

Imperial Christendom and the Colonial State

Cong ibig mog magca utang
icaog ag mag titinaan
cong dica, macapag *quintal*
icaog ay *maquiquintalan*.

[If you want to obtain a loan
Go and cultivate indigo (ink dye)
But if you can't harvest a quintal
You'll surely be *marked* (*quintal*-an), singled out.]

A song transcribed by Augustinian priest Fr. Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga in 1800 opens this chapter, which concerns the contradictory principles and motives behind the colonial state in the Philippines in the nineteenth century and the fictions of *native consent*, *public good*, and *general culture* that served to mitigate those contradictions. This labor song, according to Zúñiga, was passed around on the banks of the Baliwag River, which cuts through Bulacan hinterland, north of Manila, in the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. Indigo dye was one of the first cash crops, along with tobacco, sugar, and *abaca*, or hemp, which the colonial government under Don Basco y Vargas (1785) encouraged and helped to finance as part of a larger initiative to transform the Philippine economy from being a constant drain on the colonial treasury in Mexico to a self-sustaining and even profitable colonial possession.¹ The program of fiscal reform constituted one of the two main projects of the colonial administration from this period onward; the other was military and consisted in the shoring up of Manila's defenses as well as the subjugation of Muslim sultanates in the southern part of the archipelago to Spanish rule. With these two projects, Spain, under the Bourbon monarchy of Charles III, hoped to fashion an overseas colonial territory under Spanish rule that, for the most part, existed in name only. By securing the Pacific frontier as the rear guard of Spain's colonies in the Americas, as well as cultivating the colony's self-sustainability, colonial officials would parallel (if not anticipate) Britain's

approaches to their colonial possessions in India and Southeast Asia, as well as the Netherlands's approaches to the Dutch Indies.

The song in the epigraph pivots around the element of risk in investing in indigo as an agricultural export commodity. This element of risk ties together two otherwise unrelated meanings of the word *quintal*: the first is Spanish and refers to a hundred-pound unit of weight; the second is the Tagalog verb root that refers to the act of marking. For Zúñiga, "All the humor of the rhyme consists in the double-retort [*retruécano*] of the word *quintal*," in which debtors become "marked" by the same ink they sought to produce as a way of overcoming their perpetual debt to Spanish rule and even rendering a profit (406).

The song, or *dalit*, a poetic form discussed in greater detail in chapter 3, returns us in somewhat elliptical fashion to an important detail of José Honorato Lozano's *Letras y figuras* (see figure 1). Most of Lozano's native colonial subjects are wearing simple, blue, loose shirts and pants made with the same indigo dye that was being produced as an export commodity. In the painting, it is indigo that allows their visibility as figures to serve as the basis of each letter's legibility: their clothes serve as the "ink" that sustains the letter. Paradoxically, however, their very form of visibility conspires to conceal them. The colonial subjects who find humor in the wit of the Baliwag rhyme express a classic instance of what Gayatri Spivak has called "subaltern speech": that is, they are "marked," ciphered, under the terms of perpetual debt to the name as the very condition of their visibility and, by extension, their imagined autonomy in the common space of the painted scene or song in which they live and work together.² Can we not see the same logic at work in the Baliwag song? Like Lozano's letter-figures, the song projects a predicament awaiting native colonial subjects who seek autonomy from the forced tribute and manual labor that has been their burden since the Spanish conquest and colonization of the Philippines. Here, in order to alleviate one form of colonial debt, the native-turned-entrepreneur seeks emancipation by paradoxically resorting to another. The threat of interpellative violence remains, but it has itself become subject to the fulfillment of a new task and prospect.

At the same time, however, the caesura between the first "If . . . then" and the second—between two expressions of law that signify one's opportunity and the risk of incurring the exercise of state violence—allows for an instant, a pause, to reflect not only on the opportunity and risk of native entrepreneurship, but also, and more significantly, on the distinction between two economies of debt and redemption that

inspired the song in the first place. There is the economy of debt based on the principle of imperial sovereignty and Christian conversion, in which the ancient formula *protego ergo obligo* (I protect therefore obligate [you]) provides the cornerstone of native tribute and forced labor to the rulers.³ Yet there is an economy of debt apart from the first that works in a different manner. To put it simply, this debt is an investment made by the consent of the colonial subject and its placement at the disposal of the law or state. By cultivating indigo, the native entrepreneur stands not only to fulfill previous obligations, but even to surpass them. Of course, the *dalit* expresses skepticism at this prospect. What is important to recognize, however, is that this moment of hesitation between two hypothetical proceedings also reveals how the new form of indentureship and debt unleashed by the cash-crop economy is neither identical to nor continuous with the old. Rather, the link from one economy of debt and redemption to another has to be routed through the subjects' acquiescence. Their consent, however limited, has become the hinge between two orders of debt and their representation.

The rhyme's insight emblemizes the central theme of this chapter, which concerns the invention of "the colonial state" as the designation of a political rationality whose task it was to transform the absence of organized resistance to Spanish rule into relations of manifest consent: a consent that could be targeted, procured, channeled, and ramified—in a word, governed—by means of measurement, calculation, and investment, that is, knowledge. "Political rationality" here refers to a process by which decision making under colonial rule is ascribed to an ostensibly preexisting criterion, structure, or principle, a criterion that remains inseparable from the specific instances of its invocation or utterance. Friedrich Meinecke has illustrated how the identification of this presumed rationality is what allows a "state" of things to become the target object of "the (modern) State," as in the sixteenth-century doctrine of *raison d'état*:

Raison d'état is the fundamental principle of national conduct, the State's first Law of Motion. It tells the statesman what he must do to preserve the health and strength of the State. The State is an organic structure whose full power can only be maintained by allowing it in some way to continue growing; and *raison d'état* indicates both the path and the goal for such a growth. . . . The choice of path to the goal is restricted by the particular nature of the State and its environment. Strictly speaking, only one path to the goal . . . has to be considered at any one time. *For each State at each particular moment there exists one ideal course of action, one ideal raison d'état.* (Italics added)⁴

On one level, it would be easy to demonstrate why the identification of such a political rationality, however specious, appeared in the Philippines from the middle of the eighteenth century. As outlined in the introduction, the 1762 British invasion and occupation of Manila crystallized an entire set of concerns around the precariousness of Spain's control over its colonial territories, as well as the constant drain on the Crown treasury produced by the administrative costs of the archipelago. Fiscal considerations were further heightened by Spain's bankruptcy after seven years of war with Britain. Both the insecurity of Spain's foothold across the Pacific as well as Spain's economic crisis warranted a plan, a project, capable of addressing these issues as interconnected.

At the same time, however, the more difficult question to ask is *how* the introduction of native consent enters into the calculations of colonial officials. By what mechanisms (discursive and institutional), programs, and strategies would the colonial official and native colonial subject navigate the crisis of the colonial compact? This chapter focuses on the way colonial officials imagined this change and on how these projections of social and economic change presumed a new relationship between rulers and ruled that would provide the foundations of the modern colonial state. My objects of analysis are the two concepts of *colony* and *state* that begin to be used in the late eighteenth century to describe the crisis of imperial hegemony in the archipelago and to propose a solution. At stake was a form of legitimacy that would ensure the continuity of Spanish sovereignty, even as it marked a radical break from the authority and order on which that sovereignty was based.

FROM HAPSBURG FLEXIBILITY TO BOURBON REFORM

In *Las Indias no eran colonias* (The Indies were not colonies), legal historian Ricardo Levene advanced the controversial argument that, until the late eighteenth century, Spain's overseas possessions in the Americas, the Caribbean, and the Philippines were not considered satellite colonies of Spain. Rather, their juridical status was more or less equal to that of Spain's provinces on the Iberian Peninsula. Reflecting upon and responding to the long-term effects of Spain's "black legend" (*leyenda negra*) of the Spanish conquest on historical and legal scholarship, Levene argues that Spanish rule over its "dominions" (as opposed to "colonies") was neither formally nor systematically despotic and exploitative. Compared to Dutch and British colonial systems of the

time, Levene concludes, the relationship between the Spanish monarchy (and later, nation) and its overseas territories was no different than the relationship of Castilian rule to Catalonia or the Basque Province. His exhaustive survey of documents spanning the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries reveals, among other things, that the *literal* identification of the Americas and the Philippines as colonial possessions—either for the purposes of settlement or economic exploitation—does not appear until very late in the history of the Spanish empire. Furthermore, the appearance of this new identification played a central role in the rise of political separatism in Latin America.

Scholars of the colonial and postcolonial epochs in Latin America have criticized Levene's thesis.⁵ His polemic fails to explain, perhaps even to the point of obscuring, how genocidal campaigns, the enslavement of Native Americans, and the African slave trade all presupposed a concept of racial difference and colonial sovereignty in a way that Spanish rule over Basques or Catalonians does not. Above all, Levene's victory in a debate over juridico-legal terms ("Were the Indies actually referred to as colonies in Spanish laws?") occurs at the expense of acknowledging the actual experience of the Spanish conquest and its aftermath.⁶ Yet the significance of Levene's argument is that it succeeds in raising questions regarding the relationship of the Spanish empire to modernity and the colonial state in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As we know, the first two centuries of Spanish conquest in the Americas and the Philippines did not lead to the constitution of colonies as the word *colony* is etymologically used, that is, to refer primarily to Spanish settlement and land cultivation. The Philippines, specifically, served primarily as a military outpost that would ostensibly protect Spain's American dominions from attack via the Pacific and as a prospective base from which to launch the project of Christian religious conversion in Asia.

We can also extrapolate from Levene's thesis that the colonial *state* in the Philippines could not arise until the Philippines itself became imaginable as a *colony*. The political organization of frontier Christendom illustrates such an interpretation. From the time of the conquest to the accession of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain, the Spanish Hapsburg monarchs had adopted an extremely loose, flexible administration in the Philippines, if not the Americas in general, which depended on de-centered and heterogeneous forms of authority in constant flux and negotiation.⁷ Herbert Bolton called it a "frontier system," which was based on the concession that Spain lacked the resources to extend its

authority over the vast territories it had claimed for itself in the sixteenth century.⁸ The chief manifestation of colonial administration, the Laws of the Indies, not only outlined the basic responsibilities of the colonial subject to king, but also explicitly specified the limits of Spanish sovereignty to interfere with certain privileges (*fueros*) of the religious and with the “common law” or customary rights (*derecho consuetudinal*) of the colonial subject. Regarding the former, religious *fueros* theoretically referred to the rights of the religious orders to administer affairs pertaining to sites of missionary activity as well as the practice of religious duties among converts.⁹ On a practical level, however, such privileges could encompass a wide spectrum: from burial fees on holy ground to the forced suspension of working days for festivals and to a missionary priest’s exemption from criminal prosecution by the civil authorities. As for the common laws and customs of the colonial subject, these remained in force wherever and whenever they did not contradict the Laws of the Indies and in fact received sanction from colonial authority (see chapter 3).

On a theoretical level, these rights and immunities were all integrated into a vertical chain of command, which began with the colonial subject and culminated with the will of the monarch, who stood above the law insofar as the monarch dictated it. In practice, however, the absolute power of the monarch undermined this chain of command and rendered the entire structure weak. The double standard of monarchical authority (its power to at once establish and undermine the chain of command) resulted in its self-cancellation. “In light of these circumstances,” Frank Jay Moreno writes, “it is quite understandable that no one felt the slightest compulsion to obey his superior whenever he did not agree with his commands. The artificial hierarchy of power never functioned in practice” (“Spanish Colonial System,” 316).

The resulting impossibility of administrative centralization and monopoly on legitimate violence found its juridical expression in the policy of *Se acata pero no se cumple/Obedezco pero no cumplo* [One complies with but does not carry out/I obey but do not carry out].¹⁰ John Phelan describes this legal measure in the following manner: “The ‘I obey’ clause signifies the recognition by subordinates of the legitimacy of the sovereign power who, if properly informed of all circumstances, would will no wrong. The ‘I do not execute’ clause is the subordinate’s assumption of the responsibility of postponing the execution of an order until the sovereign is informed of those conditions of which he may be ignorant and without a knowledge of which an

injustice may be committed” (“Authority and Flexibility in the Spanish Imperial Bureaucracy,” 59).

The resulting legal chaos of what Phelan (after Andre Gunder Frank) called the “conflicting standards approach” to colonial rule is what prompted French explorer Jean-François Galaup de la Pérouse to remark in 1787, “For a society so lacking in enlightenment as this, I believe it would be difficult to imagine a system of government more absurd than that which has ruled these colonies for the past two centuries.” [Je crois qu’il serait difficile à la société la plus dénuée de lumières, d’imaginer un système de gouvernement plus absurde que celui qui régit ces colonies depuis deux siècles.]¹¹ Yet, while the Laws of the Indies and the day-to-day practice of adapting or changing Spanish colonial policies at their point of application might lead one to believe that, for the better part of three centuries, the Americas and the Philippines lay in a Hobbesian state of nature, the reality was otherwise. In fact, studies of the Hapsburg approach to imperial rule illustrate that the level of bureaucratic disunity and autonomy, combined with the endless conflicts between the jurisdictions of “spiritual” and “temporal” and “common law” administration, actually contributed as much to the *success* of Spain’s longevity and continuity in the Americas and the Philippines as to the Spanish monarchy’s limitations. This is what led John Phelan, in his study of the Philippines under the Hapsburg monarchy, to conclude: “The paradox is that Spanish success issued from Spanish failure.”¹²

The late eighteenth century in the Philippines designates a central theater in which the attempted dismantling of “compromise government” and administrative flexibility in Spain’s administration of its overseas possessions took place. We have already mentioned the 1762–63 British takeover of Manila, which resulted from Spain’s alliance with France during the latter’s Seven Years’ War with Britain and led to the penetration of British commerce in the islands as well as Latin America. While this penetration was minimal in the Philippines during the short term, it revealed the insecurity of Manila from foreign attack. It also underlined the imperial outpost’s exposure to the discontent of the religious orders, the opportunism of the nascent commercial sector (composed primarily of predominantly Chinese and mestizo entrepreneurs), and native resentment to tribute and forced labor.

In response to the events of the Seven Years’ War and its aftermath, the Bourbon Crown under Charles III moved to strengthen the bases

of absolute monarchy. His measures included the removal of the Jesuits from the Americas and the Philippines in 1768 as part of a larger initiative to reduce the power of the religious to challenge or influence his decisions in both Spain and its colonies.¹³ Another was the 1788 *Reglamento* that abolished restrictions on exterior commerce between Spain and its overseas empire. Taken together, these events provided colonial officials with an opportunity to reconceive the relation of Spain to the Philippines in a way that would reflect Spain's changing relationship with the rest of Europe.

In 1784, the captain-general and governor of the Philippines, Don José Basco y Vargas, began an ambitious plan of reforms that lasted until the late nineteenth century.¹⁴ These reforms included the establishment of a government monopoly on the production and sale of tobacco; the formation of a Royal Company of the Philippines, a state-sponsored commercial company modeled after the royal companies established in the British and Dutch Indies; the inauguration of an Economic Society, composed of the principal members of the religious and colonial bureaucracy; and a set of initiatives to cultivate the land beyond subsistence agriculture in order to produce agricultural exports. Most, if not all, of these plans met with shortcomings and eventual failure. Yet Basco y Vargas's reforms, tied to the aftermath of the British occupation, the sacking of the Jesuits, and the establishment of free trade between Spain and its overseas possessions, give us a picture of Spain's first systematic efforts to synchronize Philippine commerce to a world market that had shattered Spain's fragile, imperial network of security and trade.

CALCULATING CONSENT TO COLONIAL RULE: VIANA AND BASCO Y VARGAS

At the time of the 1762 British invasion of Manila, Francisco Leandro de Viana served as the fiscal attorney or auditor (*oídor*) of the Philippine Audiencia, a counseling body to the captain-general that was appointed by the Spanish Crown. Viana wrote a series of statements and letters to the king (Carlos III) that centered on ways to increase the revenue produced by the colony, but came to address questions of security, governmental corruption and mismanagement, the power and irresponsibility of the religious missionary orders, and the neglect (or active hindrance) of the teaching of Spanish. Indeed, as Viana's initial statement to the king expressly illustrates, all the problems that afflict

the colony have one thing in common—the poverty they produce—which prompts Spain to seriously reconsider its continued presence in the archipelago:

There is no greater misfortune in the world than poverty; all have contempt for it, and all regard it with displeasure. . . . If, then, [the colonies] produce nothing; if to maintain them must cost so much that it saps the royal treasury, to the injury of other and more important domains; if for lack of money the honor of the Catholic arms cannot be maintained in these distant regions; if we are exposed to being the plaything of all the nations; if we cannot resist or confront the feeblest enemy who may attack us; and finally, if we must endure the ignominy of being discreditably deprived of these faithful vassals, with the loss of all that they have: it is better to anticipate these losses in good time, to abandon or sell these regions, and allow to all free opportunity to make their property secure and take refuge under [our] other dominions. . . . This is the method of saving expenses, and employing those funds for other and more useful purposes, and averting the ignominies to which we are dangerously exposed.¹⁵

Viana's lengthy, conditional statement encodes a new criterion for the continuity of colonial rule, which marks a departure from both the imperial and the missionary endeavors that first inspired the conquest and pacification of the islands. First and foremost, the archipelago must be *productive*, beyond the expenses it incurs for its maintenance. From the time of the conquest until the middle of the eighteenth century, the Spanish Philippine government had to be subsidized by funds derived from the Crown (through the Viceroyalty of New Spain): a situation bound to aggravate imperial Spain during the centuries of its worst losses to the rival European powers. Yet Viana did not plan to generate funds solely for the purpose of balancing the books. His idea, rather, was to reinvest the income generated from increased revenues to the Crown into infrastructure, public works, health and security: in short, all the operations of good government required to maintain and manage the welfare of the population. "With such receipts in the royal treasury," he notes, "and with the aforesaid soldiery and their pay, and with navy, artillerymen, and military supplies, what enterprises cannot be taken in these islands? Will this not be the most considerable establishment in all the Indies? Will there be forces that can overcome us? Will the English, who hold their posts and factories with the necessary garrisons, venture again to invade this place?" (pt. 1, chap. 4, par. 3).¹⁶

Of equal importance, the consideration of the country's wealth or poverty must take precedence over the honor of its evangelizing mission.

From the beginning of his memorandum, Viana is careful to emphasize the necessity of looking at the history and present condition of the Philippines under Spanish rule by first setting to one side the glory of Christian evangelization: "And thus would [our] Commerce be restored, which the Foreigners engage in, since the whole matter consists in taking it by will from them, an idea that shows how premature the abandonment of these Islands would be . . . even laying aside religious motives, which are powerful to the Catholic zeal of the Spaniards" (pt. 1, chap. 2, par. 4);¹⁷ "in view of these reflections, every Spaniard will be convinced of the necessity of preserving these islands . . . [even] without the powerful incentive of religion, on account of the great benefit which can result to the monarchy" (pt. 1, chap. 2, par. 14).¹⁸ His effective diminution of the Christian evangelical endeavor serves to suspend the narrative of the exploration and conquest that had informed the understanding of Spain's presence in the Philippines since the sixteenth century. By contrast, Viana seeks a hard-nosed calculation of assignable indices of wealth and poverty, under which the Crown might evaluate the Philippines in terms of an *investment*. What profit does it yield for the Crown, and what are its possibilities of growth and development, in and through the cultivation of its labor force and its natural wealth? What are its prospects for navigation and commerce? What other markets in Asia does the possession of the islands open up?

In a related vein (and this is his second point), the Spanish Crown must take cognizance of and secure itself against the opposition and hostility to Spanish rule in the archipelago arising not only from the predatory interests of other European countries (most prominently the English), but also from the Muslim sultanates, Chinese commerce and piracy, and even the native subjects or *Indios* themselves (pars. 6–7). This can be contrasted, again, with the vision that guided the exploration and conquest of the Americas and the archipelago in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The latter was predicated on a world that had yet to be *redeemed*—spiritually but also temporally, in the sense of being complete and enclosed under either the worldwide expansion of imperial administration or (later) the universal codification of international law.¹⁹

Juxtaposed to this worldview, Viana sees the preservation or abandonment of the islands as an issue that directly impinges upon the strategic position and tactical maneuvers of rival European powers, whose relation to Spain is defined as a permanent state of potential or actual warfare.²⁰ These conflicts, and particularly Viana's fear of British encroachment on both the western hemisphere and Pacific Asia, led

him to warn the king of the numerous disadvantages of abandoning the islands from a military as well as commercial standpoint. More than a colonial outpost, then, the Philippines had to be reconceived in systematically preemptive terms: that is, in ceaseless preparation for a war that was already happening or always about to happen.²¹ Not coincidentally, the first recommendation he makes for the preservation of the islands is to send punitive expeditions against the Muslim (Moro) sultanates of Jolo and Mindanao so as to prevent future attacks and piracies.²²

Finally, Viana's desire for the government to "allow to all free opportunity to make their property secure and take refuge under other dominions" suggests an obligation of the colonial government, a primitive "social contract" of sorts, that is tied to the government's permanence in the islands and defines its reason for being and its mode of rationality. To put it another way, Spanish rule must enter into a consideration of political expediency that takes on the form of a *reason of state* (*raison d'état* or *razón del estado*) whose ultimate goal is to calculate and secure those conditions for its perpetuity.²³ In this case, Viana identifies Spain's capacity to promise the property, safety, security, and happiness of the governed as a key strategy for the maintenance of Spanish sovereignty in the islands.²⁴

Viana's statement is not meant to be exhaustive. Its call for productivity, preemptive security, and a reason of state, however, expressed a shift in thinking about the relationship of the archipelago to the Spanish metropolis and undertook the constitution of the Philippines as an object of knowledge, administration and management, and military strategy in a field of operations quite different from that of Spain's imperial maneuvers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. "No one better than Your Excellency," his opening dedicatory lines to the Superior government in Manila read, "can know the sad constitution of these Philippine Islands, because as their leader you are moved by the *universal lack* of what is necessary for the Islands' development" (*Demostración*, dedicatory preface; italics added).²⁵ For the first time, the consideration of abandoning the islands entirely forces Spain to clarify the preconditions for the maintenance of its sovereignty overseas. It would have to consider the Philippines not as the completion or fulfillment of either a divinely sanctioned mission or sovereign right of conquest, but as a project that measured the archipelago's future prospects against its present expenses and risks. Moreover, this modern colonial program had to be undertaken in a world of rival powers and discontented subjects, whose capacities for consent and dissent had yet

to be calculated.²⁶ Finally, Spain would have to view its relationship with the Philippines not only as a central municipality views its surrounding provinces, but also in the way that rival European powers (particularly the British and Dutch) administered their *colonies*. The Philippines begins to assume the form, in however imprecise a manner, of a colony—a conception quite alien to the administration of the islands under the missionary orders and the *Recopilación de las Leyes de Indias*, or Laws of the Indies.²⁷

The identification of the Philippines as a colony affects not only the Philippines, however, but also the character of sovereign authority and the object of knowledge and legislation that, in a sense, justifies the continued presence of Spanish domination in the archipelago. While the appeal to the monarch's supreme authority appears the same, it has been rerouted through a condition that will overdetermine Spain's future in the archipelago. That new object of knowledge, legislation, and calculation is the will (*voluntad*), desire, and consent of the native population for Spanish rule.

Viana stumbles onto this new object of legislation and reform in a paradoxical manner. After reviewing several arguments for increasing the native tribute to the colonial government—the mutual obligation of king and subject, the increase of tributes in other colonies, the extreme moderation of the current tribute, the expenses of wars and the maintenance of troops—he briefly considers the counter-argument, based on the largely “peaceful” nature of the conquest:

[No han] sido conquistados con Guerras que ocasionasen sus malos procedimientos, para imponerles Tributos grandes, al arbitrio del vencedor, como es justo en tales casos, *pues ellos se rindieron de su propia voluntad*; y nuestra conquista no fue por habernos dado antecedentes motivos para Guerra, sino por su mayor bien espiritual, y Temporal, por cuya causa deber ser mas moderado el Tributo. (pt. 1, chap. 5, par. 10; italics added)

[The natives were not conquered in Wars that would occasion grave consequences on the defeated, such as heavy Tributes, subject to the judgment of the conqueror, which would be just in such cases; instead (the natives) became subjects out of their own will/desire (*voluntad*); and our Conquest did not arise out of earlier motivations for making War, but out of concern for their greater spiritual, as well as material well-being, for which reason the Tribute ought to be mitigated.]

Viana concludes, however, that such an argument cannot hold to the degree that other Spanish subjects take on the responsibility of sustaining the Philippines because the islanders refuse to do it themselves.

The consent of the native, in this instance, appears largely as a control mechanism against the unjust or arbitrary demands of the sovereign on his subjects. Abstracted from this context, it becomes clear that native consent and its instantiation or *performance* in various capacities is the privileged object of colonial reform in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁸ Viana's memorandum, for instance, occupies itself with this question when he moves from a discussion of the tribute's lawfulness to the advantages of enriching the colonial government so that it may in turn facilitate the possibilities for the natives' own enrichment: "If the Indians were willing to apply themselves to a very moderate [amount of] labor, they could pay a larger tribute and [yet] live with more comforts; for there are probably no vassals in all the world who have such capacity and talent for making themselves rich as have the Indians of the Philippines, but nothing comes of this because of their indolence" (pt. 1, chap. 4, par. 14).²⁹ This same logic is at work when Viana goes so far as to suggest that increasing native tributes and more effectively enforcing compulsory labor will benefit not only the colonial government, but the natives as well.³⁰ On the one hand, such an explanation reveals nothing more than the paternalistic attitude of a benvolent master toward his or her vassals. As we will see later, however, the idea that the interests of the colonial administration and of the natives are the same takes on a new meaning when the project of economic and social reform begins to develop. Native consent, far from merely existing as the base condition for expanding Spanish claims to territory and tribute, becomes an object of knowledge and colonial engineering, which aims to discover what elicits it, how to sustain it, and how to trace its ramifications for the procurement of Spain's perpetuity in the islands.

The identification of the Philippines as a self-sustaining agricultural colony and the targeting of native consent as the basis for its future success constitute the two bases of Spanish modern colonial rule. Yet they also anticipate the rise of paradoxes and contradictions in the nature and character of Spanish rule. When one examines Governor and Captain-General José Basco y Vargas's (1778–1787) reflections on his general economic plan, one gets a glimpse of how the new economic vision would transform both the political order and the relative autonomy of Spanish institutions as well as native customs and traditions.

Basco y Vargas explains his plan by invoking the general good of these islands (*el bien de estas Islas*), the love that all (presumably Spaniards) owe the native land (*el amor que deben a la Patria*), and

the favorable reception of the public to the plan. Throughout the text, Basco y Vargas emphasizes that these are all in fact the same thing: so, for instance, the good of the islands becomes the “public good,” the “common good,” “the good of all,” and “our common happiness.” Similarly, love for the mother country translates into a desire to improve the state of the Philippines, which is shared by all: “We have skill, love for the mother country, and the desire for our increase equal to theirs” (*Recuerdo*, par. 27). Yet who constitutes the reference of this “we,” this “our?” At one point, Basco y Vargas describes the inhabitants of the Philippines as the “Citizens of the Islands,” all of whom seek “our common happiness.” It is clear, however, that he refers primarily to Spaniards, either born in Spain or the Philippines (i.e., Creoles); for in the next breath he refers to the native inhabitants as “our industrious fellow vassals” (*nuestros industriosos Convasallos*).

Yet, while “our common good” and “our common happiness” do not appear to include non-Spaniards, the terms do not exclude them, either. Paired with decrees and ordinances passed by Basco y Vargas during the period of his appointment—from his attempt to suppress the abuse of authority and corruption that had led to the dispossession of natives from their land to the opening of free trade to all merchants, regardless of race—it is clear that Basco y Vargas’s notion of a Philippine “Republic” is not concerned with the maintenance of older forms of privilege. Rather, his concern lies with the establishment of an intellectual, enlightened class, closely tied to the colonial bureaucracy, capable of gathering and disseminating knowledge to all interested entrepreneurs as well as enacting legislation suitable for the growth of export agriculture. To this end, the creation of Patriotic Societies (*Sociedades Económicas de los Amigos del País*) would lead to the study of natural history and its insertion into the calculations of agriculture, industry, and commerce, as well as what he calls “the joy and security of the Public and Private State” (*la dicha y seguridad del Estado público, y particular*; par. 16). When the “state” of the Philippines becomes an object of knowledge, through the constitution of an enlightened society whose place in the hierarchy of Crown and colonial subject is anomalous, one can begin to speak of a colonial state as the reification of political reason or rationality.

ENCLOSURE AND OCCUPATION: COMYN

The identification of the Philippines as a Spanish colony and the targeting of native consent as the object of modern colonial policy can

be traced in the fifty odd years of reform and initiatives that separate the publication of Viana's memoranda and that of Tomás de Comyn's *Estado de las islas Filipinas en 1810* (*State of the Philippines in 1810*; pub. 1820). These reforms included the aggressive pursuit of commercial agriculture, the establishment of various government monopolies, the attempt to place the management of parishes under secular priests rather than members of the missionary orders, the enforcement of the visitation and inspection of the provinces, and the establishment of a Royal Patriotic Society, whose task it was to study ways to increase revenue through agriculture and industry. These clarified the extent to which native consent had to be secured by a colonial "state of the Philippines" and the means of securing it—"state" being understood here not only as a stable condition but one invested with a specific political rationality.

The emphasis on the preservation of political and economic stability in the islands becomes all the more poignant when we examine it in light of the tumultuous changes transpiring in Spain. In 1808, two years before the writing of Comyn's book, Fernando VII was deposed by Napoleon, who set his brother Joseph on the throne amid widespread opposition. The following four years saw a brutal war between French-Turkish forces and the Spanish resistance, which resulted in the drafting of Spain's first Constitution (1812). Upon his restoration to the throne in 1814, however, Fernando abolished the Constitution and persecuted its authors by imprisonment or exile. His reign was once again challenged in 1820 (the year of the actual publication of Comyn's *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810*), when a military coup forced Fernando to accept the constitutional basis of the Spanish monarchy (1820–1823). However, the restoration of autocratic rule succeeded this brief period, aided by France and Britain. After Fernando's death in 1833, a new cycle of unrest was unleashed by those who supported the restoration of absolute monarchy under Fernando VII's brother Carlos and opposed the constitutional monarchy of Fernando's daughter Isabel. These years of revolution and restoration coincided with and to a large degree precipitated the wars of independence in Latin America, and introduced political debates concerning the future of the peninsula to the Philippines.

As the general manager of the Philippine Royal Company, a commercial monopoly under the Spanish Crown patterned after the British and Dutch (VOC) East Indies Companies, Comyn was eminently placed to observe the prospects and pitfalls of Spain's dominion in the

Philippines. This position may explain why the work was translated into English the year after its publication in Madrid (1821). The translator, William Walton, regards it largely as a critique of Spain's disregard of the islands, designed "to awaken a spirit of inquiry" that owed itself largely to the 1820 revolution on the peninsula (Comyn, *State of the Philippines in 1810*, [English], xvii). José Felipe del Pan, by far the most important publicist in the history of the Philippines under Spain, remarks that from the time of its publication, "no important resolution of an economic character, was adopted by the higher powers of the State, pertaining to the Philippines, without first consulting Comyn's book. . . . Even now, we do not believe it possible to undertake any serious investigation into any branch of administration, without first knowing the antecedents that are laid bare and discussed with the highest standards in this book" (Pan, *Islas Filipinas*, 7).³¹

Like his predecessor, Comyn recognizes the need for the government to pursue an aggressive policy of intervention in the management and life of the subject population, far beyond what he regards as the negative or "protective" role Spain had taken since the time of the conquest and pacification of the islands. Again, brief reference to Viana's recommendations will clarify this conception of colonial modernity as a form of political rationality. The first is the explicit recognition that the Philippines is a colony—specifically, an agricultural colony—and that if it is to be maintained for the Spanish Crown or nation, it must be treated as one. Recall that in Viana's writings, the identification of the islands as a colony under Spain was almost everywhere absent. Yet from the first sentence of Comyn's treatise, the dual articulation of "state" and "colony" with all aspects of the population, the question of security, and the prospects of industry and commerce, begins to be posed in a systematic way. What defines a colony? In Comyn's words, it is "a commerce based on the extraction [of wealth], which is what most commonly decides the value and importance of every agricultural colony" (*Islas Filipinas*, 15) [el comercio de extraccion, que es el que decide por lo comun del valor e importancia de toda colonia agrícola].

For Comyn, the implications of this designation need to be fully measured and exploited in order for any serious, directed reform to take place. In his words, "As long as the government limits itself to exercising a merely protective role [in government], the effects will necessarily be slow. Thus, it is imperative to put into effect measures more powerful than the ordinary ones, and to eschew altogether recourse to general principles that pertain more directly to societies comprised of

a different fate, or to put it another way, formed by quite different elements" (*Islas Filipinas*, 38).³²

The projected transformation of the government's "protective" system of rule into a militarily preemptive and agriculturally productive (it is tempting to say "proactive") one, proceeds in a hybrid manner, which combines new methods of indirect management with older means of coercion and forced obedience codified in law. This hybridism can best be appreciated in Comyn's greatest point of divergence from his predecessor Viana, concerning the value and investment of the tribute. The increased levy of the native tribute formed the centerpiece of Viana's proposed reforms: it would eliminate the insular government's dependence on outside sources for its maintenance and upkeep, open up prospects for improving security and commerce, and draw the natives out of their "sloth," "indolence," or indifference to work. By contrast, Comyn begins his report by noting the immense difficulties, if not the utter impossibility, of correctly calculating and exacting tribute: a difficulty that outlines, in blueprint, the challenge to the insular government in the Philippines as a whole (11–15). His criticism of the insular government's dependence on such an inconstant and incalculable generation of revenue is only furthered by the admission that the exaction of tribute proceeds via a faulty system of collection that engenders corruption and extortion at all levels (136–38). Thus it is, he concludes, that the simplest obligation between the government and the governed has devolved into a complex of "excesses and abuses of authority" (138). Even in cases where such corruption does not exist, the system of exemptions to tribute that evolved over two centuries of Spanish rule increasingly leads the natives to see the tribute as an institutional form of racial preference and discrimination.

Comyn proposes four main solutions to the problems caused by the loss of revenue resulting from the cessation of the tribute: the appropriation of unused private lands by the colonial state; their redistribution to settler families for the creation of large estates (*haciendas*) devoted to commercial agriculture; the return to a system of forced labor (*repartimiento*); and the reform of the colonial administration (38–41, 143–45). Of course, Viana himself had proposed certain reforms analogous to the spirit of Comyn's treatise (particularly the proscription of indolence) fifty years earlier.³³ Yet the putative effectiveness of this proposed system from its previous manifestation is the (re)appropriation of all unused lands to the Crown (or nation) and the distribution of these lands for commercial agriculture.³⁴ Comyn arrives at this measure in quite a euphemistic way: he first asserts that the first responsibility of the subject (*vasallo*) is "to

compensate for the protection that the government dispenses to her or him, and to work together toward the increase in power and wealth of the State" (38).³⁵ This obligation to the colonial state entails the natives' recognition that even the guarantee of private property takes second place to the public good of the state: "Although at first sight this appears as a direct weakening of the inalienable rights of property, it is wise to keep in mind that individual interest, in some cases, must be sacrificed to the utility of the whole, and that the balance that is used to mete out the good of the State neither is nor can be as accurate as one that is used to weigh gold" (39).³⁶ The compliance of forced labor, in Comyn's mind, thus increasingly arises not from the colonial subject's debt to the Crown but from their participation in the good of the State, which has *absorbed* the colonial subject's debt and elevated it to the "disposition of the whole."

A second implication of Comyn's specifically *modern colonial* solution to the problem of insular government concerns the consequences that must arise from the resettlement of the archipelago into large, landed estates. The aforementioned question of uncultivated lands, which results in the stagnation of agricultural productivity, itself belongs to a larger issue for Comyn that is linked with *culture in general*—particularly one (or many) faced with a government run by a minority of whites, most of whom reside permanently outside the archipelago and only serve as officials for a few years. To this end, the colonial government has to do a better job at securing the native's confidence in the due process of law.³⁷ But of equal importance, the government needs to demonstrate and foster, through its early successes with the colonial project, a new culture of capitalism that is based as much on the creation of new needs as it is on their fulfillment. It is in this regard that Comyn calls for "the acceleration of general culture" to be led by those families "faithful to the present reform of ideas and governmental principles" (*las familias que fiadas en la actual reforma de ideas y máximas gubernativas*):

La aceleración de *la cultura general*; y creciendo las necesidades de los naturales, a la par que vayan comparando y conociendo de cerca las comodidades que resultan de la presencia y propagación del lujo en sus pueblos, es consiguiente que crezca también, entre ellos el ahínco de hacerse con los medios de proporcionarse iguales goces y conveniencias. (37–38; italics added)

[The acceleration of *general culture*; and as the necessities of the natives grow, to the degree that they compare and become familiar with the commodities (or comforts, fr. Sp. *comodidades*) that arise from the presence and propagation of wealth in their provinces, it follows that their zeal in adopting the means of securing the appropriate luxuries and conveniences will also grow.]

Again, a quick comparison between Comyn's plan for colonial settlement by the creation of haciendas and the return to forced labor, on the one hand; and Viana's earlier call for the reduction of natives into towns and villages, on the other, shows how the seemingly analogous objective regarding the problem of generating revenue for the Spanish Crown (or nation) in fact masks two different conceptions of Spanish rule. This difference enables us to distinguish the emergence of *modern colonialism* from the early management of an originally flexible administration characteristic of the imperial frontier. For Viana, the administration's initiative to enforce the reduction of the native population into towns and villages stems from a continuation of the original blueprint of imperial sovereignty: the concerns to bolster security and to better calculate and collect the tribute "owed" to Spain by the population of Christian converts.³⁸ In other words, the consent of the governed in Viana's memorandum is still closely tied to the dispensation of sovereignty and the vassal's corresponding rights, which comprise the "protective," essentially *pastoral* approach to government that Comyn disparages. Colonial settlement in the latter's plans, or settlement for the purpose of commercial agricultural production, does not concern itself primarily with either conception. On the contrary, colonial settlement into haciendas displaces the question of sovereignty and the subject's rights vis-à-vis one another to the common obligation of both to the cultivation of the land. In this way, colonial rule aims to solicit, stimulate, and ramify the consequences of native consent without resorting to direct *exaction* or disfranchisement between the subject and object of the insular government. Again, Comyn is explicit with regard to this mutual obligation:

Who else but the natives can act as cultivators in a country where the number of whites [*blancos*] is so small? And if, after expressing repugnance for personal service [*servicio personal*], they still refuse to work for a daily wage, what reason can prevent us from compelling them to contribute by this means to *the prosperity of the society of which they are members, in a word, for the public good* [*la prosperidad de la sociedad de que son miembros, en una palabra, al bien público*]? If the soldier uprooted from the bosom of his family, exposes himself to constant danger, continually throwing himself into battle for the salvation of the State, how much is it to ask that the Indio sweats a little and tills the fields to sustain and enrich it? (41; author's translation)³⁹

The new task of colonial rule thus involves the synchronization of native consent with the stimulation of export agriculture—a task that involves not only a "transition" between economic modes of production, but also a process of *acculturation* to entrepreneurship,

investment, remunerated labor, and commodity production (“as the necessities of the natives grow . . . it follows . . . their zeal . . . will also grow”). Elsewhere, Comyn is quite explicit about the stagnation of the colonial economy that results from the all-too-easy satisfaction of the natives’ needs. If the future of Spanish rule was to be assured, the state would have to enforce the *lack* of a means of subsistence by reorganizing the forces and social relations of economic production.⁴⁰ That is the reason for the directives to enclose, clear, and cultivate the land; artificially stimulate the presence of a constant labor supply; concentrate the population around the formation of large landed estates; and generate the need for commodities that would accelerate and secure the disposal of a wage-labor force.

GOVERNMENTALITY AND THE COLONIAL WORLD: A DERIVATIVE DISCOURSE?

From the analyses of Viana’s and Comyn’s elaboration of a new point of reference for evaluating and transforming the nature and functioning of imperial authority in the archipelago, we can isolate the two new objects of knowledge and self-reflexive critique, as well as their reification into descriptive categories designating the Philippines under Spanish rule: they are *colony* and *state*. Their intersection provides us with a working model for the contradictions that colonial officials sought to resolve, even as they inadvertently brought these contradictions into ever-newer forms of social activity and consciousness. On the surface, their works demonstrate that the Philippines comes to need a “state” when it first becomes recognized as a “colony.” Reciprocally, the state’s mandate is to achieve what imperial Christendom for centuries had not thought to do: to make of the Philippines a colony. Achieving these two tasks, however, entailed two transformations in political organization whose effects would be felt in many aspects of colonial culture and society throughout the nineteenth century. The first was the institution of a form of reasoning in colonial policy and administrative practice that was capable of limiting and counteracting the flexible authority or “compromise government” that the Hapsburgs had allowed to proliferate on the colonial frontier. In Europe, this political rationality was known as “reason of state,” *raison d’état*. The second was the acknowledgment of a new capacity, a new power, whose existence at once secured the prosperity of the state and reproduced its mandate in new spheres of economic, political, and social life: the consent of the

ruled to be so ruled, that is, by an alien ruling authority. Let us examine each of these transformations.

The State

The colonial state occupies an ambiguous place in the study of Philippine history and culture for reasons that are easily identified but less easily studied. For one thing, any normative concept of the state itself as a universally recognizable structure or ensemble of institutions—ones that can be historicized and analyzed in a given context—remains a bone of contention among sociologists.⁴¹ A common point of departure for examining the state as a normative category of sociological analysis is Weber's account, which considers the state as a *rational structure* from the genesis of its many variants. Weber, following a long line of political philosophers from Hobbes to Marx, defined the state as "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory": it involves "the expropriation of autonomous and 'private' bearers of executive power who . . . in their own right possess the means of administration, warfare, and financial organization, as well as politically usable goods of all sorts" (*From Max Weber*, 77–83). In saying this, Weber attempted to capture two things. On the one hand, the state designated the field of political authority under the central command of the sovereign prince, including the power to make war or peace, the adjudication of punishment or pardon, the right to administer and arbitrate, and other functions. On the other hand, Weber also offered a structural process that could be read in historical terms, that is, one in which the "expropriation of 'private' bearers of executive power" corresponds at once to the severe restriction and preemption of civil and religious war by a system of autonomous, formally equal and competing sovereign polities, and to the passage from feudalism to a capitalist economy.

Weber's conception of the state as a normative category or "ideal-type" for the purpose of analysis certainly tempers the exuberance of Hegel's reflections on the modern state.⁴² It also develops Marx's otherwise somewhat schematic understanding of the state as a "super-structure" assigned the task of consolidating the division of labor and class society.⁴³ Yet, as we have seen, in both theoretical and practical terms the administration of overseas Spanish imperial sovereignty fails to meet adequately the conditions of even this streamlined criterion of state sovereignty. Not only did the "ideal-type" never exist in

the colonies prior to the early nineteenth century, but its impossibility was acknowledged, anticipated, and accommodated by the Laws of the Indies themselves, which allowed for plural, coexisting forms of authority to freely negotiate the terms of colonial hegemony on the frontiers of Spanish military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastical control.

Even notwithstanding Spain's apparent exception to Weber's criterion, the idea of colonial statehood as a derivation and extension of state sovereignty and its institutions (bureaucracy, military, tax collection, and public works) runs into problems when we consider it in relation to the colonial context of the "modern age" that the state's birth appears to anchor. In Marx's account, the concentration and monopoly of violence as the primary function of the modern state in Europe emerged as a way to consolidate bourgeois control: it served as a condition of possibility for the European bourgeoisie's struggle against feudal structures, which prepared Europe for the economic hegemony of capitalism.⁴⁴ For Weber and other historians, the state appropriation of executive power was also hegemonic in the sense that it ensured the limitation and preemption of civil war (Hobbes's *Leviathan*) and religious war (the Thirty Years' War in Europe). This resulted in the first pan-European international peace treaty and the origins of modern international law.⁴⁵ Yet the colonial state as officials of the Spanish Crown and nation imagined it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was engaged neither in overcoming feudalism in the New World and the Philippines nor with the threat of civil war. In fact, the colonial "variant" of the state often-times *initiated* the creation or intensification of feudal or neofeudal-type arrangements (indentured labor, patron-client relations) rather than annulling or absorbing them.⁴⁶ Moreover, far from curtailing or mitigating the threat of civil war and widespread diffidence with respect to the political order, the colonial state in certain instances (particularly in Southeast Asia) served to exacerbate group tensions along ethnic-racial, religious, and geopolitical lines: tensions that, from time to time, exploded in open conflict.⁴⁷

The radical disparity between any understanding of the state in the European metropolis and the colonial periphery in the nineteenth century has prompted South Asian scholars like Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee to wonder whether this disparity itself ought not to be the point of departure for critical inquiry into the nature and history of the colonial state and society. For Guha, what makes a colonial state *colonial* is its fundamental divergence from the metropolitan state's hegemonic origins. "As an absolute externality," Guha

writes, “the colonial state was structured like a despotism, with no mediating depths, no space provided for transactions between the will of the rulers and that of the ruled. . . . As an anachronism, this was in agreement with the paradox of an advanced bourgeois culture regressing from its universalist drive to a compromise with precapitalist particularism under colonial conditions of its own creation.”⁴⁸ In a similar vein, Chatterjee contends that “the colonial state, we must remember, was *not just* the agency that brought the modular forms of the modern state to the colonies; it was *also* an agency that was destined never to fulfill the normalizing mission of the modern state because the premise of its power was a rule of colonial difference, namely, the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group.”⁴⁹

This rule of colonial difference, Chatterjee explains, proved to be a self-sabotaging obstacle to the “modular forms” of statecraft in the colonies, even as it sought to control the exercise of lawful violence in the hands of the ruling group. As long as the exercise of colonial authority remained at bottom the differentiation of an alien ruling group over a native ruled one by force of arms, the former could neither fully answer or account for the charge of tyranny and conquest, nor stimulate the growth of a “civil society” capable of ensuring the continuity of colonial rule. To put it succinctly, the force of right or law never replaces or authoritatively substitutes for the right of force, which on the colonial periphery was never theoretically or practically feasible to begin with.

The critique of the state as an entity that conforms to a predetermined criteria of either materialist designations of a “superstructure” or the Weberian assertion of a state’s “ideal-type” leaves us initially without a standard point of reference for evaluating Spain’s project of colonial reform in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In fact, it radically opens up a historical investigation into our assumptions about modernity and the state in Europe as well as its colonies. Philip Abrams has raised this question of whether “the state,” in fact has any real existence beyond that of an idea: an abstraction that enables us to group together historical processes for comparative analysis and political strategy.⁵⁰ By contrast, Abrams wonders at the possibility of investigating seriously the ensemble of institutions, apparatuses, and structures that ostensibly comprise the state, as well as the possibility of studying the state as an *idea* or, more specifically, an ideology that legitimates domination—yet without *believing* in the state as an object or apparatus. “The state,” he concluded, “is the unified symbol of an actual disunity” (79).

Abrams's insight resonates strongly with the later work of Michel Foucault, who approaches the emergence of the state in a manner opposed to Weberian sociology, yet also distinct from the structuralism of scholars like Carl Schmitt as well as the historical materialism of Western Marxism. Instead of attempting to define *a priori* the relation and parameters of the concepts of state and sovereignty, and instead of attempting to mark a threshold that distinguishes all "pre-modern" states and forms of sovereignty from "modern" ones, Foucault foregrounds a surprisingly modest question: How do social actors in a given context—officials, writers, plaintiffs in court proceedings, priests, students, and so forth—fixate on an idea, project, or even fiction that has come to be identified as "the state," thereby reifying it as a primary point of reference for political organization, struggle, questions of due process, and the exercise of violence?

It would be absurd to say that the ensemble of institutions that we call "the State" begins in the years 1580–1650. . . . What is important—the real, specific, irreducible historical fact that needs to be borne in mind—is at what moment that entity called "the State" begins to enter, is effectively inaugurated, into the reflexive practice of men. The problem is to understand the moment, and under what conditions, in what form the State comes to be a site of planning, programming, development, at the heart of people's conscious activity; at what moment and under what conditions it [the State] is brought in as a reflexive and concerted strategy, at what moment the State, for all, becomes an object of appeal, desire, longing, dread, rebuff, love, hate.⁵¹

In discussing the state first and foremost as a discursive entity—he calls the state at different moments a "practico-reflexive prism," a "principle" or "schema of intelligibility," and a "regulating idea" for the reflection and calculation of all political activity or intervention—Foucault calls attention to the state as both a reified fiction and an event in discourse, whose emergence must be studied at the level at which its writers and theorists identify its presence or absence in political institutions. The starting point, then, is not a predetermined criterion of the state, traditionally associated with the right and exercise of violence, but rather the intersections of "appeal, desire, longing," and so forth, which constitute a self-reflexive and self-regulating way of calibrating and directing political force, order, and control. In other words, how does one come to project—to *propose*—a consistent and coherent rationality behind politics as opposed to *identifying* or claiming to *recognize* an already existing structure or design? How does this

“conceptualized community” become reified in social practices that ascribe their authority to the state or claim to resist the state?⁵²

Returning to the memoranda, decrees, and reports of Viana, Basco y Vargas, and Comyn, we see the emergence of this floating signifier, which appears at a glance to work completely in favor of the monarch’s will—the continuity of Spanish imperial sovereignty in the Pacific—yet remains distinct from it and for this reason introduces a new dynamic into the political order. In the short term, the project of colonial reform seems easy enough: strengthen military fortifications; link the natural and human resources of the archipelago to the world market in order to generate revenues; unify and centralize heterogeneous forms of authority at the risk of compromising the authoritarian principles upon which imperial sovereignty is based. In the long run, however, the rerouting of economic and social relations through the state as a “regulating idea” was bound to raise new questions regarding the difference between the rights of royal patronage and *raison d’état*, or between the governing norm and the allowance for exceptions to the rule, or between the traditional balance of powers (among the colonial bureaucracy, the missionary orders, and Hispanized native tradition) and the influx of new economic forces represented by the emergence of a commercial and Chinese mestizo elite. At what point, for example, will the Spanish Crown or nation be forced to recognize the limits of its juridical omnipotence and submit to forms of authority based on the local calculations of imminent threat (from internal and external dangers) as well as productive capacity? To what degree do the new governing norms or fictions of “society,” “public good,” and “culture,” designate points of reference that are independent of sovereign will and whose criteria of success or failure may in fact give rise to an authority that can critique, challenge, or openly defy that will? The “practico-reflexive prism” called the state thus appears to supplement the authority of imperial Christendom under Spain, even as it begins to erode that authority in the name of furthering it. It is a “dangerous supplement,” which undermines that which it appears to buttress.⁵³

Native Consent

It should be clear from the outset that in using the native’s “will” or consent as the basis of Spanish rule in the Philippines, Viana, Basco y Vargas, and Comyn make no claims regarding the historical veracity of popular support for Spanish rule, which could be measured by some semblance of historical criteria. Rather, native will constitutes

an object of knowledge for the calculation and forecast of Spain's *future* in the Philippines. In a similar manner, "society," "the public good," and "general culture" all serve as *prescriptive*, or normative, as opposed to *descriptive* indices. To put it another way, the naming of these indices serves as "illocutionary" or "(performative) speech-acts," as linguist J.L. Austin would call them, capable of directing colonial policy through the nomination and articulation of indices referring to an emergent field of knowledge, evaluation, and intervention.⁵⁴

The invocation of this field of political knowledge and rationality performs a specific function, which is the solicitation, provocation, and direction (the multivalence of the French word *conduite*, "conduct," here is particularly apt) of colonial subjects to the degree that the material results of their economic and social activity have become the target-object and responsibility of the colonial administration.⁵⁵ From the perspective of Viana and Comyn, there was no other way to balance the books of Spain's future in the Philippines than to endow the colonial administration with an autonomous rationality. In contrast to Spain's approach to the Philippines's sister colonies Cuba and Puerto Rico after the Latin American wars of independence, the colonial administration in the Philippines from the beginning could neither rely on the existence of a Creole planter elite class (whose concern for safety tempered any thoughts of political separatism); nor could it rely on the importation and exploitation of African slave labor to address the crisis of colonial hegemony after the British invasion and occupation of Manila in 1762. At the same time, however, it was against Spain's interests to abandon its Pacific frontier outpost: the shrinking of the world into a small group of interests led by the European powers and their networks of security and trade foreclosed the option of abandoning the islands. Moreover, from a religious perspective, just as native Filipinos were indebted to Spain for guaranteeing their safety, directing their prosperity, and facilitating Christian conversion, the identity of religious and Crown interests during the spread of imperial Christendom bestowed an obligation on both institutions to remain and to maintain a united opposition to the infidel. For these reasons, the colonial administration had to undertake the project of incorporating the Philippines into the world market through the direct stimulation of initiative, entrepreneurship, and investment, as well as the perfection of older methods of forced labor and tribute. Native consent provided a governing fiction and abstract norm around which the colonial administration could develop a blueprint for the preservation and optimal production of wealth in Spain's overseas Pacific colonial possession.

Comyn has outlined what this entailed for the native colonial subject: the inscription of lack and need into the fabric of their lives as a way of “filling” the demonstrated need for the colony to become self-sufficient and prosperous.⁵⁶ As Marx and Engels had pointed out, Adam Smith’s economic system of values and needs—a field created by the accumulation and capitalization of wealth, monetarization, and the alienation of labor—creates new needs that are reproduced and extended even as they are (or appear to be) fulfilled.⁵⁷ The alienation of private and communal lands from their owners (by legal disfranchisement or debt) and the transference of these lands to large-scale haciendas or plantations organized alternately by the colonial administration and the frontier missions formed the primary basis of this cycle. Through the elaboration of this “general culture,” Comyn and others hoped to shift from older methods of extracting wealth by obligation (i.e., under a “protective” legislation) to the new methods of extracting surplus value without effecting a corresponding change in the continuity of Spanish rule. As we have seen in the case of the state, however, the invocation of “culture” as a fiction of colonial modernity was bound to encounter contradictions and impasses in its own logic (not to mention its practical application). After all, to what degree can one reconcile the direct injunction to labor with a culture that did not directly depend on the circulation and concatenation of commodities? To what degree would the seizure of lands and their redistribution to other private hands be seen to serve “society,” or “the public good?” Finally, to what degree does a colonial “state” remain autonomous from the tumultuous crises of the monarchy and the unsuccessful establishment of the constitution on the peninsula? These questions, and the anomalies they engendered, find their full development and crisis in the chapters that follow. It is clear, in any case, that only with the synchronization of native consent with capitalism does “colonialism” enter the consciousness of Spanish reformers. The condition of modernity in the Philippines lies in its identification as a colony.

COLONIAL CULTURE AND THE AESTHETIC PRODUCTION OF LONGING

The floating signifier of the colonial state anchors a chain of signification concerning new notions of society, the public good, and general culture as they might be or ought to be, “quilting” them in such a way that, taken together, they appear to manifest an underlying rationality apart from both the rule of conquest and the missionary enterprise.

At first glance, Comyn's ideas of society, the public good, and culture, appear as vague gestures designed to mask his real intent, which is the (re-)colonization of the Philippines for Spain's economic profit. But the identification of Spanish interest with that of the colonial subject opens up a zone of contact and negotiation between Comyn's colonial idea of culture as the development of native capacities as well as new needs and desires and a more general understanding of culture as the "un-" or "partially Hispanized" material practices that defined the semi-autonomous life of the colonial subject. For, just as new needs and demands had to be inserted into "the practice (or practices) of everyday life," in order to more closely bind them to questions concerning the security, perpetuity, and prosperity of Spanish rule, so too would these practices produce, represent, and aesthetically reflect upon the colonial subject as an agent of will and desire, as well as an object of calculation.

This zone of contact can be illustrated at a glance in the rise of cultural institutions in the first half of the nineteenth century, beginning with the publication of religious chapbooks and metrical romances, followed by the Royal Economic Society's patronage of a school of drawing (in 1822), and the construction of permanent theaters in the suburbs around Manila (Tondo and Arroceros) in the 1830s and in Binondo in the 1840s.⁵⁸ With the establishment of a school of drawing, portraiture became available not only to government officials, but also to wealthy entrepreneurs who benefited from the growth of export agriculture. In addition, the first comprehensive artistic rendition of colonial subjects in their dress or costume, called *tipos del país* (after the minor artistic genre in Europe, also called "Heads of the People" or *tableaux vivants*), began as a collaboration between an *Indio* textile trader and the first professor at the Academy of Drawing, Damian Domingo. Not only did this artistic genre catalog the first collection of "Filipiniana" costumes, "covering all social classes and major regions of the Islands," as Domingo asserts, it also contributed to the creation of illustrated albums, which were sold to Europeans interested in investing in Philippine agriculture and industry (Joaquin and Santiago, *Nineteenth-Century Manila*, 19). This "typification" of colonial subjects as cultural commodities remained a mainstay of nineteenth-century colonial art and literature, from Lozano's *Letras y figuras* to the colonial *costumbrismo* of Spanish journalists and writers (see introduction and chapter 5).

In literature, the earliest extant copy of the metrical romance in the vernacular Tagalog appeared in 1815, although the publication of these chapbooks does not seem to have become commonplace until after

1850.⁵⁹ Largely inspired or borrowed from medieval epics revived in the Spanish Golden Age, these fantastic tales of chivalry often depicted the wars and love affairs between Christians and Moors.⁶⁰ Their theatrical counterpart, the *kumedy* (from Sp., *comedia*), was staged as early as the seventeenth century and served as the most popular form of entertainment during town fiestas and special occasions. But it may be safe to assert that both the publication of metrical romances, however sporadic and the production of plays in the new theaters in the 1830s endowed the narratives of colonial literature and theater with an autonomy and circulation that neither had ever previously enjoyed. Separated from the state and religious occasions that once sanctioned their existence, such works become cultural commodities for the enjoyment of the burgeoning populations settling in the suburbs of Manila, outside the walls of Intramuros.⁶¹

A corollary to this early commoditization of culture as an aesthetic object was the appearance of a new figure on the outskirts of Manila: the professionalized vernacular Tagalog author. Part-time scribes, part-time translators, part-time assistants to a priest or government official, or part-time printers or bookbinders, writers like Huseng Sisiw and Francisco Balagtas (alias Baltazar) benefited from the institution of public theaters and the relaxed grip of censorship throughout and around the constitutional years.⁶² These are virtually the only two names that have been handed down to us as *komedya* playwrights and authors of metrical romances in Tagalog during the first appearance of popular secular literature. Yet the different modes of their remuneration tell us something about the changing value of art as a commodity. José de la Cruz was allegedly known as Huseng Sisiw (Chick José) because his price for an original lyric composition was a small chick. By contrast, poet and playwright Francisco Balagtas was regularly and sometimes handsomely paid for his lyrical and theatrical compositions in the 1830s.⁶³ An even more telling difference between the two concerns their respective approaches to the publication of their work. While Huseng Sisiw was a master improviser who dictated to up to five transcribers at a time, he also remained very guarded with his works and in fact expressed an aversion to his friends' proposal to publish them (Rivera, *Huseng Sisiw*, 14–19 and *passim*). In marked contrast, Balagtas's preface to his famous work *Ang Pinagdaanang Buhay ni Florante at ni Laura sa Cahariang Albania* [The saga of Florante and Laura in the kingdom of Albania, hereafter referred to as *Florante at Laura*] (1838), openly proclaims the integrity of the written work as

an aesthetic object and cultural commodity, explicitly cautioning the reader against tampering with the words in any way:

Di co hinihinging pacamahalin mo,
tauana,t, dustain ang abang tulâ co
gauin ang ibigui,t, alpa,i, na sa iyô
ay houag mo lamang baguihin ang verso.

Cun sa pagbasa mo,i may tulang malabô
Bago mo hatulang catcatin at licô
Pasuriin muna ang luasa,t, hulô
At maquiquilalang malinao at wastô. (Stanzas 25–26)

[I do not ask you to (ap)praise (me),
Laugh, and deride my wretched poem
Do as you please, the harp is yours
Only do not change the lines.

If in your reading there are unclear verses
Before you judge them blurred or improper
Scrutinize first their north and south
And you will know them to be clear and correct.]

While Balagtas employs the lyric-epic form of the metrical romance, he also insists on the integrity of his work as a closed network of signs and resonances—an economy of signification—that will allow for its consideration as an aesthetic object and cultural commodity.

The triangulation of the aesthetic object—paintings, drawings, poetry, drama—with the market and the projection of the colonial state as political rationality coincided with a poetic transformation of the Tagalog lyric analogous to the dynamic we have already glimpsed at work in Lozano's paintings: the constitution of a desiring subject whose agency or consent is solicited, directed, and channeled, while paradoxically remaining her or his own. National artist and cultural critic Bienvenido Lumbera has identified the central manifestations of this shift in his foundational study of literary form in Tagalog poetry. Lumbera's analysis of Tagalog poet José de la Cruz (1762–1829), or Huseng Sisiw, highlights “the search for poetic diction” that led Cruz away from earlier expressions of secular and religious Tagalog poetry.⁶⁴ These forms either remained anchored in the native tradition of imagery organized around figures of speech (*talinghagà*), or became tied to the didactic, explanatory rhetoric of Christian catechism. The elegance and wit of Cruz's poetry—expressed in double-entendres, intentionally fallacious reasoning, and exaggeration—reflect the urbanity and refinement of a

Tagalog audience that had grown up in towns and had received some exposure to formal education and economic advancement (Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, 82). On a more general level, however, the few extant examples of Huseng Sisiw's poetry mark the historical moment when poetry and drama first became cultural commodities and a consuming public came to identify itself as consisting of desiring subjects.

Not surprisingly, the subject of many of these poems and dramas written by Cruz and others focus, if indirectly, on the very dynamics of power that had become the object of concern in the imagination of the colonial state: the conditions of individual capture or emancipation; the metaphorical conflation and circulation of different kinds of desire associated with different relationships (romantic, economic and religious); and, most notably, the provocation or titillation of the addressee to react to her or his interpellation. In metrical romances like *Doce Pares de Francia* (Twelve peers of France) and *Siete Infantes de Lara* (The seven princes of Lara) as well as Cruz's lyrical poems, scenes of kidnapping and rescue freely enter into metaphorical relation with men's hearts "chained" (*gapus*) by love; women are "wounded" (*tama*) by gazes; and expressions of fidelity serve as bargaining chips (*tawad*) for absolution or condemnation to death. In the following poem, we can see how desire has become an object of calculation for a poet who is at once consumed by longing and seeks to provoke it in the other:

Ano't ang ganti mong pambayad sa akin,
 Ang ako'y umasa't panasanasain,
 At ilinagak mong sabing nahabilin
 Sa langit ang awa saka ko na hintin! (Quoted in Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry*, 81)

[And how have you paid me in return?
 You urged me to hope and anticipate
 And then, as collateral, these words:
 Wait till you get to heaven to receive your boon!]

The marked departure from both native *talinghagà*, or metaphoric figures of speech, and religious didacticism culminates in what Lumbera and others have called the emergence of "sentimentalism," characterized by romantic exaggeration; the excessive use of rhetorical devices like personification, metonymy, synecdoche, and apostrophe; and the tendency toward poetic abstraction (92).⁶⁵ Lumbera ascribes this to the Tagalog assimilation of the "courtly love" tradition of medieval poetry. A more likely point of reference would be the baroque reception of Petrarchism in the pastorals of Garcilaso de la Vega

and Luis de Góngora, as well as in the plays of Pedro Calderón de la Barca.⁶⁶ For it is in these works that the theme of free will, as Golden Age scholar Anthony Cascardi describes it, becomes “the inscrutable and ultimately unrepresentable object of baroque persuasion and control. Indeed, all the more overt and explicit mechanisms of ‘control’—whether in religious oratory, meditative practice, or catechesis—are directed toward this elusive faculty.”⁶⁷ In either case, it is clear that in the poetry of Francisco Balagtas the rhetorical tendencies that Lumbea has noted elsewhere have reached a threshold of indistinction between different forms of metaphorical language. This threshold will enable a poetic discourse of consent and calculation, organized around an economy of signification that features the author-as-reader, the lost/regained beloved, and the act of interpretation as the elements of aesthetic reflection and reification.

The appearance and insertion of the Petrarchan beloved as a floating signifier in Tagalog literature, specifically the genre of the metrical romance, was carefully restricted by the missionary orders prior to the nineteenth century: they owned most of the printing presses in the archipelago, and their publication of Tagalog poetry served a primarily pedagogical function. It is easy to see why: the expression of desire that neither arises from nor finds fulfillment in Christian spiritual love threatens to destabilize the very moral order that the colonial metrical romance sought to buttress. Not surprisingly, in the Tagalog poetry of Christian conversion and catechism cited by Lumbea, the beloved is always God (27–48).

In marked contrast to the poetry of Christian mysticism, the development of metrical romances as published literature in the nineteenth century characteristically featured long and drawn-out passionate monologues between lovers, which are nowhere to be found in their ostensibly original Spanish sources.⁶⁸ In the Tagalog adaptation of the Twelve Peers of France legend (*Salita at Buhay ng Doce Pares sa Francia na Kampon ng Emperador Carlo Magno Hanggang Ipagkanulo ni Galalon na Nangapatay sa Roncesvalles* [Words and deeds of the Twelve Peers of France, followers of Emperor Charlemagne until they were betrayed by Galalon and killed at Roncesvalles]), one of the earliest and perhaps the most popular metrical romance of the nineteenth century, the anonymous author inserts forty-nine stanzas describing the seduction of Moorish princess Floripes by Christian prince Gui de Borgoña, full of sexual innuendoes of surrender and penetration.⁶⁹ Out of love for Gui, Floripes finds herself compelled to rescue the Christian

crusaders from death, consolidate the alliance between Alexandria and France, and surrender the holy relics in the possession of the Turks.⁷⁰

Francisco Balagtas's *Florante at Laura* goes even further in this direction, to the point of rendering the plot (largely told in retrospective monologue) entirely secondary to a series of prefaces that frame the metrical romance and create an intersubjective triad between the writer, the reader, and the absent beloved, which interpellates the reader as a desiring subject.⁷¹ In the opening dedicatory preface to Balagtas's masterpiece, the narrator situates himself between the past that he reads from the present with longing, and the present as an *anticipated past* in which the future reader will one day read his completed work.⁷² Let us reread the oft-quoted first stanza of Balagtas's preface, dedicated to "Celia" (a homonym for the Spanish *sello*, a stamp or mark):

Cong pag saulang cong basahin sa isip
 Ang nangacaraang arao ng pag-ibig,
 May mahahaguilap cayang natititig
 Liban na cay Celiang namugad sa dibdib? ("Kay Selya," stanza 1)

[Leafing through my memory to read
 the days of love gone by,
 What letters do my groping hands seize
 But those of "Celia" nesting in my heart?]

Readers and critics of Balagtas's poem have felt compelled to identify the source of the author's nostalgic love: the initials M.A.R. that designate the woman to whom the poem is addressed ostensibly refer to two of Balagtas's sweethearts, Maria Asuncion Rivera and Magdalena Ana Ramos. Such a reading, however, forecloses the ocean (*mar*) of signification on which the author has set the reader adrift. If we read the text as a constant play on words and names, Selya, the beloved, is the reader, whose "stamp" of approval or critical reflection identifies her with the *actual* reader of the poem.

As in the Petrarchan sonnets dedicated to the absent beloved Laura, or their Spanish counterpart in the sonnets of Garcilaso de la Vega, the allegorical free play of substitution brings the author, reader, and beloved into a shared space wherein each becomes identified with the other.⁷³ On one level, Celia is the beloved whom the narrator pursues in and through the act of reading. Reading his thoughts, the poet gives the name Celia to a lost age, a period (I am tempted to say "state") he longs to recover, a presence he longs to enjoy once again. At the same time, however, in reflecting upon her absence, he proceeds to disseminate and

insert that absence into every aspect of his existence—much as commodity culture seeks to rationalize and ramify absence and lack in Comyn, or the state project rationalizes and ramifies the threat of insecurity and poverty in Viana. The narrator sees and fetishizes the absence of his beloved everywhere—from her portrait to the old haunts of their courtship, where he “traces in that happy place/the imprint of your feet upon the rocks” [binabakas ko rin sa masayang dongan/yapak ng paa mo sa batong tuntungan] (“Kay Selya,” stanza 10). As the narrator grieves over the loss of his beloved, Selya’s role as a stamp or *imprint* to be studied in his memory gives way to her anticipated return as the *future reader* who will read, in turn, the narrator’s absence through the poem he has dedicated to her:

Cung casadlakan man ng pula’t pag-ayop
 Tubo co,i, daquila sa puhunang pagod,
 Kung binabasa mo,i, isa mang himutok
 Ay alalahanin yaring naghahandog. (“Kay Selya,” stanza 19)

[Should it be received with insults and scorn,
 Still, the profit from my labor would be great,
 If, as you (Selya) read it, just one sigh
 Brings to mind the one who offers it.]

What bridges the memorialized Selya-as-text and the anticipated Selya-as-reader (and, one might say, the narrator as the subject of the statement or narrative and the narrator as the subject of enunciation) is of course the actual reader of the poem—*you*. Balagtas makes explicit the agency of the reader in facilitating the fulfillment of his fantasy—the reciprocal correspondence of Selya’s longing with his own—in his second dedicatory preface, to the reader:

Salamat sa iyo, O nananasang irog
 Kung halagahan mo itong aking pagod,
 Ang tula ma’i, bukal ng bait na kapos,
 Pakikinabangan ng ibig tumarok. (“Sa babasa,” stanza 1)

[Thanks be to you, O beloved reader
 For treasuring this labor of mine
 This poem, be it a fount of lesser virtue
 Still holds a great reward for the one desirous to plumb its depths.]

Under the sign of Selya—a feminine mark (*sello*) that redeems or recompenses the narrator’s grief and the reader’s labor of interpretation—Balagtas compels the reader to see her or his desire as an agency that transforms the act of reading into that of writing; and, in doing so, to

evaluate the text as an object of aesthetic reflection and value. In the act of reading, the reader at once occupies the place of the writer (who reads) and holds that place for the anticipated, beloved reader/writer, Selya. This baroque theater of agency introduces the reader to a hall of mirrors, wherein the drama that unfolds aims to envelop and involve the spectator as a participant in the drama itself.

This constant solicitation of the reader's emotional reaction is reflected in the unrestrained use of poetic devices like personification and apostrophe, which Lumbera has noted as a characteristic feature of nineteenth-century Tagalog poetry. "The folk *talinghagà* [metaphoric image]," Lumbera writes, "revolved around a single image and could therefore function as a unifier of sensations and ideas within a stanza. Once it was jettisoned or suppressed, the result was the chaotic imagery that Retana noted. . . . Another effect, equally deleterious, was the tendency towards abstractness as brought about principally by personification, and *towards exaggerated emotionality as encouraged by the apostrophe*" (136; italics added). With the repeated invocation of *you*, in which apostrophe abandons the objects of sensuous experience to be found in the native *talinghagà* in favor of addressing abstract concepts, absent people, and memories, the reader is invited, cajoled, impugned, and otherwise compelled to lend her or his presence to the drama at hand: to turn the narrative into an "event," to insert the reader into what Jonathan Culler calls "the temporality of writing."⁷⁴ Accepting the fiction of being in the same world as the narrator or even Florante "frees" us to experience the characters' plights as pale reflections of our own. Conversely, it allows the narrator to further demand the production and performance of our involvement. Such an injunction appears in the following passage, when Florante faints against a tree to which he is tied. The narrator breaks into his narration, and cries,

Díco na masabi,t, lúhâ co,i, nanatác,
 na-uumid yaring dilang nañguñgusap,
 pusòco,i, nanglambot sa malaquing habág
 sa ca-aua-auang quinocob ng hirap.
 ¡Sinong dí mahapis na may caramdaman
 sa lagay ng gapús na calaumbay-lumbay,
 lipus ñg pighati sacá tinutunghán
 sa lamán at butó niya, ang hihimáy!⁷⁵

[I can't speak anymore, my tears are falling,
 this speaking tongue has been struck dumb,
 for the poor (Florante) wracked by suffering.

What feeling person would not suffer
 at the sight of him bound, beside himself in sorrow,
 full of sadness and before long
 It will tear apart his flesh and bones!]

Balagtas makes a direct appeal to the reader to *manifest her or his investment in the text*, much as a priest exhorts his parishioners to identify with the suffering Christ.⁷⁶ The difference between Florante and Christ, of course, is that our investment in the former belongs to the self-reflexive practice of reading Balagtas's text and evaluating its virtue as a manufactured event, that is, an aesthetic object and cultural commodity.

Conversely, the solicitation of the reader's emotional investment in the story becomes an object of calculation: How can it be directed, managed, or led to an underlying rationality? In *Florante at Laura*, questions of familial obligation, ancestral patrimony, religious conversion, and political alliance all intersect in the search for this underlying rationality capable of guaranteeing a new ethic to restore the collapsing moral order. For Florante, it is the acceptance of Aladin, his religious enemy, as his rescuer, protector, and friend. For the Muslim prince, it is the (surprisingly Christian) doctrine of natural law, which moves Aladin to save Florante despite their religious enmity. Both characters are forced to act in an anomalous fashion, insofar as they find themselves in a situation characterized by *anomie*. Florante weeps, Aladin sympathizes with Christians (and also weeps). But in conformity with the logic of metaphor, in which the true essence of a thing is conveyed by its concealment under an avowedly incongruous representation, the emancipation of Florante and Aladin from their prescribed roles and their encounter with one another in the wilderness allow them to reflect on their pasts critically as the result of their *investments* and project their fates as the conscious result of their individual *agency*. This could only happen in a society where political authority had come to depend upon the very forces over which it sought to exercise force.

The emergence of Balagtas's fame as a poet and playwright, not to mention Huseng Sisiw, alone signifies a change in the understanding of native vernacular poetry and the role it promises to play in a commodified culture. Far from being an activity limited to small, private gatherings or the hosting of town fiestas and official events, such poetry and the legendary existence of Huseng Sisiw and Balagtas betoken the emergence of literature and theater production as a profession: a form of remunerated labor for the production of a new commodity—culture. The task of “culture” under colonial modernity

was to organize crowds around the reflection on the new constitution of their social relations, which were informed by the production and ordering of new needs and desires. Supported by the building of theaters in the 1830s, as well as the increasing private ownership of printing presses, and complemented by the Royal Economic Society's initiatives to start a school of painting, the emergence of native poets, artists, and playwrights shows the production and elaboration of a society capable of disseminating, reflecting on, and multiplying the implications of native consent for colonial rule.

To reiterate, one can hardly see the liberalization of the economy and the emergence of commodity culture as any more or less "emancipating" than the colonial hegemony forged by frontier imperial rule—with its flexible administration and its rule of expediency. Yet, while the leap from one economy of debt to another may not guarantee the native's emancipation from imperial sovereignty, it does illustrate that at least the native folk recognized a transformation at work in the principles and objectives of Spanish Christendom, which was bound to have profound effects on the life and labor of the colonized. Mere obligation or indebtedness to the sovereign authority no longer sufficed as an organizational principle behind colonial rule: Spanish authority had to be the object of desire, made manifest in economic initiative, political expressions of patriotism, and the growth of a colonial civil society. And no form of knowledge about the subjects ruled could remain isolated from the ceaseless task of (re)directing them, anticipating and acting upon their habits, traditions, behavior, creating an environment wherein their pursuit of individual welfare would coincide with that of the colonial state—in short, from colonial *governance*. Knowingly or unknowingly, natives had become constituent members of the authority that appeared to preside over them. Consciously or unconsciously, they had become subjects of desire and the calculation of that desire's capacities.