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Final Abstract

Ryan Drendel

Speak Up: Body Language and Dialogue in Raymond Carver's Fiction

Raymond Carver is credited with rebirthing the American short story in the 1970's and 80's. His first short story collection, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* ambitiously attempts to coalesce the attributes of Minimalism and Realism. To articulate how Carver achieves this literary goal, I have conducted close readings of several synecdoches (representative passages of *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*) and supplemented my analyses with the arguments of several Carverian critics. I posit that Carver uses dialogue to depict his working-class characters' disillusionment realistically—but that his dialogue fails to accelerate characterization, introduce action, or advance plot (as literary dialogue conventionally does). Instead, Carver uses body language to deliver this information. By applying symbolism to characters' inadvertent nonverbal gestures, Carver reveals their convictions, motivations, and the mechanics of their failing relationships. In a literary sphere, Carver's innovation argues preeminence of action-based descriptions over verbal descriptions when writing minimalism or realism. But in the 21st century, Carver's critique of certain modes of communication transcends literature, and questions the value hyper-efficient communication.