Not Far From Here

Not Far From Here:
The Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver

Edited by

Vasiliki Fachard and Robert Miltner

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Not Far From Here:
The Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver,
Edited by Vasiliki Fachard and Robert Miltner

This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4252-4, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4252-5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

'*PAREE?* OR HOWEVER THEY SAID IT . . . ': RAYMOND CARVER AND EUROPE

VASILIKI FACHARD

Raymond Carver wrote that Ernest Hemingway was "one of the many writers whose work . . . I first read and admired when I was in my twenties."[1] Among the "admired" Hemingway books were, according to Carol Sklenicka, his "Paris memoir *A Moveable Feast.*"[2] One may safely venture that Carver was drawn to the theories of fiction that Hemingway expounds in his book, particularly to the art of heightening suggestiveness by means of omission: "You could omit anything if you knew that you omitted and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood."[3] Carver would hold a similar view in "On Writing": "What creates tension in a piece of fiction is partly the way the concrete words are linked together to make up the visible action of the story. But it's also the things that are left out, that are implied, the landscape just under the smooth (but sometimes broken) surface of things."[4] Both Hemingway and Carver, in their striving for verbal economy and suggestiveness, followed Ezra Pound's motto that "Fundamental accuracy of statement is the ONE sole morality of writing."[5] Hemingway said of his friend and mentor Pound, whom he knew in Paris, that he was "the man I liked and trusted the most as a critic then, the man who believed in the *mot juste* – the one and only correct word to use – the man who had taught me to distrust adjectives"[6]; and Carver kept a three-by-five card of the motto taped on the wall next to his desk.[7] Hemingway and Carver also shared a distrust of stylistic "tricks" and of theorizing. Hemingway's attempt to get his friend Francis Scott Fitzgerald "to write his stories as well as he could and not trick them to conform to any formula"[8] also resonates in Carver's "'No Tricks.' Period. I hate tricks."[9] Stylistically and aesthetically, then, Carver had much to find and agree with in Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. Beyond these patent stylistic and aesthetic affinities, however, one may wonder if Carver

admired *A Moveable Feast* also for its ideas; that is, not only for its reflections on the mechanics of writing but also for the book's celebration of a place brimming with "symbolic material"[10] that excited and stoked Hemingway's creative energies. According to his grandson, Sean Hemingway, Paris "remained . . . the city that [Hemingway] loved most" as well as "the best place to work in the world."[11] According to Mary Hemingway, her husband had told a friend: "If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast."[12] This Preface seeks to explore Hemingway's and Carver's respective reactions to, and literary uses of, Paris and Europe.

Paris offered Hemingway and his first wife Hadley constant, exhilarating, sensual and intellectual stimulation, making their sojourn in the French capital one of discovery and revelation. Far from the austerity of his upbringing as well as from prohibition, Hemingway came alive in the promenades along the *quais* or below the Pont Neuf, watching the fishermen catch "the dace-like fish . . . called *goujon*"[13] that ended up in heaps of golden *friture* (fish fry); he reveled in his wanderings around the quartier latin, which he describes with painstaking precision:

> I walked down past the Lycée Henri Quatre and the ancient church of St. Etienne-du-Mont and the windswept Place du Panthéon and cut in for shelter to the right and finally came out on the lee side of the Boulevard St. Michel and worked on down it past the Cluny and the Boulevard St. Germain until I came to a good café that I knew on the Place St. Michel.[14]

He savored the sights and sounds of the bistrots – such as the one in Montparnasse where a plat du jour of *cassoulet* (beans) "mimeographed in purple ink . . . made [him] hungry to read the name"[15] – and of the brasseries, like the famous Lipp's, where a rustic dish of potatoes (*pommes à l'huile)*, in whose "olive oil" he "moistened the bread," is followed by a second serving of the same and by a *cervelas* – "a sausage like a heavy, wide frankfurter split in two and covered with a mustard sauce" that he "mopped up . . . with bread" along with "all the oil."[16] The luminosity of white potatoes glistening in the Provençal olive oil, reminiscent of a Vermeer painting, turns the feast for the palate into an esthetic experience. This intertwining of sight and taste brings to mind the very etymology of the word *aesthetics*: *εσθιω*, Greek for "to eat." Similarly lucent and delectable to the artist's eye is the grey-silver composition of oysters Hemingway savors in the midst of a conversation about Ezra Pound:

> I began my second dozen of the flat oysters, picking them from their bed of crushed ice on the silver plate, watching their unbelievably delicate brown edges react and cringe as I squeezed lemon juice on them and separated the holding muscle from the shell and lifted them to chew them carefully.[17]

The gourmand in him is already going on his second dozen of oysters; the esthete knows how to take his time "to chew them carefully."

A feast for the eye as well are the scenes of Paris Hemingway observed from his studio window, captured in a style reminiscent of a Utrillo painting:

> When spring came, even the false spring, there were no problems except where to be happiest . . . In the spring mornings I would work early while my wife still slept. The windows were open wide and the cobbles of the street were drying after the rain. The sun was drying the wet faces of the houses that faced the window. The shops were still shuttered.[18]

Astonishing to modern readers and travelers of the tourist industry is the scene of the goats at rue Descartes in the morning, bringing to life the French *campagne* that furnishes the *victuailles* of the metropolis:

> The goatherd came up the street blowing his pipes and a woman who lived on the floor above us came out onto the sidewalk with a big pot. The goatherd chose one of the heavy-bagged, black milk-goats and milked her into the pot while his dog pushed the others onto the sidewalk. The goats looked around, turning their necks like sight-seers. The goatherd took the money from the woman and thanked her and went on up the street piping and the dog herded the goats on ahead, their horns bobbing. I went back to writing and the woman came up the stairs with the goat milk. She wore her felt-soled cleaning shoes and I only heard her breathing as she stopped on the stairs outside our door and then the shutting of her door. She was the only customer for goat milk in our building.[19]

Hemingway delighted in the sights, smells, and tastes of Paris; its bottles of Pouilly-Fuissé and Châteauneuf du Pape**,** which he came to appreciate long before they were popularized by the gourmet revolution in America. He relished his conversations with Sylvia Beach at the bookstore Shakespeare and Company, or with Gertrude Stein at 27 rue de Fleurus, where he enjoyed sipping a glass of *eau-de-vie*, literally, "water-of-life." His thirst for Parisian fare was unquenchable. He was always hungry, even after a meal at the expensive "Michaud's," where James Joyce often ate with his family:

> It was a wonderful meal at Michaud's after we got in; but when we had finished and there was no question of hunger any more the feeling that had been like hunger when we were on the bridge was still there when we caught the bus home. It was there when we came in the room and after we had gone to bed and made love in the dark, it was there.[20]

His senses and perceptions are "heightened" by his insatiability:

> You got very hungry when you did not eat enough in Paris because all the bakery shops had such good things in the windows and people ate outside at tables on the sidewalk so that you saw and smelled the food . . . you could always go into the Luxembourg museum and all the paintings were heightened and clearer and more beautiful if you were belly-empty, hollow-hungry. I learned to understand Cézanne much better and to see truly how he made landscapes when I was hungry.[21]

The abundance of French words in *Feast* – concrete, accurately used and savored by the American author – are emblematic of his receptivity to the language as well, also affecting his budding artistic sensibility. All aspects of Parisian life awakened and nourished his creativity. Hemingway could not understand Fitzgerald's complaint that he could not work in Paris: "He [Fitzgerald] laid the failure to Paris, the town best organized for a writer to write in that there is . . . "[22] For Hemingway Paris was a productive place: "The blue-backed notebooks, the two pencils and the pencil sharpener (a pocket knife was too wasteful), the marble-topped tables, the smell of *café crèmes* [sic], the smell of early morning sweeping out and mopping and luck were all you needed."[23]

Set against the scenes Hemingway makes palpable to the reader in his panegyric of Paris, Carver's scant impressions from his few visits to the same city display none of the *frisson* that so exhilarated Hemingway. In fact, most of them are relayed by others (his first wife Maryann, Tess Gallagher, his son Vance). This does not mean that he was left entirely cold by Paris's monuments, museums, and literary past. Stopping in Paris for ten days on their return from Tel Aviv, Maryann recalls: "We had lost ourselves in the Rodin museum, going back repeatedly, unable to take our eyes off the magnificent works"[24]; with his son Vance, Carver also "viewed Impressionist paintings in the Jeu de Paume and the sarcophagus of Napoleon at Les Invalides."[25] However, on the whole, there can be little doubt that Paris did not make as significant an impression on Carver as it did on Hemingway.

More information on Carver's impressions of Europe can be gleaned from *Soul Barnacles*, the diary that Tess kept during the couple's journey

across Europe in the spring of 1987.[26] One of the couple's most memorable moments was the time spent being "entertained and feted by [Ray's] French Editor, Olivier Cohen."[27] On their own, Carver and Tess appear to be uninterested in venturing beyond the usual touristic itineraries, to tap into the pulsating life of a city. They did visit some of the famous cafés and even the Brasserie Lipp so dear to Hemingway, but not in the curious, appreciative spirit of their predecessor. Unlike Hemingway, Carver and Tess are content "just to sit and watch what's going on out in the street," as they would in any other city. All Tess observes is "[m]ostly young people, very playful with each other. Some short dresses, but jeans mostly. Strikingly handsome gay men. Not many gay women."[28] Further, the couple's decision to have dinner at the touristy cabaret Moulin Rouge shows that their curiosity does not extend beyond the conventional:

> Ray and I go for dinner at the Moulin Rouge and take in the "spectacle" – really beautiful girls in elaborate costumes, very fast-paced, but because I've danced the cancan in Texas in the Merry Widow in 1966, I can tell how the girls are sparing themselves. I remember being so sore after dance practice that I could hardly climb the stairs to my bedroom. The dancers smile a lot and, as Ray says, seem to be enjoying themselves . . . There are acrobats and also a ventriloquist who makes people from the audience come up on stage with him . . . Next he brings a white dog on stage and allows it to 'talk.'[29]

Carver and Tess distinguish themselves from ordinary – naïve – tourists by foiling a fare rip off by a chauffeur de taxi: "Coming out, a taxicab driver tries to scalp us. He wants one hundred francs (about eighteen dollars) to take us back to the hotel. Ray tells him to forget it. He finds a cab for fifty francs, which was probably still about five francs [ninety cents] too much."[30]

Invited to the prestigious Prix Goncourt award ceremony, the couple are duly impressed by the official banquet, with its multiple courses, pyramid of champagne glasses and profusion of vintage wines. However, this experience fails to stimulate Ray's palate for French food; the morning after, in Saint Quentin, a suburb of Paris, he craves an American breakfast:

> Ray has just come in as I write. He's been out trying unsuccessfully to find eggs and bacon! On a Sunday morning in Saint Quentin. Failure. He sits down and eats a stale croissant I saved from yesterday's breakfast for an emergency. He opens a coke. Coke and croissant.[31]

This episode corroborates Sklenicka's claim that Carver, who "was curious about other people's lives and loved a good story," was not, on the other hand, "intellectually curious about other cultures and religions."[32]

A notable exception to the above incuriosity is Carver's willingness to visit the cemeteries of the famous, as if Europe were a mausoleum of masterful writers rather than the living source of inspiration it was for Hemingway. With Tess he visited Rome's "Cemetery for Foreigners," in which "Keats, Severn, and the ashes of Shelley are buried."[33] To Joyce's grave in Zurich, they went back three times.[34] In Paris with Vance, Carver expressed the desire to visit the Cimetière du Montparnasse, where many masters – Chopin, Baudelaire, Maupassant, Sartre – are buried. This latter experience found its way into a poem, "Ask Him," whose central question is recounted by Vance:

> My father asked me to ask our guide how one could be buried there. I looked at him puzzled . . . I asked the old man, who was walking next to us, "*Qu'est-ce qu'on fait pour être enterré ici?*" The old man stopped, fixed his gaze on me, and said with total seriousness. "*C'est complet monsieur, c'est complet*" ("We have no more room, sir; we are full") . . . my equally serious father fell silent and motionless when I translated.[35]

One may wonder if Carver's question betrays a secret wish to be recognized by France's literati, an unconscious identification with the masters of the past. His growing success and recognition at home and abroad had led him "to think of himself as a man of letters in the process of creating his own legacy. Among friends, Carver and Gallagher sometimes said to one another, 'We're out there in history now, Babe.'"[36] Moreover, Carver had given a course on the "European Masters of Short Fiction"[37] at Syracuse University the year before his Paris trip with Vance. Was it, then, the Professor in Carver who was now paying homage to the European Masters he had explored in his course?

If so, Carver is not so different from Morgan, the professor of literature in "Put Yourself in My Shoes," as he would have us think. Morgan has moved to Germany during a sabbatical and rented his house to a derisive Myers, a writer with whom Carver presumably identifies. In a story within the larger story of "Shoes," the academic Morgan recounts visiting a Bauhaus exhibit at the Dortmunder museum in Germany "to pay homage to a few of our favorites among the old masters."[38] Back in America, Morgan urges Myers to visit the European continent, thinking that "a trip to Europe would be very beneficial to a writer."[39] In the same metafictional story, a character named Carl "always talked of going to Paris to write a novel, and when Myers had quit to write a novel, Carl had

said he would watch for Myers' name on the best-seller list."[40] Myers, however, does not heed their recommendations. He completes his story without traveling to Paris. Interestingly, like Myers, Carver's only place of inspiration was America, where he always longed to return during his trips abroad. Only four days after their arrival in Paris, Carver left a note for Tess at the Hôtel des Saints-Pères saying, "I'll be glad to get home!"[41] At the end of their trip, "[w]eary of media attention and foreign food and foreign languages, Ray gratefully retreated to Port Angeles."[42]

The writer in Carver misses most hearing his native tongue when he is traveling abroad. At the end of his abortive search for an American breakfast, Ray had told Tess: "I have a whole new respect for Vance . . . living for a year in a country where English isn't spoken. I'll be glad to hear English again."[43] To write, Carver needed to hear the American idiom. According to Sklenicka, Carver's "fantasies of having a Hemingway sort of life" were short-lived and "a bit far-fetched for a man of his background . . . His adventures would be domestic."[44]

Carver's impressions of his trips are to be found predominantly in his work, as his above identification with Myers shows. If he articulated so little of his impressions of Europe, his experiences were nonetheless lodged in his unconscious, from where they would, one day, come out to find their way into a poem or a story. For instance, his need to hear English spoken surfaces in "The Compartment." Its protagonist, also called Myers, works for an "engineering firm."[45] Yet, like the eponymous writer in "Shoes," he is also a fictional extension of the writer in Carver. As he nears his destination, Strasbourg, where he travels to reunite with his son, Myers looks back on his trip, which has included Rome, Venice and Milan. He deems it disappointing and longs to return home: "After a day or two, or three days – he'd see how it went – he would travel to Paris and fly home. He was tired of trying to make himself understood to strangers and would be glad to get back."[46] As he approaches the meeting place, the father, who had never understood "what had possessed [the son] to go to France,"[47] decides not to see him after all. Breaking ties with his son as he also turns his back to a continent that has become a "hateful place,"[48] Myers is shaken by still another (mechanical and metaphorical) fracture: the realization (after briefly leaving his compartment and not finding his suitcase when he returns) that his car has been uncoupled and attached to another. The mishap leaves him confused about his new "destination" and further disorients him in the foreign continent:

> He needed to find out from someone where this train was going. He had understood, at the time he purchased the ticket, that the train to Strasbourg

> went on to Paris. But he felt it would be humiliating to put his head into one of the compartments and say, "Paree?" or however they said it – as if asking if they'd arrived at a destination.[49]

It is intriguing to imagine what the association of "Paree" and Myers's ultimate "destination" in Europe might be suggesting in Carver's unconscious. Was "Paree" the place where the paths of great writers – including his own – converged for recognition? The question admits of no easy, confident answer. But it is noteworthy that it is as veiled and as pregnant with significance as the one that Carver asks at the illustrious cemetery of Montparnasse: what must an artist do to be buried here and gain eternal fame?

Carver's identifications with his characters – now Morgan, now Myers – show that he distills his own experiences into his fiction, a Pirandellian process whose mechanics Carver himself explains in *Conversations*: "You are not your characters, but your characters are you."[50] Carver's fictionalizing of fragments of his Parisian and European journeys bears this out. Seemingly un-seduced by the pulse and throb of the French capital, Carver did not *describe* his impressions and experiences in realistic-mimetic fashion, nor did he worship Paris. Rather, his experience of foreignness is splintered into bits that later provided raw material for his art, a technique adumbrated in *Conversations*: "You stick bits and pieces here and then make some kind of coherent whole out of it."[51] He allows the fragments (scenes, names, snatches of conversations, scraps of memory) to gestate and, later, to creep up in the stories mentioned above – to which "The Train," not discussed in the space of this preface, could be added to complete what may be called the 'travel trilogy.'

This technique, of which Carver is the new *master*, differs from that of realism, which was predicated on the reproduction of the "smooth" surface of reality – a reality that Carver, on the other hand, sees as "broken and unsettled."[52] Some of these broken parts have to do with Paris as the literary and artistic capital of Europe in the imagination of writers, including American writers that preceded Carver. Thus, his parodic use of "'Paree?' or however they said it" evokes Mark Twain's equally parodic designation "Parry" of the same city in *The Gilded Age*; Myers's itinerary – "first to Rome"[53] and then onwards to Venice – recalls a Jamesian tour, while Milan echoes Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms.* Through such intertextual allusions, Carver pays homage to his masters, who formed part of his implied audience, as he himself acknowledged: "Any writer worth his salt writes as well and as truly as he can and hopes for as large and

perceptive a readership as possible . . . But I think you're also writing for other writers to an extent – the dead writers whose work you admire."[54]

Carver's repeated visits to the cemeteries of the illustrious dead and his indifference to European life combine to indicate that the Europe he was sensitive to was not the *living* Europe of his visits nor the one romanticized by the Hemingway he admired, but the dead Europe enshrined in the literary monuments of Morgan's "old masters."

Works Cited

Carver, Maryann Burk. *What It Used to Be Like*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006.

Carver, Raymond. *Collected Stories*. Eds. Maureen P. Carroll and William L. Stull. New York: The Library of America, 2009.

—. Interview by Lewis Buzbee and Mona Simpson. *Fires*. New York: Vintage, 1984.

Gallagher, Tess. *Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray*. Ed. Greg Simon. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.

Hemingway, Ernest. *A Moveable Feast*. Ed. Sean Hemingway. New York: Scribner, 2009.

Kennedy, J. Gerald. *Imagining Paris: Exile, Writing, and the American Identity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Koehne, David. "Echoes of Our Own Lives." *Conversations with Raymond Carver*. Eds. Marshall Bruce Gentry and William L. Stull. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1990.

Sexton, David. "David Sexton Talks to Raymond Carver." *Conversations with Raymond Carver*. Eds. Marshall Bruce Gentry and William L. Stull. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1990.

Sklenicka, Carol. *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life*. New York: Scribner, 2009.

Notes

[1] Raymond Carver, *Collected Stories*, eds. Maureen P. Carroll and William L. Stull (New York: The Library of America, 2009), p. 734.

[2] Carol Sklenicka, *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life* (New York: Scribner, 2009), p. 119.

[3] Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, ed. Sean Hemingway (New York: Scribner, 2009), p. 71.

[4] *Collected Stories*, p. 732.

[5] Qtd in *Collected Stories,* p. 729.

[6] Hemingway, p. 102.
[7] *Collected Stories*, pp. 728-29.
[8] Hemingway, p. 156.
[9] *Collected Stories*, p. 729.
[10] J. Gerald Kennedy, *Imagining Paris: Exile, Writing, and the American Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), Introduction, xiv.
[11] Hemingway, p. 13.
[12] Hemingway, Introduction, xii.
[13] Hemingway, p. 37.
[14] Hemingway, pp. 16-17.
[15] Hemingway, p. 81.
[16] Hemingway, pp. 68-69.
[17] Hemingway, p. 98.
[18] Hemingway, p. 41.
[19] Hemingway, p. 41.
[20] Hemingway, p. 49.
[21] Hemingway, p. 65.
[22] Hemingway, p. 156.
[23] Hemingway, p. 169.
[24] Carver, Maryann Burk, *What It Used to Be Like* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), p. 333.
[25] Sklenicka, p. 385.
[26] Tess Gallagher, *Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray*, ed. Greg Simon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000). Carver's voice cannot always be confidently distinguished from his wife's Tess, the narrator. However, this frustrating uncertainty is mitigated by the fact that the couple were very close and presumably shared widely identical views.
[27] Gallagher, p. 455.
[28] Gallagher, p. 21.
[29] Gallagher, p. 21.
[30] Gallagher, p. 21.
[31] Gallagher, p. 25.
[32] Sklenicka, p. 156.
[33] Gallagher, p. 41.
[34] Gallagher, p. 39.
[35] Sklenicka, p. 386.
[36] Sklenicka, p. 435.
[37] List of courses at the Charvat Archives, Ohio State University. I wish to thank Carol Sklenicka for the above information.
[38] *Collected Stories*, p. 111.
[39] *Collected Stories*, p. 106.
[40] *Collected Stories*, p. 101.
[41] Gallagher, p. 22.
[42] Sklenicka, p. 456.
[43] Gallagher, p. 25.

[44] Sklenicka, p. 59.
[45] *Collected Stories*, p. 396.
[46] *Collected Stories*, p. 396.
[47] *Collected Stories*, p. 395.
[48] *Collected Stories*, p. 398.
[49] *Collected Stories*, p. 401.
[50] David Koehne, "Echoes of Our Own Lives," *Conversations with Raymond Carver*, eds. Marshall Bruce Gentry and William L. Stull (Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1993), p. 8.
[51] David Sexton, "David Sexton Talks to Raymond Carver," *Conversations with Raymond Carver*, eds. Marshall Bruce Gentry and William L. Stull (Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1993), p. 132.
[52] *Collected Stories*, p. 732.
[53] *Collected Stories*, p. 396.
[54] Raymond Carver, interview by Lewis Buzbee and Mona Simpson, *Fires*, (New York: Vintage, 1984), p. 205.

INTRODUCTION

ROBERT MILTNER

> Reluctantly, my son goes with me through the iron gates of the cemetery in Montparnasse. "What a way to spend a day in Paris!" is what he'd like to say. Did, in fact, say. He speaks French. Has started a conversation with a white-haired guard who offers himself as our informal guide. So we move slowly, the three of us, along row upon row of graves. Everyone, it seems, is here.
>
> —Raymond Carver, "Ask Him"[1]

I

Raymond Carver, called "The American Chekhov" at the time of his death from cancer in 1988 at the age of fifty, is the most important American short story writer of the twentieth century after Ernest Hemingway. His body of work includes collections of stories and poems from commercial and small presses; mixed-genre collections that include essays, poems, and stories; limited edition poetry broadsides and fine-press chapbooks; and a clutch of publications in other genres including a co-authored screenplay, two co-authored one-act plays, and a single-authored one-act play.

The popularity of Carver's writing, particularly his short stories, continues to grow around the world; his work has been translated into well over twenty languages; moreover, the concurrent academic scholarship and critical study have expanded proportionately. Until recently however, Carver scholarship was largely the domain of academics in the U.S., as evidenced by Arthur Saltzman's *Understanding Raymond Carver* (1988, 2008), Randolph Paul Runyon's *Reading Raymond Carver* (1992), Ewing Campbell's *Raymond Carver: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1992), Kirk Nesset's *The Stories of Raymond Carver* (1995), Adam Meyer's *Raymond Carver* (1995), and Arthur F. Bethea's *Technique and Sensibility in the Fiction and Poetry of Raymond Carver* (2001). Furthermore, Bob Adelman's

Carver Country (1990), Marshall Bruce Gentry and William L. Stull's *Conversations with Raymond Carver* (1990), Sam Halpert's *When We Talk About Raymond Carver* (1991) and *Raymond Carver: An Oral Biography* (1995), Tess Gallagher's *Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray* (2000), Maryann Burk Carver's *What It Used to Be Like: A Portrait of My Marriage to Raymond Carver* (2006), and Carol Sklenicka's *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life* (2009), supplement critical studies with biographical collage, collected interviews, oral biographies, a memoir, and literary biography, respectively. Lastly, the eminent Carver scholars William Stull and Maureen Carroll have edited Carver's *Collected Stories* (2009) which, coupled with *All of Us: The Collected Poems* (1996), finally make the body of Carver's work available to readers and scholars.

In more recent years, international scholarship has grown. Books by Canadian scholars include G. P. Lainsbury's *The Carver Chronotope: Inside the Life-World of Raymond Carver's Fiction* (2005), Kerry McSweeney's comprehensive *The Realist Short Story of the Powerful Glimpse: Chekhov to Carver* (2007), and Paul Benedict Grant and Katherine Ashley's *Carver Across the Curriculum: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching the Fiction and Poetry of Raymond Carver* (2011). Furthermore, Israeli scholar Ayala Amir's *The Visual Poetics of Raymond Carver* (2010) offers a new avenue for critical study. Additionally, a special issue of the *Journal of the Short Story in English* (2006) on Carver, edited by Swiss scholar Vasiliki Fachard and published by the University Press of Angers, France, created the first international forum for scholars from the U.S., Spain, Norway, Switzerland, France and Italy to engage in critical discussion of Carver's stories.

The founding of the International Raymond Carver Society by Sandra Lee Kleppe and Robert Miltner in 2005, and its related journal, the *Raymond Carver Review,* in 2006, established an ongoing international approach to Carver studies which, according to Carver biographer Carol Sklenicka, "promotes critical study"[2] and "provide[s] a vibrant platform for discussion of Carver's work."[3] Kleppe and Miltner subsequently edited *New Paths to Raymond Carver: Critical Essays on His Life, Fiction, and Poetry* (2008) which included essays from a range of established and emerging scholars who discussed equally Carver's work as a poet and fiction writer. Still, while it gathered scholarly work from Canada, France, Norway, and the U.S., it was predominantly representative of North American critical study. It was from these converging trajectories of international scholarship and growing literary criticism that Sandra Lee Kleppe of the International Raymond Carver Society, an American Literature Association affiliate, and Claire Fabre-Clark from the Université

de Paris XII – each of whom contributed to *New Paths to Raymond Carver* – organized the Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver in June of 2008.

The essays in this collection are taken from papers presented at that Carver Symposium in Paris, "Commemorating and Celebrating Raymond Carver," held at Université de Paris XII on June 6th and at Hôtel Massa, Société des Gens de Lettres, on June 7th. *Not Far From Here: The Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver* presents the first collection of contemporary essays written almost exclusively by *international* scholars: four from France, two from Canada, one from Spain (now a PhD candidate in Canada), and one each from Switzerland, Norway, Italy, and the U.S. The range of critical perspectives from these scholars is both varied and interconnected: feminism, film theory, semiotics, biographical study, cultural studies, mythology, textual editing, intertextual analysis, existentialism, metafictional analysis, elegiac lyricism, representationalism, symbolism, humanism, and Lacanian criticism all have some presence in this collection of essays. As a result, *Not Far From Here: The Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver* offers the richest and most varied international conversation by emerging and established scholars to date on the importance of Carver's work.

The period of time between the Paris Symposium and the production of this book has seen tremendous advancements and expansion in Carver scholarship. In 2009, Sklenicka's literary biography, *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life*, was published by Scribner's and was subsequently selected as one of the top ten books of the year by *The New York Times*, bringing Carver's life, career, and works more fully into the public eye in English-speaking countries. Moreover, due to the convictions and determination of Tess Gallagher and William Stull who have worked to "restore" Carver's work as it existed before the heavy editing of Gordon Lish, *Beginners,* the unedited manuscript version of what would become *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, was published in 2009 both by Jonathan Cape in the U.K. and in the *Collected Stories* by the Library of America in the U.S. No wonder, then, that Kleppe has called 2009 a watershed year for Carver studies.

II

Not Far From Here is organized around five areas of critical inquiry: biographical studies, textual studies, film and visual studies, literary studies involving signs and symbols, and literary studies considering time and space.

The book opens with a Preface titled "'*Paree*? or however they said it': Raymond Carver and Europe," written by editor Vasiliki Fachard, who ruminates on Carver's relationship with Paris, contrasting it with Hemingway's celebration of the city of lights in *A Moveable Feast*, which Carver had read and "admired" according to Sklenicka.[4] Whereas it nourished Hemingway's creativity, Paris exerts no romantic fascination on Carver, whose literary identity is forged by and in America. However, at the same time, Carver is drawn to Paris as a place where the "great masters" of the past sought recognition. As he visits their graves, he muses on his own recognition by the French literati of the present and, possibly, the future. As a result, Fachard's preface sets the stage for the Paris symposium.

G. P. Lainsbury, in "Reference ≠ Reduction: Literature & Life of Raymond Carver," offers a defense for, and argues the necessity of, biographical studies as an important basis of criticism of Carver's work. In *The Carver Chronotope*,[5] Lainsbury interpreted Carver's narratives of family life using the Freudian concept of repetition, noting how Carver equated "a continuity in the work … [with] a continuity in the life." By examining a variation on an anecdote from Carver's essay "My Father's Life," in which the mother locks the father out on suspicion of adultery, and then knocks him out with a colander when he finally gets in, Lainsbury notes how Maryann Burk Carver's memoir *What It Was Like* shows a tendency to view her life experience through an expectation for literary utility, ultimately rationalizing Carver family violence by asserting that it was of importance in the larger net of material from which Carver often drew material for his writing. Moreover, and interestingly, Lainsbury's insistence that Carver's writing is inextricably linked to his life subsequently finds strong support from Sklenicka's award-winning epic literary biography, *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life.*

Randolph Paul Runyon's "Beginners' Luck," which was presented as the keynote address at the symposium, offers the first of two textual studies of Carver's work. Runyon engages in an intertextual analysis of Gordon Lish's editing of Carver's stories. Runyon was considering at the time what Carver's editor may have added to Carver's stories, and many of the issues about which he wonders have been expanded upon or qualified by the publication of *Beginners* and Carver's *Collected Stories.* Runyon's attention in his keynote address focused both on what Lish subtracted, as has become well-known now, as well as what he added through his editing. The publication in the December 24/31 2007 *The New Yorker* of "Beginners," the original story that through Lish's intervention became "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," in the

collection whose title story it is, offers a revealing glimpse. Some of Lish's additions give what could be called a metafictional dimension to the story and set up connections to "One More Thing," which follows it in the collection. The issue that surfaces in Runyon's consideration of these competing texts is how many of the intertextual connections, which he has identified in his book *Reading Raymond Carver*, were the influence of Lish and not Carver. What is remarkable about Runyon's keynote address is how it seemed to predict the need for the publication of the complete collection which Carver wrote as *Beginners* so that the two competing texts – the complete manuscript of Carver's *Beginners* and the version heavily edited by Lish, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, which was a National Book Award finalist and Carver's first major critical and popular success – could be available for critical study. The detailed study of the varied drafts that passed between Carver and Lish, discussed in detail in Sklenicka's *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life,* offers possible answers to many of Runyon's questions posed in his keynote address at the Carver Symposium.

The issue of Lish's influence on the published versions of Carver's stories is discussed in detail in the second textual studies essay, Enrico Monti's "From 'Beginners' to 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Love': Variations on a Carver Story." Monti analyzes the shaping of the story "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," leaning on Carver's early draft "Beginners," which he studied in manuscript form when he was a visiting scholar at the Lilly Library at Indiana University in Bloomington. Monti's work also anticipated the publishing of the 'unedited' stories of Carver as *Beginners* and *The Collected Stories,* which also includes *Beginners*. His essay aims to identify the major changes that Carver's draft underwent in the hands of Lish before being published in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981). A textual analysis of such radical changes, including omissions, rewritings, and different endings, shows the nature and extent of Lish's editing, which was clearly aimed at expelling what he considered to be any sentimentality and most psychological introspection; by doing so, he strove to highlight the stories' bleaker tones and edgy minimalist undertones. In the end, the edited version reads like a different story, and *Beginners* offers readers the longer, layered, and non-minimalist stories as Carver intended them to be read.

Françoise Sammarcelli offers a film and visual study in "'So why would I want a photograph of this tragedy?': The Inscription of the Eye in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*," which examines the inscription of vision in Carver's sparest collection of stories, *What We*

Talk About When We talk About Love (1981). By focusing on the passages in the stories which most explicitly and powerfully address the issue of the eye and the related crisis, Sammarcelli sheds light on the various strategies used by texts which recurrently call into question the codes of representation. The essay first scrutinizes the intriguing close-ups on fascinating objects in texts which resort to disjunction and displacement, as well as combine vision and indeterminacy. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, Sammarcelli then dwells on Carver's ambiguous negotiation with abjection and the notion of "borderline." Her closing section consists of a close-up on "Viewfinder" and the questions of vision and abstraction, showing how the linguistic code comes under scrutiny in this story, which brilliantly explores the topos of photography, the better to play with its readers' expectations.

Libe García Zarranz presents a feminist critique of Carver in "A Threatening Fetish: The Female Body through Carver's Hitchcockian Eye," and in doing so offers a second film and visual study. Echoing Alfred Hitchcock's film strategies and techniques in the era of the 1950s, women in "Carver Country" are often subjected to the male's domineering gaze, becoming ideal objects of desire or, alternatively, imperfect canvases featuring male anxieties and insecurities. This essay establishes certain thematic similarities and webs of influence between Hitchcock and Carver in their representation of femininity and the female body. Through film techniques, such as soft-focus, subjective point-of-view and close-up, Hitchcock tackles controversial issues like the implications of male voyeurism and the fetishization of the female body. Similarly, Carver's *femmes* are either portrayed as perfect or deflective fetishes, often trapped in complex labyrinths of voyeuristic pleasure. She examines Carver's ambivalent construction of the female body in relation to Hitchcock's trilogy on voyeurism: *Rear Window* (1954), where woman stands as the perfect fetish; *Vertigo* (1958), which portrays the collapse of ideal femininity and, as a result, the depiction of woman as agent of fear; and *Psycho* (1960), where the female body is finally represented as corpse and turned into a source of abjection. She argues that Carver's stories loyally reproduce Hitchcock's approaches towards the construction of female characters involving the fetishization, objectification, and abjection of their bodies.

Vasiliki Fachard's literary study, "Signs vs. Symbols: Gifts in Raymond Carver's *Cathedral*," argues that, according to Marcel Mauss, a gift "forges a bilateral, irrevocable bond" and does so by virtue of its own power, enabling one to "emerge from self" and open up to the other. Grounded in our consumer – as opposed to Mauss's archaic – societies,

the gifts found in Carver's stories are, in contrast, most often reduced to objects acting as differential status signs, inert and devoid of the power to enhance or consolidate human relations. It is through such *lack*, therefore, that a discourse on the symbolic and humanistic value of gifts unveils itself in three stories from *Cathedral*: "Feathers," "Preservation" and "The Compartment." Fachard's detailed analysis of the use of gifts – including bread, feathers, and cigars in "Feathers," of candy in "Preservation," and of watches and self in "The Compartment" – as well as her convincing study of Carver's inclusion of elements of mythology in "Feathers," initiate new topics for future examination by Carver scholars.

In "Lack and Leftovers: 'Feathers' and 'Menudo,' or the Impossible Remains," Claire Fabre-Clark proposes, through the lens of a literary study of signs and symbols, to synthesize the place of the real in Carver's stories through the close study of two stories belonging to two different collections of stories of the end of his writing career: "Feathers" (1983) and "Menudo" (1988). She uses as her focus the meals in each story, the feast of simple food shared by the two couples in "Feathers" and the missed meal in "Menudo," each seen as indicative of the characters themselves. The characters in "Feathers," through the dinner at Bud and Olla's, are faced with the excessive presence of the real in the form of the peacock and the baby, which Fabre-Clark sees as "excessively real" and bordering on the grotesque. However, as the analysis of "Menudo" shows, this "excessive presence" is not incompatible with the Lacanian notion of the real, i.e., the impossible, and therefore represents what is lacking. Thus, she suggests, the metafictional resonances of "Menudo" are emphasized to shed light on the place of the real in Carver's work.

In a literary study of the chronotope of time and space, Laetitia Naly places the focus of her attention on one particular story form from Carver's important *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* as she considers elements of time in "Celebrating the Moment: Virility and the Writing of Time in Raymond Carver's 'The Calm'" with its story-within-a-story format that opens like Russian dolls to reveal the author's use of time as a means of construction. Naly explores how the narrator of "The Calm" recollects an argument in a barbershop, then points out that he decided to break up with his wife at that very moment. The story thus displays the simultaneity of various facts without ever assigning a single meaning to any of them. The celebration of a unique moment that is both decisive and banal is the underlying theme of the story, yet the moment is like a microcosm, self-referred and self-contained: an invitation to further interpretation, it also reminds that time always resists univocity. In "The

Calm," the simultaneity of events outwits narrative linearity and brings the reader closer to the existential experience of time.

Marie Le Grix de la Salle examines two understudied stories in "'Waiting for what? I'd like to know': Confusing Expectations in Raymond Carver's Train Stories." Carver's stories "The Compartment" and "The Train," which employ specific representations of time, provide for another literary study of the chronotope. Made up of very limited action and scant dialogue, both "The Compartment" and "The Train" dramatize the characters' waiting for something ill-defined to happen. By focusing on specific symbolical details which capture the reader's attention – clocks, waiting rooms, train cars – Carver manages to create narrative suspense although what the characters are expecting is never clearly stated. Finally, while all this waiting results in the characters' growing feeling of confusion as the atmosphere becomes progressively more unfamiliar, readers find themselves continuing to seek an explanation or understanding after the uncertain and divergent conclusion of the story.

III

Not Far From Here: The Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver demonstrates more than ever the rich and vibrant international scholarship that celebrates the remarkable work of Raymond Carver. By offering a collection of essays that utilizes biographical, textual, literary, and film studies, this book will provide readers with new critical lenses through which to examine the writing of this important writer. Moreover, as the first clearly international critical collection of essays – one that is predominantly European – readers will encounter Carver scholars engaged in an exciting conversation on the literary merit and cultural value of one of the late twentieth century's most influential writers. Ideally, this book will help expand the discussions that continue to evolve as more readers and critics discover the writing of Raymond Carver.

Works Cited

Adelman, Bob. *Carver Country: The World of Raymond Carver*. New York: Scribner, 1990.

Amir, Ayala. *The Visual Poetics of Raymond Carver*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010.

Bethea, Arthur F. *Technique and Sensibility in the Fiction and Poetry of Raymond Carver*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Campbell, Ewing. *Raymond Carver: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne, 1992.
Carver, Maryann Burk. *What It Used to Be Like: A Portrait of My Marriage to Raymond Carver*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006.
Carver, Raymond. *All of Us: The Collected Poems*. New York: Vintage, 1996.
—. "Beginners," *The New Yorker*, December 24/31 (2007).
—. *Collected Stories*. Eds. Maureen P. Carroll and William L. Stull. New York: The Library of America, 2009.
Fachard, Vasiliki, ed. Special Issue on Raymond Carver. *Journal of the Short Story in English* 46 (Spring 2006).
Gallagher, Tess. *Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2000.
Gentry, Marshall Bruce and William L. Stull, eds. *Conversations with Raymond Carver*. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1990.
Grant, Paul Benedict and Katherine Ashley, eds. *Carver Across the Curriculum: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching the Fiction and Poetry of Raymond Carver*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.
Halpert, Sam, ed. *Raymond Carver: An Oral Biography*. Iowa City: Iowa UP, 1995.
—. *When We Talk About Raymond Carver*. Layton: Gibbs Smith, 1991.
Hitchcock, Alfred, dir. *Psycho*. Perf. Anthony Perkins and Vera Miles. Shamley Productions, 1960.
—. *Rear Window*. Perf. James Stewart and Grace Kelly. Paramount Pictures, 1954.
—. *Vertigo*. Perf. James Stewart and Kim Novak. Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions, 1958.
Kleppe, Sandra Lee and Robert Miltner, eds. *New Paths to Raymond Carver: Critical Essays on His Life, Fiction, and Poetry*. Columbia: South Carolina UP, 2009.
Kristeva, Julia. *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection*. Paris: Seuil, 1980.
Lainsbury, G. P. *The Carver Chronotope: Inside the Life-World of Raymond Carver's Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1990.
McSweeney, Kerry. *The Realist Short Story of the Powerful Glimpse: Chekhov to Carver*. Columbia: South Carolina UP, 2007.
Meyer, Adam. *Raymond Carver*. New York: Twayne, 1995.
Nesset, Kirk. *The Stories of Raymond Carver*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1995.

Runyon, Randolph Paul. *Reading Raymond Carver*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1992.
Saltzman, Arthur M. *Understanding Raymond Carver*. Columbia: South Carolina UP, 1988.
Sklenicka, Carol. *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life*. New York: Scribner, 2009.

Notes

[1] Raymond Carver, *All of Us: The Collected Poems* (New York: Vintage, 1996), p. 142.
[2] Carol Sklenicka, *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life* (New York: Scribner, 2009), p. 488.
[3] Sklenicka, p. 494.
[4] Sklenicka, p. 119.
[5] A "chronotope," as defined by M. M. Bakhtin in his essay "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel" from *The Dialogic Imagination* (ed. Michael Holquist, Texas UP, 1992), literally means "time space" and is the name he applies to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84), though "the primary category in the chronotope is time" (85).

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES