

7-20-2021

The Editor's Influence on the Author's Writing Style: Gordon Lish's Impact on the Works of Raymond Carver

Sandra Webb

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rio.tamtu.edu/etds>

Recommended Citation

Webb, Sandra, "The Editor's Influence on the Author's Writing Style: Gordon Lish's Impact on the Works of Raymond Carver" (2021). *Theses and Dissertations*. 165.
<https://rio.tamtu.edu/etds/165>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Research Information Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Research Information Online. For more information, please contact benjamin.rawlins@tamtu.edu, eva.hernandez@tamtu.edu, jhatcher@tamtu.edu, rhinojosa@tamtu.edu.

“THE EDITOR’S INFLUENCE ON THE AUTHOR’S WRITING STYLE:
GORDON LISH’S IMPACT ON THE WORKS OF RAYMOND CARVER”

A Thesis

by

SANDRA LAURA WEBB

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2020

Major Subject: English

“THE EDITOR’S INFLUENCE ON THE AUTHOR’S WRITING STYLE:
GORDON LISH’S IMPACT ON THE WORKS OF RAYMOND CARVER”

Sandra Webb, 2020, Copyright ©

“THE EDITOR’S INFLUENCE ON THE AUTHOR’S WRITING STYLE:
GORDON LISH’S IMPACT ON THE WORKS OF RAYMOND CARVER”

A Thesis

by

SANDRA WEBB

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Approved as to style and content by:

Chair of Committee,	Manuel Broncano
Committee Members,	Jennifer Coronado
	Thomas Mitchell
	Jonathan Murphy
Head of Department,	Jonathan Murphy

December 2020

Major Subject: English

ABSTRACT

The Editor's Influence on the Author's Writing Style:
Gordon Lish's Impact on the Works of Raymond Carver
(December 2020)

Sandra Webb, BA English, Texas A&M International University;
Chair of Committee: Dr. Manuel Broncano,

Postmodern short story author and poet, Raymond Carver became known as *the* American minimalist author. His works are composed of minimalist pieces filled with distanced narration, economy of language, and zero-point endings with limited descriptions-- inviting the reader to construct or complete the narrative beyond the lines within the text. Carver's works, however, had been heavily edited at the hands of his trusted friend, Gordon Lish. Lines, paragraphs, even entire pages had been removed from the original manuscripts at Lish's direction leaving only echoes of the author's creations. A comparison of original, published works with restored manuscripts reveal the differences in pre and post edited styles. Carver's true literary style shines through, and the editor's impact on his works reveal the profound minimalist influence left by Gordon Lish.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis committee chair, Dr. Manuel Broncano for your unquestionable faith in me. I will forever be indebted to you. I would also like to thank Dr. Thomas Mitchell for introducing me to the topic and igniting this journey. I am forever grateful to Dr. Jennifer Coronado whose passion for the field of education inspired me to never let my teaching spark fade. Thank you Dr. Murphy for your kindness and support throughout my graduate studies. Much praise goes to Franco Zamora for not being a Lish but instead patiently guiding me through revisions.

A special heartfelt thanks goes to the English department faculty and staff along with the department of Graduate Studies at Texas A&M International University for their dedication and support throughout my academic career.

This study would not have been possible without the endless hours dedicated to manuscript restoration by William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll along with Tess Gallagher and the outstanding staff at Indiana University's Lilly Library.

And my biggest thanks goes out to my family who have demonstrated undying faith, patience, and support as I spent countless hours immersed in research and writing. A special and profound thank you to my loving husband who sees in me more potential than I can fathom and continuously

demonstrates unyielding patience, love and support. You are the reason this study ultimately came to fruition. I am forever grateful. This is for you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
ABBREVIATIONS	viii
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE EDITOR & THE AUTHOR	3
Role of the Literary Editor	3
Gordon Lish, The Editor	5
The Writer, the Editor, and the Problem of Authorship	5
Author/Editor Relationship.....	7
Selling of the Manuscripts.....	9
III. CARVER'S STYLE	10
IV. PUBLISHING	14
What We Talk About When We Talk About Love	14
<i>Beginners</i>	15
V. TEXT COMPARISON	17
"Beginners" vs "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love"	17
Characters Changed: "Where is Everyone?" vs. "Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit"	21
Characters Changed: "Tell the Women We're Going" (same name)....	24
The Title is "Mine"- "Distance" Yourself	27
Lost Meaning: "The Fling" vs "Sacks"	28
"A Small, Good Thing" vs. "The Bath"	32
Lish's Style, Lish's Ending, Lish's Critique: "One More Thing" (same name)	34
Carver's Reaction	36
IV. CONCLUSION.....	40
WORKS CITED.....	42
APPENDIX	46
VITA	57

ABBREVIATIONS

WWTA	<i>What We Talk About When We Talk About Love</i> (collection)
“WWTA”	“What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” (short story)

I. INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago, I was introduced to Raymond Carver's short story "Cathedral." It was a reading assigned for a summer undergrad class focused on short fiction, and this particular selection piqued my interest. The words on the pages were fluid, non-scholarly, and most definitely raw. I noticed the lives created by Carver reflected the lives of the average American whose life is equally far from perfection. This interest soon developed into a curiosity about other works written by the author, and before I knew it, I was flipping through pages of history, Carver's history. It would be surprising to find the fictional characters created by Carver as not having been inspired by his acquaintances, family, or the strangers he crossed paths with throughout his life. They are almost too realistic, too messy to be fictitious. At the time, the eager undergrad in me was curious and quickly researched the author. The entanglement of Carver's works and the relationship with his editor quickly began to unravel. I knew, at that point, if I opened the can, I would have to dive in. It was all or nothing.

What initially began as a curious intrigue in Raymond Carver's style and storylines quickly evolved into a preoccupation with the author-editor relationship between Carver and his editor, Gordon Lish. This interest led to a deeper assessment of the role of the editor, initiating the search of identifying

This thesis follows the model of *Publications of the Modern Language Association*.

and answering the following: what distinguishes the role of the editor from that of the role of co-author? Where, if at all, is the line drawn? Is it merely a title or a name slapped onto the cover of a book?

II. THE EDITOR & THE AUTHOR

Role of the Literary Editor

To begin dissecting these questions, it is essential to identify the ways in which the title of “editor” can be interpreted differently. It is pertinent to note that, currently, there are countless editing posts in a multitude of fields. A full and detailed assessment of the role of “the editor” would result in an entirely independent and lengthy study. However, the editing process in the literary realm prior to publishing a work of fiction means manuscripts will run through multiple hands before final publication. The procurement/acquisitions editor searches out the manuscript on behalf of the publisher. The production editor takes on the responsibility of having contracts signed to have the manuscript make its way towards production. At this stage, if necessary, a copyeditor will be introduced for more detailed examination of the work. Meanwhile, the executive editor finds and helps to develop a new work, and the managing editor oversees the copyeditor who closely reads and carefully corrects the manuscript, word by word, character by character (Stainton 5). These are the more common editorial roles in the literary world. Outside of this realm, an editor can be applied to various fields within the arts: film, journalism, etc. For the purpose of this particular analysis, the term *editor* will refer solely to the role of the literary copy editor.

Copyediting is generally to be classified as either minimal, routine, or heavy. Depending on the manuscript’s legibility and time and funds allotted for revision, a publisher will select the appropriate and necessary

recommendations for the editor to take. Manuscripts will generally run through the revision process before reaching the copyeditor. As is current practice, a critique and comprehensive edit are the general requisites designated by the publisher prior arriving at the copyediting stage. Along with spelling, punctuation and other technical details, the copyediting process more importantly focuses on the readability, continuity, and correction of any inconsistencies in the work. However, not all editors are created equal. While the manuscript is the brainchild of the author, some editors, when heavily editing a piece, overrule and overwrite leaving the piece unrecognizable.

As Speck posits, “the author has ultimate authority over a document's contents, particularly its style [, but] editors have authority to make decisions about the final shape of a document, decisions that can conflict with the author's au-thority” (300). This can, and has, caused friction during the publishing process. Unfortunately, for the eager, aspiring author, choosing to halt the process would and is often not the option of choice. Despite the fact that the work is the creation of the author, it can be daunting to voice objection.

The editor, however, is not to *be* the author. In spite of this, Gordon Lish’s extensive editorial alterations on various pieces changed the stories on a fundamental level, effectively elevating Lish to the status of co-author. Nevertheless, Raymond Carver, the credited author will forever be “responsible for the ideas put forth, the method of presentation, and the style of writing, as well as the accuracy and cogency of the material” (Stainton 16). Despite Carver

receiving the credit, the end result of the published works is an amalgamation of both author and editor.

Gordon Lish, The Editor

Gordon Lish worked as editor-in-chief on *Genesis West*, a collection of celebrated works, from 1963-1965. Soon after, he took on the position of editor-in-chief at Behavioral Research Laboratories in California. It was here, in Menlo Park, where Lish was first introduced to Carver by his editor, Curt Johnson. The friendship between the alcoholic Carver and the self-regarding Lish grew as the editor relocated himself and his second wife to New York where he began his post as fiction editor at *Esquire*--a position he held from 1969 until 1977 *earning* him the self-titled name of "Captain Fiction." Upon his departure from *Esquire* in 1977, Lish had reached the position of senior editor. He held on to this title after leaving the magazine for a position at Alfred A. Knopf. While at Knopf, Lish edited the works of Barry Hannah, Richard Ford, and Don DeLillo among others. However, it was through Carver's pieces that Lish became the prominent editor he is now recognized as.

The Writer, the Editor, and the Problem of Authorship

The writing process is just that--a process. On the road to publication, the writing process and the work itself, is not complete until it has traversed the hands of an editor. While authors have the ability to self-edit or submit to any of the endless online editing websites, professional copy editors will provide a more thorough and detailed revision of the manuscript, as the publisher's reputation, and therefore, the editor's career, remain on the line. Ideally, an

editor's task is to improve upon the work by making suggestions and improving continuity, tone, etc. It is the copyeditor's job to improve upon the work whether they like or dislike, agree or disagree with the subject matter.

However, what happens when an author's work is completely dismantled in the editing process? A character's name is changed where Herb is now Mel, Sara is now Pam. A title is entirely reconstructed or altogether dismissed and replaced. Does it matter? The author's works are read and published, and the reader assumes what is being read are the words written or intended by the author. The experience of reading the piece are the connections and emotions the author intended the reader to feel. The audience will never question if Mel was originally Mel, if Pam was always Pam. But what if Melville's original version of *Moby Dick* had not commenced with "Call me Ishmael?" What if Melville's editor had penned those initial words himself? Would the author still be looked upon with the same reverence? Would the text still hold the same meaning? What happens when the editorial process changes the fundamental nature of the work itself? There is no editorial law enforcement to monitor and convict such violators. Instead, manuscripts are passed along the assembly line that is the editing process with hidden secrets, lost stories, and at times reinventions that are the result of the editor's imagination. Such is the case for the numerous works that came to be composites of the merged voices and visions of Raymond Carver and Gordon Lish.

Raymond Carver is said, by Stephen King, to have been the most influential writer of American short stories in the second half of the twentieth

century. He has been most notably recognized for composing works with a minimalist approach, a style Carver himself did not like to attach to his work. However, Carver did declare an admiration for Chekhov's simplistic writing style and claimed to love the implied hints of revelation (Bausch & Cassill 1625). In examining Carver's earlier edited pieces and comparing them to later, less edited publications, the distinct disparity of syntactical structure between time periods is clear. For instance, Carver's earlier works are lauded for their stripped down, stark style, lacking detail and displaying a disconnected bleak view of the human condition, but his later works show a definite sensitivity and hope for his characters and their lives. Many biographers of Carver have concluded that this is a result of the writer's maturing both as a person and as an artist, moving from an insecure alcoholic to an established and respected writer, but just how much influence did Gordon Lish have on Carver's style? In order to determine this, one must first consider the relationship between author and editor while analyzing original and edited versions of Carver's works.

Author/Editor Relationship

Controversy related to Lish's heavy hand at editing Raymond Carver's manuscripts began after Carver's death in 1988. Carver and Lish had been long-time friends for years preceding their author/editor relationship. In fact, it was not until Lish attained the position at Esquire that he gave Carver's manuscripts serious consideration (Sklenicka 178). Lish confessed he only looked into Carver's manuscripts as his end of a bargain. At the time, Lish had

relocated to New York, after his ex-wife, Frances had been threatening his new wife, Barbara's life. Carver promised to watch Frances and Lish's three children in exchange for manuscript editing. Lish's position at Esquire was, for Carver, a miracle (178). In previous years, Carver faced difficulty publishing his works. Lish's position at Esquire, however, was, in Carver's mind, a godsend. Lish had experience and a name in the literary world, and helped introduce Carver's works to a larger audience. Although Carver had, for many years, considered Lish a friend and drinking companion, he undoubtedly recognized and took advantage of Lish's access to publishing. This deal proved beneficial to both. While Lish was unable to publish Carver's work at Esquire, he was able to publish one piece at Harper's Bazaar. Publishing "Fat" validated Lish's editor status and power, and Carver knew he had a foot in. Lish had earned Carver's trust and Carver would come to rely on and succumb to Lish's 'expert' advice.

Audacious editor Gordon Lish's prominent reputation was earned by his employment as editor at Esquire, McGraw-Hill, and most notably with Alfred A. Knopf. After failed attempts at circulating his own fiction, Lish learned early on that his editing expertise could become his own ticket to freedom and mobility (Sklenicka 150). If he could not publish his own works, his editing skills would help him gain the recognition he felt so deserving of. Lish became Carver's editor at a time when Carver, recovering from alcoholism, was trying so desperately to regain his sense of self. He was eager to have his works published and was appreciative of Lish's efforts. Lish's interest became a symbol of hope for Carver as a writer. In fact, Carver felt indebted to Lish.

Selling of the Manuscripts

When his wife was diagnosed with ALS in the early 1990s, Lish admitted “there was nothing to be done but to get money. [He] then sought to sell the papers, worksheets, and the like” in an effort to help pay for medical bills (Lish 145). With Raymond Carver no longer in the picture, Gordon Lish arranged for the sale of Carver-related documents to the Lilly Library at Indiana University. Among these documents, a myriad of works edited by Lish along with both personal and professional letters from Carver. The original manuscripts and letters unfold and transport us, their readers, to early 1980 when the newly-recovered Carver had risen from vulnerability and developed a voice helping him stand on his own two feet. In his tell-all book, *Conversations with Gordon Lish*, the editor insinuates he had hoped selling and exposing the manuscripts would earn him recognition he believed he deserved (146).

In reading the letters, Carver’s desperation becomes evident (see figure 1). So afraid of the consequences that might be a result of the publication of the now unrecognizable stories on his new-found sense of self/sobriety, Carver was driven to the point of begging the editor to halt publication.

III. CARVER'S STYLE

Carver's desperation was likely an attempt to regain control of his writing--a control he had not possessed as a published author. Carver's natural, pre-edited style or, more accurately, pre-revised style can be considered realism. This style is most apparent through his very real yet fictitious worlds that focus on the commonplace. It is easy to be pulled into his very realistic yet fictitious worlds. It is surprisingly natural to empathize with Carver's characters who would otherwise be seen as unappealing. The reader's search for perfection is lost and forgotten, and the undesirable or the under-represented becomes real and appreciated. Carver's earlier stories, according to poet Donald Justice, had a "true Chekhovian shape and form along with sympathy for characters that you wouldn't expect to be sympathetic with" (Halpert 33). Carver's characters had realistic and relatable flaws. They were unabashedly true to themselves. The author possessed a natural talent and ability to help his characters transcend beyond the page and connect with the reader. This is evident in restored fiction.

Carver's "language worked to establish a particular tone and that tone became the vehicle for the emotion" evident in the lives of his characters (Runyon xiii). The stories selected, like most stories published in *WWTAWWTAL*, string the characters along, as they struggle to find their own way. They do not find their fairy tale ending, but life does not guarantee such endings anyway. His characters are real. They "work for a living. They fret about mortgages and dream about vacations [. . .] Carver's characters smoke

and drink [. . .] [and] complain about their misfortunes, harbor resentment, fear the future. [. . .] They wonder if they are leading the right lives" (Saltzman 3-4). We are the characters in Carver's fiction. Furthermore, Carver "has been credited with the restoration of a presumably moribund form – literary realism" (Saltzman 4). More specifically, Carver can be credited as being one of the fathers of dirty realism-- an offshoot of literary minimalism. As such, dirty realism shares characteristics with minimalism such as detached narration, economy of language, and sparse character development. However, what separates it is the focusing on the dark side of modern life - the alcoholic, the drug addict, or even the unhappily married and unhappily divorced. Pre or post Lish, this is essentially Carver focusing on the existential dilemma at the heart of ordinary contemporary Americans living ordinary contemporary lives.

Interestingly, Carver has become known amongst his peers and the literary world as *the* Minimalist writer of American literature--a title he detested, most likely because he recognized the characteristics of minimalism reflected in the editorial changes made by Gordon Lish. Literary minimalism is defined within the anthology, *The Story and Its Writer*, as "a literary style exemplifying economy and restraint" (Sodowsky 529). Similarly, Frederick Karl wrote of his search for delineation between this tradition and other forms of literature suggesting,

The minimalist writer must assure the audience that he, the writer, knows far more about the subject than he is including; that beyond him, in some spatial realm, there is the rest, undefined perhaps, but there. Often, the writer makes as his point of

reference not the line he develops but the beyond; what is not is as dominant as what is, and possibly more significant (Karl 384).

Carver's *revised* fiction does just this. Both the anthology's definition and Karl's observations skim the surface of what encompasses the movement. Robert C. Clark, a scholar of the movement, agrees, suggesting that "the core idea that differentiates American Minimalism from other movements is that prose and poetry should be extremely efficient, allusive, and implicative" adding that "the language in this type of fiction tends to be simple and direct" similar to prose and poetry as "it is laconic yet highly implicative" (Clark 1). In omitting information, the author draws the reader into fiction, leading them to implication as a result of the exchange between text and self. However, the differences between Carver's pre and post edited stories demonstrate that while Carver always focused on the "real" the extremely compact nature of his stories with limited character development and greater invitation of reader involvement came as the result of Lish. As Gaby Wood explains, "Lish's edits become slices that depend on silence and suggestion, on the reverberations of the barely glimpsed. Carver's original characters did a lot more talking – they told drunken anecdotes, they wept, they felt, they contemplated, confronted, confessed" ("Raymond Carver: the kindest cut"). In fact, Wood continues, that if "you are a Carver reader who mainly associates his work with a certain style, then you may be surprised to find that the style itself – his sentences and paragraphs, the blunt, mid-air endings of his stories – was in many cases engineered by Gordon Lish" ("Raymond Carver: the kindest cut"). It is no

wonder that shortly after his departure from *Esquire*, Lish began to “brag and say that Ray was his creature” (Sklenicka 359).

In 2009, William Stull and Maureen Carroll undertook the daunting task of rebuilding Carver’s pre-edited stories from the original manuscripts containing Lish’s notes and from letters between Carver and Lish. The result of this massive reconstruction delineates the differences in style between Lish and Carver.

IV. PUBLISHING

As the editor-author relationship progressed, Lish began confidently heavily editing Carver's pieces. The edited versions had been stripped of detailed scenarios, rounded characters, and psychological introspection. Names of characters were changed or simply removed along with their personal stories. In contrast to Carver's original manuscripts, Lish's versions appear cold and detached from human emotion. In editing Carver's works, Lish would merely run his black marker across paragraphs and pages immensely reducing the original length of Carver's works, and more importantly completely altering Carver's storylines. The once-necessary editing evolved into extreme Frankensteinian alterations. Carver's final, edited works appeared to have been compositions of Lish's voice, style, and ideas with remnants of the skeletons of Carver's design.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

In May of 1980, the newly sober and recovered Carver took three collections of stories to Gordon Lish at Alfred A. Knopf. Carver's labors modified by Lish's heavy-editing of the manuscripts resulted in the 1981 published collection titled *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. It was received initially with mixed reviews, but by 1983, the collection had earned Carver literary acclamation and success despite his initial, desperate pleas to not have his works published in their final form.

Beginners

Almost three decades later, in 2009, William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll, along with the support of Tess Gallagher, took on the laborious task of restoring Carver's original manuscripts. Stull and Carroll dove into the collections at Indiana University's Lilly Library and Ohio State University Library to revive Carver's stories to their original form. In the collections, Stull and Carroll unyieldingly studied both the Lish-edited manuscripts and letters between author and editor to produce *Beginners*--the collection Raymond Carver intended for the world to see.

The collection of published works titled *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* served as the foundation upon which Stull and Carroll's research and restoration was constructed. *Beginners* was structured in a way which is easily comparable to the original, published version, *WWTA*. Both the original, published version and the later, restored versions are titled after the penultimate short story of the compilations. For comparison purposes, and to distinguish between short story and collection, the original collection published by Alfred A. Knopf will be referred to as *WWTAWWTAL* and the restored version compiled by William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll and published by Tess Gallagher will be identified as *Beginners*. Additionally, the short story within each collection will be identified as "WWTA" and "Beginners" accordingly.

While not all of the included works were susceptible to Lish's heavy editing, the majority were unfortunately, or fortunately depending on preference, subject to Lish's confident editing. For an accurate assessment of

Carver's pre-edited style, it is imperative to closely compare original and restored versions of each text. To do so, stories have been specifically selected to be dissected for literary analysis and composition purposes. Additionally, to assist in identifying and comparing original and restored versions of each short story, the strikeout formatting has been implemented to demonstrate Lish's omission of pre-existing narrative from Carver's initial, submitted final draft. The italicized context provided within brackets represents Lish's contributions to Carver's pre-existing works.

Each subtitle in the preceding section identifies the title of the work examined (originally given by Carver and reinstated in the restored text) versus the title selected, and ultimately kept, by Gordon Lish for each of Carver's works in the original published version. Each story has been selected with purpose to examine the various types of alterations made by Gordon Lish upon Raymond Carver's masterpieces. Altered characters, shifted morals, hidden secrets, along with changed style and storyline re-writes are all evident in comparing the versions.

V. TEXT COMPARISON

“Beginners” vs “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”

The titular story, “Beginners” is tied to a turning point in Carver’s personal life. The author had shared his recent journey to sobriety with Gordon Lish, along with the strong connection he had to this particular work of the collection: “Beginners.” At the time in which the collection had been submitted for publication to Lish at Alfred A. Knopf, the story was too recent, too raw for Carver. Still, he included it in the collection. Upon seeing the alterations, Carver immediately pleaded with Lish to halt the publication process for a potential later release date.

The piece explores the natural human curiosity regarding what it means to love and be in love. The story’s characters, main character Herb McGinnis, the cardiologist; Terri, Herb’s second wife of 5 years; Nick, the observant narrator; and Nick’s new, second wife, Laura, sit at the McGinnis’ kitchen table drinking gin as they listen while Terri defends a former abusive relationship. Despite the abusive nature of the relationship, Terri insists it was rooted in love. After the attempted defense, her husband Herb, dismissive of the possibility that such a relationship could possibly stem from love, shares the story of an elderly couple which he believes to be an example of real, undying love.

As is a common occurrence in many of Carver's published works, character's names were renamed during the editing process along with the titles. The heavily-edited "Beginners" is renamed "WWTA," and Carver's main character, Herb becomes Mel. While a simple name-change may not be much of an alteration, it becomes a herald of changes to come in the overall work. After Herb, now Mel, has told his story of the elderly couple, and finishes his gin, and the narrative concludes as follows:

Mel turned his glass over. He spilled it out on the table.
 "Gin's gone," Mel said.
 Terri said, "Now what?"
 I could hear my heart beating. I could hear everyone's
 heart. I could hear the Human noise we sat there making,
 not one of us was moving, not even when the room went
 dark. ("WWTA" 128)

The inconclusiveness created by the ending fits the mold of minimalist fiction, and without original manuscript to compare, there would be no question about the validity and authenticity of "WWTA" as being entirely Raymond Carver's creation. The restored manuscripts have, however, provided insight to what transpired in Herb and Terri's dining room in Carver's version.

Carver's story continues with Terri confiding in her friends, disclosing how worried she is about Herb. She reveals his suicidal tendencies and her love for both him and her now-deceased, abusive former-lover, Carl. The reader also learns of her decision to end her pregnancy right before Carl's death. Terri's emotional divulgence seems almost like a confession. Laura embraces, comforts, and reassures Terri while simultaneously nodding

towards her husband, the narrator, reassuring the security of their relationship. The final paragraphs of the short story end with the narrator looking out of the kitchen window into the abyss. Carver's writing in the omitted final pages arms the narrative with symbolism and introspective growth on the character's part that is otherwise non-existent in Lish's edited rendition. Below is the excerpt detracted from the manuscript:

~~The room had gotten very dark. I finished chewing what I had in my mouth, swallowed the stuff, and moved over to the window. I looked out into the backyard. I looked past the aspen tree and the two black dogs sleeping in amongst the lawn chairs. I looked past the swimming pool to the little corral with its gate open and the old empty horse barn and beyond. There was a field of wild grass, and then a fence and then another field, and then the interstate connecting Albuquerque with El Paso. Cars moved back and forth on the highway. The sun was going down behind the mountains, and the mountains had gotten dark, shadows everywhere. Yet there was light too and it seemed to be softening those things I looked at. The sky was gray near the tops of the mountains, as gray as a dark day in winter. But there was a band of blue sky just above the gray, the blue you see in tropical postcards, the blue of the Mediterranean. The water on the surface of the pool rippled and the same breeze caused the aspen leaves to ramble. One of the dogs raised its head as if on signal, listened a minute with its ears up, and then put its head back down between its paws.~~

~~I had the feeling something was going to happen, it was in the slowness of the shadows and the light, and that whatever it was might take me with it. I didn't want that to happen. I watched the wind move in waves across the grass. I could see the grass in the fields bend in the wind and then straighten again. The second field slanted up to the highway, and the wind moved uphill across it, wave after wave. I stood there and waited and watched the grass bend in the wind. I could feel my heart beating. Somewhere toward the back of the house the shower was running. Terri was still crying. Slowly and with an effort, I turned to look at her. She lay with her head on the table, her face turned toward the stove. Her eyes were open, but now and~~

~~then she would blink away tears. Laura had pulled her chair over and sat with an arm around Terri's hair.~~

~~"Sure, sure," Terri said. "Tell me about it."~~

~~"Terri, sweetheart," Laura said to her tenderly. "It'll be okay, you'll see. It'll be okay."~~

~~Laura raised her eyes to mine then. Her look was penetrating, and my heart slowed. She gazed into my eyes for what seemed a long time, and then she nodded. That's all she did, the only sign she gave, but it was enough. It was as if she was telling me, Don't worry, we'll get past this, everything is going to be all right with us, you'll see. Easy does it. That's the way I chose to interpret the look anyway, though I could be wrong.~~

~~The shower stopped running. In a minute, I heard whistling as Herb opened the bathroom door. I kept looking at the women at the table. Terri was still crying and Laura was stroking her hair. I turned back to the window. The blue layer of sky had given way now and was turning dark like the rest. But stars had appeared. I recognized Venus and farther off and to the side, not as bright but unmistakably there on the horizon, Mars. The wind had picked up. I looked at what it was doing to the empty fields. I thought unreasonably that it was too bad the McGinnises no longer kept horses. I wanted to imagine horses rushing through those fields in the near dark, or even just standing quietly with their heads in opposite directions near the fence. I stood at the window and waited. I knew I had to keep still a while longer, keep my eyes out there, outside the house as long as there was something left to see."~~

~~("Beginners" 199-200)~~

The last lines in Lish's edited version deliver a significantly distinct ending, one that leaves the reader to imagine what may come next. In the editing process, the characters, Herb, Terri, Laura, and Nick, were stripped of their back-stories. They become flat abstract beings--less relatable in contrast to what was intended by the author. With Lish's pen, the titular story becomes the embodiment of minimalism. Carver's insight to Nick's symbolic longing for meaning is obliterated. Herb, or in Lish's case, Mel, fails to return to his cycle of mental conflict and lingering suicidal distress. While the omission of the

information may not affect the quality of the narrative, it alters Carver's original vision. Carver's intent was not to have the reader construct their own ending to the characters' stories but to instead invite the reader into the world he had created filled with realistic characters and realistic endings. Carver's complete storylines and well-rounded characters present the worlds he created in a more developed, therefore, more realistic light. Instead, the remnants of his worlds were presented and ultimately published by Lish. This loss justifies Carver's distaste for the minimalist title. It was not his title; it belonged to Gordon Lish. Despite the success he knew would come of Lish's efforts, Carver knew it was not reflective of his own pen.

Characters Changed: "Where is Everyone?" vs. "Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit"

The third installment in both collections, originally titled "Where is Everyone?" grants the reader a therapist-like point of view, where the narrator hopelessly shares the details of his broken marriage, his struggle with alcoholism, "accepted" affairs, the dysfunctional relationship and lost bond with his children, and the disinterest and inability to fix the resulting corruption ultimately caused by alcoholism. Dysfunction, failed marriages, and substance abuse are the common thread among many of Carver's narratives. The lives of his characters are filled with sorrow, sadness, hurt, and rifts that appear to be beyond repair. Carver's experiences and own familiarity with life's tribulations ultimately led him to understand and fabricate equally painful lives through his fiction.

The narrator of the short story, a nameless male in both versions, ruminates and reflects on his “crazy” family including his estranged wife, Cynthia; his teenage children, Katy and Mike; and his lively mother--who remains nameless. Adding to the family is his wife’s paramour, who appears to have been surprisingly accepted by the narrator with indifference. Like in many of Carver’s Lish-edited narratives, the names of the main characters, wife and children, are ultimately changed: Cynthia becomes Myrna, Katy to Melody, and Mike loses his name and his place within the story altogether. Instead, a less significant character, the paramour’s pregnant girlfriend, Beverly, keeps her role, with the intention of developing Ross’ mistrustful character.

Carver’s restored work, “Where is Everyone?”, provides its reader with details that help bring its supporting characters to life. The narrator finds slight comfort in his mother’s home, which too has its share of dysfunction, but still, it provides him with the distance from the life he no longer recognizes. In the original, published text, the narrator walks in on his mother while she is on the sofa kissing an unknown man. She is introduced in five sentences:

“My mother is sixty-five. She belongs to a singles club. Even so, it was hard. I stood with my hand on the railing and watched as the man kissed her. She was kissing him back, and the TV was going” (“Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit” 14).

The narrator then simply walks out unnoticed. The lines provided present the narrator’s mother as a floozy and nothing else. However, Carver’s restored work gives her depth that creates a much more dynamic and

relatable character. She has lived, suffered, and is now trying to find herself at the age of sixty-five.

My dad died in his sleep, drunk, eight years ago. It was a Friday night and he was fifty-four, years old. He came home from work at the sawmill, took some sausage out of the freezer for his breakfast the next morning, and sat down at the kitchen table, where he opened a quart of Four Roses. ~~He was in good enough spirits in those days, glad to be back on a job after being out of work for three or four years with blood poisoning and then something that caused him to have shock treatments, (I was married and living in another town during that time. I had the kids and a job, enough troubles of my own, so I couldn't follow his too closely.)~~ That night he moved into the living room with his bottle, a bowl of ice cubes and a glass, and drank and watched TV until my mother came in from work at the coffee shop.

~~They had a few words about the whiskey, as they always did. She didn't drink much herself. When I was grown, I only saw her drink at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's—eggnog or buttered rums, and then never too many. The one time she had had too much to drink, years before (I heard this from my dad, who laughed about it when he told it), they'd gone to a little place outside Eureka and she'd had a great many whiskey sours. Just as they got into the car to leave, she started to get sick and had to open the door. Somehow her false teeth came out, the car moved forward a little, and a tire passed over her dentures. After that she never drank except on holidays and then never to excess.~~

~~My dad kept on drinking that Friday night and tried to ignore my mother [*was there at that same kitchen table. She was trying*], who sat out in the kitchen and smoked and tried to write a letter to her sister in Little Rock. Finally [my dad] he got up and went to bed. [*My mother said he never said good night. But it was morning, of course.*] My mother went to bed not long after, when she was sure he was asleep. She said later she noticed nothing out of the ordinary except maybe his snoring seemed heavier and deeper and she couldn't get him to turn on his side. But she went to sleep. She woke up when my dad's sphincter muscles and bladder let go. It was just sunrise. Birds were singing. My dad was still on his back, eyes closed and~~

~~mouth open. My mother looked at him and cried his name.~~
 (“Where is Everyone” 20 & “Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit” 16)

The relationship between the narrator’s parents is established and depth is developed. The narrator presents the reader with a parallel between his father’s alcoholism and his own. In contrast to the Lish-edited draft, the compassion and solace found in his mother’s home becomes justifiable, as the narrator has become an extension of his father. Through her son, she is able to fill the emotional intimacy void, and her promiscuity fulfills the lack of physical intimacy brought upon by her late husband’s passing. The flashback of the passing provides her otherwise streamlined, flat character into a battle-scarred persona whose baggage helps the reader justify why her licentiousness was originally weaved into and splayed in the narrative by Carver. Once again, the Lish-edited renditions exhibit streamlined narrative and flat characters, which are once again representative of his minimalistic tendencies.

Characters Changed: “Tell the Women We’re Going” (same name)

The eighth installment, “Tell the Women We’re Going,” stands out among Carver’s works, as it experiments with the boundaries of comfort. The narrative is told from an omniscient perspective. This provides the reader with a safe distance from the topic of sexual abuse while still entrapping them as an unwilling accomplice.

The narrator begins introducing best friends Bill Jamison and Jerry Roberts. Jerry is clearly the eccentric, dare-devil of the two who has found himself ill-fittingly married with several children and one on the way. His

former ways, however, lie slightly beneath the surface, threatening to make a re-appearance. Bill, the sensible of the two, has found comfort in everyday routine and a seemingly healthy relationship.

The dynamic between the couples shifts when Lish's version adds dimension to the three characters' relationship. The main character, Bill, becomes entangled in the relationship between Jerry and Carol, as Lish's edits add "As for Bill, he'd dated the girl too" (*WWTAWWTAL* 48). This contrasts with Carver's original script: "Bill liked Carol Henderson--he'd known her a couple of years, almost as long as Jerry had--but after Jerry and she got married, things were just never the same between the two friends" (*Beginners* 83). In Carver's vision, the friendship with Jerry is what Bill attempts so desperately to hold onto. He holds on to their youth and the happiness that was tied to it, along with his dependency on his relationship to Jerry. His friend's marriage, however, interrupted their youth and ultimately hindered the boys' freedom. In contrast, Lish's additions suggest the two were complacent with sharing women and had no attachment to them. The editor stepped beyond his role, as he embedded his own vision through the addition of words and new storylines, elevating himself to co-writer. While the additions appear minimal in length, their effect is significant. The character, Carol, is transformed into an irrelevant and replaceable minor character. Her importance within the piece is detracted, and she becomes another addition to Lish's list of flat characters.

It isn't until the wilder of the two friends, Jerry, decides to make a drive for drinks that the two find themselves passing up two teenage girls on bicycles. In his desperation to temporarily escape from his "adult" life as parent and husband, he pleads and persuades Bill until he acquiesces to having "some fun" with the girls. Bill's better judgement keeps the breaks pumped, but has minimal control of what Jerry ultimately does. In Carver's resuscitated manuscript, Bill represents conscience and moral compass. He is more concerned with the amount of time they have been away and the fact that his girlfriend Linda would be "worried sick" (*Beginners* 95). He passively suggests "we should be getting back. That stuff's too young anyway. Huh?" hoping Jerry would succumb to his pleas. Bill's character can almost foresee the trouble that lies ahead.

Still, Jerry continues his plan to pass up the girls and wait for them further down the road. Carver's vision results in Jerry's sexual assault and murder of one of the girls. Bill remains innocent as he comes face-to-face with the second of the two girls, as the narrator discloses he "hadn't tried to kiss her, much less anything else" (95). Throughout the narrative, Bill holds onto his purity and represents the good judgement lost by Jerry when their friendship was "lost."

However, in the published version within *WWTAWWTAL*, Bill and Jerry both share corrupt ideals. The character is unquestionably altered. As the two finally come face-to-face with the young girls, Bill admits to only "wanting to fuck" or to simply "see them naked" (55). Lish's character-change claims

ownership of Bill. He is no longer the symbol of good conscience as intended by Carver. In this way, Carver's stories slowly took on the shape of what Lish envisioned despite the author's opposition. Once again, Lish elevates his editor status to that of co-author. The nature of the Bill's character is so extensively altered that he becomes Lish's character.

The Title is "Mine"- "Distance" Yourself

In the summer letter of 1980, Carver acknowledges Lish had made the decision to give most of the works in the collection the titles of his own creation. He directs Lish to reverse the alterations: "The story 'Distance' should not have its title changed to 'Everything Stuck to Him.' Nor the little piece "Mine" to "Popular Mechanics." "Dummy" should keep its title" ("Letters to an Editor"). Despite the author's directive, the collection continued on through publication as Lish had intended. Stamping ten of the seventeen of Carver's works along with the title of the book with *his* choice of title opened a keyhole into Lish's agenda. At that point, the collection no longer belonged to Carver alone. Ironically enough, the changes of short story titles diverge from the trend of transforming the manuscripts into works of minimalism. Instead, the titles designated by Lish are less minimalistic, encapsulating entire phrases from the text, and Carver's titles are the only facet of his works that are minimalistic. Lish was overconfident in his position as editor and made the final call in assigning titles to the works. It is understandable how upsetting these changes were to Carver seeing how "convenience has required that [titles] serve as handles for public record when literature is treated as

property” (Ransom 125). Effectively, Lish was placing the ultimate stamp on Carver’s manuscripts, essentially marking them as his own.

Lost Meaning: “The Fling” vs “Sacks”

The sixth entry of the collection was originally titled by Carver as “The Fling” which is fitting given the unfolding narrative of an old fling. As now comes to no surprise, Lish once again left his stamp on the arguably most important detail of an author’s creation. Along with the title reconstruct, Lish immensely severed intricate details of the narrative.

Lish’s heavy editing transforms the detailed, heartfelt disclosure of a man’s infidelity into a brief moment in the form of a confessional. An unnamed father arrives to visit his son with one goal: confession. The estranged duo sit at a bar while the narrator muses at the reasoning behind his father’s request to reconnect. His silent indifference further gives way to his father’s regurgitation of the details of his infidelity. This confession appears to be a last attempt to free himself from the weight of the secret. However, this revelation is one-sided, as the narrator simply sits as an observer.

Carver’s inconsiderate character discloses the details of the affair, which were ultimately omitted from the final version:

~~“[Well] That[’s] was the way [how] it started. After that, nothing happened for two or three weeks. Your mother and I got along the same as always, and after the first two or three days I stopped thinking about the other. I mean, I remembered everything all right—how could I forget it?—I just stopped thinking about any of it. Then one Saturday I was out working on the lawn mower in the front yard when I saw her stop on the other side of the street. She got out of~~

~~the car with a mop and a couple or three little paper bags in her hand, making a delivery. Now your mother was right in the house where she could see everything, if she just happened to look out the window, but I knew I had to have a chance to say something to Sally. I watched, and when she came out of the house across the street I sauntered over as ordinary-looking as I could, carrying a screwdriver and a pair of business with her. When I walked up to the side of the car she was already inside and had to lean over and roll the window down. I said, 'Hello, Sally, how's everything?'~~

~~"All right," she said.~~

~~"I'd like to see you again," I said.~~

~~"She just looked at me. Not mad like, or anything, just looked at me straight and even and kept her hands on the wheel.~~

~~"Like to see you," I said again, and my mouth was thick.~~

~~'Sally.'~~

~~"She pulled her lip between her teeth and then let go and said, 'You want to come over tonight? Larry's gone out of town to Salem, Oregon. We could have a beer.'~~

~~"I nodded and took a step back from the car. 'After nine o'clock,' she added. 'I'll leave the light on.'~~

~~"I nodded again, and she started up and pulled away, dragging the clutch. I walked back across the street, and my legs were weak." (The Fling 47 & "Sacks" 36).~~

The regurgitation of his affair continues as he describes the intimacy shared the first night at the home of his mistress:

~~—"The first time, that same night, I parked the car three or four blocks away and walked up the street and then right on past her house. I walked with my hands in my coat and at a good pace and walked right on by her house, trying to get my nerve up. She had the porch light on all right, and all the shades pulled. I walked to the end of the block and then came back, slower, and walked up the sidewalk to her door . . ." ("The Fling" 49).~~

~~"We were both pretty nervous. We sat up for a long time in the kitchen drinking beer, and she began to tell me a lot about herself, secret thoughts, she called them. I began to relax and feel more at ease too, and I found myself telling her things. About you, for instance; you working and saving your money and going to school and then going~~

~~back to Chicago to live. She said she'd been to Chicago on a train when she was a little girl. I told her about what I'd done with my life—not very much until then, I said. And I told her some of the things I still wanted to do, things that I still planned on doing. She made me feel that way when I was around her, like I didn't have it all behind me. I told her I wasn't too old to still have plans. 'People need plans,' she said. 'You have to have plans. When I get too old to make plans and look forward to something, that's when they can come and put me away.' That's what she said, and more, and I began to think I loved her. We sat there talking about everything under the sun for I don't know how long before I put my arms around her” (50).~~

Insight to the evolution of the affair unravels as he continues,

~~“She kept his picture in the bedroom right by the bed—. I want to tell it all, Les—. First it bothered me, seeing his picture there [*and all*] as we climbed into bed, the last thing I saw before she tuned out the light. But that was just the first few times. [*But*] After a while I got used to having it there [*You see how a man gets used to things?*] I mean, I liked it, him smiling over us, nice and quiet, as we got into his bed. I almost got to looking forward to it, and would have missed it if it hadn't been there. Got to where I was even liking to do it best in the afternoons, because there was always plenty of light then, and I could look over and see him whenever I wanted” (“The Fling” 50-1 & “Sacks” 37).~~

The unpublished details attest to Carver's verbose chronicling of events, as is evident in many of the recovered manuscripts. This style is aligned with Carver's melodrama-esque storytelling. The reader receives the dramatic and horrific details through the thoughts and eyes of the narrator. Omitting this insight detracts from the father's otherwise intensely immoral character. He becomes more empathetic and easier to forgive. The friction between the two characters is smoothed out, and this waters down the intensity of the

situation, creating more distance between the story and the narrator as is common in works of minimalism.

The main reason behind the narrator's father's confession is eventually discovered within the narrative's climax. The reader discovers the man, in his old age, fears dying without admitting to being the reason behind Sally's husband's suicide:

~~“No. No, that’s not all . . . [“Ah, God] I’m sorry. I’ll tell you what else happened. If, if he’d just beat her up or something, or else come after me, come looking for me at my home. Anything. I deserved it, whatever he had to dish out . . . But he didn’t. He just didn’t do anything like that. I guess, guess he just broke up and [The man] went all to pieces. He just . . . went to pieces. He lay [got] down on the couch [floor] and cried. She stayed out in the kitchen, and she [did her crying out there] cried too, [She] got down on her knees and prayed to God out [good and] loud [so the man would hear].” and said she was sorry, sorry, but after a while she heard the door lose and came back out to the living room and he was gone. He didn’t take the car, that was still there in the driveway. He walked. He walked downtown and rented a room there at the Jefferson, down on Third. He got hold of a paring knife at some all night drugstore and went up to his room and began, began striking it in his stomach, trying to kill himself . . . Somebody tried to get in there a couple of days later and he was still alive, and there were thirty or forty of those little knife wounds in him and blood all over the room, but he was still alive. He’d cut his guts all to pieces, the doctor said. He dies up in the hospital a day or two later. The doctors said there was nothing they could do for him, He just died, never opened his mouth or asked for anybody. Just died and with his insides all cut to pieces~~

~~“I feel like, Les, that I died up there. Part of me did. Your mother was right in leaving me. She should’ve left me. But they shouldn’t have had to bury Larry Wain! I don’t want to~~

~~die, Les, it isn't that. I guess if you'd get right down to it, I'd rather it was him under the ground and not me. If there was a choice had to be made . . . I don't know what any of it's all about, life and death, those things. I believe you only have one life and that's that; but, but it's hard to walk around with that other on my conscience. It keeps coming back to me, I mean and I can't get it out of my head that he should be dead for something I caused."~~ ("The Fling" 52-3 & "Sacks" 38).

Lish's rendition extirpates Larry's death. The significance of the father's confession is ultimately eliminated, and the purpose of the narrative is left inconclusive. The grim reality of the situation has been extracted, and the residue published was reflective of Lish's vision. The intention with which Lish revised, or extracted, these details remains unknown. What is clear is this: the result of having the works published in Lish's final state severely impacted Carver, and he was not accepting of it. He would later prove to have formed thicker skin from the experience, and permitting Gordon Lish the freedom to dismantle his works would no longer be tolerated.

"A Small, Good Thing" vs. "The Bath"

In another example, the short story, "A Small Good Thing," depicts the anguish faced by parents amidst the loss of a child. In the story, Scotty's mother has ordered a cake for her son's eighth birthday. The boy, in route to school on a Monday morning, is hit by a car and later hospitalized. Although his parents are assured that he will recover soon, Scotty remains in a deep sleep. As his father heads home to shower and change, he receives a call from a man stating that the cake ordered had not been picked up, nor paid for.

Confused and unsure of the caller's identity, Scotty's father, Harold, dismisses the call and simply hangs up. Ann and Harold continue receiving unintelligible, harassing calls. The story takes a devastating turn as the young boy perishes three days after the accident. In this original version scripted by Carver, Ann realizes that the mysterious caller was the baker. After sarcastically questioning whether or not the parents are planning on picking up the three day old, stale cake, the parents inform the baker of their son's death. The news is received with compassion and sympathy as the baker apologizes. The story concludes with the trio eating "rolls and [drinking] coffee" ("A Small Good Thing" 82). Carver's original, pre-Lish version conveys a message of forgiveness, kindness: heart. The baker is humane. Life lessons are learned and the story reflects the depth of style Carver would become known for in his later works.

In extreme contrast, Lish's edited version alters the main characters, leaving them as nameless, secondary shadow characters. What was originally a twenty-six page story under Carver's pen, becomes a seven page story after Lish's heavy editing. Although the narrator initially introduces the young boy as Scotty, for the rest of the story, he is referred to as "The birthday boy." Referring to him in this way inhibits the reader from forming a personal and emotional connection with the character. It redirects focus from the boy's death to the situation of loss in its entirety. Instead, Lish's heavy revisions leave a closing dialogue which reads:

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 of the engine. She got out of the car and went to the door. She turned on lights and put on water for tea. She opened a can and fed the dog. She sat down on the sofa with her tea.

The telephone rang.

“Yes!” she said. “Hello!” she said.

“Mrs. Weiss,” a man’s voice said.

“Yes,” she said. “This is Mrs. Weiss. Is it about Scotty?” she said.

“Scotty,” the voice said. “It is about Scotty,” the voice said.

“It has to do with Scotty, yes.” (“The Bath” 47)

With this ending, it is unclear whether the caller is the doctor, the baker, or Harold. The story is cut off. The fate of the child is left to the reader’s imagination--all changes molding the piece into a work of minimalism. This is a significant contrast to the heartbreaking finale written by Carver. Similarly, the weather and landscapes described in version one disappear. Sympathetic emotion is entirely eliminated and the ending that leaned toward epiphany vanishes. Just as with “WETA,” Lish’s editing leaves the reader with the bare, minimalist version of what Carver had originally intended: an emotionally engulfed scenario.

Lish’s Style, Lish’s Ending, Lish’s Critique: “One More Thing” (same name)

The final installment of the collection is a short entry under 5 pages. Still, the editor managed to, once more, demonstrate paramount editing in this work. The short piece continues with Carver’s common theme: the dysfunction within a small family caused by alcoholism. The story’s

characters consist of L.D., the alcoholic father, and his wife and daughter combo whom he refers to as being the contributing members of the “nuthouse” he lives in. Maxine and L.D.’s daughter, Bea, have united to figure out a way to help L.D.; however, the relationship between the three is too far dismantled. Maxine and Bea, a high school dropout, lack the wherewithal to help L.D. and ultimately team up and demand he leave.

L.D.’s final revelation arms the character with growth and closure, as he comes to the realization of the consequences caused by his life choices. Carver’s resolution, as is now expected from Lish, is expunged from Carver’s drafted manuscript and earns its place as one of Carver’s minimalistic works. The ensuing excerpt from the texts, both original and restored, corroborate with the extensive altering of the narrative’s finale:

L. D. put the shaving bag under his arm ~~again~~ and ~~once more~~ picked up the suitcase. [*He said,*] “I just want to say one more thing;” [*But then he could not think what it could possibly be.*] ~~Maxine. Listen to me. Remember this,”~~ he said. “I love you. I love you no matter what happens. I love you too, Bea. I love you both.” He stood there at the door and felt his lips begin to tingle as he looked at them for what, he believed, might be the last time. “Good-bye,” he said.

~~———“You call this love, L.D.?” Maxine said. She let go of Bea’s hand. She made a fist. Then she shook her head and jammed her hands into her coat pockets. She stared at him and then dropped her eyes to something on the floor near his shoes.~~

~~——— It came to him with a shock that he would remember this night and her like this. He was terrified to think that in the years ahead she might come to resemble a woman he couldn’t place, a mute figure in a long coat, standing in the middle of a lighted room with lowered eyes.~~

———“Maxine!” he cried. “Maxine!”
 ———“Is this what love is L.D.?” she said, fixing her eyes
 on him. Her eyes were terrible and deep, and he held them
 as long as he could. (*Beginners* 204 & *WWTAWWTAL* 134)

Both versions are notable in their own right. However, the alteration begs the question, “whose ending is this?” A book review published in the *N Y Times*, after the collection’s 1981 publishing, credits Carver’s ending stating, “Mr. Carver hits it just right by adding “But then he could not think what it could possibly be” (Broyard). The problem: this ending is an amputated version of Carver’s conceptualization. He is commended for Lish’s words. Would critics praise his creativity had his vision been published in its entirety without the editor’s contribution? It is clear the author was not accepting of the severe edits pushed by Gordon Lish, but it was far too late with the wrong editor. Mr. Lish had no intent to cease publishing. On the contrary, this was the ideal place to leave his mark, and fans of Carver’s works would see Lish’s plan would come to fruition posthumously.

Carver’s Reaction

So how is an author to respond to such extreme manuscript lacerations? The stories sent to Lish had been, for Carver, the sole remnants of his former self, confirmation that he had overcome the most vulnerable state of his existence: his journey from alcoholism to sobriety. The letters written to Lish dated July 8, 1980 (see figure 1), Carver wrote apologizing, and yet begging and insisting that Lish “stop production” of the upcoming publishing.

Carver had been up all night reviewing Lish's severe editorial cuts--two stories had been slashed by nearly seventy per cent [sic], many by almost half; many descriptions and digressions were gone; endings had been truncated or rewritten--and he was unnerved to the point of desperation. A recovering alcoholic and a fragile spirit, Carver wrote that he was "confused, tired, paranoid, and afraid." He feared exposure before his friends, who had read many of the stories in their earlier versions. If the book went forward, he said, he feared he might never write again. ("Rough Crossings")

The works included in the manuscript had been penned during Carver's recovery period. They were "so deeply connected to his recovered sense of 'worth and self-esteem' that he could not in any way permit them to be published in the severely altered form that Lish proposed" ("Rough Crossings"). Carver felt "the book, even at the time of its publication, did not represent the main thrust of his writing, nor his true pulse and instinct in the work." Letters sold by Lish, to the Lilly Library at Indiana University, display desperate pleas by Carver to have several of Lish's changes reversed:

If I don't speak now, and speak from the heart, and halt things now, I foresee a terrible time ahead for me. The demons I have to deal with every day, or night, nearly, might, I'm afraid, simply rise up and take me over... I am just much too close to all of this right now. It's even hard for me to think right now. I think, in all, maybe it's just too soon for me for another collection... I think I had best pull out, Gordon, before it goes any further. I realize I stand every chance of losing my soul and my mental health over it, if I don't take that risk. I am still in the process of recovery and trying to get well from the alcoholism, and I just can't take any chances, something as momentous and permanent as this, that would put my head in some jeopardy...Even though they may be closer to works of art than the original, they're still apt to cause my demise (*Collected Stories* 995).

Carver recognized that Lish's edits to the collection included in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* would challenge expectations about "what a Carver short story ought to be—yours, mine, the reading public at large, the critics" (Collected Stories 984). He understood what had come to be expected of him through his writing, but he could not stand to allow his work to be butchered and taken over by his editor any longer. In his final plea to Lish, he writes "But I'm not them," he added, "I'm not us, I'm me" (Collected Stories 984). He had finally moved along in his quest for sobriety and had found his confidence and strength to hold on to his own voice. The idea of Lish coming through in his writing, even if only one more time, would undoubtedly keep Carver from progressing and evolving.

Carver, by this point, had sent back the check awarded to him by Knopf and offered to pay Lish for the hours dedicated to editing his works. He finally demanded: "NO, I don't THINK it should be put off. I think it had best be stopped" ("Letters to an Editor"). Later letters addressed to Lish apologize for his initial demands. Because it is difficult to decode the conversation held between Lish and Carver, whatever settlement was reached between the two seems to remain lost in history. Scholars can simply assume an agreement was made allowing Lish's edited versions to be published under Carver's authorship.

The final judgement as to Carver's feelings about the entire headache-inducing matter may perhaps be found in the fact that he later republished three of his original stories in longer forms (Sklenicka 362). His later works,

like those published in his collection entitled *Cathedral*, truly reflect how Carver had progressed as not only a writer, but psychologically and emotionally. Regardless of the level of involvement Lish once had in molding Carver's words, Carver's later works will forever secure him a place in the history of American short fiction.

IV. CONCLUSION

This analysis begs the question--at what point does the editor become co-author? To find the response to this, it is essential to reverse the question and break apart the role of the editor, more specifically, the copy editor.

Editors generally aim to keep a low profile, improve upon the author's writing while highlighting the existing style. Stephen King posits,

A good editor should improve the writer's work by doing a number of useful things: posing questions the writer should have answered and didn't, suggesting places where thematic concerns can be reinforced to make a more pleasing whole, and pointing out (gently) infelicities of language. What an editor should never do is superimpose his or her own beliefs about style and story on the author's work. An editor should be an expert midwife, not a surrogate parent. (The New York Times)

Yet in comparing the pre and post edited versions of Carver's "If It Please You," King comments, "It's a total rewrite and it's a cheat" in reference to Lish's heavy-handed revisions ("Raymond Carver's Life and Stories").

Lish's heavy editing was his way of making a mark in the literary world while remaining in the author's shadow. Gordon Lish was Raymond Carver's lifeline. However, the lifeline came with strings attached, and once Carver found a way to detach from the surrogate Lish, his place in the literary realm became clearer. Raymond Carver was a writer of gritty realism. His characters, and the previously removed details of their lives, have been resurrected and continue to thrive on the pages of his restored manuscripts in *Beginners*.

Perhaps the line is this: the editor guides the author in improving upon his/her writing. Once the line, or almost all lines are crossed out, and the editor's ideas and imagination takes over, the role of editor transcends into that of co-author as was the case with many of Carver's stories. In these instances, Lish used his position as editor as a medium through which to express his own literary style, that of minimalism, while remaining hidden safely between the lines and behind the desk. After *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, Lish would continue to edit Raymond Carver's works; however, the extent to which he would carve into the manuscripts would be limited. Carver had regained full style and narrative control. Still, Gordon Lish's influence had been placed, and now Raymond Carver had been granted the control and recognition as a major writer to come out from behind the editor's shadow. Carver would go on to publish *Cathedral*, a collection which reflected the author's true literary style and voice, and for which he won the Pulitzer Prize.

WORKS CITED

- Armitage, Simon. "Rough Crossings: The Cutting of Raymond Carver." *The New Yorker*, 17 Dec. 2007, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/24/rough-crossings.
- Bausch, Richard, and R. V Cassill. *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*. Crane Library at the University of British Columbia, 2012.
- Brady, Jennifer. "Hispania Guest Editorial: The Managing Editor's Role: Style Matters." *Hispania*, vol. 99, no. 1, 2016, pp. 3-4., www.jstor.org/stable/44112821.
- Broyard, Anatole. "Books of the Times." *NY Times*, 15 April 1981, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/01/01/21/specials/carver-what.html>
- Carver, Raymond. "A Small Good Thing." *Raymond Carver: Collected Stories*. New York: Tess Gallagher, 2009. 804-830.
- "A Small, Good Thing." *Raymond Carver: Collected Stories*. New York: Tess Gallagher, 2009. 927-48.
- *Beginners*. Vintage Contemporaries, Vintage Books, a Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2009.
- "Beginners." *Beginners*. Vintage Contemporaries, Vintage Books, a Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2009. 179-200.
- "Beginners." *Raymond Carver: Collected Stories*. New York: Tess Gallagher, 2009. 927-948.
- "Letters to an Editor." *The New Yorker*, 17 Dec. 2007,

www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/24/letters-to-an-editor.

---“Mr. Coffee & Mr. Fixit.” *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*.

First Vintage Contemporaries Ebook Edition ed., Vintage Books, 2015.

14-15.

---“One More Thing.” *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. First

Vintage Contemporaries Ebook Edition ed., Vintage Books, 2015. 130-

35.

--- “One More Thing.” *Beginners*. Vintage Contemporaries, Vintage Books, a

Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2009. 201-205.

--- Raymond Carver: Collected Stories. Library of America, 2009.

---“Sacks.” *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. First Vintage

Contemporaries Ebook Edition ed., Vintage Books, 2015.

31-38.

---“Tell the Women We’re Going.” *What We Talk About When We Talk About*

Love. First Vintage Contemporaries Ebook Edition ed., Vintage Books,

2015. 48-54.

---“Tell the Women We’re Going.” *Beginners*. Vintage Contemporaries, Vintage

Books, a Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2009. 83- 96.

---“The Bath.” *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. First Vintage

Contemporaries Ebook Edition ed., Vintage Books, 2015. 39-46.

---“The Fling.” *Beginners*. Vintage Contemporaries, Vintage Books, a Division

of Penguin Random House LLC, 2009. 40-55.

---*What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. First Vintage

Contemporaries Ebook Edition ed., Vintage Books, 2015.

---“What We Talk About When We Talk About Love.” *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. First Vintage Contemporaries Ebook Edition ed., Vintage Books, 2015. 39-45.

---“Where is Everyone?” *Beginners*. Vintage Contemporaries, Vintage Books, a Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2009. 13-23.

Clark, Robert C. *American Literary Minimalism*. University Alabama Press, 2015.

Halpert, Sam. *Raymond Carver: An Oral Biography*. University of Iowa Press, 1995.

Karl, Frederick. *American Fictions, 1940-1980* New York: Harper and Row, 1985.

King, Stephen. “Raymond Carver’s Life and Stories.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 20 Nov. 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/11/22/books/review/King-t.html?auth=-google1tap.

Lish, Gordon. *Conversations with Gordon Lish*. Edited by David Winters and Jason Lucarelli, University Press of Mississippi, 2018.

Lish, Gordon. Interview by Christian Lorentzen. *The Paris Review*. Winter 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20161029235415/http://www.the-parisreview.org/interviews/6423/the-art-of-editing-no-2-gordon-lish>. Accessed 15 May 2020.

Ransom, Harry. “OWNERSHIP OF LITERARY TITLES.” *The University of Texas Studies in English*, vol. 31, 1952, pp. 125–135. *JSTOR*,

www.jstor.org/stable/20776055. Accessed 8 Nov. 2020.

Runyon, Randolph Paul, *Reading Raymond Carver*. Syracuse University Press, 1992.

Saltzman, Arthur M. *Understanding Raymond Carver*. University of South Carolina Press, 1988.

Sklenicka, Carol. *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life*. 1st Scribner hardcover ed., Scribner, 2009.

Sodowsky, Roland. "The Minimalist Short Story: Its Definition, Writers, and (Small) Heyday," *Studies in Short Fiction*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1996.

Speck, Bruce W. "Editorial Authority in the Author-Editor Relationship." *Technical Communication*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1991, pp. 300–315. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43095742.

Stainton, Elsie Myers. *The Fine Art of Copyediting*. Vol. 2nd ed., and expanded, Columbia University Press, 2002. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=68577&scope=site. (January 26th)

Wood, Gaby. "Raymond Carver: the Kindest Cut." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 26 Sept. 2009, www.theguardian.com/books/2009/sep/27/raymond-carver-editor-influence.

APPENDIX

Fig. 1 “Letters to an Editor”. Letters from Raymond Carver to Gordon Lish as published in *The New Yorker’s* December 27, 2007 issue.

Following are excerpts from Carver’s correspondence with Lish, from 1969 to 1983.

November 12, 1969

Well, as it happens I do have a few stories on hand, and I’m sending them along within the next day or two. I hope you can find something you like.

July 15, 1970

Hombre, thanks for the superb assist on the stories. No one has done that for me since I was 18, I mean it. High time I think, too. Feel the stories are first class now, but whatever the outcome there, I appreciate the fine eye you turned on them. Hang tough.

January 19, 1971

I think it’s a fine story. Took about all yr changes, added a few things here and there. Hope to get it retyped by this evening and back off to you. No later than tomorrow, sure. Thanks for going over it.—Listen, something you said a long time ago, the thing itself is what matters. Is true, in the end. I’m not bothered. I’ve always been the slowest kid in class anyway, right down there. But I keep trying, even at this advanced age. So lean on it, if you see things. If I don’t agree, I’ll say something, never fear.

November 11, 1974

Well, listen, can’t exactly tell you how pleased and so on about the prospects of having a collection out under your aegis . . . along with McGraw-Hill, of course. First reaction was to run out and buy two bottles of champagne for a champagne breakfast. . . . But all that is neither here nor there. What I’m concerned about and thrilled about is having out a book of stories, & from there on I intend, brother, to set the globe afire, believe me. . . . I’ll tell you this, you’ve not backed a bad horse. . . . About the editing necessary in some of the stories. Tell me which ones and I’ll go after it, or

them. Tell me which ones. Or I will leave it up to you & you tell me what you think needs done or doing.

September 27, 1977

The most wonderful thing about this stay in McKinleyville, though, is that I've got sober and intend to stay that way. I've never done anything in my life I've felt so good about as getting and staying sober. What can I say? [Lish had left *Esquire*.] You've made a single-handed impression on American letters that has helped fix the course of American letters. And, of course, you know, old bean, just what an influence you've exercised on my life. Just knowing you were there, at your desk, was an inspiration for me to write, and you know I mean that. You, my friend, are my idea of an ideal reader, always have been, always, that is, forever, will be. So you loomed large on the literary scene, and that is a fact, as well as a truth, but you loomed large in my conscious and unconscious life as well.

September 8, 1978

Tess Gallagher, that Irish lass, I like to have fallen in love with her. She left, went to Tucson on business—she'll be teaching there next year, she's on a Guggy this year—then returned and we spent a fine week together, I put her on a plane to Seattle yesterday, today I get a dozen red roses from her.

February 1, 1979

I'm going to Mardi Gras with Tess; and the Fords are coming down in March for spring break and we're going into Mexico by train for a week. . . . I'm happy, and I'm sober. It's aces right now, Gordon. I know better than anyone a fellow is never out of the woods, but right now it's aces, and I'm enjoying it.

May 10, 1980

As for lunch, lord, it was the high point of my visit to NYC, nothing mindless or silly, at least not on your part. I delight in your company, simple as that. You know, I feel closer to you than I do to my own brother. Have for a long

time, years. We don't see each other that often, or talk on the phone weekly, etc., but I know you're there and it's important to me. Besides, you're my hero—don't you know? Ever since you left PA [Palo Alto] and went out into the Great World and began sending me messages back from time to time what it was like out there. Your friendship and your concern have enriched my life. There's no question of your importance to me. You're my mainstay. Man, I love you. I don't make that declaration lightly either. . . . For Christ's sweet sake, not to worry about taking a pencil to the stories if you can make them better; and if anyone can you can. I want them to be the best possible stories, and I want them to be around for a while. . . . I never figured I was going to get rich or even earn a living writing stories and poems. Be enough, you know, to have Knopf do a book of mine and have you as my editor. So open the throttle. Ramming speed.

July 8, 1980, 8 A.M.

Dearest Gordon,

I've got to pull out of this one. Please hear me. I've been up all night thinking on this, and nothing but this, so help me. I've looked at it from every side, I've compared both versions of the edited mss—the first one is better, I truly believe, if some things are carried over from the second to the first—until my eyes are nearly to fall out of my head. You are a wonder, a genius, and there's no doubt of that, better than any two of Max Perkins, etc., etc. And I'm not unmindful of the fact of my immense debt to you, a debt I can simply never, never repay. This whole new life I have, so many of the friends I now have, this job up here, everything, I owe to you for "Will You Please." You've given me some degree of immortality already. You've made so many of the stories in this collection better, far better than they were before. And maybe if I were alone, by myself, and no one had ever seen these stories, maybe then, knowing that your versions are better than some of the ones I had sent, maybe I could get into this and go with it. But Tess has seen all of these and gone over them closely. Donald Hall has seen many of the new ones (and discussed them at length with me and offered his services in reviewing the collection) and Richard Ford, Toby Wolff, Geoffrey Wolff, too, some of them. . . . How can I explain to these fellows

when I see them, as I will see them, what happened to the story in the meantime, after its book publication? Maybe if the book were not to come out for 18 months or two years, it would be different. But right now, everything is too new. . . . Gordon, the changes are brilliant and for the better in most cases—I look at “What We Talk About . . .” (Beginners) and I see what it is that you’ve done, what you’ve pulled out of it, and I’m awed and astonished, startled even, with your insights. But it’s too close right now, that story. Now much of this has to do with my sobriety and with my new-found (and fragile, I see) mental health and well-being. I’ll tell you the truth, my very sanity is on the line here. I don’t want to sound melodramatic here, but I’ve come back from the grave here to start writing stories once more. As I think you may know, I’d given up entirely, thrown it in and was looking forward to dying, that release. But I kept thinking, I’ll wait until after the election to kill myself, or wait until after this or that happened, usually something down the road a ways, but it was never far from my mind in those dark days, not all that long ago. Now, I’m incomparably better, I have my health back, money in the bank, the right woman for this time of my life, a decent job, blah blah. But I haven’t written a word since I gave you the collection, waiting for your reaction, that reaction means so much to me. Now, I’m afraid, mortally afraid, I feel it, that if the book were to be published as it is in its present edited form, I may never write another story, that’s how closely, God Forbid, some of those stories are to my sense of regaining my health and mental well-being. . . .

Please help me with this, Gordon. I feel as if this is the most important decision I’ve ever been faced with, no shit. I ask for your understanding. Next to my wife, and now Tess, you have been and are the most important individual in my life, and that’s the truth. I don’t want to lose your love or regard over this, oh God no. It would be like having a part of myself die, a spiritual part. Jesus, I’m jabbering now. But if this causes you undue complication and grief and you perhaps understandably become pissed and discouraged with me, well, I’m the poorer for it, and my life will not be the same again. True. On the other hand, if the book comes out and I can’t feel the kind of pride and pleasure in it that I want, if I feel I’ve somehow too far stepped out of bounds, crossed that line a little too far, why then I can’t feel good about myself, or maybe even write again; right now I feel it’s that

serious, and if I can't feel absolutely good about it, I feel I'd be done for. I do. Lord God I just don't know what else to say. I'm awash with confusion and paranoia. Fatigue too, that too.

Please, Gordon, for God's sake help me in this and try to understand. Listen. I'll say it again, if I have any standing or reputation or credibility in the world, I owe it to you. I owe you this more-or-less pretty interesting life I have. But if I go ahead with this as it is, it will not be good for me. The book will not be, as it should, a cause for joyous celebration, but one of defense and explanation. . . . I know that the discomfort of this decision of mine is at its highest now, it's rampant, I feel nearly wild with it. But I know it will cause you grief as well, explanations, more work, stopping everything in its tracks and coming up with valid reasons for why. But, eventually, my discomfort and yours, will go away, there'll be a grieving, I'm grieving right now, but it will go away. But if I don't speak now, and speak from the heart, and halt things now, I foresee a terrible time ahead for me. The demons I have to deal with every day, or night, nearly, might, I'm afraid, simply rise up and take me over.

Of course I know I shouldn't have signed the contract without first reading the collection and making my fears, if any, known to you beforehand, before signing. So what should we do now, please advise? Can you lay it all on me and get me out of the contract somehow? Can you put the book off until Winter or Spring of 1982 and let them know I want to have the stories in the collection published in magazines first (and that's the truth, several of them are committed to places with publication way off next year)? Tell them I want the magazine publications first, and then the book out when I'm up for tenure here that spring of 1982? And then decide next year what, for sure, to do? Or else can or should everything just be stopped now, I send back the Knopf check, if it's on the way, or else you stop it there? And meanwhile I pay you for the hours, days and nights, I'm sure, you've spent on this. Goddamn it, I'm just nearly crazy with this. I'm getting into a state over it. —No, I don't think it shd. be put off. I think it had best be stopped.

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) and I'd want some more of the old couple, Anna and Henry Gates, in "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" (Beginners). I would not want "Mr. Fixit" (Where Is Everyone) in the book in its present state. The story "Distance" should not have its title changed to "Everything Stuck to Him." Nor the little piece "Mine" to "Popular Mechanics." "Dummy" should keep its title. "A Serious Talk" is fine for "Pie." I think "Want to See Something" is fine, is better than "I Could See the Smallest Things." . . .

I'm just much too close to all of this right now. It's even hard for me to think right now. I think, in all, maybe it's just too soon for me for another collection. I know that next spring is too soon in any case. Absolutely too soon. I think I had best pull out, Gordon, before it goes any further. I realize I stand every chance of losing your love and friendship over this. But I strongly feel I stand every chance of losing my soul and my mental health over it, if I don't take that risk. I'm still in the process of recovery and trying to get well from the alcoholism, and I just can't take any chances, something as momentous and permanent as this, that would put my head in some jeopardy. That's it, it's in my head. You have made so many of these stories better, my God, with the lighter editing and trimming. But those others, those three, I guess, I'm liable to croak if they came out that way. Even though they may be closer to works of art than the original and people be reading them 50 years from now, they're still apt to cause my demise, I'm serious, they're so intimately hooked up with my getting well, recovering, gaining back some little self-esteem and feeling of worth as a writer and a human being.

I know you must feel angry and betrayed and pissed off. God's sake, I'm sorry. I can pay you for the time you've put in on this, but I can't begin to help or do anything about the trouble and grief I may be causing there in the editorial and business offices that you'll have to go through. Forgive me for this, please. But I'm just going to have to wait a while yet for another book, 18 months, two years, it's okay now, as long as I'm writing and have some sense of worth in the process. Your friendship and your concern and

general championing of me have meant, and mean still, more to me than I can ever say. I could never begin to repay you, as you must know. I honor and respect you, and I love you more than my brother. But you will have to get me off the hook here Gordon, it's true. I just can't go another step forward with this endeavor. So please advise what to do now. . . . As I say, I'm confused, tired, paranoid, and afraid, yes, of the consequences for me if the collection came out in its present form. So help me, please, yet again. Don't, please, make this too hard for me, for I'm just likely to start coming unraveled knowing how I've displeased and disappointed you. God almighty, Gordon.

Ray

Please do the necessary things to stop production of the book. Please try and forgive me, this breach.

July 10, 1980

Please look through the enclosed copy of "What We Talk About," the entire collection. You'll see that nearly all of the changes I suggest are small enough, but I think they're significant and they all can be found in the first edited ms version you sent me. It's just, not just, but it's a question of reinstating some of the things that were taken out in the second version. But I feel strongly some of those things taken out should be back in the finished stories. "Gazebo," for instance. "In this, too, she was right." That ending is far superior and gives the story the right, the just ending, the narrator's sense of loss, and a sharp, perfect ending for the story. Otherwise, the narrator is a lout, a son of a bitch, and totally insensitive to everything he's been telling us. Otherwise, why even is he telling the story, I wonder.

July 14, 1980

I'm thrilled about the book and its impending publication. I'm stoked about it, and I'm already starting to think about the next one. More than thinking about it, in fact. Fact is, I'm giving some thought to taking the second semester off to do nothing but write and write through the summer as well.

. . . Things are in full swing, and I am just generally excited, specifically too. I know you have my best interests at heart, and you'll do everything and more to further those interests. . . . I won't harp or dog, for I know the book is going to astonish and give pleasure. So just these last words on the matter: please look at the suggestions I've penciled in and entertain those suggestions seriously, even if finally you decide otherwise; if you think I'm being my own worst enemy, you know, well then, stick to the final version of the second edited version. But do give those things a hard third or fourth look. My greatest fear is, or was, having them too pared, and I'm thinking of "Community Center" and "The Bath" both of which lost several pages each in the second editing. I want that sense of beauty and mystery they have now, but I don't want to lose track, lose touch with the little human connections I saw in the first version you sent me. They seemed somehow to be fuller in the best sense, in that first ed. version. Maybe I am wrong in this, maybe you are 100% correct, just please give them another hard look. That's all. That and what I said about "Where Is Everyone?"—Mr. Coffee, Mr. Fixit.

August 11, 1982

Now I don't know for sure how we're going to work out some of the disagreements we're bound to have over some of these stories I've written and am writing this very minute. And I'm going to give you the book ["Cathedral"] on schedule, in November. . . . Anyway, you're the best editor there is, and a writer yourself, you bet, and you have to call them the way you see them. Fair enough. But I may not be in agreement with you, and this is what's worrying me right this minute. . . .

Forgive me. But hear me out. I'm saying that despite all and fuck all, I've been writing short stories ever since I landed out here in this woodsy cranny. I've got five new ones, no six, counting the one I just typed out a second draft of earlier tonight and hope to finish, at least have some more drafts of, before the week is out. I've been writing as if my life depended on it and like there's no tomorrow. And we both know that first may be true, and there's always likelihood of the second. (And fuck no, I can't get off the cigarettes either.) . . . But one thing is certain—the stories in this new

collection are going to be *fuller* than the ones in the earlier books. And this, for Christ's sake, is to the good. I'm not the same writer I used to be. But I know there are going to be stories in these 14 or 15 I give you that you're going to draw back from, that aren't going to fit anyone's notion of what a Carver short story ought to be—yours, mine, the reading public at large, the critics. But I'm not them, I'm not us, I'm me. Some of these stories may not fit smoothly or neatly, inevitably, alongside the rest. But, Gordon, God's truth, and I may as well say it out now, I can't undergo the kind of surgical amputation and transplant that might make them somehow fit into the carton so the lid will close. There may have to be limbs and heads of hair sticking out. My heart won't take it otherwise. It will simply burst, and I mean that. Dearest friend of all, brother, you know what I'm saying, and I know you understand. Even if you think I'm dead wrong. . . .

I love your heart, you must know that. But I can't write these stories and have to feel inhibited—if I feel inhibited I'm not going to write them at all—and feel that if you, the reader I want to please more than any, don't like them, you're going to re-write them from top to bottom. Why, if I think that the pen will fall right out of my fingers, and I may not be able to pick it up. . . .

You understand I'm not saying, or even remotely thinking, that these new and year-old stories are beyond criticism, or that they won't need editing. Not true. Not true in either case. You're as close to me, and my work, you couldn't be closer, if you were my blood brother. You're the left side of me. Or the right side, take your pick. But I guess I'm trying to say here that we're going to have to work very closely together on this book—the most important book of them all for me, at every stage, and be careful and understanding with each other. Gordon, the last book passed as if in a dream for me. This one can't go that way, and we both know it.

October 3, 1982

Listen, I've finished work on the new Knopf book of stories. Last week I got them all back from the typist and I spent all day today reading them through. It's going to be something, that book. I thought I would try and put

them in order, the order I'd like to see them in the book, but just a few minutes ago gave up on that. I'll leave that up to you. I don't have a title, either. We talked, a year ago, about calling the book "Cathedral." That's fine with me and maybe lead off with that story and finish with "Fever," a long story, or "A Small Good Thing," another long story. But I will leave the arrangement of the stories up to you. You know I want and have to have autonomy on this book and that the stories have to come out looking very essentially the way they look right now. I'm of course not saying we can't change words or phrases or a line here and there, and punctuation, sure. But after you've read the book, I'll come down and we'll talk about titles, the ordering, or any suggestions you might have.

October 29, 1982

As I said before, I would be happy with either title, "Cathedral" or "Where I'm Calling From." . . . My biggest concern, as you know, is that the stories remain intact. Oh, Christ, sure, you know, if you see some words or sentences that can be trimmed, that's fine, trim them. You know what I'm saying. Please help me with this book as a good editor, the best . . . but not as my ghost. I tell you, I may be reading it all wrong—and if I am, I don't care, in a very profound way—but I think there is a great deal of good will established toward me, or for me; and this book, the stories, are going to be so different, in so many regards, from so many of the earlier stories, that the book is going to be met with a good show of enthusiasm, even celebration. And, yes, I'm eager to have that artist you were talking about do something for the cover, if she can. Yes, for sure. I hope that works out. (But that, finally, will be *your* final decision; the matter of the text, in this case, has to be mine.)

November 19, 1982

From Lish to Carver

Dear Ray—Here's "Where I'm Calling From" reworked to the extent that I think it must be—as basic as I can keep it. I'm aware that we've agreed that I will try to keep my editing of the stories as slight as I deem possible, that you do not want me to do the extensive work I did on the first two

collections. So be it, Ray. What you see in this sample is that minimum: to do less than this, would be, in my judgment, to expose you too greatly. At all events, look: if this is in keeping with your wishes, call quickly and say so—and I will then be guided thereby in my handling of the rest of the stories. Love, G.

January 21, 1983

From Carver to Lish

What's the matter, don't you love me anymore? I never hear from you. Have you forgotten me already? Well, I'm going back to the [*Paris Review*] interview and take out all the good things I said about you.

VITA

Name: Sandra Webb

Major Specialization: English

Educational: B.A., English, Texas A&M International University, 2013

Professional Experience: English Teacher, Laredo, TX 2013-2020

Major Field of Specialization: English