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Obliquity ellipses define Carver's minimal prose. It's a threadbare style that doesn't give you much to chew on but somehow it captures the threadbare lives scattered across these stories perfectly. There's sadness, desolation here that would numb you to the point of oblivion, the coiling despair tightening, tightening around you like a python's grip till you are swallowed whole into its blackness. Carver takes the ephemera and flotsam of non-descript, everyday life that no one would stop to consider, let alone turn into subject for writing; he makes it work because into these scattered shards of truth you'll perhaps glimpse a moment or two from your own experience when life was threatening to go off the rails, lurching from one drink to another, one meaningless relationship to another, one jaded conversation to another, with you there laughing at it all because if you didn't laugh you would probably break down, lose yourself to the ever approaching madness, to the simmering violence that was just itching to let loose. Carver's characters grapple with loneliness, guilt, heartbreak, infidelity, broken marriages, alcoholism, job loss, bankruptcy, a sense of ennui, disconnect from their once joyous core, a hopeless striving to recover that, a desire to escape from their own lives, quite a smorgasbord of woes on their existential platter, really. There are some things that give them company: a few run-down records, books on makeshift bookshelves, fishing trip with buddies, chain smoking, cream sodas and hard liquor, always the liquor. There's some genuinely moving stuff here, best enjoyed when you are feeling down because when you hit the

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rock bottom with these stories there s no way to go but up chaos bringing back order, madness leading to sanity This four stars rating is being given on the overall effect of this collection As is with any short story collection, it s a mixed bunch. Here are the ones I liked Why Don t You Dance my favourite story overwhelming sadness here With the privacy of his life thrown out into the front yard for the whole neighborhood to snicker at, a broken man indulges a young couple who assume it must be a yard sale Where I m Calling From the story which gives this collection its name is remarkable as a textbook example of Carver s indirect style where the horrors of a relapsed alcoholic s life is presented via the recounting of secondary characters lives at the dry out facility Nobody Said Anything a story that broaches the effect of a messy parental fight on the two sons, focusing most of the time on a fishing trip instead Gazebo a married couple having a meltdown after the husband s affair is discovered. This story was referred to in Gass essay, A Failing Grade for the Present Tense needless to say Gass is no fan of minimalism unless the writer happened to be the great Beckett What We Talk About When We Talk About Love it ought to make us feel ashamed when we talk like we know what we re talking about when we talk about love The old couple in this story yeah, that was love Neighbors a young couple in charge of a financially better off couple s house during the latter s holidays, tries to impersonate their lives So Much Water So Close to Home this story made it to Altman s Short Cuts 1993 , the one about couple of guys on a fishing trip who discover a girl s dead body in the river carry on with their camping holiday Two things are certain people no longer care what happens to other people and 2 nothing makes any real difference any longer A Small, Good Thing another one that made it to the Altman movie a couple coping with the sudden loss of their little child on the day of his 8th b day a grumpy baker who keeps crank calling them for the uncollected cake He was a baker He was glad he wasn t a florist It was better to be feeding people This was a better smell anytime than flowers The Collectors the face of desperation the vacuum cleaner salesman here reminded me of Jack Lemmon s visit to a potential client s house in Glengarry Glen Ross Boxes a son s guilt over his mother s manic house shifting there s no peace anywhere cause no matter where you go, how do you escape

Delta of Venus

Metamorphoses

Lady Chatterley's Lover

Kushiel's Dart

Sappho's Leap

Claudius the God and  
His Wife Messalina

A Princess of Mars

The English Patient

Robert Mapplethorpe  
and the Classical  
Tradition

Tropic of Cancer

The Piano Teacher

I, Claudius

Sex and the City

The Nude: A Study in  
Ideal Form

Thy Neighbor's Wife

from yourself Fever a harried father trying to look after his two young children, manage his job household after his wife leaves him for his colleague. I was hoping the story featuring Jennifer Jason Leigh's portion in Short Cuts would be here it was a perfect example of the absurdity irony underlying Carver's humour, but it wasn't here. Impressioni scritte prima del 15 febbraio 2018 L'altro pomeriggio sabato, ferma ad un semaforo in attesa della freccia di svolta a sinistra, occhio nello specchietto retrovisore che mi restituisce un'immagine nitidamente perfetta non accecata dalla luce di una giornata di sole né oscurata dal buio notturno. Come fosse lo schermo rettangolare di un cinema in un contrasto di bianco e nero vedo una coppia perfettamente a fuoco nell'auto che mi sta dietro. Sono di mezza età né brutti né belli, vestiti in maniera ordinaria ma non trascurata. Stanno parlando di qualcosa, senza fervore con calma privi di particolare trasporto o enfasi forse la spesa da fare o i figli piccoli, magari il film da decidere lui dice qualcosa brevemente, dal labiale non posso capire, stanno zitti qualche secondo, poi lei sposta lo sguardo prima rivolto verso il finestrino di una ventina di gradi verso il marito gli risponde o comunque dice a sua volta qualcosa, poi ancora silenzio. La freccia di svolta a sinistra diventa verde, inserisco la marcia e le strade che si sono sfiorate per lo spazio di un semaforo si dividono per sempre, senza epilogo, non saprò mai più nulla di loro. Una scena che avrebbe potuto infilarsi in un racconto di Carver che dà la percezione di ciò che si prova al termine di ogni racconto di Carver. Persone ordinarie che fanno lavori ordinari, che vivono in case ordinarie, che mangiano pasti ordinari, fanno discorsi ordinari e si amano in maniera ordinaria, litigano, come stanno facendo in questo esatto istante altre mille coppie nel mondo, telefonano a qualcuno, o lavano con cura posate e bicchieri e nel frattempo pensano che hanno voglia di scappare, gente che si lascia o ritorna sui propri passi, o spinge avanti e indietro meticolosa il battipappeto nella stanza. Io, tu, lui, noi, voi. Niente brilla, niente colpisce, tutto si confonde nei 35 racconti dialoghi, persone, ambienti, situazioni, la coppia della porta accanto, l'avventore che sfiora col gomito al bancone del bar solo che tu bevi un caffè mentre, dentro le storie di Carver laggiù dall'altra parte dell'oceano, lui avrà un bicchiere di whisky o un boccale di birra davanti, o un marito seduto sul divano, o una donna che

Atomised

Les Liaisons  
dangereuses

The Naked Woman: A  
Study of the Female  
Body

Atlas Shrugged

Justine, Philosophy in  
the Bedroom, and Other  
Writings

trasloca, anonimi antieroi in cui ci si pu facilmente immedesimare. Si detto e scritto tanto sulla scrittura di Raymond Carver che non usa una parola in pi n una di meno, soppesa vocaboli in maniera maniacale con l esattezza del bisturi del chirurgo che non vuole incidere un millimetro in pi di pelle di quella che gli necessita per riparare un tessuto malato. Un artista del racconto e quanto vero che la definizione di m i n i m a l i s t a non gli davvero per nulla congeniale. S vero ci lascia spesso con epiloghi di racconti troncati che lasciano attoniti e talvolta frustrati ma questo non significa essere minimalista, e nemmeno l uso calibrato delle parole che soppesa come l orafo le sue pagliuzze d oro, lavorando per sottrazione senza mai sprecarne due laddove fosse possibile usarne una sola significa essere minimalista perch nonostante tutto questo lavoro di limatura riesce a non farci mai mancare nulla pi del necessario, una lezione che di ausilio anche nello stordimento di parole a volte vacue e a cascata che in ogni istante ci bombardano da ovunque. Che poi io per antitesi possa amare anche molto di pi altri scrittori di racconti completamente differenti, che so un Cechov che sa dipingere quadri di natura meravigliosi La steppa o un DFW con le sue storie lunghe e strutturate su cui ti devi affaticare e spremere le meningi come su una equazione di terzo grado, oppure immaginifici e pieni di mito e di passione come La sirena di Giovanni Tomasi di Lampedusa, non rende minore il mio apprezzamento verso l apparente pochezza di Raymond Carver. Non tutti i 35 racconti raggiungono lo stesso vertice di bellezza e quelli che ho preferito, oltre ai famosissimi e bellissimi Di cosa parliamo quando parliamo d a e Cattedrale, sono raggruppati verso la fine della raccolta Con tanta di quell acqua a due passi da casaFebbreIntimit MenudoUna cosa piccola ma buonaElefantePasticcio di merliL incarico By The Time Of His Early Death In , Raymond Carver Had Established Himself As One Of The Greatest Practitioners Of The American Short Story, A Writer Who Had Not Only Found His Own Voice But Imprinted It In The Imaginations Of Thousands Of Readers Where I M Calling From , His Last Collection, Encompasses Classic Stories From Cathedral , What We Talk About When We Talk About Love And Earlier Carver Volumes, Along With Seven New Works Previously Unpublished In Book Form Together, These Stories Give Us A Superb Overview Of

Carver's Life Work And Show Us Why He Was So Widely Imitated But Never Equaled I wanted the first book I read in 2018 to be special, and this classic selection of stories by Raymond Carver the final book he published during his lifetime he died in 1988 at the incredibly young age of 50 fit the bill. Here, presented in chronological order, are 37 stories representing than two decades work Some of them are among the most powerful and influential works of short fiction published in the late 20th century Most are written in a clear, unpretentious voice that s suffused with wisdom and hearty good humour but also a particular kind of pathos that Carver captured and knew so well. His characters are ordinary people, often from the Pacific Northwest, struggling to get by and faced for the time of the story with a significant complication A couple s child might be in a coma after being struck by a car on his birthday A Small, Good Thing a man might draw on his own history of violence to defend his son accused of stealing a bicycle Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes another man might worry about his restless, constantly dissatisfied elderly mother Boxes Most of these stories are about marriages breaking up, slowly or suddenly The marriage might have broken up already, and a man it s usually a man can t deal with it he drops by his ex wife s home after he s trashed it in a jealous rage during the Christmas holidays A Serious Talk he s tasked with finding a babysitter housekeeper for his two children Fever he s obsessed with a blockage in his ear while living on his own and constantly drinking champagne Careful. Several stories feature male protagonists who are out of work while their wives take on jobs They re Not Your Husband, Put Yourself In My Shoes, Are These Actual Miles , Vitamins And, oh yeah, there are drinkers Lots of drinkers Many conversations take place in a boozy haze of distraction and false cheer One of the saddest stories I ve ever read is called Gazebo, about a couple who have holed themselves up in a room at the motel where they work while they drink and hash out their marital problems, ignoring the customers at reception. It contains the following paragraph about the couple s relationship to alcohol Drinking s funny When I look back on it, all of our important decisions have been figured out when we were drinking Even when we talked about having to cut back on our drinking, we d be sitting at the kitchen table or out at the picnic table with a six pack or

whiskey And this one line in the story simply yet profoundly captures their end of the line desperation There was this funny thing of anything could happen now that we realized everything had Wow. Reading these stories in a short period of time made me sensitive to some of Carver's techniques The faux epiphany In my review of Carver's Cathedral, I already pointed out his sometimes contrived use of the narrator simply stumbling upon an epiphany I noticed it here too I don't know why, but it's then I recall the affectionate name my dad used sometimes when he was talking to my mother Boxes and I'd like to say it was at this moment, as I stood in the fog watching her drive off, that I remembered a black and white photograph of my wife holding her wedding bouquet Blackbird Pie These passages are like the author nudging us to think Oh, here's the significance The story within the story Carver is excellent at having characters tell tales within tales And sometimes, as in Whoever Was Using This Bed and The Student's Wife, the story will become a monologue Incidentally, both of these stories feature insomniacs As someone who watches a lot of plays, I'm sad Carver didn't write for the theatre His dialogue is so good Yes, I know the films Birdman and Short Cuts draw on his work The humour I didn't appreciate just how funny Carver could be until I read What Do You Do In San Francisco, a story narrated by a postman who tells us about a beatnik couple who move into the neighbourhood on his route The man's nosiness and judgements on the young couple perhaps modelled after the young Carver and his then wife girlfriend are so amusing I literally laughed out loud while reading them He shows, doesn't tell Carver can describe a gesture that, in a few words, precisely captures what a person's thinking He doesn't have to tell you someone's depressed or sad By showing you what they're doing, you know that Sigh Writing all this makes me a little dissatisfied Picking apart Carver's stories like this takes away a bit of their magic There's a mystery at the heart of stories like Fat, Cathedral, A Small, Good Thing, Fever, Why Don't You Dance and Are These Actual Miles that should stay mysteries They suggest profound things about the human condition our frailties, our contradictions, our attempts at redemption Much has been written about Carver's final published story, Errand, a loose retelling of the death of Russian playwright and short story master Chekhov. The

setting, of course, is far removed from Carver's other fiction, and I'm sure it was inspired by the author's feelings about his own impending death. But what you realize is that it's not the grand event itself that captures Carver's interest but the little things happening on the sidelines, the small moments that only an artist like this surely Chekhov's equal in his insight into human behaviour could capture, honour and make real and memorable. Devo dire che con nessun altro autore l'effetto sorpresa stato pi violento che con Carver. Le tre ore senza interruzioni in cui mi spazzolai da cima a fondo. Di cosa parliamo quando parliamo d'a rimarranno una delle mie esperienze pi significative di lettore, le paragonai ad una donna incontrata in vacanza. Se quella stessa donna te la porti a casa la magia finisce, inizia qualcos'altro, ma la magia va persa. Alcuni racconti sono la versione extended di quelli pubblicati in altre raccolte. A rischio di esser accusato di blasfemia, scrivo che io ho preferito quelli Lish, fatti per benino dall'editor pi famoso del secolo scorso. Il partito degli anti baricchiani conta pi iscritti del PD, invito, chi ne avesse voglia, a leggere questo bell'articolo, dimenticando la tessera che ha in tasca: <http://www.oceanomare.com> ipse scripsi. La prima volta l'ho letto in una recensione su Anobii. Mi sono messo sulle tracce del pittore ed ho riscontrato un'effettiva affinita fra Edward e Raymond. <http://www.settemuse.it> pittoriscult. Mantengo le 5 stelle per il ricordo di quella donna incontrata in vacanza. Quando crediamo di parlare d'a, spesso, stiamo parlando d'innamoramento.

- 1 Nessuno diceva niente adolescenziale come la prima fantasia sessuale
- 2 Biciclette, muscoli, sigarette verticali. Poi disse Babbo: Penserai che sono proprio matto, ma vorrei tanto averti conosciuto quando eri piccolo, cio quando avevi suppergi la mia et di ora. Non so spiegartelo, ma mi manca tanto come se come se sentissi gi la tua mancanza quando ci penso adesso.
- 2 verticale. Me lo fece leggere quando ancora non lo conoscevo.
- 8 lettere. Grazie ancora a lei e a Philibert Commerson.
- 3 La moglie dello studente insonne.
- 4 Loro non sono mica tuo marito dietetico e disoccupato.
- 5 Che cosa si combina a San Francisco pettegolo.
- 6 Grasso. L'obesita dei sogni.
- 7 Che ci sar mai in Alaska obnubilante.
- 8 Vicini scopofilo.
- 9 Provi a mettersi nei miei panni allusivo.
- 10 Creditori tentata quanto inutile vendita.
- 11 Perch, tesoro mio, il bisogno di credere nonostante la consapevolezza non lo consentirebbe. Un figlio

degenere che diventa manco a dirlo un politico influente<sup>12</sup> I chilometri sono effettivi indegno<sup>13</sup> Gazebo L alcol strano Se ci ripenso, tutte le nostre decisioni pi importanti sono state prese bevendo.<sup>14</sup> Un altra cosa fallimentare<sup>15</sup> Piccole cose fallimentare e nocivo per chi sicuramente non ha colpa alcuna<sup>16</sup> Perch non ballate cinematograficohttp://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP0Jpm17 Un discorso serio il recipiente che contiene ci che rimasto della coppia consumatasi con gli anni<sup>18</sup> Di cosa parliamo quando parliamo di gin epraiOgnuno di noi parla di una cosa diversa quando parla di Tutti per passiamo la vita a cercare la forma che ci si addice.<sup>19</sup> Distanza neonatale<sup>20</sup> La terza cosa che ha ammazzato mio padre ittico<sup>21</sup> Con tanta di quell acqua a due passi da casa tri ittico <sup>122</sup> Con tanta di quell acqua a due passi da casa continuazione l aspetto ittico lascia campo esclusivo a quello angoscioso<sup>23</sup> La calma epifanico<sup>24</sup> Vitamine vitaminico<sup>25</sup> Attento oleoso<sup>26</sup> Da dove sto chiamando infognato<sup>27</sup> La casa di Chef l ombra della bottiglia<sup>28</sup> Febbre rassegnato<sup>29</sup> Penne pavoneggiantell cambiamento si pavoneggia di s , ma un giorno ci lascer soli a contare le nostre penne cadute sulla veranda<sup>30</sup> Cattedrale tattile<sup>31</sup> Una cosa piccola ma buona scott y ante<sup>32</sup> Scatole materno<sup>33</sup> Chiunque abbia usato questo letto mortale<sup>34</sup> Intimit divorzievole l ennesimo <sup>35</sup> Menudo a normale<sup>36</sup> Elefante economia domestica a pro altrui<sup>37</sup> Pasticcio di merli calligrafico<sup>38</sup> L incarico stappato 5 starsIn keeping with my study of the short story, I figured it was about time I picked up Raymond Carver Call me a late bloomer The only story I had previously read by him was Cathedral, which is excellent This is basically a story about a skeptical, somewhat superficial man who is taught by a blind man how to see.The 37 stories in this 526 page collection are arranged chronologically The final story, called Errand, unpublished at the time of Carver s untimely death, begins with the single word sentence Chekhov Carver is often compared to Chekhov, who also died at a young age Carver has also often been described as a minimalist I understand this description, but find it somewhat simplistic Sure, he uses simple language, in short sentences but when required, he gives plenty of time and space to establish the raw material he needs to make a character s growth believable Carver s characters are often summed up as ordinary people as any random person we

might pass in the street at first glance His genius was to use this superficial first impression, then to make great use of sub text to reveal deep characterization Another oft heard idea about Carver is that he employed trickery, and would throw the reader a curve ball at the end I would contend that Carver used technique to lull the reader like the sleeper yo yo move stringing the reader out, only to bring closure with a snap with a quick flick, the meaning of the story is disclosed In the case of A Small Good Thing, I cried As for What s In Alaska, when I realized what was really going on in this couple s marriage, I abruptly stopped laughing Carver had played me, as a reader, and I was left in awe at his skill It s worthwhile picking up this book even if you choose not to read every story This is the first time I ve read an entire collection of short stories without interruption But, do read, as well as the ones above, Elephant So Much Water, So Close to Home and the title story, Where I m Calling From These stories stay with you They are uniquely Carver no one could possibly imitate him because I don t even believe they can be categorized And the final seven stories, published after Carver s death, show that he was heading in a new direction Even at that point, he had established himself as one of the best short story writers out there How far and where he might have gone is anyone s guess. 2.75 This book includes the best stories from other collections including What We Talk About When We Talk About Love Choosing this sweeping collection of over 3 dozen stories as an introduction to Carver was a mistake Carver is known for his minimalism the less is school The flip of that was certainly true for me The I read, the less I liked the stories After the first few stories, I would have rated the book a solid 4 stars By the end, my rating was hovering around 2 stars The stories are skillfully drawn With a few strokes, Carver outlines a boozy, sad world of despair, infidelity and bursts of violence The problem for me is that after a while, the stories start blending, with an oppressive sameness, like grayscale sketches that need to be filled in. Murakami on Carver I ve never read so many stories about divorcees, unhappy marriages or relationships, dysfunctional families and alcoholics Carver s writing was incredibly real, and this collection will definitely stay in my memory I ll be picking this up again down the track, and maybe I will connect with it on a deeper level as I catch up to the ages of the characters,

whom are generally older than 30. I'd been interested in reading Carver since Haruki Murakami had consistently praised him in his interviews. Murakami had translated Carver's collection over 14 years into Japanese, and discussed his personal and professional life and writing in great detail in a 40-page interview devoted to Carver from this book. I'm lucky to be able to read as a Murakami fan. Here are some excerpts my translation from the interview in September 2004 for the Japanese literary magazine, Bungakukai. While Carver's prose was realist, his stories contained surprisingly strong anti-realism components. Things incredibly radical. However, there are some people who ignore those parts and just say, "What's new about his writing? All these stories are just plain realism," giving a simple, perfunctory assessment. On the other hand, others insistently praise his writing. He portrays the everyday lives of American blue-collar workers brilliantly, only gathering up what's on the surface. In this sort of context, I think Carver's true literary value was something difficult to ascertain. We should also keep in mind that because Carver was a writer who grew up inside academicism, he used to be entangled in rather fruitless debates such as "Are creative writing courses meaningful?" For such trivial matters to settle down and a proper assessment of Carver's writing to be reached, I think some time is needed, but in any case, I believe a fair number of the 70-something short stories Carver left will be passed onto future generations as classics. p.267

What I think Carver did was utilize his own unique system in slicing up the aspects of a situation or the world and reconstructing them into the shape of a story. Of course, this is or less something many authors attempt. In that kind of operation, the writing was not an ingredient that held an especially high importance for him. It's just that, going down that road of reconstruction, in other words tightening the screw on his own system of writing fiction, Carver's writing style surfaced into existence as a necessary product. In the cases of Fitzgerald and Capote, things sort of begin from the style of writing. Needless to say, that isn't everything, but there's a wide domain managed by the writing. However, with Carver, the writing style was satisfactory with being at a bare minimum. Using bicycles as an example, it would be a little crude to say a bike you'd use for shopping, but something like a ten-speed bike was not necessary. If the

writing style was a truly necessary one, then even if it wasn't attractive, what mattered was that it did the job. For example, with such a simple sentence as "The telephone rang while he was running the vacuum cleaner," just plonking it at the start of a story brings a mysteriously strong presence with it. I still love translating Fitzgerald and Capote, but personally I don't really feel that I'd like to write such elegant prose. Just like with gazing at beautiful craftwork, you'd be impressed, thinking this is wonderful, but you wouldn't want to copy it. Well okay, even if I wanted to I wouldn't be able to, and what I want to do is something very different anyway. If there's something I've learnt from Carver, it's not going to be something individual that can be picked out, such as the writing style, technique or storytelling. It would be something like a recognition of how an author establishes their own unique system of story composition, and an efficient yet earnest way of bringing that to fruition or perhaps a readiness to vow to live life, carrying that recognition. pp 285-286

For Raymond Carver, the moral bare minimum was to write with desperation, as if expending a piece of his own soul. Thus, he couldn't stand people who didn't act on such morals. He was a kind, warm and gentle person, but in an essay he confessed that he couldn't feel affection as a friend should towards those who compromised on writing, or those he could only conclude must be compromising on writing. In such cases, his point is that he wouldn't say "He's a nice guy," but, but the perspective of a nice guy disappears altogether. With someone like that near you, you really feel like you need to be serious and give your all. p.297 June 25, 2015

It ought to make us feel ashamed when we talk like we know what we're talking about when we talk about love. Life has a way of breaking even the strongest of hearts, of dashing families, friendships and lovers against the cold rocks of reality, leaving hopes and dreams to drown beneath the waves of approaching days. Through his short life the chord of life severed by his own vices Raymond Carver (May 25, 1938 - August 2, 1988) created a body of work that dives into the wreckage of such lives to bring their stories back to the surface, giving a voice to the red-rimmed eyes of divorce and the hollow cavities of loneliness, addiction and remorse. These voices sing out in sweet simplicity stories pared down to the bones of reality without need of any slick mechanics, fantastical ingredients, or even,

on occasion, any concrete plotlines, to deliver a walloping punch to the readers gut and soul. Through a style forged in the flames of his tutelage under John Gardner and the controversial editing of Gordon Lish, Carver gives only the bare necessities of story in a deceptively small package permeated with an infinitude of universal messages about life and love while giving voice to a lower to middle class being strangled by finance, booze, love, and their own undoings Raymond Carver lived a life not unlike many of his own characters the over educated sorts working blue collar jobs and returning home to a spiraling hell of alcohol and matrimonial disquiet Coming from a poverty stricken family, Carver grew up with books being a small but important comfort in his life Marrying 16 year old Maryann Burk when he himself was 19, and bearing their first child a year later, the family spent years criss crossing the country as Ray enrolled in creative writing courses and worked in sawmills, as a delivery man and janitor many stories in Carver s first collection, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please* , were written during his night janitorial shifts at a hospital while his wife waited tables to help support his literary aspirations The struggles and strife of a working family are illuminated all throughout his stories, and carry with them the deep felt understanding of someone who has truly witnessed the ugly underbelly of existence Carver breathes life into his characters with voice and action devoid of artifice or affectation, making them feel so realistic that they often take space in memory as if they were someone you had the misfortune of being stuck conversing with on a late night bus or barstool That s all we have, finally, the words, and they had better be the right ones. What truly sets Carver apart is his signature simplistic delivery, often labeled minimalism compared to authors such as Ernest Hemingway Prescribing the notion of show, don t tell , these stories fructify fantastically without much need of plot to take root in or description to germinate meaning, leaving ample opportunity for the reader to deduce motives and context as seeds in their own mind While these stories may initially seem like nearly empty, four wall cell of realism, with just enough lamplight to find their way about, anything additional would feel as bloated adornment or decorative furniture when all is needed is a quiet place to ponder and reflect Even the beating heart of each story remains relatively hidden from sight,

visualized through the spaces left by its absence or seen in quick, shadowy flashes lurking among the forest of words. Similar to the suitcase in the film *Pulp Fiction*, everything revolves around something that the characters understand and hold like a thorn in the hearts, yet we the readers are left in camera angles carefully placed as to obscure the contents inside. The story *Why Don't You Dance* is a prime example of Carver's seeming magic making, in which a man has reassembled the layout of his home in the front yard. In the kitchen, he poured another drink and looked at the bedroom suite in his front yard. The mattress was stripped and the candy striped sheets lay beside two pillows on the chiffoinier. Except for that, things looked much the way they had in the bedroom: nightstand and reading lamp on his side of the bed, nightstand and reading lamp on her side. His side, her side. He considered this as he sipped the whiskey. So much is said without having to draw attention to it. Especially after an offhanded comment by the man, sitting out getting drunk and selling his stuff to a young couple about to start their first place together, that the neighbors thought they had seen everything by now, it can be inferred that there was a breakdown of marriage, but the details are nowhere to be found. Stories like this take hold on a reader through the hospitality of welcoming them into being an active participant and letting their imagination take Carver's by the waist and go dancing through his pages. Another impressive technique he often applies is to frame a smaller story within a larger story, such as in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* or *Where I'm Calling From*. The latter included in a *Best Stories of American Fiction* edited by John Updike. The internal stories are told by characters of the external story as a sort of juxtaposition on way to make sense of the world around them. Neither the internal or external are fleshed out, but by pulling the subtly tied strings binding them together a potent portrait of life and love is created. It is his light touch and subtlety that makes for such a powerful and unforgettable read though so much is unsaid and unaccessed. The final lines of *Why Don't You Dance* perfectly summarize the Carver experience: She kept talking, She told everyone There was to it, and she was trying to get it talked out. After a time, she quit trying. The girl tells everyone she knows about the events hoping to find something inside, something she

knows is in there but can't quite reach Resolution or emotional epiphany is not always present in the final lines, much like in reality. You often come away feeling vague sadness and a carrying a weight pregnant with meaning that you can't quite access but understand all the same. No iron can pierce the heart with such force as a period put at just the right place.

Isaac Babel: Despite purgatorial settings of life surrounded by crumbling manors of marriage and drowning pools of booze, Carver's stories aren't aiming to sink the reader in pit of despair but to capture a bittersweet solace as the characters find a new meaning and perspective caught in a fleeting glimpse during their darker hours. There are incredibly beautiful moments that flower all around, and Carver has the ability to kill with a solitary line or observation.

Distance, my personal favorite, features a young man leave his wife and sick child to go fishing, despite her vitriolic pleas against this. Driving, the boy looked out at the stars and was moved when he considered their distance. Such a simple observation at a key moment cracks open the floodgates of interpretation and causes the reader to look at humanity in a new light as well how sad and strange the distance between human beings, even the ones who love each other dearly.

Or take the closing moments of Cathedral, a staple on the college literature degree diet, when a man closes his eyes, allows the hand of a blind man to wrap around his own, and draws a cathedral by feel so the other can see the metaphysical power of the structure. Both men are opened to a new understanding, yet it is the man that can see that feels a power so strong, yet one he cannot fully comprehend. Even the death of a child, as in A Small, Good Thing, one of those stories that reads as literature with a capital L and makes me want to stand before a classroom and shout this is how you write, this is what a short story is all about, is brought to its knees by a simple act of humanity by a lonely baker.

Subtlety is the key to the power of each story. Carver delivers such angles as to completely mesmerize and pulls the emotional punch as if he were a magician making doves appear out of thin air.

Distance is a story centered around a moment of reconciliation and happiness between a young couple, being told by the man in the present before he stands to gaze solemnly out the window. But he stays by the window, remembering that life. They had laughed. They had

leaned on each other and laughed until the tears had come, while everything else the cold and where he'd go in it was outside, for a while anyways Carver breaks my heart Without warning, we are reminded that relationships even the ones doomed to nightmarish shouting matches under a torrential downpour of tears before severing the limbs of love have their tender moments That broken love was once love That we are all human, all have needs, feelings, and hope, and that we succumb to pain, to vice, to selfishness and self loathing The human heart is what beats on each page Carver delivers pure and true slices of life, where right and wrong are extraneous moralizing in a discussion on human nature There is no answer It's okay But even if it wasn't okay, what am I supposed to do These are the moments in life that shape us forever, and though we may not understand what to do, we have to always keep on moving or perish. The style that Carver has become known and loved or even hated, seeing as we live in a world where almost everything must inevitably come under the knife of detractors has an interesting story of development As evinced in his collection *Beginners*, containing early versions of the stories that saw the light of day in the re-titled collection *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, Carver was much wordy and descriptive in his drafts than the Carver typically read His first published story, *Furious Seasons*, has been stylistically compared to that of William Faulkner, yet Carver is known for minimalism While enrolled in John Gardner's writing courses, Gardner recommended to use fifteen words in place of anything said in twenty five, and Gordon Lish would later advise reducing anything said in fifteen words to a mere five Lish's editing of Carver for publication is a highly discussed and controversial topic, as many stories were edited down by nearly half and arrived on the other side of Lish with major scenes particularly scenes of emotional closure removed This is a discussion better suited for an upcoming review of *Beginners*, however, it is the sparse and sharp style of Carver that really grabs me His later stories, especially those under the *New Stories* section of *Where I'm Calling From* are slightly beefier and lengthier and proceed towards of a conclusive feel than the earlier ones Before knowing any of this, I had remarked that Carver's stories felt like perfect classroom examples of what makes a good short story, and perhaps it is

because so much was removed as to leave much open to interpretation, and much of this may be attributed to Lish's keen insight into knowing exactly what is necessary and what is, while still great I'm sure to a writer each blessed word and mark of punctuation is like a child born from their blood and having someone else feel some are disposable possibly extraneous in a story that could be made into a lean and deadly beast of literary perfection. Regardless of any opinions on the editing, the style of these stories is outright perfection and, personally, I find Lish to be the White Knight of the editing pen. They are a stealthy knife through the ribs rather than a walloping punch to the face, and the vagueness is what keeps them haunting your mind like a ghost for days to come. These are stories that really spoke to me, arriving seemingly as if just at the right time to properly ensnare my heart during a brutally snowy winter following a season of dismantling in my own life. It is stories like these that seem like gifts of consolation from the world than a mere collection of pages between two covers, and the musing and soul searching perfectly combined with my own as I found out what it really was in life that mattered and the people I really wanted to spend it with. Having recently suffered the scars of divorce, many of the depravities and pain found in the stories of aborted loves spoke to me on a deep level. These stories should be court ordered to anyone filing for divorce. Carver perfectly frames life in his fiction and each story rings true in the heart, since reading these I've often found moments where I think I wish Carver wrote this moment. He captures the very basic human emotion and deftly details the hard moments we all feel at one time or another. These stories are the floor dropping out from under you, the moments when you realized the dream has ended, the realization that love has been lost, the blind eye towards your own undoings or the inability to accept your own addictions. Carver champions human nature in a crisp and clean style delivered with perfect nuance and subtlety and builds vast visions of understanding, realization and reflection. Carver is the writer for me, these are stories I hold dear in my heart and have changed me forever as a reader. These stories remind me why I fell in love with life and literature in the first place.

5 5 certain things around us will change, become easier or harder, one thing or the other, but nothing will ever really be any different. I believe that We have

made our decisions, our lives have been set in motion, and they will go on and on until they stop But if that is true, then whatIn the essay Fires, from the collection bearing the same name, Carver admits to having grown up being a fan of Hemingway and notes that Gardner advised him to Read all the Faulkner you can get your hands on, and then read all of Hemingway to clean the Faulkner out of your system Carver, however, declines to consider either author as a particular influence, but only as authors that helped spur his desire to write Interestingly enough, Carver s pre Lish work or manuscripts before reaching Lish , are often compared to Faulkner, whereas the final products that reached publication are compared to Hemingway But that is a discussion for another day and forthcoming maybe review of Beginners I have read a few accounts of critics rallying against what they considered a glorification of domestic violence and alcoholism, so than that of his style Though, like any notable author, many Carver imitators did arise I can t quite place the reference, but I recall a poem mentioning repulsion towards the dime a dozen Carver knock offs littering the poets literary circle I do not believe Carver was attempting to glorify or make light of domestic issues, but to give a voice to these moments as they are grim aspects of life Stephen King wrote an article for the New York Times taking a firm stance against Lish s editing, portraying Carver as a people pleaser weakened by alcoholism being pushed around by a tyrannical Lish with his meat cleaver editing. SHOW, DON T TELLRobert Altman e Tess Gallagher, la vedova di Raymond Carver, durante le riprese del film.Prima di morire, nel 1988, Carver selezion proprio questi trentasette racconti per la sua ultima antologia in vita, presumibilmente quelli che lui considerava i suoi migliori.Per me, il meglio del meglio Non esiste nessuno come Carver E se anche esistesse, Carver sarebbe meglio.Foto locandina di Short Cuts , 1993 Il film a colori, ma io ho preferito selezionare immagini in bw.Storie di gente comune, uomini e donne normali, dannatamente ordinari, in totale assenza di colpi di scena.Brevi narrazioni tese come una corda di violino, sospese sul baratro abissale dell esistere, grondanti algida commozione.Frammenti, tranche de vie, istantanee, fatti insignificanti Con personaggi complessi, sfaccettati, pi reali della realt.Solitudine, dolore, disperazione, impotenza,

incomunicabilità, fine della violenza, vite senza scampo, insieme a tenerezza, condivisione quella vera, ante internet, generosità di sentimenti, pietas. Robert Altman prepara una scena con Julianne Moore e Madeleine Stowe. Impieghi umili, povertà, difficoltà a tirare avanti, eccessi alcolici, coppie problematiche. Molta autobiografia. Narrazione e scrittura ridotta all'osso ma accidentata, non minimale, quotidianità che diventa eccezionale, banalità che si trasforma in straordinario, toni e colori neutri ma nitidi e indelebili. Raymond non spinge sul pedale, non accelera, non calca la mano immortale scene di vita ordinaria in istanti di luce senza scampo. Come nei quadri di Edward Hopper. Tom Waits e Lily Tomlin protagonisti dell'episodio Loro non sono mica tuo marito. Alla fine del racconto intitolato Cattedrale l'io narrante non riesce a descrivere una cattedrale al suo amico cieco. Allora il cieco gli chiede di disegnarla, e con la sua mano segue il movimento di quella del vedente che disegna, non si capisce qual è la mano che guida effettivamente, quella che disegna e improvvisamente sulla carta la cattedrale prende vita con archi, campanili e tutto il resto. A quel punto il cieco chiede al narratore di aggiungere delle persone, e di continuare a disegnare ma a occhi chiusi. Robert lo fa chiudere gli occhi e disegna come non ha mai fatto in vita sua. E impara dal cieco a vedere veramente, con gli occhi dell'immaginazione. Robert Altman in sala trucco con Robert Downey Jr. Alcuni di questi racconti sono tra i nove più una poesia, Lemonade scelti da Robert Altman per il suo splendido film Short Cuts America oggi del 1993. Vicini, Loro non sono mica tuo marito, Creditori, Con tanta di quell'acqua a due passi da casa, Vitamine, Una cosa piccola ma buona. Un altro, Perché non ballate stato adattato da Dan Rush nel suo primo e per ora unico film del 2010 intitolato Everything Must Go. Robert Altman spiega un'inquadratura ad Andie MacDowell, Bruce Davison e Lyle Lovett, famoso cantautore country.

"The summation of  
a triumphant career from  
one of the great short story  
writers of our time--of any time."  
— *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

*Where I'm Calling From*

SELECTED STORIES

RAYMOND  
CARVER