

Romanticism in the Poetry of Robert Frost and Fawzi Al-Maluf: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Although Robert Frost and Fawzi Al-Maluf are from two different nations, they share similarities in conveying poetic concepts. This paper aims at making a comparative study in the reflections of Romanticism in the poetry of Robert Frost, American poet and Fawzi Al-Maluf Lebanese-Brazilian poet. The main concern of the study is to provide an answer to what are some dominant and prevalent romantic themes in both poets. The findings of the research show that; the appreciation of nature and simple rustic life as the most important features of Romantic poetry is traceable in the literary oeuvre of both poets under study. However, unlike most English Romantic poets, Frost and Maluf go one step forward to communicate deep philosophical truth about the essence of human life. The theme of death or mortal consciousness prevalent in Romantic poetry is also present in the sample poetry of both poets. They consider the inevitable fortune of human being and point out to the unpredictability and briefness of life. Also the theme of loneliness and solitude dominant in romantic poetry is touched by both authors. Thus, the poetry of Frost and Al-Maluf could be included in the school of Romanticism.

Keywords: Romanticism, Robert Frost, Fawzi Al-Maluf, Comparative Study.

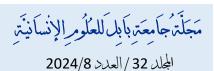
الرومانسية في شهر روبرت فروست وفوزي المهلوف: دراسة مقارنة إخلاص راهي مشكور كلية العلو مرجامعة القادسية

المستخلص

على الرغم من أن روبرت فروست وفوزي المعلوف ينتميان إلى دولتين مختلفتين، إلا أن هناك أوجه تشابه بينهما في نقل المفاهيم الشعرية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى إجراء دراسة مقارنة في انعكاسات الرومانسية في شعر روبرت فروست الشاعر الأميركي وفوزي المعلوف الشاعر اللبناني – البرازيلي. الاهتمام الرئيس للدراسة هو تقديم إجابة لبعض الموضوعات الرومانسية السائدة والمهيمنة لدى الشاعرين. وتشير نتائج البحث إلى أن الفخر بالطبيعة والحياة الريفية البسيطة يمكن تحديدها بوصفها أهم سمات الشعر الرومانسي في الأعمال الأدبية لكلا الشاعرين قيد الدراسة. ولكن على عكس معظم الشعراء الرومانسيين الإنجليز، يذهب فروست ومعلوف إلى أبعد من ذلك لتوصيل حقيقة فلسفية عميقة حول جوهر الحياة الإنسانية. إن موضوع الموت أو الوعي الإنساني السائد في الشعر الرومانسي حاضر أيضاً في شعر الشاعرين. انهم ينظرون إلى المصير الحتمي للإنسان ويشيرون إلى عدم إمكانية التنبؤ بالحياة وقصرها. وتطرق كلا الشاعرين أيضا إلى موضوع الوحدة السائد في الشعر الرومانسي. وبذلك يمكن إدراج شعر فروست والمعلوف في المدرسة الرومانسية.

الكلمات الدالة: الرومانسية، روبرت فروست، فوزى المعلوف، در اسة مقارنة

Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024



Introduction

Romanticism is an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement at the end of the 18th century in Europe, which reached its peak in the early 19th century. Romantic philosophy refers to a movement in the 18th and 19th centuries that emphasized emotion, imagination, individualism, and the beauty of nature. It rejected the rationalism of the Enlightenment and focused on subjective experiences and intuition. "Although the romanticism movement had its roots in the rise of the storm and insurgence in Germany, which preferred intuition and feeling over the rationalism of the Enlightenment era"[1], the events and ideologies of the French Revolution were also influential factors. Also the founders of this movement and many romantic pioneers were revolutionary figures and sympathizers with the French Revolution. The hopes and fears of the French Revolution led to widespread and sometimes conflicting reactions. The most important impact of the defeat of the French Revolution and the political and social consequences of it on the minds of romantics was idealism and strange individualism that can be seen in most of the poems of this period.

The prevalence of individualism should be considered as an inevitable consequence of the process of industrialization of the society. In a village or a small town, people often know each other, but in big industrial cities, a person faces the risk of losing his identity due to interacting with a large mass of unfamiliar people. In such a situation, the human mind and consciousness inevitably confronts two ways: "Firstly, it praises nature as a balm and refuge for the soul of man, and secondly, because it feels alienated from other members of the society, it seeks refuge in the necessarily individual world within itself" [2].

The Romantic movement considers intense emotions as a genuine source of aesthetic experience. The thinkers and artists of this school considered the neoclassical school's emphasis on wisdom as limiting and suppressing the human spirit, and emphasized on elements such as "art, passion, excitement, imagination, spiritual themes, rituals and symbols"[3]. Romanticism, under the influence of the French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy, is considered as a revolution against the principles of classicism. In the field of literature, this movement considers imagination and emotions to be much more powerful than reason and systematic thinking. William Wordsworth, who according to many literary critics is the founder of the English romantic school and is considered one of the most central figures and one of its important intellectuals, offers the following definition of poetry: Spontaneity of powerful emotions; Its origin is from the feelings that are remembered in peace" [4].

The dominant view in this literary school prioritizes creativity and innovation over traditionalism and imitation. Spontaneous outpouring of powerful emotions, that is, rejection of the neoclassical definition of poetry, which considers it as a mirror of human behavior, because spontaneous outpouring contradicts any kind of imitation and follow-up and does not stand the artificial rules and traditions of the neoclassical predecessors.

English romantic poets like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keads, Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Byron have created works that express spontaneous feelings that correspond to life in the natural world and celebrate creativity and innovation. Unlike the neoclassicists, who believe in the literary principles of ancient

مَجَلَّةُ جَامِعَةِ بَابِلَ لَلعَلُومِ الإِنسَانِيَّةِ الجلد 32/العدد 2024/8

Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024

Greece and Rome, who adhere to rationalism, controlling emotions and following the structural rules of composition, the pioneers and followers of the school of romanticism promote individuality, subjectivity, rich emotions and freedom of expression. The works of these poets are usually located in rural or Gothic environments, and special attention is paid to innocent characters such as animals, young lovers, and especially children, who are an important reference for the manifestation of eternal truths [5]. The romantics have emphasized the human need to express emotions, reject the corruption of civilization, become primitive and be in harmony with nature, and escape from the destruction and erosion of urban life.

The definition of Romanticism, which is generally accepted as the most complete and the most meaningful, belongs to Morse Peckham in an article titled "Toward a Theory of Romanticism"; "Romanticism is considered a revolution in the European mind against the static mechanism of the world and moving towards the organized dynamics of the mind, its values are change and growth, diversity, the creative mind and the unconscious mind" [6]. What is understood from this definition is the perception of the universe as an evolving and progressing entity that is always changing and dynamic. This world is imagined subjectively and not objectively by each individual. Therefore, the role of human individuality becomes especially important. Each poet alone has a special idea of the surrounding world, which is different from the other. Meanwhile, poetic imagination is the power that gives him this power. According to romantic poets, only imagination can reveal the truth and give insight into the life of beings. "Imagination has the ability to understand and see things that reason is blind to" [7].

Change and growth are at the heart of Peckham's definition and one of the most important values of this school of thought and art. In other words, romanticism is a philosophy of growth, not being. The world of the 18th century is like a watch made by God's hand. In the thinking of the neoclassicals, the world is a perfect machine, but the romantic world is a living entity that is doomed to change and to grow. Therefore, change and growth is considered a positive value. Another characteristic of romantic poetry is variety and innovation. The school of romanticism, which stood tall in front of neoclassicism, questioned the tradition of imitation, which is one of its characteristics, and considered variety and innovation to be the essentials of poetry.

The celebration of nature and simple rustic life by Romantics has made some critics call them, "nature poets". However M. H. Abrams announces it a serious mistake and oversimplification; "To a remarkable degree external nature-the landscape, together with its flora and fauna-became a persistent subject of poetry, and was described with an accuracy and sensuous nuance unprecedented in earlier writers. It is a mistake, however, to describe the romantic poets as simply 'nature poets'[4]. The poet's meditation on nature, the change of seasons, the birds, and vegetation is not presented per se but as means for deep philosophical thoughts.

Discussion

Although Robert Frost (1874-1963) appertains to the era of modernism, his poetry carries many characteristics of romantic poetry. In a sense, Frost stands at the turning point of nineteenth-century American poetry and modernism, for in his verse may be

مَجَلَّةُ جَامِعَةِ بَابِلَ لَلْعُلُومِ الْإِنْسَانَيْةِ الجلد 32/العدد 2024/8

Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024

found the culmination of many nineteenth-century tendencies and traditions as well as parallels to the works of his twentieth-century contemporaries. However, as Leonard Unger and William Van O'Connor point out in Poems for Study, "Frost's poetry, unlike that of such contemporaries as Eliot, Stevens, and the later Yeats, shows no marked departure from the poetic practices of the nineteenth century." [8]

Robert Frost is much admired for some eminent characteristics in his writings such as "the depictions of rural life of New England, command of American colloquial speech, and his realistic verse portraying ordinary people in everyday life"[9]. The most prominent quality in Frost's poetry is clarity and simplicity. His poetry is specific. It does not puzzle the reader unlike his contemporary poets like Pound and Eliot. His thoughts are not vague. The seemingly simplicity has depth underneath but on the surface level, every ordinary reader can read and enjoy his poems. Nadia Shah writes about the impact of William Wordsworth on Frost's poetry: "In some ways, William Wordsworth seems to have had a deep impact on the Frost's choice of content in his work. Both focused their poetic lens on the ordinary and common rural populace whose behavior as well as mannerisms are not influenced in any way by the 'civilization' that characterizes those living in the urban set ups. These common people are simple and naïve having a very close affinity with the nature around them. Their language is not made up and their thoughts are raw, unpolished and absolutely in their purest form. It is among these people that Frost discovered the simple but at the same time not so simple truths that characterize life"[10].

In Frost's poetry, there is always an easily understood meaning or image for the reader, some perception of beautiful nature, some reflections on natural elements such ads, birches, blueberry patches, or deep woods filling up with snow. He is a four times Pulitzer prize winner. His early life was passed in San Francisco, California. Frost moved to Lawrence. Then he got admitted into Dartmouth College. After that, he attended Harvard University though dropped out after two years due to illness. In 1900, Frost shifted to New Hampshire with his wife and got a farm purchased by his grandfather for them. But there two of his young children died. After that, he faced so many challenges in his personal life. Then he started to dwell in the countryside and began setting many of his poems there.

Fauzi al-Maluf (1899-1930) is considered one of the most outstanding representatives of Arabic romantic poetry in the Latin American exile. He was born in Zahleh, Lebanon in a scholarly family. His father was one of the famous lexicographers. Fawzi wrote poetry from his youth. His poetic genius blossomed in 1914. He wrote his poems in famous magazines. Then he assumed the position of. secretary of Syrian University in Damascus. Fawzi completed his studies at the Freire Institute in Lebanon. After he learnt French, Portuguese and Spanish, he went to Brazil. Fawzi's fame in literature is due to his long poem. It is under the title "Ali Basat al-Rih" which is the description of the poet's imaginary journey to the heavens. There he meets the stars, birds and his soul. This poem is written in fourteen parts. One of the prominent features of Fawzi's poems is reflection on nature, tendency to freedom and pessimism towards existence and life, which is the cause of illness, unsuccessful love.

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Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024

المجلد 32/العدد 8/2024

One of the most important features of Romantic poetry is the appreciation of nature and simple rustic life, which is traceable in the literary oeuvre of both poets under study. The theme of nature is a very frequent phenomenon that may be found more or less in every poet's writings. As it is a universal concept, every writer tries to integrate it to his writings. But the most important thing is the way every author deals with nature which seems to be non-identical. They see the same nature, but every poet's reflections are versatile and unique.

Nature is present in all of Robert Frost's poetry, such as the Road Not Taken", "Acquainted with the Night," "Mending Wall," and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." In each of these poems, Frost uses the pastoral setting of New England, where he spent most of his youth. "Rural scenes and landscapes, homely farmers, and the natural world are used to illustrate a psychological struggle with everyday experience met with courage, will and purpose in the context of Frost's life and personal psychology. His attitude is stoical, honest and accepting" [11].

Frost uses nature as a background. He usually begins a poem with an observation of something in nature and then moves toward a connection to some human situation or concern Shrestha thinks that Frost presented the natural world in the form of the source which inspires individuals for the deep metaphysical thought as it is seen in 'Birches' and 'The Sound of Trees'. Nature is not simply a background for poetry, but rather a central character in his works. Birches, one of the best-known poems is not about simply birches, mainly, it's about the desire of escaping from this mundane world [12]. The relationship between the human and the natural worlds is central to the theme of this poem:

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay
As ice storms do. Often you must have seen them [12]

Accordingly, nature and human relationship with nature are central themes in the poetry of Fawsi Al-Maluf. Al-Maluf does not only describe nature, but also uses nature as a means for expressing his deep thoughts and emotions. The poet does not simply pass by the natural phenomena, but touches and depicts it with all his senses.

We would not have composed poetry
Had it not been for the regular dew on its radiant cord
We would not have found prose if it were not for the passion
That scatters it with the wisdom of the prose writer
We did not know that love circulates blood in our body with pure

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essence

If it were not for the embrace of the cedars in the woods Or for the kiss of the birds [13]

In this description, the poet visits special scenes or phenomena through the insight of inner feelings. In fact, in this type of description, the poet integrates his feelings. Coleridge comments on poets' different view of nature, he believes that nature never changes, but it is the reflections of the poets that change. Coleridge considers nature to be

مَجَلَّةُ جَامِعَةِ بَابِلَ لَلعُلُومِ الإِنْسَانَيْةِ

Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024

المجلد 32/العدد 2024/8

vital in artistic creativity because "art cannot exist without, or apart from, nature" [14] Coleridge defines poetry as an art "of presenting, in words, external nature and human thoughts and affections" [14]. He highlights the relationship between the poet and nature [14]. Maluf considers "the dew on the leaves of trees, the branches of cedars embracing each other, and the singing birds as the sources of inspiration for poets" [16].

In Frost's poetry the inherent ties between nature and human life is noticeable and the poet uses natural images for conveying deep reflections on the nature of human life as Hosne Are points out, "Frostian depiction of nature is more comprehensive than that of the Romantics. He always attempts to make a connection between nature and human life. The symbolic diction used in his poetry implies different layers of meaning which is very much related to human life" [8]. One of those beautiful images is depicted in "The Road Not Taken", in the sadly beautiful description of the autumn forest, the poet tries to convey his philosophical thoughts on the essence of human life which is full of choices. The choices are indicated by the roads which are equally attractive for the solitary middle-aged traveler, the melancholic atmosphere of the poem is emphasized by the words such as "yellow woods", "sorry", and "sigh":

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth; [16]

The similar reflections on the essence of human life is observable in Al-Maluf's poem entitled Cryptic Charms, the poet uses the same image of the road for discussing human being's inevitable choices although it is less romantic than the poetry of Frost set in a sadly beautiful morning in the woods;

I came- whence, I know not- but I came
I saw before me a road, so I walked
And shall continue to walk, whether I will or noHow did I come? How did I see my road?
I know not.
And my road: what is my road? Is it long or short?
Do I climb or descend along it, or walk on a level path?
Is it I who travel the road, or the road which travels?
Or do both of us stand still while Time runs onI know not. [13]

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The same solitary traveler appears in the "The Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1923), in the Romantic era 'loneliness' or the physical condition of solitude was preferred to being in public. Painters and poets deliberately sought solitude in natural landscapes to create transformative spiritual and emotional experiences that could be the source of inspiration for their art. Shah explains that, "Frost portrays man alone in an ultimately indifferent universe and takes the help of metaphors from the natural world to define that condition. Further, Frost highly respects diversity. He is fully aware of the

مَجَلَّةُ جَامِعَةِ بَابِلَ لَلعُلُومِ الإِنسَانَيَّةِ الجلد 32/العدد 2024/8

Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024

distances between one man and another and he is also always aware of the distinction and the ultimate separateness, of nature and man. He treats this distinction as a concrete reality" [10]. The narrator in this poem stops beside a wood and continues watching the natural beauty of that snow-covered woods. In the first three stanzas, the narrator's little horse feels strange why the rider stops beside this wood instead of the farmhouse. Here he uses the expression 'darkest evening' which could mean the narrator is depressed for some reason. He wants to spend a serene moment in a tranquil place to enjoy the snow falling, to soothe his mind, and pass time amidst natural beauty. Nature has always been the rescue place for Romantic poet

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep. And miles to go before I sleep [16].

In Romantic poems that focus on death, death is typically viewed either with bitter lament as an end of life for human beings despite nature's eternal condition, or it is viewed as a reconnection to nature, a form of returning to a more whole and communal existence. Johnston in his doctoral dissertation considers the particular manifestation of mortal consciousness for romantic poets. He believes that that death is a theme "one frequently encounters in British Romantic literature, and which, for this reason, I shall call Romantic mortal consciousness. This is an intimation of mortality that, besides simply drawing one's attention to the inexorable fate of the self, also encourages one to look beyond the self, engage sympathetically with human hardship and suffering, and critically examine the forces causing, aiding, or abetting it" [17]

Life and death are important issues that Fawzi's mind has always focused on. For him, death is the point of separation between man and life, and in a sense, death is an inevitable fate that everyone will face, and a person has no choice in deciding whether to go or not, and is completely forced to leave life. Now, this abandonment is sometimes considered a real release for a person because death can save him from suffering. Maalouf introduces himself as a prisoner of life and death and believes that he walks the distance between birth and the grave without any chice until he faces the inevitable fate of death. In one poem he refers to premature death, and suffering in life. To approximate this meaning to the mind that human life is continuous in suffering and torment, he uses similes and takes help from nature. In the piece "All the Worlds of Life" which was written by the inspiration of Abul Ala Ma'ari, the life of a flower from the moment it blooms until withering is depicted, and says:

Have you seen the garden flowers in the morning
That open their eyelids in the evening?
It opens fresh, then the wind scatters these flowers
And the feet of passersby trample them and spread them on the

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ground?[13]

The poet depicts a flower branch that is at the peak of beauty and elegance, and everyone enjoys seeing it. But suddenly a wind blows on its petals and spreads them on

مَجَلَّةُ جَامِعَةِ بَا بِلَ لَلْعُلُومِ الْإِنْسَانَيَّةِ الجِلد 32/العدد 2024/8

Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024

the ground. Fawzi Maluf generalizes this issue to human life; a person who lives in the prime of youth and beauty may suddenly pass away, his body will go to the grave and turn into dust. he finds the only way to get rid of the pains of life in death, which is one of his concerns forever.

And will you die? What has deceived you?
Why did you die at the height of your youth?
Everyone is afraid of the shadow of death
And run away from it, how are you infatuated with it?
Are you resting next to him?
Indeed, the grave is the relief of the human body from pain
The comfort of the heart is from its darkness. [13]

Accepting and even welcoming the death is one of the other notable concepts in the poetry of the Lebanese poet, who leaves life in his youth. Such a view of death has rarely been seen among the common human society. Rather, human beings have spent their entire lives searching for a way to immortality and averting death.

The briefness and unpredictability of life is also brought up in the poetry of Frost. In "Out Out" which is a short narrative poem and the title is an illusion to the famous lines of William Shakespeare's Macbeth; "Out out brief candle Life's but a walking shadow a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. It is a tale

told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing. "[16]. These soliloquy which is uttered after hearing the news of lady Macbeth's death is related with short life span and Macbeth in the state of numbness and pain after his wife's death compares life with a brief candle, a walking shadow, a poor player, a tale told by an idiot. According to Macbeth, life is nothing but an illusion. Life is like a poor actor who worries for his short act on stage and is heard no more after that. Life is like a story told by an idiot, which is full of tantrums and dramas, but it has no importance. Likewise, Frost in "Out out" considers a premature and tragic death of a young worker:

The doctor put him in the dark of ether.
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.
And then-the watcher at his pulse took fright.
No one believed. They listened at his heart.
Little-less-nothing!-and that ended it.
No more to build on there. And they, since they
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs [16]

The poem explores themes of mortality, the fragility of life, technology, and the suddenness of death. 'Out, Out' is a poem that reveals the sudden and unexpected nature of death. The climax of the poem happens with the boy's fatal accident, but before this Frost purposefully narrates a mundane story about typical life on a farm. Mother nature is described with an elegance that is characteristic of Frost's work. His mention of the sunset marks the end of the day, which acts as a symbol for the end of the boy's life. Frost's exclusion of separate stanzas acts to make the climax appear out of the blue. As a

مَجَلَتُهُ جَامِعَتِ بَأَبِلَ لَلعَلُومِ الإِنْسَانَيْتِ

Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024

المجلد 32/العدد 8/2024

reader, it's quite surprising and unexpected when we reach the point where the accident occurs. This technique effectively portrays the constant threat of death in daily life. The poem ends abruptly when the rest of the family gets up and continues with their lives. There is no sorrow or lamentation from the family, they've accepted that there is 'No more to build here'. This reaction naturally raises the question: if life is so fragile, where can we find value in it.

Another poem by Frost that entails the theme of death is Home Burial, in which the parents of a dead child have different reactions towards their child's death; the young mother can't conciliate with the death of her child, and her husband becomes completely stranger to her because of his cold reaction towards it. They can't share the grief as a family, which is supposed to unify them in their feeling towards their child's death. The difference in reaction between the two makes

them separated and unable to return to their normal experience of life. It is obvious that the wife lives under the burden of grief because of her child's death, while the husband appears cold in his reaction. Indeed, the effect of the death of the child results in the death of emotions between the spouses because of their different intensity of grief on the emotional level. The husband fails to express his sadness as if his emotions are dead:

The little graveyard where my people are
Tell me about if it's something human
Let me into your grief, I am not so much
If you had any feelings you that dug
With your own hand How could how could you? his little

grave,

A man can't speak of his own child that's dead [16]

It's obvious that the husband's cold reaction aggravates the death's effects on his wife's psyche; his dead emotions extend to the child's death. And there is an obvious physical and psychological detachment between the two; the wife is obliged to be isolated by death. In addition to the theme of unexpected death, the themes of isolation and detachment are also explored through Home Burial.

Frost's another poem Design uses the image of a moth killed by a spider to communicate the cruelty of nature and death. "Frost also uses symbolism and imagery to evoke his theme of death in this poem; he utilizes symbols to suffuse the poem with his ideas and themes, like that of the white, fat and cruel spider, the white flower which has healing properties, and the white, dead moth that was killed by the spider" [18]

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white, on a white heal-all, holding up a moth! Like a white piece of rigid Stain cloth... Assorted characters of death and blight! Mixed ready to begin the morning rights, Like the

ingredients

of witches, broth a snow-drop spider, a flower like a forth, and dead wings carried like a paper kite [18]

Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024



The contradictory and mysterious design of life and death is beautifully portrayed in this poem. This Petrarchan sonnet discusses more profound concepts such as creation, death, and even God.

Conclusion

No matter, how geographically separate, Frost and Al-Maluf both have definitely proved their talent in using the common subjects of "Nature", "Death", and "Loneliness" prevalent in Romanticism. It's in the heart of comparative studies to consider two or more literatures in comparison. Their multi-dimensional components have influenced the generations of readers to consider the thematic values of the different poems of these two great poets. The nature for these poets is not only a source of inspiration, imagination, and ecstasy but also their focus on nature is meant to demonstrate more profound philosophical thoughts and reflections on the essence of human life and death. Man's isolation and loneliness are also encompassed in their work. Both Frost and Maluf focus on mortality and the inevitableness of death; thereby, through reflection on mortality and particularly drawing attention to the inexorable fate of human, they also encourages the readers to look beyond the self, engage sympathetically with human hardship and suffering, and critically examine the forces causing it.

CONFLICT OF IN TERESTS

There are no conflicts of interest

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Vol.32 / No.8/ 2024

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