

The Disillusionment with Marriage in Nick Joaquin's May Day Eve and The Summer Solstice

Jan Emmy C. Julve^{1*}, Kesshia Jake B. Alesna¹, Carlisle T. Auman¹, Florineth Rodrigo¹, Lito L. Diones¹

¹Department of Literary and Cultural Studies, Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, Philippines

Abstract: This study examines the disillusionment with marriage in Nick Joaquin's May Day Eve and The Summer Solstice, two short stories that depict marital relationships shaped by cultural tradition, gender expectations, and personal conflict within Filipino society. Employing a qualitative literary research design, the study analyzes how disillusionment emerges through plot structure, characterization, and thematic development. The analysis proceeds in three major phases. The first phase focuses on plot structure using IA Richard's New Criticism theory. It followed the structure of Aristotelian plot structure and principles of narratology, revealing how cyclical narration, ritualized events, and reversals of power expose the erosion of marital idealism. The second phase examines the characters through Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory, demonstrating how internal conflicts arise when characters' expectations of marriage clash with lived realities, resulting in emotional estrangement, resentment, and role reversal. The third phase applies Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis to identify recurring patterns of marital disillusionment, particularly those linked to authority, gendered power, and unmet romantic ideals. The fourth phase presents a creative writeback in the form of a monologue, synthesizing the analytical findings into an interpretive response that reflects the emotional and thematic tensions of marital disillusionment. Findings reveal that marriage in both texts is not portrayed as a harmonious union but as a place of psychological tension and transformation, where ritual, memory, and power destabilize traditional marital roles. Ultimately, the study concludes that Joaquin critiques marriage as a culturally sanctified institution by exposing its capacity to produce disillusionment rather than fulfillment. This research contributes to Philippine literary studies by foregrounding marriage as a central thematic concern and by integrating literary and psychological frameworks in textual analysis.

Keywords: Cognitive Dissonance, Disillusionment, Marriage, Nick Joaquin, Philippine novella.

1. Introduction

Literature reflects society while also serving as a curative mirror for its members [13], embodying a society's values, beliefs, and experiences at a given time. Short stories, in particular, focus on specific moments or emotions, and their concise narratives can deeply resonate with readers' conscience [2]. Nicomedes "Nick" Marquez Joaquin is a Filipino writer and journalist in Philippine literature and he is known for short stories namely May Day Eve and The Summer Solstice. The marriage aspect of the two short stories is the focus of the

research. Marriage is a central theme shared between the short stories May Day Eve and The Summer Solstice, yet it has not been extensively explored in academic research compared to other aspects which have focused on language, identity, narrative structure, feminism, and romanticism in Joaquin's works [3]-[8].

This study examines the disillusionment with marriage as depicted in Nick Joaquin's May Day Eve and The Summer Solstice exploring the plot structure using the Aristotelian plot structure. It also focuses on the characters Agueda, Badoy, and Anastasia for May Day Eve, then, Doña Lupeng, Don Paeng, and Guido for The Summer Solstice. Furthermore, the themes of the pieces are analyzed to understand the disillusionment with marriage in the two stories.

This study assumes that the short stories May Day Eve and The Summer Solstice by Nick Joaquin shows disillusionment with marriage. This assumption is supported by IA Richard's New Criticism, Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory, and Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis.

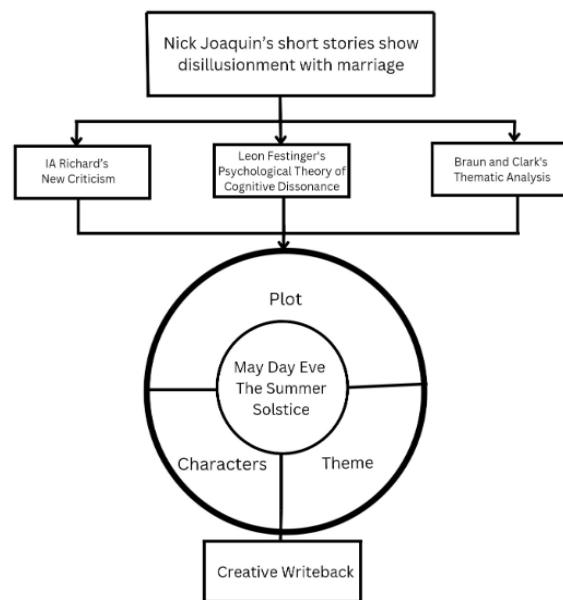


Fig. 1. Schematic presentation of the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

I.A. Richards' New Criticism argues that a literary text should be interpreted through its own language, structure, and literary devices, independent of external contexts such as authorial intent, historical background, or reader emotion. [12] New Criticism nonetheless upholds the autonomy of the literary work and views meaning as inherently embedded in its formal elements. Guided by this framework, this study applies Richards' New Critical approach to examine the disillusionment with marriage through the plots of *May Day Eve* and *The Summer Solstice*.

Leon Festinger's Psychological Theory of Cognitive Dissonance posits that individuals seek consistency among their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, as internally consistent cognitions tend to coexist in stable clusters [9]. When contradictions arise, cognitive dissonance occurs, producing psychological discomfort that individuals may resolve not only by changing beliefs or behaviors but also by avoiding situations or information that intensify the inconsistency. As Elliot Aronson explains, this process reflects the human effort to reconcile conflicting ideas in order to maintain a sense of coherence and meaning in life [9]. Complementing this theory, Self-Perception Theory suggests that individuals infer their attitudes by observing their own behavior rather than responding to internal discomfort, offering a behavioral explanation for similar phenomena [10]. Together, these theories illuminate the dynamic relationship between attitudes and actions. Guided by Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory, this study analyzes disillusionment with marriage in *May Day Eve* through Agueda, Badoy, and Anastasia, and in *The Summer Solstice* through Doña Lupeng, Don Paeng, and Guido.

Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis (TA) offers a systematic yet flexible method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning in qualitative data. Introduced in their 2006 work, TA is theoretically versatile, supporting both inductive and deductive approaches and guided by a six-phase process: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report [11]. This model emphasizes reflexivity, asserting that themes are actively constructed through the researcher's interpretive engagement rather than simply emerging from the data, and that they function as organizing concepts revealing both semantic and latent meanings shaped by cultural, psychological, and social contexts [11]. Guided by this framework, the study applies TA to Nick Joaquin's *May Day Eve* and *The Summer Solstice* to identify recurring patterns that reveal the characters' disillusionment with marriage.

2. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study employs qualitative research method, specifically discourse analysis methodology. Qualitative methods are applied to explore questions related to experience, meaning, and perspective, typically from the participant's viewpoint. This type of data is generally unsuitable for counting or

measurement [13]. Discourse analysis generally involves a research approach where language material, such as spoken language or written texts, and occasionally other types of material, are studied as indicators of phenomena that extend beyond individual perspectives [14]. It involves examining social life by analyzing language in its broadest sense, which includes spoken communication, non-verbal cues, visual elements, symbols, and written documents [15]. This approach relies on analyzing and interpreting the work under study, presenting and interpreting data in a qualitative, non-numerical way. This method is used to provide feasible reasoning for the analysis of the study on Nick Joaquin's *May Day Eve* and *The Summer Solstice* by organizing the gathered data to achieve the purpose of this study

B. Sources of Data

The primary source of data is taken from Tropical Gothic - Special Library Edition by Nick Joaquin. Initially published in 1972, this book was later copyrighted by Nick Joaquin in 2003. It is published and exclusively distributed by Anvil Publishing Inc. in Pasig City, Philippines. The book is classified under the Anvil Classics category and it comprises a total of 335 pages, including the short stories *May Day Eve*, which is situated on pages 120-133 and *The Summer Solstice* on pages 134-150. The secondary sources of data are taken from academic journals, scholarly literature, e-resources, blogs and articles from reputable websites.

C. Data Gathering Procedure

This study follows three phases: Phase 1. Plot Structure Analysis, Phase 2. Character Analysis, Phase 3. Theme Analysis, and Phase 4. Creative writeback.

Phase 1 focuses on conducting an analysis of Nick Joaquin's *May Day Eve* and *The Summer Solstice* by employing Aristotelian plot structure, which includes the beginning, middle, and end. I.A. Richards' New Criticism supports this study to ensure close attention to the short stories. Specific lines from the story are extracted as textual evidence. Each line is described in terms of the narrative techniques employed.

In Phase 2, the analysis focuses on the three characters from *May Day Eve*, Badoy, Agueda, and Anastasia, and the three characters from *The Summer Solstice* which are, Don Paeng, Dona Lupeng, and Guido by examining their characterization and how their experiences reflect disillusionment with marriage. This phase uses Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory as the analytical framework. Through this theory, the analysis aims to reveal how each main character experiences conflicting beliefs and expectations regarding marriage, leading to feelings of disillusionment.

In Phase 3, the analysis centers on the themes that emerge from *May Day Eve* and *The Summer Solstice* by identifying recurring patterns in the characters' actions, dialogues, and relationships. Following Braun and Clarke's six-phase model of thematic analysis, the study moves from close reading and coding of significant passages toward the construction of themes that capture both surface-level or the semantic meaning, and underlying or the latent meanings.

Phase 4 shows a creative writeback in the form of a monologue.

3. Results and Discussions

This section provides an extensive analysis and discussion of the findings of the study.

A. Plot Structure Analysis

Plot, the structured arrangement of events showcasing the author's skill in conveying themes through characters' interactions and conflicts, is analyzed in *May Day Eve* and *The Summer Solstice* by examining lines, scenes, and narrative techniques that reveal the progression of disillusionment with marriage, using I.A. Richards' New Criticism and an Aristotelian beginning-middle-end structure, with tables presenting the data.

1) May Day Eve Plot Structure Analysis

The narrative opens with Old Anastasia's recollection of a past May night (lines 32–33), immediately establishing a retrospective and ritualized temporal frame. The repetition of the phrases "And it was May again" and "It was the first day of May" emphasizes recurrence rather than singularity, situating the event within a cyclical pattern associated with tradition and ritual. This structural choice frames the plot as a return to an event whose consequences persist beyond the moment itself.

Through framed narration and flashback, the plot shifts from the present to the past, while imagery of witches, divination, and superstition constructs an atmosphere of ambiguity. This atmosphere sustains tension between magical belief and

rational explanation. Anastasia's narration casts the mirror ritual as a prophetic act, positioning love as something revealed through supernatural means rather than shaped by personal agency. At this stage of the plot, the narrative establishes the central illusion: the belief that love is predestined and inevitable. Although disillusionment has not yet emerged, the ideal is presented as inherently fragile, as the ritual promises certainty that the plot will later undermine.

The rising action intensifies when Agueda openly rejects superstition. In lines 92–93, she declares, "But what nonsense!" and insists that the year 1847 has eliminated belief in devils. This verbal confidence is immediately countered by the narration's assertion that "nevertheless, she had turned pale." The contrast between Agueda's assertive disbelief and her involuntary physical reaction introduces dramatic irony. The plot reveals an early instability between outward skepticism and inward fear, foreshadowing the eventual collapse of her convictions. Disillusionment is not yet realized, but the plot plants its foundation through this dissonance.

The mirror ritual reaches a critical point in lines 128–131, as Agueda recounts the event to her daughter. Her whispered incantation and closed eyes signal full submission to the ritual, while descriptions of paralysis and suspended time heighten narrative tension. The repetition of "unable" underscores her loss of control, suggesting both enchantment and entrapment. This moment represents the peak of illusion within the early plot, where romantic longing and supernatural belief converge.

The interruption of the ritual by the sound of footsteps and a smothered giggle breaks the scene's stillness and propels the

Table 1
May Day Eve plot structure analysis

Plot	Lines	Scene Description	Narrative Technique
Beginning	Lines 32-33	Old Anastasia recalls the first night of May, known for witchcraft. The night feels mysterious, suggesting something supernatural is possible.	Flashback, Framed Narrative, Foreshadowing, Irony, Imagery
	Lines 92-93	Agueda laughs at superstitions and pretends not to believe, but when something happens, her fear shows. Though she tries to hide it, her actions reveal she is still affected.	Character Contrast, Dramatic Irony, Tone Shift, Psychological Interiorization
	Line 128-131	Agueda recalls performing the ritual, more afraid when she heard a strange sound behind her. Not knowing its source, her fear intensifies.	Symbolism, Rising Action, Foreshadowing, Flashback
Middle	Lines 135-139	Agueda reflects on her younger, hopeful self and compares it with her current bitterness, clearly showing how much she has changed.	Symbolism, Flashback, Psychological Interiorization, Tone Shift, Juxtaposition
	Line 143-144	Agueda speaks bitterly, revealing her pain and hinting at something strange in her story. Her words suggest a deeper experience.	Ellipsis/Narrative Gaps, Tone Shift, Subtext
	Lines 177-178	Agueda recalls her youthful love, feeling both longing and nostalgia for the days when everything felt new and exciting.	Flashback, Stream of Consciousness, Nostalgic Tone
End	Lines 270-275	Badoy, lost in memory, recalls his youthful longing for Agueda on a night as beautiful as his feelings—her image lingering in his mind.	Flashback, Romanticized Imagery, Internal Monologue, Hyperbole
	Lines 277-278	Badoy's bitterness is clear—his desire for revenge reveals a deep, lingering hurt.	Character Contrast, Irony, Internal Monologue
	Lines 332-339	Don Badoy remembers Old Anastasia's warning from his youth, she cautions him about the ritual, her words grave as she warns of the dangers and horrors it may bring.	Flashback, Foreshadowing, Framed Narrative Return, Dramatic Irony
	Lines 368-371	Don Badoy remembers describing Agueda to his grandchild—enchanting, beautiful, but marked by a dark, fatal allure.	Flashback, Symbolism, Retrospective Narration, Structural Irony
	Lines 390-405	Don Badoy stands by the window, tears falling as city sounds deepen his grief for lost love.	Symbolic Setting, Internal Monologue, Atmospheric Closure

plot forward. The vague tone foreshadows the intrusion of human reality into the imagined supernatural space. Structurally, this interruption mirrors the broader trajectory of the plot: the romantic ideal formed through ritual is destabilized by reality. Through flashback narration, the early plot thus establishes a movement from illusion toward the gradual emergence of disillusionment that will define the narrative's later stages.

The middle section of the narrative marks a shift from the immediacy of the ritual night toward reflective recollection. The plot increasingly relies on memory as a structural device, allowing past illusion and present awareness to coexist. Through this movement, the narrative exposes the growing tension between youthful romantic ideals and the realities shaped by time and experience.

In lines 135–139, Agueda confronts her younger self through the mirror, initiating a moment of self-examination. Although the setting remains unchanged—"the same room and the same mirror" (line 137)—the reflection reveals transformation. The image shifts from "that fresh young face like a pure mask" to "an old face – a hard, bitter, vengeful face, like a white mask" (lines 137–138). The contrast between the static environment and the altered reflection foregrounds internal change rather than external circumstance. The mirror, once a symbol of romantic possibility, now becomes a medium for confronting time and emotional hardening. Through flashback, past and present collapse into a single image, allowing disillusionment to emerge visually rather than through direct commentary.

This reflective tension intensifies in lines 143–144, as Agueda recalls the ritual to her daughter with emotional restraint. The description that her face "did not soften though her eyes filled with tears" (line 143) captures the divergence between inner feeling and outward severity. Her declaration, "I saw the devil" (line 144), condenses past experience into a single, charged statement. While the line refers literally to the mirror ritual, its bitter tone transforms the ritual's promise of love into an expression of betrayal and pain. Joaquin employs narrative ellipsis, withholding explanation and forcing meaning to surface through omission. The plot thus advances disillusionment not through explicit judgment but through irony and compression, as the mirror's original function is inverted.

Further development of disillusionment appears in lines 177–178, where Agueda reflects on her youthful admiration for Badoy. Her admission, "I could not see them at that time" (line 177), introduces retrospective awareness, while the nostalgic exclamation "Yes, he did! But, alas..." (line 177) signals irony and regret. The rhythmic enumeration of Badoy's outward traits—"his fine clothes, his flashing eyes, his curly hair, and moustaches" (line 178)—highlights the superficial qualities that once defined her attraction. The plot revisits memory not to revive wonder but to reassess it critically, revealing youthful love as grounded in appearance rather than substance. Disillusionment emerges through linguistic contrast, as elements once associated with enchantment are now recalled with distance.

Badoy's perspective further complicates the middle plot in lines 270–275, which dramatize a surge of desire through

sensory immediacy. Verbs such as "touch," "hear," and "see" convey intensity, while his longing to hear Agueda's "harsh voice" reveals the contradictory idealization of memory. His movement from inner emotion to outward action—running to the window and opening the casements—externalizes passion, which is mirrored by the personified night that "struck him back like a blow" (line 273). The exclamatory repetition "young – young! – and deliriously in love" (line 274) heightens romantic excess, culminating in tears. Structurally, however, this excess exposes instability, as passion is fueled by nostalgia and atmosphere rather than mutual understanding.

The contradiction deepens in lines 277–281, where exaltation coexists with resentment. Badoy's declaration that "he did not forgive her – no!" (line 277) introduces anger and wounded pride, while his vow to "make her pay" frames love in terms of vengeance. This hostility is immediately juxtaposed with awe as he declares the night unforgettable (lines 278–279). The imagery of "bleeding knuckles" and tears (lines 280–281) fuses pain with ecstasy, revealing passion entangled with violence. The plot thus exposes the unstable foundation of their relationship, as love is intertwined with control, resentment, and physical harm.

Across the middle portion of the narrative, the plot gradually dismantles romantic illusion through memory, irony, and contradiction. Both Agueda and Badoy reinterpret their youthful passion through the lens of experience, revealing that what once appeared as destiny is sustained by nostalgia and emotional excess. This middle movement prepares the narrative for the full emergence of marital disillusionment, as illusion gives way to bitterness, resentment, and unresolved conflict.

The narrative moves toward resolution by returning to the mirror ritual, now reenacted through Badoy's grandson. This structural return frames the plot as cyclical, emphasizing that the superstition which initiated Agueda and Badoy's youthful illusion resurfaces in a new generation. The ritual, which once promised romantic revelation, now functions as a warning rather than a prophecy. Through this repetition, the plot suggests that disillusionment is not a singular event but part of a recurring pattern, as enchantment repeatedly gives way to regret.

In lines 332–339, the exchange between Badoy and his grandson reinforces this cyclical structure. Badoy's references to "wicked games" and "horrors" echo earlier warnings associated with the ritual, while his mocking tone—"so you want your wife already, hey?"—projects his failed marital experience onto the boy's curiosity. The grandson's dismissal of the ritual as involving a "witch" recalls Agueda's earlier vision of Badoy as a "devil," establishing a pattern of demonization that replaces romantic idealization. The repetition of supernatural imagery highlights how love rooted in illusion deteriorates into fear, resentment, and bitterness.

This paradox intensifies in lines 368–371, where Badoy's recollection oscillates between admiration and condemnation. His description of Agueda as "beautiful" and "the most beautiful creature" contrasts sharply with his immediate reversal, "the dark and fatal creature she was." The structure of this recollection mirrors the plot's overall movement, rising

from enchantment to collapse within a single utterance. Beauty, once the basis of attraction, becomes the justification for lifelong regret, revealing the instability of passion grounded in appearance rather than emotional maturity.

The culmination of disillusionment appears in lines 390–405, where Badoy is overwhelmed by grief. Memories of youthful passion resurface not as nostalgia but as physical torment, rendering sorrow bodily and uncontrollable. The surrounding imagery—“medieval shadows,” “blind black houses,” and a “murderous wind”—externalizes his inner devastation, aligning setting with psychological collapse. The repeated emphasis on age and sobbing underscores the irony that the passion once described as “young – young! – and deliriously in love” has deteriorated into despair. The intrusion of the watchman’s lantern situates Badoy’s private grief within the indifferent rhythm of the city, reinforcing the futility of his emotional struggle.

As the plot concludes, the mirror ritual completes its transformation from a symbol of destiny to a marker of repetition and loss. What begins as prophecy ends in grief, and what is mistaken for love is revealed as illusion. Through cyclical structure, ironic reversal, and atmospheric closure, the plot resolves in profound disillusionment. Marriage, founded on superstition and youthful infatuation rather than genuine understanding, collapses into bitterness and regret. The ending confirms that illusion does not mature into fulfillment but instead perpetuates a cycle in which enchantment repeatedly yields to disillusionment.

2) The Summer Solstice Plot Structure Analysis

The opening part of Nick Joaquin’s *The Summer Solstice* situates the narrative within the Feast of St. John, immediately establishing a ritualized setting where tradition, bodily excess, and suppressed desire intersect. The plot begins with a disturbance, introducing unease through Doña Lupeng’s encounter with Amada, who lies naked, laughing, and possessed by the Tadtarin spirit.

In lines 50–53, Joaquin employs dense sensory imagery to

construct an atmosphere of physical and psychological disquiet. The room “reeked hotly of intimate odors” (line 51), overwhelming Lupeng’s sensibilities and marking an intrusion into her cultivated ideals of decorum and restraint. Lupeng’s repeated blushing, averted gaze, and silence signal an internal conflict that remains unspoken yet palpable. Although she does not verbally articulate disapproval, her bodily response exposes an involuntary disturbance. Through this technique, Joaquin externalizes Lupeng’s inner unease without explicit commentary, allowing tension to surface implicitly.

A visual and symbolic inversion governs the scene. Entoy stands clothed and motionless at the doorway, while his naked wife occupies the center of the room with laughter and authority. This contrast destabilizes conventional marital hierarchy, presenting a paradox in which power belongs to the exposed woman rather than the restrained man. Joaquin’s use of irony here subverts expectations of gendered dominance, transforming nudity into a marker of agency rather than vulnerability. Within a New Critical framework, the paradox between stillness and movement, modesty and command, generates structural tension that resists immediate resolution.

The narrative deepens this inversion through dialogue in lines 77–79 and 83–84. Lupeng’s exclamation, “Naku,” conveys astonishment rather than condemnation, revealing a rupture in her assumptions about marriage and power. When Entoy explains that Amada is not his wife but “the wife of the river, the wife of the crocodile, the wife of the moon” (lines 83–84), the language deliberately removes Amada from domestic possession and aligns her with elemental forces. This symbolic elevation dissolves the exclusivity of marital ownership and repositions the wife as a figure of ritual authority.

Joaquin employs irony and symbolic reversal to unsettle the permanence of marriage as an institution. A role traditionally perceived as fixed—the wife as subordinate—appears provisional, capable of suspension through ritual belief. Lupeng’s silence in response to Entoy’s declaration reinforces this tension; she neither resists nor accepts the explanation, but

Table 2
The Summer Solstice plot structure analysis

Plot	Lines	Scene Description	Narrative Technique
Beginning	Lines 50-53	Lupeng blushes amid intimacy as Entoy stands firm by his laughing, naked wife	Sensory imagery, internal conflict
	Lines 77-79	Entoy reveals his wife’s ritual role; Lupeng is surprised by her power	Dialogue, irony, symbolic reversal
	Lines 126-133	Lupeng feels assaulted by revelers’ man-smell as Paeng watches smugly	Descriptive imagery, irony
Middle	Lines 282-285	Paeng defends his pride; Lupeng challenges his response	Dialogue, irony, Metaphor
	Lines 293-303	Paeng upholds respect; Lupeng demands adoration	Dialogue, irony, paradox, rhetorical questioning
	Lines 317-319	Paeng kisses; Lupeng stays still	Gesture, silence, symbolism
	Lines 321-331	Lupeng demands to see the procession; Paeng resists in frustration	Dialogue, irony, symbolic imagery
	Lines 366-375	Chaotic yet dignified procession; Paeng fumes at Lupeng’s gaze	Descriptive imagery, symbolism, irony
End	Lines 377-381	Paeng feels insulted; Lupeng, fascinated, resists his pull	Intense imagery and contrast
	Lines 465-468	Paeng condemns; Lupeng asserts her true self.	Irony, paradox, and symbolic diction
	Lines 486-498	Lupeng exposes Paeng’s pride; he refuses to admit it.	Irony, paradox, and repetition
	Lines 523-524	Paeng submits, confessing worship and slavery to Lupeng	Repetition, irony

her astonishment registers a quiet internal shift. Disillusionment does not yet manifest overtly, but its foundation emerges through the contradiction between Lupeng's social conditioning and the reality she witnesses.

The middle part of *The Summer Solstice* shifts the narrative tension from Lupeng's silent observation to open strain within her marriage to Don Paeng.

The carriage scene in lines 126–133 foregrounds this rupture through sensory imagery and irony. Lupeng appears as an emblem of refinement, clothed in white and shaded by a parasol, visually aligned with purity and social elevation. This image is immediately undermined by her visceral reaction to the “insolent man-smell” (line 128) of the revelers, which she experiences as an assault. The diction of invasion—“wave upon wave,” “assaulting,” and “pressed a handkerchief” (lines 128–130)—transforms celebration into oppression, suggesting an aggressive masculinity that overwhelms her physical and psychological space.

Irony intensifies through Paeng's response. Where Lupeng recoils, he smiles smugly, aligning himself with the crowd rather than shielding his wife from it. His command for her to sit signals an attempt to restore order and authority, yet Lupeng's refusal is expressed not through speech but through silence. By “pretending not to hear” (line 132) and standing straighter, she enacts defiance through posture rather than words. The paradox lies in her outward embodiment of elegance concealing an inner resistance. The silence between them replaces dialogue, exposing a growing estrangement beneath the appearance of composure.

This misalignment deepens in their exchange regarding Guido in lines 282–285. Paeng frames Guido's pursuit not as a violation of Lupeng's dignity but as an embarrassment “as a man” (line 282), centering male pride over spousal concern. His metaphor of the “whipped dog” (line 283) trivializes the incident, reducing it to a matter of masculine hierarchy. The irony is pronounced: the husband, expected to respond with emotional engagement, speaks instead in detached, patriarchal terms. Lupeng's restrained question—“And was that all you felt, Paeng?” (line 285)—cuts sharply against this detachment. Her brevity exposes the emotional void in his response, revealing a rupture in mutual recognition.

The dialogue in lines 293–303 further articulates this divide through paradox and irony. Paeng's diction—“canalla,” “dog,” “slave”—casts adoration as degrading and irrational, incompatible with the dignity of a “gentleman.” In contrast, Lupeng's tentative suggestion, “maybe we... want to be adored” (line 296), introduces a destabilizing alternative to his rigid moral framework. The shift from “I” to “we” universalizes her longing while the word “maybe” tempers but does not negate its challenge. Paeng's immediate dismissal—“Ah, he has converted you then?” (line 301)—denies her agency, attributing her awakening to external influence. The silence that follows underscores her refusal to retract the thought, signaling an internal shift that Paeng cannot contain.

Gestural symbolism replaces dialogue in lines 317–319, revealing the erosion of intimacy. Lupeng's movement to the window signifies detachment and outward orientation, while

Paeng's act of grasping her elbows and kissing her neck appears less affectionate than possessive. Her stillness—“she stood still, not responding” (line 318)—inverts expectations of reciprocity, turning intimacy into exposure of absence. When he releases her “sulkily” (lines 318–319), the gesture betrays fragility rather than authority. Her final act of turning to face him signals readiness for confrontation rather than reconciliation.

The tension escalates in lines 321–330 as Lupeng insists on attending the Tadtarin. Her softened phrasing initially casts Paeng in a paternal role, yet her claim that “My head aches worse in the house” (line 327) transforms domestic space into a site of confinement. Paeng's command to “take those clothes off” (line 329) functions as disciplinary control, while his retreat into the ritualized act of cigar-lighting exposes impotence masked as authority. Gesture replaces influence, and silence hardens into stalemate.

The Tadtarin ritual in lines 366–381 culminates this middle section through imagery, irony, and symbolic inversion. The “prancing, screaming, writhing women” (line 366) embody chaos, yet the calm dignity of the old Tadtarin (line 368) reframes feminine power as authoritative rather than hysterical. Paeng's outrage intensifies as he watches Lupeng absorbed in the spectacle, while the grotesque image of the blackened St. John—“a caricature of his sex” (lines 372–375)—externalizes his fear of emasculation. The sacred masculine figure appears mocked and powerless, mirroring Paeng's own destabilized identity.

The contrast sharpens when Lupeng is described as “watching greedily, taut and breathless” (line 378). Her fascination signifies alignment with the ritual's energy, while Paeng's attempt to remove her reads as desperation rather than dominance. The lightning that interrupts the procession foreshadows rupture, situating their conflict within a broader cycle of ritual death and renewal.

The final part of *The Summer Solstice* brings the previously submerged tensions of the marriage into direct confrontation, transforming silence and irony into explicit reversal.

In lines 465–468, Paeng attempts to reassert control through moral judgment by accusing Lupeng of being “lewd.” The accusation functions as disciplinary language, aiming to redefine her identity as deviant. Lupeng's response—“How I behaved tonight is what I am” (line 467)—collapses the distinction between act and essence, rejecting correction outright. The paradox lies in the reversal of intent: what Paeng offers as condemnation becomes, for Lupeng, affirmation. Her further statement—“If you call that lewd, then I was always a lewd woman”—exposes the illusion underlying their marriage, that his authority rested on a false understanding of her selfhood. The silence following his disbelief signals the collapse of that illusion; he realizes not that she has changed, but that he never fully knew her.

The exchange intensifies in lines 486–498 through irony and paradox. When Paeng justifies whipping as an act of love and respect, the contradiction becomes explicit. Lupeng's probing—“because if you ceased to respect me you would cease to respect yourself?” (line 490)—names the dependence Paeng cannot admit: his authority relies on her submission. His

responses shift from assertion to defensiveness, culminating in a “peevish” tone (line 496) that signals the erosion of patriarchal confidence. Lupeng’s ultimatum—either confession or violence—exposes both options as failures. Either choice dismantles the illusion of control Paeng seeks to preserve, revealing authority as coercive rather than moral.

The final reversal occurs in Paeng’s confession in lines 523–524. Spoken “in his dead voice,” the repeated declaration “That I adore you” drains exalted language of vitality. What should signify passion instead registers as mechanical surrender. The imagery reaches its fullest inversion when Paeng names himself Lupeng’s “dog” and “slave,” adopting the very metaphors of abasement he earlier ridiculed. The irony is complete: to preserve the marriage, he must relinquish the authority on which it was founded. The confession formalizes defeat, marking the irreversible collapse of the marital hierarchy.

B. Character Analysis

This section examines the characters in Nick Joaquin’s *May Day Eve* and *The Summer Solstice* using Leon Festinger’s Cognitive Dissonance Theory, which explains the psychological tension experienced when personal beliefs conflict with reality.

Don Badoy Montiya is portrayed as a romantic idealist whose passionate and patriarchal worldview shapes his expectations of marriage. In his youth, he views love as magical and exaggerated, idealizing Agueda and expecting marriage to sustain passion and male authority. However, marriage fails to meet these expectations. Koehler [16] notes that, according to Festinger’s theory, cognitive dissonance arises when idealistic beliefs about love clash with lived experience. As Badoy ages and his marriage deteriorates, he experiences this discomfort, prompting him to reinterpret his past. As his idealism clashes with reality, Badoy experiences cognitive dissonance and resolves it by distorting memory and shifting blame onto Agueda. His intense emotions and patriarchal expectations deepen his disappointment when dominance and fulfillment are not achieved. His disillusionment stems from the conflict between idealized romance and marital reality.

In contrast to Badoy, Doña Agueda initially embodies rebellion and independence, openly challenging tradition and superstition. She initially defies superstition and traditional female roles, asserting independence and rationality. Marriage, however, confines her to a submissive role that contradicts her

ideals. This unresolved tension transforms her independence into bitterness. She reinterprets her romantic past as deception, symbolically portraying her husband as the source of her suffering. Harmon-Jones and Mills [17] explain that cognitive dissonance occurs when past decisions conflict with present values, causing mental discomfort. In her youth, Agueda rebelled against societal expectations, believing she could forge her own path. In marriage, she finds herself constrained by the very institution she sought to control. By calling Badoy “the devil,” she externalizes blame, framing her misery as fate’s doing. This response illustrates her disillusionment, showing how youthful passion can turn to bitterness under the weight of reality. Agueda resolves her cognitive dissonance by twisting romance into bitterness. Her disillusionment arises from rebellious ideals being crushed by the restrictive realities of marriage.

Serving as a symbol of tradition, Anastasia upholds superstitious beliefs about love and fate through the mirror ritual, presenting marriage as destiny. While she does not personally experience marital disillusionment, she reinforces the illusions that shape Agueda and Badoy’s expectations. Through the lens of Cognitive Dissonance Theory, her teachings foster unrealistic views of marriage, indirectly contributing to the couple’s later bitterness.

In *May Day Eve*, Badoy’s idealism turns into resentment, Agueda’s defiance into bitterness, and Anastasia’s superstition sustains the illusions that fracture lives when love and marriage confront reality. This dynamic sets the stage for Joaquin’s *The Summer Solstice*, where characters similarly confront the tensions between tradition and transformation.

Doña Lupeng undergoes a transformation from restraint to dominance within marriage. Initially detached from traditional rituals, she is deeply influenced by the Tadtarin festival, which awakens her sense of power and autonomy. This creates cognitive dissonance between her former submissive role and emerging dominance. During the festival, she witnesses an embodied reversal of power, and her horror and shuddering reflect the peak of this dissonance, as she is disturbed by Guido’s behavior and the possibility that his claims may be true. Festinger’s theory explains her psychological discomfort, arising from the clash between her belief in male dominance and the display of male submission. She initially withdraws to reduce dissonance, but eventually reconciles the tension by embracing authority over her husband. Her disillusionment

Table 3
Characters analysis

Title	Character	Characterization	Disillusionment
May Day Eve	Badoy	Romantic, Idealist, Passionate, Patriarchal	Idealism and reality, root of Badoy’s disillusionment.
May Day Eve	Agueda	Rebellious, Bitter, Resentful Wife	Agueda’s disillusionment twists romance into bitterness to justify her unhappiness.
May Day Eve	Anastasia	Superstitious, Traditional, Fearful	Reinforces illusions of fate, setting the stage for others’ disillusionment.
The Summer Solstice	Doña Lupeng	Curious, Progressive, Empowered	Dona Lupeng’s disillusionment: expecting worship, but facing tradition.
The Summer Solstice	Don Paeng	Conservative, Patriarchal, Possessive	Don Paeng’s disillusionment arises as Lupeng’s dominance shatters his patriarchal ideals.
The Summer Solstice	Guido	Sensual, Charismatic, Provocative	Acts as a catalyst, intensifying Lupeng and Paeng’s disillusionment.

arises not from loss but from realizing that traditional marriage suppresses female power, which she reclaims.

As a conservative and patriarchal husband, Don Paeng represents traditional male authority challenged in the narrative. He believes in order, restraint, and male dominance within marriage. Lupeng's transformation challenges his authority, creating cognitive dissonance between his belief in patriarchal control and his lived reality of subordination. Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory explains his psychological discomfort, as his belief in male supremacy clashes with evidence of female power. Unable to reconcile this conflict, Paeng submits to Lupeng, resulting in his disillusionment. His experience reveals how patriarchal ideals collapse when confronted with female dominance.

The character analyses of *May Day Eve* and *Summer Solstice* reveal that disillusionment with marriage arises from idealism clashing with reality, unhappiness being justified through bitterness, and patriarchal expectations being destabilized by shifts in power. In *May Day Eve*, romantic and rebellious ideals decay into resentment, while in *The Summer Solstice*, traditional authority is overturned through female dominance. Together, the stories show that marriage, when shaped by illusion, tradition, and unequal power, becomes a source of psychological conflict rather than fulfillment.

C. Theme Analysis

This section presents the results and brief discussion of the thematic analysis addressing the third subproblem of the study, the theme of disillusionment with marriage in Nick Joaquin's *May Day Eve* and *The Summer Solstice*. The analysis applies Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. The results are grounded exclusively in the evidence summarized in Tables 3 and 4, which serve as the empirical basis for the interpretations discussed below.

1) *May Day Eve* Theme Analysis

The thematic analysis of *May Day Eve* identifies four major themes that collectively trace a progression from youthful agency to marital disillusionment.

The first theme, Female Defiance and Agency, emerges through Agueda's decision to perform the mirror ritual despite warnings and superstition (lines 92–98). Her assertion that devils no longer exist marks a refusal of fear and submissiveness expected of women in her social context. At the semantic level, Agueda appears as a bold and curious young woman. At the latent level, however, this defiance exposes the limited scope of female agency within patriarchal structures. Her act of self-determination does not lead to freedom but initiates a marital trajectory that ultimately confines her. The

narrative thus frames agency as simultaneously empowering and precarious, revealing how women's resistance may still culminate in entrapment within marriage.

The second theme, Illusions of Love and Fate as Deception, centers on the mirror ritual scene (lines 120–131). The mirror, culturally associated with destiny and romantic revelation, instead produces a vision marked by dread when Agueda encounters Badoy as a devilish figure. Semantically, the ritual promises knowledge of one's future spouse. Latently, it critiques the cultural myth of predestined love. The scene anticipates the collapse of romantic ideals, as fate delivers hostility and resentment. Marriage, rather than realizing youthful hope, becomes the place where illusion gives way to disillusionment.

The third theme, Passion Entangled with Violence, is most evident in Agueda and Badoy's confrontation in the darkened sala (lines 184–281). The interaction escalates into physical aggression and humiliation, yet this moment coincides with Badoy's realization of desire. Love emerges through domination and resistance. At the latent level, the narrative exposes the violent undercurrents embedded in romantic attraction. This fusion of passion and cruelty foreshadows a marriage sustained by power struggle rather than intimacy, reinforcing the instability of marital ideals.

The final theme, Bitterness of Memory and Disillusionment in Marriage, appears in the retrospective narratives of the older Agueda and Badoy (lines 143–182; 380–388). Both recount their marriage through demonizing metaphors, referring to each other as "devil" and "witch." Semantically, these are memories shared with descendants. Latently, they reveal the erosion of affection into resentment. Marriage becomes a repository of regret, demonstrating how initial defiance, illusion, and passion culminate in enduring bitterness. Together, the four themes portray marriage not as fulfillment but as a gradual disintegration of love.

2) *The Summer Solstice* Theme Analysis

The thematic analysis of *The Summer Solstice* also yields four major themes, each emphasizing the destabilization of marriage through ritual, desire, and power.

The first theme, Gender-Roles Reversal and Sacred Female Power, emerges through the Tadtarin ritual and its effects on marital authority (lines 39–84; 430–440; 516–541). Women assume dominance while men, particularly Don Paeng, experience humiliation and submission. Semantically, the scenes depict ritual inversion. Latently, they expose gender roles as performative rather than natural. The sudden shift in authority destabilizes the marital hierarchy, revealing marriage

Table 4
May Day Eve theme analysis

Lines	Character	Characterization
Lines 92-94 Line 98	Agueda Challenges Anastasia's Superstition	Female Defiance and Agency
Lines 120-131	Agueda before the mirror	Illusion of Love / Fate as Deception
Lines 184-281	Agueda and Badoy's Confrontation	Passion Entangled with Violence
Lines 143-182 Lines 380-388	Old Agueda retelling to her daughter and Badoy to his grandson	Bitterness of Memory and Disillusionment in Marriage

Table 5
The Summer Solstice theme analysis

Lines	Character	Characterization
Lines 39-84	Amanda in the stables – possession/laughing in bed	Gender-roles reversal/sacred female power
Lines 268 – 271	Guido in the orchard – flirtation; kiss of shoes	Erotic longing & disillusionment with marriage
Lines 456 – 488	Bedroom confrontation – Don Paeng threatens to whip Lupe	Control, punishment & marital coercion
Lines 516 – 541	Don Paeng's final submission – crawling and kissing Lupe's feet	Emasculation, role reversal, & negotiated power

as contingent upon fragile social performances rather than inherent order.

The second theme, Erotic Longing and Disillusionment with Marriage, appears in Lupeng's interaction with Guido (lines 268–271). Guido's submissive gesture awakens Lupeng's awareness of desire beyond her marriage. She outwardly displays restraint but the encounter exposes emotional and sensual deprivation within her marital life. At the latent level, suppressed erotic longing reveals the inadequacy of marriage as a space for mutual recognition and fulfillment, contributing to Lupeng's growing disillusionment.

The third theme, Control, Punishment, and Marital Coercion, is evident in Don Paeng's threat of violence following the Tadtarin festival (lines 456–488). His attempt to reassert authority through punishment highlights the coercive foundations of patriarchal marriage. Semantically, the scene depicts anger and discipline. Latently, it reveals that marital power relies on intimidation rather than consent, exposing the insecurity of masculine authority and deepening marital estrangement.

The final theme, Emasculation, Role Reversal, and Negotiated Power, culminates in Don Paeng's submission to Lupeng (lines 516–541). His crawling and kissing of her feet signify a complete inversion of authority. Rather than restoring marital harmony, this act confirms the collapse of traditional power structures. Marriage emerges as a negotiated and unstable arrangement, shaped by ritual and dominance rather than affection or equality.

Across both stories, the results demonstrate that marriage is consistently portrayed as unstable and disillusioning. In May Day Eve, disillusionment unfolds across time through memory,

resentment, and the decay of romantic illusion. In The Summer Solstice, disillusionment occurs through ritualized reversals of power and unfulfilled desire in the present. Despite their differing narrative strategies, both texts expose marriage as dependent on contested gender roles and fragile authority. The thematic patterns collectively reveal that love, far from sustaining marriage, is entangled with deception, violence, and power struggles that ultimately undermine the institution.

D. Creative Writeback

The creative writeback in the form of a monologue captures the disillusionment with marriage presented in Nick Joaquin's May Day Eve and The Summer Solstice.

The monologue, therefore, bridges the creative and the scholarly by expressing disillusionment as a dramatic performance, and, in this manner, the words encapsulate the disintegration of love, the shifting roles of marriage, and the unfulfilled expectations of a partnership.

Illusion
I once read stories of lovers and marriage, and of the sad life they've led, and of the confusions they've felt. Marriage. They said it was the altar of devotion, that it is the combining of souls. They promised warmth, fidelity, and the gentle hand that would steady me in a storm. But what did I find? In those stories, I found a mirror, a mirror cracked between lovers. I found two people staring at each other as strangers. They are blaming, and they are wounded.

Love, so fiery in youth, cooled into resentment. He remembered her beauty, yes, but only to mourn the ruin of it. She, who was once defiant, grew bitter at the chains she swore she would never wear. And in the end, they told their children not of love, but of warning.

And more and more lovers began with certainty, more in the stories that made me question my reality. He, who bears the weight of tradition, and her wearing the mask of docility. Yet in one night, the ritual fire turned her into something new. She became empowered, she demanded reverence. And he, the proud husband, was forced to bow.

Was this love, or submission exchanged for another form? Because long in their loves, in their household, marriage became a struggle for power.

Do you see the pattern? The plots that rise with passion, only to collapse under reality's hand. The characters who were torn between what they expected and what they endured. And the theme which was unchanging through time upon time, that marriage, once adorned with ideals, strips itself bare in the clash of desire and duty.

So what remains then? Only this... disillusionment. Just in the quiet ache of knowing that marriage, for all its vows, can betray the very dreams that built it.

Do you tell me you love me. You tell me you believe in soulmates, in rituals, in happenstance, that the end of my red string leads to you. You believe you can provide, be the guiding light, and I will submit wholly to you.

You expect me to believe it? After all these lovers, Badoy, Agueda, Lupeng, Paeng, you expect me to believe that marriage is still a sanctuary? That I should cross the lands, defy tradition, surrender my freedom for a promise that has betrayed so many before me?

Really?

Because I think love is not the altar they promised, but the fire you must enter knowing you may be burned.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that May Day Eve and Summer Solstice by Nick Joaquin portrayed a profound disillusionment in marriage as reflected in the plot, characters, themes, and creative writeback from the two stories which were shaped by romantic idealism, patriarchal authority, and cultural expectations. The narratives reveal how expectations of love and devotion clash with harsh realities when confronted by power, emotional repression resulting in loss of identity and acts of rebellion against traditional and patriarchal roles within the marriage.

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