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When ‘seeking love is travel by bus’: Deliberate metaphors, stories and humor in a Romanian song

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When *'seeking love is travel by bus'*: Deliberate metaphors, stories and humor in a Romanian song

Abstract

Drawing on a song by Romanian blues rock singer and satirist Alexandru Andrieș, *Transport în comun*, we argue that both listeners and metaphor researchers must sometimes assume that a metaphor has been deliberately used and transformed in order to make sense of a metaphorical story, particularly when the metaphor is embedded in a particular cultural and political context. On the face of it *Transport în comun* is a song about seeking love, but it opens with a decidedly unromantic metaphor, “*women are buses*,” then develops this song into a story that is intelligible only on the assumption that the songwriter / singer has selected and developed the metaphor deliberately. We further argue that Andrieș’s known history of writing cleverly satirical songs during the Communist Romania, plus widely-shared experiences with public transportation in large cities, provides a firm basis for the further assumption that Andrieș also deliberately developed the song as a political and social metaphor. We agree with Gibbs (2011) that it is not possible to determine from the text alone whether a particular metaphor was used deliberately. However, we argue that the larger context in which a metaphor appears often provides evidence of deliberateness that is too strong to ignore. We aim to demonstrate that understanding and appreciating this song requires that the listener make the assumption that the metaphor was deliberately chosen and elaborated, and that most of the song’s meaning is lost without this assumption.

Key words: deliberate metaphor, story-telling, song lyrics, intentionality

1. Introduction

“Women are buses
That we wait for
We spend ages at the bus stop
That’s why we smoke!”
Alexandru Andrieș (2005), *Transport în comun*

In this popular Romanian song, singer/song-writer Alexandru Andrieș playfully transforms a conventional metaphor, LOVE IS A JOURNEY¹, connecting an ironic view of romantic relationships with a commonplace experience that is ordinarily considered anything but romantic – waiting at a bus stop. Andrieș develops this metaphor and blends it with other conventional metaphors (particularly LOVE IS A CONTAINER) in clever and surprisingly complex ways that suggest his use of these metaphors can only be considered *deliberate*. Yet this conclusion raises complex issues about intentionality that have been subject to considerable debate in recent years (Charteris-Black, 2012; Gibbs, 2011, 2012; Steen, 2008, 2011, 2013). In this essay, we begin with an analysis of *Transport în comun* drawing on previous research on story-telling (Ritchie & Negrea-Busuioc, 2014a), playful transformation of metaphors (Ritchie, 2005; 2008; 2009) and story metaphors (Ritchie, 2005; 2010; 2011; Ritchie and Negrea-Busuioc, 2014a). We then return to the questions of intentionality and deliberateness, based on evidence drawn from Andrieș’s use and development of metaphors.

1.1 Conceptual metaphors and intentionality

It is widely agreed that metaphor plays a major role in the expression of abstract concepts (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 1994) and that metaphor comprehension frequently involves embodied simulation of actions and states associated with the metaphor

¹ We use small capital letters to indicate conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) or systematic metaphors (Cameron, 2007); for our analysis the distinction is not important.

vehicle (for recent reviews see Bergen, 2012; Gibbs & Matlock, 2008). Metaphor (and figurative language, in general) is particularly important in the conceptualization of emotions (Kövecses, 2000). Love has been expressed in many metaphor vehicles including CONTAINER and JOURNEY. Metaphors often imply stories, and conventional metaphors are often developed or transformed into extended stories (Ritchie, 2010, 2011), inextricably linked to the intentions of the speakers who develop them (Herman, 2013; Ritchie and Negrea-Busuioc, 2014a). Metaphors based on metaphor vehicles such as JOURNEY lend themselves particularly well to being transformed into a story; conversely, a nominative metaphor such as LOVE IS A CONTAINER would seem less likely to provide the basis for a metaphorical story. However, as we will show, “*women are buses*” blends these two metaphors with each other, and with commonplace experiences of life in large cities, into a complex story that is about love – a story that also appears to be about much more than love. For many members of the Romanian audience, this metaphorical story is also likely to trigger memories of conditions particular to life in Romanian cities during the Communist era.

The metaphor potentially transports the listener into a narrative world (Green, 2004) by activating in the listener’s mind a vivid image of the experiences of traveling by bus. The challenges and downsides of bus travel are particularly mapped onto love relationships, and it is the artist’s intentional and deliberate use of the metaphor that makes possible the unfolding of the story. Our goal is to examine the claim that the metaphor is used deliberately by the singer and, additionally, that the listener needs to assume deliberate elaboration of the metaphor in order to experience the full meaning of the song. However, the argument put forward here does not extend over metaphor selection. In what follows, we acknowledge that it seems plausible that Andrieș spontaneously rather than deliberately produced the metaphor “*women are buses*” and that his choice of metaphor might have been influenced by latent familiar mappings between the

two domains as well as by exposure to similar metaphors in other literary, artistic, and media products. The singer's development of the metaphor is novel and creative in relation to other linguistic expressions frequently used to characterize *love as a journey*. However, regardless of whether the metaphor was initially crafted or occurred spontaneously, we argue that the singer's elaboration and transformation of the metaphor into a story was deliberate (i.e., the product of careful thought and artistic deliberation, including evaluating and selecting among alternatives) and that complete understanding of the song requires that the listener assume that the use of the metaphor is deliberate.

Steen (2008, p. 222) argues that that metaphors are used deliberately when people intend to “change the addressee’s perspective on the topic that is the target of the metaphor, by making the addressee look at it from a different conceptual domain”. Previous research has shown how deliberate metaphors have been used in education to help teachers in affixing new information and new concepts (Cameron, 2003), in politics and economics to consolidate different ideologies (Charteris-Black, 2004), and in science popularization to explain scientific progress in various fields and to make abstract ideas accessible to a general audience (Wee, 2005). The role of deliberate metaphor in communication may vary across texts and genres (Semino, 2008; Steen, 2013) and is closely related to the linguistic form and conceptual structure of the metaphor. Wee (2005) argues that a constructed source domain indicates an explanatory function of a metaphor that has been deliberately used by a speaker to clarify complex scientific concepts and make them available to the general public. Novelty and creativity enhance the use of metaphors *as* metaphors (Steen, 2008, 2013); the more salient the novelty of metaphor, the more likely it is that the metaphor is used deliberately.

Gibbs (2011) challenges the claim that unconventionality and quirkiness of metaphor necessarily demonstrate that it was deliberately used by a rational language user in pursuit of particular communication goals. Gibbs claims that it is not possible to ascertain that a metaphor was deliberately or consciously produced by a speaker just by looking at the language. Nor does it help to ask people about the conscious judgments that they may have made before using a metaphor, since speakers are unlikely to be able to describe the reasoning that underlay their actions. Research in psychology has shown that people are actually very poor at describing the cognitive processes involved in their performance, “the paradox of the expert” (Gibbs, 2011, 2012). Gibbs also challenges the claim that “tuning devices” (Cameron & Deignan, 2003) are sufficient to mark conscious use of a metaphor. Such tuning devices clearly draw attention to the accompanying metaphor, but they seem more likely related to certain expectedness of a metaphor in discourse rather than to its deliberateness (Cameron & Deignan, 2003; Deignan, 2008).

1.1.1. Degrees of intentionality.

Side-stepping issues related to theories about consciousness and focusing instead on communication itself, Charteris-Black (2012) proposes the term “purposeful metaphor.” Elsewhere, (Ritchie & Negrea-Busuioc, 2014a) we proposed a concept of *spontaneous intentionality* to account for the production of metaphors in the flow of conversation, in response to opportunities and stimuli present in focused conscious intention, but where there is no evidence of forethought or advance rehearsal. *Deliberate intentionality* would seem to be at the opposite end of the intentionality spectrum. *Deliberate* implies careful thought about an action, considering and evaluating alternative actions, usually with respect to one or more specific goals or objectives, and selecting the alternative that best fits certain criteria. Charteris-Black’s (2012)

term *purposeful* would seem to fall between these extremes: It implies something done with a specific aim or purpose but does not imply that alternative actions were considered, much less carefully evaluated. *Spontaneous* acts may be performed intentionally but do not necessarily have a specific aim or purpose, and explicitly do *not* result from consideration and selection among alternatives.

In this essay we argue that the listener (and by the same token the researcher) must assume deliberate selection of a particular metaphor in order to make sense of the metaphors in the immediate context of the song *Transport în comun* and the extended context of recent Romanian political and cultural history. Through analysis of “*women are buses*” in its social, political, and historical context we will show that the musician’s use of the metaphor can only be understood as not only intentional but also deliberate, and illuminate how deliberate metaphors might “afford conscious metaphorical cognition” (Steen, 2013, p. 186). We will also distinguish between metaphorical meanings that are *obligatory*, in the sense that the song makes sense only if the listener assumes a deliberate use on the part of the singer, and metaphorical meanings that are *potential*, in the sense that they are possible interpretations that might enrich but are not essential to the meaning of the song, and for which there is no substantial evidence within the song itself and the extended context provides suggestive but not overwhelming evidence.

We argue that the metaphorical narrative activated by “*women are buses*” is essential for understanding the song and for grasping the intended meaning of the musician / songwriter. Following Baumeister and Masicampo (2010; see also Steen, 2013) we assume that narrative reconstruction is a costly cognitive effort that requires cognitive processing, if only because activating a story requires retrieving information from the long-term memory storage and holding it in the working memory. This same logic extends to the effort of processing a

metaphor that activates a story. The metaphor is part of the story and the unexpectedness of its linguistic realization draws attention to the metaphorical conscious thought that has produced it. Thus, metaphorical reconstruction of a story often entails a considerable degree of deliberateness in both production and interpretation.

We begin with a summary of the cultural and historical background that would be familiar to virtually all Romanians in Andrieș's audience, and which we believe is essential to understanding the full meaning of the metaphorical story-lines of the song. We then turn to an overview of the conceptual mappings generated by the use of this metaphor, followed by a more detailed discussion of the key metaphor "women are buses" used by the artist to describe romantic relationships from a man's point of view. Following this explication of the metaphor, we show how Andrieș's development of this metaphor supports the claim of deliberate intentionality, and discuss the implications that a metaphorical reconstruction of a story can have for assessing deliberateness in direct metaphor use. Based on this analysis we will consider how the concept of deliberate metaphor can contribute to metaphor scholarship. We will outline and compare Steen's (2008, 2013) approach to deliberate metaphor and Gibbs's (2011) critique of deliberateness and explore the possibility that some metaphors can be classified as deliberate by virtue of their communicative function.

2. The text: *Transport în comun*² (Public transportation)

<i>Femeile sînt autobuze/</i>	Women are buses
<i>Pe care le așteptăm:/</i>	That we wait for:
<i>Stăm în stație cu anii.../</i>	We spend ages at the bus stop...
<i>Uite, de-aia fumăm !/</i>	That's why we smoke!
<i>Și-apoi cînd apar, n-apar niciodată/</i>	And then when they come, there're always
<i>Decît de la trei în sus.../</i>	At least three...
<i>Și dacă te miști încet, amice,/</i>	and if you move slowly, buddy,
<i>Te-ai lins pe bot, că s-au dus!/</i>	You've missed them, they're gone!

² Used with permission of the author; retrieved from the musician's official website in January 2014, <http://alexandries.free.fr/andries/documente/discografie/proprie/comandaspeciala.html>

<i>Cum să ghicești așa, dintr-o dată, /</i>	How could you guess, all of a sudden,
<i>Unde-ai putea s-ajungi ?/</i>	Where they might get you to?
<i>Dacă nu-ți convine traseul ?/</i>	What if you don't like the route?
<i>Dacă au stații prea lungi ?/</i>	What if the bus stops are too rare?
<i>Femeile-autobuz știu bine,/</i>	Women-buses know it well,
<i>De-aia țin ușa crăpată:/</i>	That's why they only crack the door:
<i>Trebuie să te sui aproape din zbor.../</i>	So you have to jump on...
<i>Cum dracu' să n-o faci lată ?/</i>	How the hell can you not blow it?
<i>Și dacă cumva ceva nu-ți convine/</i>	And if there's something you don't like
<i>Și vrei înapoi pe șosea,/</i>	And you want back on the highway,
<i>Numărul unu: o faci din mers,/</i>	First thing is: you get off while moving,
<i>Numărul doi: nimeni nu te mai ia !/</i>	Second thing is: no one's gonna pick you up again!
<i>Așa că las-o încolo de treabă,/</i>	So give it up,
<i>N-ai cum să ieși din joc.../</i>	You can't escape this game...
<i>Femeile sînt autobuze, da,/</i>	Women are buses, yes,
<i>Dar fără ele stăm pe loc.../</i>	But without them we don't get anywhere...

2.1. Background: Alexandru Andrieș and Public Transport in Communist-era Romania

Alexandru Andrieș is an iconic Romanian rock-blues singer, famous for clever and intriguing lyrics, often inspired by subjects related to the social and political life in Romania. He is famous for his beautiful and expressive compositions and witty lyrics. During the Communist era, Andrieș wrote and performed songs that ironically and humorously conveyed his criticism of the regime, often at the risk of censorship. Humor was his weapon of choice in combating the grim and unattractive social, economic and political reality of Communism. In the modern post-1989 Romanian society, there is an enduring story of long and obnoxious bus waiting times, a vivid reminiscence of the Communist age when there were never enough buses for commuters, especially in Bucharest, the capital, but also in other major cities. Even though in post-Communist Romania the shortage of buses has been sorted out and public transportation services have diversified and improved, the story-line of waiting for a bus still resonates with many Romanians.

2.2. “*Women are buses*”³

The song opens with a metaphorical statement that reads more like a riddle – “in what way is a woman like a bus?” It juxtaposes two highly incongruous schemas: among their other qualities, buses are big, slow-moving, awkward, and uncomfortable. The song title, “*public transportation*” does not offer much help; although it does point away from qualities such as size and shape, it leaves intact the qualities of *slow-moving*, *awkward*, and *uncomfortable*. However, such attributive qualities set up by the nominal metaphor “*women are buses*” are neither necessary nor sufficient elements to help the audience make sense of the song.

At first glance, it would appear rather odd to analyze the key metaphor of the song as a linguistic expression of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Usually, when love is conceptualized as a journey, lovers are seen as travel companions, common goals in life as destinations, love relationships as vehicles that help them complete their journey. Nevertheless, here women are seen not as “*travel partners*” but as “*vehicles propelling the journey*”, hence their crucial role in ensuring the success/ failure of the endeavor. This departure from commonly established mappings does not imply that “*women are buses*” is less likely to be a metaphor that expresses ontological correspondences between *love* and *journey*.

“*Women are buses*” sets up an alternative mapping scenario for lovers and love relationships, which is made possible precisely because the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY is a conventional way in which people conceptualize love and this conceptual metaphor is not conventionally tied up to any particular linguistic expression (Lakoff, 1993). Admittedly, “*women are buses*” is a novel, creative metaphor that maps lovers and love relationships rather differently than many other expressions through which the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY is manifest in language. Furthermore, the title of the song furnishes an additional

³ We use italics within quotation marks to highlight metaphorically used segments of language.

argument in favor of analyzing “*women are buses*” as a JOURNEY metaphor. In Romanian, the attribute “*în comun*” translates literally as “together”, which makes the construction ‘*transport în comun*’ a candidate metaphor for the LOVE IS A JOURNEY conceptual scenario; love is a bus journey and women are in a more powerful position as vehicles of the romantic relationships, *without them, we don’t get anywhere*. The singer plays on the double meaning of the attribute “*în comun*” when building and expanding the analogy between love relationships and bus journeys.

3. Identifying and analyzing story-metaphors in the song

As already mentioned, we aim to provide grounds for the claim that sometimes both readers and metaphor scholars need to assume that a metaphor has been deliberately used and transformed in order to make sense of a metaphorical story, particularly when the metaphor is embedded in a particular cultural and political context. To this purpose we proceed directly to the analysis of story metaphors that, we believe, are *activated* by the key metaphor of the song. Spending time on identifying and grouping linguistic metaphors into categories seems less productive than focusing on the metaphorical stories that the text contains. Ultimately, the metaphor is very much the song; there are few metaphorical expressions in the lyrics that are not extensions of “*women are buses*”, and non-metaphorical expressions are even fewer. By story activation, we refer to the potential of certain metaphors to elicit associations that go beyond basic conceptual mappings. Such associations are essential to the interpretation of the metaphor/ song and are likely to be overlooked by an analysis based solely on the structure-mapping approach (Ritchie, 2010; 2011; Ritchie and Negrea-Busuioc, 2014a).

As the text unfolds, it becomes clearer that the song plays on the analogy between what buses are used for (public transport) and women’s unpredictable behavior in a romantic relationship. Interestingly, despite its nominal form, the metaphor “*women are buses*” actually

builds on the dynamics of its predicative extensions in the lyrics: “*That we wait for*”, “*You’ve missed them, they’re gone*”, “*So you have to jump on*”, “*No one’s gonna pick you up again*”.

Embarking on a romantic relationship with a woman shares many similarities with getting on the right bus. The disadvantages of traveling by bus (spending lots of time waiting for the bus, getting rapidly on the right bus before it departs, being unable to get off when and where you want, etc.) are mapped onto the constant challenges of being in a romantic relationship (chasing after women and, eventually, choosing the right woman, being caught in a relationship, fearing the unknown while the relationship develops).

In the song, the conventionalized metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY is manifest creatively in the analogy between women and buses. However, simply decoding the meaning of the metaphor “*women are buses*” as a metaphor of love does not mean understanding what the musician might have intended to communicate by the song. In the following sections of this paper, we argue that the audience (and especially the Romanian public) has to assume a deliberate use of the metaphor in order to grasp anything beyond the surface meaning. Without the story activated by the deliberate use of the metaphor, the song does not communicate much about love and intimate relationships, in any case, not more than the classical ontological correspondences between journey and love embedded in our conceptual system. At this level of the analysis, there is insufficient evidence to ascertain how listeners actually interpret the song. Certainly, a reception analysis would provide valuable insight in this respect, and this suggests a productive avenue for further research. However, we argue it is reasonable to infer that, based on background knowledge about bus riding triggered by the song metaphor, most people in the audience will readily recognize the link between a defeatist attitude with regard to love and a defeatist attitude with regard to the use of public transportation. Moreover, the fact that the audience recognizes

the words as part of a poetic / musical performance, and sought out the song or attended a performance explicitly to hear the clever words, must inevitably foster the audience's attributions of intentionality to the singer⁴.

The song title, "*Public transportation*" is worth examining in itself. As detailed in the preceding, it is almost certain to activate a detailed script for most Romanians, at least those who live in large cities and rely on public transportation. When combined with the first line, "*women are buses*," it also implies a mapping between gender relations (not necessarily romantic) and public transportation as an institution – an institution that is bureaucratic, inefficient, and unresponsive – but that is nonetheless an essential part of everyday life ("without them, we *don't get anywhere*"). This juxtaposition resists the straightforward mapping of TRAVEL BY BUS onto ROMANTIC LOVE, which is implied in most of the song. We will return to the implications of this observation later in the analysis.

The second line, "*that we wait for*," triggers a frequently encountered conventionalized metaphor, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, as well as a slightly less used metaphor, LOVE IS A CONTAINER, which becomes more salient in the second and third stanzas. But it also begins to activate a story-line, "*waiting for the bus*," which is strengthened by the third line, "*we spend ages at the bus stop*" and developed throughout the remainder of the song. This contrasts ironically with the dynamic implications of LOVE IS A JOURNEY, a contrast that is reinforced by the third line, "*We spend ages at the bus stop*."

It is important to note that the metaphor vehicle shifts halfway through the first stanza, from "*women are buses*" to an overarching mapping between "*courtship*" and "*the public transportation system*" and then again, halfway through the second stanza to "*women-buses... only crack the door*," which implies "*women are bus-drivers*" or at least "*women are buses with*

⁴ We are indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

minds and intentions.” This reading moves the entire story into the realm of playful fantasy – more in the genre of children’s literature, where buses, trucks, trains, etc. routinely and without further comment are accorded minds, emotions, and intentions.

3.1. Story-metaphor #1: “*seeking love is travel by bus.*”

As noted in the introduction, it is possible to analyze this song as an extended analogy, consistent with Gentner’s (1983) *structure-mapping* approach. However, that would miss what we regard as the central feature of the song: It tells a familiar story about trying to travel somewhere by bus (the vehicle story), and maps it onto at least one other familiar story from a very different domain. The most obvious topic story can be characterized as *meeting and forming a satisfying relationship with a woman*. We believe it is reasonable to map the story metaphor onto at least one other, even more abstract story, something like *securing a satisfying way of life or a satisfactory political order*. We will discuss this second possibility after analyzing the most immediate and obvious story-metaphor topic. (For a more detailed discussion of story-metaphors see Ritchie, 2010; 2011; Ritchie & Negrea-Busuioc, 2014a; 2014b.)

The story metaphor “*seeking love is travel by bus*” builds on conceptual mappings that are visually represented in Figure 1. Metaphorical correspondences between the vehicle (*buses*, more precisely, *travel by bus*) and the topic (*women, love relationships*) are prompted by the overarching narrative of the commonplace disruptions to bus service in the Communist era. Waiting for a bus is seeking a romantic relationship; women are “the vehicles” in a love relationship, they are essential in either making the relationship move forward or making it come to a stop.

- Figure 1 about here -

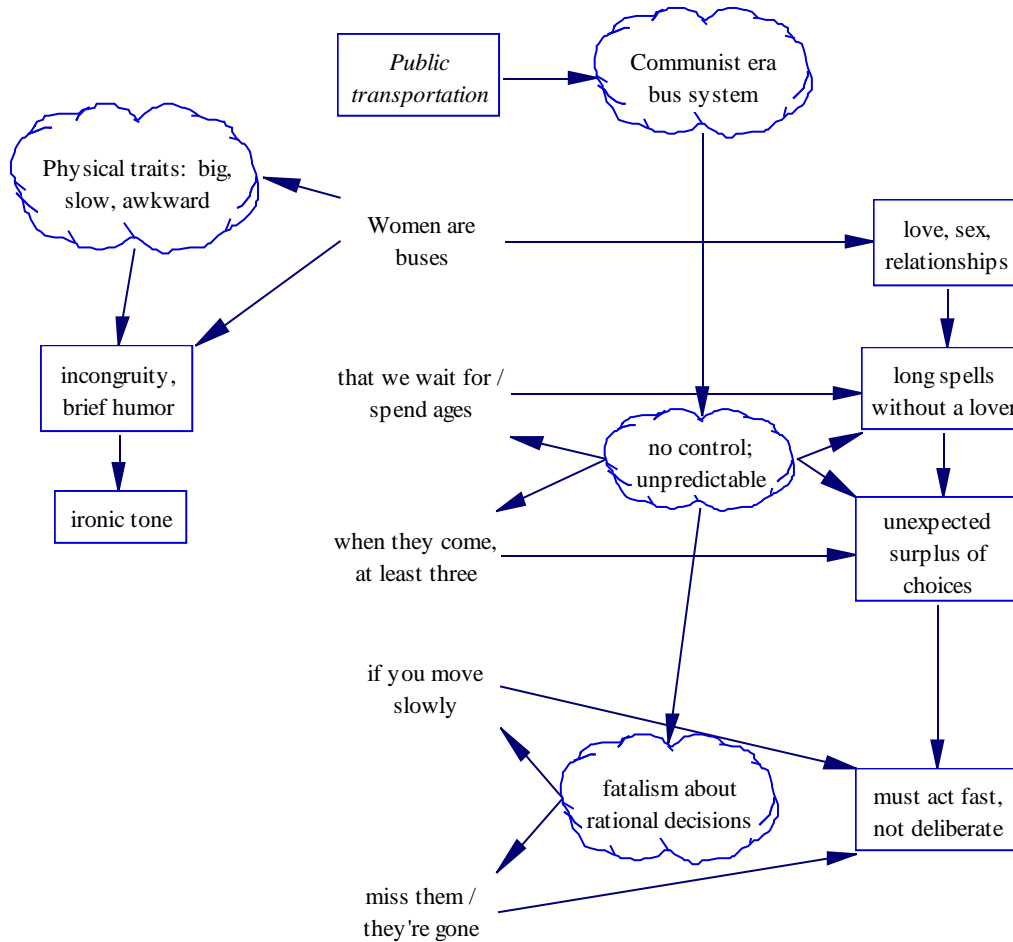


Fig. 1 Metaphorical mappings in *Transport în comun*

Defining elements of the Romanian bus system, namely the unpredictability of the schedule and the high likelihood of jumping on the wrong bus, facilitate the mapping between “traveling by bus” and “seeking love”. Long waiting time for the bus, “*we spend ages at the bus stop*”, is mapped onto the long spells without a lover; confusion generated by simultaneous bus arrivals, “*And then when they come, they’re always / at least three...*”, corresponds to hesitation accompanying unexpected surplus of possibilities to get romantically involved; overall, commonly encountered potential sources of discomfort when traveling by bus (e.g. impossibility to get off exactly when and where one wishes, fixed bus routes, slower speeds than regular cars, etc.) are mapped onto uncertainties that a love relationship might trigger (difficulty in breaking

off a relationship, difficulty in finding another partner, lack of satisfaction in the relationship, etc.), “*What if you don’t like the route? What if the bus stops are too rare?... And if there’s something you don’t like / And you want back on the highway / First thing: you get off while moving/ Second thing: no one’s gonna pick you up again!*”

The metaphor “*women are buses*” introduces a story about seeking love in terms of a commonplace story about traveling by bus. However, this metaphorical story conveys more meaning than can be comprised by the unpacking of the underlying conceptual mappings. The last lines of the first stanza indicate the musician’s intention to communicate a pessimistic view of what it means to build a love relationship. At an abstract level, fatalism about starting a romantic relationship resembles fatalism about getting on the right bus (“...*and if you move slowly, buddy, / You’ve missed them, they’re gone!*”). In both cases, a rational approach is usually futile and even undesirable (“*You can’t escape this game / Women are buses, yes.../ But without them you don’t get anywhere...*”). Riders and lovers must act quickly when making decisions about their *bus* or *love journeys*. Missed opportunities (buses passing by, women refusing to get involved in a relationship) are an impediment to one’s physical and emotional progress. Andrieș’s presumable cynical attitude towards starting a romantic relationship is attenuated by the ironic tone and the humor produced by the incongruity between the topic and the vehicle. Admittedly, to be able to grasp any meaning beyond the surface mappings between the topic and the vehicle, listeners must resonate with the story of a particular deficient bus system (in Communist Romania) that is deliberately evoked to portray creatively a less than ideal (and often more realistic) image of the development of a love relationship. Later in this section, we’ll show that the visible humor potential of the metaphor “*women are buses*” also supports the

attribution of deliberate use, i.e., use as the result of deliberation about the metaphor and its entailments, and about how they relate to the topic.

The outline of the vehicle story is straightforward, and will be familiar to most residents of Bucharest and other major cities in Romania, and more generally in many other parts of the world. Public buses are unreliable and often get off schedule; bus-drivers are sometimes surly and unresponsive. Riding the bus requires long, frustrating waits, but if you don't act quickly when the bus you want arrives, or if it is the third in a long row and you don't reach it in time, it leaves without you and you have to wait even longer. The bus may not go where you want, may not let you off where you want – and if you get off at the wrong place, the next bus may not stop for you. The elements of this vehicle story map readily onto familiar elements of the topic story, *seeking a relationship*: Compatible women are difficult to meet, and sometimes when you meet one you meet several others at the same time. But if you spend too much time deciding which one to date, they may all find other partners and leave you alone again. Because women are aware of all of this, they give you only a brief opportunity (“*only crack the door*”) so you have to decide immediately what to do, or you are certain to “*blow it.*” If you decide to end a relationship, she is unlikely to cooperate, so you need to leave while the relationship is still active – but if you do, you may find that no other woman will have anything to do with you.

In addition to the metaphorical mapping of the vehicle scenario and events onto the topic scenario and events, common emotions are mapped from vehicle story to topic story throughout. In the first stanza there is the boredom and/ or anxiety of waiting (“*That's why we smoke!*”). This is followed by the frustration of missing a bus, mapped onto the frustration of trying and failing to form a relationship. The second stanza maps the feeling of uncertainty about which bus to take to reach one's destination onto the feeling of uncertainty whether a relationship with a

particular woman will be satisfying, and whether a particular woman will be too possessive or demand too much commitment (“*bus stops are too rare*”). Finally, the frenzy of trying to board a bus before it leaves is mapped onto the frenzy of trying to get the attention of a woman who may be entertaining several other suitors. The third stanza maps a certain fatalism about bus travel onto a similar fatalism about romantic relationships (“*So give it up, / you can’t escape this game*”).

The fatalism metaphorically realized in the song is humorously conveyed to the public, probably in an attempt to suggest that laughing at the uncertainties of bus travel and love relationships may sometimes help people better deal with these experiences. From a communication perspective, the metaphor “*women are buses*” is deliberately used to produce humor and to stimulate enjoyment and entertainment. As shown in Figure 1 above, the central metaphor of the song builds on the blatant incongruity between “women” and “buses”, but also on the powerful impact that imagining the physical traits of buses (big, awkward, slow-moving objects) might have on the audience. It may very well be the case that the musician counts on these simulation effects to add to the incongruity between the two elements.

Creative metaphors often produce humorous effects, provided that there is an incongruous and surprising association between the domains (Dyrel, 2009; Ritchie, 2010). Creative metaphors used deliberately may also produce humor because they “violate aptness” by foregrounding “less salient features” of “unprototypical” sources (Dyrel, 2009, p. 36). This seems to be the case of “*women are buses*”, where certain features of traveling by bus (e.g. spending lots of time waiting for the bus, getting rapidly on the right bus before it departs, being unable to get off when and where you want, etc.) are brought to front in order to be mapped onto challenges that being in a love relationship often poses (e.g. chasing after women, choosing the

right woman, being caught in a relationship and trying to get out of it, fearing the unknown as the relationship develops).

The humorous effects of “*women are buses*” are amplified by the use of playful language and idioms and by playing on the multiple meanings of some expressions. For example, the musician intentionally and (apparently) deliberately uses the expression “*nimeni nu te mai ia*” [no one’s gonna pick you up again] to humorously suggest that getting off the bus in between stops is risky just as breaking up with your lover might be. In Romanian, the verb *a lua* (*ia*, 3rd person singular) is frequently used in puns and play on words, as it can have multiple meanings. For instance, it can be used to mean either “to pick up” (travelers) or “to marry”, when used in the reflexive form *a se lua*. The artist plays on these two meanings of the verb to humorously point to the risk that many people run when breaking up; seeking another relationship, pursuing a different opportunity does not necessarily end up successfully and many people have difficulties in finding another love interest and forming a romantic relationship after a breakup.

The sequence of narrative elements in the song invites several compelling interpretations: seeking love is both an unpredictable and inescapable process just as travelling by bus in the Communist Bucharest used to be. Undergoing the complexity of a romantic relationship resembles riding a bus whose schedule, itinerary and final destination are subject to constant change. The metaphor “*women are buses*” makes much more sense when the story behind the vehicle is activated and blended with the story about seeking a romantic relationship. The intended allusion to familiar events (i.e. traveling by bus in Bucharest, especially before 1989) serves to illustrate familiar aspects of the universal story of love relationships in a way that produces a kind of wry humor. The fact that many Romanians are readily transported into the vehicle story invoked by the metaphor also generates humor: the activated simulations of waiting

for a bus with its attendant emotions will readily blend with the activated simulations of seeking a lover. People experience a similar defeatist attitude towards finding a lover and riding a bus – in both cases, there doesn't seem to be much one can do about it (hence the lines “*So give it up/ You can't escape this game.../ Women are buses, yes/ But without them we don't get anywhere...*”).

To summarize the argument thus far, the song invokes or activates a story, familiar to most members of the Romanian-speaking audience, of waiting for a bus during the Communist era (and, more broadly, waiting for a bus in any large and chaotic city) and maps it onto the experience of seeking a romantic liaison. This story makes sense only if the listener assumes that the metaphors were deliberately chosen to evoke a mapping of this sort, that is to say, that they were selected by a process of considering and evaluating the root metaphor, WOMEN ARE BUSES, and shaping the subsequent metaphorical phrases according to its entailments. Without this assumption, the overall story with its amusing phrases seems merely playfully cute. Moreover, from studies of the working drafts of many poets and song-writers, we know that they are often filled with evidence of deliberation, such as crossed out and inserted words and phrases. Although we do not have access to Andrieș's working drafts, given his reputation for carefully crafted song lyrics the most tenable assumption is that this song also emerged from such a process of evaluation, deliberation, and selection⁵.

It is important to note here the limitations of this claim. Just because we can infer with confidence that the songwriter very likely considered carefully and deliberately chose his metaphors for their entailments, we cannot be equally confident of our interpretations. We can infer with confidence that the song is about the frustrations of courtship, to be sure. But beyond

⁵ It is of course likely that this process of deliberation “may have been subject to all sorts of influences and constraints - many of them subconscious,” as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer – but that is true of *all* thought and language use, and does not negate the crucial distinction between *deliberate* and *spontaneous*.

that, other layers of meaning are possible, and may well have been deliberately intended by the artist, that audience members and researchers alike can be much less certain about. In the following section we explore one such secondary level of potential meaning.

3.2. Story-metaphor #2: “*seeking a meaningful life is travel by bus.*”

The final line of the song, “*without them we don’t get anywhere,*” is somewhat ambiguous. “*Get anywhere*” could refer to sexual or emotional satisfaction, consistent with the story mapping outlined in the preceding. It could also refer to and map onto larger life goals and life satisfaction in general. In this case, LOVE IS A JOURNEY can be viewed as a vehicle in a second layer of metaphor, LIFE IS LOVE, or more directly LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

If the listener interprets “*women*” as a generic metaphor vehicle and maps it onto *life opportunities*, then the story-metaphor leads to a second-level interpretation. “*There’re always at least three, and if you move slowly buddy, you’ve missed them, they’re gone*” applies as readily to opportunities for new careers or other life opportunities, or to political opportunities, as to opportunities for sexual relationships. Like buses (and romantic relationships), the individual must often decide quickly whether to “*jump on,*” lest the opportunity disappear. Like romantic relationships (and buses), it may not be easy to terminate a commitment to a career, political movement, or other activity, so “*you get off while moving*” and, if you “*get off*” at the wrong “*place,*” another opportunity may not come along. Thus, life opportunities in general are like women – and buses: unpredictable, arbitrary, and necessary. “*Without them we don’t get anywhere.*”

This more general reading of the story-metaphor is consistent with the conceptual metaphor vehicles, LIFE IS A JOURNEY and LIFE IS A CONTAINER are as common as LOVE IS A JOURNEY and LOVE IS A CONTAINER. It is also consistent with the more obvious interpretation,

inasmuch as a satisfactory love-life is usually considered important to overall life satisfaction. Moreover, LOVE is itself often used as a metaphor for other life activities including careers, avocations, and political movements. There is little evidence, beyond the final metaphor (“*we don’t get anywhere*”) for this broader reading of the story-metaphor. One might argue that the decidedly unromantic implicatures of the basic metaphor, “*women are buses*,” discussed in the preceding section, leave an opening for a broader metaphorical interpretation in terms of life satisfaction, but this is quite tenuous. This raises questions about degrees of confidence a researcher – or a listener in the audience – might have in attributing intentionality with respect to subtle, “hidden,” or potential meanings to a songwriter / singer. The most that can be asserted with confidence is that the additional reading of the story-metaphor as a description of the universal quest for a meaningful life is consistent with the musician’s signature songs that explore social, cultural and political issues in a humorous and clever manner and, to a certain extent, his use of music (particularly of well-crafted and intelligent lyrics) to ironically criticize the communist dictatorship.

In any event, within a broader existential or political interpretation, the resigned acceptance of the uncertainties of love communicated by the song is applied to the continuous search for political or personal fulfillment. This shift from love to life in general also requires the listener to assume the deliberate use of the direct metaphor “*women are buses*” and the implicit metaphorical extension “*without them we don’t get anywhere*”. The assumption of deliberation in the production of the story metaphor is necessary to understand the song as a political metaphor of people’s struggle to take advantage of life’s limited and short-lived chances. Attributing multiple, intertwined meanings to metaphorical expressions is possible when interpreters deduce authors’ intended allusions to narratives relevant to the context of metaphor production and to

the targeted audience. Building a narrative and vividly engaging with the story is an important human cognitive activity (Baumeiser & Masicampo, 2010). Constructing a meaningful story that enhances social and cultural interaction requires conscious thought. It follows that metaphors used to build a relevant story that connects the musician and his public are deliberate and intended to communicate more meaning than afforded by the underlying conceptual mappings between topics and vehicles.

Here it must also be acknowledged that we cannot be nearly as confident about the songwriter's degree of intentionality with respect to possible secondary interpretations. It is quite possible that the bus-riding metaphors in the song were, as we assert, *deliberately* selected for their connections with the experience of romantic courtship, but the potential political or economic meanings did not enter into the deliberation. These potential additional meanings may have been only spontaneously intended. The songwriter may not have been aware of them until after the song was completed. And, of course, it is also possible that they were never any part of the songwriter's intention. Neither audience nor analyst can be certain, although the songwriter's history of writing satirical political songs supports the inference of potential political intention in *this* song.

4. Deliberation in the craft of writing

As we acknowledged in the preceding, the "paradox of the expert" (Gibbs, 2011) implies that even the songwriter himself might not be able to describe accurately the process through which metaphors were selected and developed during the process of writing a particular song, just as the authors of this paper could not be expected to describe in detail the process of selecting, deleting, adding, and revising words and phrases to create a (we hope) coherent essay. However, we do have earlier drafts of poems, songs, novels, and other works of art from many authors, all

of which reveal through crossed out words, phrases, and sentences what can only be considered a *deliberate* process of creation – that is to say, a process in which alternatives were considered, evaluated, then rejected, accepted, or re-shaped. That this process is also responsive to influences and constraints of which the artist is not consciously aware does not negate the role of deliberation in producing a product that more or less closely matches the artist’s overarching communicative intentions.

It seems quite plausible that the focal metaphor, “*women are buses*,” initially occurred spontaneously rather than deliberately. The bus-related experiences to which many commuter resonate are quite universal, and not an exclusive peculiarity of Communist Romania. However, it seems very unlikely that the elaboration of the metaphor in the song emerged without conscious deliberation. Once the initial metaphor entered the artist’s focused spotlight of conscious intention, it opened up opportunities that connected with overarching general intentions in the artist’s more general semi-active consciousness (Chafe, 1994). At that point, the process of evaluation in relation to overarching intentions leads to selection and arrangement of particular metaphorical expressions, i.e., to deliberate production of the phrases and composing them into a song. The title of the song is illustrative of the deliberate transformation of the metaphor “*women are buses*”: women are as unpredictable as bus travel and love relationships share the intricacies of public transportation.

4.1. Deliberate metaphors and conscious metaphorical cognition

There has been considerable controversy over what role, if any, conscious thought has in producing action, including communication (Chafe, 1994; Pacherie & Haggard, 2010; Pacherie, 2013). Gibbs (2011, 2012) argues that we cannot actually determine whether or not metaphor and/or irony have been deliberately used by a speaker just by looking at the text in which they

appear. Nor are people able to provide satisfactory accounts of their own language choices (the “paradox of the expert” discussed previously).

Baumeister & Masicampo (2010) argue that consciousness plays a role in mediating social roles, norms, and expectations and in deliberation about alternative overall courses of action. Action *initiation* is not necessarily the benchmark of conscious agency; the processes that take place before and after action initiation play an important role in establishing if and when people act consciously (Pacherie, 2013). We agree with Gibbs that this cannot be determined from the text of a particular utterance alone. However, as we have shown, a particular utterance in its overall context, including an extended segment of discourse as well as what is known about the speaker’s (or songwriter’s) history and the cultural and political context, *can* provide convincing evidence of deliberation and conscious intention.

In this paper, we argue that the story about bus service in Romania activated by the key metaphor “*women are buses*” must be the product of conscious thought, and the elaboration of the metaphor in the remainder of the song must be the product of deliberate composition. No other explanation provides a satisfactory account of the song. We also suggest that assuming the deliberate use of the “*women are buses*” metaphor helps the reader grasp a meaning that is otherwise inaccessible, i.e. fatalism related to the unpredictability of bus service in the Communist era maps onto fatalism associated with uncertainties of romantic love.

Admittedly, we cannot say whether, at the beginning of the creative process of writing the lyrics, Andrieș was *immediately* conscious of using “*women are buses*” as a metaphor for a love relationship, much less for life satisfaction or political activity. However, it is difficult to provide a satisfactory account of the song without assuming that, as he developed the song, he deliberately exploited the potential of the metaphor to connect the listeners to a historically

(socially and politically) salient period in which it was very hard to fight the pressure of uncontrolled events and to anticipate future developments in the society. This parallel may be a later consciously constructed narrative, but it is supported by the crafted development of the key metaphor. The story is deliberately built and this reflects on the metaphor that activates it. This is not just a song about (unfulfilling) love and bad public transportation; it is also a song about the powerlessness that people experience when confronted with many aspects of their life.

Certainly, there may be several interpretations of this song, and we acknowledge this possibility since recovering the meaning of a text is almost always a balancing act between speaker's publicly unavailable intentions and reader's capacity to recognize or infer those intentions in a given specific context. However, we claim that a deliberate use of the metaphor and its extensions in the text can be convincingly inferred from the structure of the text and its relation to the surrounding context. By assuming that the metaphor "*women are buses*" has been deliberately used and developed, readers can access a story of the unreliability of bus system in Communist Romania and rely on remembered events (traveling by bus in Bucharest) to understand complex experience such as romantic love. From a communication point of view, assuming metaphor deliberateness enriches the meaning of the text. In addition to the humorous effects generated by the incongruous mappings between women and buses, the song wittily alludes to a contextually salient story whose activation presupposes a conscious remembering of past experience (Chafe, 1994).

By deliberately using the metaphor "*women are buses*", the musician intends more than changing the listeners' perspective on the topic by introducing an "alien" domain (Steen, 2008) for comparison. He seeks to connect two types of experiences metaphorically: one that has already happened, that has been lived by many Romanians (riding a bus) and another that is

almost continuously projected (seeking love). Presumably, it is the deliberate use of the metaphor that facilitates an understanding of the text as an intended parallel between two emotionally loaded experiences relevant to both the artist and his audience. Despite their apparently total unrelatedness, both experiences share a certain degree of fatalism that those who live them have to accept and learn to deal with. This is conveyed by the last lines of the song: “*You can’t escape this game.../ Women are buses, yes,/ But without them we don’t get anywhere...*”.

Resonating with the story of bus travel in Romania (and, to more or less similar extent, in other places in the world) allows the audience to understand more than the surface meaning of a funny, witty song about women as buses and about love as a bus ride. Stories are enabled by conscious thought and facilitate social and cultural interaction (Baumeister & Masicampo, 2010). Engaging in a story, both as a narrator and as a listener, often entails accessing a fictional universe, but also retrieving inactive information stored in the long-term memory. In the song analyzed here, the deliberate use of the metaphors activates information related to the bus system in Romania before 1989; this information becomes salient and useful in understanding present or anticipated experiences of romantic love.

5. Conclusion

Convincing arguments have been developed against the assumption that all discourse, including metaphor use, is deliberate or even consciously intended. However, it does not follow that utterances, including metaphors, are *never* or even *rarely* the product of deliberate, conscious, thought processes. We have analyzed a particular popular song (with possible political overtones) in which a slightly bizarre metaphor for love is introduced and developed, and shown that comprehension of the song is facilitated by the assumption that the songwriter selected and

developed the metaphor deliberately. Further, we have argued that the assumption of deliberateness is almost required in order to understand the wittiness of the song fully. This argument is supported by evidence of extensive deliberate revision by poets and songwriters, as well as our own introspective observation of the multiple revisions through which an essay such as this one is produced.

With respect to communication “in real time,” ordinary conversation, the case is somewhat more difficult. Elsewhere (Ritchie & Negrea-Busuioc, 2014a), we have argued that disfluencies such as self-corrections and startovers provide evidence of conscious monitoring of one’s own utterances, which are often if not always deliberate in the sense that alternatives are evaluated and selected according to how well they fit overarching intentions. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore this topic adequately; we suggest that future research might look for evidence of deliberateness in conversations that have the overt character of deliberation, such as negotiations or purposive interviews.

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⁶ The lyrics of the song are available on the musician's official website from where they were retrieved on January 2014, <http://alexandries.free.fr/andries/documente/discografie/proprie/comandaspeciala.html>

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