What Came Between

Short Story Cycle and Critical Exegesis

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Statement of Originality

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my long-suffering family (it’s a long story).
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

This thesis includes a creative component, *What Came Between*, and an accompanying critical exegesis. *What Came Between* is a collection of twelve realist short stories about residents of adjoining terraces in inner-city Newcastle. The collection opens on the 28th of December 1989, the day of the Newcastle Earthquake, and ends a decade later on New Year’s Eve as the BHP steelworks closes and the city’s history of steelmaking comes to an end. This kind of collection, which gains unity from its consistent setting and recurring characters, belongs to the short story cycle genre. The exegesis discusses the two contexts most relevant to *What Came Between*, that is the realist mode and the short story cycle genre, and notes the relative influences of Raymond Carver and Tim Winton in both instances.
The creative section of this work is available as a commercial publication and therefore is not available as part of this PDF document.

Page numbers have been maintained to ensure consistency of citation.
EXEGESIS
**Introduction**

*What Came Between* is a collection of twelve realist short stories about residents of adjoining terraces in inner-city Newcastle. The collection opens on the 28th of December 1989, the day of the Newcastle Earthquake, and ends a decade later on New Year’s Eve as the BHP steelworks closes and the city’s history of steelmaking comes to an end. This kind of collection, which gains unity from its consistent setting and recurring characters, belongs to the short story cycle genre.

A fellow contributor to *The Best Australian Stories 2005* anthology commented that the three stories published there that would later form part of *What Came Between*, the creative component of this thesis, were reminiscent of a cross between Raymond Carver and Tim Winton.¹ Both parts of the description are apt. The influences of Carver and Winton are evident in *What Came Between*, though each contributes in different ways to the book’s style, substance and structure.

In an essay on his own influences, Carver writes:

Influences are forces – circumstances, personalities, irresistible as the tide. I can’t talk about books or writers who might have influenced me. That kind of influence, literary influence, is hard for me to pin down with any kind of certainty. It would be as inaccurate from me to say I’ve been influenced by everything I’ve read as for me to say I don’t think I have been influenced by any writers.

So I don’t know about literary influences. But I do have some notions about other kind of influences. The influences I know something about had pressed on me in ways that were often mysterious at first glance, sometimes stopping just short of the miraculous. But these influences have become clear to me as my work has progressed (“Fires” 28).

¹ Others noted Carver’s influence too. In his review of that same anthology, James Ley described the stories as Chekhovian realism owing much to Raymond Carver and the school of American realism (“Unknown Quantities” 32).
Carver goes on to write that the greatest influences on the forms in which he writes and the subject matter he writes about are the circumstances of his own life. He says that only after his children were born does the material for stories present itself: “I really don’t feel that anything happened in my life until I was 20 and married and had the kids. Then things started to happen” (“Fires” 32). Carver also believes that his children influence his working method and, perhaps consequently, the forms in which he chooses to write. He draws a parallel between the short amounts of time he has to sit and write with the brevity of the forms in which he writes — poetry and short stories (“Fires 34”). However, the parallel is not entirely accurate because even after he has the financial independence to buy him time to write whatever he wants, and has accepted an advance from a publisher for a novel, Carver continues to write short stories and poetry. The irony is not lost on him either. “The circumstances of my life are much different now,” Carver writes, “but now I choose to write short stories and poems. Or at least I think I do. Maybe it’s all result of the old writing habits from those days” (“Fires” 36). Alongside his six volumes of poetry, Carver published during his lifetime four collections and an edition of selected short stories.

Charles E. May suggests that writers such as Carver and Anton Chekhov might have seen their material in a “short story way” (“Experimental Short Story” 2010). Chekhov suggested that it is “compactness that makes short things live” (qtd. in McSweeney 3). For Carver, this ‘short story way’ is evident in his dictum: “Get in, get out. Don’t linger” (“On Writing” 22). The brevity of the short story form suits the extent to which Carver focuses on a particular dramatic situation. His material is not that of a novelist and, as Chekhov notes: “Long, detailed works have their own peculiar aims” (qtd. in McSweeney 3). Tim Winton does not only see his material in a ‘short story way’. His published fiction does include three collections of short stories but also nine novels, and a number of books for young adults. More recently has written plays and co-written a screenplay adaptation of one of his novels.2

All literary works have contexts. Richard L. Levin asserts that no literary work is ever understood until it is placed in some “prior and larger contexts” and these are chosen to better understand the work (qtd. in McSweeney ix). The contexts most relevant to this exegesis are the short story cycle and realism. The history of the short

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2 With his wife, the poet Tess Gallagher, Carver did publish the screenplay of an unproduced biographical film, *Dostoevsky* (1985).
story cycle and the debate over the naming of the genre are detailed in “Chapter 1: Habit of Mind”. The chapter also explores the conceptual territory that the genre occupies in narrative fiction and considers the place of *What Came Between* and texts by Raymond Carver and Tim Winton in that territory. “Chapter 2: In Reality” details the origins of literary realism, its role in the development of the short story form, and the strategies and techniques of realist writers. The chapter then examines the use of these strategies and techniques in the short stories of Raymond Carver and Tim Winton, and evaluates their relative influence on *What Came Between*. 
Chapter 1: Habit of Mind

The Short Story Cycle: History and Nomenclature

When Forrest Ingram published *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century* (1971), the first book-length study of the short story cycle, the genre was far from new; as a literary form it was “at once ancient and avant-garde” (Kennedy, *Modern American* vii), with historical roots in the oral tradition “antecedent to the novel” (Nagel 1). Ingram suggests that precursors of the short story cycle genre were often collections of existing material that had been rewritten to connect them into a series (17), and Susan Garland Mann concurs, noting: “The Odyssey and The Iliad…were originally composed of individual stories sung by different bards and passed on orally from one generation to another” (1). Mediaeval texts such as Boccaccio’s *Decameron* or Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, both of which are composed of short works framed by a larger story, are, J. Gerald Kennedy writes, claimed by some to be precursors of the genre (“Toward a Poetics” 9); but Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris write that “composite works and framed collections have been around for centuries, including and predating the age of Chaucer and Boccaccio” (21).

Kennedy, however, does not entirely believe that cycles are direct descendants of Greek epic cycles. He writes that literary history reveals “no clear, continuous line of influence or production.” Instead, he adds, industrialisation in the early 1800s led to a proliferation of book and magazine publishing, which in turn “conventionalised periodic tales and single-author collections” (“Toward a Poetics” 9). Kennedy writes that narrative was commodified in the nineteenth century; collections of stories were published, and those stories had often been “written for and collected from magazines, [reflecting a] commercial determinism. Unlike the novel, the short story has no individual market value; it becomes saleable only as a component within the periodical or published collection” (“Toward a Poetics” 9). Mann agrees that magazines contributed to the popularity of story cycles as they were “frequently interested in stories by the same author dealing with a single character (or group of characters), setting, or topic” (8). The argument that economic factors contributed to the development of the genre is sound. Authors responded to the commercial possibilities and the publication of individual stories in magazines and periodicals
prior to inclusion in the completed cycle became an established practise that remains common.

The genre has remained popular despite low sales, writes Paul March-Russell (103). The genre may actually be increasing in popularity, or at least gaining a greater audience following the awarding in recent years of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction to books composed of short stories — Elizabeth Strout’s *Olive Kitteridge* in 2009, and Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad* in 2011. Nagel writes that the short story cycle has become increasingly important in contemporary fiction, appealing to contemporary writers “of disparate ethnic, class, and linguistic backgrounds” (255). The cycle’s recent development appears to be more heavily influenced by commercial opportunities, though the notion of it having ancient origins remains valid. As Ingram notes, behind their composition there has always been a “cyclical habit of mind,” that is “the tendency to compose, arrange, or complete sets of individual units so that they form a new whole through patterns of recurrence and development” (24).

In *The One and the Many: English-Canadian Short Story Cycles*, Gerald Lynch, makes a case for the short story cycle genre — essentially unified collections of short stories — as a “distinctly and distinctively” Canadian genre (4). An equivalent case could be made for the genre being ‘distinctly and distinctively’ Australian too. There is a long-standing tradition of cycle production in Australia. Henry Lawson’s *Joe Wilson and His Mates* (1901) was among the first early Australian collection feature stories of a recurring character, and the intervening years have seen the regular publication of cycles. A tradition of cycle production is evident in the United States too, with several exemplars of the genre — including Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), Ernest Hemingway’s *In Our Time* (1925) and William Faulkner’s *The Unvanquished* (1938) — published there.

Evidence soon mounts that the short story cycle is in fact a universal form. Unifying

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3 *Joe Wilson and His Mates* (1901) was Lawson’s sixth collection. Interestingly, his second collection, *While the Billy Boils* (1896), was criticized for lacking unity (*Australian Short Fiction: A History* Bennett 63).

4 In recent decades this publication has been particularly noteworthy: Frank Moorhouse’s *Futility and Other Animals* (1969) and *The Americans, Baby* (1972); Robert Drewe’s *Drewe’s The Bodysurfers* (1983) and *The Bay of Contented Men* (1989); Thea Astley’s *It’s Raining in Mango* (1987); Helen Garner’s *Postcards from Surfers* (1985), Gillian Mears’ *Fineflour* (1990), Mandy Sayer’s *15 Kinds of Desire* (2001), and Eva Sallis’s *Mahjar* (2003).
discreet narratives is, writes Nagel, a “legacy of the oral tradition, reaching back through time and across national boundaries to bind together legions of tellers of tales” (255). He adds that it is not solely a Western tradition either, “linked stories being known worldwide, in the East as well as the West, among people of disparate ethnic, class, and linguistic backgrounds” (255). The appeal of the genre may be in its adaptability. The genre may permit multiple voices more readily than a novel; it may better set apart a minority within a majority. Through their multiple narrative episodes, short story cycles may better capture life as a reader recognises it, and this may be even more relevant to particular groups of readers. Nagel suggests that the genre suits ethnic and migrant communities. His own criticism focuses on cycles set within America, and of these he notes: “the proliferation of volumes of stories from virtually every racial and nationality group in the United States suggest that there is something transcendent in its literary essence, something that lends itself to adaptation and implementation” (255).

The persistence of the genre internationally has warranted its analysis and definition. Ingram defined the short story cycle genre as books of stories “so linked to each other by their author that the reader’s successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole significantly modifies his experience of each of its component parts” (19). Since the publication of Ingram’s study there has been much debate over the appropriateness of the term short story cycle as the name for the genre. The term is still in common use today with critics readily aligning themselves with it, doing so with some reservations, or arguing at length against it. Those arguing against the term have tended to propose alternate terms and definitions. Concerted attempts have been made to replace the term but most often the alternatives are used with less, if any, conviction. As Dunn and Morris note: “Many of these terms were proposed in unpublished dissertations and hard-to-find articles, while others have been proposed ‘in passing’ in critical works that do not focus on genre identification as such” (4). The alternative terms are numerous and varied, and those for which a definition has also been offered do still appear to describe books to which Ingram’s definition still applies.

5 In his United Stories of America, Rolf Lunden provides a comprehensive survey of the dozens of terms (see pages 12-18 in particular).
The alternative terms that have gained a greater degree of acceptance are ‘short story sequence,’ ‘short story composite,’ and ‘composite novel’. Robert M. Luscher advocates for the term short story sequence, which he defines as “a volume of stories, collected and organised by the author, in which the reader successively realises underlying patterns of coherence by continual modifications of his perceptions of pattern and theme” (148). Luscher’s definition is a significant revision of one he first proposed in his own doctoral dissertation because it shifts its focus away from the novel. Originally Luscher suggested that in a short story sequence “the author has consciously structured the collection in an attempt to create an internal consistency and coherence similar to that of a novel” (Dunn and Morris 153) but he has since removed the reference to the ‘novel aspirations’ of the short story sequence. This revision may reduce confusion over texts that are far from resembling novels, but at the same time it actually opens that same border, permitting the entry of a greater number of texts into the genre. Kennedy also prefers the term short story sequence, which, he writes, emphasises a text’s “progressive unfolding and cumulative effects” (Modern American vii). But James Nagel questions the term sequence over cycle, citing its limitation as placing undue emphasis on “sequentiality” of the stories following on from one another. He suggests that the relationships between stories are “far more complex” (12).

The definition of short story composite is most like that of the definition of cycle. Raymond Joel Silverman defines it as “a group of stories written by one author, arranged in a definite order, and intended to produce a specific effect. Though every story of a composite can be understood in isolation, the stories have an added dimension when seen as co-ordinate parts of the larger whole” (qtd. in Lunden 14). An insistence on the stories having been arranged in a ‘definite order’ is challenged by a reader who reads a collection out of order, immediately frustrating any attempt by the author to create a preferred or ideal order. Though Rolf Lunden acknowledges the term has disadvantages, in that it “implies a more or less complete merging of the parts into an organic whole” (14), he prefers its reintroduction, if only because it as the only term “broad and neutral enough to function as a generic one” (12).

Perhaps the broadest term, the one that affords the inclusion of the widest range of text variants into the genre is composite novel. Dunn and Morris write: “The composite novel is a literary work composed of shorter texts that — though individually complete and autonomous — are interrelated in a coherent whole
according to one or more organising principles” (2). With their reference to the notion of individually complete and autonomous components, Dunn and Morris appear to have some affinity with definitions for other terms, including short story cycle, sequence and composite — in fact, Lunden describes Dunn and Morris’s definition as “a fair description of the short story composite” (17) — but their definition does propose significant changes to the range of texts constituting the genre. While other critics specifically and solely refer to ‘stories’ as the units of construction, Dunn and Morris refer only to ‘short texts’, which obviously allows for the inclusion of both fictional and factual prose, and poetry too. The border barely exists in Dunn and Morris’s minds; if it does exist it is only the notion of “individually complete and autonomous” components that define its boundaries. Of the term ‘composite novel’, Dunn and Morris write that it “emphasises kinship to the novel itself, the modern era’s predominant literary genre” (4). Their motivation for advancing the term is commendable. Lunden recognises Dunn and Morris’s “desire to emphasise ‘the integrity of the whole’ and the affinity of these texts to the novel proper” (24) and they clearly demonstrate this desire when they write that “in the pigeon house of genre the novel occupies a lofty perch, and any generic label that emphasizes ‘story’ rather than ‘novel’ roosts at a lower level” (Dunn and Morris 5). Evidently they would like that to change. However, the term is problematic; it overly equates this genre with that of the novel.

The term *discontinuous narrative* is often used in Australian reviews and criticism of texts from the short story cycle genre and generally with mention of the term’s originator, Frank Moorhouse. Moorhouse uses the term to describe his own collections of short stories, which Clunies Ross writes are “certainly not a new form” (177). As evidence he not only cites cycles by Anderson, Hemingway, Faulkner, but also Henry Lawson’s *Joe Wilson* cycle of stories. Even if Moorhouse made his own particular use of the form, he was still very much writing in the tradition of those

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6 The term originated in a conversation between Moorhouse and his publisher when the publisher asked how they were going to describe Moorhouse’s first book, *Futility and Other Animals* (1969). Moorhouse replied, “Discontinuous narrative” (Baker 224) and, as Clancy notes, the term, which was used as a subtitle on that book, “passed immediately into the language” (303). Raines notes that subtitling of Moorhouse’s cycles as “discontinuous narratives” ceased after the publication of the first three (426). Later editions of *Futility and Other Animals* (Picador 1996, for example) dispensed with the subtitle.
earlier writers. Raines suggests that Moorhouse’s collections can be more accurately described as “developments of the short story cycle rather than as ‘discontinuous narratives’” (425). The fundamental elements common to all cycles — what Moorhouse himself describes as “short, interlinked pieces” (1981: 222) — are the same in Moorhouse’s texts as they are in the exemplary cycles and many other texts cited as belonging to the genre, and Kanaganayakam notes the paradoxical nature of the term: “‘discontinuous’ implies dislocation and fragmentation, while ‘narrative’ implies movement and continuity” (68). While not referring specifically to either Moorhouse’s term or his texts, Lunden stresses this paradox when he refers to the opposing forces at work in such texts. The term ‘discontinuous narrative’ appears not to have gained recognition equivalent to ‘short story cycle’ or the alternative terms ‘short story sequence,’ ‘short story composite,’ and ‘composite novel’. The term is not mentioned in criticism debating the naming of the genre and Moorhouse’s own texts are subsumed into discussions based on these primary terms. Dunn and Morris, for example, include reference to Moorhouse’s *Futility and Other Animals* and *The Americans, Baby* in their list of selected ‘composite novels’ (175).

Debate over the naming of the genre points to inherent challenges: the genre is diverse; the connotative merit of any term is limited; a single name cannot equitably apply. Despite the assertion that no single name can apply, and the belief that each of the terms noted here has limited connotative merit, the following discussion — unless quoting critics whose own preference is for alternate terms — defaults to the term ‘short story cycle’, largely because it is the one most widely recognised, and it is not within the scope of this exegesis to attempt a conclusive analysis of the relative merits of nomenclature.

More relevant, and certainly within the scope of this exegesis, is a comparison of *What Came Between* to other works within the genre. The framework for this comparison is the short story cycle spectrum that Ingram’s uses to illustrate the conceptual space that the genre occupies in narrative fiction.

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7 Lunden describes “centrifugal” narrative forces leading to dislocation and fragmentation and “centripetal” forces leading to movement and continuity (52).
Ingram’s Spectrum

In addition to defining the short story cycle, Ingram also proposed a spectrum to illustrate the conceptual territory that the genre occupies in narrative fiction. This chapter examines how the cumulative effect of unifying elements determines the location of texts on that spectrum. The texts discussed here are all exemplars Ingram used to illustrate his spectrum, all but one of which have particular relevance to What Came Between given that is unified by both setting and recurring characters. The exemplars are James Joyce’s Dubliners (1914) William Faulkner’s The Unvanquished (1938), Sherwood Anderson’s Winesburg, Ohio (1919), and Ernest Hemingway’s In Our Time (1925), in which characters and setting recur to different degrees. Also discussed are texts by Raymond Carver and Tim Winton.

Ingram’s spectrum illustrates the conceptual territory that the short story cycle occupies in narrative fiction, although by covering only a single axis — from the disunity of a ‘mere’ collection to the unity of a novel, with the short story cycle as the midpoint — the spectrum offers only a limited perspective of that territory. Its simplicity does, however, present a useful framework for a discussion on how particular elements contribute to the unity of the particular text Ingram used to illustrate his spectrum.

A text’s place on Ingram’s spectrum is dependent on a range of unifying elements, and these elements have even been used to classify short story cycles. Gerald Lynch suggests that the simplest classification is one based on elements providing “primary coherence” (20). Place and character are obvious choices, and Lynch sees these as the two major categories of short story cycle (20). Minor categories, he adds, are those unified by theme, style or tone. Lynch does not consider such minor categories to be sufficiently unified to be properly described as short story cycles: “the presence of a constituent theme or a consistent style alone cannot be the defining characteristic of a story cycle” (21). However, these characteristics or elements do contribute to unity, and they do so via a cumulative effect. As Lynch notes of theme, style and tone: “it would be mistaken not to take account of the role those aspects play in strengthening the coherence of cycles unified primarily by place and/or character” (21).

A comment by Malcolm Cowley, in the introduction to Sherwood Anderson’s Winesburg, Ohio, suggests that there is a hierarchy of unifying elements. Cowley
writes: “[Winesburg, Ohio] is a cycle of stories with several unifying elements, including a single background, a prevailing tone, and a central character. These elements can be found in all the cycles, but the best of them also have an underlying plot that is advanced or enriched by each of the stories” (14). Those cycles with some semblance of plot — which is contingent on character and setting — are certainly more unified than others in which theme was the primary unifying element. While Lynch considers theme a minor category of short story cycle, here it is considered alongside setting, character and plot as a major unifying element. There are, of course, many other elements contributing to unity — imagery and symbolism, for example — and while they do contribute to unity, their contribution is less explicit. The task of enumerating all of the elements would be, Lunden suggests, “an almost Sisyphean task” (95). It would be impractical, if not impossible, to detail all of the elements here, and the greatest differences between texts would likely be in the contribution of the major unifying elements of theme, setting, character and plot.

The major unifying elements can be overlayed on Ingram’s spectrum. Texts unified by theme alone occupy the ‘mere’ collection end; texts unified by theme and setting, or by theme, setting and character occupy the area around the midpoint; and texts unified by theme, setting, character, and plot occupy the novel end. Overlaying these elements serves only to provide an additional layer of interpretation on Ingram’s spectrum, it does not fully explain the spectrum, nor does the spectrum fully describe the range of texts in narrative fiction.

‘Mere’ Collections

The unity in ‘mere’ collections is hidden, writes Ingram: “strands of unity. Diversity of narrators, settings, central characters, or techniques have misled critics of these books to treat them as collections of unrelated stories” (201). He cites Franz Kafka’s

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8 Which is not to suggest that plot is entirely necessary or even desirable; the short story cycle genre is a vibrant and wide-ranging genre and unity and aesthetic success need not, and do not always, coexist. “The writers of short story composites,” suggests Lunden, “are apparently less willing to follow their natural human impulse to enclose. To some extent they reject the unity and continuity of the traditional novel. They do not, however, see openness as leading to complete chaos, nor do they see it as serving as a detour on the road to an end (59).
A Hunger Artist (1924) as the anchor and James Joyce’s Dubliners as another example. Ingram’s pairing of these texts at this end of his spectrum is not entirely accurate because there are significant differences between these texts and these differences warrant separation on the spectrum.

A Hunger Artist contains four stories: “First Sorrow,” “The Hunger Artist,” “A Little Woman” and “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk,” which, Nahum N. Glatzer notes, was Kafka’s last finished work (472). Though it is used as an anchor at the mere collection end of his spectrum, Ingram does consider A Hunger Artist to be a “haphazard bundle of stories thrown together from earlier scraps or fragments of prose” or “an attempt to peddle four tales on the merits of one, its title story” (46). The stories were specifically chosen by Kafka for inclusion and so important was this selection, writes Ingram, that he “insisted on the present order of the stories” (46). Allen Thiher writes that even as he was dying, Kafka apparently worked to correct the proofs (80).

There are no recurring characters or setting in these stories; theme, which “is sometimes merely secondary in other collections” (Ingram 105), here takes precedence. The themes explored by Ingram are “failure to communicate” (94), “anxiety temporarily controlled” (64), and “the exception is ordinary” (84), which he expands as “the exceptional as ordinary and the ordinary as exceptional; the extraordinary as habitual and therefore ultimately not extraordinary; compromised and striving; artistic talent as abnormality” (84-5). Of these themes the most readily perceived are failure to communicate and permutations of the ordinary and the extraordinary. Characters are isolated are not heard at all, they are misunderstood or fear being misunderstood.

There are parallels between stories: the narrator of “The Little Woman” no longer wants to be recognised by the eponymous ‘little woman’ who considers the narrator objectionable; in “First Sorrow” a trapeze artist fears the end of his successful performance. There is an ironic relationship between “A Hunger Artist” and “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk.” Neither Josephine nor the hunger artist is likely to be remembered, though only the hunger artist’s performance seems to warrant remembering — the narrator of “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk” describes her singing as “nothing out of the ordinary” (361). Josephine’s ordinarness contrasts with the trapeze artist’s manager considering him “an extraordinary and
unique artist” (Kafka 446). Each story involves a performance that is unique if not extraordinary.

Thematic analysis alone does not describe *A Hunger Artist* and Lunden is critical of Ingram, who he suggests privileges theme over structure. The form of Kafka’s cycle:

actually parallels and reinforces this theme of ambiguity and antinomy. The narrative structure of the text is as disjunct as the world of separation and lack of communication that Kafka depicts, and of voids and silences between the stories adumbrate Kafka’s message of man’s inability to communicate (Lunden 21-22).

Ingram does consider the structure of *A Hunger Artist* but focuses on what he considers to be a recurring pattern in the structure of the stories. Each story, he writes, uses a structure that begins with

a description of a fundamentally calm situation, a positive presentation under which only slight negative hints lurk; immediately, then, some disturbing change, either in the situation itself or in the narrator’s recollection of it, destroys the placidity of the opening section. Finally, the narrative advances to a particular climax, an imagined revelation or a projected crisis; and then sinks back into an insecure state of apparent calm (54).

This recurring pattern adds to the unity of *A Hunger Artist* but repetition of story structure is not unique to Kafka. Structural patterns have been identified in cycles by Sherwood Anderson (Mann 55), James Joyce (Mann 38), and Ernest Hemingway (Mann 76), and the structure of Kafka’s stories may simply be characteristic of the short story form itself. Ingram writes of the stories in *A Hunger Artist* as being “short stories in the general twentieth-century acceptation of that term: tightly constructed, relatively brief prose fictions whose movements highlight meaningful situations” (51).

Later, Ingram makes a curious comment about the nature of stories when published together. Discussing the stories in Kafka’s *A Hunger Artist*, Ingram writes
that some stories, “removed from their proper place in their cycle and transplanted into the foreign soil of an anthology, are bound to baffle the experts” (202). But what the stories lose from being published apart is not nearly as great as what they gain when published together. Together they support the theme of an inability to communicate, which, as Lunden suggests, is reinforced by the disjunctive structure of the text. A Hunger Artist demonstrates the extent to which an author can use the less explicit unifying element of theme to create unity. With the application of theme alone a text is certain to remain near the mere collection end of Ingram’s spectrum. The cumulative effect of an additional unifying element such as setting may warrant the positioning of a text further along Ingram’s spectrum.

While Ingram cites James Joyce’s Dubliners as another ‘mere’ collection it can be reasoned that the text may be positioned between the ‘mere’ collection and short story cycle. Like A Hunger Artist, it is unified by recurring theme, with each of Dubliners’ stories tending to emphasise characters’ paralysis, which Mann suggest is the cycle major theme: “The weak individual both creates and is the direct result of societies oppressiveness” (Mann 36). It is generally accepted that there are no recurring characters in Dubliners; however, Mann notes that some critics believe that the same unnamed protagonist appears in “The Sisters,” “An Encounter,” and “Araby.” Others, Mann adds, believe that Gabriel Conroy, from “The Dead,” the final story, is “a grown-up version of the boy in ‘The Sisters’ (31); however, the more readily accepted view of the protagonists, Mann notes, is that they are archetypal: “all bear a family resemblance: they are products of middle-class Catholic Ireland and trapped by limitations in the environment and in their own personalities” (31).

Just as Ingram suggests about A Hunger Artist’s stories having recurring plots, Mann writes that the plots of individual Dubliners stories resemble each other structurally: “The strong impact of the book is created largely through the cumulative effect of the same basic story — of an individual’s attempt to escape from dullness and paralysis — being told again and again with a different cast” (Mann 38). Compared to Kafka’s A Hunger Artist, in Dubliners Joyce actually creates a sense of development of the archetypal Dubliner by ordering the stories to show characters moving from childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood, and public life.

Three stories deal with childhood; they capture the sense of a child’s eyes being forced open to the world and them then having to make their own way in it. The next four stories, a group covering adolescence, show how children begin to make
their way in the world. Young adults are shown making their first potentially life-changing choices or becoming all too aware of the likelihood that their fortunes will never change. In the four stories about adulthood the characters still consider their fortunes with their responses ranging from acceptance to sadness and extreme frustration. As adults, the characters in *Dubliners* are no more content in their lives than the children or adolescents. The theme of paralysis is clear, and it continues with the characters appearing in the four stories of public life. The long final story, “The Dead,” ends with Gabriel Conroy contemplating his life. He and his wife, Gretta, have attended an annual party hosted by his two aging aunts and their niece. Gabriel is anxious about a speech he is to give at the party and how it will be received. So concerned is he about himself that he practically ignores his own wife until he finally sees her in the shadows at the top of a flight of stairs. She is listening to distant music and he finds the moment beautiful — “Distant Music he would call the picture if he were a painter” (211) — only to learn later that she was remembering a boy who had loved her in the past. The boy had died a week after Gretta moved from Galway to Dublin, and had he not died he might have followed her there. Again, the theme of paralysis and lost opportunity is evident. Adult characters reminisce. In “The Dead,” as Gretta sleeps, Gabriel experiences an epiphany: “Generous tears filled Gabriel’s eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love” (224).

From the first story to the last, subsequent protagonists in *Dubliners* are progressively older,⁹ and Dunn and Morris write: “progressing from naiveté in the early stories to some degree of self-awareness in the later ones” (39). They add that this increasing self-awareness is reinforced through Joyce’s shifting of point of view, which shifts from “simple first-person narration to limited omniscience to omniscience” (40). In “The Dead,” Mann notes, Gabriel is “less defensive and ironic …allowing himself to move closer to the world from which he has so carefully distanced himself through the rest of the book” (60). What closure the final story, “The Dead,” provides is in part attributable to this shift in point of view, which parallels the maturation of protagonists. Though they mature they do not in fact manage to escape their paralysis, and this theme is reinforced by the fact that all the characters are from Dublin and each of the fifteen stories is set there.

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⁹ James Baldwin uses a similar organising principle in the stories of *Going to Meet the Man.*
The title of a work, writes Mann, is the “first generic signal that the reader receives… [It] is used to emphasize that a book is not a miscellany or a ‘mere’ collection” (14). Collections are often named after an individual story title, *A Hunger Artist*, for example. A title other than one taken from a story may, writes Kennedy, “indicate an organising concept that acquires depth and resonance as the collection unfolds” (*Modern American* ix). The title of Joyce’s text draws attention to the setting, and a recurring setting adds to the recurrence of theme to create greater unity. However, while we may see Dublin as the indisputable setting of *Dubliners*, Anthony Ostroff counters:

> Dublin as place, as setting in the physical sense, is not all the major importance.… For the most part, the Dublin of the book might be any large European city: in the cases of many of those poignantly real details of setting throughout the stories we need not be in Dublin at all — the quay, the bridge, the green field, the doorway, the back yard, for instance, might be almost anywhere (qtd. in Mann 32).

Mann appears to agree, suggesting that rather than the “fidelity with which the stories recreate turn-of-the-century Dublin,” it is the recurrence of more universal details such as *Dubliners’* settings almost always being “dreary, dark or dimly lit, and confined urban spaces” (33). Dunn and Morris see Joyce as depicting a city of “buildings that are always dark, never warm enough…. Curtains and windowsills are always dusty.” They add: “Dublin is a place of entrapment, an environment that renders its people weak, enervated, unable to escape” (40). Even if one is to regard these details as universal rather than local, their recurrence reinforces both theme and setting. Characters remain paralysed in a city that offers no literal or metaphorical light. The atmosphere is constant and Joyce described it thus: “the odour of ash pits and old weeds and offal hangs round my stories” (qtd. in Mann 33).

The recurrence of setting and theme lends *Dubliners* greater unity than that found in *A Hunger Artist*, but it is less unified than texts at the midpoint of Ingram’s spectrum.
Short Story Cycles

According to Ingram, short story cycles reside at the midpoint of his spectrum. These are texts where “sufficient number of unifying strands show above the surface” for critics to acknowledge the text as a unified whole text rather than as a “disregarding it as a disconnected series of discrete stories” (Ingram 202). Ingram cites Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* as the anchor and Ernest Hemingway’s *In Our Time* as another example. The two cycles are, however, distinctly different. *Winesburg, Ohio* contains twenty-five stories, with the first serving as a prologue. In that story, “The Book of the Grotesque,” an old writer speaks to a carpenter who has come to his home. The writer recalls a dream in which “the young indescribably thing within himself was driving a long procession of figures before his eyes” (Anderson 23). Each of the stories that follow portrays a resident of Winesburg and each resident could be one of the grotesques from the old writer’s dream.

The cycle’s unity is derived from the cumulative effect of the themes of isolation and departure, the setting of Winesburg, and the recurring character George Willard. In “Mother,” Elizabeth Willard is trapped in an unfulfilling marriage, imagining that she is in a battle with her husband for influence over their son George who is a young reporter at the local paper and is the cycle’s primary recurring character. If the cycle has a plot, it concerns George’s eventual departure from Winesburg, though it is difficult to consider this a ‘plot’ as one might consider a novel’s events as constituting a plot. George’s departure is more closely associated with the theme of the cycle; he and other characters are either leaving or wanting to leave, or mourning those who have already left the town through departure or death.

“Paper Pills” is about the ageing Doctor Reefy, who married one of his young patients, only to have her die a short while later. “Godliness PART 4 — Concerning David Hardy” explicitly portrays the theme of departure. David is living with his grandfather, Jesse, who takes him out into the forest to find a message from God. Disturbed by the experience, David flees Winesburg. “Adventure” depicts the loneliness of Alice. Unmarried, Alice recalls the man who may have been her true love years ago left Winesburg years before. The fact that Alice’s hope for love left town serve to emphasise the isolation of characters. This isolation is given a physical, antagonistic form in “Respectability,” when Winesburg’s telegraph operator, Wash Williams, the man who literally connects the residents with each other and with the
outside world, is shown to despise women because of his own wife’s infidelity. The notion of departure recurs in “The Thinker.” Here a young man called Seth Richmond says that he does not belong in Winesburg and during an evening with Helen White, the daughter of Winesburg’s banker, he tells her that he plans to leave town for good. Here departure is again seen as a something worth striving for. Ironically, the main character in “Tandy” purposefully moved to Winesburg in the hoped to cure himself of alcoholism: “[he] thought that by escaping from his city associates and living in a rural community he would have a better chance in the struggle with the appetite that was destroying him” (Anderson 143). In “Loneliness,” Enoch Robinson tells George Willard of his earlier experience of living in New York.

In “Queer” a character finally departs Winesburg. Elmer Cowley, the son of a storeowner, resents Winesburg because he thinks that the town considers his family queer, and he resents George Willard in particular after George had witnessed an exchange between Elmer’s father and a travelling salesman. The story ends with Elmer, who has stolen his father’s money, preparing to leave on a train to Cleveland. He has arranged for George to meet him at the station and when George arrives he gives him the money, confessing: “Give them to my father. I stole them.” He then beats George and gets onto the train, content that “I showed him I ain’t so queer” (Anderson 201). Departure from Winesburg has become increasingly evident as a primary theme: David Hardy fled; Alice Hindman recalls that a man she loved left Winesburg; Seth Richmond has declared his intent to leave; Elmer Cowley leaves but does so with a sense of anxiety; and in the end George Willard will leave too.

When George’s mother dies he wishes to leave Winesburg, and the money his mother has secretly left him ensures that he can. Leaving Winesburg may be the wish of many residents but few do or will. George will, Helen White the banker’s daughter has already moved to Cleveland to attend college. In “Sophistication” Helen returns for the day to attend the Winesburg County Fair. A young male instructor from the college has come with her. While her mother says of Winesburg, “There is no one here fit to associate with a girl of Helen’s breeding” (Anderson 239), Helen spends the evening with George, and he seemingly prepares to leave the town behind. And in the final story, “Departure,” he does leave Winesburg. Passing through the streets on his way to the railway station people farewell George and wish him well. As he leaves “and again looked out of the [train] car window the town of Winesburg had disappeared and his life there had become but a background on which to paint the
dreams of his manhood” (Anderson 247).

There is a sense of impending conclusion in the appearance of many well-wishers on the platform as George Willard waits for his train and finality as he leaves, however, until this point, the stories have no clear chronology. Even if a sequence could be determined it would be without consequence; there is little in the events of Winesburg, Ohio to suggest an overall plot. Mann writes that, in Winesburg, Ohio, the plot of each story is essentially one that recurs:

Sometimes called a quest, the plot contains the following ingredients: the longing for connection; the attempt to express love; the sense of rejection and failure that follows when the protagonist cannot express affection or the other person fails to respond satisfactorily; finally, the withdrawal, generally accompanied by either self-delusion or a sense of resignation” (55).

This repetition alone, however, is not enough to unify the cycle, just as an equivalent recurring plot structure does not significantly unify A Hunger Artist or Dubliners. Much more influential is Winesburg, Ohio’s opening story, “The Book of the Grotesque,” which serves as a prologue. While every other story is clearly about people from Winesburg, the opening story is set elsewhere and its two characters are not known to be from Winesburg. There are similarities between the older writer and George Willard, they share a contemplative nature, and it is possible to imagine that George may one day come to be the old writer.

Although not referred to explicitly as a prologue or introduction, the formatting of “The Book of the Grotesque” differs from the stories in that it is italicised whereas the story titles are instead capitalised. This clearly establishes the text as different in a significant way, though Mann writes that the role of “The Book of the Grotesque” in unifying the cycle is not entirely clear (61). The role of the final story in creating unity is also debatable. Clearly Winesburg, Ohio does not have an external action or plot to be resolved like that of a novel but its ending does still provide a degree of closure to the cycle.

George Willard’s desire to leave Winesburg could be considered the cycle’s underlying narrative; Anderson even wrote in his Memoirs of his desire to give the “feeling of a boy growing into young manhood in a town” (qtd. in Dunn and Morris
This notion is supported by the fact that references to George as a ‘young man’ increase in the final three stories, but at the same time Ingram suggests that George Willard is not substantial enough a character, to warrant description as the “central character” (166). Nevertheless George Willard remains a significant unifying feature because he does connect the individual stories to their setting of Winesburg, Ohio; he either appears in, or is mentioned in, each story, and he is the only character who undergoes significant development.

Setting is a significant unifying device as suggested by the title of Anderson’s cycle. Within the stories, details such as the names of streets and buildings create the impression of a real place, though Mann notes of Winesburg: “one is never able to visualise the town’s geography.” What details Anderson provides do, however, evoke a sense of Winesburg as a real town. A precise map of the town is not necessary anyway. The setting serves the themes of isolation and disconnection, and the themes are reinforced by repeated patterns of images. The most explicit of these, according to Mann, are imagery of physical spaces such as rooms, offices and houses; imagery of eyes and hands, imagery of light and dark (58). There are similarities in descriptions of settings; Mann writes: “Repeatedly, rooms, offices, or houses are described as a run-down and poorly or sparsely furnished, as claustrophobic, as unoccupied except for the protagonist” (52).

The symbolic use of gestures, especially of hands reaching out toward another resident is repeated throughout the cycle, and, Ingram notes, becomes more frequent in the final three stories (191). It clearly climaxes in the final story with the shaking of hands on the railway platform as George Willard departs. The recurrence of the symbolic use of hands is indicative of the significant contribution that less explicit elements may still make in unifying a cycle.

Winesburg, Ohio’s theme of isolation is evident in the stories showing what Mann describes as “characters who are crippled because they cannot connect with one another” (61), and this failure to connect is emphasised by the form of the short story cycle itself. Winesburg, Ohio is essentially a static cycle. Lunden describes static works like Anderson’s Winesburg, Ohio, as “uni-spatial” and “uni-temporal” [italics Lunden’s]. He notes that that such works are generally limited to one setting and have little if any chronological progression (90). Spatial breaks in static works are certainly smaller, from room to room of a house, or house to house of a town. More important in such cycles are what Lunden describes as “character breaks” (90) [italics
Lunden’s], the shifting of focus from one character to the next between stories. In
*Winesburg, Ohio*, where isolation and failing to communicate are central themes,
these breaks are responsible for the fact that characters remain isolated or, as Kennedy
writes, “sealed off from meaningful connection with the rest of the town...” (*Modern
American* 197).

In *Winesburg, Ohio* unity is derived from the cumulative effect of the themes
of isolation and departure, the setting of Winesburg, and the recurring character
George Willard. These elements are enhanced by less explicit elements such as
recurring gestures and the structural role of “The Book of the Grotesque,” none of
which alone would alone be sufficient to create such unity.

Establishing the unity of a cycle remains the primary goal of the majority of
critics. Lunden refers to it as “the compulsion to create coherence” (19). Donohue
describes it as the “unity imperative,” which, he adds, “most critics bring to the
discussion of the genre with near missionary zeal, as if the absence of final unity were
a heresy against the truest of all literary values” (162). Luscher suggests that a
disadvantage of this could be the integration of unrelated material (Donohue 164).
Kennedy writes more generously of a reader’s role in discovering connections in a
text as something that “enhances the pleasure of the text” (*Modern American* 196),
though this pertains to a general reader not a critic. Disunity, when noted, is often
considered a failing of a cycle or a sign of its resistance to integration. Kennedy
suggests that it could be argued that integration and unity are actually the result of
ingenious critics (“Toward a Poetics” 11). Perhaps critics’ ingenuity could be put to
use on analysis of what Kennedy calls “textual discontinuities” (*Modern American*
196). Lunden agrees, writing that in much criticism on short story cycles discontinuity
is marginalized and multiplicity ignored; readings that consider the openness of the
form, he notes, are the exception rather than the rule (31): “The tension between
variety and unity, separateness and interconnectedness, fragmentation and continuity,
openness and closure” all deserve greater attention (12).

Determining degrees of unity is certainly not the only way of analysing short
story cycles because unity is not always an author’s intention. Discovering it,
however, remains an instinct of many readers, even in cycles such as Ernest
Hemingway’s *In Our Time*. The unity of *In Our Time* is complicated by the cycle’s
complex structure, which alternates between short stories and chapters. Some critics cite the juxtaposition of short stories and chapters as an effective means by which *In Our Time* gains some unity. There is, as Pleasant Reed describes it, “a sense of simultaneity between stories and vignettes, a feeling of a rhythm” (qtd. in Mann 82) but there is also unity within each of these text types. The unity of the chapters alone was supposedly apparent when they were first published without the stories as *in our time* and they do still contribute to the cycle. The chapters generally involve war, bullfighting, crime or an act of violence or its aftermath, therefore reflecting the themes of the stories.

Nagel identifies *In Our Time*’s most significant theme as the “longing for ‘peace in our time’ in a world of senseless violence, barbarous war, gratuitous cruelty, and ubiquitous disillusionment” (6). This longing for peace is represented by what Mann identifies as the cycle’s general movement “from peacetime America to war in Europe to postwar America and Europe” (75). Collectively, the stories and chapters cover the period before, during and after World War I. The first story, “On the Quai at Smyrna,” is actually closer in style to the chapters than any other of the stories. It introduces the war through a brief account of an evacuation but Nick Adams then becomes the focus of the cycle. However, this focus and the unity it brings is only temporary because even though Nick Adams is the cycle’s recurring character, he appears in only half of *In Our Time*’s sixteen stories. After being central to a series of five stories (from the second to the sixth), and the following chapter (Chapter VI), he essentially disappears, until reappearing in the thirteenth story, and returning again in the fifteenth and sixteenth (second last and last) stories.

While Nick is often cited as a primary source of the cycle’s unity, it is also suggested that it is not just recurrence of a particular character but also of a character

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10 The terms vignettes, chapters and interchapters have all been used in criticism on Hemingway’s cycle but Hemingway himself referred to them as chapters.

11 Lowercase is intentional. Hagemann details the composition of *In Our Time*, focussing primarily on the chapters, six of which were first published as “In Our Time” in *The Little Review* in early 1923. William Bird, publisher at Three Mountains Press in Paris, admired the chapters and encouraged Hemingway to write more. If Hemingway, “could get together a dozen more…” Bird, writes, “the whole would make a respectable little volume…” (qtd. in Hagemann 38). An extended collection of eighteen chapters (including revised versions of the six first published in *The Little Review*) was published as *in our time*, in March 1924 (Hagemann 39).
type, a “composite personality” (Mann 75) or “collective protagonist” (Dunn and Morris 64). Mann writes that Harold Krebs in “Soldier’s Home” and Joe Butler in “My Old Man” are reminiscent of Nick, and it is often assumed that Nick is an unnamed protagonist in “The Revolutionist,” “A Very Short Story,” “Cat in the Rain,” and “Out of Season” (75). The soldier recovering from injury in “A Very Short Story” seems almost certain to be Nick — his injuries appear consistent with Nick having been shot in the spine in “Chapter VI” — but the assumption is purely speculative in the case of the other stories. The other characters are better described as composite or collective and as such their contribution to unity as similar to Joyce’s archetypal Dubliner or Anderson’s series of grotesques.

Mann suggests that despite Nick Adam’s disappearance during the middle stories, “his presence is almost continually felt” (75). This is in part attributable to the recurrence of a character type, but his presence also manifests as an anticipation of his later return. Each of the stories in which Nick appears describes an episode in his life, beginning with him as a young boy in “Indian Camp.” He is a few years older in “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife” but he is an adult in the remaining stories. These stories, however, are not in chronological order. The events of “The Battler” precede “The End of Something” and “The Three-Day Blow” though in the cycle it appears after those stories. And Nick’s relationship with a woman called Marjorie, which ends in “The End of Something” and is subsequently referred to in “The Three-Day Blow,” actually ends following the events of In Our Time’s final two stories, “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I” and “Part II.”

Like Dubliners and Winesburg, Ohio, the stories in In Our Time have a repeating pattern. According to Chaman Nahal, the pattern is one of “contrast between systolic and diastolic action – that is, the contrast between physical activity and the contemplative, physical passivity that follows, in which the individual returns to a deep mystery within himself through passivity and makes himself ready for the next systolic move” (qtd. in Mann 76). This pattern, even if distinctive in

12 In The Nick Adams Stories, Philip Young arranged the stories in what he perceived to be their correct chronological order: “Indian Camp,” “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife,” “The Battler,” “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I,” “Big Two-Hearted River: Part II,” “The End of Something,” “The Three Day Blow,” and “Cross Country Snow.” He does not include “A Very Short Story,” in which a soldier recovers from injuries possibly the same as those obtained by Nick in “Chapter VI.”
Hemingway’s stories, is not unique. Other authors’ stories move between scenes of action and others of reflection. This movement may actually be fundamental to creating an emotionally engaging story — a character interacts with others or their environment and reflects on that interaction in an effort to create meaning.

The development of events between individual stories contributes more to unity than recurring narrative structures. When Nick’s relationship with Marjorie ends in “The End of Something” he is approached by a friend called Bill who asks if there was a scene. Nick says there wasn’t and reacts against Bill’s intrusion: “Oh, go away, Bill! Go away for a while” (35). In the following story, “The Three-Day Blow,” Nick and Bill are drinking and Bill says that Nick was right “To bust of that Marge business” (46), suggesting that he would have soon found himself unhappily married to her if he had not. Even without the events in the later story being contingent on those of the first the link between the stories contributes to unity. The cycle’s stories are clearly connected here by Nick Adams even if the chronology of the stories is not always as linear.

Although placed before the “Big Two-Hearted River” stories, “Cross-Country Snow” actually occurs chronologically after. In that story Nick and another man, George, are skiing cross-country in Switzerland. They stop to drink, and George asks Nick about Helen having a baby and whether he and Helen will be moving from Europe back to America. “Cross Country Snow” is clearly the last story when they are arranged chronologically but given the story’s focus on Nick’s friendship with George, it narrows the potential ending of the cycle, providing one that is less ambiguous at a time when ambiguity could be used to return more strongly to the theme of longing for peace.

Reynolds writes that Hemingway, conscious that In Our Time lacked the unity of setting that was apparent in both Dubliners and Winesburg, Ohio, was instead drawn to the way in which Joyce had used “The Dead” to “weld the Dubliners’ themes together” and decided then that he could do the same, and did so with “Big Two-Hearted River” (The Paris Years 202). However, the cycle’s ending is far from conclusive. It has “a certain sense of ‘appropriate cessation’ or finality,” writes Lunden, but he acknowledges that there are “many loose ends unaccounted for” (73). “Big Two-Hearted River” does not provide a closure to any of the stories in which Nick does not appear, though Hemingway intended for it to provide the cycle with some closure. In “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I” and “Part II,” Nick returns to an
area he knows well. He sets up camp by a river and goes fishing, and after catching and cleaning his fish he returns to his camp. He looks back and sees the river through the trees: “There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp” (“Part II” 156). Despite these stories appearing out of chronological sequence the reflective aspect of the ending of “Part II” lends a sense of closure. Nick, it appears, has already himself found peace or at least the time and inclination to now find it.

Theme is as significant here as in The Hunger Artist but actually contributes more, primarily through recurrence (emphasised by the greater number of texts — stories and chapters — in the cycle) and development (the cycle’s movement from peacetime to war, then returning to peacetime). Setting contributes less to unity here than it does in Dubliners and Winesburg, Ohio because while the setting of Joyce and Anderson’s stories was constant, the stories in In Our Time are set in America and Europe. The common setting of Petoskey, Michigan connects the Nick Adams stories but of greater significance is Nick’s recurrence. The recurrence of George Willard is more frequent in Winesburg, Ohio’s stories but Nick Adams plays a more active role in In Our Time’s stories, even if he appears in only half of them and in only one of the chapters.

Winesburg, Ohio and In Our Time do occupy a similar position on Ingram’s spectrum even though the unity of each cycle is achieved through a different combination of unifying elements. For a cycle to demonstrate greater unity it requires the recurrence of a character as in In Our Time’s Nick Adams stories or Winesburg, Ohio, in addition to consistency of setting of as in Dubliners or Winesburg, Ohio, and not only the recurrence of theme as in Kafka’s The Hunger Artist but of the development of that theme. The cumulative effect of these unifying elements is to create a cycle that occupies the novel end of Ingram’s spectrum.

Novels

Texts on the ‘novel’ end of Ingram’s spectrum are those with the greatest unity, most likely achieved through a single setting and central character or characters. Ingram suggests: “critics have welcomed [such works] with open arms into the crowded kingdom of the novel” (202). The notion of their being an already ‘crowded kingdom’ points to a hazard of interpreting the terms Ingram uses to describe his spectrum.
Novels on Ingram’s spectrum have as much in common with ‘mere’ collections as they do with texts usually classified as novels outside of a discussion of the short story cycle genre; rather than being composed of chapters with a degree of dependence, novels on this spectrum are composed of independent short stories that combine to create a unified work.

Ingram cites William Faulkner’s *The Unvanquished* as representative of this end of the spectrum and an exploration of the cumulative effects of its unifying elements shows how it achieves this degree of unity. *The Unvanquished* contains seven stories set between 1862 to 1873 — from the second half of the American Civil War into early Restoration — and while some stories follow on almost immediately and others are separated by months or years. Regardless of the continuity, there is a clear escalation of events from one story to the next that lends *The Unvanquished* greater unity than *Winesburg, Ohio* and *In Our Time*, and perhaps as much coherence and closure that a short story cycle is likely to ever attain. Lunden writes that generally, through the independence of a cycle’s stories, its “disjointed structure and its minimisation of temporality and causality, plot is never allowed to become a prominent narrative element” (99). This is certainly true of *Winesburg, Ohio*, which is relatively static and *In Our Time*, which is discontinuous, but through the recurrence of Bayard Sartoris in stories with events that are not just sequential but consequential, *The Unvanquished* has a far more prominent semblance of plot.

*The Unvanquished* is primarily set in Mississippi, in Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha County where much of Faulkner’s other fiction is set. As Ingram notes, in the case of *The Unvanquished*, it is “the place from which all journeying proceeds and to which all journeying ultimately returns” (114). The cycle begins with the Civil War already underway, blacks are enslaved, so racial tension is a significant theme, but the most explicit element in the cycle is the action involving Bayard.

The book opens with “Ambuscade” in which Bayard and another young boy, his slave friend Ringo, are making a map of their small world in the dirt. The greater world soon imposes itself on them. Union armies have entered northeastern Mississippi and are near their town of Jefferson, symbolically approaching their small world. In “Retreat,” set the following year, an attempt to transfer a heavy trunk of silver to Memphis for safekeeping fails. Bayard and Ringo pursue the thieves and when his father, Colonel John Sartoris and his troops find the boys they are taken home. On the way they encounter the thieves, take their supplies and reclaim the
silver but allow the thieves, Union soldiers, to escape. A brigade soon rides to the house looking for Colonel Sartoris and not only steal the chest of silver but also raze his house.

Granny petitions the Yankees for the return of her silver and it is returned, along with many extra slaves and mules too, reward for taking the slaves. Dismissing the slaves, Granny and Ringo use an order given to them by a Colonel to get a dozen more horses from a Union encampment further along the road. Having sold the extra mules gained in “Raid,” Granny repeats her scam in “Riposte In Tertio.” Ringo forges new orders that Granny uses to requisition even more mules, which they then sell back to the oblivious Yankees. Eventually their scam is discovered and in “Vendee,” Granny is shot and killed by a man called Grumby. Bayard seeks revenge. He and Ringo spend weeks tracking Grumby and his troop who actually hand him over. After a struggle, Bayard kills Grumby. This is a key moment in the thematic development of *The Unvanquished* because Bayard’s actions here contrast with his actions in the final story.

At the end of the Civil War, Colonel Sartoris returns home and, in “Skirmish at Sartoris,” he has living with him his niece, Drusilla. Drusilla had been fighting as a soldier with Colonel Sartoris’s troop. Her mother, Aunt Louisa, decides that to avoid further scandal Drusilla and Colonel Sartoris should be married. However, the planned wedding coincides with an election and instead of marrying, Colonel Sartoris and Drusilla instead disrupt the election, which is being manipulated by two Northerners. Colonel Sartoris shoots and kills the two men, takes the ballot box and the election is instead held at the Sartoris plantation. The final story, “An Odor of Verbena,” is set eight years later, and Bayard, now in his early twenties and a law student in Oxford, confronts his father’s murderer. The murderer, Ben Raymond, was a jealous ex-business partner of Colonel Sartoris’s. Ringo encourages Bayard to seek revenge and Drusilla gives him a pair of dueling pistols, but his Aunt Jenny — Colonel Sartoris’s sister — cautions him to end the violence. Bayard rides into Jefferson with Ringo and an expectant crowd watches as he enters Redmond’s office. Two shots are fired, both by Redmond who misses Bayard each time and then leaves on the next train out of town. Bayard had gone into the office unarmed and, as his Aunt Jenny had hoped, the cycle of violence is finally broken.

A number of characters recur here but because of Bayard’s recurrence and active role in each of the seven stories he is clearly the central character. Some critics
consider *The Unvanquished* a Bildungsroman that traces his maturation (Mann 109); Ingram agrees, writing that Bayard develops into “an independent, morally responsible Southern leader” (115). More so than Nick Adams or George Willard, Bayard Sartoris can be readily described not only as a recurring character but also as the cycle’s central protagonist. His experiences as a youth shaped his actions as a man.

Not only does the chronological ordering of the stories more clearly trace Bayard’s maturation, the related events of the stories portray lend the overall cycle greater continuity, and provide end-orientation and closure. Bayard’s decision to confront Redmond unarmed is what *The Unvanquished* appears to be working toward from the beginning, even though, as Lunden writes, the cycle is still “less forward-oriented than the traditional novel” (62). Faulkner recognised that *The Unvanquished* was not a novel, that the stories were “too episodic,” so instead he thought of them as a series (Luscher 165). Though considering them a series, Faulkner still created significant connections between the stories and “Skirmish at Sartoris” functions as a link between the earlier stories with the last. Whereas the first five stories are set during the war, this story is set in the Reconstruction where the cycle will end with “An Odor of Verbena,” which is set nine years after “Skirmish at Sartoris.” The intervening years are covered in flashbacks. Other stories also employ flashbacks, recalling earlier events and creating links between stories. Lunden considers this “repetition of ‘unnecessary’ or ‘redundant’ information” essential to the autonomy of individual stories (72). Such repetition is unnecessary in a novel; however, it may be a distinctive trait of the short story cycle genre:

the reiteration serves to make the story relatively self-sufficient and independent of the other stories; it thereby satisfies our need for closure in the individual story. If thereby becomes a device that widens the gaps between the stories and thus reinforces the anti-closure of the composite as a whole (Lunden 72).
Nevertheless, *The Unvanquished* provides as much closure as a ‘narrative of middles’\(^{13}\) as is ever likely to be found in a short story cycle. The cumulative effect of not only theme and setting and character, but also plot is evident in the cycle’s unity.

**Raymond Carver, Tim Winton and *What Came Between***

In the process of revising my previously published stories for inclusion in *What Came Between* I avoided some of the reiteration that Faulkner employed. For example, references to the characters as neighbours were limited to the first instance, with the expectation that a reader would then understand these relationships. These, perhaps, were novelistic revisions. However, the independence of individual stories was retained because relationships between characters could be readily inferred from the events of each story.

The unity of *What Came Between*, which is derived primarily through place and character, is actually diffused in two ways. First, by the number of recurring characters — there are three groups of stories, each about a particular couple — which introduces greater potentiality. The divergence from the collective cast of “Aftershocks” to smaller casts in subsequent stories complicates a prospective reading of *What Came Between*. While a reader may anticipate a degree of closure in a couple’s stories, the recurrence of other characters in those stories could make difficult an accurate prediction of closure. Only the final story “The Birth of Unknowing” involves all six primary characters (Paul and Sarah, Ray and Pam, Lucas and Cate) in relatively equal roles. Four of them (Paul and Sarah, Ray and Pam) had appeared in the first story, “Aftershocks,” although their roles were not equal (Paul and Sarah were the primary characters, Ray and Pam secondary). Through the interceding stories, the roles of primary characters tend to centre on a couple although they recur in secondary roles in other characters’ stories. This kind of character recurrence in *What Came Between* introduces a greater anticipation of the reappearance of characters, which sets the cycle apart from *In Our Time*. When Nick

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\(^{13}\) The discontinuity of a short story cycles creates what Prince refers to as “a narrative made up of middles,” one that, without continuity and developing plot, has “practically no narrativity” (qtd. in Lunden 69).
Adams disappears from Hemingway’s cycle there remains no clear expectation that he will reappear.

The setting is relatively consistent in *What Came Between*. Although much of the action of “The Long Drive Home” occurs elsewhere Laman Street is the point of departure and return for that story, and other stories are set not far from the street. The characters live in adjoining terraces and this proximity makes their recurrence believable. This recurrence contrasts with a cycle like *Dubliners*, which has a single setting but no interaction of characters across multiple stories. Kennedy suggests that in the case of *Dubliners*, this serves to emphasize the theme of paralysis and “mutual estrangement” because the independence of the texts correspond to absolute boundaries between one life and another. Figures who walk the same streets and whose stories appear side by side nevertheless remain oblivious to each other and unconscious of parallels between their own situations and those of other characters (*Modern American* 196).

The unifying role of setting, then, appears to contribute as much to unity as character does. However, character in *In Our Time* and *Dubliners* contributes less to unity than it does in *What Came Between*. Although there is, to some extent, a plot — or plots — in *What Came Between*, in that through a sequence of events each couple moves toward a resolution, it does not have a plot anywhere near as explicit as *The Unvanquished*. This lack of an overarching plot is the second way in which potential unity is diffused.

Plot, understood here as a causal chain, is not only absent from the overall cycle, it is not explicit in the series of stories about each couple. Each couple’s stories are clearly sequential (*occurring after*) rather than consequential (*occurring because of*). Each couple’s stories contain related events. In Paul and Sarah’s stories, for example: Sarah’s miscarriages (“Aftershocks”); Paul having earlier fathered a child, his meeting with Amy, the mother of his child, and the possibility of them having an affair (“‘And?’”); Paul’s fear of Sarah leaving him (“Mauve”); Sarah’s cancer diagnosis, and Paul meeting with Amy again (“Scar Tissue”). These stories do not relate to each other in the way that one chapter of a novel is developed in a later, if not immediately subsequent, chapter. There is no explicit causal link between stories
even if each enhances the context of the others. Each of these stories is a self-contained, independent part of the cycle.

Another example of the independence of the stories and the fact that they are sequential although not necessarily consequential is in the Lucas and Cate stories. At the end of “The Comet,” Lucas speaks to Cate but she is sleeping. The story ends at this point and while the end is fitting for that story, there is no closure. Lucas and Cate have only just met, so it is not unlikely that a reader might wonder what happens when Cate wakes up, and what might happen in her relationship with Lucas. “Where Things Belong” shows that Lucas and Cate are in fact living together and this would most likely be no great surprise to a prospective reader who may have already anticipated that their relationship would develop. Again, there is no direct development of their story from “The Comet” to “Where Things Belong,” but the final story, “The Birth of Unknowing,” shows how far their relationship has developed: Cate is pregnant and, at the end of the story, gives birth.

Through their stories, Paul and Sarah’s relationship appears to reach a resolution, as does Ray and Pam’s, but as a group of characters they do not experience the same degree of resolution, nor is resolution shared. Lunden writes that through the independence of the cycle’s stories, its “disjointed structure and its minimisation of temporality and causality, plot is never allowed to become a prominent narrative element” (99). This is certainly true of What Came Between, as it is of Winesburg, Ohio and In Our Time too. The Unvanquished, through the recurrence of Bayard Sartoris in stories with events that are not just sequential but consequential, has a far more prominent plot.

Temporality in What Came Between is limited, but a linear chronology for the stories about each couple can be determined based on the logical progression of events. The cycle’s ten-year period covered is apparent because the first story is set on the day of the 1989 earthquake, and the last story is set on New Year’s Eve 1999, but the cycle otherwise includes no other explicit references to time. However, the order of the stories does approximate a linear chronology. For example, in the four stories in which appears, Lucas lives with his grandmother (“The Long Drive Home”); he then lives alone and meets Cate (“The Comet”); they then live together (“Where Things Belong”); and then Cate and Lucas’s first child is born (“The Birth of Unknowing”). The juxtaposition of one couple’s stories with another’s is primarily
motivated by an attempt to avoid any couple’s stories appearing to take precedence in the cycle.

“The Birth of Unknowing,” the final story in What Came Between, was conceived as an opportunity to provide closure for each of the couples and the cycle itself. The first story, “Aftershocks,” serves to introduce the setting of Newcastle and narrows the focus to Laman Street in particular; the last story, “The Birth of Unknowing,” broadens that focus from Laman Street to “the great world beyond” (181). The broken water pipe in the final story serves to link back to the opening story, which begins with an upheaval, a physical disruption. The symbol is linked via the notion of the damage to the pipe being a residual effect of the earthquake. Of such framing, Lynch writes:

Concluding stories of pure story cycles bringing to a fulfilment the recurrent patterns, frequently reintroducing many of the preceding stories’ major characters and central images, and restating in a refrain-like manner the main thematic concerns (26).

The closure that “The Birth of Unknowing” brings to the cycle is not a complete closure. There is some convergence in that the story includes all of the characters and their interaction is congenial and celebratory, but in “Scar Tissue” Paul and Sarah have already found some resolution to their marital difficulties and in “Short of Breath, Full of Ache” Ray and Pam have re-established a positive relationship with their son. The main action in the final story, the birth of Lucas and Cate’s daughter, and Cate’s willingness to welcome people into the room could be seen as providing a degree of closure at the same time as it opens the text out again.

What Came Between would reside between the mid-point and the novel end of Ingram’s spectrum. The recurrence of setting, and the development of theme and character, and the progression of events warrant positioning it there. Altering the recurrence and development of a text’s unifying elements would warrant a change to its location on the spectrum. To be more unified, the events in What Came Between would need to be revised to constitute the kind of causal chain or escalation of events that provides The Unvanquished its unity.
As a short story cycle, the structure of What Came Between owes more to Tim Winton than to Raymond Carver. Carver’s collections of stories are unified primarily by their recurrent themes and the consistency of their dramatic situations; the situations are almost invariably domestic, focussing on relationships that are generally fraught. The characters may all occupy an equivalent place in society but they do not necessarily reside in the same geographical space — ironically, Kennedy suggests that the lack of community in Carver’s Cathedral, actually serves to unify the work by exposing the “absence of community” (Modern American 213).

The film Short Cuts was an attempt to create a sense of community out of nine of Carver’s stories and one of his poems. The film, directed by Robert Altman based on a screenplay co-written with Frank Barhydt, was more unified than the works from which it was created. But its unity came from Altman and Barhydt’s explicit effort to achieve that aim. As Martin Scofield notes, instead of using a single crisis to link all characters or setting the film in a single narrowly defined location such as a bar, street or hospital, they relocate the stories to Los Angeles to allow for interaction between characters “by chance events and associations” (389). The details of these interactions are not as relevant as the fact that they are the filmmaker’s creation, not Carver’s.

The only attempt Carver appears to have made to create unity in his stories is the appearance of a recurring character. A man called Myers appears in three stories from three separate collections, only two of which were published in Carver’s lifetime. Robert Miltner argues that the three stories show a development of character that indicates Carver’s intent to create unity and asserts that “[i]t would be remiss to read them as anything less than a composite of stories (Para 31). In his individual collections, however, Carver’s communities are far less unified than those in Short Cuts and What Came Between, and in two of Winton’s three collections.

Similarly to William Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha County where much of his fiction is set, Tim Winton has created, in and around his fictional town of

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14 Published during Carver’s lifetime were Will You Please Be Quiet, Please? (1976), What We Talk About When We Talk About Love (1981), Cathedral (1983) and Elephant (1988) and Where I’m Calling From: Selected Stories (1988). Beginners (2009), an earlier version of What We Talk About When We Talk About Love, was published posthumously, so to was Call if You Need Me (2000), a volume of uncollected fiction, essays and reviews.

15 The stories are “Put Yourself in My Shoes” in Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?, “The Compartment” in Cathedral, and “Kindling” in Call if You Need Me.
Angelus, a community of characters who recur throughout his short stories and novels. The unity of his collections has progressively increased. Scission (1985), Minimum of Two (1987) and The Turning (2004) are all set in the same geographical and fictional territory, they are similar in style and substance, but from first to last they become increasingly dependent on recurring characters. And Winton’s use of recurring characters — Jerra Nilsam and Vic Lang in particular — is a significant influence on the structure of What Came Between as a short story cycle.

Scission contains thirteen stories, all of which are about characters experiencing emotional turmoil. No characters recur but the stories are generally set within the same geographical region making it comparable to Raymond Carver’s collections. In “A Measure of Eloquence,” a newly married couple honeymoon in a coastal area on the recommendation of their friend Jerra (87). Jerra is mentioned only a couple of times in this story and does not appear in any others in Scission, but he is central to Winton’s second collection.

Jerra appears in seven of the fourteen stories in Minimum of Two, although the stories in which he appears are dispersed throughout the collection — appearing first, third, fifth, ninth, tenth, twelfth, and fourteenth — and are not strictly chronological. The collection opens with “Forest Winter” set soon after the birth of his son, Sam. The intervening stories show Jerra as a father but also before he became a father. The closing story, “Blood and Water,” is set a few months before the opening story. Here, following a difficult labour, Sam is born. By ending with the story of Sam’s birth, Winton offers a degree of hope for Jerra, his wife Rachel, and their son. Despite the stories being presented achronologically there is a sense of development that lends a degree of unity similar to that in Hemingway’s In Our Time.

Winton’s third collection is even more unified. Although The Turning is not about Vic Lang. Like George Willard in Winesburg, Ohio, Vic is central to the cycle — the stories are all connected to varying degrees, and show his development. Ben-Messahel writes that, in The Turning, Vic Lang serves as a “twin character to Jerra Nilsam, Winton’s emblematic character” (7). Each of them, Ben-Messahel adds, “acts as a foil” to Winton’s experiences growing up in Albany (7). In nine of the seventeen

16 Other Australian writers have also written of communities, most notably Frank Moorhouse, who coined the phrase ‘discontinuous narratives’ to describe his collections of stories about a group of people living in Sydney (Gay Raines).

stories Vic is the narrator, the viewpoint character, or a focal point of the story. He is mentioned in other stories, including the opening story: “Vic Lang, the copper’s kid, is dux of the school and doesn’t even stay for graduation” (“Big World” 2). His character develops from childhood to adolescence, and from adolescence into manhood. He goes to university to study law (“On Her Knees” 103) and in stories that occur chronologically later he is married to woman named Gail, with whom he has a difficult relationship, primarily because he still bares some of that “lousy luggage of family memory” (“The Strong One” 98). Vic Lang is somewhat like Nick Adams in that he does not appear in every story; however, whereas the stories in which Nick does not appear tend to lead away from him, the various connections between stories in The Turning always seem to lead back to Vic.

The structure of The Turning is quite different to Winesburg, Ohio and In Our Time, and it is more unified than both of those cycles. The stories were written without a plan for them to interconnect. Caroline Lurie writes that Winton was “initially dismayed to find the same old characters turning up again and again,” and Winton says that once he “relented and surrendered to that, I began to enjoy more” (25). There is much to enjoy in reading the stories too, as they move between characters and points in time, and events overlap. For example, in “Abbreviation,” Vic is thirteen and on a family camping trip, during which is attracted to an older girl who is missing a part of a finger: “The third finger was little more than a stump” (25). The girl is recalled in “Damaged Goods,” which is set decades later when Vic and Gail are married. Gail reflects: “Vic’s first love…a farm girl whose ring finger ended at the first joint, the result of an accident with a hay baler” (58) The girl receives only a passing mention here but Vic’s time with the girl is portrayed more fully in “Abbreviation.” This earlier story affords greater resonance to the fleeting mention of the girl in “Damaged Goods.”

The strongest resonance between stories is set up in “Long, Clear View,” which portrays Vic — “the new copper’s kid” (189) — alone with his baby sister. His father has been temporarily posted elsewhere, his mother has gone out, and Vic stands behind a curtain with a gun trained on people who pass by his house:

Your sister whacks and rattles in her cot across the hall. You load your rifle. In the gunsight you watch strangers of your town take their dirty little secrets from place to place […] You can’t leave the window.
You’re not sure what to look for but you know you have to be ready. From here you have a long, clear view (204).

This is Vic at a time when he feels most threatened by the world and inclined to act out against it. The pay-off to this story occurs in “Defender,” the final story. Here Vic is now forty-four and he and Gail are visiting her friends, Daisy and Fenn. Suffering from neuralgia, likely associated with anxieties has borne since childhood, Vic fears a total physical and emotional collapse. He reflects on his childhood: “At this distance he could see himself, the boy behind the curtain, cradling death in his arms…He knew what the boy didn’t, that you couldn’t keep soldiering on indefinitely” (309). Fenn offers Vic the opportunity to shoot skeet. He has not held a rifle since his father finally left for good and when Vic calls, “Pull!” and Fenn releases the target: “He led but did not fire. He thought of the boy lurking behind the curtain. The skeet hummed off into the twilight. It was important to know he could resist the urge” (317). His resisting the urge is at once a reflection on his past and a gesture toward the future. In that moment he is recalling being that boy in “Long, Clear View” and demonstrating, by not firing, that he can exercise control when necessary. Vic appears to have connected his past with his present, and it now seems possible that he may be able to act as necessary in the future.

There are many other connections, direct and tangential, between stories in The Turning and the influence of Winton’s short stories has conceivably been in the readerly pleasure of discovering those connections and exploring his community of characters. Even though Angelus is at its centre, Winton’s community is much broader, extending along the coast from Angelus. What Came Between’s community is much narrower. It places its characters in adjoining terraces, and the proximity makes the connections between characters and stories more explicit, and more contingent on events rather than tangential links. The less contingent the links between stories, the less novel-like a text will tend to be.

The cumulative effect of unifying elements is evident when considering how a ‘mere’ collection may become a cycle. Lunden asserts that Richard Ford’s Rock Springs is not a short story cycle because “the places that recur are mentioned in passing; little emphasis is placed on them as narrative elements, and so, as a unifying device, they are not very significant” (45). All Ford requires to make Rock Springs a cycle, Lunden observes, is simply “let the action of the stories take place in one town”
and “the collection would better have qualified as a composite similar to *Winesburg, Ohio*” (45). Perhaps all Ford need do then to make the short story cycle version of *Rock Springs* a novel is to have a character or characters recur in that setting and for the events of each story to relate to the events of other stories in a way that represents a sequence of consequential events. This is, of course, more easily said than done, but Lunden’s suggestion for increasing the unity of *Rock Springs* — and my extrapolation — demonstrates the implications of a hierarchy of unifying elements and their cumulative effect. This examination of illustrative texts from along the breadth of Ingram’s spectrum confirms it.

The spectrum is not without limitations, the most apparent being its attempt to reduce great complexity. One should not infer from its presentation of a single axis and its emphasis on unity that the spectrum represents an ideal, that it is not only possible to create unity through an accumulation of unifying elements but that novel-like unity is the goal. Ingram’s spectrum is but one path through the conceptual territory of narrative fiction, and there is great and necessary diversity in the space beyond.
Chapter 2: In Reality

Realism and the Short Story

Realism, writes Bran Nicol, is “a mode of production in literature, art and film which attempts to sustain the illusion that the fictional world we view or read about it a plausible version of the real one, replicating how it looks, how people in it behave, the kind of things which happen to them (18). As a literary movement, ‘Realism’ began as writers sought to “distance themselves from romantic idealism” (Fludernik 53) and instead focus on, what Sir Paul Harvey describes as, “truth to the observed facts of life (especially when they are gloomy)” (qtd. in Fludernik 53).

The movement, writes J.A. Cuddon, began in 1830s France and gathered momentum over the next few decades and by the end of the nineteenth century was entrenched there and had also spread throughout Europe. The publication of Champfleury’s *Lé Realisme* (1857), which became an early manifesto for realists, was published the same year as Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (Cuddon 731). Marshall Brown writes that the self-styled réalistes [which includes Champfleury], “the group of publicists around Courbet and Flaubert” popularised the term ‘realism’ (225). The réalistes specified the qualities of a realist work, notes Brown:

> At its most characteristic, this approach is entirely negative; thus one classic essay defines realism as literal exactitude; “the least possible amount of composition”; “an extremely simple style”; a minimum of temperament; “the probity of a copyist”; a tendency to suppress sensibility, imagination, and thought; and, finally, abstinence from the excesses of romanticism (225).

Stendahl, Flaubert, and Honoré de Balzac are generally recognised as among the first to move away from the ‘excesses of romanticism’, which had long been the dominant mode, toward a more realistic representation of contemporary life. Auerbach notes that early realists were drawn to write of things that could arouse in the reader “feelings of moral discomfort” (Auerbach 503). But they did this not because of their own morbid fascination or to create feelings of moral discomfort,
insists Ankersmit. Instead, he writes, “they were motivated by a desire to show how life displays itself through the prism of the sublime” (Ankersmit 65). Realists aimed to not merely document reality but to transcend it; however, realism is not solely about the aesthetics of the text. The writer’s intent is significant. Nicol writes that realism is also a belief system, a conviction that literature not only can replicate reality but should do so:

Realist ideology asserts that art and literature should reflect life and the world soberly, in precise detail, so that we can learn from or analyse it rather than becoming swept up by idealistic and escapist flights of fancy (Nicol 18)

Despite the apparent simplicity of its ideology the term ‘realism’ remains imprecise. It has been, and remains, a difficult term to define. Damian Grant suggests that “the word is in fact delinquent, and writers have indicated their mistrust of its behaviour either by sending it out under escort [with qualifications] or by letting it loose only when safely handcuffed by inverted commas” (2). However, the term’s qualifications are not obfuscations requiring rebuttal. Reviewing criticism on realism, writes Marshall Brown, “is thus to in counter a series of partial truths awaiting synthesis, not a congeries of errors demanding refutation (224).

Critical analysis of realism has tended to approach the topic from one of two perspectives. Some, like Erich Auerbach in his Mimesis, have considered how texts throughout history have created their realities without ever attempting to systematise the realist’s methods. Others, like Ian Watt in his The Rise of the Novel, have attempted to identify these strategies and techniques. Writing of novels — but the same is true of short stories — Watt states that a text’s realism “does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it” (Watt 11). Examining realism as a style and set of techniques that set realists’ works apart from those of romanticists’, Watt’s observations include: the setting of realist works shifts from courts and high society to the middle and lower classes; social concerns gain importance and the

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18 Auerbach surveys centuries, providing analyses of an impressive breadth of texts including Dante’s Inferno, The Divine Comedy, Homer’s Odyssey, Genesis 22:1, Miguel de Cervantes’ Don Quixote, Stendahl’s The Red and the Black by Stendhal, Flaubert’s Madame Bovary, Virginia Woolf To the Lighthouse, and Proust’s In Search of Lost Time.
struggles of everyday people are increasingly shown; plots are less ‘epic’; characters
are less heroic; the world is rendered vividly and familiarly instead of with the “vague
and frequently geographically and historically erroneous information provided in
romances” (qtd. in Fludernik 53). So realism is no one characteristic of a text but an
overall effect achieved through various means.

Though the world may be familiar to readers it remains the writer’s design. It
is not reality faithfully reproduced, as Marshall Brown notes, “for reality reproduced
remains reality rather than realism…‘Realistic’ authors form and transform their
material…and ‘realistic’ readers shape their reading experience in similar ways”
(Brown 233). Elizabeth Webby acknowledges this artifice in the realist’s
transformations when she says that realist plots may still be “loaded with
coincidences and contrivances” (Webby 155). Such narrative selections, the
coincidences and contrivances and the provision of familiar details, are used to create
the fiction’s reality.

The rise of realism contributed greatly to the development of the short story as
a distinct literary form. Ann Charters writes that in medieval Europe short narratives
were written in verse, whereas prose was “usually reserved for devotional and
instructive pieces until the fourteenth century. Around that time,” Charters adds,
“paper was introduced instead of parchment, and then secular tales in both prose and
verse became popular” (1061). Increasing secularisation throughout Europe during
the eighteenth century saw fictional narratives given the opportunity to evolve into
forms more closely related to modern short stories (Charters 1062).

Important too were periodicals, which were increasingly popular with readers
and served as a developing market for writers. Narratives published there did still tend
to be influenced by romanticism, writes Charters, but as opposed to when stories were
essentially parables aimed at teaching people morals, “originality and imagination
were valued above all other qualities in writing” (1062). These stories were, however,
still referred to as ‘tales’ for the modern short story had not yet emerged. Realism,
however, continued to rise, and its rise saw the decline of the tale. “If the tale is a
close relation to the early prose romance,” writes Charters, “then the short story is
akin to the later realist novel” (1065).

Two of the writers most influential in the development of the realist short
story are Guy de Maupassant in France and Anton Chekhov in Russia. Both were
writing at the end of the nineteenth century and each brought innovations to the content and form of the short story. Charters describes their influence:

Both wrote realistic fiction, and both are considered modern writers because of the content of their stories. They insisted on focusing on the particular here-and-now quality of ordinary human existence rather than proselytising for any particular religious, philosophical, or political system of belief (1065-6).

Chekhov and de Maupassant were different, however, and nowhere were they more different than in their plotting. Maupassant wrote tightly plotted stories that often concluded with a decisive action while the action in Chekhov’s stories, notes Charters, is less decisive. Instead, she adds, Chekhov attended more to the mood and character psychology. This distinction essentially describes the two types of stories seen today, with critics recognising either ‘‘traditional stories,’ descending from Poe and Maupassant, which are plotted and closed” or ‘‘modern stories,’ descending from Chekhov19 and Joyce, which are less plotted and more open” (Charters 1066). It’s possible, though, to add a third type of story, a distinct variant that some see as working in opposition to both traditional and modern stories even as it borrows from each. Just as realism was a reaction against the dominant mode of romanticism, the experimental short story is, and was especially during the 1970s and ’80s in Australia and the United States, a reaction against the dominance of realism. At the time, Raymond Carver was a major influence on the short story writers and it was his particular kind of realism that prompted much debate.

A debate between John Barth and Frederick Barthelme played out publicly. The focus of their dispute was minimalism, realism’s leaner cousin.20 In his article, “A Few Words About Minimalism,” Barth acknowledges that: “The dialogue between fantasist and realist, fabulator and quotidianist, like the dialogue between maximalist and minimalist, is as old as storytelling, and by no means always adversary” (Barth). The dialogue was not always adversarial, Barth suggests, because “[t]here are innumerable combinations, coalitions, line-crossings and workings of both sides of

19 So great is Chekhov’s influence on the modern short story that William Boyd insists that the twentieth century short story is “almost exclusively Chekhovian” (7).

20 John Barth refers to minimalism and realism as “kissing cousins” (Barth).
the street” (Barth). Regardless of his acknowledgement of writers working both sides of the street, Barth was essentially looking across from his own side of the street at writers including Raymond Carver, Tobias Wolff and Frederick Barthelme. Barthelme responded with an analysis of post-modern writing, suggesting that it was successful for very few. “The difficulty,” he writes, “was that after these top-of-the-line guys, you had guys getting the stuff off the rack, figuring cute-named characters and a disjointed narrative and a list or two would get them through — nice guys, mind you, and smart, just not very good” (Barthelme). Realist and experimental writing were at odds in Australia too, and similarly to in the United States this came after a long period in which realism had been the dominant mode.

While geographically distant, Australia has never been entirely isolated from the influence of literature from Europe and the United States. Laurie Hergenhan writes that these influences reached Australia belatedly but under these influences realism and the short story form flourished since the 1890s (xi). The rising dominance of the realist short story in Australia is also primarily attributable to the rise of one particular publication. Founded in 1880, the Bulletin magazine — with its journalism, letters and cartoons it was a kind of colonial New Yorker — was highly influential in Australia’s developing literary culture. In its pages short story writers built an audience for their collections. The Bulletin encouraged accounts of “specifically Australian experience,” writes Bruce Bennett, and stories of convicts and exploration were supposedly common (44). To an extent J.F. Archibald, the Bulletin’s founding editor, dictated the style and structure of stories too, encouraging writers to “reduce excessive detail (Archibald’s “boil it down” dictum was infectious) (Australian Short Fiction: A History Bennett 48). In response, notes Bennett, writers “strove to economise with words, to create a single incident as the story’s crisis or turning point” (49). This aesthetic led some writers toward realism; other writers were already there.

Henry Lawson, whose “lack of education,” writes John Barnes, “meant that his style was largely formed on the speech of the people amongst whom he lived” (5), considered himself a realist writer.21 His writing was suited to the Bulletin’s aesthetic. His first story was published there in 1888 at the age of nineteen and his most famous story, “The Driver’s Wife”, was published there in 1892. He published numerous

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21 A. A. Phillips suggests that the “closest correspondence” to Lawson’s technique was Anton Chekhov’s (8).
other short stories there over subsequent years. The significance of Lawson’s place in early Australian literature is emphasised by A. G. Stephens’ pronouncement that he was “the voice of the bush and the bush is the heart of Australia” (qtd. in Bennett “The Short Story, 1890s to 1950” 165-6). Webby reports that it’s been suggested Lawson’s Bulletin stories were so influential that “the Lawson tradition of Australian short story should, more correctly, be labelled the Bulletin tradition” (Webby 151).

The Bulletin tradition was realist, and realism for a long time stood as the dominant mode in Australian short stories. Stephen Torre suggests, however, that since the middle of the twentieth century there has not been a “succession of concerns and modes, one supplanted the other, but [instead] waves of writing successively enlarged by a variety of influences and innovations” (Torre 451). Bruce Clunies Ross reports that in the mid-1970s, as Australian writers began to experiment with the short story form, the writer Dal Stivens asserted: “Lawson, Joyce, Hemingway and others were great short story writers, but their ‘reality’ isn’t ours. You can’t use the tools they used” (qtd. in Clunies Ross 172). The short story, writes Martin Scofield, has always been “an ideal form for experimentation, for breaking new literary ground” (237). Leading exponents of the experimental short story during the 1970s and ’80s include Peter Carey and Murray Bail. Their surreal and fabulist stories were writing largely as a reaction against realism,22 to negotiate its formal restrictions, writes Delys Bird (190).

Realism did have its restrictions and Ley even suggests that realist stories can be reduced to a formula, a recipe in fact; he even identifies the ingredients and method: “take an ordinary person, add half a cup of complicating factors and a tablespoon of emotional confusion, stir gently until he or she arrives at a moment of realisation, pour the contents into a symbolic bowl and sprinkle with tasteful imagery (“Home fires too close for comfort” 22). Reduced in this way to its fundamentals, realism can certainly be seen as limited, and limiting for its exponents, but an equivalent reduction could conceivably be made of fabulist and experimental short stories. While not endeavouring to do so, Torre almost achieves this in his descriptions of the characteristics of short stories by two Australian writers. He writes that Carey’s surreal and fabulist short stories “manipulate material reality unexpectedly, in order to dislodge readers from ordinary consciousness and to draw

22 Bruce Clunies Ross describes surrealism as a “well-established alternative to realism” (174).
them into the logic of the story” (439). According to Torre, Bail did a similar thing with his stories: “A number of Bail’s stories begin as objective descriptions of some external thing or concept and gradually develop subjective points of view that undermine the idea of objective reality” (441).

Bruce Bennett writes that Bail “claimed to be influenced by an active dissatisfaction with the ‘barren anecdotal realism’ of Australian fiction” (Australian Short Fiction: A History 219).23 Instead of presenting the world as people might already know it these writers sought to present something entirely new. In an interview with Radhika Jones, Carey says that reading Jorge Luis Borges taught him “that it might be possible to reinvent the world in just a few pages […] I began to write a whole lot of what-if stories” (127). ‘What-if stories’ is an apt description not only of Carey’s short stories but also the stories of many other writers of experimental short stories in America and Australia. The 1970s, writes Philip Edmonds, was a time of experimentation and optimism (16). The shift away from realism during the 1980s was accompanied by a shift away from working class characters; on stories of the period, Edmonds notes that few characters went to work and if they did few “were actually getting their hands dirty in old fashioned ways” (15). In effect, he suggests, “unfashionable working characters have been exported off the page. It is a genre where the bedroom [and, I suggest, the kitchen] dominates as the narrative site (15).

While stories were being set far from the bush, in suburban and urban environments, natural environments still figured. Bennett cites Robert Drewe’s contribution to the ‘new realism’ of the 1980s as having “detected, explored and popularised the notion of the beach as a neglected site for representations of Australian experience, contributing to the relegation of bush and outback to positions of less prominence” (Australian Short Fiction: A History 253). As Torre notes, Australians were mostly coastal dwellers and “the seaside and beach were more likely to be the settings for everyday aspirations, achievements and failures” (444). The stories in Drewe’s collections, The Bodysurfers (1983) and The Bay of Contented Men (1989), were largely set on the sand or within sight of the water.

Robert Drewe was an influence on Tim Winton, a fellow West Australian. Ironically, Winton, in his short stories and novels, has done much to elevate the sea to

23 In his 1958 essay, “The Prodigal Son”, Patrick White attacked Australian novels as being “the dreary, dun-coloured offspring of journalistic realism.”
the almost mythical status once held by the bush. Bennett writes that Tim Winton’s short stories serve as a reminder that even in the age of globalisation, regionalism remains “a viable literary perspective” (Australian Short Fiction: A History 282). Winton says that he was influenced by the works of America’s Southern writers: “what I learnt about American regionalism in general, is the ability of novelists to wear their localities and to stand by the colloquial language of their place and their time and try and do magic with” (qtd. in Taylor 374). Despite Winton’s appreciation of some magic quality being possible he does not choose, Bennett notes, “ironic urban surrealism or fabulation as a preferred mode” (Australian Short Fiction: A History 282).

The divergence of modes in the 1970s and ’80s, saw many writers seemingly ‘take sides’ as exponents of either experimental or realist short stories but there remains a fundamental similarity between experimental and realist short stories. They both, notes Fredrick Barthelme, involve artifice (Barthelme). Marshall Brown acknowledges the artifice too, especially of realism, which “is not the faithful reproduction of real contents or of real patterns or of real language, for reality reproduced remains reality rather than realism” (233).

In an interview with The Paris Review, Frederick’s brother Donald makes an insightful comment on the notion of realism. Resisting classifications of writers as ‘realist,’ ‘surrealist’ or ‘super-realist,’ he says all writers are realists: “everybody’s a realist offering true accounts of the activity of mind. There are only realists” (qtd. in O’Hara). Even if all writers are realists in their own way, some are considered realists in very particular ways. Raymond Carver was considered a prime of what by some was termed ‘minimalism’ and by others, ‘dirty realism’.

The term ‘dirty realism’ was coined by Bill Buford who wrote in the introduction to Granta literary magazine in 1983 of a literary movement in the United States in which writers dealt with “the belly-side of contemporary life” (4). Kevin Rabalais concurs, writing that dirty realism is generally about “impoverished, often blue-collar, lives” (26). Raymond Carver, Richard Ford and Tobias Wolff were considered among dirty realism’s leading exponents. “All three,” writes Rabalais, “became household names for readers of American fiction in the ’80s and ’90s, members of a Holy Trinity of writing whose influence lingers” (26). Buford, discussing ‘dirty realists’, writes that Carver and Ford in particular:
write in a flat, ‘unsurprised’ language, pared down to the plainest of plain styles. The sentences are stripped of adornment, and maintain complete control of the simple objects and events that they ask us to witness: it is what’s not being said — the silences, the elisions, the omissions — that seem to speak most (5).

The influence of Chekhov and Hemingway is evident in their techniques: the omissions and the controlled use of objects and actions. Buford’s depiction of ‘dirty realists’ is echoed in Barth’s description of ‘minimalists’. They both name Carver as a leading exponent of the style they described. Barth detailed several ways in which writing may be considered minimalist:

There are minimalisms of unit, form and scale: short words, short sentences and paragraphs, super-short stories… There are minimalisms of style: a stripped-down vocabulary; a stripped-down syntax that avoids periodic sentences, serial predications and complex subordinating constructions; a stripped-down rhetoric that may eschew figurative language altogether; a stripped-down, non-emotive tone. And there are minimalisms of material: minimal characters, minimal exposition…minimal mise en scene, minimal action, minimal plot (Barth).

Barth focuses here on style, which is often the immediately recognisable feature of such stories. He only briefly mentions ‘minimal characters’ but Cynthia W. Hallet offers a description of these: “ordinary people, neither heroes nor larger than life, just people who appear to inhabit the ‘real world,’ where doing and saying nothing is often easier than the alternative…characters often respond to their inability to communicate by/with some form of action” (490). Barth and Hallet appear to be on agreement of the features of a minimalist plot. Many of Carver’s stories can certainly be described as minimalist based on their plots and characterisation, yet he is sensitive

24 Hallett notes that “the minimalist style is rooted in the classical functions of the short story,” those functions being leanness, concision, and the “unity and singleness of effect” (494).
to his being labelled a minimalist. Despite recognising that a reviewer’s reference to him as a minimalist was intended to be complimentary, he still did not like it: “There’s something about ‘minimalist’ that smacks of smallness of vision and execution that I don’t like” (Simpson and Buzbee). Frederick Barthelme shares Carver’s defensiveness. In his reply to Barth’s article, Barthelme encouraged writers to defend their writing against being labelled minimalist, likely because he — and others including Carver — inferred that it was being suggested that minimalist writing was inferior:

Tell them that you prefer to think you’re leaving room for the readers, at least for the ones who like to use their imaginations; that you hope those readers hear the whispers, catch the feints and shadows, gather the traces, sense the pressures, and that meanwhile the prose tricks them into the drama, and the drama breaks their hearts (Barthelme)

Barthelme is essentially saying that the intentions of realists are best served by their particular choice of strategies and techniques. Barthes’ and Buford’s characterisations of ‘minimalism’ and ‘dirty realism’ ably point out the strategies and techniques of realists and a number of these are evident in the short stories of Raymond Carver and Tim Winton.

Realism in the Short Stories of Raymond Carver and Tim Winton

Despite the apparent emphasis on substance and style as defining features of realist short stories, structure is important too. The structural differences of collections by Raymond Carver and Tim Winton have already been discussed in “Chapter 1: Habit of Mind”, where it was reasoned that Winton moves toward a more unified short story cycle as he progresses from his first to his third collection, whereas Carver’s design remains relatively static. The structure of Carver and Winton’s individual short stories do, however, have a great deal in common, even if this characteristic is shared by other short story writers.
The length of Carver and Winton’s stories are comparable, apart from Winton’s “Boner McPharlin’s Moll”, which is twice as long as the majority of and his own stories and all of Carver’s. In this longer story Winton is able to move the narrative more freely through space and time in what amounts to more plot-driven story: there is a larger cast of characters, multiple settings are used, and the story moved fluidly between present, past and distant past. The structure of “Boner McPharlin’s Moll” serves as an example of the greater freedoms afforded a writer in a longer story. However, in stories of similar length Carver and Winton do tend to display similar narrative structures.

Neither Carver, nor Winton experiments greatly with the form. The structure of their stories tends toward a linear progression through few scenes, and often leading to an epiphany. The epiphany, writes Charters, is James Joyce’s contribution to the modern short story. Instead of constructing stories around a decisive action as Maupassant did, Joyce borrowed from Chekhov then developed to his own ends, “a climactic moment of self-realisation” for which he coined the term ‘epiphany’, meaning, a “showing forth” to describe this point in his stories.” Charters describes these moments of epiphany as often being “painful flashes of recognition” (Charters 1067). An epiphany occurs at the end of Winton’s “Neighbours”; here a young man who has been working on a thesis “on the development of the twentieth century novel” (82) is overwhelmed at the birth of his first child and reflects: “The twentieth century novel has not prepared him for this” (85). And again, in Winton, an abused woman has found faith and consolation through her religious neighbours and when her husband later attacks her she is able to reflect: “She was free. She had already outlived him” (“The Turning” 161). In Carver’s “Cathedral”, a man has attempted to describe a cathedral to his wife’s blind friend. Feeling that he has failed to do so the man instead draws a cathedral, the blind man’s hand on his own. Having earlier said, “Cathedrals don’t mean anything special to me” (212), he then worked to draw one with the blind man. As the story ends, at the blind man’s urging, the man closes his eyes: “My eyes were still closed. I was in my house. I knew that. But I didn’t feel like I was inside anything. ‘It’s really something,’ I said” (214). The man here, who had resented his wife’s friendship with the blind man, has learned to see things anew.

The ending of “Cathedral” is almost sentimental compared to the ending of many of Carver’s other stories, which tend to end abruptly and without the hopefulness of an epiphany. As Scofield notes of epiphanies, which he characterises
as “clinching moments of revelation or realisation that come usually at the end,” Carver’s stories often end with “anti-epiphanies”, where the realisation (at least for the characters) just does not come” (228). Both kinds of ending — the epiphanic high and the anti-climactic low — are equally characteristic of realist short stories.

Beginnings may be characteristic too. Richard Ford writes that Carver willingly adopted “the direct, no-vamp-entry style of his short-story openings” from Chekhov (“Good Raymond” 79). The first lines of some stories from Where I’m Calling From, Carver’s edition of selected stories, shows that he regularly implemented this: “I am sitting over coffee and cigarettes at my friend Rita’s house and I am telling her about it” (“Fat” 50); “I had a job and Patti didn’t” (“Vitamins” 199); “I was out of work” (“Collectors” 90); “Carlyle was in a spot” (“Fever” 248); “The call comes in the middle of the night, three in the morning, and it nearly scares us to death” (“Whoever Was Using This Bed” 347). Carver’s other stories almost always begin with equivalent matter-of-fact statements, the tone of which serves to affirm the reality of the stories. A sampling of opening lines from Winton’s short stories reveals a similar pattern: “Despite their bad luck, Albie had enjoyed the night” (“A Blow, A Kiss” 7); “It was three years after Dad died that Mum started to get ideas, and it nearly drove the five of us mad” (“Getting Ahead” 15); “Just now I discover the axe is gone” (“My Father’s Axe 23); “Peter Dyson came home one day to find his wife dead in the garage” (“Small Mercies” 67); “He pauses at the door and wonders about lipstick” (“More” 119); “My husband had a thing about a girl with a birthmark” (“Damaged Goods” 55); and “I was sixteen when the old man shot through” (“On Her Knees” 101). Even the opening of the long story, “Boner McPharlin’s Moll”, introduces its subject directly: “To say that I went to school with Boner McPharlin is stretching things a bit because he was expelled halfway through my first year at high school” (251). Many of What Came Between’s stories have comparable beginnings: “She came in after dawn, closing the heavy front door behind her without a sound” (“The Ground Beneath” 17); “Lucas had barely slept” (“The Long Drive Home” 33); “Cate waited at the foot of the ladder, which stood beneath the manhole” (“Where Things Belong” 117); “Paul woke to find Sarah sitting at the end of the bed” (“Scar Tissue” 129). The simplicity of these openings leads directly into the substance of each story.

Writers work to match the substance of their work with an effective structure and style. In an interview with The Paris Review, Richard Ford tells Bonnie Lyons
that while he had admired experimental stories, his own instincts “weren’t particularly well served by those narrative practices and conceits.” Instead, he found his instincts better suited to “traditional, realistic fiction” (51). Ford adds that when he first read Raymond Carver’s stories he thought: “Here are story forms that provide the opportunity for me to write the kinds of things that I know and am ready to put in stories” (51). The substance of realist short stories is almost always domestic in its themes, characters are relatively few and they are usually middle or lower class, characters are also rarely, if ever, inclined to acts of heroism, so plot is quite limited. This summation applies readily to short stories by both Carver and Winton.

As noted in “Chapter 1: Habit of Mind”, characters recur in Winton’s stories, especially within individual collections. Characters do not recur in Carver’s stories; however, character types do, and this type is usually someone un- or under-employed, alcoholic or recovering alcoholic, and they are often leaving, or have recently left, a relationship. Madison Smart Bell suggests that the identity of Carver’s characters is often unclear because the circumstances of many characters are almost identical (Smartt Bell, Koch, Jenks, Gaitskell and Wolitzer “Throwing Dirt on the Grave of Minimalism” 47). Character types recur in Winton’s stories too and they are generally middle class children and workers, cleaners and policemen, they are often geographically and emotionally isolated — and often no less so when they recur in later stories. Winton and Carver’s character types are typical (some might say archetypal, others stereotypical) of realist fiction.

Winton writes of his motive in writing about the working class:

I think the ordinary…things of life are worthy of celebration. They tend to be forgotten, particularly in this day and age when people seem most lured by the lifestyles of the rich and famous and people who are more talented and more this and that.

In my stories I’m trying to render the commonplace worthy of attention. And then to have it looked at anew — and hopefully bring from that some kind of search for meaning (Salter 8).

Like Ford and Carver, Winton writes about what he knows. In his case, notes Hawley, “the working class, people who generally aren’t articulate, aren’t mobile and are often alienated and powerless” (“On the Edge of the World” 14). Winton’s stories
portray decisive moments in the lives of their characters: “I write about small places; about people in small situations” (Willbanks 190). The characters and situations Winton writes about are familiar, and if not true then readily imagined possible. One can still write of possibilities in realism without those possibilities necessarily being true. On ‘truth’ in fiction, Winton says: “The point with fiction is that it appears to be true and that it convinces and that it is beautiful in its own right. Whether it happened or not is beside the point” (qtd. in Jan Phillips 11).

Winton often cites hearing his police officer father coming home from work with stories of crimes and accidents as the source of many of the subjects of his stories. However, rather than simply recounting his father’s stories, writes Hawley, Winton endeavours to create compelling narrative out of the material (“Where Do I Go From Here” 23). Like Tobias Wolff, Winton is a Christian and his faith influences the substance of his writing. “All my books,” he says, “are about people trying to make sense of things […] about the search for meaning” (Jose 1334). Carver was not religious (Simpson and Buzbee 47) and perhaps less inclined to explore morality with the same vigour as Wolff or Winton.

The nature of Carver’s settings tends to run counter to the notion of realism characteristically being rendered ‘vividly and familiarly’, and suggests that Barth’s reference to ‘minimal mise en scene’ has a strong basis. The settings of his stories appear almost interchangeable because, as Madison Smart Bell suggests, they tend to be “set up so you don’t know where they’re happening” (Koch, Jenks, Smartt Bell, Gaitskill and Wolitzer “Throwing Dirt on the Grave of Minimalism” 47). Winton’s fiction is more clearly set — and almost exclusively set — on the southwest coast of Western Australia, around Albany and Angelus, a fictional town generally regarded as Albany. Whenever his characters do venture inland, to rural or deserted areas, they are invariably drawn back to the coast. The setting of What Came Between is made clear in “Aftershocks”, the opening story, as Paul and Sarah characters return to the city of Newcastle. Later stories further describe the setting of Laman Street, furnishing factual details alongside fictional details to create the ‘reality’ of the cycle’s setting.

Winton’s fiction, Bird writes, is “preoccupied with family and sexual relationships, interactions between people and their environments” (205). Ben-Messahel suggests that Winton sees families as “hell and/or a shelter” (Ben-Messahel 40) and this is apparent in “Reunion”: “Family, said Vic. It’s not a word, it’s a
sentence” (215). The sentiment is evident in “The Strong One” too: “the lousy luggage of family memory” (98). Families are either a refuge or a place from which characters might want to seek refuge. In an interview with Richard Rossiter, Winton says that most of his stories, he says “people typically find themselves struggling to connect” (37). However, compared to those in Carver’s stories, the characters in Winton’s appear more capable of connecting with each other or with themselves.

Like Chekhov’s stories, Carver’s do not aim to make explicit political, social or economic statements even if characters circumstances are clearly shaped by such factors. A movement toward more favourable circumstances remains only that because it is never clear that Carver’s characters will ever move to a better economic or emotional place. Suggestions of favourable changes are, however, implied through symbolic actions. At the end of Carver’s “A Small, Good Thing,” parents’ grieving the death of their son are offered something to eat by a baker:

“You probably need to eat something,” the baker said. “I hope you’ll eat some of my hot rolls. You have to eat and keep going. Eating is a small, good thing in a time like this,” he said (83).

They do eat and the story ends with:

“Smell this,” the baker said, breaking open a dark loaf. “It’s a heavy bread, but rich.” They smelled it, then he had them taste it. It had the taste of molasses and coarse grains. They listened to him. They ate what they could. They swallowed the dark bread. It was like daylight under the fluorescent trays of light. They talked on into the early morning, the high, pale cast of light in the windows, and they did not think of leaving (84).

The parents’ grief is palpable but by having them consume the “dark loaf” — symbolically, their grief — Carver implies some sense of hope for the future. A. P. Chudakov and Julian Graffy note the “selection of ‘fortuitous’ details” in Chekhov’s writing (379). These details include objects and actions, and the use of these is another thing Carver learned from Chekhov. On the significance of objects, Carver writes: “It’s possible, in a poem or short story, to write about commonplace things
and objects using commonplace but precise language, entering down those things — and chair, the window curtain, a fork, a stone, the woman’s earring — with immense, even startling power” (“On Writing” 24). A combination of an object and associated action, or inaction, in this case, appears at the end of Carver’s posthumously published story “Kindling.” Here, a man “between lives” (7) spends days involved in manual labour and evenings writing in a journal. At the end of the story he appears to have some hope for his own future and this is further suggested with the simple act of leaving a window open when he goes to bed because “It was okay like that” (20). The character’s reflection on the open window conveys a developing sense of contentment, and suggests that they may soon move from their inert place of being ‘between lives.’ Carver here shows how it is possible to limit the canvas to only the most essential of brushstrokes, applying small touches of colour, subtle highlights, to significant effect.

Objects and actions are relevant to What Came Between’s stories too. The insecurity Elsie feels with the onset of her dementia is emphasised by her actions when neighbour Sarah leaves: “[Sarah] made her way down the steps, heard the door close behind her, the bolt strike home, and the chain drag across the back of the door” (“The Ground Beneath” 32). In “Where Things Belong” Lucas has found a small shoe in the ceiling. A neighbour informs him that it was part of a superstitious act carried out a century ago “to ward off evil spirits” (123), and when Lucas’s partner Cate discovers that she is pregnant, he takes the shoe back up to the ceiling: “returning it to the corner above the spare room, to the place where it belonged” (127). Clearly the placing of the shoe above the spare room, the room in which the baby will soon sleep is symbolic, though the symbolism of the act is suggested rather than stated.

There are two main ways in which details serve to establish the reality of a text. The first relies on a reader’s unfamiliarity, the other, their familiarity. Unfamiliarity is key to what Roland Barthes describes as the effet de réel, that is the ‘reality effect’: “According to him, it is precisely the superfluity of apparently pointless detail which authenticates the text is realistic: the details would not be there if they were not an integral part of true-to-life description” (Fludernik 54). Fludernik suggests that unfamiliar details may be sufficiently strange and exotic, to effectively “authenticate the foreign,” even if this authentication still relies on “the universal nature of the human psyche and its transculturally valid qualities” (55). More characteristic of realist writing, however, are familiar details used in another way.
These details are used as touchstones to a reality with which the reader is already familiar. As Fludernik writes: “Watt’s notion of realism depends much more extensively on the mentioning of functioning details (such as the chair once it’s on a table, the spoon the cook users to stir the pot or the dressing table at which the heroine sits to comb her hair)” (Fludernik 54). These details, Fludernik adds, serve to function create the reality of the text through the “metonymic processes of expansion” (54), that is, when the single detail serves to evoke other related details. Mention of the dressing table at which the heroine sits to comb her hair, for example, evokes a number of other related details including the items on the dressing table, a mirror, a bed, a window — the entire room in which the dressing table sits is readily evoked.

For every reader, the evoked details may differ but the selected detail that initiates the expansion has served to allow each reader to create their own version of the text’s ‘reality’. In this way functional details serve to create the illusion of reality. So important is the technique that, Roman Jakobson argues, “it is the predominance of metonymy which underlies and actually determines the so-called ‘realist’ trend” (qtd. in Morris 103). This use of details is an important aspect of Carver’s particular kind of realism, writes Scofield. Carver used what Scofield refers to as “his metonymic imagination” (229). He explains:

In the figure of metonymy the part stands for the whole. Carver story show a marked absence of metaphor or simile, but his method is instead metonymic. Everyday objects take their place in the story in a descriptive, realist manner, relating to each other in the mode of continuity both in the ‘world’ of the story and in the syntax of sentences” (Scofield 229)

It is apt that Scofield here refers to the syntax of sentences because it is in that syntax that much of Carver’s reputation was largely forged from ore mined out of Chekhov and Hemingway.

Anton Chekhov was one of Carver’s literary influences and William Boyd suggests that the appeal of Chekhov’s style was that it “corresponded with the random, haphazard, inexplicable lives we all lead” (9). May suggests that Carver is “the contemporary short story writer who is closest to Chekhov” (“Chekhov and the Modern Short Story” 160). The techniques Chekhov espoused — “no undue emphasis
on political, social, or economic factors; persistent objectivity; veracity in the
description of active figures and objects; absolute brevity; boldness and originality;
and no triteness or insincerity” (Simmons xiv) — are evident in Carver’s short stories,
and he advocated for such writing too. After overhearing the writer Geoffrey Wolff
say to a group of students, “No cheap tricks,” Carver suggests the advice “should go
on a three-by-five card.” He adds, “I’d amend it a little to “No tricks.” Period. I hate
tricks” (“On Writing” 23).

The style of realist short stories is often a combination of limited vocabulary
and simple syntax; the style is often spare, with short, declarative sentences, and few
if any metaphors. The emotional tone is often subdued; silence and ellipsis are often
accentuated by the use of an objective point of view. This style is characteristic of
Chekhov and Hemingway.

Carver often cited Chekhov as his favourite writer and recommended him to
other writers, saying that he himself “wrote more carefully” and “better” after reading
other writers including Chekhov (O’Connell 139), but Arthur F. Bethea writes that
Hemingway was a greater influence on Carver’s short stories, “certainly on his
technique” (Bethea 102, n15). Any debate over Carver’s major influence comes down
to just these two writers: Chekhov and Hemingway. While William Boyd believes
Carver owes everything to Chekhov, writing that Carver “simply could not exist
without him” (7), James Plath believes he owed as much to Hemingway. “It is
impossible,” Plath writes, “…to read Carver’s simple and compound sentences, his
sections of clipped dialogue, often without ‘tags’, and his use of only a few carefully
chosen objects to evoke an entire room or landscape, without thinking of
Hemingway” (37).

Carver acknowledges Hemingway’s influence. When asked about ellipsis in
his own stories, Carver says that Hemingway’s work showed him that “it’s all right to
leave things out as long as you know what you’re leaving out. I think that was one of
his dictums. I hate to say, me too, but I did feel like I knew what I was leaving out”
(Plath 39-40). Carver is alluding to the ‘iceberg theory’ Hemingway described in
Death in the Afternoon:

If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he
may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing
truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though
the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is
due to only one-eight of it being above water (169).

When asked what his favourite Hemingway story was, Carver replies: “a
writer could learn a lot from ‘Hills Like White Elephants’” (qtd. in Halpert 126). It
was a story that Hemingway considered one of his best, and he resented critics for not
recognising its merit when it was first published: “not a damn critic thought anything
of when it came out” (qtd. in Bruccoli 203). The story exemplifies Hemingway’s
technique of writing from an objective point of view and omitting anything that could
be reasonably inferred by the reader.

To say what this story is ‘about’ goes straight to the heart of its art. It reads
more like a play in that a couple waiting on a railway platform are discussing a
possible future event or act of great importance. The passage below shows the
elliptical nature of the objective point of view:

‘It’s really an awfully simple operation, Jig,’ the man said. ‘It’s not
really an operation at all.’
The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.
‘I know you wouldn’t mind it, Jig. It’s really not anything. It’s just to
let the air in.’
The girl did not say anything.
‘I’ll go with you and I’ll stay with you all the time. They just let the air
in and then it’s all perfectly natural.’
‘Then what will we do afterwards?’
‘We’ll be fine afterwards. Just like we were before’ (212).

The passage is representative of the rest of the story too. The story opens with
a descriptive passage that sets the scene, but the focus soon narrows from “The hills
across the valley of the Ebro” to the station itself and the “warm shadow of the
building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door
into the bar, to keep out flies” (211) The two characters are then introduced simply as
“[t]he American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building”
(211) Before beginning the passage of dialogue and action, Hemingway rounds out
the context of the setting: “It was very hot and the express from Barcelona would
come in forty minutes. It stopped at this junction for two minutes and went to Madrid” (211).

The story begins and ends with the couple waiting for a train, so ‘nothing’ happens outside of the elliptical conversation; however, it is clear that much has already happened and will later happen. At the end the man asks if the woman feel better: “I feel fine,” she said. ‘There’s nothing wrong with me. I feel fine.’ (214). Mandy Sayer rightly suggests that the location is particularly significant because “the station is a junction, a crossroads of sorts, and perfectly represents the emotional crossroads of the man and woman who, we sense, will never be ‘going in the same direction’ after the argument that spans the story” (199). It is easy to imagine though that the operation will not be without consequence for their relationship.

In “Hills Like White Elephants” Hemingway gives nothing away through authorial comment or narrative summary, and this is a defining feature of much of his work. As Thomas A. Gullason notes that Hemingway, like Chekhov, strips away “traditional, ‘pointed,’ often mechanical, artificial, contrived, and formulaic plot. In its place, he creates the ‘pointless’ plot” (271). The story, a single scene really, plays out in front of the reader as realistically and vividly as though the reader were on that rail platform, hearing the man and a woman talking about something that can only be inferred to be plans for an abortion. The story serves as an illustration of Hemingway’s theory of omission and his use of the objective point of view.

Chekhov uses a similar technique and believes that the reader can supply the omitted material: “When I write, I reckon entirely upon the reader to add for himself the subjective elements that are lacking in the story” (qtd. in Charters 858).

Charles E. May writes that Chekhov, Hemingway and Carver’s each use objective narration to “attempt to express inner reality by describing outer reality” (“Reality in the Modern Short Story” 369). Salhia Ben-Messahel notes Winton, “like Ernest Hemingway…uses interruptions, pauses, silences, as part of the construction of an emptiness in the Australian environment, of the fragmented country and people” (149). Of his own use of objective narration in Minimum of Two, his second collection of stories, Winton says: “I learnt that from Hemingway. You can often get a lot of emotion by being extremely formal” (qtd. in Ben-Messahel 155). Winton also states: “my narrators never say anything; there's very little in my stories or novels of a narrator commenting on the action, or judging the action... I want to get it from the characters and not from the narrator” (qtd. in Willbanks 195). In Winton’s fiction,
characters struggle to articulate their feelings and desires: “they're not stupid, but they're not articulate, and they battle with it, with their silence. I guess in my stories people can’t really articulate what they’re feeling” (Willbanks 194-5).

This technique of using scenes in which only observable details such as dialogue and actions are reported, is typical of the realist stories that influenced the composition of What Came Between. An objective point of view does have clear limitations. “Realist authors,” writes Charters, “usually refrain from commenting at great length on their characters’ psychology. Instead, their psychology is manifesting things said and done by the characters themselves” (1065). Of realism’s tendency to leave readers looking in at a story from the outside, Jonathan Penner — reviewing a collection of Tobias Wolff’s stories — suggests that writing stories from the outside in “is the way of drama” can be “awkward, artificial, inefficient” (169). He adds that “Only a partial humanity percolates through action and speech” (170), and suggest that even a good writer like Wolff cannot “eschew he thought and he felt forever” (170).

In many of What Came Between’s stories characters struggle to articulate their thoughts, and this is emphasised by the objective point of view, which severely limits access to the inner thoughts of characters unless they speak directly about them. An objective narrative point of view may be considered a hallmark of realism but, Galens notes, “[i]he realistic method may be altered or extended, as in stream of consciousness writing, to record highly subjective experience” (Galens, 378-379). Free indirect style can also be used to provide what Gloria G. Jones describes as a shift in consciousness (70), a technique which permits access to a character’s thoughts and feelings without relying on direct or indirect speech — that is, without a character having to say aloud or to themselves what they think or how they feel. This technique is used in “Where Things Belong,” when Lucas contemplates the available range of pregnancy test kits, each promising a different combination of accuracy and number of available repeat tests: “He drove to the supermarket alone and stood in front of the shelf, comparing pregnancy test kits. Why should you have to choose? At a time like this why couldn’t there be just one kit” (“Where Things Belong” 125). Not only are Lucas’s actions suggestive of his likely psychological state but that state is also made clear through the use of free indirect style.

Free indirect style was used minimally and only late in the composition of What Came Between. The style of the stories developed progressively. The
The chronology of the stories as they appear in the cycle differs from the chronology of their writing and in order of composition — “And?” was one of the first; “The Birth of Unknowing” one of the last — the style moved gradually away from the more minimalistic short story that was considered trademark of Raymond Carver.

The style that did most to establish Raymond Carver’s reputation, the minimalism of *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, is not entirely his own. James Thorpe writes that a complete understanding of a literary work “depends on knowing a great many things about its creation and its revision. These are things which can generally be learned only from reading letters and marginalia and comparing editions and searching out all other relevant material” (205). This is certainly the case with Carver’s revisions, which have been much discussed over recent years because they were, in many cases, attempts to return his stories to their earlier unpublished forms.

### Revisioning Raymond Carver

Writers often return to and revise previously published stories for republication and revisions made by Raymond Carver have been much discussed in recent years because they were, in many cases, attempts to return his stories to their earlier unpublished forms. The first published versions of a number of Carver’s stories were heavily edited by Gordon Lish, his editor at the time. Anxious about the publication of the edited versions of the stories, Carver wrote to Lish insisting that the planned collection *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981) not go to print as it was:

Carver had been up all night reviewing Lish’s severe editorial cuts — two stories had been slashed by nearly seventy per cent, many by almost half; many descriptions and digressions were gone; endings had been truncated or rewritten — and he was unnerved to the point of desperation [...] Carver wrote that he was “confused, tired, paranoid, and afraid.” He feared exposure before his friends, who had read many of the stories in their earlier versions. If the book went forward, he said, he feared he might never write again (“Rough Crossings” 93).
The extent of Lish’s editing is evident in a comparison of “A Small, Good Thing” to “The Bath”. In both stories, a car hits Scotty, an eight-year-old boy, as he walks to school. Scotty is hospitalised and over the following days his parents receive a series of telephone calls that they find disturbing because they do not realise the context of the calls. The boy’s father, Howard, who has only just arrived home from the hospital, answers the first. The caller mentions a cake, of which Howard knows nothing. The caller is the baker with whom the mother, Ann Weiss, has ordered a cake for the boy’s birthday. The cake has been forgotten. The parents are now either at the hospital together or taking turns staying there. When the mother later heads home to take a bath and get some rest, the telephone rings:

“Mrs. Weiss,” a man’s voice said. It was five o’clock in the morning, and she thought she could hear machinery or equipment of some kind in the background.

“Yes, yes! What is it?” she said. “This is Mrs. Weiss. This is she. What is it, please?” She listened to whatever it was in the background. “Is it Scotty, for Christ’s sake?”

“Scotty,” the man’s voice said. “It’s about Scotty, yes. It has to do with Scotty, that problem. Have you forgotten about Scotty?” the man said. Then he hung up (“The Bath” 47).

“The Bath” is the version of this story that was edited by Lish and published in Carver’s collection What We Talk About When We Talk About Love, ends well short of any resolution. The boy’s fate is not yet known and the tone of that ending is filled with menace:

“Yes!” she said. “Hello” she said.

“Mrs. Weiss,” a man’s voice said.

“Yes,” she said. “This is Mrs. Weiss. Is it about Scotty?” she said.

“Scotty,” the voice said. “It is about Scotty,” the voice said. “It has to do with Scotty, yes” (“The Bath” 47).
In “A Small, Good Thing,” however, the story continues. The son dies. The mother realises who has been calling, and she and her husband go to confront the baker. There has been some confusion, the baker says and he asks them to forgive him. Only when they forgive him, and sit down with him to eat, can they begin to cope with their grief. Clearly the revised story progresses much further — it no longer ends in what is essentially the middle of the story. In editing “A Small, Good Thing” to publish as “The Bath,” Lish cut the story by seventy-eight percent of its total word length (Carver Beginners 208). While this is certainly the most extreme example of Lish’s editing the effect here is indicative of edits made elsewhere and each time the result was similar.

Only in 1998, ten years after Carver’s death, did the true extent of Lish’s revisions become widely known. In his New York Times Magazine article, “The Carver Chronicles,” D.T. Max revealed the results of his own investigation. He accessed Lish’s archives, including the actual Carver manuscripts showing Lish’s edits and, of the discrepancies between early drafts and published versions of the stories, he surmised:

All the characters, the settings and the plots are Carver’s. Carver country conceived of as a physical place with a given population is still Carver country. But the minimalist tone, for good or ill, was Lish’s. He was more avant-garde than Carver, whose real voice was closer to his plain-spoken poetry. That’s how he wrote before he met Lish, and that's how he wrote after (Max 56).

The posthumously published Beginners (2009) not only returns the stories published as What We Talk About When We Talk About Love to their intended form but also returns the intended title to the collection. In an appendix to the collection, William L. Stull and Maureen, P. Carroll detail the percentages of words excised from all each story; of the seventeen stories, eleven had forty percent or more of their words cut, five of those had more than sixty percent cut (“Notes”). The reinstatement of Carver’s manuscript was widely discussed and generally seen as a warranted correction. However, What We Talk About When We Talk About Love remains the collection that cemented Raymond Carver’s reputation both as a short story writer and, seemingly now misguided, the persistent reputation of his being a minimalist.
“A Small, Good Thing,” was published in *Cathedral* (1983), Carver’s third collection, and the revised version of that story, the other stories in *Cathedral* are more fully realised — less is left ‘unsaid’. Stull refers to the collection, especially to “Cathedral,” its first story, as a shift away from the “existential realism” of the earlier stories to a “humanist realism” (qtd. in Arthur A. Brown 125). The collection has been considered a repudiation of minimalism but it appears more likely that it is simply Carver reclaiming control of his material and writing as he had always wanted.

Tim Winton appears to have always had control of his material. The realism of his early stories is still evident in his most recent collection. Andrew Reimer describes the style of the stories in *The Turning* as “matter-of-fact bleakness” (10), which suggests a comparison to Carver. Colleen Keane writes that the stories in *The Turning* are: “In the strong tradition of Raymond Carver” (8). Also making a comparison, Stella Clarke suggests that Winton’s stories are less grim: “His gritty, sand-in-your-face realism (reminiscent of Raymond Carver) is softened by compassionate solemnity, and urge to foster integration between troubled selves and the world (13). Clarke’s more reasoned comparison points toward the differences in Winton and Carver’s writing. There is a warmth and humour in Winton’s colloquialism that is not found in Carver’s stories; a balance of lightness and darkness too. “Brutality and hideousness,” writes Reimer, are balanced with “delicate evocations of sea and landscapes, conveyed, in most instances, with the lightest touch” (10).

This notion of ‘balance’ may be a valid distinction between Carver and Winton’s short stories. Even though they deal with similar characters and situations, their styles differ, and this difference is approximated in Helen Garner’s comment on what she saw as Winton’s occasional excesses: “a character doesn’t just take a mouthful of beer” [as they might in Carver’s stories], instead, a character “nudges the bitter foam” (“Eight Scenes from a Friendship” 4). It is reasonable to conclude from Garner’s observation that despite their affinity with Tim Winton’s consistent setting and recurring characters, the short stories in *What Came Between*, with their more literal descriptions, are more heavily influenced by Raymond Carver’s particular kind of realism.
Conclusion

It is appropriate now to return briefly to the notion of influence. “Literature has always been written under the scrutiny – in the presence, if you will – of other writers,” Tobias Wolff acknowledges in an interview. Dispelling romantic notions of writers creating in isolation, he adds, “The idea of the writer as the figure isolé, it simply doesn’t ring true to experience. You will feel the discipline and presence of other writers through the books you read, if nothing else. Influence is inescapable” (Orringer 437).

Goethe, too, was adamant that influence was inevitable and eternal, and that influence was beyond literature alone: “There is all this talk about originality, but what does it amount to? As soon as we are born the world begins to influence us, and this goes on till we die” (Bloom 52). It’s ironic that Goethe refers to the fact that influence remains with us till the grave because does influence not also reaches us from the grave? Many writers cite as influences other writers, or the works of other writers, who are dead, often long dead. Malraux said that, “Every young man’s heart is a graveyard in which are inscribed the names of a thousand dead artists…” Drawing attention to the likely major influences on a writer, he adds, “…but whose actual denizens are a few mighty, often antagonistic, ghosts” (Bloom, 26). So influence is inevitable, and it is inescapable; we cannot live without it nor can we outlive it.

Jorge Luis Borges writes:

“In the critics’ vocabulary, the word ‘precursor’ is indispensable, but it should be cleansed of all connotation of polemics or rivalry. The fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future” (236).

What Came Between, then, is not without precursors. It is best understood not only in the ‘prior and larger contexts’ of the short story cycle and realism but also as a work written under influence and forever indebted to that influence.
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