# Western Illinois Historical Review

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***Letter from the Editors***

The editors are pleased to present the spring 2026 issue of the Western Illinois Historical Review. This is the fourteenth issue of the publication, which showcases the best scholarship of undergraduate and graduate students in the Department of History at Western Illinois University. There are two articles in this year's issue, both of which focus on cultural history. We hope that students, scholars, and general readers will find the topics in this issue of interest and usefulness.

Paolo Gabriel Romero, in "Defiance and Defense of Heritage: Spanish-Language Literature in the Philippines under U.S. Colonial Rule," explains how Spanish-language literature became "an anti-colonial language against the growing influence of English, and writers used this language to express defiance and defense of heritage." Romero's fluency in Spanish enables him to provide a thorough analysis of Spanish-language newspapers, works of history, novels, poetry and other forms of literature in the Philippines during the United States' colonial control of the country. Through his research, Romero uncovers a deep appreciation of Filipino and Spanish culture in the archipelago expressed in Spanish.

In "Representations of Samurai in Anglophone Popular Music, 1970-2024," Jesse Godbey explores the uses of fictionalized Samurai depictions both in music and the artwork associated with it in the English-speaking world. Utilizing Jean Baudrillard's theories in Simulacra and Simulation, Godbey employs "pop-cultural simulacra" in his research of Samurai in rock and roll, hip hop, and other genres of popular music. Godbey argues that his "study illustrates how the self-referential nature of media contributes to a widening gap between cultural conceptions of history and the academic understanding of historical accuracy."

Jesse Godbey and Dr. Greg Hall
Co-Editors

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# Defiance and Defense of Heritage: Spanish-Language Literature in the Philippines under U.S. Colonial Rule

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## Introduction

Within *La Hispanidad*,[1] the Philippines is an overlooked part of its history. While Spain brought its culture and traditions to the islands and ruled them for 333 years, this heritage is often overlooked, even by Filipinos themselves. Few Filipinos can claim to have read the works of its national heroes like José Rizal—whose novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* are required readings in Philippine high schools—in the original Spanish. Most Filipinos can only read about their history in translation. Under American rule, Spanish-language literature was a cause of celebrating heritage, even if the masses revolted against its former colonizer, the Spanish Empire, decades prior. Paradoxically, Spanish became an anti-colonial language against the growing influence of English, and writers used this language to express defiance and defense of heritage. Filipino literature in the language of Cervantes became a cause of nationalism, anti-colonialism, and Hispanic tribute.[2]

## Historiography

The historiography on this topic is primarily the work of Spaniards interested in the history of the Philippines and a few Filipinos who could still read and speak Spanish. Rocío Ortuño Casanova's "Philippine Literature in Spanish: Canon Away from Canon" looks into why Philippine literature in Spanish is both unknown in the country and the Hispanic world as a whole and examines the reality of the matter.[3] Antonio Checa Godoy in "La prensa filipina en español entre dos guerras (1899-1941)"

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[1] This term refers to parts of the world where Spain and its culture had a lasting impression; the Philippines was a colony—or more accurately, a captaincy-general (Capitanía General)—of Spain and therefore deserves to be part of this.

[2] By this, I mean *castellano* (European Spanish).

[3] Rocío Ortuño Casanova, "Philippine Literature in Spanish Canon Away from Canon," *Iberoromania*, no. 85, (2017): 58-77. https://oai.e-spacio.uned.es/server/api/core/bitstreams/6428a480-a616-4a12-a146-9ba55ab8794b/content.

examines how despite the introduction of English in the Philippines, the press still continued publishing in Spanish in bilingual or even trilingual newspapers.[4] Edmundo Farolán Romero in "Literatura hispanofilipina del siglo XX" showcases excerpts from writers and their exploration of themes like nationalism, religion, and heritage spanning the entire 20th century.[5] Lourdes Castrillo Brillantes's *81 Years of Premio Zóbel* covers the history of Asia's oldest literary award, starting in 1922 up to its last winner in 2000. For Castrillo Brillantes, herself a winner of the award, winning the *Premio Zóbel* was the greatest achievement a Filipino writer could obtain as writing in Spanish was paying proper tribute to those who fought for the country's heritage. To those unfamiliar with the history of the Spanish language in the Philippines, this work also shows the story of how the language became a mark of national pride.[6] Adam Lifshey is the only American in this literature review to write on the subject. His book *Subversions of the American Century: Filipino Literature in Spanish and the Transpacific Transformation of the United States* investigates how Filipino literature in the language highlighted the reality of American imperialism and acted as a form of defiance.[7] The latest work that tackles the topic of Spanish-language literature in the Philippines is the multi-author compilation *Introducción a la literatura hispanofilipina*. This edited volume showcases a general history of Philippine literature in Spanish stretching to the awarding of the last winner of the *Premio Zóbel*.[8] Estanislao B. Alinea's *Historia analítica de la literatura filipinohispana* (*desde 1566 hasta mediados de 1964*) is an older

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[4]Antonio Checa Godoy, "La prensa filipina en español entre dos guerras (1899-1941)," *Revista internacional de Historia de la Comunicación,* no. 4, (2015): 22-51. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5139632.

[5]Edmundo Farolán Romero, "La literatura hispanofilipina del siglo XX," Tonos digital, no. 3, (2002).

[6]Lourdes Castrillo Brillantes, *81 Years of Premio Zóbel: A Legacy of Philippine Literature in Spanish* (Makati City: Ayala Foundation, Inc.), 2006.

[7]Adam Lifshey, *Subversions of the American Century: Filipino Literature in Spanish and the Transpacific Transformation of the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

[8]Rocío Ortuño Casanova et al., eds., *Introducción a la literatura hispanofilipina* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2024).

work on the subject with more emphasis on analyzing the themes of works written from the beginnings of Spanish colonization up to 1964, the year of his work's publication. Alinea wrote his work in light of the Cuenco Law in the Philippines which mandated the teaching of 24 credit hours of Spanish on the collegiate level; he also remarked that his work was to be pedagogical in nature for Filipino students of Spanish.[9] Luis Mariñas Otero's *Literatura filipina en castellano* provides a survey of literary works meant for Spanish readers. Compared to Alinea's earlier work, he does not go much into analysis but rather traces how this literary tradition evolved.[10]

To those unacquainted with Philippine history, this paper seeks to introduce the transformation of a colonial language, namely Spanish, into one of defiance against another colonial power, the United States. While the works I mentioned in the previous paragraph do tackle this topic, this one seeks to do so concisely with a focus more on literary works from the intellectual elite. Spanish was never the language of most Filipinos since the colonization of the islands, but it was a unifying language as the

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[9]Estanislao B. Alinea, *Historia analítica de la literatura filipinohispana* (*desde 1566 hasta mediados de 1964*) (Manila: Imprenta los filipinos, 1964), v. There were three Republic Acts in relation to the teaching and learning of Spanish on the collegiate level after World War II: Republic Act No. 709, authored by Senator Enrique Magalona, made it mandatory for students in private and public universities to take at least twelve credit hours; Republic Act No. 1881, authored by Congressman Miguel Cuenco, revised section one of Republic Act No. 709 to require twenty-four credit hours of Spanish for students in majors like Law and the Liberal Arts; and Republic Act No. 5182 returned to the original twelve-credit-hour requirement for most majors. A key component for these acts was not only for students to learn Spanish but also read the works of Filipino nationalists like José Rizal in the original language. See Republic of the Philippines, *An Act Declaring Obligatory the Teaching of Spanish in All Courses of Public and Private Universities and Colleges in the Philippines*, Republic Act No. 709, https://www.chanrobles.com/republicacts/republicactno709.html#.XOIVncgzaUk; Republic of the Philippines, *An Act Amending Section One of the Republic Act Numbered Seven Hundred Nine, Entitled "An Act Declaring Obligatory the Teaching of Spanish in All Courses of Public and Private Universities and Colleges in the Philippines,"* Republic Act No. 1881, https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1957/ra_1881_1957.html; Republic of the Philippines, *An Act to Revise the Laws on Compulsory Teaching of Spanish, Repealing Republic Act Numbered Seven Hundred Nine, as Amended by Republic Act Numbered Eighteen Hundred Eighty-One, and for Other Purposes*, Republic Act No. 5182, https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1967/ra_5182_1967.html. After the ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos in February 1986, her successor, Corazón "Cory" Aquino, would remove Spanish as an official language of the Philippines in the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Spanish at its current status is an optional and voluntary language in the country. See Philippine Constitution, art. XIV, sec. 7. https://lawphil.net/consti/cons1987.html.

[10]Luis Mariñas, *Literatura filipina en castellano* (Madrid : Editora nacional, 1974). For more information on Mariñas and Alinea's works in this literature review, see Cecilia Quirós Cañiza, "Introducciones a la literatura filipina en español: Analisis de las obras de Estanislao Alinea, Luis Mariñas y Delfín Colomé," *Revista Filipina XVI*, no. 3 (Invierno 2012-13). https://revista.carayanpress.com/cquiros.html.

Philippines did not yet have a national language under American rule until 1937, when Manuel L. Quezon, the first president of the Philippine Commonwealth, made Tagalog the national language.[11] As the islands were linguistically diverse, Filipinos needed a common language to communicate with one another; Spanish was the logical choice of the time, all while the influence of English was growing.

## Methodology

This paper deals with a relatively overlooked part of Philippine cultural history. As I deal with literary works as my main primary sources, I seek to explore the themes of these works and how they expressed praise of the Philippines' Hispanic heritage and rebellion against American colonial rule. The secondary sources I used are mainly in Spanish, both from Filipino and Spanish writers. I divide this work with the following sections: the context of the period and how it became the "golden age" of the language, the various literary genres Filipino writers in Spanish used and the establishment of the *Premio Zóbel* literary award, and a conclusion tying up all findings.

## Context: The Spanish Language in the Philippines under American Colonization

As the United States colonized the Philippines, the Spanish language faced a new challenge: the introduction of English. American public education insisted on the teaching of English to its new subjects, but according to Florentino Rodao, Spanish still had its hold since many private institutions persisted in teaching their classes in said language. After the First World War, the authorities insisted on these institutions teaching English as well; Roman Catholic universities like the Ateneo de Manila

[11]In his speech proclaiming Tagalog the national language of the Philippines, Quezon believed that it would be fulfilling a wish of José Rizal, the national hero, in having an indigenous tongue for all Filipinos. At the same time, he still believed that Filipinos should still continue speaking Spanish and English, of which he provided the following reasons: "Spanish will preserve for us our Latin culture and will be our point of contact with our former metropolis as well as with Latin America; English, the great language of democracy, will bind us forever to the people of the United States and place within our reach the wealth of knowledge treasured in this language." See Manuel L. Quezon, "Speech of his Excellency Manuel L. Quezon, President of the Philippines on Filipino National Language" (speech, Manila, December 30, 1937), Manuel L. Quezon III: The Explainer. https://www.quezon.ph/1937/12/30/1024/.

and the University of Santo Tomas took note and started teaching in English to remain relevant.[12] As Philippine society at this time was moving away from its Hispanic heritage towards a new American one, Spanish now had a "Filipinism," i.e., it was an anti-colonial weapon against the new colonizer. The elite also used this language to foster their status and privilege —Vicente Rafael stated that the elite would use the vernacular languages "in conversing with the people from their towns…English with the American officials, and Spanish among themselves."[13]

## The "Golden Age" of Philippine Literature in Spanish

The American colonization of the Philippines marked a substantial amount of literary activity in Spanish, ironically dubbing the period as the "golden age" of the language in the country. Estanislao B. Alinea groups this period into two thematic cycles: political independence and culture. The former's literary genres, notable poetry, press articles, and speeches were aggressive and unyielding in their expression of Philippine independence. The latter on the other hand, had this "mixed humanism (Christian and secular) of liberal background" that made its mark in Fil-Hispanic literature. The themes of this cycle focused on such topics as love, beauty, and nature.[14] Alinea attributes six factors that allowed the flourishing of Spanish letters under the period. The first dealt with the amount of literary activity in various genres. The second was the controversial prose and poetry from the various writers.

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[12]Florentino Rodao, "Spanish Language in the Philippines: 1900-1940," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 45, no. 1, (2012): 95-96. https://archium.ateneo.edu/phstudies/vol45/iss1/4/. Rodao references a 1918 census of the Philippines which showed that there were 757,463 speakers of Spanish aged ten and above, which then declined to 417,375 in the 1939 census.

[13]Rodao, "Spanish language," 100.

[14]Estanislao B. Alinea, *Historia analítica*, 78 & 81. Luis Mariñas counters that the general themes of the authors of the period were simply "God, country, and Spain" (*Dios, Patria, España*); See Mariñas, *Literatura filipina*, 52. All translations are mine unless stated otherwise. Original: « …humanismo "mixto" (cristiano y laico) de fondo liberal…» By "liberal," I assume Alinea was hinting at the values of the Enlightenment and not political leanings. At the time of his book's publication, Alinea had much to his name: he was a lawyer, professor of Spanish at various Philippine universities, and an associate director of *La Hispanidad*, a monthly publication under the Spanish and Culture Division of the Philippine Department of Education. See Alinea, vi.

The third, related to poetry, deals with Spanish-language poetic jousts (*balagtasan* in Tagalog). The fourth dealt with the press and periodicals. The fifth was in the number of literary contests. The last factor was Spanish's popularity in government and society.[15] He saw the flourishing of Spanish letters in the country starting with the death of the Apolinario Mabini in 1903 and ending in January 1942. This flourishing of literature happened as the American authorities shifted their mood to a "policy of attraction." From here, the output was numerous in any literary genre tackled by writers including Fernando María Guerrero, Jesús Balmori, and Manuel Bernabé. There were great contributions in the press, poetry, drama, novels, and short stories. For non-fiction, there was a new form called the *instantanea* or *ráfaga*, which were anecdotes or accounts of events. Essays and newspaper articles flourished as well since they enjoyed public support—there were 200 dailies in the country with the likes of *El Renacimiento* and *El Debate* having wide circulation. Spanish-language historical works were also plentiful. For Alinea, there was no doubt that this period saw Spanish as the "official" language of the nation, even "a sign of distinction to speak it."[16] According to Benedict Anderson, the golden age of Fil-Hispanic literature contributed to the forging of an "imaginary community" despite the obvious geographic fragmentation of the Philippines within the context of colonial recomposition and against profound transformations that pushed the nation towards modernity. While this was

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[15] Alinea, 85. The *balagtasan* was a then-popular poetic duel in Tagalog wherein two authors argued in verse and meter on a given topic. During the preparations for the birth anniversary of Tagalog poet Francisco Balagtas by the Balagtas Commission on March 28, 1924, Lope K. Santos, a writer and future Philippine senator, wanted a modern *duplo* (poetry competition) for it; however, the commission found it inappropriate and decided to create the *balagtasan* instead. The first *balagtasan* occurred a few days later on April 6 at the Instituto de Mujeres between poets José Corazón de Jesus and Florentino T. Collantes with Santos as the moderator. De Jesús is best known in the Philippines as the "*Hari ng Balagtasan*" (King of *balagtasan*). See "Balagtásan," CulturEd Philippines, accessed April 13, 2026. https://philippineculturaleducation.com.ph/balagtasan/.

[16] Estanislao B. Alinea, "Philippine Literature in Spanish from the Literature of Protest to Efflorescence," in *Brown Heritage: Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition and Literature*, ed. Antonio G. Manuud (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1967), 511-516. Mabini was an advisor to the first president of the country, Emilio Aguinaldo. January 1942 marks the Japanese occupation of Manila during World War II.

happening, Filipino authors were also forming a nostalgically idealized version of Spain: one of a maternal, benevolent, and generous figure. This feminine depiction of Spain was also a contrast to the violent and masculine depiction of the United States.[17] The flourishing of Spanish letters was also in a way, a cultural civil war, of which it was losing ground. Mariñas explains why:

> Spanish was the language used in the executive, the legislative, the judiciary and the 1934 constitutional assembly; it was the language of high society and intellectuals, and the language of nationalism against English, which represented the foreign political power. It was also, by sociological determinism of the time, an elitist minority language that had to fight on two fronts: against the new generations of intellectuals already formed in English, and the popular classes who in their immense majority spoke the indigenous languages—and among these, the growing influence of Tagalog. Which is why after Philippine independence…upon producing an educational revolution which took hold of the masses, Tagalog became the language of nationalism of new generations.[18]

As mentioned above, Spanish never took hold of most of the Philippines since its colonization. The fact that it persisted showed that to those who grew up speaking it, it was something worth preserving. Evidence of this is seen in the works that this elite had written.

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[17]Ortuño Casanova et al., *Introducción a la literatura hispanofilipina*, 214-215. Benedict Anderson wrote a book called *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* which tackles the development of nationalism. He argues that the idea of nationalism comes from the imagination instead of matters of history, culture, and ethnicity. See Mikkel Flohr, "Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities," CLT, April 25, 2023. https://criticallegalthinking.com/2023/04/25/benedict-andersons-imagined-communities/.

[18]Mariñas, 51. Original: «El español era la lengua usada en el Gobeirno, el Congreso, el Poder Judicial y la Asamblea Constituyente de 1934; la de la alta sociedad y los intelectuales, era el idioma del nacionalismo frente al inglés que representaba el poder político foráneo. Pero era también, por determinismo sociológico de la época, una lengua elitista, minoritaria, que tenía que luchar en dos frentes : contra las nuevas generaciones de intelectuales formadas ya en el idioma inglés y frente a las clases populares que en su inmensa mayoría hablaban los idiomas autóctonos y entre ellos el tagalo de forma creciente. Por ello tras la independencia de Filipinas…al producirse en todo el mundo la revolución educativa que lleva ésta a las masas, se irá convirtiendo el tagalo en el idioma del nacionalismo de las nuevas generaciones». The quoted passage was edited for clarity. American public education emphasized the learning of English to all Filipinos. According to Raúl S. Manglapus, Philippine senator and winner of the 1986 *Premio Zóbel*, he and his classmates secretly spoke to each other in Spanish and Tagalog during their days at the Universidad Ateneo de Manila—now known as Ateneo de Manila University. American Jesuits would punish any student caught speaking the aforementioned languages. See Castrillo Brillantes, 283. The use of Spanish was also associated with fascism through the Philippine Falange, founded in 1936. Such association reduced any chance for Spanish to remain relevant in post-war Philippine society, even among the elite. See Ortuño Casanova et al., 316-317.

## Notable Genres During the Period

### The Press

Spanish-language periodicals expressed social commentary and defiance against American colonialism; in fact, it was among the most active defenders of the Philippines' Spanish heritage. The newspaper *El Renacimiento* published an editorial on October 30, 1908, titled *Aves de rapiña* (Birds of prey), which attacked Dean Worcester, secretary of the interior for the insular government, for his exploitative activities across the Philippines like profiting from the illegal sale of diseased rotten meat and using his anthropological activities in Benguet to justify a search for gold. Worcester, despite not being named explicitly, took offense at the sentence: "There are men, besides being eagles, who in themselves have the characteristics of the vulture, owl, and vampire." He filed a libel case, now known as *Dean C. Worcester v. Martin Ocampo et al*, wherein the Philippine Supreme Court ruled in his favor. Ocampo, with fellow editor Teodoro Kalaw, faced prison sentences, and the newspaper had to close owing to the legal fees.[19] Newspapers also featured bilingual caricatures, usually in Spanish with a Tagalog or English translation. One caricature from *The Independent* on October 23, 1915, critiques the inequality of pay for Filipino and American schoolteachers, with the line "Equal work, unequal salary, why?" (*Igual trabajo, desigual salario, ¿por que [sic]?*). The Filipino teacher looks weary and sweaty with a school building weighing heavier than the small sack for a salary on his back. The American teacher, on the other hand, in his suit and tie looks fatter with a cigar in his mouth; his salary sack

[19]"Aves de rapiña," *El Renacimiento*, October 30, 1908. https://digilib.ust.edu.ph/digital/collection/elrenacimie/id/6322; Ambeth Ocampo, "'Birds of Prey,'" *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* August 2, 2019. https://opinion.inquirer.net/123002/birds-of-prey; Dean C. Worcester v. Martin Ocampo, et al, G.R. No. 5932, 022 Phil 42, (SC. 1912). https://chanrobles.com/cralaw/1912februarydecisions.php?id=80. Original: «Hay hombres que, además de ser águilas, reunen en sí las características del buitre, del buho [sic], y del vámpiro».

weighs heavier than his school building. At this time, Governor-General Francis B. Harrison allowed the so-called "Filipinization" of the civil service in the colony, a contrast from his predecessor, William Howard Taft. The Board of Education was the biggest public employer, and Filipinos could finally have the same credentials as their American counterparts; however, institutional racism set them back from having better pay and more manageable classrooms.[20] The newspaper *Lipang Kalabaw* on November 14, 1908, critiqued whether Filipinos could finally have the freedom of speech again. A year prior, the Philippine Assembly was inaugurated, and Filipinos were concerned about whether they could get their civil liberties back owing to the passage of the Sedition Law of 1901, which punished any hint of desire for independence. Its caricature on the issue shows a Filipino with his *salakot* on his side standing firm against an ugly depiction of Uncle Sam: huge in stature with a largely elongated nose. Both the Spanish and Tagalog captions capture the same essence if the ordinary Filipino could speak freely, but they differ in reasoning:

| Spanish: Heavy-handed policy *(Política de mano fuerte)* | Tagalog: Meaningful question *(Tanong na makahulugan)* |
|---|---|
| - First of all, may I speak, distinguished sir?<br>- Good question! And who keeps you from talking to me?<br>- I ask because you announced a heavy-handed policy! | - May I still speak now, sir?<br>- Why do you ask? Is there something stopping you?<br>- I ask because you say that you are tightening it again now. |

Table 1. Translations of the captions of *Lipang Kalabaw's* caricature. [21]

[20]Alfred McCoy and Alfredo Roces, *Philippine Cartoons: Political Caricature of the American Era 1900-1941* (Quezon City: Vera-Reyes, Inc., 1985), 120. "Filipinization" during this time meant that Filipinos would be the ones gradually leading the colonial government, therefore preparing them to rule the nation after independence. Taft would become president after serving as governor-general in the Philippines. See Appendix A, Fig. 1 for the specific illustration.

[21]McCoy and Roces, *Philippine Cartoons,* 167. Spanish original: «Ante todo, ¿puedo hablar, ilustre Señor? ¡Galana pregunta! ¿Y quien [sic] te impede hablarme? Lo pregunta [sic] porque, como han anunciado la politica [sic] de mano fuerte !...» Tagalog original: "Ako ba, maginoo, ay makapagsasalita pa ngayon. Bakit ganyan ang iyong tanong. May pumipigil ba sa iyo? Naitatanong ko pagka't siya'y sinasabing maghihigpit na naman daw ngayon." A *salakot* is a wide brimmed Filipino hat made from lightweight materials like bamboo. See Appendix A, Fig. 2 for the specific illustration.

The Tagalog shows the concerns of retightening restrictions; the Spanish lays out directly the announcement of policy.

Culture and society—especially women—were a focus as well. There were two magazines devoted to women's matters, namely *The Woman's Outlook* (with a Spanish section) and *La Mujer*.[22] An example of this was the article on pianist Caridad López Jison for *The Woman's Outlook's* April 1926 issue, wherein it lauded her recital a month prior at what is now St. Scholastica's College in Manila. Highlighting her training, the article stated that "Ten years of devoted years of piano study have made Ms. Jison a worthy holder of the title of professor of such a difficult instrument."[23] *La Independencia's* article "Éxito femenino" broke the news of three Filipino women awarded diplomas by Drexel University in Philadelphia. Luisa M. Sison, Genoveva Llamas, and Oliva Salamanca were *pensionadas* who had the privilege to study in the United States. The paper highlighted Salamanca's intelligence and surprising proficiency in English despite her brief stay there; she hoped to finish her medical degree there before returning to her home province of Cavite. Llamas and Sison also hoped to return to the Philippines after finishing extra studies.[24] In the movement for women's suffrage, figures like Pura Villanueva de Kalaw edited magazines in their fight for gender equality. María Paz Mendoza Guazón edited a compilation called *My Ideal Filipino Girl* that featured English, Tagalog, and Spanish entries like essays and newspaper articles on what a Filipino woman ought to be. In one of

[22]Ortuño Casanova et al., 229.

[23]"Nuestra Artistas Filipinas," *The Woman's Outlook*, April 1926. Original: «Diez años consagrados al estudio del piano han hecho de la Srta. Jison digna poseedora del título de profesora de tan difícil instrumento». The magazine lists St. Scholastica's College as «el aristocrático colegio de Sta. Escolástica».

[24]"Éxito femenino," *La Independencia*, July 20, 1906. https://digilib.ust.edu.ph/digital/collection/laindepende/id/1170/rec/29. Drexel University was originally an institute for the arts, sciences, and industry before taking up its current name in the 1970s.

the entries, Mendoza Guazon expresses the necessity of following Western models of the feminist fight without adapting them wholesale into the Filipina context. A key difference in the Filipina fight was the necessity of tending to the needs of every female, not just the privileged elite alone.[25]

## Historical Works

Academic writing was also active. Rafael Palma, one of the biographers of José Rizal and a former president of the University of the Philippines, wrote numerous essays ranging from studies on various Philippine figures to politics; an example was *Nuestra campaña por la independencia desde Taft hasta Harrison (Our Fight for Independence from Taft to Harrison).* Epifanio de los Santos wrote on literary topics in works such as *La influencia de la poesía castellana en la indígena de Filipinas (The Influence of Spanish Poetry on Philippine Poetry)* and *Breve historia de la literatura tagala (Brief History of Tagalog Literature)*. Philippine historiography flourished too, especially in biographies. Manuel Artigas's *Historia de las Revoluciones Filipinas (History of Philippine Revolts)* and *El centenario de la imprenta en Filipinas (The Centenary of the Philippine Press)* were samples of monographs at the time. For biographies, Jaime de Veyra's *Biografías de Marcelo H. del Pilar y Lopez Jaena* and Artigas's *Biografías del Gral. Antonio Luna y de los tres presbíteros Filipinos, Burgos, Gomez y Zamora and Galería de filipinos ilustres* were great entries.[26]

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[25]Ortuño Casanova et al., 295-296.

[26]Mariñas, 53-54; Alinea, 107. Unfortunately, Alinea's section on Philippine historiography in Spanish is very brief and does not provide much analysis compared to other genres; Mariñas also dedicates little to this in his monograph. Marcelo H. del Pilar and Graciano López were two of many Filipino reformists who sought assimilation with the Spanish Empire. Along with Rizal, they were among the *ilustrados* (educated wealthy or middle-class Filipinos) who could afford a European education and discuss their ideas for reforms in the colony. Antonio Luna was a general and commander of the regular Philippine army during the Philippine-American War. The priests Mariano Gómez, Mariano Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora were charged for participating in the 1872 Cavite Mutiny, wherein Filipino soldiers mutinied at the Cavite arsenal after the colonial government voided the exemption from paying tributes. The three priests, despite their pleas of innocence, were executed in February 1872. See Ambeth Ocampo, "The Execution of GomBurZa," Republic of the Philippines Presidential Museum and Library, February16, 2014. https://web.archive.org/web/20140503232317/http://malacanang.gov.ph/7695-the-martyrdom-of-the-gomburza/.

## Literary Works

### Poetry

Poetry had many great masters in the Philippines; in fact, it was the most prolific genre of the time. Claro M. Recto, before his move to politics, wrote poems alongside plays and essays. He wrote two collections of poetry: *Bajo los cocoteros (Almas y panoramas) (Under the Coconut Trees [Souls and Panoramas])*, a youthful compilation of 73 poems of various themes and styles, and *Mi choza de nipa (My Nipa Hut).* His "*Epopeya de la Raza*" *(Epic of the Race)* in the former collection is full of nationalistic fervor in memory of those who fought for Philippine independence.[27] Another work in such a nationalistic vein with a grander scope was Flavio Zaragoza Cano's "*De Mactán a Tirad*" (*From Mactan to Tirad*) which encompasses the greatness of Philippine culture and history from Lapu-Lapu's battle at Mactan in 1521 to the exploits of General Gregorio del Pilar during the Philippine Revolution in three forms of rebellion. The first is historical, using the Visayan chieftain Lapu-Lapu fighting against Ferdinand Magellan. The second is religious, with the priest Bangotbanua continuing pagan religious practices despite being arrested by the Spaniards. The third is political, with the battles of del Pilar in Kakaron de Sili and Zapote as key events.[28] The *balagtasan* was also popular

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[27]Mariñas, 65; Claro M. Recto, *Bajo los cocoteros (Almas y panoramas),* (Manila: Librería "Manila Filatélica," 1911), 39-46. https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmcht4h4; partially quoted in Alinea, 79. Claro M. Recto is best known in the Philippines as a nationalistic lawyer and politician. He also wrote works in Tagalog and English. Despite my search, I could not find a copy of *Mi choza de nipa*.

[28]Alinea, 88-89. There were two battles of Zapote but in different conflicts: General Gregorio del Pilar fought and won against Spanish forces led by Governor-General Camilo de Polavieja in February 1897 at the Battle of Zapote Bridge. At the Battle of Zapote River, Major General Henry Lawton defeated Filipino forces led by General Artemio Ricarte in June 1899.

at the time. Generally, the poetic joust is not written but spoken with a preplanned theme organized for its two contestants; a jury and the audience judge the merits of the contestants before announcing a winner.[29] Jesús Balmori and Manuel Bernabé wrote together for their own Spanish version in three parts: *El Recuerdo y El Olvido (Memory and Oblivion)*, *El Hombre y La Mujer (Man and Woman)*, and *La Ilusión y El Desengaño (Illusion and Disappointment)*. The final joust of the second part starts off with Bernabé featuring the qualities of strength and adventure of man in contrast to the beauty and sweetness of woman, ending with his sacrifice so that the woman can enjoy life. The ending of Balmori's joust is more romantic and nationalistic in its depiction of the woman, one that fights for her children. In this case, Spain is the mother, and the Filipinos are her beloved children.[30]

*Spanish Poetic Translations*

Spanish translations of poems from other languages showcased literary skills. Epifanio de los Santos translated Francisco Balagtas's magnum opus *Florante at Laura* from Tagalog into Spanish and added a critical essay on the play featuring the role of translation and a general survey of Tagalog literature from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.[31] Bernabé also translated Omar Khamyyan's *Rubaiyat* based on the English translation of Edward Fitzgerald.

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[29]Alinea, 117-118.

[30]Jesús Balmori and Manuel Bernabé, *Balagtasan* (Justa Poética), (Manila: 1927), 103-111. https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmcx9412; quoted in Castrillo Brillantes, *Premio Zóbel*, 71-73. Her translated excerpts are fragmented and do not cover the final joust in its entirety.

[31]Epifanio de los Santos, *Florante : version castellana del poema tagalo con un ensayo crítico,* (Manila: The Philippine Review, 1916). https://archive.org/details/akj1305.0001.001.umich.edu/page/n1/mode/2up. *Florante at Laura* is a Tagalog epic poem that narrates the love story of the titular characters amid treachery in a fictional depiction of Albania. The setting of the poem alludes to conditions in the Philippines in the early nineteenth century.

The table below features a sample of Fitzgerald's translation of the original Persian and Bernabé's "masterful transfigurations" per Castrillo Brillantes:

| Fitzgerald | Bernabé |
|---|---|
| A Book of verses underneath the Bough | *Un rítmico breviario bajo el ramaje en flor,* |
| A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou | *Un trozo de pan blanco y un vaso de licor,* |
| Beside me singing in the Wilderness— | *Y al lado Tú, cantando en la Sonora Umbria,* |
| Oh, Wilderness were Paradise now! | *Oh, hiciérais de la Umbria Eden encantador.* |

Table 3. Quatrain XII of Rubaiyat in Fitzgerald's English and Bernabé's Spanish.

*Art Songs*

Philippine art songs had their share of Spanish lyrics, although the ones usually performed in concert halls today are in Tagalog.[33] While American music genres like jazz were taking hold, Philippine art songs still enjoyed some renown, and its musical character was undeniably Hispanic. Nicanor Abelardo composer had three songs with Spanish lyrics, namely *Nasaan Ka Irog?/Dónde estás, mi vida? (Where are You, Love/Where are You, My Life?), Ikaw Rin/Sola tú (Still You/Only You) and Amorosa (Amorous)*.[34] In essence, *Nasaan Ka Irog?* captures the pain of unrequited love and devotion. Both Narciso Asistio and Balmori, the Tagalog and Spanish lyricists respectively, feature these themes but express them differently:

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[32]Manuel Bernabé, *Rubaiyat de Omar Khamyyan : Traducido en verso castellano según la versión inglesa de Edward Fitzgerald*, ed. Isaac Donoso (Revista Filipina, 2015). https://revista.carayanpress.com/resources/RF-Primavera-2015b.pdf; quoted in Castrillo Brillantes, 64; reprinted in *Revista Filipina* 2*,* no. 2 (Primavera 2015): 105-130. This was Bernabé's winning entry when he won the *Premio Zóbel* in 1924. The original publication data for this translation of *Rubaiyat* is Manila: Imp. La Vanguardia, 1923. There is no scanned copy of the first edition to my knowledge. For more context into this translation and analysis, see Isaac Donoso, "Relaciones culturales filipino-persas (I): Las *Rubaiyat* de Manuel Bernabé," *Revista Filipina* 2, no. 2 (Primavera 2015): 60-70. https://revista.carayanpress.com/resources/RF-Primavera-2015b.pdf.

[33]Art songs are a subgenre of classical music wherein existing poetry is adapted to song by a composer. Usually, they are performed by a vocal soloist accompanied by a pianist or an orchestra. In the Philippine context, these art songs are called *Kundiman.*

[34]Ortuño Casanova et al., 279-281.

| Spanish | Tagalog |
|---|---|
| If I die for you, I die in sorrow,<br>Kissing your lips of rose and ruby.<br>And thereafter, I will gladly perish,<br>Just to kiss your white feet, out [sic]<br>the madness of my heart and soul. | If I am now all that torments you,<br>All your utterances and promises of affection,<br>All that is my life, all that I am, shall remain,<br>For all that is etched in the Memory that is<br>our love. |

Table 4. Translations of a stanza of *Nasaan Ka Irog?* from Balmori and Asistio.[35]

Asistio showcases a sacrificial form of love, one that is meant to last forever. Balmori, on the other hand, goes further towards an almost fatalistic kind of devotion.

Prose

While poetry was the most dominant literary genre of the period, novels also flourished. Antonio M. Abad was the best novelist in his time —he was labeled as *el Juan Valera filipino*. His novel *La oveja de Nathán (Nathan's Sheep)* was the peak of the Filipino novel in Spanish.[36] The story shows Mariano Bontulan, who upon returning to the Philippines from Europe after fighting in the First World War, faces the reality of publishing anti-Filipino propaganda for the American government. Later in the novel, his patron, Don Benito Claudio de Hernán González, critiques the hunger of the American empire, that in its fight for liberty, it became the very thing it originally fought against. To bring a more

[35] Nicanor Abelardo, "Nasaan Ka Irog?," (Quezon City: n.d.). https://imslp.org/wiki/Nasaan_ka_irog%3F_(Abelardo%2C_Nicanor). Translation copyright © 2013 by Katrina Navarro, reprinted with permission from the LiederNet Archive. See "¿Dónde estás, mi vida?," The LiederNet Archive, accessed May 7, 2026. https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=98981; "Nasaan Ka, Irog?," The LiederNet Archive, accessed May 7, 2026. https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=98979. Spanish original: «Si muriera yo por ti, moriría yo en dolor, / Besándote los labios de rosa y de rubí, /Y después, después, después con gusto moriría / por besar tus blancos pies, / Locura de alma y de mi amor». Tagalog original: "Kung ako man ay iyong ngayo'y siniphayo, / Mga sumpa't lambing pinaram mong buo, / Ang lahat sa buhay ko ay hindi maglalaho't / magsisilbing bakas ng nagdaan 'tang pagsuyo." In *Ikaw Rin*, Bernabé wrote the Spanish lyrics and Abelardo himself wrote the original Tagalog; *Amorosa* is solely in Balmori's Spanish. The printed music misses numerous accents in the Spanish lyrics.

[36] Mariñas, 58. Juan Valera was one of Spain's greatest novelists of the nineteenth century. The *Cebu Sunstar Weekend* in 1992 wrote that he was "The great novelist of Fil-Hispanic literature after Rizal" *(El gran novelista de la literatura Filipino-Hispana después de Rizal)*. The newspaper clipping is reprinted in Antonio M. Abad, *La oveja de Nathán*, bilingual ed., trans. Lourdes Castrillo Brillantes (Makati City: Filipinas Heritage Library, 2013). Alinea counters that the best novel of the time was another work by Abad: *El campeón (The Champion)*. See Alinea, 95.

religious allusion, Don Benito recites the story of King David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba and his rebuke by the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 11 to 12. The sheep from the title comes from Nathan's rebuke as a rich man robs a poor man who only had a small sheep that he took care of. For Don Benito, the ordinary Juan de la Cruz was the poor man, and the sheep was the Philippines. King David was also the hungry America who stole Bathsheba from Uriah the Hittite. Viewed in this way, the Philippines was the prized possession of the Spanish Empire.[37]

Short stories were the second most prolific literary genre. Mayolo Torres, a professor of Spanish at Ateneo de Manila University, saw that the short story ignited public imagination; newspapers published these works to the delight of readers. Generally, the stories were either serious or humorous in tone. Enrique Laygo contributed the most in the genre; his best-known work is a compilation of short stories called *Caretas (Masks)*. They are short stories of moralizing and sentimental character.[38] Rafael Palma attested to his talent when he wrote the collection's introduction:

> Laygo is one of those writers who came to write Spanish with incomprehensible ease. There is nothing forced in his style, which appears to flow from pen to paper naturally like water seeping through the rocks down from the mountains to the river basin.

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[37]Abad, *La oveja de Nathán*, 511-517; 2 Samuel 11-12 (ESV). Abad places "It is in Chapters XI and XII of the Book of Kings" *(Se lee en los capítulos XI y XII del Libro de los Reyes)*.

[38]Mariñas, 59; Alinea, 98-99; Castrillo Brillantes, 65-67. Laygo won the *Premio Zóbel* in 1925 with this work. Alinea saw the short story as the least cultivated literary genre of the period; Pilar Eugenia Mariño, a professor at the University of the Philippines, counters this in her research on Filipino-Spanish short stories. She published an anthology of such works titled *Philippine Short Stories in Spanish: 1900-1941*. She argued that Spanish-language short stories were the ones that inspired the best writers. See Castrillo Brillantes, 169.

> The realism of his stories is not solely in the atmosphere, but also in soul. He has no need to search for extraordinary situations or resort to the beauty of dialogue to awaken the note of affinity in a reader's soul. It is sufficient to insinuate that to draw a trait, or line is to make us guess the landscape's charm or one's despair.[39]

The name of the collection is also the name of one of his stories. The story itself shows a rich young man returning to his hometown. Beatriz, a woman whom he loves, rejects his embrace for a greeting; this did not stop the man from wanting to marry her despite his parents' and his fellow townspeople's disapproval. The disapproval of these for the young man are nothing but masks.[40]

Theatrical Works

Theater made its mark as well; however, the majority of theatrical works at the time were primarily done by Spanish authors and theater companies in Manila. The rise of motion pictures during the period contributed to the genre's relative decadence compared to poems and short stories; its best years were from 1903 to 1911. There were two trends in the genre: comedic sketches for popular recreation and profoundly nationalistic, anti-American sentiment. Recto's *La ruta de Damasco (The Route to Damascus)* was the fundamental work of Philippine theater, and undeniably nationalistic—comedic as well. The works of José Rizal were also staged. With such activity, Mariñas wrote that this

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[39]Enrique Laygo, *Caretas (Cuentos filipinos)* (Manila : General Print Press, 1931), v, vii. https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/caretas--cuentos-filipinos/. Original: «Laygo es de los que han llegado a escribir el castellano con una facilidad incomprensible. No se nota ningún esfuerzo en su estilo, que parece fluir de su pluma al papel con la naturalidad de un hilo de agua que se filtrara entre las rocas y corriera sierra abajo, hacia la cuenca del río». «El realismo de los cuentos de Laygo no está solamente en el ambiente sino también en el alma. El autor no tiene necesidad de buscar situaciones extraordinarias, ni recurrir a los primores del diálogo para despertar la nota de afinidad en el alma del lector ; le basta insinuar, dibujar un rasgo o una línea para hacernos adivinar el encanto de un paisaje o la desesperación de un sér».

[40]Laygo, *Caretas*, 1-26; Castrillo Brillantes, 67.

was the response to Rizal's and Vicente Barrante Moreno's question over whether there was a Filipino theater tradition.[41]

## The *Premio Zóbel*

Recognizing the precarious state of the Spanish language in the Philippines and the pervasiveness of American culture, Enrique Zóbel de Ayala, a businessman of Spanish-German descent, established a literary award meant to promote Filipino writers in Spanish. His granddaughter, Georgina Padilla y Zóbel de MacCrohon, stated that this was also another way for young Filipino writers across the country to write in Spanish. His motto in this quest was "I do not want the Spanish language to die in the Philippines" *(No quiero que el español muera en Filipinas)*.[42] This contest, the *Premio Zóbel*, became one of the biggest events in the country. Its first winner was Guillermo Gómez Wyndham with his novel *La Carrera de Cándida (Candide's Career)*. The magazine *Excelsior* in July 1922 wrote that the awarding of Gómez Wyndham was received with rapturous applause, to the point that his speech was interrupted numerous times.[43] Another winner was Abad, who won the

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[41]Mariñas, 56-57; Castrillo Brillantes, 30; Alinea, 100. A summary of Recto's play is found in Alinea, written and critiqued by Spanish journalist Joaquín Pellecina Camacho, who saw the play as the start of a great era in Philippine literature. Barrante Moreno was a Spanish critic and bibliophile who wrote to Rizal to critique the latter's *Noli me tangere.* Nicanor Tiongson argues for three different classifications for plays in this time: drama *romantiko* (romantic drama), *drama komiko* (comic drama), and *drama simboliko* (symbolic drama). The latter truly represented defiance against American colonial authorities. Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio adds another classification to supplement Tiongson's categories, namely the *obra camalcónica* ("Chameleon plays") to hide direct anti-American sentiment after the imposition of the 1901 Sedition Law. See Ortuño Casanova et al., 266.

[42]"81 Years of Premio Zóbel (Part 1)," filnetcast, June 21, 2007, YouTube video, 3:48 to 4:50. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yf31h-tj58M. The slogan of Doña Georgina's parents, Don Ricardo Padilla y Satrústegui and Doña Gloria Zóbel de Ayala de Padilla, is a variation of the original from Don Enrique: "That the Spanish language shall never die in the Philippines" *(Que nunca muera el español en Filipinas)*. See Abad, ix.

[43]"El Premio Zóbel," *Excelsior*, July 1922. https://digilib.ust.edu.ph/digital/collection/excelsiormg/id/8574/rec/1.

[44]Castrillo Brillantes, 80-87, 99-103, 122-124. In its time, the novel was also considered to be the Philippine version of *War and Peace* and a spiritual successor of José Rizal's *Noli me tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. The republishing of Abad's novel marks the inauguration of the *colección Premio Zóbel* per Doña Georgina. As of 2013, the next project was to republish Gómez Wyndham's *La carrera de Cándida.* There is currently no announcement of the project's completion to my knowledge. Doña Georgina is also hoping to locate a copy of *El último romántico* to prepare for republishing. See Abad, ix and Jaime Picornell, "Long-lost Philippine 'War & Peace' novel reissued in handsome bilingual edition," *Lifestyle.inq*, August 5, 2013. https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/118303/long-lost-philippine-war-peace-novel-reissued-in-handsome-bilingual-edition/.

premio twice in 1928 and 1929 with his novels *El último romántico (The Last Romantic)* and *La oveja de Nathán (Nathan's Sheep)*. The latter novel now exists in a bilingual edition thanks to the efforts of Zóbel de MacCrohon, who republished it in 2013. Other winners included Zaragoza Cano—who won with Abad in 1929—for *Las Rimas (The Rhymes)*; José Teotico in 1931 for his *Del Momento Hispánico (Some Hispanic Moments)*, and Evangelina Guerrero Zacarías in 1935 for her *Kaleidoscopo Espiritual (Spiritual Kaleidoscope)*. Its first female winner was María Paz Mendoza Guazón. Alongside her literary achievements, she was also the first female graduate of the University of the Philippines College of Medicine. Her winning work in 1930 was *Notas de viaje (Travel Notes).*[44]

Fernando Zóbel de Ayala, the brother of Enrique, also set up a contest for journalists. *Excelsior* on September 20, 1923, announced such a contest to commemorate Christopher Columbus's discovery of the New World on October 12. The journalist with the best article on said subject would win 300 pesos. The prompt for the contest that year was as follows: "does an ideal culture and union between the Philippines, Hispanic America, and Spain based on language, tradition, and customs exist? If so, is it feasible to encourage its development?"[45] Contests like these even encouraged Filipino writers in English to set up their own versions of the *premio*. The incentives of monetary prizes were a reason to make more contributions. Currently, the English counterpart of the *Premio Zóbel* is the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature.[46]

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[45]Fernando Zóbel de Ayala, "Concurso periodístico : pro-idioma español," *Excelsior*, September 20, 1923. https://digilib.ust.edu.ph/digital/collection/excelsiormg/id/11877/rec/2. Original: ¿«Existe un ideal de cultura y unión entre Filipinas, Hispano-América y España a base de idioma, tradición y costumbres? En caso de existir ¿es conveniente el impulsar su desarrollo»?

[46]Castrillo Brillantes, 156.

## Conclusion

The Philippines under American colonization was a period of irony for Spanish letters. The population of America's new colonial acquisition was to be molded into Uncle Sam's image through English; in response, Spanish became the new anti-colonial language. Writers expressed their love for the Philippines and Spain in such a florid manner that would never be replicated post-independence. Carlos P. Rómulo, one of the Philippines' greatest diplomats, said that Recto's generation "was probably the most exquisite flower that Spain's civilization produced in the Philippines. It wrote, spoke, and thought in Spanish."[47] Translations into English and Tagalog could only go so far; Senator Camilo Osías insisted on only one solution to the matter: "The Filipino who wants to know the true history of the Philippines must read the original works in Spanish."[48] The golden age of Philippine literature in Spanish was one of the greatest forms of defiance in the country's history; translations of these literary works give Filipino readers merely an incomplete picture of what their ancestors and heroes believed in and fought for. They *must* learn to read the works in the original language to keep such legacies alive, lest they continue wondering what it really means to be Filipino.

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[47]Filiberto Martín (Defensores de la lengua Española en Filipinas), "EL FILIPINO CARLOS RÓMULO Y PEÑA HABLANDO EN UNA CONFERENCIA SOBRE ESPAÑA Y FILIPINAS EN CAVITE A LAS NACIONES UNIDAS EL 11 DE MAYO DE 1962," January 1, 2018, Facebook video/recording, 16:45 to 17:02, https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1K2ucDxfUo/; quoted in Castrillo Brillantes, 35. Original: «Aquella generación de Recto, fue probablemente, la flor más exquisita que la civilización de España produjo en Filipinas. Escribía, hablaba, y pensaba en castellano». The original recording is in the Biblioteca Digital de la AECID (Agencia Española de Cooperación International para el Desarrollo). Unfortunately, as the website is indefinitely down for maintenance matters, the Facebook post is the only way for the meantime to access the recording itself.

[48]Republic of the Philippines, *Congressional Record: Senate*, vol. 2 (Manila, 1967), 1032. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Republic_of_the_Philippines_Congressiona/8q4yLO-j1G0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA1032&printsec=frontcover. Original: «El filipino que quiera saber la verdadera historia de Filipinas, debe leer las obras originales escritas en lengua castellana». Osías was among the first Filipinos who attended Western Illinois University when it was still a teacher's college. He would later serve in the Philippine colonial government in the Bureau of Education and as Resident Commissioner for the colony in the House of Representatives. See "Osias, Camilo," History, Art & Archives: United States House of Representatives, accessed February 4, 2026. https://history.house.gov/People/Detail/19211.

Appendix A:

A Sample of Bilingual Philippine Cartoons

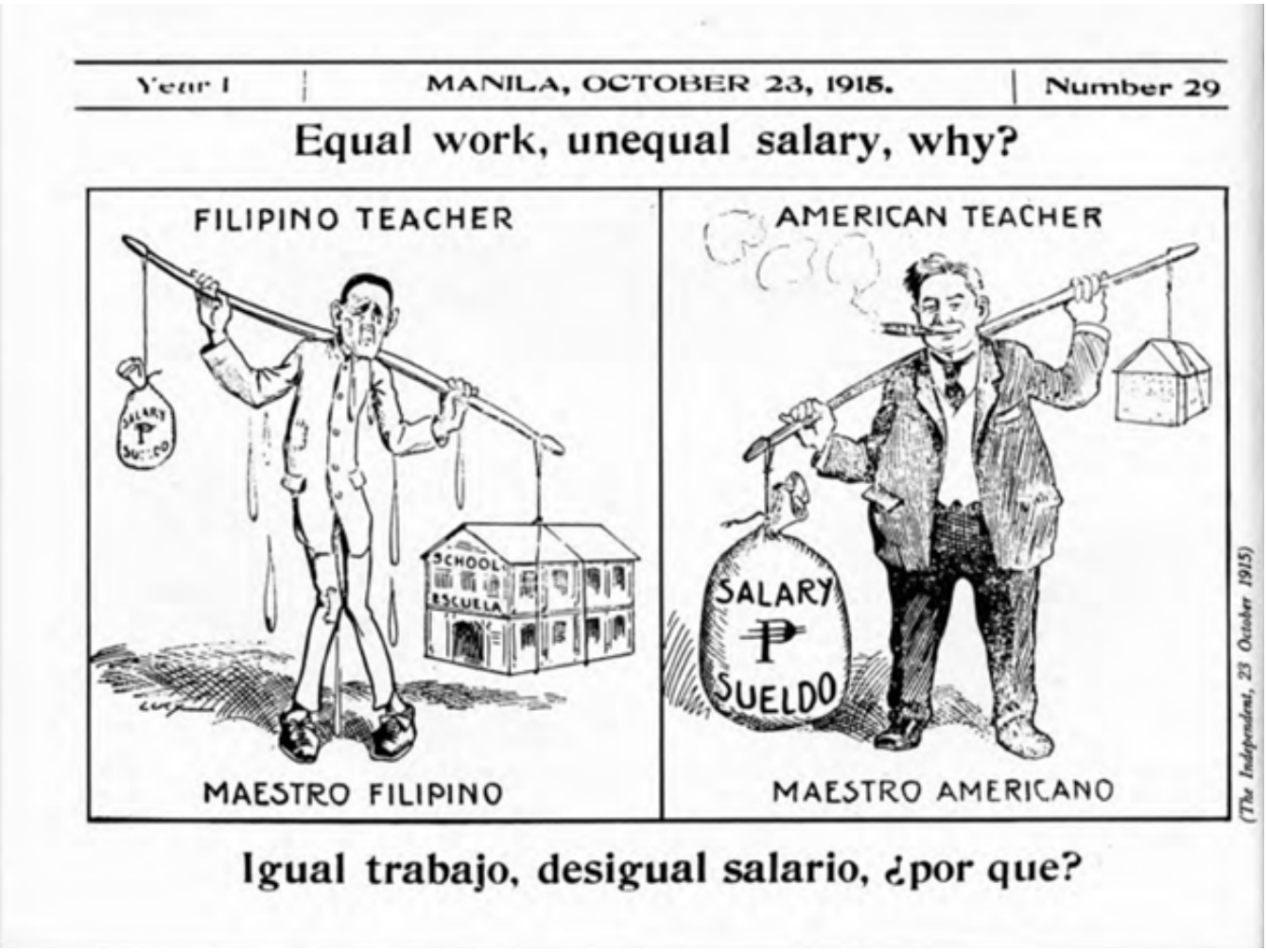


Fig. 1. Caricature from The Independent critiquing the inequality of pay and classroom management between Filipino and American teachers.[49]

[49]See note #14.


Fig. 2. *Lipang Kalabaw's* caricature criticizing American restrictions on the freedom of speech.[50]

[49]See note #15.

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# Representations of Samurai in Anglophone Popular Music, 1970-2024

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Representations of samurai in Anglophone popular music, from 1970-2024, reproduce pop-cultural simulacra distinct from historical samurai. For the purposes of this paper Anglophone popular music is defined as music with English-language lyrics and titles, created by and primarily for the consumption of audiences in North American and European markets. This paper examines such music on the premise that the audiences and artists in these markets will have encountered samurai primarily through entertainment media before or in the absence of any study of historical samurai. The resulting chain of fictionalized representations of samurai are referred to throughout the paper as pop-cultural simulacra. This use of the term simulacra follows Jean Baudrillard's theorization, in *Simulacra and Simulation*, on the exchange of "signs of the real for the real."[1] Baudrillard's work explores how the intersection of capitalism, the state, and mass-media have collapsed any effective distinction between representations and the represented. "A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and for the simulated generation of differences."[2] Whether functioning as orientalist exoticism, expressions of Western values or desires, Japanese soft power, or genuine cultural exchange, the music to be examined engages with samurai as a Baudrillardian cultural meme rather than as a historical class or as actual individuals. By showing how popular music references simulacra constructed by previous media rather than historical samurai, this paper will illustrate one instance of

[1]Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 2.

[2]Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 2-3.

a broader process by which historical nuance is shed in favor of a reductionist construction based upon the most sensational elements of history and cultural stereotypes in popular media, which contributes to a broadening gap between academic and popular conceptions of history in general.

## Historiography

There is a gap in academic scholarship around the representation of samurai in Anglophone popular music across genres. Related work examining simulacra of groups or figures in popular music exists. For example, Ken McLeod's "Afro-Samurai: techno-orientalism and contemporary hip-hop" focuses on Japanese culture more broadly rather than samurai specifically; Derek Scott, in his book From the *Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* examines orientalist musical representation in Western art music, though without any specific exploration of samurai, along with musical representations of other groups like Native Americans and African Americans. In "Postcolonialism on the Make" Ellie Hisama examines representations of Asian women. Ralph Locke addresses the role of terminology in musicology more broadly in understanding the construction of these types of representations in "On Exoticism, Western Art Music, and the Words We Use."[3] Noriko Manabe's "Representing Japan" explores how Japanese musicians represent their culture to Western audiences, and Koji Matsunobu examines North Americans who feel they have transcended any form of cultural

[3]Ken McLeod, "Afro-Samurai: techno-Orientalism and contemporary hip hop," *Popular Music* 32, no. 2 (2014), 257-275, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24736760; Ralph Locke, "On Exoticism, Western Art Music, and the Words We Use," *Archiv Für Musikwissenschaft* 69, no. 4 (2012): 318–28, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23375158; Derek Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Ellie Hisama, "Postcolonialism on the Make: The Music of John Mellencamp, David Bowie and John Zorn," *Popular Music* 12, no. 2 (1993): 91–104.

simulacra through a spiritual approach to a traditional Japanese folk instrument.[4] Outside of music and musicology, Alain Silver and Adam Chapman have explored representations of samurai in film and videogames in *The Samurai Film* and "Interacting With Digital Games as History" respectively, and the "Historical Evidence" section of Frank Manchel's *Film Study* work discusses turning historical films around to understand the times in which they were produced, just as this project seeks to glean knowledge about how samurai are understood by the musicians who summon them and their audiences.[5] Existing scholarship has examined samurai in film and games, or the representation of Asian cultures in music, but not samurai as a recurring figure across the genres of Anglophone popular music. Drawing on critical methodologies from musicology, sociology, and history, this paper fills that gap by analyzing what Anglophone musicians accomplish when they summon samurai imagery and what those representations reveal about the eras and cultures that produced them.

## Sources and Methods

Beyond Baudrillard, the following secondary sources were instrumental in constructing a theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis of the Anglophone popular music in this paper. Scott's *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* examines ideology encoded in diverse Western musical styles, arguing that orientalist musical styles relate to previous orientalist

[4]Noriko Manabe, "Representing Japan: 'National' Style Among Japanese Hip-hop DJ's," *Popular Music* 32, no. 1 (2013): 35–50, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23359880; Koji Matsunobu, "Spirituality as a Universal Experience of Music: A Case Study of North Americans' Approaches to Japanese Music," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 59, no. 3 (2011): 273–89, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23019529.

[5]Frank Manchel, *Film Study: An Analytical Bibliography*, rev. ed., vol. 1 (London: Associated University Presses, 1990), 252–65; Adam Chapman, *Digital Games as History: How Videogames Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 30-55; Alain Silver, *The Samurai Film* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1977), 33–54.

styles rather than any historical or contemporary cultural or artistic products of the places they are meant to evoke.[6] Locke's "On Exoticism, Western Art Music, and the Words We Use" addresses terminology and conceptual frameworks for examining how constructions of "elsewhere" become "hopelessly inadequate reflections" of what or whom they are intended to represent.[7] Robert Rosenstone's "History in Images/History in Words" explores how visual media constructs historical narratives that reveal more about the era in which they were produced than about the historical periods they depict.[8] Ellie Hisama's "Postcolonialism on the Make" analyzes depictions of Asian women in popular music by Anglo-American men, demonstrating how representations both reflect and reinforce real world behaviors and perceptions.[9] Simon Frith's *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* examines popular music as a process rather than a product for its social and cultural value.[10] Max Paddison's "Mimesis and the Aesthetics of Musical Expression" explores the relationship between mimesis and rationality in the production of music, drawing heavily upon the work of Theodore Adorno.[11] Finally, William Roy and Timothy Dowd's "What is Sociological About Music" explores how music can be understood as both product and process, how people use music to create meaning and identity, and how it can inform an understanding of broader social forces such as class, race, and gender.[12]

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[6]Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology*, 155-178.

[7]Locke, "On Exoticism, Western Art Music, and the Words We Use," 318, 323.

[8]Robert Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film," The *American Historical Review* 93, no. 5 (1988): 1173–85.

[9]Ellie Hisama, "Postcolonialism on the Make: The Music of John Mellencamp, David Bowie and John Zorn," *Popular Music* 12, no. 2 (1993): 91–104.

[10]Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[11]Max Paddison, "Mimesis and the Aesthetics of Musical Expression," *Music Analysis* 29, no. 1/3, Special Issue on Music and Emotion (2010): 126–48, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41289724.

[12]William Roy and Timothy Dowd, "What Is Sociological About Music?," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 183–203, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25735074.

The examination of primary sources in this paper will consist of a textual analysis that incorporates the sociological functions of music as a cultural activity on the part of both musician and audience, following the models of critical musicology laid out by the aforementioned authors and works. Approximately seventy examples referencing samurai in the titles, lyrics, music videos, and or associated artworks such as album covers have been compiled.[13] This is not an exhaustive list, but it is sufficient to demonstrate the prevalence of the samurai as a symbol and cultural touchstone. Though none of the examples are meant to be educational in the academic sense, they each rely on some form of samurai simulacra meant to convey meaning or emotion to the audience. For these simulacra to function, they must tap into a popular understanding of samurai, if not as historical figures, then at least as media archetypes.

Examining these works' artistic applications of samurai will establish a profile of these media archetypes. A conceptual morphology of the samurai, as it exists in the shared cultural context of these musicians and their audiences, will begin to take shape, and its similarities to, and differences from, the historical samurai can be cataloged. Analysis will address basic contextual information such as genre and medium, and the way samurai are portrayed or referenced in order to determine, as specifically as possible, what cultural function each particular simulacrum of samurai serves. Where does the piece in question depart from or distort historical accuracy in its portrayal? Why was the simulacrum of a samurai used rather than another warrior archetype? By examining such questions with special regard to the implications of race, nationality, gender, class, and power, this paper will identify patterns in

[13]See appendix.

how Anglophone popular music constructs samurai and what those constructions reveal about the contexts that produced them and more broadly about how historical figures and archetypes can take on a symbolic existence in popular conceptualization separate from their historical one.

## In History

By the eleventh century, an intersection of cultural, economic, and military circumstances had engendered the emergence of a new social class, that of the samurai, in Japanese society. The samurai's warrior identity afforded them a kind of monopoly on violence within the contemporary social hierarchy since the established imperial aristocracy's classical period Shinto beliefs led them to view bloodshed as spiritually polluting. Historian Eiko Ikegami describes those courtiers as being " …in the grip of a cultural obsession with notions of purification and pollution [wherein a] …slain person's spirit would return to harm the living."[14] This monopoly on coercive power allowed the samurai class to ascend in terms of actual authority, even if they remained ostensibly subordinate to the traditional aristocracy. This eventually led, in the late twelfth century, to the establishment of the *bakufu* or shogunate, in effect, military rule in Japan.

Eiko Ikegami argues, in *The Taming of the Samurai*, that the samurai class prized its conception of honor as a way not only of distinguishing its use of violence from more mercenary ones, but of

[14]Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) 57-58.

legitimizing its role in society and of enforcing an internal hierarchy within what had become a hereditary class.[15] The samurai conceptualization of honor would become central to the class's identity. One manifestation of this sense of honor can be found in the samurai's practice of ritual suicide. *Seppuku* began as a battlefield expression of exasperation in the face of defeat but later became codified in the judicial code of the Tokugawa era, from the beginning of the seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth century, as a punishment reserved exclusively for deviant or dishonored samurai. It was during the samurai government of the Tokugawa shogunate that samurai social systems became more codified within a hierarchical structure that political as well as hereditary and directly tied individual samurai's sense of value to their position within the greater state apparatus. Under this system, samurai transitioned from warriors to state officials and civil servants, and as opportunities to prove their individual skill and honor through violence became scarce, a stricter and more codified system of social mores and moral axioms took shape. It would be this ideological and ethical framework, which would outlast the samurai, who were dissolved as a class during the *Meiji* Restoration of 1868, and take on an existence of its own, which would be shaped and remade by cultural forces and individuals through history up to the present, and spawn the samurai as a cultural and political symbol through the concept of *bushido.*[16]

In *Inventing the Way of the Samurai,* Oleg Benesch argues that it was not until after the dissolution of the samurai class that the disparate writings and social trends that had begun to take hold as the samurai became further removed from the martial source of their class identity came to be

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[15]Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, 29-32.

[16]Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, 48-51, 57-58, 253-254, 278, 355-356.

seen as a single system referred to as *bushido*. For Benesch, *bushido* is not an accurate portrayal of a historical samurai ethos, but a modern response to a changing world.[17] He writes "…the invention of *bushido* follows patterns found in other societies dealing with issues of tradition, modernity, progress, and national identity…in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."[18] The most popular book on *bushido* is Nitobe Inazo's *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Benesch argues that this book, published at the turn of the twentieth century, had a Western audience in mind, and was intentionally trying to link samurai to European knights by promoting a Japanese version of chivalry wherein samurai were portrayed as paragons of not only martial virtues such as bravery and fidelity, but as being practiced in a kind of humility and etiquette, which when joined with a fierce sense of right and wrong formed the basis of their code of honor. This invented concept of the samurai was turned from a means of integrating Japan into a modernizing international community towards a medium for militaristic jingoism. The use of *bushido* as propaganda began with Japan's wars with Russia and China and reached its zenith as justification for conquest and motivation for war fighting in the lead up to World War Two. After the war, interest waned until gradually it resurfaced in Japanese literature, politics, and even business, each time being recontextualized and reoriented towards supporting whatever end its proponents aimed to promote.[19]

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[17]Oleg Benesch, *Inventing the Way of the Samurai: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Bushidō in Modern Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4, 6.

[18]Benesch, *Inventing the Way of the Samurai: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Bushidō in Modern Japan*, 6.

[19]Benesch, *Inventing the Way of the Samurai: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Bushidō in Modern Japan*, 1-3, 13-14.

## In Music and Media

The post-war existence of this new conceptualization of samurai was not limited to Japan though. It found its way into the Anglophone world as well, particularly through films beginning with Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954). It was as a genre of film that the iconic vocabulary of swords, honor-bound avengers, lone ronin, and fierce duels entered Anglophone popular culture.[20] Locke would describe this in terms of a "hopelessly inadequate reflection" of the historical class it would represent, but within a Baudrillardian framework they are better understood as replacements rather than distortions.[21] It is this cultural archetype, a reductionist simulacrum of a complex historical class, through which analysis of Anglophone popular music must be approached. Even musicians who may well imagine themselves as striving for historical accuracy would still have to contend with the simulacrum as it exists in the popular culture *zeitgeist* in which they perform, and their audience engages with them.

The approximately seventy examples of Anglophone popular music from the 1970's through 2024 assembled in the appendix of this paper all share in common some form of reference to samurai. Some, like the 1995 album *Master Killer* by Merauder, an American metalcore/hardcore band, only use the image of a samurai as part of accompanying album art, in this case a figure wearing a *kasa* (hat) and wielding a *katana* (sword).[22] Merauder play a particularly aggressive blend of hardcore punk and

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[20]Silver, *The Samurai Film*, 37-38, 43-54.

[21]Locke, "On Exoticism, Western Art Music, and the Words We Use," 318.

[22]Century Media Records "Master Killer, by Merauder," October 20, 2023. https://centurymedia.bandcamp.com/album/master-killer

thrash metal, and in the artwork we can see an example of the samurai simulacrum at its most reduced, devoid of any implication of an honorific code it is employed in the album art as symbol of a proficient warrior simply to convey a fierce aura of aggression. Another album from 1995 is *Liquid Swords*, by Wu-Tang Clan alumnus GZA (Gary Grice), which features a battle scene as its album art with figures wielding swords and a shadowy figure wearing a *kimono* in the background. GZA's lyrics employ complexly layered metaphors and deft wordplay also evoke violence, but in the title track from the album there is not a sense of the raw aggression summoned by Merauder but rather of the application of a high level of skill, finesse, or technique. The track opens with a sample from the movie *Shogun Assassin* which cements the association of not just violence, but skill with the conception of samurai here employed.[23]

Heavy metal act High On Fire's "Bastard Samurai" makes use of both the ferocious aspect summoned by Merauder and the reverence for technical deftness expressed by GZA. The song draws upon comic books to conjure an image of a samurai whose prowess is matched only by his callousness in its application.[24] The song comes from the band's 2010 album *Snakes For the Divine*, and is explicitly a fiction based upon another work of fiction, a lengthening chain of simulacra directly echoing Scott's discussion of how representations become themselves the models for further representation.[25] This song mirrors Silver's description of samurai in Kihachi Okamoto's *Samurai Assassin* (1964), as a "pitiless, obsessive, perhaps more alienated than any other genre hero."[26]

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[23]"GZA - Liquid Swords" Uploaded by Robbie D, May 14, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blA3TBKlj8Q.

[24]Ben Ratliff, "Atop the Bill for a Change, Powering Past Sound Issues," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/12/arts/music/12high.html.

[25]Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology*, 61.

[26]Silver, *The Samurai Film*, 38.

There is a noticeably absence of any reference to an honorific code in the song. Unlike in "Liquid Swords," where deftness is the implied result of practiced self-discipline, "Bastard Samurai" is focused on the destructive capabilities of the warrior in and of themselves.[27]

Meanwhile, in the 2021 animated music video for "The Writing on the Wall," the English heavy metal band Iron Maiden's undead avatar, "Eddie," is transformed into a monstrous, magical *katana* wielding, samurai at the climax of the song and video's story arc. Though violence and the idea of a samurai reduced to that solely of warrior is again present, its application seems intended to evoke different associations than the previous examples. In Iron Maiden's music video, we do not get the sense that the samurai figure represents violence for its own sake, or as an analog for technical expertise. The "Eddie" character at the beginning of the video is one of many ragged refugees traveling a post-apocalyptic wasteland toward what is seemingly the only remaining vestige of civilization. Upon reaching the city in the waste, the refugees are barred from entrance as only characters representing national political leaders and the rich are admitted. When "Eddie" is transformed into a samurai, it is not as a figure of violence for its own sake, or a demonstration of superiority, but violence as the last resort of the downtrodden.[28] Iron Maiden's "Eddie" as samurai most resembles the Samurai in Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* while the preceding examples perhaps more closing resemble the characters in Kurosawa's later movies, *Yojimbo*, (1961) for example. In the former samurai do not outwardly display their violence, and when they do wield it, it is in defense of the weak. In the latter, the samurai character is an anonymous representation of a warrior type who acts not out of principled defense but as response.[29]

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[27]High On Fire - Topic, "Bastard Samurai," Video, *YouTube*, March 10, 2025, https://www.youtube.comwatch?v=hnvkHZ8bS8E.

[28]Iron Maiden "Iron Maiden – the Writing on the Wall (Official Video)," July 15, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhBnW7bZHEE.

[29]Silver, *The Samurai Film.*

In bass virtuoso and eclectic RnB musician Thundercat's 2015 music video for the song "Them Changes" and avant-garde pop musicians Bjork and Rosalia's 2023 music video for "Oral," the conceptual samurai is summoned to signify less literal conflict. The video for "Them Changes" begins with two samurai locked in combat. The fight ends with the protagonist left without his arms or legs, dependent on others to help him turn off a television advertising katanas he can no longer use. Rather than literal violence and aggression this is a depiction of emotional devastation at the end of a relationship. The figure of the samurai is here completely removed from any potential for reference to the historical class. Though violence is depicted it is an abstraction with no attachment to even the simplistic view of samurai solely as warriors. It is plainly the idea of samurai representation in media that is being referenced, not any historical group.[30]

Bjork and Rosalia's music video for the song "Oral" depicts the two artists sparing with *katanas*. However, unlike in "Them Changes" this sparring is not meant to convey emotional damage but rather the tension between desire and boundary. The women wield swords in a subversion of the stereotypical masculinity of the warrior archetype and of its phallic symbolism in a choreographed exchange of queer desire and the navigation of consent. The song ends with the refrain: "There's a line there, I can't cross it."[31] The subversive force of the song depends upon the audience's understanding of the inherent masculinity of the samurai. As Ikegami notes the samurai were a hereditary class which included women, a nuance lost in media spawned simulacra where the definition of samurai shrinks to a classification of or specialized type of soldier.[32] Hisama provides another example of this at work,

[30]"Thundercat - 'Them Changes' (Official Video)" Uploaded by Brainfeeder, July 21, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNCd_ERZvZM.

[31]Björk, "Björk Ft. Rosalía: Oral," November 21, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jsi2Tgvx6A.

[32]Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, 123-127, 244-247.

when she observes that David Bowie invoked the samurai in his instructions to a female collaborator in his own attempt at subverting stereotypes in the song "China Girl."[33] Bjork's and Rosalia's choice to subvert this masculine coding, and the expectation that this subversion would be recognized by their audience, is confirmation that the reference point is a simulacrum, not the historical class. They were never really engaging with the historical samurai at all. The warrior figure as representative of masculinity is only a means of addressing gender itself. Since the historical existence of the samurai was never necessary to "Oral's" artistic purpose, only its cultural function, it operates solely as a symbol which replaces the historical class rather than merely misrepresenting or distorting it.

## Conclusion

These songs, words, and images demonstrate engagement with samurai as a pop cultural archetype rather than as historical figures. They draw upon a vocabulary of symbolism first established in Anglophone media through twentieth century genre film rather than a historical class that had been a fixture of Japanese society from the eleventh century until the *Meiji* Restoration. This paper has demonstrated two broad categories of such engagement: reinforcement and subversion. Merauder, GZA, and Iron Maiden call upon the samurai simulacrum established in film to hammer in their auras of aggression and prowess, while Thundercat, Bjork, and Rosalia transform those same associations. The effectiveness of both relies upon an audience understanding informed by previous media, not by an awareness of bushido as a modern invention, late Tokugawa civil servants, or early autonomous

[33]Hisama, "Postcolonialism on the Make," 94-95.

warlords, mercenaries, and strongmen. This study illustrates how the self-referential nature of media contributes to a widening gap between cultural conceptions of history and the academic understanding of historical accuracy. By grasping not just the existence of, but the nature of such gaps between the public and academic understandings of historical figures, periods, and archetypes, historians and teachers can become better equipped to communicate with and educate the public. At times there may be opportunity to teach students to separate artistic, literary, or entertainment concepts from historical ones in ways that allow both to exist so long as their different spheres are acknowledged rather than struggling to entirely replace one with the other. Providing students of history with an understanding of the hyperreality of such concepts allows for more critical engagement with historical topics, where the academic and cultural are understood as being in conversation with one another rather than in competition. It is an approach that acknowledges the dialectic process by which the perspectives of the present shape our understanding of the history from which they themselves were formed.

## Appendix:

## Songs Compiled

| Artist | Title |
|---|---|
| Afu-Ra | Mortal Kombat |
| ALL FOR METAL | The Way of the samurai |
| Arab On Radar | Samurai Fight Song |
| High On Fire | Bastard Samurai |
| Bjork | Oral (video) |
| Born of Osiris | Seppuku |
| Clutch | A Shogun Named Marcus |
| CoryxKenshin | The Samurai Rap |
| Dave Matthews Band | Samurai Cop |
| Denzel Curry | Zatoichi |
| Dirty Diggs | Samurai Showdown |
| Djavan | Samurai |
| Dschinghis Khan | Samurai |
| Enforcer | Katana |
| Fantastic Negrito | Chocolate Samurai |
| Flying Lotus ft. Denzel Curry | African Samurai |
| Freddie Gibbs & The Alchemist | A Thousand Mountains (video) |
| Ghostemane | Seppuku |
| Goodie Mob | Fighting |
| GZA | Liquid Swords (album) |
| Hammerfall | Bushido |
| Hanumankind | Cowboy Samurai |
| Harakiri for the Sky | (band name) |
| Howler | Samurai |
| Ibaraki | Ronin |
| Iron Maiden | Senjutsu (album) |
| Iron Maiden | The Samurai |
| Iron Maiden | The Sun and Steel |
| Ja'King the Divine | Seven Ronin |
| Juno Reactor | Samurai |
| katana | (band name) |
| Katana Cartel | (band name) |
| Kurt Elling | Samurai Cowboy |
| Kurt Elling | Samurai Hee-Haw |
| Kurt Elling | Samurai Cowboy |
| Little Sis Nora | Samurai |
| Lookas | Samurai |
| Lupe Fiasco | Samurai |
| Lupe Fiasco | No.1 Headband |

| | |
|---|---|
| Michael Cretu | Samurai |
| Nas feat. RZA | Samurai |
| New Horizon | Daimyo |
| Oingo Boingo | Reptiles and Samurai |
| Refused | (as the fictional band Samurai for cyberpunk 2077) |
| Ridgey | Samurai |
| RZA | Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai soundtrack |
| Sabaton | The Duelist |
| Sabaton | Shiroyama |
| Samara Cyn | Katana |
| Crosby & Nash | Samurai |
| Samurai (1) | Sacred Blade |
| Samurai (2) | Samurai (album) |
| SamuraiGuitar | (YouTube guitar instruction channel) |
| Serj Tankian | Harakiri |
| Shogun | (band name) |
| shurik'n | Samurai |
| Sniveling Shits | Bring me the head of Yukio Mishima |
| StephenxBloody | Samurai |
| Sturgill Simpson | Ronin |
| Sturgill Simpson | Sound & Fury (album) |
| The Brokedowns | Samurai Sword Decontrol |
| The Microphones | Samurai Sword |
| The Ponys | Harakiri |
| Motion City Soundtrack | The Samurai Code |
| Thundercat | Them Changes (video) |
| Tori Amos | Samurai |
| Trivium | Shogun |
| Vanic | Samurai |
| Whispered | Strike (music video, lyric, theme for band) |
| Yojimbo | (band name) |
| Yoshio | Samurai |

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