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Quote-unquote: Raymond Carver and metafiction

Claire Maniez

- 1 Raymond Carver, we are told, found metafiction “ultimately boring,” “all texture and no flesh and blood,” (quoted in Meyer, 27) and had little taste for the experimental fiction which flourished in the two decades preceding his own literary career. And some metafictionists seem to have reciprocated the feeling: “When I’ve read about two sentences of Ray Carver, I know the whole sense of the story,” William Gass declared in an interview (Saltzman 1991, 22). Yet categories are not as clear-cut as such quotations might suggest: Gass qualified his negative judgment in the following lines of the interview,¹ while Carver, on the other hand, mentioned William Gass as one of the authors he liked and chose to teach at the university,² implicitly recognizing that he somehow “fed” on him. Indeed although Raymond Carver has generally been hailed as the herald of a return to realism in contemporary American literature, several critics have pointed out the fact that his fiction does not ignore the work of his predecessors and is indebted to them in more than one way. As early as 1986, Marc Chénétier questioned the so-called “realism” of Carver’s fiction, emphasizing his extreme attention to narrative structure:

Even though [Carver] has clearly reintroduced a modicum of social depiction in his stories, it seems clear that his strategic choices favor the work as construct over an obsolete mimetic conception of the use of literary language. A text that feeds on reader’s reaction and filling in, that operates by subtraction of explicitness and clearly outlined conclusions, cannot be said to rely on traditional categories of representation. (188)

- 2 In his article about the story “Viewfinder”, Michael Trussler convincingly argues that “Carver’s subtle interweaving of various indeterminate levels [...] is a strategy that focuses on the sinuosities of narrative as an act.” (75) Randolph Runyon, in his 1992 essay, goes as far as to claim that “Carver is in fact a self-reflexive metafictional writer — not the practitioner of ‘extrospective’ fiction Barth takes him to be but an extremely *intro* spective one.” (4) Although Runyon’s assertion is probably exaggerated — and his method to prove his point somewhat controversial — many stories by Carver, through their

complex narrative strategies, lend themselves to metafictional interpretations, especially if we define metafiction, as William Gass proposes, as “those [works...] in which the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed.” (25)³ The “forms of fiction” Gass mentions include the narrative structure of the text, and thus the relationship of a writer to his tale, to his reader and to his material. In several stories, Carver’s narrative strategies draw the reader’s attention precisely to these points. This article will focus on one specific narrative device, the omission of quotation marks in the transcription of direct discourse, which Carver used only in a limited number of stories.⁴

- 3 Carver’s essay “On Writing” testifies to his close attention to punctuation: quoting one of Isaac Babel’s narrators — “No iron can pierce the heart with such force as a period put just at the right place” — he goes on:

Evan Connell said once that he knew he was finished with a story when he found himself going through it and taking out commas and then going through the story again and putting commas back in the same place. I like that way of working on something. I respect that kind of care for what is being done. That’s all we have, finally, the words, and they had better be the right ones, with the punctuation in the right places so that they can best say what they are meant to say. (24-25)

- 4 Punctuation, however, has an ambiguous status as far as narration is concerned, especially in first-person narratives: in such stories, while the narrative voice is supposed to be the source of all the words of the tale, the responsibility for its punctuation remains doubtful. One of the functions of punctuation is to give indications for the “performance” of the text, its oral realization, even if most readers no longer read aloud; it thus enters into the definition of the “narrative voice.”⁵ On the other hand, punctuation is undoubtedly part of what William Gass calls the “inscription” or “notation” of the text, i.e. its realization as a series of black marks on a page. All first-person narrators are not necessarily responsible for the written form of their story, and it is to clarify this question that Gérard Cordesse introduced the useful concept of the “scriptor” of a fictional text in his article “Narrateur, scripteur et auteur dans *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country*”. Cordesse remarks that first-person narration has become a favorite with realistic writers, since it supposedly coincides with maximum authorial disengagement, and thus makes referential illusion all the easier. Yet in order to assess the degree of the author’s disengagement from his text, one must also decide whether he delegates not only the telling but also the writing of the text to a character. In his discussion of “The Perderson Kid,” a story in which William Gass chose to work within a realistic framework, delegating the narration to an adolescent farmer in Midwestern America, Cordesse argues that the author has kept the responsibility of the inscription of the text for himself, and that Jorge, the story’s narrator, is not its “scriptor”. In spite of his apparent disengagement, the writer asserts his presence through his management of the written text, in particular through punctuation: Cordesse analyzes the absence of quotations marks in the story as a deliberate flouting of the conventions of realistic writing, a way for the writer to increase the text’s ambiguity at the expense of its realism (102). In Carver’s stories as well, the study of punctuation, or of its absence in places where it is expected, can lead the reader away from the realistic surface of the text, and reveal its hidden metafictional dimension.

- 5 “Fat,”⁶ the first story in the volume *Will You Please Be Quiet Please?*, was inspired by an anecdote which Carver’s first wife told him, but which he only used much later:

But I didn’t do anything with the story for years and then it came time to write the story and it was a question of how best to tell it, whose story it was. Then I made a

conscious decision how to present the story, and I decided to tell it from the point of view of the woman, the waitress, and frame the story as if she were telling it to her girlfriend. She can't quite make sense out of the story herself, all of the feelings that she experienced, but she goes ahead and tells it anyway.⁷

- 6 The narrative structure of the story confronts the reader with three different communication situations, each having a different time-space frame of reference: the first level involves the anonymous narrator, a waitress in a diner, and an extradiegetic narratee — that could also be the waitress herself, in a sort of interior monologue. This situation accounts for only a small part of the discourse of the story, but its framing position makes it essential to the interpretation of the story; its function is to introduce the next level — as in the first two sentences of the story — or to comment on it, as in the last lines, starting with “but I can see she doesn't know what to make of it” (16), and in a few isolated lines in the middle of the narrative, which clearly are not addressed to her friend Rita.⁸ These sentences can be considered as the narrator's reflections on the function of her narrative, although they mainly express the fact that she is still unable to give meaning to her experience. Placed immediately after a typographical blank, the sentence “Now that's part of it. I think that is really part of it” (13) translates her uncertainty about the object of her narration, since the pronoun *it* does not seem to refer to any specific element in the text. The sentences “I know now I was after something. But I don't know what” (15) clearly differentiate the moment of enunciation — now — from the time of the narrated experience, indicated by the use of the past form *was*, a unique occurrence in the story; they also belong to the narrator's introspective discourse, characterized by interrogation and indeterminacy.
- 7 The second level of enunciation involves the narrator's telling her friend Rita about a strange experience she had on a Wednesday night, a communication situation which is established in the first sentence of the story: “I'm sitting over coffee and cigarets at my friend Rita's and I am telling her about it” (13). Although the object of the narrative, once again, appears only as a cataphoric *it*, and remains highly problematic to the end of the story, storytelling itself is thematized through the introduction of the intradiegetic narratee Rita, who is referred to several times in the course of the narrative through the use of the second-person pronoun — “You know Rudy” (13), “You know the size of those Caesar salads?” (14), etc. — and sometimes comments upon what her friend tells her: “He's not the kind of person you'd forget, Rita puts in with a snicker” (14). Rita obviously lacks understanding, as she finds the story is getting interesting at the very point when it stops:
- What else? Rita says, lighting one of my cigarets and pulling her chair closer to the table. This story is getting interesting now, Rita says.
That's it. Nothing else. (16)
- 8 In the same way, Rita's only comment on the story — “That's a funny story” (16) — is evidence of her lack of perception and of her incapacity to provide the meaning which the narrator is trying to find. Rita is interested only in closure, and presents the reader with a reflection of himself which he must try not to resemble: the story “makes the reader a very active participant: We are called upon, if we don't want to be dropped the way Rudy and Rita are being dropped, to be more sensitive listeners than they were.” (Meyer 35) By introducing in the story a figure of the unresponsive reader, Carver underlines the reader's role in the production of textual meaning.

- 9 Inside the narration appears a third level of enunciation, which involves the narrator in her professional capacity, her fat customer and her colleagues. Indeed, the story of that Wednesday night consists mainly in the verbatim transcription of the words uttered by the different characters and minute description of their actions in the course of the dialogue:

I drop lots of sour cream onto his potato. I sprinkle bacon and chives over his sour cream. I bring him more bread and butter.
Is everything all right? I say
Fine, he says, and he puffs. Excellent, thank you, he says, and puffs again.
Enjoy your dinner, I say. I raise the lid of his sugar bowl and look in. He nods and keeps looking at me until I move away. (15)

- 10 The narrator's obsessively precise account of the events testifies to the impression that the experience made on her, since she seems to have total recall of what went on that evening. However, it also indicates that she is unable to identify the significant elements of her experience to structure them into a meaningful narrative. Rita's apparent frustration is indeed understandable, since the story sometimes sounds as dry as a police report, and fails to highlight any salient point around which meaning and interpretation could accrue. What we are presented with is in fact the rough material for a story, without the mediation of a competent narrator.
- 11 The confusion engendered by such a mode of narration is compounded by the lack of typographical distinction between the three levels of enunciation which we have identified: no quotation mark ever interrupts the flow of the narrative voice, whether it addresses the implied reader, Rita, or the fat customer, whereas according to the rules of traditional narration, the narrator's and Rita's words in the second level should be within quotation marks, while the exchanges between her and the fat man should be within a double pair of quotes.⁹ In the same way, the use of a single tense (the present) throughout the story further contributes to blurring the borders between the three communication situations, and points to the obsessive *presence* of the incident in the narrator's mind. The heuristic function of storytelling is thus emphasized in the narrator's half-failed attempt to make sense of her experience by telling her friend about it.
- 12 Who is responsible for the omission of the quotes is of course an open question: should we consider the narrator or the author as the "scriptor" of the text? If we consider that the narrator is also the writer of the story, and thus the source of its punctuation, then the omission of the quotation marks is simply another means of characterization: the waitress, who does not seem to master the rules of narration, is also ignorant of the conventions of written discourse. It is however more interesting to consider this device as one of the author's means of asserting his presence, in spite of his delegation of the narration to another instance, through the inscription of the narrative voice on the page. As we saw above, this is one of the ways metafiction manifests itself under the guise of realistic fiction. In Carver's story, although it is not overtly metafictional, the missing quotation marks draw the reader's attention to what is really at stake in the narrative, i.e. the impression produced on the narrator by the incident in the diner, as well as her incapacity to share this experience with her friend Rita. They emphasize the narrator's lack of distance from the event she narrates: quotations marks are indeed a mark of the enunciator's distance¹⁰ from what he/she utters, whether they simply differentiate his/her words from someone else's, or whether they also carry a defensive or ironical connotation. The narrator thus appears as completely alienated by her own experience,

unable to step back and consider it from a perspective which would give it shape and meaning. The narrative strategy chosen by Carver gives us an answer to the question he himself asked of “whose story it was”: in spite of its title, the story is not the fat man’s story, but the narrator’s. By appropriating all the voices in the story, she tries to appropriate her own experience of the incident, an attempt which is often the main object of autodiegetic narration.

- 13 “Intimacy” presents us with another example of a narrator’s appropriation of someone else’s words, but in this case it is legitimate to consider that the narrator is also the “scriptor” of the story. In this story, Carver once again dramatizes the situation of a writer suffering from lack of inspiration, as he had in “Put Yourself in my Shoes,” another openly metafictional story. The treatment of the theme is however less satirical than it was in the former story, and could be usefully compared with its less overt handling in “Collectors”. In that story, a disquieting salesman calls upon the narrator to demonstrate the magical powers of a vacuum cleaner:

You’ll be surprised to see what can collect in a mattress over the months, over the years. Every day, every night of our lives, we’re leaving little bits of ourselves, flakes of this and that, behind. Where do they go, these bits and pieces of ourselves? Right through the sheets and into the mattress, *that’s* where! Pillows too.
(83)

- 14 As he performs his demonstration, the salesman alludes to various writers (W.H. Auden, Rilke and Voltaire), and forces himself into the narrator’s intimacy, collecting into his *paper* filters the traces of his former life: “After a while he shut off the machine, opened the lid, and silently brought me the filter, alive with dust, hair, small grainy things. I looked at the filter, and then I got up and put it in the garbage” (85). Significantly, the narrator refuses to acknowledge that the salesman’s actions have anything to do with him: “It’s not my mattress” he tells him after the latter has shown him the *material* which had gathered in the creases of the mattress.
- 15 *Material* is also the term used by the narrator’s ex-wife in “Intimacy,”¹¹ when she accuses her former husband, who is paying her an unexpected visit, of coming to find new matter for future stories:

She says, I’m beginning to understand something now. I think I know why you’re here. Yes. I know why you’re here, even if you don’t. But you’re a slyboots. You know why you’re here. You’re on a fishing expedition. You’re hunting for *material*. Am I getting warm? Am I right? (47-48, Carver’s italics)

- 16 Most of the discourse of the story is made up of the wife’s account, prompted by the narrator, of an incident of their married life, and of her accusations against her former husband, whom she reproaches with remembering only the most sordid episodes of their life together and using them in his fiction to ridicule her. Whether the absence of quotation marks is attributed to the narrator himself – in which case it would constitute a case of unconscious self-betrayal –, or to the author, the device underlines the predatory and parasitic nature of the writer’s activity who, after using his wife as a character in former stories, now appropriates her very words in order to produce another story: “Maybe it’ll make a good story, she says” (53). The narrator’s attitude at the end of the story confirms this interpretation: as he kneels in front of his wife, he holds onto the hem of her skirt, as a moment earlier he had fingered the sleeve of her blouse, feeling the

material of his wife's clothes, unable to detach himself from it until she has granted him the forgiveness he needs to go on with his task:

She says, I forgive you.

She says, Are you satisfied now? Is that better? Are you happy? He's happy now, she says.

But I'm still there, knees to the floor.

[...]

She says, You just tell it like you have to, I guess, and forget the rest. Like always.

You been doing that for so long now anyway that it shouldn't be hard for you.

She says, There; I've done it. You're free, aren't you? At least you think you are anyway. Free at last. That's a joke, but don't laugh. Anyway, you feel better, don't you? (52)

- 17 In this excerpt, the narrator finds himself relegated to the position of a character through the use of the pronoun *he* by his wife. Although she is only quoting someone else's words, she appropriates them in this instance, whereas they first appeared in the text within quotations marks, the only ones in the story:

She says, You found somebody else for yourself, didn't you? It didn't take long. And you're happy now. That's what they say about you anyway: "He's happy now." Hey, I read everything you send! (49)

- 18 The situation involves a sort of ironic reversal, as the narrator's ex-wife uses against him the alienating powers of the writer, with material which he himself sent her. The story thus presents us with a much more ambivalent representation of the writer's activity than "Put Yourself in my Shoes": both predatory and alienating, it is also, as the final image of the text suggests, the necessary, sometimes painful task of a "collector" of dead leaves:¹²

There are these leaves everywhere, even in the gutters. Piles of leaves wherever I look. They're falling off the limbs as I walk. I can't take a step without putting my shoe into leaves. Somebody ought to make an effort here. Somebody ought to get a rake and take care of this. (53)

- 19 If the omission of quotes in "Intimacy" can be read as the manifestation in the inscription of the narrative voice of the narrator's appropriation of someone else's words, the reverse phenomenon can be observed in the story "Chef's House": the narrator, the ex-wife of an ex-alcoholic, has accepted to spend the summer with him in a house lent by a friend, and finally lets herself be contaminated by her ex-husband's pessimism. As she expresses the hope of a possible change for both of them, his words become superimposed on her own narrative, thus negating it:

Then I said something. I said, Suppose, just suppose, nothing had ever happened. Suppose this was for the first time. Just suppose. It doesn't hurt to suppose. Say none of the other had ever happened. You know what I mean? Then what? I said.

Wes fixed his eyes on me. He said, Then I suppose we'd have to be somebody else if that was the case. Somebody we're not. I don't have that kind of supposing left in me. We were born who we are. Don't you see? (311)

- 20 The story concludes with the narrator's renunciation: "I went in to start supper. We still had some fish in the icebox. There wasn't much else. We'll clean it up tonight, I thought, and that will be the end of it." (312) Once again, the missing quotation marks show the narrator's lack of distance and mastery over her own narrative and her own life. Like her husband, she is the pawn of circumstances, and allows herself to become included in his rival script. "Edna cannot hold out for long against her husband's logic, and she ends up

absorbing his attitude,” Arthur Saltzman writes, concluding his analysis of the story with these words: “For Carver to bother to extend ‘Chef’s House’ to include verification of Wes’s relapse and Edna’s final renunciation would be redundant.” (130)

- 21 “Why, Honey?” presents the same narrative structure as “Fat,” to the extent that narration is once again motivated, the enunciation situation being that of a mother answering a request for information concerning her son. This time, however, the narrator is obviously also the “scriptor” of the text, and the narratee remains anonymous, a circumstance which directs the reader’s attention to the problem of his identity. The first and last lines of the story firmly establish the frame of the narration, while the rest of the text is devoted to the narrative of the son’s offenses, interspersed with dialogues devoid of quotation marks and occasionally of tag clauses:

Where did you go?
Up to the Wenas. We got a few shots.
Who did you go with, honey?
Fred.
Fred?
He stared and I didn’t say anything else. (127-128)

- 22 As in “Fat,” the mother’s detailed narrative of her son’s doings in the fortnight preceding his disappearance from her life suggests that the events have been impressed on her memory and still haunt her, since she seems able to reproduce verbatim their dialogues and her own monologue after all these years. The two levels of enunciation are undifferentiated, and no punctuation mark distinguishes the words addressed to the recipient of the letter from those spoken to the son. The device enables Carver to arouse the reader’s curiosity about the unknown addressee: the story’s central sentence, taken from a dialogue between mother and son, seems to be directed, beyond its immediate context, to the mysterious addressee:

Honey, what happened to your shoes? Look at your shoes.
I ran out of gas, I had to walk for gas. He sat up. What do you care?
I am your mother. (128)

- 23 The conjecture that the letter could be addressed to the narrator’s son is supported by the second half of the story, in which the reader discovers that the son is a powerful politician: as Saltzman puts it, “it would have been less astounding to learn of his having become a gangster.” (58) Indeed, the mother’s narrative in the first half of the story builds up the portrait of a liar, thief, and possible murderer, whose first recorded offense is an act of cruelty towards the family’s old cat Trudy, on Independence Day. The revelation of his successful career as a politician suggests that he is powerful enough to have traced her in spite of her efforts to hide, as the narrator herself recognizes — “If you are a powerful man and want to find somebody, you can find them, it wouldn’t be that hard” (130) —, without fully realizing the sinister implications of the fact: who indeed but her son might be interested in locating a mother who has such devastating revelations to offer? Thus a sense of menace sets in, in accordance with Carver’s own precepts in his essay “On Writing”:

I like it when there is some feeling of threat or sense of menace in short stories. I think a little menace is fine to have in a story. For one thing, it’s good for the circulation. There has to be a tension, a sense that something is imminent, that certain things are in relentless motion, or else, most often, there simply won’t be a story. What creates tension in a piece of fiction is partly the way the concrete words are linked together to make up the visible action of the story. But it’s also the

things that are left out, that are implied, the landscape just under the smooth (but sometimes broken and unsettled) surface of things. (26)

- 24 The mother's only partial awareness of her danger makes the sense of threat even more acute for the reader, as he understands that the letter writer, signing "Yours *truly*" (my italics) at the bottom of a letter to a son who has always despised truth, might bring upon herself the fate of the cat *Trudy*, whose funeral oration was that she was old and had lived long enough. The final paragraph of the letter, insisting on the mysterious correspondent's reasons for tracing the mother, seems to leave no doubt about the outcome of the story: "I also wanted to ask you how you got my name and knew where to write. I have been praying no one knew. But you did. Why did you? Please tell me why?" (130) As Ewing Campbell remarked, the elliptical sentences convey the "narrator's confusion and terror," as well as the fact that she is "concerned about motives," as the "unidiomatic" expression "Why did you [know]?" indicates (24-25). The final question, substituting *why* for the expected *how*, rings like an echo of the title. As the only manifestation of the implied author in the story, the title "Why, Honey?" associates the final question to the one asked by the narrator in the crucial central scene between mother and son, at the end of her long monologue: "Why should he lie, you ask yourself, what does he gain I don't understand. I keep asking myself why but I don't have the answer. Why, honey?" (129). The final *you* in "Why did you?" is thus equated with *honey*, a word which is used eleven times in the story to designate the narrator's son.

In this story, the absence of quotations marks underlines the narrator's lack of control over her narrative as well as the confusion in her mind, but it also fulfills a function in the narrative strategy: it reveals the addressee's identity to the reader, and forces him to consider the implications of that identification. One can of course read the story as a satire of an America where politicians are all the more successful as they are liars and murderers: "Perhaps Carver implies that at this level of accomplishment the two [being a politician or a gangster] merge, or that the power politics associated with being a victimizer instead of a victim mandate the same ruthlessness regardless of what 'career' one chooses." (Saltzman 58-59) However, it is also possible to read the story as a metaphor for the relationship between reader and writer: like the mother, the author of fiction writes for an unknown addressee who is also his "hypocritical brother," if not his son. For William Gass, "the object of every novel is its reader," (70) a position which can easily become uncomfortable when the fiction confronts us with such a relentless picture of our limitations and betrayals. Hence the reader's desire to silence the author's voice, by closing the book or proposing a less disturbing interpretation.¹³

- 25 Whether openly assumed, as in "Intimacy," or hidden under a realistic surface, as in "Fat," and "Why, Honey?," manifestations of Carver's literary narcissism can be found in many of his stories, as they explore the heuristic function of narration, the parasitic nature of the writer's activity, or the author-reader relationship. As Marc Chénétier put it,

By pointing consistently to that which "has not yet been comprehended" — and another suggestion of his stories is that the characters themselves, not being quite equipped for the task, are pushed all the deeper into the process of alienation — Carver favors contact between the struggling nature of the object of representation and the decoding attitudes of the reader at the reception end of the line. The mediating effects of the interrogative structure, of the elements of indeterminacy, and of the undecidable prolongation of the diegetic end transform his

narratives into far less and far more than what most reviewers and critics have been tempted to pigeonhole as “realism” or “minimalism.” (181-82)

- 26 Carver’s art, indeed, proceeds through often imperceptible omission, and many readers fail to notice the missing quotation marks¹⁴ in the stories we have analyzed, although their absence constitutes an important clue to their interpretation, forcing the reader to reconsider the stories’ relation to reality as well as his own relation to fiction.

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NOTES

“Now part of that may be a fault of Carver’s, but part of it is a matter of the experience of the reader, who just knows a great deal about how these things work. I think Ray is probably the best of that whole bunch, but I think, unlike, say, the best of Barthelme, where there is something absolutely extraordinary, with Ray I tend to say... okay... [...] It’s not as much of a meal [as Beckett].” (Saltzman interview, 22).

“Lorsque j’enseignais, je choisissais des auteurs que j’aimais et qui m’étaient utiles à moi, jeune écrivain. Flaubert, ses *Contes* et ses lettres, Maupassant (sur qui j’ai écrit un poème: *Ask him*), Tchekhov, Flannery O’Connor, un roman de William Gass et ses essais critiques, Eudora Welty...” (Interview with Claude Grimal, p. 77).

Gass shares Carver’s impatience with “writers writing about writing” (quoted in Meyer, 27), and refuses to restrict the use of the term metafiction to “those drearily predictable pieces about writers who are writing about what they are writing” (24-25).

These stories are: “Fat,” “Collectors” and “Why, honey?” from the collection *Will You Please Be Quiet Please* (1976), “Popular mechanics” and “Everything stuck to him” (a revised version of “Distance” from *Furious Seasons*, 1977) from *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981), “Chef’s house” from *Cathedral* (1983), and “Intimacy” from *Elephant* (1988). The quotations from the stories in the first three collections will be taken from the 1985 Picador edition *The Stories of Raymond Carver*.

For a discussion of this highly problematic concept, see the articles in *Revue Française d’Études Américaines* n° 54, November 1992, “La voix dans la fiction américaine contemporaine,” Marc Chénétier, ed. and in *GRAAT* n° 12, 1994 (Publications de l’Université de Tours), “Effets de voix,” Pierre Gault, ed.

Interestingly, this short story was dramatized by a French company in 1993, together with other texts of fiction by such avowed practitioners of metafiction as Donald Barthelme and Robert Coover, under the title: *Pratiques innommables (Unspeakable Practices)* after texts by Raymond Carver, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, Stephen Dixon, Kenneth Gangemi, William Gass, Flannery O’Connor, a production of the Théâtre de l’Opossum, January-February 1993. Two other stories by Carver (“The Idea” and “Cathedral”) were also included in that production.

Quoted in Claudine Verley, “Errand’ ou le réalisme de R. Carver dans un bouchon de campagne”, in *Visions Critiques* n° 7, 1991, pp. 60-61.

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These stories are: “Fat,” “Collectors” and “Why, honey?” from the collection *Will You Please Be Quiet Please* (1976), “Popular mechanics” and “Everything stuck to him” (a revised version of “Distance” from *Furious Seasons*, 1977) from *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981), “Chef’s house” from *Cathedral* (1983), and “Intimacy” from *Elephant* (1988). The quotations from the stories in the first three collections will be taken from the 1985 Picador edition *The Stories of Raymond Carver*.

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ABSTRACTS

Raymond Carver, bien qu'ayant souvent exprimé des réserves sur les exercices métafictionnels de la génération d'écrivains américains qui a précédé la sienne, n'a cependant pas gommé de sa propre pratique d'écriture toute dimension auto-réflexive. À partir de l'étude d'un élément perturbateur dans la ponctuation de quelques nouvelles, l'omission des guillemets dans la transcription des dialogues, cet article s'attache à montrer comment cette absence attire

l'attention du lecteur sur la structure énonciative des textes considérés, notamment sur l'identité de leur « scripteur », et permet de les lire comme des métaphores de l'écriture, mettant en évidence tantôt sa fonction heuristique (« Fat »), tantôt son caractère prédateur (« Collectors », « Intimacy »), tantôt encore la difficile et dangereuse relation qui peut exister entre auteur et lecteur (« Why, Honey? »).

AUTHORS

CLAIRE MANIEZ

Claire MANIEZ est Maître de conférence de littérature américaine à l'Université de Metz. Elle est l'auteur de l'ouvrage *William Gass : l'ordre de la voix*, paru chez Bellin en 1996, ainsi que de nombreux articles de critique, notamment sur William Gass, Paul Auster, Raymond Carver et William Gadsis. Elle a aussi traduit deux romans de Stanley Elkin : *The Magic Kingdom* et *Van Gogh's Room at Arles*. Elle a enfin publié des articles sur les traductions françaises de *Huckleberry Finn*.