

Wagon rattles as it trundles away.
Wailing. Gut-wrenching sobs.

go back to whatever beginning
I was small the world was small with me
after nature before culpability
no log cabin in a dark wood to revisit
a golden age an infantile disorder

Loud thunderclap.
Heartbeat pulses loudly.
Men scream in agony.
Fighting grunts.
Warrior yells.
Weapons clank.
Gurgling grunt.
Hard blow.

today's nightmare made fodder
tomorrow's period pieces
boltholes for Pangloss carnage naturalised
made bearable inevitable a good

Grunts of effort.
Flames crackle and roar.
Ragged breathing.
Blood splatters.

TOM BLOCK

Raymond Carver

You know, goddamned Raymond Carver. Right? Son-of-a-bitch. Carves everything up into little pieces like one of those salads. You know what I mean? With the little pieces of tomatoes and cucumbers and parsley and goddam olive oil – the good olive oil from some island in Greece or whatever. The fucking Bulgarians call it Bulgarian salad and the Turks call it Turkish salad and the Israelis call it Israeli salad but no matter what it's the same fucking thing.

Just like Raymond Carver.

If he was here – if he wasn't such a flyaway pussy – I'd tell him to his face. With his fucking Teacher's whisky (not even a thing anymore, folks – look away) and his cigarettes (so yesterday – now it's all medical marijuana). The son-of-a-bitch with his convertible Fords and fishing trips trying to be all Hemingway.

But Hemingway knew how to fish, and this guy always loses the big trout.

At least, he claims it was so big, but what do I know? I never seen it. I don't.

Listen to me: IT DOES NOT EXCUSE IT. That's right: ALL CAPS. Because son-of-a-bitch Raymond Carver writing about life in half-bits like a piece of a relationship or love which rhymes with 'live' and he never even uses the word 'yearn'.

Never saw it in one of his stories.

Oh, the gin goes down smooth no matter how cheap the bottle comes and the girls is always angry – they angry for good reason and the kids are always offstage. Offstage, like the Voice of God in some downtown theatrical event. Offstage like forget about them.

As if we haven't all been kids and we never really outgrow that, anyway.

Don't tell me about Raymond Fucking Carver because I don't want to hear your excuses. I really don't.

Submerge. Right, 'Ray'? That's what you really want, isn't it? 'Submerge?' Like a submarine or an apple or a child. Because you were a child – were you the fucking offstage child?

Hah! You don't go in much for psychology, do you? 'Leave me alone.'
That's the cry. That's what it is.
I see that.

He drank himself to death, Ray. Right to death. The Internet tells me
that he died at 50, in 1988. 'He contributed to the revitalization of the
American ...'

All that's left of the guy is a small paperback called *Where I'm Calling
From*.

Where are you calling from, Ray? Huh?

FEDERICO FEDERICI

End-zone

17.

you are not here
though the air-circulating lungs
produce a sound, seem to take
against appearance repetitions to life
– it lulled you to sleep, remote-controlled
in the red camouflaged light of the sunsets

you do not see
all comes like a noise from a mirror,
movements without forces, air-swollen bags
across heaps of cardboards, papers,
ashes, ends in the registry room reports
where the proper nouns survive
the scissors, the knives

35.

come into this maze of beech and hazel
where two most famous lovers kissed
and streets run through a true drain of hell,
now the white line erased, two lanes in one

the showers of rain wash down and fill
pits and ruts, the shelters for dead grubs
and leaves and all lilacs shiver, all crocuses
drown, bluish shadows on the surface squat