Introduction

Welcome to the Winter 2016/Spring 2017 Issue 5/6 of The Raymond Carver Review: Special Feature on James Carver. Following several unanticipated delays with this combined issue, we believe that this issue is among the best that The Raymond Carver Reviews has offered. Most of all, we hope that you find this combined issue informative, interesting, and valuable in promoting the writing and influence of Raymond Carver (1938-1988).

Since its inception in 2006, The Raymond Carver Review was represented through the English Department at Kent State University’s main campus in Kent, Ohio, which provided the web design, tech support, and hosted the website. In spring of 2016, Kent State re-configured its multi-campus wide website, addressing the way in which websites had been created over a ten-year period and hosted randomly and without coordination, a problem not singular to Kent State. As a result, RCR has migrated its website to the Kent State University Stark, which is editor Robert Miltner’s campus; this move was fully supported by my campus Dean. This move was complicated, however, by taking place during a period in which the entire interconnected Kent State website—a central campus with seven regional campuses—was initiating an upgrade. As a result, the re-hosting of the RCR had to wait until the redesign was complete.

Special Feature: James Carver

Around the time that the re-hosting was commencing this spring, Sandra Lee Kleppe, director of the International Raymond Carver Society, was contacted by James Carver, Raymond Carver’s younger brother and only sibling, regarding his memoir, Raymond Carver Remembered by His Brother James. As a result—thanks to James’ generosity, and permission from Austin Macauley Publishers—this issue of the RCR is delighted to offer an excerpted chapter, “Eleventh Avenue” set in Yakima, Washington during Raymond Carver’s childhood. Kleppe, in her accompanying essay “Raymond Carver and Biography,” rightly calls this memoir “both a biographic documentary as well as an imaginative and artistic portrayal of the people, places, and events that were significant in [Raymond] Carver’s life.” Raymond Carver Remembered by His Brother James is a welcome and valuable addition to any Carver scholars’ shelf of essential reference books that includes Tess Gallagher’s personal essays, Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray; Maryann Burk Carver’s What It Used to Be Like: A Portrait of My Marriage to Raymond Carver; Carol Sklenicka’s biography, Raymond Carver: A Writer’s Life; Sam Halpert’s
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Raymond Carver: An Oral Biography; and William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll’s Remembering Ray: A Composite Biography of Raymond Carver. Including the excerpt from Raymond Carver Remembered by His Brother James, accompanied by Sandra Kleppe’s essay, moved the release date back further, but offering a special feature on James Carver is an amazing opportunity for the RCR to pursue its mission to present new and important contributions to Carver scholarship.

Current Issue

Issue 5/6 of The Raymond Carver Review includes five peer-reviewed essays by new and emerging Carver scholars. The issue opens with two essays on Raymond Carver’s popular masterpiece, the short story “Cathedral.” Taylor Johnston’s essay, “‘Insid[ ]e anything’: The Evacuation of Commodified Space in Raymond Carver’s ‘Cathedral,’” traces and examines the ways in which the minimalist tendency to delete consumer artifacts opens up space in which decomodified experience can act as allegory through the presence of blindness so as to “relocate[e] the act of reading from the entrapments of the consumer apparatus to symbolic indeterminacy.” Madeleine Stein, in “Keeping Our Eyes Closed: Unsustainable Transformation in Raymond Carver’s ‘Cathedral,’” questions, through lenses of narrative distance and gender relations, whether the metaphorically blind narrator’s transformative interaction is sustainable, given the parallel de-evolution of his wife’s engaged presence. The third and fourth essays examine two lesser studied Carver stories. In “‘Kill who?: Forgiving the Immigrants in Raymond Carver’s ‘Sixty Acres,’” Ann Olson reviews the historical complexities of native versus immigrant relations in the 1969 story “Sixty Acres” as they play out in a confrontation, between Yakama tribesman Lee Waite and young white duck-hunters who are poaching on his land, that echoes the choice of peace over violence enacted by his ancestors. Cameron Cushing’s essay, “The Negative Pastoral in Raymond Carver’s “The Compartment” locates Myers’ decision not to meet with his estranged son in Strasbourg in an interstitial space between Terry Gifford’s concept of an external “contextual pastoral” and Martin Scofield’s concept of an internal “negative pastoral,” and in doing so, offers a lens that suggests that Myers’ acceptance of finding himself on re-coupled train car is concurrently his acceptance of traveling toward a newly re-contextualized emotional landscape. Rather than examining an individual Carver story, Jonathan Pountney’s essay, “Raymond Carver and Haruki Murakami: Literary Influence in Late-Capitalism,” explores the literary influence of Raymond Carver on the Japanese author Haruki Murakami within the socioeconomic context of late-capitalism. It argues that Carver’s influence resides most powerfully in his example of how to negotiate the complex and
shifting foundations of late-capitalist culture. This article suggests that Murakami’s acceptance of Carver’s influence rests in a corresponding desire to depict a societal dislocation, one that is distinctly tied to each author’s experience of the mass-commodification of the labor market in America and Japan in the late-twentieth century.