

Title:	Reshaping for Beauty: Understanding Raymond Carver's <i>What We Talk About When We Talk About Love</i> with its Editorial History and the Influence of Editor Gordon Lish
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Abstract

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love (henceforth *WWTA*) is a short story collection published in 1981. It is widely known as the magnum opus of Raymond Carver (1938-1988). Before 2009, the year the manuscript of *WWTA* and the biography of Carver were published, little did the public know that Gordon Lish (1934-present), the editor of *WWTA*, had made substantial changes to the manuscript without Carver's full consent. What *WWTA* presents is heavily dependent on Lish's aesthetic concerns. Lish fragmented the original writing and altered the theme of the collection from human connection (what Carver preferred) to lost communication and love. Carver's intended message was lost in the editing. The Carver readers see in *WWTA* is a hollowed-out writer reshaped by the editor. Yet, Carver is not a mere creature of the editor. Raymond Carver is a man with a soul who wrote to tell his feelings and thoughts.

Studying the editorial history of *WWTA* offers an engrossing window into the complex writer-editor relationship and the problem of authorship and originality. Juxtaposing the manuscript and the edited versions of *WWTA* presents a marked distinction in themes between the two versions. Deciphering the messages conveyed in *WWTA* and its manuscript expands readers' sense of Carver as a writer and an individual.

This paper aims not to criticize the editorial interference but to unveil how the editorial process of *WWTA* mirrors the shift of theme with textual analysis of several stories in their edited and manuscript versions, viz. "Why Don't You Dance?", "So Much Water So Close to Home," "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" (manuscript title: "Beginners"), and "One More Thing." The way Lish used "One More Thing" – the final story – to amplify the theme of *WWTA* will also be discussed.

Reflection

Before entering university, I was never an avid reader of English literature, and I was not a master of the English language. After five years of study at CUHK, I gradually built up my understanding of English and English literature.

Despite five years of comprehensive academic training, I still dare not to say that I know much about literary studies. Fortunately, with the encouragement and guidance from Professor Sorensen, I was able to find my way through the fog with passion. The capstone project is a precious opportunity for me to train in critical thinking and logical thinking, as well as to develop integration skills and a sense of responsibility as a university student.

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