

Introduction

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Welcome to the second issue of *The Raymond Carver Review*, a special issue on Raymond Carver and Feminism. The idea for this issue was proposed by two members of the editorial board, Claire Fabre-Clark of the Université de Paris XII and Libe García Zarranz, previously at the University of Zaragoza in Spain and now a Doctoral Fellow at the University of Alberta. Having presented and published with them, I knew Claire and Libe would be ideal editors for the first in-depth discussions on Carver and Feminism. The journal is fortunate to have two such talented scholars, both European feminists, guest edit this special issue on a very American author.

Once the proposal was accepted, a call for papers was placed, and there was excitement among the community of Carver scholars, but some skepticism as well. Sandra Kleppe, Associate Editor for the journal and president of the International Raymond Carver Society, reported that she had received emails from people who knew Carver, including Chuck Kinder, who wrote, “‘Carver and Feminism’! Are you kidding me? You academics are something else. Old Ray is rolling over in his grave laughing.” To be fair, he may be right; Raymond Carver himself may have found the topic worthy of an initial laugh. After all, Carver never presented himself as a feminist, and while he talked many times during interviews about first lines, fellowships, and fishing, he appeared not to have discussed feminism, if the two dozen interviews collected by

Marshall Bruce Gentry and William L. Stull are representative. And while I respect Chuck Kinder's life-long friendship with Carver, and his own ludic presentation of him in his comic novel *Honeymooners*, Kinder may be misreading the intent of this special issue of *The Raymond Carver Review*: we are not arguing that Carver was a feminist, but rather that a feminist study will offer readers new perspectives for Carver scholarship.

Such a re-reading, by limiting its focus to what can be seen through the critical lens of feminism, offers new insights into Carver's work, allowing for a widening of critical assessment of one of America's—and the world's—greatest authors. Readers have long been impressed by the many strong women found in his stories, and favorites come easily to mind: the unnamed women in "Fat," "Intimacy," and "Blackbird Pie," Roxy the chimney-sweep in "Where I'm Calling From," the melodramatic Holly in "Gazebo," the helpful Mrs. Webster in "Fever," the sociable Paula in "Put Yourself in My Shoes," the optimistic Emily in "How About This?" and the savvy Toni in "Are These Actual Miles?" Through each of these characters, Carver shows women who carry their own burdens with strength, dignity, and, as much as circumstances allow, success. The presence of strong women characters in Carver's stories may be based on his admiration for formidable and resilient women he knew personally, or what he considered necessary to tell the kind of stories he wanted to tell, but such biographical or aesthetic considerations are hardly feminism in a theoretical sense. Examining these women characters and the stories from a feminist perspective moves the focus of scholarship from the personalities of these fictional women to the larger principles of critical theory. By doing so, this special issue on Carver and Feminism initiates a new discussion for Carver studies, opening the way for further assessments, connections, and

opinions. The contributors and editors represent current scholarship in the U.S., Canada, Spain, Switzerland, Ireland, and France; as a result, these essays are not limited by geographic insularity or provincialism to any one current scholarly view; rather, they offer a representative sampling of critical readings that reflect contemporary feminist criticism.

Structurally, this issue contains peer-reviewed essays by four academic contributors: Josef Benson of the University of South Florida; Vanessa Hall of the New York City College of Technology, CUNY; Aoileann Ní Éigearthaigh of the Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland, and Eve Wiederhold of George Mason University in Virginia. Additionally, guest editor Claire Fabre-Clark has written an introduction for this special issue, while guest editor Libe García Zarranz and associate editor Vasiliki Fachard have written topical essays, and these three essays provide a context for the four peer-reviewed essays. Finally, and appropriately, included in this issue are reviews of recent books by Carver's wives, Maryann Burk Carver and Tess Gallagher, by Julia Kaziewicz and Jo Angela Edwins, respectively.

This second issue is the first of a series of special topics numbers, providing for talented guest editors to bring a vision to a project and shape issues that expand discussions and topics of interest to readers and scholars. In this sense, *The Raymond Carver Review* is extending its range as an academic journal by not limiting itself to one set of editors. Moreover, it is also expanding and diversifying as more members join the various boards, making the journal richer, fuller, and more vibrant. Academic journals exist because of the dedication of a community of like-minded and committed scholars. Issues of *The Raymond Carver Review* are possible because of the excellent editorial

board members who volunteer their time to review the submissions, make recommendations, and begin the work of editing essays for the issues. The original members of the board remain: Tamas Dobozy, Jo Angela Edwins, Chad Wriglesworth, William Wright, Claire Fabre-Clark, and Libe García Zarranz, with the latter two serving as guest editors for this issue. In addition, the board has expanded: former journal contributors Alaya Amir, Angela Sorby, and Enrico Monti were invited to the board, and Paul Grant and Françoise Sammarcelli were invited after the Paris Symposium; together, they bring new, international voices to augment the original editorial board. Two of the finest Carver scholars, Randolph Paul Runyon and Kirk Nessel, accepted invitations to the now-expanded advisory board. On the technical side, Jason Piatt has joined as a website consultant. Finally, I want to acknowledge the talented and dedicated Vasiliki Fachard who accepted a position as Associate Editor with this issue. An independent scholar with great editorial instincts, comprehensive knowledge, and an international perspective, her contributions are invaluable.

On behalf of all of us at *The Raymond Carver Review*, I hope you find this special issue on Carver and Feminism, guest edited by Claire Fabre-Clark and Libe García Zarranz, as interesting, informative, and innovative as we do.

Robert Miltner

Editor, *The Raymond Carver Review*