



## Multimodal metaphors and metonymies in Soviet anti-alcohol posters: the role of the image of the bottle and (de)personification

### *Metáforas e metonímias multimodais nos cartazes Soviéticos antialcoolismo: o papel da imagem da garrafa e a (des)personificação*

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**Abstract:** In the last decades there has been a proliferation of studies investigating metaphors and metonymies, as they are defined in the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Recently, increasing attention has been paid to multimodal metaphors and metonymies and to their persuasive role in both commercial and social advertisements. In this paper we analyze Soviet anti-alcohol posters published during the Gorbačëv's anti-alcohol campaign (1985-1988), and we investigate the role of a central pictorial element, i.e. the bottle, that metonymically gives access to the concepts of alcohol or alcoholism. In anti-alcohol posters of the '80s, the bottle's metonymic image often interacts with other metaphorical processes. In particular, we focus on the interactions between the metonymies triggered by both pictorial and verbal use of the bottle (bottle metonymies) and the process of (de)personification undergone in these specific contexts. In some posters, the bottle is personified to convey the message that alcohol can damage people's private lives by substituting for their loved ones and taking their rightful place. In some other posters, a human alcoholic is represented as a bottle, showing that alcoholism makes people lose their human features. The interactions between the metonymic image of the bottle and (de)personification processes play a central role in Soviet anti-alcohol posters and aim to demonstrate the destructive effects of alcohol abuse on drinkers' private and social life.

**Keywords:** Soviet anti-alcohol posters; metaphor; metonymy; multimodality; Russian.

**Resumo:** Nas últimas décadas, houve uma proliferação de estudos relativos à metáfora e à metonímia, segundo a definição da Teoria da Metáfora Conceitual. Recentemente, uma crescente atenção tem vindo a ser dedicada às metáforas e metonímias multimodais e ao papel persuasivo que desempenham na publicidade comercial e social. Neste trabalho, analisamos os cartazes soviéticos antialcoolismo publicados durante a campanha de propaganda de Gorbaçev contra o consumo de bebidas alcoólicas (1985-1988). De modo particular, interessa-nos o papel central de um elemento pictórico, a garrafa, metonímia que se traduz como os conceitos de álcool ou alcoolismo. Nos cartazes anti-alcoolismo dos anos oitenta, a imagem metonímica da garrafa entra frequentemente em interação com outros processos metafóricos. Nosso estudo vai precisamente focalizar a interação entre as metonímias desencadeadas por meio do uso pictórico e/ou verbal da garrafa e o processo de (des)personalização ocorrido nesses contextos específicos. Alguns cartazes apresentam a garrafa como personificação para transmitir a mensagem de que o álcool é prejudicial para a vida privada dos indivíduos, pois pode manifestar-se enquanto um substituto dos entes queridos e levar às ações que independem da vontade do sujeito. Outros cartazes mostram a pessoa alcoolizada representada enquanto uma garrafa, para demonstrar que o alcoolismo destrói características humanas. A interação entre a imagem metonímica da garrafa e os processos de (des)personalização desempenha um papel primordial nos cartazes antialcoolismo soviéticos e visa representar os efeitos negativos do abuso de álcool na vida privada e social dos indivíduos.

**Palavras-chave:** cartazes antialcoolismo soviéticos; metáfora; metonímia; multimodalidade; russo.

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## 1 Introduction

In the Conceptual Metaphor Theory elaborated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) within the cognitive linguistics framework, metaphors and metonymies are not considered as mere rhetorical devices, but as cognitive processes which allow us to understand and conceptualize the surrounding world. Both these two cognitive processes are extremely powerful tools that, by highlighting the desired aspect, can convey a specific message in an indirect, but more persuasive way. In the last decades, much attention has been paid to multimodal metaphors and metonymies, i.e., in which more than one mode is involved. In particular, several studies have focused on the use and function of verbo-pictorial metaphors and metonymies in both commercial and social advertisements

(FORCEVILLE, 1996, 2007, 2009; PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2017, among others). In this study, we focus on multimodal metaphors and metonymies used in anti-alcohol posters published in the '80s in the Soviet Union in order to dissuade Soviet people from alcohol consumption.

In the Soviet Union, alcoholism was always one of the major social problems and, from 1917 onwards, several anti-alcohol campaigns were carried out by the Soviet State with the aim of reducing alcohol consumption. The last Soviet *suchoj zakon* 'dry law' was approved by the Politburo and the Central Committee in May 1985(-1988), only a few months after Michail Gorbačëv became General Secretary of the Communist Party. The Gorbačëv anti-alcohol measures were designed to decrease alcohol production, further restrict alcohol sales, increase the price of alcoholic beverages and impose sanctions for drunkenness in public and, in particular, at the workplace (BHATTACHARYA *et al.*, 2013, p. 237). The positive results recorded at the beginning, such as a decrease in alcohol consumption, reduction in criminality rates and rise in life expectancy, were followed by negative consequences: the economic loss for the State was extremely high while the dissatisfaction of people with the unavailability of alcohol encouraged bootlegging and moonshine production to proliferate (BAGDASARJAN, 2004; TARSCHYS, 1993; TRANSCHEL, 2003).

In order to support unpopular radical Gorbačëv's anti-alcohol policies that aimed at total sobriety, the Soviet State promoted propaganda campaigns and education programs. One of the most widespread mechanisms for anti-alcohol propaganda was a special kind of social poster, the *antialkogol'nyj plakat*, i.e. anti-alcohol poster. As a conflation of images and words, the *plakat* is an interesting object of study which allows investigation of how multimodal cognitive processes, in particular metaphors and metonymies, interact with each other to convey a specific social message.

In the vast majority of anti-alcohol posters, the "bottle" is the immediate pictorial element used to introduce the issue of alcoholism. In Soviet anti-alcohol posters published in the '80s, the metonymic and metaphorical images of the bottle are abundant and diverse; in particular, in posters published during the Gorbačëv's campaign, there are frequent and various pictorial interactions between the images of the bottle and of the human body that aim to draw attention to the negative effects of alcohol abuse on people's private and social lives (PINELLI, 2020).

The present analysis focuses on Soviet anti-alcohol posters published in Russia (RSFSR) from 1985 until 1988, in which the image of the bottle, metonymically referring to alcohol or alcohol consumption, also functions as the source or the target of a basic, but powerful, metaphorical process, i.e. (de)personification. In these posters, the metonymic and metaphorical use of the bottle, which pictorially interacts with the image of the human body, activates negative associations and aims to discourage alcohol consumption.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we discuss the role of multimodal metaphors and metonymies in social advertising. In Section 3, we focus on Soviet anti-alcohol posters and discuss the central role of the bottle metonymy. We then investigate the metonymic shifts triggered by the pictorial bottle (Section 4) and how these can interact with (de)personification processes (Section 5) in Soviet anti-alcohol posters. In particular, we analyze posters in which the bottle, and metonymically alcohol or alcoholism, is personified (Section 5.1) and those in which the image of the bottle is used to depersonify the alcoholic (Section 5.2 and 5.2.1). In Section 6, we offer some concluding remarks.

## **2 Multimodal metaphors and metonymies in social advertising**

In the last decades, several scholars (FORCEVILLE, 1996, 2007, 2009; FORCEVILLE; URIOS-APARISI, 2009; PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2017, among others) have focused on multimodal metaphors and metonymies and have shed new light on the cognitive nature of these processes. Multimodality has been considered by cognitive linguists as a piece of evidence that, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claimed, metaphors and metonymies are not just a matter of language, but also a matter of thought. A multimodal metaphor is defined by Forceville (2009, p. 24) as a metaphor “whose source and target are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes”. In contrast to metaphor, metonymy involves only one conceptual domain, and a multimodal metonymy is defined as a “mapping that affords access to one concept by calling up another concept within the same domain, in a process that involves a mode shift” (PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2017, p. 97).

A particularly suitable object for multimodal analysis is commercial advertising because, as Forceville (1996) observed, its aim is not ambiguous: it promotes a certain product by highlighting its positive features and evoking positive connotations. Moreover, several studies have

also confirmed the persuasive power of metaphors and metonymies in advertising. Metaphors make indirect claims and comparisons and “render the consumer more receptive to multiple, distinct, positive inferences about the advertised brand” (MCQUERRIE; PHILLIPS, 2005, p. 7); in particular, visual metaphors are more effective because “inferences are more likely to be generated spontaneously at the time of ad exposure” (MCQUERRIE; PHILLIPS, 2005, p. 7). Like metaphors, metonymies also play a central role in advertising: it has been observed that in multimodal texts, metonymy is pervasive and that the interactions between metaphor and metonymy are even more complex than in verbal discourse (PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2017). The role of multimodal metaphors and metonymies has been widely investigated in different kinds of advertising, such as print and TV commercials (FORCEVILLE, 1996, 2007; FORCEVILLE; URIOS-APARISI, 2009; NEGRO ALOUSQUE, 2014; PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2017; among many others). Social advertising, although it has been investigated as a special kind of commercial, has only more recently attracted the attention of scholars who have focused on its distinctive characteristics (BOLOGNESI, 2019; PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2016).

Although social advertising shares several features with commercials, there are also some differences. In several social campaigns, such as those against alcohol abuse, the aim is not to persuade but to dissuade from dangerous and unhealthy habits, for example, drinking alcohol, and, consequently, negative rather than positive features of the targeted undesirable behavior are mapped in order to promote negative inferences. However, as with commercials, social advertisements must be compelling and often make extensive use of multimodal metaphors and metonymies.

Another distinguishing feature of social advertising is that it does not promote a concrete product, but rather something abstract, such as an attitude or an idea, with the goal of raising awareness about specific, but non-tangible, issues. Bolognesi and Vernillo (2019) observe that this characteristic of social advertisements, as for commercials promoting abstract products such as services, has consequences for the structure of the advertisement itself: although abstract, the promoted concept needs to be pictorially represented in the ad by a concrete element (BOLOGNESI; VERNILLO, 2019, p. 26). For this reason, metonymy plays a crucial role in social advertisements: a concrete pictorial element is needed to refer metonymically to the abstract target concept. As we will show in

Sections 3 and 4, this explains why it is that in anti-alcohol posters, the image of the bottle is a recurrent concrete pictorial element used to refer metonymically to the abstract issue of alcohol abuse.

While metaphors have been widely investigated, the central and pervasive role of metonymy has only recently been acknowledged (among others LITTLEMORE, 2015). At different linguistic levels and in different modes, metonymy is a “suggestive, powerful and economical meaning-making device” (LITTLEMORE, 2015, p. 122). Analyzing the role of metonymy in conversation, Panther and Thornburg (1998) claim that such general conceptual relations as cause-effect or part-whole constitute “natural inference schemata” and draw the participant in a conversation to make the inferences necessary to understand the utterances. The use of these schematic metonymic relations, which are easily retrievable by the viewer, allows a rapid and effective interpretation of the message. Moreover, Barcelona (2009, p. 369) observes that metonymy has an inference-guiding function that allows and facilitates meaning construction. This is possible because metonymic inferences, based on conceptual contiguity, are so well-established that they are almost automatic (GIBBS, 1994; LANGACKER, 1993; RADDEN, 2005).

One of the most significant metonymic mappings used in several health issue campaigns, and also in anti-alcohol posters, is the cause-effect metonymy. The cause-effect metonymy, based on one of the most relevant contiguity relations, i.e. the causal relation, is used in advertising for persuasive purposes (LITTLEMORE, 2015, p. 117). For example, Denroche (2014, p. 119-120) observes that the texts and images on cigarettes packages, such as “Smoking causes fatal lung cancer” and smoke-damaged lungs photographs should be considered instances of cause-effect metonymic relations. Similarly, Herrero Ruiz (2006) analyzes Spanish and English drug-prevention ads and identifies both the CAUSE FOR EFFECT and the EFFECT FOR CAUSE general metonymies that are instantiated by more specific ones, such as DRUG CONSUMPTION FOR IMPRISONMENT (in a billboard in which syringes are the bars of prison) and DEATH FOR DRUG CONSUMPTION (in a billboard with a prostrate skeleton) (HERRERO RUIZ, 2006, p. 182-183). As often happens both in commercials and in social advertising, the cause-effect metonymic mapping provides the basis for making sense of the whole advertisement.

Moreover, several studies (RADDEN, 2003, 2005) show that metaphors very often rely on metonymic relations. In his analysis of

pain-relieving cream advertisements, Serrano Losada (2015) observes that pain is metaphorically understood and pictorially represented as a sharp object (PAIN IS A SHARP OBJECT metaphor). He further observes that this metaphor, widely used in the linguistic description of pain, is based on a cause-effect metonymy: sharp objects, such as knives or stubs, can cause physical damage and, consequently, pain.

Metaphors and metonymies can interact with each other in several different ways, in both verbal and pictorial modes (BARCELONA, 2003; DIRVEN; PÖRINGS, 2002; FORCEVILLE; URIOS-APARISI, 2009; PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2017; RUIZ DE MENDOZA IBÁÑEZ; GALERA MASEGOSA, 2014 among others), but for the present discussion, we will use the broad term metaphonymy, that generally refers to an interaction between these two cognitive processes (GOOSENS, 1990). Pérez Sobrino (2016, p. 271) observes that metaphonymies are frequent in advertising because they do not require excessive efforts to be interpreted and yet, at the same time, achieve quite a high degree of effectiveness. Moreover, advertising campaigns promoted by Non-Governmental and nonprofit organizations show a significant preference for metaphonymies (PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2017, p. 170). It is then not surprising that metaphonymies are also extensively used in social issues campaigns that aim to be both effective and simultaneously clear and unambiguous.

### 3 Soviet anti-alcohol posters and the BOTTLE metonymy

The *plakat* ‘poster’ (pl. *plakaty*) is considered one of the most important Russian cultural products, particularly widespread and significant in Soviet society from the October Revolution onward. Although there were many stylistic and thematic changes throughout Soviet times, *plakaty* played a central role in Soviet culture as a medium for ideological, political and social propaganda. The typical merger of images and short texts in posters was inherited from the tradition of Russian popular prints, the *lubki*, that dates back to the XVII century (BUVINA; CURLETTO, 2015). Among the antecedents of *plakaty*, White (1988) mentions, together with *lubki*, satiric journals and pre-revolutionary advertising, an even more ancient source, namely icons, from which early revolutionary *plakaty* inherited the use of colors. This legacy made the *plakat* extremely efficient for conveying both political and social messages because the visual language they used was familiar

and accessible to people from all social classes of the recently established Soviet State (BONNEL, 1997; WHITE, 1988).

In particular social posters aimed to sensitize Soviet people to certain social issues, such as, for example, literacy, sports, and healthy life habits; the issues addressed in posters shifted over time to focus on the most urgent ones of the society of their time (IGOŠINA, 2009). The political and social changes brought about by the Gorbačëv's *perestrojka* were also reflected in social posters in which, particularly between 1985 and 1988, the fight against alcohol consumption became paramount. Although the problem of alcoholism had been addressed in plenty of *lubki* since the XVIII century, in the 1980s, there was an unprecedented proliferation of *antialkopol'nye plakaty* to support the Gorbačëv's anti-alcohol campaign (BUVINA, 2014, p. 84-86).

As mentioned in Section 2, social advertisements, although they address abstract issues rather than tangible products, still require a concrete element that can be depicted in the ad and can thus introduce the topic through a metonymic reference. An almost ubiquitous pictorial element in anti-alcohol posters is the bottle.<sup>1</sup> Analyzing Latvian posters and advertisements, Veinberga (2014) observes that the multimodal metonymic image of the bottle has been used in several advertising campaigns over time. Following Naciscione (2010), Veinberga claims that the sustainability<sup>2</sup> and the interdiscoursal<sup>3</sup> use of the visual image,

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<sup>1</sup> In some posters the metonymic bottle is replaced by the drinking glass that, like the bottle, refers metonymically to alcohol or alcoholism. However, the image of the glass can also be used to allude to the first phase in the process of alcohol addiction; thus alcoholism is often represented as a multiplicity of glasses. In those cases in which the images of the glass and the bottle coexist, the glass represents the initial phase of alcohol addiction process, while the bottle represents the final phase (alcoholism) (PINELLI, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Naciscione (2010, p. 9) defines the sustainability of phraseological image in discourse as “the spread of a phraseological image over a length of text in sequential segments as part of the interrelated web of the discourse. (...) A phraseological unit may extend across sentence boundaries and even larger stretches of text, creating continuity, a network of unique interrelationships of figurative and direct meanings, and associative links. Sustained stylistic use reflects extended figurative thought and contributes to perception of the text as a cohesive and coherent entity.”

<sup>3</sup> With the term “interdiscoursal” Veinberga (2014, p. 182) refers to “sustainable visual use across advertisements or advertising campaigns”.



in this case, of the bottle, “play a significant role in thinking and conceptualisation of experience” (VEINBERGA, 2014, p. 190).

In Russian, as in many other languages, there are several phraseological units in which the bottle is metonymically used to refer euphemistically (“euphemistic metonymy”, VEINBERGA, 2014, p. 183) to alcohol consumption and abuse such as, for example, in *zagljadyvat’/zagljanut’ v butylku* ‘be fond of the bottle, lit. have a look in the bottle’ or *ne vrag butylki* ‘lit. not to be enemy of the bottle’.<sup>4</sup>

The pictorial representation of the bottle in anti-alcohol posters is very often novel and creative and does not necessarily need to be motivated by a preexisting linguistic expression; however, sometimes, the metonymic and metaphorical representation of the bottle in pictorial mode harmonizes with its use in phraseology. For example, in several Soviet anti-alcohol posters (see Section 5.1), as well as in Russian phraseological units such as *podružit’sja s butylkoj* ‘to make friend with the bottle’ or *provodit’ vremja s butylkoj* ‘to spend time with the bottle’,<sup>5</sup> the BOTTLE metonymy and the COMPANION metaphor are used together to refer to alcohol abuse and represent the alcoholic as a “friend of the bottle”. Thus, preexisting phraseological items and pictorial representations reinforce each other and enhance the automaticity with which the metonymic image is interpreted. Yus (2009, p. 166) claims that, although there do not appear to be differences between visual and verbal metaphors in terms of how they are interpreted, when visual metaphors “seem to include an anchorage of previously used verbal metaphors (...)”, the process of comprehending the message can be speeded up.

Whether preexisting verbal anchorages exist or not, the image of the bottle plays a central role in anti-alcohol posters. In this paper, we analyze in detail how the bottle image is used to dissuade Soviet people from alcohol consumption. For the present study, we considered Soviet anti-alcohol posters published in Russia (RSFSR) between 1985 and 1988,<sup>6</sup> in which the metonymic image of the bottle interacts with other verbal or pictorial elements that trigger, directly or through

<sup>4</sup> These phraseological units have been retrieved in the Russian phraseological dictionary edited by Tichonov (2004).

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>6</sup> The anti-alcohol posters analyzed in this paper have been retrieved in Murray and Sorrell (2007).

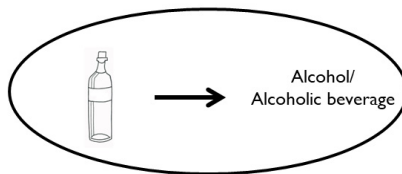
context, a metaphorical process of personification or depersonification. In the following sections, we detail different metaphonymic uses of the bottle; we first address metonymic shifts undergone by the pictorial bottle (Section 4) and then go on to focus on the metaphorical processes of personification and depersonification (Section 5).

#### 4 The multimodal BOTTLE metonymy in Soviet anti-alcohol posters

In Soviet anti-alcohol *plakaty* the image of the bottle often functions as the source domain for multimodal metonymy and introduces the issue of alcoholism. However, the boundaries of this metonymic shift in context are not always clear (cf. LITTLEMORE, 2015, p. 53). Although in some posters the reference of the metonymy remains vague, we have tried to identify the possible metonymic shifts by attending to the message conveyed and by concentrating on pictorial elements and verbal anchorages in the posters.

The most basic metonymic shift identified in the analyzed Soviet anti-alcohol posters is the BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL metonymy. Owing to this metonymic shift, partially based on the CONTAINER-CONTENT metonymy, the bottle stands for alcoholic beverage in general, as represented in Image 1.

Image 1 – BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL metonymy



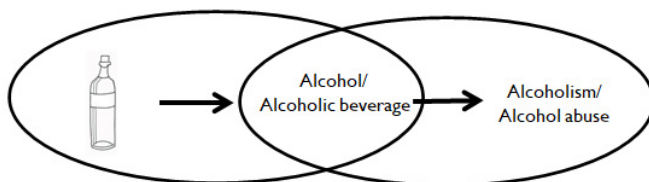
Source: Prepared by the author.

The communicative context of the anti-alcohol campaign triggers the metonymic reduction process from the container (the bottle) to a specific kind of content (alcoholic drink) that must be activated in order to interpret the poster correctly. In some cases the BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL metonymy is made explicit by a verbal element; for example, the pictorial bottle can show a label with the name of the alcoholic drink contained, such as *vodka* ‘vodka’ or *vino* ‘wine’ (see for example Image 3 in Section 5.1). In other cases, the reference to the alcoholic drink is not integrated

into the image, but given in the title. Whether integrated in the image or not, if these verbal elements (*vodka*, *vino*) occur in the poster, they must be in turn interpreted metonymically (metonymic expansion) and refer to alcoholic drink (alcohol) in general. In these cases, in order to unequivocally identify the correct reference, i.e. alcoholic beverages in general, two reverse metonymic processes are activated: the pictorial bottle triggers a narrowing process to a specific kind of content, while the text initiates a broadening operation from a specific alcoholic drink (vodka or wine) to a more general referent, alcohol.

In some other posters, the metonymic shift goes further, and, thanks to a metonymic chain, the bottle refers to the abstract concept of alcoholism, as represented in Image 2.

Image 2 – BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL FOR ALCOHOLISM metonymic chain



Source: Prepared by the author.

Multimodal metonymic chains are a combination of two or more multimodal metonymies, in which the target concept of the first metonymic shift functions as the source concept for the second metonymic operation (PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2017). In Image 2, the CONTAINER-CONTENT metonymy, through which the bottle stands for alcohol, interacts with another metonymy, whose source domain is, in turn, the alcoholic beverage. The second metonymy allows a shift from a concrete entity to an abstract activity, i.e. from alcoholic beverage to alcoholism. In several posters, there are textual cues that illustrate this metonymic chain: the coexistence of verbal elements that refer to alcoholic beverages (such as *vodka* or *vino*) and verbal elements that refer to alcoholism, such as *p'janstvo* ‘alcoholism’, make the two chained metonymies explicit (see for example Image 5 in Section 5.1). Although textual anchorages can specify the boundaries of the metonymy and facilitate the association between the bottle and its referent, we can also infer an immediate

association between the bottle and alcoholism: these two concepts, one concrete and one abstract, are part of the same frame and are linked by the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTIVITY metonymy (bottle for drinking), which is also reinforced by the metonymic usage of the Russian verb *pit'* 'to drink' that also means 'to drink alcohol' (USA KOV, 1935-1940).

The almost automatic metonymic associations of bottle-alcohol or bottle-alcoholism allow the viewer to correctly interpret the poster even when there is no verbal reinforcement. Moreover, the communicative context certainly plays a crucial role in determining the metonymic shift that must be activated (cf. STEEN, 2008); in fact, if we found the image of a bottle on a recycling bin, for example, no reference to alcohol would be activated, while the OBJECT FOR MATERIAL CONSTITUTING THE OBJECT metonymy would immediately trigger the reference to glass or plastic, depending on the bottle shape. Ultimately, other possible figurative mappings in the poster facilitate the completion of the interpretation process.

## 5 The bottle and the human body

The metonymic shifts initiated by the pictorial bottle (IMAGES 1 and 2 in Section 4) play a crucial role in Soviet anti-alcohol posters and motivate further metaphorical mappings.

From the October Revolution to the collapse of the Soviet Union, it can be observed that bottle metaphors, or more precisely metaphonymies, used in anti-alcohol posters increase in number and variety (PINELLI, 2020). It can also be noted that a peculiarity of *antialkogol'nye plakaty* published in the '80s, beyond just the variety and novelty of metaphors, is the abundance of pictorial interactions between the image of the bottle and the representation of the human body. The bottle-person interaction at pictorial level, although it had already appeared in the '50s, characterizes the Soviet anti-alcohol posters from 1985 onwards and, depending on the message to be conveyed, can involve both the images of the human body as a whole or of specific body parts (PINELLI, 2019). For the present study, we focus on the pictorial relation between the bottle and the human body as a whole which gives rise to processes of personification and depersonification. The personification of inanimate objects and the objectification of people are two widespread cognitive processes that show how, on the one hand, human beings comprehend the surrounding world by comparing it to themselves and, on the other hand, how they comprehend themselves by making comparisons with the outside concrete

and tangible world. In commercials, personification is widely used as a strategy by “adding value to the product by transferring to it human features and behavioral actions” (NEGRO ALOUSQUE; CORTÉS DE LOS RÍOS, 2018, p. 115), while in social advertising, personification can be used to activate negative inferences and raise awareness of specific social issues (cf. PÉREZ SOBRINO, 2016). In order to understand the role of personification and depersonification in Soviet anti-alcohol posters, it is helpful to consider the Great Chain of Being, “a cultural model that concerns kinds of beings and their properties and places them on a vertical scale” that goes from humans at the highest level, followed in descending order by animals, plants and, at the lowest level, inanimate substances (LAKOFF; TURNER, 1989, p. 167). In anti-alcohol posters analyzed in this paper, the “climb” of an inanimate object to the upper end of the scale with the consequent acquisition of human properties, as well as the “descent” of humans to the level of object and the loss of human properties, evoke negative connotations.

The complexity of multimodal texts and the number of cognitive processes involved at once make the identification of the source and the target domains somewhat challenging. Commenting on commercial advertisements, Forceville (1996, p. 111) notes that “the combination of the understanding of the wider pictorial-cum-verbal context and the classification of the picture as an advertisement”, together with the communicative intention and possible verbal elements, allow or facilitate the identification of the correct metaphor. Following Forceville’s observations, we identify two general reverse metaphors and their communicative meaning in Soviet anti-alcohol posters (1985-1988): on the one hand, the BOTTLE IS A PERSON metaphor (personification process, see Section 5.1) arises from the representation of alcohol or alcoholism with human features, while on the other hand, the PERSON IS A BOTTLE metaphor (depersonification process, see Section 5.2) is used to represent the alcoholic, who loses human features owing to alcohol addiction. These two reverse metaphors, although evoking different messages and inferences, serve the same purpose, i.e. to dissuade people from consuming alcohol by showing the destructive effects of alcohol on different private or social aspects of human life.

As we will see in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, the bottle-person interaction can be conveyed through contextual metaphors: in these cases, only one of the two terms (the source or the target) is depicted, while

the other is suggested by the pictorial context (FORCEVILLE, 2008, p. 464-465); in some other cases, the bottle-person interaction is implied by hybrid metaphors, in which the source and the target are represented and conflate into a single hybrid gestalt (FORCEVILLE, 2008, p. 465-466)

### 5.1 The pictorial BOTTLE-PERSON interaction: the role of personification

In this section, we focus on posters in which the metonymic bottle is personified. In all these cases, the image of the bottle serves both as the target domain of the metaphor and simultaneously as the source for the metonymic shift to alcohol (IMAGE 1) or alcoholism (IMAGE 2).

An interesting example of an interaction between the BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL metonymy and personification (contextual metaphor) is given in the poster *Tretij lišnij* ‘Three’s a crowd’ drawn by Boris Semenov in 1988 (IMAGE 3).

Image 3 – B. Semenov. *Tretij lišnij* ‘Three’s a crowd’, 1988



Source: Retrieved from the book *Alcohol* © FUEL Publishing 2017

In Image 3, the bottle is depicted between two lovers, a man and a woman sitting on a bench; they both hug and caress the bottle as if it were their partner. As noted in Section 4, in this poster the concept of “alcohol” is accessed via the bottle metonymy (narrowing process) and reinforced by

the label *Portvejn* ‘Port wine’ written on the bottle (broadening process). The pictorial context, and in particular the loving attitudes of the two persons towards the Port wine bottle, triggers the personification of the object that takes the place of a beloved person; in this way, we are also able to identify the couple as the alcoholics. The interaction between metonymy and metaphor gives rise to the BOTTLE (FOR ALCOHOL) IS A LOVER metaphonymy. Another element that triggers or at least facilitates personification of the bottle is the title in the right upper part of the poster, *Tretij lišnij* ‘Three’s a crowd’, which literally means “The superfluous third”. In particular, the word *tretij* ‘third’ reinforces personification and leads us to consider the bottle as the third person on the poster. The adjective “superfluous” (*lišnij*) negatively evaluates the situation and lets us focus on the bottle as the separating element between the two lovers. The message is then clear: the “love” for the bottle, and metonymically for alcohol, can damage private and personal life (cause-effect relation).

In addition to featuring in contextual metaphors, personification can also be triggered by hybrid metaphors as can be seen in the poster *So mnoj edut moja “polovina” i moj “malyš”* ‘I’m with my better “half” and my “little one”’ by Leonid Kaminskij (IMAGE 4).

Image 4 – L. Kaminskij. *So mnoj edut moja “polovina” i moj “malyš”* ‘I’m with my better “half” and my “little one”’, 1985



Source: Retrieved from the book *Alcohol* © FUEL Publishing 2017

In Image 4, a man with a red nose is ready to leave with his luggage to Soči (written on the train wagon) on vacation and is talking to the train ticket inspector. The man says *So mnoj edut moja “polovina” i moj “malyš”* that literally means ‘My better “half” and my “little one” are coming with me...’. Behind him, there are two vodka bottles depicted with face, arms and legs; the bigger bottle has feminine features and holds the hand of the little bottle. The verbal text makes the personification explicit and lets us identify the *polovina* ‘half’ with the wife, and the *malyš* ‘little’ with the son. A second reading of this sentence, signaled by quotation marks in the speech bubble, completes the interpretation and reinforces the BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL metonymy: the *polovina* is the half liter bottle of vodka, while the *malyš* is a quarter of liter bottle of vodka. The personification of the bottles and the BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL metonymy interact with each other and, together with the pictorial context, activate specific metaphonymies: THE HALF LITER BOTTLE OF VODKA (FOR ALCOHOL) IS A PARTNER and THE QUARTER OF LITER BOTTLE OF VODKA (FOR ALCOHOL) IS A SON.

In both Image 3 and Image 4, we are able to identify the alcoholics owing to their attitudes towards the bottle, while the concept of alcoholism is given by the entire scene. In particular, the specific representation of vodka as a partner (IMAGE 3) or a member of the family (IMAGE 4) aims to highlight a negative consequence of alcoholism: the inference is that alcohol and family or any other loving relationship, are mutually exclusive.

Moreover, in Image 4, several other metaphors are used to convey the message. The personification of the bottle and the verbal element *So mnoj edut* ‘(they) are coming with me’ activate the ALCOHOL IS A COMPANION metaphor that recurs in posters in which alcohol is personified (see also IMAGE 5). Other metaphors are triggered by the rhymes at the bottom of the poster:

*S lichvoj nagruzilsja spirtnogo ljubitel’ : spešit na kurort,  
popadet...v vytrezvitel’.*

[‘The lover of alcohol has loaded himself with interests: he rushes to the resort, he will end up...in a drunk tank’]

Particularly interesting is the use of the verb *nagruzit’sja* ‘load oneself’ that triggers the ALCOHOL IS A BURDEN metaphor: this metaphor highlights how alcoholism can make one’s life, metaphorically one’s journey, difficult and “heavy”. The BURDEN metaphor is also reinforced by



*s lichvoj* ‘with interests’ that refers to additional negative consequences, or metaphorical costs, of alcohol consumption. The verb *nagruzit'sja*, that in colloquial speech means “drink until one is drunk”, also activates the alcohol frame in these rhymes. In this poster, the frame of journey is also activated by such pictorial elements as the train, and the luggage. The words in the final rhymes let us understand that the real destination of such a journey is not the *kurort* ‘holiday resort’ in Soči,<sup>7</sup> but the *vytrezvitel'*<sup>8</sup> ‘drunk tank’, in police custody. In this way, alcoholism is associated with criminality.

The association between alcoholism and crime was central in Soviet anti-alcohol campaigns from the 1950's.<sup>9</sup> In the poster *Vodka vlečēt za soboj...* ‘Vodka leads to...’ (IMAGE 5), the bottle metaphtonymy, together with the COMPANION metaphor, is used to highlight the power of alcoholism to lead people to the commission of illegal actions.

Image 5 – E. Bor. *Vodka vlečēt za soboj...* ‘Vodka leads to...’, 1985



Source: Retrieved from the book *Alcohol* © FUEL Publishing 2017

<sup>7</sup> Sochi is a Russian city on the Black Sea that already in Soviet times was one of the most popular tourist destinations.

<sup>8</sup> *Vytrezvitel'* was a special medical institution for sobering up drunk people.

<sup>9</sup> In 1960 the criminal code was revised and a punishment for purchasing moonshine was introduced (TARSCHYS, 1993, p. 18).

In Image 5, a bottle, represented with arms and legs, holds the hand of a man who, having passed out due to alcohol, follows the bottle together with other people in the same state of unconsciousness. On the bottle appears the label *p'janstvo* 'alcohol abuse/drunkenness', while the texts on men's jackets say: *raspuščenost* 'licentiousness', *chuliganstvo* 'hooliganism', *prestupnost* 'crime', *tunejadstvo* 'parasitism', *proguly* 'absenteeism', *brakodel'stvo* 'shoddy workmanship'.

Unlike the two posters we have already analyzed (IMAGES 3 and 4), in Image 5, the hybrid metaphor through which the bottle is personified interacts with the bottle metonymic chain that goes from the bottle to alcoholic drink, and then, in turn, to alcoholism (IMAGE 2): the text *p'janstvo* 'alcoholism' on the bottle and the word *vodka* in the title serve as "anchoring" for these metonymic shifts. The interaction between the BOTTLE metonymy and the pictorial hybrid metaphor triggers the (BOTTLE FOR) ALCOHOLISM IS A PERSON metaphonymy: the bottle with human features can walk, make decisions, lead and, more generally, act in people's place. Moreover, the representation of drunken people that follow the bottle and the text *vodka vlečēt za soboj...* 'vodka leads to...', allow the viewer to understand alcoholism as an undesirable companion. In this way, we can identify the more specific (BOTTLE FOR) ALCOHOLISM IS A (NEGATIVE) LEADER metaphonymy through which the poster conveys the message that alcoholism can lead people to illegal actions with bad consequences. The cause-effect metonymy at the basis of this poster's intended meaning can be easily retrieved: on the left side, the bottle and the words *p'janstvo* and *vodka* represent the cause, while the effects are presented on the right side of the poster and made verbally explicit with the labels on the jackets. Interestingly, the verb form *vlečēt* is a crucial element in the interpretation of the poster: on the one hand, the verb *vleč'*, literally meaning 'to drag' and figuratively, 'to attract', reinforces the COMPANION metaphor; on the other hand, the whole construction *vleč' za soboj*, meaning 'to cause, to determine', reinforces the cause-effect metonymy.

## 5.2 The pictorial BOTTLE-PERSON interaction: the depersonification of the alcoholic

In Section 5.1. we have analyzed those cases in which the metonymic bottle is the target concept of the metaphorical shift: in this way, the bottle stands for alcohol or alcoholism, while the alcoholic is represented in the context. In this Section, we focus on the reverse

metaphor in which the bottle serves as the source concept and invites access not only to the concept of alcoholism, but also to the dehumanized representation of the alcoholic.

In the poster *P'janstvu – boj* 'Fight alcoholism' (IMAGE 6), a bottle with a human head shows the label *vodka*; floating in the bottle, there are some papers that say *13-a zarplata* 'thirteenth salary', *putevka* 'trip/holiday voucher', and *premiya* 'bonus'.

Image 6 – Unknown artist. *P'janstvu – boj!* 'Fight alcoholism', 1986



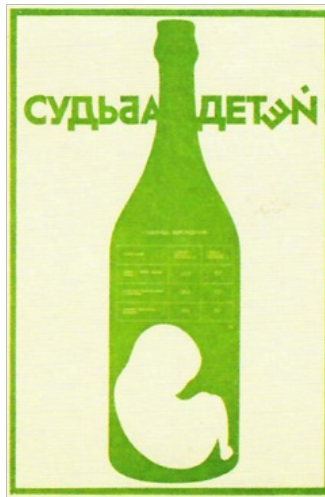
Source: Retrieved from the book *Alcohol* © FUEL Publishing 2017

The pictorial conflation of human features, i.e. the eyes, the mouth and the big nose, with the object triggers a metaphorical mapping between the person and the bottle. At the same time, the label *vodka* on the bottle and the word *p'jantsvo* 'alcoholism' in the title make the metonymic chain triggered by the BOTTLE explicit (IMAGE 2). In order to correctly interpret the poster, the bottle should be considered as the source concept of the metaphorical shift, i.e. PERSON IS A BOTTLE. In this case, the role of the bottle metonymy is not only to shift from a concrete object (bottle) to an abstract one (alcoholism), but also to characterize the target concept of the metaphor. Thanks to the interaction between the BOTTLE metonymy and depersonification, we can identify the specific ALCOHOLIC PERSON IS A BOTTLE metaphor, through which the person addicted to alcohol is depicted as dehumanized (effect) because of alcohol abuse (cause).

Although we cannot entirely exclude the possible interpretation of the bottle as a personification of alcoholism, other elements in the poster favor the depersonification of alcoholic as the most fitting reading. In particular, the papers floating in the vodka, representing missed opportunities (*putevka* ‘trip/holiday voucher’) and lost money (*13-a zarplata* ‘thirteenth salary’ and *premija* ‘bonus’) due to alcohol consumption, can be considered relevant evidence for depersonification. This visual representation of the alcoholic can indeed be supported or motivated by the phraseological expression *propit’ den’gi* ‘drink money away’: the body of the bottle that corresponds to the stomach of the alcoholic contains not only vodka but also money from extra payments (thirteenth salary and bonus) that could have been spent differently. The whole scene acquires negative connotation thanks to the sad expression of the alcoholic, who has lost human features. The verbal element *boj* ‘fight’, that metaphorically conceptualizes alcoholism as an enemy to fight against, further reinforces the negative connotation of drinking behavior.

Another poster in which the BOTTLE metonymic chain interacts with depersonification is *Sud’ba detej* ‘Children’s fate’ (IMAGE 7) that deals with the issue of harmful effects of alcohol use on the fetus during pregnancy.

Image 7 – V. Zundalev. *Sud’ba detej* ‘Children’s destiny’, 1985



Source: Retrieved from the book *Alcohol* © FUEL Publishing 2017

In the poster *Sud'ba detej* (IMAGE 7), the bottle refers metonymically to the abstract concept of “alcohol abuse”, while its metaphorical interpretation is triggered by the pictorial context, i.e. the fetus. In order to interpret the anti-alcohol poster correctly, the bottle should be considered part of the source domain and the PERSON IS A BOTTLE metaphor (depersonalization) should be activated. The fetus that floats in the bottle triggers a specific contextual metaphor, THE PREGNANT WOMAN IS A BOTTLE, through which the woman, depicted as an object, i.e. the bottle, loses her human features and qualities.

However, the depersonification of the pregnant woman becomes meaningful only when interacting with the BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOLISM metonymy: this interaction allows the viewer to identify the pregnant woman as the alcoholic and, consequently, to activate the more specific ALCOHOLIC PREGNANT WOMAN IS A BOTTLE metaphor. This metaphor activates a set of correspondences between the source (the bottle) and the target (pregnant woman) domains: the woman’s womb is the body of a bottle, while the amniotic liquid that should protect and nourish the fetus is replaced by toxic alcohol that endangers the life of the future baby.

The interpretation must be completed by activating the cause-effect metonymy at the basis of the poster’s intended meaning: alcoholism (BOTTLE metonymy) causes negative effects in pregnant women (BOTTLE metaphor) and, in particular, endangers the fetus. Negative effects of alcohol consumption during pregnancy are also given in verbal mode. The title in the upper part of the poster, *Sud'ba detej* ‘Children’s fate’, helps to negatively weight the scene by employing a pictorial strategy: reversed and falling letters represent the staggering unhealthy future of children of alcoholic mothers. Moreover, the label on the bottle further specifies negative consequences of alcohol on fetuses and displays information about possible birth defects (effect) due to alcohol consumption during pregnancy (cause).

### 5.2.1 Depersonification without the image of the bottle

As we have seen in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, the image of the bottle is the element that introduces the main topic of the poster, i.e. alcohol and/or alcoholism. Its frequent appearance in anti-alcohol posters makes the bottle an expected element. On the one hand, the conventionalization of an element assures the correct reception of the message, which is

extremely important for such a social campaign; however, conversely, the conventionalized association can make the image lose vividness (cf. YUS, 2009, p. 167). For this reason, to be effective in dissuading people from drinking alcohol, poster artists contrived to make the BOTTLE metonymy interact with metaphors in many innovative ways.

In all posters we have analyzed so far, the bottle, no matter whether it was the source or the target of the cognitive processing, was a central pictorial element. In the poster *Ne bud'v plenu durnoj privyčki* 'Do not be prisoner of a bad habit' (IMAGE 8), the PERSON IS A BOTTLE metaphor is active, but the bottle, which is the source domain, is not pictorially present.

Image 8 – Unknown artist. *Ne bud'v plenu durnoj privyčki*  
'Don't be prisoner of a bad habit', 1985



Source: Retrieved from the book *Alcohol* © FUEL Publishing 2017

In Image 8, twenty men are depicted in a wooden bottle case, each man standing in a bottle's place. The contextual metaphor triggered by the wooden bottle case and the pictorial substitution of bottles for men activates the PERSON IS A BOTTLE metaphor, without pictorially representing the source, i.e. the bottle. This path to giving access to the BOTTLE metaphor is novel and assures its effectiveness. Once the concept of bottle arises, the ALCOHOLIC PERSON IS A BOTTLE metaphor can be activated.

As we have already observed in Section 5.2, the representation of people as bottles make them lose human characteristics. In Image 8, the dehumanization of the alcoholic is reinforced by another metaphor, the ALCOHOL IS A PRISON metaphor. The PRISON metaphor is triggered both pictorially and verbally: the image of men forced into a constrictive space, suggesting a prison cell and the expression *v plenu* ‘as prisoner’ favor the depiction of the alcoholic as a prisoner. Both the negative imperative *ne bud* ‘don’t be’ and the adjective *durnoj* ‘bad, stupid’ imbue the scene with unmistakable negative connotations.

## 6 Conclusion

In this paper we have investigated the role of the metonymic image of the bottle in Soviet anti-alcohol posters of the ‘80s, with a special focus on its interaction with metaphorical processes. In particular, we have shown how this metonymic pictorial element can interact with (de) personification processes in different ways to convey a specific social message.

As often happens in social advertising, a concrete element is necessary to access pictorially the more abstract target concept; in anti-alcohol posters, the bottle is the most frequent recurring pictorial element that allows the advertisement to introduce the issue of alcoholism. The metonymic shifts undergone by the image of the bottle are not always easy to retrieve, but thanks to the textual anchorages and the general interpretation of the poster, two major possible shifts have been identified: the BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL metonymy and the BOTTLE FOR ALCOHOL FOR ALCOHOLISM metonymic chain (Section 4).

We have investigated how the metonymic image of the bottle interacts with both contextual or hybrid metaphors and how this interaction can lead to the personification of alcohol or alcoholism (Section 5.1) or to the depersonification of the alcoholic (Section 5.2). Both of these metaphorical processes aim to negatively portray alcohol consumption. On the one hand, the acquisition of human features by the bottle highlights the potential danger of alcohol substituting for our beloved ones and acting in our place; on the other hand, alcohol can also make people squander opportunities, lose or endanger close relationships and even make them lose their human features and, more generally, their lives. Together with (de)personification, other verbal or pictorial

metaphors are used in the posters to censure alcoholism and ultimately dissuade viewers from alcohol consumption.

This analysis also represents a first attempt to apply multimodal analysis of metaphors and metonymies to investigate an important cultural product like Soviet posters from a fresh perspective.

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