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THE LOSER IN RAYMOND CARVER:
WHEN SILENCE IS THE VOICE OF RESISTANCE

PORTO ALEGRE
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WHEN SILENCE IS THE VOICE OF RESISTANCE

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Fear

Fear of seeing a police car pull into the drive.

Fear of falling asleep at night.

Fear of not falling asleep.

Fear of the past rising up.

Fear of the present taking flight.

Fear of the telephone that rings in the dead of night.

Fear of electrical storms.

Fear of the cleaning woman who has a spot on her cheek!

Fear of dogs I've been told won't bite.

Fear of anxiety!

Fear of having to identify the body of a dead friend.

Fear of running out of money.

Fear of having too much, though people will not believe this.

Fear of psychological profiles.

Fear of being late and fear of arriving before anyone else.

Fear of my children's handwriting on envelopes.

Fear they'll die before I do, and I'll feel guilty.

Fear of having to live with my mother in her old age, and mine.

Fear of confusion.

Fear this day will end on an unhappy note.

Fear of waking up to find you gone.

Fear of not loving and fear of not loving enough.

Fear that what I love will prove lethal to those I love.

Fear of death.

Fear of living too long.

Fear of death.

I've said that.

Raymond Carver

RESUMO

Esta dissertação analisa o universo discursivo das obras de Raymond Carver, focando-se especialmente no silêncio e em como ele cria mecanismos de significação nos contos do autor. O objetivo principal é analisar a presença recorrente, nos contos de Carver, de personagens que podem ser classificados, culturalmente, como *losers*. Para embasar este trabalho, amparo-me nas teorias da Análise do Discurso Francesa e em seus pressupostos acerca do sujeito, história e língua. A questão do silêncio é analisada tomando como base as teorias desenvolvidas por Orlandi. Espera-se concluir que os personagens de Raymond Carver, no decorrer da carreira do autor, evoluem, passando de excluídos, sem voz e sem poder de discurso — características marcantes na fase minimalista; para uma fase de maior autonomia discursiva e inclusão social — mais frequente na fase final da sua carreira.

Palavras-chave: Loser; formação ideológica; Análise do Discurso; sujeito; silêncio.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the discursive universe of the fictional works of Raymond Carver, focusing specially in the role of silence and on how it creates mechanisms of signification in the short stories of the author. The main goal of this dissertation is to analyze the recurrent presence, in the short stories of Raymond Carver, of characters that can be classified, culturally, as "losers". To support this paper, I use the theories of French Discourse Analysis and its presuppositions about language, subject and history. The issue of silence is analyzed with the endorsement of the theories developed by Eni Orlandi. I expect to conclude that the characters of Raymond Carver, throughout the career of the author, evolve, passing from excluded subjects who have no voice and no discursive authority — characteristics that are evident in the minimalist phase of the author; to a phase where the characters have a more significant discursive autonomy and social inclusion — characteristics that are more frequent in the final phase of Carver's career.

Keywords: Loser; ideological formation; Discourse Analysis; subject; silence.

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INTRODUCTION

Raymond Carver was born in 1938 and died in 1988. After being sober for ten years, lung cancer condemned him to early immortality at the age of 50. Carver is considered by many as the greatest American short story writer of the twentieth century. His style has been called minimalist, blunt, and pared down, but Raymond Carver's literature could also be described in other words, words that would not only frame his works as a reflection of an alienated and inarticulated society, but in deed, as a struggling class seeking for surviving and resolution. Carver is famous for showing a portrait of a society that lives at the margins of the "American dream". His characters mirror his own life, where alcoholism, unemployment, financial hardship, infidelity, violence and silence are common factors that reflect a reality of a different America we are used to talk about. Raymond Carver was an awarded story teller and poet who chose silence and elliptical spaces to develop discourse and social resistance.

Communication is a threatening constituent in Carver's literature. The world the characters inhabit is hostile and cruel. There is almost no space for salvation and resolution for the social class Carver portrays. It is too dangerous to establish communication, since communication means discourse, the exterior world. The characters in Carver are subjects of desire and ideology who are "trapped" in an oppressed ideological formation. These subjects are not allowed to rise socially, and the device that controls this prohibition takes the form of discourse. The discursive study I endure in the fiction of Raymond Carver has the purpose of establishing the ideological formation in which his characters are inscribed and understand the class conflicts involved in it. This dissertation intends to identify the ways in which Raymond Carver establishes meaning while being in silence, and also, hopes to understand the materiality, within discourse, of the social resistance portrayed in the stories.

One of the formal aspects of the fictional universe of Carver is the elliptical style he applies into his short stories and poems. This elliptical feature, present in his literature is called by many critics, minimalism. Although minimalism is not the best

word to describe Carver's style, the reader understands that the stories of Carver are more focused on what is not said than what was said. The spaces of silence are more important and reveal more about the subjects and the class conflict involved in the narratives than the hard language used by the author. The silenced moments presented in Carver's narratives expose the incompleteness feature, historically materialized, in the form of discourse. I would like to take into consideration that incompleteness is a very important element for French Discourse Analysis, since, for Discourse Analysis every saying needs absence. Every subject and every discourse are incomplete therefore incompleteness is a constituent element of discourse. I would like to point out that I do not intend to interpret silence in the works of Raymond Carver, but in fact, I aspire to understand the processes and mechanisms of signification that operates in silence, and that allow the possibility of interpretation. I seek to identify in the text another text that was silenced, but that is constituent of it.

As an American literature student, I understood that a good approach to deal with the literature of Raymond Carver would be the French Discourse Analysis of Michel Pêcheux. Several reasons drove me to the discursive theories of Pêcheux, so that I could study Raymond Carver better. First, it is a field of studies that is particularly studied in Brazil nowadays, and remembering that UFRGS has a very representative group in the area; second, It is a pioneer association of theory and the literature of Raymond Carver; and finally, because the fictional world of Carver mirrors many aspects of this theory. From the French Discourse Analysis I endorse my studies in the notions of subject, language and history to sketch the universe of Raymond Carver's literature, and his characters who are interpellated by ideology and trespassed by the unconscious. Referring to language, Carver used a unique elliptical style, where silence is louder than words. Silence in Carver is surrounded by hard and spare language creating a discourse choked with ambiguity and polysemy. When the concept of history is approached in Carver's literature, the discourse analyst is able to identify the historical materialism evidenced by the materiality of ideology manifested in discourse, therefore, identifying the class conflicts inscribed in the narratives. When the subject of discourse is analyzed in Carver's literature, the analyst can distinguish the *subject form* in which the characters

are presented, and also, distinguish where the ideological formation in which the respective *subject form* is speaking from.

Eni Orlandi, the celebrated Brazilian discourse analyst, developed a pioneer study about the role of silence in the discursive practices. I approach her project in three aspects: analyzing the *founding silence*, the one that permeates words, that signifies the unsaid, and that gives space so that the conditions for production of meanings might happen; the *politics of silence* with *constitutive silence*, the one where a specific ideological formation is induce to say "x" for the impossibility of saying "Y', and finally, *local silence*, the one where the mechanisms used by social voices, repressed by a dominant ideology, signify in silence.

In this perspective, this dissertation is developed into four chapters: The first one establishes the basic notions of French Discourse Analysis of Michel Pêcheux, and its relevancy to the study of the literature of Raymond Carver. Still in the first chapter I elaborate a map of the functioning of silence and its influence in Carver's fiction. After the development of my theoretical background, I endure a study on the figure of the *Loser* in the North American culture in the second chapter. Carver created a world where his characters are in constant fear and the feeling of threat exhales from every hard, arid word and silenced spaces. Carver's stories portray a set of subjects that are grown apart from each other, alienate and fearful to communicate, although communication is the great desire of these characters. Any kind of approximation through communication generates the possibility of disaster. The world created by Carver has very defined ideological formations: the losers and the others, the ones that are in a dominant ideological formation. The impossibility of movement between different ideological formations is a signature of Carver's early minimal stories, which is, in his later stories, also the center of the dramas concerning the characters, but then, characters are able to establish a redemptory feature of communion. Carver's characters represent the American working-class, usually portrayed as a class unable to rise socially. They are husbands and wives in recurrent financial and marital hardship. In the third chapter the discourse is analyzed in the author's fiction. I analyze two short stories from the first collection of fiction from Carver: *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (1976). These stories are going to serve as a

sample of Carver's early minimalist style and the effects this style caused in his narratives. In the forth and final chapter, I will scrutinize the perspective of silence in the literature of the author. In a first moment I will establish the functioning of silence and on how it generates meaning in one of the most representative stories that deals with this subject: *A Serious Talk* from Carver's second collection of stories *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981). In a second moment I dissect the differences from two stories of Carver: *The Bath* from *What We Talk About* and *A Small, Good Thing* from *Beginners* (2008). *Beginners* is the original manuscript of what became *What We Talk About*. Carver's editor in 1981 was Gordon Lish. This editor decided to publish Carver's collection by reducing it more than fifty percent of its original length. The result of this dramatic editing is what the readers know as *What We Talk About*, the most famous collection of stories of the author. In 2008 Carver's widow, Tess Gallagher decided to publish the original manuscript her husband had sent to Lish. The original collection proved to be completely different from the version published in 1981. Lish's editing and deletions contributed to construct the character of incompleteness, inarticulateness and menace that permeates the whole 1981's collection. Lish censored Carver's desire to turn his literature into a more expansive tone. Characters who appear in *Beginners*, differently from those who appear in *What We Talk About*, are seeking for resolution and salvation. They do not represent the alienated and fearful people who inhabit Lish's version. In *Beginners* silence gives space to discourse and communication. This expansive tone will continue throughout the rest of Carver's short fiction, establishing a cut from the minimalist style that made him famous.

To make it clear, I translated to English all the material from discourse analysis produced in Portuguese, so all the references present in this dissertation are translations. The original references are placed on foot notes.

1 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND SILENCE

> Man is "condemned" to signify. With or without words, when faced with the world, there is an injunction towards "interpretation": everything has to mean something (whatever the meaning might be). Man is irremediably constituted by his relation with the symbolic[1]. (ORLANDI, 2007, p.29)

The Discourse Analysis of the French School of Michel Pêcheux gained strength in the 1960's by working, the relations between subject, language and history through discourse (its theoretical object). As Denise Maldidier proposes, "*Discourse*, in Michel Pêcheux, to me, seems to be a real *knot*. It is never an empirical and original object. It is the place where, literally, all the great questions about language, history and subject are intricated"[2] (2003. p. 15). French Discourse Analysis focuses, in particular, on the textualization of politics and on how power relations might be signified and symbolized. To construct an instrument of analysis, the French Discourse Analysis uses a divided subject, the subject of the unconscious from a theory of subjectivity of the Lacanian psychoanalysis and the subject of ideology from Louis Althusser's *Ideology and ideological state apparatus*; in addition, it relies on the heritage of Saussurean Linguistics; and Historical Materialism, from which Pêcheux asserts: "Today Marxism tends to get married, or to have some kind of marital relation…"[3] (2008, p. 16). The marriage of Marxism with psychoanalysis and linguistics, led Pêcheux to the creation of a research instrument that would be capable of analyzing discursive devices, producers of "evidences" of meaning.

> Discourse Analysis presupposes the legacy of historical materialism, which means that there is a real of history, in such a way that man makes history, but history is not transparent to him. Thus, by conjugating language with history in the production of meanings, these discourse studies work with what is going to be called the material form (not the abstract form, like the one in Linguistics),

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[1] Original: "O homem está 'condenado' a significar. Com ou sem palavras, diante do mundo, há uma injunção à 'interpretação': tudo tem de fazer sentido (qualquer que ele seja) O homem está irremediavelmente constituído pela sua relação com o simbólico."

[2] Original: "O *discurso* me parece, em Michel Pêcheux, um verdadeiro *nó*. Não é jamais um objeto primeiro ou empírico. É o lugar em que se intrincam literalmente todas suas grandes questões sobre a língua, a história, o sujeito."

[3] Original: "Hoje o marxismo procura casar-se, ou contrair relações conjugais..."

> which is the form embodied in history, to produce meanings: this form is consequently linguistic-historical.[4] (ORLANDI, 2003, p.19)

In French Discourse Analysis, language is not closed, as it is in Saussurean Linguistics. For Discourse Analysis, language is a social-historical object in which the linguistic element is a constituting factor. Closed language is not studied in discourse analysis, but discourse is, or in other words, the practice of language. One must recall that, to Pêcheux, language is a place inhabited by ambiguity, and it is only in the relations between subjects (interlocutors) that the effects of meaning might be reached. Discourse is the place of particularity, where the Ideological Formations, represented by the Ideological formations, in which "something signifies before, in another and independent place"[5] (ORLANDI, 2005, p. 11) make class struggle a representational constituting element. The Ideological formations allow the subject to utter what is possible and establish what is impossible to say in a determined situation and position, connecting the saying with the conditions of production.

The particularity between the social and the individual implies precisely that every discourse is determined by different pre-existing discourses, or the already-said; that is regulated by the social place of the subject who, when assuming a word, never has absolute control over his saying, once the subject is interpellated by ideology. The saying of the subject is still determined by the presence of the other, by the place that this other occupies in his imaginary; and determined by the fact that the meaning(s) for those who speak is(are) not necessarily the same meaning(s) for those who listen. That is, to say that discourse is the place of particularity is to say that exteriority is constitutive of discourse.

Eni Orlandi, a celebrated Brazilian discourse analyst, amplifies the horizons of the discipline by involving silence in the epistemological field. According to Orlandi, silence is a position in which the subject inserts himself in signification. There is(are) meaning(s) in silence. For this analyst, silence does not have the mortifying

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[4] Original: "A Análise do Discurso pressupõe o legado do materialismo histórico, isto é, o de que há um real da história de tal forma que o homem faz história mas esta também não lhe é transparente. Daí, conjugando a língua com a história na produção de sentidos, esses estudos do discurso trabalham o que vai-se chamar a forma material (não abstrata como a da Linguística) que é a forma encarnada na história para produzir sentidos: está forma é portanto linguístico-histórico."

[5] Original: "algo significa antes, em outro lugar e independentemente."

characteristic to which it was relegated, where it represented the "rest" of language. Orlandi places silence in a fundamental and indissociable position in relation to discourse. To do that, she establishes some presuppositions: to be in silence is to be in meaning; silence, similar to language, has a character of incompleteness, it is also the place of the equivocal and displacement of meanings; there are silenced processes of meaning production; silence is the place of truly polisemy; silence is the real of discourse. Silence means, in different and multiple ways, mediating the relations between world, thought and language. It resists the control pressure employed by the urgency of language.

> Silence is like this the "breathing" of signification: a place of retreat necessary for the possibility of signification, so that the meaning makes sense. Redoubt of the possible, the multiple, silence opens space to what is not "one", to what allows the movement of the subject.[6] (ORLANDI, 2007, p.13)

The meaning is not "one", it is not attached to any specific pre-defined place. It is constructed in its relation with interlocutors, since meaning and subject construct themselves mutually, in the game of multiple Ideological formations. The different Ideological formations "carve the interdiscourse (the utterable[7], the memory of saying) and reflect their ideological disparities, the manner in which the position of the subjects, and their social places represented in discourse constitute different meanings."[8] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 20). To analyze silence and the discursive devices of silence, it is necessary to analyze Ideological formations. It is important to understand that it is in silence where the movement of meanings is possible, and where the different ideological formations can be trespassed. "The limits of a Ideological formation is what distinguishes it from another (therefore, both have the same limit of one another), and it allows us to think that a Ideological formation is

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[6] Original: "O silêncio é assim a 'respiração' da significação; um lugar de recuo necessário para que se possa significar, para que o sentido faça sentido. Reduto do possível, do múltiplo, o silêncio abre espaço para o que não é 'um', para o que permite o movimento do sujeito".

[7] For the lack of an appropriate word to translate from Portuguese, 'o dizível', I chose to represent it in the word 'utterable' instead of using an expression like 'what can be said' or the word 'pronounceable' believing they would not fit adequately the required context.

[8] Original: "recortam o interdiscurso (o dizível, a memória do dizer) e refletem as diferenças ideológicas, o modo como as posições dos sujeitos, seus lugares sociais aí representados, constituem sentidos diferentes."

heterogeneous in relation to itself, since it evokes, by itself, the "other" meaning that it does not signify"[9] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 21). It is within these limits where the work with silence is found, in the performance of the equivocal, the non-sense, the meaning: "other". To Orlandi, silence is:

> The possibility for subjects to elaborate with their constitutive contradiction, that places the subject within the relation of "one with the "multiple", that accepts the reduplication and the displacement from that allow us to see that every discourse always refers itself to another discourse that gives it a signifying reality.[10] (2007.p. 24)

Orlandi classifies two important functioning devices in the work with silence: the *founding silence*, present in the language as a whole, and in every word, signifying the *unsaid*; and the *politics of silence*, subdivided into *constitutive silence* and *silencing process*[11]. In constitutive silence, Orlandi outlines the idea that every saying silences something, that someone says (y) to signify (x), therefore, every saying has silenced meanings. Furthermore, silence is present in every word, in every pause signifying multiple possibilities. In the politics of silence, the analyst works with the concept that some meanings are censored, either by the subject of a Ideological formation, or by an entire community somewhere historically determined. "In the presence of its political dimension, silence might be considered part of the rhetoric of domination (that of oppression), as much as part of the rhetoric of the oppressed (that of resistance)"[12] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 29). Raymond Carver's short stories could fit perfectly in the cases reported by Orlandi. His characters are in such a way imprisoned by pre-determined Discourse Formations that they cannot trespass them, except through silence. In the writing of Raymond Carver silence becomes the place of resistance for his oppressed working class subject/characters.

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[9] Original: "O limite de uma formação discursiva é o que a distingue de outra (logo, é o mesmo limite da outra), o que permite pensar que a formação discursiva é heterogênea em relação a ela mesma, pois já evoca por si o 'outro' sentido que ela não significa."

[10] Original: "a possibilidade para o sujeito de trabalhar sua contradição constitutiva, a que o situa na relação do 'um' com o 'múltiplo', a que aceita a reduplicação e o deslocamento que nos deixam ver que todo discurso sempre se remete a outro discurso que lhe dá realidade significativa."

[11] Adopted expression for the lack of a better translation for 'silenciamento'.

[12] Original: "Em face dessa sua dimensão política, o silêncio pode ser considerado tanto parte da retórica da dominação (a da opressão) como de sua contrapartida, a retórica do oprimido (a da resistência)."

1.1 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND ITS PRINCIPLES

Meanings are mobile, and in the act of moving, the idea of the intentionality of those who produce such saying, is lost. Meanings are mutable because historicity, language and ideology imbricate themselves in the constitution of meanings. In its theoretical field Discourse Analysis embodies four scientific regions of knowledge:

> Historical materialism, as a theory of social formations and their transformations, embracing the theory of ideologies; Linguistics as a theory at the same time of the syntactic mechanisms and of enunciation processes; discourse theory as a theory of the determination of semantic processes.[13] (MALDIDIER, 2003, p. 38)

Finally, but not less important, Discourse Analysis incorporates a theory of subjectivity from lacanian psychoanalysis. With this theoretical background, Pêcheux proposes a theoretical field capable of working with an unstable language and its unstable meanings and subjects.

The concept that historicity is constitutive of meaning and materializes in the linguistic is the concept of language for French Discourse Analysis. Michel Pêcheux, its founder, introduced a theoretical object into linguistic studies that could approach language by its heterogeneity, remembering that Discourse Analysis is not a method of interpretation, but rather a device to understand the mechanisms of interpretation and signification:

> Discourse Analysis intends to comprehend how symbolic objects produce meanings, thus analyzing the gestures of interpretation that it considers as acts in the symbolic domain, since they intervene in the real of meaning. Discourse Analysis does not stop at interpretation, it deals with its limits, its mechanisms, as part of the process of signification. Furthermore, it does not look for a truthful meaning using a "key" of interpretation. There is no key, there is method, there is the construction of a theoretical device. There is no truth hidden behind the text. There are gestures of interpretation that constitute the text, and which the analyst, with his

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[13] Original: "O materialismo histórico como teoria das formações sociais e de suas transformações, aí compreendida a teoria das ideologias; a linguística como teoria ao mesmo tempo dos mecanismos sintáticos e dos processos de enunciação; a teoria do discurso como teoria da determinação dos processos semânticos."

theoretical device, should be capable of understanding.[14] (ORLANDI, 2003, p. 26)

According to Discourse Analysis, the subject has a false impression that he is autonomous and that he is in control of what he says, but in fact, his saying is regulated by a social place. It is from this social place where the subject will produce the Imaginary Formations he has of himself, and the ones he has of the interlocutor and the referent. The saying of the subject is also conditioned by the already-said, which is concomitantly conditioned by determined social places.

> Focusing, fundamentally on the question of meaning, Discourse Analysis constitutes itself in the space where Linguistics is connected with Philosophy and the Social Sciences. In other words, from a discursive perspective, language is language because it signifies. And language only signifies because it is inscribed within in history[15]. (ORLANDI, 2003, p. 25)

The false impression the subject has of his supposed independent ability of expressing itself, is still a reflection of a humanistic view of a neutral language whose meanings are not obscure or changeable. Most subjects are not aware of the forces driving their speech. Historicity, ideology and the unconscious trespass the subject, positioning him in a social place. The subject speaks from a Ideological formation inside an Imaginary Formation. There is nothing independent or individual about it. The naïve illusion of the transparency of language is necessary for the existence of the subject. The inscription of the subject in a specific ideological formation does not occur consciously. The subject of discourse is gifted with pre-consciousness and unconsciousness. According to Ferreira "the subject is not the source of meaning, nor the master of language; meaning is formulated by the elaboration of a memory

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[14] Original: "A Análise do Discurso visa fazer compreender como os objetos simbólicos produzem sentidos, analisando assim os próprios gestos de interpretação que ela considera como atos no domínio do simbólico, pois eles intervêm no real do sentido. A Análise do Discurso não estaciona na interpretação, trabalha seus limites, seus mecanismos, como parte dos processos de significação. Também não procura um sentido verdadeiro através de uma "chave" de interpretação. Não há está chave, há método, há construção de um dispositivo teórico. Não há uma verdade oculta atrás do texto. Há gestos de interpretação que o constituem e que o analista, com seu dispositivo, deve ser capaz de compreender."

[15] Original: "Tendo como fundamental a questão do sentido, a Análise do Discurso se constitui no espaço em que a Linguística tem a ver com a Filosofia e com as Ciências Sociais. Em outras palavras, na perspectiva discursiva, a linguagem é linguagem porque faz sentido. E a linguagem só faz sentido porque se inscreve na história."

network; subject and meaning are not "natural", "transparent", but historically determined and should be thought of in their constitutional processes"[16] (1998, p. 202).

To Pêcheux, discourse is the effect of meaning between interlocutors. These interlocutors are subjected and interpellated by ideologies and historicity. To work with these interlocutors/subjects, Pêcheux rethinks the presence of subjectivity within language from the junction of the althusserian notion of ideological interpellation of the subject and the lacanian psychoanalytical theory of subjectivity. In the following pages, we will analyze the main characteristics of discourse separately, although language, history/ideology and the subject are, in French Discourse Analysis, inseparable.

1.1.1 Language

Differently from Saussurean Linguistics which had a tendency to focus on *langue* (its theoretical object), the universalization and homogeneity of language, French Discourse Analysis developed by Pêcheux, will detain itself on discourse as its theoretical object. By saying that, I mean that the discourse will define a process of signification in which Language and History are presented in their materiality, and the subject is subjected and interpellated by ideology.

> The object of DA will consider linguistic functioning (as internal order) and the production conditions in which it manifests itself (as exteriority). Thus, the linguistic (on the one hand) and the social and historical aspect (on the other hand) are gathered under the denomination of discourse. There is no separation, as there is in linguistics between *langue* and speech, between the social and the historical.[17] (FERREIRA, 1998, p. 203)

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[16] Original: "O sujeito não é fonte de sentido, nem senhor da língua; o sentido se forma por um trabalho da rede de memória; sujeito e sentido não são "naturais", "transparentes", mas determinados historicamente e devem ser pensados em seus processos de constituição."

[17] Original: "O objeto da AD vai considerar o funcionamento linguístico (enquanto ordem interna) e as condições de produção em que ele se realiza (enquanto exterioridade). Desse modo, o linguístico (de um lado) e o aspecto histórico e social (de outro) ficam reunidos sob a denominação do discurso. Não há, portanto, a separação feita pela linguística entre língua e fala, entre social e histórico."

The remarkable efforts of Saussure towards the development and foundation of Linguistics as an autonomous science in the beginning of the 1900's, focusing on langue as the only linguistic object, resulted in the rejection of everything that was external to the linguistic. The subject, history and ideology were left aside in Saussurean Linguistic Science, as Indursky points it out:

> The linguistic analysis of a text occupies itself with one text only to examine its internal organization, analyzing the marks of its cohesion and coherence. In this kind of analysis, the text is considered as a closed, formal unit, endowed with completeness. It deals with an empirical object. Discourse analysis also deals with the text, but does not examine it in its extension, and does not limit the examination to only one text. In fact, the interest of Discourse Analysis in the text resides in the fact that the text represents the material surface through which discursivity might be reached. Faced with this type of analysis, the text is considered as an open and pragmatic unit that relates to exteriority, and is strongly marked by incompleteness.[18] (INDURSKY, 1998, p. 10)

These exclusions of Saussurean Linguistics were responsible for the creation of semantic disciplines, such as Discourse Analysis, the Enunciation theory, Pragmatics, Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics, that worked with what Saussure had not approached or within the spaces in which Saussure had committed "mistakes". Saussurean binarism was a system of subordination, from the linguistic point of view, the subordination of signification over value. The opposition *langue*/speech which places speech in a secondary position, as a manifestation of individual will, inside the closed meanings of langue, summarizes the absence of semantics, history, the world, ideology and the subject in the Saussurean Linguistic apparatus. Saussure gave the world the functioning of *langue* as a system of signs. He gave us the interiority of language, and during this construction, he also instituted language's exteriority, and it is in the relations with exteriority that meanings are constructed.

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[18] Original: "Uma análise linguística do texto ocupa-se de um único texto para examinar sua organização interna, analisando as marcas de sua coesão e de sua coerência. O texto, diante desse tipo de análise, é tomado enquanto unidade fechada, formal e dotada de completude. Trata-se de um objeto empírico. Uma análise de discurso também trabalha com o texto, mas não o examina em sua extensão, nem se limita a um só texto. Na realidade, seu interesse pelo texto reside no fato de que o texto representa a superfície material através da qual pode-se atingir a discursividade. O texto, frente a esse tipo de análise, é considerado como uma unidade aberta e pragmática, que se relaciona com a exterioridade, sendo marcado fortemente pela incompletude."

> The relations between Discourse Analysis and traditional Linguistics are not put together in a complementary and interdisciplinary panorama. There is, of course, a relationship between them, but a tense, contradictory one, in which Linguistics enters as a presupposition. The discursive point of view creates an object that is not langue, but that also does not discard it. As we have seen, discourse (the object of DA) has a part that is linguistic, but is not concentrated on this.[19] (FERREIRA, 1998, p. 204)

Language in Pêcheux deviates from the trilogy that controlled the field of Linguistics: *Univocality*, *Regularity* and *Transparency*. By *Univocality* we comprehend a conception of a world that is "semantically normal", where there is a perfect relation between forms and meanings. Inside this normative space there is no place for equivocal, ambiguity or double meanings. *Univocality* is the place of completeness. With *Regularity* we place language in a reduced logical world, where langue represents a homogeneous set of elements that establishes predictable and systematic relations. This set of elements must be closed and work within the stable and uniform principles. And finally, with *Transparency* we have the idea of a concept that places langue as a vehicle of thought. Langue must fit and adjust itself to thought. Therefore, we can observe that this type of view of langue lacks historicity and ideological content, creating relations that have no contradictions.

Michel Pêcheux, centered on the exteriority of language, and focused on the questions of meaning and on the heterogeneity of language that traditional Linguistics chose to neglect, decided to rely on social sciences that could give him some background support to solve some of these problems. Combining Marxism, Linguistics, and Discourse theories connected to a psychoanalytic subjectivity theory, Pêcheux allowed external concepts to interfere in the world of traditional Linguistics. Historicity is a mark of language since meanings are always determined by the subjects that speak and by the social space they occupy in pre-defined production conditions. Pêcheux establishes that words may change their meaning according to the positions stated by those who employ them.

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[19] Original: "As relações da AD com a Linguística não se colocam no plano da complementaridade, da interdisciplinaridade. Existe, é claro, uma relação entre as duas, mas uma relação tensa, contraditória, na qual a lingüística entra como pressuposto. O ponto de vista discursivo cria um objeto que não é a língua, mas que também não a descarta. Como já se viu, o discurso (objeto da AD) tem uma parte linguística, só que não se fixa nela apenas."

> Nowadays, the interdisciplinary impulse that incites nowadays, at least in France, a growing interest in the study of the acts of language, the pragmatic relations and the argumentative, narrative or descriptive mechanisms, leads to sociology, to a micro-sociology of the interactions, attributing to itself the task of analyzing the power "strategies" of speaking subjects in a situation, with the conscious or unconscious "calculi" that these strategies display with.[20] (PÊCHEUX, 1983, p. 54)

From a concept of language, that sees it as determined and held within a relation with history, Pêcheux realizes that discourse is an ideological functioning, that is, discourse goes beyond linguistic elements. Discourse, according to Pêcheux, is not a static and universal science, but a place of articulation. The linguistic materiality of discourse is consolidated through history, ideology and the subject who always signifies from a determined social place.

> The field of Discourse Analysis is determined by the field of discursive spaces that are not logically stable, and depends on the philosophical, sociohistorical, political or aesthetic domains, and also, hence, on the multiple registers of the quotidian that are not stable.[21] (PÊCHEUX, 1983, p. 58)

To French Discourse Analysis there is no language without ideology, and there is no meaning that is not constituted by an ideological position entirely infected by historicity. The concepts Pêcheux uses to approach discourse question the saussurean idea of literal meaning. The mobility of meanings within words shows that there is nothing neutral about language. The material conditions (exteriority) in which a discourse is produced is always embodied with meaning; therefore, we can argue that, if conditions change, meaning also changes. Discourse Analysis proposes an analytical level that contemplates the circumstances of production in an enunciation. Pêcheux calls these circumstances which embody the expression of

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[20] Original: "O impulso interdisciplinar que suscita atualmente, ao menos na França, um interesse crescente pelo estudo dos atos de linguagem, das relações pragmáticas e dos mecanismos argumentativos, narrativos ou descritivos, desemboca, em sociologia, em uma microssociologia das interações, atribuindo-se a tarefa de analisar as estratégias de poder dos sujeitos falantes em situação, com os 'cálculos', conscientes ou não, que essas estratégias põem em jogo."
[21] Original: "O campo da análise do discurso é determinado pelo campo dos espaços discursivos não estabilizados logicamente, dependendo dos domínios filosófico, sócio-histórico, político, ou estético, e também, portanto, dos múltiplos registros do cotidiano não estabilizado."

exteriority in the linguistic materiality, *production conditions*[22] of discourse. *Interdiscourse*[23], that is, the infinity of other discourses already-said, is a part of these conditions of production. Consequently, we can understand that every discourse alludes to another discourse. A discourse establishes a dialogue with this other discourse, identifying or contradicting itself in relation to it.

In addition to the idea that a discourse always refers to another discourse, it also always refers to someone. This anticipation of what the other will think is also constitutive of discourse. Pêcheux formulates what he is going to call Imaginary Formations. Addresser and Addressee are the main characters of discourse. And discourse, as the place of particularity, determined ideologically, politically and socially, finds that the places in which its main characters act are also determined within a social structure. According to Pêcheux, what works in the discursive processes is a series of imaginary formations that determines the places that A and B attribute to themselves and to one another, the image they have of their own position and the position of the other. These formations also include the image that the performers of discourse (A and B) have of the referent and the image they think the other has of the referent.

Discourse, as we have seen, always refers to (an)other discourse(s) and will interfere in the discourses that will be produced. In these relations of the subject with the *already-said* and his saying, there are two notions of oblivion that will give the subject the illusion that he is the master of his discourse. *Oblivion*[24] n°1 concerns ideology and ideological formations. This oblivion is what the subject never knows, it belongs to the area of the unconscious. Every meaning constitutes itself from an established ideological formation, and that is why it is an effect of meaning. The subject is not aware of its ideological interpellation, not to mention the interference of unconscious order in its saying. Orlandi says that this oblivion is the reason why the

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[22] Derived from the marxist expression "economical production conditions", Pêcheux empirically defines the notion of Production Conditions when he establishes the advantage of making evident the protagonists of Discourse and their 'referent', allowing the comprehension of the historical conditions in the production of discourse.

[23] Concept that appears since the origins of French discourse analysis. It is defined as a set of discursive unities (that belong to former discourses of the same genre, from contemporary discourses of different genres) from which a *particular discourse* has an explicit or implicit relation.

[24] Word chosen for the lack of an aproppriate translation for 'esquecimento'.

subject has the illusion of being the origin of what he says. *Oblivion* n° 2 alludes to the order of enunciation. "when we speak, we do it in one way, and not the other, and, in the continuity of our saying, paraphrasic families are formulated and indicate that the saying could always be another" (ORLANDI, 1999, p. 35). This second oblivion is related to the choices the subject makes in his discourse, it is what the subject says and it is what is left unsaid. This is the source of the subject's illusion: I know what I say, I know what I speak. This oblivion creates, in the subjects, the impression of reality of thinking. This impression, named referential illusion, makes us believe there is a direct relation between thought, language and the world, in such a way that we think that what we say can only be said with those words and not others (ORLANDI, 1999, p. 35). Both oblivions operate in an articulated way in discourse and they are what allow the subject to constitute himself (as such) and to signify. By realizing that, we can understand that meanings are produced in their relation to exteriority and with interdiscourse, while ideology creates the illusion of a single meaning. Discourse analysis deconstructs this illusion by showing the discursive devices that operate and constitute it.

1.1.2 History and ideology

> Let me simply point out that the common feature of the two structures called respectively *ideology* and the *unconscious* is the fact that they conceal their own existence within their operation by producing a web of '*subjective*' *evident truths*, 'subjective' here meaning not 'affecting the subject' but 'in which the subject is constituted. (PÊCHEUX, 1996, p. 148)

The althusserian *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses* which predicates that there is no practice except by and in *an* ideology, and that there is no Ideology except by the subject and for subjects, is maintained by Pêcheux in his construction of a materialistic discursive practice. Discourse is an instance where the ideological materiality manifests itself. Discourse is one of the material aspects of the "materialistic evidences" of ideology. To Pêcheux, what is interesting in the field of historical materialism connected with discourse theories is the idea of an ideological superstructure linked with the dominant means of production in an analyzed social

formation. To discourse analysis, the idea of accessing reality in a way that is not distorted by any discursive devices or a conjunction with power is purely ideological.

> So, to begin with, we have ideology 'in-itself': the immanent notion of ideology as a doctrine, a composite of ideas, beliefs, concepts, and so on, destined to convince us of its 'truth', yet actually serving some unavowed particular power interest…the aim of the critique is to discern the unavowed bias of the official text via its ruptures, blanksand slips. (ZIZEK, 1996, p. 14)

Michel Pêcheux gave a linguistic approach to the theory of Interpellation from Althusser. Pêcheux focused his work on the discursive devices that generate "evidences", "materialities" of the *unavowed particular power interest, the unavowed bias*. Althusser asserts that to maintain its domination, the ruling class develops mechanisms of perpetuation and reproduction of the material and ideological conditions and its exploitation politics. The State intervenes with its Repressive Apparatus (the Government, the Army, politics, prisons, courts, etc) and its Ideological apparatus as well (religion, education, family, culture, the unions, etc). The ruled classes are induced/forced to submit to the relations and conditions of exploitation.

Althusser creates a general project of a theory of ideology, not a particular one. On ideology he says: "whatever its form (religious, ethical, legal, political), they always express class positions" (1996, p.123). To explain ideology, Louis Althusser focused his work on three presuppositions: (1) Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence; (2) Ideology has a material existence; and (3) Ideology interpellates individuals into subjects.

With the first presupposition, that ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence, Althusser opposes the simplistic conception of ideology as a mere mechanistic representation of reality. He concludes that ideology is the way in which men live their relations to the real conditions of existence, in an imaginary process.

> It is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their

relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. It is this relation which is at the centre of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the 'cause' which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. Or rather, to leave aside the language of causality, it is necessary to advance the thesis that it is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology. (ALTHUSSER, 1996, p. 128)

The imaginary is the way in which man acts and relates to the real conditions of life. These relations are represented symbolically and abstractly, thus, deviating from reality. "This distance might be the cause of the transposition and imaginary deformation of men's real conditions of existence, in sum, of the alienation in the imagery of the representations of men's existential conditions"[25] (Brandão, 1994, p. 23).

In his second assumption that Ideology has a material existence, Althusser concludes that practice only exists by an ideology and in an ideology. "An ideology always exists in an apparatus, and in its practice, or practices. This existence is material." (Althusser, 1996, p.129) That is, ideology materializes in the concrete actions, as a molding character of actions. He criticizes the concept that ideology carries a spiritual and ideal existence, saying that ideas gain materiality since their existence is only possible within an ideological material apparatus that prescribes material practices ruled by a material ritual, and that these practices appear in the material actions of a subject.

In his third and final presumption, in which Althusser states that Ideology interpellates individuals into subjects, he concludes that every ideology has the function of constituting concrete individuals into subjects.

> I wish only to point out that you and I are *always-already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects. The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are currently performing are also in this respect rituals of ideological recognition,

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[25] Original: "Esse distanciamento pode ser a causa para a transposição e para a deformação imaginária das condições de existência reais do homem, numa palavra, para a alienação no imaginário da representação das condições de existência dos homens."

including the 'obviousness' with which the 'truth' or 'error' of my reflections may impose itself on you. (ALTHUSSER, 1996, p. 133)

In this process of constitution, interpellation and recognition exert an important role in the functioning of the entire ideology. It is through these mechanisms that ideology, functioning in the material rituals of quotidian life, operates the transformation of individual into subjects. Recognition happens at the moment that the subject inserts himself and his actions in practices regulated by the ideological apparatus. As a constitutive category of ideology, it will be merely by the subject and in the subject that the existence of ideology will be possible.

Pêcheuxtian Discourse Analysis is responsible for re-signifying the notion of ideology in a strictly linguistic way. Pêcheux's discursive definition of ideology takes for granted that there is no meaning without interpretation. He argues that the unavoidable practice of interpretation of every symbolic element facing the subject, reveals the presence of ideology and destroys the former concept of literal meaning. Interpretation is an ideological position. Interpretation is the place where the subject inserts himself in ideology.

1.1.3 The subject

The discourse analyst should understand that the subject is not the source of meaning, nor, the master of language. Meaning is created and shaped by the work of a memory net, therefore, subject and meaning are not transparent entities, but, historically determined and they should be thought of in their process of constitution.

> In the instance of discourse, the subject is perceived from determined social places. Moreover, the subject, being social, necessarily loses his individualizing characteristics. The first dimension of the subject that we should examine presents itself as "Subject-form"… the individual, when he is ideologically interpellated as subject, identifies himself, in an imaginary sphere, with the "subject-form" of a "ideological formation" — understood as the domain of knowledge constituted by discursive enunciations that represent a form of relating itself with the dominant ideology, regulating what can and should be said, but also, what cannot and should not be said. Consequently, the subject-form is a historical

subject with whom the subject identifies himself with, constituting himself as "subject of discourse".[26] (INDURSKY, 1998, p.115)

Pêcheux incorporates the notion of interpellation notion present in Althusser, and amplifies it. To Pêcheux, individuals are interpellated into talking subjects by the ideological formations which represent, in language, their correspondent Ideological formations. We can understand that it is in the interior of a ideological formation where the subjecting of the subject of discourse happens. The identification of the subject with a ideological formation that dominates him constitutes what Pêcheux will call *subject-form*. Therefore, the subject-form is the subject affected by ideology.

It is through the subject-form that the subject of discourse inscribes himself in a specific ideological formation, from which he (de)identifies himself and that, constitutes him as a subject. While performing the movement of *incorporation –dissimulation* from the "truths" that transit in the interdiscourse, through the subject-form, is that the subject of discourse will produce an effect of unity, of evidence.[27] (GRIGOLETTO, 2005, p. 62)

The interpellation of subjects is realized within interdiscourse by means of two mechanisms that Pêcheux identifies as *preconstruction* and *articulation*. The pre-constructed corresponds to the "always already there" quality characteristic of all ideological interpellation. Ideology interpellates the individual as the subject of discourse, yet the interpellation is impenetrable to the subject, who appears to himself or herself as always already a subject. Pêcheux calls this the "Munchausen effect". The pre-constructed element of discursive practice is always already there, Pêcheux contends, because it is a function of interdiscourse itself and not of any particular discourse.

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[26] Original: "Na instância do discurso, o sujeito é percebido a partir de lugares socialmente determinados. Por outro lado, o sujeito, sendo social, perde necessariamente suas características individualizadoras. A primeira dimensão do sujeito que aqui interessa examinar apresenta-se como a 'forma-sujeito'... O indivíduo, ao ser interpelado ideologicamente em sujeito, identifica-se imaginariamente com a 'forma-sujeito' de uma 'formação discursiva' — entendida como o domínio de saber constituído de enunciados discursivos que representam um modo de relacionar-se com a ideologia vigente, regulando o que pode e deve ser dito, mas também o que não pode, não deve ser dito. Por conseguinte, a forma-sujeito é um sujeito histórico com o qual o sujeito identifica-se, constituindo-se em 'sujeito do discurso'".

[27] Original: "É pelo viés da *forma-sujeito* que o sujeito do discurso se inscreve em uma determinada formação discursiva, com a qual ele se (des)identifica e que o constitui sujeito. Ao realizar o movimento de *incorporação-dissimulação* dos saberes que circulam no interdiscurso, pelo viés da *forma-sujeito*, é que o sujeito do discurso vai produzir efeito de unidade, de evidência."

It is the pre-constructed element in discourse that creates the subject's identification with himself. The second element, articulation, creates the relationship of the subject to other subjects and to the subject. Articulation, to Pêcheux, refers to the linear system of discourse: the system of co-references that clarifies the operation of discourse with respect to itself (what I am saying now in relation to what I said before) is such that a "thread of discourse" is established as the discourse of a subject and, as such, is recognizable by other subjects. Because this is an operation of discourse in relation to itself, Pêcheux refers to it as *intradiscourse* . Intradiscourse, he explains, "crosses and connects" the discursive elements constituted by preconstruction which are the raw material, the primary stuff of discourse. However, the mechanisms of this process are such that the primacy of the pre-constituted is reversed; rather than appearing as determined by interdiscourse, intradiscourse "forgets" this determination and appears autonomous. "The subject-form (by which the subject of discourse identifies with the ideological formation that forms him) tends to absorb-forget interdiscourse in intradiscourse.

By all of these mechanisms, discourse simultaneously produces an identification of the subject with himself or herself and an identification of the subject with the other subjects. Subjects cannot recognize their subordination to the subject because this subordination-subjection is realized in subjects in the form of autonomy: the freedom of speaking subjects to say whatever they want. It is in this way that in language, as in other ideological practices, the process without a subject creates-constitutes-realizes the subject: the subject is created by "forgetting" the determinations by which he or she is produced.

> The subject is manifested as an effect of language, since it is constituted by language. When the individual is interpellated by ideology, assuming then, the form of subject, he is manifested as subjected. And by being trespassed by a non-subjective theory of subjectivity, the subject is classified as a desiring subject.[28] (FERREIRA, 2005, p. 69)

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[28] Original: "O sujeito constituído pela linguagem manifesta-se como efeito de linguagem; ao ser interpelado pela ideologia como sujeito, comparece como assujeitado; e, ao atravessado por uma teoria não subjetiva da subjetividade, marca-se como desejante."

The subject of capitalism is focused on himself, gifted with conscience and power of action. To overcome this humanistic tradition of an idealistic subject, Althusser uses the concept of the unconscious, from Lacan, which proposes that the unconscious is structured as a language, hence, constituted by historical conditions. Discourse Analysis and Lacanian psychoanalysis share convergent concepts in relation to the subject. To these social sciences the subject has a (de)centered concept, where he is trespassed by language and associated to the concepts of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. Discourse Analysis re-signifies the concepts of the imaginary, the symbolic, the real and the subject, since it analyzes them within the theories of social formations.

1.2 SILENCE

Discourse is always a continuum. It has no beginning, nor an end: discourse always alludes itself to other discourses (the already-said or the interdiscourse) that are constitutive of its saying. The discourse also alludes itself to a discursive future. That is, we can never say everything. There will always be something left over. What is left over is exterior to what is linguistic, and is pointed out by Pêcheux as something that immanent linguistics cannot handle. This is the real of language, that which is impossible to be said, the one thing that makes ambiguity and what is equivocal constitutive of the symbolic order.

Orlandi, by working with the mobility of meanings and the functioning of language, paradoxically, touched on the object that is silence. The author says that silence is the founder and constitutive of language. Silence is a continuum of signification, surrounded by language. Considering this, we can infer that the equivocal, the possibility of polysemy and the mobility of meanings belong to the spectrum of silence. If it were possible to say everything, if there were no silence within words and around them, it would be possible to live in a world with fixed meanings.

It is this space within words and around words inhabited by silence where the mobility of meanings is possible. If there were no silence, meanings would be fixed.

Silence cannot be put into words, since to put words in silence is to interpret it, that is, it is no longer silence. That does not mean that silence and language do not have some functioning in common, since, saying implies in the unsaid. When one considers language as ideologically determined, what is silenced is such as ideological as that which is utterable. Notwithstanding, there is a space of silence that words cannot reach, this space remains outside the ideological sphere. This space is the real of language.

> The act of speaking is the act that separates, distinguishes, and, paradoxically, catches a glimpse of silence and avoids it. This gesture disciplines the signifying, since it is already a project of sedentarization of meaning. Language stabilizes the mobility of meanings. In silence, on the contrary, meaning and subject move generously[29]. (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 27)

Silence is usually connected with negative characteristics, such as the absence of sound and meaning, and a mortifying emptiness. This belief that silence is a negative thing can be seen in the following exert from Orlandi's book: "To our social and historical context, a man in silence, is a man with no meaning. Then, man lay down the risk of signification, its menace and insert himself: speak"[30] (2007, p. 34). This preconception of silence has been put into jeopardy. Eni Orlandi moves silence from the space of emptiness and death to a fundamental factor in the mobility of meanings. A continuum of signification, silence is categorized through language. Within this categorization, silence becomes constitutive of words, establishing with them a rhythm in the act of signifying. This is the reason why the comprehension of the functioning of language mandatorily depend on the comprehension of the particularity of silence within the processes of signification.

Orlandi establishes that to be in silence, is to be in the sphere of meaning, and that, in some sort of way, words emanate silence. There is silence in and between words. More than that, Orlandi says that silence is a signifying matter, a signifying

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[29] Original: "O ato de falar é o de separar, distinguir e, paradoxalmente, vislumbrar o silêncio e evitá-lo. Esse gesto disciplina o significar, pois já é um projeto de sedentarização do sentido. A linguagem estabiliza o movimento dos sentidos. No silêncio, ao contrário, sentido e sujeito se movem largamente."

[30] Original: "Para o nosso contexto histórico-social, um homem em silêncio é um homem sem sentido. Então, o homem abre mão do risco da significação, da sua ameaça e se preenche: fala."

continuum. Silence is the real of signification, that is, what is impossible to be said or impossible to be said in a different manner. In the work with discourse, silence is the space that allows the mobility of meanings, showing us that incompleteness is immanent to language. This statement can be better explained in the words of Orlandi:

> There is a dimension of silence that alludes to the character of incompleteness of language: every saying is a fundamental relation with the unsaid. This dimension lead us to appreciate the wandering of meanings (its migration), the desire of "one" (the unit, the fixed meaning), the place of the non sense, the equivocal, the incompleteness (the place of many meanings, the ephemeral, the place of misunderstanding) not as mere accidents of language, but as the core of its functioning[31]. (2007, p. 12)

We have to remember that Pêcheux believes that discourse is the effect of meanings between speakers. To understand what the effect of meanings is, is to understand that meaning is not a stable entity, that meaning happens and is produced in the relations between subjects, meanings, and that this production is only possible due to the mutual constitution of meaning and subject. Meaning and subject constitute themselves in the multiple game of Ideological formations, which constitute the regions of utterability for every subject. According to Orlandi,

> Ideological formations are different regions that trim the interdiscourse (the utterable, the memory of saying) and that reflect the ideological differences, the way in which the position of the subject, and their social places represented there, constitute different meanings.[32] (2007, p. 20)

More than that, to understand what effects of meaning is, is to understand how ideology operates in the constitution of meanings and subjects. And it is in the

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[31] Original: "Há uma dimensão no silêncio que remete ao caráter de incompletude da linguagem: todo dizer é uma relação fundamental com o não-dizer. Essa dimensão nos leva a apreciar a errância dos sentidos (a sua migração), a vontade do 'um' (da unidade, do sentido fixo), o lugar do *non sense*, o equívoco, a incompletude (lugar dos muitos sentidos, do fugaz, do não-apreensível), não como meros acidentes da linguagem, mas como o cerne mesmo de seu funcionamento."

[32] Original: "As formações discursivas são diferentes regiões que recortam o interdiscurso (o dizível, a memória do dizer) e que refletem as diferenças ideológicas, o modo como as posições dos sujeitos, seus lugares sociais aí representados, constituem sentidos diferentes."

relations built historically between different ideological formations that the different effects of meanings between speakers are constituted.

> To speak about "effects of meaning" is, therefore, to accept that everything is always on the game, in the relations of the different ideological formations, in the relation of different meanings. In this game one finds the presence of the equivocal, non-sense, the "other" meaning and, consequently, in the investiture of "one" meaning. It is here that the work with silence resides.[33] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 22)

In this work with silence, Orlandi identifies two fundamental functionings: silence as founder and the politics of silence. The founding silence refers to the fact that all of language is, above all, a categorization of the signifying continuum of silence. In regards to the politics of silence, Orlandi subdivides it in constitutive silence and being silenced. In constitutive silence we understand that it is related to the fact that the saying implies, necessarily, in the unsaid. That is, every saying carries within silenced meanings. When we talk about being silenced, we are talking about censorship, in other words, some meanings are vetoed to a subject in a specific ideological formation, or to an entire community by censorship in a specific historical moment.

These three types of silence can be found in Raymond Carver's short stories. Moreover, silence has a very important role in the way the stories are told. The founding silence in the stories is immanent, as it is in every saying, but in the elliptical story telling of Raymond Carver, this form of silence is a central force that leads the reader to a multitude of possibilities. Constitutive silence is always present in the relations between characters, since communication represents a danger to the stability of the characters' universe. The characters say "x" because of the impossibility of saying "y". In 2008 there was the incredible revelation that Raymond Carver was severely censored and edited in his most prestigious piece of work. The collection *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1982) was cut by half of its original size by the famous editor Gordon Lish. We can understand that Carver was

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[33] Original: "Falar em 'efeitos de sentido' é pois aceitar que se está sempre no jogo, na relação das diferentes formações discursivas, na relação entre diferentes sentidos. Daí a presença do equívoco, do sem-sentido, do sentido 'outro' e, consequentemente, do investimento em 'um' sentido. Aí se situa o trabalho do silêncio."

being silenced by this editor, who took advantage of the prestige he had in the editing world to intervene in the work of an artist that was not famous at that particular time. The intervention of Gordon Lish shaped Carver's career as a minimalist writer, which was something the author did not recognize. Next, we will analyze the peculiarities of silence in a number of different examples portrayed in Carver's stories.

1.2.1 Founding silence

> Silence is not open to visibility, it is not directly observable. Silence trespasses the words. It does not last. It is only possible to catch a brief glimpse of it. It escapes between the web of words.[34] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 32)

In the beginning there was silence, and when men perceived silence as signification, they created language to retain it. This inverted biblical quotation (in the beginning there was the word) portrays the power of silence. To Orlandi: "the act of speaking is the act in which men separate, distinguish and, paradoxically, catch a glimpse of silence and avoid it"[35]. (2007, p.27) The act of speaking has the natural tendency to confine meaning(s). This can be better exemplified in the following quotation:

> Language is the categorization of silence. It is a peripheral movement, noise. The desire of unicity that trespasses man is a function of his relation with the symbolic in a verbal manner. Language is the signifying conjunction of existence and is produced by man, in an attempt to tame signification.[36] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 32)

But silence cannot be tamed. Silence signifies in multiple infinite ways. Mediating the relations between language, thought and the world, silence withstands

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[34] Original: "O silêncio não está disponível à visibilidade, não é diretamente observável. Ele passa pelas palavras. Não dura. Só é possível vislumbrá-lo de modo fugaz. Ele escorre por entre a trama das falas."

[35] Original: "O ato de falar é o de separar, distinguir e, paradoxalmente, vislumbrar o silêncio e evitá-lo."

[36] Original: "A linguagem já é categorização do silêncio. É movimento periférico, ruído. O desejo de unicidade que atravessa o homem é função de sua relação com o simbólico sob o modo do verbal. A linguagem é conjunção significante da existência e é produzida pelo homem, para domesticar a significação."

the pressure of control applied by the urgency of language and signifies in many different manners.

Signification does not develop in a straight line that can be measured, calculated or segmented. Meanings are scattered, they develop in multiple directions and they do it in different manners, one is silence. To think about silence, demands that the analyst doubts the notions of linearity, literality and completeness. When we talk about completeness, we have to remember that incompleteness is a fundamental factor in the act of saying. It is the character of incompleteness present as much in meaning as in the subject that creates the condition for plurality in language. Incompleteness is the region of possibility. And silence is one of the paths to understand it:

> It is incompleteness that produces the possibility of multiplicity, the basis of polysemy. And it is silence that presides over this possibility. Language pushes what it is not towards "nothing". But silence signifies this "nothing", multiplying itself in meanings: the more it is missing, the more silence installs itself, and more possibility of meanings is presented.[37] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 47)

Silence cannot be interpreted, but understood. And to understand silence is to make it explicit the manner in which it signifies. To understand silence is not to give it a metaphorical meaning in its relation with language; silence cannot be translated into words. Understanding silence is to comprehend the *processes* of signification that it puts into practice.

The silence we are working with is not the absence of sounds or words. We are talking about the founding silence (or founder), the principle of all signification. Silence is not emptiness, or non-sense. On the contrary, it is the evidence of a signifying instance. From then on, we can understand the emptiness of language as a "horizon", not as an absence. The silence we are dealing with is the one that installs itself in the limits of meaning.

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[37] Original: "É a incompletude que produz a possibilidade do múltiplo, base da polissemia. E é o silêncio que preside essa possibilidade. A linguagem empurra o que ela não é para o 'nada'. Mas o silêncio significa esse 'nada' se multiplicando em sentidos: quanto mais falta, mais silêncio se instala, mais possibilidade de sentidos se apresentam."

It is impossible not to signify, to create meaning. Man is doomed to signify and interpret reality. To the subject of language, meaning is always already there. Considering the relation of man and signification, we can infer that the subject has a necessary relation with silence. With effect, language is the continuous passage from word to silence and from silence to words. A permanent movement that characterizes signification and that produces meaning in its plurality. Meaning is multiple because silence is constitutive. The fissure and the possible are in the same space and they are a function of silence. Presence and silence enfold themselves in the act of signifying, and this is immanent to language and the effects of meaning between speakers.

1.2.2 The politics of silence

There are two different types of silence: the founding silence, the one where silence is immanent and is constitutive of the act of language; and a second type, the politics of silence, subdivided in constitutive silence and local silence. The politics of silence is defined by the fact that when someone says something, necessarily, other possible undesirable meanings, in a specific discursive situation, are being erased.

The great difference between the politics of silence and the founding silence is that the politics of silence makes a cut between what has been said and what has not been said, while the founding silence is always a continuum of signification, it does not cut anything, it means naturally, and by itself.

The relation between said/unsaid can be contextualized in a social and historical frame, particularly, in relation to what we might describe as a power-position to say something in a specific historical moment. Determined by the founding character of silence, constitutive silence belongs to the order of production of meanings and controls every production of language. Constitutive silence classifies the politics of silence as an effect of discourse that installs the anti-implicit: "someone says "x" so he won't (be allowed to) say "y", this being the meaning to be

discarded from the enunciation. It is the unsaid necessarily excluded"[38] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 73). By doing that, the meanings someone wants to avoid can be erased. Those erased meanings could displace a subject of a specific ideological formation to another ideological formation. Those erased meanings could move the subject to another region of meanings that was not permitted to him, causing, then, an unbalance to the environment. The politics of silence works with the borders of the different ideological formations, regulating the limits of saying. "It is at this level that the meaning's "foreclosure" works, constitutive silence puts into practice the set of what is needed not to say, so you can say"[39] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 74).

Silence is a constitutive element in the relation between subject and different ideological formations. Silence allows the subject to transit in different limits of meaning, which is, in fact, different ideological formations. In this game arranged by silence and produced by the distinct ideological formations, subject elaborates the "difference". The following quotation exemplifies how the subject "discovers" the difference concerning what can and cannot be said in a specific historical moment:

> Silence allows him (the subject) to "move" from the utterable and follow different ways, without, however, releasing "his" meanings. It is silence that performs the sensible polarity experience between subject/meaning. It is a form of integration that goes beyond the stipulated relation of the numberable, segmentable, and linguistic. Silence is continuous and this characteristic, this continuity, allows the subject to move in signification, to go through different meanings.[40] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 154)

The subject trespasses and is trespassed by many distinct ideological formations. Subject is not a stable, fixed element. He is an errant element who crosses and is crossed over by difference. What maintain the subject with his "identity" are not the diverse elements of its contents, or the different experiences he had with

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[38] Original: "Se diz 'x' por não (deixar) dizer 'y', este sendo o sentido a se descartar do dito. É o não-dito necessariamente excluído."

[39] Original: "É nesse nível que funciona a 'forclusão' do sentido, o silêncio constitutivo põe em funcionamento o conjunto do que é preciso não dizer para poder dizer."

[40] Original: "O silêncio permite que ele se 'desloque' do dizer e siga diferentes vias sem no entanto se desgarrar de 'seus' sentidos. No silêncio é que se realiza a experiência sensível da polaridade sujeito/sentido. Uma forma de integração que vai além da relação dada pelo efeito do enumerável, do segmentável, do linguístico. O silêncio é contínuo e esse seu caráter, essa sua continuidade é que permitem ao sujeito se mover nas significações, percorrer sentidos."

meanings, but his relation with silence. Because before there was the word inhabited with meaning, meaning had already been silence. That is, every meaning shaped into words, had, mandatorily, passed through silence.

Besides constitutive silence, the politics of silence also presents local silence. Local silence is a manifestation of a politics where the saying is interdicted. A good example is the functioning of censorship. According to Orlandi, censorship functions when some words are prohibited, so that some meanings can be also prohibited. (2007, p.76) Censorship is a political strategy that produces silence. Censorship produces interdiction and prohibition.

> Censorship might be understood as the interdiction of the inscription of the subject in specific ideological formations. Consequently, the identity of the subject is immediately affected as being subject of discourse since identity is a result of identification processes and the subject should inscribe himself in one (and not in any other) ideological formation in order for his words to have meaning. When the subject changes to another ideological formation, words change their meaning.[41] (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 76)

The discourse analyst should deconstruct censorship as a fact and evidence of language that produces effects in relation to public politics concerning speech and silence. The analyst should take for granted the materiality of censorship inscribed in the linguistic and historical sphere, which means, the discursive sphere. Censorship is a discursive fact that produces itself in the limits of the different ideological formations in question. Censorship creates a game of power in which it establishes, in a localized and specific form, what, from the universe of utterability, should not (cannot) be uttered when a subject speaks.

During censorship, the relation of the subject with what is utterable suffers some changes. It means that while censorship operates in the space of utterability, this space is not regulated by a social and historical saying defined by specific ideological formations anymore, because, one cannot say what has been forbidden to him. That is, one cannot say what one can say. The relationship between subject and

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[41] Original: "A censura pode ser compreendida como a interdição da inscrição do sujeito em formações discursivas determinadas. Consequentemente, a identidade do sujeito é imediatamente afetada enquanto sujeito-do-discurso, pois, sabe-se, a identidade resulta de processos de identificação segundo os quais o sujeito deve-se inscrever em uma (e não em outra) formação discursiva para que suas palavras tenham sentido. Ao mudar de formação discursiva, as palavras mudam de sentido."

censorship affects the concept of identity, since the subject is doomed to signify from one "place" only, so that he can produce meanings that are not forbidden to him. Orlandi elaborates on the functioning of silence and its influence over the subject's identity; the following passage demonstrates how the analyst can use silence to trace a portrait on how the subject constructs his relations to different ideological formations:

> Censorship, by influencing the subject, affixes on him an image and at the same time, demands him to project this image from then on (within the fluidity of silence). Effectively, censorship is the place of denial, and at the same time it is the place of exacerbation of the movement that establishes identity. That is the reason why it is a privileged space to "analyze" the relation of subject with the different ideological formations. It allows us to appreciate better the processes of identification of the subject when inscribing himself in the region of the utterable to produce (be produced by) meaning.[42] (2007, p. 81)

When the subject is forced to silence some meanings, the subject surpasses meanings with silence. In censorship, there is a silence that erases, but there is also a silence that transcends the limits of signification. Censorship unautomates the interaction of the subject and the implicit and that explains the relation of the subject with the utterable. The silence of the oppressed can be categorized as a discourse of resistance, considered as a form of opposition to the institutions that regulate power. Silence is not the absence of words. Someone who imposes silence, is not exactly silencing the speaker, but forbids him to sustain a different discourse. The speaker says something so he would not say another thing that would cause relevant fissures in the interactions with meanings. The words are, then, loaded with silence.

The analyst should keep in mind the fact that censorship is not only connected with politics. Censorship is a heterogeneous phenomenon, it may result from processes that could be conscious and that can be reported from different spheres, such as the political, social, moral or aesthetic. It will only depend on the order of discourse in which the regions of meanings are prohibited. The analyst should also

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[42] Original: "A censura, ao atingir o sujeito, fixa-lhe uma imagem e ao mesmo tempo obrigá-lo a projetar-se para além (na fluidez do silêncio). Com efeito, a censura é o lugar da negação e ao mesmo tempo da exacerbação do movimento que institui identidade. Por isso é um lugar privilegiado para 'olhar' a relação do sujeito com as formações discursivas. Porque nos faz apreciar melhor os processos de identificação do sujeito ao inscrever-se na região do dizível para produzir(-se) sentido."

have in mind that censorship is not an isolated fact in the individual conscience of the subject, but rather, the discursive evidence that happens in the limits of distinct ideological formations.

Censorship acts on what the subject is expected to know. It does not try to obstruct the access to information. What it really does, is to impede the subject to be able to develop a different historical approach to meanings, and also, prohibits the subject to enlarge his movement on the process of identification. By doing that, censorship tries to establish a world where meanings are fixed. However, in fact what really happens is the extreme opposite, since silence generates more meanings and more possibilities. Resistance appears, exactly where silence is initiated.

2 THE LOSER AND AMERICA

Scott A. Sandage[43] stresses that: "Failure is not the dark side of the American Dream; it is the foundation of it. The American Dream gives each of us the chance to be a born loser" (2005, p. 278). America's ideology as capitalism's ideology, creates a necessary disparity between different Ideological formations. These submitted Ideological formations are inexorably needed for the system. It is through them that the ideology of the dominant Ideological formations exerts more influence. And it is through the successful man and the rich that the same ideology maintains and assures itself.

The losers inhabit the oversized shadow of ambition. For many decades, Americans were deluded into thinking that the harder one worked, the more ambitious one was, the higher were the chances to achieve the dream. And the Dream in America is that nobody is a born loser. Or, as Raymond Carver himself said, in an essay entitled *Fires*:

> For years my wife and I had held to a belief that if we worked hard and tried to do the right things, the right things would happen. It's not such a bad thing to try and build a life on. Hard work, goals, good intentions, loyalty, we believed these were virtues and would someday be rewarded. We dreamed when we had the time for it. But, eventually, we realized that hard work and dreams were not enough. (1983, p. 33)

We could say that low achievement is a less harmful blow to Americans, than low ambition is, since low ambition reveals the weaknesses of a man's character, disposition, or habit. "An American with no prospects or plans, with nothing to look forward to, almost ceases to exist", says Sandage (2005, p. 20).

But where can one find the history of failure in America? Where is the pessimistic face of this optimistic narrative that is America? In the mid 1850's Abraham Lincoln said: "men are greedy to publish the success of [their] efforts, but meanly shy as to publishing the failures of men. Men are ruined by this one sided practice of concealment of blunders and failures" (apud SANDAGE, p. 8, 2005).

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[43] Scott A. Sandage is Associate professor of History at Carnegie Mellon University.

The concept of the loser has been constantly changing, or, more precisely, has always enlarged itself. It once involved the misfits of capitalism. Those who were ejected from it, or could not adapt to the drive for success the capitalist system required. Those losers had different names, they were called bankrupts, good-for-nothings, third-raters, broken men, nobodies, little men, loafers, small fries, goners, has-beens. But these names come from a time where only white business men could be seen as losers, only white men who failed in business, who had their names tainted, could feet the loser's Ideological formation shoes.

What is the loser now? The semantic range of the postmodern loser absorbs different types of people. All the American minorities could be placed in the loser category. In the last century, we could say that women, black people, homosexuals, foreigners, nerds, southern Americans, and many other groups can also fit into the same shoes. We must ask ourselves: when did the loser become a question of identity and not a financial one? Why do Americans connect themselves with capitalistic metaphors? Or treat identity the way you run a business? Why do they measure failure in lost dollars, as they do with lost dreams? The following chapter analyzes the History of Losers in America, showing how the issue became a question of identity in the American imaginary. We explore the loser as an ex-centric. We scrutinize him in his reflection in mass culture and literature and finally, we examine the loser in Raymond Carver's stories.

2.1 THE HISTORY OF THE LOSER

In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Americans built an ideology focused on the struggle of the individual. Individualism has always been the backbone of ideology in America. But the way Americans look at it now is quite different from back them. The Calvinist heritage taught Americans that individual strife is necessary. Max Weber[44] asserted in his classical 1905 work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, that aiming for success is a mandatory virtue, and even a duty, in American culture.

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[44] Max Weber (1864-1920) was a German sociologist and political economist.

The individual American of the seventeenth and eighteenth century worshiped freedom, and individualism was a legitimate device to reach this goal. It did not matter how metaphysical the word freedom might seem, Americans thought it was quite tangible, and they lived for it for a long time. But when capitalism increased its range, when the civil war broke out, the situation changed, allowing capitalist ideology to trespass its market borders, infiltrating social, governmental and individual ideologies. We could include in these rules the pursuit of profit, the endless increase of capital as an end, the formation of an acquisitive personality, and evidently, the belief that ceaseless work is a dogma in America. Guided by the same principle of individualism, hard work, and pursuit for happiness, Americans changed their drive. It is no longer freedom that leads them to success, it is ambition. "With few exceptions, the only identity deemed legitimate in America is a capitalist identity; in every walk of life, investment and acquisition are the keys to moving forward and avoiding stagnation" (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 4). The industrial revolution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remolded American ethics. Ambition becomes the drive, and motto of Americans. The nation's economic growth magnified the yearning desire to rise in most Americans. "Ambition grew more legitimate as occupational mobility deposed the Calvinist sense of calling; the sin of pride made room for the virtue of striving" (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 14).

2.1.1 Going down in a time of going ahead

The self-made man of the nineteenth century walked hand in hand with his counterpart, the loser. The imperialistic culture was able to "erase" the history of those who failed. Nineteenth century America is a period seen as an extreme example of enterprise and fortune. The silenced history of failure, the voices of men, women and families who missed success reverberate in diaries, suicide notes, private letters, business records, memoirs, bankruptcy cases and literature. Stories about failure are everywhere, as occurs in the history of capitalism as well. Scott A. Sandage, Associate Professor of History at Carnegie Mellon University, won a Thomas J. Wilson prize from Harvard University Press for his book *Born Losers: A*

History of failure in America (2005). In his book, Sandage scrutinizes the influence and history of the losers in America. He declares that the loser is the national bogeyman, and his history over the past two hundred years reveals the dark side of success and how economic striving reshaped the self and soul of America. he starts by mapping failure from colonial days to the Columbine tragedy, exploring how failure evolved from a business loss into a personality deficit, from a career setback to a gauge of Americans self-worth. The next quotation summarizes the changes of the nineteenth century in America:

> This was the era of the self-made men and manifest destiny. The nation we know today evolved between the inaugurations of Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt, 1801-1901 – a century that began and ended with empire builders in the White House, icons of individualism and progress. The industrial revolution sped economical growth, the Civil War remade freedom and political growth, the rise of mass media animated cultural growth, and frontier and imperialist incursions secured territorial growth. Most of what the twenty-first century public knows about nineteenth-century America fits somewhere into this general outline. (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 3)

The popular American concept says that with a little more effort, a little more determination, what could be a doomed failure, might turn to sublime success, that the only failure lay in no longer trying. "The age of the self-made man was also the age of the broken man", says Sandage (2005, p. 17). History tells the tales of those who succeeded in the enterprising capitalist world. But these winners are only a few, compared to the numerous failures who led lives of quiet desperation.

What happens to America when the ones who fall are hard working people, when they are people who strive and do their best? Who is to blame? The belief of an industrious hard working American who achieves success persists until today. Mass culture is a great disseminator of this philosophy. Movies and television programs use to a great extent the image of a loser who, after working hard, failing and working hard again, finally achieves success. In the media, America is still the land of hope and opportunity. The justifications of failure today are the same justifications used for two hundred years, as Sandage points out:

> Franklinesque proverbs blamed failure on laziness, drunkenness, greed, ignorance, extravagance, and a host of other sins. But what to do when the market ejected "an honest, upright industrious & economical man"? If the problem of failure was the fall of good men, its root was a growing breach between character and fortune, between rectitude and reward. The vicissitudes of capitalism were such that honest dealings and hard work could earn failure. (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 15)

The Americans who were failing were not simply lacking ambition, or ability. Business was driving their business away, that is, national economy and its mutable facet was leading striving Americans to the bottom of a social life. Many producers of goods and businessmen were not prepared to guide their business in a fast-changing scenario of the industrialized capitalist system. "If the market is an invisible hand, failure is how that hand discipline and ejects the misfits of capitalism" (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 5). The capitalist system has its ups and downs. Some will be catapulted and some will adapt to its changes. In the age of the self-made men, failure in business was an unbearable moral tragedy, as it is shown in the next passage:

> To a nation on the verge of anointing individualism as its creed, the loser was simultaneously intolerable and indispensable. Failure was the worst thing that could happen to a striving American, yet it was the best proof that the republican founders had replaced destiny with merit. Rising from laborer to entrepreneur was the path to manhood. (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 27)

The history of the first losers begins with white businessmen from the nineteenth century. Their loss of money and manhood compelled legislative, cultural and commercial solutions to redefine failure: from the money lost in a bankruptcy to the opportunities lost in a wasted life. This change in semantics put everyone in alert. Anyone from then on could become a nobody. Although the nineteenth century had been a time of progress and imperialistic prosperity, the market had presented a number of oscillations. The century is marked by many moments of financial uneasiness. In 1819 the financial market offered one of the first financial panics to Americans, when a powerful depression ruined many and unsettled the rest. The chaos in the market returned several other times. In 1837, 1857, 1873 and 1893 the American people again faced the dark twists of the market. The people understood

that the future looked risky, and that both, success or failure could be waiting around the corner.

2.1.2 Information revolution and the losers

At the beginning of the 20th century, although most Americans lived in rural areas, there was an immense number of new technologies appearing and assuming relevance in America's lifestyle. Thousands of roads crossed the country; the railroads were larger than all railroads of Europe together. Furthermore, after World War II, the USA became the most powerful country in the world. The Americans who used to live fixed lives, now, began to "[…] live very mobile lives, in cities or suburban extensions of large metropolitan areas" (RULAND; BRADBURY, 1991, p. 369).

After the years that followed World War II, the economy of the United States, based on manufacturing, turned to an economy based on services and information technologies, a change that characterizes a developed country in a capitalist society. This transition molded a new perspective for the modern world. Now Americans lived "[…] at the center of a network of world communications linked by plane and satellites technology, microchip messaging, interactive video or fax, an age of polyglot noise and hypercommunication" (RULAND; BRADBURY, 1991, p. 369). After the war, many blue-collar workers lost their jobs and were dragged to different and lower working positions. For America, it was the time of the dissolution of the bourgeoisie and the rise of mass culture. The American Dream was also changing; a new hunger on materialism took over Americans, the whole nation bowed to the magnificent enlargement of their gigantic metropolises. The geography of the United States was changing as well, suffering meaningful transfigurations. Cities started to grow larger and larger, spreading pavement over mountains, deserts and all sorts of remote places where human beings could settle, thus, creating the suburbs, which would become the home of a great part of the middle-American-class. The Information Revolution molded the American economy and the world economy at a fast pace. More than that, it molded American ideology and the concept of

consumerism. The influences of the Information Revolution can be exemplified in the following excerpt:

> What followed the war was an age of materialism, military expansion, ideological anxiety and a sense of rapid transformation of consciousness. This was an age of the media, the instant record, the new message system, the multiplication of styles, the accelerating confusion of levels of reality (RULAND; BRADBURY, 1991, p. 371).

The ideology that preached a better tomorrow becomes blurred. The belief that ceaseless work, determination and ambition can lead anyone to success has now been shattered to pieces. Instead, today, we find Americans drifting in a stagnated ocean, distancing themselves from the principles that built America. They are really suspicious about the present and insecure about their future. The time in which History is the history of progress has gone. According to Bernard Carl Rosen[45], the ideological transformation of many Americans comes from the change in the economical structure that happened in the last thirty years of the twentieth century, when the means of production, which depended on manufacturing work, were incisively displaced to an inferior position by a new economy based on technology and services. This new economy is merciless to those who do not adapt and are now useless to it. Healthy biceps lost prestige and utility in the workplace. Many North Americans who lived an "honest and worthy" life as manufacturing workers were replaced by market strategies that could be molded to the new mutable market. The working class, up to the seventies, had acquired many rights. Their salaries were "fair", they had a stable job, insurance, and they had the right to a good retirement. Thus, one can infer that the workers had become too expensive.

The new economy that was establishing itself in North America and in a good number of developed countries based itself on the developments of telecommunications and on computer technologies. These new features were responsible for the creation, implementation and distribution of services in a simpler and faster way. According to the dogmas of the new market, the developed countries transferred their factories and plants to underdeveloped countries, where workers

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[45] Bernard Carl Rosen is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Cornell University. He has been the director of research projects on the causes and effects of social change in five countries and three continents.

are cheap, there are scarce working rights, legislation is deficient and people work for a great number of hours. With these changes in the economical structure of America, there is no other group who feels more mistreated than the working class. They believe that their interests are being neglected, that their financial security is in jeopardy and that their status has never been so low. Rosen points out some factors that exemplify the dilemmas of the working class:

> Economic factors alone do not explain working-class discontent. It is true that many factory workers feel pinched. Some have lost their jobs; others have taken pay cuts; most find pay increases harder to come by. This is painful and no doubt contributes to blue-collar anxiety. But it is not the only cause of their discontent, not even the most important one… It is not only economic deprivation, a state of the pocketbook, from which some workers suffer; it is also relative social deprivation, a state of the mind. What has in truth declined for almost all blue-collar workers is their satisfaction with what they think it should be, they feel a distinct sense of loss. But it is less a loss of dollars than a loss of respect. (ROSEN, 1998, p. 199)

This economic change appears and settles in American lives during the 1970's, and requires a new set of workers, subjects who have the appropriate motivation, skills, talents and values needed to make the system work. For a long time in the United States, it was the manufacturing workers, capable of producing goods, who made the wheel of capitalism turn. In the new economy, focused on technology and services, attention is paid to workers who can deliver services and can process information in a fast, efficient way. The New Elite[46] is highly educated, having gone to good colleges; they are skilled in manipulating money and finances, they are extremely influent and well-paid, very competitive, and also adept at the art of creating ideas, concepts and image. This wealthy dominant social class also believes they had reached power and financial satisfaction by their own merit. And by doing so, they legitimate the ideology of the self-made man. The contrast is evident when we see the other American, the one who is more numerous than the New Elite, but who is voiceless, the one who missed out on success, even in a society that apparently offers all the necessary tools for financial glory. The working class is

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[46] Expression used by Rosen to classify the emerging and powerful social class that dictates the new rules and values of the information economy.

underrated by American society and the market. They were caught by surprise in a market revolution that doesn't belong to them, but from which they cannot escape. Moreover, they feel forgotten and out of the race. Success is no longer possible. The future is uncertain. Without understanding the changes that surround them, these losers silence.

2.1.3 Blue-collar loser blues

From the end of World War II to the beginning of 1970's the United States had passed through magnificent economic growth. The blue-collar workers were delighted with a remarkable improvement in living standards and social position. During this short period, the American economy became considerably more productive. The material condition of Americans had never changed so much in such a short period of time and in such good circumstances:

> The extraordinary growth of the American economy after 1945 created a wealth of good-paying jobs that was unprecedented anywhere in the world. Skilled workers, and even those with few if any skill, enjoyed incomes never dreamed of by previous generations. Real earnings of the typical worker were twice as high around 1972 than they had been in the late 1940's. Automatically, almost magically, the children of the working class, many of them factory workers like their parents, stepped on the escalator that is the American Dream, moved into a well-paying jobs, bought houses in the suburbs, and took on the title and accoutrements of the middle class. (ROSEN, 1998, p. 186)

But this Gatsbian economic period did not last long, and the continually rising standard of living could no longer be taken for granted. Americans grew used to decent work benefits, great job security and large paychecks. And they were certainly not prepared to face the revolution in the economy that was knocking at the door. By the middle of 1973, things had changed:

> The economy, which had been growing at a brisk average rate of 3.9 percent during the period from 1950 to 1970, slowed at a modest growth rate of 1 or 2 percent. Jobs became scarcer and real wages increased slowly; the upward movement of average family income slowed to a crawl. (ROSEN, 1998, p. 187)

The blue-collar workers in America felt that their financial security was in jeopardy from the seventies on. In fact, the situation has not improved since then, and has actually gotten worse. In the twenty first century, the capitalist system focused on Information and services has shown itself uneasy and unstable. Discontentment and uneasiness has taken over the working class. Factories were and still are in a process of downsizing. To avoid bankruptcy and to maintain a certain profitability, many companies moved production abroad where work could be quickly learned and performed with similar quality as was done by well-paid Americans. Other strategies were used by American companies, such as: implementing robots and computers to increase productivity; downsizing their workforces; reducing expenses by not filling vacant lots, inducing the remaining employees to carry out the duties of the former co-workers; and also taking advantage of overtime. Most companies use overtime to explore the best of their facilities without the addition of new workers. Building new plants or hiring new people would be more expensive than paying overtime. This is the reality of work conditions in America since the seventies, and the twenty first century generation has seen it happening again. The last 2008 credit crisis caused a number of casualties, with many workers being laid off or led to premature retirement.

Proud Americans find unemployment hard to swallow. And a great number of blue-collar workers face personal or family disintegration after job loss. These workers feel they are being treated unfairly, and more than that, they think other people are doing more than well:

> Who do they [workers] blame for their unhappy condition? Who are the people who make them feel unappreciated and insecure? The villain is the New Elite, the upwardly-mobile, bright, hardworking, eager for power and wealth, information processors who dominate the techno-service society. (ROSEN, 1998, p. 193)

Not only do New Elitists dominate the American economy showing financial superiority, they demonstrate moral superiority. New Elitism is driving affirmative action policies toward the working class workers, and that is undermining their sense of security and self-esteem. A good example can be seen in

the current Obama government, where there is a congress bill ready to be put into action, where the government wants to increase the period of unemployment compensation. The American working class finds it difficult to accept "charity". The workers have the impression that they are losing status and respect.

Differently from the Rooseveltian way of solving problems, the New Elite is not interested in building bridges or roads to suppress increasing unemployment. What they are interested in is to dominate words, to possess and process information. Manufacturing work can be assigned to people in underdeveloped countries. Rosen, in referring to the condition of the American blue-collar workers says that "In the past, society understood their importance and visibly showed its respects…blue-collar workers were people to whom the politicians and employers paid heed". (1998, p.195)   But now, the working class feels that they are under attack from all sides of society, and, thus, feel rejected:

> As though economic disappointment and declining influence were not trouble enough, workers must also contend with attacks upon their values and personal worth. At times the media portrays them, especially the white males, as louts, beer-sodden inebriates, mindless television addicts, coarse boors oblivious to the needs of women, lesbians and gays, to the sensibilities of the crippled, the old, the fat, the ugly, and other fashionable minorities. Their lives are ridiculed as shallow and crude, wasted years spent in the pursuit of tawdry pleasure, without commitment to ideas, to the joys of self-discovery, and to the advancement of high culture. (ROSEN, 1998, p. 196)

Perhaps, what is most hurtful to blue-collar workers is the imaginary the New Elite has created of them. All the machinery of the New Elite, their scholars, social researchers and psychometricians, tends to classify the working class as "dumb". The elite members of the information society question the ability of the blue-collar workers to handle the requests of the information age. They declare that the ordinary blue-collar lacks the ability and intelligence to deal with the technical requirements of the information system:

> Words make workers uncomfortable. They are accustomed to making tangible objects and tend to judge the value of things by their obvious utility. They are suspicious of the tools Elitists use to ply their trades: words and images, mysterious devices of dubious value.

> But without words and the skill to use them, workers lack the right weapons to deal with the Elite. And so, when told that their anger is not justified and must not be expressed, that it must be swallowed, bottled up, reasoned away, and treated with scorn for the selfish, ugly thing it is, they are dumbstruck, literally at a loss for words. (ROSEN, 1998, p. 199-200)

Thus, the blue-collars stay silent and repress their rage. The pervasive anxiety that afflicts the blue-collar losers is a reflection of the repressed anger they feel. This anger appears in feelings of irrational fear and uneasiness, and also in a sense of drifting and alienation. In silence, the losers resist.

2.2 THE LOSER AS AN EX-CENTRIC

Similar to contemporary literature theory and its representatives such as Derrida, Foucault, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Judith Butler and others, a great number of postmodern artists question and challenge the concepts of Liberal humanism. And when we talk about Liberal Humanism, we are talking about its centralizing and totalizing impetus, its concepts of autonomy, transcendence, certainty, authority, unity, totality, system, universality, center, continuity, teleology, closure, hierarchy, homogeneity, exclusivity and origin.

Linda Hutcheon[47] elucidates that to question and challenge Liberal Humanism is not to deny it, but to inquire its relation to experience. Postmodernism is a "contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges — be it in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, TV, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, or historiography" (1988, p. 3).

Hutcheon states that Postmodernism is the result of an interrogative posture plus a defiance on authority that comes from the molecular politics of the sixties. Some people say that the defiance of traditional liberal concepts is a reflex of the fragmented and chaotic life of our times. There have been several inquiries about the

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certainties of Liberal Humanism which have become the truisms of contemporary theoretical discourse.

One of the most important truisms questioned is the notion of center. What is the center? Who says what center is? Since when has it been? We have been going through a period in which we are rethinking the center, and focusing on the margins and frontiers. We are deviating from centralization and its concepts of unity and origin. Derrida says that the center, in time, becomes fiction.

Alternatives arise. Theories that privilege dialogue and the hybrid (Barthes), contextualize the necessity of totalization as a transitory aspiration in the history of philosophy.

> Both Marxists and Freudian psychoanalysis have been attacked as totalizing "meta-narratives", yet one could argue that they have been fruitful in analyses of postmodernism precisely because their "split" model (both dialectic and the class struggle or manifest/latent and conscious/unconscious) allows a very postmodern – or contradictory – anti-totalizing kind of totalization or decentered kind of center. (HUTCHEON, 1988, p. 58)

When the center starts to give space to the margins, the complexity of the contradictions that exist within the conventions become discernible and that is when the game of language takes place, where everything that represented origin/center, in deconstruction, becomes part of a constant movement and displacement:

> The 1970's and the 1980's have seen the increasingly rapid and complete inscribing of these same ex-centrics into both theoretical discourse and artistic practice as andro-(phalo), hetero-, Euro-, ethno-centrism have been vigorously challenged. (HUTCHEON, 1988, p. 61)

Cultural homogeneity breaks down, but the vindicated heterogeneity does not assume the shape of a set of fixed individual subjects, but, a flow of contextualized identities: by genre, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, education, social role. The assertion of identity by the means of difference and specificity is a constant in Postmodern thinking.

Though the center might not prevail, it is still an attractive subterfuge to art, as a representation of the fiction of what is understood as order and unity. "The most radical boundaries crossed, however, have been those between fiction and non-

fiction and — by extension – between art and life" (HUTCHEON, 1988, p. 10). In postmodernism, diffrent genres of art mix among themselves. It is hard to categorize them. Sometimes the audience does not know if it is dealing with autofiction or a novel, a biography and a novel, a short story and an autobiography, which is the case in some of Raymond Carver's short stories.

"Another form of this same move off-center is to be found in the contesting of centralization of culture through the valuing of the local and peripheral" (HUTCHEON, 1988, p. 61). Raymond Carver's short stories can be connected with this characteristic very well since his characters come from isolated places in the Northwest of the country, usually in the states of Oregon or Washington, where life seems to have no surprises, or, as his book title reveals, *No heroics, please* (1991). These small towns are described almost as a reflection of his characters, who, according to Michael Gearhart "[…] are a down-and-out blue-collar type familiar with the trauma of marital infidelity, alcoholism and financial hardship" (1984, p. 439).

The ex-centric individual, or the off-center, unavoidably identified with the center he aspires, but from which he is denied, is the great Postmodern paradox. Postmodern artists are not concerned about giving an answer to problems they present, or finishing a story with a traditional ending. In the works of Raymond Carver and other postmodern writers such as Donald Barthelme and John Barth, the reader has a major influence over the text. The elliptical style of these writers allows readers to have an active participation in the act of constructing the story. The reader fills in the gaps of the narratives by inferring meaning in the moments of silence and ambiguity. This attitude towards the role of the reader is one of the most significant aspects of postmodernism; in spite of this technique having been used before by writers like Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce and William Faulkner, it is in postmodernism that this characteristic is taken to its limit. Postmodern writers are inquisitors, therefore, their audience must be inquisitive, as well.

The open ending is another characteristic of postmodernism. It will depend on the reader's knowledge of the world and his subject-position toward the story to make the best of it. The idea of perspective is a constant in postmodern art, because it may represent the possibility of different realities, considering that each reader is

different and carries a different background and a different ideology. It can also represent the perspective of reality of the innumerous social and class groups. These multiple perspectives which inhabit postmodernism, make it hard for postmodern artists to achieve a clear coherence in their work of art (though they probably do not actually want to achieve coherence since they prefer subjective interpretations and approaches), and that is why narrative continuity and closure have been questioned in postmodern art. The movement to the margins is not only focused on the artists, but also on the universe of theoretical creation:

> While I would not argue a relationship of identity (or antagonism) between postmodern theory and practice or between postmodernism and ex-centric, there clearly are common concerns. Thanks to the ex-centric, both postmodern theory and art have managed to break down the barrier between academic discourse and contemporary art (which is often marginalized, not to say ignored, in the academy. (HUTCHEON, 1988, p. 71)

This ex-centric group of writers represented the great change postmodern art would bring to the world. The possibility of plural voices and plural perspectives in literature and pop culture in general changed art in many significant ways, bringing it closer to the reality of the greater public, which was mostly living in suburban cities, at the margins of the big centers. These new voices introduced characters with which people could identify, be it the working class, the immigrant, the homosexual, the Afro-American descendant and so on. The place where these ex-centrics were speaking from was now important and interesting.

Black or indigenous writers not only exposed their ethnic point of view concerning reality in a white-dominant world, but also allowed themselves to step back in time to re-write history through the point of view of the exploited and not from that of the explorer. This group of artists was interested in re-telling history through a different perspective. The Postmodern writers who represented minorities, like African-Americans, native-Americans, Homosexuals, and so on, re-told history as not being as heroic and filled with "white-honor", as it had been told before, but describing an unfair, pessimistic and cruel reality. Sherman Alexie, a well-known Native-American writer, usually uses a suburban Indian character in his short stories. His Indian does not live on the Reservation with other Indians; he chooses to

live in big centers such as Seattle. This kind of situation reveals the ex-centric, since it represents a social minority (in this case, the Native-American) that confronts the modern and dominant world (which is represented by the big center, Seattle). As Hutcheon states:

> Postmodernism does not move the margin to the center. It does not invert the valuing of centers into that of peripheries and borders, as much as use the paradoxical double positioning to critique the inside from both the outside and the inside. (1988, p. 69)

When writers decide to re-tell history, other things are implied. Usually there is the idea of criticism toward "traditional" history. In his poem/tale *Captivity* (1993), Sherman Alexie, goes back in history to re-tell the story of Mary Rowlandson who had been taken captive when the Wampanoag tribe destroyed Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 1676, and who narrated her own experience living with Indians for some months in some of the first works of North American fiction. Sherman Alexie decided to write the story through another perspective, that of the Indians, who had never been heard before in this matter. His poem has a great lyric touch, sometimes taking the shape of a poem, sometimes taking the shape of a letter and sometimes taking the shape of a dialogue. This kind of "Historiographic meta-fiction", as Hutcheon calls it, is one of the major characteristics of postmodern literature.

When Raymond Carver released his first book of stories *Will you please be quiet, please?* (1976), his characters were completely representative of a social class agonizing over debts; people that had their marriages destroyed by infidelity and lack of communication; people who wished their lives were different. Carver and his characters represent the ex-centrics by class and geography since most of his characters, including the author himself, lived in remote small cities at the margins of the modern world, usually at the states of Washington, Oregon or Alaska. The characters that inhabit the literary universe of Raymond Carver are not black, gays or immigrants. In fact, the women portrayed in the stories are usually living under the "laws" of a masculine world. Yet, Carver's characters are white-male-andro-phalic losers. We could place them even at the margins of ex-centricity. Although the ethnic characteristics of Carver's characters represent the center (white-male), these subjects

are entirely excluded from a power-position. They are jobless alcoholics who feel the world is a dangerous place. The sense of inadequacy on the part of the characters reverberates in their inarticulateness toward the other. These characters are suffocated and alone.

2.3 THE LOSER AND MASS CULTURE

There are not enough studies on the losers, except for those who fit the Postcolonial archetype. Black people, women, homosexuals and foreign descendants have achieved a certain status in mass culture and in the academic world, and might even be seen as winners nowadays. One could say that black people and foreign descendents might not even represent a minority any longer. These groups, in terms of numbers, represent almost half of the American population. There have been numerous studies about them. Great names in the academic world have been working with these minorities, bringing them to the spotlights of the traditional European andro-phalic academic world. Since the sixties people like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, have been displacing these minorities from the margins, to the core of discussions. However, it is difficult to find works about the average white male loser. Americans still try to hide the failure history of these people. Sociological and behaviorist studies are only interested in the white-male loser when there is a burst of outrageous violence by these losers such as the Columbine massacre in 1999 or, more recently, the University of Texas shooting in 2010. These recurrent acts call attention of the scholars and the American society, but, usually the focus of discussion is not on why these people committed these terrible atrocities, but, why is it so easy to buy guns in the USA, as if they only commit these crimes because the access to fire weapons is negligent.

Although it is difficult to find any books, studies and papers on the white-male loser, mass culture was able to represent them in different ways and in different media. One might ask why the media portrays losers so often. A simple answer could be that Americans sympathize with losers more than recognize themselves in the loser figure. We can see the white loser portrayed in many songs, movies,

literature, and nowadays, in television series. The history of American music also shows this inclination to sing the failures of America. The purely American styles like jazz, blues, country, folk, rap and hip hop music have been the place where the losers find a voice. American music fed on failure. "Country music could not exist without failure, as singers regret lost loves, lost jobs, lost mammas, and lost trucks" (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 268). The names are uncountable. During the forties and fifties, Woody Guthrie, inspired by John Steinbeck, sang his anti-capitalist dust-bowl ballads. Woody, as John Steinbeck's *The grapes of wrath* protagonist Tom Joad, migrated to California in the late thirties due to the dust storm in Oklahoma and to the lack of a job and a home. Woody strongly identified with his audience and adapted to an 'outsider' status, along with them. This role would become an essential element of his political and social positioning, gradually working its way into his songwriting; *I ain't got no home*, *Goin' down the road feelin' bad*, *Talking dust bowl blues*, *Tom Joad* and *Hard travelin*"; all reflect his desire to give voice to those who had been disenfranchised. In *I ain't got no home*, we have a good example of the history of failure in America from the thirties and forties:

> I ain't got no home, I'm just a-roamin' 'round,
> Just a wandrin' worker, I go from town to town.
> And the police make it hard wherever I may go
> And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.
> My brothers and my sisters are stranded on this road,
> A hot and dusty road that a million feet have trod;
> Rich man took my home and drove me from my door
> And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.
> Was a-farmin' on the shares, and always I was poor;
> My crops I lay into the banker's store.
> My wife took down and died upon the cabin floor,
> And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.
> I mined in your mines and I gathered in your corn
> I been working, mister, since the day I was born
> Now I worry all the time like I never did before
> 'Cause I ain't got no home in this world anymore
> Now as I look around, it's mighty plain to see
> This world is such a great and a funny place to be;
> Oh, the gamblin' man is rich an' the workin' man is poor,
> And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

The dilemmas of failure are intensely engaged by Woody Guthrie. Most of his songs deal with unemployment, government disinterest in the American working

class, land appropriation by banks and government. Guthrie sang the losers and their harsh reality in those times. In *Goin' down the road*, he portrays the dissatisfaction he felt in the forms the government treated those families of stranded working folks.

> I'm a-lookin' for a job at honest pay,
> I'm a-lookin' for a job at honest pay,
> I'm a-lookin' for a job at honest pay, Lord, Lord,
> An' I ain't a-gonna be treated this way.
> My children need three square meals a day,
> Now, my children need three square meals a day,
> My children need three square meals a day, Lord,
> An' I ain't a-gonna be treated this way.
> It takes a ten-dollar shoe to fit my feet,
> It takes a ten-dollar shoe to fit my feet,
> It takes a ten-dollar shoe to fit my feet, Lord, Lord,
> An' I ain't a-gonna be treated this way.
> Your a-two-dollar shoe hurts my feet,
> Your two-dollar shoe hurts my feet,
> Yes, your two-dollar shoe hurts my feet, Lord, Lord,
> An' I ain't a-gonna be treated this way.

Another great example of a white male down and out loser can be found in Johnny Cash's songs and career. Folk music and country music from the thirties to the sixties were a niche to the marginalized Americans. Johnny Cash has a large repertoire on southern losers. Cash made two shows that were recorded inside Folson Prison (1968) and another at San Quentin Prison (1969). Many of his songs sing the dramas of criminals and outlaws. Financial hardship is another current theme in Johnny Cash's career, as, can be seen in his song *Busted*:

> My bills are all due and the babies need shoes,
> But I'm Busted
> Cotton's gone down to a quarter a pound
> And I'm Busted
>
> I got a cow that's gone dry
> And a hen that won't lay
> A big stack of bills
> Getting bigger each day
> The county's gonna haul my belongings away,
> But I'm Busted
>
> So I called on my brother to ask for a loan
> 'Cause I was Busted
> I hate to beg like a dog for a bone,

But I'm Busted

My brother said, "there's not a thing I can do,
My wife and my kids
Are all down with the flu
And I was just thinkin' about callin' on you,
'Cause I'M Busted."

During the sixties, Bob Dylan appears, influenced by Guthrie, Cash, Whitman and the beatniks, Dylan becomes an overnight icon to Americans. Significant in both, the intellectual and the popular audiences, Dylan, in a loser hipster style, was a mass-market superstar. More than becoming an icon, Dylan helped to ferment the hippie movement and rock n' roll music. The sixties generation tried to redeem the concept of freedom, over the drive for ambition and acquisition. The Thoreaunian dream once again was revisited and passed on.

In fact, from the 1950's onward, losers began to occupy something of a market niche, especially in popular music. The Hit Parade gave voice to new masses of born losers, says Sandage (2005, p.267). Different examples of ex-centrics begin to make huge success. The musicians connected with the civil rights movement such as Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, the Everly Brothers and so on were making notorious success with songs that portrayed the "loser" reality. The loser vocabulary was significantly extended in this period through popular music. Here are some examples:

> Frank Sinatra crooned, "Here's To The Losers." the Beatles made the charts with "I'm a Loser," Janis Joplin belted out "Women is Losers," and Paul Revere and the Raiders tried "I'm a Loser Too." Typically understated, the Grateful Dead sang simply, "Loser." Ray Price's "Better Class of Losers," Don Gibbon's "A Born Loser," Leslie Gore's "I Don't Want to Be a Loser," Tom Petty's "Even the Losers," Judy Collins's "Hard Lovin' Loser," the Little River Band's "Lonesome Blues," and Willie Nelson's "The Loser's Song" all aimed at what seemed a growing market segment. (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 268)

When the seventies arrived, new styles were entering the loser's growing market. Punk music brought nihilism to the loser's world, subverting not only morality with their lyrics, but music itself. Most punk bands did not have any knowledge on how to play an instrument. One of their premises was "Do It

Yourself." Aggressively, as if they were trying to cause harm to the instrument, they sang songs like "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue" from the Ramones or the outrageous Sex Pistols song "No Future".

Different styles born in the city ghettos became the most significant forms of expression for these communities. This is what happened with Rap and Hip Hop, a discourse of confrontation towards the white power. More recently, in 1994, Beck, an American singer and composer, made huge success with his song "Loser," where he sang "Soy un perdedor. I'm a loser, baby. So why don't you kill me?"

Aside from music, the figure of the loser can be found continuously in the movies. Since the thirties Charles Chaplin and Buster Keaton created classic comedies with wandering and heartening losers. In the sixties and seventies Woody Allen focused his films in his neurotic and hypochondriac intellectual loser. A figure that became recurrent in basically all of his movies. But, aside from the traditional neurotic character, Woody Allen created a wonderful specimen of a loser in his film Zelig (1983). In this movie, the character of Woody Allen, Leonard Zelig, suffers from a chameleon complex. He transmutes himself into different people, assuming different ethnic characteristics, so that he can mingle with people without feeling like an outcast.

In movies the figure of the loser is usually used to show the American Dream and how redemption and success can be waiting around the corner. This is still the message of most blockbusters. In the classic Frank Capra Christmas movie, "It's a Wonderful Life" (1947), the protagonist George Bailey, played by James Stewart, is forced to abandon a probably promising career, so that he can help his family. He maintains his old job and after some years feeling as if he were a loser, and on the verge of bankruptcy, he decides to commit suicide. At that moment, an angel appears and convinces him not to do it. The message of the angel is that a man who has friends cannot be a failure.

In comic books, the classic example is the big headed Charlie Brown. He has been feeling down, and excluded, looking for psychiatric help for more than fifty years. More than that, he has been read by kids, teenagers and adults immensely for more than fifty years. Who has never felt like Charlie Brown? In fact, Charles Schultz,

the creator of Charlie Brown, was really surprised with the immense success his comic characters have achieved. In an interview, Schultz said that he thought he was the only "Charlie Brown" he knew and that he could not believe there were actually so many people that could relate to the character. But the audience sympathizes and recognizes themselves with down and out losers. Still in comic books, the figure of the loser resonates in other examples, as it can be seen in *Dilbert*, a nerd who works in a cubicle, or, in a super hero comic such as *The Hulk*, where the character, Bruce Banner, a scientist with a submissive personality turns into the Hulk when he is feeling angry. The Hulk is able to do things Bruce Banner cannot do, remembering that the angrier Banner gets, the stronger the Hulk becomes.

Television series during the twenty first century began to create shows with loser protagonists. Usually, these losers are stereotypical and comical. But there is no doubt that they are hip, and making a huge profit for their respective broadcasting network. Cable television with its endless list of channels is able to offer shows to an American multicultural segmented audience. There are ethnic shows, specific programs for the lesbian and gay public, productions for the misfit and nerdy adolescents. The CBS channel is making huge profit with a comedy show about awkward intelligent nerds in *The big bang theory*. More interesting than that, is the deviation in the meaning of the word nerd. In the commercials advertising the show, the Brazilian TV channel, Sony Entertainment Television, announces the program as "Nerd is the new sexy." The most popular comedy show in the United States is *Two and a half man*, also from CBS. In the show, the protagonist played by Charles Sheen, lives a bohemian life. He has a well rewarding job, has a mansion in front of the beach, he is always drinking, smoking, gambling and having sex with beautiful empty-headed-blow-up-doll-like women. Apparently he represents the idealistic dream of the Middle-class male worker American. But the audience really identifies with the protagonist's brother even if they don't know it. The brother, named Alan, is a complete loser: he is divorced, his fat son is not smart, he has an effeminate career as a chiropracticist and has no luck with women, in fact, Alan is only tormented by them. It is not by chance that *Two and a half man* is, after seven years, the most popular of comedy shows. Another emblematic example can be seen in the comedy

series, *My name is Earl* from NBC network. The series shows two brothers who represent the white male losers in all caricatural aspects. The protagonist is a burglar that commit small crimes, doesn't have a job, really enjoys beer, was married to a promiscuous woman who made him believe he was the father of her child, he lives in a trailer in a trailer camp, and shares a bed with his fat almost retarded brother.

Nowadays the adolescents and adults speak a language of exclusion. Synonyms for failure embrace nerd, wimp, dork, freak, jerk, weirdo, geek, dweeb, slacker, fag and loser.

> At the beginning of a new century, the loser – signified by your right thumb and index finger held up to your forehead – remains a figure at once vulnerable and menacing. Columbine survivors told the press that other students regarded the two shooters as "losers": they dressed oddly and listened to strange music. (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 275)

Columbine is not the only case where adolescent misfits resort to violence to make themselves be heard. After the shooting, experts advised schools to tighten security with metal detectors and other more subjective techniques to detect "losers" before they could burst into violence. "The losers among us, people who bear failure as an identity, embody the American fear that our fondest hopes and our worst nightmares may be one and the same" (SANDAGE, 2005, p. 277). The American Dream that levels freedom with success exists and persists only due to the loser. The American culture needs the loser, the figure and the word. Without the loser no one could succeed. It is the core of the darkest American and capitalist paradox.

2.4 THE LOSER IN LITERATURE

If the loser is neglected and almost forgotten in the history the American institutions tell, the opposite happens in literature. The greatest American literature is focused on the loser. The greatest American literature is a non-stoppable narrative of failure. American artists were sensible to detect a great metaphor when they saw one. And the loser represents the spirit of their country and the spirit of men himself. The transcendentalist poets and artists like Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman paid

scrutinizing attention to the losers. Walden (1854) is a major illustration on how the loser is captured in nineteenth century America. In the book, Thoreau criticizes Western culture and its fixation on materialism and consumerism. He decided to live alone in a small cabin, made by himself, for the period of two years and a half. There, at Walden Pond Thoreau lived a simpler and silent life, occasionally visiting the city of Concord where he could talk to friends and keep track of what was going on in the community. In a Walden passage he says:

> Let us first be as simple and well as Nature ourselves, dispel the clouds which hang over our brows, and take up a little life into our pores. Do not stay to be an overseer of the poor, but endeavor to become one of the worthies of the world. (THOREAU, 2006, p. 12)

Thoreau started an enterprise in living an economical, independent life, distancing himself from the capitalist world. He wanted to live deliberately, and to face only the essential facts of life. His enterprise at Walden, led many of his neighbors to wonder if he was only looking for an opportunity to loaf, wandering pointlessly about life, although none of his purposes were connected with loafing. His short list of necessary items for survival in Walden did not include the essential item in capitalism: money. And if money is not necessary, neither is work, which Thoreau defines as an activity done merely to earn money:

> Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine. (THOREAU, 2006, p. 2)

Besides Thoreau, Walt Whitman his contemporary and probably the greatest American poet, sang America in a way few have ever done. Walt Whitman sang the multitudes, he sang America as a whole. Whitman's poems talk about every kind of citizen. In the first edition of *Leaves of grass*, he writes: "I play not a march for victors only… I play great marches for the conquered and slain persons," (1855, p.24) and "It is for the endless races of working people and farmers and seamen." (1855, p.24)

Walt Whitman sang the losers in the same proportion he sang the winners in his poem:

> Vivas to those who have failed, and to those whose war-vessel sank in the sea, and those themselves who sank in the sea.
> And to all generals who lost engagements, and all overcome heroes, and the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known. (1855, p. 25)

American southern literature is essentially a literature of failure. The masterpieces of American drama are dramas of failure. The aesthetic of failure can be found in the class struggle portrayed by John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*; in the absence of identity of Joe Black in William Faulkner's *Light in August*; on the stage, Tennessee Williams created atypical female icons of failure in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and in *The glass menagerie*; Eugene O'Neill depicts wasted lives at their barest in *The iceman cometh*, *Long day's journey into the night*, and *Anna Christie*.

Steinbeck works with subjects entrapped in subjected Ideological formations. In *Of mice and men* (1937), we have George Milton, a migrant field worker in California after the Great Depression who detains a subject-position overpowered by dominant ideologies, and his brother Lennie Small, a strong, mentally disable man, equally subjected by oppressive ideologies. They have the American Dream of acquisition of land, but their Ideological formations do not allow them the right, the opportunity or the money to reach their goal. In his masterpiece, *The grapes of wrath* (1939), Steinbeck tells the saga of the Joad family, who loses everything to banks and has to leave Oklahoma in search for job, a home and dignity in sunny California. Together with a thousand other migrants they find only desperation and injustice. In the end of the book, Tom Joad kills a man who had murdered preacher Casy. He decides to run away and abandon the camp and his family, and in a memorable passage when he is saying goodbye to his mother, Tom Joad puts himself in the shoes of all losers and oppressed people of that system:

> "Well, maybe like Casy says, a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on'y a piece of a big one- an' then-"
> "Then what, Tom?"
> "Then it don' matter. Then I'll be all aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where- wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry

people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. If Casy knowed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an'- I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build- why, I'll be there. See? (1939, p. 319)

The narratives of failure are not only exclusive to the South: the industrialized North has also portrayed their own big city outsiders. On Wall Street, at the core of the capitalist system, we can find Melville's powerful depiction on the death of the American spirit. *Bartleby, the scrivener: a story of Wall Street* (1853) shows a character who deliberately refuses to act, who embraces stagnation. He can be a good example of a revolutionary subject who tries to defy the capitalist system and imperialism by refusing to take part of it, refusing to assume a capitalist Ideological formation.

In Arthur Miller's *Death of a salesman* (1949) the reader is able to capture the archetype of the ordinary middle-class working American. Willy Loman has worked hard all his life, he bought a house, appliances, a car and his son has gone to college. Apparently, Loman has lived the American Dream. But the feeling one gets is that, although Loman had done well, he could have done better. Willy believed in the promise of America. The bent and tired silhouette of carrying those heavy valises, hid his face under the hat, this shows that Willy Loman has no face, but all faces. Arthur Miller knew that a character like that deserved to have some attention paid.

Postmodern American literature is populated by losers of all classes, genders and ethnicity, from the white male urban loser in Updike's Rabbit series, to the marginalized black female characters of Toni Morrison. From the Mexican heritage and culture in Sandra Cisneros to the modern Native American city dweller in Sherman Alexie. Postmodern age is the time where we celebrate the losers.

Maybe the most emblematic change in America has been the election of a black president. The civil rights movement of the fifties has changed America considerably. And now, Barak Obama, an affirmative action student has become the first African American president. In his presidential campaign, the short slogan he used created a huge impact and was reproduced all over the world. The slogan carried this message: *Yes, we can*! But one might ask: who is the *We* in the sentence. One might say it represents the African American community, but, going deeper we

might inquire if *We* really represents all of those people who were left behind. The job of a discourse analyst in a situation like this is to question who is(are) the subject(s) of this sentence. It is not by chance that too many people all over the world could sympathize and recognize themselves in the sentence, since there are excluded people and losers everywhere.

2.5 RAYMOND CARVER OR IDEOLOGICAL FORMATION: LOSER

In Raymond Carver the Ideological formations are straightened out, restricted. Allowing the characters to transit to another Ideological formation, always represent a great risk and a possibility of collapse. Although the Discourse Analyst recognizes the inclination and the danger in restraining a Ideological formation, understanding that it represents an affront to all esteemed notions of Discourse Analysis, where nothing is linear, closed, and that there is no homogeneity, in Raymond Carver's short stories we can see a tendency to homogenize the Ideological formations. This inclination should be taken for granted and must be treated carefully by the analyst. However, this fact also reveals an interesting aspect of Carver's work, which is the materiality of ideology and how it is portrayed in his stories.

Raymond Carver created a universe where characters feel suffocated and threatened by the outside world. And it is in Discourse (exteriority/outside world), as much in words as in silence, where the reader/analyst might perceive the great tension and the potentiality of collapse in their worlds of the characters. Carver's style creates some sort of tension in the text because there is great silence in his characters, which Susan Sontag classifies as "the aesthetics of silence". She explains: "silence remains inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue" (1982, p. 181). Everything in the characters lives is a threatening factor as we can see in the next passage:

> I like it when there is some feeling of threat or sense of menace in sort stories. I think a little menace is fine to have in a story. For one thing, it is good for the circulation. There has to be tension, a sense that something is imminent, that certain things are in relentless motion, or else, more often, there simply won't be a story. What creates tension in a piece of fiction is partly the way the concrete

> words are linked together to make up the visible action of the story. But it is also the things that are left out, that are implied, the landscape just under the smooth (but sometimes broken and unsettled) surface of things. (CARVER, 1983, p. 26)

Carver's stories are inhabited by subjects who are completely separated from one another, alienated and fearful to communicate, although communication is a latent desire among them. Each and every attempt of approximation between the characters/subjects, in a discursive way, creates a chance for catastrophe, or, according to Discourse Analysis, the chance for the equivocal and displacement. Transiting in different Ideological formations is to violate the norm, to violate stability. Miriam Marty Clark wrote in her essay, *After epiphany: american stories in the postmodern age,* that:

> There are stories that move, as Raymond Carver's do, with centripetal force, collapsing into a minimal selfhood linguistically determined even as it is linguistically isolated. Here silence has to do not with the ineffable but with language itself: the broken conversation, the insufficient word, the incommensurability of languages even within marriage […] Carver's characters are unable to sustain the multivocality, the heteroglossia of the word and, not coincidentally, of novelistic discourse as Bakhtin defines it. Carver's narratives seem, on that account, bound to be short stories. The very source of narrative, and hence of the self, are choked off by the fear, the impossibility of communication. (1993, p. 390)

In a fragile and oppressing world, the characters/subjects of Carver live under the shadow of a dominant ideology. The subjects only reach and touch the other through silence. Communication is established through silence. The boundaries of a Ideological formation subjected to an ideology of the oppressed only cross their limits through silence. Everything that comes from words generates fear, suspense. A telephone or a door bell ringing are symptoms of threat. A good example can be shown in the first paragraph of *Put yourself in my shoes*, a story that appears in Raymond Carver's first short story collection:

> The telephone rang while he was running the vacuum cleaner. He had worked his way through the apartment and was doing the living room, using the nozzle attachment to get at the cat hairs between the cushions. He stopped and listened and then switched off

the vacuum. He went to answer the telephone. (CARVER, 1976, p. 132)

Carver's reader, in the same way, when faced with the blank spaces that separate each word, between every comma or period, fills that space with tension and anxiety, not understanding entirely what really is or might be happening.

Raymond Carver's characters seem extremely fragile, incapable of solving problems related to money or broken marriages. His protagonists and secondary characters do not differ so much in their absence of confidence and their lack of ability and inarticulateness in talking. Aldridge points out, about the experiences of the protagonists of postmodernist short story fiction, that "there is no evidence that these experiences are meant to coalesce into drama or arrange themselves as to produce some climatic insight into a truth about the human condition" (1990, p35). Nevertheless, they usually tend to cause such an impact.

The world Carver designed in his stories is completely pessimistic, as his characters have no ambitions and, in some sort of way, are not prepared to accept the roles society has established for them. They are not prepared to be parents, husbands and wives, or even employees. These characters and the world they represent are about to collapse, as one of his characters in his second book —*What we talk about when we talk about love*— realizes: "He understood that it took only one lunatic with a torch to bring everything to ruin" (CARVER, 1981, p.76) Another character in his first book —*Will you please be quiet, please?*— also comments that "Yes, there was a great evil pushing at the world, he thought, and it only needed a slipway, a little opening" (CARVER, 1976, p. 241).

In regards to the pessimism Carver applied to the world he created, one can refer to what Clark wrote when describing the trends in postmodern short story fiction: "Move away from the known toward disillusionment rather than revelation and reintegration" (1993, p. 388). When Carver was asked if his characters were trying to do what matters, he answered:

> I think they are trying. But trying and succeeding are two different matters. In some lives, people always succeed […] In other lives, people don't succeed at what they are trying to do […] These lives are, of course, valid to write about, the lives of the people who

don't succeed. Most of my own experience has to do with the latter situation […] It's their lives they've become uncomfortable with, lives they see breaking down. They'd like to set things right, but they can't. And usually they do know it, I think, and after that they just do the best they can. (1983, p. 201)

Raymond Carver "gave voice", through silence, to the loser. A fascinating character which rises from the North American culture on the necessity of success, and who permeates American modern history and culture. In the writer's short stories, the characters/subjects represent the working class, and are often faced with no perspectives of social ascension. They are husbands and wives in constant financial struggle: they are continuously between jobs, or unemployed, or even holding two jobs so they can try to make ends meet. Carver gave voice to the common man, the janitor, the waitress, the baker, the motel clerk. As most Americans, Carver's characters live a life of quiet desperation, alienation and dissatisfaction. Unconscious of what they really feel, most of them live in a Ideological formation submitted to the elite. Carver's characters lack the drive of ambition. They are so overwhelmed with their problems that ambition has no space in their universe. Carver's characters are survivors trying to maintain a certain order in their turbulent lives. The challenge for them is not social and financial ascension, but social and financial survival. The difficulties of living in a broken home, where family disintegration, alcoholism, marital infidelity and bankruptcy are always knocking at the door, are the real issues fermenting the stories. The characters' lack of ambition can be seen and analyzed in most of his stories. In one of his most popular books, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981), the characters face these situations quite regularly. In the story *Gazebo*, we may understand how the shallow dreams of these people take shape, distancing a great deal from the American Dream of acquisition and success. In the story, a couple is responsible for taking care of a small hotel. The job seems perfect, and they initially see themselves as if they were privileged people. "When we'd first moved down here and taken over as managers, we thought we were out of the woods. Free rent and free utilities plus three hundred a month. You couldn't beat it with a stick" (1981, p. 22).

The ex-centrics of Raymond Carver are not only marginalized socially and financially. They are also geographically out of the center. Most of Raymond Carver's stories take place in small cities in Alaska, or in Yakima and Port Angels, small cities in the State of Washington, or even in El Paso, California. Raymond Carver's widow, Tess Gallagher talks about the subject of how the characters, the place and the stories are really very much alike, and how they complement each other. "Ray's proclivity for scorning tricks in his writing, for favoring simplicity over ornamentation, for choosing economy as the most telling sign of veracity – these seem present in elements of the Yakima landscape" (1990, p. 9).

The subject-position *loser*, born from capitalist North American culture, is engraved in the characters created by Raymond Carver. Discourse represents the kind of relationship these characters have, most of them with a low self-esteem, suspicious of one another, and always expecting a blow. The human relations in Raymond Carver's stories are filled with anxiety and wrath. It is not by chance that many of his stories end up with some kind of violence. Carver's losers are survivors and they resist in a world that cohibits and marginalizes them. The materiality of this resistance can be found in silence.

3 RAYMOND CARVER AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The writing of Raymond Carver is the perfect object of study for French Discourse Analysis, since, the works of the author are focused on the unique use of language and its elliptical characteristic; the characters of Carver's fictional world are representative of a repressed social class desiring to move upwards in the social pyramid. In addition, Carver uses silence as a main factor of communication and subversion of social status. We have to remind ourselves that the French Discourse Analysis understands language as a necessary mediation between man and his social and natural reality. This mediation is called discourse, and discourse is responsible for the feeling of permanency and continuity as much as displacement and transformation of man and his social existence. In Carver's texts, language and communication are almost always factors that characters have problems to deal with, therefore, they use silence quite regularly. Silence, in the stories, usually represents a place of permanency and continuity to the social spheres of characters. Silence, most often, tends to imprison characters in an oppressed ideological formation, while communication, is the place of displacement and social transformation. The discourse analyst is aware that within language, there are things that cannot be said, things that are untranslatable to words. This space of untranslatability creates a mechanism of indetermination which opens doors to ambiguity, and this is a fundamental property of all natural languages. The discourse analyst does not see the untranslatable or ambiguity in a negative panorama, but he sees them as a place of resistance, where they represent a place of difference within the dominant system. It is also an effective way to perceive the subject that produces and/or detects such ambiguity and untranslatability better.

An expert reader on Carver recognizes that a constant throughout his fictional creation is the presence of characters that are not happy or satisfied with their social position. Carver created subjects that are representative of a lower, desperate social class. Every little thing in the characters' lives is a component of a desperate existence: the characters' marriages are often destroyed, filled with infidelity, alcoholism and financial hardship; a broken refrigerator and the meat inside being

rotten is a symptom of the internal catastrophe these characters are passing through. Carver's characters can certainly be classified as losers in a country that respects and worships ambition and achievement. In a closer analysis, the reader realizes these characters are not defeated, but are in a process of struggling. The America Carver constructs is helpless and desperate, shadowed by the pain and the loss of dreams, but it is certainly not as fragile as it seems. Carver's America is a place of survivors. As Kirk Nesset comments in regards to the characters that people Carver's fictional universe:

> They talk, however unsuccessfully; they have sex or avoid it. They employ both their bodies and tongues in efforts to find themselves again, struggling to reassemble the bits and pieces of their tattered identities – and they continue struggling, even as their bodies get them into trouble, and as their tongues, taking them forever in circles, fall silent. (1991, p. 295)

The materiality of the ideology(ies) in the world of Carver is manifested both in silence and in the hard language the narrators and the subject/characters use. Carver creates a style where the blank spaces are as important as the spaces filled with words. Silence works as a factor of threat and menace that echoes through the stories and the reader has the feeling that he is aware of something the characters are not. It is this sense that the reader is missing something that helps give him a feeling of menace. In an essay titled *On writing*, Raymond Carver said:

> I like it when there is a feeling of threat or a sense of menace in short stories. I think a little menace is fine to have in a story. For one thing, it's good for the circulation. There has to be tension, a sense that something is imminent, that certain things are in relentless motion, or else, most often, there simply won't be a story. What creates tension in a piece of fiction is partly the way the concrete words are linked together to make up the visible action of the story. But it's also the things that are left out, that are implied, the landscape just under the smooth (but sometimes broken and unsettled) surface of things. (1983, p. 26)

The reader is induced to fill in the blank spaces of the sentences with meanings that would symbolize a pessimistic and oppressive world. The meanings, in a way, seem to be always there, evident to the eye, although, it is the position of the reader that enables such a reading.

> The meanings are always "managed", they are not loose. In face of any type of fact, of any symbolic object, we are induced to interpret, as if there is an injunction towards interpretation. When we speak, we interpret. But at the same time, meanings seem to always be there.[48] (ORLANDI, 1999, p. 10)

In this chapter I will depict some aspects present in Carver's early stories, basically, focusing on his first two collections of stories: *Will you please be quiet, please*? (1976) and *What we talk about when we talk about love* (1981). These two collections represent the minimalist period of the author, where ellipse is a key element in the stories. I start my analysis focusing on the transgression the characters face, when they try to transit to different ideological formations, using silence as transportation. In a second moment, I establish Carver's construction and deconstruction of masculinities in his stories through discourse.

3.1 TRANSITING BETWEEN DIFFERENT IDEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS

A great example to illustrate the figure of the loser in Raymond Carver can be found in the short story called *Neighbors*, from Carver's first collection of stories *Will you please be quiet, please*? (1976). The story is evidently short, with approximately eight pages, and it portrays a third person narrator, which is a technique that can create a feeling that repels the reader from the characters, by removing their personal voices. There are sporadic dialogues in the story, and those that are present, are definitely shaped by the unsaid. The story depicts the life of two different couples, the Millers and the Stones. These two couples represent two distinct ideological formations. The Millers could be portrayed as the losers, dissatisfied with the life they lead. They have low self-esteem and are sexually frustrated. The opposite situation can be seen in the imaginary the Millers have of their neighbors, the Stones: "It seemed to the Millers that the Stones lived a fuller and brighter life. The Stones were always going out for dinner, or entertaining at home, or travelling about the

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[48] Original: "Os sentidos estão sempre 'administrados', não estão soltos. Diante de qualquer fato, de qualquer objeto simbólico somos instados a interpretar, havendo uma injunção a interpretar. Ao falar, interpretamos. Mas, ao mesmo tempo, os sentidos parecem já estar sempre lá."

country somewhere in connection with Jim's work." (1976, p.9) These two ideological formations enter in conflict when the Stones let the Millers take care of their apartment for the period of ten days while the endure a business travel. They should water the plants and feed the cat. What really starts to happen is that Bill and Arlene Miller start to transit in a different ideological formation. By doing that, the Millers institute a process where they lose their identities. For the Millers, to be in the Stone's apartment is to be a completely different person. The following quotation exemplifies the drive that guides the characters into desire, and it reveals a common structure perpetuated in America:

> Carver's characters want what everyone else wants. Their desire is borrowed; it is the conventional desire in the consumer-capitalist, nuclear family-oriented culture in which they live. But, because they are American, there is no limit to the range and scale of their desire: they are free to desire what they wish. This freedom is popularly conceived of as the zero degree of individualism, a notion that one is born into a fantasy playground of pure potentiality with the freedom to go anywhere, do anything, have anything, be anyone. Sooner or later comes the realization that the idea of freedom is just that, an idea. For most people, limitation and constraint, personal or social, are life's realities. (CORNWELL, 2005, p. 345)

This process of moving to a different ideological formation is also highly aphrodisiac. In a different ideological formation which, before this situation, was unreachable, the Milers become sexually aroused, fulfilling their most inner unconscious desires. Right after visiting the Stones' apartment for the first time, Bill returns to his home with a great deal of sexual appetite:

> "What kept you?" Arlene said. She sat with her legs turned under her, watching television.
> "Nothing. Playing with Kitty," he said, and went over to her and touched her breasts.
> "Let's go to bed, honey," he said. (p. 11)

In this passage we can also find an example of constitutive silence, where someone says (x) because (y) cannot be said. When Arlene asks Bill why it took him so long to come back, he answered that he was "playing with Kitty." But the reader knows he was doing other things. Bill was experimenting himself in a different space. "He headed for the bathroom. He looked at himself in the mirror and then

closed his eyes and then looked again." (p. 10) Bill robbed some pills that were inside the medicine chest in the bathroom, and, in the living room, he had two drinks from the bottle of Chivas Regal. What does this represent? One can infer that Bill Miller was already showing an indication that the Stone's apartment could be a place where he might experiment new things, and those new things that were prohibited to him in his ideological formation. After the first visit, the sexual stimulation will be a constant in their lives right after they return from the neighbor's apartment.

On the second day, Bill leaves his job a little earlier than he usual, so he could spend more time in the apartment. When he returns to his own apartment, again, he and Arlene have sex:

> "Let's go to bed," he said.
> "Now?" She laughed. "What has gotten into you?
> "Nothing. Take your dress off." He grabbed for her awkwardly, and she said, "Good God, Bill."
> He unfastened his belt.
> Later they sent out for Chinese food, and when it arrived they ate hungrily, without speaking, and listened to records. (p. 11)

At first, this phenomenon happens to Bill. It is he who is responsible for going to the neighbor's apartment with the excuse of feeding the cat and watering the plants. But the apartment becomes the place of the unconscious, where time passes in an irregular way. The feeling that Bill is losing his identity is taken to extremes, to a point where he tends to believe that he is somebody else, or even the Stones. We have this evidence in the fact that Bill develops the obsession of looking at himself in the mirror when he is in the Stones' apartment. On the first visit he makes at the Stones, the mirror obsession starts: "He headed for the bathroom. He looked at himself in the mirror and then closed his eyes and then looked again" (p. 10). On the following visitations this phenomenon is repeated continuously. At another moment of the short story, Bill opens his neighbors' wardrobe, chooses a Hawaiian shirt and Bermudas and looks at himself in the mirror. This might indicate that he feels like a "tourist" in that place, but he decides to change his clothes right after that. So he puts

on a blue suit and black dress shoes as if he were imagining himself in the social position of his neighbor. And finally, not recognizing himself in the mirror with these clothes, Bill wears a pair panties and a bra belonging to Harriet Stone. We can infer that because of these acts, Bill does not recognize his identity anymore, and that he is experimenting different identities. These events could be analyzed by lacanian psychoanalysis, in what concerns the mirror stage. The mirror stage represents the entering of the subject in the world of the symbolic. It is when the baby, by seeing his image reflected in the mirror, starts a journey to recognition, separating himself from his mother, that up until then, he believed was a part of himself.

> This prime identification of the individual with his image is the origin of the rest of his identifications. It is an immediate and "dual" identification, reduced to two terms, the body and its image. Lacan qualifies it as the imaginary, since the individual recognizes himself with a copy of his own body, with an image that is not really him, but that allow him to find recognition. And by doing so, the baby fills the emptiness between the two terms of this relation: the body and the image. We are talking about a relation that is characterized by indistinction, the confusion between oneself and the other, and also by alienation, because the subject does not have any distance in relation to his own image, making him confuse his body with the resembling other.[49] (MORALES, p. 37)

Arlene also decides to visit the Stones' apartment, after she perceives the changes that are taking place with Bill. The same phenomenon seems to be happening to her. When Bill goes to the neighbor's apartment looking for his wife, the same dialogue they had before is repeated:

> "Was I gone long?" she said.
> "Well, you were," he said.
> "Was I?" she said. "I guess I must have been playing with Kitty."
> He studied her, and she looked away, her hand still resting on the doorknob. (p. 15)

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[49] Original: "Esta identificação primeira sujeito com sua imagem é a origem das demais identificações. É uma identificação imediata e 'dual', reduzida a dois termos, o corpo e a sua imagem. Lacan a qualifica como imaginária, porque o indivíduo se identifica com uma cópia de si mesmo, com uma imagem que não é ele mesmo, mas que lhe permite reconhecer-se. Ao fazê-lo, preenche um vazio entre os dois termos da relação: o corpo e a imagem. Trata-se de uma relação caracterizada pela indistinção, porque o sujeito não tem nenhuma distância frente a sua própria imagem, confundindo seu corpo com o do semelhante."

The same sentence Bill used to silence what in fact really had happened inside the apartment is repeated with Arlene: "I guess I must have been playing with Kitty." That is when Bill "notices white lint clinging to the back of her sweater, and the colors were high in her cheeks. He began kissing her on the neck and hair and she turned and kissed him back" (p. 15). She could have been trying out different clothes, and also, noticing her high colored cheeks, the reader is able to infer that Arlene is sexually aroused. When the couple starts kissing at the door, Bill suggests getting some cigarettes so they could come back, together this time, to their neighbor's apartment and then fulfill their fantasies together. They lock the door of their own apartment, and, holding hands in the hall, between their own apartment and the neighbor's, separated by two different ideological formations, they stop.

> They held hands for the short walk across the hall, and when he spoke she could barely hear his voice.
> "The key," he said. "Give it to me."
> "What?" she said. She gazed at the door.
> "The key," he said. "You have the key."
> "My God," she said. "I left the key inside."
> He tried the knob. It was locked. Then she tried the knob. It would not turn. Her lips were parted, and her breathing was hard, expectant. He opened his arms and she moved into them.
> "Don't worry," he said into her ear. "For God's sake, don't worry." (p. 16)

It is at this point where the short story comes to an end. The Millers have trespassed their ideological formation when they were in the neighbor's apartment. But now, the door was locked. They did not have the *key* to open that door. Their desires cannot be satisfied anymore. The hall puts them in a void and in a situation of uncertainty about the future. This is suggested by the type of comfort the husband offers to his wife: "For God's sake, don't worry." The reader notices the silent desperation in this enunciation, creating an almost contradictory sentence. The Millers cannot return to the place of fulfilled desires the apartment represented, and they cannot occupy the ideological formation they were enjoying any longer. That ideological formation has been denied to them. They leaned into the neighbor's door, and "as if against a wind" (p. 16), they resisted together, but now they are repelled from the place, being forced to return to their ideological formation. This short story

illustrates well the dilemmas suffered by a ideological formation that represents the oppressed. The world keeps these losers from moving, forcing them to remain in the same static ideological formation.

3.2 WHEN THE WHITE MAN DOESN'T FIT IN

Raymond Carver's characters want more. They are unsatisfied with their lives, their jobs (if they have any), their marriage and kids. These characters want more, but, frequently, they do not know how to obtain "that something else". Still talking about Carver's first collection of short fiction, *Will you please be quiet, please?* (1976), we can find an emblematic example of dissatisfaction in the short story *They're not your husband*. The story focuses on a man who is a loser but does not want to recognize himself as one. In his ideological construct, he is a manly, powerful, white male, but that does not match with his real conditions of existence, remembering that, ideology represents the imaginary relation between individuals and their real conditions of existence. The first sentence of the short story opens with: "Earl Ober was between jobs as a salesman" (p. 22). In an American capitalist context in which a man's value is measured by his income, we can infer that Earl Ober has a terrible self-esteem. The first sentence is followed by the information that his wife Doreen worked the night shifts in a coffee shop at the edges of town. That information, revealed in the first three lines of the story is a perfect portrait of the family: down and out losers suffering to make a living. One night, after drinking, Earl decides to go to the coffee shop, because he wanted to see where Doreen worked and also, because he expected to get a free meal on his wife's account. Arriving at the coffee shop, Earl sits at a table, while two men, in "business suits, ties undone… collars open sat down next to him and asked for coffee" (p. 22). These two men represent, exactly what Earl is not, which is: employed workers. The suit also reveals that they are not only "mere" hard workers, but, at least, blue-collar ones. These businessmen represent a dominant ideological formation in the universe of Earl Ober. The two men started talking, and Earl was listening to them.

As Doreen walked away with the coffeepot, one of the men said to the other,
"Look at the ass on that. I don't believe it."
The other man laughed. "I've seen better," he said.
"That's what I mean," the first man said. "But some jokers like their quim fat."
"Not me," the other man said.
"Not me, neither," the first man said. "That's what I was saying."
…
She came back with the pot and poured coffee for him and for the two men. Then she picked up a dish and turned to get some ice cream. She reached down in the container and with the dipper began to scoop up the ice cream. The white skirt yanked against her hips and crawled up her legs. What showed was girdle, and it was pink, thighs that were rumpled and grey and a little hairy, and veins that spread in a berserk display.
The two men sitting beside Earl exchanged looks. One of them raised his eyebrows. The other man grinned and kept looking at Doreen over his cup as she spooned chocolate syrup over the ice cream. When she began shaking the can of whipped cream, Earl got up, leaving his food, and headed for the door. He heard her call his name, but he kept going. (p. 22-23)

Earl Ober is not angered by the cruelty of the men who were treating his wife as an object (an object of desire), in fact, he feels humiliated by that. There is a sentence in the conversation between the businessmen that classifies the woman's partner as a joker: "some *jokers* like their quim fat." *Jokers*, in this case, is a synonym for loser, as much as *quim*, a mispronunciation of queen, also reveals a ridicularization of the woman. The reader has a clear sense of that and the psychological drama of the passage is evident: Earl's self-esteem is embodied in the object of desire, which, in this case is his wife, who had been ridicularized by those two "successful" men. The ridicularization of Doreen by the businessmen, removes all the value Earl attributed to his wife, and consequently, to himself, making him feel useless and oppressed.

The issue of love, or, more accurately, the absence of it is a constant throughout all Carver's work, be it fiction or poetry. Kirk Nesset, an expert on Raymond Carver and professor of the University of California, describes love in the works of Raymond Carver as:

> A darkly unknowable and irreversible force, a form of sickness not only complicating but dominating the lives of characters. Characters are alternately bewildered, enraged, suffocated, diminished, isolated and entrapped by love. (1991, p. 293-294)

After hearing what the men had to say about Doreen, Earl leaves the coffee shop in a hurry, and deals with the problem as many other Carver characters do: having no understanding of it at an emotional level, but taking it into a physical sphere:

> He checked on the children and then went to the other bedroom and took off his clothes. He pulled the covers up, closed his eyes, and allowed himself to think. The feeling started in his face and worked down into his stomach and legs. He opened his eyes and rolled his head back and forth on the pillow. Then he turned on his side and fell asleep. (p.23)

His actions show that he is not feeling comfortable. The feeling of uneasiness and misplacement Earl feels is transferred to his wife the next morning when he suggests and convinces her that she needes to start a diet. The reader can infer that if Doreen loses weight, Earl would be able to restore his pride and value. He could then be a man again. He could then, restore his position in a "dominant" ideological formation, because we have to remember that gender is a construct, like anything else is, and Earl was completely lost in relation to his identity. The encounter with the businessmen in the coffee shop has brought some traumatic issues to the surface of things. The imaginary formation in which Earl inscribes himself, as a white dominant male is put in jeopardy, not to say the most evident transformation, which is his undefined position in a ideological formation. He believed he was a Man who possessed a beautiful and sexy wife. Although he did not have a job, he had a wife, and others would envy him because of this. When he discovered that men, who were in a higher social position, did not have any sexual interest in his wife, Earl felt lost. He could not identify himself in a subject-position (ideological formation) that had some kind of power, and he certainly did not want to recognize himself as a useless loser, or a *joker*, as the men in suits described him.

We have to remember that the desire of the subject is the desire of the Other. The subject is subjected to the signifiers of his own unconscious desire structured by the laws of language. Desire, that Lacan classifies as a term that designates the incompleteness of language and subject, conducts the subject to search for the *object a*, that has been lost. Morales, in an essay titled: *Subject: imaginary, symbolic and real* says that:

> The *object a* is the cause for the division of the subject, and it comes up in the space language creates beyond physiological need, in the space of demand, that cannot be suppressed by the object of need. It is an object that did not exist before being lost: it is the act of losing it that creates it.[50] (p. 40)

This is what has happened to Earl Ober: *object a* is his manhood materialized in his wife. Since his wife is not desirable anymore, he loses his position as a manly subject. Earl Ober has constructed his persona in the discourse of the Other. His ideology and social position is interpellated by the discourse of the Other. We can understand this unconscious functioning of the subject with the words of Morales:

> The subject is unavoidably inhabited by an absence, the absence that comes from his own disappearance. However, intimidated, interpellated by the Other, what the subject encounters is the enigma of desire, to which he shall, necessarily, respond. Connected to the structure of the chain of signifiers, we can find the desire of the Other. In the absence of the Other's discourse, for the subject, the enigma of desire dwells. In face of the intimidation caused by the Other, the subject responds to it with what it constitutes at a first moment, which is, absence. This is what the space of the subject and the space of the Other have in common. This is why the desire of the subject should be thought as the desire of the Other.[51] (p. 40)

So, Earl Ober convinces his wife to start a diet. They make plans together and try to figure out the best type of diet to suit Doreen. In this passage, Raymond

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[50] Original: "O *objeto a* é a causa da divisão do sujeito. Surge no espaço que a linguagem cria para além da necessidade fisiológica, no espaço da demanda, que não pode ser suprimida pelo objeto da necessidade. É um objeto que não existia antes de ser perdido: é a perda que o cria."

[51] Original: "Um sujeito irremediavelmente habitado por uma falta, a falta advinda de seu próprio desaparecimento. Entretanto, intimidado, interpelado pelo Outro, o que o sujeito encontra é o enigma do desejo, ao qual deverá necessariamente responder. Ligado à própria estrutura da cadeia de significantes, encontra-se o desejo do Outro. Nas faltas do discurso do Outro, para o sujeito, se aloja o enigma do desejo. Ante a intimidação que lhe faz o Outro, responde com aquilo que se constitui no primeiro tempo, vale dizer, a falta. Isto é o que há de comum entre o campo do sujeito e o campo do Outro. Por isso, o desejo do sujeito deve ser pensado enquanto desejo do Outro."

Carver, using his masterly writing apparatus, portrays in a simple, and even funny moment, the social status, the personality and the educational background of the couple.

> They talked about diets. They talked about the protein diets, the vegetable-only diets, the grapefruit-juice diets. But they decided they didn't have the money to buy steaks the protein diet called for. And Doreen said she didn't care for all that many vegetables. And since she didn't like grapefruit juice that much, she didn't see how she could do that one, either.
> "Okay, forget it," he said.
> "No, you're right," she said. "I'll do something."
> "What about exercises?" he said.
> "I'm getting all the exercise I need down there," she said.
> "Just quit eating," Earl said. "For a few days, anyway." (p. 25)

The Obers could not afford to have steaks, since they did not have the money. Their social position in that moment is clear: they don't have any money. But Carver goes further, when the discourse analyst approaches a statement that reads: "Doreen said she didn't care for all that many vegetables." We should ask ourselves, as discourse analysts: Who is the subject of this sentence? What type of ideology is being materialized in the form of discourse? What kind of conflict exists between the two or more ideological formations in question? This analyst, understanding that there are different readings of the same enunciation, could read the sentence as a portrait of a social class which does not have a healthy diet, not only because of money issues, but also because of the educational level it is inscribed in. This situation can be seen when Doreen says she "didn't care" for vegetables. She has a position towards the subject. She inscribes herself in a ideological formation at the moment the evidences of historicity are materialized in discourse. We could infer that, by not enjoying vegetables that much, Doreen's diet represents the diet of most middle-class and lower-class individuals, since she did not eat either meat or vegetables that often, but probably, cheap frozen food and canned food. In the end they decided that the best thing to do was for Doreen to quit eating, that is, starve for a while. There is a pathetic and desperate tone to this. When Earl asks her about exercise, she answers that she is getting enough exercise at her job. This clarifies the

idea that Doreen does not have an intellectual challenge at her job and routine, she is always on the move, carrying coffeepots, serving people, etc.

After the conversation Earl becomes obsessed and compulsive about his wife's diet. He controls everything on the diet. He buys a bathroom scale and takes notes of her progress continuously. Doreen starves for weeks and loses many pounds, so many that her co-workers do not think she is feeling well.

> "People are saying things at work," she said.
> "What kind of things?" Earl said.
> "That I'm too pale, for one thing," she said. "That I don't look like myself. They're afraid I'm losing too much weight."
> "What's wrong with losing?" he said. "Don't you pay any attention to them. Tell them to mind their own business. They're not your husband. You don't have to live with them."
> "I have to work with them," Doreen said.
> "That's right," Earl said. "But they are not your husband." (p. 27)

When Doreen says that people are saying things at work, Earl become interested, probably because he was expecting to hear that Doreen's co-workers were commenting on how thin and sexy and desirable she is. Earl spends a lot of time and energy controlling his wife's weight, he is expecting things to come back to "normality". Earl's response manifests that it is not his wife whom he desires. Earl's desire is to have his desires authenticated by the desire of others. Something ambiguous takes place in this passage: Doreen's co-workers are worried about her. Is she really too pale? Sick? Has Doreen become really skinny? Anorexic? Or are they not able to recognize her as herself? They do not accept her with a new body, meaning that she cannot transit to another ideological formation. It is very significant to see that her co-workers said that she didn't look like herself. What can this mean? Nonetheless, the most illustrative moment in this conversation is the passage where Earl asks: "What's wrong with losing?" This is a question most characters in the fictional universe of Carver might ask themselves. The core of this sentence lays in losing. Maybe, losing is the most recurrent image in Carver's stories. The characters are always losing weight, losing respect, losing prestige, losing money, losing their cars, their homes, their families. Earl, in a pathetic attempt to control his wife says that she should not listen to what those people had to say, because they were not her

husband. Probably this means that, as a husband, Earl possesses the power and the authority to control his wife, and he continues saying that other people do not have to live with her. However, Doreen simply answers: "I have to work with them." The answer Doreen gives her husband could be simply read as a statement where she makes the type of relation she has with these people explicit, but, in the light of discourse analysis, we should look for evidence that indicates a conflict of classes. According to this approach, we could say that Doreen was saying that she had a position that her husband did not have. "I have to *work* with them" may silence the fact that Earl does not work, so he should not or could not say anything about the subject. Doreen is defying her husband and the phalo-centric order presented in the universe she inhabits, simply by creating a space where silence reverberates, creating a movement of resistance to the dominant order. Earl understands what his wife had done, at least in some level. We can see that when he says "That's right," but still tries to maintain the irrational, controlling, behavioral mumble jumble thoughts when he finishes the sentence with "But they're not your husband."

Towards the end of the story, Earl comes back to the coffee shop, and the situation where his wife is been judged as an object of desires is repeated. But this time, it is Earl who is commenting and asking the opinion of another man in concern to the new re-formed body of his wife. Earl finds himself playing a similar but even more disgusting part than the men at the beginning of the story, making a voyeuristic spectacle of his own wife.

> "What do you think of that?" Earl said to the man, nodding at Doreen as she moved down the counter. "Don't you think that's something special?"
> "The man looked up. He looked at Doreen and then at Earl, and then went back to his newspaper.
> "Well, what do you think?" Earl said. "I'm asking. Does it look good or not? Tell me."
> The man rattled the newspaper.
> When Doreen started down the counter again, earl nudged the man's shoulder and said, "I'm telling you something. Listen. Look at the ass on her. Now you watch this now. Could I have a chocolate sundae? Earl called to Doreen.
> She stopped in front of him and let out her breath. Then she turned and picked up a dish and the ice-cream dipper. She leaned over the freezer, reached down, and began to press the dipper into

the ice-cream. Earl looked at the man and winked as Doreen's skirt traveled up her thighs. But the man's eye caught the eyes of the other waitress. And then the man put the newspaper under his arm and reached into his pocket.

The other waitress came straight to Doreen. "Who is this character?" she said.

"Who?" Doreen said and looked around with the ice-cream dish in her hand.

"Him." The other waitress said and nodded at Earl. "Who is this joker, anyway?"

Earl put on his best smile. He held it. He held it until he felt his face pulling out of shape.

But the other waitress just studied him, and Doreen began to shake her head slowly. The man had put some change beside his cup and stood up, but he too waited to hear the answer. They all stared at Earl.

"He's a salesman. He's my husband." Doreen said at last, shrugging. (p. 29-30)

Earl did not have any straight answer from the man who was reading the newspaper. The reader has the impression that the man is quite upset with the situation and the tone of the conversation. Actually, the man never exchanged a single word with Earl. At the end of the situation, the man gives a look to the other waitress that, then, understands what is going on and approaches Doreen. At this moment we have a repetition of the adjective the two businessmen used in the beginning of the story to describe the kind of man who suited Doreen. The other waitress asks Doreen: "Who is that *joker*?" again we have the confirmation that others see Earl as a loser (joker). But what is really interesting is not the question, but the answer Doreen gives, she says: "He's a salesman. He is my husband." In fact, Earl is acting like a salesman when he tries to establish the value of the merchandise (his wife) by attempting to convince the man with the newspaper to "buy the product". But this analysis could go further, since Doreen's discourse is ambivalent. On the one hand, Doreen identifies Earl as her husband, establishing their kind of relationship in a social category. But on the other hand, Doreen attributes a profession to her unemployed husband maybe trying to restore him to a minimal sense of dignity in that pitiful situation, or, out for pure shame since she then recognizes him as a loser.

4 UNDERSTANDING SILENCE IN CARVER

After an extensive reading and analysis on Raymond Carver's stories, the discourse analyst is able to conclude that silence is a spectrum that involves every aspect of Carver's fictional world. Silence operates in different ways: It appears unquestionably untranslatable in the form of *founding silence*, the one that is inhabited by all the other meanings that were not filling the enunciation said, the one that carries all the other possible meanings and that is immanent to every enunciation and discourse; Silence also permeates the narratives of Carver in the form of *politics of silence*, as much as in the panorama of constitutive silence and censorship. Constitutive silence, the one that is invisibly present in every saying, that says "x" for the impossibility of saying "y" is a mechanism of discourse abundantly used by Carver that generates ambiguity and polysemy. The elliptical style present in Carver's writing produces silence. It is an elliptical writing method that opens space for ambiguity and that demands the reader to position himself as a subject in a determined ideological formation, and insert meaning into the spaces permeated by silence. Another form of silence in Raymond Carver is the recently discovery that his most celebrated collection of stories, and also the most minimalist one, *What we talk about when we talk about love* (1981) was dramatically edited to one third of its original length by the famous American editor Gordon Lish. This is an unique example in literature, for a discourse analyst understand the functioning of censorship, the inevitably creation of silenced spaces, and the ideological forces operating in the fields of class and meaning; In a second moment of his career, called the Good Raymond days, Carver developed longer stories. This stories were still focused on discourse and silence, but they deviated themselves from the pessimistic atmosphere that surrounded the first shorter stories. The narratives included in *Fires* (1983), *Cathedral* (1983) and *Where i'm calling from* (1988) did not have the pessimistic aura present in Carver's two first collections of stories *Will you please be quiet, please* (1976) and *What we talk about when we talk about love* (1981). These longer narratives, although still portraying characters that represent the same type of ideological formation his older stories used to do, allow the possibility for redemption and

salvation. In many stories of these new collections, characters take advantage of the opportunity that is presented to them, and, differently from the older stories where characters did not feel capable of solving things, in the most recent ones, they try solving their problems, usually through discourse and communication, something that was usually denied to them in the older stories.

In this final chapter I would like to analyze two aspects of silence in the work with Raymond Carver's narratives. In a first moment, I will analyze the inarticulateness embodied in most characters who inhabit Carver's literary world and the dangers discourse might represent to these subjects. In a second moment, I will depict the differences between two versions of a short story from Carver: *The bath*, present in the edited version of *What we talk about when we talk about love* (1981) where the atmosphere of menace, silence, ambiguity and oppression dominates the story and is stressed by the editing of Gordon Lish; and *A small, good thing*, present in the original version with its original length in *Beginners* (2008), which has a very different approach and that establishes a rupture with the style that was an "essence" in Carver. This recovered version has a longer and fuller quality than the edited one. *A small, good thing* has twenty pages more than his edited version and it ends with a tone of redemption and understanding. The discourse analyst discovers that in this phase of his career, where he was edited by Lish, Carver, as a reflection of his own life, since he was no longer an alcoholic, portrayed dysfunctional characters that were willing to find a solution to their problems. Although the stories presented in *Beginners* were longer and characters were trying to solve their problems, discourse and silence were still fundamental elements in the stories, but now, they were playing a different role in the narratives.

4.1 INARTICULATENESS OR ABSENCE OF AUTHORITY

In Raymond Carver's fictional universe what usually maintains characters in the same position (ideological formation) is the lack of, and inarticulateness in conversation. The dangers presented in communication permeate every story with this writer. In his earlier stories, Carver's characters seemed unlikely candidates to

solve a diplomatic dilemma. This atmosphere is displayed in the words of John Powell, in his article *The stories of Raymond Carver: the menace of perpetual uncertainty*.

> Raymond Carver creates an atmosphere of unresolved uncertainty that becomes menacing as the story draws to a conclusion. Carver's method is to leave out details in the course of dialogue, revealing very little despite the heightened sensitivity for meaning that the characters display. Another method is for characters to be resistant to communication that immediately places an ambiguous and contradictory quality on dialogue. (1994, p. 647)

Language, in Raymond Carver's fiction, is much more confusing than clarifying. The critic of Carver understands that there is no heavier menace in the characters' world than which language represents. Language presents itself as an ambiguous space where the other might inscribe different positions and meanings. The unique use of language has been pointed out as one of the most impressive of Carver's talents, since he had the ability to "control", to a certain level, the use of silence in his writing. This can be shown in the words of Laurie Champion in an interesting article entitled: *What's to say: silence in Raymond Carver's "feathers"*:

> Narrators leave surface details unspoken, characters frequently remain silent. Often it is not direct discourse, words unspoken between characters, but characters' inability to communicate that becomes important in developing characters' attitudes, motives, weaknesses, or hopelessness. Indeed, characters' silences, indicative of their inability to communicate with other characters, reflect a recurrent theme in Carver's fiction. Often his stories are about discourse itself, ways people communicate or fail to communicate, demonstrating consequences of various modes of discourse. (1997, p. 193)

We could say that polysemy is a trademark in Carver's writing, creating subtle contradictions in which the subject/characters have to position themselves. But silence reverberates in this world creating multiple and possible meanings. It is more recurrent for Carver's characters to fill the spaces of silence with fear and a sense of menace than any type of "positive" feelings. They do this because their ideological formation as losers, do not allow them to move forward. They are impelled from resolution, entrapped in their own psychological construct. The characters usually manifest their affliction through the use of action and through concrete objects. They

smoke, drink, they are promiscuous, drive around, have sex, and it is common for them to end up in some situation of violence as well. As Kathleen Shute, an expert on Carver, says in her essay, *Finding the words: the struggle for salvation in the fiction of Raymond Carver*: "When the palpable menace that is ubiquitous in Carver's low-rent landscape came too close, when the tension churned too furiously, characters sometimes exploded, beating, even killing, each other" (1987, p. 1). The external world is always a factor that generates chaos and interference in the fiction of Carver.

In his second, and probably, the most acclaimed and the most minimalist collection of stories, *What we talk about when we talk about love* (1981), Carver presents his readers one of the most representative stories focused on this menacing world of silence and language. The story is entitled *A serious talk*. This story contains every theme and motif that inhabits Raymond Carver's fictional world. It is a grim, melancholic story about a broken marriage, the drunkenness and the infidelity inside the marriage, the children dealing with a divorce, the nonstop smoking and drinking, the characters doing things that will cause great remorse and, not saying words that were meant to be said. This is a typical Carver story where silence permeates and reverberates in every word pronounced or unpronounced.

In *A serious talk*, it is the day after Christmas and Burt, a divorced man, is going to visit his ex-wife Vera so he can apologizes for destroying Christmas the day before, and he expects they can have a serious talk. Burt is completely lost, suffering in quiet desperation while his ex-wife is seeing another man.

> He'd come on Christmas day to visit his wife and children. Vera had warned him beforehand. She'd told him to score. She'd said he had to be out by six o'clock because her friend and his children were coming for dinner.
> They had sat in the living room and solemnly opened the presents Burt had brought over. They had opened his packages while other packages wrapped in festive paper lay pilled under the tree waiting for after six o'clock. (1981, p. 105)

What happens in this passage is the description of the drama Burt is going through. He does not hold his former ideological formation since he is not "part" of the family and tradition any longer. His role is resigned to a formal visitation with an limited time: six o'clock. The narrator makes it clear that under the tree there are

"packages wrapped in *festive* paper". By saying that, we can infer that Burt's packages were not festive. In the passage, Burt has to leave his former house at six o'clock, because Vera's "friend" would arrive, with his kids, to have Christmas dinner. Burt would like to have all that back: the dinner, the festive mood, his family. He has lost his position as a family man. Now, he finds himself stranded in a lower ideological formation (the drunken divorced man), submitted ideologically to his imaginary former ideological formation (the one where he is a "stable" family man). Burt is looking to recovering that position, but he does not know how to get it back. What he wants is to have a serious talk with his ex-wife, to clarify their differences and solve their problems. But this conversation never happens. It, actually cannot happen since he does not feel capable of assuming the ideological formation needed for solving things.

The portrait of the broken family continues when the reader faces the desires that could be silenced in his kids' enunciation when they, in the manner they can, try to give their father some kind of support. Burt gives Vera a cashmere sweater, and the kids, in a simple act, invite their mother to return to the family's old routine:

> "It's nice," she said. "Thank you, Burt."
> "Try it on," his daughter said.
> "Put it on," his son said. (p. 106)

We are compelled to think that either son and daughter are asking their mother to return to the broken marriage and give Burt a new chance. The mother should experiment that life again. It could even, maybe, suit her this time. In exchange, Burt receives a gift certificate at Sondheim's men's store from Vera, which is certainly, a crude example of a harsh distant affection. This gift Vera gives Burt exemplifies the formality which Vera sees in the transformation her relationship with Burt has suffered.

> Vera served sodas, and they did a little talking. But mostly they looked at the tree. Then his daughter got up and began setting the dinning-room table, and his son went off to his room.
> But Burt liked it where he was. He liked it in front of the fireplace, a glass in his hand, his house, his home. (p. 106)

The broken family has a short Christmas moment followed by disintegration once again. Everyone escapes to different places. Before everyone leaves, however, there is a "little talking", which is a typical Carver expression. The ambiguity residing in this enunciation might mean a short period of conversation, but also to, a conversation without importance. This is a common characteristic of Carver's male and female characters, although women confront problems more often and more efficiently than men usually do. In *A serious talk*, characters will never confront themselves. The only confrontation comes from silence. It is in silence where resistance takes place. In silence, Burt stands alone in the living room, at that moment he is in "his house, his home". There is no physical confrontation that would cause him any kind of menace. No ex-wife bothering him and asking him questions, hoping for answers. He could stay there, safe in a ideological formation where he could imagine himself in his home, with his family. "Burt liked where he was", but nobody knew where he was. Day dreaming on the armchair he got up and filled the fireplace with sawdust logs. He watches the flames until the wood is involved by them. In a moment of silent anger, Burt picks up the pies lined up on the sideboard. "He stacked them in his arms, all six, one for every ten times she had ever betrayed him. In the driveway in the dark, he'd let one fall as he fumbled with the door." (p. 107) Silence always leave traces, evidence. The pumpkin pie smashed on the pavement of the driveway is the materiality of silence. In the words of Orlandi:

> It is the founding silence that produces a signifying state where the subject is enabled to inscribe himself in the process of signification, even over the effects of censorship, signifying, by the different language games, the "y" that was forbidden to him.[52](2007, p. 86)

The pie on the pavement was Burt's statement, an untranslatable statement of his emotional reality. On the day after Christmas, Burt comes back to ask for forgiveness. He enters the house by the backdoor. Vera is wearing a bathrobe when he asks to come inside. He wants to talk about what has happened. Vera allows him to come in, but she draws her robe together at her throat. By doing that, one can

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[52] Original: "É o silêncio fundador que produz um estado significativo para que o sujeito se inscreva no processo de significação, mesmo na censura, fazendo significar, por outros jogos de linguagem, o 'y' que lhe foi proibido."

deduce that she is denying him "something", namely, sex, redemption and forgiveness. Burt has the inability to express precisely what he wants to say to Vera. His concepts are limited to abstract concepts of "something" or "things" they have to solve. The reader, following the narrative, understands and recognizes what the characters want to express but fail to and knows what should be said to soothe the misunderstandings of their relationship. The reader feels frustrated, impotent, since he identifies himself with what is happening and hopes the characters will do the "right" thing, which usually never happens.

> "Do you remember Thanksgiving?" she said. "I said then that was the last holiday you were going to wreck for us. Eating bacon and eggs instead of turkey at ten o'clock at night."
> "I know it," he said. "I said I'm sorry."
> "Sorry isn't good enough."
> The pilot light was out again. She was at the stove trying to get the gas going under the pan of water.
> "Don't burn yourself," he said. "Don't catch yourself on fire."
> He considered her robe catching fire, him jumping up from the table, throwing her down onto the floor and rolling her over into the living room, where he would cover her with his body. Or should he run to the bedroom for a blanket? (p. 108)

Burt believes that saying sorry could make a difference. He cannot explain anything more profound than that. Vera says to him that sorry is not enough, but he does not know what to do. He deviates from the conversation when he imagines her robe catching fire. Burt's desire is manifested in this passage in a brilliant way. He considers jumping up on her, rolling with her on the floor and putting out the fire. The robe, which Vera closes to her throat, is still a sexual magnet to Burt. And this is more relevant, since Vera already knows the robe would cause an effect on her ex-husband. After this moment, they do not restart the conversation, but decide to drink vodka in that morning.

> "Do you have anything to drink? I could use a drink this morning."
> "There's some vodka in the freezer."
> "When did you start keeping vodka in the freezer?"
> "Don't ask."
> "Okay," he said. "I won't ask."
> He got out the vodka and poured some into a cup on the counter.

> She said, "Are you just going to drink it like that, out of a cup?"
> She said, "Jesus, Burt. What'd you want to talk about, anyway? I told you I have someplace to go. I have a flute lesson at one o'clock."
> "Are you still taking flute?"
> "I just said so. What is it? Tell me what's on your mind, and then I have to get ready."
> "I wanted to say I was sorry."
> She said, "You said that."
> He said, "If you have any juice, I'll mix it with this vodka." (p. 109)

In this passage the situation is repeated again. But this time it is not only Burt who avoids a serious talk, but also Vera when she refuses to talk about the vodka she keeps in the freezer. This is a passage that illustrates the level of alcoholism on the part of Burt: he is drinking pure vodka in the morning. The reader can only infer what Vera's condition and relation to alcohol is, deducing that she, too, might be having some problems. When Vera realizes that Burt is drinking straight vodka from a cup, she gets nervous. Probably aware of her ex-husband's alcoholic condition, she then, once again, inquires him about what he wanted to talk about. Burt rejects the opportunity to talk about their problems and tries to turn the conversation to a subject that will cause them no harm: Vera's flute classes. Nevertheless, Vera tries again, giving Burt a chance to explain himself and, maybe fix the whole situation. The reader has the impression that both Burt and Vera want to get together, but there are things that have to be solved. Burt is not helping since he escapes once again from the confrontation of their problems when he asks for juice to mix with the vodka.

Vera leaves Burt alone in the kitchen. While he is in there, he lights a cigarette. He is looking at the ashtray and the cigarette buds lying there (another physical and material substitute to the emotions reflected on the characters).

> He studied the buds in it. Some of them were Vera's brand, and some of them weren't. Some even were lavender-colored. He got up and dumped it all under the sink.
> The ashtray was not really an ashtray. It was a big dish of stoneware they'd bought from a bearded potter on the mall in Santa Clara. He rinsed it out and dried it. He put it back on the table. And then he ground out his cigarette in it. (p. 110)

The narrator creates ambiguity when he says that the ashtray was not really an ashtray. This should be taken in consideration in a careful analysis. The ashtray is a symbol on the story. With all the different cigarette buds, it represents, as much as the tree with the festive gifts, the space that no longer belongs to Burt. He no longer represents that ideological formation. In a ridiculous and desperate act, Burt removes all the buds and cleans the ashtray, grounding his own cigarette in it. His lonely cigarette in that ashtray is a very phallic image, as if Burt wanted to mark his territory. It is a common thing for Carver's male characters to manifest their masculinity in ridiculous forms, and only when their masculinity is completely wounded. This is what Vanessa Hall exemplifies in her article, *"It all fell in on him": masculinities in Raymond Carver's short stories and American Culture during the 1970s and 1980s.*

> The sexual crisis Carver's male characters face, while deeply rooted in traditional gender relations and literary conventions, do more that ultimately reflect a kind of [ahistorical] fortune and fate which, forever unseen and unheard, dictate the bleak circumstances of their lives. Carver's portrayals of male sexual insecurities, the deep symbolic concern with emasculation, span Carver's writing and reference a larger cultural upheaval in gender relations occurring in the 1970s. (2009, p. 173)

Images of crisis in masculinities permeate all the phases of the fictional creation of Carver. Masculine identity is something his male characters are always looking for. Some, such as Burt and Earl from *They're not your husband*, have the sense that they are not masculine anymore, that is, they do not represent the ideological formation they once did. Their way of trying to recover their lost identities, usually ends up in a pathetic fruitless attempt. Masculinity is a problematic construct in both the early and later stories of Raymond Carver. The most interesting and contrasting fact about this process of constructed identities is that in order for white masculinity to "negotiate" its position within the field of identity politics, white men must claim a symbolic disenfranchisement. It is when they claim a victim status that they are enabled to claim a position of power (ideological formation) in the world of identity politics. This happened with Burt and Vera as the story follows to an end.

> She sat across from him and drank her coffee. They smoked and used the ashtray.
>
> There were things that he wanted to say, grieving things, consoling things, things like that.
>
> "I'm smoking three packs a day," Vera said. "I mean, if you really want to know what goes on around here. "
>
> "God almighty," Burt said.
>
> Vera nodded.
>
> "I didn't come here to hear that," he said. (p. 111)

In this passage, Burt and Vera share the ashtray and, consequently, they are sharing "things". The act of using the ashtray creates a bond between the characters. The reader feels Vera is more receptive, she decides to tell him that she is not that well. In fact, she has been smoking a great deal. What this implies is a dangerous thing to answer, and to analyze it adequately one should have in mind that it might not be the best way to try to interpret silence, but to understand the processes in which it establishes meaning. This whole passage is a great example of constitutive silence, since, the characters say "x" because of the impossibility of saying "y". This type of process occurs with both characters; Vera mentioning her abuse of cigarettes, which might indicate that she does not feel that well without Burt, and Burt, as usual, avoiding any serious talk, since "There were things that he wanted to say, grieving things, consoling things, things like that," and in the end, the only thing he is able to utter is "I didn't come here to hear anything like that." After that, Vera becomes angry with him, probably because of his incapacity in positioning himself in a space that could bring some kind of comfort and resolution. The telephone rings and Vera decides to take it in the privacy of her bedroom. Burt become nervous and ends up sawing the cord of the telephone, understanding that the person on the telephone was having "a serious talk" with his ex-wife.

> He picked up the ashtray. He held it by its edges. He posed with it like a man preparing to hurl a discus.
>
> "Please," she said. "That's our ashtray."
>
> He left through the patio door. He was not certain, but he thought he had proved something. He hoped he had made something clear. The thing was, they had to have a serious talk soon. There were things that needed talking about, important things that had to be discussed. (p. 112-113)

Burt *posed* as a man when he is holding the ashtray. Burt could only pose, but he could not fit the shoes of this ideological formation. He looks like a man and the narrator indicates that Burt is ready to start the discussion he and his wife did not have. But this moment do not last long. He goes to his car, holding the ashtray (his masculinity or, maybe his ideological formation as a family man) in one hand and hopes he has made something clear. Again, Burt stops at the abstractions of "something" and "things". Nothing is clear, and silence continues to reverberate in the story and in its possible polysemic meanings, because we have to remember that it is the feature of incompleteness, from both meaning and subject, that is the immanent condition of plurality within language.

4.2 THE CELEBRATED CASE OF THE EDITING OF GORDON LISH

Raymond Carver became a famous and prestigious writer after the publication of *Will you please be quiet, please* (1976) and *What we talk about when we talk about love* (1981). But it was with *What we talk about* that Carver received international recognition. Gordon Lish was the editor in Carver's first two collections and the writer also considered him a very close friend. But Lish surprised Carver when he decided to publish *What we talk about* by cutting the original manuscript in more than half of its length. Carver never authorized such editing, and in one of many desperate letters to Lish, he said:

> Please, Gordon, for God's sake help me in this and try to understand. Listen. I'll say it again, if I have any standing or reputation or credibility in the world, I owe it to you. I owe you this more-or-less pretty interesting life I have. But if I go ahead with this as it is, it will not be good for me. The book will not be, as it should, a cause for joyous celebration, but one of defense and explanation…
> Of course I know I shouldn't have signed the contract without first reading the collection and making my fears, if any, known to you beforehand, before signing. So what should we do now, please advise? Can you lay it all on me and get me out of the contract someway? … Or else can or should everything just be stopped now, I send back the Knopf check, if it's on the way, or else you stop it there? And meanwhile I pay you for the hours, days and nights, I'm sure, you've spent on this. Goddamn it, I'm just nearly crazy with this. I'm getting into a state over it. —No, I don't think it should be

> put off. I think it had best be stopped… I realize I stand every chance of losing your love and friendship over this. But I strongly feel I stand every chance of losing my soul and my mental health over it, if I don't take that risk. I'm still in the process of recovery and trying to get well from the alcoholism, and I just can't take any chances, something as momentous and permanent as this, that would put my head in some jeopardy. (2007, p. 2)

The desperation Carver stated did not change the fact that Gordon Lish would maintain his decision of using his edited stories. The editor had total authority over the stories and he decided to use them as he wished. Raymond Carver, who considered Gordon Lish and John Gardner as the two major influences in his life as a writer, felt he owned his relative success in that time to Lish. This is probably an accurate statement, since, after *What we talk about* was released in 1981 in the edited format, it soon became a huge success and created the image of Carver being a minimalist master. But the success does not erase the fact that the stories had been dramatically changed, and the suggestions of the author were not taken into consideration. Still in the same letter, Carver gave some suggestions to Lish:

> I thought the editing, especially in the first version, was brilliant, as I said. The stories I can't let go of in their entirety are these. "Community Center" (If It Please You) and "The Bath" (A Small Good Thing) and I'd want some more of the old couple, Anna and Henry Gates, in "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" (Beginners). I would not want "Mr. Fixit" (Where Is Everyone) in the book in its present state. The story "Distance" should not have its title changed to "Everything Stuck to Him." Nor the little piece "Mine" to "Popular Mechanics." "Dummy" should keep its title. "A Serious Talk" is fine for "Pie." I think "Want to See Something" is fine, is better than "I Could See the Smallest Things."… (2007, p. 2)

The suggestions were not accepted by Gordon, and some of the original stories, with their original length, appeared in other Carver's collections, such as *Fires* (1983), *Cathedral* and *Where i'm calling from* (1988). Critics of Carver, then, did not know what had happen with Gordon Lish and the editing, so they treated the "new" stories as revisions of Carver. But a constant was there, the stories had more "heart", not to mention, more words. The critics said that the stories could be placed in this new phase of Raymond Carver, where he was no longer a minimalist nor an alcoholic. But, the truth is that this new phase of Carver "appeared" in *What we talk about* and it

was censored. What Gordon Lish censored was actually the rising of characters to a more powerful ideological formation, a ideological formation where the characters were no longer powerless victims of life, but capable subjects to face their dramas and dilemmas. This is reflected in Carver's words in the same letter to Gordon:

> You have made so many of these stories better, my God, with the lighter editing and trimming. But those others, those three, I guess, I'm liable to croak if they came out that way. Even though they may be closer to works of art than the original and people be reading them 50 years from now, they're still apt to cause my demise, I'm serious, they're so intimately hooked up with my getting well, recovering, gaining back some little self-esteem and feeling of worth as a writer and a human being. (2007, p. 3)

Carver puts himself in a subordinate position, usually the position of his characters, and indicates that Lish is in control and possess the knowledge required to define what art is or isn't. Carver then, victimizing himself, saying that he would possibly break down, confesses his desire to have his originals maintained. The reason why Carver wants to see the longer versions of the stories in the collection resonates in the reasons his characters have to break their silence and reach the other: their self-esteem and feeling of worth have gotten better. What is interesting in this Gordon Lish situation is that the edited version of the book from 1981 suffocates and imprisons characters, as much as the author himself, in an oppressed ideological formation. The characters and the author's voice were deliberately silenced and censored. As if Gordon Lish understood that the working class should be in its place, that they should not have the opportunity to rise socially. The great feeling of menace in *What we talk about* does not come entirely from Carver's techniques and writing method, it also comes from the blank spaces the editor cut. Black spaces would be better to describe them, since the reader fills them with shadowy thoughts. The world (the discourse) characters inhabit is a gray and sinister one, where there is no light or optimistic glimpse in the stories. This feeling is created by Gordon Lish.

In 2008, Tess Gallagher, Carver's widow, decided to publish the original stories in a book called *Beginners*. *Beginners* is the manuscript Carver delivered to Gordon Lish, a famous editor of Knopf in the spring of 1980. Carver's original stories have been recovered by transcribing his typewritten words that lie beneath Lish's

handwritten alterations and deletions. The title of the book released in 2008 is ambiguous, since it was the original title of the story that was published as *What we talk about when we talk about love*, but more than that, it is also the state of Carver's position as a writer. He had no authority in the time his second collection of stories had been published. Probably, if he had been a prestigious writer back in 1981, his book would never be edited in such a dramatic way.

To French discourse analysis, this rare situation offers a unique object of study, considering that the juxtaposition of the two books reveal the evidences of censorship concerning discourse. To understand the ideological instrument operating in the censorship applied by Lish, the analyst, using the original manuscript, can easily detect the censored elements and create a "map" of the functioning of its effects in discourse. We shall not interpret the censored meanings, but understand the functioning of its process and establish some repetitive patterns that might silence some meanings, unavoidably creating and generating others. There will be readers who are going to feel that Gordon Lish did Raymond Carver a favor, improving the stories, or, at the very least, believe that Lish did some kind of editorial work, which is something expected from his position as a famous editor working for a prestigious publishing house that was Knopf. On the other hand, there are going to be readers who will disagree with this and feel that Gordon Lish took possession of the stories, cutting and shaping them to serve his own vision, not Carver's.

The first paragraph of *Beginners* and *What we talk about,* when juxtaposed, offer a syntax of Gordon Lish's work and ideology. This pattern will be reproduced throughout the stories in *What we talk about*. Additions to Carver's draft appear in bold; a strike-through indicates a deletion; and paragraph marks indicate paragraph breaks that were inserted during the editing process.

> My friend **Mel** ~~Herb~~ McGinnis, ~~a cardiologist,~~ was talking. **Mel McGinnis is a cardiologist, and sometimes that gives him the right. ¶** The four of us were sitting around his kitchen table drinking gin. ~~It was Saturday afternoon.~~ Sunlight filled the kitchen from the big window behind the sink. There

were **Mel** ~~Herb~~ and **me** ~~I~~ and his second wife, Teresa—Terri, we called her—and my wife, Laura. We lived in Albuquerque~~,~~ **then. But** ~~but~~ we were all from somewhere else. ¶ There was an ice bucket on the table. The gin and the tonic water kept going around, and we somehow got on the subject of love. **Mel** ~~Herb~~ thought real love was nothing less than spiritual love. **He said** ~~When he was young~~ he'd spent five years in a seminary **before quitting to go to medical school. He** ~~He'd left the Church at the~~ ~~same time, but he~~ said he still looked back **on** ~~to~~ those years in the seminary as the most important in his life.[53]

The first sentence evidences a characteristic that symbolizes the interference of Gordon Lish. The original sentence would be "My friend Herb McGinnis, a cardiologist, was talking", while Lish's "My friend Mel McGinnis was talking. Mel McGinnis is a cardiologist, and sometimes that gives him the right." In Carver's sentence, the word "cardiologist" was particularly placed between commas, which, indicates that the professional career might sound relevant. The reader understands that the narrator's friend, in that version named Herb, was a man with a certain type of power. Lish changed the name of the character from Herb to Mel, giving the character more finesse and sophistication from the "redneckness" Herb evokes. But the most meaningful change was the addition of "My friend Mel McGinnis was talking. Mel McGinnis is a cardiologist, **and sometimes that gives him the right**." By adding this passage Lish confirms the idea that subaltern ideological formations did not have the right to speak and should be kept in silence. Because he is a cardiologist, which is an indicator of his social position, he had the authority to talk. The first sentence of Lish's version starts defining roles and authority in the fictional world of this story and, by consequence, in all the other stories in the book.

To exemplify the narrative influences of Gordon Lish and the process of censorship he endured in the fiction of Carver, I will analyze two emblematic stories: *The bath*, from the edited version, and *A small, good thing* from the original manuscript. It is hard to say that these are different versions of the same story, since

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[53] Available in http://www.newyorker.com/online/2007/12/24/071224on_onlineonly_carver

The bath is surrounded by a feeling of the sinister. It is a dark, pessimistic and arid world where characters are impelled to resist in fear and in silence, while, on the other hand, *A small, good thing* is a story of redemption, resolution and confrontation, which is something that would become a constant throughout Carver's later works. Kathleen Shute evidences this change in Carver's style when she said in her article "*Finding the words: the struggle for salvation in the fiction of Raymond Carver*" that:

> Carver, for reasons he has largely attributed to his recovery from alcoholism, has begun to afford his characters the gift he has always granted the reader: some light by which to navigate, the chance for insight, a greater range of freedom and personal choice and, indeed, by implication, the moral responsibility which such an unfettering demands. However tenuously woven and fragile it may be, his fictions are increasingly imbued with a strand of hope. Concomitantly, there now exists — in all its psychological, moral and religious ramifications — the possibility of personal salvation. (1987, p. 1)

Kathleen Shute, in 1987, was certainly talking about the stories presented in *Fires* (1983) and *Cathedral* (1983) and was not aware that the possibility of personal salvation was already silently present in *What we talk about when we talk about love* (1981). In fact, **all** the narratives in *What we talk about* are extremely pessimistic and portray the characters as total losers. Probably, it is the only collection of stories from Carver that focuses precisely on that: the loser and his absolutely inarticulateness in the world he inhabits. In the years that followed the publishing of *What we talk about*, Carver was able, and by able, I mean that he had the prestige and authority to publish whatever he wanted, since he became a respected and admired writer. Although, Carver suggested in the letters to Gordon Lish that he could lose his confidence on his own writing and talent by suffering heavy creative interference from his editor, he became, in fact, more confident. Confident enough to reject advises from his following editors (at least that is the information an expert on Carver has so far). And whereas his audience and the critics expected the same type of narrative, Carver decided to abandon minimalism for good, embracing a more expansive literature, as Carver himself described in an interview to *The Paris Review* in 1983:

> I knew I'd gone as far the other way as I could or wanted to go, cutting everything down to the marrow, not just to the bone. Any farther in that direction and I'd be at a dead end––writing stuff and publishing stuff I wouldn't want to read myself, and that's the truth. In a review of the last book, somebody called me a 'minimalist' writer. The reviewer meant it as a compliment. But I didn't like it (2007,p. 3)

Critics of literature cannot dismiss the fact that *The bath* is a masterpiece of American minimalist short fiction, winner of the Carlos Fuentes award for fiction. And as a reflection of the poverty of language, the characters of the story represent a poverty of the soul. Characters in the story edited by Lish are gray and distant, while on the extended original version, they represent a humanistic touch never used before on Carver. In the extended version, the figure of the loser, portrayed by the baker, initially manifests itself as a figure of menace, but the character has the opportunity to grow and develop in the story, embracing an aura of compassion and resolution, recovering trust in communication and getting some kind of psychological redemption, while, in *The bath*, this loser figure never had the chance to be anything else than a dark menace.

The stories, as much as *The bath* and *A small, good thing*, are one of the few of Raymond Carver's narratives that deal with the subject of death. The first one treats death as a reflection of the oppressive and suffocating world in which the characters reside; the second one deals with death in a more emotional and mature manner, evoking religion, compassion, salvation and communion. Characteristics that were, until 1981, not present in Carver's literature. In these two stories, a birthday boy is run over by a hit-and-run car. The boy enters in a "deep-sleep" state, and his parents rush him to the hospital. The parents are always with the boy in the hospital waiting for any sign of recovery. Their vigil over their son's life drags them down to moments of despair since the clinical situation of their son seems to be continuously declining. To increase the feeling of desperation, the parents start to receive threatening phone calls questioning mysteriously about "Scotty". The calls are made by a baker infuriated by the fact that there was a birthday cake that was not even picked up or paid for in the bakery shop he worked in. *The bath* ends up at this moment. The reader is compelled to infer that the boy would die, since there is no

indication of him getting any better. In fact, the story ends with a menacing tone. The mother, who was arriving at her house and was intending to take a bath and to "put something clean", is interrupted by a phone call. The reader of Carver knows that phone calls always represent a menace and the oppressive forces of the outside world, since, the phone call leads unavoidably to discourse.

> The telephone rang.
> "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, yes." (1981, p. 56)

The reader is left with a terrible doubt and a terrible feeling. The story ends with a mysterious man on the other line saying: "It is about Scotty, yes." The character of the mother has no idea who is calling, actually, at this moment the reader has no idea either. It could be the baker, or someone from the hospital. Carver (Lish) finishes the story allowing the reader to complete it. But the pessimistic tone of the story telling compels the reader to fill the silent spaces with despair and suspense. In *A small, good thing*, the story is told a little different, and the reader is aware that the phone call comes from the baker:

> As she sat down on the sofa with her tea, the telephone rang.
> "Yes!" she said as she answered. "Hello!"
> "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 carefully into the receiver. "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.
> She dialed the hospital's number and asked for the third floor. She demanded information about her son from the nurse who answered the phone. Then she asked to speak with her husband. It was, she said, an emergency. (2008, p. 67)

These two passages reveal that there is more use of words in the dialogue between Mrs. Weiss and the caller in *A small, good thing*. The prolixity in it gives a more humanistic characteristic to characters, as one can notice when the mother, in

despair asks about Scotty?: "Is it Scotty, for **Christ's sake**?". The reader realizes the caller is actually the baker before the mother does. When the caller says: "It's about Scotty, yes. It has to do with Scotty, **that problem**. Have you **forgotten** about Scotty?" The word *forgotten* is immediately connected with the cake that was not picked up by Mrs. Weiss. And when the reader faces the idea of "Scotty, that problem", he can understand that the problem is the cake, since the cake has a big spaceship with the name Scotty written on it. This device Carver created helps to soothe the act of reading, different from the style engendered in the version edited by Lish, where the reader, too, feels suffocated and menaced, not aware of what is going on, and consequently filling silence with terror. In the longer version, the reader fills silence with expectation.

The version of *A small, good thing* has the rest of the story, which is extended for more 15 pages that were completely deleted from Lish's version. *A small, good thing* allows the loser figure, embodied in the baker, to establish communication and resolution with the desolated parents. In the original manuscript, Mrs. Weiss returned to the hospital where she witnesses the death of her son. Even the description of the moment where Scotty dies is portrayed in an emotional tenderness with the use of delicate words, such as, *rested, traveled, relax, soften* and *gently*.

> "Look!" Howard said then. "Scotty! Look, Ann!" he turned her toward the bed.
>
> The boy had opened his eyes, then closed them. He opened them again now. The eyes stared straight ahead for a minute, then moved slowly in his head until they *rested* on Howard and Ann, then *traveled* away again.
>
> "Scotty," his mother said, moving to the bed.
>
> "Hey, Scott," his father said. "Hey, son."
>
> They leaned over the bed. Howard took Scotty's left hand in his hands and began to pat and squeeze the hand. Ann bent over the boy and kissed his forehead again and again. She put her hands on either side of his face. "Scotty, honey, it's Mommy and Daddy," she said. "Scotty?"
>
> The boy looked at them again, though without any sign of recognition or comprehension. Then his eyes scrunched closed, his mouth opened, and he howled until he had no more air in his lungs. His face seemed to *relax* and *soften* then. His lips parted as his last breath was puffed through his throat and exhaled *gently* through the clenched teeth. (2008, p. 73)

The humanistic touch is absent in *The bath* in many different ways. Lish deleted the name of the father and the reader is revealed the name of the mother and the name of the family (Weiss) only at the very end of the story. In the longer version, their names are repeated continuously throughout the narrative. In *The bath* even the moment when the boy is hit by the car is a reflection of the indifference the characters/subjects have concerning each other.

> At an intersection, without looking, the birthday boy stepped off the curb, and was promptly knocked down by a car. He fell on his side, his head in the gutter, his legs in the road moving as if he were climbing a wall.
> The other boy stood holding the potato chips. *He was wondering if he should finish the rest or continue on to school.* (1981, p. 48)

The friend that was walking to school with the birthday boy seems to be unaware of his friend. His concerns are focused on a ridiculous dilemma: eating the potato chips or continue his walk to school. Not only that, but Lish's version excludes the participation of the driver of the hit-and-run car. He simply hits the child and goes on his way. The original manuscript sent to Lish humanized, in a way, both the driver and the friend sharing the potatoes:

> Without looking, he stepped off the curb at an intersection and was immediately knocked down by a car. He fell on his side with his head in the gutter and his legs out in the road. His eyes were closed, but his legs began to move back and forth as if he was trying to climb over something. *His friend dropped the potato chips and started to cry.* The car had gone a hundred feet or so and stopped in the middle of the road. A man in the driver's seat looked back over his shoulder. *He waited until the boy got unsteadily to his feet.* The boy wobbled a little. He looked dazed, but okay. The driver put the car into gear and drove away. (2008, p. 55)

The birthday boy's friend is in a state of shock, and the reader sympathizes with the reaction of this character. More than that, the reader is faced with the situation of the driver, who stops, although he does not get out of the car, he "waited until the boy got unsteadily to his feet" and drive away. Lish created an atmosphere of negligence and indifference that are not present in the fiction of Carver.

While the birthday boy was in the hospital, his father decides to go home and take a bath. In the *What we talk about* version, this passage shows that the Weisses

represent a traditional middle-class family: "It had been a good life till now. There had been work, fatherhood, family. The man had been lucky and happy. But fear made him want a bath." (1981, p.49) Here, the items that described Mr. Weiss's "good life" could be placed in a rudimentary grocery list that would summarize traditional North American aspirations: work and family. Although, not revealing any sign of ambition and desire for power. The Weisses in Lish's version represent a catatonic middle-class, while the Weisses in *A small, good thing* represent a fuller and more self-satisfied "richer" middle-class. By doing that, the reader has a greater comprehension of the Weisses social position, and has the possibility to analyze Howard Weiss in a deeper panorama when faced with the philosophical issues of life and its mysteries:

> Until now, his life had gone smoothly and to his satisfaction – college, marriage, another year of college for the advanced degree in business, a junior partnership in an investment firm. Fatherhood. He was happy and, so far, lucky — he knew that. His parents were still living, his brothers and sister were established, his friends from college had gone out to take their places in the world. So far he kept away from any real harm, from those forces he knew existed and that could cripple or bring down a man, if the luck went bad, if things suddenly turned. (2008, p. 57)

The apathetic middle-class portrayed in the first version of the story does not represent the family described in the second story. In *A small, good thing* we understand that the characters come from a simpler life in a small town and then evolving to the big city. There is an exclusive passage in *A small, good thing* where Ann Weiss is driving back to the hospital after taking a bath and drinking tea at her house. While driving she is caught in a reminiscence state, thinking about a moment that passed two years before when she was having a hypothetical conversation with God on the possibility that Scotty could have been dead. Scotty had been lost and Ann thought he might have drowned.

> She dropped to her knees. She stared into the current and said if He would let them have Scotty back, if he could have somehow miraculously — she said it out loud, "miraculously" — escaped the water and the culvert, she knew he hadn't, but if he had, if He could only let them have Scotty back, somehow *not* let him be wedged in the culvert, she promised then that she and Howard would change

> their lives, change everything, go back to the small town where they had come from, away from this suburban place that could ruthlessly snatch away your only child. (2008, p. 69)

Lish amputates any possibility of communion, sympathy and communication. While in the hospital, Ann Weiss meets a family who was in the waiting room. This family is in a similar situation as the Weisses. They are waiting news of their son who is in the hospital. The family in the waiting room mistakes Ann as a nurse. This confusion leads Ann to establish some type of communication, and she shares her problems with that family:

> "My son was hit by a car," the mother said. "But he is going to be all right. He's in shock now, but it might be some kind of coma too. That's what worries us, the coma part. I'm going out for a little while. Maybe I'll take a bath. But my husband is with him. He's watching. There's a chance everything will change when I'm gone. My name is Ann Weiss.
> The man shifted in his chair. He shook his head.
> He said, "Our Nelson"

Lish's version does not specify what the problem with Nelson is, and the reader does not come to know that family very well either. In *A small, good thing* the family in the waiting room creates a bond with Ann Weiss, and the reader discovers that Nelson is in the hospital, in the operating table, due to an attempt against his life. And more than that, the family in the waiting room and Ann establish a mutual sympathy, and their discourse is characterized by an exchange of giving and taking of a genuine conversation. In *A small, good thing*, the family in the waiting room is afro American, something that is erased from Lish's edition. This is a peculiarity in Carver's literature, since it is the first time that a black character appears in all of his stories. Not only, the characters appear, but they are able to create bonds, in a discursive way, with the white middle-class embodied in the Weisses. Communication and a sense of communion occupy the place where Lish established silence. In *The bath*, The father of Nelson uttered only "Our Nelson", while, in *A small, good thing* he went further, sharing their apprehensions and fears:

> He said, "Our Nelson, he's in the operating table. Somebody cut him. Tried to kill him. There was a fight where he was at. At this party. They say he was just standing and watching. Not bothering

> nobody. But that don't mean nothing these days. Now he's on the operating table. We're just hoping and praying, that's all we can do now." He gazed at her steadily and then tugged the bill of his cap.
>
> Ann looked at the girl again, who was still watching her, and at the older woman, who kept her head down on her shoulder but whose eyes were now closed. Ann saw the lips moving silently, making words. She had an urge to ask what those words were. She wanted to talk more with these people who were in the same kind of waiting she was in. she was afraid, and they were afraid. They had that in common. She would have liked to say something else about the accident, told them more about Scotty, that it had happened on the day of his birthday, Monday, that he was still unconscious. Yet she didn't know how to begin and so only stood there looking at them without saying anything more. (2008, p. 66)

At the end of this passage the reader might question himself if Ann, like many of Carver's characters, did not have the ability to express herself and share her pain and her life with strangers. The reader is induced to think she is another example of inarticulateness, but, different from other Carver's characters, Ann Weiss knew exactly what should be said, she did not stop in abstractions like "something" or "things" the character in *A serious talk* stopped at, she understood her role in the discursive game that was happening with them. Also at this passage, the analyst encounters a moment where the character of Ann is seeking for the silent words that are coming from the old woman's mouth. This is a rare moment for Carver. A moment where a character tries and is wishing to understand the silence of the other.

But the communion and salvation that were silenced in *The bath*, are abundant in *A small, good thing*. The epiphany of communion is presented at the end of this second longer version, where there is no editing, no words, no sentences, no whole paragraphs silenced. There are moments of silence, immanent moments to every enunciation. But the censorship of the editorial world is not present in the second version of this two sided story. At the end of *A small, good thing*, after leaving the hospital and their dead son behind, the Weisses went home. At their home they receive another phone call and Ann Weiss realizes that the person who had been calling them was the baker.

> "Hello," she said, and again she heard something in the background, a humming noise. "Hello! Hello!" she said. "For God's sake," she said. "Who is this? What is it you want? Say something."

> "Your Scotty, I got him ready for you," the man's voice said "Did you forget him?"
>
> "You evil bastard!" She shouted into the receiver. "How can you do this, you evil son of a bitch?"(2008, p. 75)

Ann is seeking for some kind of communication. She is forcing herself towards an act of articulation when she says "What is it you want? Say something." The man hangs the phone and then Ann and her husband Howard decide to go to the shopping center. They are decided to have a confrontation with the baker. So far, the baker represented a mysterious menace. The menace that is manifested in Carver's fictional world as the oppressive forces of discourse, that is, the external world, the other. Enraged, as many Carver's characters are, this couple rushes to the shopping center where the bakery shop is. The reader, knowing that many of Carver's stories end up in violence, is filled with tension.

At the bakery Ann Weiss articulate her pain into discourse and tells the baker everything she failed to say to the parents of Nelson in the hospital's waiting room. By saying everything to the baker she releases herself from the rage and anger she was holding in. Surprisingly, in this story, the figure of the loser, manifested in the baker, feels completely moved with the pain that family is enduring and offers, with all the methods he is able to, to comfort that family.

> "First. Let me say how sorry I am. God alone knows how sorry. Listen to me. I'm just a baker. I don't claim to be anything else…I'm sorry for your son, and I'm sorry for my part in this. Sweet, sweet Jesus," the baker said. He spread his hands out on the table and turned them over to reveal his palms. "I don't have any children myself, so I can only imagine what you must be feeling. All I can say to you know is that I'm sorry. Forgive me, if you can," the baker said. "I'm not an evil man, I don't think. Not evil, like you said on the phone." (2008, p. 79)

The baker is able to put himself in the position of the Weisses. This transition to a different ideological formation reveals that the loser, in this prolix version, is aware of the other. In this case, he is not only aware of the other, but conscious of his role in that family drama. Differently from other loser figures in Carver's literary fictional world, the baker seeks for forgiveness and acceptance. He is also aware of

his own inner emotions when he says that he is not evil, but a normal man. While listening to the baker, the Weisses are taken over by an intense feeling of epiphany:

> It was warm in the bakery and Howard stood up from the table and took off his coat. He helped Ann from her coat. The baker looked at them for a minute and then nodded and got up from the table. He went to the oven and turned off some switches. He found cups and poured them coffee from an electric coffeemaker. He put a carton of cream on the table, and a bowl of sugar.
> "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. (2008, p. 79)

In a way, the Weisses find some kind of comfort inside the bakery and in the company of the baker. It was warm in there, the narrator describes. The loser is not a threatening factor anymore, but and element of conciliation and affection. Carver, using his traditional technique of describing emotions through actions and real objects, creates, what might be his most beautiful and touching finale to a story: the baker gives the grieving parents food and coffee. Many critics see this passage as a symbolic element to religion and Eucharist. What is more abnormal in this version of the story is that the feeling of salvation comes from the loser and is spread out to other people. The loser is a diffuser of resolution, and not the creator of silences and threats that was usually attributed to his figure in other Carver's stories and in the edited version of *The bath*. In *A small, good thing* the baker says: "You have to eat and keep going. *Eating is a small, good thing* in a time like this." Differing from his technique of showing, not telling, Carver allows the baker/loser to articulate his discourse, and by saying that, the reader can infer that eating, in a basic level, means surviving. Later, the baker says: "There's more. Eat up. Eat all you want. There's all the rolls in the world in here" (2008, p. 80). The Weisses ate the rolls and drank coffee. Later, they listened to the baker tells his story of loneliness.

The bath and *A small, good thing* could be easily seen as completely different stories. The first one, as the title suggests could be connected with a ritual of cleansing, where the parents want to take a bath to wash away their guilt and their sins. But a bath is a silent act that would not work to relieve their grief and pain. There is no resolution in taking a bath. Gordon Lish did not authorize the characters

to find articulation through their discourses. The silenced characters are trapped in a threatening world that offers no space for movement or resolution. The contrary happens in *A small, good thing*: characters are offered a chance of salvation through the act of communion. The boundaries of the two different ideological formations personified by the Weisses and the baker are blurred. Communion is achieved when they share their pains and their stories through conversation. Discourse becomes a place of salvation, affection and warmth. The final sentence in *A small, good thing* summarizes this situation: "they talked on into the early morning, the high pale cast of light in the windows, and they did not think of leaving." (p. 80)

CONCLUSION

Sometime ago when I was still in my undergraduate course, a professor asked me: "Do you think that Raymond Carver, in the final phase of his career, had become a mainstream writer?" In that time my answer was yes. I believed he had become a little bit more conservative. His late humanistic touch was seen by me as an attempt to create a more commercial literature. If I had the opportunity to answer that question nowadays, my answer would be different. Raymond Carver did not become a mainstream author because he was writing what he was not supposed or allowed to write about. Raymond Carver was a rebel in the publishing world, giving voice to down-and-out loser that reflected America. In his more mature narratives his characters passed from total losers, people who mirrored their gray and fruitless world, to losers who are seeking salvation. Salvation might sound a little drastic, but I do not believe there could be a better word to describe it. Language, in Carver, passed from the menacing tone of "immense" silences to a timid and subtle prose, where silence and communion walk side by side in nuance. The universe of his fictional creation was still menacing in his mature prose, but the subjects who inhabited it were not as helpless as they used to be. Carver developed an America of survivors in his late stories, people that were willing to face their problematic issues and move towards resolution.

When Carver released the collection of stories *Cathedral* (1983), he was drastically changing his writing style. The stories were twice as long as the stories presented in *Will you please be quiet, please?* (1976) and *What we talk about when we talk about love* (1981), with an average of 10 pages more. Besides being more expansive, the stories portrayed characters that were not as fragile and alienated as he portrayed before. Kirk Nesset, an expert on Raymond Carver says in his essay *Insularity and self-enlargement in Raymond Carver's 'Cathedral.'*:

> Carver's figures seal themselves off from their worlds, walling out the threatening forces in their lives even as they wall themselves in, retreating destructively into the claustrophobic inner enclosures of self. But corresponding to this new extreme f insularity, there are in several stories equally striking instances where pushing insularity — the other way — characters attempt to throw off their entrapping nets

> and, in a few instances, appear to succeed. In Cathedral… we witness the rare moments of their coming out, a process of opening up in closed-down lives that comes across in both the subjects and events of the stories and in the process of their telling, where self-disenfranchisement is reflected even on the level of discourse, rhetorically or structurally, or both. (1994, p. 116)

To French Discourse Analysis, subjects are constructed mutually in the game of discursive practices. Raymond Carver's characters were reaching some kind of salvation and communion when interacting with each other. The other still represented menace, and establishing communication was still dangerous, but nonetheless, characters were willing to throw themselves into the dangers of discourse.

> As one might expect, "de-insulation" of this kind necessarily involves the intervention of others: the coming out of a self-enclosed figure depends upon the influence of another being — a baker or a babysitter or blind man, or even a fellow drunk on the road to recovery, who, entering unexpectedly into a character's life, affords new perspective or awareness and guides him along, if not toward insight then at least away from the destructively confining strictures of self. As one might expect further, such interventions and influences are mobilized in the stories through the communal gesture of language — through the exchanging of tales and through communicative transactions, particularly, where separate identities blend and collaborate rather than collide. (NESSET, 1994, p. 117)

There are a great number of stories inside *Cathedral* that represent this description. The ones that best fit this style are *Cathedral*, *Where i'm calling from*, *Preservation*, *Fever* and *A small, good thing*. But maybe, the one that best describes Carver's change it would be *Cathedral*. Similarly to *A small, good thing*, *Cathedral* which is the story that gave name to the collection, deals with communion and communication. The short story that has nineteen pages describes a couple who is about to receive the visit of a blind man. This blind man is an older employer and friend of the woman and he is going to spend the night at the couple's house. The husband, as it is common in Raymond Carver, feels threatened by the presence of the blind man. The blind man represents a different ideological formation. Here, Carver is more subtle than he usually is. Instead of using a social class as a marker of a ideological formation, he uses different life experiences. The husband never had any

contact with blind people, which makes him completely alienated about the subject. "My idea of blindness came from the movies. In the movies, the blind moved slowly and never laughed. Sometimes they were led by seeing-eye dogs. A blind man in my house was not something I looked forward to" (1983, p. 209). This alienation and the fear and sense of threat he feels concerning the visitation of the blind man in his house mirrors the dilemmas approached by Carver in other stories. The blind man is the exterior world, and the world is a threatening place. While on the house, the characters start to mingle and conversation happens, but the reader has the feeling that conversation might lead them to muddy waters. The night passes on while they drink and smoke marihuana. Late at night, the wife decides to go to bed. The husband and the blind man are left alone. The husband now has to face confrontation and talk with the blind man alone. When the husband does not find anything on TV to watch besides a documentary about cathedrals he receives a signal from the blind man: "it's fine with me. Whatever you want to watch is okay. I'm always learning something. Learning never ends. It won't hurt me to learn something tonight. I got ears" (1983, p. 222). The subtle discourse of the blind man indicates that he is open for new experiences and that he believes the husband has things to share with him. Later, the blind man asks the husband to explain to him what a Cathedral was. This invitation to discourse is certainly one of the greatest fears the characters of Carver might face. The husband was thrown into conversation and communication, which is the dangerous world of discourse and the creating of meanings. The husband starts describing the physical attributes of cathedrals: "they're very tall…they reach way up. Up and up" (p. 224) but then, he starts describing them in more abstract manners: "In those olden days when they built cathedrals, men wanted to be close to God. In those olden days, God was an important part of everyone's life. You can tell this from their cathedral-building" (p. 225). The two characters start to develop a conversation about God, religion and faith, and that's when the blind man suggestes if the husband can draw a cathedral with him. This is one of the most beautiful passages of Raymond Carver where the reader has to complete the story understanding whether there was a moment of

epiphany that would create a bond between these two different ideological formations or reading it in a skeptical tone, seeing nothing else than alienation:

> "Close your eyes now," the blind man said to me.
> I did it. I closed them just like he said.
>   "Are they closed?" he said. "Don't fudge."
> "They're closed," I said.
> "Keep them that way," he said. He said, "Don't stop now, Draw."
> So we kept on with it. His fingers rode my fingers as my hand went over the paper. It was like nothing else in my life up to now.
> Then he said, "I think that's it. I think you got it," he said. "take a look. What do you think?"
> But I had my eyes closed. I thought I'd keep them that way for a little longer. I thought it was something I had to do.
> "Well?" he said. "Are you looking?"
>   My eyes were still closed. I was in my house. I knew that. But I didn't feel I was inside anything.
> "It's really something," I said. (p. 228)

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