

‘All the stars aligned’: Creative metaphors of love in Taylor Swift’s and Lana Del Rey’s lyrics

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Abstract. Metaphors are known to express people’s feelings, especially complex ones, and they shape our understanding of the world (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2010). Songs that can be analysed like poetry (Randel 2014; Abrams 2012) regard one of the most complicated human feelings (Maestre 2015; Lomas 2018). The study analyses love-related metaphors in Swift’s and Del Rey’s lyrics, considering creative metaphors and the prevailing metaphorical scenarios. The results reveal that the conceptualisation of love differs across both artists. Metaphorical scenarios prevail in Swift’s lyrics and are less frequent in Del Rey’s. When constructing scenarios, Del Rey employs one-shot creative metaphors, and Swift uses a balanced mix. While the relationship itself is mostly understood as a *game*, the process of the relationship is conceptualised as a *vehicle* that takes the passengers/lovers from point A to point B, and the end of the relationship is conceptualised as *death*, which hints at emotional turmoil.

Keywords: *cognitive linguistics, creative metaphors, scenarios, Lana Del Rey, Taylor Swift*

„Visos žvaigždės susiliejo“: kūrybinės meilės metaforos Taylor Swift ir Lana Del Rey dainų tekstuose

Santrauka. Tyrime lyginamas meilės supratimas per metaforas Taylor Swift ir Lanos Del Rey dainų tekstuose. Tyrimo klausimas: Kaip meilė yra konceptualizuojama pasitelkiant kūrybines metaforas ir kaip šios metaforos kuria scenarijus.

Tyrimas buvo grindžiamas konceptualiųjų metaforų teorija (Lakoff ir Johnson 1980), kurioje metaforos vertinamos kaip mąstymo procesas. Metaforų kūrybiškumas yra kontinuumas, ir kūrybiška metafora gali tapti konvencine, jei ji dažnai vartojama ir įrašoma į žodyną, o konvencinė metafora gali tapti kūrybiška, jei ji vartojama naujai, sukuriant naujus semantinius ryšius (Turner ir Littlemore 2023). Dainų tekstuose naudojamos metaforos išreiškia stiprius abstrakčius jausmus konkrečiau. Dažnai kūrybinių ir konvencinių metaforų sąveika sukuria metaforišką diskursą arba naratyvus / scenarijus, kurie žymi diskursą kaip kūrybinių (Musolff 2006; Cibulskienė 2023).

Tyrimo metu buvo taikytas mišrus metodas: metaforoms identifikuoti taikyta metaforų identifikavimo procedūra (Pragglejaz 2007), Chi kvadrato testu įvertintas kūrybinių metaforų dažnio reikšmingumas. CMT leido atlikti šiuolaikinį metaforų tyrimą, susiejant metaforinius pasisakymus su šaltinio sritimis. Kūrybinių ir konvencinių metaforų analizė scenarijų požiūriu atlikta siekiant paaikškinti scenarijus ir tai, kaip jie išreiškia meilės supratimą.

Rezultatai rodo, kad L. Del Rey dainų tekstai (71 %) yra kūrybiškesni nei T. Swift (59 %). Ryškiausias šaltinių sritis buvo GYVAS/NEGYVAS, PRAMOGOS, GAMTOS FENOMENAS, KELIONĖ ir OBJEKTAS. Santykių pabaiga dažnai suprantama kaip *sveikata*, kuri apima ligą, sužalojimą, skausmą ar žaizdas; *mirtis*, kuri reiškia įsimylėlių mirtį arba *kelionės pabaiga*. Be to, meilė konceptualizuojama kaip *pasirodymas* arba *varžybos* ir dažniau suprantama kaip *ugnis* nei bet kuris kitas elementas. DAIKTO srityje meilė suprantama kaip kažkas apčiuopiamo, pavyzdžiui, *trapus* daiktas arba *medžiaga*.

T. Swift dainų tekstuose naratyvus galima matyti didelėse šaltinio srityse, pavyzdžiui, PRAMOGOS ir GYVAS/NEGYVAS srityse; tačiau L. Del Rey dainų tekstuose scenarijai atsiranda arba vienkartinių metaforų srityse, arba GAMTOS REIŠKINIŲ srityje. Kūrybiškiausia sritis yra PRAMOGŲ sritis, kurį sudaro 78 % kūrybiškų metaforų. T. Swift naratyvuose naudojama konvencinių ir kūrybinių metaforų pusiausvyra, o Del Rey daugiausia remiasi kūrybinėmis metaforomis.

Raktiniai žodžiai: *kognityvinė lingvistika, kūrybinė metafora, scenarijai, Lana Del Rey, Taylor Swift*

1. Introduction

Metaphors have long been regarded as devices that appear only in literature and can be wielded by geniuses and masterminds. However, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) changed that belief (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Metaphors permeate everyday language and govern our understanding of the world (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2010; Gibbs 2018) and are employed when expressing complex ideas/feelings, one of which is love (Maestre 2015). According to Lomas (2018), love is a complex feeling because it can be felt not just for a person but for objects too and even love that is focused on a person can be different. Love encompasses both positive and negative emotions/feelings; thus, it becomes a complex emotion.

Songs often focus on love and explore its various types. While considerable research has been done on metaphors in different discourses, songs as such have not been much researched (Saputri 2023; Nugraheny & Yuwita 2023). It is most likely due to the ongoing discussion about whether songs belong to the literature canon (Randel 2014; Abrams 2012). Juxtaposing songs and poetry, it is evident that they have many similarities, including shape, meter, and often a rhyme (ibid.) The popularity of this art makes it an interesting subject for analysis which can provide possible reasons for the popularity of the artists or the reason why some songs *go viral* and some do not.

This study focuses on relatively different music genres: Taylor Swift, a pop, country and pop rock representative, and Lana Del Rey, an alternative and indie pop representative. Hence the research question is raised: How do Taylor Swift and Lana Del Rey conceptualise romantic love through creative metaphors and through scenarios?

2. Literature review

Lakoff & Johnson (1980) adopted a cognitive approach and introduced the CMT that established metaphors as not a trait of language but rather a phenomenon integral to cognition and everyday life: “They [...] govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 3). Richardson, prior to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), defined metaphor as “have[ing] two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction” (Richardson 1936: 94, in Mácha 2019: 2254). This means that to understand the figurative meaning, one must think of two separate things simultaneously and create a new semantic link to connect the direct and indirect meanings. Kövecses (2010: 8) provides an example of a meta-

phorical expression: *we aren't going anywhere*. In a proper context, this expression maps the travellers as lovers, thus the conceptual metaphor conveyed through the metaphorical expressions is LOVE IS A JOURNEY (Kövecses 2010: 8).

The creativity of metaphors can be described as a continuum with fuzzy boundaries rather than as firmly fixed categories. In metaphor literature, various terms such as novel, creative, conventional, clichéd or dead are used to describe the continuum of metaphors. Dead metaphors are what is left after a creative metaphor becomes popularised and overused (Goldstein et al. 2012: 137). Conventional metaphors are processed automatically; however, according to Bowdle & Gentner (2005: 210), conventional metaphors are firstly understood as a figurative comparison if the literal interpretation is impossible, illogical or does not fit the context. Then, after the mappings' semantic relation manifests, the target and source foundation is established. This is only possible due to the similarities between the two domains. The metaphor creativity/conventionality continuum also allows conventional metaphors to become creative when they are used in a new or surprising way (Turner & Littlemore 2023: 40-45). Silvia & Beaty (2012) emphasise the significance of discerning if the metaphor is creative or conventionalised. A creative metaphor needs to be both novel in terms of originality and meaningful (possible to interpret).

Metaphors expressing emotions can often become complex since the concepts conveyed are too abstract to express and are not clearly delineated in our experience; thus, some sources become metaphors themselves (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 97). To analyse creative love metaphors, it is necessary to understand that there are more types of love than romantic love (Lomas 2018). One can feel either desire, jealousy, or simply commitment; in other words, positive and negative emotions are integral in understanding love metaphors.

Originally, poetry and songs were the same (Goethals & Gils 2000: 73). Numerous names of poems include music terms such as ballad or song, some poems are even called lyric poetry, and both require creativity to be created. Walton (2011: 459) brings music and poetry even closer together by stating that just as narrators in literature express their emotions and experiences, so do the musical personae in songs. Poetry and songs evoke a reaction from their consumers, because the music accompanying the words captures some of the poet's music and highlights certain elements of the poem/lyrics (Randel 2014: 33). The sonic shape of a poem being read out loud is described by Abrams (2012) as the fourth dimension of a poem.

Bards, the medieval time equivalent of singer-songwriters, were considered poets who recited poetry or even composed it, relating the great battles and heroic deeds of heroes. Every story one tells evokes metaphors; sometimes the narrative itself becomes a metaphor. According to Cibulskienė (2023: 1), scenarios are created when the same source domain appears in clusters throughout the discourse or in "thematically grouped metaphorical expressions" (p. 4). Musolff (2006: 23-24) referred to such mini-narrative scenarios. The scholar further explained that repeating source domains creates extended mappings that assign roles to the participants. For example, focusing on political discourse Musolff interprets the nations of the European Union as participants: France and Germany were seen as a married couple, and Britain was assigned the role of somebody outside the marriage who tried to disturb it. Such scenarios frame how we understand the order of events or the strength of a partnership between countries and create a whole scene, complete with states of "mind", intentions, and actions, allowing evaluative interpretation. Cibulskienė (2023: 4) emphasises that for the scenario to be creative, not all metaphors involved must be creative; some can be conventional. Although examples provided are taken from political discourse, the same ideas can be applied to any metaphorical discourse analysis.

3. Data and methods

The first, preparatory step was to build a corpus. The lyrics of the songs were taken from the most extensive online music encyclopaedia *genius.com*. To build a balanced corpus the songs were chosen according to the following criteria: (1) the selected corpus of lyrics had to be from songs about love/lovers; (2) the songs had to be narrative with a clear overarching theme, since the analysis included metaphor scenario analysis; (3) the songs picked were from the most listened to the least, since the popularity of songs could be an indicator of a more universal understanding of love. The co-authors of the analysed songs include: Jack Antonoff, Aaron Dessner, William Bowery and Justin Vernon from Swift's lyrics and Jack Antonoff, Rick Nowels, Drew Erickson, Dan Heath, and other artists from Del Rey's songs. This way, two corpora were compiled. The corpus size and the number of identified metaphors are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Corpus building

Name of the artist	Corpus size (words)	Number of songs
<i>Taylor Swift</i>	23,988	59
<i>Lana Del Rey</i>	22,155	64
Total	46,143	123

The second step was to identify metaphors. Although there is no single approved way among scholars how to identify metaphors, the Metaphor Identification Procedure or MIP (Pragglejaz 2007) was employed. MIP includes four basic steps (Pragglejaz 2007): (1) Reading the text to establish understanding. In this case, the lyrics were closely read and their context considered (Genius n.d.). (2) Identifying lexical units. This step was adapted as originally MIP treats one word as a lexical unit, but in this study, a love-related word or a phrase was considered as a lexical unit. For example, *cold* (one word) or phrase *your head is on fire* (several words) were taken as a lexical unit. (3) Understanding the basic meaning. To understand whether the basic meaning contrasts with the context or not, it is essential to understand its more concrete meaning, understand if the meaning is more precise than vague, and ascertain whether the basic meaning is historically older than the contextual meaning. (4) If a lexical unit has a basic meaning that contrasts with the meaning created by the context, it is a metaphorical unit and is analysed as such.

The third step was to identify the target and source domains. The metaphors, identified using MIP, were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet to identify source domains and their subdomains. The target domains identified include not only the direct domain LOVE but also metonymically expressed domains. Additionally, domains that represent feelings associated with love or the expression of love were also included in the analysis. When an expression could fit into two domains, the context was the deciding factor.

The fourth step was to identify creative and conventional metaphors. To evaluate metaphor creativity, Philip (2016) proposes that if metaphorically extended meanings are included in a dictionary, it is conventional, whereas if it is not included it is considered as creative. For example, the metaphor *And all of my heroes died all alone / Help me hold on to you* is considered creative because the metaphor *heroes* does not have a meaning associated with love in the Cambridge dictionary; it can only be interpreted through context. On the other hand, a metaphor such as *Let's get out of this town, baby, we're on fire* is conventional because the metaphorical expression *fire* is included in the Cambridge dictionary and has a meaning of strong emotion; thus, the dictionary provides not only primary (basic, physical) meaning but also metaphorical.

Lastly, step five included narrative identification and analysis. Three types of narratives suggested by Cibulskienė (2023) were considered in the songs: 1) Mini-narratives that comprise at least two metaphorical expressions from the same source domain that appear in proximity within the same text. 2) Leitmotif narratives appear in the same text but not necessarily close to each other. Their source domains are the same, but they appear irregularly; nevertheless, they create coherence. 3) Long narratives are those that appear as a plot-like structure throughout the text and create a metaphorical text.

4. Creative metaphors of love in Taylor Swift’s and Lana del Rey’s lyrics

The findings show that there is a pattern of how love is conceptualised in both artists’ lyrics. In total, 1,125 metaphors were identified, comprising 765 metaphors from Taylor Swift’s discography and 360 from Lana Del Rey’s (see Table 2 in appendix).

The numerous source domains in Table 2 in appendix, show that love can be conceptualised in different ways. A total of 36 domains were identified. The three major source domains were similar in both artists’ lyrics: ANIMATE ENTITY, ENTERTAINMENT, OBJECT, and NATURAL PHENOMENON. The source domains with the fewest tokens were similar; these metaphors are called one-shot metaphors, since they appear not more than 10 times throughout the corpus. Out of the total number of metaphors, creative metaphors dominated in both discographies, comprising 53% of all of Swift’s metaphors and 71% of Del Rey’s metaphors, in total coming to 59% or 662 tokens of all identified metaphors. The Chi-square test shows that the p-value was $p < 0.00001$, indicating the significance of $p < 0.05$. Since the calculated p-value is below the cut-off value, the Chi-square results show that the difference between the frequency of creative metaphors in both singers’ texts is statistically significant.

Love in terms of ENTERTAINMENT, NATURAL PHENOMENON, and JOURNEY were distinguished by Kövecses (2010) and Lakoff & Johnson (1980) as some of the most common source domains in conceptualising love; thus, the results showing that these types of source domains are the largest is an expected outcome. However, one of the domains not specified by the mentioned researchers is the ANIMATE ENTITY source domain, which in Swift’s lyrics was the fourth largest domain and in Del Rey’s was the largest. These source domains provided outstanding metaphors that reveal the understanding of all stages of the relationship: the beginning, the middle and the end.

4.1. The ANIMATE ENTITY source domain

This domain comprises all elements associated with living beings, meaning that it includes everything a human or an animal can experience throughout their life, excluding external influence but not family relations. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Taylor Swift’s and Lana Del Rey’s subdomains of the ANIMATE ENTITY domain

Source domain	Subdomain	T.S. tokens (%)	L.D.R. tokens (%)
ANIMATE ENTITY	Living	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
	Animal	5 (6%)	9 (17%)
	Death	16 (19%)	8 (15%)
	Family	4 (5%)	0 (0%)
	Health	36 (43%)	23 (42%)
	Person in general	17 (20%)	6 (11%)
	Youth	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
	Miscellaneous	5 (6%)	6 (11%)
	Total	84	53

The third-largest subdomain in Swift's and Del Rey's analysis was *death*-related metaphors. This provides some interesting findings regarding the conceptualisation of love as the death of a living entity. In this subdomain, 16 metaphors were identified in Swift's lyrics and 8 in Del Rey's.

The *death* subdomain often appears in Swift's music but is less frequent in Del Rey's. Although most metaphors regard natural death, Swift additionally employs *killing* when comprehending the end of a relationship. Nevertheless, the end of a relationship is more often conceptualised as the death of the lover(s) (example 1) or the relationship (example 2).

- (1) *I died on the altar waitin' for the proof* (*So Long, London – T.S.*)
- (2) *The spirit was gone, we would never come to* (*So Long, London – T.S.*)

Employing context, example (2) hints that it was not just the lover who died but also the relationship itself by adding the line *we would never come to*. It entails that the lack of love is the reason for the termination of the relationship and the emotional pain caused. While example (1) does suggest a cliché romantic-comedy movie scene, example (2) provides a more spiritual outlook on the relationship. Although the phrase *spirit is gone* is a euphemistic phrase usually heard in the English language when referring to death, it could also be interpreted as a supernatural phenomenon. This would pose a challenge to the classification system, but it would also allow a different interpretation and conceptualisation, which could still be relevant for people who are not fluent in English and do not recognise this phrase. In this case, spirit would become the target domain, and love would be expressed metonymically as part of the lover; then love would be conceptualised through the source domain MOVEMENT and understood as leaving. Furthermore, based on Birdsell's (2018) study, this manner of analysing example (2) would require more time to understand the metaphor, since it includes a combination of metonymy and metaphor.

Nevertheless, death-related metaphors in Swift's song 'So Long, London' appear as clusters and create a scenario. In addition to examples (1) and (2), two more metaphors within the *death* subdomain appear:

- (3) *My white-knuckle **dying grip*** (*So Long, London – T.S.*)
- (4) *For so long, London / Stitches undone / **Two graves, one gun*** (*So Long, London – T.S.*)

Examples (3) and (4) complement examples (1) and (2). Example (3) portrays love as a death grip, implying that the lover is trying to save the relationship by investing a significant amount of effort into it, but it also reveals that the other party is not interested in pursuing the affair. Example (4) plays with the saying 'two birds, one stone', and while the saying regards opportunities and luck in an endeavour, the metaphor creates a stark contrast by suggesting the lack of said opportunities. According to Cibulskienė (2023), these types of metaphor clusters, which appear irregularly in the same discourse but share the same source domain, have the structure of leitmotif scenarios.

On the other hand, death-related metaphors do not create any scenarios in Del Rey's songs; in fact, they do not appear twice in one song. However, a similar metaphor to Swift's appears in example (5):

- (5) *But when you walked out that door, **a piece of me died*** (*Blue Jeans – L.D.R.*)

Example (5) indicates the end of a relationship, which can be understood from the context of the beginning of the line. The metaphor refers to strong emotional pain, which entails that it was one of the partners' decisions to terminate the relationship, but not the others. Albeit examples (1) and (5) express the death of a person, the difference is that the narrator in example (1) condemns the lover as if they

identified with the relationship, while Del Rey’s narrator suggests that they were just a party in the relationship but did not identify with it.

Considering that death, under normal circumstances, signifies the end of a person’s life, it is only logical that death-related metaphors conceptualise the end but not the beginning or any other part of the relationship. Both Swift and Del Rey employ death-related metaphors to express the strong emotional pain of the party more invested in the relationship.

4.2. The ENTERTAINMENT source domain

The ENTERTAINMENT domain is not often mentioned in other research; however, Kövecses (2010: 36) mentions a subdomain of the *game* of the source domain ENTERTAINMENT when discussing common ways to conceptualise love. In this analysis, the source domain ENTERTAINMENT was based on Cibulskienė et al. (2024) depiction of subdomains falling under the source domain ENTERTAINMENT, specifically the subdomains of *competition-*, *performance-*, *storytelling-* and *creativity-based* metaphors.

Table 4. Taylor Swift’s and Lana Del Rey’s subdomains of the ENTERTAINMENT domain

Source domain	Subdomain	T.S. tokens (%)	L.D.R. tokens (%)
ENTERTAINMENT	Competition	27 (35%)	14 (30%)
	Creativity	8 (10%)	0 (0%)
	Storytelling	10 (13%)	5 (11%)
	Performance	23 (29%)	25 (53%)
	Leisure	6 (8%)	1 (2%)
	Miscellaneous	4 (5%)	2 (4%)
	Total		78

The largest subdomains of the source domain ENTERTAINMENT in both artists coincided, but in a different order. The *competition* subdomain had 27 metaphors in Swift’s lyrics and 14 in Del Rey’s. The *performance* subdomain had 23 metaphors in Swift’s lyrics and 25 in Del Rey’s.

The *competition-related* metaphors in Del Rey’s lyrics are mostly concerned with non-specific games, such as *I’m not gonna play*, *skip the games*, *let’s quit playing*, *play with me like a child* or *you got game*. On the contrary, Swift’s subdomains have subsubdomains and conceptualise love in terms of *chasing games*, *pretend play*, *dice*, *chess*, *dominoes*, *hide-and-peek* or *playing with dolls*. Consider the examples below:

- (6) *Cause we were born to be pawns / in every lover’s game (Mastermind – T.S.)*

Love, in these examples, is conceptualised as a game of chess. In example (6), a plural narrator appears, which defines the relationship as a shared experience. The narrators are mapped as chess pieces, specifically pawns. A pawn is any of the eight less valuable pieces in the game of chess; hence, the narrators, mapped as chess pieces that can be used as a tool to satisfy the lovers’ needs. From the context of the example’s second line, it becomes evident that the lovers are mapped as game masters who control the relationship. Additionally, the game of chess requires not only intellectual and logical capabilities but also strategising. Consequently, love is conceptualised not as a mere game but as a strategy for attaining the relationship.

However, example (7) changes the game/the dynamic of the relationship:

- (7) *To assess the equation of you / **Checkmate**, I couldn't lose (Mastermind – T.S.)*

The metaphor is a word usually heard in a real-life chess game; however, in this example it signifies the changed dynamic of the relationship. Statistically, there is a low probability for a pawn to win a chess game. However, a pawn, reaching the end of the opponent's board, can be promoted to one of the more powerful pieces, such as a rook, bishop, knight, or queen, which severely increases the odds of winning the game. Due to the lack of context, it can only be assumed that the plural narrator was promoted to a more powerful piece, overthrew the game master, declared victory, and took control of the board/relationship. Similar entailments are also portrayed in other metaphors within the same song.

- (8) *I laid the **groundwork**, and then / Just like clockwork / The **dominoes** cascades in a line / What if I told you I'm a mastermind? (Mastermind – T.S.)*
(9) *It was all by **design** (Mastermind – T.S.)*

Example (8) conceptualises love through the source domain CONSTRUCTION. Example (9), while stemming from the source domain ENTERTAINMENT, has two versions in the song: one is as shown in Example (9), and another is *It was all my design*. Both versions depict the shifting changing dynamic within the relationship and eliminate the possible classification of this phrase into the SUPERNATURAL source domain. Despite the usual classification of these metaphors as a leitmotif narrative due to their distance in the lyrics and irregular appearances, the name of the song 'Mastermind' and the interaction with other source domains create a long narrative. Other metaphors that aid in creating a long narrative but are not from the source domain ENTERTAINMENT are given in examples (10), (11), (12), and (13):

- (10) *Once upon a time, the **planets** and the fates / And all the **stars** aligned (Mastermind – T.S.)*
(11) *And the touch of a hand **lit the fuse** / Of a chain reaction of countermoves / To assess the equation of you (Mastermind – T.S.)*
(12) *And the touch of a hand lit the fuse / Of a chain reaction of **countermoves** / To assess the equation of you (Mastermind – T.S.)*
(13) *And the touch of a hand lit the fuse / Of a chain reaction of countermoves / To assess the **equation** of you (Mastermind – T.S.)*

Example (10) provides the CELESTIAL BODY source domain metaphors, which serve as the opening line to the narrative and set the scene of the scenario. The metaphors in examples (11), (12), and (13) come from the same line in the song but describe the actions leading up to the climax of the story. Previously mentioned examples (6) and (7) present the characters of the narrative and even reveal that the narrator, who described themselves as a pawn, is a dynamic character who becomes the board master at the end of the story. The song closes with an outcome:

- (14) *'Cause I'm a **mastermind**. (Mastermind – T.S.)*

The presented examples not only serve to present love as a complex emotion that needs to be expressed metaphorically but also serve to comprehend love in general. The song 'Mastermind' reveals that for a scenario to appear, it does not have to be created by a cluster of source domains. This is possible due to the interaction of metaphors and a complementary relationship. The analysis of creative and conventional metaphors in this song is not of the utmost importance, because the interaction between different metaphors from different source domains creates a complex scenario or a long narrative that is creative.

In Del Rey's lyrics, the source domain might not create a strong scenario but rather a resemblance to a leitmotif through the ENTERTAINMENT source domain. Although example (15) does not express the

view of a relationship as a strategic plan, as the examples in Swift’s source domain ENTERTAINMENT do, it employs the gist of the game of dominoes to conceptualise love.

(15) *It’s you that I adore, though I make the boys fall like dominoes (Lolita – L.D.R.)*

The metaphor in example (15) expresses the idea of the narrator as a ‘player’ who can get as much romantic attention as they want but chooses to pursue the person they are conversing with. Other metaphors, such as *I’m not gonna play* or *no more skipping rope*, interacting with example (15) create a leitmotif, hinting that one of the characters of the narrative is a child playing. Nevertheless, example (15) entails that the lover enjoys the attention they receive; however, the name of the song and the association with Nabokov’s book of the same title add negative connotations. In other words, referring to the characters of the book, it is not Lolita saying that she gets all the attention, but Humbert, who mimics Lolita’s voice, expressing his ideas of her to fuel his fantasies.

Competition-based ENTERTAINMENT metaphors allow for a varied conceptualisation of love. While it can be understood as a strategic plan to attain love, it can also be used to describe a lover’s character. However, many metaphors do not have specific subsubdomains but are rather general *game-based* metaphors.

4.3. The JOURNEY source domain

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2010) identified the source domain of JOURNEY as one of the most frequent domains when conceptualising love. As presented in Table 2, the JOURNEY source domain is the biggest source domain in Swift’s lyrics, but it is not the largest in Del Rey’s lyrics. The identified subdomains are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Taylor Swift’s and Lana Del Rey’s subdomains of the JOURNEY domain

Source domain	Subdomain	T.S. tokens (%)	L.D.R. tokens (%)
JOURNEY	Beginning	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
	Circular/straight return	9 (7%)	2 (1%)
	End of journey	9 (7%)	5 (17%)
	Down	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
	Not moving	8 (8%)	6 (20%)
	Via water	5 (5%)	2 (1%)
	Farewell	2 (2%)	1 (0%)
	Flying	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
	Leaving	25 (24%)	2 (0%)
	Road	7 (7%)	4 (13%)
	Running	0 (0%)	1 (0%)
	Via vehicle	8 (8%)	2 (1%)
	Trace	3 (3%)	1 (3%)
	Miscellaneous	23 (22%)	4 (20%)
	Total		105

The number of metaphors identified in the JOURNEY source domain in Swift’s case is more than three times larger than the number identified in Del Rey’s. Although *via vehicle* metaphors are not the largest subdomain, it reveals minute details about the relationship, such as whether the ‘end destination’ of the relationship was reached, whether the relationship was abandoned and if yes, in what manner?

Swift's subdomain of *vehicle-based* love metaphors employed terms related to movement, such as straight or in circular paths, travelling via ship or car, being lost or going home, when understanding love. Del Rey conceptualised love through similar subsubdomains such as going home, travelling in a boat or car, or being lost. Nevertheless, conceptualising love in terms of a JOURNEY *via vehicle* can help to understand the situation in more detail. Consider these examples:

(16) *You booked **the night train** for a reason (champagne problems – T.S.)*

In the example, love is conceptualised as a vehicle, more specifically a train, and the passengers are mapped as the lovers. The seemingly ordinary adjective that describes the train as a *night train*, reveals the specifics of the relationship. A night train refers to a passenger-carrying vehicle that accommodates them with beds and travels throughout the night, reaching the destination in the early morning. This implies that the relationship was comfortable due to the installed beds, which made for a better journey. However, many literary interpretations regarding night time suggest that it represents trouble, secrecy, or obstacles; thus, it can be inferred that the relationship was troublesome. Although the train motif is not frequent, it does appear in two more songs, 'cardigan' and 'willow'. Vehicle-based journey metaphors reveal details that can deepen the understanding of the relationship between the lovers.

The train motif appears in Del Rey's song 'If You Lie Down With Me' and conceptualises love as a moving train. Consider example (17):

(17) *Cause we were built for the **long-haul freight train** (If You Lie Down With Me – L.D.R.)*

In this example, similarly to Swift's example (16), the vehicle represents the relationship and maps the travellers as lovers. The description of the train as *freight* means that it is intended to transport goods but not passengers, and *long-haul* entails that the relationship is a long-term commitment. Example (17) can be compared to example (16) in the sense that both trains are meant for long-distance travel; however, in example (16), it is meant for humans, while in example (17) it is meant for goods. Although these two examples portray a similar type of love, they imply that one relationship is meant to be exhilarating, dangerous, and exciting, while the other is more mellow.

JOURNEY *via vehicle* metaphors reveals subtle details about relationships or lovers that are mostly implied by the adjectives describing the vehicles. While Swift portrays a relationship with struggle and Del Rey portrays an exciting relationship, both artists reveal that vehicle-based love metaphors concern long-term commitments.

4.4. Creative and conventional metaphors in narratives

As presented in Table 2 in the appendix, most of the metaphors identified in both corpora are creative, making up 59% of all identified metaphors. This means that the majority of the extended metaphorical meanings that appear in the songs are not documented in contemporary English dictionaries. Swift's metaphors are less creative than Del Rey's, comprising only 53% of all her metaphors, while in Del Rey's corpus 71% of identified metaphors are creative. Domains with most of the creative metaphors were ENTERTAINMENT, NATURAL PHENOMENON, ANIMATE ENTITY, and OBJECT source domains. However, eliminating the source domains with the highest number of conventional metaphors from the most creative source domains, it becomes clear that the ENTERTAINMENT source domain is the most creative across the analysis of both artists. This source domain has 125 metaphors in total, out of which 78% are creative.

The percentage evaluation indicated that one-shot metaphors were the most creative. In this study, one-shot metaphors are understood as metaphorical expressions used less than 10 times throughout the

whole corpus. This includes source domains such as EXCREMENTS (6), HUNTING (1), JEWEL (7), KISS (4), LANGUAGE (3), LAUGHTER (1), LEGACY (1), SOUND (7), TATTOO (2), THOUGHT (1), TRUTH (1), VEHICLE (1), and VOID (3). The reason of the creativity of these source domains might be the overall infrequent use in other discourse. This is to say that since these source domains are not mentioned by scholars as the most common ways to conceptualise love, and a metaphor must build new semantic links to be creative, the unconventionality of the source domains encourages the creative use.

The only source domain whose majority comprises creative metaphors and built scenarios in both discographies is the ENTERTAINMENT source domain. The ENTERTAINMENT source domain created a long narrative of a game of chess, as is explained in examples (6)-(14), and a leitmotif scenario in example (15). Swift's discography was generally concerned more with scenarios than Del Rey's; long narratives were also more dominant in Swift's, while mini-narratives were more common in Del Rey's. Swift's narratives were created using a balanced mix of creative and conventional metaphors; however, Del Rey's narratives mostly employed creative metaphors. In Del Rey's song 'Freak', a mini-narrative is created within the source domain of NATURAL PHENOMENON. In the lyrics, love is mapped as a *blue fire* through the metaphorical expression *flames so hot they turn blue* and *my love's full of fire*. The same source domain creates a mini-narrative in Del Rey's song 'Chemtrails Over The Country Club'. It appears in the line *You're in the wind, I'm in the water*. In the line, two metaphors can be identified. The first part of the line maps the narrator of the song as an object in water, and the other part maps the lover as an object in the wind. Another mini-narrative appears in Del Rey's song 'National Anthem' and maps the lovers as royalty. This mini-narrative manifests in lines *Sweetness and danger, Queen of Saigon*, and *See what you've done to me, King of Chevron?* Creative one-shot metaphors also create mini-narrative in Swift's song 'I Can See You'. One-shot metaphors from the source domain SOUND that appear in verses *What would you do if we never made a sound?* and *So it's best that we move fast and keep quiet* create a mini narrative that entails that love is a private thing.

Despite the understanding that a scenario does not have to include only one type of metaphor to be created, in Del Rey's case it is primarily the creative metaphors that build scenarios. Another obstacle to identifying scenarios in Del Rey's lyrics is the fact that the singer seems to consciously or unconsciously avoid using the same source domains multiple times in one song. However, this obstacle could have also appeared due to the chosen manner of the source domain groups in this study.

Creative metaphors do not serve as a tool to make the language of text more beautiful but rather express the empathetic function identified by Charteris-Black (2014). They allow the singers as well as the listeners to understand emotional relations of a relationship; however, the singers, as the producers of these metaphors, express their proper comprehension of the events and arouse similar feelings in the listeners. It might be the reason behind the popularity of the artists since metaphors acting within this function emotionally charge the lyrics and influence the reaction of the audience.

Conclusions

The research aimed to compare the metaphors of love used in Swift's and Del Rey's lyrics. Together with the aim, a research question was raised: How do Taylor Swift and Lana Del Rey conceptualise romantic love through creative metaphors, and how do they build scenarios? After conducting the research, the following conclusions were drawn:

A relatively new understanding of metaphor clusters as scenarios revealed that Swift's scenarios are longer than Del Rey's and that the scenarios identified in Del Rey's lyrics are mostly built employing creative one-shot metaphors.

While creative metaphors dominated in both artists' lyrics, Del Rey's were more creative than Swift's. The long narratives in Swift's lyrics might be the reason behind the overall metaphorical creativity. Since the scenarios are considered creative, the use of creative metaphors diminishes, but the storytelling remains creative. The use of metaphors in songs reveals a similar conceptualisation of love. In the subdomain of *vehicle* both artists understood love as a train and expressed a long-term commitment, but Swift conceptualised love as a struggle, while Del Rey understood it as fate. Basing the narrative mostly in the *game* subdomain Swift builds a long narrative, revealing the inner dynamics of the relationship, while Del Rey only hints at the idea of love as a game. It can be concluded that while the artists use a number of the same source domains, Swift employs more specific metaphors that refer to a more long-lasting impact, while Del Rey uses broader metaphors and considers love inevitable.

Swift's scenarios are longer and tend to appear as plot-like structures; Del Rey's are mostly built using two metaphors from the same source domain. Additionally, Swift's scenarios are built using a balanced mix of creative and conventional metaphors; however, Del Rey's scenarios tend to use only creative metaphors. The contrast between the scenarios might depend on the number of identified metaphors. Although the word count in both corpora was similar, the number of metaphors identified in Del Rey's lyrics was almost half of Swift's; thus, the scenarios are logically expected to more often appear in discourses with more metaphors.

While the research provides valuable insights into the metaphor field, it has limitations. Additionally, the research is limited to two artists, which could not be applicable when generalising metaphor tendencies in their respective genres. Lastly, given the interpretative nature of metaphor analysis, the study was influenced by the researcher's introspective understanding of the discourse.

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Appendix

Table 1. The source domains in tokens and percentage, and creative and conventional metaphors in tokens and percentage.

Source domain	Taylor Swift			Lana Del Rey			Both artists		
	Tokens (%)	Creative tokens (%)	Conv. Tokens (%)	Tokens (%)	Creative tokens (%)	Conv. tokens (%)	Total tokens (%)	Creative tokens (%)	Conv. tokens (%)
ANIMATE ENTITY	84 (11%)	34 (40%)	50 (60%)	53 (15%)	34 (64%)	19 (36%)	137 (12%)	68 (50%)	69 (50%)
CONSTRUCTION	17 (2%)	16 (89%)	1 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	17 (2%)	16 (94%)	1 (6%)
CELESTIAL BODY	5 (1%)	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5 (1%)	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	10 (1%)	9 (90%)	1 (10%)
COLOUR	18 (2%)	14 (75%)	4 (25%)	3 (1%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	21 (2%)	15 (71%)	6 (29%)
CONFLICT	50 (7%)	36 (70%)	14 (30%)	6 (2%)	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	56 (5%)	41 (73%)	15 (27%)
CONTAINER	24 (3%)	12 (50%)	12 (50%)	13 (4%)	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	37 (3%)	21 (57%)	16 (43%)
CRIME	11 (1%)	8 (73%)	3 (27%)	3 (1%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	14 (1%)	11 (79%)	3 (21%)
DISTANCE	16 (2%)	4 (25%)	12 (75%)	6 (2%)	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	22 (2%)	6 (27%)	16 (72%)
DREAM	10 (1%)	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	2 (1%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	12 (1%)	4 (33%)	8 (67%)
ECONOMIC TRANSACTION	3 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	3 (1%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	6 (0%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)
EDUCATION	12 (2%)	8 (67%)	4 (33%)	3 (1%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	15 (1%)	10 (67%)	5 (33%)
ENTERTAINMENT	78 (10%)	59 (76%)	19 (24%)	47 (13%)	38 (81%)	9 (19%)	125 (11%)	97 (78%)	28 (22%)
EXCREMENTS	3 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	4 (0%)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
FOOD & BEVERAGES	16 (2%)	7 (44%)	9 (56%)	14 (4%)	12 (86%)	2 (14%)	30 (3%)	19 (63%)	11 (37%)
FORCE	14 (2%)	6 (43%)	8 (57%)	13 (4%)	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	27 (2%)	13 (48%)	14 (52%)
HUNTING	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
JEWEL	3 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	4 (1%)	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	7 (1%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)
JOURNEY	105 (14%)	35 (33%)	70 (67%)	30 (8%)	25 (83%)	5 (17%)	135 (12%)	60 (44%)	75 (56%)
KISS	2 (0%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (1%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	4 (0%)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
LANGUAGE	3 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)
LAUGHTER	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)

Source domain	Taylor Swift			Lana Del Rey			Both artists		
	Tokens (%)	Creative tokens (%)	Conv. Tokens (%)	Tokens (%)	Creative tokens (%)	Conv. tokens (%)	Total tokens (%)	Creative tokens (%)	Conv. tokens (%)
LEGACY	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
MOVEMENT	9 (1%)	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	13 (4%)	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	22 (2%)	12 (55%)	10 (45%)
NATURAL PHENOMENON	88 (12%)	62 (70%)	26 (30%)	44 (12%)	25 (57%)	19 (43%)	132 (12%)	87 (66%)	45 (34%)
OBJECT	111 (15%)	31 (28%)	80 (72%)	50 (14%)	35 (70%)	15 (30%)	161 (14%)	66 (41%)	95 (59%)
PLACE	9 (1%)	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	2 (1%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	11 (1%)	9 (82%)	2 (18%)
RELIGION	16 (2%)	8 (50%)	8 (50%)	22 (6%)	14 (64%)	8 (36%)	38 (3%)	22 (58%)	16 (42%)
ROYALTY	5 (1%)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	7 (2%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	12 (1%)	10 (83%)	2 (17%)
SOUND	7 (1%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (1%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)
SPORTS	13 (2%)	6 (46%)	7 (54%)	5 (1%)	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	18 (2%)	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
SUPERNATURAL	27 (4%)	17 (63%)	10 (37%)	5 (1%)	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	32 (3%)	18 (56%)	14 (44%)
TATTOO	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	2 (0%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)
THOUGHT	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
TRUTH	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
VOID	1 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	3 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL:	765	407 (53%)	358 (47%)	360	255 (71%)	105 (29%)	1125	662 (59%)	463 (41%)