

The semiotics of disguise in seventeenth-century Spanish theatre

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Summary

The theatrical phenomenon of the disguise in two seventeenth-century Spanish plays is examined in terms of the sender-message-receiver transaction. This disguise is seen as a 'sign-vehicle' manifesting high semiotic flexibility as it denotes and at the same time connotes meaning on more than one level. The Don Juan disguise in *El burlador de Sevilla* (The Deceitful Trickster of Seville) by Tirso de Molina and the Rosaura, Clotaldo and Basilio disguises in *La vida es sueño* (Life is a Dream) by Calderón de la Barca are shown to communicate their message to a destination receiver by means of a number of codes - extratextual, intertextual and intratextual - which are illustrated in diagram form and explicated in detail. The conclusion reached is that the disguise event is a tangible theatrical device which effectively integrates the themes that a worldly concept of life is an illusion, a dream and a stage and that man's task is to separate the true from the false, the real from the illusory.

Opsomming

Die teaterverskynsel van vermomming in twee sewentiende-eeuse Spaanse dramas word uit die oogpunt van die verhouding sender-boodskap-ontvanger ondersoek. Hierdie vermommingselement word beskou as 'n 'tekendraer' wat groot semiotiese buigbaarheid openbaar deurdat betekenis tegelykertyd op meer as een vlak aangedui en geïmpliseer word. Die Don Juan-vermomming in *El burlador de Sevilla* (Die oorlamse skelm van Sevilla) deur Tirso de Molina en die vermomming van Rosaura, Clotaldo en Basilio in *La vida es sueño* (Die lewe is 'n droom) deur Calderón de la Barca dra hul boodskap aan 'n bestemmingsontvanger oor deur middel van 'n hele paar kodes - ekstratekstueel, intertekstueel, en intratekstueel. Hierdie kodes word diagrammaties verduidelik en in besonderhede ontleed. Daar word tot die slotsom gekom dat die vermommingselement 'n tasbare teatermiddel is, waardeur die volgende temas op 'n effektiewe wyse geïntegreer word: dat die wêreldse konsep van die lewe 'n illusie, 'n droom en 'n verhoogspel is en dat dit die mens se taak is om die waarheid van die onwaarheid en die werklike van die illusie te onderskei.

In introducing the topic, I propose to address three questions: (1) Why I chose the disguise as a topic; (2) Why the seventeenth-century Spanish theatre; and (3) Why a semiotic approach to the subject. Then I hope to illustrate what is communicated by the disguise in two representative seventeenth-century Spanish dramas, applying a semiotic approach.

In answer to the first question, I quote Freeburg (see Ashcom, 1960: 5-6) who, in his book *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama*, points out that 'disguise is an effective contrivance because the deception which produces action and the recognition which ends it are fundamentally dramatic transactions... For dramaturgic effectiveness there are few better mechanical devices... A playwright, before constructing a plot, must find a factor which is capable of producing a dramatic complication. He must also find a factor which will produce a sure

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resolution of this complication. A device which complicates and at the same time is capable of resolving is especially desirable. Disguise is such a device'. The disguise or concealment of truth in drama has a number of possible visual and verbal manifestations, for example: dress and make-up; behaviour (that is, social, verbal and psychological); movement; distance and so on. This not only suggests its dramatic and theatrical potential but also, I think, explains its popularity from ancient to modern drama.

The disguise device achieved special dominance, however, at certain periods in literature, sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe being one of them as is evidenced in plays by Shakespeare in England, Molière in France and of course the 'commedia dell'arte' in Italy, and so on.

With regard to the seventeenth-century in Spain, the themes of deception and illusion also gain particular significance, and their most manifest expression in theatre is in the disguise. All of Spain's dramatists of the period used this device for both comic and serious purposes. In fact, according to Ashcom (1960: 51) a few of them used it when the plot in no way justified it! It also appears in Spanish narrative, the picaresque novel being one example, and of course *Don Quijote* and other works by Cervantes offer us yet further expression of the notion that things may not be what they seem. And this was not exclusively a literary phenomenon, as certain social practices of the period demonstrate.

I refer here to the masked ball or masquerade in which guests would change their usual dress and behaviour patterns and only at the end of the evening reveal their true identities. This type of event, seen in the context of what Basil Willey (1934: 9) calls 'the winnowing process', suggests that the task of separating the real from the illusory had indeed an appropriate metaphor in the double illusion of the disguise in theatre. As can be expected, the disguise in Spanish drama of the seventeenth-century or 'Golden Age' as it is called, has also been a popular topic for critical enquiry from various viewpoints: the dynamics of the human personality for example (Fischer, 1977), the nature of feminism in seventeenth-century Spain (Bravo-Villasante, 1955 and McKendrick, 1974), the prevailing theatrical conventions of the period (Díez Borque, 1975 and Orozco Díaz, 1969), as well from the historical perspective (Romera-Navarro, 1934).

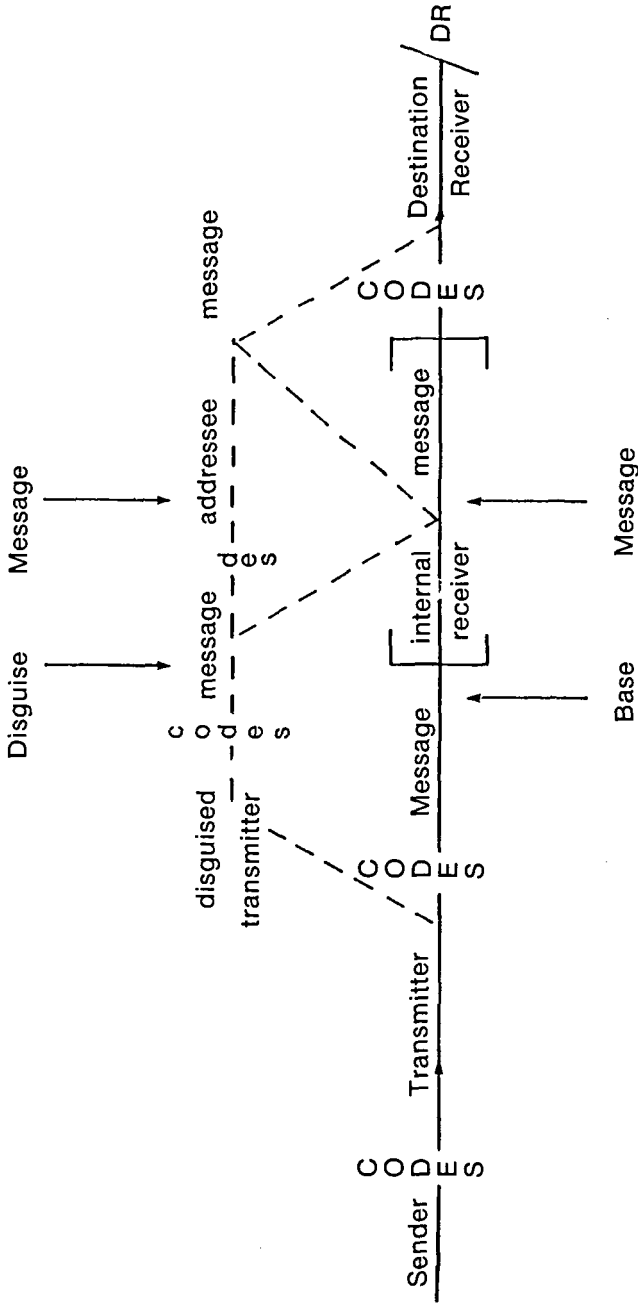
The purpose of my study is to examine the disguise in terms of the sender-message-receiver transaction, in other words as a theatrical event in the context of a communication process predisposed by a dramatic text. This semiotic approach, would hopefully help clarify the manner in which the disguise event is transmitted and the levels of communication which are operative in the transaction, both of which, in turn, would lead to an improved understanding not only of the disguise event itself but also of its relevance to the meaning of the play under examination. I also thought that Umberto Eco's (1976) definition of semiotics was peculiarly appropriate to the analysis of disguise: 'Semiotics is, in

principle, the discipline studying everything which can be used to lie!

In this transaction I see the disguise as a 'sign-vehicle' or signifier of a number of codes, or systems of signs, which allow that sign-vehicle to be attached to a signified or mental concept. (Here I use the terms sign-vehicle and code in the sense that Keir Elam (1980: 6,7,50) does, namely that the sign is a two-faced entity linking a material vehicle or signifier with a mental concept or signified, and a code as being an ensemble of correlational rules governing the formation of sign-relationships.) The disguise as sign-vehicle then, manifests high semiotic flexibility in that it denotes and at the same time connotes meaning on more than one level. For example, the masculine disguise in a Spanish seventeenth-century play not only shows a woman in a certain type of male attire, but also suggests many attendant factors, such as abandonment by her lover, revenge tactics on her part, her rebellion against societal pressure, and so on. The particular dual denotative and connative functions of the disguise can be considered as a major event in theatrical communication. (Although it also appears and is important in narrative, it is the performance or potential performance factor of the disguise in theatre that gives it this more complex duality of meaning.) For this reason then I shall be using the term 'disguise event' in my examination of the two plays I've chosen, namely *El burlador de Sevilla* (The Deceitful Trickster of Seville) by Tirso de Molina,¹ in which the protagonist - Don Juan - is the focus of the study and *La vida es sueño* (Life is a Dream) by Calderón de la Barca,² which presents three disguise events - the Rosaura, Clotaldo and Basilio disguises. The disguise events in these plays operate in terms of a variety of codes in the transmission of their respective messages. Both plays centre on moral and philosophical issues and the disguise events therefore carry a particular cultural and religious bias or world view, namely Roman Catholicism and the Counter-Reformation. Common to these and all disguise events is the fact that the disguise messages are delivered in a double or two-tiered communication situation as Diagram 1 shows.

The sender is of course the author of a play seen as a dramatic text, or the author-producer of a play seen as a performance text. The transmitter is the character who carries out the disguise and who appears physically on stage and speaks, thereby delivering both visual and spoken messages. By means of codes specific to his/her disguise this transmitter delivers a disguise message to the addressee concerned, that is the character or characters who fall prey to the disguise message. (I've indicated this by means of a broken line in the diagram.) At the same time however, this same transmitter may deliver the real or base message (indicated by means of an unbroken line) to an internal receiver, that is the character or characters who are aware of the disguise. These characters are therefore connected to the disguise message as the linking lines show on the diagram. These two messages are simultaneously received by a final receiver - the

DIAGRAM 1



spectator or reader - who is called the destination receiver, abbreviated DR.

The co-presence within a play of addressee, namely a victim of the disguise, and internal receiver, that is a participant in the disguise event, is a particularly important resource of dramatic discourse: between the informed and the uninformed, between awareness and ignorance, a sense of superiority and power is created, and this is one of the essential elements in drama to which the final receiver bears witness.

The term codes appears at certain places in the diagram where the communication process enters an encoding or decoding phase. What I hope to do is identify and explicate those codes specific to the disguise event in theatre and drama and I do so with caution because, being a fairly recent field of study, the problematics of theatre and drama code systems have not yet been completely or satisfactorily resolved (see Elam, 1980:52).

In this presentation I refer and often imply what I call *extratextual*, *intertextual* and *intratextual* codes. By extratextual codes, I mean that range of information and experience derived from the norms, constraints, ideas, attitudes, values, etc of the society of the author's time and that of the play's fable or story time which are relevant to the disguise event. Intertextual codes then refer to the experience and expectations evolved from other plays or literary works in which the disguise is a component. Intratextual codes are those used to produce the direct dramatic discourse; this category therefore includes the recollection of all previously stated discourse information relating to the disguise event in the play itself. One further point I should like to make here is in connection with the identity of the DR. A twentieth-century South African DR for example would not necessarily be familiar with the social and ideological conventions of a period or setting other than his or her own. For the purpose of this study, I shall regard the DR as an ideal receiver, namely, one who is acquainted or made familiar with the cultural background of seventeenth-century Spain, a receiver then who is an 'ensemble of codes' to use Eco's (1979:7) term.

The disguise events in the first play centre around the main character Don Juan whose legend I am sure is very well known to you, although perhaps not from the play in which he first appeared - *El burlador de Sevilla* written by Tirso de Molina, the pen-name of Fray Gabriel Téllez, at some stage between 1616 and 1625. The title given to the play and the character himself - 'burlador' - indicate what the play dramatizes: the malicious and mocking deceitfulness of Don Juan. For each of his many deceptions Don Juan adopts the disguise of the serious and committed husband-to-be or fiancé. His disguises are, therefore, mostly verbal - they are lies - but he also makes use of concealment devices provided by the dark or, in one case, by wearing someone else's cloak.

The first manifestation of the disguise occurs at the very opening of the play in the first line uttered by Isabela, the first addressee: 'Duque Octavio, por aquí /

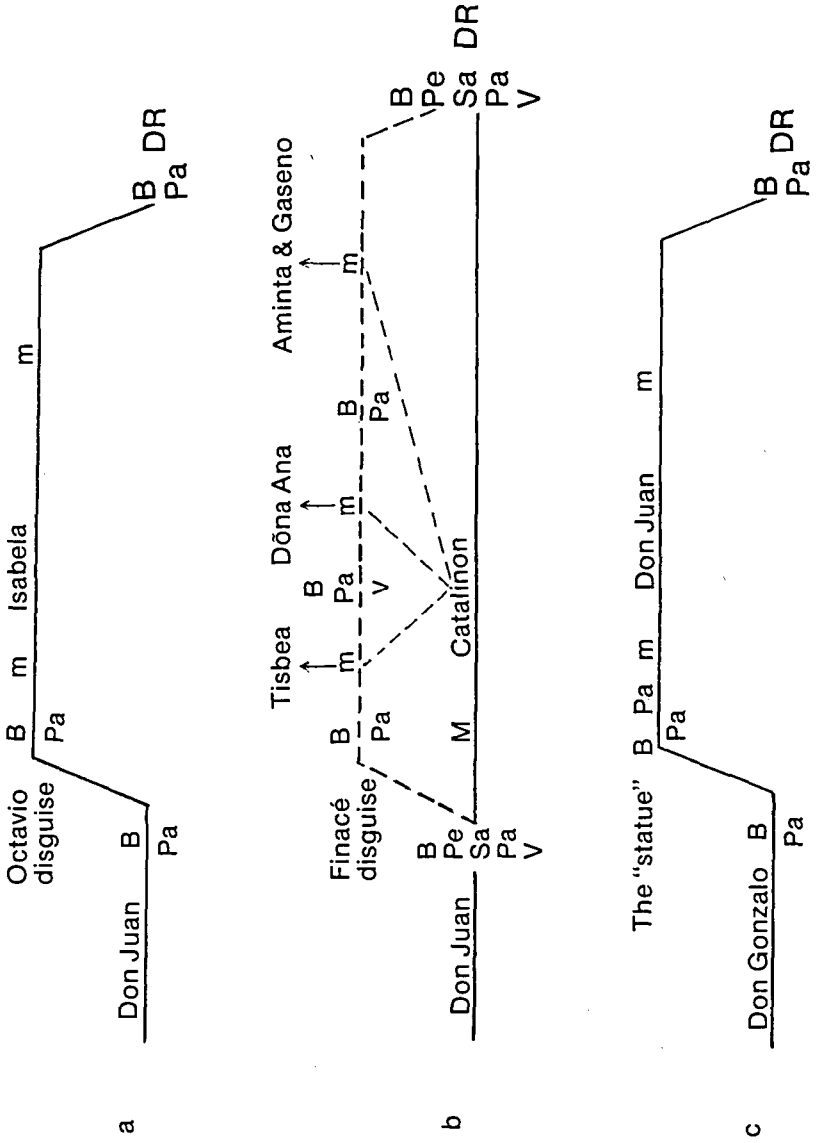
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podrás salir más seguro' (Duke Octavio, you'll have a safer exit through here), which she says to Don Juan, thinking him to be the Duke, her fiancé, as she leads him through the door into the imaginary darkness of her bedroom, in reality a sunlit 'corral' stage. (Plays in seventeenth-century Spain were performed between 3 and 6 in the afternoon in these 'corrales' which were open-air rectangular yards, with the stage at one end, consisting of a projecting apron, a mid-stage area with a trap door and a back-stage which was partially curtained for sudden exits and entrances. The walls and balconies at the back and sides of the stage together with the stage together with the stage props and machinery were extensively used for one effect or another but principally as concealment and transformation devices - yet another indication of the popularity of the disguise convention.)

At this point in the play both Isabela and the DR are the addressees of the disguise message Don Juan = Duque Octavio. In other words, neither Isabela nor the DR has reason to believe that Don Juan is not in fact the Duke. This I have endeavoured to put into diagram form (Diagram 2a) by combining the solid line of the base message with the normal positioning and broken line of the disguise message. This means that the only one who is aware of the true dramatic reality is Don Juan himself. Don Juan then proceeds to complete his disguise role in the next few lines of the play by promising Isabela instant marriage, that is by lying to her. After hearing the lady's grateful and happy reply, and as she is about to bring some light to her bedroom and thereby see that he is not the Duke, Don Juan admits, boasts rather, that he is not in fact the person who had taken him for although he does not reveal his true identity at this stage. The DR, then, already at the outset of the play, can piece together two important components of Don Juan's disguise tactics which are designated Behavioural (B on the diagram) and Pragmatic (Pa on the diagram) and these are repeated in the subsequent disguise events as you will observe in Diagram 2b. Working backwards as it were from Don Juan's self-disclosure, both Isabela and the DR will reinterpret his profession of love and commitment as deceitful lies.

In terms of the behavioural codes operating within the play, that is intratextually, Don Juan's action and words show him to be not just a seducer of women but a malicious deceiver and trickster, a man who creates trust in order to betray that trust and then deride the victim of it. In relation to other plays of the period, that is intertextually, Don Juan's behaviour presents a distinctive feature in that he does not disguise himself and his motives to satisfy feelings of desire and lust, but for the pleasure of the deceit and the presumption of success without fear of retribution. Here too the extratextual aspect of the behaviour code emerges in that the DR, regarding Don Juan as a morally reprehensible being would begin to expect a punishment befitting the wrongs being done (and this applies to any DR, not just a seventeenth-century Spanish one).

DIAGRAM 2



Clearly coincidental with Don Juan's insincere and presumptuous behaviour are his speech acts or verbal behaviour in the play as a whole and more pertinently in the disguise events. (As an aside here I should like to add that the list of characters or 'dramatis personae' in seventeenth-century Spanish plays was headed by 'personas que hablan en ella' - 'characters who speak in the play' - for indeed the action of the plays was predominantly a spoken one, in fact saying was doing.) This spoken action was interpreted by the dramatic interlocuter and the final receiver according to the norms which govern interpersonal communication, namely the pragmatic code (Pa on the diagram). Here I am referring to the early speech-act theorists Searle (1969) and Austin (1962), as well as Elam (1980: 156ff). The types of act in a given utterance - locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary - and the conditions necessary for their accurate decoding - the preparatory, the sincerity and the essential - take on a particular significance in the communication of the disguise event, for the speech acts of the agent or transmitter of the disguise do not fulfill the conditions proper to their decoding on both message levels. In other words the addressee in the disguise message accepts that the conditions are fulfilled, therefore the 'illocution' inevitably achieves the desired perlocutionary effect. (In the Don Juan/Octavio disguise, (Diagram 2a) Isabela sexually surrenders herself to Don Juan because she believes he is the Duke and that his promise of marriage to her is sincere.) The DR, however, and the internal receiver if there is one, know that the speaker is not entitled to say what he says, namely does not fulfill the preparatory conditions in the base message. (Don Juan, for example, is not the Duke and he has no right to be in Isabela's bedroom proposing marriage.) The DR would further know that the speaker is not sincere in what he says, that he does not fulfill the sincerity condition. (Don Juan has no intention of marrying Isabela.)

Finally the DR realises that the speaker is not committed by what he says, that he does not fulfill the essential condition. (Don Juan for example would not be committed to carrying out what in the first place was a lie.) I think it will be observed from these remarks that the disguise event, that is the two-tiered communication model, can be said to function optimally in terms of the pragmatic code.

In Don Juan's first disguise as Duque Octavio, the DR is, together with Isabela, an addressee, as the single-tier diagram (2a) shows. After Don Juan's self-disclosure, both Isabela and the DR will reinterpret everything he has said as deceitful lies and for the DR a pattern has been set out to which he can refer in the subsequent disguise events. He therefore ceases to be an addressee as from this point and the double message model becomes operative.

This facility to apply previously transmitted information is designated structural anaphoric - Sa on Diagram 2b - and again I use Elam's (1980: 152-3) term for this code, which is of course an intratextual one. It is not indicated in the

code abbreviations in Diagram 2a because it was not operative at the time of occurrence of the disguise event, the DR being an addressee, just as Isabela was.

I have grouped the other major Don Juan disguises under a single composite diagram - Diagram 2b. In all of these Don Juan professes love and marriage to the addressees, namely Tisbea, Dña Ana, Aminta and her father Gaseno, all of whom believe him to their cost. The DR will interpret or decode Don Juan's disguises according to the same behavioural and pragmatic codes which were applicable in the first disguise (Diagram 2a). In other words he will be aware of Don Juan's pretence to be sincere in his proposals of marriage.

However there are important differences. The first one - Don Juan's use of asides - constitutes one of the conventions Elam (1980: 59) classifies under the presentational code (abbreviated Pe in the diagram), namely, modes of directly addressing the DR whereby the mimetic illusion of the dramatic world is broken and the spectator/reader is therefore in a greater state of awareness. In this play Don Juan's asides not only inform the DR of his intention to 'burlar' - to dishonour and mock without fear of consequences - but actually 'involve' the DR in those very 'burlas', making him a voiceless participant. The action of the disguise events therefore unfolds before the eyes of the DR according to the set plans of Don Juan as author/producer: they become foreshadowed plays within the play as it were, with their beginning, middle and end segments. The success of these disguise events is assured in Don Juan's asides too, and they further signal his arrogance and a presumption on his part that he will neither be condemned nor punished for his deeds. Apart from the aside, the DR is informed of Don Juan's plans through his discussion of them with his man-servant, Catalinón, whose name, like all the 'graciosos' (comic servants) of seventeenth-century Spanish theatre, is a pun, in this case on the Spanish word for coward. Catalinón denies that he is what his name suggests and, in a way, he proves it when as an internal receiver, he voices forebodings and issues warnings to Don Juan about his conduct and his motivation. And of course by doing so he is also voicing the warnings of the DR as informed observer. Don Juan's response to all of these warnings is the famous line: 'Que largo me lo fiais' (You can have confidence in me for a long time to come, or: I have time enough to repent and be saved.) The second important difference between the first (Diagram 2a) and the second and fourth disguise events (Diagram 2b) is that Don Juan's identity is not withheld from the addressees. In the case of Tisbea, a fisherwoman who rescues Don Juan and Calatinón from the sea after they have been shipwrecked on their way back to Spain from Italy, it is Catalinón who tells her who Don Juan is: The Count of Seville and son of the King's Counsellor. In the case of Aminta and her father Gaseno - peasant farming people - it is Don Juan himself who boasts his status and lineage. Although his true identity is revealed here, Don Juan still does not fulfill the preparatory conditions of the pragmatic code because he is not entitled

to tell lies by virtue of his rank. He promises marriage to these two women, who are both poor and lowly peasants, successfully enticing them through an offer of higher social status.

The fiancé disguise in which Dōña Ana is the addressee is similar to the first one in that Don Juan pretends to be the true love of the lady in question - Don Moto. This Don Moto is also Don Juan's best friend from whom he borrows a cloak on the pretence of impersonating him to have a rendezvous with a lady-friend of Moto's. Hence the V for what Elam calls the vestimentary or dress code is operative here (Diagram 2b). Don Juan's expressed intention, which the DR learns through an aside and discussions with Catalinón, is not only to trick and seduce Ana in Moto's name, but also to deceive and dishonour Moto. His disguise goes even further than this, however, because in it Don Juan murders Don Gonzalo, Ana's father, and he escapes from Ana's home allowing Moto to be accused and arrested for the murder. Added to this is the terrible irony that Don Juan had been officially betrothed to Dona Ana by the king of Spain (which information the DR received in a previous scene). Don Juan's offences against the norms of the behavioural and pragmatic codes therefore are doubly defiant: he is dishonoring the very woman he is supposed to marry, and as well as that he kills his future father-in-law.

As the DR witnesses these disguise events take place and as he also sees that Don Juan successfully manoeuvres out of one and into the next before his victims have sorted out the confusion and demanded redress, there is an increased tension on that final receiver's part emerging from his sense of moral outrage at the open flouting of just about all his values. And corresponding to this is his growing suspense as to how these wrongs will eventually be put right. I should add here that each disguise event is more outrageous than the preceding one. More people are involved, secondary addressees if you like, for example Duque Octavio; Don Juan's father and his uncle; the King of Spain; the people of Tisbea's fishing village; Moto and Don Gonzalo in the case of Ana; and Aminta's father, husband and a whole wedding party. It will also be noted by the discerning DR that the behavioural code is not being vigorously upheld by any of Don Juan's victims - they all fall into his hands for one selfish reason or another. There are two possible exceptions however, the one being Catalinón, the internal receiver who issues warnings to Don Juan, and the other being a stone effigy, the avenging fury of the murdered Don Gonzalo, as distinct from Don Gonzalo the living character- Ana's father.

This brings me to the last disguise event of the play, as seen in Diagram 2c. Don Juan has escaped from his commitment to Aminta and hearing from Catalinón that his previous victims are in pursuit of him, conceals himself by day in a churchyard cemetery and at night in a 'little known' inn. He comes across Don Gonzalo's tombstone on which there is a stone effigy of the murdered man with

the words that he is waiting to take vengeance on the man who murdered him imprinted or carved on it. Don Juan takes these words as a challenge and while pulling the statue's beard - a sign of total disrespect and a gross mockery - he invites him to dine. Later that night the effigy of Don Gonzalo does appear at the inn, has supper with Don Juan and when they are alone asks Don Juan to dine with him the next night. The purpose of this invitation is hidden from Don Juan and the DR. So this time it is Don Juan himself who is the addressee as well as the DR in the sense that neither really knows this is the fulfillment of an oath Don Juan made to Aminta when he foreswore to be her husband by saying may a dead man strike him dead if he were not telling the truth. Like the previous addressees, Don Juan falls victim to the invitation to dinner from the 'statue' for a self-serving purpose. In his case it is to prove that just as he had no respect for the living, so he has none for the dead, nor even for death itself because he thinks himself invulnerable. He cannot lose face and show himself a coward by refusing the invitation and, ironically, he cannot break his word to the statue because he regards himself a 'gentleman'.

Don Gonzalo as avenging fury is the sender of the disguise message, the import of which is known only at the closing of the play. In other words his behaviour and speech acts conform to what can be expected in 'someone' issuing a return invitation to dinner. Similarly, his gesture of friendship and bonhomie in the handshake with Don Juan does not seem out of place. When Don Juan takes his hand, however, the effigy starts accusing him of his wrongdoing and with that Don Juan's hand begins to burn. Don Juan's final plea for confession and absolution is refused and he dies in great pain a condemned man. Both Don Juan and the DR discover simultaneously the truth as to the significance of the stone effigy, namely that he is the agent of divine justice and retribution.

The emphasis is on retribution as the statue's last words suggest: 'This is God's justice: you will be punished in accordance with your actions'. As Don Juan lived by deceiving and mocking others, so it is fitting he should die as the willing victim of a deception himself. The absence in this play of any notion of divine mercy - noticeable in the fact that Don Juan's last minute wish to repent was not granted - would have been rather unusual to a seventeenth-century Spanish playgoer, according to his extratextual or religious codes, and intertextually too, because in no other play, except one by the same author, is moral condemnation so explicitly expressed. A seventeenth-century Spanish DR would, interpret the resolution of the final disguise event not only as a grim aesthetic and moral satisfaction but also as a very severe warning that the judgement of a Christian soul is not decided till the last minute, that the last minute is not predictable, hence making death-bed repentance a dangerous and unsure hedge against immoral actions performed in the temporal world.

In conclusion, then, the disguise events in this play constitute a kind of

symmetry and communicate a fearful final message to the DR. This DR has been an addressee in Don Juan's first disguise, he has been an informed observer of the next three and he is, along with Don Juan, an addressee in the last one. In other words the knowledge the DR has gained from intratextually transmitted codes throughout the play, together with the intertextual and extratextual or religious codes with which he would be familiar, do not permit him to see the last disguise as an uninvolved receiver of a two-tiered communication. He is an addressee as in the first disguise, but when the truth is revealed he is finally the receiver of information in the form of an admonition with an illocutionary force that goes beyond the dramatic world from which it came.

The disguise events in *El burlador de Sevilla* would seem to dramatize the evils of deception and the fact that deception leads to the outright damnation of the deceiver and even to the moral accountability of the deceived. The DR is an addressee in the crucial final disguise message - in other words he is emotionally and intellectually involved in that message - precisely so that the knowledge he gains from its disclosure will enable him to recognize and distance himself from the dangers of deception and self-deception, and thereby achieve a greater self-awareness and hopefully a sense of goodness.

The disguise events in *La vida es sueño* - written by Calderón de la Barca in 1636 - are more of a reflection of the complexity of the theme of deception and the DR is, through his continuous awareness of the base message - the dramatic reality - brought closer to both the sender and the addressees of the disguises.

The disguise events in the play centre around three people - Rosaura, Clotaldo and Basilio - who play pivotal but nevertheless secondary roles. The protagonist - Prince Segismundo - is the principal addressee in all these disguise messages. In brief, it is the story of a Polish prince whose father King Basilio, fearful of the evil prognostications which were revealed to him on the birth of his son, had him imprisoned in a tower to be looked after and taught by a manservant, Clotaldo, and never told of his rights to the throne of Poland. A trick is devised whereby Segismundo is drugged, brought to the palace and told of his true identity. In this way Basilio hoped to test the accuracy of the evil portents and at the same time have an escape hatch in case they did prove true. Throughout the test Segismundo behaves selfishly, violently and immorally. He is therefore drugged again, awakening back in his prison tower whereupon he is told by Clotaldo that what he relates happened was a dream. He is left to reflect on this. Meanwhile the Polish subjects who have discovered his existence come to the tower to free him. As a free person he faces a number of moral tests which parallel his experiences in the palace or 'dream sequence'. He emerges from these tests an unselfish, upright, loyal and humble human being, in other words a true and worthy prince.

Intertwined and indeed dependent on Segismundo's emergence as a capable prince is the story of Rosaura who, although, she is unaware of it till the play's

end, is the unacknowledged daughter of Clotaldo. Her aim from the very beginning of the play is to regain her lost honour, that is to force Astolfo, pretender to the throne in place of Segismundo, to marry her. She meets Segismundo in each of the play's three acts, the first time when he is imprisoned in the tower, the second when he is prince in the palace/dream sequence and thirdly on the battlefield as he is fighting for his right to the throne. These meetings prove essential to the attainment of the goals of both these characters.

In the first two meetings Rosaura is disguised, initially as a man and then as a maid-in-attendance using the name Astrea. At these points in the play Segismundo is either unaware of his true identity or unable to act on it. When they meet for the third time, however, they both have reached a certain level of self-awareness and determination which they then help each other to complete.

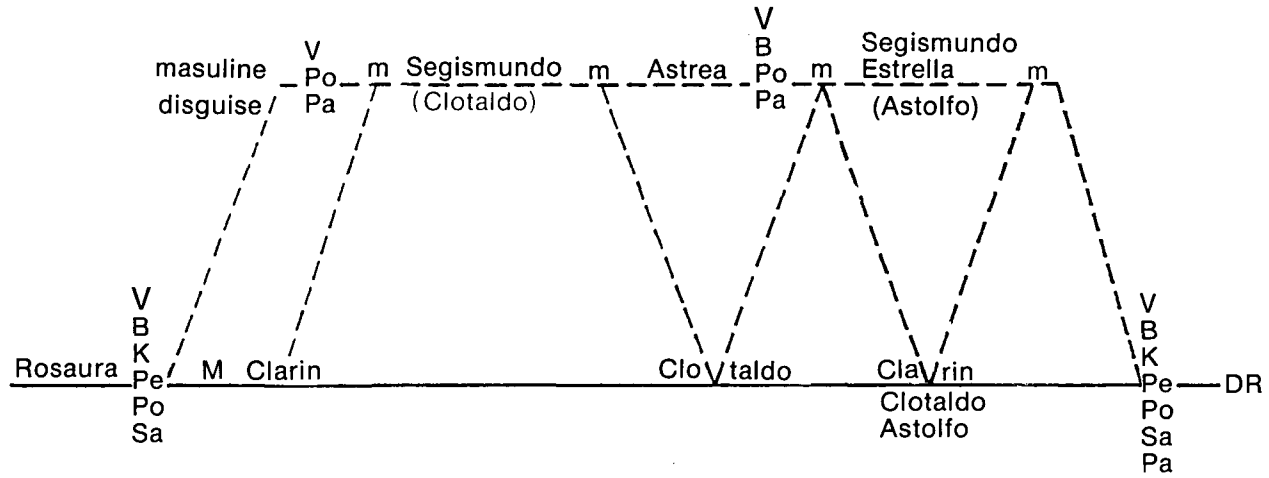
In Diagram 3, corresponding to the Rosaura disguises, you will note a greater number of codes signalling the transmission of the disguises in this play than in *El burlador de Sevilla*. Added to the fact that the disguise elements are more complex, the greater number of codes has probably more to do with the fact that Calderón was writing at this point with an enclosed theatre space in mind - the Court Theatre at the Palace of the Buen Retiro. Rather than go into detail about all the codes, I shall limit myself to commenting the more interesting ones.³

The addressees of the first disguise message (Diagram 3) are Segismundo and initially Clotaldo, and in the second disguise Segismundo, Estrella to whom Rosaura is maid-in-attendance and who is committed to marrying Astolfo, and Astolfo who is Rosaura's intended husband. Both Clotaldo and Astolfo become internal receivers as Rosaura directly or indirectly discloses her identity to them. Clarín is Rosaura's manservant and at all times apprised of her disguises. (His name is a pun on the Spanish word for clarion, and he uses it to suggest that he can reveal information best kept secret.) Rosaura is also the first character to appear on stage and she does so in masculine disguise, that is wearing a doublet and hose (V on Diagram 3). This mode of dress however only disguised the true sex of the wearer to the addressee, never to the DR who, through extratextual and intertextual codes with respect to this type of disguise, would have had access to certain relevant information. As a frequent dramatic and theatrical device used by Calderón's precursors, the masculine disguise in Spain had become a codified sign-vehicle: the woman had been abandoned by her lover and was in search of him to persuade or force him to marry her.⁴ Two extratextual codes would seem to confirm this, namely the question of 'honour' with its rigid implications for the 'dishonoured' woman and her family, and the social restrictions of the period whereby a respectable woman would not normally have the freedom of movement to pursue her objectives outside the confines of her house and family.

The only person to appear initially with Rosaura is Clarín, her manservant,

DIAGRAM 3

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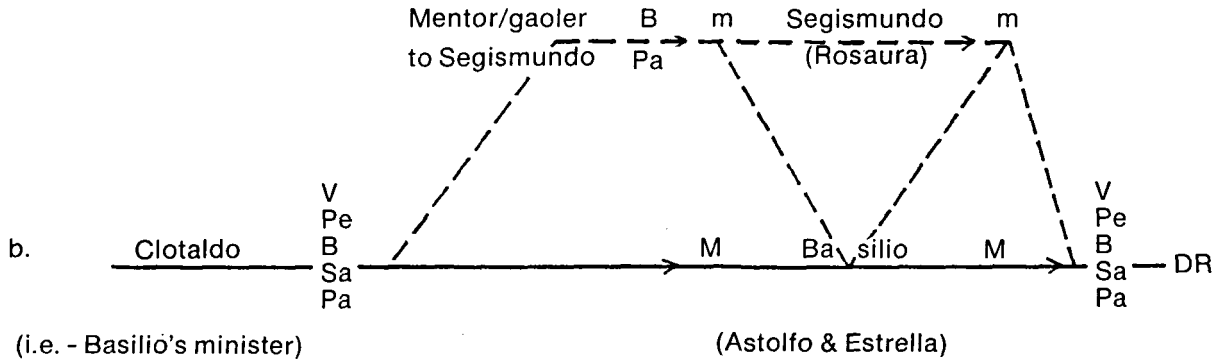
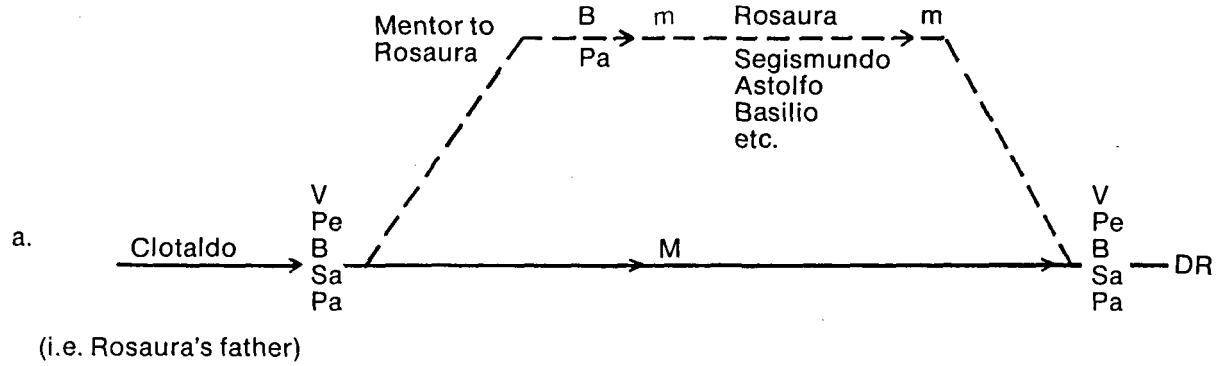
who is of course unaware of her disguise. Therefore the disguise remains a visual sign only, for when she speaks she refers to herself as a woman and Clarín addresses her as 'senōra'. It is only when she accidentally discovers Segismundo in his prison tower and shortly thereafter when she encounters Clotaldo that she refers to herself and is referred to as a man, thereby fulfilling the conditions of the pragmatic code in the disguise message but of course breaking them in the base message.

Where it would seem there is an incomplete enactment of the masculine disguise, not only in Rosaura's case but in all disguises of this type, it is in the behavioural code as applied to the disguise message. The behaviour of the character in masculine disguise was never inconsistent with the recognizable behaviour pattern of a woman, and again this was always discernable to the DR but not to the addressees. (Hence the omission of the B in the disguise message -Diagram 3.) When Rosaura discovers Segismundo in his prison tower, his initial male-to-male aggression directed towards her is soon tempered by her voice and semblance. Feelings of warmth and tenderness are aroused in him which of course he does not understand. At this point the combined disguise message and base message become particularly poignant for the DR because he is aware of the fact that both Rosaura and Segismundo are expressing care and concern for one another and, too, there is the initial manifestation of love between man and woman. This sequence is of major relevance to understanding the play as a whole because it shows that Segismundo has the human qualities proper to being both a free man and a ruler, qualities which he was not and is not permitted to develop in a normal manner. Through a disguise event at the beginning of the play therefore, the DR has acquired information about Segismundo and Rosaura whereby he will be able to integrate and logically order the play's ongoing message. The functioning of the structural anaphoric code is particularly important to the DR in his interpretation of the next two meetings between Rosaura and Segismundo.

When Segismundo next sees Rosaura, it is in her Astrea disguise as maid-in-attendance in the palace of King Basilio, Segismundo's father. The events leading to both Segismundo's and Rosaura's presence in the palace reveal how the two other disguise transmitters - Clotaldo and Basilio - become part of this complex web of circumstances which vividly portray the notion that things might not be what they seem.

Rosaura is arrested by Clotaldo's because she has inadvertently discovered the existence of Segismundo. Clotaldo is the King's minister and confidante and was appointed by him as Segismundo's gaoler and teacher. The King and Clotaldo are the only people who are supposed to know about Segismundo (Diagram 4b refers.). Rosaura's knowledge has therefore put her in danger of losing her life, and to try and save it she discloses her true identity and predicament to Clotaldo,

DIAGRAM 4

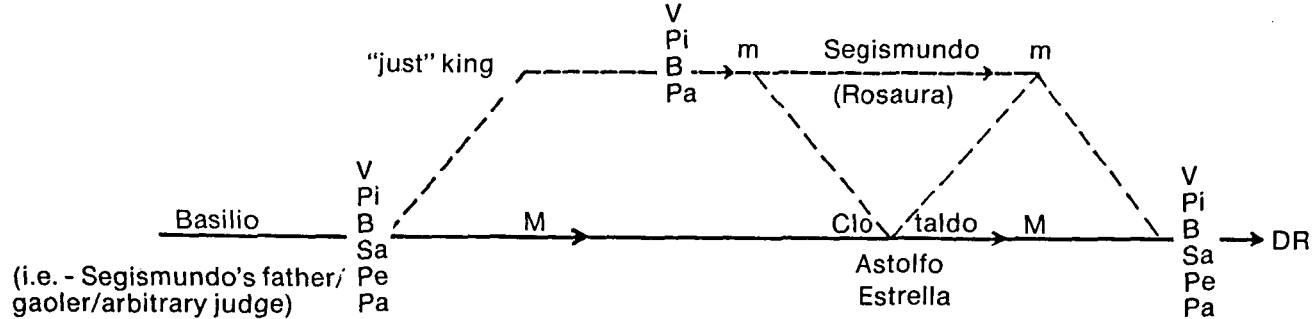


hoping to receive his help. When Clotaldo examines her sword and hears who is Rosaura's mother, he knows her to be his own daughter. However he withholds this information from her and all other characters till the close of the play. Thus Rosaura and the others are addressees in this disguise message throughout the play, there being no internal receiver. (See Diagram 4a.) The DR is aware of the father-daughter relationship exclusively through the presentational code - in the form of two asides. The first is when Clotaldo receives Rosaura's sword and the second when he ponders over whether he should reveal his daughter's identity and presence in the tower to his king, knowing that the consequence would be her death. His decision to inform the king of Rosaura's identity is a clear statement of where his prime loyalties lay. A seventeenth-century DR would interpret Clotaldo's behaviour both extratextually and intertextually as a realistic reflection of his predicament. Loyalty to one's monarch was clearly a compelling and overriding duty of the period, consistently referred to in seventeenth-century plays. It is highlighted in this play too when Segismundo, liberated from his prison in Act III, accepts Clotaldo's interpretation of his obligation to his King by allowing him to go and fight with Basilio against Segismundo himself. However, father-daughter relationships obviously had a set of behaviour rules too and furthermore the 'honour' principle had its own expected behaviour pattern with regard to the father of a 'dishonoured' daughter. Clotaldo would be expected to help Rosaura regain her lost honour by forcing Astolfo to marry her or by killing him, or failing those solutions, by arranging for her to retire to a convent. Ironically, he does in fact try to persuade her with the convent solution which advice she feels she can ignore, precisely because she does not know he is her father. The DR therefore would not only be decoding a double message in the Clotaldo/mentor to Rosaura disguise, but also the dual motivation which prompted it: [loyalty to king] versus [loyalty to daughter]

Rosaura is fortuitously saved from death by Basilio's decision to put Segismundo to the public test of princeliness in the palace. At this point Rosaura has disguised herself as a maid-in-attendance, having used Clotaldo's influence to do so. As she comes across Segismundo in the palace enacting the role of prince, it is significant that both she and Segismundo are addressees of the Basilio disguise, the third disguise to which I referred (Diagram 5). This disguise event constitutes the axis of the play and its principle locus in the palace. This represents Segismundo's rightful place from birth, the place from which he was removed as an infant by his father because he believed in the evil portents predicting the future tyranny of his son. It is also a place into which Segismundo makes a sudden, unprepared and artificial entry. This creates for the DR a complex double message in that the signs relating to the vestimentary and pictorial codes (the latter designated Pi on Diagram 5 and referring to the scenario itself) are what they seem both in the disguise and in the base messages.

DIAGRAM 5

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In other words Segismundo's princely attire, his surroundings, the king and royal courtiers, etc., constitute his rightful environment. The deception lies in the fact that the existence of these signs and their validity for Segismundo depend upon the arbitrary judgement of one person - Basilio. As easily as he initiated the test he can terminate it, which in fact he does, telling Segismundo it was all a dream.

Rosaura is also an addressee of the Basilio disguise message in the sense that she is unaware of the circumstances which have produced it. However, when she meets Segismundo, she recognizes him as the prisoner she encountered in the tower. He too thinks her familiar but Rosaura in her Astrea disguise does not clarify his doubts, in defence to Clotaldo's wishes. Segismundo is the victim of multiple disguise messages at once: the Rosaura-masculine disguise which Rosaura as Astrea does not reveal to him (Diagram 3), which in turn is dependent on the Clotaldo as Rosaura's mentor disguise (Diagram 4), and they all in turn form part of the grand disguise of Basilio (Diagram 5). Now the DR at this point processes these messages by continually referring back to previously assimilated information, namely via the structural anaphoric code. This of course only highlights the fact that Segismundo is completely unable to do so. It is only when Segismundo is released from his prison tower again, this time by the Polish people, that he can begin to refer back to his own experiences in the palace as possibly having been real and not a dream as he had been led to believe. This is why Rosaura's third meeting with Segismundo is so important because she is the one person who can and does confirm the reality of his past through the revelation of her masculine and Astrea disguises. As Segismundo becomes more aware of the Basilio deception and thus less and less an addressee of the disguise message, his behaviour emerges as more and more that of a worthy prince. This of course is in marked contrast to the dire predictions of the stars which gave rise to the Basilio disguise in the first place and to Segismundo's behaviour in the palace sequence. Again through the structural anaphoric code the DR would understand Segismundo's unprincely behaviour in the palace, precisely because he was not allowed to develop a proper behaviour code for himself up to that point, having been arbitrarily isolated in his prison. The DR would not, however, condone Basilio's behaviour towards his son and heir - the extratextual and intertextual codes of the period would have created expectations not fulfilled in the play by Basilio, not as king, not as father and not as Christian Catholic because of his obvious belief in the concept of predestination over that of free-will. All this is intratextually confirmed when Segismundo forgives his father at the end of the play. In fact, it has been said (see Brody, 1969:55; Fox, 1981:217-28) that Calderón's sensitivity to this code prompted him to situate the fable outside Spain.

By the end of *La vida es sueño*, all the addressees have discovered what the DR has known from the first act of the play. The DR's awareness of the true dramatic

reality - the base message - is therefore constantly greater than that of the characters in the play. This greater or superior knowledge - a necessary feature in respect of the DR in any disguise event - usually creates a distance between him and the addressees of the disguise. This can provoke a comic response as indeed is the case in many comedies of intrigue and cloak and dagger plays of the period (written by Calderón, Tirso de Molina and Lope de Vega, another well known playwright of the seventeenth-century in Spain). It can also bring out a sense of moral outrage in the DR with regard to the transmitter as we saw in the previous play - *El burlador de Sevilla* - in which the addressees are also morally questionable in the eyes of the DR. *La vida es sueño* on the other hand shows that that very awareness brings the DR closer to the addressees to the point where he pities them. And the transmitter too engages the DR's understanding and sympathy. Through the disguise then, this play, perhaps more than any other seventeenth-century Spanish play, manifests the complexity of that century's preoccupation: deception and illusion, the experience of which, through the drama, can lead to a greater and perhaps more humble sense of self and of the world. The disguise event itself is, I think, the one tangible theatrical device which can effectively integrate the themes that a worldly concept of life is an illusion, a dream and a stage and that man's task is to separate the true from the false, the real from the illusory. It also communicates the fact that this task, although compelling, is rarely an easy one. I hope I have been able to show that a semiotic examination of the disguise event can serve to illustrate what it communicates, how it does so and why it is both challenging and inviting to pursue this mode of inquiry.

Notes

1. de Molina, 1954.

2. de la Barca, 1980.

3. Abbreviations for codes on Diagram 3 which are not specifically mentioned are: K = kinesic and Po = proxemic. An example of a kinesic code element in the Rosaura-male disguise would be her entry on stage which takes the form of a fall from her horse, an event which was intertextually codified in the drama of the period to suggest that the woman in question, usually in male disguise, had been sexually seduced and that therefore her mission to recover her lost 'honour' through marriage was all the more compelling. An example of a proxemic code element would be the physical concealment of one character from another on stage as for instance when Rosaura, disguised as Astrea and concealed from Astolfo, overhears him tell Estrella he will give her the locket he wears around his neck. Both Rosaura and DR know the locket holds a portrait of Rosaura in it, and this leads to her quandry of how to retrieve it and maintain her disguise in front of Astolfo at the same time.

4. See Orozco, 1969:229. Although the male disguise sometimes signalled a woman pursuing studies at an all-male institution, e.g. Tirso de Molina's *El amor médico*, it more often indicated the abandoned woman.

Key to code abbreviations

- B = Behavioural
K = Kinesic (Movement on stage)
Pa = Pragmatic (Norms governing interpersonal communication)
Pe = Presentational (Mode of directly addressing receiver)
Pi = Pictorial (Construction of setting/scene)
Sa = Structural anaphoric (Recollection of previously transmitted information)
V = Vestimentary (Dress)

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