

# Feminine Liberation: A Stylistic Analysis of Angela Manalang-Gloria's 'Revolt from Hymen'

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## Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Angela Manalang-Gloria's poem *Revolt from Hymen*, focusing on its linguistic, structural, and thematic features. Through the lens of feminist literary theory, the research explores how Manalang-Gloria masterfully employs diction, syntax, metaphor, and imagery to critique patriarchal norms, particularly the institution of marriage and its oppressive control over women's bodies. The poem, set against the backdrop of early 20th-century Philippines, engages with global feminist discourses, addressing themes such as bodily autonomy, gender-based violence, and resistance to patriarchal domination. The metaphor of the hymen is central to the poem's feminist message, symbolizing the physical and societal barriers imposed on women, which the protagonist defies in a powerful act of rebellion. The study's contextual analysis situates the poem within the socio-political history of the Philippines, highlighting the influence of colonialism and traditional gender roles in perpetuating inequality. Ultimately, this research positions *Revolt from Hymen* as a seminal work in both Philippine and global feminist literature, underscoring its enduring relevance in contemporary discussions on gender, power, and women's rights. The findings emphasize how Manalang-Gloria's use of language and poetic devices not only convey deep emotional complexity but also advocate for feminine liberation, making the poem a timeless feminist text.

**Keywords:** Angela Manalang-Gloria, *Revolt from Hymen*, feminist literary theory, bodily autonomy, feminine liberation.

The exploration of feminine liberation in feminist literature has been a recurring theme reflecting the ongoing global struggle for women's rights and autonomy. Historically, patriarchal societies have often restricted women to roles of submission and silence, particularly within the institution of marriage, limiting their agency over their bodies and lives (Stubbs, 2022; Domínguez & Noriega, 2022). In the Philippines, literature has emerged as a vital platform for women to challenge these oppressive norms, providing a space for them to

voice their resistance, reclaim their narratives, and assert their rights (Rabinovitch-Fox, 2021). Angela Manalang-Gloria, a prominent figure in Philippine literature, embodies this subversive voice, challenging traditional gender norms through her literary works. Her poem "Revolt from Hymen" serves as a powerful feminist statement addressing the oppressive structures that constrained women in early 20th-century Filipino society (Brandwein, 2007; Cannizzo, 2021).

Angela Manalang-Gloria, a significant figure in Philippine literature, particularly in feminist poetry during the American colonial period, delves into themes of love, loss, and female empowerment, showcasing a forward-thinking feminist consciousness that predates many feminist movements in the Philippines (Shapiro, 2020; Goszczyńska, 2022). Writing within a conservative societal framework where traditional gender roles were strictly enforced, her poem "Revolt from Hymen" directly challenges the taboo subject of marital rape, questioning the patriarchal notion that marriage grants men control over women's bodies (Calafell, 2018; Azmitia, 2023).

"Revolt from Hymen" is a pivotal piece in Philippine feminist literature, confronting the deeply ingrained patriarchal belief that marriage bestows men with ownership of their wives' bodies (Bowen, 2018). The title of the poem symbolizes defiance against societal expectations, with the "hymen" serving as a metaphor for the physical and metaphorical barriers imposed on women, reinforcing the concept of female submission within marriage. Through vivid language and symbolism, Manalang-Gloria captures a woman's rebellion against this control, framing the poem as a declaration of feminine liberation and autonomy (Rodríguez-Rocha & González-López, 2019).

In feminist literary theory, personal narratives are often seen as inherently political, with individual stories reflecting broader societal power dynamics and structures of oppression (Hernández, 2019). This perspective is particularly relevant to Manalang-Gloria's work, where the intimate portrayal of marital rape in "Revolt from Hymen" can be interpreted as a broader critique of the institution of marriage and the cultural expectations imposed on women ("undefined", 2019). Scholars have highlighted the significance of language, metaphor, and symbolism in feminist poetics, emphasizing how these elements can either reinforce or challenge existing power structures (Flint et al., 2022).

This study conducts a comprehensive stylistic analysis of "Revolt from Hymen" to explore the linguistic, structural, and thematic elements contributing to its feminist message (Amorao, 2017). By examining Manalang-Gloria's use of diction, imagery, and metaphor, the analysis aims to reveal how these literary devices enhance the poem's emotional depth and critique of patriarchal norms (Knowlton & Manlapaz, 1995). For example, the juxtaposition of terms like "revolt" and "hymen" draws attention to the tension between submission and resistance, highlighting the protagonist's yearning for bodily autonomy.

Furthermore, this research contextualizes "Revolt from Hymen" within the broader scope of feminist literary theory and the socio-political history of the Philippines (Mitchell, 2023). The poem was written during a period when conservative Catholic values and colonial influences reinforced traditional gender roles, thereby limiting women's agency (Knowlton et al., 1995). By placing the poem within its historical and cultural context, the study aims to provide insights into how Manalang-Gloria's work intersects with both local and global feminist movements (Jackson & Prins, 1999).

In conclusion, Angela Manalang-Gloria's "Revolt from Hymen" stands as a testament to the power of feminist literature in challenging societal norms and advocating for women's liberation (Holiday, 2010). Through its intricate stylistic elements and thematic richness, the poem continues to resonate in both local and global feminist literary discourse, offering a critical perspective on the intersection of gender, power dynamics, and resistance (Bartlett, 2010). Manalang-Gloria's enduring influence on Philippine literature and feminist thought underscores the significance of her work in advancing discussions on gender equality and women's rights (Burton, 1998).

## Methods

### Research Design and Approach

This study utilized a qualitative research approach to conduct a detailed stylistic analysis of Angela Manalang-Gloria's poem "Revolt from Hymen," focusing on linguistic, structural, and thematic features (Nshimiyimana, 2024). The choice of stylistic analysis aimed to explore how the poem's elements contribute to its feminist message (Rizky, 2024). The research design allowed for an examination of how language, form, and content interact to critique patriarchal structures and advocate for feminine liberation (Bao, 2023).

### Data Sources

The primary data for this study was derived from the poem "Revolt from Hymen" by Angela Manalang-Gloria, sourced from published collections of her works and Philippine poetry anthologies in English (Yang, 2024).

Supplementary data were gathered through an extensive review of related literature, including feminist literary theory, stylistic analysis frameworks, and historical accounts of gender roles in the Philippines (O'Halloran, 2021). These sources provided a theoretical foundation for the analysis of the poem.

Secondary data from scholarly articles and books discussing feminist theory, postcolonial studies, and Philippine literature were also utilized to contextualize the poem within local and global feminist movements (Hardyansah, 2024). This broader perspective helped in understanding how "Revolt from Hymen" resonates with wider feminist discourses and movements (Satria et al., 2022).

### Data Analysis Procedure

#### Linguistic Analysis

The linguistic analysis focused on the poem's diction, syntax, and figurative language to understand how these elements contribute to the overall meaning and feminist message of the poem (Lan-lan & Xu-hong, 2022).

#### Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis delved into central themes such as bodily autonomy and gender-based violence to uncover how the poem reflects broader feminist concerns (Franssen, 2015).

#### Contextual Analysis

The contextual analysis situated the poem within its historical and cultural context, considering colonial influences and traditional gender roles that shaped societal norms (Jeffcoate, 2001).

#### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research was grounded in feminist literary theory, providing a lens through which the poem was analyzed (Silva, 2023). This framework emphasized how literature reflects, challenges, or reinforces gender norms and patriarchal ideologies, aligning with the themes of bodily autonomy and resistance present in "Revolt from Hymen" (Rahimnouri & Ghandehariun, 2020).

#### Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study due to the sensitive subject matter of the poem, particularly its focus on marital rape and gender-based violence (Mhana, 2023). The analysis was conducted with sensitivity to the experiences of women who may have faced similar forms of violence, aiming to present the themes respectfully and thoughtfully while advocating for women's rights and autonomy (Ohito & Nyachae, 2018).

#### Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While this study offered a detailed analysis of "Revolt from Hymen," limitations should be acknowledged, such as the focus on a single poem, which limits the scope of findings (Šeškauskienė & Valentjeva, 2015). Future research could expand by examining a broader range of Manalang-Gloria's works or comparing her poetry to other feminist writers in the Philippines (Krismonsari, 2024). Additionally, as a qualitative study, the interpretive nature of the findings may vary based on the theoretical framework applied.

## Results and Discussion

The linguistic analysis of Angela Manalang-Gloria's poem *Revolt from Hymen* unveils the layers of feminist consciousness embedded within its verses, illustrating the poet's masterful command of language in addressing gender-based oppression and the fight for female autonomy (Rodríguez, 2007). Through deliberate word choice, syntactic structuring, metaphorical imagery, and thematic exploration, Manalang-Gloria crafts a compelling narrative that speaks to both the physical and psychological struggles of women trapped within patriarchal norms, particularly in the context of marriage. The poem serves as a stark reminder of the limited agency afforded to women during the early 20th century in the Philippines, where cultural, religious, and colonial influences intersected to perpetuate gender-based violence and inequality (Man et al., 2017; Clarke, 2022).

### Diction and Imagery in Conveying Emotional Turmoil and Feminist Resistance

Manalang-Gloria's strategic use of diction immediately sets the tone of *Revolt from Hymen*, immersing readers in the protagonist's visceral experience of suffering and defiance (Alduais et al., 2022). Words like "chains," "shackles," and "blood" are not simply literal representations of physical imprisonment; they serve as potent symbols of the systemic oppression imposed upon women within the institution of marriage (Manar, 2022). The language evokes imagery of bondage, violence, and degradation, which are emblematic of the broader societal constraints faced by women who are often subjected to marital rape and other forms of domestic abuse (Burgoon et al., 2015). Manalang-Gloria's linguistic choices not only highlight the protagonist's physical entrapment but also underscore her psychological suffering—an experience compounded by the expectations of female submission within a patriarchal framework.

The use of metaphor amplifies this sense of entrapment. The poem's titular reference to the "hymen" acts as a powerful metaphor for both the physical reality of virginity and the symbolic barriers that restrict female autonomy (Konopasky et al., 2019). In traditional cultural and religious contexts, the hymen is often viewed as a symbol of a woman's purity and the seal of her worth within marriage (Grieve, 2014). By framing the protagonist's rejection of this symbol as a "revolt," Manalang-Gloria captures the essence of the feminist struggle against societal expectations that reduce women to objects for male consumption. The metaphorical representation of the hymen allows the poem to transcend its immediate context and speak to the broader feminist discourse around bodily autonomy, ownership, and freedom from patriarchal control (Maya, 2023).

In this light, the imagery of blood takes on a dual significance. On one hand, it signifies the physical violation of the protagonist's body, possibly alluding to the act of marital rape, which is both legally and culturally ignored in many patriarchal societies (Bu et al., 2020). On the other hand, blood symbolizes the protagonist's resistance, marking her defiance and refusal to conform to the gendered expectations imposed upon her. It is a bold reclamation of agency, challenging the notion that her body and, by extension, her identity, belong to her husband or society at large. This thematic portrayal of blood, chains, and shackles ultimately positions the poem as a fierce denunciation of the violence inherent in the patriarchal institution of marriage, thereby framing *Revolt from Hymen* as a work of feminist protest (Balandina & Peredrienko, 2019).

### Syntax and Rhythm in Mirroring the Emotional Conflict of the Protagonist

The syntactical structure of the poem further intensifies the emotional landscape, reflecting the protagonist's internal conflict and resistance. Manalang-Gloria employs short, fragmented sentences to emphasize the immediacy and intensity of the protagonist's rebellion against the

constraints of her marital life (Haaften & Leeuwen, 2021). These terse statements, delivered in staccato rhythm, mirror the protagonist's escalating desperation and growing urgency to reclaim her body and autonomy. The fragmented nature of these lines captures her fractured state of mind, her struggle to articulate the deep-seated anger and frustration that arise from her subjugation within the confines of marriage (Zhang, 2023).

In contrast, the poem transitions to longer, more reflective sentences during moments of introspection, allowing the protagonist to pause and process her emotions. These passages, while still steeped in tension, provide a glimpse into her psychological journey from victimhood to resistance (Rosett et al., 2023). The interplay between terse declarations of defiance and longer, contemplative lines creates a dynamic rhythm that mirrors the protagonist's fluctuating emotional state. It also highlights the duality of her experience—caught between the immediacy of her revolt and the deeper, more sustained contemplation of her place within a society that seeks to control her body and her life (Yan et al., 2010).

#### Metaphor and Feminist Critique in Revolting Against Patriarchy

Central to the poem's feminist critique is the metaphor of the hymen, which represents both the physical and symbolic barriers to female autonomy. In patriarchal societies, the hymen is often fetishized as the mark of a woman's purity, a concept deeply rooted in the belief that a woman's worth is tied to her virginity and her ability to fulfill her husband's sexual desires upon marriage (Grieve, 2014). Manalang-Gloria subverts this notion by framing the protagonist's defiance as a "revolt from hymen," positioning her refusal to conform to these expectations as an act of rebellion against patriarchal norms (Maya, 2023). The metaphorical significance of the hymen as a barrier extends beyond its physical manifestation, symbolizing the broader societal and cultural restrictions that limit women's freedom and autonomy. The poem's exploration

of these themes places it firmly within the feminist literary tradition, engaging with issues of bodily ownership, gendered power dynamics, and the right to self-determination (Bu et al., 2020).

Moreover, the imagery of blood, which recurs throughout the poem, serves as both a symbol of the violence inflicted upon the protagonist and a marker of her resistance (Sunarto et al., 2019). The bloodshed, often associated with the act of defloration in patriarchal contexts, is reinterpreted in the poem as a powerful symbol of the protagonist's rebellion. Rather than signifying the loss of purity, the blood represents her reclaiming of agency and autonomy. In this way, the poem offers a radical reimagining of patriarchal symbols, turning them into tools of feminist resistance (JR, 2023).

#### Themes and Socio-Cultural Context in Feminism and Patriarchy of Early 20th-Century Philippines

The thematic exploration of *Revolt from Hymen* delves deeply into feminist concerns, with the poem addressing issues such as bodily autonomy, gender-based violence, and the critique of patriarchal institutions (Balandina & Peredrienko, 2019). One of the central themes of the poem is the protagonist's assertion of her right to bodily autonomy, a theme that resonates with feminist movements around the world advocating for women's control over their own bodies and reproductive rights. In *Revolt from Hymen*, this assertion takes the form of a bold rejection of the protagonist's husband's presumed right to her body, challenging the cultural norms that justify marital rape and other forms of gender-based violence (Toyoura et al., 2003).

The poem also critiques the institution of marriage itself, portraying it as an oppressive structure that limits women's freedom and autonomy (Yuniawan et al., 2017). In the socio-political and cultural landscape of early 20th-century Philippines, marriage was often seen as a social contract that granted husbands control

over their wives' bodies and lives (Man et al., 2017). This patriarchal understanding of marriage, deeply influenced by both indigenous traditions and colonial legacies, is challenged by the protagonist's revolt, which represents a broader feminist struggle against patriarchal control (Matos & Passos, 2006).

The poem's feminist critique extends to the larger cultural and religious norms that justify the oppression of women, particularly within the context of marriage (Clarke, 2022). By addressing issues such as marital rape and bodily autonomy, *Revolt from Hymen* aligns itself with global feminist movements advocating for women's rights and autonomy (Dorst, 2011). The poem also reflects the influence of colonialism on gender relations in the Philippines, responding to the colonial legacies that have shaped gender dynamics in the country (Tian, 2023). This socio-cultural critique situates *Revolt from Hymen* as a work of feminist resistance that not only addresses the specific context of the Philippines but also engages with broader global feminist concerns.

## Conclusion

*Revolt from Hymen* emerges as a powerful feminist text that engages deeply with issues of gender, power, and autonomy through its masterful use of language, imagery, and metaphor (Kanwal et al., 2021). The poem's critique of patriarchal structures and its advocacy for feminine liberation resonate with contemporary discussions on gender equality and women's rights (Dorst, 2011). Manalang-Gloria's ability to weave together linguistic artistry with feminist themes underscores the enduring significance of *Revolt from Hymen* in both Philippine literature and the broader feminist literary tradition (Zakharova et al., 2022). Through its exploration of bodily autonomy, resistance to gender-based violence, and critique of patriarchal institutions, the poem stands as a testament to the power of literature to challenge societal norms and advocate for social change.

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