Raymond Carver's "Myers trio"

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In 1999, *Esquire* magazine posthumously published “Kindling,” one of three Raymond Carver stories “found” by Jay Woodruff and Tess Gallagher among Carver’s files in his office in Port Angeles. Along with two stories discovered by William Stull and Maureen Carroll in the William Charvat Collection of American Fiction at Ohio State University, these five lost stories were the impetus for the 2001 collection *Call If You Need Me: The Uncollected Fiction and Other Prose*. Of the stories, “Kindling” is the most remarkable for its central character, a writer identified only as Myers, who makes his third appearance in a Carver story. Myers had previously appeared in Carver’s first published book of fiction—a 1974 Capra Press chapbook, *Put Yourself in My Shoes*—and again in “The Compartment,” from *Cathedral* in 1983, though oddly not included in *Where I’m Calling From: Selected Stories*, Carver’s 1988 “major” collection.

What is the relationship between these three "Myers" stories by Raymond Carver? What happens when these three stories are read as an intentional or critically constructed composite, as an interlocking short story sequence about the writer, Myers, and perhaps about the writer, Carver? Such a reading would ask us to reconsider the body of Carver’s fiction.

“Put Yourself in My Shoes”

“Put Yourself in My Shoes” is the stock tale of a writer who quit his day job to write a novel. In the story, Myers is confronted by the Morgans, whose house he and his wife Paula lived in temporarily while the owner and his wife were in Germany; the house-sitting apparently did not go as the Morgans had planned, and when the “Myerses” (Carver’s label) visit the Morgans over the Christmas holidays, Morgan and his wife tell stories (within the larger outside frame story) in which they make veiled accusations concerning the way the Myerses conducted themselves while house sitting. After several stories within stories, discussions regarding the writing life, and Edgar Morgan’s advice...
to Myers regarding his writing future, the plot ends with Myers having found his story: the one he has written and the one we are reading.

This metafictional nature of “Put Yourself in My Shoes” is evident in the surface narrative. Readers discover early that Myers is a writer when Carver shows Myers thinking about a former co-worker with whom Paula still works: “Dick always talked of going to Paris to write a novel, and when Myers quit to write a novel, Dick said he would watch for Myers’ name on the best seller list” (WICF 94). It is important that Myers is talked about as a novelist, since Myers is presented as a writer who “was between stories” (my emphasis), for a while a novelist is engaged in an extended commitment to a project, a short story writer works on fragments, sketches, and small narratives, therefore Myers can be “between stories” more easily as a writer of short stories—as was Carver—so that Myers can live up to his own expectations of writing individual stories by the end of “Put Yourself in My Shoes.” Furthermore, Myers himself knows that he is falling short of expectations—both Dick’s and his own—for, while Dick wants to “watch for Myers’ name on the best-seller list,” readers observe how Myers “began to write his name on the glass [window] as he waited [for Paula to reply on the phone]” (95), the window being where, instead of the best-seller list, Myers writes his name, like a by-line, but in a temporal medium (steam, generated by hot air) on a transparent surface. Readers infer that Myers has not yet had success with publishing, even if he has been writing, for Paula expresses a desire to visit Germany “Maybe as soon as Myers sells something” (101), suggesting that his quitting work to write has not panned out. Myers twice comments indirectly on his faltering as a writer, once by using driving as a writing metaphor, “I think I can get my car started. If I can’t start it, I’ll call you back” (95) and once by using travel, with undertones of sexual performance, as a metaphor, “I don’t think I can come,’ Myers said” and “I can’t come now,’ Myers said” (94). This performance anxiety and its accompanying fear of impotence—as metaphor for writer’s block—is carried to its extreme when Paula tells Myers that a former co-worker, Larry Gudinas, “committed suicide. He shot himself in the mouth” (95); this has ghostly echoes of Hemingway’s suicide reputedly in popular culture as due to his fear of impotence, a noteworthy comparison given that Carver often commented that “Hemingway [was] an author whose work I admire greatly” (Pope and McElhinny 17). Moreover, this Hemingway reference is reinforced by Dick’s/Carl’s romantic desire to go to Paris—like Hemingway in the 1930s—to write. Of course, the closest to Paris Myers gets is house-sitting for the Morgans when they go to Germany, a point made even more distinctly when Edgar Morgan goads Myers by proclaiming, “I should think a trip to Europe would be very beneficial to a writer” (101). Morgan is an academic while Myers is not, so he dismisses both Dick’s and Morgan’s advice to follow the imperative of Americans Henry James and Ernest Hemingway, as well as Ireland’s James Joyce, to go to Paris for inspiration. Myers stays, finding his story in the Morgans, so that he can stay his native ground, for his time and place are the America he lives in.

Writing issues—craft, technique, influences—are embedded in the narrative and find emphasis in the interior stories. For example, when Edgar Morgan tells the story of his former academic colleague’s infidelity with a young co-ed and his son’s throwing a can of tomato soup at his head, there are two sets of reactions. First, each character has a different emotional response: Morgan gazes at his listeners; Mrs. Morgan pronounces the story “disgusting”; Paula calls it “[h]orrible”; while Myers just “grinned” (102). Secondly, each character suggests that the story could be told from a different point of view: Edgar initially suggests the point of view of the man, then also offers that of the young co-ed;
Mrs. Morgan prefers the wife; Paula offers the son’s view; yet Myers remains silent. While his silence seems a refutation of realism’s tenet of “point of view” and the author’s god-like omniscience, this same persistent silence permits all the others to express multiple points of view, or rather, since they allow for each character to stand inside the shoes of different points of view, this silence creates opportunities for Edgar, Paula, and Mrs. Morgan to put themselves in some else’s shoes. Edgar Morgan pushes the issue with Myers, insisting he take a position or point of view: “Put yourself in the shoes of that eighteen-year-old coed who fell in love with a married man. Think about her for a moment, and then you see the possibility of your story” (103). This dialogue both echoes the title of the story and emphasizes the metafictional nature of this piece: put yourself in my(ers)’ shoes, it seems to say, and watch him use this episode as his next story, for, as we learn at the end as Myers and Paula leave, “He [Myers] was at the very end of a story” (112).

Secondly, the Morgans tell Myers three times how to conduct himself as a writer. He needs, for instance, to be like Tolstoy rather than himself: “It would take a Tolstoy to tell [the story of the colleague’s infidelity] and tell it right ” (103) and “It doesn’t need a Tolstoy to tell [the story of what the Myerses did to the Morgans’ house]” (111).

The contradiction between these two statements represents a movement away from the tenants of 19th century realism to which Tolstoy adhered toward a 20th century postmodern appropriation of material—the subject of Carver’s “Intimacy”—as old styles of storytelling are replaced by new conventions. Ironically, Carver, a writer of this postmodern metafiction, believed that “Tolstoy is the best there is” (Simpson and Buzbee 46). Moreover, when Myers can not stop laughing over Mrs. Morgan’s line that “Fate sent [Mrs. Attenborough] to die on the couch in our living room” (109), Edgar chastises Myers, saying:

“If you were a real writer, as you say you are, Mr. Myers, you would not laugh,”
Morgan said as he got to his feet. “You would not dare laugh! You would try to understand. You would plumb the depths of that poor souls’ heart and try to understand. But you are no writer, sir!”
Myers kept on giggling. (109-10)

Lastly, when Morgan wants the “real story”—of what happened when the Myerses house-sat—told, he goads Myers again: “If you were a real writer, sir, you would put that story into words and not pussyfoot around with it, either” (111). What seems evident is that Morgan wants closure, both on the house-sitting incident and the evening’s episode as well, as evidenced in Morgan’s comment regarding the incident with Mrs. Attenborough when he offers closure: “Here is what happened, then. Mr. Myers, I’ll go right to the climax, as you writers say” (108), and his feeling cut-off when Myers won’t give him the closure on the house-sitting incident, particularly regarding his two-volume set of ‘Jazz at the Philharmonic,’ which he demands:

…and now, now I’d like this writer [Myers] to tell me exactly what he knows of their whereabouts. Mr. Myers? … I insist on knowing! Morgan called. “I am waiting, sir!”
(112)

Of course, while Morgan sought a convergent ending with clearly identified closure, Myers gets one, but Morgan doesn’t get one, and further, if we are to believe that Myers will tell this entire story, as “Put Yourself in My Shoes,” then the story becomes divergent, for Myers is no longer “between stories,” but on to the next one. “Myers has apparently overcome his writer’s block,” as Arthur M. Saltzman observes, “Not the tales proffered by their hosts, but the tale of their hosts” (54-5).
What Kirk Nesset has said of “Intimacy” might just as well apply to this story: “Winking at us at times in the story, at play in the fields of the metafictional, Carver sheds new light on the dark inner realm of his craft” (101). As we can see, then, Myers is very much the alter-ego or shadow figure for Carver. “Myers is the man in Carver’s shoes,” quips Arthur M. Saltzman (52); he is “Carver-Myers, the aspiring writer,” as Runyon identifies him (52), with the story operating as a postmodern metafiction on the writing process, and, as Runyon further points out, the job which Myers left so that he could write comes close to the position Carver held with Science Research Associates from 1967-70 (50), echoed by Paula Myers’ reference to Larry Gudinas who “helped out on science books for a while” (WICF 95).

Moreover, Runyon argues that the Edgar Morgan character is based on John Gardner, Carver’s former teacher, from whom he asserts Carver borrowed story titles, much like the Myerses borrow the Morgan’s personal items: “[John] Gardner is hidden yet displayed in the person of Edgar Morgan (as the –gar of his first name suggests) by a remarkable switching of opposites: “Morgan envies Myers for being a writer, but at a deeper level this is the story of how Carver-Myers … wishes he were Gardner-Morgan (52). Taking Runyon’s writer-character conflation one step further, I want to read the name Myers as a blend of “my” (story or counterpart) and “er” (from the end of Carver), holding the two syllable surname, and reading Myers as an alter-ego for Carver himself, as Carver “Puts [Him]self in My[ers]’ Shoes.”

Interestingly, French Carver scholar Marc Chénétier has written on how “Carver’s characters are so often ‘halfway between possibilities’” (quoted in Runyon); this is true for Myers who we find “between stories.” This sense of being “between” links the stories by considering how Myers is always found “between”: stories in “Put Yourself in My Shoes,” trains in “The Compartment,” and lives in “Kindling.” This link furthers the exploration of Myers, and Carver-Myers, as a writer and as an individual, seeking to define identity and selfhood.

“The Compartment”

Kirk Nesset has called “The Compartment” “one of Carver’s bleakest stories ever” (51). A mostly descriptive piece nearly devoid of dialogue, “The Compartment” presents a now-older Myers who is divorced and working at an engineering firm. He doesn’t seem to be writing. In this “dissonant narrative … about [a] solitary railroad journey” (Kennedy 206), Myers is traveling by train in Europe, in Italy and France, and on to visit his son in Strasbourg. The choice of Strasbourg is interesting, for it is a border town “between” two countries, and, as a result of its varied historical inclusions in German and France, it functions as a border, as an interstitial locale where Myers must make his decision of crossing over or returning.

Notably, Myers and his son are estranged: “He hadn’t seen the boy in eight years. There had been no phone calls between them during this time” (47, my emphasis); the loss of time is emphasized when the “expensive Japanese wristwatch [he had] purchased at a shop in Rome” (52) for his son is stolen on the train, leaving Myers frustrated and “tired of trying to make himself understood to strangers” (52). In a way, while the theft of the watch echoes the theft of the $120 by Mrs. Attenborough from Mrs. Morgan in “Put Yourself in My Shoes,” the loss of the watch symbolically alters time, for Myers is in the place and time where he has come to meet his estranged son, and it possible that he unconsciously wished to lose the watch in order to disconnect himself from his son, an
action that is echoed by his unconscious wish to have his train car, the compartment of the title, disconnected so that he can be completely removed from the time and place necessary for a reunion with his son.

While it can be assumed Myers has taken Edgar Morgan’s advice that “a trip to Europe would be very beneficial to a writer” (“Put Yourself WICF 101), as a son might take a father’s advice, Myers, however, subconsciously seems still to refute the European experience when he wonders, regarding his son, about his decision to go to France, a reference which establishes his son as a metafictional extension of himself. Myers, after all, is not in his own territory, but is instead the outsider, the other who has to mix with people who do not speak his language, as evidenced by his frustration when trying to locate the watch he had bought for his son which he discovers is stolen. Ultimately, with his loss of time (the watch) and place (the US for Europe, “his” train car for another), his dislocation is emphasized by his disconnection.

Met, Myers’ dislocation is greater than that of his disconnections in Europe, it includes his being uncoupled from his wife and his writing which were central to his character in “Put Yourself in My Shoes.” Myers is at this time is neither married to Paula nor writing, and, given that he has an adult son, it appears as if some twenty years or more has passed since the events in “Put Yourself in My Shoes.” The once humorous and playful writer Myers has become a dour, surly businessman, a mean-spirited man who is disdainful of “foreigners” (54) and who decides, after all his travel, not even to see his son:

... a wave of bitterness passed over Myers. This boy had devour ed Myers’ youth, had turned the young girl he had courted and wed into a nervous, alcoholic woman whom the boy alternately pitied and bullied. Why on earth, Myers asked himself, would he come all this way to see someone he disliked? He didn’t want to shake the boy’s hand, the hand of his enemy... (54).

It appears as if Paula has become an alcoholic, though we don’t see Myers drinking at all, an issue that comes into play when Myers reappears in “Kindling.”

Myers moves between first and second class train cars three times, a number that echoes the number of stories the Morgans tell, in the course of the narrative, and, due to his stubborn Americentricism—“He felt it would be humiliating to put his head into one of the compartments and say, “Paree?” or however they said it”—he finds his train car, with his luggage, has been reconnected to another train, leaving him in a second-class car “nearly filled with small, dark-skinned men who spoke rapidly in a language Myers had never heard before” (58). After missing his connection, the story ends with Myers on a train, “going somewhere, he knew that. And if it was the wrong direction, sooner or later he’d find out” (58). In this symbolic way, with Myers on the wrong train, he is again between places. Moreover, Myers had become the cranky Morgan, and the small, dark-skinned men are “jovial” and “laughing,” as Myers was in “Put Yourself in My Shoes.” Where Myers has put himself is in an emotional compartment, as his wish from earlier in the story comes true: “He [Myers] thought this might be a good way to live—in an old house surrounded by a wall” (48). Ultimately, Myers’ “tendency toward insularity” leaves him “insulated in his ‘compartment’” as he remains on the train, “walling out everything external to his selfish world” (Nesset 51); identity and self- hood are self-contained, emphasized by Myers’ near silence in the story, his stubborn denial of emotional connection, and his secreting himself in sleep as the train carries him to an unknown destination.
Myers makes his final appearance in the posthumously published “Kindling.” Seemingly, Carver has gone back to re-imagine an aging Myers in light of a new horizon of possibility: Myers, like Carver, has become a recovering alcoholic. Carver begins “Kindling” by stating, “It was the middle of August and Myers was between lives” (my emphasis). The phrase “middle of August” suggests a man who is metaphorically in middle age, and the phrase in “between lives” echoes Myers’ being “between stories” from “Put Yourself in My Shoes” and his being between train cars in “The Compartment,” for Myers is between the “drying out facility” he has just left and where he will go when he leaves Sol and Bonnie’s house “in a day or two” (20).

Interestingly, the same Myers who lost his suitcase by leaving it in the train car in “The Compartment” is obsessive about not losing the one he takes with him to Sol and Bonnie’s house. When he first arrives, he “gripped his suitcase and stepped inside” (7); when he enters, he “was still holding his suitcase” (8); when talking to his hosts the first time, he “set the suitcase down and opened and closed his fingers. Then he picked up the suitcase again” (8); and as they walk toward Myers’ room, “a door at the end of the little corridor” (9) which is reminiscent of the corridors Myers passed through on the train in “The Compartment,” Carver mentions again that Myers was “carrying his suitcase” (9). Thus, Carver shows Myers holding or carrying the suitcase five times in just three pages, gripping it like a talisman. It is possible to see echoes here of Hemingway’s “lost suitcase” of early manuscripts which in 1922 was either lost by his first wife Hadley (Kohen) or stolen from the Paris train station (Neil); either the suitcase represents Myers’ fear of the loss of the craft he is trying to revitalize in “Kindling” or it shows Carver-Myers’ mirrored connection with his literary mentor, for it appears possible that Myers lost his suitcase when he lost his train car in “The Compartment.” Happily though, Myers “put his suitcase on the bed” (9), then “took his things out of the suitcase and put them away in the drawers” (10), making himself at home, settled as it were, like Holly in “Gazebo” who wishes to be “Dignified. And in a place” (146).

Myers, having left the “drying-out facility,” is trying again to be the writer he was in “Put Yourself in My Shoes.” But Carver shows how this is the same Myers from “The Compartment” through this plot device: right after Sol tells Myers that Bonnie wants to be a writer, Bonnie asks Myers what sort of work he does, and Myers replies, “I’ve done everything,” including, it seems, working for an engineering firm, the job Myers held in “The Compartment.”

Carver lets his readers see Myers writing four times in his notebook, and once in a letter; even better, he lets his readers see what Myers is writing. Letters seem to come easy, at least when we see Myers writing to his wife:

> It was a long letter and, he felt, an important one. Perhaps the most important letter he’d ever written in his life. In the letter he was attempting to tell his wife that he was sorry for everything that had happened and that he hoped someday she would forgive him. I would get down on my knees and ask forgiveness if that would help. (15)

Certainly, apologies and forgiveness are associated with AA meetings, but this connects Myers to Paula, his wife in “Put Yourself in My Shoes” and who is described as having gone her “separate way[...]” in “The Compartment.” Even more interesting, however, is Myers’ written line that he “would get down on [his] knees and ask forgiveness,” for this is
exactly the action taken by the unnamed narrator in “Intimacy,” another story about a writer who has broken off with his wife, suggesting that the characters in “Intimacy” may be an unnamed Myers and Paula.

While letter writing seems to go well, the notebook is clearly a struggle for Myers. His first entry is dissatisfying:

[He] sat down and took a ballpoint out of his pocket. He thought for a minute, then opened the notebook, and at the top of a blank white page he wrote the words

*Emptiness is the beginning of all things.* He stared at this, and then he laughed. Jesus, what rubbish! He shook his head. He closed the notebook... (10)

Here, though, we see the old Myers from “Put Yourself in My Shoes,” laughing at bad prose, much as he did over Mrs. Morgan’s line “Fate sent her to die on our couch in the living room in Germany” (109). On the second day, his writing is ludicrously brief: “Late that night, before going to bed, he opened his notebook and on a clean page he wrote, Nothing” (13). Of course, we can read this as Myers’ inability to write, or we can view this as his attempt to keep a journal, diary, or log; does he mean there is nothing to write about, nothing that will come to mind, or is the “Nothing” part of the “Emptiness” from the earlier entry?

When Myers offers to chop wood for Sol, he begins to feel like he needs to accomplish something, and finds great satisfaction in doing so, as his third notebook entry indicates:

“I have sawdust in my shirtsleeves tonight, he wrote. *It’s a sweet smell*” (18). The significant shift in Myers’ notebook entries is his movement from abstraction—emptiness, beginning, nothing—to the concrete physical presence of sawdust and the sensual delight of its “sweet smell”; Myers, like any good writer, is showing, not telling, and what he shows is not emptiness but fullness. Yet Myers indicates his concern that what he is gaining he could just as easily lose, as is evident when Carver uses an interior shot to show how Myers views the job: “I must finish this job, he thought, or else…” (19). Myers needs to accomplish something, however rough—like chopping wood. Ironically, Sol tells Myers “Don’t worry about making kindling,” which will later become the *Fires of creation*, “I’ll take care of that later” (18); the implication is that at a later time, Myers will be able to make kindling, as the title suggests and as the final line of the story tells us, “It was okay like that” (20). As metafiction, reader note that just as abstraction must be replaced with the kinds of concrete details one associates with Hemingway, so too must general plot—sawing and stack[ing] logs—give way to style and technique, the “kindling” of the craft.

Readers sense a Nick Adams-like fragility about Myers here, as this echoes Hemingway’s “Big Two-Hearted River: Part II” when Nick, who is only able at this point to fish in the open river, knows intuitively that “There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp” (180). Moreover, the night before he leaves after having chopped all the wood, Myers listens to the sound of The Little Quilcene River, again reminiscent of Nick Adams in “Big Two-Hearted River: Part II,” and writes his final notebook entry:

The country I’m in is very exotic. It reminds me of someplace I’ve read about but never traveled to before now. Outside my window I can hear a river and in the valley behind the house there is a forest and precipices and mountain peaks covered with snow. Today I saw a wild eagle, and a deer, and I cut and chopped two cords of wood. (20).

This entry both summarizes his observations from just before the wood truck arrived (the eagle, the deer), his accomplishments (cutting and chopping wood), and his sense of
having “arrived” someplace (“very exotic...country”) in lieu of his being “between” places.

26 As in many of Carver’s stories, there is a double: Bonnie, who also “wants to be a writer”(8). Bonnie thinks about writing, imagined entries such as “This tall, stooped—but handsome!—curly headed stranger with sad eyes walked into our house one fateful night in August” (11). Of course, Myers is also thinking about writing. Oddly, Bonnie’s description of Myers is surprisingly like Carver himself: tall, stooped, curly-headed, and, as Carver plays with it, “but handsome,” accompanied by an exclamation point, and the romantic “sad eyes,” the “Saddest eyes I ever saw on a man,” as she tells Sol earlier (11). But it is the echo of Mrs. Morgan’s “Fate” which sent Mrs. Attenborough to die in her living room that is echoed by Bonnie’s “our house” on “one fateful night,” accompanied even more so with her reference to the month of August, when Carver tells his readers that Myers is between lives in “the middle of August,” evoking the end of summer which forecasts autumn’s ripeness, and suggesting the completeness of a writer’s maturation.

27 The “in-between’ spaces” which Homi K. Bhabha suggests “provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood...that initiate new signs of identity” (1) offer new information to be gleaned by studying the changing identity of Myers. First, Myers is seen as a writer who takes directly from reality, “the real world” as Dick calls it in “Put Yourself in My Shoes,” then as an insular failed writer in “The Compartment,” and finally in “Kindling” as a recovering alcoholic who recovers his writing by learning to gather and synthesize, with a lyrical dimension, events that will tell stories of recovery and re-integration of the self.

The Short Story Sequence

28 Each story in the Myers Trio operates successfully as a free-standing fictional work, so much so that “Put Yourself in My Shoes” was published as a chapbook. One need not connect the other Myers stories to it in order to appreciate the narrative or its impact. Furthermore, given the spread of time between publication of the stories, and the fact that Carver himself never connected these works—nor, interestingly, did critics or interviewers ever ask Carver to comment on Myers’ reappearance from “Put Yourself in My Shoes” in “Compartment”—what happens when the three are considered as a short story composite, as an intertextual body of work?

29 Regarding the first point: a short story composite is “several stories that function simultaneously as autonomous units and as parts of an interrelated whole” (Kleppe 173). Moreover, the short story cycle has literary precedent in works by James Joyce (Dubliners), Ernest Hemingway (In Our Time) and Sherwood Anderson (Winesburg, Ohio); three writers, by the way, who Carver cited as inspirations and influences.

30 The possibility of Carver’s having written a short story composite—the Myers Trio—has a sound basis. The idea that the Myers stories are readable as a sequence has been suggested by Chad Wriglesworth in his essay “Raymond Carver and Alcoholics Anonymous: A Narrative Under the ‘Surface of Things’” (n150). Randolph Paul Runyon, in his important and influential book Reading Raymond Carver, was the first to study the structural connections of Carver’s stories, observing “the interstices between the stories” (Introduction 1) are as important as the individual stories themselves; Runyon offers the term intratextuality to explain “what can happen when the texts...in a text begin to refer
to each other in ways that seem to refer to their doing so” (9). Moreover, the Myers Trio operates as a formally organized set of stories which manifests itself through “a developing character” (Mann ix) and operating as a sort of “arranged” text, which Forrest Ingram characterizes as being “assembled ... from separate, previously published pieces to form a recognizably connected” sequence” (ix), though in this case, Ingram’s suggestion that this assemblage is conducted by the author or in conjunction with an editor does not apply.

But did Carver “plan” a composite of stories? In his important essay “Fires,” commenting on his work as a short story writer and not a novelist, Carver stated that because of the responsibility of parenting and his struggle to achieve a life that was beyond his working class background, he “was going to have to stick to stories and poems. The short things I could sit down and ... write quick” (25). Moreover, he added that “To write a novel, it seemed to me, a writer should be living in a place that makes sense...” (26). Later, however, when he was living in Port Angeles, had recovered from the destructive years of alcoholism, and was settled and “in a place,” he could have written “Kindling,” which picks up the Myers-Carver alter-ego and moves it forward, creating a triad of Myers stories. It would be remiss to read them as anything less than a composite of stories. By doing so, scholars will need to think of Carver in a larger way, as a writer of a short story sequence rather than as a writer of magazine fiction. This, in turn, should open a new area of Carver scholarship.

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NOTES


ABSTRACTS

Le personnage nommé Myers apparaît comme écrivain dans trois nouvelles de Raymond Carver. La première, « Put Yourself in My Shoes », est une histoire métà-fictionnelle d’une sous-location
qui tourne en débâcle ; dans la suivante, « The Compartment », Myers entreprend un voyage en Europe pour retrouver un fils qu’il finit par ne pas rencontrer ; enfin dans « Kindling », une des cinq nouvelles posthumes, on le retrouve dans la peau d’un alcoolique qui tente de se guérir en se remettant à écrire dans une chambre qu’il vient de louer. La présente étude retrace les changements dans la vie de Myers par le biais de ces trois récits montrant comment ils s’inscrivent dans une séquence narrative autour d’un personnage central commun. En se prolongeant dans le temps, la suite de nouvelles finit par créer une seule histoire reflétant parallèlement la vie de l’auteur Carver. L’étude propose ainsi une relecture de l’œuvre carvérienne en y intégrant la notion de séquence.

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