

Defying Patriarchy: A Critical Analysis of Revolt from Hymen by Angela Manalang-Gloria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how linguistic and stylistic features in Angela Manalang-Gloria's *Revolt from Hymen* function as discursive mechanisms for challenging patriarchal constructions of gender within Philippine society. Using a qualitative textual analysis approach grounded in postmodern feminist discourse analysis, the study employs inductive coding to identify recurrent linguistic patterns present in the poem. These include metaphorical constructions, lexical deviation, symbolic labeling, and syntactic fragmentation. The analysis demonstrates how these linguistic features operate as discursive strategies that recontextualize conventional representations of intimacy, purity, and relational expectations. Through semantic shifts and stylistic deviation, the poem encodes gendered identities and socio-cultural norms within its lexical and syntactic structures. The findings highlight the role of poetic language in constructing and contesting dominant gender ideologies within literary discourse.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Postmodern Feminism, Metaphorical Construction, Lexical Deviation, Gender Identity, Philippine Poetry

1. Introduction

Literary works are increasingly recognized as discursive spaces where dominant gender ideologies and societal expectations imposed upon women are challenged. In the Philippines, poetry has been examined as a medium for contesting patriarchal constructions of women's roles in marriage and the construction of female identity (Jocson, 2020; Cruz, 2019; Reyes, 2020). Previous studies suggest that feminist poetry functions not only as an aesthetic form but also as a linguistic resource for negotiating gendered power relations using poetic devices such as metaphor and syntax (Calubayan & Raymundo, 2022; De la Rosa, 2022; Navarro, 2023). These findings suggest that poetic language may operate as a mechanism for interrogating restrictive socio-cultural norms and gender roles embedded in the text.

From the postmodern feminist perspective, gender identity is socially constructed and not based on biology (Butler, 1990). Literature may function as a site for challenging dominant gender narratives through the subversion of socially constructed ideals of femininity and purity. In this respect, feminist poetry foregrounds themes of autonomy and resistance by examining the socio-cultural mechanisms that regulate women's bodies and identities within patriarchal contexts (Santos, 2021; Reyes, 2020).

Across different cultural contexts, feminist poetry has engaged patriarchal constructions of womanhood through stylistic and linguistic subversion of dominant discourses (Smith, 2023; Wilson & Carter, 2024; Kim, 2023). In recent times, literature in prose and narrative forms in the Philippines has begun to deal with issues concerning gender inequality in these forms (Cruz, 2024; Solanon et al., 2024). In contrast,

there has been little examination of how poetic language, as a means of discourse, can challenge patriarchal notions of gender. This gap highlights the need for analyses that examine how poetic language functions as a discursive mechanism of resistance.

Revolt from Hymen by Angela Manalang-Gloria, which is from the early twentieth century, provides a critical site for examining how women's autonomy in their relationship to marriage and purity is constructed in socio-cultural contexts of women's roles in society. The use of metaphorical language, unconventional syntax, and symbolic imagery in the poem encodes representations of gendered oppression and resistance to patriarchal norms. This study aims to examine how the linguistic and stylistic features of the poem subvert dominant gender discourses within Philippine society.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative textual analysis design using postmodern feminist discourse analysis to examine the linguistic construction of gendered meanings in Angela Manalang Gloria's poem Revolt from Hymen. The research focused on how poetic language functions as a discursive site for the negotiation of gender roles, social expectations, and patriarchal ideologies. Specifically, the study adopted a content relational analytical approach to identify patterns of linguistic disruption, metaphorical encoding, and symbolic representation that articulate resistance to dominant gender norms embedded in socio cultural discourse.

2.2 Corpus of the Study

The primary corpus of this study consisted of the poem Revolt from Hymen written by Angela Manalang Gloria. The poem was purposively selected due to its explicit thematic engagement with issues of female autonomy, marital expectations, and socio cultural constructions of purity in Philippine society. As a published literary text, the poem served as the unit of analysis through which discursive representations of femininity and gendered power relations were examined.

2.3 Analytical Instrument

To facilitate systematic analysis, the study utilized a structured analytical guide grounded in postmodern feminist theory. The analytical guide enabled the identification and categorization of linguistic and stylistic features present in the poem, including:

- fragmented syntax
- metaphorical expressions
- symbolic imagery
- lexical deviation
- ironic tone
- semantic shifts

These features were examined in relation to their discursive functions in constructing or destabilizing gendered identities and socio-cultural expectations of women.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected through close textual reading of the selected poem. Relevant lexical items, metaphorical expressions, and syntactic constructions that reflect discursive representations of gender identity and relational expectations were identified and extracted from the text. These linguistic elements were subsequently organized according to their stylistic and structural characteristics to facilitate discourse-oriented analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The extracted textual data were analyzed using an inductive coding process adapted from qualitative content analysis. Open coding was initially conducted to identify recurrent linguistic patterns and discursive strategies present in the poem. These codes were subsequently grouped into linguistic and discursive categories aligned with postmodern feminist discourse, including:

- metaphorical constructions
- lexical deviation
- symbolic labeling
- semantic recontextualization
- syntactic fragmentation

These linguistic features were further examined in relation to their discursive functions in representing gender identity, relational constraints, and socio-cultural expectations embedded within the text.

3. Results

The analysis of Angela Manalang-Gloria’s *Revolt from Hymen* revealed recurring linguistic and stylistic features identified through inductive coding of lexical items, metaphorical constructions, and syntactic patterns present in the poem. These features include metaphorical expressions, symbolic labeling, lexical deviation, and syntactic fragmentation that function as discursive representations of gender identity and relational constraints within the text.

Table 1 *Linguistic and Discursive Features in Revolt from Hymen*

Discursive Representation	Linguistic Feature Identified	Line
Female Bodily Autonomy	Metaphorical Construction (“broken the seal”)	Lines 7–8
Marital Constraint	Negative Lexical Connotation (“no better than a whore’s”)	Lines 7–8
Resistance to Intimacy	Semantic Recontextualization (“kisses... like sores”)	Line 6
Gender Identity Construction	Symbolic Encoding of Purity (“marks the flesh”)	Line 8
Emotional Regulation	Syntactic Fragmentation (“To turn the face this way and that”)	Lines 4–5

The metaphorical construction "No kisses festering on it like sores" recontextualizes intimacy through negative lexical connotation, transforming a conventional symbol of affection into an index of bodily discomfort. The comparison of "kisses" to "sores" introduces a semantic shift that frames physical intimacy as a site of constraint rather than affective connection. This lexical deviation functions as a discursive strategy that destabilizes romanticized representations of marital relationships by encoding intimacy as a mechanism of social control within patriarchal discourse.

Table 2 *Linguistic and Discursive Features in Revolt from Hymen*

Discursive Representation	Linguistic Feature Identified	Line
Emotional Regulation	Syntactic Fragmentation (“With passion weighted down...”)	Lines 4–5
Autonomy Construction	Imperative Lexical Choice (“O to be free...”)	Lines 1–2

Gender Identity Encoding	Symbolic Labeling (“marks the flesh”)	Line 8
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The syntactic fragmentation observed in the phrase "With passion weighted down upon the breast, To turn the face this way and that and feel" introduces a structural disruption that reflects constrained agency within interpersonal relations. Similarly, the imperative lexical construction in the line "O to be free at last" foregrounds autonomy through modality that signals resistance to imposed relational expectations. In addition, the symbolic labeling in the phrase "marks the flesh" functions as a lexical marker of identity inscription, encoding gendered categorization through references to purity and social valuation.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the linguistic and stylistic features in Angela Manalang-Gloria's *Revolt from Hymen* function as discursive mechanisms for challenging patriarchal constructions of femininity and marital expectations. The use of fragmented syntax, symbolic imagery, and metaphorical language in the poem foregrounds the speaker's resistance to socio-cultural norms that regulate women's bodies and identities within patriarchal institutions. These linguistic strategies may be interpreted as forms of ideological disruption that subvert dominant narratives surrounding purity and gendered obedience.

In particular, the poem's metaphorical representation of the hymen as a symbolic marker of ownership reflects how societal expectations of female virtue are constructed through language. From a postmodern feminist perspective, such representations illustrate how gender identity is discursively produced through socio-cultural practices rather than biologically determined characteristics (Butler, 1990). The speaker's desire for liberation, as expressed through phrases such as "broken the seal," may therefore be understood as an act of resistance against socially imposed standards of chastity and marital obligation.

Furthermore, the poem's use of grotesque imagery and ironic tone destabilizes conventional romanticized portrayals of intimacy and affection. Expressions such as "No kisses festering on it like sores" reframe traditional symbols of love as instruments of emotional and physical constraint, thereby revealing the ideological function of intimacy within patriarchal structures. These findings support previous analyses that emphasize how poetic language may serve as a discursive tool for negotiating gendered power relations through stylistic deviation and symbolic disruption (Calubayan & Raymundo, 2022; De la Rosa, 2022).

The representation of emotional burden in the lines "With passion weighted down upon the breast" may also be interpreted as an articulation of gendered emotional labor imposed upon women within marital relationships. This aligns with earlier feminist studies that examine how literary texts portray resistance to restrictive gender roles and socio-cultural expectations of female submission (Santos, 2021; Reyes, 2020). Through these linguistic features, the poem foregrounds the tension between individual agency and institutionalized norms that regulate female identity.

Overall, the stylistic elements employed in *Revolt from Hymen* function as mechanisms of literary resistance that interrogate dominant gender ideologies within Philippine society. By reconstituting the female body as a site of discursive struggle rather than passive submission, the poem contributes to feminist literary discourse that challenges socially constructed narratives of femininity, purity, and marital obedience.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate how linguistic and stylistic features in Angela Manalang-Gloria's

Revolt from Hymen function as discursive mechanisms for challenging patriarchal constructions of gender within Philippine society. The use of metaphorical constructions, lexical deviation, symbolic labeling, and syntactic fragmentation in the poem encodes gendered identities and relational expectations through language.

These linguistic strategies illustrate how poetic discourse may operate as a site for negotiating socio-cultural norms related to marriage, purity, and female autonomy. By recontextualizing conventional representations of intimacy and identity, the poem foregrounds the role of language in constructing and contesting dominant gender ideologies within literary discourse.

Overall, this study contributes to discourse-oriented approaches in the analysis of Philippine feminist poetry by highlighting how stylistic and lexical choices may function as mechanisms of ideological resistance within socio-cultural contexts.

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