

“Catalans pel món” by Pere Calders and the Catalan Diaspora: An Insight into Irony and Magic Realism in the Context of Catalan Identity

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1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, Pere Calders is a classic author of Catalan narrative and is well-known for his short stories. Since only a few of them have been translated into other languages, he remains a relatively unknown figure outside Catalonia. His writings skilfully exploit the Catalan language to convey a message that goes beyond its apparent fiction. He mastered and deployed irony to present a critical viewpoint. On the one hand, his ironic stance sometimes addresses the reality of existing as a Catalan under Franco, where expressing his views explicitly would have been compromising given his exile at a time of Catalan linguistic and cultural repression. On the other hand, being explicit about his views would have also been compromising as a Catalan refugee in Mexico, given that irony sometimes served to communicate a distanced viewpoint towards the country that welcomed him. Devoted to keeping Catalan identity alive through literature, he always wrote in Catalan during his 23 years of exile in Mexico. Most of his short stories were only published in Catalonia when the Franco regime relaxed its censorship of the Catalan language after the 1950s.

Since the 1980s, Calders' literary output has fascinated many scholars who have conducted substantial research on his fiction. The first monograph devoted to Calders in English was by Amanda Bath, based on her doctoral thesis (1987; 1991). She also undertook the challenging task of translating some of his stories into English. Hinging upon an exhaustive examination of the theory of magic realism, a more recent book by Carme Gregori (2006) deconstructs earlier interpretations that Calders' literary works have engendered. Many academic papers have also sought to contribute to the study of this author (Bou 1996; Gregori 2004; Melcion 1980, 1996, 2003; Orazi and Greco 2019; Quintana Trias 2017). Nonetheless, these studies have paid little attention to those linguistic, stylistic and narrative devices which render his style ironic. When studying Calders' fiction, there has also been a general focus on the works which feature Mexico with Mexican characters. Gregori (2004) points out the sadness that distinguishes many of Calders' characters. The present article expands on this premise to demonstrate that the trauma originating from his condition as a refugee in Mexico was a decisive factor in most, if not all, of his exile narrative. Originating from the Greek

word for wound, the term “trauma” is currently employed in psychoanalysis to name the wound inflicted upon the mind (Caruth 1996). Based upon the work of the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth asserts that trauma implicates “the voice that is released through the wound” (1996, 2) following overwhelming events that are not completely assimilated as they occur. The response to such events is often delayed in the forms of nightmares, hallucinations or other “intuitive phenomena” (Caruth 1996, 10). Calders’ delayed response to his ordeal of war, concentration camps and a lengthy exile was captured in his ironic narratives.

The main goal of this article is to provide a model of analysis for Caldersian ironic narrative to facilitate both the tasks of interpretation as well as its rendering into another language. In addition, it will be argued that Calders’ condition as a refugee in Mexico and his consequent feeling of having an uprooted Catalan identity caused trauma, which inspired his recurrent use of irony. To accomplish these goals, I will examine “*Catalans pel món*”, a story representing the Catalan diaspora after the Spanish Civil War through magic realism and irony. I postulate that Calders’ story offers an implicit literary representation of Catalan identity and the trauma of diaspora, a reading which is activated in consideration of the cultural context in which he lived. Section 2 provides an introduction to the mechanisms of irony in literary discourses and its translation into other languages. This methodological guide will act effectively as a framework for approaching ironic discursive narratives that necessitate a complex system of contextual inferences, which can pose challenges for their communication across cultures. The title, “*Catalans pel món*” [Catalans about the world], provides the readership with hints about the contextual knowledge required to make sense of the story. On the one hand, Section 3 reviews what the term “Catalan” represents. To do so, I will be overviewing the development of Catalan identity from its early origins to the exodus of Catalan refugees during the Spanish Civil War. On the other hand, the word “món” [world] alludes to the movement of Catalans around the world, hence Catalan immigration and diaspora will be included in Section 4. This section also correlates the characteristics of the short story with Calders’ exile before undertaking an analysis of the story itself, which comprises a little more than 400 words. Section 5 intends to shed light upon the mechanisms of irony and how the ironic cues (ironic markers) Calders resorts to point towards his ideological stance. In so doing, I shall also be drawing parallels with some of his other stories as well as analysing how the translation of the Source Text (ST), “*Catalans about the world*”, reflects the Caldersian message and style to an English-speaking readership. By incorporating an examination of the Translation Text (TT), this paper adopts a cross-cultural approach with a view to enhancing the scope of the

proposed analytical methodology for the interpretation and translation of irony.

2. Irony in Narrative Discourse

The concept of verbal irony has been “extended” and “overused” (Hutcheon 1994: 54), and it has often been lumped within the same category as other rhetorical tropes. This section seeks to outline its key aspects to provide a comprehensive and perspicuous approach applicable to a range of written discourses. In addition, it considers the challenges that irony may pose in cross-cultural communication. I will dissociate verbal irony (hereafter irony) from irony of situation, which epitomises a contrast of outcomes in situations. Irony must not be thought of as the opposite of what a person means, a definition that stems from the Roman orator Quintilian. For centuries, irony has been given new meanings to suit different literary movements. Recent studies have not approached it uniformly, often falling into contradictions with each other and raising more questions about the nature of this phenomenon. To further elucidate the nature of irony, I will combine two contrasting views to produce a view of irony as disparity: H. Paul Grice’s (1989) theory of implicatures and Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson’s (1981; 1986) deconstruction of this perception with their theory of irony as echoic mention.

Grice claims that our exchanges of information are characterised by the “cooperative efforts” that make communication possible (1989, 26). He hypothesises that irony is an intentional flout of the Co-operative Principle, through which the hearer is invited to look for a meaning other than the surface one. When this occurs, there is an implicature, the meaning of which will be determined in the given context. As stated by Grice, an ironic communication flouts the maxim of quality because ironists state the opposite to what they believe to be true (1989, 34). It has been argued, though, that this is a limited perception of irony, which does not necessarily flout the maxim of manner (Attardo 2000; Holdcroft 1983; Kaufer 1981). Another flaw in Grice’s perception resides in its disregarding the literal meaning upon reaching the implicated meaning, a position that other scholars, such as Rachel Giora (1995), refute by claiming that both meanings are required to retrieve the ironic meanings. Neo-Gricean studies have broadened irony to see it as an inappropriateness in context (Levinson 1983; Attardo 2000) and even as the absurd (Kapogianni 2011), two traits that may also result in other phenomena, such as humour. Nonetheless, irony differs from other rhetorical tropes and non-ironic forms of communication in the evaluative and dissociative attitude it encompasses (Hutcheon 1995). Irony hence ensues when a given inappropriateness causes an evaluative shift or contrast (Holdcroft 1983; Partington 2007). A reversal of evaluation occurs in switching “generally, from favourable evaluation in the dictum to

unfavourable evaluation in the implicatum” (Partington 2007: 1565). To further understand how evaluative shifts may occur in ironic communication, it is worth taking into consideration foregrounding theory. Originating with the Prague Structuralists, this is a concept in literary studies that makes a distinction between the background, which is what is linguistically expected, and the foreground, which departs from expectation via deviations or parallelism (Mukařovský 1970). Irony brings certain elements to the foreground, and how this occurs embodies a cue that leads to the presence of irony in the discourse. Traditionally, there have been claims that irony can be triggered by collocative clashes (Louw 1993; Leech and Short 2007), register clashes (Booth 1974), hyperbole and litotes (Muecke 1978). My research into the translation of irony further evinces that, in written literary discourses, ironists have at their disposal a wide range of ironic strategies that further incorporate other linguistic and pragmatic cues (2007).

Sperber and Wilson’s (1981; 1986) theory of irony departs from the traditional perception of irony as a contrast between what is said and what is meant. Following this theoretical framework, the ironist mentions a proposition that represents someone else’s thoughts to draw attention to them and implicitly reject them. My approach to irony complements the theory of echoic mention with the notion of irony as a form of inappropriateness. Whereas, at the semantic level, we find foregrounded features signalling that a message beyond the literal meaning must be retrieved, at the pragmatic level, the message is comprehended as a thought attributed to someone whom the ironist is dissociating him/herself from. To identify an ironic echo, the linguistic form of a proposition must be measured against the assumptions about the communicative situation and context. In narrative discourses, the idea of another voice being echoed relates to Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1994) double-voiced speech. He distinguishes between three types of discourse: direct discourse, character speech, and double-voiced speech. The first two types are single-voiced because they represent one single intention and consciousness. However, double-voiced discourses deliberately refer to someone else’s words and include a new semantic intention in a discourse that retains an intention of its own (Bakhtin *ibid*, 61-63). Within the double-voicedness of the narrative, ironic cues signal a shift of footing (Clift 1999), that is, a movement from one perspective to another that indicates alienation from a given point of view.

Irony becomes an economic yet sharp tool to create a hidden channel of communication with the reader. It is an intentional manipulation of language with the purpose of expressing an implicit viewpoint and judgemental attitude. This viewpoint contrasts with the apparent pre-existing perspective, making irony a double-voiced phenomenon, which causes a given effect; sometimes, it generates humour that masks the compromising reality of the topic. However, to retrieve the ironic meaning, the

linguistic form of certain propositions in the text must be measured against the assumptions made about the communicative situation and context. Such a premise suggests that the rendering of ironic discourses like “*Catalans pel món*” into another linguistic and cultural context might raise issues with its interpretation. Not only is interpretation difficult to measure, but also there have been divergent approaches to how ironic literary texts may be construed. Moving away from the traditional and static concepts that see the reader as deciphering the text to reach an intended meaning (cf. Booth 1974), I intend to adopt a more pragmatic approach along the lines of Linda Hutcheon (1994), taking into account the contexts of both the ironists and the reader.

If ironic utterances can sometimes lead to misunderstandings within discourses in a single language, irony may inevitably pose challenges to translators, whose own understanding will be reflected in TT (de Wilde 2010). Significant advances have been made in the translation of irony and humour. Albeit these are not interchangeable phenomena, they can be linked in communication. Their complex mechanisms have prompted translators to espouse functional translations. Regarding the translation of humour, Delia Chiaro admits that a “translation is a kind of linguistic and culture give and take which converts the content of the ST into a new form in the TL” (2010, 10). In the same vein, Patrick Zabalbeascoa admits that sameness may not be achieved to the same degree and translation depends on many variables (2005, 206). To cope with the translation of irony, Ernest-August Gutt (1991; 1998) develops the conception of equivalence as functional with a theory that hinges upon Sperber and Wilson’s *interpretive resemblance* (1981). For Gutt (ibid), communicative effectiveness in translation might be achieved through complete interpretive resemblance (direct translation) or interpretive resemblance of the relevant aspects (more of an indirect translation). To do so, both the linguistic and contextual conditions must be observed in order to communicate the maximum contextual effects with minimum processing effort (Gutt 1991; 1998). In Francisco Yus Ramos’ (1998) terms, the interpretation of irony is a balance between context accessibility and processing effort. The translation must hence be conducted taking into account how accessible the relevant cultural aspects are in the text, and how much effort the target audience would require in order to infer this information. Yus Ramos proposes “the principle of optimal accessibility to irony”, whereby the higher the number of disparities perceived, the easier it will be to discern the ironic act, hence implying that there must be visible ironic cues in the TT for the target reader to perceive the irony without requiring extra effort. The analysis of ironic literary discourses must then focus on rendering both ironic cues and relevant contextual clues. In accordance with these mechanisms of irony, contextual information regarding Catalan identity must be reviewed as pertinent data in the communication of “*Catalans pel món*”.

3. Catalan identity

The concept of Catalan identity continues to be a hotly debated and often subjective point that has led to political disruption, conflicts and disputes over centuries. Albeit related, culture and identity are different notions. Catalan identity encompasses a sense of belonging to a group of people with a common cultural, historical, and linguistic background (cf. Weedon 2004). Even if the origin of the terms Catalonia and Catalans still remain very much unclear, understanding the makings of Catalan culture, as the historian Josep Maria Salrach points out, aids in discerning the evolution of a group of people into an ethnocultural community sharing certain characteristics (2018, 363). Salrach believes that the origins of Catalonia date back to at least the 12th century (2018, 11), but Catalan nationalism was not born until the *Renaixença* movement attempted to recover the Catalan language, history and traditions in the 19th century.

Salrach underlines the problems inherent in the concept of nation, which has been historically used in different ways (2017, 359). Benedict Anderson (2006) describes a nation as a social construct imagined by a group of people who share some affinities and operate through exclusion. Whilst some schools of thought concerning national identity (Andrews and Saward 2018; László 2013) defend the relevance of shared culture such as language, history and ethnicity, some scholars seek to prove that national identities are not always apolitical but may be subject to political attitudes (Mader et al. 2018). The resurgence of Catalan identity took a political direction after industrialisation changed society, at which point Ernest Geller (1985) argues that common identity constructs became necessary. National identities tend to often surge more fervently in time of conflict (Guibernau 2004), as has been the case for Catalan nationalism, which is rooted in the tensions between Spain as a centrally-organised state and Catalonia as a peripheral area that felt marginalised and oppressed (Carr 2000, 227).

The Catalan language is a key cultural trait that delimits a territory seeking to have its distinctive identity recognised. Hans-Ingo Radatz (2020) states that identities are formed through discourses in a given language, and collective identities are, at least, partially linguistic. For many Catalans, their language is the driving force of Catalan identity, as the Catalan poet Josep Carner affirmed during his exile in Mexico: “la fidelitat a la nostra llengua és, diríem, el nostre mitjà propi d'expandiment, i el senyal, doncs, de la nostra fe. [...] La llengua catalana és la nostra identitat, la nostra història i filosofia implícites, ensems tradició i programa” (Carner 1985: 66). [The fidelity to our language is, we should say, our own means of expanding, and, consequently, the sign of our faith [...]. The Catalan language is our identity, our implicit

history and philosophy and, at the same time, tradition and agenda].

If “with language comes a representation of the surrounding reality, including the native culture, in the forms of verbalised beliefs, traditions and ways of perceiving the world” (Stroinska 2003, 96), the Catalan language is a crucial factor in the construction of Catalan identity, which both the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in 1923 and the Franco regime following the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 attempted to weaken. Francoist politicians, such as Joaquín Serrano Súñer, declared that Catalan traditions would not be a target of the new regime. This promise, however, was broken and Catalonia was stripped of all its cultural identity (Centelles 1982, 7). In favour of a united Spain without regional differences, public use of Catalan was forbidden and was consequently not taught in schools. Over decades, this prohibition had an impact on the formal knowledge of the language with a growing generation that could not write in their mother tongue (Badia i Margarit 2007). Many Catalans felt that they had lost everything, freedom as well as their language and culture, which is why this moment in time was conceived as the “exile of Catalonia” (Manent 1989, 16). Josep Benet (2009) even described it as cultural genocide. Statistics suggest that around 100,000 people left Catalonia, mainly passing through France before moving to countries in the Americas prior to the Nazi invasion in the Second World War (Manent 1989, 18). Eighty per cent of journalists were absent from their homeland among a huge exodus of intellectuals. Albert Manent refers to the Catalan diaspora with the Latin words “*finis Catalonia*” [end of Catalonia] (1989, 17). The Mexican government of Lázaro Cárdenas favoured the Republic, unlike other Latin American countries, and accepted as many exiles as possible. Exile permitted ideologies and identities that would otherwise have been suppressed on Spanish soil. At the same time, the great exodus of Catalan intellectuals was a cultural loss for Catalonia but an asset for the country that welcomed them into exile. Calders was representative of the vast number of individuals dispersed outside of their homeland who identified themselves with a Catalan identity. Since the separation from Catalonia constituted a threat to their identity, many Catalan exiles maintained strong links with the homeland whilst disengaging from the host country. The Catalan diaspora fitted within the key features of the classical paradigm of diaspora defined by William Safran (1991, 83-84): a dispersed community, collective memory, a lack of integration and persistent link to the homeland. Taking everything into consideration, Catalan identity is key to make sense of what other scholars have struggled with in studying the work of Pere Calders, whose stories have been sometimes described as “irrelevant short stories” (Bou 1996, 209), have been criticised for their portrayal of Mexican Indians (Bou 1996; Quintana Trias 2015) or have led to claims that Calders was

ungrateful towards the country that adopted him (Quintana Trias 2015, 133).

4. “*Catalans pel món*”

“*Catalans pel món*” is a story included in the editorial collection under the title *Cròniques de la veritat oculta* [Chronicles of the Hidden Truth], which was written in exile and published in 1955. It concerns a voyage to foreign lands in a similar way to other stories of his, such as “*Problemes en l’Índia*” [Problems in India] or “*Història natural*” [Natural History]. In all of these, the narrator is a European who travels to other exotic countries encountering some fascinating adventures. Melcion upholds that the physical journey to the unknown is one of the most recurrent topics in Calders’ fiction (2003, 51-52). He posits that the Caldersian character often reacts negatively to the change that the fictional physical displacement involves (ibid). This premise can be disentangled in consideration of the significant affliction stemming from Calders’ exile. Within this framework, “*Catalans pel món*” is a story that can be interpreted as an ironic depiction of the authorial personal experiences of the Catalan diaspora. Calders was one of those many intellectuals who emigrated to Mexico, where most of them lived in a Catalan “bubble” endeavouring to maintain their roots and language (Faulí 1979, 13). Catalan schools were established, organisations such as *L’Orfeó Català*, which had originally started as a choir, offered Catalans a meeting point, and more than 100 magazines were made available to Catalans. In Mexico, around 175 works were published in Catalan, making Mexico the second country for Catalan exiles with the most writings published after France (Manent 1989, 64). Following Anderson’s (2006) theory of imagined communities, these printed writings permitted the Catalans in exile to unite as a nation despite their mass exodus. Pere Calders also contributed to the Catalan weekly magazine “*Quaderns de l’exili*”, which was used as a political weapon outside Catalonia (Casacuberta 1989). With the Franco regime’s attempts to suppress Catalan identity only intensifying the feeling of Catalanism (Sabaté 2015), the very first edition of the magazine in September 1943 provides an example of Catalans asserting their rights as a nation:

Catalunya, València i Balears son tres Països i una sola Nació. Es missió de la nostra època realitzar la unitat nacional dels catalans, valencians i balears en un Estat en el qual siguin emparades les peculiaritats de cada un dels tres Països (Quaderns de l’exili 1943, i).

[Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands are three countries¹ and one unique nation. It is our mission at this time to carry out the national unity of the Catalans, Valencians and Balearic people in one State where the different peculiarities of each of the three countries are protected]

Catalans exiles living in Mexico formed an ethnic minority whose members often detached themselves from other Spanish immigrants (Brugat 2008). Language was the connecting element that brought Catalans together as a collective group. Their language thus ensured their “group identity” during their exile in Mexico (Stroinska 2003, 101). Previously, this Latin American country had been subject to Spanish immigration since the arrival of the conquistador Hernán Cortez in 1519 during the colonisation of the Americas. The “Indianos”, as the Spanish immigrants were called, were often driven to the continent for economic reasons, often gaining a higher social status than they would have had in Spain (Lida 1997). However, the Spanish refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War were striving to maintain the motherland that had been taken from them due to their ideals (Brugat 2008).

The refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War and subsequent dictatorship were more fragmented as a result of regional and linguistic differences although, in general, Mexicans regarded all immigrants from Spain as Spaniards and, consequently, regional ethnic status lost its meaning outside the Spanish group (Brugat 2008). Since Mexicans were unaware of the regional differences in Spanish ethnicity, the Catalans’ attempts to preserve a separate Catalan identity were rendered difficult (*ibid*). Integration or assimilation did not often ensue for many refugees, who saw themselves as only temporarily displaced. Adapting to the country of reception depended very much on each refugee’s personal circumstances. Calders’ exile was a choice motivated by the desire to flee prosecution having fought for the republican side. He was already 26 years old when he arrived in Mexico. He had left his wife and son in Barcelona and later remarried another Catalan refugee, Rosa Artís, with whom he fathered another three children. He lived, worked, and mixed with Catalans in Mexico City, where Catalan organisations were facilitating the segregation of Catalans not just from Mexicans but from other immigrants too. Enric Bou (1996) equates Catalan and Spanish exiles with each other in the same category of refugees, but the truth is far from being so. Catalan identity played a role in the integration, or rather non-integration, of refugees from Catalonia.

¹ In Catalan “Països Catalans” [Catalan Countries] encompass all the areas where Catalan or variations of Catalan are spoken. This term has been used either culturally or/and politically since the beginnings of Catalan nationalism in the 19th century.

Adhering tightly to their identity led to difficulty in adjusting to the country of exile. This can be explained by Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "habitus", which is thought to structure the subject's worldview. Habitus is construed as a "subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class" (Bourdieu 1977, 86). To this extent, Calders' impressions of Mexico were determined by his own internalised schemes granted by being part of the Catalan community. These perceptions were portrayed through his fiction, which had a twofold dimension: whilst maintaining the Catalan language alive, it became a therapeutic form of dealing with the trauma of exile, rather than a source of income. He was a cartoonist with a passion for writing and photography, whose children did not even discover his writings until they were adults themselves. While other intellectuals resorted to historical realism, Calders used anecdotes to create short stories that often contained the surreal in everyday life. Regarding the degree of influence of the country of exile, Joan Melcion (1980) speculates that the Mexican reality was indeed a source of inspiration that created tension in his fiction, which at the same time led to the author's distancing himself. Bou questions Melcion's approach by suggesting that Calders perhaps exploited the new situations he found himself in to adopt new ways of expression (1996, 209). Meanwhile, Gregori asserts that the new context became an inviting scene for his writing (2004, 195). I concur with Veronica Orazi and Barbara Greco (2019) that everything that is written must have derived from real experiences. Calders himself once clarified his "literary" position towards Mexico when he stated: "No hi influí Mèxic, sinó l'enyorament i com a conseqüència un desig d'evasió" (Faulí 1979, 13) [Mexico did not influence, but rather the longing and, as a consequence, a desire for escape].

Calders did not regard Mexico as a direct influence in his narrative but he considered that his inspiration grew from the strong sense of yearning that the new social environment had triggered. Hence, his experience as an outcast in exile determined his writing (Fuster 1971). Homesickness heightened a sentiment that made him highly sensitive to new situations, often strange to him. Longing can be found in short stories the theme of which does not explicitly appear to be set in Mexico. This recurrent motif stems from deeply clinging to his Catalan identity within a context that differed from his identity linguistically, culturally and ideologically. Calders adopted the short story as his favourite genre for self-expression. In justifying this choice, he explained that this narrative genre did not have the limitations of the novel (Calders TV3, 1984). Having a job as a cartoonist only allowed him to have limited time for writing. Beyond these personal reasons, the fantastic short story also became the perfect medium to deal with the traumatic experiences he had endured during his life.

The term “magic realism” was initially used by Franz Roh, a German art critic, to refer to a new artistic movement that went against realism, but it was later adopted to name the genre that became popular in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. Magic realism refers to literature that juxtaposes supernatural elements with real-world events (Bowers 2004). This juxtaposition helps explore the complexity of the human being through mystery, identity, obsessions, dreams and feelings (Herrero Cecilia 2000) but, as Tzvetan Todorov (1973) attests, fantastic literature always departs from reality to show the incongruous. In this vein, Patricia Heart posits that Calders’ fiction about Mexico attempts to project what was unusual to him and considers that the “syncretic blend of Catalan language and tradition with American experience” is not far from the origins of the Latin American “lo real maravilloso” (1996, 217). To that end, she coins the term “marvelous seny” to define the pragmatism and common sense that encapsulates Calders’ surprised approach to the Mexican world. Magic realism has also been subject to scrutiny in relation to the traumatic memory of postcolonial times (Caruth 1995; Arva 2001).

In the Catalan diasporic scene, trauma is relevant to understanding the narratives of Pere Calders. Julio Cortázar’s perception of the fantastic short story sheds light upon its true psychological essence. He once explained that it is born from a sudden feeling of being displaced, thus altering the normal state of consciousness (Cortázar 1969). This level of detachment and estrangement relates to Calders’ desire to evade the reality he found himself in as a result of longing. Julia Kristeva views exile as a solitude that evolves in response to the Otherness surrounding the subject of longing, who is required to be recognised as double (Smith 1996). This premise relates to Bakhtin’s double-voicedness, which implies that longing results from a journey through memory that divides the self. Such a division could be mirrored through the double-voicedness that characterises ironic narratives. To put it in other words, the choice of this genre is motivated by traumatised memory trying to rationalise experience (Cortázar 1969). Calders’ traumatic experience of exile would have been the motivation for internalising this experience through his writing, whilst remaining detached from it all. There have been different points of view regarding the relation of trauma and magic realism in novels. Eugene Arva (2014) believes that magic realism gives a voice to narrate an event that caused trauma, and Caruth (1995) argues that, in magic realism, there is a recognition of the truth of the incomprehensibility of the events. Maria Takolander (2016) goes beyond these interpretations and adopts an ironic reading that sees the future as being potentially liberated from the past through historical knowledge. The latter pinpoints the perception of postcolonial writing, which tends to be associated

with magic realism and non-Western or marginal cultures.² As I will later demonstrate, we are dealing with a different kind of ethnicity, that is, post-civil war Catalan identity representing a traumatic voice that manipulates fantasy in short stories as a consequence of the predicament of adapting to a particular reality. Although Calders' works cannot be situated within postcolonial fiction, they belong to a peripheral Western culture. Calders is a writer from a minority culture, given that his literary works have contributed to "cultural production within those regions and stateless nations of Europe which have (or once had, or are in the process of creating) a strong cultural identity different from the 'official' culture of the state" (Barberà and Cramerì 2002, 214). For Todorov (1973), the introduction of the supernatural element has a social function that combats potential condemnation due to censorship, be it institutionalised by society or by the author's own psyche. Indeed, Catalan identity, the theme of "*Catalans pel món*", had been subjected to censorship of each kind.

5. Analysis

Calders' identity and traumatic memories determine the subjects of his short stories. On that matter, Cortázar (1994) adds that the most significant feature in short stories is the topic, which goes beyond anecdote to become a summary of the human condition or, even, a social, historical symbol. As Takolander (2016) upholds, magic realism implies the omission of history in the ironically narrated fantastic event. Other characteristics of a good short story are similar to poetry: tension, rhythm and economy (Cortázar 1969; 1994). Calders' stories fit within Cortázar's perception of the genre, and I hope to demonstrate with the present analysis that "*Catalans pel món*" goes beyond the anecdote to express a historical and social ideology regarding Catalan identity. By resorting to magic realism, Calders can displace himself from the painful reality of the diaspora. Magic realism, irony and short stories go well hand in hand in the depiction of a remembered past. As Takolander (2016) notes, the fantastic being represented as the real leads to the definition of irony itself. Indeed, this juxtaposition of the real and unreal relates to one of the characteristics of prototypical irony that I summarised in my doctoral research (2007), that is, deviation from conventionalised strategies or expectations.

We can now proceed with the textual analysis of the "*Catalans pel món*" in the framework of the above literary and contextual considerations. In the story in question, a Catalan man embarks on a journey to Burma on a business trip, where he befriends a Catalan parrot. The first-person narrator explains his experiences in this oriental country that is not used to European visitors.

² In *the Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, Mariano Siskind suggests that magical realist fiction "belongs organically to non-Western, or rather marginal, cultures" (2011, 835).

Calders possibly chose Burma as the context of the story because it represents a distant culture significantly distinct from his own, thus drawing parallels with his exile. The following opening of the story already establishes the answers to “who” and “where”:

Una vegada vaig anar a Birmània vigilant una expedició de *blanc d'Espanya*².

El viatge va anar força bé i en arribar a Yakri, un *reietó* local m'ofereí hospitalitat de bona llei. Havent-hi per allí pocs europeus, aquell senyor va tenir interès a fer evident la brillantesa de la seva cort, i em retenia, feia que el meu repòs s'allargués més del que m'havia proposat.

**No n'hi havia cap. (Aclariment de consciència).*

(Calders P. *Cròniques de la veritat oculta*, 139).

Once I went to Burma to supervise a sales expedition of *plaster of Paris*.

The trip went quite well, and when I arrived in Yakri, a *local kinglet* offered me his trusty hospitality. Since there were few Europeans there*, that gentleman felt interest in showing off the brilliance of his court and detained me, making my sojourn longer than I planned.

**There were none (Clarification out of conscience).*

(Sobrer J. M. trans. *Catalan Review. International Journal of Catalan Culture*, 95).

This excerpt contains three ironic cues that direct the reader to go beyond the literal semantic sense of the words. In the first place, the first-person narrator is a European character who is trading “*blanc d'Espanya*”, a light and white dust made of calcium carbonate with multiple uses for art and medicine. This material is employed as a *double entendre* because it can be interpreted in both a literal and metaphorical manner. As well as referring to the geological material, it evokes connotations of purity and cleanliness associated with the colour “white”. In fact, the colour chosen for this reference is not incidental but appears to have a political charge attributed to the two main blocs during the Spanish conflict: the reds represented by the communists, republicans and anti-fascist forces against the whites or fascists. In the light of such allusions, this play on meaning tacitly represents the Francoist worldview that *los blancos*, the white political forces, had to be

³ Emphasis is mine.

“cleansed”. The export of this material could then be understood as those refugees that had to take exile due to the newly established Spanish Francoist dictatorship after the victory of the white bloc. The expedition could refer to the diaspora of Catalan identity being exported to other countries. Hence, “blanc d’Espanya” echoes the Francoist viewpoint that is being exposed with ironic detachment. All things considered, the translation fails to render the many historical connotations of the “white of Spain” by using the term “plaster of Paris”. Although semantically equivalent, this translation procedure is incoherent with the intended meaning. To achieve interpretive resemblance (Gutt 1991; 1998), we require a term in English that has double meanings. Given that “blanc d’Espanya” is a semantically-complex term in this context (Baker 1992), a near-synonym such as “whiting” would permit the target readership to retrieve the relevant connotational meanings of whiting as well as the desire to conceal unpleasant events, which could equivalently echo the white bloc’s intentions to obscure the truth regarding their censorship and regime. To further contextualize this term, we could add the origin of this material “whiting from Spain”, as a compensatory procedure (Harvey 1995) that would make the relevant contextual information explicit.

The next section of the story establishes the tone of the narrator-character, whose statement that the host country was not accustomed to European visitors hints at his own origin. The term “reietó” is using a diminutive suffix: “tó” added to the word “rei” [king], which acts as a lexical modification that suggests a voice of superiority. This evaluative suffix connotes a diminutive meaning that equates semantically to the adjective “little or secondary”. Beyond its semantic scope, this is an ironic cue that connotes a subjective evaluation. In this sense, the narrator sees the king as an unimportant local figure, who detains him longer than he had anticipated. The lengthening of the stay in Yakri suggests affinities with Calders’ stay in Mexico of over 23 years. “Kinglet” in the TT connotes the same derogatory position towards the king but with a stylistic change, since it is a word with a low frequency of usage. Along with the use of “sojourn”, the text appears to be more pompous and old-fashioned than the original, which may cause some readers not to engage with the narrative.

Let us now give attention to the footnote, which is a narrative device that points to a diversion from our expectation of its graphological use, given that this is not commonly found in literary texts. This graphological device is more common in academic writing. In literature, it constitutes a narrative deviation that is even more foregrounded than parenthetical constructions because some information is deliberately placed outside the text. This is an ironic cue that could potentially evoke the “possibility of irony in print” (Myers 1990: 431). In “*Catalans pel món*”, the footnote deviates from the main narration to say “No n’hi havia cap” [there were not any there in Burma] and adds a parenthetical statement that explains the narrator’s personal reasons for such a

footnote: “aclariment de consciència” [clarification out of conscience]. The meaning of this narrative deviation can only be deconstructed with the knowledge of its antecedent, namely, what is missing in Burma: “pocs europeus” [few Europeans]. Heeding the initial *double entendre*, the footnote is an ironic intrusion that not only corrects some textual information but also points to the Catalan exodus in countries where Catalans were a minority. By being excluded from the narration, the information from the footnote is foregrounded, thus implying that the real reason for travelling (exile) is to isolate and remove him from his culture.

The detailed descriptions of Yakri accentuate the differences between the narrator and the people he is encountering in the new social environment, as is evident in the following passage:

Perquè la meva presència occidental no deslluís l’etiqueta de Palau, el monarca em va donar una capa tota brodada de perles i pedres fines, amb la condició que només me la podia treure per dormir.

(Calders P. *Cròniques de la veritat oculta*, 139).

So that my Western appearance would not dull the palace etiquette, the monarch gave me a mantle all embroidered with pearls and precious stones, with the condition that I only remove it to go to sleep.

(Sobrer J. M. trans. *Catalan Review. International Journal of Catalan Culture*, 95).

The sentence structure above is outlined by the thematic organisation of information. “Perquè la meva presència occidental no deslluís l’etiqueta de Palau” [so that my Western appearance would not dull the palace etiquette] is a subordinate clause that is placed before the main sentence as the theme. Akin to an ironic tone of voice, the syntactic organisation emphasises that the reason why the king lends the narrator character fine clothing derives from his plain appearance not worthy of the court. Seeing one’s appearance in a self-deprecating manner implicates that this sentence echoes a representation of the natives’ perception rather than his own (cf. Sperber and Wilson 1981; 1986). With this strategy, the narrator is detaching himself from this depiction to implicitly recall the great financial losses that many Catalans had to endure following their escape from the Spanish Civil War. At the same time, the humbleness displayed by the narrator is also characteristic of the first-person Caldersian narrator. It is important to note that the TT keeps the same thematic organisation by placing the subordinate sentence of purpose starting with “so

that...” at the beginning of the sentence. This, however, is not the syntactical organisation expected in English, so, the target readership may feel the sentence does not flow or read well.

The narration resumes with a focus on a court that includes all sorts of animals:

Les residències reials d'aquells països són com una mena de parc, on bèsties i persones viuen en comú guardant determinades diferències. Hi Ha una quantitat d'ocells, elefants de jardí, felins, tortugues sagrades i profanes, insectes de temporada i altres animals, tan rars que arriben a fer respecte.

(Calders P. *Cròniques de la veritat oculta*, 139).

The royal apartments in those countries are a kind of a park, where animals and people live in common, keeping certain distances. There is a great quantity of birds, garden elephants, felines, sacred and profane tortoises, seasonal insects, and other animals, so rare that they inspire respect.

(Sobrer J. M. trans. *Catalan Review. International Journal of Catalan Culture*, 95).

This portrayal clashes with our expectations regarding what an opulent king's court should be like, hence constituting a diversion from our schemata of the world. Despite the etiquette, people live with wild animals that would not normally be found in most European countries. Qualifying the tortoises with two antonyms and contrasting adjectives “tortugues sagrades i profanes” [sacred and profane tortoises] is a lexical clash. Similarly, “elefants de jardí” [garden elephants] is a collocation that refers to statues of elephants to decorate gardens, rather than real elephants basking in gardens, as suggested in this story. These unexpected combinations of lexica appear to be ironic cues, which is corroborated by other stories of Calders', such as “*Història natural*” [Natural History], where the first-person narrator is also a European who ends up living in a tropical city. Despite settling in a very modern apartment, he finds himself having to share it with reptiles and a tiger. When complaining to the landlord, he is advised not to disturb the feline, especially when it is giving birth, at which time he is given the option to move out of the flat and have some of his rent expenses refunded. This recurring motif stems from Calders' anecdotes of life in exile, where he came across a wide range of animals he had never seen in Barcelona. At that time, a large number of indigenous people lived in the country

but those who lived in the city congregated in certain Western parts of the city where old buildings were plagued with animals (Chávez 2012). In an interview (TV3 1984), Calders recalled his utter shock at how iguanas were used as street cleaners. As Calders said himself, “el que vaig fer fou, com a espectador, la comprovació d’una gent i d’una realitat que em sorprenien” (Faulí 1979: 13) [I saw for myself a group of people and a reality that surprised me]. Observations of the new environment did determine his writing, turning exile into a source of inspiration.

Let us now examine another section from “*Catalans pel món*” that focuses on a farewell party. Despite the stay in Yakri being reported as a party, the narrator perceives himself as a loyal person who has never neglected his duty, this being the reason for bringing his stay to an end. To be sensible is another of the qualities of the typical Caldersian character. In Catalan, this attribution is referred to as “seny”, an ancient rationalism passed from generation to generation that, according to the Institute of Catalan Studies, defines Catalan culture and society along with continuity, measurement, and irony (Sabaté 2015). In context, this sensibleness seems to allude to his duty towards his homeland. During the farewell party organised by the King prior to the narrator’s departure, there is another unexpected turn of events:

El ball es va allagar-se hores i hores, sempre
igual, sempre amb la mateixa cadència. Quan el
tedi es va apoderar de mi, vaig dir a manera
d’expansió, en català i alcant la veu
-Mal per mal, m’agraden més les danses de
Castellterçol...
El lloro va fer un crit gutural i dirigint se a mi
digué:
‘No us emboliqueu. Si us sent el Gran Interpret
esteu perdut.
(Calders P. *Cròniques de la veritat oculta*,
139).

The dance lasted long hours, always the same,
always the same cadence. When boredom got
the better of me, to let off steam I said out loud,
in Catalan.
“For the money, I prefer the dances from
Castellterçol”.
The parrot let out a guttural cry and, addressing
me, said:
“Be careful. If the Great Interpreter hears you,
you’re a dead man!
(Sobrer J. M. trans. *Catalan Review*.
International Journal of Catalan Culture, 95).

The ball is seen with boredom [tedi], which relates to Calders' quoting the boredom he felt during his exile in Mexico as well as his inability to settle down: "No tinc capacitat d'adaptació americana i el continent m'avorreix de dalt a baix" (Aulet 2003, 110) [I do not have the ability to adapt to America and this continent bores me intensely]. At this point, the narrator voices, out loud, his predilection for Catalan festivals, to which a parrot reacts, surprisingly enough, in Catalan. The parrot, with the wisdom and sensibleness of the Catalan personality, warns him about the consequences of his words, as they could offend the host. The parrot's remark may well implicitly voice those that regarded Calders' writing as unappreciative towards Mexico, the country that hosted him. Even if parrots can indeed be trained to repeat some words, they are unable to hold a conversation and understand the meaning of words. Consequently, this event subverts our expectations. The fantastic element suggests we are dealing with magic realism, which acts as an ironic trigger that activates a hidden message in relation to the author's difficulty in settling in the country of exile. Such a reading becomes unequivocal when the narration focuses on the parrot:

Va dir-ho en un català tan correcte que de moment s'em va tallar l'alè. Home de món com era, vaig dissimular davant del rei, pero aquella nit, quan tothom dormia, vaig cercar el lloro, que va explicar-me la seva història. Era un lloro, de Cadaqués, i havia arribat fins allí per atzars de la vida.

Per moltes que fossin les coses que ens separaven, hi havia l'idioma que ens unia i tenim records comuns.

Parlàvem del Mediterrani i de les nostres esperances, de reveure'l, i l'endemà de bon matí, en marxar de Yakri, tenia el cor mes tendre que el dia de la arribada.

(Calders P. *Cròniques de la veritat oculta*, 139).

He spoke in such correct Catalan that, at first, it left me breathless. Man of the world that I was, I kept my cool before the king, but at night, when everyone was asleep, I looked for the parrot, who told me his story. He was a Catalan parrot from Cadaqués, and fortune had brought him there.

In spite of all those things that separated us,
there was the language uniting us, and we
shared some memories.

We spoke of the Mediterranean, and of our
hopes to see it again, and the next morning,
when I left Yakri, my heart was much softer
than on my arrival.

(Sobrer J. M. trans. *Catalan Review*.
International Journal of Catalan Culture, 96).

Despite parrots and humans being distinct in many ways, the narrator feels connected with the parrot because he is from Cadaqués, a village on the coast of Girona. The Catalan language, which is a representation of identity, is what unites Catalans. Memories are another pivotal factor in building a sense of belonging to a given ethnological group. The last sentence of the story connotes a strong feeling of yearning, which is manifest in other stories such as “*La ratlla i el desig*” [The line and the desire], where a Mexican setting is not explicitly evoked. When the narrator of this story desires to get home quickly after being delayed at work, his wish is granted by magic. Despite finding his wife at a house in a closer location, he is unhappy, which is why he sets off looking for his real home. “*La ratlla i el desig*” resembles Calders’ settling down with his family in a place that is not the usual location, i.e., Mexico, and his desire to look for his home in the real location, i.e., Catalonia. Concerning the diaspora, Joan Triadú has described this story as being therapeutic for an exile (2003, 19). By way of comparison, “*La clara Providència*” [The clear Providence] also depicts a sense of displacement and yearning when a man, by a strange fate, finds a family that is not his living in his house. These stories have a common thread, which illustrates that his narratives of exile indeed derive from observations and feelings arising from his situation as a refugee. In terms of the excerpt translated above, it is worth noting that this last section displays casual vocabulary, thus creating a distinct shift of style from the initial section, where, unlike in the ST, flowery and old-fashioned vocabulary was used: “kinglet, sojourn, regale, detain, cadence”. Register is meaningful as it gives information about the relationship between the situation and language use in texts (Halliday 1985). The stylistic shift here seen could hence be justified by the fact that the narrator’s warmth towards the parrot changes his choice of language, even if such an abrupt change of register is not discernible in the ST.

Heeding this analysis, “*Catalans pel món*” is culturally specific: in the post-Spanish Civil War context, exile allowed the Catalan language to be cultivated away from Spanish oppression. It has become a portrait of Calders’ ideology via irony: Catalan identity exists, and despite being uprooted, language and

memories will keep this identity alive. The underlying attitude is an emotive sentiment that encompasses a sense of duty to his identity and trauma caused by a longing for his roots. It was not just a physical exile but also an interior one, as his granddaughter Diana Coromines encapsulates (2019). At the same time, the present story implicitly defies Francoist attempts to destroy Catalan identity. For the reader of the ST, the implicit feeling of Catalanism in the story may put readers “on edge”, following Hutcheon’s argumentation (1994) that, given the evaluative and judgemental attitude that irony entails, negative feelings may arise in interpreting, or, even, misinterpreting, an ironic discourse, like this one.

When reviewing the impact of this story on an English-speaking readership, the fictional plot will most likely be understood, although the question remains whether English-speaking readers will be able to discern the story as ironic. To do so, some hints aid the reader/interpreter to go beyond the narrative discourse of the speaking parrot. We have seen devices that indicate the double-voicedness of the narration: *double entendre*, evaluative suffixes, thematic organisation, footnotes, lexical clashes, magic realism, and schemata clashes. Nevertheless, their renderings into English exhibit some changes that make them less foregrounded and can disorient the reader. Since magic realism is mostly prevalent in postcolonial cultures, some English-speaking readers, for example, in the UK, may not be accustomed to such types of fantastic writing in genres other than children’s fairy tales, sci-fiction or horror. Consequently, the TT could just be read as a fantastic story with a moral, for instance, that of being appreciative towards other cultures. More importantly, the lack of knowledge of the contextual information needed to bridge the fiction and its intended meaning may deter an English-speaking readership from seeing the story as ironic. The historical and sociocultural contexts will ultimately be the missing piece of the interpretative puzzle.

In conclusion, the target readership may require more or less cognitive effort (Yus Ramos 1998) to perceive the irony depending upon affinities with the author, and might even not attribute any irony to the story at all. Those who have encountered other cultures and languages may appreciate the sense of identity that languages give. Similarly, readers with knowledge of the Catalan situation will arrive at the intended message and implied attitude more easily, and the more affinities that one may share with the ironist, the closer his/her interpretation will be to the ironist’s intention (Hutcheon 1994). These include: being Catalan, speaking Catalan, having a strong sense of Catalanism, having lived abroad or having used a different language, being subject to cultural repression, etc. Paradoxically, despite being a culturally-laden story, it is, all the same, a universal one that reaches out to different readers. The open ending and the lack of detail about the main character makes this story open to multiple readings.

5. Conclusion

This article has aimed to demonstrate that Calders' "*Catalan pel món*" is an ironic discourse that represents a displaced Catalan identity triggered by the trauma of exile during the Francoist repression of Catalan culture. I have attempted to propose an analytical framework of narrative discourse whereby ironic cues serve as markers of a shift in perspective. This shift directs the reader towards an echo of an implied reality or world view that is tacitly denounced. Ironic cues are more easily discerned in relation to the relevant contextual background. In the context of irony, the fantastic elements are not only a deviation from our expectations, but magic realism is also the literary medium for representing the historical memory and traumatised voice of the Catalan diaspora.

The essay also interrogated the cross-cultural rendering of this story into English. There are two main obstacles into the proper reception of the translation. On the one hand, the TT has suffered some detrimental shifts and, on the other, the relevant background information might not be easily accessible to the target readership. Another fundamental consideration is the context of this translated story, which was published in an academic journal. The translations of Calders' narratives into English have been intended to reach a wider audience (Bath 1991) and often to promote Catalan culture and recognition of its identity (Cramer 2000). As Cramer indicates, it is up to the target culture to be willing to receive it (*ibid*), which may further make it difficult for the target readership to engage with this translated text. It is also noteworthy that "there is no guarantee" that this irony or any irony "will be realised" (Hutcheon, 31) by either a source or target readership.

In a nutshell, Calders, as the ironist of "*Catalan pel món*", implicitly reinforces Catalan identity whilst protecting himself, to which the reader as an interpreter may react according to his/her own perception of the literary discourse. Not only may irony function differently linguistically but also culture may play a factor in the construction of ironic discourses, hence rendering the translation of this ironic discourse into another culture a challenging task. We could thus say that Catalan identity ultimately determines Calders' irony not only in the story "*Catalans pel món*", where Catalanism is implicitly alluded to, but also in many of his short stories written in exile, where the tension between identity and exile, which caused trauma for Calders, is apparent through the construction of ironic discourse.

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