a while, but I haven't heard [He said, "I didn't hear] anything," he said. "Haven't seen anything either. It might have been the wind. That's it. Still, if it was latched it shouldn't have come open." [¶] He was chewing something. He looked at the open gate and then he looked at me again and shrugged.<sup>255</sup>

The neighbor's statement redacted from the manuscript about the gate having to be unlatched if it is open, seems as a registering of the fact that the new perspective offered by her discoveries during the night could reveal itself only because the gate "was unlatched," implying that her understanding of herself was insufficient. This association between the gate

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<sup>254</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 782. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 240.

<sup>255</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 782. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 241.

and consciousness or self-understanding is emphasized by Sam looking back and forth at the gate and her in the manuscript version.

The next passage describes the woman's experience during the walk from her garden to the neighbor's that is initiated by the neighbor's question, "Want to see something?" appearing in the title of the manuscript.

"I'll come around," I said, and started along the side of our house to the front gate. [¶] I let myself out and went down [along] the sidewalk. I felt strange, [funny] walking around outside in my night-gown and [my] robe. I thought to myself that I must [should try to] remember this, walking around outside in my nightgown [like this].<sup>256</sup>

Both mentioning of the gates, that of the narrator and the neighbor, are missing from the redaction that seems as a consequence of Lish's previous practice of leaving this association more in the blind spot. It maybe attributed to the fact that this motif supports a more natural and less dramatic vision of self-understanding and is closer to the idea of *invitation* spelled out in the manuscript. While the long version of this passage highlights the importance of self-reflection as in, "must remember this," it is changed to a mere effort with no obvious success in the redaction, as in "I should try to remember this." The omission of Sam wearing a robe also removes an association, that of the parallel between the neighbor's and the narrator's situation of having to understand how their life got derailed.

The page-long omission that follows details the story of the neighbor's past, as it has been mentioned. In addition to making it clear that Sam's story plays a significant role in the narrator's effort to come to terms with her own life, the fact that she and Cliff do not have any children is also mentioned only in this omission. When she describes her difficulties in remaining composed above the albino child of their neighbors, she remarks: "I silently gave thanks that this was her baby. No, I wouldn't want a baby like that for anything. I counted my

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<sup>256</sup> *Beginners.* in *Collected Stories.* p. 782. and *WWTa.* in *Collected Stories* p. 241.

blessings that Cliff and I had long ago decided against children.”<sup>257</sup> The relief she feels maybe associated with the characteristic fear of women of giving birth to a monstrous creature that can be regarded as an overall sign of insecurity as a woman and as a productive human being.

The central motif of slugs appears directly after this omission. That makes the redaction less clear in identifying this motif as a reference to Sam’s unfulfilling life, his sick child, and his efforts to cope with his situation. What is more, the parallelism in the lives of Sam and Nancy also remains left out. Sam says: “Bastards are all over. Your backyard has them too, I’ll bet. If mine does, yours does. It’s a [A] crime what they can do to your yard. And your flowers.”<sup>258</sup> A clear reference to slugs as irritating elements of life that one has to perceive and work into one’s consciousness also remains cut out from the redaction.

“An awful invention, a [the] slug. But I have [save] them up in that jar there, and when the jar is full and they’re nice and ripe, I sprinkle them under the roses. They make good fertilizer.” He moved his light slowly over [to under] the rosebush. After a minute he said, “Some life, isn’t it?” and shook his head.<sup>259</sup>

As we can see, the description of Sam’s way of dealing with the alienating elements of his life is missing from the redaction. Even though he is the one with immense problems, such as the loss of his first wife, the departure of his daughter, and the albino child born out of the second marriage, he has created a successful way of dealing with these difficulties as it is suggested by the grotesque habit of recycling dead slugs. “And what I’m doing is worth doing, I believe that.”<sup>260</sup> This is an important lesson the narrator indirectly learns from her neighbor in the manuscript.

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<sup>257</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 783.

<sup>258</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 784. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 242.

<sup>259</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 784. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 242.

<sup>260</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 785.

Sam's function in raising the narrator's consciousness remains more spelled out in the rest of the long version of the story, too. In the scene when he actually shows her his way of killing slugs, the redaction removes most of the references to the successful strategy of coping with one's difficulties.

The slug began to writhe and [was] twist[ing] this way and that. Then it curled and it straightened out. It curled again and lay still. [¶] Sam picked up a toy shovel. He [, and] scooped the slug into that [it,]. He held the jar away from him, unscrewed the lid, and dropped the slug [dumped it out] into the jar. He fastened the lid once more and set the jar on the ground.

"I quit drinking, [you know,]" Sam said.<sup>261</sup>

The entire process of capturing the slug is only detailed in the long version, and the redaction also removes the clear reference to Sam's breaking the habit of drinking. Even though we may guess what it is that he quit, the short version makes Sam's presence less of an example to cope with one's difficulties but rather, a counter-example to human happiness.

The contents of the extended omissions towards the end of the manuscript have been mentioned before. Upon returning to her house, the narrator's regained consciousness in the manuscript allows her to contemplate her life and go back to the point when it was derailed in order to reconnect to her past.

I stopped for a minute with my hand on the gate and looked around the still neighborhood. I don't know why, but I suddenly felt a long way away from everybody I had known and loved when I was a girl. I missed people. For a minute I stood there and wished I could get back to that time. Then with my next thought I understood clearly I couldn't do that. No.<sup>262</sup>

Even though this realization sounds like a bitter one, a registering of irrecoverable loss, but it may also be considered as a moment of coming to terms with her present that makes it possible for her to value the people of her past. The long train of thoughts completely omitted

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<sup>261</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 785. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 242.

<sup>262</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 786.

in the redaction puts her back into her bedroom and thus, her attention is turned to herself and her marriage.

The line “I remembered I’d forgotten to latch the gate”<sup>263</sup> shows that her openness towards her circumstances characterizing her altered state of consciousness is preserved from the experience outside her house. Although this reference appears in both versions, the consequences of this new perspective are rather different.

Finally I opened my eyes and just lay there, letting my eyes move around over things in the room. After a time I turned on my side and put an arm over Cliff’s waist. I gave him [Cliff] a little shake.<sup>264</sup>

In the long version the wife’s hand around the husband’s waist is an obvious sign of a tender reunion with him. By removing this line, the wife’s giving Cliff “a little shake,” a neutral gesture becomes the only physical contact between the couple in the redaction. This omission has significant consequences to the ending of the story because the following page-long passage of the wife’s physical reunion with and monologue addressed to her sleeping husband are entirely omitted from the redaction. They are only understandable within the context of Nancy’s long unfelt closeness to her husband.

However, the wife’s physical closeness and the monologue it induces, are clearly the climax of the story in the manuscript version. At the beginning of the passage the physical contact between them becomes more intense.

For a minute he seemed to have stopped breathing, to be down at the bottom of something. Of their own accord, my fingers dug into the soft flesh over his hip. I held my own breath waiting for his to start again. There was a space and then his breathing, deep and regular once more. I brought my hand up to his

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<sup>263</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 786. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 243.

<sup>264</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 786. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 243.

chest. It lay there, fingers spread, then beginning to tap, as if thinking what to do next. <sup>265</sup>

The wife's adjusting her pace of her breathing to that of her husband is a clear effort to establish a momentary harmony between them. The newly found communion is made even more suggestive by the parallel movement of her hand and fingers exploring the husband's body in an apparently unconscious manner. Her hand touches the neck and the entire face of the husband as if she was rediscovering him. "I touched his heavy closed eyelids. I stroked the lines in his forehead."<sup>266</sup>

During her monologue the wife reconsiders her relationship with her husband. She first registers her love towards him regardless of her worries. Having said that, her one-sided communication with him alone raises the possibility of mutual understanding between them.

Then I began to talk. It didn't matter that he was someplace else and couldn't hear any of what I was saying. Besides, in mid-sentence it occurred to me he already knew everything I was saying, maybe better than I knew, and had for a long time. When I thought that I stopped talking for a minute and looked at him with new regard. <sup>267</sup>

Looking at Cliff "with new regard" is the result of a change in her presuppositions about the husband's perspective. It is shown as a solitary process that is only made more apparent by the unconsciousness of the sleeping husband. Realizing this, the wife understands that it is she who needs to be able to express her insights about their relationship and moves on to formulate her worries.

At the end of the penultimate paragraph that functions as the climax of the story in the manuscript version, the narration offers a vague insight into the wife's renewed perspective. After the registering of the fact that she managed to express herself as in, "I went on telling

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<sup>265</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 787.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

him, without rancor or heat of any sort, everything that was on my mind,”<sup>268</sup> her complex feelings about their relationship are worded in a long sentence.

I wound up by saying it out, the worst and the last of it, that I felt we were going nowhere fast, and it was time to admit it, even though there was maybe no help for it.<sup>269</sup>

It is a single occasion of the narration offering insight into the wife’s understanding of their relationship. The statement shows the pattern of a downward spiral towards the center of the wife’s fears. The first clause predefines the rest of the sentence as the object of her realization. The semantic charging of the object of the sentence is set in motion at the beginning by the phrase “wound up” that signals a conclusion to come and offers the association of a circular movement. While the pronoun “it” appears as a yet undefined object of the phrase “saying it out,” its reappearance in the next clause gives it the qualities of “worst” and “last” within the structure of another phrase thus, the idea of centrality is introduced to the circular motion.

The three remaining clauses define the object of her recognition, and add a sense of depth to it by their consecutive shifts of focus. The first part of the statement, “I felt we were going nowhere fast” seems to be ambiguous. We can both read it as an indirect expression with the focus on “nowhere fast,” implying that there is time for them to treat the problems in their marriage, and as the opposite, that they are “going nowhere,” suggesting that their relationship is developing towards a dead end and it is a “fast” process. This ambiguity is resolved only in the next clause, “it was time to admit it,” where it becomes clear that it is a negative insight about the direction their relationship is going as in, “admit it”, but at the same time, facing the facts appears as a way of putting an end to this process as in, “it was time”. The ambiguity recreated on another level, about whether or not they have reached a point of no return in their alienation from each other, is then resolved in the last clause, “even though

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

there was maybe no help for it.” Reading this clause as the “worst and the last of” a sequence of negative insights, its focus falls at the end, “no help for it,” in which the object, “it” has been charged with the negative connotations accumulated along the sequence of insights. However, the ambiguity reoccurring during the sequence is recreated one more time when we consider the entire sequence retrospectively, and the focus in the last clause shifts to “even though,” suggesting that the effort to communicate this loss is not without meaning.

The fundamental undecidability of the dilemma of trying to change the unchangeable by facing its unchangeability becomes apparent at the end of the paragraph, and the downward spiral of the wife’s reflections points towards an oscillation of meanings that brings the limits of expression into the focus. The reader’s possible feeling of losing track is clearly reflected upon and answered by the narrator in the first sentence of the last paragraph: “Just so many words, you might think.”<sup>270</sup> The unusual addressing of the reader makes this statement more highlighted and introduces the final argument the wife has to say about the dilemma: “But I felt better for having said them.”<sup>271</sup> This argument when seen alone, appears as a somewhat weak echoing of the commonplace wisdom about the relief one feels when speaking about his problems. However, read in the light of the previous sequence of realizations, the statement gains weight, and feeling “better” appears as a relevant answer to, and a positive outcome of her insecurity and anxiety that awoke her and set her self-consciousness in motion.

The significance of this momentary feeling of relief is reinforced in the rest of the closing paragraph of the manuscript. The narration lists a series of references to a regained composure and feeling of comfort: “I wiped the tears off my cheeks and lay back down. Cliff’s breathing seemed normal, though loud to the point I couldn’t hear my own.” The husband’s presence becomes dominant but not oppressive. His breathing helps her forget

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

about her own breathing, as if it put an end to the long detour of her self-reflections during the night.

The extensive passage in the manuscript ends at this point and the last sentence of the story appears in both versions, although with different endings.

I thought for a minute of the world outside my house, and then I didn't have any more thoughts except I [the] thought maybe [that] I could [had to hurry up and] sleep.<sup>272</sup>

The manuscript version of the sentence provides further textual evidences for the reading of the long version as the presentation of a primarily successful attempt of self-discovery. The wife takes another look at her circumstances, and what appeared at the beginning as the “immediate neighborhood,”<sup>273</sup> is now expanded to the “world outside” – an expansion anticipated before her story is told in the redaction<sup>274</sup>. Considering that the wife's story is an account of a sleepless night in which she is awoken by her anxieties, the last “thought” of the wife is a closure of the story by creating a tautological relationship between the last word “sleep” and its appearing at the end of the narrative, as if the wife *did* fall asleep after these thoughts. This association between the wife's sleeping and the silencing of the narrator implicitly reduces the insecurity in the sentence “I thought maybe I could sleep,” by shifting the focus from “maybe” to “I could” and it serves as the last proof in the manuscript version for the success of the wife's efforts.

There are three modifications in the redacted version of the closing sentence quoted above, all of them contributing to the overall change in the interpretative context of the narrative. Replacing the personal pronoun “I” with the impersonal article “the” results in a syntactic change in which the word “thought” becomes a noun from a verb shifting the focus

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<sup>272</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 787. and *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 243.

<sup>273</sup> *Beginners*. in *Collected Stories*. p. 781.

<sup>274</sup> *WWTA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 240.

from the wife's thinking to the objectivity of her thoughts. The omission of the word "maybe" is another step towards eliminating references to the wife's process of thinking. Finally, replacing the expression "I could" with "I had to hurry up and sleep," removes all associations to success and resolution and makes the act of sleeping seen as an obligation or necessity.

As we have seen before, the long passage leading to the closing sentence in the manuscript is entirely omitted from the redaction. It is replaced by an insertion that makes a strong but unexplained reference to the wife's object of discovery and thus, defines the central motif of the story: "I don't know. It made me think of those things that Sam Lawton was dumping powder on."<sup>275</sup> What gives rise to this association is the husband's clearing his throat during which "Something caught and dribbled in his chest."<sup>276</sup> This way, a direct connection is established between the slugs and Cliff. Considering that the motif of the slug, as it appears in the redaction, is primarily characterized by its alienating characteristics, this association offers her a similarly alienating vision of the husband. The expression "those things that Sam Lawton was dumping powder on" also refers to the similarly alienating problems her husband may have to those of Sam, his neighbor and former friend. Arriving to the conclusion from this version of the story makes her reference to the need "to hurry up and sleep" understandable more as a desire to escape from what she found out during her sleepless night.

Considering the evident difference in the focus and the overall implications between the two versions of the short story we may understand more about the effects of reduction as a minimalist strategy. While the manuscript version details the wife's vague but apparently successful attempt to recreate an understanding of her situation by an active engagement with her circumstances, the redaction puts the focus on the limits of perception and communication

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<sup>275</sup> *WETA*. in *Collected Stories* p. 243.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*

by stressing the alienating characteristics and thus, objectifying the “smallest things” that the wife gets to see during her experience.

#### 4.4 “CATHEDRAL”

*A serious house on serious earth it is,  
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,  
Are recognized, and robed as destinies.  
/Philip Larkin: “Church Going”/*

The short story “Cathedral” is undoubtedly the most anthologized text by Raymond Carver and it is also considered a milestone in his career. Carver not only claimed, like in the interview given to Claude Grimal,<sup>277</sup> that it was his favorite story but also attributed special significance to writing it after a long silence following the controversial publication of *WWTA* that “passed as if in a dream” for him as he put it in a letter written to Lish.<sup>278</sup> The narrative of writing the story as a process of waking up from this dream, like he was finally opening his eyes, was created in the interview given to *Mississippi Review* in 1984. In their conversation with the writer McCaffery and Gregory ask Carver about his “new-found belief in and love for, the things of this world”<sup>279</sup> they find so evident in the title story of the volume *Cathedral*. Instead of referring to the positive turn in his life as a reason for the change, this time Carver highlights the unique experience of writing the story.

That story was very much an “opening-up” process for me – I mean that in every sense. “Cathedral” was a larger, grander story than anything, I think, I had previously written. When I began writing that story I felt I was breaking out of something I had put myself into, both personally and aesthetically. I simply couldn’t go on any further in the direction I had been going in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. Oh, I *could* have, I suppose, but I didn’t want to. Some of the stories were becoming too attenuated. I didn’t write anything after that book came out for five or six months. I literally wrote

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<sup>277</sup> William L. Stull. “Prose as Architecture: Two Interviews with Raymond Carver.” *Clockwatch Review* (10/1-2) Available: <http://www.iwu.edu/~jplath/carver.html> Access: 12 December 2009

<sup>278</sup> Raymond Carver. “Letters to an Editor.” *The New Yorker* (December 24, 2007) Available: [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/12/24/071224fa\\_fact\\_carver](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/12/24/071224fa_fact_carver) Access 22 November 2009

<sup>279</sup> McCaffery, 65.

nothing except for letters. So it was especially pleasing for me that, when I finally sat down to write again, I wrote *that* story, “Cathedral”. It felt like I had never written anything that way before. I could let myself *go* in some way, I didn’t have to impose the restrictions on myself that I had in the earlier story.<sup>280</sup>

This extended quotation shows that seeing the story as the clear sign of a new writing style in the reception of Carver’s work coincides with the experience of the writer, as if Carver had known from the start that it was the beginning of a new period for him as a writer with a newly found voice.

What seems even more telling is how the narrative of “breaking out of something” echoes the experience of the narrator in the story of “Cathedral” itself. In the much interpreted last scene of the short story the husband describes the moments of insight at the end of the strange game of drawing together with the blind man.<sup>281</sup> His claims that “[i]t was like nothing else in my life up to now” and “I didn't feel like I was inside anything” are even worded similarly to Carver’s “breaking out of something” and “[i]t felt like I had never written anything that way before.” The unique experience of previously unfelt freedom found in a new vision comes through both of the narratives.

Carver’s famously enigmatic use of otherwise empty clichés and inaccurate language can also be detected in both the story and the interview. In the short story, the semantic charging of the words *anything* and *something* appearing in the climax is prepared for throughout the entire story by every element pointing to this last scene. But these nearly meaningless words are also loaded with potential meanings by being inserted into the very general pattern moving from *nothing*, as in “nothing else in my life up to now”, through *anything*, as in “I didn't feel like I was inside anything”, towards *something*, as in the very last line: “‘It’s really something,’ I said.” A similar process may also be recognized in Carver’s

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Raymond Carver. “Cathedral.” In: *Collected Stories*. p. 529.

narrative of writing the story when he stresses that he “literally wrote nothing” for months before he could let himself “go in some way”. In Carver’s words the writing of the short story is made to be seen as an inaugurating experience in which the writer breaks loose from what had put himself into.

Considering that the narrator of the short story is also liberated from the very limited world he maneuvered himself into before the blind man’s visit, reading the story as a parable of artistic creation seems a tempting possibility. However, in the Grimal-interview Carver denied the relevance of this reading.

**CG:** Could you talk about the endings of your stories? The ending of "Cathedral," for instance?

**RC:** Well, the character there is full of prejudices against blind people. He changes; he grows. I'd never written a story like that. [...] when I wrote that story, I felt it was truly different. I felt a real impetus in writing it, and that doesn't happen with every story. But I felt I'd tapped into something. I felt it was very exciting. The sighted man changes. He puts himself in the blind man's place. The story affirms something. It's a positive story and I like it a lot for that reason. People say it's a metaphor for some other thing, for art, for making . . . But no, I thought about the physical contact of the blind man's hand on his hand. It's all imaginary. Nothing like that ever happened to me. Well, there was an extraordinary discovery.<sup>282</sup>

The way Carver renders the genesis of the story by the vague word of “something” reoccurring in the most important sentences is very similar to his wording in the other interview. But here he goes even further at the end, when he makes clear that “it’s all imaginary” that is, not only he had “never written a story like that” but “nothing like that ever happened” to him. By this parallelism, the “extraordinary discovery” at the end of the quotation becomes irreducibly ambiguous, equating the experience described in the story with

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<sup>282</sup> William L. Stull. “Prose as Architecture: Two Interviews with Raymond Carver.” *Clockwatch Review* (10/1-2) Available: <http://www.iwu.edu/~jplath/carver.html> Access: 12 December 2009

the experience of writing it, as if Carver could actually *feel* the physical contact he centered the story around by becoming able to write about it.

It seems that this “extraordinary discovery” is based on a powerful experience capable of moving the writer, the main character and the readers of the short story alike. By realizing the parallelisms within these three different segments of literary communication we are looking at a short story that is unusually successful in communicating rather abstract or general ideas in an efficient manner; an achievement not at all alien to the literary goals of the best traditions of minimalist fiction.

In order to find out more about this discovery it seems reasonable to map out the various contexts of interpretation relevant in the process of change that Carver claims the sighted man goes through in the story. These contexts may range from a simple dismantling of the main character’s prejudices against blind people, through a husband’s reluctant insights made into the life of his wife, to an epiphany of regained identity by means of self-reflection or a collective rite of passage to spiritual enlightenment. What may be striking even before a closer look at these interpretative contexts, is their mutual applicability that is, the fact that “Cathedral” appears to be a story that provides equal textual evidence for apparently different readerly approaches on various levels of abstraction. This recognition offers us an approach in which connections *among* these contexts indicated by their mutual applicability become the guiding lines in reading the story and mapping out the design of the cathedral the narrator is drawing.

Even though it is clearly the husband who stands in the focus of the story, due to the fact that his change is the central pattern of the composition, the various approaches to the text all focus on a *relationship* forming between him and the blind man. It is because the main character’s change is first provoked and later initiated and finally guided by the unwanted

visitor on all levels of interpretation. But even if the blind man's function in the story is very significant all through, he is only a catalyst in the husband's transformation and fades out of the picture in the moment of insight, right before the end of the story. Theoretically, his role could be played by almost *anything* capable of intruding the husband's world and pushing it out of its stagnant state. Defining Robert's (the blind man's) particular contribution depends upon the actual context of interpretative approach. He may stand for blind people or anyone stigmatized by processes of *othering*,<sup>283</sup> he can also be considered as a kind of mediator in a broken marriage, also as the incarnation of the abstract notion of Other assisting in the self-recognition of the main character or a Hermes-like figure who guides the narrator through his spiritual journey. For this reason, by reading the story as a report on the gradual diminishing of distance between the husband and the blind man, we are actually given insights into the causes and consequences of the shifts in the process of change the main character undergoes.

While the third character seems much less present in the text, the wife's role in the story is similar to that of Robert. It is through being forced to peep into her life that the husband is brought to the recognitions he makes, and her life-story clearly dominates the first part of the narrative. Thus, the readers have to understand her past with its limited possibilities, failures, and vague efforts to communicate before entering the insular world of the husband. This task is not much different from the challenge posed to the husband by the unwanted visit of his wife's friend, he also has to understand and value her wife's life by exposing himself to the experience of the visit. Therefore, we can say that the entire story may be viewed as the initial moments in the melting of the ice in a frozen marriage, during which the husband's attitudes change from a cold indifference at the beginning, until the playful communion with her near the end when he leaves her robe open while she is asleep and enjoys the sight of her thigh in the presence of the blind man. After all, it is the wife who

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<sup>283</sup> A term used in social psychology to describe the way of defining and securing one's own positive identity through the stigmatization of an "other".

decides to close her eyes first, an act later becoming an important part of the game. Even though she stops being part of the action, she is present all through the remaining of the happenings: “I may just sit here for a while between you two guys with my eyes closed. But don't let me bother you, okay?”<sup>284</sup>

The reading of the story as a report of a rare moment of closeness experienced in an unhappy marriage may be supported by the tendency of Carver to present his characters within the confines of malfunctioning or broken marriages in many of his stories, defining this institution as a primary scene of social interaction for them. In this context Robert plays the role of a very skillful relationship counselor. This role is reinforced by the fact that the wife used to have to “read stuff to him, case studies, reports, that sort of thing.”<sup>285</sup> Why would an Amway salesman and ham radio operator read case studies – one may wonder. This expression evokes the discourses of sociology or psychology, thus providing textual evidence for the reading of the story within a context of the social practice of marital therapy.

However, the relationship between Robert and the husband seems to point beyond this context, and offers insights into the transition of the main character in which marriage is only one of the confines the main character has to come to terms with. For this reason, a detailed enumeration of the shifts in their relationship could be carried out in order to identify the relevant contexts of interpretation together with the possible cross-references between them.

Despite the gradual change taking place in the narrator's attitude throughout the story, the narrative can be divided into three distinct parts in which the three characters are introduced one after the other. The first part features the wife's past, the second center's around the blind man's story with his wife, and the longest part of the narrative describes the personal encounter with the blind man. Naturally, this last part is the least homogeneous, and can be further divided into three subsections. The first ends with the wife's falling asleep and

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<sup>284</sup> “Cathedral,” p. 523.

<sup>285</sup> “Cathedral.” p. 514.

leaving them alone, in the second Robert and the husband build up their relationship to the point of the husband confessing his lack of beliefs, while the last subsection features their drawing together. However sectioning the narrative into three major parts allows us to see the function of the stories of the wife and Robert, and thus, the role of their characters in the overall narrative of the husband's transition. Even though the visitor only arrives in the third part, the husband is continuously working on the challenge posed by his visit from the very beginning of the story.

Following the initial paragraph that gives away the narrator's general hostility towards the visit, the first part renders the story of the wife's connection with the blind man. From this narrative we actually find out about the wife, the general circumstances (the unfulfilling life of being the wife of an officer, moving around from one army base to another) and the major turning points (alienation, divorce, suicide) of her life. To disclose these details the narrator uses the description of the habit of tapes being sent back and forth between the wife and Robert. This unusual but effective means of communication, and especially the fact that it is used by the wife as a "chief means of recreation"<sup>286</sup> and to compose herself in the moments of crisis, clearly shows that Robert's function in the wife's life is similar to the role he is about to play in the husband's experience. The story of their relationship also shows that she, too had to go through a process of learning from the shock of being touched on her face to a unique communication with a close friend.

The narrative of the wife's unusual relationship with the blind man culminates in her effort to share this part of her life, and thus, her life in general, with her husband by offering him to listen to the latest tape of Robert with the husband mentioned on it. After the giant leaps of rendering the wife's life story, in this scene the narration slows down to a pace comparable to real-time creating an intensive effect of expectation.

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<sup>286</sup> "Cathedral." p. 516.

I got us drinks and we settled down in the living room. We made ready to listen. First she inserted the tape into the player and adjusted a couple of dials. Then she pushed a lever. The tape squeaked and someone began to talk in this loud voice. She lowered the volume. After a few minutes of harmless chitchat, I heard my own name in the mouth of this stranger, this blind man I didn't even know! And then this: "From all you've said about him, I can only conclude--" But we were interrupted, a knock at the door, something, and we didn't ever get back to the tape. Maybe it was just as well. I'd heard all I wanted to.

The attention raised by the slow narration, the abrupt ending of the scene, together with the narrator's statement of indifference at the end all serve the purposes of closing the wife's story and pointing out its relevance in understanding the formation of the husband's character. Even though the husband shows indifference to his wife's past and feelings, it is the threat of finding out about his own identity from the wife's friend that makes him lose interest in the tape and also makes the narrator drop this narrative. By this unexpected conclusion of the wife's story possible reasons for the husband's closed world gain shape, suggesting that his general attitude of escapism is motivated by the fear of acquiring knowledge about himself.

The second part of the story still takes place before the visitor's arrival, and follows an interlude of a short and broken dialogue between the couple in which the husband gives away his complete lack of empathy (he wants to take Robert bowling), and general prejudice (guessing by her name that Robert's wife was colored). Then, the story of Robert and his late wife is introduced in the following way:

Right then my wife filled me in with more detail than I cared to know. I made a drink and sat at the kitchen table to listen. Pieces of the story began to fall into place.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> "Cathedral." p. 517.

An obvious reference to Robert's past being only a piece of a greater story comes through the narratorial remark at the end of the quotation. The paragraph also echoes the scene of getting ready to listen to the tape but this time the husband's indifference is expressed before the narrative and does not prevent the narrator from telling it.

While the relating of the wife's story was not free from clear signs of narratorial bias, the blind man's narrative is actually broken in the middle and gives way to the husband's imagination and speculations about the blind man. It implies that it is not Robert's story that will be in the focus of the upcoming events but rather the husband's difficulties in coping with the stimuli from the world outside. Among these difficulties there is the husband's lack of skills in exercising empathy towards another person. His speculations about the possible difficulties of the couple due the blindness of Robert are weak and un insightful but at the same time they are the first steps in an effort to understand a stranger.

They'd married, lived and worked together, slept together--had sex, sure--and then the blind man had to bury her. All this without his having ever seen what the goddamned woman looked like. It was beyond my understanding. Hearing this, I felt sorry for the blind man for a little bit. And then I found myself thinking what a pitiful life this woman must have led. Imagine a woman who could never see herself as she was seen in the eyes of her loved one. A woman who could go on day after day and never receive the smallest compliment from her beloved.<sup>288</sup>

The first sign of the narrator's imagination interfering with the blind man's story is the remark "had sex, sure", which is only an inference the narrator makes. The husband's entry into the world of Robert's past takes place by automatically presupposing the presence of sexuality in their relationship, making it seem only as an obvious routine for two people sharing their lives. But at the same time this association penetrates the privacy of the couple and this

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

ignites a whole line of speculations about their life that quickly turns from cheap to almost ridiculous.

A woman whose husband could never read the expression on her face, be it misery or something better. Someone who could wear makeup or not--what difference to him? She could, if she wanted, wear green eye-shadow around one eye, a straight pin in her nostril, yellow slacks, and purple shoes, no matter. And then to slip off into death, the blind man's hand on her hand, his blind eyes streaming tears--I'm imagining now--her last thought maybe this: that he never even knew what she looked like, and she on an express to the grave.<sup>289</sup>

Never considering that the lack of sight could not have prevented Robert from knowing what his wife really *looked like*, the narrator first conjures up an obscure image of the wife, and then describes her departure by a language that is much different from the short sentences and broken narrative applied before. The expression “express to the grave” shows how the narrator is carried away by the clichés of language that are readily available for him to describe a trauma he thinks he has nothing to do with.

Even though the narrator warns his readers that it only takes place in his imagination, and he returns to rendering the information he has from his wife, the passage, and thus the whole of the second part of the story, ends in a scornful remark about the blind man's drama: “Robert was left with a small insurance policy and a half of a twenty-peso Mexican coin. The other half of the coin went into the box with her. Pathetic.”<sup>290</sup> It seems that the remark “pathetic” only describes the ritual of breaking the coin but as a conclusion of the whole narrative about Robert's past, it also points back to the clearly pathetic concerns the narrator worded in his speculations. Thus, at the end of the rendering of Robert's story another factor in the husband's change comes to the surface, the vague realization of a need in him to use his imagination in exploring the world, and also the difficulty of using his imagination in

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

exercising empathy due to the cheap pathos of language that prevents him from understanding another person's life.

The last major part of the story starts with a description of the unusual happiness of the wife when arriving with Robert from the station. "Just amazing" the narrator comments, noticing the significance of the visit for his wife. The first meeting between the husband and the narrator is an example of the clichés of language starting to work regardless of their accuracy or truth value. Nearly paralyzed by the unusual and unwelcome encounter, the husband's behavior become automatic, almost robotian.

The blind man let go of his suitcase and up came his hand. I took it. He squeezed hard, held my hand, and then he let it go. "I feel like we've already met," he boomed. "Likewise," I said. I didn't know what else to say.<sup>291</sup>

He clearly does not feel like they have met before but politeness and the automatism of language in a context of introduction compels him to join the blind man's verbal gesture, by which he does not only create expectations in the visitor but pushes himself towards their later acquaintance.

The husband's first attempt to initiate a conversation is also rather awkward and seems disconcerted. Trying to inquire about which side the blind man sat on the train from New York is induced by his memory of the scenic ride along the Hudson, an irrelevant context for a blind man. The wife instantly notices this and makes an irritated remark, "What's it matter which side?", by which she entirely refuses to acknowledge the perspective offered by the husband. But Robert's answer, "Right side," puts the dialogue back on its track, suggesting that questions raised however aimlessly can be meaningful in any of several ways, and the polysemy of the word "right" hints that they may even lead to answers full of meaning.

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<sup>291</sup> "Cathedral." p. 518.

The first part of the visit features the husband's gradual facing with the blind man's particular character during which the prejudices of the husband are confronted one by one. At the end of this process the husband finally ventures to examine Robert's eyes as the key to his alterity.

I'd always thought dark glasses were a must for the blind. Fact was, I wished he had a pair. At first glance, his eyes looked like anyone else's eyes. But if you looked close, there was something different about them. Too much white in the iris, for one thing, and the pupils seemed to move around in the sockets without his knowing it or being able to stop it. Creepy. As I stared at his face, I saw the left pupil turn in toward his nose while the other made an effort to keep in one place. But it was only an effort, for that eye was on the roam without his knowing it or wanting it to be.<sup>292</sup>

In sharp contrast with the redundant verbosity characterizing his speculations before, the narrator's language becomes efficient and rather descriptive. The term "creepy" in the middle of the passage seems first as an honest gesture of withdrawal from the alienating sight but by continuing the examination, the narrator makes it seem more like a registering of a not so severe shock. However, repeated references to the unusual moving of the pupils before the word "creepy" and also at the end of the passage imply that at the core of the alienating sight there is recognition of the lack of knowledge of and control over one's essential movements. This is the uncomfortable recognition that could be avoided by the blind man's wearing of dark glasses and satisfying the narrator's expectations.

What helps the husband in facing the illusionary nature of his preconceptions is a set of routines they seem to share with the blind man, like eating, and drinking and smoking. It seems that the blind man can very well perform these routines and that makes some of the fears of the husband go away, since Robert does not interfere with his most important ways of

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<sup>292</sup> "Cathedral." p. 519.

functioning. Towards the end, when they remain by themselves, the husband is able to share two more of his habits with the blind man, watching TV and smoking cannabis. By accepting the husband's invitation to join him in these activities, Robert shows his willingness to enter the husband's world that is obviously alien to him. This way, what were the chief means of escapism for the husband turn into the paraphernalia of a newly formed community.

At the end of the first part of the visit the two characters are left alone by the wife's falling asleep between them and they acknowledge the new situation in an exchange of polite words. Robert initiates the dialogue by saying "We haven't had a chance to talk." The husband's answer appears to be the same formality he applied during their introduction but this time he registers the fact that he actually means his words.

"That's all right," I said. Then I said, "I'm glad for the company."

And I guess I was. Every night I smoked dope and stayed up as long as I could before I fell asleep. My wife and I hardly ever went to bed at the same time. When I did go to sleep, I had these dreams. Sometimes I'd wake up from one of them, my heart going crazy.<sup>293</sup>

The simple act of admitting he was glad for the company seems to require explanation and inevitably makes the narrator reveal a lot about his discomforting life. His loneliness, regular habit of anesthetizing himself, his unsatisfying marriage and the symptoms of a neurotic anxiety are all recognitions made possible by willing to stand behind a polite verbal gesture and fill it with meaning.

The very last scene starts with the experience of watching TV together. A modern-day ritual in and of itself, watching a late-night program on TV is the regular climax of the day for the husband, when he takes refuge in a passive mode of reception while drinking and smoking himself into oblivion. Realizing that there is nothing to share in this experience, the husband feels he has to comment on the program they are watching. Thus, the theme of translating

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<sup>293</sup> "Cathedral." p. 524.

visual information by means of verbal communication starts as a lead-in to the final scene in which another version of translation will be in the focus. Having to explain what he sees, the husband first faces the limitations of his eyes in perceiving the world as well as those of his words in expressing it.

"They're showing the outside of this cathedral now. Gargoyles. Little statues carved to look like monsters. Now I guess they're in Italy. Yeah, they're in Italy. There's paintings on the walls of this one church."

"Are those fresco paintings, bub?" he asked, and he sipped from his drink.

I reached for my glass. But it was empty. I tried to remember what I could remember. "You're asking me are those frescoes?" I said. "That's a good question. I don't know."<sup>294</sup>

His language shows the scope of the difficulties experienced in his efforts by falling back to a fragmented vernacular; as if he had to compose his internal monologues going on in his head when watching TV by himself: pronouns without referent ("this cathedral", "this one church"), decontextualized pieces of information ("Now I guess they're in Italy. Yeah, they're in Italy."), insufficient details ("There's paintings on the walls").

His use of the word "gargoyle" as the first thing to mention, still shows the sign of language, i.e. the stylistic value of a unique word, interfering in the way he expresses himself. Even though he tries to parry this effect by giving a rather concise definition, what is left out, such as its architectural function or the symbolism behind the grotesque figures, would also be relevant for Robert to understand the idea of a cathedral. In addition, the use of a special word of terminology makes Robert do the same and ask about "frescoes" that makes the husband fully aware of his limitations. Reaching for his glass he automatically returns to his routines but realizing that "it was empty", he seems to have no option other than admitting his ignorance.

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<sup>294</sup> "Cathedral." p. 525.

Following this moment of revealing himself the husband becomes more active and after delving in the details of different cathedrals seen on TV, he initiates a conversation about the very idea of cathedrals, as if trying to step back and establish a common ground for interpretation.

Then something occurred to me, and I said, "Something has occurred to me. Do you have any idea what a cathedral is? What they look like, that is? Do you follow me? If somebody says cathedral to you, do you have any notion what they're talking about?"<sup>295</sup>

The first thing to notice in the passage is the repetition of the narratorial statement "something occurred to me" in the dialogue. It seems as another step in the long struggle of the husband with the words he utters. It was started by using empty clichés, as in "likewise", and then filling them with meaning, as in "And I guess I was". The repetition of the statement here gives the idea of simply repeating what is on his mind and thus, arriving at a balance in his communication. However, the redundancy of the repetition still creates a grotesque effect and indicates that coming to gaining control over one's language may be a rather difficult practice.

By the gesture of invitation ("Do you follow me?") the husband also initiates the final conversation in which Robert summarizes his sporadic knowledge about cathedrals. His pointing out that cathedrals are built by generations of people, who "never lived to see the completion of their work,"<sup>296</sup> seems as a clear reference to the metaphysical significance of the object of description. Working for goals beyond one's scope of life is a traditional topos of seeing communal activity driven by metaphysical goals as a source of cultural achievement. However, when Robert adds that "they're no different from the rest of us,"<sup>297</sup> he highlights the individual perspective of the endeavor, which indicates a more disillusioned and resigned attitude.

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

Facing his ignorance, Robert quickly admits that most of his knowledge comes from the program they are watching so he asks the husband to do the job of defining cathedrals in general. During his efforts the husband refers to the same metaphysical context that Robert indicated.

In those olden days, when they built cathedrals, men wanted to be close to God. In those olden days, God was an important part of everyone's life. You could tell this from their cathedral-building. I'm sorry," I said, "but it looks like that's the best I can do for you. I'm just no good at it."<sup>298</sup>

Even though he finally starts to perform a more effective interpretation, offering a context to what he wants to make the blind man see, the meaningful insight he makes also reminds him of his distance from what he has to explain. Robert does not fail to realize this and inquires about the husband's beliefs.

I hope you don't mind my asking you. Can I ask you something? Let me ask you a simple question, yes or no. I'm just curious and there's no offense. You're my host. But let me ask if you are in any way religious? You don't mind my asking?"<sup>299</sup>

Robert's awkward way of coming out with the question shows that he is aware of the level of intimacy this question entails. It seems like an endless repetition of the idea of raising a question with the words "ask" or "curious" occurring in almost all of the sentences. In a way, Robert's anxiety is also a signal that he is actually fulfilling the worst fears of the husband: a visitor intruding his late-night privacy and interrogating him about his personal beliefs.

Despite Robert's worries, the short dialogue that follows takes them to a level of mutual understanding where language stops being a hindrance in the way of exchanging ideas.

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<sup>298</sup> "Cathedral," p. 526.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

I shook my head. He couldn't see that, though. A wink is the same as a nod to a blind man. "I guess I don't believe in it. In anything. Sometimes it's hard. You know what I'm saying?"

"Sure, I do," he said.

"Right," I said.<sup>300</sup>

The narrator realizes that his almost involuntary gesture of shaking his head goes unnoticed, and for a second, he entertains the idea of freedom this gives him to hide his real self and deceive Robert. But instead of escaping the situation by a lie, he reveals more than Robert was asking for. The undefined "it" in the husband's first sentence is expanded in the second but it only makes the target of his disbelief more ambiguous. At first, the second short sentence in the dialogue may suggest anything connected to religion, such as the angels, divine providence or afterlife, etc. But the two sentences read together indicate a more general disbelief in "anything" life has to offer.

The rest of the dialogue presents the final stage of the main character's process of learning to use language for his purposes. After the personal confession he makes, that it is sometimes hard to live this way, he again resorts to a cliché of language, "You know what I'm saying?" But this time, the empty pattern of verbal communication becomes perfectly transparent and taken literally, it allows the two men to word their fundamental understanding and sympathy for each other in the simple exchange of the two short sentences at the end.

After this newly found communion it becomes easy for the husband to face his limitations and he can finally verbalize his relationship to cathedrals. "They're something to look at on late-night TV. That's all they are." This confession makes clear that the husband has gone as far as he could in using language to communicate his perspective, and that is when Robert comes up with the idea of drawing together.

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<sup>300</sup> "Cathedral," pp. 526-27.

The last scene of the story in which the husband draws with Robert's hand on his hand is not only the climax of the story, the narrative most readers remember, but a revision and recontextualization of the themes and motifs occurring in the story up to that point. What becomes clear in this revision is that the various contexts appearing along the reading of the story all become relevant in interpreting this last scene and therefore, their analogies come to the surface.

At the beginning of the drawing the narrator makes it clear that by this time his ability to communicate his experiences has been restored. The unusual experience of drawing with a blind man *and* the unusual topic of the drawing converge and the effort of drawing a cathedral becomes an effort to compose his ongoing realizations.

So I began. First I drew a box that looked like a house. It could have been the house I lived in. Then I put a roof on it. At either end of the roof, I drew spires. Crazy.<sup>301</sup>

By associating to his house, the narrator clearly establishes the connection between his world and the object of description. Putting on a roof and ornamenting his "house" are the first things that become possible by taking the job of composing. He instantly notices the novelty of this possibility and voices his amazement at the beginning of the passage. As he delves in this project and focuses on the details of the drawing, elements of his surroundings that played part in arriving at this stage gradually lose significance. "The TV station went off the air"<sup>302</sup> and Robert's participation is reduced to words of encouragement.

At the point of the husband's gaining confidence the wife wakes up and realizes the intensity of the situation.

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<sup>301</sup> "Cathedral," p. 528.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

I'm no artist. But I kept drawing just the same. My wife opened up her eyes and gazed at us. She sat up on the sofa, her robe hanging open. She said, "What are you doing? Tell me, I want to know."<sup>303</sup>

At first the wife's anxiety of being left out becomes obvious but compared to her hostility and indifference towards her husband's behavior shown earlier, this is a clear sign of change in her attitude towards him. The fact that her robe was "hanging open" is a reference back to the playful gesture of leaving it open by the husband before and shows that his newly found joy in her company is now a natural part of the situation. The husband's refusing to answer recalls their unsuccessful attempts to communicate earlier but here it does not seem rude, only a simple sign that his discovery is not yet over and the wife's role in it has come to completion by their regained interest in each other.

Instead of the husband, Robert answers the question. "We're drawing a cathedral. Me and him are working on it. Press hard."<sup>304</sup> This proud acknowledgement of the creation of a new relationship between them is also a confirmation that they both went beyond their limits by the blind man drawing and the husband accepting his proximity. This way, the disturbing alterity of blindness disappeared from between them and the husband's preconceptions were put out of sight.

As a confirmation that his relationships with his wife and the blind man have come to a balance, Robert asks the husband to "[p]ut some people in there now. What's a cathedral without people?"<sup>305</sup> What the husband was not able to do in his previous efforts in conjuring up the image of a cathedral, to see people in there, now becomes possible by having come to terms with these two in his house. At this point, as if she knew that she is being drawn in the process, the wife becomes very excited: "What's going on? Robert, what are you doing?"

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

What's going on?"<sup>306</sup> Robert's soothing answer, "[i]t's all right"<sup>307</sup> shows that he is aware that it is an important event for her, too but then he returns to the husband to give his last advice by suggesting him to close his eyes.

The husband's closing his eyes is most often seen as a completion of the process of transition in which the sighted man learns to experience the world by taking the perspective of the blind man. This reading focuses on the reversal of the positions of the sighted and the blind man in which blindness stops being a physical limitation. Robert's functioning as a marriage counselor, psychotherapist or spiritual advisor all reinforce his position as a man with a clear vision of the world and make the husband's indifference, escapism and self-loathing seem as the symptoms of a more essential blindness.

However, as it was shown before, the relationship between the husband and the blind man is only a scheme, in which the husband's transition is presented, similarly to the way the sending of tapes between Robert and the wife gave structure to the wife's story. Another reason not to consider the husband's closing his eyes merely as an act of finally understanding the blind man's position is the fact that their community and mutual understanding was already created in their discussion about the burden of disbelief. However difficult it was for the husband to fill the clichés of language with meaning throughout his encounter with Robert, his asking the blind man if he knew what he meant, and Robert's answer "[s]ure, I do"<sup>308</sup>, made it clear that the limited words they have to understand each other can be used efficiently to bridge the gap created by their alterity.

Therefore, instead of designating the husband's entry into the world of the blind man, the image of them drawing together seems rather as a final disappearing of the divide between the husband and the world outside. In their joint movement "the physical contact of the blind

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> "Cathedral," p. 527.

man's hand on his hand”<sup>309</sup> that the writer highlighted as the central image of the story, becomes a source of fascination because it allows the husband to shift his focus from his circumstances and his limitations in connecting to them towards an inward look appearing as a new perspective for him: “It was like nothing else in my life up to now.”<sup>310</sup>

This way, the closing of his eyes does provide the husband with a new vision, although it has not much to do with the particular perspective of the blind man but rather with his insights into his own identity in the process of recreation. Robert’s important role in this process actually ends here and this becomes evident when he encourages the husband to take a look but the husband refuses to open his eyes as the first step of taking the initiative in his actions. Even though Robert’s gesture of trying to make the husband see what they drew together is generous, considering that he cannot do the same and is finally limited by his blindness, but the real reason for Robert being excluded from the recognitions of the husband is that these are uniquely his own and pertain to his personal self-discovery.

But I had my eyes closed. I thought I'd keep them that way for a little longer. I thought it was something I ought to do.

"Well?" he said. "Are you looking?"<sup>311</sup>

The somewhat unexpected allusion to an undefined expectation in the remark “I thought it was something I ought to do” is the last in the long line of references to a world of formalities that previously dominated the husband’s existence. But here, the source of this expectation is unclear, since Robert and the wife have already lost their control over the events, and it makes it seem as an urge from the inside, a vague sign of motivation that the husband has not felt before.

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<sup>309</sup> William L. Stull. “Prose as Architecture: Two Interviews with Raymond Carver.” *Clockwatch Review* (10/1-2) Available: <http://www.iwu.edu/~jplath/carver.html> Access: 12 December 2009

<sup>310</sup> “Cathedral,” p. 528.

<sup>311</sup> “Cathedral,” p. 529.

When the blind man asks whether the husband is looking is an acknowledgement that he will not be able to see what the husband sees, therefore he cannot escort him in his enquiries any longer. But if we consider that he may not only want to know whether the husband has opened his eyes but rather if he can see anything, this question becomes a simple sign of curiosity that does not require any response.

My eyes were still closed. I was in my house. I knew that. But I didn't feel like I was inside anything.

"It's really something," I said.<sup>312</sup>

The last lines of the short story reinforce the reading of the scene of drawing as a process of self-discovery by highlighting that it started and ended in his "house". But this time, the boundaries of his personality, first perceived by the physical contact with the blind man, and now by realizing that it is his own self he is discovering, cease to be limitations anymore and enable him to see that his position in his world is "really something".

The empty word, "something" resonates with the husband's long struggle to express himself by linguistic banalities, and after the gradual acceptance of the positions offered by the formalities and clichés of language, and following the successful communication with the blind man in their dialogue about his lack of belief in anything, the semantic charging of the word is well prepared for. However, due to the fact that this is the ending of the story, and there is no further context to fill this word with meaning, the weight is put onto the adverb "really" as a rhetorical device to justify the statement. This way, the entire project of trying to animate an apparently inanimate language is put to a final test that points beyond the confines of the story and makes the reader decide whether the husband really saw something, i.e. whether he actually changed during the story and would continue to live differently

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

afterwards. Once that is presupposed, the reader is also made to consider what the husband *really* saw.

The words *nothing*, *anything* and *something* appearing in each other's proximity towards the end of the story, and forming an abstract pattern of motion has been mentioned at the beginning of the analysis, when the writer's account of writing the story was compared with the experience depicted in it. What was implied by this comparison is that Carver's breaking his silence in writing the story can be viewed as a movement from a passive state towards regaining his voice illustrated by the feeling that he "tapped into something."<sup>313</sup>

What the ending of the story adds to the understanding of this movement, is that the passage from nothing to something does not happen miraculously, there is an in-between state of having to face *anything* in the process. A benevolent reading of this pattern of transition would entail that anything can ignite a fundamental change in a person. An unwanted visit from a stranger or any other stimulus that causes friction could work as a force to make the husband experience and accept his limitations and assists him in the process of realizing himself. However, a less optimistic approach could point out that it is precisely due to the irreducible polysemy of the word "anything" that makes the act of self-discovery a difficult process, since it does not allow one to see the causes and directions in this process, neither does it guarantee the success of the transition. It also entails that in the process of overcoming one's limitations, the points of reference in one's identity are also set into motion and thus, a movement from nothing to something must take place at the cost of a temporary blindness. When the husband claims in their discussion about faith that he does not believe in anything, it does not only imply that there is nothing he believes in, but also that he does not believe in *anything* itself. In other words, it can be viewed as his reluctance in accepting the function of exposure to the unexpected or uncontrollable in the course of one's coping with life.

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<sup>313</sup> William L. Stull. "Prose as Architecture: Two Interviews with Raymond Carver." *Clockwatch Review* (10/1-2) Available: <http://www.iwu.edu/~jplath/carver.html> Access: 12 December 2009

A more positive interpretation of the word *anything* reveals itself if we take a look at the overall design created by the co-existence of the different contexts emerging in the reading. As we have seen, these contexts are defining the husband's transition in different ways, making it seem as a process of accepting his wife's world and regaining joy in his marriage, or a gradual acceptance of the alterity of the blind man and thus, that of anyone in the position of a significant Other. But also clear references are made in the text to his process of recreating his identity by facing and overcoming the confines of his means of self-expression and his fears of exposing himself in situations beyond his control; while another context, that of the husband's spiritual awakening has also been mentioned in the reading. The multiplicity of contexts provided by the different levels of abstraction in the main character's transition can also be viewed as an illustration, and a hint for the reader, that *anything* may become relevant in the composition of the complex image of the cathedral.

The title undoubtedly supports a reading of the story that points in the direction of the main character's metaphysical insights, presenting him in his first steps towards acquiring a religious faith. But considering the apparently secular world in which the main character's transition is presented, and registering that, due to its ideological nature, such a reading depends on the disposition of the reader, we may also look elsewhere to find a relevant context for the interpretation of the title.

The metaphor of the cathedral, together with the allegory of drawing one, may also be interpreted as a construction in which the seemingly diverse layers of human existence, represented in the different possible contexts of reading, can all be parts of a spacious structure and reveal their interchangeability. From this perspective the grandiosity of the image of the cathedral derives from its capacity to present essential human needs, those of coming to terms with oneself, with others and with one's general existence, as *analogous* with each other, both in their hindrances and their possible ways of satisfaction. In a world, where

people do not get to “see the completion of their work”<sup>314</sup> as the blind man suggests, a realization of such analogies is essential and its significance can be compared to the scale of a cathedral. By presenting a set of small-scale personal difficulties as connected and informative of each other thereby transparent, the writer provides the story with a quasi-metaphysical resonance that may remind the reader of the experience of a secular visitor to an empty church depicted in Philip Larkin’s poem quoted in the motto.

Towards the end of the analysis, another context offers itself for consideration by recalling the writer’s formulations of the unique experience of writing this story and by considering its similarly central position in the reception of Carver’s work. As we have seen, Carver repeatedly referred to the joy of finding a new way of expression after the silence imposed upon him by the controversial publication of his previous volume. Based on the parallelism formerly pointed out between the story of the main character and the self-narrative of the writer about regaining his voice, the short story “Cathedral” can be seen as an account of what the writer/narrator of the story actually saw in the moment of insight. In that sense, the story does not render the process *leading to* a mysterious and unexplained awakening but rather, it presents what has become revealed as the narrator and the writer found their ways of reporting about it. The retrospective light the ending sheds upon the rest of the narrative is also an invitation for the reader to join the writer and the narrator in their “extraordinary discovery” Carver mentioned.

Carver’s most significant short story offers a clear example of reduction performed on various levels of the text in order to create a complex network of references by the transparency of the various contexts that the elliptical structures allow one to see. In that sense, the symbolic act of gaining control over his writerly voice was made possible by

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<sup>314</sup> “Cathedral,” p. 525.

Carver authorizing the strategy of reduction as one of his most essential tools of representation. What was a central strategy in Carver's writing from the beginning, now became an instrument fully appropriated and used for the particular artistic goals of the writer. While the striking effects of a reduced language and a generally limited outlook upon life still characterize his writing style, reduction is withdrawn from the foreground of the composition, compared to the most pared-down stories of redactions, and it is applied as a complex strategy to open up the narrative for co-existing contexts of interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

Raymond Carver's unusually heterogeneous canon is created as the result of an intriguing narrative of a writer with one of the most authentic voices in American literature caught up in the conflict of different paradigms of authority influencing the formation of his literary legacy. Carver himself was aware of this conflict, as he made clear in his essay devoted to the influences defining his career as a writer: "Influences are forces – circumstances, personalities, irresistible as a tide."<sup>315</sup> In his essay, "Fires," Carver claims that the forces affecting his writing are not to be found in the works of other writers.

I don't know about literary influences. But I do have some notions about other kinds of influences. [...] These influences were (and they still are) relentless. These were the influences that sent me into this direction, onto this spit of land instead of another – that one over there on the far side of the lake, for example. But if the main influence on my life and writing has been a negative one, oppressive and often malevolent, as I believe is the case, what am I to make of this?<sup>316</sup>

Carver gives away his general attitude towards the external forces affecting him and his writing. While he refuses to acknowledge the significance of literary predecessors, thereby claiming authority for his writerly voice,<sup>317</sup> the other forces, "circumstances, personalities" affecting his life are perceived with unconcealed hostility. Published in the same year as *Cathedral*, the collection that documents his regained voice after the years of lack of control over his personal and professional life, the title essay of the volume, *Fires* presents a writer who turned desperate during the ceaseless fight to make himself heard.

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<sup>315</sup> Raymond Carver. "Fires," *Collected Stories*. p. 734.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> He even takes a clear position in the discussions about his indebtedness to Hemingway, an influence most often mentioned in Carver's reception: "On occasion it's been said that my writing is 'like' Hemingway's writing. But I can't say his writing influenced mine. Hemingway is one of the many writers whose work [...] I first read and admired when I was in my twenties." Ibid.

The particularly oppressive and malevolent influence that Carver mentions in the menacing question raised at the end of the passage is clearly defined later in the essay.

I have to say that the greatest single influence on my life, and on my writing, directly or indirectly, has been my two children [...] there wasn't any area of my life where their heavy, often baleful influence didn't reach.<sup>318</sup>

The all-pervasive, "heavy" and "baleful" influence of his children is a repeated reference in Carver-interviews where the writer points at it as a primary reason behind his inability to write anything extensive: "it was simply impossible to start something that would have taken me two or three years. So I set myself to writing poems and short stories."<sup>319</sup> His children preventing him from becoming a novelist is a narrative that gives account of an initial conflict of authority: the conflict between being a father and a writer in which the first, the primordial figure of authority, *reduces* the capacities of the second, the primary figure of cultural authority.

Irritated by his offsprings, Carver presents himself in a conflict that seems rooted in a general unease with his own position of authority. Since he is referred to as a "father" in various senses of the word in the literary context as well, this unease is also informative of his attitude towards his authority as a writer.

**SDP:** Some critics and some younger writers regard you as the "father" of the new wave. Do you agree?

**RC:** I'm only the father of my own children. But think my experience and success have encouraged lots of young writers to follow my path.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> William L. Stull. "Prose as Architecture: Two Interviews with Raymond Carver." *Clockwatch Review* (10/1-2) Available: <http://www.iwu.edu/~jplath/carver.html> Access: 12 December 2009

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

While the writer clearly accepts the authority granted to him by the young writers who follow his path, the rhetorical turn of reducing his authority as a “father” to his personal life, where fathering was a burden for him, undermines the efficiency of the claim.

Another relationship where authority may be approached by the metaphor of fathering is that of the writer and his work. The narrative of burdensome fatherhood may be read as a symptom of anxiety caused by the disturbing state of the stories he fathered as a writer with limited control and authority. Seen retrospectively, Carver’s reference to the single most important negative influence upon his writing could hardly be answered by pointing to his children. After the posthumous recreation of his canon, in which the scale of Lish’s contribution is fully revealed, there will always be readers who identify Lish as the most oppressive, malevolent force influencing Carver’s writing, and the question they raise will echo that of the writer: what are we to make of it?

Examining Lish’s contribution to the writer’s work we have seen that it is only one of the powerful forces affecting his oeuvre. However, due to the complex network of mutual influences *redaction* appears as a dominant paradigm of authority in Carver’s canon formation, directly or indirectly affecting all of the other paradigms of *revision*, *recovering* and *restoration*. This recognition allows us to approach Lish’s role in the writer’s work somewhat more free from the unsettling anxiety it induces if we insist on a traditional, uncompromised notion of authorial control.

As Joe David Bellamy points out in an article<sup>321</sup> published as early as in 1985, Gordon Lish is one of the most influential literary figures of latter-day American literature. Referring to Lish as a “cultural commissar”<sup>322</sup> Bellamy concludes by calling attention to “the vast

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<sup>321</sup> Joe David Bellamy. “A Downpour of Literary Republicanism,” *Mississippi Review* (Winter 1985): 31-39.

<sup>322</sup> Bellamy, 38.

influence that one man may have on the literary climate – possibly enough to make it rain if he wants it to rain.”<sup>323</sup>

A year later, Sven Birkerts also took note of the intriguing and, as he made it seem, oppressive cultural phenomenon of powerful editorial influence represented by Lish. Discussing the literary effects of his editorial work, Birkerts refers to a generation of young writers he labels the “school of Lish,” all realizing his fictional goals.

Lish’s progeny come across almost without exception as purveyors of the slight and the fragmented. They are sculptors of sentences rather than of worlds. Their hunt for essences bypasses existence.<sup>324</sup>

By referring to Lish’s followers as “progeny” Birkerts offers another approach to the authority associated with the concept of fathering. He convincingly argues for the limiting effects of a uniform writing style characterized by a fundamental reduction of scope that results in the reduction of “existence” in the literary work of art.

While Birkerts may be correct in pointing out the oppressive nature of Lish’s reductionism, as we have seen, when it comes to Carver, Lish proves to be astonishingly effective in contributing to the writer’s work. By the redaction of many of the central stories in the Carver canon, the editor created unique and equally authentic stories out of Carver’s more expansive manuscripts. While the question whether he enhanced the artistic qualities of Carver’s stories or went too far in paring them down, is likely to remain a major concern in Carver’s future reception, it has been argued that his editorial goals and the particular reductive strategies he applied in his redactions are congruent with the primary directions Carver took in the creation of his authentic style of writing.

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<sup>323</sup> Bellamy, 39.

<sup>324</sup> Sven Birkerts. “The School Of Lish – The New American Writing and its Mentor,” *New Republic* (Nov. 13, 1986): 29.

This recognition allows us another insight into the working of the strategy of reduction as an effective tool of literary representation. If Lish's reductionism appears forced and unproductive when seen in itself, it starts to function rather productively when exercised on the texts of an author with a powerful and authentic voice. Reduction, even in its extreme form as applied by Lish, *can* function as an effective means of representation if there *exists* a source material that is complex and animated enough to allow for its meaningful application.

## APPENDIX 1

### *Chronological Bibliography*<sup>325</sup>

The following list indicates the first American and English periodical publications of Carver's stories, as well as their published revisions, separate editions, and inclusion in collections. Alternate titles are given in brackets.

#### *Abbreviations*

<i>Beginners</i>	<i>Beginners</i> – the original manuscript of <i>WWTA</i> , published in <i>Collected Stories</i> (Library of America, 2009)
<i>Call</i>	<i>Call If You Need Me: The Uncollected Fiction and Prose</i> (Harvill Press, 2000)
<i>Cathedral</i>	<i>Cathedral</i> (Knopf, 1983)
<i>Fires</i>	<i>Fires: Essays, Poems, Stories</i> (Capra Press, 1983)
<i>FS</i>	<i>Furious Seasons and Other Stories</i> (Capra Press, 1977)
<i>WICF</i>	<i>Where I'm Calling From: New and Selected Stories</i> (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988)
<i>WWTA</i>	<i>What We Talk About When We Talk About Love</i> (Knopf, 1981)
<i>WYPBQP</i>	<i>Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?</i> (McGraw-Hill, 1976)

1960

- “The Furious Seasons” [“Furious Seasons”]  
    “‘The Furious Seasons,’” *Selection 2* (Winter 1960-61): 1-18.  
    —, *December* 5.1 (Fall 1963): 31-41.  
    “Furious Seasons,” *FS* 94-110.  
    —, *Call* 129-45.

1961

- “The Father,” *Toyon* 7.1 (Spring 1961): 11-12.  
    —, *December* 10.1 (1968): 32.  
    —, *WYPBQP* 39-40.

1962

- “The Aficionados,” signed “John Vale,” *Toyon* 9.1 (Spring 1963): 5-9.  
    —, *Call* 150-55.  
“Poseidon and Company,” *Toyon* 9.1 (Spring 1963): 24-25.  
    —, *Ball State Teachers College Forum* 5.2 (Spring 1964): 11-12.  
    —, *Call* 156-57.  
“The Hair,” *Toyon* 9.1 (Spring 1963): 27-30.  
    —, *Sundaze* 2.6 (Jan. 7-20, 1972): n. pag.

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<sup>325</sup> For the sake of easy access, Carver's Chronological Bibliography is included here as it appeared in the Library of America volume, except for references to the volume itself that were changed from “this volume” to “*Collected Stories*.” William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll. “Chronological Bibliography,” *Collected Stories*. pp. 1005-1012.

- , *Those Days, Early Writings by Carver*  
(Elmwood, Conn.: Raven Editions, 1987): 19-23.
- , *Call* 146-49.
- “Pastoral” [“The Cabin”]  
“Pastoral,” *Western Humanities Review* 17.1 (Winter 1963): 33-42.
- , *FS* 79-91.
- “The Cabin,” *Indiana Review* 6.1 (Winter 1983): 4-13.
- , *Fires* 127-38.
- , *Granta* 12 (1984): 99-110.
- “The Night the Mill Boss Died” [“The Ducks”]  
“The Night the Mill Boss Died,” *Carolina Quarterly* 16.1 (Winter 1963): 34-39.
- “The Ducks,” *WYPBQP* 175-82.
- 1964
- “The Student’s Wife,” *The Carolina Quarterly* 17.1 (Fall 1964): 19-29.
- , *WYPBQP* 120-29.
- , *WICF* 26-32.
- 1966
- “Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?” *December* 8.1 (1966): 9-27.
- , *WYPBQP* 225-49.
- 1967
- “Bright Red Apples,” *Gato Magazine* 2.1 (Spring-Summer 1967): 8-13.
- , *Call* 158-64.
- “Sometimes a Woman Can Just About Ruin a Man” [What Do You Do in San Francisco?]  
“Sometimes a Woman Can Just About Ruin a Man,” *Colorado State Review* 2.3  
(Summer 1967): 35-40.
- “What DO You Do in San Francisco?” *WYPBQP* 109-19.
- , *WICF* 40-47.
- “Dummy” [“The Third Thing that Killed My Father Off”]  
“Dummy,” *Discourse* 10.3 (Summer 1967): 241-56.
- , *FS* 9-26.
- “The Third Thing that Killed My Father Off,” *WWTA* 89-103.
- , *WICF* 149-59.
- “Dummy,” *Beginners* 884-900.
- 1969
- “Sixty Acres,” *Discourse* 12.1 (Winter 1969): 117-27.
- , *WYPBQP* 60-74.
- 1970
- “The Night Out” [“Signals”]  
“A Night Out,” *December* 12.1-2 (1970): 65-68.
- “Signals,” *WYPBQP* 217-24.
- “Cartwheels” [“How About This?”]

“Cartwheels,” *Western Humanities Review* 24.4 (Autumn 1970): 375-82.

“How About This?” *WYPBQP* 183-92.

1971

“Neighbors,” *Esquire* (June 1971): 137-39.

—, *WYPBQP* 7-14.

—, *WICF* 65-70.

“Friendship” [“Tell the Women We’re Going”]

“Friendship,” *Sou’wester Literary Quarterly* (Summer 1971): 61-74.

“Tell the Women We’re Going,” *WWTA* 57-66.

—, *Beginners in Collected Stories* 831-44.

“Fat,” *Harper’s Bazaar* (Sept. 1971): 198-99, 228.

—, *WYPBQP* 1-6.

—, *WICF* 48-52.

“Nightschool” [“Night School”]

“Nightschool,” *North American Review* 256 [n.s. 8].3 (Fall 1971): 48-50.

“Night School,” *WYPBQP* 92-99.

“The Idea,” *Northwest Review* 12.1 (Fall-Winter 1971-72): 81-84.

—, *WYPBQP* 15-19.

“The Lie,” *Sou’wester Literary Quarterly* (Winter 1971): 56-59.

—, *FS* 37-40.

—, *Playgirl* (May 1978): 92.

—, *American Poetry Review* 11.6 (Nov.-Dec. 1982): 7.

—, *Fires* 123-25.

1972

“What’s in Alaska?” *Iowa Review* 3.2 (Spring 1972): 28-37.

—, *WYPBQP* 75-91.

—, *WICF* 53-64.

“What Is It?” [“Are These Actual Miles?”]

“What Is It?” *Esquire* (May 1972): 134-37.

—, *WYPBQP* 206-16.

“Are These Actual Miles?” *WICF* 96-103.

“A Dog Story” [“Jerry and Molly and Sam”]

“A Dog Story,” *Perspective* 17.1 (Summer 1972): 33-47.

“Jerry and Molly and Sam,” *WYPBQP* 151-67.

“Put Yourself in My Shoes,” *Iowa Review* 3.4 (Fall 1972): 42-52.

—, *WYPBQP* 130-50.

—, *WICF* 71-84.

“The Man Is Dangerous” [“Why, Honey?”]

“The Man Is Dangerous,” *Sou’wester Literary Quarterly* (Winter 1972): 53-62.

“Why, Honey?” *WYPBQP* 168-74.

—, *WICF* 91-95.

- “Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes” [“Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes”]  
 “Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes,” *Kansas Quarterly* 5.1 (Winter 1972-73): 17-23.  
 “Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes,” *WYPBQP* 193-205.  
 “Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes,” *WICF* 17-25.
- 1973
- “Are You a Doctor?” *Fiction* 1.4 (1973): 27-28.  
 —, *WYPBQP* 29-38.
- “The Pheasant,” *Occident* 7 [n.s.] (1973): 76-81.  
 —, *New England Review/Bread Loaf Quarterly* 5.1-2 (Autumn-Winter 1982) 5-10.  
*The Pheasant*. Worcester, Mass.: Metacom Press, 1982.  
 “The Pheasant,” *Fires* 147-53.
- “They’re Not Your Husband,” *Chicago Review* 24-4 (Spring 1973): 101-7.  
 —, *WYPBQP* 20-28.  
 —, *WICF* 33-39.
- “The Summer Steelhead” [“Nobody Said Anything”]  
 “The Summer Steelhead,” *Seneca Review* 4.1 (May 1973): 60-75.  
 “Nobody Said Anything,” *WYPBQP* 41-59.  
 —, *WICF* 3-16.
- 1974
- “The Fling” [“Sacks”]  
 “The Fling,” *Perspective* 17.3 (Winter 1974): 139-52.  
 —, *FS* 62-78.  
 “Sacks,” *WWTA* 37-45.  
 “The Fling,” *Beginners in Collected Stories* 788-803.
- 1975
- “So Much Water So Close to Home,” *Spectrum* 17.1 (1975): 21-38.  
 —, *Playgirl* (Feb. 1976): 54-55, 80-81, 110-11.  
 —, *FS* 41-61.  
 —, *WWTA* 79-88.  
 —, *Fires* 167-86.  
 —, *WICF* 160-77.  
 —, *Beginners in Collected Stories* 864-83.
- “Collectors,” *Esquire* (Aug 1975): 95-96.  
 —, *WYPBQP* 100-108.  
 —, *WICF* 85-90.
- “Distance [“Everything Stuck to Him”]  
 “Distance,” *Chariton Review* 1.2 (Fall 1975): 14-23.  
 —, *FS* 27-36.  
 —, *Playgirl* (Mar 1978): 101-4.  
 “Everything Stuck to Him,” *WWTA* 127-35.  
 “Distance,” *Fires* 113-21.

- , *Beginners in Collected Stories* 917-26.
- “Harry’s Death,” *Eureka Review* 1 (Winter 1975-76): 21-28.
- , *Iowa Review* 10.3 (Summer 1989): 28-32.
- , *Fires* 139-45.
- 1977
- “Mine” [“The Little Things”] [Popular Mechanics”]
- “Mine,” *FS* 92-93.
- “Little Things,” *Fiction* 5.2-3 (1978): 241-42.
- “Mine,” *Playgirl* (June 1978): 100.
- “Popular Mechanics,” *WWTA* 123-25.
- “Little Things,” *WICF* 114-15.
- “Mine,” *Beginners in Collected Stories* 915-16.
- 1978
- “View Finder” [“Viewfinder”]
- “View Finder,” *Iowa Review* 9.1 (Winter 1978): 50-52.
- , *Quarterly West* 6 (Spring-Summer 1978): 68-72.
- “Viewfinder,” *WWTA* 11-15.
- , *Beginners in Collected Stories* 757-60.
- “Why Don’t You Dance?” *Quarterly West* 7 (Autumn 1978): 26-30.
- , *Paris Review* 23.79 (Spring 1981): 177-82.
- , *WWTA* 3-10.
- , *WICF* 116-21.
- , *Beginners in Collected Stories* 751-56.
- 1979
- “The Calm,” *Iowa Review* 10.3 (Summer 1979): 33-37.
- , *WWTA* 115-21.
- , *WICF* 178-82.
- , *Beginner in Collected Stories* 909-14.
- “From *The Augustine Notebooks*,” *Iowa Review* 10.3 (Summer 1979): 38-42.
- , *Call* 167-74.
- 1980
- “Where is Everyone?” [“Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit”]
- “Where is Everyone?” *TriQuarterly* 48 (Spring 1980): 203-13.
- “Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit,” *WWTA* 17-20.
- “Where Is Everyone?” *Fires* 155-65.
- , *Beginners in Collected Stories* 761-71.
- “A Serious Talk” [“Pie”]
- “A Serous Talk,” *Missouri Review* 4.1 (Fall 1980): 23-28.
- “Pie,” *Playgirl* (Dec, 1980): 72-73, 83, 92, 94-95.
- “A Serious Talk,” *WWTA* 105-13.
- , *WICF* 122-27.

- “Pie,” *Beginners* in *Collected Stories* 901-8.
- “Want to See Something?” [“I Could See the Smallest Things”]  
 “Want to See Something?” *Missouri Review* 4.1 (Fall 1980): 29-32.  
 “I Could See the Smallest Things,” *WWTA* 31-36.  
 “Want to See Something?” *Beginners* in *Collected Stories* 781-87.
- “Gazebo,” *Missouri Review* 4.1 (Fall 1980): 33-38.  
 —, *WWTA* 21-29.  
 —, *WICF* 104-9.  
 —, *Beginners* in *Collected Stories* 772-80.
- 1981
- “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” [“Beginners”]  
 “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,” *Antaeus* 40-41 (Winter-Spring 1981): 57-68.  
 —, *WWTA* 137-54.  
 —, *WICF* 128-39.  
 “Beginners,” *New Yorker* (Dec. 24-31. 2007): 100-109.  
 —, *Beginners* in *Collected Stories* 927-48.
- “One More Thing,” *North America Review* 266.1 (Mar. 1981): 28-29.  
 —, *WWTA* 155-59.  
 —, *WICF* 110-13.  
 —, *Beginners* in *Collected Stories* 949-53.
- “If It Please You” [“After the Denim”]  
 “If It Please You,” *New England Review* 3.3 (Spring 1981): 314-32.  
 “After the Denim,” *WWTA* 67-78.  
*If It Please You*. Northridge, Calif.: Lord John Press, 1984.  
 “If It Please You,” *Beginners* in *Collected Stories* 845—63.
- The Bath” [“A Small, Good Thing”]  
 “The Bath,” *Columbia* 6 (Spring-Summer 1981): 32-41.  
 —, *WWTA* 47-56.  
 “A Small, Good Thing,” *Ploughshares* 8.2-3 (1982): 213-40.  
 —, *Cathedral* 59-89.  
 —, *WICF* 280-301.  
 —, *Beginners* in *Collected Stories* 804-30.
- “Cathedral,” *The Atlantic* (Sept. 1981): 23-29.  
 —, *Cathedral* 209-28.  
 —, *London Magazine* (Feb.-Mar. 1984): 3-18.  
 —, *WICF* 266-79.
- “Vitamins,” *Esquire* (Oct. 1981): 130-39.  
 —, *Granta* 4 (1981): 215-30.  
 —, *Cathedral* 91-109.  
 —, *WICF* 183-96.

- “Chef’s House,” *New Yorker* (Nov. 30, 1981): 42-43.  
     —, *Cathedral* 27-33.  
     —, *WICF* 222-26.
- 1982
- “Where I’m Calling From,” *New Yorker* (Mar. 15, 1982): 41-51.  
     —, *Cathedral* 127-46.  
     —, *WICF* 208-21.
- “The Bridle,” *New Yorker* (July 19, 1982): 30-32.  
     —, *Cathedral* 187-208.
- “Feathers,” *The Atlantic* (Sept 1982): 62-69.  
     —, *Cathedral* 3-26.  
     —, *WICF* 248-65.
- 1983
- “The Compartment,” *Antioch Review* 41.2 (Spring 1983): 133-41.  
     —, *Granta* 8 (1993): 67-77.  
     —, *Cathedral* 47-58.
- “Preservation,” *Grand Street* 2.3 (Spring 1983): 7-16.  
     —, *Cathedral* 35-46.
- “The Train,” *Anteus* 49-50.  
     —, *Cathedral* 147-56.
- “Fever,” *North American Review* 268.2 ((June 1983): 11-19.  
     —, *Cathedral* 157-86.  
     —, *WICF* 227-47.
- “Careful,” *Paris Review* 25.88 (Summer 1983): 222-34.  
     —, *Cathedral* 111-25.  
     —, *WICF* 197-207
- 1986
- “Boxes,” *New Yorker* (Feb. 24, 1986)  
     —, *WICF* 305-16.
- “Whoever Was Using This Bed,” *New Yorker* (Apr. 28, 1986): 33-40.  
     —, *WICF* 317-30.
- “Elephant,” *New Yorker* (June 9, 1986): 38-45.  
     —, *Fiction Magazine* (Oct. 1986): 15-20.  
     *Elephant*. Fairfax, Calif.: Jungle Garden Press, 1988.  
     “Elephant,” *WICF* 351-64.
- “Blackbird Pie,” *New Yorker* (July 7, 1986): 26-34.  
     —, *WICF* 365-80.
- “Intimacy,” *Esquire* (Aug. 1986): 58-60.  
     *Intimacy*. Concord, N.H.: William B. Ewert, 1987.  
     “Intimacy,” *WICF* 331-37.
- 1987

“Menudo,” *Granta* 21 (Spring 1987): 157-71.

—, *WICF* 338-50.

“Errand,” *New Yorker* (June 1, 1987): 30-36.

—, *WICF* 381-91.

1999

“Kindling,” *Esquire* (July 1999): 72-77.

—, *Call* 7-20.

“Vandals,” *Esquire* (Oct. 1999): 160-65.

—, *Call* 49-62.

“Call If You Need Me,” *Granta* 68 (Winter 1999): 9-21.

—, *Call* 63-74.

2000

“What Would You Like to See?” *Guardian Weekend* (June 24, 2000): 14-20.

—, *Call* 21-37.

“Dreams,” *Esquire* (Aug. 2000): 132-37.

—, *Call* 38-48.

## APPENDIX 2

### *Hungarian Chronological Bibliography*

The following list indicates the publications of the Hungarian translations of Carver's stories. Original titles are given in brackets. Parallel translations, as well as repeated publications are listed separately under the year of their publication.

#### *Abbreviation*

*Nem ők*      *Nem ők a te férjed.* [*The're Not Your Husband*] István Géher, ed., Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997.

1987

“A levél,” [“Blackbird Pie”] Transl. Mária Borbás, *Nagyvilág* (March 1987): 307-318.

1989

“Megbízatus,” [“Errand”] Transl. Gyula Csák, *Nagyvilág* (March 1989): 357-366.

1990

“Miről beszélünk, ha szerelemről beszélünk?” [“What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”] Transl. Anna Nemes, *Nagyvilág* (March 1990): 337-345.

“Mechanikai ábécé,” [“Popular Mechanics”] Transl. Mária Borbás, *Nagyvilág* (May 1990): 665-666.

1993

“Ég a házad ideki,” [“Blackbird Pie”] Transl. András Barabás, *2000* (May 1993): 23-30.

1995

“Dobozok,” [“Boxes”] Transl. Anikó Rup, *2000* (May 1995): 25-31.

1997

“Kövé,” [“Fat”] Transl. Róza Vajda, *Nem ők* 15-19.

“Nem ők a te férjed,” [“The're Not Your Husband”] Transl. Róza Vajda, *Nem ők* 20-25.

“Miért drágaságom,” [“Why, Honey?”] Transl. Attila Hazai, *Nem ők* 26- 30.

“Hazugság,” [“The Lie”] Transl. Anikó Rupp, *Nem ők* 31-33.

“Miért nem táncolnak?” [“Why Don't You Dance?”] Transl. Attila Hazai, *Nem ők* 34-38.

“Szólj az asszonyoknak, hogy elmegyek,” [“Tell the Women We're Going”] Transl. Anikó Rupp, *Nem ők* 39-45.

“Pavilon,” [“Gazebo”] Transl. Róza Vajda, *Nem ők* 46-51.

“Beszélni kell,” [“A Serious Talk”] Transl. Gábor Matolcsi, *Nem ők* 52-56.

“Zacskók,” [“Sacks”] Transl. Anikó Rupp, *Nem ők* 57-62.

“Miről beszélünk, amikor a szerelemről beszélünk?” [“What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”] Transl. Gábor Matolcsi, *Nem ők* 63-73.

“Még valamit,” [“One More Thing”] Transl. Róza Vajda, *Nem ők* 74-76.

“Kereső,” [Viewfinder] Transl. Attila Hazai, *Nem ők* 77-79.

“Tollak,” [“Feathers”] Transl. Anna Pintér, *Nem ők* 80-95.

“Egy kis jó,” [“A Small, Good Thing”] Transl. Attila Hazai, *Nem ők* 96- 115.

- “Vitamin,” [“Vitamins”] Transl. Anikó Rupp, *Nem ők* 116-128.
- “A kantár,” [“The Bridle”] Transl. Dóra Pusztai, *Nem ők* 129-143.
- “Vigyázok,” [“Careful”] Transl. Gábor Matolcsi, *Nem ők* 144-153.
- “Katedrális,” [“Cathedral”] Transl. Gábor Matolcsi, *Nem ők* 153-165.
- “Honnan beszélek,” [“Where I’m Calling From”] Transl. Gábor Matolcsi, *Nem ők* 166-178.
- “Ennyi sok víz, ilyen közel,” [“So Much Water So Close to Home”] Transl. Péter Fazekas, *Nem ők* 179-196.
- “Ég a házad ideki,” [“Blackbird Pie”] Transl. András Barabás, *Nem ők* 197-211.
- “Közel,” [“Intimacy”] Transl. Róza Vajda, *Nem ők* 212-218.
- “Dobozok,” [“Boxes”] Transl. Anikó Rupp, *Nem ők* 219-231.
- 1998
- “Csináld magad,” Transl. Béla Polyák, [“Popular Mechanics”] *2000* (March 1998): 28.
- 2001
- “A harmadik dolog, ami kicsinálta apámat,” [“The Third Thing That Killed My Father Off”] Transl. Béla Polyák, *2000* (March 2001): 27-32.
- 2006
- “Biciklik, bicepszek, cigaretták,” [Bicycles, Muscles, Cigaretts”] Transl. András Kroó, *Holmi* (Febr. 2006): 196-202.
- 2008
- “Mechanika kezdőknek,” [“Popular Mechanics”] Transl. Júlia Gárdos, *Kalligram* (May 2008): 30-31.
- “Minden hozzáragadt,” [“Everything Stuck to Him”] Transl. Júlia Gárdos, *Kalligram* (May 2008): 31-34.
- “A fülke,” [“The Compartment”] Transl. Júlia Gárdos, *Kalligram* (May 2008): 35-39.
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