

## Forms of Expression of Children's Love in *My Papa's Waltz*: A New Criticism Approach

Siti Aprilia Malika Zalianty<sup>1✉</sup>, Ramadhina Ulfa Nuristama<sup>2</sup>  
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya<sup>1,2</sup>  
✉ 03010321036@student.uinsby.ac.id

### Abstract:

The research objective is to identify in depth the forms of expression of a child's affection towards his father in Theodore Roethke's poem *My Papa's Waltz* using New Criticism theory. A descriptive qualitative method is used to analyze the data. The technique used for data collection is library research. Meanwhile, the data is analyzed qualitatively after reading the poem and identifying the expressions of a child's affection toward his father. The researcher identifies several elements that convey this affection. The first is the imagery of violence as a metaphor for love, along with the poetical structure and tone of sound in the poem, as well as the use of metaphors and personification within its figurative language. Based on this analysis, it is concluded that Roethke portrays a child's affection as a complex and nuanced emotion, expressed through symbols of violence that reveal the inner conflict between love and fear. This study enhances the researcher's understanding and knowledge of New Criticism theory. It is expected to be significant for future researchers conducting literary studies focused on the intrinsic elements of texts, such as language, imagery, and structure, without involving external context, in poems like *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke.

**Keywords:** children's affection; new criticism; form of expression; poem.

### Abstrak:

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi secara mendalam bentuk-bentuk ekspresi kasih sayang seorang anak kepada ayahnya dalam puisi *My Papa's Waltz* karya Theodore Roethke dengan menggunakan teori Kritik Baru. Metode kualitatif deskriptif digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Teknik yang digunakan dalam mengumpulkan data adalah penelitian kepustakaan. Sementara itu, untuk menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif. Setelah membaca puisi tersebut dan kemudian mengumpulkan bentuk-bentuk ekspresi kasih sayang seorang anak terhadap ayahnya. Peneliti menemukan beberapa unsur yang berkaitan dengan bentuk-bentuk ungkapan kasih sayang seorang anak terhadap ayahnya dalam puisi tersebut. Yang pertama adalah citraan kekerasan sebagai metafora dari kasih sayang, struktur puisi dan nada suara dalam puisi, dan yang terakhir adalah metafora dan personifikasi dari bahasa kiasan. Berdasarkan analisis di atas, dapat disimpulkan bahwa Roethke menggambarkan kasih sayang anak sebagai sebuah emosi yang kompleks dan tersembunyi. Kasih sayang ini diekspresikan melalui simbol-simbol kekerasan, mengekspresikan konflik batin antara cinta dan ketakutan. Penelitian ini memberikan arti penting bagi peneliti untuk memahami dan memberikan pengetahuan lebih mengenai teori Kritik Baru. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat bermanfaat bagi peneliti selanjutnya yang akan melakukan penelitian mengenai sastra yang berfokus pada unsur intrinsik teks, seperti bahasa, citraan, dan struktur puisi, tanpa melibatkan konteks eksternal dalam puisi *My Papa's Waltz* karya Theodore Roethke.

**Kata kunci:** kasih sayang anak; kritik baru; bentuk ekspresi; puisi.

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between parents and children is one of the most important aspects of human life, and it greatly affects children's emotional and psychological development. Verani et al. (2022) said, "The role of parenting is not only the responsibility of the mother but also the responsibility of the father, where both have different but equally important roles for optimal child development." Fathers, as authority figures in the family, are often both a source of affection and fear for children. This dynamic reflects the complexity of family ties that can be understood from various perspectives, including direct observation of daily behavior and how interactions between fathers and children occur in certain situations.

In the context of father-child relationships, a child's expression of affection towards his father is not always shown in gentle or direct ways. Sometimes, this affection comes through actions that are ambiguous or full of tension, creating a dynamic that is difficult to understand without further observation. The poem *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke presents an interesting illustration of this relationship, where a child's affection is expressed through symbolism that can be interpreted as an interaction between love and fear.

One of the various forms of literature, poetry is unique in its ability to express emotions and ideas. Through concise and imaginative language, poetry can touch readers' hearts on a very personal level. Using figurative language such as metaphor, simile, and personification allows poets to create multi-layered meanings and open up space for various interpretations. The universal themes of love, loss, and self-discovery often take the center of attention in poetry. In the context of family, children's poetry often explores the relationship between children and parents, portraying the complex emotions that come with it. *My Papa's Waltz* is an example of a poem that combines these elements to portray the dynamic relationship between a child and a father. "Poetry stands out from prose and fiction not only in its form but also through its unique rhetorical expressions and sonic effects, thus enhancing its aesthetic and artistic qualities" (Sharma, 2022). Although it may seem simple, the poem holds a deep emotional complexity, where love, fear, and violence interact. With the use of measured and rhythmic language, the poem can present a deep emotional experience, so the analysis of *My Papa's Waltz* through the New Criticism



approach allows a deeper understanding of how the form of expression of children's affection is reflected in the symbols used by Theodore Roethke.

Theodore Roethke, a famous American poet, has made significant contributions to the literary world with his poetry, which is deep and full of emotion. Born in 1908, Roethke is known for his ability to explore personal themes relating to family relationships, childhood experiences, and self-discovery. His works often reflect the influences of his rich background, including his childhood experiences on his family's farm located in Michigan, which served as a source of inspiration for many of his poems. (Nasir Masar, n.d.) "The author focuses on the content of each poem, believing that it reveals a clear pattern of pantheism that gradually developed in Roethke's poetry over the years." One of Roethke's most controversial and interesting poems to analyze is *My Papa's Waltz*. The poem depicts the complicated relationship between a son and his father using powerful imagery and provocative language.

Through distinctive rhythm and structure, Roethke creates an atmosphere that reflects the emotional dynamics between affection and tension. Interpretations of the poem are various, from the view of an affectionate father-son relationship, where the dance between them symbolizes closeness and warmth, to a darker view that highlights the presence of physical and psychological abuse. This contrast has led to debates among literary critics and readers, creating complex layers of meaning. Through this poem, Roethke describes a personal experience and touches on universal themes of love, fear, and ambivalence that often arise in family relationships, making *My Papa's Waltz* a relevant and profound work in the literary world.

In this study, the problem to be discussed focuses on the forms of expression of a child's affection towards his father in the poem *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke, using the New Criticism approach. This approach will be used to analyze the intrinsic elements in the poem, such as language, imagery, structure, and symbolism, which help illustrate the complexity of emotions and relationships between children and fathers. The question arises: How is the love of a child for his father expressed in the poem *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke? Through the close reading method at the core of New Criticism, this research will explore the hidden meanings behind the words and symbols used in the poem. Thus, this research is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of how the forms of expression of children's affection towards their fathers are implicitly but



powerfully reflected in this literary work without involving external contexts such as the author's biography or social background.

This research is important because it makes theoretical and practical contributions to both literary studies and society's understanding of the dynamics of family relationships. From an academic perspective, this research strengthens the relevance of the New Criticism approach that emphasizes the intrinsic analysis of literary texts. While much literary criticism focuses on the external context, this research highlights the importance of understanding internal elements such as language, imagery, and symbolism in forming meaning. *My Papa's Waltz* is a good example of how intrinsic analysis can reveal hidden layers of meaning through close reading. By exploring the symbolism and structure in this poem, this research adds to the understanding of the complex dynamics of father-son relationships. Practically, this research is also relevant to society, especially in illustrating how family relationships can contain various expressions of love that are not always conventional. Through this poem, Roethke depicts the ambivalence between affection and tension, which often reflects the emotional reality of families. This study invites readers to rethink the forms of affection implied in actions that may be ambiguous or full of tension. The implications can also be applied in education, helping students develop critical thinking skills through literary analysis and broadening their understanding of complex family dynamics.

This research is important for the academic world and society in understanding the complexity of human emotions, especially in the context of father-son relationships. It is expected to cover the way for further research on family dynamics and the expression of emotions in literary works.

There have been many previous studies on Theodore Roethke's *My Papa's Waltz*, which deal with previous findings and some literature reviews related to the research.

The first article is "Toxic Parenting in *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke." They analyzed the toxic relationship between father and son in the poem *My Papa's Waltz* using Reader Response theory, which aims to know readers' responses when reading it. They used qualitative research to analyze this article. Wardani (2023) shows that "there are allegations of toxic parenting patterns in *My Papa's Waltz* such as the father having more power in the family than the mother, the father getting angry and emotional easily, and the child not having the strength to stand out the truth." They also found the reason why

his parents became toxic. Then they applied reader response theory to analyze the findings deeply. This study concludes that toxic parenting has affected child psychology. This is because parents play an important role in children's early learning.

The second article, "Meter in Theodore Roethke's *My Papa's Waltz*," was written by William Barillas in 2015. In his article, Barillas (2015) stated that "the discussions about the poem are underlining its ambiguity, where some of the words imply that the child reacts with fear and pleasure." William focused on the dominant meter of the story. William Barillas raised the topic of the story's ambiguity in this poem.

The third article is "Childhood in Theodore Roethke's *My Papa's Waltz*" from (Nasir Masar, n.d.). In this study, the researchers stated that the story talks about the memory of his father, who had a bad attitude toward his child. Massar Nasir and Massar A. Razzaq submitted the childhood perspective in the poem.

Although Theodore Roethke's *My Papa's Waltz* has been widely analyzed, most previous studies have focused on two main interpretations, father-daughter affection or domestic violence, often tied to biographical and social contexts. The research gap is seen in the lack of an in-depth intrinsic analysis of the poem's elements using the close reading approach typical of New Criticism. This research will fill the gap by highlighting how Roethke portrays the complexity of affection through language, structure, and symbolism without involving external factors, providing a new perspective on the hidden meanings in the text. No articles analyze the poem *My Papa's Waltz* using the New Criticism theory.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The poem *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke has received many interpretations, with readers viewing it from various critical perspectives. This research, entitled *Forms of Expression of Children's Love in My Papa's Waltz: A New Criticism Approach*, aims to explore how a child expresses his love for his father using the theory of New Criticism. This theory emphasizes an in-depth reading of the text, focusing only on the elements within it and excluding external contexts such as the author's biography or socio-cultural background. This section will review literature related to New Criticism, previous studies on *My Papa's Waltz*, and key elements in the poem, such as imagery, tone, structure, and figurative language. All these aspects will be analyzed to see how the poem portrays the complex relationship between father and son.

## New Criticism

New Criticism emerged in the early 20th century as a response to traditional approaches that often relied on historical and biographical context. Figures such as Cleanth Brooks, W.K., and T.S. Eliot introduced methods that focused more on the text's form, structure, language, and internal dynamics. According to Wellek & Warren, (1948) "Textual Criticism, a major American literary theory of the twentieth century, was first called 'New Criticism' by Joel E. Spingarn in a 1925 speech at Columbia University. Its significance was further reinforced by John Crowe Ransom's 1941 book *The New Criticism*". In essence, New Criticism emphasizes the importance of exploring how the literary elements in a work contribute to its meaning, providing an interpretation based on the text itself rather than on factors external to the text.

One of the main principles of New Criticism is the idea of 'text as a self-contained object,' where literary works are analyzed without regard to authorial intent or reader response. By focusing on intrinsic elements such as imagery, symbolism, tone, and figurative language, New Criticism tries to discover the complex and integrated meanings in the text. This approach helps readers understand how each part of the poem plays a role in conveying the overall message. In the context of *My Papa's Waltz*, the poem's imagery, rhythm, and language are key to portraying the complex emotional interaction between father and son.

### Imagery and Metaphor in *My Papa's Waltz*

Imagery and metaphor are two powerful literary devices used to create vivid and evocative images in writing. Although they are often used together, they have different characteristics. In their analysis, Tahir (2017) states, "Imagery creates mental images using descriptive language. Meanwhile, metaphors compare two different things to create deeper meaning". Both imagery and metaphor are important tools for writers to enrich their work and engage readers on a deeper level.

Imagery plays an important role in conveying the complex emotions in *My Papa's Waltz*. Roethke's choice of violent imagery-such as **You beat time on my head** and **the hand that held my wrist / was battered on one knuckle** -serves as a metaphor for the contradictions of childhood affection. While these images may be seen at first to depict violence or fear, with a New Criticism approach, we are invited to see how they can symbolize the closeness between father and son. The waltz, usually considered a graceful

dance, becomes a metaphor for their complicated relationship, combining rudeness with softness.

The metaphorical language in this poem also reveals the duality of emotions the child feels. The phrase **whiskey on your breath** describes the father's authority and human frailty, creating a complex bond, combining admiration with fear. This metaphor suggests that there is a hidden layer of affection behind the violence. Love doesn't always appear pure; it is sometimes expressed through rudeness or tension.

### **Tone and Structure in *My Papa's Waltz***

Tone and structure are two important elements that contribute to a poem's overall meaning and impact. The tone in poetry is the author's attitude towards the subject being discussed. Van Oostendorp (2006) has argued that "Tone can be expressed in various ways, but poetic structure refers to the overall organization and structure of the poem. Various factors can influence structure". Both tone and structure are interrelated and contribute to the overall meaning and effect of a poem. By analyzing these elements, readers can better understand the author's intentions and the message they want to convey.

Tone is also an important element that shapes the interpretation of love in *My Papa's Waltz*. The poem's tone is playful and tense, creating an ambivalent atmosphere. The child's perspective memories of a dance full of joyful freedom contrast with images of physical violence. This ambivalence reflects the complex emotional experience of a child whose affection for his parents may be accompanied by feelings of fear or respect.

The structure of the poem, written in an ABAB rhyme pattern, reflects the rhythm of the waltz itself. This rhythm emphasizes the playful tone of the poem, even as it works in concert with violent imagery. The poem's constant rhythm reflects the father-son relationship's rhythmic nature, where love is constant yet sometimes violent. The structured meter in the poem, which mimics a dance, suggests that the affection between father and son is controlled and measured yet still very consequential.

### **Figurative Language: Personification and Symbolism**

The use of figurative language in *My Papa's Waltz* enriches the complexity of emotions in this poem. Personification, such as **the whiskey on your breath**, could make a small boy dizzy, making the father's presence come alive in the child's mind and showing how much of an impact his father has. The father's breath is almost a living thing, describing a powerful and intoxicating authority over the child.

Symbolism also plays an important role in depicting love in this poem. The waltz dance symbolizes the father-son relationship, where harmony and tension exist. The waltz suggests a regular intimacy, but there is also roughness, like the father's scarred knuckle and the son clutching his father's shirt, which adds layers of conflict and affection. So, the waltz here is not just a dance but a symbol of the complex emotional dance between love and fear.

This literature review discusses new criticism as a theoretical framework, emphasizing the importance of focusing on the intrinsic elements in the text. Analyzing previous studies of *My Papa's Waltz* and exploring its key elements- image, tone, structure, and figurative language- this section has laid the foundation for understanding how a son's affection for his father is expressed in this poem. The New Criticism approach allows for a reading that reveals the complexity of love, showing how affection can be intertwined with tension, conflict, and even violence. This interpretation provides deeper insight into the hidden emotions in *My Papa's Waltz* and how Roethke conveys those emotions through poetic language.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This section describes the research method used to analyze the poem *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke, particularly in identifying the forms of expression of a child's affection for his father using the New Criticism approach. "The research used in current literary study applies qualitative research to specific library research" (Creswell & Creswell, (2018). The research used the qualitative method because the data are from the poem. To achieve the research objectives, a descriptive qualitative method focuses on analyzing the intrinsic elements of the poem without including external factors. The New Criticism approach allows the researcher to conduct an in-depth reading of the poem's text and explore imagery, figurative language, and structure to reveal deeper meanings.

### Research Design

This research is qualitative in the sense that the focus is on understanding and interpreting meaning through words, not numbers or statistical data. The researcher used a case study approach to one main object, the poem *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke. This approach was chosen because the research objective was to explore in depth the forms of expression of a child's affection for his father by analyzing the poem's intrinsic elements,

such as imagery, structure, and figurative language, without including the external contexts.

This research does not use a sample or population in a quantitative sense because the main subject is the poem text itself. Through close reading techniques, the researcher deeply analyses the poem to identify and understand the elements that contribute to the expression of affection in the text. The selection of the poem *My Papa's Waltz* was based on the relevance and potential of the text to be analyzed using the New Criticism theory, which focuses on studying the intrinsic elements of literary works.

### **Research Instruments**

The main instrument used in this research is library research, where data is collected through reading the text of the poem *\*My Papa's Waltz\** by Theodore Roethke and related literature that supports the analysis using the New Criticism approach. No questionnaire, interview, or observation was used as the research focused on analyzing the text in depth.

The researcher used close reading method guided by the New Criticism theory to determine the validity and reliability of data collection. Validity was maintained by referring to relevant and verified academic sources on New Criticism and poetry analysis. The reliability of the research was achieved by applying a consistent method in each analysis stage, identifying intrinsic elements such as imagery, metaphor, tone, and poetic structure so that the interpretation was kept objective and focused on the text.

### **Research Procedure**

The research process was conducted through preparation, data collection techniques, and data analysis. The following is a detailed explanation of each of these steps:

#### ***Research Preparation***

Before starting the research, the researcher conducted several preparatory stages:

- **Determining the Research Focus:** The researcher first determined the focus of the
- Supporting Literature:** The researcher read and studied literature related to New Criticism theory, especially guidelines in conducting close readings of poetry and other references that discuss the intrinsic elements of poetry, such as imagery, structure, and figurative language.
- **Preparing the Research Instrument:** The researcher is the main instrument in this research. The preparation involved an in-depth study of the poems to be analyzed and

an understanding of the theory and methods of New Criticism that would be applied in the analysis.

### ***Data Collection Technique***

Data collection was conducted through the library research method, with the following steps:

- In-depth Reading of the Poem: The researcher read the poem *My Papa's Waltz* thoroughly and repeatedly to identify relevant intrinsic elements, such as imagery, figurative language, and poetic structure.
- Taking Notes on Important Elements: During the reading process, the researcher took notes on the elements that were the focus of the study, specifically the violent imagery that serves as a metaphor for affection, the use of tone and structure of the poem, and the use of personification and metaphor in the language of the poem.
- Collecting Secondary Literature: In addition to the poem's text, the researcher also collected secondary sources related to the poem, New Criticism theory, and previous studies on *My Papa's Waltz*.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data that has been collected was analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method. The following are the stages of the analysis:

- Identification of Intrinsic Elements: After data collection, the researcher identified and categorized the intrinsic elements of the poem, such as imagery, structure, tone, and figurative language. These elements were analyzed to see how they contribute to the poem's overall meaning.
- Interpretation of Meaning: Based on the New Criticism approach, the researcher interpreted how the identified elements express the son's form of affection for his father. The analysis focuses on how violent imagery can be a metaphor for affection and how structure and figurative language create a complex emotional atmosphere.
- Formulating Findings: After interpretation, the researcher summarizes the findings by detailing the forms of expressions of affection revealed from the analysis of the poems. The findings are then formulated concerning New Criticism theory, highlighting how the poem's meaning is entrenched in intrinsic elements.

Through this step, the research is expected to reveal in depth the forms of expression of a child's affection for his father in the poem *My Papa's Waltz* according to the New Criticism approach.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of an analysis of Theodore Roethke's poem "*My Papa's Waltz*" through the lens of New Criticism. This research aimed to explore the forms of expression of a child's affection for his father as portrayed in the poem. This analysis revealed that the poem contains a complex emotional landscape in which affection, fear, and tension interact. The findings fall into several key themes: violent imagery as a metaphor for love, the importance of poetic structure and tone, and the use of metaphor and personification. These elements contribute to the understanding of the complex relationship between the child and the father.

### Violent Imagery as a Metaphor for Love

One of the most prominent features of *My Papa's Waltz* is the striking use of violent imagery, which serves as a metaphorical representation of a child's affection for his father. The poem begins with the line, **whiskey on your breath / could make a small boy dizzy**, immediately introducing discomfort and the potential for danger. The mention of whiskey suggests a chaotic environment, which may indicate the father's drunkenness. However, the son's reaction, **but I hung on like death**, reveals a deep attachment and determination to remain close to his father despite the uncomfortable situation.

The violent imagery continues throughout the poem with lines such as **You beat time on my head and the hand that held my wrist/ was battered on one knuckle**. At first sight, these phrases may evoke thoughts of physical harm or abuse. However, through a New Criticism approach, it is possible to interpret these images as symbolic representations of the complexities involved in their relationship. The act of 'beating time' can be seen as a rhythmic connection between father and son, suggesting that even in the context of rudeness, there is a sense of shared bond.

The interspersion of violent imagery with intimate physical contact serves to highlight the duality of children's affection. The metaphor of violence becomes a means to express affection, illustrating how affection can manifest in unconventional ways. The child's experience is not simply happiness or safety, but an emotionally charged interaction

that includes love and fear. This complexity resonates with readers, inviting them to explore the deeper meaning behind the images.

### Poetic Structure and Tone

The structure and tone of *My Papa's Waltz* play an important role in conveying a child's affection. The poem is structured in an ABAB rhyme scheme, which creates a playful and rhythmic quality that reminds of a dance. This structure mirrors the waltz dance depicted in the poem, which shows a sense of fun and familiarity in the interaction between father and son. The consistent meter brings out a sense of movement, strengthening the idea of a shared experience between the two characters.

For example, the line **we romped until the pans/ slid from the kitchen shelf** creates a vivid image of playful chaos, indicating a happy time between father and son. The word *romped* conveys a sense of freedom and excitement, emphasizing the playful nature of their relationship. However, this joy is paired with the line: **my mother's countenance/ could not unfrown itself**. Here, the tone switches, introducing a sense of tension and discomfort. The mother's inability to 'frown' suggests that all parties involved may not view this playful interaction positively, suggesting an underlying conflict in the family dynamic.

Ambivalence in tone reflects the complexity of the child's emotional experience. Fun and exciting elements live side by side, illustrating that love for parents can be accompanied by feelings of fear or respect. The child's perspective is of mixed emotions, where happy memories are intertwined with an awareness of potential danger. This duality is further emphasized by the poem's rhythmic structure, which combines elements of playfulness with moments of tension.

### Metaphor and Personification

Roethke's use of metaphor and personification enhances the emotional depth of '*My Papa's Waltz*.' For example, the line "**the hand that held my wrist / was battered on one knuckle**" personifies the father's hand, inspiring it with a sense of history and character. The phrase "**battered on one knuckle**" suggests a life full of hard work and struggle, indicating that the father's experiences have shaped him. This personification allows the reader to see the father as a complex figure who manifests strength and weakness.

In addition, the metaphor of the waltz is a powerful symbol of the father-son relationship. The act of dancing together implies a level of intimacy and connection, where the rhythm of their movements reflects the dynamics of their relationship. However, the waltz is not just a graceful dance; it also contains elements of roughness and tension. The



'clutching' and 'scraping' imagery further emphasizes the complexity of their relationship, showing that love can be beautiful and painful.

The line '**You beat time in my head**' can be seen as a metaphor for the father's influence on the child's life. The act of '**beating time**' suggests a rhythmic relationship, where the father's actions shape the child's experience. This metaphor highlights the idea that the child's life is deeply connected to the father's life, illustrating the profound impact of their relationship.

Through the analysis of *My Papa's Waltz*, it has been shown that this poem embraces a complex emotional landscape where love, fear, and tension coexist. The use of violent imagery as a metaphor for love, the importance of poetic structure and tone, and the use of metaphor and personification all contribute to an overall understanding of the complicated relationship between son and father.

The New Criticism approach makes it possible to see how each poem element contributes to this multi-layered expression of love. By focusing on the text only, avoid biographical interpretations and instead look at how the intrinsic features of the poem work together to create meaning. This analysis reveals that children's expressions of love can be much more complex than mere affection. The poem shows that love can coexist with fear, that rudeness can be a form of tenderness, and that the deepest attachments can be expressed through actions that seem, on the surface, harsh or even abusive.

In addition, *My Papa's Waltz* uses its intrinsic poetic elements to paint a nuanced picture of a child's love for his father - encompassing a range of emotions and expressed through a complex interplay of imagery, structure, and figurative language. This analysis highlights the importance of considering the complexity of human emotions, particularly in family relationships. By exploring how love can manifest in unconventional ways, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that make up the experience of love.

## CONCLUSION(S)

The poem *My Papa's Waltz* by Theodore Roethke offers a profound exploration of a son's affection for his father, expressed through the lens of New Criticism. Analysis reveals that Roethke encapsulates the complex emotional dynamics of the father-son relationship, blending love with tension and fear. The use of violent imagery, poetic structure, and

figurative language such as metaphor and personification contribute to this multi-layered portrayal of love.

Through the New Criticism approach, it becomes clear that love can be expressed in unconventional ways, including actions that may seem violent or cruel. Roethke's poetry shows that emotions, especially in family relationships, are not straightforward but interwoven with ambivalence and hidden meanings. This research has highlighted the importance of intrinsic elements such as imagery, tone, and structure in analyzing literary works without relying on external contexts such as the author's biography.

This study contributes to literary studies by offering a purely intrinsic analysis of *My Papa's Waltz* without involving biographical or social context and focusing solely on textual elements. It invites further exploration of how violent imagery in literature can serve as a metaphor for complex emotions, particularly in family relationships. Future research could extend this analysis by exploring similar dynamics in other poems that use violence or ambivalence to portray affection or investigate how readers from different cultural backgrounds interpret the literary device.

## REFERENCES

- Barillas, W. (2015). Meter in Theodore Roethke's *My Papas Waltz*. *Explicator*, 73(1), 9–12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00144940.2014.1000246/ASSET//CMS/ASSET/BF832CF0-2850-4D9E-AAC3-332799A700F0/00144940.2014.1000246.FP.PNG>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Mixed Methods Procedures. In *Research Defign: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*.
- Nasir Masar, M. A. R. (n.d.). *Childhood in Theodore Roethke 's " My Papa ' s Waltz "*.
- Sharma, B. D. (2022). An Analysis of Poetic Text and Language: A Reference to Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz." *Humanities and Social Sciences Journal*, 13(2), 41–51.  
<https://doi.org/10.3126/hssj.v13i2.49801>
- Tahir, F. S. (2017). *An Analysis Of Figurative Language And Imagery In "The Beatles" S Song Lyrics*. 5(6), 1156–1165. <http://eprints.unpam.ac.id/4878/>
- Verani, M., Somad, A., & Warmansyah, J. (2022). the Relationship of Father'S Involvement in Parenting and Interpersonal Intelligence of Young Children. *Journal of Early Childhood Education (JECE)*, 3(2), 105–114.  
<https://doi.org/10.15408/jece.v3i2.19844>
- Wardani, A. D. (2023). Toxic Parenting in "My Papa's Waltz" By Theodore Roethke. *Alphabet: A Biannual Academic Journal on ...*, 06(01), 28–32.  
<https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.alphabet.2022.06.01.03>
- Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1948). *Wellek-Theory of Lit.pdf* (p. 361).