

## Some Proposals to Cope with Forms of Irony Typically Found in Literary Texts from a Relevance-Theoretical Perspective\*

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**Abstract:** The study of irony has always been a field of interest for diverse disciplines. Whereas irony had been traditionally explained as a contrast between what was *said* and what was *meant*, more recent, pragmatically-oriented studies have adopted a wider perspective, by considering aspects like the speaker's attitude, intention or context. Among these approaches, relevance theory has proposed an ostensive-inferential approach to communication, whereby the addressee seeks to infer the speaker's intention. Such an approach seems to be appropriate for the study of irony, and in fact, irony has been a hotly-debated issue within the relevance-theoretical framework (Sperber and Wilson 1981, 1978), even before the model as such (Sperber and Wilson 1986/95) was explicitly fleshed out. Moreover, the proposals made reach very recent times (for instance, Wilson, 2006). In one of the contributions by Sperber and Wilson (1998), they claimed that irony was not a natural kind, and enhanced the echoic nature of verbal irony. A distinction between ostensive and non-ostensive forms of irony was put forward. Precisely, among the latter, Sperber and Wilson gave as instances forms such as dramatic irony, or irony of fate. Such types of irony may be frequently found in literary texts. As a matter of fact, they abound in the *corpus* selected for our study, *Celestina* (Fernando de Rojas, 1499/1502). This Spanish work was soon translated into English (Mabbe, 1631). The present paper sets out to provide a relevance-theoretical account of these forms of irony as manifested in the work. The discussion will be structured as follows: after the introduction of the theoretical background, we shall explain the tenets that can be applied in the forms of irony traced and under study in the corpus, and will provide with examples to illustrate our claims. Finally, the conclusions reached will be presented. The theory established a dichotomy between ostensive and non-ostensive forms of irony (Sperber & Wilson, 1998). Precisely, among the latter, these authors referred to forms such as tragic irony or irony of fate and dramatic irony. These and other related forms of irony abound in the *corpus* selected for our study: *Celestina*, an important literary Spanish work of the Late Middle Ages written by Fernando de Rojas (1499). All in all, therefore, the purpose of the present work is to analyse the

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forms of irony which have regarded as non-ostensive or non-echoic, taking into consideration that they seem to occur in literary works, as Rojas' work suggests. As a central hypothesis, we shall argue that the distinction between echoic and non-echoic irony should be best approached in terms of degree, as a *continuum*. Moreover, the corpus reveals that these forms of irony are most likely found in communicative acts which entail complex relationships between the different participants, so that not all the characters involved may have access to the context envisaged by the speaker, on the one hand, and on the other hand, characters' actions may be mediated by the presence of an internal author that is only perceived by the external readership. Therefore, as a consequence of the differences in choice and accessibility, we shall find different *levels of communication* between addressers and addressees. These levels may contribute to the explanation of the forms of irony referred to above.

**Key words:** Relevance-Theoretical Approach; Echoic Irony; Ostensive Irony; Forms Of Irony Found in Literary Texts; *Celestina*

## 1. INTRODUCTION: THE RELEVANCE-THEORETICAL ACCOUNT OF IRONY

Even before the framework of relevance theory was developed (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995, 1987), the earliest proposals on irony were put forward (Sperber and Wilson 1981, 1978). Besides, these have reached very recent times –for instance, Wilson, 2006). In what follows, an overall outline of the model will be made, and emphasis will be laid upon those aspects that have been central for the main contentions and scope of analysis of the research carried out within this paper.

The earliest account of irony provided by Sperber and Wilson (1981, 1978) rejects traditional views on this figure, according to which it had been defined in semantic terms as an opposition between what is “said” and what is “meant”. Likewise, for the forerunners of relevance theory, Grice’s approach to irony (1978, 1975) in terms of a flouting or violation of the communicative principle and its corresponding maxims –most importantly, of the maxim of quality– did not bring any significant improvement to this panorama. For Sperber and Wilson, the traditional analysis of irony as literally saying one thing and figuratively meaning the opposite fails to cope with all the possible cases, and can neither explain why an ironic utterance may be preferred to its neutral counterpart.

What is more, Sperber and Wilson reject the notion of *figurative meaning* altogether. In their view, accepting this notion or sustaining that irony stands for meaning the contrary to what is said amounts to depriving irony of any meaning whatsoever: if this were so, irony would convey no meaning, because it would bring no substantial change to the cognitive environment of speaker and addressee.<sup>2</sup> It would also be hard to cope with the meaning of ironical utterances in the absence of certain paralinguistic devices such as intonation.

The earliest formulation of the relevance-theoretical approach to irony (Sperber and Wilson 1981, 1978; Carston 1981, 1980) is based upon a general theory of rhetoric which, in their view, should cope with basic psychological and interpretive mechanisms that remain invariable in different cultures. To a certain extent, this comes close to the classical approach, for which rhetoric was understood as the art of persuasion, of achieving certain communicative effects by means of language. Nevertheless, a critical issue raised in connection with Sperber and Wilson’s approach to irony is that they may have supplied a

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<sup>2</sup> Within the relevance theoretical framework, *cognitive environment* is defined as the set of facts that are *manifest* to an individual at a given time. By being *manifest*, it is meant to be “perceptible” or “inferable”. As Sperber and Wilson put it, a fact is manifest to an individual at any given time “if and only if he is capable of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true”. Likewise, an assumption is manifest in a cognitive environment “if the environment provides sufficient evidence for its adoption” (Sperber and Wilson 1986/95: 39).

reading of traditional rhetoric which might have gone far beyond what these theories may have aimed at explaining. Concretely, for Barbe (1995), traditional theories of irony were not concerned at all about psychological mechanisms of irony comprehension:

Perhaps Sperber and Wilson are correct when they say that traditional definitions do not consider the whole psychological picture. However, that was not the purpose of these definitions. Traditional definitions were, indeed, established for the main purpose of educating an orator in the art of oratory. Thus in the area of linguistics, we still have much to add to the discussion of irony. (1995: 65).

Similarly to some contemporary literary approaches to irony –such as Hutcheon (1994, 1978)– and also to most tendencies within pragmatic analyses –like Grice himself (1978, 1975), politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1978), or pretense theories of irony (Clark and Gerrig 1984)– Sperber and Wilson approach irony as the expression of a certain attitude, so that ironic utterances show either “an attitude of the speaker to his utterance” or “an attitude of the speaker to what his utterance is about” (1981: 303). This may be further connected with the distinction made between use and mention, which is crucial to cope with irony for these authors, and which is defined as follows: “USE of an expression involves reference to what the expression refers to; MENTION involves reference to the expression itself” (1981: 303, capital letters as in the original). The distinction between use and mention applies not only to expressions, but also to propositions. Moreover, the mention of expressions and propositions may be either explicit or implicit. On the whole, therefore, the following panorama results:

- USE of an expression
- USE of a proposition
- MENTION
  - Explicit mention
    - of an expression
    - of a proposition
  - Implicit mention
    - of an expression
    - of a proposition

Crucially, the concept that most characteristically defines irony for Sperber and Wilson is its *echoic* nature. As for the concept of echo, it is closely related to that feature shared by most of contemporary pragmatic approaches –namely, the connection of irony to a certain attitude. It is defined as follows: That irony is echoic is “... meant to indicate that the preceding utterance has been heard and understood, and to express the hearer's immediate reaction to it” (1981: 306).

The main instances of echoic irony introduced by Sperber and Wilson (1981) are the following: first, when the proposition mentioned is the one just uttered; second, when the proposition mentioned is what the addressee takes to be as one of the pragmatic implications of the proposition just uttered; third, cases in which the proposition mentioned occurred some time ago; fourth, instances where the sources are very distant indeed; fifth, what they term as “anticipatory echoes”: the echo comes first, and then its source; and sixth, those instances in which what is echoed is not a proposition, but a thought imputed by the speaker to the hearer.

This notion of irony has several implications both for the addresser and the addressee. For the *addresser*, it is a way of showing her attitude of distance and even potential rejection of the proposition uttered. For the *addressee*, understanding this utterance is a way of realising it as a mention and recognising the speaker's attitude towards it.

Whether irony is necessarily echoic or not is an aspect that is not really made clear by Sperber and Wilson now, and which will become a hotly-debated issue until very recently (Wilson, 2006). Thus, in their 1981 paper, Sperber and Wilson seem to suggest that there may be intermediate cases between *echoic irony* –which would be based upon the speaker's dissociation towards the propositional content of her utterance– and *standard irony*:

It might be suggested that there are two distinct types of irony: “echoic” irony, as illustrated earlier, whose interpretation involves a recognition of its status as mention, and “standard” irony, whose interpretation involves (sic) a recovery of its figurative meaning. The problem with this suggestion is that there is a whole range of intermediate cases between clear cases of echoic irony and the “standard” cases. (...). If there were two totally distinct processes, one based on mention and the other on figurative meaning, each resulting in a different type of irony, such intermediate cases should not exist. (1981: 309).

So far, their solution seems to consider that irony is *necessarily* echoic, but that there are many different kinds of echoes. They do not specify whether their former classification has meant to be exhaustive, or if they have just meant to provide several examples and there could be many more:

It seems more accurate to say that all examples of irony are interpreted as echoic mentions, but that there are echoic mentions of many different degrees and types. Some are immediate echoes, and others delayed; some have their source in actual utterances, others in thoughts or opinions; some have a real source, others an imagined one; some are traceable back to a particular individual, whereas others have a vaguer origin. When the echoic character of the utterance is not immediately obvious, it is nevertheless suggested. (1981: 309-10).

Thus, it seems that Sperber and Wilson point out that there are many echoes, of different *degrees* and kinds, which might be thought to range from *zero-echo* to being *fully* echoic. Thus, it should not be incompatible with their theory to admit the existence of ironic non-echoic utterances, if the difference between echoic and standard irony is meant to be gradual, and not discrete.

In their work *Relevance* (1986/95), Sperber and Wilson retake the discussion on irony in the context of the *poetic effects*. They claim that styles are important because they constrain or guide the addressee’s search for relevance. What is peculiar about *poetic effects* is that they achieve to be relevant “through a wide array of weak implicatures” (1986/95: 222). At this stage, it may be worth considering that Sperber and Wilson’s difference between *explicatures* and *implicatures* does not coincide with Grice: traditionally, the difference between both would be that whereas the explicit content is a set of decoded assumptions, the implicit is formed by a set of inferred assumptions. On the other hand, Sperber and Wilson claim that inference is required in the recovery of both implicatures and explicatures. For them, an explicature is a development of a logical form, whereas an implicature is an assumption communicated, but not explicitly (1986/95: 182). According to Sperber and Wilson, not all implicatures are communicated, and among those that are so, not all of them come with the same strength: “Some implicatures are made so strongly manifest that the hearer can scarcely avoid recovering them. Others are less strongly manifest” (1986/95: 197). The relative strength or weakness of implicatures will directly influence upon the responsibility of addresser and addressee in retrieving them: the weaker the implicatures, the more responsibility the addressee has in deriving them: “Eventually, (...) a point is reached at which the hearer receives no encouragement at all to supply any particular premise and conclusion, and he takes the entire responsibility for supplying them himself” (1986/95: 199). Their account of irony, then, is contextualised in their general model that covers ostensive-inferential communication (Furlong, 1989).

Sperber and Wilson (1986/95: 224) also establish a distinction which, as will be shown below, will be particularly important for the application of relevance to irony. This has to do with the *descriptive* and the *interpretive* dimension of language use. In this respect, utterances are regarded as representations both in virtue of resembling some other phenomenon, and also, and more important, “in virtue of having a propositional form which is true of some actual or conceivable state of affairs” (1986/95: 227).

A certain representation is used *descriptively* whenever it refers to a certain state of affairs in virtue of its propositional form being *true* of that state of affairs. In contrast, a representation will be used *interpretively* in virtue of a *resemblance* of the propositional form of that representation with another; in

that latter case, it will be said that the first representation is an *interpretation* of the second one, or that it is used interpretively.

For Sperber and Wilson, “irony involves an interpretive relation between the speaker’s thought and attributed thoughts or utterances” (1986/95: 231). They also claim that irony is best approached as a kind of *second-degree interpretations*, which are characterised by the fact that they achieve relevance by informing the addressee of the fact that the speaker has a certain attitude towards an utterance or a state of affairs: “We will argue that verbal irony invariably involves the implicit expression of an attitude, and that the relevance of an ironical attitude invariably depends, at least in part, on the information it conveys about the speaker’s attitude to the opinion echoed” (1986/95: 239). In the case of irony, such attitude is generally one of disagreement, rejection or disapproval.

Sperber and Wilson also point at *three recurrent tenets of the processing of ironic utterances*: first, the utterance must be recognized as echoic, defined as above; second, the source of the opinion echoed must be traced back and identified; third, the speaker’s attitude towards what her utterance enunciates is basically of rejection, refusal, dissociation or distance.

The implications of Sperber and Wilson’s treatment of irony –and related “tropes”, such as litotes, meiosis or parody– are the following: first, they follow general mechanisms of verbal communication, and they do not stand for any departures or breakings from everyday language, or from any rule, convention or maxim whatsoever. Second, here Sperber and Wilson claim that “there is a continuum of cases rather than a dividing line between metaphorical utterances on the one hand, between ironical utterances and other echoic utterances on the other” (1986/95: 242). Now, if this is so, we feel that they should not pursue either on the clear-cut distinction between echoic irony and non-echoic irony, or the rejection of the existence of the latter, as they have been stating in their most recent papers on irony (Sperber and Wilson, 1998). Finally, Sperber and Wilson claim to abandon the traditional notion of *trope*, as “it groups together phenomena which are not closely related and fails to group together phenomena which are” (1986/95: 243).

Sperber and Wilson will deal with *irony* again in 1992, in an article entitled “On verbal irony”.<sup>3</sup> In it, they suggest replacing the notion of *mention* (Sperber and Wilson, 1981), by that of *interpretive resemblance* (Sperber and Wilson, 1986), to account for irony. They claim that the approach proposed in their earlier paper was too restrictive: “It was too restrictive because certain types of irony do not fit in the analysis of irony as echoic mention proposed in 1981” (1989: 96). This would not happen if their 1986 model of irony as echoic interpretive use is followed, they will claim.

In this sense, the distinction between *use* and *mention* is now seen as a special case of *interpretive resemblance*. Moreover, following the overall framework provided by relevance theory, irony is analysed as a balance between cognitive efforts and contextual effects. It is also claimed that the status of utterances as ironic often remains implicit, for the opposite would spoil the whole effect: “There is no such thing as a fail-safe diagnostic of irony” (1992: 67). A further implication of this would be that when interpreting or attempting to recognise ironic utterances, the addressee will have to assess the speaker’s more or less calculated or intended *ambiguity*. About this, Wilson and Sperber will write: “The communicator’s intentions cannot be decoded or deduced, but must be inferred by a *fallible* process of hypothesis formation and evaluation; even the best hypothesis may turn out to be wrong” (1992: 67).

Blakemore (1992) agrees with Sperber and Wilson on the consideration of a close link between irony and the expression of a certain attitude. In this sense, she further notes down how such attitude may not necessarily be of rejection, but quite on the contrary it may be of endorsement. She also avows for a somehow wide approach to echo, since its source may not necessarily refer to the immediate co-text. As she states, “Notice too that an ironic utterance is not necessarily an interpretation of a thought which a speaker has actually expressed. It is frequently an interpretation of a thought which the speaker attributes to someone else” (1992: 167).

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<sup>3</sup> Wilson and Sperber, 1992: This paper is a reprinted version of an earlier one that had appeared in 1989, in the corresponding volume of UCL Working Papers in Linguistics 1: 96-117. The 1992 version contains the whole of the 1989 paper, except for some points of the abstract. References made in the paper to this article will refer to the 1992 edition, unless specified.

For relevance theoreticians, *context* plays an important role in communication. Thus, Deirdre Wilson (1994) has defined context as “the set of assumptions brought to bear in arriving at the intended interpretation”, which may be derived from a variety of sources, such as the following: “... from the preceding text, or from observation of the speaker and what is going on in the immediate environment, (...) from cultural or scientific knowledge, common-sense assumptions, and, more generally, any item of shared or idiosyncratic information that the hearer has access to at the time” (1994: 41). This shows that the context has a cognitive nature, and is likely to be modified in the course of the communicative interaction.

In the case of ironic utterances, it is likewise the role they play in context that will really define ironical utterances as such. Therefore, ironic utterances may not be identified solely on the basis of a tone of voice, a feature which in any case would otherwise only apply for oral communication. For authors such as Sperber and Wilson or Blakemore, it will be the context that will provide the addressee with evidence regarding whether the speaker aims to be ironic or not. As Blakemore notes, “That the speaker of an ironic utterance is dissociating himself from the thought it echoes may be evident to the hearer on the basis of the context” (1992: 168).

The addresser will also have to decide, in any case, what clues she is providing the addressee with and also what she decides to leave implicit.<sup>4</sup> This will depend, for Blakemore, upon the assumptions and estimations she may have about the hearer’s contextual resources: that is, depending upon the estimations she makes regarding the accessibility that the addressee may have to the context envisaged by herself and signalled by her utterance, the latter may find it easier or more difficult to infer the attitude and message intended by his interlocutor: should there be a mismatch in the contexts of both speaker and hearer, this may result in the addressee’s failure to infer the irony intended by the speaker, and, therefore, in miscommunication.

In 1993, in the framework of a monographic Conference on relevance theory held in Osaka, and whose results were published in 1998, a discussion on the necessarily echoic character of irony took place. On the one hand, authors such as Seto (1998), Hamamoto (1998) or Yamanashi (1998) argued that there could be manifestations of non-echoic irony. On the other hand, Sperber and Wilson (1998) reaffirmed the intrinsically echoic nature of verbal irony. A synthesis of their main arguments follows.

Firstly, Seto (1998) holds the view that two forms of irony may exist, one based on echoing, the other on semantic reversal. In her paper, this author provides an extensive analysis of the means through which both echoic irony and also irony based upon semantic reversal may be conveyed. These can be *lexical*, *syntactic*, *stylistic* or *prosodic*, as will be illustrated next:

- *lexical means* –by means of single words or by the modification received by a lexical item in a certain context. Seto refers to the words *genius* or *Albert Einstein* in utterances such as the following:

- (1): John is a *genius*
- (2): John is *an Albert Einstein*.
- (3): John is *another Albert Einstein*.

(Instances quoted from Seto’s paper, 1998: 246).

- syntactic devices –such as the use of superlatives (as in example 4), exclamations (5) or topicalization or focus topicalization (6):

- (4): Truly this is the *sweetest* of theologies.
- (5): What lovely weather!
- (6): A *fine friend* she turned out to be!

(Instances quoted from Seto’s paper, 1998: 246-7).

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<sup>4</sup> Unless specified otherwise, if used with a generic meaning and reference, feminine pronouns will refer to the speaker, and masculine ones to the addressee.

- *stylistic resources*, within which Seto (1998) refers to forms of overtly emphatic politeness, such as (7):

(7): Would you mind if I asked you to please consider cleaning up your room sometime this month?

(Instance quoted from Seto's paper, 1998: 246-7).

- *prosodic mechanisms*: Seto claims that, even though the tone is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for irony, yet an exaggerated tone of voice or stress may indicate in certain contexts that a definite utterance is ironically loaded or intended.

Seto also provides a detailed account of the possible markers of echo, something which Sperber and Wilson have not actually described. Such markers may be emphatic words as *such, truly, indeed, of course, actually, really, certainly, definitely, evidently, obviously, or surely*.

Among the forms of irony that are regarded as non-echoic by Seto (1998), we find precisely those of *anticipatory irony*, such as in the following utterance:

(8): "I like *that*. Bob smashes up my car and then expects me to pay for the repairs".

(Instance quoted from Seto's paper, 1998: 243, my italics)

Seto argues that utterances such as the previous one show that there are instances of non-echoic irony, because in these samples of anticipatory irony, the echo would come before its source, which is not feasible: "An echo would come first, and the source second, which is impossible" (1998: 243). However, in our view, this is based on an excessively narrow view of echo. We shall argue that there may be indeed instances of anticipatory irony, as Sperber and Wilson (1981, 1978) had upheld. Indeed, in our corpus we shall find plenty of instances of this form of irony.

Hamamoto (1998) approaches irony from a cognitive point of view. Similarly to Seto, she also questions whether echoic irony can cope with all possible forms of irony. Concretely, she refers to the following instances, which, in her view, would be insufficiently accounted for in terms of echoic irony: vagueness of echoic source; ironical utterances which show dissociation from an echoed opinion or state of affairs; ironical utterances which describe a state of affairs; unintentional ironical utterances; and finally, those cases where a literal meaning which has a negative appearance is intended to convey some positive attitudes, such as appreciation, gratitude, etc. All these cases lead Hamamoto to formulate an alternative approach to the explanation of irony, based upon the contrast between the speaker's prior expectations about a certain state of affairs and its posterior reassessment. For Hamamoto, ironic utterances "remind us of the existence of a discrepancy between two cognitions" (1998: 265).

Such an approach to irony in terms of a clash or opposition between two states of affairs had already been suggested by authors such as Robert Martin (1992), who had likewise been critical about the relevance-theoretical approach to verbal irony as echoic. He had proposed a different framework for the analysis of irony, based upon the notions of *possible worlds*, and of *universe of belief*. His hypothesis is based on the notions of *counterfactual world* and *world of expectations*. In his view, "an ironical utterance echoes an expectation which has not been fulfilled" (1992: 84). Counterfactual worlds are those possible worlds which contradict at least one proposition of the real world. Worlds of expectation are a special subset of the former, and their negation contradicts the speaker's own expectations about the likely course of events. According to him,

Irony of fate, narrative irony and situational irony all involve an expectation being disappointed by the way things turn out: for example, a reasonable expectation is dashed; an unfolded expectation makes victims of those who held it. (1992: 89)

Similarly, Kihara (2005) has dwelled upon irony as related to a clash or contrast between the so-called *initial reality or base space*, on the one hand, and certain *mental spaces* and *expectation spaces*. Her approach is based upon Fauconnier's *mental space theory* (1997, 1985). She sets out to account for those utterances where both a proposition and its contradiction can result in irony, if connected to a certain attitude of the speaker's, as in:

a) I love people who signal when turning.

b) I love people who don't signal when turning.

For Kihara (2005), utterances such as these, and the fact that they can be both interpreted as ironic, show that irony can best be interpreted as a mental space phenomenon, on the basis of the claim that mental space access explains the compatibility between such seemingly contradictory utterances. In other words, utterances such as a) and b) above would refer to different mental spaces. More concretely, Kihara's proposal aims at showing that "ironical remarks have their effects by referring to a counterfactual mental state of expectation without any distinct space builders" (2005: 517), that is to say, without any overt mechanisms used by speakers to induce the hearer to set up a new mental state. Yet, the utterance will be recognised as ironical because of the presence of a certain element which exists only in the imaginary expectation space –in a mutually manifest manner for both the speaker and the hearer–, and which will contrast to its counterpart in the initial reality space.

Yamanashi (1998) argues that it may sometimes be hard to distinguish between instances of use, on the one hand, and cases of mention, on the other hand. In their original article, Sperber and Wilson (1978/81) had claimed that the notion of mention brought irony in connection with indirect speech, even though different kinds of mention would hold for either. Already in the early nineteen eighties, when Sperber and Wilson had put forward their first proposals on irony, both for Récanati (1981) Ducrot (1984), the connection is not clear, either in itself, or as regards what may have been intended by Sperber and Wilson. Likewise, for Van der Auwera and Rombouts (1982), there is not necessarily a one-to-one correspondence between ironic and echoic utterances, and the status and features of echo should be further clarified.

It is in their reply to Seto, Hamamoto and Yamanashi that Sperber and Wilson (1998) seem to qualify as echoic irony only those cases of *verbal* irony: "... We have suggested that the echoic nature of verbal irony divides it from a range of non-echoic cases (situational irony, dramatic irony, romantic irony, irony of fate) which it resembles in some respects" (1998: 290). This seems to exclude the latter forms of irony, which may be frequently found in literary texts, from the scope of analysis put forward by the relevance-theoretical framework. However, the main authors working within this model –most importantly, Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995)– had explicitly denied the existence of any qualitative difference between literary language and everyday speech.

Sperber and Wilson seem to perceive the need to amplify the scope of their theory; they establish a dichotomy which they had not made before between *ostensive forms* of irony and *non-ostensive forms* of irony, without specifying how the latter should be dealt with in their theory. This group is, however, broad enough, and it includes certain acknowledged varieties of irony, such as dramatic irony, or irony of fate, which will be essential in a work such as *Celestina*. The dichotomy they make in the end, between *ostensive forms* of irony and *non-ostensive forms* of irony, is not further pursued, either.

In any case, the distinction may be related to their own concepts or distinction made between *ostensive* and *non-ostensive communication*. For Sperber and Wilson, *ostensive-inferential* communication is characterised as follows: "the communicator produces a stimulus which makes it *mutually manifest* to communicator and audience that the communicator *intends*, by means of this stimulus, to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions {I}" (1986/95: 63, my italics). An important feature is that such a distinction is founded on a matter of degree, that is, communication may be more or less ostensive, as Sperber and Wilson also point out in their seminal work: "... we want to distinguish degrees of manifestness" (1986/95: 39). It is also remarkable that ostensive communication is closely related to the speaker's intention. Hence, in the distinction drawn between ostensive and non-ostensive communication, Sperber and Wilson refer to a *continuum* of cases which may well be applied also to irony: "... There are not two distinct and well-defined classes, but a *continuum* of cases of ostension ranging from 'showing', where strong direct evidence for the basic layer of information is provided, to 'saying that', where all evidence is indirect" (1986/95: 53, my italics). Nevertheless, there is no indication that ostensive-inferential communication is to be necessarily associated with its verbal forms, in contrast to what Sperber and Wilson seem to have hinted at about ostensive irony, in the quotation referred to above.

Such a distinction of degree must also be complemented with the layers of communication that may be appreciated in the corpus selected for the study, *La Celestina* and its earliest renderings into English, but which may have appeared also in other works, if only in a weaker or less manifest form. This is so because in the framework of relevance theory, if ostensive-inferential communication is defined as the speaker's intention that her addressees may recognise her intention to inform them of some state of affairs, and if, as Sperber and Wilson point out, "communication is successful not when hearers recognise the linguistic meaning of the utterance, but when they infer the speaker's 'meaning' from it" (1986/95: 23), then it follows that so as to characterise the different forms or kinds of irony, both ostensive and non-ostensive (or, as will be assumed here, the different degrees of ostension by which irony may be manifest to addressees), a detailed analysis of the possible kinds of relationship established between addressers and addressees will necessarily have to be carried out before the different forms of irony may be characterised.

In the case of *Celestina* and its earliest versions written in English, we are referring to the *different levels of communication to be found in the work*: on the one hand, communication established between the different characters, and the level of communication established between the internal author and the external audience or readership, on the other hand. Such a differentiation should be at the core of the contrast between *+intentionality/-intentionality*, which, as Sperber and Wilson (1998) themselves have predicted, seems to lie at the core of the distinction between ostensive and non-ostensive forms of irony. Therefore, just as we have rather tended to assume a *continuum of ostensive and non-ostensive forms of irony*, the analysis of the levels of communication present in the work have let us hint that whereas what may be non-ostensive or unintended at the level of communication established between the speaker and her interlocutors, being both characters in the work, it may nevertheless be an ostensive stimulus put forward in an indirect way by the author, and made weakly manifest or communicated by him to the external audience.

There have been authors –most importantly, Yus (2000-01, 2000, 1999, 1997-98)– who have precisely attempted to reconcile the approach to irony based on contradictions of expectations, or, as he will term and as we shall explain below, *incompatibility* between different *contextual sources*, and the relevance-theoretical approach to irony. By *contextual sources* reference is made to those entries of contextual information that make it possible for the addressee to access the meaning intended by the addresser regarding ironic utterances.

His most remarkable contribution has three different aspects: first, the tracing of different *contextual sources*, whose activation by the addressee is crucial for his understanding of irony, on condition that there are certain *incompatibilities* which may make him activate an ironic interpretation. These *incompatibilities* refer to the clash arising between the proposition expressed by the utterance, on the one hand, and the information conveyed by one or more contextual sources. Such a clash triggers the identification of the echoic mention and the speaker's attitude of dissociation, which is a key factor for the addressee's optimal access to an implicit ironic interpretation.

The *contextual sources* distinguished by Yus Ramos to which the addressee will attempt to have access to for the interpretation of ironic utterances are the following: encyclopaedic factual information; the mutually manifest physical context or environment; the speaker's non-verbal behaviour; the addressee's background knowledge of the addresser's biographic data; mutual knowledge; previous utterances of the conversation; and linguistic cues.

The second aspect has to do with the formulation of a *criterion of optimal accessibility to irony*, which results as a consequence of the application of these contextual resources to ironical utterances, and which goes as follows:

#### CRITERION OF OPTIMAL ACCESSIBILITY TO IRONY.

The processing effort required for the interpretation of the intended ironic meaning of an utterance decreases in proportion to the increase in the number (and quality) of incompatibilities (detected by the addressee) between the information supplied by the inferential integration of simultaneously activated contextual sources (leading or leading plus supportive) and the information provided by the proposition expressed by the utterance (Yus Ramos, 2000: 39).

Finally, the fact that the faster or slower identification of irony depends upon the number of incompatibilities detected in the contextual sources available leads Yus Ramos to propose a terminological distinction between the *bypassed 'proposition expressed'* and the *entertained 'proposition expressed'*. This is introduced in relation to the question of the role which literal meaning is likely to play in the interpretation of ironic utterances. The proposition expressed may be either *bypassed* or *entertained*, depending on whether the speaker's intended interpretation remains implicit and inferable from the context, or else the absence of adequate contextual information does not give way to possible implicatures, and the proposition expressed is processed as the speaker's intended interpretation.

More recently, Wilson (2006) has redefined the relevance-theoretical approach to irony as *echoic allusion*, a term which at the same time corresponds to the original proposals made by Sperber and Wilson (1981, 1978). As an initial premise, traditional classifications of irony –which had distinguished forms such as dramatic irony, situational irony, Socratic irony, etc.– are rejected. Then, as had been already stated by Sperber and Wilson (1998), it is claimed that irony is not a natural kind, and that the pragmatic study of irony should be limited to those forms that are overt and intentional. Nevertheless, already in *Relevance*, Sperber and Wilson (1986/95) had claimed that there could be ostensive and yet unintentional communicative acts. It is also admitted that the *source of echo* is a major factor in the comprehension of irony, in so far as the addressee's recognition of irony will be fostered by the identification of the *source* being criticised or even mocked at: "The interpretation of irony is facilitated by the presence of an obvious source for the echoic utterance" (2006: 1728).

Wilson (2006) approaches irony as an *echoic* and *interpretive* use of language, as it had already been done by Sperber and Wilson (1986/95). However, and within the context of further developments within relevance theory, now *interpretive uses* are approached as *higher-order metarepresentations*: "In order to understand an interpretively-used utterance, the hearer must recognise that the speaker is thinking not directly about a state of affairs, but about another utterance or thought" (2006: 1729).

What is more, it has only been in this paper that Wilson (2006) has undertaken to clarify and further define the notion of *echo* as applied to irony, thus answering one of the most recurrent critical arguments against the relevance-theoretical approach to irony so far, and which have been commented upon above. Thus, Wilson states that *echoic use* as related to irony has two main meanings: first, echoic use as an *interpretive, metarepresentational use of language*; and second, echoic use as a sub-type of a (tacitly) *attributive use* of language. In the former sense, this means that interpretive use must be approached as a representation of another representation. Thus, the notion of metarepresentation has been recently developed by certain relevance-theoreticians–by way of example, let us refer to Livnat (2004); Noh (2001, 1998); Sperber (2000a, 2000b); or Wilson (2000, 1997)–. Curcó (2000) stands for the earliest attempt to apply the notion of metarepresentations to account for irony in terms of relevance theory.

The notion of echoic use as a sub-type of a (tacitly) *attributive use* of language is being introduced in the present paper. It accounts for the speaker's intention not just to report the content of the attributed thought or utterance, but, more importantly, to express her reaction and attitude towards the speaker's utterance –already noted in the earliest account of irony within the relevance theoretical framework, namely, Sperber and Wilson (1981, 1978)–. Such an attitude may widely range from endorsement to even rejection or contempt. The target of the attitude is now pinned down more precisely as "a (generally tacitly) attributed thought or utterance" (Wilson 2006: 1730), which in fact stands for what the speaker actually distances herself from when aiming to be ironic.

Besides, Wilson (2006) acknowledges that the scope of the reality or state of affairs being echoed may range from the most specific up to general states of affairs, or even beliefs deeply entrenched within a certain culture. This meets the most general and important criticism that Clark and Gerrig (1984) had made against irony as understood by relevance theoreticians as echoic mention. Thus, Wilson notes that there may be "merely a difference in the extent to which the hopes or expectations being echoed are universally shared" (2006: 1731). In any case, the fact that any ironic utterance confronts the addressee with a remarkable degree of ambiguity and underdeterminacy should by no means be overlooked. In other words, irony may be conveyed in various ways, each of which is characterised by a different

degree of explicitness, or as Wilson herself puts it, the difference lies in “how explicitly the attitude is expressed and the attribution made” (2006: 1733).

In this sense, the research made by Yus (1999) is relevant. Yus Ramos approaches the dichotomy explicit/implicit as a continuum or scale, in which there are *degrees of explicitness* and *degrees of implicitness*, and in which the hearer has to take a much greater share of responsibility as the utterance becomes more implicit, and hence, “the more implicit the intended interpretation is (...) the more likely it is that the interpretive process will end up in some kind of speaker-hearer mismatch” (1999: 490). Next, he proposes to consider two *continua*, one explicit and the other implicit, rather than just one: “...instead of one continuum between two poles (one explicit and one implicit), the speaker’s choice is, rather, between two *sub-continua*, one *explicit* and one *implicit*, and each one with its own explicit-implicit gradation” (1999: 491). Similarly, Wilson notes that “the borderline between overt and tacit attributions and expressions of attitude, and hence between typical and less typical cases of irony, is a gradual one” (2006: 1733).

The classification proposed by Wilson distinguishes between cases where either the attitude or the attribution may be linguistically indicated or tacitly conveyed. Different possible cases may be found, such as a linguistically indicated attitude and a tacitly conveyed attribution, or vice versa, and also instances in which both are either linguistically indicated or tacitly conveyed.

## 2. MAIN ASPECTS OF IRONY IN *CELESTINA*

The reason for the choice of this work lies in the fact that it overflows with some of the forms of irony that were approached by Sperber and Wilson (1998) as being beyond the scope of echoic irony. Even though classifications of irony have been so far based upon semantic criteria, so that they are not clear-cut and not always distinguishable, yet, terms such as “dramatic irony”, “irony of fate” or “tragic irony” or “anticipatory irony” are still being widely used by literary critics. In this sense, it is our contention that the relevance-theoretical framework can indeed cope with such manifestations of irony. In our view, this may be done if the following *assumptions* are taken into consideration.

### 2.1 Hypotheses of the study

Our central contention may be explained in the following way. Even though for more than thirty years (1978-) relevance theory has been providing with interesting insights and a consistent analytical approach on the study of non-literary or discourse forms of irony, it seems if only fruitless to bring the state-of-the art to a standstill of a dichotomy ostensive/ non ostensive irony, and denying any possible account of the latter. The basic claim, therefore, is that the present state of the theory provides a substantial and coherent panorama to cope with these forms of irony. If this is so, the central claims or main *hypotheses* to be worked upon in the present work may be explained as follows, on the basis of the *premises* or *assumptions* that have been put forward and which are synthesised next:

1. Just as relevance theory assumes that the difference between *ostensive* and *non-ostensive communication* may be best approached in the form of a *continuum*, the same may be expected to be the case of the counterpart forms of irony. This is so because a possible basic approach to irony may be that of a form of communication.

It also seems to be the case that literary communication shows peculiar forms of the manifestation of *ostensive communication*, in the sense that it is a *delayed* form –i.e., there is no direct, face-to-face relationship between the participants in the work –internal author and/ or set of characters– and the external readership. This fact points towards the gradation of different forms of weaker or stronger ostension.

2. As relevance theory hypothesises, the difference between everyday speech and literary language may not be regarded as qualitative, but should be best approached as a *continuum*. Therefore, in contrast to formalist models, literature (or literary language) is not seen as a process of *estrangement* or defamiliarisation of everyday speech. On the contrary, relevance theory argues that both everyday and poetic language rely upon the same or very similar cognitive processes, being inference a key aspect in

the achievement of meaning. What both colloquial and literary language share is the same kind of interpretive mechanisms. What differentiates both is the strength with which the assumptions are made manifest. Hence, even though we may expect certain forms of irony to be more closely associated with literature, these should not be regarded as exceptions or as "separate" cases, but regardless of the peculiar traits of each, they seem to ask for similar explanatory approaches.

3. In literary works, different levels of communication may be established. Roughly speaking, the most basic forms to be found in the works under analysis may be said to be the following: on the one hand, those communicative interchanges occurring between the different characters, and which in the source text and in Mabbe's version in particular develop the action; on the other hand, that form of communication that is established between the internal author and the external readership, and which in the works under analysis is done so in an explicit, ostensive way. It may be expected that these different levels of communication may set differences in the perception of the level and forms of ostension of irony. In general, our hypothesis is that those forms of irony which are non-ostensive or non-echoic (e.g., dramatic irony, irony of fate, anticipatory irony, etc.) at the level of the communication established between the different characters, may nevertheless be ostensive or echoic at the level of the communication that the internal author intentionally and ostensively sets out to establish with the external audience or readership.

This leads to *weaker* forms of communication, in the sense that their understanding will be highly conditioned by the kind of hypotheses entertained by the author regarding the sort of *contextual assumptions* or *evidence* that may be accessed by the external readership. As Pilkington has noted, "The hearer/ reader inevitably takes a large part of the responsibility for the context accessed, context which, in some cases, is difficult to retrieve beyond the meta-represented cultural/ social interpretations that we often use to think with" (Pilkington, 1994: 44). This author also makes a difference between the forms of communication that we have just referred to:

(...) there is a difference (...) between language directed at known addressees and language directed at addressees most, if not all, of whom will be unknown, which is the typical case with literature. Only in the former case can communicators make ready assessments concerning which contextual assumptions are easily accessible to their addressees (2000: 82).

4. The understanding of irony may be expected to be generally linked to the *context* where it is set. Even though this has been generally acknowledged so far, the particular contributions offered in the framework of relevance theory will be taken into account in the following way. We assume that the context is *constructed* and *chosen* by the different participants in the course of the communicative interaction, and that they may have different forms and degrees of *accessibility* to the *assumptions* that form part of the *cognitive environment*. Hence, the internal or external addressee's perception of the meaning intended by the speaker –be it a character in particular or the internal author– will be highly conditioned by their access to the context entertained and pointed at by the speaker.

## 2.2 Critical approaches to irony in *celestina*

The work *Celestina*<sup>5</sup> (Fernando de Rojas 1499/1502/ 1502) is one of the masterpieces that mark the transition from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance in Spanish literature. It deals about the tragic love affair between the two young protagonists, Calisto and Melibea, fostered by the cunning plans of the old bawd Celestina.

One of the keystone claims of criticism regarding *Celestina* is that irony is a central aspect of the *author's perspective*, and indeed, this is the thesis proposed in one of the most detailed studies about irony in Rojas' work (Ayllón, 1984). This leads us to hypothesise that several layers of irony may be found in the work, being the most important of them the following: first, irony in the communicative interchanges between or among the different characters; second, and underlying this level, irony as the

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<sup>5</sup> Let us note that the work under analysis is popularly known in Spanish as *La Celestina o Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. When translating the title into English, the role of *La* as part of the title has sometimes become misleading. Partly because of this, critics have recently preferred to refer to the work as *Celestina*, which certainly is applied to the old bawd, one of the main female protagonists of the story. Whinom (1980) already dealt with this.

internal author's perspective, which is communicated to the external audience by means of the introduction of an internal reader in the initial paratext<sup>6</sup> of the work. Within the interactions taking place between or among characters, certain peculiar kinds will be distinguished, namely those which unfold in two different levels: first, the core or central dialogue between the characters; second, a parallel communicative interchange where some of these participants react to what they are being told and reveal their true feelings to the audience in their asides. As we shall see in the analysis, we propose to introduce the notion of *restricted contexts* to account for asides as well as for monologues, in the sense that some of the characters cannot have access to the assumptions entertained by the speaker. Thus, they become another aspect in which communication is established between some of the internal participants and the external readership.

### 2.3 Main forms of irony found in *celestina*: analysis

It may be argued that there has not been any universally accepted classification of irony, as Norman Knox (1972) already pointed out. It appears that each historical period has approached irony under different perspectives, and has consequently tended to classify it in many different ways. Like it also happened with the concept of irony, the earliest attempts to classify irony go back to Classical antiquity. In contrast to Socrates' and Aristotle's approach to irony based on philosophical and ethical grounds, with the Latin authors Cicero or Quintilian the earliest attempts to classify irony began to appear. These will be important, in so far as they will practically become the only classifications of irony until the Romantic period, and are still valid somehow.

Because of the fact that there seems to be no universal classification of irony, we shall focus upon the forms of irony that critics have distinguished in *Celestina* –most importantly, by authors such as Lida de Malkiel (1970, 1962), Ayllón (1984) or Snow (1996). Thus, the following forms of irony have been distinguished:

- anticipatory irony and foreshadowing
- retrospective irony
- dramatic irony
- tragic irony or irony of fate
- comic irony
- irony linked to a discrepancy with a certain state of affairs or linked to a subversion of traditionally assumed values
- deceiving by telling the truth

These will be briefly characterised next. Moreover, instances of each of these forms will be analysed. For practical purposes, the particular examples to be commented upon will be taken from the earliest English translation of the whole of Rojas' *Celestina*, which was signed by James Mabbe (1631).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In this, we follow Genette's terminology (1972), so that the *paratext* may be defined as everything that precedes the development of the story proper.

<sup>7</sup> *Celestina* (Rojas, 1499/1502/ 1502) was soon translated into English in the Elizabethan period, in very different literary forms, which would be best approached as "recreations", rather than translations proper (Murillo 1994, 1992): Rastell's version (1525), written in the form of an *interlude* –edited by Axton (1979)–, and Captain Stevens' *The Bawd of Madrid* (1707), as a narrative piece. Only Mabbe's *Celestine* (1631) is formally similar to Rojas's work. Brault (1960) firstly undertook a survey of the earliest English translations or versions of *Celestina*. Some of these versions have been lost.

Mabbe's translation of *Celestina* is very important, in so far as it remained the only extant translation of Rojas's work into Spanish until the second half of the twentieth century. Besides, the existing contemporary translations which were produced since the decade of the twentieth fifties onwards are based on Mabbe's to a great extent. These are the following: *Celestina*, by Lesley B. Simpson (1955), which is a translation of the earlier *Comedia*, into sixteen acts; *Celestina*, by John Hendricks Singleton (1958), Phyllis Hartnoll (1959), and *The Spanish Bawd*, by J.M. Cohen (1964). Recently, two new translations have been published: one, by Peter Bush (2009), Vice-President of the International Federation of Translators (FIT), in Dedalus Press; another, translated by Margaret Sayers Peden (2009) and edited by Roberto González Echevarría, in Yale University Press.

### **2.3.1 Anticipatory irony and foreshadowing**

The selection of the most representative instances of anticipatory irony and foreshadowing found in the corpus shows that it is a highly important instance of irony in *Celestina*, without which the meaning of the work can hardly be grasped, and which shows the deep pessimism of the author, which is reflected all through the work (Lacarra, 1987-88). It has also been noted that it has an important structural role (Himmelblau, 1968).

Foreshadowing has been defined as follows:

Foreshadowing in a work of fiction is a process of giving the reader an intimation of what is to follow, a prescience of those climatic occurrences toward which plot and characters are developing. It is a method or technique on the part of the creating author, which, especially when he couples it with irony, gives the spectator or reader a pleasurable, mildly Olympian sense of participating in the determining drive toward the peripeteia. (...). Foreshadowing is often ironic. (Kayser Philips 1974: 469).

From the point of view of its analysis from a relevance perspective, it presents the problem that Sperber and Wilson have claimed that anticipatory echoes do not exist, because that would be a contradiction or *reductio ad absurdum*. Nevertheless, were anticipatory echoes accepted as such (as Sperber and Wilson themselves had in their earliest studies of irony), this kind of irony would be accounted for without having to incorporate new aspects in the general theory.

Another problem that anticipatory irony has is probably that many times it cannot be intentional; that is, characters cannot be aware of the consequences of their words. As the outcome –predicted as much as sadly fulfilled– is often tragic, it can be maintained that it is closely related to tragic irony or irony of fate. It can be coped with if Martin's observation (1992) that irony often clashes a conflict between the real world (which is but a subset of the possible worlds) and the possible worlds of expectations is taken into account. However, even though this type of irony is clearly non-ostensive towards the internal addressers and addressees (i.e., the characters of the play), it seems to be the case that a further level of communication between the author and the readers or spectators of the play can be established. At this level, there is communication, and indirect though it may be it expresses an intention on the author's behalf to make a series of assumptions or beliefs manifest to the audience. It may be said that it constitutes on the whole a form of *weakly* ostensive communication, in Sperber and Wilson's sense; assumptions are there for the external addressee to pick. This form of communication, which stands for an upper or different level from the one which takes place between the different characters, can be defined as unidirectional, ostensive, and established between the author and the audience or readership. As it often happens in irony, among the external addressees, a "double circle" is created: on the one hand, those who can infer the consequences unintended by characters; on the other hand, those who fail to do so. Among the latter, a further subdivision may be established, constituted by those who may do so on back-reading. In general terms, it may be said that initially certain expectations are set (*assumptions*) which may either be fulfilled (*confirmation*) or else may be dashed (*abandonment of assumptions*). These relevance-theoretical notions allow us to characterise anticipatory irony.

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Mabbe actually undertook two different translation of Rojas's *Celestina*, which have survived in different critical editions (Kish, 1996, 1989). The first edition and translation rendered by Mabbe, probably composed towards the year 1598, was more literal, and contained notes that enhanced the didactic and moralistic values. It was the 1631 version that systematically substituted pagan elements for the original Christian motives and allusions. Martínez Lacalle (1972) edited the one from the only surviving manuscript, whereas James Fitzmaurice-Kelly (1884) and Warner Allen (1923) produced two different editions taken from the early printing of Mabbe's edition. Allen (1923) also included Rastell's *Interlude*. These editions were also studied by Rosenbach (1903), Houck (1939), Russell (1953 a, b), Guardia (1998, 1971) and Celaya and Guardia (1992). Dorothy Severin (1987) also rendered a critical, bilingual edition which included the original *Celestina* by Rojas and Mabbe's 1631 translation into English.

Joseph Snow (1997: 155) makes reference as well to a third edition of *Celestina* by Mabbe: "*The Rogue, or the Life of Guzmán de Alfarache (...) to which is added the Tragi-Comedy of Calisto and Melibea; represented in Celestina*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. corrected: London: Robert Allot, 1634. BL645.1.12. La TCM [Tragicomedia] ofrecida es la de 1631, publicado por el mismo Allot". Besides, Mabbe's 1631 version was to become adapted for the stage: it was performed at the Crucible Theatre, in Sheffield, in September 1978 (as noted in the "Pregonero" section of *Celestinesca* 2.2 (1978). All this shows the relevance of Mabbe's version nowadays.

The analysis of those instances shows that echoing and distancing oneself from the interlocutor's words may be a possible way to express this form of irony. Even though a deeper analysis remains to be done, it can be predicted that what Sperber and Wilson have termed as "non-echoic" irony may be expressed by means similar or even equivalent to those of echoic irony.

As an instance that may illustrate the previous points, the following may be quoted:

ELICIA (to Sempronio): Out, thou accursed traitor; impostures, pocks, plagues & botches consume and kill thee. Dye thou by the hands of thine enemies, and that for some notorious crime, worthy cruell death, thou maist see thy selfe fall into the rigorous hands of Justice. Ay, Ay me!. (1631: 12; Act I).<sup>8</sup>

SOSIA: Sempronio, and Parmeno!

(...)

SOSIA: Our old companions, our fellowes, our brethren.

TRISTAN: Thou art eyther drunke or mad; or thou bringest some ill newes along with thee.

Why dost thou not tell mee what thou hast to say, concerning these young men?

SOSIA: That they lie slayne in the streete. (1631: 50; Act XIII).

Little can Elicia, at the very beginning of the work, be aware that her words about her lover will be sadly fulfilled in the not-so-far future. It seems obvious that neither has she intended this to come true. Yet, on reading the accumulated instances of foreshadowing that occur throughout the work and which affect most of the important characters –those who will eventually die–, the speaker may entertain certain assumptions and expectations that are confirmed most of the cases. The *confirmation* of assumptions has been pointed at by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) as one of the possible results of a cognitive process in which new information provides further evidence for, and thus strengthens old assumptions. As is well known, one of the ways relevance is approached by those authors is as a combination of old and new information that gives way to cognitive effects. This interaction may result in either contextual effects, or the confirmation of old assumptions or the abandonment of the same.

At the same time, and on the basis of the great accumulation of instances of foreshadowing in the work, we may trace a level of intention that goes beyond and surpasses the communicative intentions of the different characters involved. Instances like the one quoted show that the character who utters words such as those cannot possibly be aware of the implications of her words. Yet, both in the English work and in the Spanish original, we may trace a further *level of communication*, which is superimposed over the different communicative interchanges taking place between the characters or protagonists of the story. This further level is addressed by the *internal author* to the external readership –which also has an internal, explicit correlate in Mabbe's English translation, and is found at the very beginning of the work, as an initial paratext:

**“EL AUTOR A UN SU AMIGO”.**

Vi no sólo ser dulce en su principal ystoria o ficción toda junta, pero aun de algunas sus particularidades salían delectables fonteicas de filosofía; de otras, agradables donayres; de otras, avisos y consejos contra lisonjeros y malos sirvientes y falsas mugeres hechizeras. (...) Para desculpa de lo qual todo, no sólo a vos pero a quantos lo leyeren, ofrezco los siguientes metros. (ST: 20).

In Mabbe's version, we also find an *Epistle Dedicatory*, “To My Worthy and Much Esteemed Friend, Sir Thomas Richardson, Knight”, who must have been a kind of author's sponsor or patron:

All which, though I know to be true, yet doubt I not, but it will meete with some detractors, who like dogges that barke by custome, will exclaime against the whole worke, because some part of it seemeth somewhat more obscene, then may sute with a ciuill stile: which as I

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<sup>8</sup> In the different quotations, different fragments will be italicised, in particular, regarding those aspects that we have found significant for the particular form of irony under study. Therefore, italics will be our own.

not deny; so since it is written reprehensively, & not instructively, I see no reason why they should more abstain from reading a great deal of good, because they must pick it out of that which is bad; (...).

(...)

So the reading of *Celestina*, to those that are profane, is as poison to their hearts; but to the chaste, and honest mind, a preservative against such inconveniences as occur in the world. (1631: A3).

This passage makes the presence of the internal author manifest to the external readership. In the two works, what is significant is that this internal author enjoys a much wider context or cognitive environment than that of the characters. Therefore, even though the latter may be unaware of the ultimate consequences and implications of their words, in passages like the one quoted before, this internal author behaves like the one who handles and pulls the strings of the characters' destinies.

This form of irony may also be shown to be related to tragedy as well as to tragic irony, in the sense that both seem to stand in a mutual relationship of *potentiality* and *factuality*. In the framework of relevance theory, then, the foreshadowing of tragedy stands for a set of contextual assumptions progressively strengthened and finally confirmed in the tragic denouement of events. The fact that foreshadowing has been found throughout the work, from its very beginning, and not only as we approach the inevitable tragic flow of events, seems to have reinforced the feasibility of this hypothesis, as well as the meaning of the repetitions of the involuntary references to the anticipation of tragedy.

In general, in instances of foreshadowing two different contexts may be distinguished: on the one hand, what may be termed as the *immediate context*, in which the irony may perhaps not be perceived, and in which only the more literal or propositional meaning can be retrieved, at least on first reading, even though if seen from the perspective of the very end, or by more acute readers, the ironically intended meaning (at least by the author addressing the reader or external addressee) may be grasped as well; on the other hand, the more *remote context*, which is unintentionally pointed at by the speaker, (though not by the author) and where the ultimate consequences, implicatures or contextual effects are to be derived. This seems to confirm the assumption that in the processing of irony, and what has been traditionally termed as "figurative language" in general, the addressee's grasping of the intended meaning does not necessarily cancel out the more "literal meaning" which must have been retrieved at some definite stage of the interpretative process.

### **2.3.2 Retrospective irony**

What seems to be peculiar about *retrospective irony* is that certain utterances may not have been intended by the speaker as ironic in the immediate, current context which either she the addressee may have pointed at or selected at the moment of speaking. Therefore, these words may have been ironic in neither an intended nor an unintended form in the smallest accessible context. However, the propositional content expressed may be denied or contradicted later on. If the addressee, either internal or usually external, is able to retain this content in his *short-term memory*, he may be able to associate the contextual implications of what has been said with the unfolding of the later situation. Thus, it may be the case that neither context is ironic in itself, but only if they are brought to connect. Hence, the first situation may be read as ironical perhaps only in the light of the later development of events. Sometimes, we may find a certain correspondence of anticipatory irony or foreshadowing with a later instance of retrospective irony. On some other occasions, however, the link may be much weaker.

It may be argued, then, that retrospective irony brings two different contexts to connect, even though this may not be accessible to all readers. The link of the final situation to what has come before is essential. From the point of view of relevance theory, we may hypothesise that this form of irony links a definite context,  $C_1$ , with a previous set of assumptions or initial context,  $C_0$ , which enriches the contextual implications of the former. Furthermore, without having the addressee this initial context,  $C_0$ , in mind, the ironic effect may be lost altogether. This final context may be more fully enjoyed if its relationship with the initial context is perceived.

From the point of view of relevance theory, the question that probably arises to mind is whether this form of irony can be considered *echoic* or *ostensive*, to what extent, and if so, how can *echo* be

characterised in this case. As there is a relationship of contiguity between the two contexts, C<sub>0</sub> and C<sub>1</sub>, it may be worthwhile to attempt to characterise the relationship between these two contexts in a more precise way. So far, it has been concluded that there is a layer of meaning in C<sub>1</sub> which may only be spotted in connection to the previous context, C<sub>0</sub>, and it is specifically in this sense that C<sub>1</sub> may be said to be *partially contextually dependent* upon C<sub>0</sub>. The echo may be thus understood in terms of a *reminder* or a *contextual assumption* that leads to a certain interpretation.

In this case, therefore, there is an initial set of assumptions not echoic strictly speaking, and this is perhaps the most remarkable feature of this form of irony, which distinguishes it from other more typical kinds. However, these assumptions will crucially be echoed either by what is said later on or by the future development of events. The main feature is, therefore, how strongly these assumptions cling to former assumptions or utterances which were probably *not intended to be ironic*. Therefore, as a whole, it may be argued that retrospective irony is not intended to be echoic or ostensive, from the point of view of the actants directly involved in its production. As in other forms of unintentional irony, instances of retrospective irony may be intended as such at a deeper or different level of communication, only to be perceived by some of the members of the external audience. Sometimes, when missed by the audience, perhaps no substantial variation of the grasping of meaning may be produced. Its perception, however, adds further possibilities of enjoyment to the audience, and helps them to build their own hypotheses about the unfolding of the action. In the same way, there may be no explicit intention by any of the speakers to produce an ironic utterance, the propositional contents of which they seek to distance themselves from. On the contrary, the ironic meaning expressed may be not only *unintentional*, but also *incidental*.

As in some other forms of irony, we may find different levels of communication: thus, on the one hand, the characters or speakers may be unaware of the ultimate implications of their words; on the other hand, there may be a further level of communication, initiated by the narrator or by the internal author, and addressed to the external readership.

Another point about retrospective irony is perhaps its *weak level of manifestness*, as well as the setting of at least two (if not more) different levels of perception: that is to say, as we have said before, the initial context may not be ironic in itself, and as such, there is usually no intention by anybody or manifestation by anything that may have led the audience, either internal or external, to interpret that context as ironic. Thus, if at all, the initial context may only be perceived as ironic when related to the final or triggered context. As always, such a relationship may be wholly missed by part of the audience, and as a result, no ironic meaning is then traced. Another possibility of interpretation is that the irony weakly intended or manifested may only be perceived by part of the external audience *a posteriori*, that is, when the initial context, C<sub>0</sub>, is seen as related to or in the light of the final context, C<sub>1</sub>.

As an example of retrospective irony that illustrates the previous points, the following may be quoted:

AREUSA: (...) had it not beene for mee, thou hadst beene hang'd long since. Thrice haue I freed from the gallowes; foure times haue I disimpawnd thee, first from this, and then from that Ordinary, when as thou might'st haue rotted in prison, had I not redeem'd thee, and paid thy debts. O that I should haue any thing to doe with such a Villaine? that I should be such a foole? that I should haue any affiance in such a false - hearted, white liuer'd slaue? that I should beleue him and his lies? that I should once suffer him to come within my doores? What a diuell is there good in him? (...) (1631: 162; Act XV).

AREUSA: Well, well, well; now trust mee no more, if I vnderstood thee. But what is it thou wouldst haue mee doe? you know that my friend went yesterday with his Captaine to the wars; would you haue me to wrong him?

CELESTINA: O! take heed, great wrong, I promise you.

AREUSA: Yes Indeed, for hee supplies all my wants; hee will see I shall lacke nothing; hee holds me honest; he does loue mee, and vses mee with that respect, as if I were his Lady and Mistresse. (1631: 91; Act VII).

On coping with the fragment corresponding to Act XV, where Areusa addresses her lover, and the context makes it manifest that he has been living at her expense, readers may rejoice if they remember what the woman had told Celestina about him. Areusa may not have intended explicitly to echo her own words, and she has not sought to distance herself from her previous attitude towards her lover. But the external reader may rejoice at the great difference and *clash of expectations* between her initial portrait of her lover and the argument that she holds with him later on.

### **2.3.3 Dramatic irony**

Dramatic irony has been usually defined as the spectators' awareness of some facts which remain unknown for a certain character, and which moreover will crucially determine the latter's future or fortune. As Sedgewick noted, "dramatic irony, in brief, is the sense of contradiction felt by spectators of a drama who see a character acting in ignorance of his condition" (1960: 48-49). It appears, hence, that not all characters may happen to have the same degree of access to the context signalled or envisaged by the speaker. It follows that some are more bound than others to become the targets of irony. In *Celestina*, moreover, it may be the case that irony has not been intended by any character at all, but yet she may be a victim of the circumstances which she cannot control and yet are nevertheless crucial for her fate. As a result, the character fails to be aware, or indeed, cannot be aware of the ultimate implications of her words, and in some cases, hardly can the external addressee be aware at all. It is probably the author himself, as a *deus ex machina*, who may predict, and indeed, devise the furthest consequences that await the different characters.

It appears that the meaning of this form of irony is linked to the way in which it is perceived by the different characters. For this reason, the relevance notions of *context accessibility* and of *context choice* may help to shed some light upon the way to account for dramatic irony. These notions are explained next.

In the relevance-theoretical framework –for instance, by authors such as Wilson (1994); Sperber and Wilson (1986/ 1995, 1987); Wilson and Sperber (2004); or Blakemore (forth.; 1992)–, it is believed that context stands for a cognitive entity formed by a set of assumptions. An *accessible context* is one in which "a sufficient number of contextual implications can be derived" (Sperber and Wilson 1982: 77). The accessibility of an assumption is defined as the "ease or difficulty with which an assumption can be retrieved (from memory) or constructed (on the basis of clues in the stimulus currently being processed). Accessibility is a matter of degree and is in a constant state of flux depending on, among other things, what is occupying attention at any given moment" (Carston and Uchida 1998: 295). In turn, the *choice of context* means that, depending on the accessibility that the communicator may have to the set of assumptions, and hence, the context envisaged by their interlocutor, the addressee may have the possibility to choose the context that he believes that the speaker has pointed at, so that the utterance is meaningful. Such a choice will be constrained by the organisation of the individual's encyclopaedic memory, and the mental activity in which he is engaged.

In the case of dramatic irony, the addressee has generally not even the possibility to access the context being pointed at by the speaker, and therefore, he cannot possibly have chosen the set of assumptions that constitute that context, all of which results in misunderstanding. On the contrary, it is possible that at least a subset of the external audience may enjoy the whole thing, if they are able to grasp the contextual implications intended by the speaker and *infer* the communicative intention intended by the speaker. However, this again may not be the case of the whole audience.

In the same way, we can also analyse this form of irony as a clash between the information encoded, the decodification to be carried out by the addressee and the sort of inferences that he must make (or should have made) in order to reach the interpretation intended by the speaker.

An interesting case for the account of dramatic irony in the relevance-theoretical framework is constituted by the contrast that may be found between *asides* and *monologues*. *Asides* have been defined as follows:

ASIDE: In drama a few words or a short passage spoken in an undertone or to an audience. It is a theatrical convention and by convention the words are presumed inaudible to other

characters on stage; unless of course the aside be between two characters and therefore not meant for anyone else who may be present. (Cuddon 1976: 59).

So as to cope with *asides* and *monologues* in the relevance-theoretic framework, we propose to introduce the notion of *restricted contexts*. It may be hypothesised that this notion will be particularly helpful for the analysis of *asides* and *monologues*. This notion will be proposed to capture our intuitions that some contexts may be accessed and presented as accessible only to some characters, whereas the speaker herself may deliberately hinder the accessibility to these assumptions to other participants. In contrast to the *asides*, in her conversations with other characters, the speaker may *echo* the assumptions made manifest in the previous context of the aside or monologue. It is only the external readership, apart from perhaps some of the characters involved, who may grasp this level of reality.

As far as *asides* may have contextual effects in the subsequent dialogue, they may be said to share some of the distinctive traits of *echoic* or *ostensive irony*. We should like to argue, therefore, that it is in *asides*, as they appear in *Celestina*, where a certain *coalescence* of *echoic* and *non-echoic irony* may be found. They may be said to be *echoic* in the sense that the speaker tends to distance herself from the contents or attitudes that she herself will make manifest in the subsequent dialogue. At the same time, in so far as the addressee tends to miss the whole point aimed at by the speaker, on account of his inaccessibility to this *restricted context*, they may be said to share features of dramatic irony.

Instances of this form of irony may be the following:

CALISTO: O my loyall seruants! O my chiefest followers! O my faithfull Secretaries and Counsellours in all my affaires. Can it be, that this should be true? O vnfortunate Calisto! thou art dishonoured as long as thou hast a day to liue; what shall become of thee, hauing lost such a paire of trusty seruants? (...)

(1631: 150-51; Act XIII).

SEMPRONIO: But you can vse Calisto worse; (...) If thou hadst beene my friend (as thou professes) when I stood in need of thee, thou should'st then haue fauoured mee, and made shew of thy loue, and assisted Celestina in all that had beene for my profit, and not to driue in at euery word a nayle of malice. (...)

PARMENO: (...) Nay, thou wilt not giue mee leaue to tell thee, how much I am thine, how much I will further thee in all I am able, how much I repent me of that which is past, and what good counsell and reprehensions I haue receuied of Celestina, and all in fauour of thee, and thy good, and the good of vs all. (...)

(1631: 98, my italics; Act VIII).

The firstly quoted fragment corresponds to the moment when Calisto praises those whom he had always believed to have been 'loyal' servants, at the time of their execution at the hands of justice, after their murdering the old Celestina. This shows that he has been unable to come to terms with reality. One of the reasons that accounts for this relies on the fact that his servants used to talk always in the restricted contexts of their *asides*. If requested by their master to clarify their points, they had usually answered in a totally different fashion, either denying their previous words, or else providing their master with a response unrelated to the former.<sup>9</sup>

The second fragment refers to a previous communicative interchange between the two servants, which shows how they had ended by becoming allies in their attempts to plot against their master. It shows, therefore, how unreliable the two of them had become, no matter if Calisto will never be aware of this –not even after their deaths, as the first part of the quotation illustrates.

There are plenty of instances of this form of irony throughout the work where external readers are offered the opportunity to enjoy a much wider cognitive environment to the one which the characters involved have access to. This surely results in a feeling of satisfaction for readers, who may be aware

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<sup>9</sup> The use of *asides* in *Celestina* has been studied by authors such as De Miguel Martínez (1996), Cassan Moudon (1987), Finch (1982), or Bataillon (1980).

even of the tragic fate that ultimately awaits most of the characters, of which they are unaware, and which has been repeatedly foreshadowed throughout the work.

### **2.3.4 Tragic irony or irony of fate**

Similarly to dramatic irony, the character is here unaware of what may befall upon her. What may be regarded as peculiar of tragic irony is that the “hero” makes a mistake which will bring only disaster to her (and perhaps to others, as well). In the work, this is particularly true of the shrewd Celestina, who nevertheless fails to see the implications of her actions only in what will bring her to the grave: she fosters the friendship of Parmeno and Sempronio, and they will be closer than ever in plotting and executing her death. In this sense, Celestina becomes a tragic figure who makes a fatal mistake which will be her ruin:

CELESTINA: How wittily this Asse thinks he hath spoken! I sweare to thee, by the reuerence of this my old age, had these words beene spoken after dinner, I should haue said, that wee had all of vs taken a cuppe too much; that we had beene all drunke. Art thou well in thy wits, Sempronio? What has thy remuneration to doe with my reward? Thy payment with my merit? Am I bound to buy you weapons? Must I reparaire your losses, and supply your wants? Now I thinke vpon it; let me be hang'd, or dye any other death, if thou hast not tooke hold of a little word, that carelessly slipt out of my mouth the other day, as we came along the street; for as (I remember) I then told you, that what I had was yours; and that I would neuer be wanting vnto you in any thing, to the vtmost of my poore ability; and that if Fortune did prosper my businesse with your Master, that you should lose nothing by it; but you know (Sempronio) that words of compliment and kindenesse, are not obligatory, nor binde me to doe, as you would haue mee; (...) But now (my Sonnes) that I may come a little neerer vnto you both, and speake home to the point: If your Master gaue mee any thing, what he gaue me, that (you must thinke) is mine. (...) I get my liuing by my trade and my trauell; you, yours, with recreation and delight; and therefore you are not to expect equall recompence, inioying your seruice with pleasure, as I, who goe performing it with paines: (...) And if this will not content you, I cannot doe withall. To your owne harme be it. (1631: 142 -45; Act XII)

This fragment corresponds to Celestina’s words, addressed to the servants Pármeno and Sempronio, where she refuses to share the booty that Calisto has given to the old bawd. And the thing is, and this is precisely what is tragic about Celestina is that, having she been a real expert throughout her life in inferring and anticipating the others' intentions, that skill is going to leave her precisely when she would have needed it most. Ayllón has particularly drawn attention to this in the following terms:

It is ironic that Celestina, who usually knows and sees the motives of others, blinded by her own greed, fails to see the danger where she is in (...) With devastating irony, the author presents us with the most ironic character of the Tragicomedia, Celestina, unable to see reality as it is just a moment before her being murdered. Celestina, who has always lived to see with clear eyes and look deeply into reality, dies when she fails to see reality the way it is.

(Ayllón, 1984: 203-4, my translation).

An interesting and peculiar feature about these communicative interchanges between the unaware speaker, generally Celestina, and her slaughterers may also be noted. Parmeno and Sempronio sometimes make use of illocutionary acts that are connected with the tragic ending that is being continually foreshadowed, threats in particular. However, as these generally occur in a restricted context, such as asides, they cannot even be accessed by the victim, and are only weakly implicated and left to the external readership's responsibility in deriving them.

At the same time, we have also found out that a certain preference for repetition of recurrent *mottos* can be associated with the tragic flow of events, both at a thematic and even at a linguistic level, which shows that this *repetition* is intended to bring certain contextual effects. Thus, utterances such as “what I

had was yours”, or “and that I would neuer be wanting vnto you in any thing, to the vtmost of my poore ability; and that if Fortune did prosper my businesse with your Master, that you should lose nothing by it;” seem to recur in the most climatic moments of the work associated with tragedy.

This also shows that the semantic meaning of tragedy can be expressed in an echoic way, and that the sources for echo in this case may be either close in the immediate context, or else more distant, but it is precisely the external readership's identification of the latter that may bring them extra contextual effects and the satisfaction, as well as the horror, of being aware of a tragic destiny which cannot be retrieved by the own victim.

At the same time, and probably because of the contextual strengthening described above, this form of irony may coalesce in a very close *cognitive environment* with some of the simplest forms of echoic irony, such as the speaker's repetition of the same words uttered by her interlocutor so as to distance herself from them.

In the climatic moments of *Celestina's* tragic death, the (mis)communication “established” between herself and the servants is characterised by the ostensive pointing of each of them to very different contexts. As shown in the analysis, beyond this level of irony there is the bawd's innermost tragedy, unable as she is at the most crucial moments of her life to see beyond the other character's intentions.

### **2.3.5 Comic irony**

Despite the fact that the comic aspects of *Celestina* were but too often neglected by a great part of twentieth century criticism, characterised by the overemphasis of the tragic side and intention of the work, as more recent studies of the last decades of the century showed, as well as what might be considered the exceptional forerunner of this consideration (Gilman, 1956; Severin 1994, 1989; Russell, 1991), comedy may be regarded just as important as tragedy in *Celestina*. Thus, Severin's central thesis is that irony brings both tragedy and comedy to connect, and for this reason it may be said to have an important structural role (Dunn, 1984). “For Rojas”, she argues, “*comedy* implied not only dialogical form but comic content as well” (1978-79: 275). Indeed, to give just a few examples, characters may be more or less humorous, even about crucial aspects, and paradoxically enough, they may be even comic at one stage about those facts which will be closest to the tragic denouement of events. Thus, for instance, the comic nature of Calisto has been emphasised by critics (Lacarra, 1989; Martin, 1972).

For Severin, the problem seems to be that the perception of the humorous may vary throughout time, in such a way that what may be considered comic at one moment in history may not be so at a different one, and this may indeed have been the case about *Celestina*: “Tastes in comedy have clearly changed over the past few centuries and what was then considered to be amusing or hilarious may now seem to be cruel and at times unbearable. Alternately, we may now need footnotes to explain the jokes to us” (1978-79: 276). Another problem, in the opinion of this author, is that there is a great deal of cruelty in the humour of this work.

Severin refers to four main categories of humour that may be found in the text: verbal humour, parody, comic borrowings from the theatre and satire. Once more, the main question to be answered in the present work is whether such forms may be regarded as echoic or ostensive, and to what extent.

One of the sources of humour in the work may be related precisely to that form of echoic, but unintended irony provoked by the speaker's unawareness of the implications of her words. In the framework of relevance theory, we have accounted for this as being based on the speaker's inaccessibility to the context, which results in misunderstanding. As the analysis has shown, this is particularly challenging for the external readership as well as for the translator, who must not only perceive this meaning, but also convey it in the target language in such a way that it may be grasped but without demanding any further processing efforts.

Another source of comedy may be provoked by the contrast between asides and dialogues, as the character target of the mockery is then ridiculed. This is particularly so if the transition from asides to the subsequent dialogue is mastered by an external character who manipulates the contents expressed in both.

A particularly problematic aspect of the original is the contextual coalescence of the tragic and the comic, which leads to the comic of the absurd and the incongruous. This has been found to be one of the most difficult aspects to cope with by the versions under analysis. Thus, we have found that sometimes even what may be interpreted as comic in the smallest, most accessible context, may be much more disquieting, to say the very least, and even tragic, or at least foreshadowing tragedy, in a more distant context. In some of these instances, comic irony seems to occupy an intermediate position between the ostensive and the non-ostensive. Another possible merging of the comic and the tragic in the original work has been found to be much more recurrent in the Western literary tradition, namely, the use of comic scenes as a form of tension relief previous to a much more climatic scene.

The latter is the case of the scene that we have selected, which corresponds to the first time that Celestina visits Melibea, Calistos's object of desire. Whereas the maid Lucrecia has been able to recognise Celestina without further problems, this will not be the case at all with Alisa, Melibea's mother. We shall see that even if her reaction seems to be comic in the most immediate context, its consequences can already be felt to be much more disquieting, and indeed will be so in the long term, in another further strange merging of the comic and the tragic that can be traced in so many other parts in the work:

ALISA: Hi, hi, hi! Now beshrew your fingers; O my heart! O my sides! I am not able to stand for laughing, to see the loathing which thou hast of this poore old woman, should make thee ashamed to name her vnto me. Now I call her to minde; Goe too; you are a wagge; No more of this. Shee (poore foule) is come to begge somewhat of mee. Bid her come vp. (1631: 47).

It is certainly ambiguous to see Alisa's reaction: if she has actually recognised Celestina, why should she allow her to come in? This is actually an aspect that recurs with her husband, Pleberio. Facts such as those qualify them to be the wrong kind of guardians for their daughter. In the case of this scene, even though the context is of an easy-going mother, it is obvious that if she had not permitted Celestina to interview with her daughter Melibea, perhaps the action would have unfolded in a totally different manner. 10

### **2.3.6 Irony linked to a discrepancy with a certain state of affairs or linked to a subversion of traditionally assumed values**

One of the aspects of irony which remains to be clarified by relevance theoreticians is perhaps the role that mutual knowledge has in communication, and hence, in the grasping of irony. This is particularly important in those contexts in which there is a subversion of traditionally accepted values, which is a crucial aspect of irony and satire in *Celestina*. In a sense, this form can be incorporated in the echoic description of irony, since the speaker echoes more or less indirectly a set of assumed values, which would be recognisable by the external audience, from which she clearly distances herself by openly criticising them. It will also play an important role in the ways in which some of the main characters of the work are depicted, which, as we know, is done through their own words, actions, and also in an important way, by what other characters say of a particular character. This is probably one of the main sources of *perspectivism* in the work, which is important for the ironic codes at work. Every meaning is relative, and constructed by particular characters under specific circumstances, and to be thus interpreted in a different way by those characters and also readers who adopt a different point of view.

*Celestina* provides us with a wide range of the social types and groups of its time (Rodríguez Puértolas 1976, 1972; Maravall, 1964). We saw in the example of comic irony how the guardians ignored the roles that they should have fulfilled towards the "young generation". Likewise, we can also trace instances where Calisto attacks the judge that has sentenced his servants to death, but just on

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<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact, this will actually be the case in the earliest English adaptation of *Celestina* into English: in Rastell's version (ca. 1525), after Melibea's interview with Celestina, the action is interrupted by Danio, who happens to be Melibea's father and who has had access to the action through a *dream*—a commonly used convention in the English literature of that time. No trace of Alisa, Melibea's mother, or of Lucrecia, can be found in that English version, where the main characters introduce themselves, following the conventions of the interlude.

account on the damage that this brings to his honour. In contrast, a character like Celestina will die begging for justice. The piece that we have selected for analysis is also located after the death of these two servants, when Calisto goes to visit his lover once more. Two other footmen accompany him, Sosia and Tristan:

SOSIA: Tristan, wee must goe very softly, and not speake a word. For, iust about this time, rise your rich men, your couetous money-mongers, your penny-fathers, your Venereans and Loue-sicke soules, such as our Master; your day-labourers, your plough-men and your shepheards; who about this time vnpinne their sheepe, and bring them to their sheeppotts to be milk't. And it may be, they may heare some word escape vs, which may wrong either Calisto's or Melibea's honour. (1631: 156-57; Act XIV).

As the quotation shows, the servants refer explicitly and unmistakably to the preservation of the honour of their masters, which at the time was closely related to fame. No trace of verbal irony can be spotted in the servant's words; what is ironic is the sharp contrast between this careful attitude of the servants, on the one hand, and the absolutely mindless disregard about it of their masters. Besides, another level of irony concerns the sort of *expectations* that may have been entertained regarding the behaviour of each of these social groups and which are sharply contradicted by those facts.

All this means that this form of irony usually goes beyond the words that are literally expressed, which perhaps –as in the previous instance– may not even be ironic themselves. Irony has then to be sought at the level of that set of beliefs, ideology or shared values, tacitly adopted by a certain social community, and which the author has deliberately chosen to subvert.

The fact that the members of these social groups, servants and prostitutes, tend to feel despise towards their masters, makes it feasible for them to make use of echoic irony so as to distance themselves from them. This is one way in which these communicative instances are echoic, but from the point of view of the contents expressed, it is in relation to the assumed or taken-for-granted values that they are echoic.

Therefore, it may be argued that this essentially semantic or ideological form of irony can be said to be ostensive or echoic at the two levels of communication that have been distinguished throughout the work: between the different characters, on the one hand; and between the internal author and the external readership, on the other hand. The conclusion that can be reached is that this is not a specific form of irony, but rather, a particular semantic set of echoic or ostensive irony which is intended to communicate and criticise a certain set of moral values or ideology.

### **2.3.7 Deceiving by telling the truth**

This is a resource typical of Spanish drama of the Golden Age period, which is already present in *Celestina*. In this case, it is clear that the speaker is not ironic because she speaks the contrary of what she actually thinks, but indeed, she is ironic because she tells what she actually believes. The ironic import will be due to the addressee's misunderstanding of the meaning intended by the speaker, and should be accounted for in terms of context mismatch and context choice and accessibility of assumptions. The definition itself, which combines "lies" and "truth" seems to challenge, or be at least an exception to the traditional, rhetorical definitions of irony, which usually are expressed as "meaning the opposite/something different from what is said".

It appears, then, that the proposals put forward by some of the most representative contemporary frameworks to irony, of which relevance theory is a remarkable instance, which emphasise the aspect of *attitude* to cope with irony, may stand for a more promising explanation of this phenomenon. An example found in the work under analysis follows:

SEMPRONIO: (...) Me thinks I heare some bodies feete mooue aboue: Who is it?

ELICIA: Who is it? One of my sweet hearts.

SEMPRONIO: Nay, like inough I easily beleuee it.

ELICIA: Nay, it is true: Goe vp and see else.

SEMPRONIO: I goe.

CELESTINA: Come hither (my son) come along with me, let this foole alone, for shee is idle-headed, and almost out of her little wits; such thought hath she taken for thy absence.

Regard not what she saies, for she will tell you a thousand slim slam tales; Come, come with me, and let vs talke. Let vs spend the time thus in idleness.

SEMPRONIO: But I pray, who is that aboute?

CELESTINA: Would you know who?

SEMPRONIO: I would.

CELESTINA: A Wench recommended vnto me by a Fryer. (1631:12; Act I)

We propose to approach this form of irony as a particular type of dramatic irony, as a character becomes the target or victim mainly because of his unawareness and impossibility to grasp the context intended by the speaker, who echoically distances herself from the state of affairs. The speaker introduces a true state of affairs, but in such a way to deceive the addressee, who is very much likely to believe it false, if only because the whole situation presents a certain risk or challenge to the speaker, as it is not really favourable for her.

The analysis has also shown that, in contrast to other forms of irony, the external audience may be just as shocked as the victim, as their cognitive environment is just as restricted as the latter. However, in contrast to the victim, when the situation is resolved, they may feel relieved to see the outcome, and contrast it with the unfolding of the situation. If they are able to do so, it is here that their distance –and advantage– over the victim is more strongly felt. In the instances analysed, the resolution phase is made possible thanks to the participation of an external agent, a role that in the work usually corresponds to Celestina herself. What she does is, basically, to make up for the whole situation, and find a balance between the speaker's description of the actual state of affairs, and the hypothetical perception of the wrong situation that the victim must accept as the only true and valid one. The result of this participation has been found to be that the victim is cheated twice: by telling him both the truth, which he resists to believe, and a lie, which he finally accepts.

It may be argued that, just as it stands for a peculiar, exceptional case within the mainstream of the traditional approaches to irony, it can be coped with in the framework of relevance theory as the speaker's intentional purpose by distancing herself not from truth, or an actual state of affairs, but from a hypothetical world which the victim is made to believe as the real one and vice versa. Its interest lies, therefore, precisely, in what is ostensibly made manifest, which confirms the actual state of affairs, but which is presented in such a weak form as to make it unreliable or unbelievable.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

All in all, therefore, the purpose of the present work has been to attempt to offer an analysis of the forms of irony which may be regarded as non-ostensive or non-echoic, taking into consideration that they seem to be associated to some of the types of irony most characteristic of literary pieces, as Rojas' work (ca.1499/ ca. 1502) –and its English translation undertaken by Mabbe (1631)– suggests. In this sense, our central hypotheses may be summarised as follows. The distinction between echoic and non-echoic irony should be best approached in terms of degree, as a *continuum*. If irony is seen as an aspect of communication, this means that, as relevance theory shows, it is not based only upon a process of codification and decodification of information, but also and most importantly, upon inference. It is the latter that will enable the addressee to grasp the speaker's communicative intention.

The process just explained occurs in a certain *context*. One of the main contributions of relevance theory is the consideration of context as a cognitive entity, which will be chosen by the participants in any communicative interaction, depending on their accessibility to the assumptions made manifest in it. Likewise, and as a consequence of the differences in choice and accessibility, relevance theory postulates different *levels of communication* between addressers and addressees. All these elements can

be traced in the works under study, and have been the guiding principles to propose an explanation within the relevance-theoretical framework of those forms of irony not accounted for so far.

The conclusions reached seem to confirm that ostension in irony is best understood as a continuum, in terms of degree, just as is the case in communication in general, and also that it cannot be restricted to its verbal manifestations. Nevertheless, we must admit that these results are heavily constrained by the *corpus* under consideration in the present study. Therefore, wider and more substantial research of a greater number of works is required so as to reach more conclusive evidence and broader results.

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### A. A note on the works under study

Celestina was essentially produced into two different versions: as a Comedia of sixteen Acts, towards the year 1499; and then, as a Tragicomedia of twenty-one Acts, towards the year 1502. Different copies or versions of each appeared: of the Comedia, Burgos, 1499 –a copy which has been preserved at the Hispanic Society of América (Serés, 2000); Toledo, 1500; or Sevilla, 1501; of the Tragicomedia, Salamanca, 1502; Zaragoza, 1507; or Valencia, 1514. In our study, we have followed the most recent critical edition of the work, conducted by Francisco Rico (Barcelona, Crítica, 2000).

As for Mabbe's translation, we have followed a copy of the edition found at the Bodleian Library (Oxford), being its complete title: *The Spanish Bawd, Represented in Celestina: or the Tragicke-Comedy of Calisto and Melibea, Wherein is contained, besides the pleasantnesse and sweetnesse of the Stile, many Philosophicall Sentences, and profitable Instructions necessary for the younger sort: Shewing the deceits and subtilties housed in the bosomes of false seruants, and Cunny-catching Bawds.*

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