

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Metaphors play a central role in how people express thoughts, emotions and experiences. They are more than just poetic decoration. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors shape the way people think and understand abstract concepts through more concrete ones. In other words, when someone says *“I am falling apart”* or *“this pain is eating me alive,”* they are not being dramatic, they are translating emotional suffering into physical terms to make it more understandable. This is the foundation of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which argues that people rely on embodied experiences to talk about things like sadness, fear, anxiety or loneliness. These metaphors show how deeply connected language is to human cognition.

Conceptual metaphors are everywhere, especially in emotionally loaded forms or expression like poetry and music. Kövecses (2010) points out that a metaphor is one of the most powerful tools for expressing emotion, because it allows people to map their internal feelings onto the physical world. Metaphors like *“drowning in a grief,”* *“locked inside my head,”* or *“a heart of stone”* do not just sound artistic, they reflect how people actually think and feel. They turn emotions into something visible and touchable. That is why metaphor is so important when analyzing lyrics, especially in music that deals with intense emotional struggles.

One genre of music where metaphors show up constantly is Depressive Suicidal Black Metal (DSBM). This subgenre of black metal emerged in the early 2000s, drawing from the harsh sound of traditional black metal, but focusing more on internal suffering

than external rebellion. DSBM is defined by lo-fi production, slow tempos, screaming vocals and lyrics that explore themes like depression, suicide, isolation and self-hatred. Instead of grand narratives about evil and mythology, DSBM zooms in on deeply personal pain. The lyrics often feel like diary entries, but are layered with poetic devices, especially metaphor, to give emotional weight to the suffering they describe.

Metaphors in DSBM is not just stylistic. It becomes a way of structuring painful experiences. As Wallach, Berger, and Greene (2011) observe, extreme music often provides an outlet for expressing marginalized or taboo emotions. DSBM in particular creates space for raw psychological content that would be hard to articulate directly. The metaphors in this genre often involve physical imagery: wounds, decay, drowning, freezing, collapse, confinement and more. These metaphors help give shape to abstract emotional states like despair, numbness and alienation. They turn invisible pain into something listeners can imagine, relate to and even feel.

One band that captures this use of metaphor is Decalius, a one-man DSBM project from the United States. Known for its raw sound and emotionally intense lyrics, Decalius has released several albums whose lyrical content reflects extreme psychological and emotional experiences. Two of the most significant are *Hated by Life Itself* (2022) and *Dehumanizing Loneliness* (2023). These releases feature lyrics that are dark, personal and metaphor-heavy. They do not describe emotions in literal way, but instead use metaphor to represent the inner world of the speaker. In many cases, these metaphors seem to reflect a deeper cognitive structure, not just artistic choices, but a mental framework for processing emotional pain.

This study focuses on analyzing selected lyrics from Decalious using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). It aims to identify the conceptual metaphors that appear across the songs and to explore the dominant themes represented through those metaphors. By focusing on a single band and specific lyrical content, this research hopes to provide a more focused and in-depth understanding of how metaphor functions within DSBM genre. The choice to study Decalious is based not only on the lyrical content, but also the band's position as a typical example of the genre's emotional and aesthetic tendencies.

Although metaphor in song lyrics has been studied in various genre, including pop, hip-hop and metal, there has been little attention paid to DSBM in academic research. Most existing studies focus on the sociological or psychological aspects of black metal, often overlooking the linguistic and cognitive layers of the lyrics. This research hopes to fill that gap by showing how metaphor is not only a part of the lyrical style, but a key to understanding the emotional and cognitive depth of the music. It will show how metaphor helps structure extreme experiences, making them accessible to both the artist and the audience.

By applying CMT to the lyrics of Decalious, this study will contribute to the broader field of metaphor research and also offer insight into how language functions in extreme forms of musical expression. It will also explore how people use metaphor not just to describe suffering, but to survive it and to turn pain into something that can be processed, communicated and shared.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background above, song lyrics often use language that goes beyond direct message delivery. They can serve as a rich medium for metaphors, allowing for the expression of emotional, social and psychological experiences. This research examines

conceptual metaphors that connect two conceptual domains, namely the source domain and the target domain, to make abstract concepts more understandable through concrete elements. In the context of Depressive Suicidal Black Metal (DSBM), conceptual metaphors play a crucial role in portraying life, death and despair, as reflected in the song lyrics of Decalius. Therefore, there are two research questions that will be answered by this research as follows:

1. What are the types of conceptual metaphors found in the selected Decalius' song lyrics?
2. What dominant themes are represented through the conceptual metaphors in the selected Decalius' song lyrics?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

1. To identify the types the conceptual metaphors found in selected Decalius song lyrics.

This involve locating expressions in the lyrics that reflect conceptual metaphors, then classifying them based on their source and target domains. The goal is to understand the variety and types of conceptual metaphors that appear in Decalius' work.

2. To examine the dominant themes that emerge through the conceptual metaphors identified in the selected Decalius' song lyrics.

This step goes beyond categorization by examining the meanings and implications behind the metaphors. It explores how each metaphor connects to the emotional and psychological stated expressed in the song and how these reflect the thematic core of DSBM.

1.4 Focus of the Research

This research specifically focuses on the identification and analysis of conceptual metaphor in selected songs by Decalius, a band known for its emotionally intense and thematically dark lyrics. The study limits its scope to six songs: *Hated by Life Itself*, *Unfair...*, and *Unknown* from the EP *Hated by Life Itself* (2022), as well as *Shotgun*, *Inside...*, and *A Miserable Life...* from the album *Dehumanizing Loneliness* (2023). These songs are selected because they contain a rich variety of metaphorical expression that are suitable for depth-in analysis using Conceptual Metaphor Theory. By focusing on these particular works, the research avoids spreading the analysis too thin across the band's wider discography and instead allows for a more concentrated and in-depth interpretation of how these themes are constructed through metaphor.

The study applies Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) as the main analytical framework, aiming to uncover the conceptual mappings that link concrete imagery to abstract emotional and psychological states. This approach makes it possible to understand how Decalius' lyrics use metaphor not as only poetic device but also as cognitive tool that shapes how listeners perceive and process the feelings of despair and isolation. The focus of the research is therefore limited both in terms of the data source, which is only the selected six songs, and in terms of analytical scope, concentrating solely on metaphorical expressions found within the selected lyrics

1.5 Methods of the Research

This research adopts a qualitative approach, which is commonly used in linguistic research to interpret and explain language phenomena in depth without reducing them to numerical data (Creswell, 2014). Since metaphors in song lyrics often contain nuanced

emotional and cultural meanings, this approach allows the researcher to explore how Decalious' lyrics encode abstract concepts such as despair, suicide, and alienation through metaphorical language. The data for this research are drawn from six songs: *Hated by Life Itself*, *Unfair...*, and *Unknown* from the EP *Hated by Life Itself* (2022), as well as *Shotgun*, *Inside...* and *A Miserable Life...* from the album *Dehumanizing Loneliness* (2023). These songs were chosen because they offer a rich variety of metaphorical expressions suitable for analysis using Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

This methodological approach is designed to maintain both analytical depth and thematic sensitivity. By combining qualitative descriptive analysis with Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the study not only identifies the linguistic patterns of metaphor in Decalious' lyrics but also uncovers the cognitive and emotional structures these metaphors reflect (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). The focus on extreme emotional content requires an interpretative method that acknowledges the genre's aesthetic values and emotional weight of its content (Pihlaja, 2017). Therefore, the methodology is expected to produce findings that are both linguistically precise and thematically faithful to the nature of Depressive Suicidal Black Metal, while offering insight into how extreme music communicates complex human experiences through metaphor.

1.5.1 Data Collection

The data for this study were drawn from the song lyrics of Decalious, a one-man Depressive Suicidal Black Metal (DSBM) project from the United States. A total of six songs were selected as the corpus of this research, comprising three songs from the EP *Hated by Life Itself* (2022), namely *Hated by Life Itself*, *Unfair...*, and *Unknown*, and three songs from the album *Dehumanizing Loneliness* (2023), namely *Shotgun*, *Inside...*, and *A Miserable Life...* The lyrics of all six songs were obtained from Encyclopedia

Metallum: The Metal Archives (www.metal-archives.com), a widely recognized and comprehensive online database dedicated to metal music, which serves as a reliable source for verifying song lyrics and discographical information.

The selection of these six songs was carried out through purposive sampling, a technique in which the researcher deliberately selects data based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Creswell, 2014). Three criteria were applied in the selection process. First, metaphorical density: only songs containing a sufficient richness and variety of metaphorical expressions were included, as the primary aim of this study is to analyze conceptual metaphors in depth using the CMT framework. Second, album representation: songs were selected to ensure balanced representation across both of Decalious' major releases, with three songs drawn from the EP *Hated by Life Itself* (2022) and three songs drawn from the album *Dehumanizing Loneliness* (2023), so that the corpus reflects the full scope of the artist's available work. Third, lyric availability: only songs whose lyrics were available and verifiable through Encyclopedia Metallum were included in the corpus, in order to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data.

Songs that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the corpus. Specifically, songs that exhibited low metaphorical density, were not represented proportionally across both releases, or whose lyrics were not available on Encyclopedia Metallum were not considered for analysis. This selective process ensured that the data collected were both linguistically rich and reliably sourced, allowing for a rigorous and focused application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

1.5.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis follows Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which posits that metaphor is not just a stylistic device but a fundamental mechanism of

thought, allowing people to understand abstract experiences through more concrete terms.

The analysis uses the three main types of conceptual metaphor:

a) Structural Metaphors

In this type, one conceptual domain is understood in terms of another that has a more clearly structured framework. For example, emotional suffering might be conceptualized as *warfare*, where depression is an enemy and survival is a victory. Such metaphors provide a narrative structure for abstract emotional struggles.

b) Orientational Metaphor

These metaphors organize concepts according to spatial orientation, often derived from bodily experience. In DSBM lyrics, emotional states are frequently mapped onto vertical movement, such as *falling into despair* or *rising from pain*, which align with the conceptual axis of UP (positive) vs. DOWN (negative).

c) Ontological Metaphor

These involve treating abstract experiences as physical entities or substances. For example, pain may be depicted as an object that can be *held*, *carried*, or *removed*. This allows listeners to visualize intangible emotions in concrete terms, making them more relatable and impactful.

The analysis is process proceeds in three steps:

a) Metaphor Identification Procedure

Using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) developed by Pragglejaz Group (2007), the researcher compares each word or phrase's

contextual meaning with its more basic meaning, the expression is identified as metaphorical.

b) Classification into Metaphor Types

Each identified metaphor is categorized as structural, orientational or ontological, according to Lakoff and Johnson's framework. This classification reveals the cognitive strategies underlying Decalio's lyricism.

c) Interpretation in Thematic Context

Finally, each metaphor is interpreted in relation to the thematic content that emerges from the analysis, including the emotional and psychological experiences expressed in the lyrics. This stage also considers the cultural and aesthetic context of DSBM, which often frames despair and death not only as personal struggles but also as existential and philosophical reflections (Podoshen et al., 2014)

This result will be presented descriptively, supported by direct lyrics quotations and supplemented with classification table showing the metaphor type, source and target domain, example lyrics, embodiment, function and theme. This approach ensures transparency in analysis and facilitates a clearer understanding of how conceptual metaphor operate in Decalio's work.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

- a. Conceptual Metaphor: A cognitive process in which one idea (the target domain) is understood in terms of another (the source domain) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In this research, it is used to interpret how Decalio's lyrics convey abstract emotional and psychological experiences through concrete metaphorical imagery.

- b. Source Domain: The concrete or familiar concept used to understand a more abstract idea. For example, physical pain or environmental conditions may represent emotional suffering in song lyrics (Kövecses, 2010).
- c. Target Domain: The abstract concept that is described or understood through the source domain, such as despair, such as despair and psychological suffering as expressed in the song lyrics.
- d. Depressive Suicidal Black Metal (DSBM): A subgenre of black metal characterized by slow tempos, melancholic melodies, harsh vocals, and lyrical themes about depression, hopelessness, self-harm, and suicide.
- e. Decalius: A one-man DSBM project whose lyrics are characterized by intense metaphorical language expressing extreme psychological and emotional experiences.

