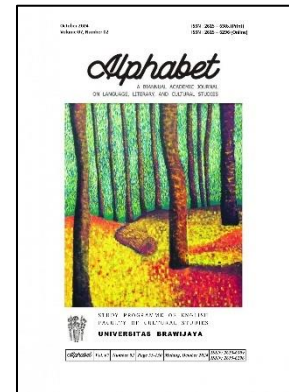


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The Use of Celestial Bodies to Build Self-esteem in Your Soul is a River

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Abstract

This research aims to show the use of celestial bodies to build self-esteem, specifically within the chapter *The Cosmos* from the poetry book *Your Soul is a River*. The poems discussed are *You Are the Sun*; *You Matter*; *Who You Are*, *What You Are Not*; *Beautiful and Terrible Things*, which are considered as the research objects. This group of research objects has the same theme, that is celestial bodies. In analyzing these poems, this study employs Wolfgang Iser's implied reader, which focuses on the reading process, emphasizing the understanding and interpretation of the celestial bodies in the poems on building self-esteem. This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method, which includes content analysis of the textual material. This research discusses the interpretation of celestial bodies in the poems and the influence of celestial bodies to build self-esteem. The study finds that each celestial object in the poems mainly carries meaning relating to self-confidence, self-acceptance, personal growth, and human experience, serving as a powerful source of inspiration for positive self-reflection and personal growth, which helps someone feel better about their self-esteem.

Keywords:

Self-esteem; The Cosmos; Celestial bodies

Your Soul is a River is a poetry book by Nikita Gill, a popular instapoet (Instagram Poet). Many celebrities have shared her work on Instagram, increasing her influence and visibility. Nikita Gill's works often explore the natural world and its connection to the human experience. One is entitled *Your Soul is a River*, published in 2016. It explores the journey of healing from trauma, growth, and recovery from personal struggles, making it impactful for readers who are going through difficult times.

Your Soul is a River is divided into several chapters: *The Cosmos*, *The Storm*, *Ache*, *Wild*, and *Others* (Gill, 2016). The chapters cover several themes: passion, struggle, healing, and self-discovery. However, all chapters show how

diverse and complex the human experience is, emphasizing the possibility of personal growth and resilience in the face of life's challenges.

The Cosmos is the first chapter in the book that explores the universe's vastness and the human experience within the cosmic context. This chapter contains several poem titles, including *You Are the Sun*, *You Matter*, *Who You Are*, *What You Are Not*, and *Beautiful and Terrible Things*. Since these poems talk about who we are, how we have changed over time, and the harmony of the positive and adverse experiences in life, therefore they are employed to discuss about how celestial bodies are used to build self-esteem.

How self-esteem works is similar to how the cosmos works in this world. Just as the cosmos

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is a vast and complex system of interconnected elements, self-esteem is a complex and dynamic construct that includes a person's self-image and self-confidence. To understand self-esteem, Keegan D. Greenier et al. (1995) define self-esteem as an essential concept in various areas of psychology, including clinical, developmental, personality, and social psychology. This foundational understanding of self-esteem sets the stage for exploring its implications in human behavior and well-being. Building upon this definition, a recent study published in the *Journal of Early Adolescence* delves into the intricate relationship between self-esteem and important life outcomes. The study highlights that self-esteem plays a pivotal role in shaping subjective well-being and psychological adjustment, emphasizing the significance of self-esteem in influencing individuals' overall mental health and quality of life (Jordan et al., 2020).

Talking about the poems that will be used in this study, all the poems connect with the theme of self-esteem. The poem *You Are the Sun* emphasizes self-esteem and the importance of standing up for oneself. It tells us that we are special and important, like the Sun. *Beautiful and Terrible Things* conveys the importance of self-worth and the type of love and acceptance one deserves. *You Matter* is discovering our value and importance remind us of our unique and priceless place in the universe. *Who You Are, What You Are Not* is to convey that everyone is unique and valuable and should take pride in themselves daily without feeling like they are mistakes. Since these poems talk about the importance of personal growth and development, they also discuss how celestial bodies are used to build self-esteem.

In literature, meaning production is through an interaction between the text and the reader. Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory is crucial in understanding this process because it highlights the meaning that emerges from the text and the reader's interaction. Iser (1978, p. 128) explains that readers actively engage by holding onto memories and forming predictions that shift as they move through the

text. This dynamic interaction highlights the importance of "gaps" in unexplained parts of the text that readers fill with their ideas, values, and beliefs. Iser's approach aligns with this study's focus on how natural objects build self-esteem by highlighting the reader's active role in shaping meaning. His theory highlights the text's ability to create personal connections, providing a valuable framework for exploring metaphorical imagery and its impact on self-esteem.

In analyzing the four poems focusing on self-esteem, a prominent theme emerges by including celestial bodies. These celestial bodies, encompassing entities beyond Earth's atmosphere like the Moon, Galaxy, Sun, and planets in our solar system, play a significant role in the poetic narrative. Within the study context, the celestial bodies serve diverse functions, often as conduits for conveying themes, emotions, and ideas rich in symbolism. The connection between self-esteem and the celestial realm within these poems adds depth and complexity to their exploration of human experience and introspection.

Thus, Nikita Gills' poems are also discussed in Andriani's (2022) article entitled "Figurative Language Analysis on Nikita Gill's Poems" In *Your Soul Is a River*, the researcher of this study examines figurative language's use and meaning. The study uses semantic theory, namely, the linguistic meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. A qualitative descriptive research method was applied, which included content analysis of the textual material. This discussion aims to better understand the beauty and meaning behind Gill's poetry by identifying the four types of figurative language used and the predominance of similes that produce effects in his poetry.

From the discussion above, this study aims to analyze the use of celestial bodies to build self-esteem in poems by using Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory, which deals with how readers respond to literary works. This research will use four poems: *You Are The Sun*, *You Matter*, *What You Are, What You Are Not*, and *Beautiful, Terrible Things*. In the discussion

below, this study explores an interpretation of celestial bodies in the poems and shows the influences of celestial bodies on building self-esteem.

This study is expected to contribute and help readers get a new insight about the object under study, which can motivate them in the problems of low self-esteem they are currently facing, as is the purpose of the author Nikita Gills to make this poem to heal and survive from our struggle.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Wolfgang Iser's Reception Theory, particularly his concept of the implied reader, has significantly contributed to literary criticism. Iser's approach to the reader is unique in that he emphasizes the reader's role in creating meaning in a literary text. He argues that the reader is not a passive recipient of the text but an active participant in the meaning-making process (Iser, 1974, p. xii). The implied reader is a hypothetical construct that represents the reader the text assumes or intends. This concept allows for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the text and the reader, as it acknowledges that the reader's interpretation is influenced by several factors, including societal norms, personal values, and past experiences (Selden et al., 2016, p. 52). The implied reader is not an actual individual but a role created by the text itself. This role represents the idealized set of knowledge, emotions, and attitudes that the text expects from its readers. It serves as a guide for understanding how the text's structure and content influence the interpretation process.

In this context, the study does not require respondents as it focuses on the implied reader, a construct of the text itself, rather than the reactions or interpretations of the real reader. This approach is based on Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory, which emphasizes the interaction between the text and the hypothetical reader over empirical data collection. This study aims to find how natural objects in the poem contribute to the

development of self-esteem by examining how the text directs the audience's perspective. The analysis is strictly textual, allowing for a thorough examination of the relationship between the poem's elements and the intended interpretive effects.

Distinct from other literary theories, Iser's Reception theory focuses on the reader's role in creating meaning through their interaction with the text. Unlike author-oriented approaches, which focus on the author's intentions, or text-oriented approaches, which focus on historical or structural context, Iser highlights the dynamic experience of the reader as central to interpretation. By shifting attention from the author or text to the reader, Iser provides a unique framework that encourages a more profound exploration of how individual readers engage with and understand literature, prioritizing the interpretive contribution and experiences of the audience.

While praised for its analytical framework, Iser's concept of the implied reader has been praised and criticized for being overly abstract and lacking clear guidance for interpretation. (Elshikh, 2021, p. 24) states that the implied reader provides a valuable framework for analyzing the relationship between the text and the reader, but others argue it needs to be more abstract and provide clear guidance for interpretation. Nevertheless, Iser's Reception Theory and his concept of the implied reader have significantly impacted literary criticism, particularly in the field of reader-response theory.

In this study, the implied reader is employed within astronomy and personal experience. The role of personal experience helps explore how individuals' emotions and cognitive processes influence their interpretation of natural objects in poetry. This study aims to analyze the use of celestial bodies to build self-esteem in poems by interpreting the celestial bodies in the poems, seeking to understand how the study of celestial bodies can contribute to personal growth and self-esteem. The implied reader is also likely to be open-minded and receptive to

new ideas, as the study proposes a unique approach to self-improvement.

METHOD

The data for this study comes from two sources. The primary data sources are taken from several poems in the poetry book *Your Soul is a River* by Nikita Gill entitled *You Are The Sun, You Matter, Who You Are, What You Are Not*, and *beautiful and terrible things*, which are considered as the research objects, appropriate to the objective of this research. This group of research objects has the same theme, which is celestial bodies. The secondary data are taken from articles, books, etc., related to the study.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method, which included content analysis of the textual material. Qualitative research aims to comprehend and explain social phenomena through gathering and analyzing non-numerical data, such as observations, interviews, and textual analysis (Dawson, 2019). To collect the data, the researchers use textual analysis by reading, understanding, identifying, and selecting the celestial bodies in the poems.

The research employs Wolfgang Iser's Implied Reader, focusing on the reader's experience and the reader's role in interpreting a text. In this study, the implied readers are those who engage with the symbolism of natural objects in the poem as metaphors for resilience and self-esteem, using their personal experiences and values to shape their interpretation of the text. To analyze the data to get an interpretation of the researcher's understanding of celestial bodies in poetry. The researcher interprets the meaning of celestial bodies in the poem and analyzes how celestial object influences self-esteem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the relationship between self-esteem and celestial bodies on building self-esteem by analyzing four poems. This study uses four poems entitled *You Are The Sun, You Matter, Who You Are, What You Are*

Not, and *Beautiful and Terrible Things*. These poems are related to the theme of self-esteem and contain several characters of celestial bodies such as stars, constellations, galaxies, the sun, and the moon.

The first poem is entitled *Beautiful and Terrible Thing*. This short poem conveys a powerful message about self-worth and the kind of love and acceptance one deserves. It explores the idea that everyone has both positive and negative sides (Gill, 2016, p. 20). Below is the full text of the poem:

BEAUTIFUL, TERRIBLE THING

*You are a thing
both beautiful
and terrible,
and you deserve
someone
who treats you
like moon
and can love
the dark side
of your soul, too.*

In this poem, the only celestial body is 'the moon.' The author describes the moon as "both beautiful and terrible," this line implies that the moon is like people's duality and represents both the light and dark sides of themselves. Similarly, people are beautiful and worthy of love, but they also have aspects that may be perceived as "dark" or difficult to understand. However, they deserve someone who can embrace all their sides, which is also beautiful from a distance but full of craters on its surface.

The moon has different symbolic meanings in various countries, cultures, folklore, legends, and myths. In Chinese history, people often see the moon as a literary symbol of feminine energy and represents the beauty of a woman (Li Xiaotong, 2023, p. 358). Representing feminine energy can make someone feel good about themselves and recognize their inner beauty. Inner beauty relates to a person's qualities, such as personality, intelligence, and character (Lo, 2021, p. 1). When someone

focuses on developing these qualities, it can significantly affect their self-esteem. This is because recognizing and appreciating one's inner beauty can increase confidence, self-acceptance, and a more positive self-image.

On the other hand, people in the West often consider the moon a sign of darkness and hopelessness (Li Xiaotong, 2023, p. 358). In Western society, darkness reflects the emotional numbness or disconnection that people with low self-esteem may experience, as if they are lost in a void without a sense of direction or purpose. Recognizing inner beauty in darkness can develop greater self-acceptance and confidence, leading to a more balanced self-worth.

Just as the moon has its dark side, humans are also creatures that are not always perfect and have a terrible side within them. However, the moon also has a part that shines brighter, where its light can illuminate the Earth in darkness. Similarly, humans also have positive qualities and important values within themselves. Acknowledging these values and qualities can develop a more balanced self-worth, allowing us to appreciate our abilities and weaknesses. We can cultivate a more profound self-awareness and self-worth by embracing our duality.

The second poem is entitled *You Are The Sun*. This poem is about believing in ourselves and appreciating our value.

YOU ARE THE SUN

*The universe did not
breathe star fire into your bones
so that you could burn yourself out
over someone who treats you
like a cigarette break.*

*You deserve someone who knows
there is stardust in your veins
that You Are The Sun.*

*And the sun does not shine
because someone else wants it to.*

*It shines because that
is what it was born to do.*

In the last line of the second stanza, the poem compares people to the sun by stating, "that You Are The Sun", meaning that we have brightness and strength within us just like the sun. The poem encourages us to avoid wasting our energy on someone who does not treat us well. Instead, we should try to be true to ourselves and shine brightly, just as the sun naturally does. It reminds us to love and respect ourselves regardless of what others think (Gill, 2016, p. 15.)

In the poem's second stanza, the sun represents inner strength, resilience, and self-worth. The author emphasizes that readers should not waste their brightness on people who do not treat them well. Instead, they deserve someone who sees the unique qualities inside them, just like the sun. The sun does not shine because others want it to; it shines because that is what it is meant to do. The celestial body sun encourages people to be true to themselves and shine bright just like the sun does naturally (Gill, 2016, p. 15).

The sun has an essential role in our life. It is not just a big ball of fire in the sky. Everything on Earth needs to survive. Without the sun, plants would not be able to grow, and we would not have food to eat. Plus, it gives us warmth and lights up our world during the day.

Nevertheless, the sun is more than just a source of light and heat. People worldwide from different cultures' myths, legends, and traditions all talk about how important the sun is. It is not just a part of nature. It is a symbol of hope and power for many people. So, looking up in the sky, we are not just seeing a bright ball of light. We see a symbol of life and strength that has been revered throughout history.

In the same way, the sun plays an essential role in shaping self-esteem. It is not just about giving light and heat. The sun is also a symbol of our inner strength and worth. When we see the bright sun, it reminds us to recognize and celebrate our unique qualities and strengths. By

associating the sun's brilliance with our inner light, we can learn to appreciate our worth and potential. This understanding is crucial for developing a positive and empowering self-image, which is essential for building resilience and confidence in adversity.

The following poem is entitled *You Matter*. This poem is about discovering our value and importance. In the first stanza it affirms that we are not small, unworthy, or insignificant, which directly addresses and rejects feelings of not being good enough. Instead, we are unique and special because we are composed entirely of stars, each component originating from a different star. The poem highlights our unique and wonderful nature by explaining that we are made of stardust and the universe's energy. It says that the way we are made is like a beautiful poem written by the universe. The main message is to enhance our sense of self-worth and remind us of our unique and priceless place in the universe (Gill, 2016, p. 12).

YOU MATTER

*You are not small,
You are not unworthy,
You are not insignificant,
The universe wove you from a constellation
just so, every atom, every fibre in you
comes from a different star*

*Together,
you are bound by stardust,
altogether spectacularly created
from the energy of the universe itself.*

*And that, my darling,
is the poetry of physics,
the poetry of you.*

In this poem, the constellations represent an individual's uniqueness and significance. When it says that the universe "wove you from the constellations," it implies that we are created purposefully and intricately, similar to how the stars form patterns in the sky. This object implies that our existence serves a purpose, just as the stars form a pattern in the sky. It emphasizes our unique and essential role in this

life. This object constellation encourages us to recognize our worth, reminding us that we are essential parts of this world and deserve dignity and belonging.

When we look up at the night sky, we see a vast expanse filled with twinkling stars, each adding to the beauty of the celestial panorama. These stars are not just random. They form patterns that humans have been observing for thousands of years. These patterns are known as constellations. Imagine them as big, complicated patterns that were made with stars. People from ancient times saw animals, mythological figures, and everyday objects in these patterns, using them to plan their days, telling each other stories about heroes and gods and when to plant crops and travel (Taylor, 2020, p. 92). This historical connection between the stars and human culture highlights the deep significance we attach to the night sky.

Furthermore, studying constellations helps us better understand who we are in the present and the past. Understanding the myths and legends surrounding constellations allows us to delve deeper into the human condition. We can strengthen our self-worth by reflecting on our experiences, values, and objectives. This process helps us better understand who we are and what makes us unique. By demonstrating that our experiences are part of a typical human journey, empathy, and connection can help us feel like we are part of a more significant community, which can lower feelings of loneliness and boost our self-esteem.

The fourth poem, *What You Are, What You Are Not*, is about how deeply complicated and intense people are. It uses big images, like comparing people to the sky, the ocean, and the universe, to show how big and strong they are. These comparisons show that everyone is complicated, has a lot of different experiences and stories, and can get through tough times. People have good and bad days but always come out strong, just like the sky goes through storms and sunshine. The poem's main point is that no one is wrong, and everyone should be proud of who they are (Gill, 2016, p. 28). Here is the whole poem:

WHAT YOU ARE.
WHAT YOU ARE NOT.

You are:

*A walking, breathing universe
of thoughts, ideas, stories as your stars
supernovas full of adventure in your veins
galaxies of emotion.*

*An untamed, powerful ocean
of every experience that made you
into a journey full of storms
and quiet starry nights.*

*A sky that has held
the worst of storms
but never forgotten
to let the sun shine through*

*But you are not and never have been
an apology, a mistake
or a thing to be forgotten.
Remember that in the way
you wear your skin every morning.*

In the poem *WHAT YOU ARE, WHAT YOU ARE NOT*, galaxies are used to show how extensive and complicated emotions can be. In the fourth line of the first stanza, the phrase "galaxies of emotion" means that a person's emotional life comprises many different feelings and experiences, like how a galaxy has many stars (Gill, 2016, p. 28). This interpretation shows how deep, complicated, and complete our emotional world is. Because galaxies are vast and extensive, they remind us that emotions are not simple but rather complex and connected. Each star in a galaxy stands for a different emotion, showing how different our feelings are and how they are connected. The poem's phrase "galaxies of emotion" means that our feelings are complex and can be very variative, ranging from happiness and excitement to sadness and thought.

This complexity in our emotional lives can be mirrored in how people are connected in their communities and social networks, just like galaxies are connected in space. These connections to society build a web of relationships around us. Feeling part of a

community helps individuals thrive and grow. Just as galaxies affect each other through their interactions, people in a community significantly affect each other's lives by giving each other emotional support, sharing information, and giving everyone a sense of purpose. Asendorpf (2014), cited in Harris & Orth (2020), suggests a reciprocal relationship existing between a person's self-esteem and the quality of their social relationships. This shows how meaningful social interactions are for mental health. Realizing our role and worth in the community can help us feel more important and worthy of ourselves, which it shows how meaningful social connections are for mental well-being.

Moreover, galaxies are always changing and growing, similar to how people's lives are always changing. Just like galaxies that change and grow over time, people also go through stages of personal growth and adaptation. Facing challenges and overcoming obstacles can make us stronger and more confident. Accepting that we are growing and learning from our mistakes can help us feel better about our self-image and boost our confidence.

Understanding the similarities between galaxies and human experiences helps us understand what affects our self-esteem. People can build confidence and self-worth by recognizing meaningful relationships and committing to personal growth. Like how galaxies are awe-inspiring, telling people to appreciate the beauty and wonder within themselves can help them to view themselves better and see their full potential for growth and success.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of four poems in this study shows how celestial bodies might help people build self-esteem. Each poem uses symbols from celestial bodies to explore self-worth, strength, and emotional complexity. The moon represents the duality of humans, emphasizing that people have both positive and negative sides. The sun symbolizes inner strength, encouraging readers to value themselves and

shine brightly like the sun. Constellations highlight how unique people are, while galaxies illustrate how emotions grow and change over time. By employing Wolfgang Iser's theory of the implied reader, these poems encourage readers to actively engage deeply with the text, prompting them to interpret the metaphors and symbols of celestial bodies in personal ways, thus fostering a deeper connection to the poem. This approach encourages readers to recognize and accept their worth and potential. The use of celestial bodies and implied reader theory demonstrate how literature can significantly improve mental health and boost self-esteem by encouraging personal reflection and connection.

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