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## Ethnopoetic Insights into Leona Florentino's Poem: Implications for Ilocano Oral Literature

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**Abstract:** Ilocano poets in the Philippines made a major contribution during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historically, Leona Florentino was the only woman writer of her time who had poems in the vernacular, Spanish, and English. She was recognized as the Philippine poetess. However, the majority of her original works were discarded, compounded by the ensuing events of the Philippine Revolution. Despite its limitation, the study contributes to the dearth of studies about the works of Leona Florentino and Ilocano oral literature. Guided by the ethnopoetic theory, the qualitative study analyzed Florentino's Ilocano poem "Nalpay Ti Namnama" (Blasted Hopes) by finding its ethnographic features to reveal implications for Ilocano indigenous oral literature. Its line breaks disintegrated the poem's emotion into manageable reflections. The pauses established silence that simulates endurance and acceptance. The tonal markers highlighted conditional phrasing transitioning from suffering to restraint to quiet hope. And the structural patterns attested the tradition in Ilocano oral literature. The intensive ethnopoetic analysis implies that Ilocano oral literature is not merely expressive or aesthetic, but pedagogical and moral, teaching how to live, feel, and endure. Its reflection in contemporary Ilocano poetry in the Philippines can be a good area for future studies to retain indigenous culture, voice emotional truth, and maintain intergenerational memory.

**Keywords:** *Ethnopoetics, Ilocano Poems, Leona Florentino, Oral Literature*

### 1. Introduction

The Ilocanos are the third-largest Philippine group. Ilokano is the regional language of Ilocanos and one of the largest languages in the Philippines, next to Tagalog and Cebuano. Ilokano is rooted in the Western Austronesian language used in Northern Luzon of the Philippines. In 2000, there were 7.7 million Ilokano native speakers based on the Philippine National Statistics Office [19]. On the other hand, lexicostatistically or based on historical linguistics, Ilokano has a higher affinity with the Malay language, which served as the foundation for the unifying language of the Indonesian nation [26].

In literature, Ilokano is considered one of the most advanced and richest languages in the Philippines, next to Tagalog, according to some scholars. Ilokano literature covers the works of writers of Ilocano heritage using the vernacular and other languages. Scholars regard it as the second most developed literary tradition in the Philippines, following Tagalog, due to its origins dating back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. This rich tradition includes religious texts, poems, riddles, proverbs, epics, and folksongs. Today, it continues to thrive through various forms, including publications like the *Bannawag* [18].

In Ilocano poetry, a reflection on life and death from a Christian perspective was included in Fr. Lopez's *Arte de la lengua Iloca* [27] which was attributed to Pedro Bukaneg. Bukaneg is historically the most popular Ilocano poet who wrote numerous poems on non-religious themes, but sadly, none of them

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have survived through the years. Likewise, the world-renowned Ilocano epic, *Biag ni Lam-ang* (The Life of Lam-ang), is recorded to be one of the oldest Filipino epic poems [5] dating it to pre-Spanish times. Despite ongoing debate about the poem's authorship, many Ilocano writers and some non-Ilocano scholars now generally agree that it existed as an oral tradition before Spanish colonization [20].

This study conducted a critical analysis of the poems of one of the Ilocano poets in the Philippines who made a major contribution during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historically, Leona Florentino was the only woman writer of her time who had poems in the vernacular, Spanish, and English. For this reason, she was recognized as the national poetess or as the counterpart of Balagtas. Internationally, she was the first acknowledged female poet when the social structure in the Philippines was predominantly male-dominated. As young as ten years old, she began writing excellent poems. On June 17, 1928, she was recognized as one of "The Five Greatest Filipino Women in History by Eulogio B. Rodriguez in the Philippines Herald and El Folklore Filipino (Yabes, 1936). She is declared to be the Mother of Feminist literature, and a monument was built to commemorate her in her hometown of Vigan, where a famous street has been named after her [10].

Despite all of these recognitions, Leona Florentino's literary career was relatively modest. Though she came from a wealthy family, Leona was denied formal education due to her sexuality. Instead, Leona's mother homeschooled her, where she also learned Spanish from an Ilocano priest, who also discovered her an adeptness and passion for writing poetry (Yabes, 1936). Eventually, she became a wife at the age of 14 and a mother of five children. However, local stories suggest that Leona experienced estrangement from her husband and son as a consequence of her feminist themes in her writings, leading her to choose a life of solitude, apart from her family, until she became ill with tuberculosis and died at the age of 35 [14].

In her time, Leona Florentino was the transitional link between oral tradition and written poetry in Philippine literary history since her excellent lyrical poems were personally recited on occasions and local events as her gift to her friends and relatives [8]. However, her son, Isabelo de los Reyes, asserted that the majority of her original works were discarded, compounded by the ensuing events of the Philippine Revolution [27]. The current study contributes to the dearth of studies about the works of Leona Florentino, which may promote the Ilocano indigenous literature as well.

Guided by the ethnopoetic theory, this study critically analyzed Leona Florentino's remarkable Ilocano poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes). Through the ethnopoetic analysis, the study provides an understanding of the Ilocano oral literature based on its cultural foundations. In particular, it offers descriptive data to address the following inquiries: (1) What are the ethnopoetic features of Leona Florentino's Ilocano poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes)? (2) What is the implication of this ethnopoetic analysis for Ilocano indigenous oral literature?

## 1.1. Literature Review

### Ilocano Oral Literature and Poetry

During Spanish colonization, Spaniards introduced education and Christianity in the Philippines, along with oral literature focused on religion and morality. They brought in poetry like Ladino poems (written by Filipinos in Spanish, Tagalog, and other Philippine vernaculars), prose such as *Pangaluluwa* (a tradition every All Souls' Day), *Salubong* (early morning ritual on Easter Sunday), *Alay* (offering in the church), and religious dramas (e.g., “*Cenakulo*,” “*Tibag*,” etc.). A notable tradition is the *Pasyon* (Passion), a verse narrative on the life and death of Jesus Christ, commonly sung during the Holy Week. Written in various Philippine languages (including Ilocano), the *Pasyon* reflects Filipino cultural values and traditions [7]. The earliest published work in Ilocano was the Ilocano translation of *Doctrina Christiana* in 1621. It included the earliest known Ilocano poems that featured both the ancient Ilocano script and a Latinized alphabet. In 1627, they also produced “*Arte de lengua yloca*,” the first Ilocano grammar book, which established poetic rules. Despite his blindness, Bucaneg is regarded as the first Ilocano poet and the Father of Ilocano Literature, credited with writing down the epic *Lam-ang*. In his honor, Ilocanos practice *Bucanegan*, a form of extemporaneous literary debate, similar to the Tagalog *Balagtasan* [6].

Qualitative studies were conducted about some Ilocano poems. For instance, Villanueva [24] collected, translated, and analyzed Ilocano poems from Barangay Malilitao, Claveria, Cagayan, using a qualitative approach. Nine poems were gathered—seven through oral narration from local respondents and two from online sources. Through textual analysis, the study found that the poems reflect Ilocano values, desires, emotions, and cultural traits, including themes of love, family, and identity. The research highlights the role of Ilocano poetry in preserving cultural heritage and promoting literary creativity. These poems serve not only as entertainment but also as tools for educating people about societal norms and traditions.

Likewise, Ilocano riddles and proverbs embody its folk literature. The Ilocano riddles and proverbs in Cagayan and Ilocos Norte were qualitatively collected, categorized, and analyzed by Villanueva [25]. The study aimed to preserve and promote Ilocano creativity and cultural heritage by enriching educational curricula with these literary works. It emphasized the importance of integrating folk literature into learning materials to deepen students' appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions. Without timely efforts like this, traditional practices risk being forgotten, making this research a valuable contribution to preserving Ilocano folk wisdom for future generations. These studies validated the existing Ilocano oral literature in some provinces in the Northern Philippines, but did not focus on or highlight specific Ilocano poets, which is the niche of the current study.

Meanwhile, Azarias and Francisco [2] explored the richness of Ilocano literature by analyzing formalism in the modern poems of Reynaldo Duque, focusing on poetic quality and the unified whole. Using textual analysis and interpretation, the study identified eight key literary devices in Duque's work: persona, tone, mood, rhyme, rhythm, figures of speech, symbolism, imagery, theme, and syntax [6]. These elements work together to progressively reveal the meaning of each poem. Despite the lack of critical studies on Ilocano literature, the findings affirm its depth and artistic value. Duque's poems reflect universal human emotions and cultural truths, proving that Ilocano literature embodies both unique local identity and shared human experience. Hence, it is interesting to explore historical Ilocano poets to compare the reflection of their poems to Ilocano culture and heritage.

#### ***Literature on Leona Florentino's Poems***

Leona Florentino (1849–1884), who was a trailblazing poet and playwright from Vigan—a north Luzón seaport town during the Spanish colonization era—was instrumental in subverting conventional gender roles in her works of literature. According to Blanton [3], as both a woman and a colonial subject, she wrote from a doubly marginalized perspective, using garden imagery to critique conventional gender expectations, expressions of desire, and the division between domestic

and public life. While many of her poems were created for public events, her more private writings explore erotic themes with greater openness. Thus, she studied how Florentino uses garden imagery in two public poems and one erotic poem to negotiate the fringes of public and private life, illuminating her representation of gender and female sexuality in 19th-century Vigan. The outcomes of this study were of great assistance to the present study, but an ethnopoetic approach, which illuminates Ilocano indigenous oral literature.

In 2017, a qualitative study on the feminist elements of the writings of 18th-century Filipina poet Leona Florentino and 16th-century Venetian poet Veronica Franco, both of whom wrote during periods when women were subordinated in society. Drawing on the theoretical lens of Gynocriticism, the research conducted a critical analysis of two poems from every author. The research indicated that both Franco's and Florentino's works are reflective of feminist sentiments, though they are pre-kin to the mainstream feminist movement. Their texts counteract stereotypes, discrimination, patriarchy, and oppression, delivering personal reflections that seek to empower and elevate women. Their work is pertinent to the present study, but it can be bolstered by the ethnopoetic qualities of the results [12].

In a recent lecture, Cuartero [4] spoke of the connection between Leona Florentino, a northern Philippines poet, and her son, Isabelo de los Reyes, a transnational anticolonial intellectual and labor leader. It positions both figures in the context of Spanish colonial chronicles that informed hegemonic narratives and circumscribed indigenous lives. By way of contrast, Florentino and de los Reyes are set over against these colonial narratives as counterpoints, providing illumination to an anterior form of late 19th-century decolonial feminism. This feminism, as personified by Florentino, recuperates nature both as a force of creativity (poesis) and as a locus of resistance. Her literary work—particularly through the printing press, pamphlets, and "gift poems"—is portrayed as revolutionary acts deserving consideration in world feminist solidarity. In conclusion, his talk lays out a decolonial folklore vision grounded in a multispecies ecology in which human and nonhuman kinships (animals, mythical creatures, earth) provide supplementary modes of meaning life, death, and survival amidst the current global catastrophes. While his lecture is more modern and environmental in its view of Florentino's poems and her son, it can offer limited assistance to this study, since it does not depend on research.

In all, the results of the research on Leona Florentino's poems emphasized formalism and feminism as recurring motifs. But the link of these motifs to the Ilocano indigenous oral literature and tradition is tactfully written about. Thus, the present study gave new accounts not just of Leona Florentino's poem's content but also of the cultural aspects of Ilocano oral literature through the ethnopoetic method.

### ***Ethnopoetic Theory***

In the mid-1970s, Dell Hymes developed ethnopoetics as the verse analysis of the oral poetics of indigenous peoples. The Hymenean ethnopoetic methodology has primarily been used as a technique of reconstituting written texts, namely as a means of reformulating transcripts of oral narrative to re-establish the original literary organization and aesthetic of the words as heard in their context of use [11]. It came to prominence as a specialized discipline aimed at the interpretation of classic verbal art within the aesthetic norms and cultural settings of producing societies. Dell Hymes's specific contribution lay in extending ethnopoetic analysis to texts in transcription—usually historical linguistic documents—augmenting the work of researchers namely Dennis Tedlock, J. Barre Toelken, and others that focused on native oral texts in performance settings. Though differing methodologically, these methodologies have a central purpose: to depict indigenous oral tradition in terms of itself, with minimal imposition of external, and especially Western, literary and cultural presuppositions [1].

For the last half-century, it has developed as a well-known theoretical model of oral poetry and cultural tradition worldwide. Essentially, ethnopoetics encourages cross-disciplinary collaboration between poets, researchers, performers, and scholars working on the gathering, translation, and interpretation

of oral poetry. It stresses the intrinsic poetic nature of oral traditions as they are formulated in indigenous languages and demands field-based research sensitive to the performance, organization, and communicative environment of oral expression. The centerpiece of this methodology is the process of transcription and translation, which, while safeguarding oral tradition, also captures its performative nature in written language. From this perspective, ethno-poetics attempts to present the oral traditions in their true cultural and aesthetic aspects [16].

Ethno-poetic theory and methodology read spoken words and maintain them over time on paper by previous ethnographers. Ethno-poetic transcription ordinarily follows standard orthographic practices but adds line breaks—like stanzas—rather than prose arrangement more accurately to represent the rhythm and cadence of the spoken word. This method allows the poetic, formal, and performative aspects inherent in everyday orality to be represented, supporting both analytical treatment as well as more accurate transmission of meaning intended by the narrator. Not standardized itself, it has become accepted practice to include typographic markers like font size, capitalization, underlining, italics, or boldface to indicate tonal variation and emphasis. The general goal is to create a true sense of the speaker's unique voice and stylistic presentation [22].

This study was grounded in ethno-poetic theory to critically analyze an Ilocano poem of Leona Florentino with its English translations. Her notable lyrical poems were known to be delivered as gifts to her friends and relatives on special occasions and local gatherings [10]. However, her original poems and dramas were lost as a result of her neglect, the negligence of her relatives and friends, and the disorder brought about by the Philippine Revolution, according to his son, Isabelo delos Reyes [27]. Hence, her poems from oral tradition were transcribed in Ilocano and translated into Tagalog, which are best recommended for ethno-poetics.

## 2. Methodology

The study used a qualitative design guided by ethno-poetic theory to analyze the three Ilocano poems of Leona Florentino in consideration of their respective Tagalog translation. Specifically, these poems in the vernacular are “*Nalpay Ti Namnama*” (Broken Hope), translated in English by Marcelino Fronda, Jr. [21].

Although the ethno-poetic approach inspired by Dell Hymes emphasized the importance of identifying structural groupings marked by pauses in verbal performance, the Ilocano poem of Leona Florentino in English translation texts was analyzed in this study despite its limitations. Ethno-poetic method reinterprets oral poetry that earlier ethnographers had recorded solely in written form. While ethno-poetic transcription generally adheres to conventional spelling and orthography, it introduces line breaks—similar to poetic stanzas—instead of using prose formatting, to more faithfully reflect the rhythm and flow of the original spoken performance [22].

Moreover, content analysis was used to draw out the reflection of Leona Florentino’s poems about her sorrows in life and her voice as a woman in a patriarchal nation. Then, the tone and rhyme treatment was conducted to understand this reflection on the language and tradition of Ilocano oral literature. Ethno-poetic analysis prioritizes features that are salient within the performance tradition itself. While tone and rhyme *may* be included, especially if they play a meaningful role in the performance, the emphasis is usually on rhythm, structure, and repetition, rather than on conventional Western poetic devices [8]. The poems analyzed are presented in tables along with their respective English translations.

## 3. Result and Discussion

The qualitative analysis of “*Nalpay Ti Namnama*” (Blasted Hopes) draws out the following ethno-poetic features: line breaks, pauses, tonal markers, and structural patterns. The analysis was assisted by the English translation of the said poem written by Marcelino Fronda, Jr. [21] in Table 1.

**Table 1. Poem 1 - *Nalpay Ti Namnama***

Original Poem	English Translation
<i>Nalpay Ti Namnama</i> by Leona Florentino (Pinoymenal, 2014)	Blasted Hopes by Marcelino Fronda, Jr. (Tan, 2014)
Stanza 1 <i>Amangaw a ragsac ken talecda</i> <i>Dagiti adda caayanayatda</i> <i>Ta adda piman mangricna</i> <i>Cadagiti isuamin a asugda.</i>	Stanza 1 “What gladness and what joy Are endowed to one who is loved For truly there is one to share All his sufferings and his pain.”
Stanza 2 <i>Ni gasatco a nababa</i> <i>Aoanen ngatat capadana.</i> <i>Ta cunac diac agduadua</i> <i>Ta agdama ngarud nga innac agsagaba.</i>	Stanza 2 “My fate is dim, my stars so low Perhaps nothing to it can compare, For truly I do not doubt For presently I suffer so.”
Stanza 3 <i>Ta nupay no agayatac</i> <i>Iti maysa a imnas</i> <i>Aoaw lat pangripiripiripac</i> <i>Nag adda pacaibatugac.</i>	Stanza 3 “For even I did love, The beauty whom I desired Never do I fully realize That I am worthy of her.”
Stanza 4 <i>Ilunod conto ti horas</i> <i>Nga inaac pannacayanac</i> <i>Ta mamenribo coma a nasescat</i> <i>No natayac idin ta nayanacac.</i>	Stanza 4 “Shall I curse the hour When first I saw the light of day Would it not have been better a thousand times I had died when I was born.”
Stanza 5 <i>Gayagayec coma a ipalaoag.</i> <i>Ngem bumdeng met toy dilac</i> <i>A ta maquitac met a sebatatad</i> <i>Nga ni paay ti calac- amac.</i>	Stanza 5 “Would I want to explain But my tongue remains powerless For now do I clearly see To be spurned is my lot.”
Stanza 6 <i>Ngem umanayento a liolioac.</i> <i>Ti pannacaamom itoy a panagayat,</i> <i>Ta icaric kenca ket isapatac</i> <i>Nga sica aoan sabali ti pacayatas.</i>	Stanza 6 “But would it be my greatest joy To know that it is you I love, For to you do I vow and a promise I make It's you alone for whom I would lay my life.”

**1. Line Breaks**

Line break is the beginning and ending of the poem that shapes its sound, feeling, and meaning. In the poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* by Leona Florentino, the line breaks are deliberate and reflective, divided into emotional units to unfold gradually its meaning.

## Stanza 1

“*Amangaw a ragsac ken talecda*” (What gladness and what joy)  
“*Dagiti adda caayanayatda*” (Are endowed to one who is loved.)

Gladness and joy in the first line are associated, but the second line distinguishes the endowment of those who possess them. The line breaks emphasize social situations foregrounding the emotional status before human relationships.

“*Ta adda piman mangricna*” (For truly there is one to share)  
 “*Cadagiti isuamin a asugda.*” (All his sufferings and his pain.)

These lines break the positivity of sharing from suffering and pain. The gradual explanation of suffering mirrors emotional contemplation where the sharing of hardships becomes universal.

Stanza 2

“*Ni gasatco a nababa*” (My fate is dim, my stars so low)  
 “*Aoanen ngatat capadana.*” (Perhaps nothing to it can compare)

The break isolates “nababa” as a low unfortunate fate, and the incomparability in the next line intensifies it as total resignation rather than objection.

Stanza 3

“*Ta nupay no agayatac*” (For even I did love)  
 “*Iti maysa a imnas*” (The beauty whom I desired.)

These lines detach love as an action from love as a person. The first line treats love as an inward condition then directs it outward in the next which highlights emotional control and introversion.

Thus, the segment thoughts of the line breaks reflect joy, suffering, love, and resignation unfolding gradually and not forcefully. The key ideas of *gasat* (fate), *agsagaba* (suffering), and *panagayat* (love) distinguish contemplation and emotional control rather than a dramatic release in the Ilocano poem.

## 2. Pauses

In the ethnopoetic analysis of the poem, pauses implied silence and reflection through syntax and enjambement. These pauses were drawn out from the following stanzas:

Stanza 2

“*Ta/ cunac diac agduadua* (For truly I do not doubt)  
*Ta/ agdama ngarud nga innac agsagaba.*” (For presently I suffer so.)

The pause created from the repetition of “*Ta*” (For) is between certainty and suffering. As the reader pauses in the first line without hesitation, they prepare for the pain to be encountered in the next line. This pause depicts acceptance instead of protest.

Stanza 4

“*Ilunod conto ti horas/* (“Shall I curse the hour)  
*Nga inaac pannacayanac*” (When first I saw the light of day)

The pause after the end of the first line “*ti horas*” (the hour) reflects the passing of time. While the next line uncovers a slowly enduring personal experience that mimics a deep sigh. Thus, a reinforcing weariness reflects from the pauses between these two lines.

*“Ta mamenribo coma a nasescat (Would it not have been better a thousand times)  
No natayac/ idin ta nayanacac.”* (I had died when I was born.)

Moreover, the pause between the third and fourth lines delays the reference to death. This restraint lightens the harshness of the idea and increases the emotional burden.

The continuation of a line in verse without a pause towards the end is an enjambement and syntactic structure to present pauses in this poem instead of heavy punctuation. This process introduces a period of silence to surface the inner struggle of the speaker. The pauses assist the reading pace and invite reflection to readers as the pauses transition from expressing certainty to acknowledging pain. Hence, silence shows quiet acceptance suggesting humility and endurance more than protest and despair.

### 3. Tonal Markers

In poetry, the words, phrases, punctuation, or stylistic cues that signal the speaker's emotion, mood, or attitude are called tonal markers to guide the readers not only in meaning but also the feelings intended in each line. In the Ilocano poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes), they shift in the emotional stance based on the analysis of the following stanzas.

#### Stanza 5

*“Gayagayec coma a ipalaoag. (Would I want to explain.)  
Ngem bumdeng met toy dilac”* (But my tongue remains powerless)

The phrase *Gayagayec coma* (Would I want) in the first line signals an inclination to express an emotion. While the word *Ngem* (But) indicates a tonal shift toward restraint which breaks the lines from each other to reinforce the emotional restraint between feeling and silence.

*“A ta maquitac met a sebatad (For now do I clearly see)  
Nga ni paay ti calac-amac.”* (To be spurned is my lot.)

The tone of these lines is reflective but not dramatic. They justify silence to protect oneself where controlling emotions becomes a moral stance.

#### Stanza 6

*“Ngem umanayento a liolioac. (But would it be my greatest joy),  
Ti pannacaamom itoy a panagayat,”* (To know that it is you I love.)

Again, the word “*Ngem*” marks a turn in tone but this time toward a decision. The line break softens an assertion by keeping the tone gentle. It sounds like a quiet assertion of hope and love.

*“Ta icaric kenca ket isapatac (For to you do I vow and a promise I make)  
Nga sica aoan sabali ti pacayatas.”* (It's you alone for whom I would lay my life.)

These closing lines anchor the firm but somber emotions in the poem. Quietly, the poem's overall restraint of love and hope is affirmed.

Altogether, the conjunctions “*ta*” (for) and “*ngem*” (but) are the tonal markers that guide the subtle shifts of tone across verses in the Ilocano poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes). They serve as voices from recognizing the suffering to self-restraint and ending in quiet resolve. They strengthen a consistent tone of controlled resilience where hope is not loudly pronounced but gently supported.

The ethnographic method was able to analyze the performative features in the Ilocano poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes). First, the line breaks disintegrated the poem's emotion into manageable reflections. Second, the pauses established silence that simulates endurance and acceptance. Lastly, the tonal markers highlighted conditional phrasing transitioning from suffering to restraint to quiet hope. Far from the usual dramatic expression, Leona Florentino voices measured resilience where hope goes on through controlled language and gentle pacing.

#### 4. Structural Patterns

The repetition of similar grammatical structures, phrases or ideas across stanzas shows parallelism. In the poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes), syntactic parallelism intensifies the emotions and themes across lines in the following stanzas:

Stanza 1

“*Amangaw a ragsac ken talecda / Dagiti adda caayanayatda*”  
(What gladness and what joy/ Are endowed to one who is loved.)

Both lines begin with a noun phrase + *a/adda* + a descriptive phrase.

Stanza 2

“*Aoanen ngatat capadana.*” (Perhaps nothing to it can compare)  
“*Ta cunac diac agduadua / Ta agdama ngarud nga innac agsagaba.*”  
(For truly I do not doubt/ For presently I suffer so.)

Causality is expressed in the creation of mirrored clauses from the repetition of *Ta* (because/that).

Stanza 5

“*Gayagayec coma a ipalaoag.*” (Would I want to explain.)  
“*Ngem bundeng met toy dilac*” (But would it be my greatest joy)

The use of adjective-like structures in each line is linked with connective particles (*coma, met*).

This syntactic parallelism intensifies the contradicting emotions of joy vs. suffering, love vs. despair that strengthen the interaction of more themes across stanzas to create deeper meaning.

In terms of rhythm of Ilocano oral traditions, repetition in structural levels (e.g., word, phrase, ideas) builds mnemonic rhythm and emotional resonance. In the poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes), the repetition of the Ilocano particles such as *ta* (that/because), *nga* (that), *met* (also), *coma* (as if), and *aoanen* (not any/none) repeatedly acts as a pattern of beats that readers hear silently.

The iambic pentameter used in the poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes) commonly exhibits patterns in Ilocano oral aesthetics. For instance, in stanza 1, the pairs of first and second lines, and third and fourth lines tend to have similar syllable counts as follows:

<i>Amangaw a ragsac ken talecda</i>	(8–10 stress units)
<i>Dagiti adda caayanayatda</i>	(8–10 stress units)
<i>Ta adda piman mangricna</i>	(7–9 stress units)
<i>Cadagiti isuamin a asugda</i>	(7–9 stress units)

Its rhythmic balance is similar to chanting used in oral performance. Another is the consonance of “*ragsac... talecda... caayanayatda*” repeats hard consonants while the frequent vowel use of **a / a / a- a / a** creates a uniform sound of the text.

The structural patterns from the ethnopoetic analysis support similar findings in Ilocano folk songs, which are part of the Ilocano oral literature. Padilla [13] found formal structure, stylistic features, and recurring patterns in Ilocano folk songs that attest to the fusion of sound and meaning in Ilocano oral verse. The patterns established in the poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes) show that Ilocano poems then were traditionally recited aloud and remembered. Their structure (e.g., pattern, rhythm, repetition, etc.) and language engage their listeners.

As a whole, the Ilocano poem *Nalpay Ti Namnama* (Blasted Hopes) [21], interpreted ethnopoetically, demonstrates a richly Ilocano affective environment structured by ideas of destiny, pain, unrequited love, and emotional self-control. The narrator speaks a culturally resonant tale of martyrdom in love, which is both individual and collective, and the rhythm and tone capture oral poetic customs that thrive beyond the page. The poetry uses the vocabulary of indigenous values such as *kapwa* (fellow), *hiya* (shame), and *damay* (sympathy) to emphasize the strong connection between emotion and cultural orientation in Ilocano literary discourse. According to Leoncini [9], these behavioral patterns of *hiya* (shame), *pakikipag-kapwa* (getting along with others), which are associated with *damay* (sympathy), have a great influence on Filipinos' (including Ilocano) interpersonal relationships.

### ***Implications for Ilocano Indigenous Oral Literature***

The recurring themes of fate, unreturned love, emotional martyrdom, and shared suffering serve as cultural vehicles through which Ilocano identity, values, and worldview are transmitted across generations. In particular, they imply that Ilocano oral literature is not merely expressive or aesthetic, but pedagogical and moral that teaches how to live, feel, and endure.

The findings of the ethnopoetic analysis showed that oral literature becomes a space where ideals like resilience, modesty in grief, and self-sacrifice in love are modeled and valorized. The themes align with the Ilocano ethic of not openly complaining, but instead suffering with dignity. By centering on unrequited love and fate, the literature shapes how emotions are felt and expressed indirectly, inwardly, and ritually emphasizing restraint over indulgence.

In performance contexts (e.g., *dung-aw*, *tagulaylay*), the collective recitation or singing of such themes sustains a communal emotional vocabulary, bonding participants through shared cultural memory and emotional experience. Moreover, these themes allow for context-specific emotional vulnerability, especially among men, within acceptable cultural bounds, indicating that emotional suffering is not weakness but moral strength when expressed through poetic form. And, the persistent presence of fate in these poems suggests that Ilocano oral literature helps cultivate a fatalistic but dignified worldview, where hardship is accepted not passively but with moral strength and collective compassion.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the limitation of this study, the themes of fate, unreturned love, emotional martyrdom, and shared suffering in Ilocano oral literature act as cultural scripts, teaching Ilocanos to endure quietly (e.g., *panagparbeng*), express emotions ritually, and face life's pains as part of a shared, meaningful struggle. They are not just literary motifs, but ethnopoetic reflections of a lived indigenous ethics. Its reflection in contemporary Ilocano poetry in the Philippines can be a good area for future studies to retain indigenous culture, voice emotional truth, and maintain intergenerational memory.

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