Every Breath You Take:
Reading Raymond Carver's "What Do You Do in San Francisco?"

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Frank Kermode has referred to Raymond Carver's work as a "fiction so spare in manner that it takes time before one realized how completely a whole culture and a whole moral condition are being represented by even the most seemingly slight sketch" (5). This succinct statement correctly describes the distinctive characteristics of Carver's works. Carver often focuses on very slight aspects of human life, especially on subtle unintended movements of human bodies. In his works, betrayals of bodies are recurrently depicted; bodies resist their owners' will, getting out of control. Such a movement of the body sometimes appears as an unexpected violence, an insuppressible appetite, an uncontrollable sexual impulse, an addiction, a slip of the tongue and so on. At other times, it appears as a more minor symptom such as shivering, headache and fever. For example, in "Fat," a fat man is not able to stop eating, saying, "If we had our choice, no. But there is no choice" (*Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* 7). In "What's in Alaska?", a wife smoking marijuana inadvertently calls her husband's friend "honey," which reveals that she is having an affair with him. In "Put Yourself in My Shoes," the protagonist bursts into laughter while an old couple are seriously talking about their story. In "Tell the Women We Are Going," a man meets girls on a picnic and suddenly hits them on the head with a rock without any clear motive. In "Menudo," there is also an impressive scene: "Suddenly I began to shake. First my hands began to shake, and then my arms and shoulders, too. My teeth started to chatter. I couldn't hold the glass" (*Where I'm Calling From* 467). In "Boxes," the protagonist, covering his face with his hands, leans forward in the chair and cannot move while his wife and mother are quarreling. We can find more examples in his other writings such as essays, poems and so on.[1] Considering these examples, we can say that Carver had a great curiosity about such betrayals of bodies throughout his career. The phrase "I don't know why"—one of the most typical remarks in his stories—probably represents the characters' sentiments about those unintentional movements of their bodies.

In this essay, I will focus on one type of unintended bodily movement of the characters. By closely reading a very short story "What Do You Do in San Francisco?" I will clarify what those "body languages" covey to us and how they are delivered, which in my view are closely related to the issue of gender that critics have paid little attention to in Carver studies. Following Kermode's words, I would say that my main goal is to make "a whole culture and a whole moral condition . . . represented by even the most seemingly slight sketch" in his texts more visible, to translate them into a more common, understandable language.

Carver and Gender

Before reading the story, it would be helpful to make a brief survey of the common features seen in the relatively disapproving criticisms of Carver's works, which will paradoxically cast a light on the distinctive characteristic of his works. His unique attachment to describing the slight, ordinary issues in everyday life has sometimes invited unfavorable criticisms; indeed, the reputation of his works seems to have greatly depended on how to consider this idiosyncrasy. For example, Frank Lentricchia, while praising Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo as "the main literary line" (4) of American writers, argues on the trend of the 1980's American literature: "the comforts of stability require a minor, apolitical, domestic fiction of the triumphs and agonies of autonomous private individuals operating in 'the private sector' of Raymond Carver and Anne Tyler, the modesty of small, good things" (2-3). Alan Wilde also argues that Carver's protagonists in a predicament often "demonstrate a terrible blankness that suspends the activities of the self and, except in fantasy or violence, betrays its effective lack of control" (112). John W. Aldridge similarly argues that "[e]xcept for the shroud of chronic dispiritedness that hangs over them," Carver's characters "do not seem responsive to much of anything" (52). It is significant that there is an obvious similarity between these arguments. In general, they seem to persist in superficial readings of the texts; they interpret what the texts tell literally without paying much attention to what they imply. What is more important here is, however, that those critics seem to connect the lack of self-control and the complete passivity which they think are seen in many of his characters, directly with their low estimation of his works.

In terms of gender studies, however, such an anti-Carver criticism, in a sense, correctly points out a distinctive characteristic of his works. It has argued that his characters are often lacking in the ability to change their circumstances for themselves. This complete "passivity" is the very quality that has long been considered to be a generic nature of women in the conventional view of gender. It is also noteworthy that the word "domestic" Lentricchia uses is a terminology that has been used to distinguish the literature created by female writers from the "mainstream" of American literature by male writers. Considering all this, we may say that Carver's texts contain some factors that repel relatively conservative male critics and unsettle their traditional view of gender roles of men and women. In other words, the exchange of conventional gender models—the "femininity" of the male characters and the "masculinity" of the female characters—described in many of his works may have been one of the main factors for its unpopularity among several critics. Indeed, few critics have paid attention to the fact that several of his stories are written from women's point of view[2] and Carver himself also says that success in acquiring a point of view of a woman is a great achievement for him as a writer.[3] The female characters in his works are not necessarily deprived of the power to change their difficult situations. Rather, those who do not have the power to alter their circumstances nor the ability to decide what to do to improve their situations are, in many cases, male characters, as Kirk Nesset has already pointed out (Nesset 51). In short, those critics who denounce his works as too deterministic and pessimistic often seem to have paid too much attention to the passivity and powerlessness of the male characters without giving any consideration to the activity and powerfulness of the female characters. In this sense, it could be said that the conventional view of gender is undermined in several of his works; indeed, his view of male-female relation seems to have something common with the feminist movement, which began to rise in the 1960s when Carver started his career as a professional writer. Of course, I do not mean by this that Carver applied feminist theory directly to his process of writing stories; he repeatedly said that he did not like any kind of theory. However, his insight into male-female relations presumably based on his private experiences is akin to the contemporary idea that many issues concerning sexuality and gender are not natural but ideological. In this sense, he may have been among the contemporary writers who faced a drastically changing society where the traditional male-female relationships were being rejected and the alternative being urgently searched for.[4] It is from this perspective that we can understand

the essence of the work we will read.

Reading Eyes' Movements in "What Do You Do in San Francisco?"

In "What Do You Do in San Francisco?" we witness various kinds of movement, whether conscious or unconscious, of eyes described. This story, which has not been discussed by many scholars and critics, seems at first glance exceptional among Carver's works in that the venue for the story is specified at the real town Arcata[5] in northern California and the background of the narrator is mentioned more clearly than in most of his works. In my view, however, this story is one of the most important ones among his works in that it contains a deep insight into the complex issue of gender and the complicated relationship between the acts of seeing and male-female power relations.[6] When the narrator, a postman named Henry Robinson, finds an article with a picture of a young man who has been arrested for killing his wife and her boyfriend, he thinks of a mysterious young man called Marston who had stayed with his wife (or lover) and children in the town briefly in the summer before. He explains the reason why the picture reminds him of the couple. He says: "It wasn't the same man, of course, though there was a likeness because of the beard. But the situation was close enough to get me thinking" (*WYP* 111). Thus, he begins remembering and narrating the circumstances of the family of which he had caught a glimpse from the outside when he delivered mails and also refers to the gossip on them which people in the town had exchanged. He infers from the evidence he collected on his delivery route that Marston's wife (or lover) left him for another man, taking the children with her. In the end, Marston disappears one day leaving no further information.

The narrative structure of the story is similar to, for instance, that of William Faulkner's famous short story "A Rose for Emily," in which the people of the town peep into a big house where an eccentric woman, Miss Emily, lives, and gossip about her behavior. The voyeuristic desire[7] of the town people to keep under surveillance those who violate the moral codes of the community is described in both stories. Indeed, there are several pieces of evidence which indicate that "San Francisco" might be directly influenced by "Emily." For example, In "Emily" there is a passage as follows: "When the town got free postal delivery, Miss Emily alone refused to let them fasten the metal numbers above her door and attach a mailbox to it" (128). It has already been pointed out that her refusal to let a mailbox be fixed to her house implies an act of

resistance on her part against the public authority represented by the modern postal service which invades her private territory.[8] In "San Francisco" the narrator's occupation is precisely that of the mailman who serves the public authority. We can also see an important parallel between the narrator's repeated advice for Marston to replace the old nameplate with his own or to get a job and the town people's persistent interference with Miss Emily. Moreover, the two stories develop in the same direction; in both, the lovers of the central characters—Marston's lover and Miss Emily's—disappear leaving little information behind. It is also noteworthy that the props important to the development of the stories are also very similar.[9]

My aim is, of course, not to simply count up the coincidences between the two stories. More important is the difference between them in the nature of the narrator. In "Emily" the anonymity of the narrating "we" underlines the existence of the public morality of the town, which makes a sharp contrast with the eccentricity of Emily's private life. As a result, the conflict between the public and the private comes to the foreground. On the other hand, in "San Francisco" there is a narrative device to direct readers' attention not only to the private life of the young couple but also that of the narrator who at first glance seems to represent the moral codes of the community, which gives a sense of uncertainty to the narrative itself. Moreover, this difference also leads to the dissimilarity in the ending between these two stories. In the former a shocking "fact" that Emily kept concealing the dead body of her lover she killed in her room and slept by for a long time is revealed, while in the latter neither the narrator nor the readers can determine whether or not the young man mentioned in the newspaper article is "really" Marston himself. Critics have offered different arguments about the ambiguous nature of the narrative. For example, Randolph Paul Ranyon boldly proposes the possibility that Marston murdered his lover and children.[10] On the other hand, Arthur F. Bethea takes a different standpoint though he eventually suggests the possibility of Marston's being a murderer. He adopts the idea of "unreliable author" and examines the narrative structure of this story in detail, focusing less on Marston than on the narrator's inner workings. In this respect, my reading is close to Bethea's, since my concern is not in determining whether Marston is a criminal or not but in figuring out the nature of Robinson's uncertain narrative itself. My argument here is that this work is not a story of a young man but a story of a middle-aged postman. The point is why the narrator always persists in narrating his memory of a young couple who stayed for only a couple of weeks in the town a

year before and exchanged few words with him. In the opening, the narrator states: "This has nothing to do with me. It's about a young couple with three children who moved into a house on my route the first of last summer" (111). He goes on talking and introduces himself in a seemingly casual manner. However, as Bethea points out, this introduction seems to be "absurdly self-delusional" (25), since it is in no time revealed that the postman has been "divorced twenty years," and "has two children" he hasn't "seen almost that long" (111). In short, the probable reason why the narrator is obsessed with the memory of the young man and maintains some sympathy toward him is that he had a similar experience: he "was also deserted by his lover" (Bethea 25). Therefore, we should not take the first passage, "This has nothing to do with me," at face value. Rather, we should catch the implied meaning of them. The message is, probably, that "this has *a lot* to do with me," for otherwise there would be no necessity for him to give such a notice.

He proceeds with his self-introduction, mentioning his belief in "work": "I believe, too, in the value of work—the harder the better. A man who isn't working has got too much time on his hands, too much time to dwell on himself and his problems" (111). This passage also drops a hint about the climax of the story. He recurrently attempts in the course of the story to encourage Marston to have some job. Eventually, he speaks to Marston after his lover and children have left him. He calls out to him, "She's no good, boy. I could tell that the minute I saw her. Why don't you forget her? What have you got against work? It was work, day and night, work that gave me oblivion when I was in your shoes and there was a war on where I was . . ." (120). Judging from all these points, we can understand the reason why he repeatedly emphasized "the value of work" and also encouraged Martson to work: he has been trying to forget his wife who left him twenty years ago by occupying himself with hard work. In this respect, Bethea justly points out that "whereas some Carver characters turn to alcohol or illicit drugs, Robinson desensitizes himself with work" (25). After all, the narrator speaks those words to encourage not only Marston but also himself. In short, Marston is the narrator's double: what he used to be twenty years ago. It is for this reason that the narrator feels sympathy toward Marston. However, his attempt to help him does not succeed; he does not "know what to say exactly" (119). It is natural that he is unable to think of any encouraging words, since he has repressed his own suffering and refused to articulate it by immersing himself in work. His failure is most clearly described in the following passage: ". . . I made up my mind to say something. What, I didn't know yet,

but I was going to say something, sure. . . . when I got to him, he suddenly turned on me and there was such a look on his face it froze the words in my mouth" (119). In this scene the narrator seems to be challenged about his faith in work by his mirror image; in other words, he is being accused of his self-deceit by his double.

He describes the last moment he saw Marston in this way:

> He was staring past me, over me, you might say, over the rooftops and the trees, south. He just kept staring even after I'd come even with the house and moved on down the sidewalk. I looked back. I could see him still there at the window. The feeling was so strong, I had to turn around and look for myself in the same direction he was. But, as you might guess, I didn't see anything except the same old timber, mountains, sky. (121)

The narrator sees that Marston seems to be staring at the sky in a deep sense of loss. At that moment, feeling something "strong," he "had to" turn around and look in the same direction. This unconscious act indicates that he involuntarily identifies himself with Marston. At the same time, however, he unconsciously refuses to admit the fact that he feels empathy for him, since if he did it would necessarily mean that he admits his frailty. This is the reason why he insists that he "didn't see anything except the same old timber, mountains, sky." By this statement, he seems to be trying to deny that he fell into a similar emotional state to Marston's. Thus, on the one hand he feels empathy toward Marston, but on the other hand he denies that empathy. This oscillation in his mind adds further complication to his warped narrative. It is noteworthy that the narrator shows a slight hesitation in recounting the scene by inserting two phrases between descriptive passages: "you might say" and "as you might guess." In this scene, in fact, it is not clear whether or not Marston was really staring to the "south" where the narrator supposes Marston's lover and children live. It is actually the narrator himself who "says" Marston was staring "over the rooftops and the trees, south"; in other words, it is he who supposes Marston must have been gazing in that direction while thinking of his lover and children. Consequently, he cannot help adding "you might say" to obscure his existence as the narrator of this scene because he doesn't want to admit himself to be a man who has such a sentimental feeling. The same thing can be said about the phrase "as you might guess." The narrator does not want

to admit he was moved by such an emotion to see in the same direction as Marston did. Therefore, by inserting the phrase "as you might guess," he tries to emphasize that he is of course not a sensitive man like Marston, that he looked up at the sky because he just wanted to confirm that the sky looked just like a normal sky to his eyes.

The Desire to See

It has become clear why the narrator feels sympathy toward Marston: he bears such an emotion because he has had similar experiences. Likewise, his self-deception is also comprehensible as a kind of defense mechanism by which he protects his identity. However, there is another question left. What restrains him from expressing his pain? Can we attribute it only to his individual character? My interest here is in ideological aspects of the relationship between men and women. I would assume that what forbids him to express his pain is the ideology of masculinity internalized in him. Indeed, all through the story it is clearly shown that he is bound by the traditional gender view. We can see the existence of sexism in his unconscious, which is revealed in the fact that he calls the young man of the couple by his family name, "Marston," but the young woman just as "the woman." This also makes it clear that he has a traditional idea of male-female relations based on the marriage system.

The narrator repeatedly refers to his hostility toward "the woman." For example, he mentions a disagreeable impression he got from when he saw her for the first time. He says he "felt a little awkward" at that time and he "always found" himself "feeling awkward" the few times he "was around this woman" though he does not "know why," adding that "it was one of the things helped turn him against her from the first" (113). Although he is not aware of the reason why he "felt awkward" when he "was around this woman," yet the passage preceding this statement clearly shows it.

> The young man was out in the yard behind the trailer and she was just coming out the front door with a cigarette in her mouth, wearing a tight pair of white jeans and a man's white undershirt. She stopped when she saw me and she stood watching me come down the walk. I slowed up when I came even with their box and nodded in their direction. (112)

The likely reason is that he was seen and watched by the woman; her eyes

watching him jeopardize his superiority as the spectator over her, unsettling the conventional gender dichotomy between men as the subject to look and women as the object to be looked at. We can also find other scenes in which the desire to see and the fear of being seen are closely intermingled in the narrator's mind. Among them the most symptomatic is the scene in which Robinson enters Marston's house to collect the postage due and, while waiting for someone to appear, he finds "a painting stood on an easel covered over with a sheet" (118) on which she has apparently been working. He "eyed the easel," and the moment he is "about to sidle over and raise the sheet" (118), the woman appears at the hallway. We can understand this voyeuristic act as a sign of his fear that he does not know what she sees and of his desire to secure his safe position as a spectator who can see without being seen and recover his superiority, which was once threatened by her gaze. The fact that he felt she looked "not at all friendly" (118) to him when she appeared shows that behind his little act lies such a complex inner working. Although he does not refer to how his own demeanor might look to her eyes, it seems clear to us that the reason for her being "not at all friendly" to him is that she was suspicious of his manner in some ways.

As I have mentioned previously, the narrator's and the town people's act of peeping into Marston's house is driven by a panoptic desire to see without being seen, that is, to put under surveillance those who violate the conventions of the community. In this light, this story, like "A Rose for Emily," may be understood as one which takes up an issue common in the modern world. It has been also pointed out that there is a similarity between this story and *Winesburg, Ohio,*[12] an exemplary small-town stories and one of the greatest influences on Carver's works.[13] At the same time, however, this story also presents, rather clearly for a Carver's work, several details which indicate specific time and place. First, for instance, it was about during World War II when the narrator's marriage broke up, and he has been "divorced twenty years" (111). Secondly, he calls the Marstons "beatniks" (111). Moreover, the word San Francisco, one of the symbols of Beat Generation in the 1950s, is recurrently referred to and the town people offhandedly associate the word with drug addicts and criminals. Taken together, we can estimate the historical setting of the story to be around the late 1950s or the early 1960s. Just as in *Winesburg* the sound of locomotives signifies the change of the times, so in this story does the contrast between the behavior of the young couple who had moved from San Francisco and the reaction of a relatively conservative small-

town to them seem to represent a ripple of the turbulent atmosphere of the coming age. It is especially by paying attention to the dynamics of gaze that Carver captures such an air of the time, and makes an observation on the change of conventional gender roles.

A further careful reading shows us that "something funny" (116) the narrator and the town people found in the couple's behavior is always related to the issue of gender codes. The narrator describes the character of the couple in this way: "The man wore a pointed brown beard on his chin and looked like he needed to sit down to a good dinner and a cigar afterwards. The woman was attractive. . . . But put me down for saying she isn't a good wife and mother. She was a painter" (112). The "beard," to which the narrator recurrently refers later, is a kind of trademark of rebellious young men in the 1950s and 1960s. Emphasized in this passage is that the man is less a "macho" type than an "effeminate" one and, at the same time, the woman is "not a good wife and mother" type. Moreover, significantly, in the latter part of the extract the two elements—that "she isn't a good wife and mother" and "she is a painter"—which need not have any relation to each other, are juxtaposed as the same issue. We can also see in other passages how the narrator and the town are bound by traditional gender norms. For example, the first thing the narrator notices when he sees the woman is that she is "with a cigarette in her mouth, wearing a tight pair of white jeans and a man's white undershirt" (112). In addition, the description of their garden thick with "weeds" and their "not tidy" (117) house can also be interpreted as an innuendo that the housewife isn't doing her duties. Furthermore, it is also notable that he mentions that "the most horrible" story for the town people is neither Marston's being "an ex-con parole" nor his being a criminal, but the woman's being "a dope addict" (116). According to the moral standards of the town a female "dope addict" is more "horrible" than a male "ex-con parole or a criminal." In such a conservative town, the combination of the "unmasculine" man who doesn't work and the "unfeminine" woman who doesn't do housework is naturally regarded as something threatening to their traditional view of gender roles.

It is in the description of the couple's "eyes" that the inversion of gender roles of the couple is most clearly expressed.[14] The narrator depicts this eyes' movement when he first saw them in this way:

> When that screen door banged open, I thought Marston was going to jump out of his skin. But she just stood there with her arms crossed, cool

> as a cucumber, and never batted an eye. . . . And his eyes—they'd land on you and then slip off somewheres else, then land on you again. (114)

Marston's eyes are repeatedly described as restless, which gives the impression that he is not strong, that is, "unmasculine." On the other hand, the woman's eyes are always self-possessed, which indicates that she is strong, "unfeminine." More than anything else, the fact that the woman is "a painter" signifies that she assumes a position as a spectator, a subject to see, which is to be regarded as men's position in the narrator's traditional view of gender roles. I have already argued that the female gaze makes the narrator, who persists in the conventional view of women's gender role, "feel awkward" because it threatens his superiority as a spectator. Likewise, summarizing a snooper-of-the-town's opinion on her, he ends the explanation with the snooper's impression of her eyes: "Well, just the way her *eyes* looked if you came up close to her, Sallie said" (116).

Attraction and Power Relation

We have confirmed that the narrator's desire to see the woman without being seen derives from his deep-seated desire to achieve his stable position as a spectator and secure his superiority over her. Nevertheless, another question arises here. Does his act of seeing really assure him of superiority? In the passage I have already referred to earlier, he mentions: "the woman was attractive, her dark hair and her fair complexion, there's no getting around that" (112). The mere fact that the narrator has a bad impression of her draws the reader's attention because of the next sentence—"But put me down for saying she wasn't a good wife and mother" (112)—, but we should pay equal attention to the fact that at first he definitely says "the woman was attractive." The issue is that if the woman had not been "attractive" to his eyes in the first place, he might not have felt much interest in the couple. A closer reading of the passage mentioned above shows us the narrator's oscillation. He says that he "doesn't know why," but he always found himself "feeling awkward" when he was around her, adding that it was one of the reasons that helped turn him "against her from the first" (113). I have already argued that the likely reason he felt "awkward" is that his security as a spectator was unsettled by her returning gaze. What if, then, the woman had not been "attractive" at all to his eyes? He would possibly not have felt "awkward" in front of her. It seems

reasonable to think that he felt "awkward" because he was "attracted" to her. For example, the sentence next to this passage, "She gave me a thin smile" (113), is probably a supercilious one that shows her sense of superiority to him. She seems to be fully conscious that the unsophisticated, middle-aged postman is attracted to her appearances and watching her; in other words, she knows that her attraction "makes him watch" her and "makes him feel" awkward. At that moment, the hierarchy in power-relations between the seer/the seen is subverted and, consequently, she gains dominance over him by the very act of making him watch her. Therefore, he does not want to admit the fact that he is attracted to her, for the admission of it would be tantamount to a declaration that he is "subject" to her. In short, it is precisely because she is "an attractive woman" that he feels hostility toward her,[15] and it is for the same reason that being "an attractive woman" and being "a good wife and mother" become mutually exclusive in his mind. His attraction and hostility toward the woman are, as it were, the two sides of the same coin. This contradiction in his mind is presumably one of the main causes of his self-delusional, oscillating narrative.

Considering in this light, we should be careful about the narrator's last statement: "It's all work, one way or another, and I'm always glad to have it" (121). Several critics have understood his words literally, interpreting them as a proof of his satisfaction at his present status.[16] Those arguments, however, seem to overlook his basic motive to narrate this story. What brought him to talk about this story in the first place? The likely reason is that he had a strong, unconscious desire to put his indescribable pain into words and understand it. True, it seems that he does not succeed in fully articulating his suffering, but he is showing—or at least trying to show—it with his limited vocabulary. Reading scrupulously such a gesture of words as the postman makes seems indispensable for understanding any story by Carver.[17]

Notes

[1] We can see other examples: In "Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?" a wife confesses that she had an affair, while repeatedly telling she doesn't know why she did it. The husband, too, breaking his promise not to get angry with her, strikes her furiously. In "Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes," a father, who says to an impolite man, "Why don't you get control of yourself?" (*WYP* 202), does, harsh violence against his will to the man when the latter pushes him slightly. In "Sacks," a father recounts his extra-marital affair, saying to his son, "A man can go along with obeying all the rules and then it

don't matter a damn anymore. His luck just goes, you know?" (*What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* 42-43). In "Where I'm Calling From," a seizure caused by alcoholism is described in detail. In "Elephant," the protagonist, imagining that his family are laughing, also all of a sudden starts laughing.

[2] For example, in his collection of selected stories *Where I'm Calling From*, there are four stories whose narrators are female: "Fat," "Why, Honey?" "So Much Water So Close to Home," and "Chefs House."

[3] Carver says: "The first time I ever attempted to write a story from the point of view of a woman, I was nervous about it. It was a real challenge to me. When I brought it off, it was like a rush. I was excited. I like to be able to write with authority in either gender" (Gentry and Stull 230).

[4] It is also noteworthy that Carver's unique method of "writing as an act of discovery" (*Fires* 25), seems to be somewhat similar to some feminist theorist's practices of writing such as "ecriture feminine," which is advocated by Hélène Cixous, a French feminist theorist. Few critics, however, have pointed out such aspects of Carver's works. This is also the case with feminist critics. Indeed, as far as I know, no feminist reading of his works has been attempted yet. This is not surprising because since the late 1960s feminist criticism has been focused on criticizing the man-centeredness of the literary history and, at the same time, constructing an alternative history which casts a new light on female writers who have long been marginalized. Carver categorically belongs to the "white men," who have been regarded as the most privileged class of people. However, it seems unfair to argue that every "white man" has such status; at least, it would be difficult to consider Carver's male characters, many of whom are occupied in hard, low-paid jobs, to be privileged. In this sense, the way certain aspects of Carver's works are disregarded for somewhat political reasons seems to be parallel to the wide-spread distrust of the men's movement. The overview of this movement is beyond the scope of this thesis, but Carver's works show great insight into this delicate issue of "men's liberation from masculinity." As sociologists have already pointed out, there is an ideological pressure of masculinity which keeps men from expressing their suffering openly. Considering in this light, it could be said that Carver's works show in some ways men's predicament which they cannot express by words. I hope this essay clarifies to some extent this issue, though full-scale study must be left for another occasion.

[5] Carver was enrolled at Humboldt State College in Arcata for two years from 1961 to 1963 (Meyer 5-6). In an interview, Dick Day, who taught Carver in several classes including fiction writing, refers to Carver's strange behavior in those days (Halpert 5). Interestingly enough, his odd behavior Day disucusses there is very similar to both Marston's in "San Francisco" and Slater's in "Collectors." Similarly, Runyon argues that Marston is identical with Slater, the protagonist in "Collectors" (Runyon 37).

[6] In an interview, Geoffrey Wolff refers to Carver's mastery of the use of the characters' eyes, saying: "He knew better than anyone where his characters should

look. I don't mean point of view. I mean where their eyes fall, what they see and what they don't see. I think he learned a lot from 'Hills Like White Elephants' when the characters look at each other, and away from each other, and at their hands, at their feet, at the table. Ray was a master of where eyes fall, where they rest" (Halpert 126).

[7] Although Nesset points out that some of Carver's works in *Will You Please* are concerned with voyeuristic desire (Nesset 9-28), he does not refer to "San Francisco" at all.

[8] Fumiyo Hayashi offers a suggestive argument about the relation between the invasion of the public authority into the private sphere of Emily and the identity of her body in "Scandalous I/We: The Modernity of 'A Rose for Emily'" (27-57).

[9] In "Emily," "a man's toilet set in silver, with the letters H. B. on each piece" (127) which Miss Emily ordered from a jeweler's suggests that she might have got engaged to her lover. Likewise, in "San Francisco" a letter which "showed the initials JD" (120) suggests the possibility that Marston's lover is living with the man called JD. The similarity between "H. B." and "JD" is obvious.

[10] The ambiguous title, "What Do You Do in San Francisco?" seems to imply several meanings. Runyon argues: "It is at this juncture that we can finally savor the real enigma of the title Carver gave the story. What indeed do you do in San Francisco—murder your wife? It is otherwise a title of the most tangential significance. . . . The story merits its title not, surely, because of what the *mailman* may have done there" (Runyon 40-41). I would give another twist to the interpretation of this title. My question is why the narrator reacted to the word, "San Francisco" so quickly. Asked what he did in San Francisco, he says: "Oh, nothing, really. I go down about once or twice a year. Out to Fisherman's Wharf and to see Giants play. That's about all" (113). Does he go there alone or with some friends? Or, perhaps, did he and his ex-wife once live there? Isn't that the reason why he got interested in the couple from "San Francisco" in the first place?

[11] Laura Mulvey's famous essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," is helpful in understanding the male-female power relation concerning the act of seeing. She notes, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (19), arguing that "in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (19), while men, on the other hand, "cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" (20). As I will discuss later, however, this argument is also problematic in that it lacks the issue of female gaze.

[12] Bethea compares the narrator's obsession with work to "grotesque" people's behavior, about which Anderson wrote in "The Book of the Grotesque," the first story in *Winesburg*, Ohio (25-26).

[13] Carver shows his respect for Anderson's works in a book review, "Fame Is No Good, Take It from Me," as follows: "I love the stories *Winesburg, Ohio*—most of them

at any rate, I love. And I love a handful or so of Sherwood Anderson's other short stories. I think his best stories are as good as any around" (*Call If You Need Me* 269).

[14] Nesset points out that "from beginning to end in Carver, men are by and large the weaker, more vulnerable species" (51).

[15] In this light we can understand why he depicts the woman's looks, clothes, and gestures in detail, while on the other hand he seldom refer to Marston's appearance except his beard and restless eye movements. For example, he observes that she "moved a handful of hair away from her forehead while she continued to smoke" (112). His gaze settled on her here is in a sense similar to the gaze of a man who has fallen in love with a woman. It might remain no more than a speculation, but it seems not unreasonable to assume that the woman might look in some ways like the narrator's ex-wife just as Marston looks like the narrator twenty years ago.

[16] For example, Meyer argues that the narrator "remains in his comfortable rut" (52), noting: "He appears to be afraid of getting involved. . . . He no longer wants to participate in life for he has become perfectly content to watch from the sidelines" (52). Arthur M. Saltzman also writes: "Robinson closes off the story by reaffirming the blessing of having work to engage his thoughts" (49).

[17] We can see a distinguishing characteristic of Carver's prose in the hesitation of the narrator. This feature may be more clearly seen in comparison with, for example, the style of Ernest Hemingway, one of the greatest influences on Carver. In analyzing the difference between Hemingway and Carver in their descriptions of fishing, Graham Clarke brilliantly makes it clear how Carver plays a kind of parody of Hemingway's style (107-114).

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