

A WOMAN AND A BAG

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The author discusses the notion of the bag as a sign (or symbol) through the analysis of language material taken from several dictionaries. The author's wish was to create his own text (a so called metatext) of the bag in which he would analyze the rhetoric of the bag as a high priority instance. The analysis emphasizes the fact that men have both a denotative relationship with the bag (the bag denotes a man's business) and a connotative relationship (the bag is the sign of extra-territoriality). Women, on the other hand, have only a connotative relationship with the bag and here it is a connotation of their sex. Through the rhetorical system of connotation, an ideology is set up, which associates the notion of the bag with the sex of the woman and the business of the man. The term sack implies the same connotations as the previous ones, and is mentioned here only so as to complete the rather forgotten image of the bag.

I have dedicated several articles to the semantic analysis of the *bag*. This one will be a review of the former ones and a step forward (or backwards, depending). The term rhetoric, as used here "corresponds to the process of ideological transformation of reality into an opposite image", and the function of the rhetoric system is "to conceal the systematic and semantic nature of a statement subject to it by transforming the equivalence into logic (...) from the connection between the world and clothing it creates an object of *common* exposure, motivation patterns, consequences, affinities,

in one word, all kinds of pseudo-logic relations" (Barthes 1967). Even though rhetoric, according to Barthes "decomposes in a certain way the system of symbols of educated beyond itself (at the level of denotation)", it is the reality that establishes the meaning in the very moment when it imposes its limits, and "reality is meaningful if it is definite, as shown by the classificational organization of the denotation system" (Barthes 1967). At another place he concludes that connotational denotators which are more specifically defined towards a selected substance correspond to general ideology. He named the denotators connotators, and the group of connotators - rhetoric (Barthes 1981:81).

The task of anthropology is to provide actual comparative rhetoric, deriving from and transcended from various bases, with an insight into rhetoric over the poetics of actual civilisation (Hymes 1974). Therefore, Burke says: we do not suggest the introduction of anthropology into rhetoric as much as that anthropologists recognise the factor of rhetoric as an essential one in their own field (Burke 1950:43).

In the analysis we will bear in mind what Bronislaw Malinowski separated as the *context of situation* and *context of culture*, which differ in almost the same way that realisation and possibility do. Therefore, Malinowski differentiates language as a manner of work, which, according to him, is typical for primitive societies, from language as a means of expressing thoughts, which, he believes, belongs to civilized societies. However, he determines later that in each culture, at every level, language is the synonym for social activity and that the meaning of an expression is subordinate to its *pragmatic efficiency* i.e., its use in an appropriate situational context (Desideri 1987:50).

I have already determined the bag as belonging to a sign not symbol because it is not identified with its denotation. A bag is a symbolic denotation when it is analyzed only through modern advertisement because it truly symbolizes a woman in that material. Here, at the level I am about to study, a bag is still a sign term of reference and will remain so throughout this paper.

Analyses have been done at the denotational and connotational level and it is not the creation of some *objective truth* regarding the bag that is emphasized. On the contrary, it is creation of a metatext that will consider the denotational marks and connotational rhetoric of a bag. Language was studied in the first place, because, as a producer and keeper of sense, it gives the most complete and the most complex image of the complete body of empirical fields that I have incorporated into this analysis. I have determined the language as a transstructural event and the linguistic analysis has been done within such context. There are no limits, as we see, that would divide one language from another by its *semantic sense*. This

was the only possible way to consider it; the semantic body evident in a language is equal to those, though very rare, that we can see in other cultural entities. Therefore, language is not analysed here as groups of grammar, but as groups and bearers of meaning, that is sense. That is why we do not have to fear Saussure's highly exploited thought that defining "things" by means of "words" is a dubious method (Saussure 1983).

As previously emphasized, for the semantic analysis of formation, what are very important, I would also say the most important, are the dictionary entries and material in language in general. If such linguistic material is not considered solely etymologically, but also in such a way that we try to find within it spatial and situational terms of reference that mention a bag, persons wearing it, and situations they create by their phenomenon, we will considerably confirm in such a way what can be seen in fashion, ethnographic or some other pictorial material. On the other hand, we will find a number of new and less known facts, submerged beneath the level of daily living and this will be the very point of our interest.

The results of the analysis will help me present the denotational and connotational term of a bag, or more specifically, I would like to underline that my objective is not to give a true or objective reality, but rather to create an operational metatext. As Barthes says "the relation between the system-product over the analyzer's metalanguage does not consider any 'true' substance, that the analyzer could use as a justification, but only a formal appropriateness" (Barthes 1967), while my job is facilitated because I will be speaking of language itself. It is true that this language is sometimes inapprehensible or of hidden meaning, so that varying the denotating towards the denotated in such cases has yet to be reread and revealed. Apart from the denotational level, that is recognisable in many issues of this paper, we will show the *rhetoric* of the bag, i.e., the connotational meaning of the sign (in other words, the ideology of its function).

Therefore, the topic in question is textual materialization of a bag as a sign at a denotational level, but also rhetorical transformation of signs into standpoints i.e. in a general ideology where the ethic relation *object - analyzer* does not necessarily as a result have to be identical with the emic relation (the emic relation will be obscured and imperceptible at this level).

Being aware that sign-like (and symbolical) reading has to be based on many facts and proofs (unlike the classical ethnographic approach where only one statement of the interviewed may be considered as *true, objective, realistic*) a detail division of truly complex material of which we will only show the final results has been carried out. (1) The first term of

reference is the situation in which the bag denotes the state of travelling, namely a voyager; (2) the bag is now a designation of trade i.e. a merchant (e.g. Bagman); (3) the bag is a designation of the hunt (e.g. to make a good bag; Bagged); (4) a bag designates taking part in banditry i.e. bandits; (5) a bag as a sign of theft (Bagged); (6) a bag as one of the signs of a shepherd; (7) a bag as a designation of being on someone else's property, being away from home (including wars); (8) a bag designates a general sign of danger; (9) a bag as a sign of enrichment or riches; (10) a bag also designates gradual impoverishment; (11) a bag as a gift; (12) a bag as a designation of a woman (Baggage; silly old bag) and (13) a bag as designation of a woman's wear.

Further analysing this we can come to a conclusion that in most cases a bag (at a denotational level) is related to men or business or jobs related to them. They travel, trade, hunt, wander find themselves in danger, become poor, become rich, become beggars, etc., while women are seldom mentioned - to them a bag is a gift or they themselves are bags.

It is important to note that together with a bag, as an accompanying denotation (at a verbal level) the term *road* is in close connection i.e. being away from home and being on someone else's territory i.e. exterritoriality (resulting in danger related to the bag). If I were to apply the thoughts and terminology of Umberto Eco, I could establish here a relation of *dual metonymy* between road and bag, and taken hypothetically, I could say that a bag is identified with a road, the road is identified with a bag (which again has to be proved and studied in detail i.e. to see whether that condition was real in some cultural milieu). The figure of dual metonymy has in principle the function of identification; to paraphrase Eco, denoting a bag by means of the road and denoting a road by means of the bag (dual metonymical movement) determines by means of simple approach, an undoubtful identity of two factors or a relation of implications.

In the dictionary, road and bag are, therefore, brought in relation by means of *culture*, and by the way, I accept Leach's opinion that culture is a "term that exists only in the singular" (Leach 1988:7). Therefore it is important to study *culture codes*, Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco do (to mention only the most reputable ones). The latter when speaking of cultural codes, emphasizes that "semiotic research finally shifts its attention to phenomena which it would be difficult to term sign systems in a strict sense, nor even communicative systems, but which are rather behavior and value systems" (Eco 1979:12). These very cultural codes must be studied ethically in the first place, within a text (or metatext) created by means of science.

Within this context I will place the problem at the level of being away from home and being, or not-being at one's own territory, and I will not be interested (as said in the introduction) in the role and relation of the bearer and the bag at a hunt, on a voyage etc. (in fact, I am changing the relation of designating towards designed from the denotational plan *bag - man* to a connotation plan *bag - situation*). It is very clear that road serves as a designation of distance therefore denoting the bag as part of someone else's territory, a dangerous world (to be more precise, that is how I understand it).

In fact, a bag is carried by a shepherd, hunter, merchant, beggar, thief or bandit, and all of them can easily be reduced into a spatial or situational determination of far - and someone else's - dangerous, and therefore confirm that the "contents of the system of signification depends on our world, organized in categories according to culture" (Eco 1988:112). The paradox from symbolization or semiosis are nicely represented, where the process of designation and the process of rationalization are presented in the same material (see Barthes 1967).

Many people do not make a sufficient differentiation of the opposition between *semiosis* and *semiotics*, so it would be appropriate to do so: "semiosis is the phenomenon, typical for human beings (for some even to angels and some animals), where - as Pierce says, the sign enters the game, his object (or content) and its explanation. Semiotics is a theoretical reflexion of what semiosis is. Therefore, a semiotist is a person who never knows what semiosis is, but is ready to devote his life to the fact that it exists" (Eco 1989:117). The paradox of semiosis appears when denoted irrealities and connoted realities are intersected, at the place where the sign is transformed into logics (according to Eco the subject of any semiotic inquiry being no more than the semiotic subject of semiosis, that is, the historical and social results of the segmentation of the world that a survey on Semantic Space makes available. Semiotics can define the subject of every act of semiosis only by semiotic categories; thus the subject of signification is nothing more that the continuously unaccomplished system of systems of signification that reflects back on itself. Semiosis is the process by which empirical subjects communicate, communication processes being made possible by the organization of signification system. Empirical subjects, from a semiotic point of view, can only be defined and isolated as manifestations of this double (systematic and processual) aspect of semiosis (see Eco 1979:315–316).

The effort of defining and explaining the hidden signification of a bag (and, indirectly, of the road) brings up the question of the *signification* as a cultural unit. The meaning is certainly determined by culture, while semiotic research accepts that the cultural unit (in each or

any culture!) is "simply anything that is culturally defined and distinguished as an entity. It may be a person, place, thing, feeling, state of affairs, sense of foreboding, fantasy, hallucination, hope or idea" (Schneider 1968:2). A meaning channeled in such a way through cultural codes, belongs to cultural units, but, again (only) at the level of rhetoric applied by the analyzer in creating a metatext (simply and briefly, meaning is given by connotation). Empirical objects can metalinguistically use codes only because they are not a metalanguage; therefore, everything in the self-contradictory code is a metalanguage (see Eco 1979:316).

Let us now clarify the aforementioned. By denotation I have connected the bag with business and jobs, by connotation with exterritoriality, but only as far as men are concerned. What is the situation with women as carriers of a bag, what does (culturally depending) a woman carrying a bag mean and what does it result in? In order to answer this partly, I must repeat that men's connection to bags is based on business and jobs, meaning that the bag is related to a certain business and occupation carried out by a man (I am speaking of specific material partly shown). On the contrary, a woman is related to a bag (connotationally) on the basis of belonging to a certain *gender/sex* (this fact is evident, in fact, becomes more intense to its furthest consequences, even if they are related businesswise - business that connects a bag and a woman in language is prostitution). Further, it is evident that rhetoric of a bag places a woman in a spatial-situational scheme, that, when men are concerned, is realized only outside the home, while in the case of women, it is realized within a family or among relatives.

One thing is certain: ideology undoubtedly plays a great role in trying to explain this phenomenon. When speaking of ideology I mean, in accordance with Eco, the *sphere of the knowledge of the receiver and group* he belongs to, his systems of psychological expectations, his religion, his experience, his moral principles (his "culture" in the anthropological sense of the word, if such culture would not comprise rhetoric systems); and that ideology has by a number of "reasons" (as Barthes would say) and by a system of signs (the bag being one of them) placed woman as a *gender/sex* in the same relation with certain groups of *men i.e. their occupations* (men's marginal groups in dictionaries "do not exist" and that is why I cannot consider them). Moreover - a woman at the verbal level can herself become a bag (with a negative connotative meaning).

We have seen so far which connotative and denotative significations are implied by the term bag. However, it would be interesting to take one step backward and consider a separate term that suits a bag. It the term *sack* (English and German), *sack* (Swedish), *zak* (Dutch), *sac* (French),

sacco (Italian), *saco* (Spanish), that corresponds to the Croatian term *vreća* (Capitol:268). This term implies the same connotations as the previous one (bag), and the genealogy of the term may be seen in e.g. Penguin (1986:816–817). (1) Sack as a designation of an object is used for carrying something; (2) sack as a designation of clothing or its detail; (3) sack as a designation of liturgical vestment; (4) sack as a designation of a shepherd; (5) sack designates robbery and destruction; (6) sack as a designation of a person keeping valuables.

This itemizing could go on forever, but many significations overlap with those that were studied within the term bag. There are designations of becoming rich, becoming poor, poor dressing, begging, etc. Schematically we shall differentiate the basic signification of the term sack:

- a. bag, sack, pocket - travel bag (sack) - saddle-bags,
- b. woman's cape - wide coat, cape, dress - jacket - wide jacket - liturgical vestment,
- c. theft - wealth - ask, demand - cashier - treasurer.

The first semantic layer is the most clear and common; the second one has a layer of primary meaning; the third one is completely lost. The second layer is easy to deduce if we recall the name jacket, blazer (*saco*), and similar ones that denote clothing (mostly worn by men). The signification that can be deduced is a *sack turned inside out with a cut for the head and arms*. We can recognize women's clothing or that worn in penance, that can be shown by a new semantic order: *sack - penance - woman and bag - penance - faster*. However, the other meaning appears as well: *sack - wealth - treasurer and sack - wealth - man*. In the linguistic sense there is a gap leading in two directions (uncompromising in any case). On the one hand is a man - wealthy - solemn, and on the other hand is a woman (faster) - penitent - poor.

How does one reconcile the expression sack with cashier or treasurer? Sack is a fibre, cloth; to the Southern Slavs it was a means of payment (*platno/linen = platiti/pay*) thus meaning wealth. This has been proved in ethnology (Gavazzi 1978:17; Radauš-Ribarić 1988:21) and in lexicography (Hamm 1947:105, 117; Skok 1972:678–679). According to these authors we may conclude that a treasurer is a person who keeps *linen/platno* (i.e. a sack) which makes it easy to understand the word *sakelar'* to designate a cashier, treasurer (Hamm 1947:118). Let us give a scheme of these premises:

linen - money
linen - treasurer
linen - sack
sack - money
sack - treasurer
sakelar' - treasurer

However, his theory is only a play on significations that reaches deep into the designated, while the sense is completely lost in the infinity of history. Everything supports the fact that the (linguistic) connection is established at both levels i.e. acquiring and preserving and poverty i.e. penance. I will not play with *man - woman* oppositions since it is of minor importance here.

Penance is carried out by eminent, I might even say sacred people. It may not be a coincidence that terms such as sacral, sacrament, sacred, sacrifice etc. have *sac* as their root. Priests as an original designation of penance and poverty are aligned with women: both carry a "sack" that denotes poverty. Throughout history priests have also been given the opposite signification (connected with the term bag) and are transferred into the group of the wealthy. However, they kept their clothes - a sack - that by means of semiosis connects them with the deep sense of poverty.

The fasting character of the bag is designed by attributes given in the *Lexicon of Iconography, Liturgy and Symbolism of Western Christianity* (1985:615). Under the entry *pilgrim* the following denotations are given: archangel Raphael (leader of little Toby), St. Alexeus, St. Jacob the Elder and St. Roch. Under the entry *beggar* one finds St. Alexeus, St. Felix Cantalicce and St. Macarius of Alexandria. They are connected with the topic of this paper in two ways:

- a. a bag is one of the designations of a faster and at this level, together with the faster's habit, stands in relation with dual metonymy. The bag and habit have the same objective - to denote the carrier. The function of the bag therefore is not essential and is left aside for another analysis.
- b. a pilgrim is a person who is away from home, travelling. A pilgrim is in a way a faster, while on the other hand he is a "religious symbol (...). The term designates a man who feels a stranger in his community. There he is but a passer-by in search of an ideal city" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1987:193). A pilgrim travels and here again is the situation of being away from home, and everything already said in this regard. This mutual connection is best depicted by Eco in the book *The Name of the Rose* in the discussion between Ubertino and William: "God will then have to send His servants Elisha and Henoch, that he kept alive in the paradise on earth (...) and will come dressed in a *sack* (remark S. B.) to predict and by word and deed they will preach penance (...)." -

- 'Ubertino, they have already come', says William showing his Franciscan habit (remark S. B.)" (Eco 1984:77).

After having reached deeper into history we have returned to the designation of bag (or any other name we call this phenomenon now) as a designation of a road, travel, or occupation.

The root signification of the term sack, with all its connotations, is mentioned here only so as to complete the rather forgotten image of a bag. Reaching deeper into the study of the ancient semantic body (of the term *sak*, *sakelar*', linen/*platno*, pay/*platiti*, cape/*plašt*, etc) would lead us in another direction beyond this topic.

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ŽENA I TORBA

SAŽETAK

Autor na temelju jezičnog materijala analizira pojam torbe na denotacijskom i konotacijskom planu, te ne stavlja naglasak na stvaranje neke objektivne istine o torbi već na stvaranje metateksta koji će uzimati u obzir denotacijske oznake i konotacijsku retoriku torbe. Muškarci su, tako, s torbom (denotacijski) vezani na osnovi zanimanja ili posla, ali posredno (konotacijski) s eksteritorijalnošću. Žene su pak označene torbom (samo na konotacijskom planu) kao spol/rod. Tako retorika torbe postavlja ženu u prostorno-situacijsku shemu koja se u muškaraca ostvaruje izvan doma, a u žena isključivo u okviru obitelji. Važnu ulogu ovdje ima ideologija (predočena retoričkim sustavom konotacije) koja spaja spol (žene) sa zanimanjem (muškarca). Korak je dalje u analizi učinjen uvođenjem novoga termina - sack (hrvatski *vreća*). Ovaj termin donosi još dublja značenja a inicijalno je to *vreća preokrenuta naopako s prorezom za glavu i ruke*. Torba se tako uvodi u donedavno nenastanjena područja hrvatske i europske, pa i uopće civilizacijske kulturne baštine.