

The less prominent types in figurative language by motionless in white's reincarnate (2014)

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Abstract: This study aims to identify and analyze the less prominent types of figurative language in three selected songs from Motionless in White's Reincarnate (2014) album. Using a qualitative research design, the study explores how personification, hyperbole, simile, and onomatopoeia function to express emotion, intensity, and atmosphere in the lyrics. The data were collected from the songs Reincarnate, Puppets 3 (The Grand Finale), and Break the Cycle. The analysis applies theories from Abrams and Harpham (2015), Perrine (1982), and Leech (1981) to classify and interpret figurative expressions. The results show that while metaphor remains the dominant device in the album, other figures play crucial roles in enriching the lyrical meaning and enhancing emotional depth. Personification humanizes abstract concepts, hyperbole amplifies emotional power, simile clarifies abstract imagery, and onomatopoeia strengthens the auditory texture of the songs. The study concludes that these less prominent types serve as complementary linguistic tools that reinforce the album's dark yet poetic tone.

Keywords: figurative language; personification; hyperbole; simile; onomatopoeia

1. Introduction

Language functions as both a communication system and a creative tool that allows humans to express emotion, imagination, and individuality. In artistic media such as literature and music, language goes beyond its referential role to become symbolic, emotional, and aesthetic [Busch et al. \(2025\)](#); [Dolese, \(2026\)](#). According to [Abrams & Harpham \(2015\)](#); [Sarwoningtyas et al., \(2025\)](#), figurative language is a deliberate deviation from ordinary speech that aims to achieve heightened meaning, beauty, and emotional force. Figurative language, therefore, transforms plain expression into evocative imagery. [Pfeiffer & Perrine \(1978\)](#) argues that figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole give language emotional and intellectual depth by linking abstract thoughts to sensory images. Figurative devices help songwriters to "paint emotions" that cannot be directly stated, enabling listeners to experience the feelings being conveyed.

[Leech \(1981\)](#) explains that figurative language not only enriches expression but also has cognitive significance, as it shapes human perception of reality. Through figurative forms, meaning becomes more vivid and multidimensional. The same principle applies to music, where lyrics often act as emotional narratives that parallel the sound, rhythm, and atmosphere of the song. The American metalcore band Motionless in White, formed in 2005, is known for its dark thematic imagery, emotional complexity, and lyrical sophistication. Their 2014 album Reincarnate explores psychological and spiritual dimensions of existence death, rebirth, pain, transformation, and self-identity. The lyrics

are layered with symbolism and figurative elements that construct the album's gothic and emotional tone.

Several previous studies have discussed figurative language in different literary and musical contexts. [Firdelina & Marlina \(2024\)](#); [Ramadhani.F & Marlina, \(2025\)](#) examined figurative language in digital children's poems with a friendship theme on WeAreTeacher.com, revealing that metaphors, similes, and personification help build emotional connections and foster linguistic creativity. Similarly, [Putri & Marlina \(2023\)](#) investigated figurative language in Sylvia M. Vardell's Children's Poetry (2020) with Family and Friends themes and found metaphor as the most dominant type. They focused on hyperbole in digital children's poems from Poets.org with Nature and Environment themes, emphasizing that hyperbole effectively conveys conceptual and emotional meaning. Sitohang & Marlina (2023) also identified metaphor as the most frequent device in Karla Kukin's children's poems, reflecting how figurative language conveys emotions in imaginative forms.

In a different genre, [Handika et al. \(2019\)](#) analyzed figurative language in Hasan Minhaj's Homecoming King stand-up comedy, highlighting how figures of speech strengthen rhetorical effect and humor. Additionally, [Kelbi & Marlina \(2023\)](#) examined figurative language in Irfan Makki's Islamic songs and found metaphor, personification, and hyperbole as key devices expressing faith and emotion. These previous studies indicate that figurative language especially metaphor, hyperbole, and personification appears as a universal linguistic feature across genres. Building on these findings, this research explores how the less prominent types of figurative language personification, hyperbole, simile, and onomatopoeia function to enrich the expressive and emotional tone of Reincarnate (2014) by Motionless in White.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design to analyze the use of figurative language, focusing particularly on metaphor, in three selected songs from Motionless in White's Reincarnate (2014) album. The qualitative approach is suitable because the data consist of linguistic expressions that require contextual and interpretive analysis ([Creswell & Creswell, 2018](#)). The data were taken from the lyrics of Reincarnate, Puppets 3 (The Grand Finale), and Break the Cycle. These songs were selected due to their thematic prominence in depicting emotional and spiritual transformation. The lyrics were obtained from official sources such as the Fearless Records album booklet. The researcher listened to each song repeatedly and analyzed the lyrics line by line to identify all figurative expressions. The classification of figurative language followed the frameworks of [Abrams & Harpham \(2015\)](#) and [Pfeiffer & Perrine, \(1978\)](#). After identifying all types, metaphor was selected as the focus because it appeared most frequently. Each metaphor was then interpreted based on its symbolic and contextual meaning using the theories of [Gibbs \(1994\)](#), [Kövecses \(2010\)](#), and [Lakoff & Johnson \(1980\)](#). The results were presented descriptively and supported by explanatory tables containing lyric lines, sources, and interpretive meanings. This method ensured systematic analysis and clear interpretation of how metaphors functioned in the lyrical texts.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Research findings

Based on the analysis, a total of 16 figurative expressions were found in the selected lyrics of Motionless in White's Reincarnate (2014) album. These include ten hyperboles, three onomatopoeias, two similes, and one personifications. Although metaphor was found to be the most dominant type in

previous research, these four less prominent types significantly contribute to the expressive depth and emotional tone of the lyrics.

Table 1. Hyperboles found in the lyrics of Motionless in White’s Selected Songs

No	Lyric Line	Source	Explanation
1	I’ve swallowed your bullshit	S1, L24	Hyperbole; exaggerates the act of “swallowing” lies to express emotional exhaustion and disgust.
2	You make me fucking sick	S1, L26	Hyperbole; extreme exaggeration to show intense anger and revulsion toward someone’s behavior.
3	Spineless, a dominion of nothing is all you will reign	S1, L29	Hyperbole; overstates weakness and emptiness to mock a person’s false sense of power.
4	You’d give a fucking aspirin a headache	S1, L31	Hyperbole; exaggerates how unbearable someone is, emphasizing irritation and contempt.
5	Six fucking years I have waited to fucking cut you out of my life	S2, L12-13	Hyperbole; dramatizes prolonged suffering and determination to finally escape a toxic relationship.
6	A portrait of torture we paint, beguiling allure whilst adorned in lace	S2, L18-19	Hyperbole; exaggerates emotional pain as a work of art, showing the beauty and agony of deceitful love.
7	Spit you out, your beauty is bullshit	S2, L32-33	Hyperbole; expresses disgust and rejection, overstating hatred toward superficial beauty.
8	But heaven knows I’m miserable now	S2, L35-36	Hyperbole; dramatizes sorrow as if even heaven is aware, emphasizing deep emotional pain.
9	Six years I’ve pissed away	S2, L46	Hyperbole; exaggerates regret and wasted time, showing bitterness toward lost years.
10	Now I’m on my knees, try to drain this disease	S3, L12	Hyperbole; intensifies emotional suffering, likening pain to a disease being drained away.

The use of hyperbole in the lyrics amplifies strong emotions and dramatizes human suffering. Lines such as “*You make me fucking sick*” and “*You’d give a fucking aspirin a headache*” from *Reincarnate* express deep disgust and frustration toward betrayal and hypocrisy. These extreme exaggerations highlight psychological exhaustion and revulsion, as the speaker releases repressed rage through aggressive language.

Table 2. Onomatopoeias found in the lyrics of Motionless in White’s Selected Songs

No	Lyric line	Source	Explanation
1	“Blegh!”	S1, L2	Mimics the aggressive guttural scream typical of metalcore music, expressing rage and energy.
2	“Blegh!” (repeated)	S1, L48	Repetition reinforces emotional aggression and intensity.
3	“Oh!”	S2, L1	Expresses pain and raw emotion through vocal outburst.

In Puppets 3 (The Grand Finale), hyperbolic expressions such as “*A portrait of torture we paint*” and “*In the grave you dug for me*” transform emotional agony into vivid imagery of death and decay. The exaggeration mirrors the self-destructive beauty of pain, reflecting the gothic aesthetic of the album. Meanwhile, in *Break the Cycle*, “*Now I’m on my knees, try to drain this disease*” portrays mental suffering as a tangible illness, dramatizing the struggle for emotional healing. As [Abrams & Harpham \(2015\)](#) note, hyperbole enhances expressive force without necessarily distorting truth; rather, it intensifies emotional perception. In *Reincarnate*, exaggeration functions as catharsis an emotional release that aligns with the aggressive sound and psychological depth of metalcore music. The device reflects how Motionless in White channels human extremity into art, making hyperbole the core of their dark and expressive tone.

Onomatopoeia appears three times across the selected songs and contributes to the auditory power of the lyrics. The sounds “Blegh!” and “Oh!” reproduce vocal aggression and emotional intensity, common features in metalcore performances. According to [Abrams & Harpham \(2015\)](#), onomatopoeia connects linguistic sound with sensory meaning, creating an immersive listening experience. In *Reincarnate*, the repetition of “Blegh!” mimics the guttural scream used to mark climactic sections, blending musical rhythm with linguistic expression. Similarly, “Oh!” in Puppets 3 (The Grand Finale) conveys pain and passion through spontaneous vocal outburst. As [Cuddon \(2012\)](#) explains, onomatopoeia carries emotional and auditory value simultaneously making language both seen and heard. Through this technique, Motionless in White transforms sound itself into emotion, merging voice, rhythm, and meaning.

Table 3. Similes Found in the Lyrics of Motionless in White’s Selected Songs

No	DN	Lyric line	Source	Explanation
1	34	“Like a scornful, lustful breed”	P2, L6	Uses “like” to compare people’s moral corruption to an impure breed, emphasizing depravity.
2	46	“Like a creature of oddity”	P2, L22	Uses “like” to compare the subject to an unusual being, highlighting strangeness or alienation.

Simile, though less frequent, serves to clarify abstract emotion by drawing direct comparisons. In Puppets 3 (The Grand Finale), lines such as “Like a scornful, lustful breed” and “Like a creature of oddity” compare human immorality and alienation to animalistic or monstrous imagery. This creates a grotesque reflection of human nature, highlighting the band’s critical view of moral corruption. As [Abrams & Harpham \(2015\)](#) explain, simile allows listeners to visualize emotion by connecting it to familiar experiences. In the album, these comparisons evoke imagery of sin and abnormality, reinforcing the lyrical focus on internal struggle and the loss of purity. Through simile, the band provides fleeting clarity amid emotional chaos, making the abstract more tangible and emotionally accessible.

Table 4. Personifications Found in the Lyrics of Motionless in White’s Selected Songs

DN	Lyric line	Source	Explanation
24	Dehumanizing virtue for your novelty	S2, L7	Personification; “virtue” is treated as a human entity that can be dehumanized, emphasizing the corruption of moral values for personal pleasure.

Personification appears rarely but plays a crucial role in humanizing abstract concepts such as virtue, destruction, and emotion. Expressions like “*Dehumanizing virtue for your novelty*” and “*A fatal heart preserved in wax*” assign human traits to moral or emotional entities, emphasizing how inner values can decay or be manipulated. According to [Abrams & Harpham \(2015\)](#), personification bridges emotion and imagery by transforming abstract ideas into human-like actions. In *Puppets 3 (The Grand Finale)*, virtue becomes a victim stripped of its humanity, reflecting the corruption of morality for pleasure. This technique intensifies moral conflict and allows listeners to empathize with abstract suffering. By animating concepts like virtue or guilt, *Motionless in White* dramatizes internal collapse in a deeply human way.

3.2 Discussion

The findings show that *Motionless in White’s Reincarnate* (2014) album uses figurative language not only to decorate the lyrics but also to express the intense emotions and inner conflicts behind them. While metaphor is the most dominant device according to previous studies, this research focuses on four less frequent yet equally important figures: hyperbole, onomatopoeia, simile, and personification. Each of these contributes to shaping the album’s dark, emotional, and expressive tone. Hyperbole appears most frequently among the four types. It serves as a way to release anger, frustration, and despair through extreme exaggeration. Lines such as “You make me fucking sick” and “Now I’m on my knees, try to drain this disease” reveal psychological pain and emotional exhaustion. The exaggeration does not distort meaning but intensifies it, allowing the listener to feel the speaker’s overwhelming emotions. As [Perrine \(1982\)](#) notes, hyperbole heightens emotional truth, making feelings more powerful and dramatic. In songs like *Reincarnate* and *Puppets 3 (The Grand Finale)*, hyperbole turns pain into performance transforming personal suffering into artistic expression that matches the raw sound of metalcore music.

Onomatopoeia supports the lyrical emotion through sound imitation. The guttural scream “*Blegh!*” and the spontaneous shout “*Oh!*” create a direct connection between sound and feeling. These expressions are typical of metalcore performance, where the voice itself becomes an instrument of emotion. [Cuddon \(2012\)](#) states that onomatopoeia fuses sound and meaning, allowing listeners to experience emotion both through hearing and imagination. In *Reincarnate*, the repetition of “*Blegh!*” amplifies aggression and defiance, while in *Puppets 3*, “*Oh!*” conveys raw pain and passion. This device strengthens the auditory texture of the lyrics and reflects the band’s energetic performance style. Simile appears less often but plays an essential role in clarifying abstract feelings. In *Puppets 3 (The Grand Finale)*, lines such as “*Like a scornful, lustful breed*” and “*Like a creature of oddity*” compare moral corruption and alienation to impure or abnormal beings. These comparisons allow the listener to visualize the emotions behind the lyrics more clearly. [Leech \(1981\)](#) explains that simile connects emotion with familiar images, making complex ideas easier to grasp. Here, simile helps portray the collapse of morality and the loss of identity central themes in the album’s exploration of darkness and transformation.

Personification, though the rarest, carries deep symbolic meaning. It gives human qualities to abstract concepts like virtue, pain, or destruction. For example, the line “*Dehumanizing virtue for your novelty*” treats moral goodness as a living being that can be corrupted or stripped of its purity. [Abrams & Harpham \(2015\)](#) describe personification as a bridge between emotion and imagery making invisible ideas feel human and alive. Through this device, the lyrics portray moral decay and inner suffering as something tangible and relatable, adding emotional depth to the album’s gothic tone. Taken together, these four figurative types form an interconnected expressive system. Hyperbole dominates emotional intensity, onomatopoeia strengthens sound and atmosphere, simile clarifies imagery, and personification humanizes abstract experiences. Their combination shows how *Motionless in White*

transforms language into emotion and sound into meaning. As [Abrams & Harpham \(2015\)](#) suggest, figurative language becomes a fusion of sound, image, and feeling. Overall, the use of these less prominent figures enriches the thematic unity of *Reincarnate*. Each device from exaggeration to sound imitation contributes to the same purpose: expressing struggle, transformation, and the search for meaning within pain. Together, they form the lyrical backbone of the album's emotional world.

4. Conclusion

This research analyzed four less prominent types of figurative language hyperbole, onomatopoeia, simile, and personification in selected songs from Motionless in White's *Reincarnate* (2014) album. A total of sixteen figurative expressions were identified: ten hyperboles, three onomatopoeias, two similes, and one personification. Among these, hyperbole appeared most frequently and served as the main channel for expressing anger, despair, and defiance. Its exaggerated statements intensified emotional truth and reflected the aggressive tone of metalcore music. Onomatopoeia contributed to the auditory and emotional rhythm of the songs, turning vocal expressions like "Blegh!" into instruments of raw feeling. Simile helped visualize abstract emotions by comparing them to concrete or grotesque images, while personification gave human qualities to abstract concepts such as virtue and destruction, deepening the moral dimension of the lyrics. Together, these figures show how Motionless in White blends language, sound, and emotion to build a unified artistic identity. Even though these types are less dominant than metaphor, they enrich the lyrical depth and strengthen the album's central themes of death, transformation, and emotional struggle. The findings suggest that figurative variety even in small quantities can greatly enhance expressive and aesthetic value in song lyrics. Further studies could examine other figurative aspects such as irony, symbolism, and imagery in different albums by Motionless in White or similar metalcore bands. Comparative analysis across genres could also reveal how figurative language reflects each genre's emotional and cultural identity. The results of this study can serve as a reference for teaching stylistics and semantics in literature or linguistics classes. Analyzing figurative language in song lyrics helps students understand how emotion and meaning are constructed through creative expression. These findings may inspire writers to explore various figurative techniques beyond metaphor. Combining exaggeration, sound imitation, and personification can create lyrics that are emotionally engaging, conceptually rich, and artistically powerful.

Author's declaration

Author contribution

Khaira Fadhlika Ramadhani: conceptualization, design of the research methodology, data collection, data analysis, and writing - the original manuscript. **Leni Marlina:** supervision, conceptual framework, methodological guidance, writing-review and revision, and approval- the final version for publication. **Nancy Elizabeth G:** methodological guidance, writing-review and revision, and approval- the final version for publication.

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Data availability

The primary data consist of song lyrics from *Reincarnate* (2014), an album by Motionless in White, obtained from official album materials and authorized lyric sources. No new datasets were generated, and no proprietary or restricted data were used in this research. All analyzed data are included within the article, and further inquiries regarding the data may be directed to the corresponding author.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this research and publication.

Ethical clearance

This research does not involve human participants, animals, or sensitive personal data. The study exclusively analyzes publicly available song lyrics as textual data for linguistic and literary purposes. Therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required for this research.

AI statement

This article is the original work of the authors without using AI tools for writing sentences and/or creating/editing tables and figures in this manuscript.

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