

A Study of Idiomatic Expressions in the Song *Eternally Yours* by Motionless in White

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Abstract

This study inv aprilaishaa@gmail.com estigates idiomatic expressions in the song *Eternally Yours* by the metalcore band Motionless in White, focusing on how figurative language communicates emotional depth and symbolic meaning. Idioms are culturally bound expressions whose meanings extend beyond literal interpretation, often posing challenges for non-native speakers and learners. Through a qualitative descriptive method, this research analyzes idiomatic expressions in the song's lyrics to interpret their contextual meanings. The analysis identified 9 idioms, all of which illustrate complex emotional states such as self-sacrifice, emotional vulnerability, and dark romantic devotion. These idioms not only enrich the lyrical style but also serve as tools to express themes of love, transformation, and shared suffering. The findings suggest that idiomatic expressions in metalcore lyrics are not merely stylistic choices but essential narrative devices that convey deeper emotional truths. This study contributes to the broader understanding of idiom usage in music.

Keywords: idiomatic expressions, lyric analysis, figurative language, Motionless in White, *Eternally Yours*

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INTRODUCTION

Idiomatic expressions represent one of the most colorful and culturally embedded aspects of language. Unlike standard vocabulary, idioms convey meanings that go beyond the literal definitions of the words, often reflecting shared experiences, cultural values, and social context. As Zoltán Kövecses (2010) emphasizes, idioms are systematically motivated, meaning their metaphorical underpinnings help explain their form and meaning. In linguistic and literary studies, idioms are especially valuable for exploring how language conveys meaning in creative and figurative ways. Their non-literal nature poses challenges for learners and analysts alike, making idioms a rich area for focused investigation.

As moon (2007) said not just as decorative language, but as cognitive and expressive tools that's why in English, idiomatic expressions are widely used not only in everyday conversation but also in various forms of literature and art, including songs. Songwriters often incorporate idioms into their lyrics to create vivid imagery, evoke emotions, and convey complex ideas in a concise and memorable way. Understanding these idiomatic expressions is crucial for grasping the full meaning and emotional nuance of the lyrics.

One song that exemplifies the rich use of figurative language, including idioms, is *Eternally Yours* by Motionless in White. As a metalcore band known for combining emotional depth with powerful imagery, Motionless in White uses language creatively to explore themes such as eternal love, loyalty, and devotion. However, the idiomatic expressions used in the song may not always be immediately clear to all listeners, especially those who are non-native English speakers.

Given the complexity and cultural specificity of idioms, it becomes necessary to conduct a study that identifies and analyzes these expressions within the song. By doing so, the meaning behind the lyrics can be better understood, providing insights not only into the language itself but also into the thematic elements the band seeks to express. This aligns with Glucksberg's (2001)

view who challenges traditional views that figurative speech is more complex than literal meaning. Instead, he suggests that both literal and figurative expressions rely on the same linguistic and pragmatic cognitive operations, emphasizing that idioms are processed similarly to everyday language.

Therefore, this research focuses on the identification and interpretation of idiomatic expressions found in *Eternally Yours*. The analysis will center on uncovering the idioms present in the lyrics and explaining their meanings based on the context of the song. This study aims to assist readers and listeners in appreciating the richness of the language used and in understanding the deeper layers of meaning conveyed through idiomatic expressions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Idiomatic expressions are integral to understanding how language works beyond its literal meaning. In English, idioms are defined as fixed expressions whose overall meanings cannot be deduced from the meanings of the individual words. According to Liu (2008), idioms are a type of multi-word unit that convey meaning holistically, often relying on metaphor and cultural context. Similarly, Grant and Bauer (2004) describe idioms as semi-fixed expressions with unpredictable meanings, emphasizing that they are essential to mastering native-level fluency in English. These expressions often appear opaque to language learners and even to native speakers without the necessary contextual or cultural knowledge. This makes them particularly rich for linguistic study, especially within creative texts like songs, where idioms contribute to style and tone.

Idiomatic expressions serve various functions in communication. They not only enrich the language but also offer speakers efficient ways to express complex ideas, emotions, and attitudes. As Moon (2007) notes, idioms are tools for expressing evaluation, irony, and emotional states succinctly. They function as linguistic shortcuts, carrying social and cultural implications that go beyond the words themselves. In song lyrics, idioms often serve to intensify the emotional message or to create vivid imagery. According to Glucksberg (2001), idiomatic expressions reflect shared knowledge and cultural narratives, making them powerful tools for enhancing audience engagement and connection. Through idioms, songwriters can encapsulate universal feelings in familiar expressions, strengthening the resonance of their work.

Several studies have been conducted to analyze the use of idioms in music lyrics, emphasizing the importance of figurative language in this medium. Suryati and Marlina (2020) examined idioms in English pop songs and concluded that these expressions contribute not only to aesthetic value but also to meaning clarity and cultural identity. Likewise, Kurniawan (2022) explored idiomatic language in the rock genre and found that idioms often align with thematic concerns such as rebellion, love, and existential reflection. These studies demonstrate that idioms are frequently employed in musical texts to enrich the narrative and emotional impact of the lyrics, making them suitable subjects for academic exploration.

This study is supported by both semantic theory and figurative language theory. According to Saeed (2016), semantics is concerned with meaning at all levels of language structure, including how fixed expressions such as idioms convey meaning in context. The semantic approach allows researchers to investigate how idiomatic meaning differs from literal interpretation and how context influences comprehension. In parallel, figurative language theory provides a framework for understanding the metaphorical aspects of idioms. Kövecses (2010) argues that idioms are based on conceptual metaphors rooted in physical and cultural experiences. These metaphors shape the way humans understand abstract concepts, which explains the pervasiveness of idioms in artistic and expressive forms like music. Together, these theories offer a solid foundation for analyzing idiomatic expressions in song lyrics.

1. Types of Idioms: Structure and Form

Many scholars, including Liu (2003), Glucksberg (2001), and Langlotz (2006), have proposed that idioms can be classified based on their structural patterns. From these models, we can identify three relevant types:

- **Fixed expressions:** These idioms are highly conventionalized and non-compositional, meaning their meaning cannot be derived from the individual words. For instance, *"rot in*

hell” expresses emotional judgment and condemnation in a rigid form.

- **Phrasal idioms:** Typically verb-based and partially compositional, these idioms still carry meanings that go beyond the literal. An example is *“blow the bridge to the past”*, which metaphorically suggests the act of cutting ties with one's history.
- **Clausal idioms:** Full sentences or clauses used metaphorically, often seen in lyrical or poetic language. Idioms like *“sleep in this dirt we call our bed”* express shared hardship through metaphorical storytelling.

These categories allow us to understand how idioms function at the syntactic level while also pointing to their expressive depth.

2. Functions of Idioms: Expression Beyond Words

Beyond their structure, idioms also serve various communicative and emotional purposes. Drawing on research from Gibbs (2006), Kövecses (2010), and Barkema (2006), we can outline three core functions found in the selected idioms:

- **Aesthetic:** Idioms used to beautify language, add metaphorical depth, or evoke emotion. For example, *“melt your heart encased in wax”* doesn't just describe emotional change—it paints a poetic image of transformation.
 - **Expressive:** These idioms reflect personal feelings like sorrow, anger, hope, or love. *“Lie but say I won't”* reveals an emotional contradiction, expressing internal conflict and self-deception.
 - **Rhetorical:** Idioms that are used to persuade, highlight, or intensify meaning, often through exaggeration or irony. For instance, *“rewrite the bitter end”* suggests a desire to challenge fate or alter an emotional narrative.
- These functions demonstrate that idioms are not merely figures of speech—they are tools for emotional storytelling and identity expression.

3. Idioms as Metaphorical Representations of Human Experience

Modern cognitive linguistics, particularly the **Conceptual Metaphor Theory** developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) and furthered by Kövecses (2010), shows that many idioms are rooted in embodied human experiences. Emotions, memories, relationships, and trauma are all commonly expressed through metaphorical language.

METHODOLOGY

This research applies a qualitative descriptive method to examine idiomatic expressions found in the lyrics of the song “Eternally Yours” by Motionless in White. A qualitative descriptive approach is considered appropriate for this study because it allows for a deeper understanding of non-literal meanings in linguistic expressions, particularly in artistic texts such as song lyrics. As Creswell (2014) explains, qualitative research focuses on the interpretation of meaning from language and texts in a natural setting. Similarly, Moleong (2012) highlights that qualitative research is essential for understanding the underlying meanings behind language, especially in contexts where subjective interpretation is necessary. Nazir (2013) adds that descriptive methods are effective in portraying the characteristics of particular linguistic phenomena as they appear in real-life communication.

The data source for this research is the complete, published lyrics of “Eternally Yours”. This song was selected for its emotionally rich and poetic language, which is characteristic of the band's writing style and believed to contain idiomatic expressions that are both metaphorical and culturally influenced. Since idioms are often used in songs to intensify emotional meaning, the lyrics provide a suitable corpus for linguistic analysis.

The data collection process was conducted through close reading. The researcher carefully examined each line of the lyrics to identify potential idiomatic expressions. Idioms were recognized based on their deviation from literal meaning, following McCarthy and O'Dell's (2010) definition of idioms as expressions whose meanings cannot be derived directly from the meanings of their individual words. Expressions that appeared ambiguous or metaphorical were noted and subjected to further interpretation.

In the data analysis, the selected idiomatic expressions were interpreted based on their surrounding context in the lyrics. Rather than classifying the idioms into categories, the analysis focused on understanding the intended meaning of each idiom in relation to the overall message of the song. This involved examining how the idiom functions within the line, stanza, and emotional narrative of the lyrics. Dictionary sources such as the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary and the Cambridge Idioms Dictionary were consulted to confirm conventional meanings, which were then compared with contextual meanings to determine any shifts or extensions in meaning due to poetic usage. By analyzing these expressions in their lyrical context, the study aims to provide insight into how idioms enrich the emotional and poetic quality of the song, and to deepen the understanding of idiomatic use in modern English songwriting.

FINDINGS

Motionless In White's "Eternally Yours," from their 2017 album *Graveyard Shift*, presents a compelling study in contemporary metalcore's engagement with themes of eternal love and self-sacrifice. Departing from their earlier narratives rooted in external inspirations, this track showcases a self-contained storyline crafted by lead vocalist Chris Motionless.

IDIOMS IN ETERNALLY YOURS

In the song "Eternally Yours" by Motionless in White, several idiomatic expressions are used to convey intense emotional states, complex relationships, and dark romantic devotion. These idioms often rely on metaphor and symbolic language rather than literal meaning, allowing the lyrics to communicate layered, emotionally charged ideas. Here are some of the most notable idiomatic expressions found in the song along with the meaning:

NO	IDIOMS FOUND	MEANING	TYPE OF IDIOM	FUNCTION OF IDIOM
1.	Blow the bridge to the past	Completely cut off ties with one's history or past experiences.	Phrasal idiom	Aesthetic, Expressive
2.	Melt your heart encased in wax	Soften someone's emotional barriers or break through their emotional coldness.	Clausal idiom	Aesthetic, Expressive
3.	Bury all of my bones	Abandon or sacrifice one's deepest truths or identity	Clausal idiom	Aesthetic, Expressive
4.	Lie but say I won't	Intend to deceive while outwardly claiming honesty.	Clausal idiom	Expressive, Rhetorical
5.	Join me in pieces	Unite through shared emotional damage or brokenness.	Phrasal idiom	Aesthetic, Expressive
6.	Rot in this garden made of stones	Emotionally waste away in a lifeless, barren relationship or setting.	Clausal idiom	Aesthetic, Expressive
7.	Sleep in this dirt we call our bed	Accept hardship or a grim reality as part of a shared relationship.	Clausal idiom	Aesthetic, Expressive
8.	Rewrite the bitter end	Try to change a painful or tragic outcome into something new.	Phrasal idiom	Aesthetic, Rhetorical
9	Rot in hell	Suffer endlessly, often as a sign of extreme emotional or moral punishment, possibly shared with someone else.	Fixed expression	Expressive, Rhetorical

Based on structural analysis and supported by the classifications of Liu (2003), Glucksberg (2001), and Langlotz (2006), the nine idioms found in *Eternally Yours* can be grouped into three types: phrasal idioms, clausal idioms, and fixed expressions. Phrasal idioms such as "blow the bridge to the past," "join me in pieces," and "rewrite the bitter end" are verb-based phrases whose

meanings extend beyond the literal combination of their parts. Clausal idioms including “melt your heart encased in wax,” “bury all of my bones,” “lie but say I won’t,” “rot in this garden made of stones,” and “sleep in this dirt we call our bed” take the form of full clauses or complete metaphoric ideas embedded within narrative lyrics, which makes them poetic and expressive. Lastly, “rot in hell” is a fixed expression, widely used and understood idiomatically to express judgment or condemnation, though in this song it is reinterpreted as a declaration of undying loyalty. This variety of structural types reinforces how idioms can serve diverse expressive functions in lyrics from emotional nuance to narrative intensity highlighting the role of figurative language as both a stylistic and communicative device in metalcore songwriting.

ANALYSIS OF THE IDIOMS

1. Blow the bridge to the past

The phrase “Blow the bridge to the past” is a vivid metaphor that represents the complete and deliberate destruction of any connection to one’s previous life, identity, or experiences. A bridge typically symbolizes a link between two moments or identities, and in this context, its destruction implies an irreversible rejection of the past in favor of transformation. This idiom reflects what Liu (2008) identifies as a multi-word expression whose meaning is non-literal and context dependent, requiring holistic interpretation. In line with Kövecses’ (2010) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the idiom translates the abstract concept of emotional detachment into a concrete physical act, allowing the audience to conceptualize inner change through tangible imagery. Glucksberg (2001) further supports this interpretation by asserting that idioms operate on familiar conceptual structures that make them cognitively accessible even when metaphorically dense. Thus, the phrase functions not just as poetic expression, but as a narrative device grounded in metaphorical thought, communicating the speaker’s emotional rupture and total commitment to a new identity forged through love and loss.

2. Melt your heart encased in wax

The phrase “Melt your heart encased in wax” is a metaphor for breaking through someone’s emotional barriers, portraying a heart sealed within a layer of wax as a symbol of emotional coldness or self protection. The choice of wax, solid yet meltable, suggests that emotional defenses, while seemingly impenetrable, can be softened by warmth, love, or intensity. This aligns with Liu’s (2008) explanation of idioms as figurative multi-word expressions whose meanings rely heavily on metaphorical context rather than literal components. Kövecses (2010), through Conceptual Metaphor Theory, explains that emotional experiences are often conceptualized using physical processes in this case, emotions are heat and the heart is a container allowing listeners to understand emotional vulnerability as a tangible act of melting. Moreover, Glucksberg (2001) points out that idioms simplify complex internal states into cognitively familiar images, making this expression both emotionally resonant and linguistically efficient. In the context of the song, this idiom reveals the speaker’s intense desire to restore feeling and connection by penetrating emotional distance through a passionate and transformative force.

3. Bury all of my bones

The phrase “Bury all of my bones” is a metaphor that evokes the act of laying to rest one’s most essential and enduring aspects bones symbolizing the inner self, identity, or truths that remain even after external elements have withered away. This idiom suggests not merely forgetting the past, but a conscious and symbolic burial of the self, implying emotional sacrifice or even self-erasure for the sake of transformation or devotion. As Liu (2008) explains, idioms are multi-word expressions whose meanings are contextually constructed and cannot be interpreted literally, and in this case, the imagery of burial signifies a deep emotional decision. Kövecses (2010) further supports this with the notion that idioms often reflect embodied experience in this case, emotional surrender is conceptualized as physical burial, reinforcing the metaphorical power of the phrase. Glucksberg’s (2001) theory adds that such idiomatic constructions are processed through familiar conceptual frameworks, allowing listeners to intuitively grasp profound psychological transitions through concrete imagery. In the context of the song, the idiom reveals the speaker’s readiness to abandon all remnants of selfhood in a symbolic death motivated by consuming love or loyalty.

4. Lie but say I won't

The phrase “Lie but say I won't” captures a striking internal conflict where one knowingly chooses to deceive while maintaining an outward performance of honesty. This idiom illustrates a contradiction between truth and perception, shedding light on emotional manipulation or self-preservation masked by fabricated sincerity. As Liu (2008) argues, idioms often encapsulate abstract psychological states in fixed expressions, with meanings that go beyond the literal interpretation of the words. Here, deception and denial are entwined into one cohesive phrase that resonates with Glucksberg's (2001) view of idioms as cognitive shortcuts enabling complex moral tensions to be communicated through familiar linguistic forms. Moreover, Kövecses (2010) reinforces the idea that idioms operate within conceptual metaphors, in this case framing dishonesty as an act that can be “performed” or hidden, revealing how personal and relational conflicts are often metaphorically structured. In the lyrical context, this idiom becomes a vehicle for expressing vulnerability, guilt, and the fragile balance between love and betrayal, portraying dishonesty not merely as a moral flaw but as a desperate strategy to preserve emotional closeness.

5. Join me in pieces

The phrase “Join me in pieces” is a metaphor that conveys the idea of coming together not in wholeness or strength, but through mutual emotional fragmentation and vulnerability. The phrase suggests that both individuals are broken in some way, carrying pain, trauma, or inner turmoil, and it is precisely in that broken state that they are invited to unite. Rather than offering each other healing or completion, the invitation is to share in the brokenness itself, to accept and connect through the damage they both carry. This line reflects a kind of dark intimacy, where love is not built on fixing each other but on embracing the raw, shattered aspects of their beings. It emphasizes emotional honesty in its most fragile form, where the connection is forged not despite their suffering but because of it. In the context of the song's theme of destructive devotion, it becomes a powerful symbol of a bond formed in mutual ruin, suggesting that their love exists in the wreckage rather than outside of it. The idiom ultimately speaks to the idea of finding companionship and meaning in shared emotional collapse.

6. Rot in this garden made of stones

The phrase “Rot in this garden made of stones” combines symbolic imagery to depict emotional deterioration within a lifeless and unyielding environment. While a garden traditionally represents growth, beauty, and renewal, describing it as “made of stones” removes all connotations of fertility and hope, replacing them with coldness and emotional sterility. The use of “rot” in this context does not suggest organic transformation, but rather a prolonged decline in a place that cannot nourish or sustain emotional healing. This idiom exemplifies Liu's (2008) notion of idioms as figurative multi-word expressions whose meanings are contextually constructed, often representing internal states metaphorically. Kövecses' (2010) Conceptual Metaphor Theory further supports this interpretation, showing how human experiences such as emotional stagnation are often mapped onto physical spaces, with the lifeless garden serving as a metaphor for a deteriorating relationship. Glucksberg (2001) adds that idioms simplify abstract experiences through conventionalized imagery, making it easier for listeners to grasp complex feelings such as hopelessness, resignation, and shared suffering. In the lyrical context, the idiom powerfully communicates the speaker's acceptance of emotional ruin as part of their commitment to a love that persists even in decay.

7. Sleep in this dirt we call our bed

The phrase “Sleep in this dirt we call our bed” blends intimacy with bleakness, presenting a metaphor for a relationship built on shared hardship and emotional desolation. While “bed” typically symbolizes comfort, rest, and emotional safety, its transformation into “dirt” introduces imagery of discomfort, burial, and decay turning a space of love into one of suffering. Despite this, the use of “our” signifies mutual acceptance, suggesting a bond formed not through healing but through a shared endurance of pain. This idiom reflects Liu's (2008) description of idioms as context-bound expressions whose meanings go beyond the literal, capturing emotional realities through metaphorical language Kövecses (2010)

further explains how idioms are grounded in bodily and spatial metaphors here, the body at rest becomes an image of resignation in a setting metaphorically tied to death. Glucksberg (2001) also emphasizes that idioms condense complex psychological experiences into cognitively familiar imagery, allowing this line to convey themes of loyalty, sacrifice, and emotional entrapment in a single, haunting phrase. Within the song's context, the idiom conveys a grim form of devotion, where love is not about escape or joy, but the acceptance of shared suffering as part of relational identity.

8. Rewrite the bitter end

The phrase "rewrite the bitter end" encapsulates a longing to alter the course of a painful or seemingly inevitable conclusion, reframing it through the metaphor of authorship as an act of emotional resistance and reimagination. While "bitter end" connotes finality, grief, or unresolved emotional wounds, the verb "rewrite" introduces the possibility of transformation, asserting narrative control over one's emotional fate. This idiom aligns with Liu's (2008) view of idioms as multi-word expressions that express metaphorical meaning beyond the sum of their literal parts. Kövecses (2010) supports this interpretation by noting that idioms are often structured through conceptual metaphors in this case, life is a story, the self is an author, and change is rewriting. These mappings enable the abstract idea of emotional healing to be understood through the concrete process of editing or altering text. Glucksberg (2001) emphasizes that idioms like this draw from familiar cognitive patterns, helping listeners intuitively understand emotional renewal as a creative and defiant act. In the context of the song, the idiom serves as a powerful symbol of resilience, where the speaker seeks not just to endure pain, but to reshape it into a new and chosen meaning through love.

9. Rot in hell

The phrase "rot in hell" is a forceful idiom traditionally used to express condemnation, implying that someone deserves eternal suffering in the most torturous conditions. However, in the context of the song, its meaning is subverted: the speaker does not curse another, but rather embraces the idea of mutual torment as an expression of unwavering devotion. Hell, as used here, becomes a metaphor for emotional ruin and existential despair, while "rot" implies a slow, irreversible degradation. This reinterpretation aligns with Liu's (2008) argument that idioms are not merely fixed phrases, but meaning bearing expressions shaped by context and speaker intention. Kövecses (2010) further explains that idioms often stem from conceptual metaphors in this case, love is suffering and hell is emotional pain allowing abstract emotional sacrifice to be conveyed through physical, spatial imagery. Glucksberg (2001) reinforces this by emphasizing how idioms function as cognitively efficient expressions of deeply embedded experiences, making extreme emotional states graspable through familiar symbolic forms. In the song's narrative, the idiom illustrates love as something so consuming and selfless that even eternal punishment becomes a shared and accepted fate, representing a tragic yet profound declaration of loyalty.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of idioms in Motionless In White's *Eternally Yours* has illuminated the emotional depth and symbolic richness embedded in contemporary metalcore lyricism. Centering on the research question "What idioms are found in the lyrics of 'Eternally Yours' and what do they mean?". This study has uncovered nine distinct idiomatic expressions that serve as crucial narrative and emotional devices within the song.

Each idiom, such as "blow the bridge to the past," "melt your heart encased in wax," and "rot in this garden made of stones", carries metaphorical weight that transcends their literal meanings. They reflect themes of emotional detachment, internal conflict, passionate devotion, and romantic self-destruction. Rather than expressing love in its idealized form, these idioms delve into the complexities of human relationships, particularly those that are shaped by shared pain, vulnerability, and even suffering.

Through these expressions, lead vocalist Chris Motionless constructs a lyrical narrative that merges dark romanticism with emotional intensity, presenting love not just as salvation, but also as something tragic, obsessive, and sacrificial. The use of idioms allows for layered storytelling, inviting

listeners to interpret meaning through metaphor, symbol, and tone rather than direct statements. This aligns with metalcore's broader lyrical tradition of combining poetic language with raw emotional expression to reflect personal and existential turmoil.

The idioms in *Eternally Yours* function not only as artistic embellishments but also as linguistic tools that mirror the psychological states of the speaker. They convey grief, longing, betrayal, transformation, and undying loyalty, all central to understanding the song's darkly passionate core. In this way, idiomatic expressions serve as both windows into the emotional world of the song and mirrors of broader themes found in modern metal music.

In conclusion, the idioms in *Eternally Yours* are essential to its lyrical depth, offering listeners a multifaceted understanding of love and loss. By interpreting these idioms through both linguistic and emotional lenses, we gain insight into how contemporary metalcore utilizes figurative language not only to enhance its poetic power but also to articulate the inner conflicts and consuming devotion that define its narrative. This research demonstrates that idioms in music, especially in genres known for emotional extremity, are more than stylistic choices, they are foundational to how stories are told, emotions are conveyed, and meaning is made.

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