

**Deceptive Truth and Its Relationship to Irony in  
Six *Exemplos* from Don Juan Manuel's *El conde Lucanor***

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Juan Manuel mentions the “verdad engañosa” in *El conde Lucanor* (ECL) on two occasions, in Exemplo V “De lo que contesció a un raposo con un cuervo que tenié un pedaço de queso en el pico” and in Exemplo XXVI “De lo que contesció al árbol de la Mentira.” In Exemplo V, Patronio intervenes in the middle of his story to admonish the Conde that the crow’s intentions are deceitful even though its reasoning is truthful: “et, señor conde Lucanor, parat mientes que, maguer que la entención del raposo era para engañar al cuervo, que siempre las sus razones fueron con verdat. Et set cierto que los engaños et daños mortales siempre son los que se dizen con verdat engañosa” (39).<sup>1</sup> At the same time, both Exemplos V and XXVI have endings in which one of the characters receives something other than what was expected, suggesting the presence of irony. Hence one could justifiably ask if there is a relationship between the deceptive truth –as one might translate “verdad engañosa”– and irony.

By means of a four-part study, this paper will show that the deceptive truth is effectively a type of irony. First, in order to broaden our understanding of the “verdad engañosa,” it will be convenient to look briefly at the deceptive truth as it appears in the early literature of Spain. Second, our attention will turn to irony, particularly, what sort of irony we are looking for in ECL and from where this type of irony comes. Third, we will examine all of the pertinent *exemplos* in ECL to determine how closely the deceptive truth and irony are related. In addition to Exemplos V and XXVI, wherein the deceptive truth is mentioned explicitly, one can make the case that the same device is present in at least four more *exemplos*: XX, XXVII, XLII, XLV. Finally, our conclusions will suggest the motives for which Juan Manuel uses the device to advance his didactic purposes.

I

George Northrup surveys the use of the term “verdad engañosa” as it relates to Spanish Golden Age literature in his “Deceiving with the Truth” (487-89). He includes Lope de Vega in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, Juan de Luna, Francisco de Quevedo, Mateo Alemán, and Baltasar Gracián. Northrup did not consider Hispanic authors from the medieval period although he may have been pointed in that direction since Gracián mentions his predilection for the 14<sup>th</sup> century Juan Manuel on several occasions in his *Agudeza y arte del ingenio* (e.g., 330). Northrup may have defined his

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<sup>1</sup> All my references to ECL in this paper will be from the edition of Guillermo Serés.

scope in this way because he approaches the concept as it appears in the following verses by Lope:

El engañar con la verdad es cosa  
que ha parecido bien, como lo usava  
en todas sus comedias Miguel Sánchez,  
digno por la invención desta memoria.  
Siempre el hablar equívoco ha tenido,  
y aquella incertidumbre anfibológica,  
gran lugar en el vulgo, porque piensa  
que él solo entiende lo que el otro dize. (493)

For a definition of the deceptive truth, Northrup refers us to Morel Fatio in his commentary on Lope's *Arte nuevo de hazer comedias*:

Ce procédé ingénieux et qui réussissait auprès du public espagnol habitué au procédé inverse, c'est-à-dire à entendre des pièces dont les auteurs s'efforçaient de cacher soigneusement le dénouement, de tromper le spectateur en l'égarant, [...], Le public ne croyait pas à une exposition qui laissait apercevoir le dénouement, et le poète donc, *en disant vrai*, trompait le spectateur et obtenait ainsi le résultat voulu, qui était de tenir jusqu'à la fin de la pièce ce public en haleine et indécis. (402)

In this context, “la verdad engañosa” is framed in a theatrical sense whereby early on in the performance the audience is presented with the denouement of which the characters on stage are ignorant. The playwright counts on the audience to doubt that the author would give away the ending ahead of time. Thus they apprehend the truth but doubt it because of their expectations regarding how a storyline is constructed. And so they are deceived by the truth.

This dramatic technique shares the “hablar equívoco” of the agent of deception and the “incertidumbre anfibológica” of its victim with the prose device in Juan Manuel. But beyond this, the theatrical trick that Lope attributes to Miguel Sánchez is not the same as the “verdad engañosa” to which Juan Manuel refers. The latter involves a deception played out by two characters in which one character seeks to benefit at the expense of the other. On occasion it invokes the participation of a wider audience but this is not always the case. A simple definition of the “verdad engañosa” as it appears in ECL is to lie and to deceive another with the truth. This is possible inasmuch as a given utterance may contain diverse meanings that when taken on only one level represent the truth. It is on the hidden secondary and tertiary levels that one discovers intent to deceive. Don Juan Manuel calls it the “mentira treble,” the most complex of lies because of its subtlety, as well as “mortalmente engañosa.” The latter expression must have meant something on the order of “terribly deceiving” since its

effects are not truly mortal, as in Exemplo V where the concept is first introduced in the work. The effect of the lie there is that the crow opens its mouth and loses the cheese. Menéndez Pidal says that the “mentira treble” from ECL is “la más *temible* de todas las mentiras” (italics mine; 119). Since what is stated is superficially true, if the audience is not attentive, they can also be unwittingly deceived. Thus one explains the heads up (“parat mientes que”) that the author provides to the reader/audience in Exemplo V.

As an early reader of Juan Manuel, Gracián may shed some light on the nature of this device. However, by invoking Gracián’s ideas on *verdad-engaño*, this study does not pretend to claim that the generalized disillusionment of Baroque Spain is also characteristic of the fourteenth century. Rather, in Juan Manuel’s stories, the *engaño-desengaño* happens on a person-to-person level. In the society of seventeenth century Spain, Gracián captures the battle between truth and lie in his *Agudeza y arte de ingenio*:

Era la verdad esposa legítima del entendimiento, pero la mentira su gran émula, emprendió desterrarla de su tálamo y derribarla de su trono...[y] comenzó a desacreditarla de grosera, desaliñada, desabrida y necia: al contrario a sí misma venderse por cortesana, discreta, bizarra y apacible...[hasta que] abrió los ojos la verdad, dió desde entonces en andar con artificio; usa de las invenciones, introdúcese por rodeos, vence con estratagemas, ... y por ingenioso circunloquio viene siempre a parar en el punto de su intención. (325-26)

The truth in its stark form is bitter and people are unwilling to swallow it, suggests Gracián, until it is sugarcoated in artifice. At the same time, Gracián seems to say that even the truth has an intention that it seeks to fulfill. Human nature dictates that each party whether on the side of good or evil brings to the table its own agenda. Gracián says as much in passage 13 from his *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*:

*Obrar de intención, ya segunda, y ya primera.* Milicia es la vida del hombre contra la malicia del hombre, pelea la sagacidad con estratagemas de intención. Nunca obra lo que indica, apunta, sí, para deslumbrar; amaga al aire con destreza y ejecuta en la impensada realidad, atenta siempre a desmentir. Echa una intención para asegurarse de la émula atención,...deja pasar toda primera intención, y está en espera a la segunda y aun a la tercera. Auméntase la simulación al ver alcanzado su artificio, y pretende engañar con la misma verdad: muda de juego por mudar de treta, y hace artificio del no artificio, fundando su astucia en la mayor candidez.

“La verdad,” “el no artificio,” and “la candidez” are words one might associate with a lack of secondary intention.<sup>2</sup> But in the battle to secure one’s *pro*, as Juan Manuel would refer to one’s advantage or interests, there is no such thing as straightforwardness. The truth cannot expect to triumph simply because it is on the side of good. It must defeat malicious intentions by use of intelligence in the design of stratagems, dissimulation, and artifice. Perhaps Juan Manuel is more guarded in his criticism of the malevolence of mankind than Gracián, but certainly the same battle of wills, alluded to here, is carried out in many of his stories. In fact, Brownlee observes that “the theme of deception and dissimulation is crystalized at the work’s structurally significant midpoint” (80), referring to Exemplo XXVI.

Given this state of human affairs in which even the truth can be a lie, S. Battaglia in his “L’esempio medievale” suggests that a man in reading exemplary tales, regardless of the period in which he lived, was admonished to take preventative measures against deceit by studying the immutability of reality, “la quale non è nè povera nè schematica, ma soltanto fissa e perenne, sempre la medesima, che i secoli e i tempi non hanno il potere di mutare, perchè gli uomini sono sempre uguali nei loro istinti e debolezze” (76). One’s circumstance at a given moment in life may appear to be unique, but Battaglia argues that circumstance is common to all individuals, regardless of their individuality or the period in which they live. One can recognize a deceptive situation and avoid it by shoring up one’s weaknesses (“debolezze”) and following the advice in the *exemplo*. Similarly, Peter Dunn in his “The Structures of Didacticism” explains that a basic purpose in Juan Manuel’s *El libro infinido* and in ECL is to help the reader to first recognize a situation and then to outwit the jealousy, envy and, sometimes, smiling treachery in others (61).

Don Juan Manuel facilitates this process by way of an interpretation given normally at the end of each of the *exempla* in his collection. On the two occasions in the ECL in which the “verdad engañosa” is explicitly mentioned, Exemplo V (cited at the start of this paper) and Exemplo XXVI, Patronio offers an interpretation in the middle of the story that complements Juan Manuel’s sentence given at the end. In Exemplo XXVI Patronio says “et devedes saber que...la mentira treble, que es mortalmente engañosa, es la quel miente et le engaña diziéndol verdat (113).

The fact that Patronio interrupts the narrative line to point out how the deceptive truth operates underlines the importance Juan Manuel attributed to the device. At the same time, the break in the narration attests to the difficulty the author believes his audience may experience in learning to recognize the “verdad engañosa” in the *exempla*. The author has his storyteller, Patronio, stop the story to make sure the Conde sees. The intended audience, from the perspective of the author, may be unaccustomed to interpreting a signifier with a double meaning. Juan Manuel believes that because of his practical experience and erudite learning he is capable of

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<sup>2</sup> For a study of similar apparent contradictions in ECL, see J. Burgoyne.

interpreting mixed signals and takes it upon himself to instruct the wider audience not to miss the secondary and tertiary meanings hidden beneath the truth.<sup>3</sup>

The very nature of the dialectic truth-lie fits well into the medieval scheme of instruction where learning happens through the mediation of opposites, as Catherine Brown explains in *Contrary Things* (13). By unraveling the paradox of how the truth can deceive, the audience learns to take the middle ground and to discern enemy intentions cloaked in friendly truths. One could argue that in the case of the *exempla* studied here, the lesson is learned when the audience identifies with the protagonist and assimilates the situation well enough to avoid falling victim at a later juncture in his or her own life. The audience sees how the protagonist reaps the opposite of what was pretended, and learns to take measures to avoid a similar fate. One could argue that the bond protagonist-audience is strengthened by what amounts to plain irony. The protagonist who fails to see the irony coming is a perfect model of what not to imitate. As an instrument of persuasion, irony could be one of an author's "most effective rhetorical tools" according to Allan Karstetter (178), a pioneer in laying out the theoretical framework for irony. As an avid reader of don Juan Manuel, Menéndez y Pelayo long ago perceived the irony in ECL, and referred to it as "benévola y fina ironía" (96) and "grave ironía" (108).

## II

In the modern sense, irony is often said to occur when what is meant is the opposite of what is said, or when what is expected to happen is different from the actual outcome. This is similar to the definition that Urbina uses in his discussion of irony in the *Quixote*: "Irony is a statement, or presentation of an action or situation, in which the real or intended meaning conveyed to the initiated intentionally diverges from, and is incongruous with, the apparent or pretended meaning presented to the initiated" (Green, p. 9; cited in Urbina, p. 676). However, one must be careful because the ironic trope that amounts to a "quick winking semantic reversal of a word or two" (Karstetter 166) by no means encompasses the field of irony. Someone accustomed to the modern usage of the word irony is surprised to discover that the Greeks in Socrates' period used the word *ironist* to refer to someone who had an intention to deceive (Vlastos 23). It is this sort of irony that we are looking at in ECL and a brief review of irony's roots will be useful. In the absence of a panoramic study dedicated to irony in medieval Spain, we will look at this literary figure as it circulated in medieval France with a forewarning that the Greek rhetorical tradition and its great Latin transmitter Quintilian are not known to have been directly available to medieval

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<sup>3</sup> See L. De Looze's comments on the interpretation of ambiguous signifiers in ECL (2006, 122); similarly in De Looze, 1995, 342-44.

Spanish scholars.<sup>4</sup> Faulhaber says that “during the greater part of the Middle Ages, Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* was available only in a badly mutilated version. Books V, VIII, IX, X, and XII were missing completely or in part” (14), and Book IX is the most pertinent to the study of irony.

The association of irony and deceit was transmitted through this same work, wherein the figure of irony involves a speaker who assumes a disguise for an extended passage or a whole speech directed at a victim (9:2:46).<sup>5</sup> Quintilian’s literary figure is close to irony in its origins and is important because, according to Knox, the medieval west derived its concept of irony from the study of rhetoric among Latin authors Cicero and Quintilian (628). In his *Perspectives of Irony in Medieval French Literature* Rossman says that “irony as a rhetorical device becomes increasingly popular in Latin antiquity, and from the Middle Ages, in French Vernacular” (19) and that in medieval France Quintilian’s ideas on irony were known (24). While the object of this essay is not to show that Quintilian was studied in medieval Spain, we will see below that the word irony appeared in Castilian before the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (almost one hundred years before the first occurrence in France) and that Quintilian’s concept of irony is indeed at play in Juan Manuel’s *El Conde Lucanor* beneath the guise of the deceptive truth. So what was the tradition of irony that Quintilian passed on?

An *eirōn* to a Greek in the Age of Pericles was a dissembler (Karstetter, 163; Vlastos 23) who masked his thoughts and deeds, or who as Rossman explains was “one who avows less than he intends” (18, n. 5). The *eirōn*’s underhanded manner hinged on the nuance between truth and what was less than the truth. His words conveyed a meaning that was purposefully ambiguous. They are “paroles doubles et artificieuses” says Antoine Furetière in his seventeenth-century dictionary of Old French (17). The type of irony pertinent to this study is the rhetorical figure in which characters use language incongruous with their intentions to bring about a reality that is convenient to them at the expense of their victim. The *eirōn*’s pretenses are not disclosed until it is too late. S/he carries out the deceit by describing reality on two levels: one of his or her own creation tailored to the pretense and another generally accepted reality. Rossman explains that if one description is true than the other cannot be (18). The *eirōn* depends on the victim choosing the confected reality over the generally accepted one. The enticement might be the attraction of entering an elitist club consisting of those who possess the superior knowledge associated with the *eirōn*’s reality (Hutcheon 94). The character’s success in his or her deceitful intentions

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<sup>4</sup> See Charles B. Faulhaber 1972 and 1986, 92-126. Here p. 102. See also the concise and very useful tabulation of the authors, texts and dates corresponding to the introduction of rhetoric into Castile and Catalonia on pp. 120-21. See also the introduction to Francisco López Estrada.

<sup>5</sup> “But in irony considered as a figure, there is a disguise of the speaker’s whole meaning, a disguise perceptible rather than ostentatious, for in the trope, some words are put for others, but in the figure, the sense of a passage in a speech, and sometimes the whole configuration of a cause, is at variance with the air of our address [...]. Thus, as a continued metaphor constitutes an allegory, so a continuation of ironical tropes forms the figure irony.”

is not necessary for irony to happen. In fact, Karstetter suggests that the speaker's failed intention has the potential to produce the most ironic situations of all (172).

Inasmuch as one may find examples of irony, this is not an assurance that the word irony was circulating during the medieval period. According to Reiss, the word itself was apparently not used in French until 1370, and in English until 1502 (209). In Spain, Isidore of Seville writing in Latin in the seventh century transmits Cicero's definition of irony as a statement in which the real meaning is the opposite of the apparent meaning (Green 4). Seven centuries later, Alphonse the Wise comments in the vernacular in his *General Estoria* (Párrafo 119, f. 270r)<sup>6</sup> regarding a pagan myth about Jupiter that “es esto una manera de fablar a que llaman los sabios ironía, e fázese esta figura quando alguno fabla de alguno con saña yl non quiere nombrar, e dízelo por otras palabras.” In 1427, Enrique de Villena uses the word in Cicero's sense in his gloss of the *Eneida*, “e puédese responder que en este lugar se faze la figura ironia que por vituperio se dize alabança, la cual tiene fuerça e significado de vituperio, ansí como quando alguno dize señor al moço quando le quiere ferir” (p.480).<sup>7</sup> Alfonso de Palencia defines the word in Cicero's sense (fol. 225r) in his dictionary from 1490, and also cites it as one of the seven figures of allegory, “et [la alegoría] tiene siete species de figuras: yronia: antifasim: enigma: cirientismos: paroemiam: sarcasmos.”<sup>8</sup> In another later Spanish vernacular text, the *Comentario o declaración familiar y compendiosa sobre la primera epístola de s. Pablo* from 1557, Juan de Valdés' gloss of the New Testament verse “Iam saturati estis, etc.” begins by stating that “estas palabras entiendo que son dichas con ironía” (80). Juan de Valdés explains that the Corinthians did not understand Paul. To this respect he says “en lo cual consiste la ironía, en quanto dezia uno [Paul], i entendia otro [Corinthians]” (80). In Sebastián de Covarrubias' *Tesoro de la lengua española o castellana*, irony is defined as

figura retórica, con que se quiere dár à entender, que se siente ò se cree lo contrario de lo que se dice. Y la explica el émphasis del tono ò acción con que se habla. Es voz griega, que vale dissimulación...usa de una figura, que llamamos en Latín *ironía*: y es quando entendemos el contrario de lo que decimos. (II, 73)

Whether in the form of an apparent neologism introduced by Alphonse the Wise as a sort of periphrasis (“fabla de alguno con saña yl non quiere nombrar e dizelo por otras palabras”), or in the verbal irony of Enrique de Villena, Alfonso de Palencia, and Juan

<sup>6</sup>Also found in *Kasten et al.* Search *GE 1* for “yronia.”

<sup>7</sup> See Julian Weiss' comments on multiple meaning in Enrique de Villena's *Aeneid Comentario*, 97-106.

<sup>8</sup> This example found on line through REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA: Banco de datos (CORDE). *Corpus diacrónico del español*. <http://www.rae.es>. Similarly found as one of the “especies” of allegory in an anonymous work of 1450, *Las etimologías romanceadas de San Isidoro*, ed. Joaquín González Cuenca, Universidad de Salamanca-CSIC-Institución Fray Bernardino de Sahagún-Diputación provincial de León (Salamanca), 1983, p. 156. Available on CORDE.

de Valdés (“en cuanto dezia uno, i entendia otro”), or the formal definition in the seventeenth century NTLLE,<sup>9</sup> irony has been present in Spanish letters as a word and a rhetorical device since the beginning of Spanish prose.<sup>10</sup> It is not surprising that a well-educated man like Juan Manuel, whether knowingly or unknowingly, used the figure of irony throughout his work ECL. With respect to authorial intention, Murillo in his study of Cervantic irony says that irony does not have to be the result of a conscious intention because “irony applies to a mode and a conveyance of meaning that is impersonal, intellectual, and universal” (24).

In addition to the Murillo and Urbina articles on irony in the *Quixote*, cited above, at least one study of irony in a Spanish medieval text does exist. Gariano briefly cites some examples of verbal irony and dramatic irony from the *Libro de buen amor* in his comparison of Juan Ruiz with Boccaccio and Chaucer (96-102). While one could conceivably argue that Trotaconventos and the first person protagonist, el Arcipreste, function as *iron(s)* with deceptive intentions, Gariano does not use this language to study the ironic moments in the LBA. And a study of episodes from the *Libro de buen amor* is not within the scope of this paper.

In order to avoid falling into the trap of allowing that “everything is ironic in one definition or another” as Booth states or that “irony is whatever we agree to call irony” as Muecke says (cited in Reiss, 211), this paper will mark the presence of irony in Juan Manuel’s *exemplos* using the criteria of Karstetter, Vlastos, Rossman, and Knox. A convenient approach to reveal the irony will be to identify the speaker and respondent in each *exemplo*, according to Karstetter’s theory, to identify the intention of each, and finally to locate the precise moment that the irony occurs.

### III

Let us return to Juan Manuel’s fox and the crow from Exemplo V. The fox is our *iron* or speaker and the crow its victim or respondent. The fox’s intention is singular; it is to get the cheese from the crow’s beak. To achieve this end, the fox plays with the crow’s insecurity about its public image. The crow’s coming to grips with its perceived undesirability gives rise to its own intention. It wants to be beautiful, something other than it is (and a crow is not a peacock even in the most subjective of worlds). The careful reader of Juan Manuel immediately recognizes the crow’s error, one must know himself or herself. The fox exploits this error and initiates its flattery, leading the crow to believe that it is everything but vile, to the point that it compares its feathers to those of the peacock (“péñolas de pavón”), and tells it that its song must be beautiful. This is the height of flattery since the crow’s song is a far cry from the nightingale or lark. The irony happens when the crow opens its mouth to sing, loses

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the *Diccionario de la Real Academia* today defines irony in its first sense as “burla fina y disimulada.”

<sup>10</sup> The compilation of these examples of *ironía* is the result of searches in the data bases ADMYTE I, ADMYTE II, and CORDE.

the cheese, and realizes that the praise of its blackness, eyes, claws, agility in flight, along with the fox's apparently sincere desire to hear its song was nothing but flattery, despite the fox's assurance at the start that "non vos lo digo por lesonja" (38). Instead of a vindication of its ugliness as expected, the crow is left hungry and dejected believing that it is as ugly as ever in the eyes of the fox and in the eyes of "las gentes" (38) that circulate their opinion regarding the crow. The crow reaps something quite different than what it expected. It is classic irony managed by the figure that Knox says is tradition's quintessential *eiron*, the fox (627). And the situation fits well into our understanding of irony from the time of Socrates which generally referred to "to any kind of sly deception with overtones of mockery" (Knox 627) or during the time of Quintilian in which "the earliest strategies, derived from Socrates, were direct praise of a victim for possession of good qualities that he lacks" (Knox 628-29).

According to Vlastos' categorization, this would qualify as what he calls a complex irony since the flattery "both is and isn't what is meant; its surface content is meant to be true in one sense, false in another" (31). It is true that the black feathers in a certain light may take on the colors of the peacock's feathers. Its eyes may indeed see well. Its claws may be stronger than those of birds of a similar size, etc. But it is false that any of this alters the fox's or anyone else's opinion of the crow. The fox's speech is empty flattery. Juan Manuel says as much at the conclusion of Exemplo V when he explains that the crow was deceived "creyendo que avía en sí más apostura y más cumplimento de cuanto era la verdat" (40). To what "verdat" is Juan Manuel referring here if not to the generally accepted opinion of the crow as an ugly bird with an unpleasant song?

In Karstetter's theory of rhetorical irony, the fox-crow encounter would represent case number three of eight possible scenarios:<sup>11</sup> on the one hand, there is a "discrepancy" between what the speaker says and the generally accepted "verdat," and on the other, "making the respondent believe that the words truly express the inner thought is intended" and "this intention is realized" (171-72), as we saw above.

Rossmann's criteria for what is necessary and sufficient for irony to occur are also satisfied: there has to be opposition to what is generally considered to be reality and an incongruity of intention (32). The flattering views of the crow offered by the fox are not in line with the general opinion of "las gentes." Secondly, the fox's stated intention is to prove that his initial compliment ("ha mucho más bien en vós de cuanto me dizían" 38) was not flattery. But don Juan Manuel explains that this intention must be false. It hides the fact that the flatterer "lo faze por vos engañar" (40) and the respondent should know this because the compliment surpasses "quanto sabedes que es la verdat" (40).

At the same time, one might question whether the irony here is also a lie, especially in light of the fact that in Exemplo XXVI Juan Manuel defines the "mentira treble" in terms of the "verdad engañosa." Modern criticism has already recognized

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<sup>11</sup> I review Karstetter's cases three, four, and five, as they appear in the exemplos considered. A complete review of Karstetter's theory would be long and is not necessary for our purpose.

that irony lies (Knox 627-28) because it shares similarities with the lie (Hutcheon 14). If one were to attempt to distinguish between the two in this context one would recognize that both the lie and the irony here share *dissimulatio*, but that irony has an edge that stings the crow with a hint of the inevitable mockery present in flattery. A lie lacks this evaluative end (Hutcheon 118).

In summary, the fox in Exemplo V uses a type of *dissimulatio* that goes beyond a simple lie by exploiting the crow's longing to be something that it is not to invoke truths that succeed in tricking the bird to open its mouth. Juan Manuel calls this technique the "verdad engañosa." In the very moment that the deceptive truth achieves its objective, which would be the moment of "desengaño," the curtain is drawn and the irony occurs.

In Exemplo XXVI, the Conde finds himself to be the victim of the lies of those surrounding him and wonders if he too should take recourse in the lie and fight back. Patronio's *exemplo* is an allegory involving the Truth and the Lie, who live together. The Lie suggests that they plant a tree for their sustenance. According to the Lie, the roots are the best part because they are protected from inclement weather. The pact that the Lie proposes is for the roots to belong to the Truth and for the rest of the tree to belong to the Lie. As the tree grows, the shade and flowers draw many people, and the Lie enjoys great social benefits that come at the expense of the Truth who is hidden below ground. However, during this time, the Truth must nourish itself by gnawing on the roots. One day a severe wind blows over the weakened tree causing great harm to the Lie and its followers.

The *iron* in this case is the Lie and it is a poorly skilled one. The Lie's intention is to secure the better part of the tree and in doing so attract many disciples. The ever-expanding crowds around the tree allow the Lie to see itself as a sort of king of liars, and they inflate the Lie's vanity. It could be argued that vanity is the character flaw that causes the plan to fail. The Truth's intention is to defeat its opponent. Its strategy is to wait in hiding for the enemy to make a mistake and then to come forward triumphant. This is in the end the tactic that Patronio urges the Conde to follow. The irony happens just as the Lie is about to achieve its purpose; it is "mucho onrada et muy preciada" (113) and "tan bienandante" (113) while its opponent is "lazdrada et depreciada" (113), and the tree is about to bear fruit that belongs to the Lie. At that moment the tree falls and the lie is left to ponder why it did not pay heed to what it said from the beginning: "que la raíz del árbol es la cosa que da la vida et la manenencia al árbol, et que es mejor cosa et más aprovechosa." Instead of fruit, the Lie reaped a short-lived popularity and suffered the brunt of the tree's fall. It expected one thing and got another of its own doing.

Exemplo XXVI measures up to the critic's definitions of irony. For Vlastos, it might again be a complex irony since the deal the Lie proposes to the Truth "both is and isn't" meant to be fair. It is correct to say that the root is essential to a tree's health, but a tree is generally grown for other purposes such as for wood, shade, and fruit. According to general opinion, the desirable part is not the root. Thus the Lie

really means something other than what it says. Its intention is to get what it considers to be the better part of the tree. Therein lays the deceptive truth or “mentira treble,” inasmuch as it “miente et le engaña diziéndol verdat” (ECL 113). In addition to satisfying Vlastos’ criteria, the situation also meets Rossman’s definition of irony because the Lie’s words are in opposition to generally agreed upon reality and its brotherly liberality is at odds with its true intention. In the end, common sense dictates that the Lie is not out to do favors.

In Karstetter’s scheme one would place Exemplo XXVI in category number four (172). This is to say that while the words and thoughts of the Lie (the speaker) appear to be consistent, there is a discrepancy between the Lie’s stated intention and its masked intention. In the end, the intention is not realized (tree does not bear fruit and the school of liars is broken apart) and the Truth (the respondent) perceives the discrepancy (the Truth crawls out and observes what has happened). In line with Karstetter’s observations on this sort of irony, (1) the Lie does not possess the necessary subtlety to pull off his *dissimulatio* (it should have fed the roots); (2) the Truth had foreknowledge of the Lie’s dubious intentions and possesses more acumen than the Lie thought. For Karstetter, this sort of situation can present the greatest irony of all for a wider disinterested audience: “Clever Harlequin is caught in his own devices. Hoisted with his own petard. Dissimulation is unmasked” (172). It is noteworthy that Karstetter summarizes his fourth type of irony as “the attempted use of falsehood by truth” (172), which sounds very close to the deceptive truth.

In summary, in this *exemplo* the irony happens in a different context than in Exemplo V because the Lie is unsuccessful in its intentions. But the irony happens nonetheless. Juan Manuel calls the type of deceit chosen by the Lie, the “mentira treble” because it juxtaposes the truth and the lie. With his use of the term “verdad engañosa” to define the “mentira treble,” Juan Manuel defines the triple lie in language very similar to what Karstetter used to characterize the fourth type of irony.

In Exemplo XX “De lo que contesció al rey con un omne quel dixo quel faría alquimia,” Juan Manuel uses a technique similar to that of Exemplo V to produce an ironic reality. The Conde has received an offer promising to increase his patrimony. The catch is that he must first put up some of his own money. In response, Patronio narrates the story of a swindler (“golfín”) who sees an opportunity to remedy his hard life when he learns of a king who wishes to learn alchemy. He invests one hundred doubloons of his own money and melds them with other substances into one hundred balls (“tabardie”), which he sells for pennies on the dollar. He manages to get word of the “tabardie” to the king, and quietly spreads a rumor that he knows alchemy. When the king summons him to ask about alchemy, the swindler carefully warns the king never to trust in anyone involved in alchemy nor to risk his fortune in pursuit of alchemy. Then he uses the *tabardie* in conjunction with other substances to make one doubloon’s worth of gold. He leaves telling the king that as long as one uses the exact same ingredients, the process can be repeated. The king is elated at his success in using the formula to make more gold, but soon runs out of *tabardie*. Again, he

summons the swindler who convinces the king to send him away with a large quantity of money to buy more *tabardie*. With the subsequent disappearance of the swindler, the king is the butt of jokes around town.

The similarity between Exemplo XX and Exemplo V is apparent if one interchanges the fox for the swindler, the cheese for the king's money, and the crow's desire to be beautiful for the king's desire for quick money. The situation reflects the irony Knox describes during Socrates' time in the sense that it involves an underhanded deception with the sting of mockery (627). The irony and the height of the deception happen at the same moment: the king searches the missing swindler's house and finds an ark, inside of which is written something to the effect that "I have deceived you. There is no such thing as *tabardie*. When I said I would make you rich you should have insisted that I make myself rich first" (trans. mine; 84). After this humbling discovery, the king finds some men in town "riendo y trebejando [burlándose]" (84) because they have added him to a list they have compiled identifying people and their qualities. They list the king as the perfect example of the "omne de mal recabdo." The townspeople serve as an audience who evaluates the ironic act and judges against the king. In fact, one could argue that the irony in this case cannot happen without the audience of "omnes" in town because the king's wits are not up to the task of interpreting what happened. One knows this because the king argues with the townsmen afterwards ("et el rey les dixo que avían errado). He just does not get it, which deepens their mockery. The townspeople constitute a "community" that "enables the irony to happen" (Hutcheon 89). Their role is to reinforce the didactic message. If the Conde as well as the reading or listening audience in turn wish to keep their money and to avoid becoming the victim of mockery in town then they had better pay heed to Patronio's advice: do not risk your money for some improbable ("en dubda" 85) bonanza such as alchemy.

Viewed within Karstetter's framework, the swindler-king interaction represents the third type of irony. The discrepancy revolves around the respondent-king who believes that the speaker-swindler truly conveys his inner thoughts when he advises the king "que deste fecho no fiasse de omne del mundo nin aventurasse mucho de su aver." In fact, the speaker means to gain the respondent's trust so that he can swindle him later. Effectively, the swindler does what the fox of Exemplo V does with his flattery: gain the victim's trust so that it can later trick the victim into giving up the prize (i.e., cheese and king's money). A categorization as type three irony is complete when the speaker succeeds with his intention.

In accordance with Rossman's theory, Exemplo XX fulfills both criteria for its denouement to be considered ironic. We have just mentioned the incongruity of intention in the speaker's advice to the king. The second criteria involving opposition to reality is met by the mistaken belief in man's ability to make gold through alchemy. The "omnes" in town also point out in so many words that the king's trust in a complete stranger is diametrically opposed to what a sensible person would do in that context.

Exemplo XX coincides with Vlastos' idea of a complex irony because the swindler's advice to the king again "both is and isn't what is meant." That it is not a good idea to believe in alchemy is true and the speaker means for the respondent to see this as true. But this is not what is really meant, since the speaker "means" to deceive by appearing to be trustworthy (he who gives sound advice must be trustworthy). Even though Juan Manuel does not make explicit reference to the *verdad engañosa* here, the deceptive truth is effectively what is at play.

Exemplo XXVII "De lo que contesció al Emperador et a don Álvaro Hãñez Minaya con sus mugeres" falls into Karstetter's category number five: what is stated is consistent with the truth; but at the same time, the speaker intends to project a discrepancy, i.e., the speaker wants the respondent to think s/he is lying. Finally, the speaker's intention is successful, a discrepancy is perceived, and an ironic reality is produced. The Conde has a brother that treats his wife with excessive affection and another brother that cannot stand his wife. He asks Patronio for advice to give his brothers. The Conde responds with two stories, only the first of which will concern us here. An Emperor is married to the most contrary woman imaginable. For everything he wants and desires she takes pleasure in opposing him. When the situation threatens the stability of his kingdom, action must be taken. He visits the Pope and gets a tacit permission to assassinate her if all else falls ("ca él [el Papa] no podía dar penitencia ante que fuesse fecho el pecado" 117). Despite redoubling his efforts, nothing works and her contrariness worsens. One day the Emperor (the speaker) sets in motion his plan. He tells his wife (the respondent) that he is going hunting and will take along an herb (*yerba*) that they put on the arrows to kill the deer. He is leaving the rest of the poison at home to use another time. Under no circumstances should the Empress put the poison on open sores. And then as she is looking on, he takes out another good ointment and puts it on his own open sores. He tells her to use the good ointment as she pleases. Once he has left, the Empress insists on doing exactly the opposite, claiming that the Emperor means to trick her so that her sores will never heal. Despite the warnings, pleas, and cries of those present in the court, she uses the poison and dies.

The Emperor's intention is to mislead the Empress into killing herself. The truth is his tool because the truth is what she is least likely to believe. Karstetter says that this technique is the "surest way with a wife of winning adherence to a proposition other than the one stated" (172). If the Emperor's intention is to eliminate his wife, her intention is to catch him at his own game by healing her sores despite his efforts to prolong her suffering. In the end the Emperor's intention is successful. The irony happens when she acts against the advice of everyone in the court and discovers that everyone was telling her the truth. She expected to cure her sores, but she reaps the opposite (death). As the poison takes effect, the deception achieves its objective and the irony is perceived.

For Vlastos, Exemplo XXVII would represent another complex irony because the Emperor's warning "is and isn't what is meant" (31). Since the stated words of the

Emperor are true, if the Empress were to listen, then perhaps her sores would heal and her contrary character might stand a chance of being corrected. In this sense, the Emperor's warning is meant. On the other hand, it is not what is meant because if she is unwilling to cooperate in a matter that is so clearly in her best interest then he wants her not to believe him and pay the grave consequences.

The two conditions Rossman insists upon for ironic outcomes are also present: (1) the Empress contradicts reality by mistaking the well-marked venom for the medicine. (2) The incongruity in the speaker's words is that the emperor is sincere in warning the empress who has demonstrated herself to be incorrigible and a grave threat to the stability of his reign.

The irony in Exemplo XLV "De lo que contesció a un omne que se fizo amigo et vassallo del Diablo" reflects Karstetter case number three. A man approaches the Conde with advice on how to increase his patrimony. But the Conde is afraid that he would have to sin by using augurs and other "arterías." So he asks Patronio for his opinion. The story that Patronio relates involves a wealthy man who has fallen into extreme poverty. One day walking he meets up with the Devil who offers to remedy the man's hard life if he agrees to obey him. To convince his victim, the Devil demonstrates that he knows the whole story of the man's life and promises to make him richer than anyone in his lineage. The man has a moment of doubt (he knows he should not trust the Devil), but his life is so miserable that he agrees. The Devil promises to open all locked doors so that the man can steal as much as he wants. If perchance he should find himself in a tight spot, he should invoke the Devil by saying "Acorredme don Martín" and the Devil will free him. The man's thefts go exceedingly well and soon he is richer than ever before. Whenever he gets caught he pronounces the magic formula and don Martín comes to his rescue, although with time don Martín begins to increasingly delay his appearances, as if to make the thief question the value of continued thefts and to give him the chance to repent. In the final scene, the man has been condemned to death by hanging and is waiting at the foot of the gallows; but apparently the noose is missing. Don Martín appears and hands the man a bag, which he believes to contain a bribe of five hundred *maravedís*. The man gives the magistrate the bag and the magistrate calls off the hanging arguing that a missing noose is a sign that the man should not be hung. However, when the magistrate opens the bag to get his bribe, he finds a noose, and so immediately reinstates the hanging. Consequently, the man loses body and soul.

As a Karstetter case number three, one notes that there is a discrepancy between what the Devil states (I will make you richer than anyone in your lineage) and what is intended (I will strip you of your most valuable possessions, namely life and soul). The Devil (the speaker) makes the man (the respondent) believe that his words truly express his inner thoughts by invoking foreknowledge of the man's past life, facilitating the thefts, and providing cover from the law. Thus at least in the short run the Devil produces results in the form of wealth that convince the man of his sincerity (and incidentally fan the flames of greed). The Devil's intention is realized. The man

becomes rich, but loses his soul. The irony does not happen until the respondent discovers the discrepancy, which is when the man finds out that the noose is in the bag. This end motif serves as a visual aid that marks the irony produced and sharpens its edge. As the condemned man hands the noose to the hangman, there is also the element of mockery. It is to say: “You idiot! Look at what you have done to yourself!” This masterful bit of irony is to be expected from someone of such superior wisdom since, as Booth writes, “the Devil was the greatest ironist” (30).

In a certain sense, the Devil actually does fulfill his end of the bargain. He makes the man the wealthiest person in his lineage. If the man were to stop his thefts at any point, he might have saved his life and soul. From this perspective, one sees Vlastos’ complex irony inasmuch as the Devil’s words are what “is and isn’t meant to be true” (31). It “is” because the Devil came through as promised. It “isn’t” because the Devil intended for the man’s greed to blind him to the point that he would condemn himself. As a complex irony, the Devil’s words may also qualify as the deceptive truth, a “*mentira treble*.” The lie hides the fact that once one has savored the pleasures of endless wealth, one cannot simply walk away. The compulsion to self-destruction is too strong. Thus the sly Devil states the truth, follows through, and in doing so misleads the man towards another hidden objective.

Rossmann’s markers for irony are also present. There is incongruity between what the Devil says and what he intends, as we have just argued. The opposition to reality rests in the man’s false hope that one can make a deal with the Devil, steal one’s way to wealth, and get away with it.

The last example we will examine here is Exemplo XLIII “*De lo que contesció al Bien et al Mal, et al cuerdo con el loco.*” The Conde has a neighbor with whom he has a relationship based on mutual convenience (“*amor de debdo*”). But the neighbor wrongs the Conde terribly and so the Conde asks Patronio to what extent he should put up with the trouble occasioned by his neighbor. In response, Patronio narrates the story of the allegorical figures of Good and Evil who live together. Evil (the speaker) suggests to Good (the respondent) that they raise some livestock to provide their sustenance. Good agrees. Knowing that the nature of Good will oblige him to grant first choice to the other, Evil lets Good choose which part of the animal he wants. Good declines to choose. Evil’s intention is singular: to get the best part of each of the shared products. Good’s intention is to gain the upper hand on Evil. Evil says that his part of the sheep will be the wool and milk. Good can have the newborn lambs. The next animal is a pig, so Evil argues the reverse: that he will take the young offspring and give Good the pig’s milk and “*fur*.” Evil acts in a similar way when they agree to make a garden. He takes the above ground part of the cauliflower and gives the part below ground to Good. With the turnips it’s the opposite. Evil takes the part below ground and gives the turnip leaves to Good.

In each successive deal, Evil’s arguments are true on one level, but they always lead to the advantage of Evil. Although Evil thinks he is cleverly deceiving Good, Good is in reality making a sacrifice in the short run to defeat Evil in the long run

using the techniques espoused by Gracián, making artifice out of what is not artifice and trickery out of candidness. Who would imagine that granting another the favor of choosing, and then honoring one's word in a bad deal are stratagems in the battle to win one's advantage? But this is indeed the case. Good knows the nature of Evil and allows Evil to choose, certain that Evil's invariable selfishness and greed will eventually lead to Good's advantage.

When Evil proposes they get a woman to serve them, Good accepts the part above the belt leaving the part below the belt to Evil. One observes that Evil's decision to share the woman in this way is shortsighted because a woman, unlike turnips, cauliflower, pigs, and sheep, does not have a single part that is desirable to the exclusion of the rest. As a human being, both the upper and lower halves are equally useful, desirable, and necessary. Evil begins to see his mistake once the woman bears him a son and Good refuses to allow Evil's child to nurse because that part of the woman belongs to Good. This is the moment that Evil feels the irony bearing down on him. Good has been cooperative, but now will not budge. Evil begs desperately because his child is going to starve. Finally, Good, being good, gives in, but only under the condition that Evil proclaims publicly that "con bien vence el Bien al Mal" (175), which confirms that Good's intention all along was to defeat his opponent. The public proclamation also introduces an audience who perceives a certain mockery or humiliation in Evil's defeat, herein sharpening irony's edge.

Similar to Exemplo XXVI, this *exemplo* reflects case number four in Karstetter's scheme. There is a discrepancy between what Evil states (that he wants to be fair) and what Evil thinks (that he wants to trick Good into conceding the best part). Although Evil wants to hide the discrepancy, in the end Evil is unsuccessful in his endeavors and the discrepancy is perceived (Good acknowledges that he knew all along he was getting duped) because Evil was unable to see through the consequences (Seres, ECL 173). In particular, Evil did not grasp the difference between the non-human objects and the woman. As a result, the trickster gets caught up in his own tricks producing the most ironic situation of all.

In the context of Vlastos' study, it is apparent that the words of Evil are on the surface fair and true. For example, once the turnips are grown, Evil says "que no sabía qué cosa era lo que non veía, mas, por que el Bien viesse lo que tomava, que tomasse las fojas de los nabos que parecían et estaban sobre tierra, et que tomaría él lo que estava so tierra" (174). It is true that it is better to see what one is getting. But with turnips this is not the case. Evil applies what is generally true to a particular for which it is not true. The result is a complex irony in Vlastos' terminology. The argument espoused by Evil for the turnips seems to also conform to Juan Manuel's "treble mentira" or "verdad engañosa" inasmuch as it recalls the argument the Lie uses to convince the Truth in Exemplo XXVI to take the roots of the tree and give its partner the above ground parts. The culmination of the deceptive truth happens at the same moment as the irony just as in Exemplo XXVI.

Evil's insincerity in extending the offer of choice satisfies Rossman's criteria for incongruity. The fact that each deal is presented in terms that are contrary to what is convenient for Good meets Rossman's requirement for an opposition to reality. The sixth *exemplo* proves to be ironic according to the definitions of Rossman, Vlastos, and Karstetter.

#### IV

In addition to the presence of irony and the "verdad engañosa", there is another similarity between the six *exemplos* studied here. In each case the party carrying out the trickery –the speaker or *eiron*– knows that his opponent has a weakness and will deny his or her own common sense to believe the truth that s/he wants to hear. On the other hand, the respondent or victim of both irony and the deceptive truth willingly participates in his/her own victimization. In "L'ironie: Etude Psychologique," Palante suggests that the *eiron* operates within a frame of cold intelligence (152). His success is assured only when his opponent lacks sufficient life experience to know that one's wants and desires must be disassociated from the intellect in the decision making process. The victim of irony lacks the valuable faculty of skepticism that derives from the "force de vivre" (Palante 151). The *golfin* is only able to trick the king because of the king's flaw, "se trabajava de fazer alquimia," that is to say, that he sought to make money without working. The *golfin* knows that the King's greed will lead him to deny good sense, and to trust a stranger with his wealth, even though the very same stranger has warned him against unfounded trust. Similarly, the crow knows it is not beautiful, but it wants to be, and willingly plays into the fox's praise. The Truth knows that the Lie has illusions of grandeur. At the same time, the Lie is perfectly aware of the importance of the roots of the tree, but its vanity blinds it. Exemplo XLIII with Good and Evil is similar enough that it does not require further comment. In Exemplo XLV the Devil knows that the former rich man's insatiable greed will condemn him to death without salvation. In Exemplo XXVII, the Emperor knows that the Empress' malicious character is what will lead her to ignore the poison warning. Her flaw is her contrary character and distrust and it leads her to deny what she sees with her own eyes.

The French philosopher Henri Frédéric Amiel might see the common thread running through this faulty human behavior as "la loi d'ironie," wherein "la vie est donc un éternel combat, qui veut ce qu'il ne veut pas, et ne veut pas ce qu'il veut" (cited in Palante 154).

With at least six of his fifty stories following this close pattern, one must ask how the deceptive truth fits into Juan Manuel's worldview and didactic scheme for ECL. Despite the fact that with all probability Juan Manuel did not draw directly from Greek rhetorical tradition or Quintilian, the study of the *exemplos* cited above suggests that Juan Manuel writes as a skilled ironist. It is as if an intuitive understanding of complex irony comes with human nature. In light of the disillusion don Juan Manuel

experienced in his political and personal life, the psychology of irony as described by Palante fits Juan Manuel well inasmuch as “l’ironie est la fille passionnée de la Douleur; mais elle est aussi la fille altière de la froide intelligence” (152). The anguish associated with his political setbacks and isolation, together with his chess-like political maneuverings could have contributed to shape an ironic outlook on life. His desire to share his acquired knowledge through literature allowed his ironic perspectives on human affairs to find their expression in his stories. According to Green, “irony and pedagogy belong together” (389) and the nature of irony “is not to deceive with a lie, but to awaken the truth” (9). The legacy Juan Manuel left behind was to point the readers to universal truths present in diverse situations. By obliging the reader to unmask the deceptive truth in an *exemplo*, Juan Manuel invokes a very effective means of helping the reader to reveal the lie in a given circumstance. There are essentially two truths between which the reader must navigate to determine which is deception and which is truth. In order to internalize Juan Manuel’s lessons and act wisely, the readers must examine their own wants and desires and recognize when they are in opposition to their best interest. A wrong choice can lead to mockery (the king, Evil), loss (the crow), physical harm (the Lie), and even death (the Empress, the thief). On the other hand, the readers that know themselves can avert an ironic outcome, avoid becoming a victim of irony, and achieve their own *pro*. The pursuit of one’s best interest figures prominently among the stated goals of ECL.

This paper has attempted to show that not only are the deceptive truth and irony present in each of these stories, but that the deceptive truth reaches its culmination and irony happens at precisely the same moment in the narration. Moreover, critics such as Karstetter and Vlastos have described a type of irony in language very similar to that used by Juan Manuel in defining the “verdad engañosa.” These results suggest that Juan Manuel’s “verdad engañosa” is in reality a type of irony, which Vlastos calls a complex irony. The reverse would not be true because clearly there are many other types of irony that do not hinge on a deceptive truth.

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