

# Folklore and Insurgent Journalism of Isabelo de los Reyes

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## Abstract

Modern-day journalism has associated folklore with the fictive and mythic. Its deployment in journalistic narratives or human interest pieces generally aims to bring out local color or quaintness. In his long journalistic career, Isabelo de los Reyes's retrieval of folklore for publication in community newspapers performed a similar function of engaging the reader but also exposed political myths to undermine colonial regimes of Spain and the United States.

De los Reyes's treatment of folklore was not only to catalogue popular knowledge but also to ground such knowledge on conditions of domination. Folklore, as a "conception of the world" is systematized and inflected with reflections upon a reality. Thus, the publication of folklore in newspapers allows the creation of common body of knowledge that, according to Gramsci, "offers to a people the elements for a deeper knowledge of (themselves)" (Gramsci, 1992, p.187).

The folklore project of de los Reyes inaugurates a tradition in insurgent journalism. Folklore, as common stories of the lesser heard, performs the dual function of acculturation and subversion. As in de los Reyes's time, journalism today could include genres adapted to new and critical function that could open up new flanks of expressions and protests.

De los Reyes the folklorist grew out of de los Reyes the journalist. He became a journalist at sixteen when he was hired in 1880 by Felipe del Pan, the editor of the Spanish daily *Diario de Manila* [*Manila Daily*]. Del Pan taught him the rudiments of editorial work such as writing, copyediting, and typesetting. De los Reyes soon became the associate editor of the newspaper and also wrote for other publications (Mojares, 2006). At twenty-five, he founded *El Ilocano* [*The Ilocano*] and, five years later, *El Municipio Filipino* [*The Filipino Town*] that explained the laws to ordinary citizens. He also became the editor of *La Lectura Popular* [*The Popular Lecture*], a Tagalog bi-weekly. In all, he published and edited six newspapers and wrote for a dozen others, including *La Solidaridad* [*Solidarity*] (Scott, 1982, p. 263).

Journalism is a compelling mechanism for representing knowledge and public opinion and during de los Reyes's time was a privilege given to the colonizers and behind colonial control. Journalists of Spanish descent, either born in Spain or in the colony, dominated the field that de los Reyes's presence was considered an anomaly.

He was the only *indio* [native] granted a license to operate a newspaper in the colony. In 1889, he established *El Ilocano*, published both in Spanish and Ilocano. Although predated by *Diariong Tagalog* [*Tagalog Daily*] by seven years, *El Ilocano* was sometimes called the first vernacular newspaper in the Philippines because while the former folded up after just seven months of operation, *El Ilocano* increased its circulation and was able to acquire its own printing press on its fourth year—proof of its viability as a newspaper (Scott, 1982). It was probably one of the first successful community newspaper ventures ever, aided by the use of two languages. Anderson (2005) argued that the choice to publish in Spanish was meant to address the world at the cusp of modernization, which means the rise of global mass-market system while the local language was used because it was “just starting to burst into print,” at the time when there was “no national language which it could be opposed” (p. 24). His argument though for the use of Ilocano was tentative. I think that there was practical and political intent over de los Reyes's use of Ilocano. Arguably, local language newspapers thrived because they were understood and socially connected with their readers. Perhaps de los Reyes was trying to underscore the parity of languages and the autonomy of groups in a culturally diverse archipelago. Perhaps, too, he was trying to undermine Tagalog, construed as the *lingua franca*.

De los Reyes was criticized for his journalistic exuberance over his choice of news subjects and commentaries that usually alerted the Spanish censors. In fact, the 1887 censorship decree was created solely to prevent him from outwitting the Manila censors when he was the news correspondent of *El Eco de Panay* [*Panay Echo*] published in Iloilo (Scott, 1982). Eventually, the

newspaper had to replace him with a peninsular Spaniard because some of his news stories sounded too radical.

De los Reyes turned to euphemisms and other writing devices whose ambiguity required close reading in order to expose the imposed rituals, representation, and laws, which the colonized could not formally challenge but could actually subvert by representing them in a different way from what the Spaniards had intended (De los Reyes, 1994; Scott, 1982). Sometimes he was lucky that the censors failed to notice his sharp pen, such as when he wrote an analysis of the exploitation of tenants by landowners or when he wrote about a revolt in Ilocos led by Diego Silang in *La Ilustracion Filipino* [*The Philippine Illustration*] in 1892, saying that “Revolutions are caused by concentrated grievances: when the atmosphere gets heavy enough, any little pretext can set off the explosion of the storm; but the pretext is not the real cause” (in Scott, 1982, p. 270).

De los Reyes carved a distinct field in the country’s print media history. His work anticipated the practice of community or hyper-local journalism today. He extensively covered his home province of Ilocos, providing “better and affectionate” reportage of Ilocos with his news, for example, of a fiesta, the invention of the Vigan *calesa* [horse carriage], a hat-making startup, and the inauguration of a town hall (Scott, 1982). However, his coverage should be seen as more than reportage of social events. They could be viewed as the vehicle through which de los Reyes’ “imagined” a community that was unified by representations of Ilocano social groups, their institutions, beliefs, and organizing structures in culture, economy, and politics *vis-à-vis* other regional groups. In his writings, de los Reyes did not seem to indicate nostalgia or nativism; instead, scholars like Resil Mojares, Benedict Anderson, and William Henry Scott have suggested that de los Reyes was positing the basis through which a nation could be formed.

While vulnerable to colonial censorship, journalism was a compelling mechanism for representing public opinion. De los Reyes turned to journalism to protest the massive crackdown on dissent and revolutionary actions shortly after the execution of Jose Rizal on December 1896. When de los Reyes was falsely charged as a recruiter of Masons and imprisoned at *Bilibid* [Bilibid prison], he wrote a series of articles about his co-inmates—leaders and members of *La Liga Filipina* [*The Philippine League*] and *Katipunan* [*Society*], the Masons, and peasants, some of them awaiting execution. He put the stories together in *Memoria sobre la Revolucion Filipina* [*Memory about the Philippine Revolution*], a copy of which was given to Fernando Primo de Rivera, then the new governor general. *Memoria* also reached Spain where it was reprinted in several parts by Spanish newspapers in 1899 (Retana as cited in Medina, 1998; Scott, 1982). The articles described

the abuses of Spanish friars, the tortures of inmates, and how insults and malicious insinuations of the Spanish press abetted the anti-colonial revolt. *Memoria* was akin to a modern-day exposé—serialized and explosive. Even bolder was its claim, in the form of a warning to the governor general, of the inevitability of revolution because of pervasive injustices that had radicalized even the rich and the educated in the colony (Anderson, 2006).

The discursive style that de los Reyes used in writing was provocative rather than methodical, ambiguous rather than explicit, tentative rather than definitive probably because of censorship, political persecution, and the satisfaction of achieving immediate result. Overall, his articles were meant as petitions for installation of rights and freedom in the colony, which he thought Spain and its citizens should pay attention to. Despite being surveilled and suppressed, de los Reyes attempted to expand the space of his journalistic expressions. He wanted to provoke a response from Spain at a time when its hold over the colony had weakened. And respond it did: De los Reyes was deported to Barcelona in August 1897 and was locked in Montjuich prison that also held anarchists and revolutionaries in Spain and other countries in Europe, some of them literary figures and journalists like him. It was actually through them that his articles were smuggled out of prison and printed in Spanish newspapers (Anderson, 2006).

On January 1898, de los Reyes was released from Montjuich to work as a minor functionary of the Ministry for Overseas Territories. As de los Reyes's politics and journalism in Spain were favoring anarchism and other violent tactics, the revolution in the Philippines was gaining ground while the United States was poised to go to war against Spain. De los Reyes favored siding with the moribund Spanish colonial administration to prevent the Americans from annexing the Philippines. He believed it was easy to topple the weary and unpopular Spain than the United States. He then singlehandedly launched a propaganda that took up substantial space in *Filipinas ante Europa* [*Philippines Before Europe*] published in Madrid from October 1899 to June 1901.

*Filipinas ante Europa*, a bi-weekly, was a typical political propaganda newspaper. Its military news exaggerated the Filipino firepower against the Americans although some of its stories had cultural value (Scott, 1982). It included political commentaries, short biographies of heroes, cultural vignettes, serious political features mixed with anti-friar attacks, military tactics, and criticisms against *ilustrados* [the enlightened class] who switched side to the Americans. It was on the last that de los Reyes trained his fiercest pen. He even warned President William McKinley that he would be personally responsible for the deaths of Filipinos if the Philippines was forcibly taken by the United States. Copies of the newspaper that circulated

in the Philippines were seized and burned by American forces while those caught keeping them were arrested. When it was closed down by Spanish police, de los Reyes launched a monthly, *El Defensor de Filipinas* [*The Deefender of the Philippines*], that saw print from July to October 1901 (Anderson, 2006, p. 223).

*El Defensor's* stance was far from sober. It was published at a time when Philippine President Emilio Aguinaldo had just surrendered to the Americans on April 1901, and American censors were harsher. Its inaugural editorial invoked the promises of democracy and free press by the Americans and de los Reyes demanded their realization (Scott, 1982, p. 280). Perhaps, during this time, he thought that the United States, being an industrial giant first before an imperialist, would, on its first attempt to colonize a country, choose to bring progress through industrialization. However when he came home from Spain in 1902, his application for a publication permit was denied on the ground of subversion.

De los Reyes's brand of journalism under the US can be labeled "insurgent" on two counts. First, the Filipino armed resistance against the Americans from 1898-1904 was termed an insurrection rather than the war that it was. Insurrection and insurgency imply the existence of a dominant and legitimate authority that, in the context of U.S. occupation, is threatened by the rebellion of its colonial subjects. Thus, de los Reyes' kind of journalism was instrumental in discrediting that period of US imperialism in the Philippines.

Second, insurgent journalism acknowledges the constraints of coercion and hegemony in the space in which it operates but simultaneously "look(s) for phenomena of resistance within that space" (Muhlmann, 2010, p. 120). In short, insurgent journalism subverts ideology while "operating within it" (p. 121). This argument is deduced from Marx's *The German Ideology*. One aspect of ideology of the ruling class is domination in the realm of expression and the production of expressions. However while Marx posits that eliminating the ruling ideology also means overthrowing the material basis of the ideology, this act discounts abandonment of the space where ideas are contested (Marx, 2007). The struggle against ideology has practical and theoretical sides but in no case in journalism would it mean retreat and invisibility. For Muhlmann, ideas have to circulate in public, to be criticized and modified into new ways of thinking and acting (Muhlmann, 2010). Thus, the journalism of the insurgent kind has the capacity to undermine the dominant ideology in a conflictive public space, and this was what de los Reyes practiced.

Despite the waning and eventual disappearance of the *ilustrado* resistance against the American rule, de los Reyes did not abandon his

strategy of critique through journalism. In his writings, he advocated for universal suffrage, trial by jury, and immediate independence (Scott, 1982). These became the topics through which his denunciation of American imperialism, along with its Filipino lackeys, had been made possible. De los Reyes challenged American imperialism naturalized in catch phrases like “white-man’s burden” and “world responsibility” and also took pains to generate public debate. He pointed out that the coercive colonization of the US, which manifested in the political, military, and cultural spheres, was bound up with its preponderant economic domination as an imperialist power (Scott, 1982). And this control was aided by the Filipino elite who enjoyed their position in the U.S.-controlled Philippine Assembly. His writings were on the pages of *El Grito del Pueblo* [*The Cry of the People*], *El Renacimiento* [*The Renewal*] and its Tagalog version, *Muling Pagsilang* [*The Renewal/Rebirth*]. However equally newsworthy were his political activities—he was a labor leader, a politician, and one of the founders of the Philippine Independent Church—not only for their bravado but because they revealed his deep sense of nationalism, which meant a commitment to self-rule and freedom of the press at a time when Filipinos were portrayed as “primitive people who still needed U.S. control and tutelage” (Zwick, 2007, p. 17).

What did de los Reyes’s insurgent journalism achieve? Under conditions of censorship and political control, journalism is constrained. This is brought about by the diminution of the public’s capacity to speak and criticize without fear of prosecution. However, the lack of freedoms and paucity of a public are not the *sine qua non* of insurgent journalism (Muhlmann, 2010). In fact, insurgent journalism could assist the assertion of rights and prefigure a public sphere in conditions of impossibility. Jurgen Habermas’s concept of the public sphere refers to a constraint-free space where issues are debated, accepted, or rejected. When coercion penetrates the public arena, the latter anticipates a critique on power. It is in this manner that insurgent journalism provides individuals with the chance to constitute themselves as a public to articulate anti-colonial sentiments. In short, this kind of journalism enables the confrontation of power.

### **Folklore, Anti-Colonial Struggle, and Journalism**

The presence of folklore in Isabelo de los Reyes’ kind of journalism permits similar arguments on free expression and the constitution of a public. However, folklore had widened access and engagement in the public sphere, given folklore’s historicized symbolic field through which a group of individuals come to an idea of who they are.

De los Reyes's journalism mentor, Felipe del Pan, introduced him to folkloric studies in 1884. Del Pan asked him to contribute articles on the subject, gave him books to read, and later sent a compilation of de los Reyes's articles to Madrid where it won a silver medal in the 1887 *Exposicion General de las Islas Filipinas* [*The General Explanation of the Philippine Islands*] (Mojares, 2006; Scott, 1982). De los Reyes linked up with pioneers of folklore studies in Spain and other countries in Europe where many of his articles were published. His articles on folklore were also printed in newspapers in Manila and the provinces. Mojares (2006) wrote that de los Reyes's body of work on folklore, *El Folklore Filipino* [*The Filipino Folklore*], "may have been his most important contribution to Philippine studies" (p.305) while Scott (1982) called him the "Father of Philippine Folklore" (p. 245) and the "First Filipinologist" (p. 246).

De los Reyes started retrieving folklore and also tried to come up with what he thought was Filipino folklore or that which "had general application to the whole archipelago" (Scott, 1982, p. 250). This search for folklore, which took him all over the colony, was a quest to discover "authentic" local culture under the sediments of colonial culture. What remained intact or untouched, though, was contestable because the centuries under the Spaniards have obliterated a lot.

The folklore materials from Ilocos was published in *El Eco de Vigan* [*The Vigan Echo*] where a debate started on what constituted folklore, which was generally understood as "popular knowledge." One area of debate was whether superstition was part of it. In the beginning, De los Reyes thought that the newspaper, presumably its editors and writers, was being unfair for not giving him a chance to answer their criticisms point by point. However, he later credited the newspaper for giving local folklore "an importance it had neither enjoyed nor deserved" (Scott, 1982, p. 250). This could mean that de los Reyes's articles on folklore have provided journalism with a genre which was accessible to the readers, whose value was symbolic because it enabled, through meaning-making, a social imaginary that offered a vision of a people.

### **Folkloric studies was a form of nineteenth-century Orientalism.**

When introduced in the Philippines, the discipline combined colonial intent with the "scientific," if not modern, desire to collect and classify objects, people, places, and ideas that were considered traditional, exotic, or primitive. Edward Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism referred to the practice of designating a space of "ours" and "theirs" to derive a "negative identity" (p. 54). Thus, folkloric studies, as a form of Orientalism, was an "exercise of cultural strength" (p.40) for its recognition of a body of

knowledge and practices though this had to be documented and analyzed through Western frameworks. However, what distinguished folklore from other forms of colonial historiography was its bias toward heterogeneity. This formally acknowledged that there existed a variety of practices and beliefs that were not subsumed by the dominant worldview. And yet it is not possible to read folklore without remembering the Spanish colonization that occasioned the marginalization of some worldviews.

There could be two reasons behind the interest in folklore as proto-historical and anthropological accounts of Filipinos throughout the Spanish colonial period. First, in the early part of the colonial conquest, knowledge of a strange culture facilitated civilizing and disciplining acts. Second, during the later period of colonization, while folkloric studies seemingly critiqued modernization, it actually betrays the triumph of a hegemony steeped in Western superiority and racism. Either way, the regard for folklore was condescending because it was incompatible with colonial and Eurocentric culture. However in the hands of de los Reyes, folklore became a subversive tool simply because his interpretation departed from the goals of its Western interlocutors.

De los Reyes's *El Folk-Lore Filipino* proceeded from a provocative premise. He defined folklore as a repository of knowledge of the past, and his task was to make it accessible to scholars and non-scholars alike. However, instead of merely retrieving customs, legends, traditions, superstitions and so forth, he also saw folklore as having "broad boundaries," and thus it could become a mechanism for resisting colonial rule and creating awareness of pluralities that could make up a nation (Scott, 1982, p. 246). Moreover, according to de los Reyes, the value of that which comprises folklore resided in the fact that the "elements that constitute the temperament, knowledge, and languages contained in the oral tradition, in monuments and in writings, are considered indispensable materials in understanding and reconstructing scientifically the history and culture of a people" (as cited in Mojares, 2006, p. 307). For Mojares (2006) and Scott (1982), patriotism underpinned de los Reyes's work on folklore. Patriotism does not simply imply a celebratory attitude toward anything traditional or native; rather, it is crucially shaped by what Mojares termed "the imperatives of anti-colonial nation formation" (Mojares, 2006, p. 363). De los Reyes's interest in folklore may have less to do with folklore's civilizational value than with his belief that from this web of tradition, the anti-colonial struggle might proceed.

De los Reyes's reflexivity showed in his work on folklore. In his accounts of rituals, beliefs, and historical episodes among others, de los Reyes liberally inserted his observations and commentaries, mainly to contextualize the folklore, debunk popular notions, and locate the changes and shifts in



meanings. These insertions could be seen as a form of protest against the reification of a culture that was defined by the design and fantasy of colonial power. But such endeavor earned de los Reyes criticism. Jose Rizal, for one, commented on limitations in his scholarship that were glossed over by the rhetorical power of his prose. For example, to underscore that Europeans are not racially superior to Filipinos, de los Reyes wrote, “There are Aetas who surpass the Tagalogs in intelligence, and it is recognized that the Tagalogs are at the same intellectual level as the Europeans” (in Scott, 1982, p. 248).

De los Reyes’s writing approach and his idea of what constituted folklore could be understood using “structure of feeling” (p. 22) a phrase associated with Raymond Williams (1980) used to designate the relationship between society and writing or, more specifically, between the “empirical consciousness of a particular social group and the imaginative world created by the writer” (p. 23). Accordingly, the relationship has less to do with content but with the analysis of structures, with their historical formation and process that are not always apparent but are embodied in a text such as the folklore by reason of ideology or false consciousness. For Williams, the task of a critical historian is to account for the social and political circumstances that produce or transform culture, art, and their expressions. “Structures of feeling” becomes more relevant in Williams’s categorization of culture—dominant, residual, or emergent—where the dominant culture co-exists with older forms that also challenge it. This categorization supports an idea that dominant cultural forms could always be undermined by residual forms as well as threatened by the emerging and evolving ones. In this sense, folklore could be seen primarily as that which mirrors the conditions of life in society but also persists even though the conditions have changed.

De los Reyes’s work on folklore also resonates with the thoughts on folklore offered by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci (1992) saw the study of folklore as going beyond its “picturesque elements” and examined it as a “conception of the world of a particular social strata, which are untouched by modern currents of thought” (p. 186). And yet such conception of the world needs to be elaborated on and systematized within the popular domain. For Gramsci, the popularization of folklore should be approached with care so as not to dwell on aspects of oddity, strangeness, and the bizarre that folklore is often associated with (p. 187). Only then could the popularization of culture be effective because not only does it allow the masses to understand themselves better, but it also teaches them the continuity and interconnectedness between modern culture and folklore. Gramsci’s comments on folklore could be seen as part of his work on emancipative potentials of culture where he acknowledged

the role of culture as a vehicle through which subalterns could understand their historical conditions. This is because he sees in culture the chance to organize and enlarge the incipient thoughts of freedom—a task given to intellectuals, especially those organic or subaltern classes.

Folklore is basically stories about people. In short, folklore is capable of constituting a public. In contemporary journalism, stories are “human interest” pieces that range from accounts of extraordinary feats of individuals or groups to the ordinariness of their everyday lives. Stories have elements that are verifiable or something that are “true” or “real” as understood by the audience that is exposed to such stories (Muhlmann, 2010). They command an audience because they spark curiosity, pose questions, and generate actions. These moves could be simultaneously political and public. They presuppose interlocution and interaction in a collective sense, moving away from the cultural realm of individual and disparate beliefs and into conditions of mutuality and inter-subjective understanding.

The above argument on unification of aesthetics and politics in the publication of folklore in newspapers and periodicals brings down the divide between folklore and journalistic forms, the private and public, the primitive and modern and so forth. The relationship now could be seen dialectically, in the sense that it represents dependence and contingency that cannot, and should not, be fixed. With the concern for praxis, this unification of aesthetics and politics could end the alienation of folklore due to the irrationality and superstitions that have been associated with it. By re-presenting folklore, de los Reyes had changed the function of the genre without changing its form. In other words, he had adapted folklore to new functions. This kind of adaptation is significant during periods of political upheavals, when embryonic forms of political power can be detected, when anti-colonial resistance, both armed and popular forms, is on the rise.

It has to be underscored that de los Reyes’s work on folklore was done during his younger days, that is, during the struggle against Spain, but it was also an interest that continued well into his mature years or during the struggle against U.S. imperialism (Mojares, 2006). The Americans also deployed its brand of Orientalism as shown, for example, in the portrayal of the Philippines in the 1904 St. Louis Fair where Filipinos were displayed, along with their native architecture, and were also made to eat dog’s meat. The revulsion displayed by spectators served to justify the American presence in the Philippines.

One could examine the ways in which folklore has to contend with the indeterminable ferment of the times, that is, when the colonized begins to challenge colonial powers. De los Reyes’s intervention, which Mojares termed “instrumental,” on the text enabled folklore to have ideological

messages, and while the stories retained their emblems, they were also capable of expressing protest (Mojares, 2006,). Because folklore stories are situated within specific historical periods, they could have what Althusser (1971) termed interpellatory capacity that provides the readers the clues when these are read. For example, de los Reyes's satiric stories of Isio tackles corruption, exploitation, class, racism, and colonial administration and altogether induces laughter, anger and, presumably, a vision of an alternative world (De los Reyes, 1994).

## **Folklore, Journalism, and Memory**

Journalism, as one of the technologies of representation, systematizes folklore according to its own logic in a manner that is informed by the practices, content, and institutions through which journalism operates. Representation is also about accessing a body of knowledge from where interpretation could start. The focus in this section is the interrogation of folklore as a memory device or an archive within the support provided by journalism or the print medium. The following discussion intends to highlight the political possibilities of technologies of representation such as journalism. It revolves around the issue of how historical injustices can be recalled and redressed and the implications to the practice of journalism today.

De los Reyes benefitted from his access to the print medium that was on its heyday. Mojares and Scott have enumerated the books, publications, and printing presses that de los Reyes have written for, produced, joined, and established. Although de los Reyes was involved in politics, trading, farming, lawyering, and other economic activities, writing and publishing appeared to be what he had for a regular, if not respectable, job. His range of printed products was admirable, from serious ones like books to saleable ones like newspapers and almanacs (Mojares, 2006). Almanacs are mass circulated printed materials; they contain information on names of saints and popes, weather patterns, tides, lunar phases and eclipses, farming tips, poems, and religious and historical vignettes. While not considered journalism that is in step with current events, almanacs, also called "the poor man's periodical" or "the masses' magazine" (Mojares, 2013, p.109), and similar publications were widely circulated. De los Reyes transformed the almanac into a folkloric platform that included "political and social criticism" by incorporating commentaries against obscurantism of the Catholic Church, the names of Filipino revolutionaries and European anarchists, and anti-colonial tirades, among others.

The print publication of folklore demonstrates how a technical system provided a condition for the disruption of the dominant colonial knowledge

and information systems as well as their familiar points of reference. Print medium is a technology of inscription that makes stories available for the many in order to share meanings and intentions. Stories of ways of living abound but when treated from the framework of culture and modernity, new meanings could emerge. When retrieved and published, folklore is preserved because the print medium is a technology for recording the past, making the past available for interpretation in the present—the work of traces. Print medium allows the mass circulation of folklore that could be read, discussed, and interpreted in various ways and also in different registers. Accessible, folklore is subject to new ways of seeing and dissociation from its time. Its authenticity is not tied to temporality but how it is made to bear on the present in order to understand the past and formulate a future. In other words, the reduction of folklore to print has granted readers a chance to play an active role in its interpretation where indeterminate meanings could be occasioned. This opens up a space for political judgment of the meanings derived from folklore, and allows for their elaboration, reconstruction and re-presentation. In short, folklore is opened up to politics. Thus the printing medium allowed de los Reyes's folklore project to realize its political goals despite the constraints imposed by colonial powers. And while colonial design shaped the "science" and intent of folklore, they were not the only source of its signification.

Journalism retrieves, systematizes, and renders folklore accessible to the present. Print publication of folklore is essentially not a preservation of the oral version of folklore but a re-presentation of its reality. The new techniques of accessing folklore give rise to new techniques of decoding the cultural narratives. In other words, printing has transformed folklore "into a new form," as new media theorist Lev Manovich (2001) would put it. This new materiality harbors aesthetic and political possibilities when it gives readers access to a folkloric imaginary. It enables the textual transmission of retrieved narratives to mass readers.

What the print medium essentially does to folklore is to record and store information in material form (Manovich, 2001). This process could be applied to journalism, which includes editorial and printing works, whose practice is no more technical than social. Thus, journalism becomes a space for negotiating issues and meanings. As support or prosthesis of memory, journalism is a vehicle through which memory could be made public. Memory, an ideological device, is inscribed upon the materiality of technologies that are integral in the practice of journalism. Inscription is not a mechanical act of recording but a re-articulation of memory where irreducible tension could result whenever different interpretations are posited as opposed to the preferred meanings held by the keepers of

folk narratives. This alerts us to the fact that there is little control of what follows after a folklore's publication. Thus transformations are anticipated the moment a folklore is retold through a new platform such as journalism where meanings are underpinned by social relations that determine who would be allowed to speak, interpret, or supply meanings, and who would benefit from the mutations of such meanings.

It is a true that the inscription of folklore on journalism, the stories of the past and those that people would like to tell each other, undergo standardization and reification. Inscription, though, is not without threat to folklore. Folklore could be modified and manipulated to conform to certain interests, and that, too, is aided by the print technology. The complicity of the culture industry with the logic of capitalism, as sketched by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (as cited in Stiegler, 2010), is a course where the rationalized folklore is heading. And yet the same process extends the reach of memory to form interpretive communities and could become political in the sense that interpretation is a contest of meaning. Memory is preserved through inscription; inscription allows appropriation and interlocation—processes that summon indeterminable acts, as de los Reyes seemed to have harnessed so well in his lifelong work on folklore.

To return to the practice of journalism, one could say that de los Reyes's adaptation of folklore as a journalistic style has expanded the frontiers of journalism in Philippine media history. Folklore is a rich source of journalistic enterprise—think of customs, traditions, artifacts, and all that de los Reyes termed the “indispensable materials for understanding and scientific reconstruction of Filipino and culture” (as cited in Mojares, 2013, p. 1). He took up the challenge of reconstituting the elements of folkloric information to convey their relevance to the present. It is this connection to the present that makes folklore relevant as an intervention in the practice of journalism. Journalism made available de los Reyes's folklore according to the convention of print medium at that time, which was a report of event and its everydayness. However, publication also shapes the report that it describes. The tension here should be underscored: that journalism tends to produce cogency while folklore in journalism enables the unexpected to emerge.

Publication in newspapers not only preserves memory as a “mnemonic platform” but also offers memory to public judgments (Zelizer, 2014, p. 35). This theme was taken up by Jacques Derrida (1978) in his philosophy of writing that posits the presence of traces that endure and at the same time invest fixity on what is easily forgotten. In relation to de los Reyes's work, the preceding arguments could consider folklore, printed in newspapers and other popular publications, as capable of engendering a range of responses

that pose a threat to colonial powers because of folklore's emancipative elements and its incredulity toward power as discerned by de los Reyes. As journalism frees folklore from its contexts and time origins, it also enables folklore to be iterable. Inscription furnishes folklore with innumerable contexts and protean origins induced by retelling and iteration. As a result, ties could be loosened just as solidarity around new interpretations could also be forged. In addition, the uncertainty of meanings allows contestation among audiences who also try to locate their place in that struggle, therefore providing opportunities for interpretation that correspond to that which could be political and subversive.

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