"His wife had died. So he was visiting the dead wife's relatives in Connecticut"; "Son épouse était morte. Alors il venait dans le Connecticut, voir sa famille à elle ": repetition and verbal art in "Cathedral" and 'Cathédrale'.

Colloque Nouvelles stylistiques europeennes
Universite de Bourgogne-Dijon, Jeudi 24 mars, 2011

Michael Toolan, University of Birmingham

Reflections on differences between British and French stylistics.
Personal history

As part of my training in stylistics, I read Bally, Spitzer, and Riffaterre, among others. But the 'canon' of authors to read on the subject of stylistics thereafter turned quite Anglo-American; thus after Riffaterre, there was Jakobson to read, and even Hillis Miller (on Yew Trees, etc). But I was interested in the *language* of literary texts, and the particular impact that particular language choices—once termed 'deviant', now more neutrally called 'foregrounded' or simply 'striking' or simply 'noticed by the present humble stylistician-critic'—seemed to carry. So, steering away from the dry crackling friction of theory, routinely conducted with only the scantest consideration of the common language of ordinary poetic texts, I returned to the 'rough ground' of practical stylistics—some of it no doubt but a slight advance from language-minded practical criticism. Thus, my stylistics apprentissage in the mid- to late-1970s in Oxford (after an initial exposure at Edinburgh under the tutelage of Norman Macleod, Angus McIntosh, and James Thorne) involved reading the following: Nowottny, Cluysenaar, Ullmann, Ohmann, Freeman, Halliday, Mukarovsky, Epstein, Enkvist, Sinclair, the Leech of the 1969 book on the language of English poetry, Lotman, Uspensky, Burton, and others. 'The French' one read for structuralism-narratology-deconstruction (Barthes, Greimas, Genette, Foucault, etc.), not for stylistics. But then one was interested in *English*-language literature, not literature in the French language, and French stylisticians evidently rarely dabbled in the style of English-language texts. Besides, perhaps I was a bit put off by the scholarly critique of French structural stylisticians produced by my friend and contemporary at Oxford, Talbot Taylor (1980), who was quite severe on Bally, Jakobson, Riffaterre, and also on someone who was later to become my good friend and colleague at the University of Washington, George Dillon.
    What did Taylor have to say about, for example, Bally's stylistic theory? Well, on the penultimate page of Taylor's forensic analysis he reminds us that Bally's theory of the affective/expressive effects within the *langue*, the language system-- whether these effects are natural (relating to favourable or unfavourable speaker-evaluation of the topic; or an adjustment in speech 'up' or 'down' the better to accommodate the addressee) or evocative (socially-based differences expressing register or dialect)—have nothing to do with literary or poetic effects.   Bally's stylistics concerns what is expressive/affective in the *langue* used by every ordinary language-user, not the poet or writer: "Bally excludes the study of literary effects from the domain of stylistics because those effects are supposedly the result of the conscious and voluntary manipulation of language by the author" (Taylor, 1980: 40; Bally, 1952: 28-9). But

even for the explicitly *non*-literary stylistics that Bally proposes, Taylor finds that the investigator lacks independent criteria at every important stage of the procedures Bally proposes for the identification of the expressive (as distinct from conceptual) parts of signs, or for the identification, among a grouping of largely synonymous expressions, of one expression which Bally asserts will carry the fundamental meaning "with a maximum of objectivity and a minimum of affect" (Bally 1909: 107, Taylor's translation). What Taylor concludes about Bally is not unrelated to what he concludes about each subsequent version of structural stylistics he examines: that they lack robust and independent criteria for establishing the categories and units they champion, beyond the subjectivity and intuition of the advocating theorist, so that the whole exercise is hopelessly circular. In addition, Taylor observes, such structural stylistic models cannot have recourse to orthodox linguistics' practical intersubstitutability test and the dictionary, to justify claims about synonymy of expression-meaning. And while Taylor was demonstrating enormous theoretical difficulties with Bally's stylistics, the former's professor was arguing the fundamental theoretical misdirections in the work of the latter's professor (or its powerful redaction, which Bally of course co-edited), in the *Cours de Linguistique Generale* (see further, below).

Another irony here is that my *particular* doctoral research interest was in Faulkner's style, and there was certainly plenty of wonderful French scholarship on Faulkner, his narratology, his style—but even this was not strictly stylistic or a really detailed analysis of his language. A host of the scholars I consulted—but three names soon come to mind: François Pitavy, Michel Gresset, Andre Bleikasten—are duly noted in my invisible book on *The Stylistics of Fiction*, 1990, which was one of the early book-length stylistic studies of one author's fictional style. In relation to all of the above influences and all of the above authors, the most important and inspiring to me was Roger Fowler, who in his 'critical linguistics' version of analysing style in fiction was surely conducting Critical Discourse Analysis *avant la lettre*. Even the fact that Fowler taught and published from the new and 'challenging' bastion of the University of East Anglia (home also to Malcolm Bradbury and, one inferred, such modern machiavels as Howard Kirk, the 'hero' of Bradbury's novel *The History Man*), was part of his attraction. But there was also the way Fowler wrote, the way he showed that linguistic patterns of commission and omission reflected and constituted political discoursal choices—all of this was exhilarating and intellectually invigorating in the way that work by Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton also was exhilarating in those days (1976-1980). In brief, I looked especially to Halliday's grammar for a framework of linguistic description (but recall that this was many years before the first edition of his magnum opus, *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, appeared in 1985), and to Roger Fowler for exemplification of how to apply or deploy that linguistic description in analysis of a particular author. As to the latter, Fowler was chiefly but interruptedly working on Dickens; I, a generation younger, had singled out Faulkner. Of course Halliday and Fowler weren't my only guides; another increasingly important one to me--who seems to have been largely pushed off the British stylistics map today by cognitivism--was Bakhtin.

But I need to add also that all the while that I was immersing myself deeper in Hallidayan linguistics and Fowler's critical linguistics, I was being supervised—like Taylor--by the first Oxford Professor of General Linguistics, who was at that time developing and publishing his own thorough-going critique of system-minded code-oriented linguistics and—as he saw it and still sees it—all the mind-forged manacles that such mainstream linguistics sponsors. I refer to Roy Harris, *inter alia* one of the

most knowledgeable and articulate students of Saussurean linguistics in the Anglophone world: author of an award-winning English translation of the *Cours*, of a sophisticated book-length critique of the *Cours*, and of a number of other volumes which repeatedly recognize Saussure's pre-eminence among theorists of languages down the ages. It cannot be emphasized enough just how high a regard Harris has for Saussure's work (as these have reached us via Bally, Sechehaye and others). But Harris's conclusion is that Saussure's picture of language, however powerfully attractive, is powerfully wrong. And this is why his (to my mind) best book, the second of an early trilogy, is called *The Language Myth*. For Harris the language myth is the belief (in reality quite general in modern linguistics no matter how often particular linguists deny this and insist that 'of course' there is variation and indeterminacy everywhere in language) that human beings manage to communicate via languages thanks to two interlinked fundamentals: fixed-code telementation. Linguistic communication, the language myth assumes, is essentially a matter of transferring ideas in my head so that they become the same ideas in your head (telementation), and this is only achieved by virtue of the fact that in all important respects all members of the relevant community are cerebrally equipped with the same code with identical pairings of forms and meanings, or *signifiants* and *signifies*. According to Harris, many powerful language theorists in the *western* scholarly tradition have subscribed to this myth with only minor differences—from Aristotle to Augustine, the Port Royal grammarians, Locke, Condillac, Bloomfield, Chomsky, even Halliday, in Harris's view—but no-one has articulated more powerfully this powerfully-erroneous myth than Ferdinand de Saussure.

I think the reader may appreciate that it was difficult, trying to write a stylistics thesis at Oxford in the late 1970s under a supervisor who regarded vast swathes of modern linguistic description as wrong-headed or trivial or both; who was articulate in his scepticism about just about every linguistic binarism one cared to cite: langue and parole, competence and performance, text and context, synchrony and diachrony, emic and etic, the linguistic and the extra-linguistic; and who was much less sure than I thought I was as to the existence of words, clauses, sentences, phonemes, and morphemes. As a result, during the years that I was at Oxford writing my ph d thesis on Faulkner's style using Halliday's linguistics and Fowler's poetics, there was a sense in which I did so with my ears firmly plugged so as not to attend too closely to the ideas Roy Harris was developing. And for his part, I dare say he was obliged firmly to hold his nose while reading my draft chapters.

Actually I didn't have to plug my ears too firmly, because the arguments and 'theses' of Harris's own linguistics (sometimes called by its critics an 'anti-linguistics') are not easy to grasp, and even less easy to 'put to work' in some academic factory churning out research publications. So it might be truer to say that I simply didn't 'get' Harris's late-Wittgenstein-inflected critique of mainstream linguistics (he calls the latter segregational linguistics, in contrast to his own integrational linguistics, for which see, *inter alia*, Harris 1996), until the dearth of academic jobs in Thatcher's Britain drove me to take a post in Singapore. There, and subsequently at the University of Washington, Seattle, I belatedly grasped Harris's integrationist ideas well enough to attempt to engage some of them, and put them into fruitful confrontation with such then-current literary-linguistic topics as literal meaning, metaphor, irony and indirectness, relevance theory, repetition, and rule-following, in my book of 1996, *Total Speech*.

But all the combined influences sketched above rendered me rather typical of British stylisticians in the final decades of the twentieth century (at least, until the late

1990s when some of the younger ones 'went cognitive'). I professed myself interested in, and content to attend to, the actual language of the literary text, using the most helpful linguistic description that seemed available; that description was Hallidayan or systemic-functional grammar, a grammar with certain broad theoretical underpinnings concerning language as social semiotic, as a complex system of potential choices suited to meet social and communicative purposes. Our idea of 'useful linguistics' was thus not hugely distant from 'surface' grammatical analysis and distributional linguistics, relying on the conviction that many traditional categories and units (clause, subordination, transitivity, tense, modality, mood, definiteness, etc. etc.) were not merely useful descriptions but related to communicative functions—in short, were meaning-bearing. And a user of the language made numerous choices, simultaneous or in sequence, in the course of formulating a message, and each choice was locally significant and contributed also to the meaning or function of the whole. All literary writing, it was equally assumed, involved exceptional adeptness and sensitivity in the making of these linguistic choices; in some cases, a writer's choices were argued to be so systematically distinct that the poem's style amounted to a distinct dialect or language, implicitly with its own grammar.   Key ideas included: foregrounding; thematic prominence; deviation from a/the norm; noticeability (or what is 'striking'— the same topic that I believe Laurent Jenny discusses (eg in his article "Style comme pratique") as the notion and problem of *attentionnalité*. (It is a problem since every stylistician who claims that this or that pattern is 'striking' or 'dominant' or foregrounded and instrumental—in effect, the stylistic feature(s) in the text that one simply cannot *not* notice and discuss—is asked how they can be so sure that the pattern which 'strikes' the analyst (who, after all, is paid to be so struck!) also and equally strikes most readers or the ordinary reader with the same effect that the stylistician asserts or reports.) Is the foregrounded, the noticeable, objectively 'in' the text for all readers and all times, even when seems only describable by recourse to quite specialist linguistic or rhetorical terms which may be unknown to the ordinary reader? This is but the tip of an iceberg of theoretical conundrums.

One could contrast *most* British stylistics with *some* forms of French stylistics by emphasizing the 'empirical' bent of the British versions, and their preference for keeping close to the specificities the text, as a lexicogrammatical construct, while shuttling between the identification of 'striking linguistic patterns (commissions and omissions)' and the proposing of 'reasonable' interpretive motivations or effects. Those kinds of French stylistics that go further in elaborating an over-arching theory, and a rhetoric of texts, could be seen to be rather more ambitious and suggestive than the neighbouring tradition. Both kinds of work are still to some degree bedevilled by the problem of establishing independent criteria to justify whatever claims they make. But British stylisticians have often given the impression that such criteria are available, championing the stylistic approach on the grounds that it affords an explanatory analysis of texts that is public, comparatively objective, replicable by others, thus open to proof. I have always been less confident about these claims, and the methodological gulf that they imply separates stylistics from 'subjective' and 'method-less' literary criticism.

My own uses of stylistics begin with writers and readers: particular exceptionally gifted writers who—I assume—have used exceptional craft (linguistic skill) in composing their works in such a way that they have the powerful effects they demonstrably have on diverse readers. So I want to know how—by what means, linguistically describable—have particular effects been achieved or a whole style been

created. And in exploring this question, or the many sub-questions it gives rise to, I am more than anything else striving to comment on these phenomena in a way that might in time be open to falsification—or at least appear to be testable and proven to be plausible or not. But I have also sometimes argued that stylisticians are more often like lawyers than scientists: they aim to argue a case about how the language functions in a particular poem, making that case in such a way that readers are persuaded of its correctness 'on the balance of probabilities' (the civil law standard of proof; the criminal standard, 'beyond a reasonable doubt', is more aimed at than attained). And in light of many other factors— including the integrational critique of bi-planar structural linguistics; the implausibility of assuming that any given text will be read the same and mean the same for all readers at all times; the implausibility also of assuming that a shared language guarantees full intersubjective communication between speakers or writers—I have for many years suggested that stylistics (or literary linguistics) is a way rather than a method. Unlike some strands of French stylistic thinking, I am interested first in specific texts (e.g., a particular poem or short story by Raymond Carver) and their specific effects, and only subsequently in whole classes of texts (modern American short stories; the short story form as contrasted with the novel; etc.); those French strands seem to me to wish to formulate a theoretical statement about style across an indefinitely large set of texts in the first instance, and only secondarily to turn to particular example cases.

Having registered serious doubts about the 'scientific' and empirical nature of British stylistic approaches, I would still emphasize the great attraction, to me, of trying to make one's commentary about the language of a text, one's 'way' through the text, take the form of descriptions that are falsifiable, as well as interesting. Provided one uses language-based terms and categories that are widely-agreed upon, it is quite straightforward to make falsifiable claims about a text: in this novel the word *simony* does not appear; the letter 's' begins every paragraph; there are no instances of indirect speech; only the present tense is used; etc. But whether any of these are *interesting* observations is another matter—where 'interesting' is shorthand for 'contributory to the effect this work appears to have on some if not most readers, such that, were this description not to be the case, the total effect of the total work would be different (and usually inferior)'. So my kind of stylistics does always aim to be exploring one or a network of testable claims or predictions about the language of a text, in ways that seem quite different from (again) certain strands of (by no means all or even most) French stylistic scholarship. And I hope always to be working with claims or predictions that, thanks to the relative inspectability and public agreement concerning linguistic categories and criteria, do not immediately founder on the rocks of the addressee's scepticism, using the 'That depends on what you mean by…' formulation.

So my cluster of falsifiable hypotheses with regard to Raymond Carver's story "Cathedral" and how certain moments in it should be translated (whether into French, or Spanish, or another language) were these:

1.   At a number of important points of Carver's story, including the opening and the closing, lexical and phrasal repetitions are unignorable; all reflect on the somewhat inarticulate, jealous, poorly-educated, possibly depressed narrator. The earlier repetitions tend to reflect his initial narrow-mindedness; the later ones seem to reflect or accompany a new generosity or open-ness.

2.   These repetitions are one stylistic feature of the original (of course there may be many more) that ought not to be lost in translation; where

the original repeats, the translated text, too, should repeat, if at all possible. Otherwise an aspect of *attentionalité* or foregrounding in the original simply fails to carry over into the translation: which of my readers disputes my claim that the repetition in these lines from the opening paragraph of the story—*His wife had died. So he was visiting the dead wife's relatives in Connecticut*—is so clumsy, tasteless, but indicative, that it is a carefully calculated effect?

      3.   On inspection, the published French and Spanish translations are found to have frequently complied with the maxim stated in (2).

      4.   Where the French or Spanish translations do not comply with (2), I have contrived to produce alternative translations, 'restoring' the level of repetition found in the original—and invited suitably linguistically proficient readers, who are familiar with the original story also, to judge whether my alternatives are better, or worse, than the published translations—or make no noticeable difference.

The link between these reflections on repetition and the business of translation, particularly translation of a literary text, relate to the fact a translation itself is a kind of repetition—it's the same again, only in a different language. But like all repetition, it is not 'full' duplication or copying; and it is clear also that as readers and evaluators of text we take the view that in the course of attempts to produce literature, writers may perpetrate bad repetitions as distinct from 'good' ones (see Toolan 2011 for a preliminary proposal as to what distinguishes 'good' from 'bad' repetitions in poetry). Good repetitions contribute to the continuity, coherence, unity, depth (attending to one or a few things, over and over, as opposed to ranging among many different, unrepeating, things). (We learn more and more about x, rather than a little about the unrelated x, 2, and γ). Bad repetitions—roughly—fail the Gricean relevance test; repeating or reformulating without noticeably adding anything, they fail to enrich the picture or situation, or fail to maintain textual dynamism.

Translating repetitions and viewpoint markers in Carver's 'Cathedral'

A number of years ago I wrote a paper on Carver's 'Cathedral' (in a collection of stylistic studies of 20th century fiction, edited by Peter Verdonk and Jean Jacques Weber, Routledge 1995) called "Discourse style makes viewpoint: the example of Carver's narrator in 'Cathedral'". My basic point was that from the very particular way that the opening paragraphs were worded, the reader could deduce a good deal about the viewpoint (mindstyle, prejudices, identity, psychology) of the first-person narrator. Inter alia I drew attention, as 'striking' verbal features, to the following:

      1. The paradoxically antipathetic effect of the proximal deixis in the pseudo-conversational opening sentence: *This blind man, an old friend of my wife's, he was on his way to spend the night.*

      2. presuppositions/assumptions

      3. narrator's naming of the two other main characters, almost invariably, as *my wife* and *the blind man*.

Are these effects maintained in translation, or lost--especially those rooted in patterns of lexical repetition or near-repetition in the Carver original text, maintained in translation, or lost?

   The first appears to be lost in the French version:

Un aveugle, qui était un vieil ami de ma femme, venait passer la nuit chez nous.
In my own back translation, this becomes:

A blind man, who was an old friend of my wife's, was coming to spend the night with us.
Compare the above with Carver's original:

This blind man, an old friend of my wife's, he was on his way to spend the night.
And that original is also incompletely reflected in the published Spanish versión:

Un ciego, antiguo amigo de mi mujer, iba a venir a pasar la noche en casa.

If I'm not mistaken, some significant differences feature in the French and Spanish opening sentences—some are unavoidable and reflective of the distinct lexicogrammatical systems of different languages, but some avoidable. With regard to the Spanish version, I suggest that the negative specificity of *this blind man* could have been preserved in translation (*Este ciego*); that so, too, might the non-standard pronominal Subject resumption in *This blind man, he* been retained (even if use of a duplicative Subject pronoun here would be even more marked in Spanish than it is in English: *Este ciego…. él*); that the use of *on his way* instead of the more neutral *venir* might have been adopted in translation; and that the use of *en casa* to make the sense explicit could and should have been avoided. The cumulative result is that a rather squalid insinuation is lost, namely that the blind man was (in the speaker's mind) half-imagined to be intent on (on his way to) spending the night sexually with the speaker's wife. Does the following capture some of these deliberate infelicities better than the published translation?

Este ciego, un viejo amigo de mi esposa, el venía de camino para pasar la noche con nosotros.

The French translation, like the Spanish, neutralises the negative effect of the proximal deictic at the opening of the sentence, which *could* have been preserved: *Cet aveugle*. Arguably, even *l'aveugle* would be preferable to, being more marked than, *un aveugle*. That opening is followed by a full rather than Carver's reduced relative clause (again, passing up a chance to signal informality of register). The reduced verbless clause would leave more open, as the original does, the question whether the blind man is currently, at the point of narrating, the wife's old friend or, for example, now a friend to both of the couple. In short the French translation *might* have run:

Cet aveugle, vieil ami de ma femme, il venait passer la nuit.

Of course, given that *blind* is in the original the top keyword in the story, and is the almost invariant means of naming the main focalised character, one translation crux to grapple with is whether *the blind man* should be translated as *l'aveugle* or the more marked *l'homme aveugle*. It is tempting to advocate the latter, despite its unnaturalness… The fact is, repeated use of the phrase *the blind man* even after the narrator and the blind visitor have been introduced, is unnatural or pragmatically marked in the English original, so it is not necessarily the case that opting for *l'homme aveugle* introduces a translationese strain where none existed in the original; rather it's an awkwardness matching the awkwardness in the original.

Is *l'aveugle* as prominent a keyword in the translation as *the blind man* is in the original? Lacking a French reference corpus of modern fiction, I cannot identify the keywords of the French translation of the story. But I can report that Wmatrix finds that the following, in order, are the most frequent lexical items in the French and Spanish translations respectively:

l'aveugle 44; *femme* 45; *puis* 31 *dit* 27 *chose* 29 *tout* 29

ciego 56 (1.53% of the text); *mujer* (wife) 44, *luego* (then) 23; *dijo* (said) *22*; and *todo* (all)18.

The most frequent lexical words in the English version were *said* (128), *blind* 80 (1.29%); *man* 75; and *wife* 49. These frequencies are tabulated below for easier comparison.

High frequency lexical words in the English, French and Spanish texts

English	French	Spanish
said 128		
blind 80	l'aveugle 44 aveugle 15 aveugles 4	ciego 56
man 75		
wife 49	femme 45	mujer 44
then 46 something 27 Robert 20 say 19 all 11 everything 7 hand 14 hands 3	puis 31 chose 29 tout 29 dit(-il/elle etc) 42 dire 17 dis (-je) 17 disait 10 Robert 16 main 16 homme/l'homme 2	Luego (then) 23 dijo (said 3rd sing) 22 dije (i said) 15 todo 18 Robert 15

There are plenty of proportionalities here, and a few striking but fairly rapidly explained discrepancies. Thus the fairly colourless reporting verb *said*, the most frequent lexical word in the English text, is more frequent than various forms of *dire* in French. This is in part because the French text sometimes (in approximately 30 instances) relies on the logic of the co-text to guide the reader as to who is speaking, the translator perhaps judging that the constant explicit attributions (*he said, I said*) feels artificial and almost like a performance, in the original. Compare:

> I stared some more at the cathedral before the picture flipped off into the countryside. There was no use. I turned to the blind man and **said**, "To begin with, they're very tall." I was looking around the room for clues. "They reach way up….[3 lines] Sometimes the cathedrals have devils and such carved into the front. Sometimes lords and ladies. Don't ask me why this is," I **said**.
>
> He was nodding. The whole upper part of his body seemed to be moving back and forth.
>
> "I'm not doing so good, am I?" I **said**.

And the French translation, which has none of these *said*s translated (e.g., as *dis/dit*):

> Je regardaí autour de la pièce pour trouver des idées.
>
> -- Elles montent très haut. Très haut. Vers le ciel….[ ] Parfois, les cathédrales ont des diables et des trucs comme ça sculptés sur la façade. Parfois des seigneurs et des grandes dames. Ne me demandez pas pourquoi.

Il hochait la tête. Toute la partie supérieure de son corps se balançait d'avant en arrière.

    -- Je ne m'en tire pas très bien, hein?

On the other hand, in Carver stories where one or more of the characters (certainly the focalising one here) is palpably ill at ease, and with some reluctance or discomfort playing the role of the sociable host, perhaps the emphasis on artificial performance conveyed by all the explicit *I said*s, in particular, is worth keeping.

Another difference clearly is the absence of a direct translation of the word *man,* in the recurrent means of naming Robert by the narrator: *the blind man*. In the Spanish translation, too, this separate lexeme is understandably missing, the phrase *el (hombre) ciego* sounding unnatural to Spanish ears. The Spanish translation retains gender marking, if not the full implicatural range of the word *man*, whereas the French *l'aveugle* does not explicitly convey even the gender, and is thus notionally further from the Carver original: *l'aveugle* I assume is translatable as 'the blind person'. But is *l'homme aveugle* acceptable, as an unnatural (in Hoey's priming terms) but still justified, because motivated, translation?? I am assuming not, but I suggest that it is a matter of judgement rather than an 'automatic' decision. (It is not quite enough, here, for the French native speaker to say 'No, we would never say *l'homme aveugle*'; my rejoinder would be that 'we' would never normally tell a whole story repeatedly referring to a protagonist as 'the blind man' rather than using his given and known name; whereas that is exactly what this narrator does, and therefore what needs translating, if possible.)

The fifth sentence, *Arrangements were made* is translated as *Ils s'étaient mis d'accord* (*Se pusieron de acuerdo* in Spanish) which back-translation might render as *They had agreed a plan* or *They had arranged things*. The trouble with this is that *Ils/Se/They* again weakens a possible effect by making explicit who was involved in the arrangement-making (the blind man and the wife) and who was not (the speaker); whereas the agentless passive of the English original leads us strongly to infer this, and an unanalysed resentment about it, in the husband's formulation, without saying as much explicitly.

Another example of subtle implicature, I claimed in the 1995 article, comes later in the same opening paragraph: in the sentence, *They made tapes and mailed them back and forth*, I suggested there was a well-veiled belittling of the correspondents, as engaged in an unproductive and thoughtless activity, in the narrator's choice of the phrase *mailed them back and forth* where something more neutral such as *mailed them **to each other*** could have been used. In the original, it is as if the parties mailed the tapes *so that* they would go back and forth, which of course was not at all the case and might have amounted to a kind of abuse of the mail service. Notice also that the original sentence doesn't even explicitly name the indirect object recipients of these tapes! Nor is it explicit, in the proposition as worded, that each of the tapes of both of the parties were different from each other In the terms of Louw/Sinclair and others, there is a negative prosody surrounding the phrase *back and forth*: it occurs in contexts of unproductive argument, tedious and repetitive travel or movement, where the thing sent forth is the same thing previously back.… Again, as reflected in my proposed back translation, the French version does not carry over that negative slur, since it uses the simple reciprocal reflexive construction: *Ils enregistraient des cassettes qu'ils s'envoyaient.*

I hesitate to suggest an alternative, but consider:

Ils enregistraient des cassettes qu' allaient et venaient par la poste.

Again, so far as I can judge, that speaker-resentment is not signalled at all in:

> *Grababan cintas magnetofonicas y se las enviaban,*

which might be translated as

> *They recorded tapes and exchanged them* or *They made tapes and sent them to each other.*

Laura Hidalgo Downing (p.c.) kindly suggests that a translation that would capture the 'futility' insinuation might be:

> *Grababan cintas magnetofonicas y se las enviaban una y otra vez.*

But perhaps the harshest pair of sentences in that opening paragraph of the Carver original are these, a couple of sentences I have put in the title of this paper:

> *His wife had died. So he was visiting the dead wife's relatives in Connecticut.*

As I said in my article on the story 15 years ago, it is partly the use of the definite article in the second sentence, and partly the overt repetition (a kind of complex repetition, in Hoey's and my terms) of the phrase *dead wife's* where *her*, in the context, would have been entirely adequate and appropriate. Again, in Gricean spirit, I assume that the repetitive redundancy is intentional and implicature-triggering: e.g., that it implies that the narrating husband has no empathy or sympathy with the blind man or his recently deceased wife, in the way that *he was visiting her relatives* would have not excluded. At best, it is officialese, the kind of neutral reporting one might find in a government agency's report. In short, the repetition is important to the texture and literary effects of the original; so my question is simply, is the jarring repetition maintained, or lost, in the translation? As you can see, it is lost:

> *Son épouse était morte. Alors il venait dans le Connecticut, voir sa famille à elle.*

which in my back translation would amount to the following, a harmless rephrasing of the original:

> *His wife had died. So he was coming to Connecticut to visit her relatives.*
> Proposed alternative:
>
> > *Sa femme était morte. Alors qu'il venait de visiter la famille de sa femme morte dans le Connecticut.*

[The harshness is lost in the Spanish translation too : *Su esposa habia muerto. De modo que estaba visitando a los parientes de ella en Connecticut.*]

More instances, where we can see interesting maintenance of repetition bonds, and some departures from such repeating cross-links:

> How do I know these things? She **told** me. And she **told** me something else. On her last day in the office, the blind man asked if he could **touch her face**. She agreed to this. She **told** me he **touched** his fingers to every part of **her face**, her nose—**even** her neck! She never forgot it. She **even tried to write a poem** about it. She was always **trying to write a poem**. She **wrote a poem** or two every year, usually after something really important had happened to her.

> Comment je le sais ? Elle me l'a **dit**. Et elle m'a **dit** autre chose. Le dernier jour, l'aveugle lui avait demandé s'il pouvait **toucher son visage**. Elle avait accepté. Elle me **dit** qu'il lui avait **touche** toutes les parties du **visage** avec ses doigts, nez—**même** le cou ! Elle ne l'avait jamais oubliée. Elle avait **même**

essaye d'écrire un poème là-dessus. Elle était toujours en train **d'essayer d'écrire des poèmes**. Elle **en écrivait** un ou deux par an, généralement lorsqu'une chose vraiment importante lui arrivait.

Many of what I take to be motivated repetitions in the English original are caught also in the French translation here; but one may note that the repetitive formulations about trying to write a poem (used twice in succession, and issuing in a third version, reporting a completed effort: wrote a poem) is not reiterated quite so remorselessly in the French, where the second use is pluralized (writing poems), and in the third, the pro-form *en* means we lose a mention of *poeme* in either the singular or plural…

Compare the Spanish, which varies the repetitive write a poem, write a poem, wrote a poem of the original by opting for *poesia* on the second occasion (she was always trying to write poetry):

> *Incluso intentó escribir un poema. Siempre estaba intentando escribir poesía. Escribió un poema o dos al año, sobre todo después de que le ocurriera algo importante.*

A very predictable overall conclusion is that the translated text has fewer of these links than the original, never more!

Several times Carver nicely manages to convey the clumsiness of the narrator by the use of quite proximate and inelegant repetitions, such as the one I have put in bold in the following paragraph:

> The camera moved to a cathedral outside Lisbon. The differences in the Portuguese cathedral compared with the French and Italian were not that great. But they were there. Mostly the interior stuff. **Then something occurred to me**, and I said, "**Something has occurred to me**. Do you have any idea what a cathedral is? What they look like, that is? Do you follow me? If somebody says cathedral to you, do you have any notion what they're talking about? Do you know the difference between that and a Baptist church, say?"

Again, a perfectly straightforward but, I would argue, important and motivated full repetition. Is it preserved in the translation? Yes, in the French:

> Puis, quelque chose me vint à l'idée:
> -- Quelque chose vient de me venir à l'idée. Vous savez ce que c'est qu'une cathédrale?

Also in the Spanish:

> **Entonces se me ocurrió algo.**
> —**Se me acaba de ocurrir algo**. ¿Tiene usted idea de lo que es una catedral?

Robert, the blind man, can likewise nicely exploit simple adjacent repetition at times, as he does fairly late in the story right after the husband has struggled but failed to produce an adequate verbal picture of what cathedrals are like. Robert now asks the husband if he is religious. The text, powerfully repetitively I would say, runs as follows:

> "That's all right, bub," the blind man said. "Hey, listen. I hope you don't mind my **asking** you. Can I **ask** you something? Let me **ask** you a simple question, yes or no. I'm just curious and there's no offense. You're my host. But let me **ask** if you are in any way religious? You don't mind my **asking**?"

This manages to use the lemma *ask* a total of five times in one turn of talk, mostly as a metapragmatic description of an imminent but now rather delayed question! Here is the French translation:

> -- Ça ne fait rien, mon vieux, dit l'aveugle. Écoutez. J'espère que vous ne m'en voudrez pas de vous **demander** ça. Je peux vous **demander** quelque chose ? Permettez-moi de vous **poser** une simple question. Vous répondrez par oui ou par non. Je suis curieux, tout simplement, et je ne veux pas vous offenser. Vous êtes mon hôte. Permettez-moi de vous **demander** si vous êtes croyant. Vous ne m'en voulez pas de cette question ?

This maintains the repetitiveness through its 3 uses of *demander,* with a switch to *poser* on a fourth occasion—in this respect at least matching the Spanish translation, which has 3 uses of pregunte and one of haga (una sencilla). The fifth and final 'ask' in the Carver original, in the final sentence, is assimilated into an idiomatic construction using *en*.

The Spanish translation does a pretty good job here:

> —No importa, muchacho —dijo el ciego—. Escucha, espero que no te moleste que te **pregunte**. ¿Puedo hacerte una **pregunta**? Deja que te haga una sencilla. Contéstame sí o no. Sólo por curiosidad y sin ánimo de ofenderte. Eres mi anfitrión. Pero ¿eres creyente en algún sentido? ¿No te molesta que te lo **pregunte**?

This maintains the repetitiveness of asking, through its 3 uses of *pregunte*, even if it switches to *haga* on a fourth occasion and dispenses with perhaps the most redundant of all, translating *But let me **ask** if you are in any way religious?* not with, for example, *Pero déjame preguntarte si eres religioso de algún modo* but with *Pero ¿eres creyente en algún sentido?*

One of the final points I made about the Carver story in my 1995 stylistic analysis concerned the (to me) interesting way in which those very vague items, indefinite pronouns, were used in the final few sentences of the story. This is where the narrating husband has finished drawing the cathedral on thick brown paper, with Robert's hand over his own, and Robert has also finished tracing the impress of the drawing's lines with his fingers. In doing the latter, there is an echo of Robert's loving honouring of the woman's face as reported at the beginning of the story, where as we have seen "he touched his fingers to every part of her face, her nose—even her neck!" We can imagine the woman, who tried to write a poem about it, thinking it was really something. Now near the end of the story, things take an interesting turn when Robert tells the narrating husband, who has been drawing the cathedral with people in it, to continue drawing with his eyes closed, thus to live through his other senses alone, but especially here the sense of touch. Robert asks him to draw with and to draw on his sense of touch:

> "**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 <u>**nothing**</u> 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 **<u>something</u>** I ought 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 like I was inside **<u>anything</u>**.

"It's really **<u>something</u>**," I said.

<div align="center">(bold and underlinings added)</div>

To my mind, this is an outstandingly successful short story ending—and endings in my view are one of the hardest things for stories to do, or at least to do well. Especially when, as here and as is often the case in modern short stories, the closing passage is also designed to be the most emotional engaging or immersing section, for the reader. Again, it is partly achieved by interesting repetitions—which strike me as not wholly unlike repetitions in music, including repetitions at the close of musical pieces.

So in musical form, which like language is sequential but, arguably at least, unlike stories does not have narrative sequence (plot), we have plentiful evidence and support for concluding that repetition is valuable in the shaping of an end. In the Carver story, I have put in bold the main kinds of lexical repetition that strike me as contributing to the sense of pattern, recurrence, and coherence—patterns around the words or phrases *eyes closed*, *think* and *thought*, *keep*/*kept*, and *fingers*. And there are other things in these final lines which, in another talk, I could get quite excited about— such as the use of the verb *feel* at this emotionally-taut conclusion, in the penultimate sentence. But I have put in underlined bold the final pattern which I believe is most paradoxically resonant, despite the semantic and referential vagueness of the indefinite pronouns involved, which of course form a set having a distinct place in the grammar: *nothing, anything, something*. The only one missing is *everything*. Everything has been used earlier in the story (particularly when the trio devour *everything* at the dinner table); but it evidently doesn't fit here.

-- **Fermez** les **yeux** maintenant, me dit l'aveugle.

C'est ce que je fis. Je **fermai** les yeux comme il me disait.

-- Ils sont **fermés** ? Ne trichez pas.

-- Ils sont **fermés**.

-- **Gardez**-les **fermés**. Ne vous arrêtez pas maintenant, dessinez.

Et on <u>continua</u>. Ses **doigts** étreignaient mes **doigts** tandis que ma main parcourait le papier. Ça ne ressemblait a **<u>rien</u>** de ce que j'avais fait dans ma vie jusqu'a maintenant.

-- Je **crois** que ca y est. Je **crois** que vous avez réussi, dit-il. Jetez un coup d'œil. Qu'est-ce que vous en <u>pensez</u> ?

J'avais les **yeux fermés**. Je <u>pensai</u> qu'il fallait les garder fermés encore un peu. Je **pensai** que c'était **<u>quelque chose</u>** à faire.

-- Eh bien, dit-il. Vous regardez ?

J'avais toujours les **yeux fermés**. J'étais dans ma maison. Ca, je le savais. Mais je n'avais pas l'impression d'être a l'intérieure de **<u>quoi que ce soit</u>**.

-- C'est vraiment **<u>quelque chose</u>**, dis-je.

Does the French version maintain some of the repetition links I've highlighted in Carver's original? Does it, in particular, maintain the closing pattern of indefinite references set up in the Carver? There, you can see, the text progresses through these

steps (among others, of course), steps which are so vague as to approach the inarticulate (if we see the speaker as inept) or inarticulable (if we see the situation as exceptional, transcendent):

It was like *nothing* else in my life up to now

It was *something* I ought to do

Didn't feel like I was inside *anything*

It's really *something*

Well, I would say that the French *does* maintain the pattern, fairly well:

Ça ne ressemblait a **rien** de ce que j'avais fait dans ma vie jusqu'a maintenant

c'était **quelque chose** à faire

je n'avais pas l'impression d'être a l'intérieure de **quoi que ce soit**

C'est vraiment **quelque chose**

The continuity among the English indefinite pronouns is of course most visible in the repeated *thing* morpheme, and arguably that *could* have been maintained in the French version:

Ça ressemblait a **aucun chose** de ce que j'avais fait dans ma vie jusqu'a maintenant

c'était **quelque chose** à faire

je n'avais pas l'impression d'être a l'intérieure de **quoi que ce soit**

C'est vraiment **quelque chose**

But as to the third of these four, and possibilities of an alternative which might more overtly pattern with the other three, my French grammar advises me that *quoi que ce soit* is used only of things and roughly equates to 'whatever' or 'nothing', so is here quite appropriate. I would not be confident in saying the latter was a viable alternative, let alone an improvement:

je n'avais pas l'impression d'être a l'intérieure d'aucun place

je n'avais pas l'impression que j'etais a l'intérieure d'aucun place.

Which of course are only offered since the *aucun* here echoes the *aucun chose* proposed for the first in the series. In any event, in my view, the final sentence of the story is the most critical in this series, and here the French translation is I believe exactly what is required, chiming with the English original (*"It's really something," I said.*):

C'est vraiment **quelque chose, dis-je.**

Whereas the Spanish solution here is not in my view satisfactory, relative to the verbally vague and inexpressive tenor of the narrator's <u>own</u> words and thoughts in this story. Basically, where the English original runs *nothing, something, anything, something*, the Spanish translation has *nada, algo, nada*, but then *extraordinario*. Thus the final sentence in the published translation reads: —*Es verdaderamente extraordinario —dije.*

I have discussed this with Spanish academics, who tell me that the final line cannot simply be translated as *Es realmente algo*, but offer two suggestions: *Es realmente algo extraordinario*, or *Es algo extraordinario*. The trouble with this is that the evaluative *extraordinario* implies a grasp and appreciation, an articulated understanding, which the narrator's character and his own words 'really something', do not. A small point, but: *extraordinario* is a seven-syllable word; in the English version, the narrator's direct speech words that rise even to three syllables are few and far between: *everything, cannabis, strawberry, company, somebody, Cathedral, difference…*

It's the wife and Robert who trade adjectives like *distinguished*, and *comfortable…* The narrator makes do with ones like *spiffy*. The tenor of his own speech patterns and proficiency is indicated when he says a grace of sorts, before they eat dinner:

> "Now let us pray," I said, and the blind man lowered his head. My wife looked at me, her mouth agape. "Pray the 'phone won't ring and the food doesn't get cold," I said.

To recap then, the Spanish translation of the *nothing/something/anything/something* sequence works satisfactory up until the final selection: *nada*, *algo*, *nada*, but then *extraordinario,* which of course does not pattern with the other terms and therefore arguably dissipates the effect.

> Y anadio, dirigiendosie a mi:
> —Ahora **cierra** los **ojos**.
> Lo hice. Los **cerré**, tal como me decía.
> —¿Los tienes **cerrados**? —preguntó—. No hagas trampa.
> —Los tengo **cerrados**.
> —**Mantenlos** así. No pares ahora. Dibuja.
> Y continuamos. Sus **dedos** apretaban los míos mientras mi mano recorría el papel. No se parecía a nada que hubiese hecho en la vida hasta aquel momento.
> Luego dijo:
> —Creo que ya está. Me **parece** que lo has conseguido. Echa una mirada. ¿Qué te **parece**?
> Pero yo tenía los **ojos cerrados**. Pensé mantenerlos así un poco más. Creí que era algo que debía hacer.
> —¿Y bien? —preguntó—. ¿Estás mirándolo?
> Yo seguía con los **ojos cerrados**. Estaba en mi casa. Lo sabía. Pero yo no tenia la impresión de estar dentro de nada.
> —Es verdaderamente extraordinario —dije.

But would --*Es realmente algo--dije,* or *Es verdaderamente algo—dije* have been better? My repetition-oriented stylistics would predict yes; but that of course is without adequately knowing the language and its idioms. Two Spanish stylisticians who have very helpfully commented on this question, Laura Hidalgo Downing (of the University of Madrid) and Miguel Angel Martinez-Cabeza (University of Granada), inform me that the final sentence cannot be translated as *Es realmente algo* (unacceptable), but offer two other suggestions: *Es realmente algo extraordinario*, or *Es algo extraordinario*.]

Final Thoughts

Some of the commentary above questions a common assumption about 'good literature', namely that good literature/poetry will avoid the 'thoughtlessness' or 'carelessness' or 'failure of creativity' that repetitions constitute or reflect. Many texts can survive being repetitive (and a bit boring), but literature cannot, the argument goes. Contextual circumstances (as Harris, *passim*, reiterates) make that entirely refutable claim; in the context of dramatizing the character of the narrator of "Cathedral", for example, I believe it is quite important to acknowledge the repetitions in the Carver text and maintain them in translations. More generally, repetition and near-repetition may be a necessary (although not sufficient) feature of literature, if literary creativity is characterized by comparative increase of internal repetition (central to the work's

literariness, and reflected in our assessment's of a work's coherence) which nevertheless eventuates in readers' judgements that taken as a whole, in context (the external perspective), the text is to a significant degree *not* a repetition of previous works, but a new and unforeseen departure, a productive variation. Translations then have to deploy repetition as extensively and effectively (perhaps not always in 'identical' places) as their sources, to yield the equivalent literary benefits of such enriching repetition.

Perhaps I should have used the following as an epigraph to this paper:

> *The differences in the Portuguese text compared with the French and Italian were not that great. But they were there. Mostly the interior stuff.*

The allusion will be lost, I'm afraid, until you read the Carver story, and come to this point, where the narrator reports what the TV programme is showing, about how the cathedrals of one country differ from those of another. In the above 'quotation', all I have done is replace Carver's word *cathedral* with my own word, *text*. In a traditional stylistic spirit, I have focussed on interior stuff, or what the French version calls *les trucs intérieurs*.

References

Bally, Charles. 1909. *Traité de stylistique française*. Paris.

Bally, Charles. 1952. *Le langage et la vie*. Geneva.

Harris, Roy. 1981. *The Language Myth*. London: Duckworth.

Harris, Roy. 1996. *Signs, Language, and Communication*. London: Routledge.

Jenny, Laurent. 2000. Du style comme pratique. *Littérature*, n° 118, June.

Taylor, Talbot. 1980. *Linguistic Theory and Structural Stylistics*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Toolan, Michael 1990. *The Stylistics of Fiction*, London: Routledge.

Toolan, Michael. 1995. Discourse style makes viewpoint: the example of Carver's narrator in 'Cathedral'. In P.Verdonk and J.J. Weber, eds, *Twentieth-Century Fiction: from text to context*. London: Routledge, 126-137.

Toolan, Michael 1996. *Total Speech: an integrational linguistic approach to language.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Toolan, Michael. 2011. Creativity in poetry: wonderfully repetitive. In Rodney Jones ed., *Discourse and Creativity*, Longman Pearson.