Recent Publications in Carver Studies

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One measure of the vitality of a field of academic study is to consider the frequency, range, and quality of its conference presentations. Each year since the founding of the International Raymond Carver Society in 2005, papers on Raymond Carver and his work have been presented at conferences including the American Literature Association, the American Literature Association American Poetry Symposium, the Midwest Modern Language Association, Association of Writers and Writing Programs, the Louisville Conference on Literature & Culture, as well as its own symposiums in Chicago and Paris. A second measure of that same vitality lies in examining the vibrancy of its level of publication on its focus, which in this case is the writing of Raymond Carver. The past four years have seen the publication of five new books that will be reviewed in this essay. Two of the works are single authored works: *The Poetry of Raymond Carver: Against the*...
Current, by Sandra Lee Kleppe of Hedmark University College, Norway, former co-editor of this journal and director of the International Raymond Carver Society and The Visual Poetics of Raymond Carver, by Ayala Amir of Bar Ilan University, Israel, an editorial board member of this journal; three are edited collections: Critical Insights: Raymond Carver, edited by James Plath or Illinois Wesleyan University; Carver Across the Curriculum: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching the Fiction and Poetry of Raymond Carver by Paul Benedict Grant of Memorial University, Canada, and Katherine Ashley, Editors; and Not Far From Here: The Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver, edited Vasiliki Fachard, Swiss independent scholar, and Robert Miltner (author of this essay) of Kent State University at Stark, both of whom edit this journal. As the following reviews will make evident, the recent work is varied and comprehensive, and that by perusing these texts a network of active scholars who bring great energy to the enterprise of Carver studies can be identified as enriching and shepherding scholarship on Raymond Carver.

The Poetry of Raymond Carver: Against the Current by Sandra Lee Kleppe

Raymond Carver told Michael Schumacher in a 1987 interview that he would be happy “if they simply put ‘poet’ on my tombstone … and in parenthesis, ‘and short story writer.’” Given Carver’s own preference to be viewed foremost as a poet, Sandra Kleppe offers the first book devoted exclusively to Raymond Carver's poetry. While Carver is best known for his fiction, his first three books were poetry [Near Klamath, Winter Insomnia, At Night the Salmon Move] as well as three of his last
books [Where Water Comes Together with Other Water, Ultramarine, A New Path to the Waterfall]. The Poetry of Raymond Carver: Against the Current focuses on six aspects of Carver’s poetry.

The first part of the book presents two chapters on autopoetics, that is, the idea that the poems are not isolated pieces, but rather part of the large body of his poetic work that are both connected with each other through intertextuality (cross-referencing and permutation) as well as reaching out into other spheres of discourse and scholarship and pulling those into the body of his own poetic work. By way of illustration, Kleppe notes how often Carver’s poems develop the recurring motifs of sight and blindness, as boundaries of observations, as well as by exploring his use of voyeurism drawn from the specialized artistic traditions more commonly associated with the visual arts. This analysis is augmented, amplified, by the chapter “Crossover Between Poems as Stories” where Kleppe focuses on three illuminating sets/pairings: the story “Why Don’t You Dance?” and the poem “Distress Sale”; the breaking marriages in the story “Blackberry Pie” and the poem “Late Night With Fog and Horses”; and the relationship between sons and mothers in the story “Boxes” and the poem “Mothers.” What Kleppe makes clear in this study is that, rather than a critical hierarchy in which the stories appear to be more important than the poems, the stories and poems, when read in pairs such as those which she presents as examples, are both equally important and central rather than tangential to understanding Carver’s work.

The two chapters in the second part of the book consider self-referentiality, that is, the ways in which poems call attention to themselves as artifacts of language.
The third chapter, "All Poems are Love Poems," Kleppe argues that the love poem is Carver *ars poetica*, offering the early poems “The Blue Stones” and “For Semra, With Martial Vigor” as example. The fourth chapter, “Water and Fish” begins with noting how the titles of nearly all of Carver’s books of poetry, including limited editions, directly or indirectly refer to water; Kleppe discusses the early books (1968-76), the late books (1985-89), and limited editions from the late period; ultimately, she chronicles Carver’s “career-long search for a path to the waterfall [as] a metaphor for the quest to discover and rediscover the source of creative energy” through the interconnections between the act of fishing and the relationship between memory and creativity.

Chapters five and six, which conclude the book, explore a new area of Carver study: the relationship between the art of poetry and medical science, the process of the writer composing a body of work which is set against the natural science that describes the decomposition of the human body following death. The fifth chapter, “Carver’s Baudelaire Sandwich,” explores his use of elegiac poetry in an extended discussion on one early poem, “Your Dog Dies,” and a late poem, “Ask Him,” where the former is an elegy for a pet, of childhood loss and first personal understanding of the objectivity of death, with the latter a personal response to the historical death of another writer, giving pause to consider how art outlives the artist. The final chapter considers more directly the “interdisciplinary intersection” of poetry and medicine, therapeutically engaging in metapathography, wherein an author who is ill writes from a narrative position about his or her illness or impending death, including two early poems, “Looking for Work” and “The Mailman as Cancer Patient”
as well as some of Carver’s most emotionally powerful late poems, such as “Proposal” and “What the Doctor Said.” Kleppe points out that Carver’s poetry is widely used and studied in the medical field, especially for terminal patients, at a rate and range that goes beyond that of the academic community. This particular area of research opens up important new territory in Carver studies.

Sandra Kleppe’s *The Poetry of Raymond Carver: Against the Current* is a must-read for fans of his poetry, for scholars interested in the relationship between Carver’s fiction and poetry, or for anyone interested in the ways in which poetry provided Carver for new opportunities of expression, particularly in the field of medical studies. For the first time, a book on Raymond Carver’s poetry is available to augment the study of his fiction.

*The Visual Poetics of Raymond Carver* by Ayala Amir

Ayala Amir has chosen to look at the way the space—the form and content, the narrative and disruption, the speech and silence—of Raymond Carver’s stories is conceived of and executed through a kind of visual poetics. Building on Poe’s comparison of a short story to a painting, Amir follows Walter Benjamin in making a comparison between a short story and a photograph, or more explicitly, between the short story and the eye of the camera. Her source is W. J. T. Mitchell who argues for a “pictorial turn” toward a more spatial and visual approach to the study of literature as the “new visual paradigm of our time.” What we find in *The Visual..."*
Poetics of Raymond Carver is Amir’s focus on visibility, spatiality, and stasis, attributes which she argues are too often absent from discussions of literature.

Divided into three sections, Visual Poetics triangulates a thorough analysis of how Raymond Carver’s narrative point of view is more that of a photographer using a camera than as a writer typing on a typewriter or laptop. The kind of psychic distance, which Kirk Nesset identifies as a “vicariousness” in Carver’s narrative points of view, is achieved not by a man looking out a window, but through a camera lens. This is illustrated directly in Carver’s story “Viewfinder” in which a photographer with hooks for hands makes a living taking photographs of people’s house; the homeowner is voyeuristically fascinated when the photo provided shows “my head, my head, in there, inside the kitchen window” looking out at the photographer. This ironic dichotomy illustrates both the divide and the link between the writer inside looking out and the photographer outside looking in, yet it also shows—visually—how Carver and the minimalists eschewed what Nesset labels the “obsessively self-reflexive” post-modern experimental writers from which they were distancing themselves. When the photographer in “Viewfinder” tells the homeowner, who asks for his picture to be taken throwing rocks from the roof, “I don’t do motion shots,” it establishes the contrary states of stasis and motion that are the subject of the first section of Amir’s book, “Movement,” in which she explores Carver’s scenic minimalism as offering fragmented narrative, often with divergent endings, that demonstrates the existential condition of his characters as well as his use of dialogue that is circuitous, discontinuous, idiosyncratic, or clichéd.
In the second section, “The Eye of the Camera,” Amir explores the impersonal narrators whose points of view exemplify what Ann Banfield calls “unoccupied perspective [where the narrator] is devoid of subjectivity and consciousness while at the same time embodying the most personal experience—that of the possibility of one’s own absence.” Carver’s narrative modes of description and visualization, Amir argues, offer a visible reality through different ways of looking than found in standard narrative—choices Carver makes in not only what he looks at, but how he looks at it: “the direct look, the sidelong look, the glimpse, and the eyes shut,” the latter the ending image in his most anthologized story, “Cathedral,” wherein a blind man asks a man with sight to trace the shape of a cathedral on a piece of paper, the blind man’s hand over his own. For the sighted man, to not look is a choice. Partly this is due to his experiencing the blind man’s sightless world, a camera with its lens cap on. But it is also due to the narrator’s sense that he may be experiencing his own absence.

The third section of Visual Poetics has at its heart Amir’s borrowing from Gilles Deleuze’s concept of the optic situation which creates “a unique relationship between vision, action, and time, and much like Carver’s frames [blurring] the distinctions between stasis and movement, inside and outside, open and closed.” Of course, while she discusses these as literary frames, they are comparable to frames as used in photography and cinema as well. To return again to “Cathedral,” the sighted man watches TV with the blind man who can only hear the narrator of the program while the sighted man both hears the sound and sees the image. This relationship “frames” Carver’s use of interconnected, interchangeable
dopplegangers, the so-called “doubling” features common in Carver’s stories, and while they begin in stasis—the blind man limited to sound, the sighted man to sound and sight—there is movement between the doubled characters as they transition into each other’s “frames” so that by the end of the story the blind man, after feeling the sighted man trace the cathedral, can “see” what he has been hearing about while the sighted man, eyes closed, follows the sound of the blind man’s directions, then keeps his eyes closed at the end, as sightless as the blind man began.

Overall, the author’s knowledge of both cinema theory and literary theory makes this a book in which the discussion moves seamlessly between these related arts. For anyone interested in Carver’s fiction, a book that explores, by chapter, the concepts of movement, dialogue, voice, vision, textual frames, and realistic effects is useful. While these first four chapters are more literary in focus, the latter two are more aesthetic and contextual as the author remains true to the camera’s lens as the focused perspective for critical analysis. As a result, the book examines Carver, both in practice and in theory, and the theory in particular has a new dimension from previous criticism, offering visual analysis and camera aesthetics as new directions for Carver studies; as a result, Ayala Amir’s work establishes her position as an important Carver scholar.

*Visual Poetics* speaks to younger scholars and contemporary readers who have high visual literacy and are drawn to other writers such as Brett Easton Ellis, Jay McInerney, David Foster Wallace, Tama Janowitz, and Amy Hempel, writers who are sometimes described by critics as strongly influenced by television. Given the interest of directors to turn Carver’s stories into movies, Ray Lawrence’s *Jindabyne*
and Robert Altman’s *Short Cuts*, for example, this book will attract readers who come to his work through movies, and who have an interest in the intersection between cinema and literature. Ayala Amir’s *The Visual Poetics of Raymond Carver* extends the range of Carver Studies by opening up an entirely new field of interdisciplinary study that uses photography as a critical lens to view and read Carver.

**Critical Insights: Raymond Carver by James Plath**

Editor James Plath has assembled an impressive collection of essays by fourteen talented scholars, resulting in the largest collection of essays yet published in Carver studies. While the *Critical Insights* series is primarily aimed at a student market—colleges and college prep high school programs—this collection is also an excellent introductory text for general readers and offers Carver scholars some finely-honed essays by William Stull and Maureen Carroll who launched Carver Studies; Kirk Nesset, Ayala Amir, and Randolph Runyon, all of whom have published a single-authored book; a strong clutch of active scholars and editors who make significant contributions to the field of Carver studies: Vasiliki Fachard, Robert Miltner, Claire Fabre, Françoise Sammarchelli, Chad Wriglesworth, Enrico Monti, and James Plath; as well as new Carver scholars Matthew Shipe and Peter J. Bailey.

The collection begins with a brief introductory section, “Career, Life, and Influence,” comprised of two essays. Editor James Plath opens with, “On Raymond Carver,” a concise and comprehensive literary and biographical summary of the
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author subject of the book, which serves as an excellent shorthand reference, particularly for students. Plath is accompanied here by Chad Wriglesworth’s “Raymond Carver and the Shaping Power of the Pacific Northwest” in which Wriglesworth explicates how the scenery and socioeconomic history of the Pacific Northwest, where Carver lived through childhood and adolescence and returned to during his last years, shaped both Carver’s working class perspective and the honesty of his voice. These two pieces establish a strong ground upon which Plath builds a scaffold to prepare readers for the second section, Critical Contexts.

Critical Contexts is comprised of six essays, each offering valuable frames for viewing Carver’s work. Who better to open with than William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll? Stull more or less launched Carver studies, as one of the first to do critical pieces, and is the pre-eminent archivist of Carver’s work, discovering previously unpublished stories and poems. The Stull and Carroll piece, “The Critical Reception of the Works of Raymond Carver,” is more than a mere overview, but weighs the dissonance between the stories, as Carver wrote them, and as they appeared, after intrusive editing by Gordon Lish, Carver’s editor. Stull and Carroll consider the publication of Carver’s unedited Beginners set against the Lish edited version of the same text What We Talk About When We Talk About Love. On the whole, Stull and Carroll’s essay is the most comprehensive review of publications by or about Raymond Carver to date: a must have reference for Carver scholars. Enrico Monti’s “Minimalism, Dirty Realism, and Raymond Carver” focuses on several terms applied both in the US (Gordon Lish) and abroad (Bill Buford) to periods or phases of Carver’s work; Monti traces the use of these terms by editors as set against the
consistent body of work Carver produced irrespective of publishers labels. Jim Plath returns with an essay, “The Carver Triangle: Lost in an Edward Hopper World,” that uses the American painter Edward Hopper as a contextual visual lens through which to read Carver, citing common depictions of isolation and inaction in static states, which he sees as Carver’s decision to begin stories after the main climax has already occurred. In a similar, yet literary comparison, Matthew Shipe writes, in “Middle-Age Crazy: Men Behaving Badly in the Fiction of Raymond Carver and John Updike,” that Carver and Updike, both considered New Yorker authors, shared a bond by writing about men ill-adjusted to divorce and its effect upon subsequent marriages and who struggle with guilt, acting out or denying complicity in the breakups. Noted Carver scholar Kirk Nesset, in “Intimate Divisions: Raymond Carver and Alcoholism,” considers the intertwined worlds of Carver the writer and Carver the alcoholic, tracing the changing positions of the male protagonists whose lives are or have been shaped by alcohol, from the early silenced or frenetic males to the reassembled and attempting salvation males of the late stories, which support Gail Caldwell’s observation that “there’s no more intimate construction of an alcoholic world in contemporary fiction” than Carver’s. The Critical Contexts section ends with “Feminist Perspectives on the Works of Raymond Carver,” by French scholar Claire Fabre who co-edited the special issue on Carver and Feminism for the Raymond Carver Review. Fabre, considering that Carver’s period of writing was concurrent with the rise of and establishment of Feminism and Feminist Criticism, considers Carver’s female characters, presentations of masculinity, critiques of male-dominated social discourse, violence against women characters, gender
boundary incursions, and empowering language appropriation by women; as a result, Fabre elucidates how current gender criticism contributes to a re-reading of Carver’s work when considering “his treatment of marital tragedies and the constraints imposed on women within a patriarchal world.”

The final section of the book, Critical Readings, offers again a balanced selection of six essays, in this case best read following the biographical and critical sections preceding it. The opening piece, “First Inclinations: The Poetry of Raymond Carver,” by Robert Miltner, argues that Carver’s poetry developed concurrently with and parallel to his fiction. His piece traces the arc of Carver’s poetry—and fiction—through three periods: the Early Poems, in which he writes with a young man’s bravado; his late poems, following his sobriety to embrace themes of recovery, memory, creativity, identity, recompense, and new relationships; and his last poems, written as he was dying from cancer, exploring memories of childhood innocence and the mystery of death as a transition. Randolph Runyon, in “Cycling Fiction: On the Structure of Raymond Carver’s Three Main Story Collections,” analyzes the ways in which Carver, when assembling his stories into collections, altered or edited the already published poems so that they would relate and refer to each other, leading to each book as a unified aesthetic whole, despite the counter balance of risking the emotional impact of the individual stories. In “Carver, Realism, and Self-Consciousness,” Swiss scholar Vasiliki Fachard argues that the originality in Carver’s fiction is achieved by its occupying a location between realism and modernism/postmodernism, and that by knowingly doing so, Carver is able to give voice to the unconscious by hinting while telling, exemplified by his focus on

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locating a sense of menace beneath the narrative level of many of his stories; Fachard effectively challenges readers to read beyond the limited field of minimalism and representation so often attached to Carver's work and seek the repetition of signs and signals that work to probe reality. Israeli scholar Ayala Amir’s “Small Good Things: Symbols and Descriptive Details in Carver’s Short Fiction” explores the methodology Carver used to layer his stories with meaning. Arguing that Carver follows the modernist tradition of tension between the concrete and the symbolic and the impression of reality, affecting the intersections of form and content, as well as rhetoric and thematics, Amir explicates an important aspect of Carver's stories. Peter J. Bailey’s “Short Cuts: Robert Altman’s Take on Raymond Carver” examines the challenges, complexities, complications, and credibility of adapting Carver’s stories to cinema. While acknowledging the sense of success expressed by director Robert Altman and the author’s widow, Tess Gallagher, Bailey seems less certain; as a result, he believes that rather than a collaboration of sorts, Altman more or less translated Carver’s stories to his own artistic and philosophical vision so that it matched his cinematic signature. The Critical Insights section closes with French scholar Françoise Sammarcelli’s “What’s Postmodern about Raymond Carver?” Though minimalism and realism are the commonly ascribed labels for Carver’s stories, Sammarcelli makes an excellent case for locating him in the postmodern school of writers by examining representative stories on several postmodern criteria: fragmentation and the effects of discontinuity, narrative self-reflexivity, and the power of the unsaid; as a result, she believes acknowledging
these techniques will help readers better appreciate the unique quality of Carver’s voice in his stories.

A well-structured and sequenced collection, *Critical Insights: Raymond Carver* demonstrates that Carver studies continues to grow. This collection brings together some of the most active established and emerging scholars in the field, offering a great starting point for anyone interested in learning more about Carver’s writing.

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

Given that Raymond Carver was an American Writer, it is not surprising that critical study has been predominantly represented by North Americans, that is, from the US and Canada. Yet Carver is a writer read world wide, and subsequently critical study has become progressively more international. The scholarly society dedicated to his work, led by American-born scholar Sandra Lee Kleppe of Hedmark University College in Norway, is the International Raymond Carver Society. Moreover, a brief review of the masthead, editorial and advisory boards shows representation that forms a quilt of countries. It was from these trajectories of international scholarship and growing literary criticism that Sandra Lee Kleppe of the International Raymond Carver Society, an American Literature Association affiliate, and Claire Fabre-Clark from the Université de Paris XII organized the Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver in June of 2008. The essays in this collection are taken from papers presented at that Carver Symposium in Paris, “Commemorating and Celebrating Raymond
Carver,” held at Université de Paris XII on June 6th and at Hôtel Massa, Société des Gens de Lettres, on June 7th. *Not Far From Here: The Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver* offers the richest and most varied international conversation by emerging and established scholars to date on the importance of Carver’s work.

The book opens with a Preface by Swiss co-editor Vasiliki Fachard who ruminates on Carver’s relationship with Paris, based on his readings of Hemingway’s presentation of the city of lights in *A Moveable Feast*, questioning whether Carver’s romantic notions of Paris are reconciled with the country that forges his literary identity. As a result, her preface sets the stage for the Paris symposium of 2008. In her own contribution, “Sign vs. Symbol: The Gift in Raymond Carver’s ‘Cathedral,’” Fachard argues that, according to Marcel Mauss, gifts forge bonds that open up giver and receiver to each other. She explores both the symbolic and humanistic value of gifts in three important stories from *Cathedral*: of bread, feathers, and cigars in “Feathers,” of candy in “Preservation,” and of watches and self in “Compartment,” initiating new topics for future examination by Carver scholars.

American scholar Randolph Paul Runyon’s “Beginners’ Luck,” which was presented as the keynote address at the symposium, offers an intertextual analysis of Gordon Lish’s editing of Carver’s stories, most of which had just previously surfaced in *The New Yorker*. What is remarkable about Runyon’s keynote address is how it seemed to predict the need for the publication of the complete collection, which Carver wrote as *Beginners*, so that the two competing texts—the complete manuscript of Carver’s *Beginners* and the version heavily edited by Gordon Lish, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, which was a National Book Award
finalist and Carver’s first major critical and popular success—could be available for critical study.

The issue of Lish’s influence on the published versions of Carver’s stories is discussed in detail in the essay which immediately follows Runyon’s essay. Italian scholar Enrico Monti, in “From ‘Beginners’ to ‘What We Talk About When We Talk About Love’: Variations on a Carver Story,” analyzes the shaping of the story “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,” leaning on Carver’s early draft “Beginners.” A textual analysis of Lish’s radical editing, including omissions, rewriting, and different endings, shows the nature and extent of Lish’s hand, which was clearly aimed at expelling what Lish considered to be any sentimentality and most psychological introspection; by doing so, Lish strove to highlight the stories’ bleaker tones and edgy minimalist undertones.

Canadian critic G. P. Lainsbury, in “Reference ≠ Reduction: Literature & Life of Raymond Carver,” offers a defense for, and argues the necessity of, the use of biographical material in criticism of Carver’s work. By examining a variation on an anecdote from Carver’s essay “My Father’s Life,” Lainsbury notes how Maryann Burk Carver’s memoir What It Was Like shows a tendency to view her life experience through an expectation for literary utility, ultimately rationalizing Carver family violence by asserting that it was of importance in the larger net of material from which Carver often drew for material for his writing.

Spanish scholar Libe García Zarranz presents a feminist critique of Carver in “A Threatening Fetish: The Female Body through Carver’s Hitchcockian Eye,” establishing thematic similarities between Hitchcock and Carver in their
representation of femininity and the female body. She examines Carver’s ambivalent construction of the female body in relation to Hitchcock’s trilogy on voyeurism: *Rear Window* (1954), where woman stands as the perfect fetish, *Vertigo* (1958), which portrays the collapse of ideal femininity and as a result, the depiction of woman as agent of fear, and *Psycho* (1960), where the female body is finally represented as corpse and turned into a source of abjection.

French scholar Laetitia Naly, in “Celebrating the Moment: The Writing of Time in Raymond Carver’s ‘The Calm,’” explores how the story-within-a-story format that opens like Russian dolls reveals the Carver’s use of time as a means of construction. Naly considers how the story displays the simultaneity of various facts without ever assigning a single meaning to any of them, while the celebration of a unique moment that is both decisive and banal is the underlying theme of the story, showing how that unique moment is like a microcosm, self-referred and self-contained. Naly explores how, in “The Calm,” the simultaneity of events outwits narrative linearity and brings the reader closer to the existential experience of time.

In “Excess and Lack: the Economy of Signs in Carver,” French critic Claire Fabre proposes to synthesize the place of the real in Carver’s stories through the close study of two stories belonging to two different collections of stories of the end of his writing career. The characters in “Feathers,” through the dinner at Bud and Olla’s, are faced with the excessive presence of the real in the form of the peacock and the baby, which Fabre sees as “excessively real” and bordering on the grotesque. However, as the analysis of “Menudo” shows, this “excessive presence” is
not incompatible with the Lacanian notion of the real as the impossible, and therefore representing what constitutes the concept of “lack”.

Marie Le Grix de la Salle considers two understudied stories in “‘Waiting for what? I’d like to know’: Confusing Expectations in Raymond Carver’s Train Stories.” Written with limited action and scant dialogue, “The Compartment” and “The Train” dramatize the characters’ waiting for something ill-defined to happen. By focusing on specific symbolical details which capture the reader’s attention—watches, waiting rooms, train cars—Carver manages to create narrative suspense, although what the characters are expecting is never clearly stated, leading readers to uncertain and divergent conclusions of the stories.

Françoise Sammarcelli, in “So why would I want a photograph of this tragedy?: The Inscription of the Eye in What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,” examines passages which most explicitly and powerfully address the issue of the eye and the related crisis, shedding light on the various strategies used by texts which recurrently call into question the codes of representation. By scrutinizing the intriguing close-ups on fascinating objects in texts that resort to disjunction and displacement, Sammarcelli dwells on Carver’s ambiguous negotiation with abjection and the notion of “borderline.” A close-up on “Viewfinder” and the questions of vision and abstraction show how linguistic codes come under scrutiny through exploring the topos of photography.

Not Far From Here: The Paris Symposium on Raymond Carver demonstrates more than ever the rich and vibrant international scholarship, especially among French scholars, that celebrates the remarkable work of Raymond Carver.
While recent scholarship in Carver Studies has been divided equally between edited collections and single-authored books, Paul Grant and Katherine Ashley’s *Carver Across the Curriculum* offers a very practical balance with scholarly study by presenting ten excellent and varied chapters on how and where to *teach* the writing of Raymond Carver.

Angela Sorby’s “Teaching Carver’s Voices through Pacific Northwest Music” explores the relationship between the economics of extraction in the Pacific Northwest and its influence on the shifting dynamics of masculinity, with a focus on violence and power, themes she sees echoed both in the folk music of the past and the more contemporary grunge music movement. The following chapter by Robert P. Waxler, “Teaching Male Violence and Vulnerability In Carver,” extends on Sorby’s chapter as he explores how male violence is a “consequence of inarticulacy and rigid gender roles” when expressed in Carver’s stories, though the same stories often present gender-transcending moments of redemption.

In “‘It Doesn’t Look Good’: Teaching End of Life Care through Carver’s Poetry,” co-authors Johanna Shapiro and Audrey Shafer explore the prevalence of Carver’s poetry in medical training programs, discussing how literary analysis of poems such as “What the Doctor Said” help medical students better understand their own emotional responses, including working through stages of grief and using humor as a release, when working with end-of-life patients. Paul Grant’s “‘It’s Grave
... Tempered with Humor’: Carver in a Humor Class” extends upon Shapiro and Shafer as he discusses how gallows humor can create common ground between people from diverse backgrounds and varied emotional connection, not only in the medical field, but across the arts and humanities as well. Jeff Birkenstein’s “Teaching Significant Food in Carver’s Fiction” deftly extends the concept of connection as he explores the communal activity of shared eating as a universal activity that bridges differences, loss, and trauma, an idea that is central to “A Small, Good Thing” wherein the Baker, after clarifying the misunderstanding at the cause of the tension between himself and a couple who have lost a child, shares rolls and coffee while he and the couple speak freely, arriving at understanding and closure.

*Carver Across the Curriculum* also extends its focus across cultures, offering two chapters and using Carver’s work in second language acquisition classes. Katherine Ashley, in “Translating Carver in the Modern Languages Classroom,” demonstrates how using the briefest fictions, such as “Popular Mechanics,” make excellent models for whole-text translations, considerations of literary and non-literary language and style, and expanded understanding of comparative literature. Ashley’s chapter connects very effectively with Sandra Lee Kleppe’s “Performing and Deforming Carver in the Classroom” in which she draws from her experience teaching in Norway; second language learners who perform the stories and poems reduce the distance between themselves and both text and culture, and “deform,” in which they re-form the work by adapting it into film or visual art, both actively engage students through meaningful immersion into the text.
What follows Kleppe’s student “deforming” Carver’s stories into visual art and film are chapters on teaching Carver through film and photography. Film maker Zhenya Kiperman’s “Teaching Carver through Robert Altman’s Short Cuts” considers how Altman's popular collage film with an ensemble cast employs the common artistic sensibility of the art of the everyday shared by both author and director, and how isolating dialogue from the text provides stimulating models for screenwriting exercises. “Teaching Carver through the Eye of the Camera,” by Ayala Amir, is another excellent pairing in this collection, as she presents photography as a metaphor for Carver’s fiction, exploring the boundaries and limitations of realism in photography and literature, as well as the temporal and spatial elements of writing.

The final chapter, “Imitating Carver in the Creative Writing Classroom” by Robert Miltner (the author of this essay), briefly reviews how Carver’s writing was shaped during his own years as a student writer by imitating Hemingway and later in his career by imitating Chekhov. Miltner suggests that teachers of creative writing in today’s classrooms can offer assignments that have students imitate Carver’s list poems and his lyric-narrative poetry, as well as his flash fictions and minimalist fictions; the pedagogy for imitation in creative writing classes is based on the imitation models commonly found in visual arts programs.

Carver Across the Curriculum is the first pedagogic collection on Carver, and Grant and Ashley have assembled a diverse body of essays written by talented and creative scholars. The collection is organized both for quick reference by scholars seeking chapters pertinent to their own area of interest and for seamless perusal by
readers interested in exploring the concept of the book. An excellent new addition to Carver studies, this book offers a model for comparable books on other authors.