

**Prophetic visions in poetry: A thematic analysis of José Rizal's selected poems
and their contemporary resonance**

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes José P. Rizal's selected poems, *Mi Último Adiós*, *Sa Aking mga Kabatà*, *A La Juventud Filipina*, *Himno al Trabajo*, and *To the Flowers of Heidelberg*, as prophetic texts whose themes overflow into contemporary Filipino life. Using a qualitative, discourse-based approach and thematic coding, the research identifies five dominant motifs: sacrifice and patriotism, language and identity, youth empowerment, dignity of labor, and migration and diaspora identity. Findings reveal that Rizal's vision of sacrifice in *Mi Último Adiós* mirrors the heroism of activists, frontliners, and overseas workers who endure hardships for family and nation. Rizal's call to treasure the nation's native language in the poem *Sa Aking mga Kabatà* resonates with current debates on globalization, language preservation, and national identity. *A La Juventud Filipina* affirms the role of youth as the "hope of the nation" and looks forward to today's youth activism, climate advocacy, and digital leadership. *Himno al Trabajo* elevates the dignity of labor, echoing the struggles of Filipino workers and labor movements seeking fair conditions and recognition. Lastly, *To the Flowers of Heidelberg* strikes a balance between enduring ties to the homeland and global opportunities, reflecting the loyalty and nostalgia of the Filipino diaspora. By situating Rizal's poetic visions within contemporary issues, the research highlights his enduring significance as a national hero and a writer whose works continue to inspire civic duty, cultural pride, and social transformation. These poems inspire the current generation to uphold Rizal's

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values in the pursuit of a freer, just, and united nation, as they are both living texts and historical relics.

Keywords: Rizal's poems, contemporary Filipino issues, thematic resonance, qualitative discourse analysis, Philippine society

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INTRODUCTION

José P. Rizal, a Philippine national hero, continues to stand as a timeless literary figure whose works reflect both the spirit of his generation and the aspirations of future Filipinos. His poetry embodies themes of patriotism, sacrifice, love of country, and enduring hope, which collectively transcend the historical period in which they were written. Through his words, Rizal articulated not only his resistance to oppression but also his unyielding vision for a free and dignified nation. His poems serve as more than artistic creations; they are also social commentaries and calls to action that stir readers across generations.

In this contemporary era, Rizal's poems continue to resonate amidst issues such as youth disengagement, migration, economic struggles, and the persistent quest for national identity. His remarks are still pertinent because they convey the goals, costs, and obligations that the current generation is still expected to fulfill. By analyzing *Mi Último Adiós*, *Sa Aking mga Kabatà*, *A La Juventud Filipina*, *Himno Al Trabajo*, and *To the Flowers of Heidelberg*, this discourse emphasizes how Rizal's poetic visions mirror the contemporary struggles of Filipinos. Nevertheless, the youth of today's generation are frequently tech-savvy and dynamic, but they are also susceptible to consumerism, indifference, and the distractions of a digitally driven society. While some struggle with a lack of connection to their cultural heritage and political responsibilities, others are enthusiastic about social causes, education, and worldwide prospects. This duality reflects both the promise and the challenge of embodying Rizal's vision for a nation built on the strength, integrity, and active participation of its youth.

By situating Rizal's poetry, *Mi Último Adiós*, *Sa Aking mga Kabatà*, *A La Juventud Filipina*, *Himno al Trabajo*, and *To the Flowers of Heidelberg*, within both literary and theoretical contexts, this study highlights how his works transcend their historical moment and continue to address the challenges of today. Values like sacrifice, patriotism, pride in one's language and culture, youth empowerment, the dignity of work, and an unwavering love for one's motherland are all embodied in each poem. Additionally, it embodies values that are still essential to contemporary concerns, including national identity, civic involvement, education reform, and migration. Through these themes, Rizal's works encourage Filipinos to act in the present while simultaneously remembering their history, upholding their love for their nation, and accepting their civic duties. These poems encourage the youth to use their enthusiasm, abilities, and inventiveness to make significant contributions that help create a more caring, just, and free country. As a living manual that connects history, current conflicts, and the shared aspirations for a free tomorrow, Rizal's lyrical legacy lives on in this fashion.

Statement of the problem

This study aims to analyze Rizal's selected poems as prophetic texts that continue to resonate in contemporary times. It seeks to explore how these literary works reflect societal realities, express symbolic foresight, and maintain relevance in addressing present-day issues. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What contemporary realities do the poems of Rizal reflect and mimic in the themes of sacrifice and patriotism, language and identity, youth empowerment, dignity of labor, and diaspora and love of homeland?
2. How do the symbols and metaphors in these poems express Rizal's foresight regarding the future struggles of Filipinos, particularly in relation to chains and shackles, the motherland, light and darkness, the youth as the "fair hope of the fatherland," and blood and martyrdom, and has this foresight manifested as reality?
3. In what ways do Rizal's poetic visions remain relevant to present-day issues concerning nationalism, education, labor, and migration?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design anchored in discourse analysis of José P. Rizal's selected poems. The primary method is textual data-mining, which involves the systematic collection, interpretation, and analysis of literary texts relevant to the study's objectives. The selected poems, *Mi Último Adiós*, *Sa Aking mga Kabata*, *A La Juventud Filipina*, *Himno al Trabajo*, and *To the Flowers of Heidelberg*, serve as the core data sources, while secondary references such as scholarly books, journal articles, and literary criticisms provide supplemental insights and contextual grounding.

The recurring themes, metaphors, and symbols that embody Rizal's foresight and vision of the Filipino nation's future are examined in this study through a qualitative, discourse-based approach. Far from being static artifacts, the poetries are treated as living texts that continue to shape, challenge, and inspire the Filipino psyche across generations.

Close reading is another method used in the analysis to find and evaluate textual components that fit the selected literary framework. The goal of the study is to determine how Rizal's poetry continues to generate meanings that go beyond its historical context by closely analyzing the language, imagery, and structure of his works. By placing more emphasis on understanding, interpretation, and contextualization than on numerical measurement, this methodology makes sure that the study stays true to the qualitative character of literary studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Themes of Rizal's poems

This study involved a comprehensive analysis of selected poems by José Rizal to determine their relevance to contemporary Filipino society. The analysis focused on five poems: *Mi Último Adiós*, *Sa Aking mga Kabata*, *A La Juventud Filipina*, *Himno al Trabajo*, and *To the Flowers of*

Heidelberg. The research examined their dominant themes, symbols, metaphors, and contemporary echoes, considering how these literary elements reflect societal realities, foresee future struggles, and continue to influence present-day issues. Data were gathered through close textual reading, thematic analysis, and comparison with contemporary social contexts, including youth activism, labor dynamics, migration, and language preservation.

Sacrifice and patriotism

The theme of sacrifice and patriotism is most prominently featured in *Mi Último Adiós*, exemplified in the line “Adios, Patria adorada, región del sol querida...,” which expresses Rizal's ultimate devotion to his country. This farewell poem encapsulates the willingness to sacrifice one's life for freedom, a message that resonates strongly in the contemporary experiences of overseas Filipino workers, frontline personnel, and activists who endure hardships for family and nation. Rizal's martyrdom has become a symbol of collective liberation, reminding Filipinos that true patriotism often requires personal cost. The Filipino youth continue to demonstrate this spirit, engaging in volunteer work, environmental initiatives, civic participation, and social media campaigns that promote voter education, human rights, and climate awareness. These contemporary acts of service, while less dramatic than martyrdom, illustrate how sacrifice for the nation can take many forms, encompassing time, energy, and creativity invested in building a more just and hopeful society.

Language and identity

Rizal's advocacy for language preservation is highlighted in *Sa Aking mga Kabatà*, notably in the line, “Ang hindi marunong magmahal sa sariling wika, daig pa ang hayop at malansang isda.” His emphasis on loving and protecting one's native language remains relevant in a globalized world where English and other international languages dominate public discourse. Current debates in educational reform and national identity underscore the importance of Filipino and regional languages in classrooms, public life, and cultural programs. Contemporary efforts to promote multilingual education, organize language festivals, and utilize social media for cultural advocacy reflect Rizal's foresight, demonstrating that valuing one's own language is crucial for preserving identity and fostering a cohesive national culture.

Youth empowerment

The poem *A La Juventud Filipina* portrays the youth as the “fair hope of the motherland,” a vision reflected in the line, “Bella esperanza de la patria mía...” Rizal entrusted the young generation with the responsibility to advance national progress through knowledge, action, and leadership. In contemporary society, this vision manifests in the active involvement of Filipino youth in climate advocacy, civic movements, and digital innovation. Young leaders today spearhead community clean-ups, climate strikes, social campaigns, and technological projects aimed at societal reform. These initiatives demonstrate that the youth are not only the symbolic hope of the nation but also its active builders, translating Rizal's literary foresight into tangible change. The combination of innovation and activism affirms that the younger generation continues to carry Rizal's message into modern contexts.

Dignity of labor

Labor and social dignity are central themes in *Himno al Trabajo*, particularly in the line, “Al peso de los años laboriosos se mide la nación que así progresa...,” which portrays hard work as the foundation of national strength. Rizal’s celebration of labor underscores the critical role of workers in achieving collective progress. In contemporary society, this reverence for labor is reflected in the perseverance of Filipino and overseas workers who sustain families and the national economy despite challenges such as institutional injustices, economic hardship, and unsafe working conditions. Farmers, factory workers, nurses, and migrant workers exemplify Rizal’s vision of the dignity of labor, and current policies on social protections, fair wages, and safe working conditions honor these contributions. The sacrifices of these workers embody Rizal’s ideal, reinforcing the enduring relevance of labor as a key pillar of nation-building.

Diaspora and love of homeland

Migration and diaspora identity are vividly expressed in *To the Flowers of Heidelberg*, particularly in the line, “Recordad que el viajero os dedica con cariño su cariño y su amor...,” which conveys Rizal’s longing for his homeland while abroad. Millions of Filipinos living and working overseas navigate similar challenges, balancing professional opportunities with deep emotional and cultural ties to the Philippines. Filipino migrants maintain traditions, educate their children about language and values, and remit resources to support national development. These actions mirror Rizal’s sentiment of enduring loyalty despite physical distance. Contemporary diaspora communities demonstrate that geographical separation does not weaken national devotion; on the contrary, it often strengthens the resolve to support and sustain one’s country through cultural preservation, financial remittances, and advocacy, thereby keeping Rizal’s vision of homeland attachment alive in modern contexts.

CONCLUSION

José Rizal’s poems endure as living texts whose prophetic visions of sacrifice, education, labor, and national identity continue to guide and inspire Filipinos in confronting the challenges of the present. Through his eloquent use of language, symbolism, and metaphor, Rizal not only captured the social realities of his time but also anticipated the struggles and aspirations that future generations would face. His works serve as moral and intellectual touchstones, reminding Filipinos of the enduring value of patriotism, the transformative power of education, the dignity inherent in labor, and the importance of preserving cultural and linguistic identity. In a contemporary context marked by globalization, migration, youth activism, and ongoing socio-economic challenges, Rizal’s poetry resonates profoundly, offering both a reflection of societal realities and a framework for action. By engaging with these texts, modern readers are able to draw inspiration, cultivate civic responsibility, and reaffirm a commitment to national development, demonstrating that the relevance of Rizal’s literary legacy extends far beyond the historical moment in which it was created.

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