

**A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Retroactive Jealousy
in Niki's 'Did You Like Her in The Morning?'**

Ibnati Faiza Hamdi¹, Sarah Safika Sitorus², Rahmadsyah Rangkuti³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Sumatera Utara - Indonesia

Email: ¹ibnatifaiza24@gmail.com, ²sarahsafikasitorus@gmail.com,
³rangkuti@usu.ac.id

Abstract

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Retroactive jealousy refers to feelings of insecurity and concern about a partner's previous romantic relationships. This study aims to examine how retroactive jealousy is represented in NIKI's song *Did You Like Her in the Morning?* through interpersonal meaning, framing, and metaphor. Using a cognitive stylistic approach, the study combines Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Frame Analysis, and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The data consist of the song lyrics obtained from Spotify and were analyzed qualitatively through data collection, identification of linguistic features, and interpretation. The findings reveal that the frequent use of interrogative sentences constructs interpersonal meaning by positioning the narrator as uncertain and emotionally vulnerable toward the partner's past. The lyrics further employ framing strategies that present the former partner as a significant figure in the narrator's imagination. In addition, metaphors such as *weightless* and *heavy* transform abstract emotions into concrete physical experiences, highlighting feelings of jealousy, comparison, and insecurity. These findings demonstrate how linguistic choices contribute to the construction of retroactive jealousy and show how contemporary song lyrics communicate complex emotional experiences.

Kata Kunci:

*Stilistika Kognitif,
Makna Interpersonal,
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Abstrak

Retroactive jealousy mengacu pada perasaan tidak aman dan kekhawatiran terhadap hubungan romantis pasangan di masa lalu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana *retroactive jealousy* direpresentasikan dalam lagu NIKI *Did You Like Her in the Morning?* melalui makna interpersonal (interpersonal meaning), framing, dan metafora. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan stilistika kognitif, penelitian ini menggabungkan teori Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Frame Analysis, dan Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Data penelitian

berupa lirik lagu yang diperoleh dari Spotify dan dianalisis secara kualitatif melalui tahap pengumpulan data, identifikasi unsur linguistik, serta interpretasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan kalimat tanya secara berulang membangun makna interpersonal dengan menempatkan narator pada posisi yang penuh ketidakpastian dan kerentanan emosional terhadap masa lalu pasangannya. Selain itu, lirik lagu menggunakan strategi framing yang menggambarkan mantan pasangan sebagai sosok yang memiliki posisi penting dalam imajinasi narator. Di samping itu, metafora seperti *weightless* dan *heavy* mengubah emosi yang bersifat abstrak menjadi pengalaman fisik yang konkret, sehingga memperkuat perasaan cemburu, perbandingan diri, dan ketidakamanan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pilihan bahasa dalam lirik berperan penting dalam membangun representasi *retroactive jealousy* serta memperlihatkan bagaimana musik populer kontemporer dapat menyampaikan pengalaman emosional yang kompleks.

INTRODUCTION

The critical convergence of popular music and literary analysis has emerged as a significant focal point in contemporary language studies, where song lyrics serve as potent sites for expressing complex human emotions and intricate psychological states. While traditional stylistic analysis often evaluates text through purely formalist lenses, cognitive stylistics bridges the gap between linguistic form and mental representation by providing a systematic framework for understanding how language structures produce meaning within the human mind. Through this cognitive stylistic approach, song lyrics are no longer viewed merely as aesthetic artifacts, but rather as cognitive triggers capable of mapping how abstract emotional phenomena are textually engineered and psychologically experienced by listeners.

In the realm of contemporary popular music, the lyrics of Indonesian singer-songwriter Nicole Zefanya, professionally known as NIKI, have drawn considerable critical acclaim for their emotional vulnerability, particularly in her 2024 album *Buzz*. A notable track within this album, "Did You Like Her in the Morning?", presents a distinct and granular investigation into "retroactive jealousy"

a complex cognitive schema characterized by compulsive comparison and chronological displacement. Within this song, each verse introduces distinctive interpersonal dynamics, strategic framing, and embodied metaphorical expressions that invite deeper academic interpretation.

Despite the song's commercial success and widespread critical praise, limited scholarly attention has been given to the specific linguistic mechanisms that facilitate this deep sense of emotional intimacy and insecurity. To date, there remains a distinct lack of empirical research that systematically integrates Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Conceptual Metaphor Theory to map exactly how a maladaptive psychological schema like retroactive jealousy is structurally built through deliberate mood choices and spatial metaphors. Prior research often overlooks the cognitive architecture underlying contemporary popular music lyrics, creating an analytical gap regarding how specific qualitative linguistic choices construct a mental world for the listener rather than merely describing an emotion.

This study directly addresses this academic gap by adopting a multidimensional Cognitive Stylistic approach utilizing Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as its primary structural foundation. Ideational, textual, and interpersonal are the three primary metafunctions of language, according to Halliday (1994). Because retroactive jealousy is really a relationship driven by power dynamics, insecurity, and an imbalance of knowledge between partners, this study purposefully isolates the interpersonal metafunction. The interpersonal metafunction shows how the speaker utilises language to enact social relationships and negotiate status, whereas the ideational and textual metafunctions deal with the message's substance and structure.

Despite its notable financial success and critical praise for its "emotional vulnerability," NIKI's 2024 album *Buzz* has not yet undergone a thorough linguistic analysis. There is a distinct lack of research that uses Hallidayan SFL and Conceptual Metaphor Theory to map exactly how a specific psychological schema such as retroactive jealousy is built through "mood choices" and "embodied metaphors." This study fills that gap by providing a linguistic blueprint for a

psychological state. This study fills the gap by adopting a Cognitive Stylistic method, contending that the lyrics of "Did You Like Her in the Morning?" use framing and spatial metaphors to create a mental world for the listener rather than merely describing an emotion. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by analyzing the lyrics of "Did You Like Her in the Morning?" to explore how NIKI employs interpersonal dynamics, framing, and metaphorical language to express themes of emotional resilience and inner turmoil conveyed throughout the song.

This study applies linguistic, psychological, and cognitive theories to provide a multidimensional analysis of lyrical content. By combining these frameworks, the study advances beyond surface-level interpretation to a more systematic explanation of the "retroactive jealousy" phenomenon.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and the Interpersonal Metafunction

According to Halliday (1994), language serves three main metafunctions: ideational, textual, and interpersonal. This study focuses on the interpersonal metafunction, which is concerned with how speakers use language to enact social interactions, construct power dynamics, and communicate opinions. The Mood system (declarative, interrogative, imperative) is an essential part of this metafunction. The interrogative mood is consistently used in "Did You Like Her in the Morning?" as a "demand for information." The narrator is linguistically subordinate to the partner who possesses the historical "truth" of the previous relationship, resulting in an informational gap or a knowledge imbalance.

Psychological Schemas: Retroactive Jealousy and Rumination

This study uses the psychological ideas of Rumination Theory and retroactive jealousy to contextualise the song's emotional story (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). An intense, repetitive attention on the reasons and effects of one's discomfort is known as rumination. Importantly, neither the clinical diagnosis of the artist nor the treatment of the lyrical identity as a real-world patient are attempted in this study. Rather, it analyses the textual representation of a maladaptive cognitive model using these psychological frameworks primarily.

The narrator's linguistic obsession with hyper-specific, imagined past events (such certain drinks, morning routines, or locations) creates a "cognitive loop" in the song. The lyrics are analysed under this stylistic framework as a purposeful language model of intrusive thought rather than as signs of a real psychological illness. By doing this, the study demonstrates how lexical and grammatical decisions are designed to mimic the experience of a mind trying to decipher and handle imagined dangers from a romantic past.

Frame Analysis Theory

In order to make sense of social events, people organize their experiences using primary frameworks, according to frame analysis, which was developed by Erving Goffman in 1974. The term "framing" in literary and stylistic contexts describes the viewpoint or mental lens that is used to convey a situation. Goffman's theory of dramaturgical analysis, also known as theatrical framing, is used in this study to examine how the narrator reconstructs the partner's previous connection as a "performance" or "pretension" rather than an actual emotional reality. The study identifies explicit textual clues that indicate the existence of this theatrical frame to interpret this theory linguistically. The analysis tracks structural indicators, such as lexical sets of artificiality (the application of particular verbs, nouns, and adjectives related to staging, acting, scripting, or deception), epistemic modality (the use of modal verbs or adverbs that indicate scepticism, uncertainty, or a lack of commitment to the truth of the previous relationship (e.g., framing the past as something that "supposedly" happened rather than declaring it as a clear fact)) and contrastive structures (syntactic decisions that purposefully contrast the "performed" and insignificant past with the "authentic" and actual present.) By following these specific textual indicators, the analysis shows how linguistic reframing functions as a psychological defence mechanism, enabling the narrator to systematically reduce the emotional significance and validity of a love rival's past presence.

Embodied Cognition and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

This study integrates the concept of Embodied Cognition, building on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. According to this hypothesis, human cognition has a strong connection to bodily experiences. The analysis will use an organised linguistic mapping procedure to find and classify metaphorical expressions in order to methodically operationalise this idea. Initially, the text will be examined for semantic tension by identifying lexical elements that are contextually applied to abstract psychological states yet have a basic, concrete, or physical meaning (such as weightless and heavy). This process isolates the precise points in the song where embodied metaphor replaces literal description. The conventional CMT framework, which transfers a physical Source Domain onto an abstract Target Domain (expressed as Target Is Source), will be used to classify these statements after they have been detected.

By using this exact categorisation system, the study does more than just identify poetic devices. It illustrates the underlying cognitive architecture of the lyrics by mapping precisely how NIKI grounds the abstract distress of retroactive jealousy (the Target) in the concrete "physicality" of morning light, household rituals, and spatial proximity (the Sources).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method within a cognitive stylistic framework to analyze the representation of retroactive jealousy in the lyrics of NIKI's song *Did You Like Her in the Morning?* This qualitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to deeply explore how linguistic choices in song lyrics construct meaning, emotion, and relationships between characters. According to Jeffries and McIntyre (2010), stylistics is the study of how linguistic elements in literary texts are used to produce specific meanings and effects for readers or listeners.

This study focuses on three main aspects: interpersonal meaning, framing, and metaphor. These three aspects are analyzed to reveal how the narrator establishes an emotional relationship with the interlocutor, frames the partner's past

experiences, and represents emotions through metaphorical language in the song lyrics. The analysis is conducted based on the principles of cognitive stylistics, which view language as a means of forming mental representations (Stockwell, 2002).

The research data consists of all the lyrics from the song *Did You Like Her in the Morning?* featured in NIKI's album *Buzz* (2024). The lyrics were obtained from Spotify and accessed on February 14, 2026. Every line of the lyrics was analyzed because each part of the song contributes to the formation of the narrator's emotional narrative, which is the central focus of this study.

Data collection was carried out through observation and note-taking techniques. The researcher listened to the song repeatedly and read the lyrics thoroughly to understand the context, emotional flow, and linguistic patterns emerging in the text. Subsequently, all lyrics were transcribed into an analysis worksheet to facilitate the data coding and classification process.

Once the data was collected, each line of the lyrics was coded based on three analytical categories: interpersonal meaning, framing, and metaphor.

a. Interpersonal Meaning

The coding of interpersonal meaning is based on Systemic Functional Linguistics theory (Halliday, 1994), specifically the aspects of mood and interpersonal relations. Each sentence in the song lyrics was analyzed to identify declarative, interrogative, or imperative forms, as well as the emerging interpersonal functions. Codes were assigned to expressions that indicate the narrator's emotional stance, the level of closeness with the interlocutor, emotional vulnerability, uncertainty, or power dynamics within the relationship.

b. Framing

The coding of framing refers to Frame Analysis theory (Goffman, 1974). The researcher identified words, phrases, or sentences that construct a specific perspective toward the partner's past relationship. Each data item was categorized based on how the narrator frames an event, character, place, time, or emotional experience. For instance, past relationships can be framed as an idealized memory, an emotional competition, or a form of unresolved loss.

c. Metaphor

The coding of metaphors was conducted based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The researcher marked all expressions that represent abstract concepts through more concrete experiences. Furthermore, the metaphors were classified based on the relationship between the source domain and the target domain. For example, the expressions *weightless* and *heavy* were categorized as metaphors that map an emotional experience onto a physical experience of weight and burden.

In the final stage, the coded data was analyzed using a cognitive stylistic approach. The researcher interpreted how interpersonal expressions reflect the narrator's emotional attitude, how framing constructs a particular perspective toward the narrated relationship, and how metaphors deepen the delivery of the emotional meaning conveyed by the narrator. Through this analysis, the study aims to reveal how NIKI constructs an emotional narrative through the linguistic choices used in the song lyrics.

To maintain the consistency of the analysis, the coding process was carried out systematically based on the predetermined categories of interpersonal meaning, framing, and metaphor from the theoretical framework. All data were analyzed repeatedly by comparing the coding results at each stage of the analysis to ensure alignment between the data and the categories used.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the coding categories and interpretation results were discussed with the thesis advisor to ensure coherence among the data, theoretical framework, and research findings. This process was undertaken to minimize interpretive subjectivity and to strengthen the validity of the analytical results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

NIKI's "Did You Like Her In The Morning?" shows a raw, granular investigation of retroactive jealousy, shifting the focus from major romantic gestures to the modest, unedited intimacy of everyday life. By centering the story on "the morning" as a chronological metaphor for total vulnerability, the track

examines the psychological weight of following a partner's significant past love. The narrator's constant application of the interrogative mood shows a deep interpersonal imbalance, casting her as an outsider seeking to understand a history she will never really experience. Through a contrast between the narrator's mental overthinking and the vivid, material gestures she imagines the ex-lover performing like "tracing the lines of a palm" or "holding her chin," the song illustrates the torturous way a mind can romanticize a partner's past. Eventually, the song shows the "former crowned head" of a partner's history not just as a person, but as a legendary norm that undermines the security of the present partnership.

Table 1. Verse 1 Did you Like Her in the Morning by Niki

No	Line	Interpersonal	Framing	Metaphor
1.	Did you like her in the morning?	This sentence shows the emotional side of the narrator that is full of curiosity about their partner's feelings. This question also creates interpersonal distance due to anxiety about the partner's past relationships.	Time framing "morning" as the moment when emotions are usually more honest.	"Morning" represents emotional truth after a night full of illusions.
2.	Right before all the sleep left your eyes	This sentence indicates a very high level of closeness. Someone can only observe the moment when "the drowsiness leaves someone's eyes" if they are at a very close physical distance.	The transition between sleep and wakefulness frames the shift from unconsciousness to full consciousness.	Symbolically, "before all the sleep left your eyes" is a metaphor for honesty and purity.
3.	Did you bother to draw the curtains?	The narrator seems to show a tone questioning their partner's caring behavior toward their ex, which indicates implied jealousy.	Curtains are usually found inside a room. And here "room" is used to frame personal relationships in the private realm.	"Curtains" function as a metaphor aimed at the narrator's past.
4.	Did the light burn too bright?	This question reflects emotional discomfort filled with questions about the reality that might be revealed.	Light frames the atmosphere as something that reveals reality.	"Light" represents a painful or hard-to-accept truth.

The Mood system in the SFL framework classifies clauses according to how they function in a social interaction. The narrator is structurally positioned as asking information that they essentially lack because of NIKI's purposeful and frequent use of the interrogative mood (e.g., "Did you like her..." "Did you bother..." "Did the light burn..."). What Halliday refers to as epistemic asymmetry 'a significant knowledge imbalance' is produced by this persistent syntactic questioning. The

grammatical structure places the narrator in a position of perpetual subordination and dependence as the partner has complete control over the historical narrative. Generic emotional vulnerability is based on Embodied Cognition through sensory experiences, according to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The "light" metaphor projects an intrusive, blinding physical force ("burn too bright") onto the painful reality of the partner's previous love. The narrator's position as an outsider looking in is further reinforced by spatial framing through the "curtains," which encloses the previous connection as an inaccessible, private sanctuary.

Table 2. Pre-Chorus Did you Like Her in the Morning by Niki

No	Line	Interpersonal	Framing	Metaphor
1.	Did you laugh over cold cups of coffee?	Indicating a relaxed yet intimate interaction between a couple in the past.	Daily activities frame emotional closeness within routines.	"Cold cups of coffee" symbolize the warmth of a relationship that is beginning to fade.
2.	That you hate but still drank anyway	The narrator shows firmness to the intended party regarding the emotional aspect in the previous relationship.	Contrast between hatred and actions framing internal conflict.	Drinking something you hate symbolizes acceptance of unwanted feelings.
3.	Did you get past the walls?	Describing the effort to understand the emotional depth of a previous partner.	Walls frame obstacles in emotional communication.	"Walls" symbolize emotional self-defense.
4.	Did you see through them all?	This sentence serves as a form of interrogation filled with vulnerability and jealousy, where the narrator tries to break the myth about the ex by questioning whether her partner truly knows the woman deeply or is just trapped in a delusion.	The search for truth amidst falsehood, where past relationships are framed not as open spaces, but rather as fortresses that are hard to penetrate or unsolved puzzles.	"Did you see through them all" reinforces the metaphor that understanding someone is an act of having x-ray vision to see what is behind the "mask" or "pretending."
5.	And if you didn't, do you still hope to someday?	The narrator shifts from merely asking about the past to questioning their partner's emotional loyalty in the future. The narrator positions themselves as the "second person" who fears that their partner still has unfinished business with their ex. This question forces the partner to admit whether their heart has truly "moved on" or is still stuck in the past.	With the phrase "if you didn't" (if you didn't manage to break through it), the past is framed as something unfinished.	"Hope to someday" is a metaphor for the desire to keep digging or climbing that wall. The narrator fears that their partner still wants to find a way back to their ex, rather than settling in the home they have built together now.

To build the conceptual framework of the remembered relationship, this part makes significant use of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Frame Analysis. The expression "cold cups of coffee" makes use of the conceptual metaphor emotional distance is coldness, which is based on temperature. The "walls" imagery uses Frame Analysis to spatially frame the ex-partner as a strengthened architectural barrier that symbolises emotional self-defence rather than as an open human being. The interpersonal metafunction changes from asking about routine behaviours to probing psychological closeness when the narrator asks, "Did you see through them all?" By framing the past as an incomplete psychological schema that actively threatens the security of the present, the conditional clause "And if you didn't, do you still hope to someday?" syntactically reveals a state of cognitive rumination.

Table 3. Chorus Did you Like Her in the Morning by Niki

No	Line	Interpersonal	Framing	Metaphor
1.	I know it'd be easier if I just didn't ask	By saying "I know," the narrator acknowledges that their action of interrogating their partner is something that disrupts the peace of their current relationship. However, implicitly, this also puts emotional pressure on the listener, as the narrator is willing to feel "pain" to obtain honesty.	Choosing not to ask is presented as the "easier" path, but the narrator consciously chooses the "difficult" path because the truth is more important than temporary comfort.	"Easier" here is a metaphor for peace bought at the cost of ignorance. The narrator feels that if they stop asking questions, they are "paying" for the peace of their relationship by suppressing their own suspicions.
2.	But it'd also be easier if she wasn't your last	The narrator asserts that the root of the problem is not their curiosity, but rather the fact that their partner has not had another relationship since the ex. This positions the partner as the "guilty" party for allowing the shadows of the past to remain fresh. There is a tone of despair here: the narrator feels they are competing with a ghost that has not been replaced by anyone before them.	Being the "last" framed not as an achievement, but as a burden. Because the woman is the last one before the narrator, her memory is still too sharp, her comparison is still too fresh, and her emotions have not yet been "washed away" by others.	The word "last" here acts as a metaphor for a wound that has not yet healed. If there was someone else between the ex and the narrator, the wound might have already become a scar. However, because he is the last, the "wound" is still bleeding and sensitive to touch.

The chorus demonstrates an intentional conflict between the interpersonal metafunction and the textual metafunction (cohesion). The repeated comparison of "easier" functions as a coherent connection that weighs the structural price of having the "last" relationship ("easier if she wasn't your last") against the emotional

cost of ignorance ("easier if I just didn't ask"). By using Frame Analysis, the phrase "wasn't your last" presents the ex-partner as an active, unresolved trauma rather than as a peaceful chronological fact. The narrator is permanently trapped in a comparative loss because the strict contrast of the personal pronouns "I" and "your" creates an unbreakable interpersonal gap inside the linguistic structure itself.

Table 4. Verse 2 Did you Like Her in the Morning by Niki

No	Line	Interpersonal	Framing	Metaphor
1.	Did you like her touch at nighttime?	This shows a high level of desperation; the narrator feels the need to compare their partner's sexual or physical experiences to measure how much "space" their ex still occupies. This question is very provocative and puts the partner in a difficult defensive position, as it touches on areas that are usually considered taboo to discuss in a new relationship.	If in the morning the narrator asks about a sincere "like," in the evening the question is framed as a search for whether the touch is merely a way to "forget."	Sleeping and "touch" in the dark are depicted as attempts to erase the painful reality or the feeling of loneliness mentioned in the lyrics "blame it on the lonely nights."
2.	Did all the pretending help you forget?	This sentence serves to destroy the romantic narrative of the partner. The narrator no longer asks whether their partner loves the ex, but rather assumes that the relationship is merely a (pretending). With this question, the narrator positions themselves as "the only one who knows the truth," while their partner and the ex are merely actors in a fake relationship. There is a strong tone of cynicism; the narrator wants to assert that the relationship lacks substance and is merely used as an escape tool.	The relationship is framed as a stage play where the displayed emotions are not real, but merely a performance to cover up the emptiness of past dynamics.	"Pretending" as a metaphor for dishonest emotional denial. The narrator asks whether the act they are putting on is strong enough to forget their partner's pain.

In order to carry out a psychological protection mechanism, this stanza applies Theatrical Framing (Goffman, 1974). By referring to the earlier intimacy as "pretending," the narrator force the partner's past relationship from being a genuine emotional connection to a staged performance. According to SFL terminology, "all the pretending" serves as a demonstrative reference that attempts to discredit the validity of the previous relationship by summarizing it in its whole form. Moreover, inquiring, "Did you like her touch at nighttime?" demands confirmation

that physical contact was only an embodied, mechanical coping strategy for loneliness, changing the interrogative tone to focus on physical recollection.

Table 5. Verse 3 Did you Like Her in the Morning by Niki

No	Line	Interpersonal	Framing	Metaphor
1.	Was she weightless in just your sweater?	This sentence shows a form of self-torture where the narrator visualizes a very specific moment of intimacy from their partner's past. This radiates a strong sense of insecurity. The narrator asks whether the ex feels "light" and "burden-free" to love, implicitly positioning themselves as someone who might feel "complicated," "demanding," or "heavy" for the current partner.	This sentence frames the past as an effortless and intimate romance. Wearing a partner's clothes is framed as the highest level of intimacy and trust, no distance, no self-defense.	"Weightless" does not merely refer to the physical weight of the woman's body, but rather a metaphor for a relationship free from drama, guilt, fear, or past complications.
2.	And does it feel heavy now to look at me instead?	This sentence is a confrontation that tests guilt. The narrator directly challenges their partner to make eye contact, which is the most honest form of interpersonal communication. By asking whether looking at her feels "heavy," the narrator positions herself as a reminder of uncomfortable reality. She implied that her partner might feel tired, regretful, or burdened by lies and unresolved feelings, making it difficult to even look at the narrator.	The word "instead" frames the narrator as a "second choice" or substitute. Staring at the narrator is framed as the partner's moment of realization that they are not with the person they (perhaps) desire the most.	Something that makes a gaze feel "heavy" is usually guilt, doubt, or a secret. The partner's eyes are likened to carrying the weight of a stone because there is dishonesty or regret behind them.

Here, the abstract psychological burden is mapped onto actual physical burdens through the explicit application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The "weightless" past and the "heavy" present are sharply contrasted in the lyrics. "As a philosophical metaphor (emotional ease is lack of mass), "weightless" depicts the previous connection as being free of conflict and complexity. On the other hand, the question "does it feel heavy now to look at me instead?" turns making eye contact into a painful lifting of emotional burdens. The narrator is linguistically degraded by the adjunct "instead" in the interpersonal metafunction, which structurally frames them as a burdensome, guilty replacement.

Table 6. Verse 4 Did you Like Her in the Morning by Niki

No	Line	Interpersonal	Framing	Metaphor
1.	Did your hands find her waist when she got sloppy?	This sentence is an interrogation about the protective instinct. The narrator is talking about her partner's automatic bodily response to the ex's vulnerability. With the word "find," the narrator implies that her partner's hands have a "memory" or magnetic attraction toward the ex's body. There is a deep jealousy dynamic here: the narrator feels that even in chaotic conditions, the partner will always be the one to catch and support the ex.	The word "sloppy" frames the ex as someone who is losing control. However, within the narrator's frame, this vulnerability is not a bad thing, but rather a reason for the partner to become a "hero" or protector.	The word "find" is a metaphor for emotional navigation. Her partner's hands are described as if they have an internal compass that always knows where to move to touch or stabilize the ex, even without thinking.
2.	After just a few Manhattans in Berlin	This sentence shows the over-information the narrator has about the partner's past. The narrator has "done research" or continuously replayed the stories they have heard until they memorized the smallest details. These specific details serve as a weapon to prove that she knows exactly how beautiful (and painful) that memory is. She positions herself as a witness to an event she actually did not attend.	Berlin is a distant city full of history, Manhattans are a specific and classy drink. This combination frames their past relationship as something "cool," "expensive," and "unforgettable."	Berlin here is not just a city, but a metaphor for a geographical area that has been "marked" by the ex. The narrator feels as if the entire city belongs to both of them, and she have no space there.
3.	Would you kiss her goodnight? would you walk her inside?	The narrator is interrogating her partner about the level of politeness and attention they give to his ex. There is a tone of jealousy in the treatment here; the narrator wants to know if her partner is a gentleman who is attentive to that woman, because if so, the pain the narrator feels will deepen, indicating she is competing with the best version of her partner given to someone else.	Kissing and escorting someone into the house is the standard frame of a romantic film or an ideal love story. The narrator frames her partner's past as a movie script in which they themselves are not a part.	Escorting someone inside is a metaphor for the role of a protector. The narrator feels jealous of the "protector" role that her partner once played for someone else.

4.	Did you hope the nights would never ever end?	The narrator is no longer asking about physical facts, but rather about her partner's deepest desires. By asking "Did you hope the nites would never ever end?", the narrator is confronting the possibility that her partner once felt "complete" and "satisfied" with someone else. This positions the narrator as someone who feels that her current presence is merely the "leftover time" from a happiness that her partner actually wanted to immortalize with his ex.	This sentence frames the narrator's current relationship as a "forced morning." If the partner wishes the night with the ex never ended, then logically, he never actually wanted to "wake up" and reach their current relationship.	"Night" is a metaphor for the suspension of reality. Hoping the night doesn't end means wanting to live in a love isolated from the outside world, responsibilities, and time.
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This stanza collects extremely detailed physical and topographical information by using the interrogative mood. The anaphoric chains of the pronouns "she" and "her," which consistently center the ex-partner as the semantic focus of the clause, demonstrate SFL's textual metafunction. The geographical specifics ("Berlin") and particular items ("Manhattans") frame the past as a carefully chosen, cinematic romance through Goffman's Frame Analysis, intensifying the narrator's emotion of exclusion. Lastly, the temporal metaphor of questioning if the partner wished "the nights would never ever end" effectively frames the current connection with the narrator as an unwelcome and forced "waking up" by mapping time onto a physical container that the partner wished to stay inside forever.

Table 7. Bridge Did you Like Her in the Morning by Niki

No	Line	Interpersonal	Framing	Metaphor
1.	I don't know if I can compete	This sentence means surrender. The narrator positions herself under the shadow of his ex. He admits that she feels powerless to change her partner's feelings, placing her partner as the "judge" who holds control over who is more deserving of love.	The past is framed as the "defending champion" with a historical advantage, so the narrator frames herself as a newcomer who has already lost before the match because she cannot erase the history that has already been written.	The word "compete" indicates that the narrator feels like she is running on the same track as the ex, but the ex has already crossed the finish line in her partner's memory, while the narrator is still far behind.
2.	The former crowned head of	By referring to the ex as a "crowned head," the narrator bestows the highest authority status	The front seat is framed as the position of a life co-pilot. Whoever sits there has control over	"Crowned head" symbolizes the former partner as a revered figure. Although her

	your old Ford's front seat	upon that woman in the past of her partner. However, the use of the word "former" creates a painful dynamic; the narrator feels like just a "successor" occupying a throne whose history is still too strong to erase.	the man's emotional navigation. The narrator frames herself as occupying a seat that still carries the "aura" or "shadow" of the previous occupant.	crown has been removed, her status as a "former queen" makes the narrator feel like an ordinary person trying to fill a role that is too big.
3.	And the story goes, you blame it on the lonely nights for it ever starting	With the beginning "And the story goes," the narrator shows a skeptical attitude. She positions her partner's explanation not as an absolute truth, but rather as a "script" or "fairy tale" designed to calm the situation. There is a power dynamic here, like the speaker who refuses to simply accept the excuse and instead highlights how her partner is trying to evade moral responsibility for his feelings in the past.	The word "blame" frames the beginning of the relationship not as a result of genuine interest, but rather as a product of external conditions (loneliness). This is the partner's attempt to make the ex seem "unimportant" in the eyes of the narrator.	"Lonely nights" are depicted as if it has a will of its own to start a relationship. This is a metaphor for biological vulnerability. As if the relationship were a disease suffered by the partner because of the "cold nite air," not something he built intentionally.

The lyrics apply Conceptual Metaphor Theory to frame the relationship through the usage of the "compete" metaphor, putting the narrator in a lower power dynamic where the partner acts as the "judge." This hierarchy is reinforced by the Metonymic Metaphor of the "crowned head," which uses Theatrical Framing (Goffman, 1974) to give the ex-lover a royal, historical position that overrides the narrator's current presence. Last but not least, the line "and the story goes" indicates a shift in the Interpersonal Metafunction as the narrator questions the partner's "lonely nights" defense. By interpreting the partner's past as a manufactured performance rather than a really loving relationship, this exposes a defensive struggle to restore power within the "retroactive jealousy" paradigm.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how the complex psychological schema of retroactive jealousy is textually represented in NIKI's "Did You Like Her in the Morning?" through the lens of cognitive stylistics. Through the use of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and Frame Analysis, the

study shows that the words of the song serve as a purposeful language pattern of intrusive rumination rather than just being artistic expressions. Three main linguistic strategies were employed to create this emotional story, according to the research. First, the repeated usage of the interrogative mood within the interpersonal metafunction creates an epistemic imbalance in which the partner has complete control over the historical "truth" and structurally degrades the narrator. Second, abstract discomfort is grounded in actual sensations through embodied conceptual metaphors, such as projecting the emotional weight of the past onto physical "heaviness". Lastly, the narrator uses theatrical framing as a psychological defense strategy to reduce the authenticity of the partner's previous intimacy by reinterpreting it as a staged "performance". This study expands current language studies by showing how popular music may be methodically examined to identify the precise cognitive architecture of emotional vulnerability by mapping these particular grammatical and lexical choices to cognitive states. However, as this study only examines one track, it must be admitted that its broadness is limited. Although "Did You Like Her in the Morning?" offers a rich, focused dataset for this particular schema, more investigation involving a larger corpus of modern song lyrics is required to determine whether these cognitive stylistic patterns are unique to this particular artist or a reflection of more general linguistic patterns within the genre.

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