

## Figurative Language Analysis of *The Cosmos in Your Soul is a River* by Nikita Gill

I'annatun Nisa'<sup>1</sup>✉, Tristy Kartika Fi'aunillah<sup>2</sup>

UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya<sup>1</sup>

UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya<sup>2</sup>

✉ [iannatunnisa216@gmail.com](mailto:iannatunnisa216@gmail.com)

[tristykartika@gmail.com](mailto:tristykartika@gmail.com)

### Abstract:

Figurative language is one of the crucial things in literary works. This study aims to find figurative language in the chapter 1 poetry anthology *Your Soul is a River*. In chapter 1, there are 26 poem titles. The researchers utilized a qualitative descriptive approach to conduct the data analysis. To analyze figurative language, the researchers used the theory of Arvius (2003). The study results found that 85 data that were included to 4 types of figurative language. The data consisted of 38 metaphors, 5 similes, 22 personifications, and 20 hyperboles. The most figurative language data found in Chapter 1, *The Cosmos*, is a metaphor. Chapter 1 uses metaphors to express important themes in the anthology, such as emotional recovery, connection with the universe, and self-meaning. Metaphors also provide deeper meaning and make the experience more alive and easier for readers to understand. Studying figurative language is expected to offer a deeper insight into the theme or meaning of the poem.

**Keywords:** Figurative language; Poetry; Your Soul is a River; The Cosmos

### Abstrak:

Bahasa kiasan merupakan salah satu hal yang krusial dalam karya sastra. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan bahasa kiasan dalam chapter 1 antologi puisi *your soul is a river*. Dalam chapter ini terdapat 26 judul puisi. Peneliti menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis data. Untuk menganalisis bahasa kiasan, peneliti menggunakan teori dari Arvius (2003). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan ada 85 total data bahasa kiasan yang terdiri dari 4 jenis. Data tersebut terdiri dari 38 data metafora, 5 simile, 22 personifikasi, dan 20 hiperbola. Data bahasa kiasan yang paling banyak ditemukan dalam bab, 1 *The Cosmos*, adalah metafora. Fungsi metafora pada chapter 1 adalah untuk mengekspresikan tema-tema penting yang ada di dalam antologi seperti pemulihan emosi, keterkaitan dengan alam semesta, dan makna diri. Selain itu metafora juga memberikan makna yang lebih mendalam serta membuat pengalaman menjadi lebih hidup dan mudah dipahami oleh para pembaca. Dengan mempelajari bahasa kiasan diharapkan bisa memberikan pemahaman lebih mendalam tentang tema atau makna yang ada di dalam puisi.

**Kata kunci:** Bahasa kiasan; Puisi ; Your Soul is a River; The Cosmos

## INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a structured literary work that uses rhythm to inspire pleasure through beauty, creativity, or profound ideas (Khairunisa et al., 2020). Authors wrote poems to express their moods, describe situations that occurred at that time, or voice criticism for justice and society through words. Widyaningsih and Markhamah (2023) describe that poetry is also one of the writings with high aesthetic value because poetry has a great choice of words, rhythms, and language styles. Poetry is characterized by selecting words rich in meaning, each crucial in expressing profound ideas and emotions. Poetry frequently incorporates figurative language to enhance its meaning and create a deep impression for the readers, so poetry has continued to exist.

Perrine in Palupi (2021) stated that figurative language is the use of language that deviates from the literal meaning to convey a deeper meaning or artistic effect. Therefore, Figurative language is frequently encountered in literary works, both poetry and short stories. In poetry, there are more figures of speech or metaphors than in short stories. Figurative language is a model for conveying the author's feelings using beautiful language that has deep meaning. In addition, figurative language is one of the elements that must exist in poetry because figurative language will captivate the reader with beautiful words written in poetry.

*Your Soul is a River* is a poetry anthology by Nikita Gill, which was first published in 2016. This collection of poems tells about heartbreak, how to get back up after a broken heart, and how to love yourself. In this poem, Nikita Gill divides into several parts, including the cosmos, the storm, ache, the sea, the river, the ocean, wild, the earth, and heal. Nikita Gill chose to name her chapter using the universe and things that happen to humans because nature and humans have a close relationship. Ayu (2021) states that Nikita Gill combines elements that exist in the universe with elements that exist in humans such as pain, recovery processes, and healing. Nature and humans can never be separated. Nature feels pain if humans cannot take care of it, and humans can be affected if nature is sick. Therefore, nature and humans take care of each other so as not to feel pain.

*Your Soul is a River* poetry anthology can motivate someone when their heart is broken or when they are in a bad situation because this book also contains how the



author describes and reacts when she is in a bad situation. Many readers feel they are on a most exciting journey in their own right. Ayu (2021) stated that this book succeeded in bringing me to dive deeper into myself. Therefore, this discussion will analyze the figurative language in Nikita Gill's poem entitled *Your Soul is a River*.

Many previous studies have discussed figurative language in poetry, including Sharma (2022) he analyzed figurative language in Robert Frost's poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, Damayanti and Suprihatien (2021) conduct a research figurative language in the poetry "*To All Women Carrying Heart Wounds*" by Asma Nadia, Palupi (2021) examine in poem *The Echoing Green* by William Blake, Laimena and Que (2022) conduct a research in poems by Laksmi Pamuntjak, and Putri and Marlina (2023) they analyzed in poetry for children selected by Sylvia M. Vardell (2020) with family and friend theme. They analyze the figurative language of the poem and conclude that it is the most widely used figurative language in the poem. From the results of their analysis, at least three kinds of figurative language are used in poetry. This shows that figurative language is still widely used in poetry, and poetry that uses figurative language in terms of meaning and language selection is more aesthetic than poetry that does not use figurative language. Such studies effectively work as a foundation for understanding figurative language. However, more in-depth analysis of figurative language's context, audience, and variations is needed better to understand its role in contemporary and traditional poetry.

The five previous studies above analyzed figurative language in poetry; however, these studies uses the theories of Perrine (1983), Kennedy (1983), Laurence E. Rozakis (1995), or Abrams and Wren (1971). In addition, several previous researchers have suggested researching various poetry collections especially in contemporary poetry because poetry contains many figurative language and is still rarely studied. The researchers selected Nikita Gill's poetry anthology, *Your Soul is a River*, as the object of this study because it is a contemporary poetry work. This anthology also includes several kinds of figurative language, including metaphor, personification, or hyperbole, that convey the emotions and feelings of modern life, which have rarely use in previous studies. Therefore, this study provides a new understanding of how figurative language

in contemporary poetry can provide a different perspective than classical poetry, which is often the object of study.

In this study, the researchers used the figurative language theory from Arvius (2003). The researchers chose to use this theory because several previous studies used the theories of Perrine, Kennedy, or Abrams and Wren. Therefore, the researchers looked for gaps by using the theory from Arvius (2003). In this theory, there are 6 types of figurative language, including metaphor, simile, personification, oxymoron, hyperbole, and polysemy. Through Arvius theory, the researchers formulates the question of what types of figurative language are in Nikita Gill's poetry anthology *Your Soul is a River* in chapter one entitled *The Cosmos*?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Figurative language is one of the crucial things in literary works, especially poetry. As explained by Arvius (2003), figurative language involves the use of non-literal expressions to convey a more imaginative and profound meaning. There are various forms of figurative language, and Arvius (2003) categorizes them into six types: metaphor, simile, personification, oxymoron, hyperbole, and polysemy.

### Metaphor

Metaphor is a form of figurative language in which a word or phrase refers to something different from its literal meaning (Arvius, 2003). In a metaphor, two different things are implicitly equated without using conjunctions such as "as" or "like", which are usually found in simile.

Example: The kitchen was a pig-sty (Arvius, 2003, p.98)

Figuratively, the kitchen is not really a pig-sty, but through metaphor, the word kitchen is equated with pig-sty to convey that it is messy or dirty.

### Simile

Simile is a form of figurative language that explicitly compares two different things using the conjunctions "like" or "as" (Arvius, 2003). Simile is used in poetry to show the similarity between the two things being compared, even though they are different. This comparison is used to clarify a concept by connecting it to something more familiar.

Example: She was as sweet as honey (Arvius, 2003, p.125)

The example above contains a simile because it compares two different things using the word "as." In the sentence, a person's personality or nature is compared to honey to show that the person has a sweet nature like honey.

### **Personification**

Personification is a type of figurative language in which human traits or characteristics are given to inanimate objects, animals, or abstract concepts (Arvius, 2003). Personification aims to make an inanimate idea or object alive and relatable by giving it human actions or traits.

Example: Life has cheated me (Arvius, 2003, p.129)

The example above personifies the word life, an abstract concept, by giving it a characteristic generally found in humans: cheating. In this context, the word "cheat" in life describes the feeling that life has been unfair or detrimental.

### **Oxymoron**

Oxymoron is an example of a figure of speech in which an expression is formed by combining words or phrases that are either contradictory or in contrast to each other for artistic impact (Arvius, 2003). By its nature, an oxymoron introduces a sharp contradiction that more often highlights the paradox or irony of the situation.

Example: They seemed to be stuck in a love-hate relationship (Arvius, 2003, p.134)

The sentence "love-hate" is an oxymoron because love and hate are two opposing feelings, but they are combined to describe a complex relationship. The use of this oxymoron helps convey that the relationship is not just full of love or hate but a combination of both.

### **Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is a figurative language that involves a statement or claim that is greatly exaggerated to emphasize a point or produce a dramatic effect (Arvius, 2003). Hyperbole is often used to create a strong impression or emphasize the intensity of a situation, feeling, or characteristic.

Example: We are all ears (Arvius, 2003, p.135)

This sentence does not literally mean that someone has ears, but it emphasizes that someone is really listening or is very interested in hearing what is being said.

## Polysemy

Polysemy is a linguistic phenomenon where a word or phrase has several different but semantically related meanings (Arvius, 2003). These meanings usually originate from one basic or core meaning and develop into additional meanings that are different but related to each other.

Example: Now I pronounce you man and wife (Arvius, 2003, p.142)

In the sentence above, the words man and wife have different meanings but are semantically related to the same meaning in the context of marriage. Both have specific meanings in the context of marriage, but the words man and wife can have different meanings depending on the context. Man can refer to an adult individual in general, and wife can refer to a relationship status in marriage.

## RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the researchers used a descriptive qualitative method. The researchers used this method because the data used by the researchers was in the form of written poetry text from chapter 1 *The Cosmos* of the poetry anthology book *Your Soul Is a River* by Nikita Gill. In chapter 1 entitled *The Cosmos* there are 26 poem. The researchers took data from chapter 1 of the poetry anthology because chapter 1 contains metaphors, simile, and other figurative language that describe the entire contents of this poetry anthology. The researchers chose a method of collecting, identifying, classifying, analyzing, and describing the types of figurative language found in this poetry anthology.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After identifying the data, the researchers found 85 figurative language data in chapter 1 of the poetry anthology *Your Soul is a River*, consisting of 38 metaphors, 5 similes, 22 personifications, and 20 hyperboles. From the data above, there are figurative language data not found in Chapter 1 of the poetry anthology *Your Soul is a River*, namely oxymoron and polysemy. To see the percentage of figurative language in chapter 1 of the poetry anthology *Your Soul is a River* by Nikita Gill, see the table below.

**Table 1. Frequency of Figurative Language**

No	Types	Frequency
1	Metaphor	38
2	Simile	5
3	Personification	22
4	Oxymoron	0
5	Hyperbole	20
6	Polysemy	0
Total		85

## Metaphor

1. *and that you are the sun.* (Gill, 2016, p.15)

This quote is taken from a poem entitled *You Are the Sun*, which talks about self-worth and individual strength. The author also uses symbols such as the Sun to describe how strong and valuable a person is. The author also tells the reader to respect themselves and be independent. This quote contains a metaphor because it compares humans to the Sun without using "like" or "as". In this quote, a person is described as the Sun with the same positive traits such as strength, not depending on others, and the importance of self.

2. *all your dreams have turned to dust* (Gill, 2016, p.25)

This piece of the poem is taken from a poem entitled *Lesson for When You Fall*. This poem tells about hope and revival from adversity. This quote also contains a metaphor because it compares dreams to dust. In this context, dreams do not turn into dust but rather a metaphor for failure or destruction of dreams. This metaphor describes the feeling that someone's dreams have been destroyed or no longer have value, just like dust that is small, shapeless, and meaningless.

3. *The sun feels closer to me in this moment than you.* (Gill, 2016, p.29)

This piece of the poem is taken from a poem entitled *In This Room*. This poem conveys disappointment and sadness because of the feeling that even though they are physically close, their emotional closeness has been lost. This quote contains a metaphor because the sun's distance is used as a symbol or comparison with the emotional distance between the author and the person in question. Even though the sun is physically very far away, the author of this poem feels that the sun is emotionally closer than the person

the author of the poem refers to. Even though they are physically close to each other, the couple feels an emotional distance and alienation in their relationship.

### **Simile**

1. *Our love was like the sun* (Gill, 2016, p.27)

This quote is taken from a poem entitled *Rogue Planet*. This poem tells about separation and acceptance of loss in a relationship. The quote above also contains a simile, which compares love to the sun using the word "like". This means that love gives warmth, happiness, and life like the sun. However, the poet reflects that in a broader sense, love is not all you need to sustain something else because some things are not for keeps. As a result, the poem distinguishes the strength of love and the bitter reality of separation.

2. *good people are like the stars, few and far between* (Gill, 2016, p.31)

This poem is taken from *Parental Advice*, which discusses the value and existence of good people in our lives. The quote above contains a simile because it compares good people with stars using the word "like". In this context, good people are described as stars, which shows that many good people are in the world but are rarely found. This supports the idea that good people are simply way too few and far between. It is so important to appreciate the good people when they are here.

3. *and you deserve someone who treats you like the moon* (Gill, 2016, p.20)

This piece of poem is taken from a poem entitled *Beautiful, Terrible things*. It tells the story of human complexity and the importance of acceptance in a relationship. It also contains a simile which compares the way a person should be treated to the moon, which is often interpreted with beauty, warmth, and serenity. This shows the poet's wish for everyone to treat people with love, care, and acceptance, the way people see and appreciate the moon.

### **Personification**

1. *The universe did not breathe star fire into your bones* (Gill, 2016, p.15)

This quote is taken from a poem entitled *You Are the Sun*. This poem tells how strong and valuable a person is and deserves to be appreciated, not wasted. This quote contains personification because it gives the characteristics of humans, namely breathing into the word universe. In this context, the word breathing is used to give the impression that the universe actively plays a role in creating or giving something to humans, such as the fire of the stars that enters human bones. In addition, the use of

personification in this poem provides a greater connection between the reader and the universe and makes the universe feel more alive and personal.

2. *hope can sometimes be a dead thing.* (Gill, 2016, p.30)

This quote is taken from a poem entitled *I Stopped Wishing on Star*. This poem tells about the loss and bitter reality of unfulfilled hopes. This quote contains personification because it gives human nature to the word hope. In this context, hope is likened to having a living nature that can die. Hope is not a physical object that can live or die. The use of personification in this quote gives the impression of how deep the disappointment felt by the poet can create an emotional effect on the reader

3. *"the shooting star collected her bones"* (Gill, 2016, p.35)

This quote is taken from a poem entitled *Myth From a Small Town*. This poem tells about a myth in a small town about a girl who died chasing a shooting star on a beautiful night. The quote above contains personification because it gives human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects. In this sentence, the "shooting star" which is an inanimate object, is described as if it could collect the girl's bones.

## **Hyperbole**

1. *Stars always shine brightest seconds before they fall apart* (Gill, 2016, p.26)

The quote above is taken from a poem entitled *Star Shine Brightest*. This poem describes how people who seem the happiest and most carefree often hide deep pain and sadness in their hearts. The quote above contains hyperbole which aims to give a dramatic or emotional effect to the reader. In the quote above, the statement that stars shine brightest right before they shatter is an exaggeration and not scientifically correct, but it is used to emphasize the deep feeling that a person may appear happiest or most carefree right before they experience devastation.

2. *Our bodies were made to house oceans of galaxies* (Gill, 2016, p.19)

This poem quote is taken from a poem entitled *13 Billion Year Old Atom*. This poem describes a deep reflection on the connection between humans and the universe. The quote above also contains hyperbole to describe how extraordinary and complex humans are, as if our bodies could accommodate the entire universe. This is impossible. Hyperbole is used here to emphasize the wonder and depth of human existence.

3. *they are more precious than any star even the sun himself* (Gill, 2016, p.33)

This quote is taken from a poem entitled *Tell Your Children*. This poem tells about the deep love and affection of a mother for her children. The quote above contains hyperbole to emphasize the depth of a mother's affection for her children. In this case, the author of the poem says that children are more valuable than the stars and even the sun.

In chapter 1 of *the Cosmos*, poetry anthology *Your Soul is a River* by Nikita Gill, the researchers found 4 out of 6 figurative languages, according to Arvius (2003). The results of this study are different from previous studies because, in previous studies, more than 4 figurative languages were found in poetry. The researchers applied different theories and objects compared from the previous study, which affected the results of the study. By studying figurative language in poetry, readers can gain many benefits, including understanding more deeply the themes and meanings in poetry, enriching the use of vocabulary and understanding of language structure, and increasing creativity in interpreting and creating a literary work.

## CONCLUSION(S)

From the results of the discussion above, the researchers concluded that there are 85 figurative language data in Chapter 1, entitled *The Cosmos*, from the poetry anthology *Your Soul Is a River* by Nikita Gill, consisting of 38 metaphor data, 5 similes, 22 personifications, and 20 hyperboles. The figurative language that often appears in Chapter 1 is a metaphor. Studying figurative language is hoped to provide a deeper understanding of the poem's contents. The researchers suggest examining figurative language in contemporary poetry or poetry on digital platforms because it will provide different findings from this study.

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