

# Analysis of Metaphors and Metonymies in 'The 1975's Lyrics

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Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2020

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:343110>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-02-20**



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Preddiplomski studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti i njemačkog jezika i  
književnosti

Irena Iličević

**Analiza Metafora i Metonimija u tekstovima pjesama glazbenog  
sastava The 1975**

Završni rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Goran Milić

Osijek, 2020

Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet

Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i njemačkog jezika i književnosti

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Završni rad

Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: lingvistika

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Goran Milić

Osijek, 2020

J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major BA Study Program min English Language and  
Literature and German Language and Literature

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Scientific area: humanities

Scientific field: linguistics

Scientific branch: English studies

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Osijek, 2020

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U Osijeku, \_\_9.9.2020.\_\_

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## **Abstract**

Metaphor and metonymy had been one of the main topics of cognitive linguistics since Lakoff and Johnson's publication of *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980. As they had set the basis of understanding these two conceptual mechanisms, a new wave of interest arose, as poetic metaphor became more and more prominent in poetry, therefore music too. The traditional examples of conceptual metaphors and metonymy were now replaced with new and intriguing ones. This is becoming clear when listening to the band The 1975, who's the most prominent feature in their musical style is control of metaphors and metonymies. With their quite intimate and personal approach to music, the lyrics give an insight in the mind of the primary lyricist and lead vocalist, Matty Healy. Healy shows a great understanding of the two conceptual mechanisms, as he manipulates and modifies some, on the surface, basic and common, metaphors and metonymies and arranges them to his understanding and view of concepts, which is finally reflected in his lyricism. The aim of this paper is to explain the basic terminology of metaphor and metonymy while illustrating their presence and functioning in The 1975's lyrics, giving a comprehensive analysis of some of the most creative examples.

**Key words:** metaphor, metonymy, metaphorical creativity, music, lyrics

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## 1. Introduction

Since the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, Lakoff and Johnson had set the agenda of conceptual metaphors, explaining how reflective conceptual metaphors are in regard to human knowledge and view of the world around them, as they became a part of the everyday language. They have also renewed the interest in metonymy, as a conceptual mechanism that displays the understanding of the world in a referential way. To take a step further, Lakoff and Turner studied metaphorical creativity in *More Than Cool Reasons* (1989), where they described the power of poetic metaphor, to further solidify how metaphors shape human thinking in general. However, as this paper will aim to demonstrate, the attitude towards poetic metaphor and metonymy, as well as the rationale for studying them within the cognitive linguistic approach, has rather changed since 1980.

As Lakoff and Turner state, great poets are able to speak to the readers “because they use models of thought we all possess” (1989: 9). Poetic language can be seen as beyond everyday language, as they use extraordinary ways of conveying messages, using complex figures of speech such as metaphor and metonymy, showing their talent and skill with words. Although the models of thought are the same, metaphorical creativity plays an important role in a poetic language, such as songwriting, which is evident in The 1975’s lyrics. New research is not interested in the conventional way of perceiving metaphor and metonymy, but rather appreciates a new approach in a more creative way. It takes more to just understand the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy in today’s poetry, for the reader to grasp the deeper meaning of the song. This is suggested by Kövecses (2009), as he argues that, in order to understand the full range of metaphorical creativity in poetry, one must require the context in which the poet creates. In addition, this notion of context includes other intertextual, cultural, social contexts, and the main entities. To further clarify, he introduces knowledge about the main entities of poetic discourse, the speaker (poet), the topic, and the addressee (audience), which play an important role in understanding the poetic metaphors and metonymies The 1975 uses in their lyricism.

In an effort to comprehend the analysis, the first section deals with the band The 1975, explaining their style, discography, the frontman, and their writing for a better understanding of the paper. In the following section the theoretical aspect of conceptual metaphor is going to be covered, giving interesting examples of their lyrics to further solidify the aspect of poetic use of metaphor. The subsection 3.1. gives a brief, yet detailed, overview of the dominant domains, which are evidently the main topics of their discography. Section 4 deals with

metonymy, and similarly to the previous section, applies the theory in the form of a case study of a single example argued to be particularly ripe for such an analysis. Lastly, Section 5 is an overall conclusion, giving the main points of theoretical and methodological aspects of this paper.

## 2. The 1975

Since the aim of this paper is to analyse metaphor and metonymy in the lyrics of the band The 1975, I must give a brief introduction to the band and the frontman Matty Healy, or as Kövecses refers to as “the speaker”. Firstly, The 1975 is a British band whose genre might be difficult to classify. As the frontman Matty Healy says himself, they are not a rock band, but “it is a rock band in the way that we’re four white blokes playing guitars a lot of the time... But we’re an R&B band before we’re a rock band”(Wosinska, 2018). The “four white blokes” he mentions, are his fellow band members and close friends: lead guitarist Adam Hann, producer and drummer George Daniel<sup>1</sup> and bassist Ross MacDonald. With their music being described as “essential... hugely clever and wryly funny” (Daly) filled with “unquenchable ambition, creativity, and outspoken curiosity” (Blum, 2020) , and “voice-of-a-generation anthems hidden inside layers upon layers of irony and bombast” (Shaffer, 2020), The 1975 became one of the most influential bands of the music industry.

So far, the band has released four studio albums since 2013 to 2020. In 2013, Healy talked about capturing the mood of a John Hughes movie and with their debut self-titled album ‘*The 1975*’, which he describes as an “apocalyptic sense of being a teenager”<sup>2</sup>, with songs mostly dealing with love, addiction, and relationships, that are naturally seen as potential target domains which this paper will later analyse. Their second album “*I Like It When You Sleep, for You Are So Beautiful yet So Unaware Of It*”, gives a more personal insight in Healy’s struggles with addiction, his love and family relationships, and his thoughts on religion. The frontman describes this album as “ quite bold, and unafraid to be sentimental, and dramatic, and overly romantic, idealistic... It captures the narrative of our psyche over the past year”<sup>3</sup> which is very important when it comes to their lyricism described further in this section. The second album was “a filtered version of reality”<sup>4</sup>, which is also in a way prophetic to their third album. “*A Brief Inquiry Into Online Relationships*” was their third album, dealing with the aspect of love and human relationships in a modern internet world. Their fourth album “*Notes On A*

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<sup>1</sup> Healy once talked about Daniel in an interview saying: „He’s my hands and my heart. No, what is he? I don’t know what we are, but a bit of both... We have this really symbiotic relationship“. This is just and interesting hint to metaphor and metonymy which this paper deals with.

<sup>2,3</sup> From Pitchfork’s interview: Matty Healy Breaks Down His Albums, From *The 1975* to *Notes on a Conditional Form*. The complete interview can be found in the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75sjpkIcnBk>.

<sup>4</sup> From NME’s interview *The 1975’s Matty Healy talks about writing 'I Like It When You Sleep For You Are So Beautiful Yet So Unaware Of It*. The complete interview can be found in the following link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCeGQ\\_eIPzs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCeGQ_eIPzs).

*Conditional Form*” was released in 2020 and is seen as “end of an era”, announcing a new wave of music to come in the future.



Picture 1. The cover art of all the four albums.

In order to understand the lyrics that are going to be analysed throughout this paper, one must know the frontman of the band, Matty Healy. Rolling Stone perfectly described the primary lyricist as

a 31-year-old who is as disgusted by fame as he is enthralled by it, a former drug addict who still writes love songs to heroin, a musician more comfortable with his laptop than his guitar, a performer who is just as likely to show up onstage in an oversize parka and tulle skirt as he is shirtless with skinny jeans (Shaffer 2020).

Healy is anything but an ordinary poet, as his songwriting “largely evades diaristic confessions or soapboxing in favour of something more impressionistic... He’ll play a character, sometimes multiple across one song, but it can be hard to tell what he’s getting at” (ibid). His lyricism is deeply personal, self-aware, and observant, covering themes such as love, relationships, addiction, politics, and life in general. Complete honesty and transparency are very important to him, as he states that his purpose is to be so personal in his lyrics: “The whole record is

completely personal, because that's what gives it purpose for me"<sup>5</sup>. As Kövecses (2009) states, the idea that the general mental, and emotional condition, or situation, of a poet can influence the way he or she writes poetry is often taken into account when it comes to understanding their work. He suggests that poor health can influence the way the poet metaphorically conceptualizes the subject matter he writes about. A perfect example for this is Healy's personal struggle with addiction, which became one of the dominant source domains (also topics) of their songs. Healy commented how his relationship with opiates played a big part of his life, which consequently influenced his writing as he states:

The way that I write music is, me and George make music to make me wanna dance or make me wanna cry to... That's what it means to me. The truth – that's the only thing that's ever provided me with the result of meaning anything, so I really have the choice. I suppose that I choose how to do it and the context... I get to choose the context, but I don't get to choose the content... So I get to choose whether I fetishize or glamorize it or I tell the truth.<sup>6</sup>

What he means by this, is that he can personally chose the context in which he creates, however the content, that is his topic of choice, is something he cannot control, since it only gives him purpose if he is honest, which means he “must” talk about topics such as addiction. Kövecses (2009: 4) explains this how a poet can use “the context (which functions as a source domain) to talk about things that go beyond or are outside the context he or she is involved in (this functions as the target domain)”. Because of this, he describes his style of writing as “very conversational also normally shrouded in metaphors”<sup>7</sup>. In addition to his, the frontman states that they are a “post-modern pop band that references a million things” (Gormely 2016). This is exactly what makes their lyrics so unique, as they are filled with creative poetic metaphors and metonymies.

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<sup>5</sup> From NME's interview: Matty Healy takes you inside 'I Like It When You Sleep...', NME's Album Of The Year 2016. The complete interview can be found in the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr2NKcNWqxs&t=131s>.

<sup>6</sup> Frome Apple Music's interview: Matty Healy: The 1975, Drug Addiction and Glastonbury. The complete interview can be found in the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmZCHCWwp2I>.

<sup>7</sup> From Pitchfork's interview: Matty Healy Breaks Down His Albums, From The 1975 to Notes on a Conditional Form. The complete interview can be found in the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75sjpkIcnBk>.



Picture 1. The 1975. From left: George Daniel, Ross MacDonald, Matty Healy, and Adam Hann.

As already mentioned, in order to understand the full range of metaphorical and metonymical creativity in poetry, one must require the context in which the poet creates. As the context heavily influences their choice of topic, therefore their usage of source and target domains in conceptual metaphors play an important role in Healy's songwriting. The following section deals with conceptual metaphor, explaining the main terminology while showcasing Healy's poetic creativity through examples of new conceptual metaphors.

### 3. Conceptual Metaphor

As opposed to traditional approaches ever since Aristotle, Lakoff and Turner described metaphor as a “matter of thought – all kinds of thought; thought about emotion, about society, about human character, about language, and about the nature of life and death... It is indispensable not only to our imagination but also our reason.” (1989: 9). Metaphor, as a device of poetic imagination, flourishes an extraordinary rather than ordinary language (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 2). This leads to the conclusion that metaphor is essentially treated as a result of some operation performed upon the literal meaning of an utterance (Lakoff and Johnson 1989: 2).

Quite contrary to this view, Kövecses (2010) states that in the standard cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as “understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain”. He suggests a convenient shorthand way of capturing this view as “conceptual domain A is conceptual domain B” (ibid. 25). To illustrate the idea of a concept being metaphorical, one can take for example the concept of an ARGUMENT in terms of WAR. In their song “*The City*”, the first line is “Don’t call it a fight when you it’s a *war*”. Healy describes an argument in a relationship, which his partner refers to as a *fight*, she perceives it as unimportant, nothing serious or massive. However, he says it is a *war*, meaning the argument is of big importance and hefty, not just a ‘small fight’ they are having. He contrasts the words *fight* and *war*, illustrating the extremes an argument can have using the vocabulary of war, and at the same time *maps*<sup>8</sup> the concept of WAR into the concept of ARGUMENT. Taking a step away from the conventional examples such as *winning* or *losing arguments* or seeing the other person as an *opponent*, Healy shows his understanding of the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT from another perspective, and in a unique way illustrates his metaphorical creativity.

These conceptual domains, WAR and ARGUMENT, are in a metaphysical view understood as abstract (ARGUMENT) and concrete (WAR) concepts. Kövecses (2010: 28) explains this usage of concrete and abstract concepts as domains in a conceptual metaphor as following:

Argument, love, idea, and social organization are all more abstract concepts than war, journey, food, and plant. This generalization makes intuitive sense. If one wants to fully understand an abstract concept, they are better off using another concept that is more

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<sup>8</sup> „Conceptual metaphors are characterized by a set of conceptual correspondences between elements of the source and target domains. These correspondences are technically called “mappings.” (Kövecses 2010: 348)



concrete, physical, or tangible than the abstract target concept for this purpose. Their experiences with the physical world serve as a natural and logical foundation for the comprehension of more abstract domains.

Kövecses (2010) labels the two domains that participate in a conceptual metaphor as source and target domains. The conceptual domain from which the metaphorical expression is drawn from in order to understand the other one is called source domain, and in the example represented above the source domain is WAR. The target domain is the domain one tries to understand through the use of the source domain. In other words, Healy's comprehension of the target domain ARGUMENT is represented through his understanding of the source domain WAR. The target domain usually covers the more abstract concepts such as life, love, time, happiness etc., while physical or concrete concepts are source domains. Continuing with the source domain of WAR, an interesting example for the representation of their metaphorical creativity is their, presumably most famous, song "*Robbers*", where Healy depicts a toxic love relationship, where the partners are too focused on each other that they do not notice the *destruction* they are causing to themselves, as they are "*robbing*" each other of happiness. Instead of representing the domain LOVE in a conventional or traditional example such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY, which can be found in most works dealing with conceptual metaphors, lyrics such as "We'll give you one more *fight*" and "Now if you never *shoot*, you'll never know" are a good example for a new poetic metaphor LOVE IS WAR, similarly to Kövecses' (2000: 44) example LOVE IS AN OPPONENT. The fights in the relationship (and their relationship is illustrated as war) are seen as *battles*, where his partner, who is his *opponent* in the war, is encouraged to *shoot* him. This can be used as an example where Healy illustrates one abstract concept in terms of a concrete one, while experimenting with the mechanisms of metaphor and demonstrating his creativity. This is further analysed through common source and target domains in The 1975's lyrics in Section 3.1..

As shown above, Healy takes a different approach when it comes to portraying conceptual metaphors in his lyrics, using metaphorical creativity as a main tool in his songwriting. He explains how his "favourite records are about life"<sup>9</sup>. Kövecses suggests, that "one of the startling discoveries of work on poetic language by cognitive linguists is the recognition that most poetic language is based on conventional, ordinary conceptual metaphors" (2010:71). Possibly the most used metaphor concerning the target domain LIFE is

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<sup>9</sup> Frome Apple Music's interview: Matty Healy: The 1975, Drug Addiction and Glastonbury. The complete interview can be found in the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmZCHCWwp2I>.



LIFE IS A JOURNEY. However, the frontman portrays this metaphor from a different perspective, giving new examples while showcasing his poetic writing, but also understanding of the world. The opening line in “*I Always Wanna Die (Sometimes)*” is “I bet you thought your life would change / But you're sat on a *train* again”. Healy sings about some type of a journey, where he is travelling by train<sup>10</sup>, which might be interpreted as a metaphor about life. Why this lyric is so interesting, in regard to conceptual metaphors and how integrated they are in our ways of thinking, is because of how Healy commented on these lyrics:

[The lyric] is me alluding the idea that we're presented with destinations for ourselves, whether it be through like pop culture or grand narratives running through society that happiness or the idea of feeling complete or being a grown up. These are places that you arrive. It's a complete myth – you know – and I think a lot of the human experience is spent not quite understanding why you haven't reached that. I think specifically what it refers to is the fact that I'm still the same person doing the same things even after this whole thing happens and then it kind of comes to an end and then you revert back to who you really are, who's just a bloke on a train.<sup>11</sup>

The way he makes sense of such an abstract concept, is shown not only in his lyrics, but the way he interprets them and explains them using mechanisms of conceptual metaphor. Healy manipulates this, at first glance basic and common, metaphor and arranges it to his understanding and view of life, which is finally reflected in his lyrics. Gibbs concludes that “much of our conceptualization of experience is metaphorical, which both motivates and constrains the way we think creatively” (Gibbs 1994:7 in Kövecses 2010: 72 ). Another example of this metaphor is “I think I've seen the side of every *road* / They all lead somewhere, I've been told” in “*Playing on My Mind*”. The frontman commented this song: “It's just me asking loads... It's me trying to figure stuff out” (Stubbs 2018). It is easy to conclude how he is asking questions about life, saying how he *has seen every side of every road*, possibly alluding that he has experienced a lot of things in his life. It is suggested that creative people, in this context poets, take heavy use of conventional, everyday metaphors and their creativity and originality actually derive from them (Kövecses 2010: 72). As an exceptional lyricist, Healy further shows his creativity through making new poetic metaphors. Staying on the topic of LIFE

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<sup>10</sup> The concept of travelling by train can be found in some other songs, for example in “*Paris*” where he states “*And I don't suppose you know where this train goes*”.

<sup>11</sup> From Genius interview: The 1975 “I Always Wanna Die (Sometimes)” Official Lyrics & Meaning. The complete interview can be found in the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBqgSiYCFHs>.

as a target domain, Healy understands life as a conceptual metaphor LIFE IS AN OCEAN<sup>12</sup> which reoccurs through their songs. In “*She’s American*” , Healy sings “But be careful or you’ll *drown*”, and in “*Talk!*” a line says, “I’d be an *anchor* but I’m scared you’d *drown*”. To *swim* would mean to get on with life and keep living, whereas *drowning* can be interpreted as dying. Healy’s wish to be an *anchor* portrays his longing to be a constant in someone’s life, although he feels as if he would ‘take her down’ with him, meaning put her in some kind of life danger. These relationships between the two concepts, LIFE and AN OCEAN, are a set of systematic correspondences, or mappings as explained above, between the source and target domain in the sense that constituent conceptual elements of AN OCEAN correspond to constituent elements of LIFE. This can be further explained with the entailment that LIVING IS SWIMMING IN AN OCEAN, meaning that NOT HANDLING PROBLEMS IS DROWNING, which is exactly what Healy illustrated in his lyrics.

Another interesting conceptual metaphor that can be recognized in Healy’s songwriting is A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP IS A PLAY<sup>13</sup>. Some examples are in “*A Change of Heart*” lyrics “You *played a part*, this is how it starts”, in “*Me and You Together Song*” are lyrics “I think *the story* needs *more pages*”, and in “*If You’re Too Shy*” the line “I just wanted a *happy ending*”. His partner is his fellow actor and their relationship can be understood as a written play. As he realizes that they are breaking up, he wishes that their story had more *pages*, alluding to the fact that he does not want to break up but rather continue their relationship. At last, the breakup is seen as a *happy ending*. In an interview, Healy comments on the last example: “I wanted some kind of resolution... I just wanted a happy ending is, again me talking about like, I just want it to be simpler”<sup>14</sup> .

As shown by some examples of conceptual metaphors above, Healy is quite creative when it comes to his use of imagination in depicting metaphors in his lyrics. There is a pattern of common source and target domains that are used throughout the lyrics of the band The 1975. The following section will further analyse these source and target domains, which also represent some of the topics the band covers in their songs.

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<sup>12</sup> This metaphor is not just characteristic for The 1975, as for example in his song “*Carolina*”, Harry Styles sings “*Towns, better swim before you drown*”.

<sup>13</sup> Lakoff and Turner (1989: 31) also take for an example Elvis Presley’s love song “*Are You Lonesome Tonight*” where he refers to the beginning of the relationship in lyrics “*Act one was when we met*”.

<sup>14</sup> From Genius interview: The 1975 “*If You’re Too Shy (Let Me Know)*” Official Lyrics & Meaning. The complete interview can be found in the following link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BR6uMbIO98s&t=97s>.

### 3.1. Common Source and Target Domains in The 1975 Lyrics

Matty Healy, as the primary lyricist of The 1975, describes their discography as “being kind of like a collection of songs in the way that stylistically they don't really sit with each other but that's because they all have their own kind of objective within it”<sup>15</sup>. With their broad spectrum of songs, there are common source and target domain that are prevalent in his songwriting. For this brief overview of the most commonly used source and target domains, I analysed song lyrics of all four albums, in order to conclude the dominant ones.

Physical or concrete concepts are represented through source domains. The human body is considered to be an ideal source domain since it is clearly defined and we as humans know it well (Kövecses 2010: 39). One of the most dominant parts of the body used in The 1975's metaphors is the heart. In “*Girls*”, Healy says “I told her from the start / I'll *break your heart*”, in “*Milk*” the lyric is “It won't *mend your heart* if it's only a couple of lines”, and in “*102*” he is “*pouring my heart out* towards your optimistic grin”. These examples belong to the target domain of LOVE. One could conceptualize the metaphor as THE HEART IS A CONTAINER (FOR EMOTIONS)<sup>16</sup>. The heart, as a container, can ‘*break*’, which can be interpreted as being emotionally hurt, damaged, or cease to function. A broken container can be fixed, so figuratively something could *mend your heart*, meaning repair it and put it back into ‘function’. As the heart is a container that holds emotions, when someone is *pouring their heart out*, it means that they are expressing their feelings to them. Next, heat and cold are another common source domain in their lyrics, because the temperature domain is often used to talk about one's attitude to people and things (Kövecses 2010: 42). Some examples such as “I wasn't told you'd be this *cold*” in “*Change of Heart*” and “You're *cold* and I *burn*” in “*Settle Down*”, illustrate how Healy deals with a cold partner, signifying their chilly<sup>17</sup> personality. Kövecses (2000) explains how source domains like heat and fire can be found in the aspects of a romantic love and lust. Healy *burning* could be interpreted as his longing for her, while she is being *cold* towards him, in other words uninterested. Another important concept is money and economic transactions. The most common conceptual metaphor regarding this source domain is TIME IS

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<sup>15</sup> From iHeartRadio's interview: Matty Healy Talks About Working With The London Community Gospel Choir | Exclusive Interview. The complete interview can be found in the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKw1tgAVPqQ>.

<sup>16</sup> Kövecses (2010: 58) classified metaphors as structural (which this paper has been concerned with so far), ontological, and orientational. This is a case of ontological metaphor, because “we conceive of our experiences in terms of objects, substances, and containers, in general, without specifying exactly what kind of object, substance, or container is meant” (2010:59). The heart is conventionally associated with the emotion of love; therefore it would “serve” as a container that holds these romantic emotions.

<sup>17</sup> Dictionary.cambridge.org describes “chilly” as unfriendly. Furthermore, Vocabulary.com says following: “A chilly person is unemotional, distant, and quiet”.

MONEY. Healy sings about his failed relationship in “*I Couldn't Be More in Love*” as he sings “If you have got the time... / She said, ‘I gave you four years of my life’”, in “*Frail State of Mind*” there is “Don't waste their time”, and in “*Sex*” the lyrics “And she said, ‘Use your hands and my spare time’”. These are some conventional examples that are part of the poetic metaphor in their lyrics. Human understanding of abstract targets, such as TIME, is often based on our understanding of money and commodity in general, as some aspects are based on these scenarios (Kövecses 2010: 41). Lastly, another dominant source domain is light and darkness. Kövecses clarifies that “the properties of light and darkness often appear as weather conditions when we speak and think metaphorically” (ibid. 42). The song “*Don't Worry*” was written by Healy's father for his wife about her postnatal depression<sup>18</sup>. The lyrics “When *blackness* hangs overhead *like a cloud* / Don't worry, darling, 'cause I'm here with you / Don't worry, darling, *the sun will shine through*” clearly describe the feeling of depression, alluding to the conceptual metaphor of SADNESS IS DARK and HAPPINESS IS LIGHT. The *blackness* could be interpreted as depression and sadness, whereas another conceptual metaphor THE SUN IS THE SOURCE OF LIGHT, therefore the source of HAPPINESS, could be introduced with the lyrics “*the sun will shine through*”.

With the analysis of the dominant source domains, it is easy to summarize the main target domains, which are also some of their main topics. As illustrated above, he often depicts the emotions of happiness and sadness. Here it is convenient to acknowledge another class of metaphor, which are orientational metaphors. Their name “derives from the fact that most metaphors that serve this function have to do with basic human spatial orientations, such as up-down, centre-periphery” (Kövecses 2010:61). For example, in “*Jesus Christ 2005 God Bless America*”, Healy sings “I'm in love, but I'm feeling *low*”, indicating that although he is in love, which commonly brings happiness, he feels *low*. This “downward” orientation is demonstrated by the metaphor “HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN”, which Kövecses further clarifies how “upward orientation tends to go together with positive evaluation, while downward orientation with a negative one” (2010: 61). Healy himself has an interesting view of the concept of happiness as he states in an interview that “happiness is like... we have fleeting moments of joy, right? We're not going to get happiness, because it's not a destination”<sup>19</sup>. His view of happiness is already constructed as a metaphor in his mind, probably without even realizing that he uses the

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<sup>18</sup> From: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/notes-on-a-conditional-form/1473599936>.

<sup>19</sup> From British GQ interview: Matty Healy: 'Art, sex, drugs, religion. It's just about losing yourself'. The complete interview can be found on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx5LlcPJjZc&t=543s>.

mechanism of conceptual metaphor to illustrate what he means. Next, the most dominant emotion is love, specifically romantic relationships, as already specified in Section 3., with the example of A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP IS A PLAY. Finally, a very important target domain in The 1975's lyrics is addiction. As Kövecses (2009) explained, in order to fully understand the creativity of a poetic metaphor, one must have knowledge about the main entities of poetic discourse, that is the poet or speaker. Healy always writes about himself, his experiences, and thoughts, he writes about things that are “the most specific to [himself] therefore maybe the most impenetrable the most people won't really get that because it's so [Matty]”<sup>20</sup>. The problem he refers to is his past struggle with addiction, which is a common topic, and therefore target domain, of his lyrics. Songs about drugs that are masked as love songs, such as “*UGH*”, “*Medicine*”, and “*It's Not Living*” (he describes this song as “the big heroin one” [Lynskey, 2020]), can almost be perceived a megametaphors, because they “run through entire literary texts without necessarily ‘surfacing’ “ (Kövecses 2010: 78). Two conceptual metaphors about addiction that are noticeable in The 1975's lyrics are ADDICTION IS A PLACE and ADDICTION IS A BATTLE/WAR. In the song “*The Birthday Party*”, the former drug addict sings “There's a *place* I've been going / Now I'm clean”. This clearly states how he has been abusing opiates, which figuratively took him to another *place*, presumably another mental state, which he views as a place. This is followed by the line “*Now I'm clean*”, stating that he no longer ‘visits this place’, meaning he does not abuse drugs anymore. Addiction is a very sensitive topic, so Healy explains how “there's not much celebration of the behaviour. I think that if I was ever romanticizing of fetishizing the use of drugs, I think I'd catch myself doing it, and if I ever have done that in a lyric, it'll immediately be met by a lyric that maybe shows that one up to be ironic or flawed or silly”<sup>21</sup> which is clearly the case in this example. “*UGH*” depicts his thoughts on opiates with the description of drug withdrawal. In the lyrics “And you're the only thing that's going on in my mind / *Taking over* my life a second time”, Healy sees his addiction as an *opponent*, that is *taking over* his life. This can be interpreted as ADDICTION IS A BATTLE/WAR metaphor, where drugs could be seen as an opponent and the addict as a soldier.

To summarize, Healy's lyrics are deeply personal, he uses source and target domains that fit the best with his topic of choice. The most common source domains are the human body, more specifically the heart, heat and cold, money, and darkness and light. This reflects upon

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<sup>20</sup> From Virgin Radio UK's interview: Virgin Radio Album Special - Matty Healy from The 1975. The complete interview can be found on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQHQimMN33Q>.

<sup>21</sup> Frome Apple Music's interview: Matty Healy: The 1975, Drug Addiction and Glastonbury. The complete interview can be found in the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmZCHCWwp2I>.

the target domains, where the dominant concept is emotions, that is love, sadness and happiness. In order to understand other poetic metaphors, it was important to give additional information about the poet himself, as his personal struggles influenced his topic of choice. Therefore another important target domain was addiction, which shows Healy's metaphorical creativity in depicting his struggles of drug abuse through the use of conceptual metaphors.

## 4. Metonymy

In relation to our cognitive activities, metaphor is not the only figure of speech that is prominent in the lyrics of The 1975. Metonymies, similarly, to metaphor, are conceptual in nature, as Radden and Kövecses (2007:1) state that metonymy “has always been described in conceptual, rather than purely linguistic, terms”. This section deals with the basic knowledge of metonymy, explaining some main ideas in terms of cognitive linguistics, while providing interesting examples from The 1975’s lyrics.

In their song “*Pressure*”, Healy sings about his personal struggle with his parents’ popularity, as both his parents are considered to be celebrities in the United Kingdom. In his lyrics “You’ve seen so many *faces* that I’ve never seen before”, he points out how they have met a lot of *people*, since they are well known, and compares that with himself, as he was still quite young and, at that time, not famous. This is a special case of metonymy, PART FOR WHOLE, or more specifically THE BODY PART FOR THE PERSON. This mechanism suggests that metonymy uses “one entity, or thing, to indicate, or to provide mental access to, another entity” (Kövecses 2010: 193). In other words, instead of mentioning the other entity directly, in this case *people*, mental access to it is provided through another entity. The metonymic entity that serves as a reference point, that is directs attention, or provides mental access to another entity is referred to as “vehicle entity”, and the other entity to which the attention or mental access is provided is “target entity” (Radden and Kövecses 2007:2). In the example “You’ve seen so many *faces*”, the “*faces*” serves as the vehicle for accessing *people* as target. This is not to be confused with target domain as explained in Section 3, since the vehicle and target entities are close in conceptual space<sup>22</sup> (Kövecses 2010: 194).

To clarify this, take for example the conceptual space of music. In the lyrics “She said ‘I’ve got a problem with your shoes and your *tunes*’ ” in “*The Sound*”, the frontman sings about his love interest who isn’t particularly fond of his songs. Tune is a melody, especially one which characterizes a certain piece of music<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, one can conclude that, by saying that she does not like his tunes, she is implying that she does not like his genre of music in general. This can be understood again as a PART FOR WHOLE, more specifically TUNES STANDS FOR MUSIC. What was meant by “close in conceptual space” is that “the two entities are

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<sup>22</sup> Conceptual metaphors include two concepts that are “distant” from each other in human conceptual systems, that is one domain is abstract and the other concrete. Metonymy, however, uses two entities that are related to each other in one conceptual space.

<sup>23</sup> Definitions from Oxford Languages found on the following link: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>



contiguously related, or that the two entities are in each other's proximity" (Kövecses 2010: 194). Since every song has a certain melody, it must have a tune, consequently these two entities are close to each other in this particular conceptual space, which is music. The relationship between the vehicle and target entity create 'mental bridges' which allow the conceptualizer to access the desired target (Radden and Kövecses 2007: 3). In the cognitive linguistic view, Kövecses (2010: 194) gives a more precise formulation to this, namely "it is suggested that a vehicle entity can provide mental access to a target entity when the two entities belong to the same domain, or as Lakoff puts it, the same idealized cognitive model (ICM)". As for the example above, tunes and songs belong to the MUSIC ICM, in which are other entities such as the producer (in this context, Healy), the product (his songs), and so on. This forms a coherent whole in our experience of the world and because they are closely linked in experience, some entities can be used to provide mental access to other entities within the same ICM (Kövecses 2010: 194). With all of this in mind, Radden and Kövecses (2009:3) define metonymy as "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model".

Radden and Kövecses (2007: 3) state that metonymy tends to "make use of entrenched relationships within an ICM" and these conceptual relationships within an ICM are called "metonymy-producing relationships". Metonymy arises when "the intended target is more or less uniquely accessible", that is the more distinct the two entities are, the better is their relationship suited to be exploited metonymically (ibid 7). PART FOR WHOLE as one type of metonymic relationship was already mentioned in this section. Radden and Kövecses (2007: 7) suggest two types of metonymy-producing relationships based our knowledge about the world, which is organized by structured ICMs that one perceives as wholes with parts. These metonymy-producing relationships will be briefly<sup>24</sup> analysed in the following sections with more examples from The 1975's lyrics.

#### **4.1 Part-Whole Metonymy in The 1975's Lyrics**

As already mentioned, the knowledge about the world can be organized by structured ICMs that one can perceive as a whole with its parts. The configuration *whole ICM and its parts* leads to metonymies "in which we access one part of an ICM via its whole or a whole ICM via one of its parts" (Radden and Kövecses 2007: 8). This section will give examples of Radden

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<sup>24</sup> The complete classification can be found in Radden and Kövecses article "Towards a Theory of Metonymy" (2007), which is rather complex and extensive. This paper will only briefly introduce some ICMs of the metonymic relationship that are relevant to this topic, that is, can be found in The 1975 lyrics.



and Kövecses' ICMs that can be also found in The 1975 lyrics. For this section, I analysed again lyrics of all four albums, and selected the most interesting ones to present.

Healy himself described their band as a “band that references a million things”. Knowing that their lyrics always have some hidden meaning, some seemingly literal uses in their lyrics turn out to be metonymy. In one of their most famous songs of the first album, “*Sex*”, a line says, “There’s only *minutes* before I drop you off / And all we seem to do it talk about sex”. This example of *minutes* belongs to Category-and-Member ICM, where “category and its members stand in a kind-of relation” (Radden and Kövecses 2007: 11). In this example, one shortish timespan stands for another shortish timespan, meaning it will probably take the driver longer than minutes until he reaches the destination. In contrast to this, in their song “*Me & You Together Song*”, Healy sings “I’ve been in love with her for *ages*”. Again, one timespan, in this case a much larger one, stands for a probably shorter one<sup>25</sup>. Next, in The 1975’s lyrics, an interesting usage of colour related to metonymy can be found. Lyrics “Now we run, run away from *the boys in the blue*” in “*Chocolate*”, illustrate how they are running away from police. Since the police officers’ uniform is blue, Healy simply describes them as boys who are wearing the colour blue, alluding to their uniform. This can be referred to as a COLOR FOR THE WEARER metonymy, belonging to Category-and-Property ICM. As a part of Category-and-Property ICM, “categories may metonymically stand for, one of their salient or essential properties and, conversely, a salient or essential property may evoke, and metonymically stand for, its category” (Radden and Kövecses 2007: 11). This is illustrated in “*Menswear*”, where Healy is singing about his day on his friend’s wedding. In the lyrics “*She’s dressed in white* and putting off crying”, the whole phrase stands for getting married. *White* metonymically represents a wedding, that is stands for the wedding dress, which is traditionally white. Another interesting example regarding the aspect of colour is COLOUR FOR MATERIAL. An example for this is “*She’s got two-tone* everything” in their song “*She Way Out*”, where Healy is singing about a girl who has “*a face from a movie scene or magazine*”, alluding to the fact that she is probably rich. Two-tone jewellery contains two different types of metal, two different types of colour which are usually white and yellow gold. Healy sings about a girl with the style of a fashion model in a magazine, who owns two-tone everything, not only jewellery. These lines

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<sup>25</sup> In her article „*Keeping an eye on the data: Metonymies and their patterns*“ in „*Corpus-Based Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy*“ (2006), Hilpert explains how some classical rhetorics would classify these examples as a case of litote and exaggeration. However, in this framework, both litotes and exaggeration are accommodated as C-Metonymies, which she defines as “kind-of relations”, specifically as „contiguity relations that obtain between categories and subcategories“ (2006: 133).

allude to her wealthy status, painting a picture of a girl who looks ‘expensive’. Taking into consideration that “a salient, typically stereotypical, property associated with the category” (ibid 13) evokes an interpretation of Category-and-Property ICM, the metonymy PROMINENT CHARACTERISTIC OF A MATERIAL STANDS FOR ITS WORTH arises, in this specific case BLING FOR WEALTH. Taking the context and explanation in mind, one can conclude that PRECIOUS MATERIAL STANDS FOR STATUS. This shows how multifaceted metonymy can be, especially in cases of poetic use. A final type of PART FOR WHOLE metonymy can be found in the reduction ICM. As already mentioned in “*Chocolate*”, they are running away from the authorities, and later in the song another metonymy arises in the lyrics “She said ‘*the feds* are here you know””. The Cambridge Dictionary defines “fed” as a police officer who works for the F.B.I.<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, F.B.I. stands for *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, which is where the word fed is derived from, concluding that “metonymy is found in the reduction of the form of a sign” (ibid 12).

Through the analysis of some examples of metonymy in The 1975’s lyrics, one can conclude that PART FOR WHOLE metonymic relations are the most prominent in their lyrics, in regard to the *whole ICM and its parts* configuration. Although metonymy does not seem like a figure of speech that can showcase creativity in poetry, Healy proves his inventiveness with some compelling examples in his lyrics. The following chapter will deal with *parts of an ICM* configuration, analysing other intriguing examples of metonymy.

#### **4.2. Part-Part Metonymy in The 1975’s Lyrics**

As suggested in Section 4, metonymy-producing relationships are based on human knowledge about the world, which is organized by structured ICMs that one perceives as wholes with parts. With respect to a whole ICM, *parts of an ICM* configuration relate conceptual entities that function as parts within one ICM (Radden and Kövecses 2007: 13). It is suggested that they typically apply to entities within an event, which are “constituted by a relation and participants”, therefore PART FOR PART metonymies “tend to build on a relation and one of its participants or between two participants related” (ibid 13).

“My consciousness controls *my hand* “ in “*Playing On My Mind*”, the frontman expresses how his consciousness controls his *actions*. In an effort to understand poetic metaphor, it was important to know about the poet, which is also the case when it comes to

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<sup>26</sup> Definition from The Cambridge Dictionary found on the following link: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fed>.

metonymy. Healy is quite conscious and aware of important issues, which was shown in their last album, where they covered topics such as racism, environmental issues, sexism, etc. Because of this, his consciousness controls the way he behaves and does things in his life. This is a typical use of metonymy within the action ICM. The action ICM refers to relationships between an ACTION and an INSTRUMENT used in action (ibid 13). This example is an INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy, especially in the context and collocation with the verb ‘control’. Another interesting ICM is that of location. Radden and Kövecses (2007: 16) suggest that “places are often associated with people living there [and] events which occur or occurred there” which is what motivates this type of metonymy. “And when I knock at *hundred and two*” in their song “102”, Healy talks about visiting his partners home, which he had to clarify on his official Reddit profile that “*hundred and two*” refers to the house number, since some people speculated that “102” meant 1:02 am<sup>27</sup>. Healy manipulates the location ICM and produces a new relation between two entities within that conceptual model and creates a new metonymy which is THE HOUSE NUMBER STANDS FOR THE HOUSE ITSELF. However, the best example of Healy’s poetic imagination and complexity of metonymy are the lyrics “I got the *jones* right through my bones” in “*Love It If We Made It*”. In an effort to understand this metonymy, it is necessary to have background knowledge about the word choice and the poet. The paper previously mentioned the singers past struggle with substance abuse, and as a “former drug addict” he had withdrawal symptoms, which he often described in other songs<sup>28</sup>. The term “jonesing” originated from Jones Alley, in Manhattan, which “after nightfall, [had] been the haunt of a crowd of idle young fellows, who [gave] the police a good deal of concern”<sup>29</sup>. In other words, it was known as a junkie hang out area around 1960s, when the Beatniks popularized the term “Mr Jones” as a code name for heroin (Kovalchik 2017). The “*jones*” Healy is referring to in his lyrics is a craving brought on by substance abuse. Radden and Kövecses (2007: 17) state how relating places with what is typically done there is a part of human cultural knowledge, which motivates metonymic relationship as it allows us to interpret the mention of a place as a reference to an action. This is a case of a particular subtype of metonymy which can be described as PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE.

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<sup>27</sup> Found on the following link:

[https://www.reddit.com/r/the1975/comments/gruxqs/i\\_always\\_think\\_of\\_this\\_and\\_it\\_breaks\\_me/](https://www.reddit.com/r/the1975/comments/gruxqs/i_always_think_of_this_and_it_breaks_me/).

<sup>28</sup> For example, „*UGH*“ depicts Healy’s battle with cocaine and his battle with quitting. He names few side-effects such as cigarette craving and numbness of gums (“*I know your lungs need filling /Since your gums have lost their feeling*”), arrhythmia (“*My irregular heartbeat is starting to correct itself*”), and so on.

<sup>29</sup> From Jones Alley. Ephemeral New York. (2010, July 24).<https://ephemeralnewyork.wordpress.com/tag/jones-alley/>.

This section attempted to cover all basic theoretical aspects of metonymy from a cognitive linguistic point of view, representing the two metonymic relationships that were classified as part-whole metonymies and part-part metonymies. In his lyricism, Healy uses the conceptual mechanisms included in metonymy and modifies them to create new metonymic relations between entities that are most suited for his topic of choice and lyrics in general. The examples of metonymy in The 1975's lyrics are a perfect example of how multifaceted metonymy can be, as some metonymies can be analysed in even four layers.

## 5. Conclusion

Since 2013, *The 1975* has had a major influence on teenagers of that time, including myself, as their complex, pretentious, and deeply personal lyrics followed me from high school to my college days. Like a true artist and poet, Healy's lyrics are deeply inspired and based on his personal experiences, feelings, and thoughts, because he sees writing music as "such a catharsis and such a personal thing"<sup>30</sup> He always had a certain complexity to his language, a "helter-skelter intelligence of an autodidact" (Lynskey 2020), and understanding of the world, which evidently reflected in his lyricism. With his understanding of mechanisms of conceptual metaphor and metonymy, Healy manipulates and creates new poetic metaphors and metonymies that reflect his creativity. The aim of this paper was to illustrate the presence, functioning, and nature of these two conceptual mechanisms in their lyrics, with all the theoretical and methodological problems that come with it.

Firstly, the paper attempted to present basic terminology of conceptual metaphor, explaining the cognitive process that comes with it and the comprehension of source and target domains. The paper proved how poets base their metaphorical creativity on such cognitive processes, as their conceptualization of experience is in nature metaphorical, which both motivates and constructs the way Healy uses this figure of speech. Approaching metaphorical creativity, it was shown that one must require additional knowledge about the poet and the context in which he creates, in order to fully understand the poetic metaphors used in their lyrics. Consequently, metaphors such as *ADDICTION IS A WAR* and *LIFE IS AN OCEAN* were easy to understand once the theoretical problems of conceptual metaphor were explained and the additional knowledge about the poet was provided. It was also concluded that the dominant topics of their songs such as love, life, happiness/sadness and addiction, were also common target domains, which Healy illustrated in lyrics such as "*Don't call it a fight when you it's a war*" or "*When blackness hangs overhead like a cloud ... Don't worry, darling, the sun will shine through*".

Similarly to metaphor, metonymies are also conceptual in nature. This paper offered a theoretical aspect of metonymy from a cognitivist point of view, describing how metonymy works in a single idealized cognitive model, producing whole-part and part-part metonymic relationships, which were present in *The 1975*'s lyrics. Although metonymy at first does not

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<sup>30</sup> From NME's interview: Matty Healy takes you inside 'I Like It When You Sleep...', NME's Album Of The Year 2016. The complete interview can be found on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr2NKcNWqxs&t=131s>.

seem like a figure of speech that can showcase particular creativity, Healy proves his inventiveness with some compelling examples. In lyrics such as “*Now we run, run away from the boys in the blue*” or “*I got the jones right through my bones*”, he uses cognitive mechanisms in metonymy and modifies them to create new metonymic relations between entities that are best suited for the picture he is trying to illustrate, in these examples running from the police or the craving brought on by substance abuse. And even with the knowledge of metonymy, as Kövecses argues, in order to understand the full range of metonymic creativity in Healy’s lyrics, one must require the context in which the poet creates, which is why it was necessary to further clarify the choice of entities and explain the motivation behind it.

Finally, this paper indicated how it is, not only possible, but necessary to go beyond some cognitive approaches in understanding poetic metaphor and metonymy. Such conceptual mechanisms within poetry require knowledge about the artist himself, and his personal motivation and context behind the lyrics, as Healy says himself: “The main thing that I’ve done with The 1975 is kind of spoken about myself”<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> From Apple Music's interview: Matty Healy: The 1975, Drug Addiction and Glastonbury. The complete interview can be found on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmZCHCWp2I>.

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