

**Points of Convergence and Divergence in the Contemporary Poetic Poem
A Comparative Critical Analysis between "García Lorca and Nazik al-Malaika"**

Dr. Cheref Fatima Zohra

Abou Bekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen

cheref.fatimazohra@univ-tlemcen.dz

Dr. Saidani Mohammed

Abou Bekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen

saidani.mohammed@univ-tlemcen.dz

Received: 20/05/2026 Accepted : 30/07/2026 Published : 10/10/2026

Abstract:

This study seeks to explore the points of convergence and divergence in contemporary poetry between the works of the Iraqi poet Nazik al-Malaika and the Spanish poet García Lorca; where the two poets converge on aesthetic and functional levels manifested in their rebellion against classical forms, their use of tragic elements and existential melancholy, their preoccupation with themes of death and alienation, as well as the personification of nature and the invocation of symbolism and mythology to express the anxieties of modern humanity.

The study focuses on the points of convergence that reflect the unity of human consciousness during moments of cultural transformation, while the differences reveal the impact of adherence to identity and linguistic reference in shaping the contours of the poetic experience. The significance of this study lies in uncovering the shared human and universal dimensions between the two experiences despite differences in environment and language, while highlighting how Arab consciousness perceives the Western experience through a poet connected to Al-Andalus Lorca and testing the limits of translation in conveying rhythm and symbolism across cultures.

The comparative study of the poetics of Nazik al-Malaika and those of García Lorca raises a series of critical, methodological, and epistemological issues both theoretical and practical due to the differences in their respective environments, cultures, and languages, despite the existence of profound human and artistic intersections between the two experiences. Among the most important questions underpinning these issues are the following: How was the existential vision of death and tragedy manifested in Nazik's work between self-anxiety and emotional alienation and in Lorca's work through a fateful and symbolic confrontation?

Keywords : free verse, vision, critical awareness, comparative approach, existential stance.

Introduction:

Despite the radical differences in social, linguistic, historical, and cultural contexts surrounding the emergence and formation of the literary and artistic works of both the Spanish poet García Lorca and the Iraqi poet Nazik al-Malaika, their respective trajectories inevitably converge at specific thresholds of poetic presentation. However, this sharp divergence itself did not

constitute a contradiction or incompatibility regarding philosophical reflection on certain existential issues. Rather, it was considered an expression of creative divergence that added new values to the poetry movement in both form and content. Here, distant horizons meet like the two ends of a circle meeting at a single point marking the birth of a new style of poetic writing characterized by a reflective/philosophical dimension that reveals the poet's vision and existential stance. Through this stance, the poet challenges the alphabet of language while simultaneously turning it into a bridge connecting humanity to its human essence, working toward achieving harmony between man and the cosmos.

I. Upbringing and Creative References: Nazik al-Malaika and García Lorca

The comparative approach examining the intersection between the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) and the Iraqi poet Nazik al-Malaika (1926–2007) is grounded in the concept of "creative contrast". This concept serves as an epistemological and methodological framework bridging two geographically, linguistically, and culturally distant poetic schools. Its goal is to trace how their paths converge at the thresholds of existence and non-existence as a fundamental cosmic reality based on "revolutionizing the symbolic potential"¹ of the essence of existence.

The poet García Lorca grew up in the atmosphere of Andalusia, Spain (Granada, 1898–1936), deeply imbued with Arab heritage, architectural remnants, and rich literary culture, before moving to Madrid to interact with the avant-garde, becoming a promising and talented poet. His pivotal trip to New York in 1929 significantly impacted his artistic and social development, alongside other travels that added immensely to his artistic repertoire in music and theater. He subsequently received wide acclaim and appreciation across various literary circles, devoting himself entirely to poetic and theatrical creation, excelling in organizing elite theatrical performances alongside his artistic production.

At a pivotal junction in his creative journey, García Lorca published his first collection (*Book of Poems*, 1921), offering a modest initial experience reflecting the dawn of his poetic endeavor. Although the rhythmic structure of these texts seemed conventional to readers at the time, their content exhibited semantic and aesthetic uniqueness. Both aspects relied on a structural renewal that transcended traditional Spanish poetic rhythms, paired with a semantic comprehensiveness combining rhetorical imagery with philosophical and emotional depth a synthesis that soon became the hallmark of his writing style.

This journey of creative uniqueness continued with the publication of *Songs* (1927), followed in 1928 by *Gypsy Ballads*, which earned him international fame. In the latter, he successfully crafted a synthesis blending fantastical and mythological dimensions by combining popular narrative styles with an objective approach to expressing human and cosmic experiences.

In 1931, he added *Poem of the Cante Jondo* to his creative legacy, emulating the Andalusian spirit and its natural nuances in a vivid, dramatic harmony where the essence of death intersects with the details and contradictions of life. He also authored numerous literary and artistic works laden with themes of love and death, deeply embodying his vision of life across its fullness and

¹ - Amna Belaali & Abdallah El-Achi, *The Jurisprudence of Poetry: From the Question of Form to Questions of Meaning*, Maim Publishing House, Algeria, 2019, p. 78.

quiet vacuums. He expressed tragic moments that transformed human beings into body without soul and truth without meaning, until his life came to a tragic end at the dawn of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, ending his journey while securing his enduring presence in the literary and artistic history of Spain.

On the other hand, the name of the poet and critic Nazik al-Malaika shone prominently in the Iraqi cultural scene in early 1947. She received her academic education at the Higher Teachers' Training College before earning a Master's degree in Comparative Literature from the University of Wisconsin in 1959. Her cognitive passion extended to studying music and fine arts, influenced by the global and Arab dissemination of Lorca's legacy through English translations. This created an indirect spiritual and intellectual intersection between the two experiences despite the absence of direct historical contact between them.

Nazik al-Malaika fulfilled her academic role at the Higher Teachers' College in Baghdad before moving to the University of Basra, eventually settling as a professor in the Faculty of Arts at Kuwait University. Her intellectual passion was not confined to academic texts; it extended to touching the structures of poetic musical melodies at the Fine Arts Center in Baghdad.

The dawn of Malaika's journey emerged in a cultural scene dominated by Lorca's global reputation. She was influenced by renewal movements that reshaped literature, criticism, and art in general, enriching her work with insights born from existential thought, national concerns, and major human issues. Through her artistic commitment, she established a rich critical and poetic legacy brimming with visions and inquiries that construct knowledge before seeking solutions to its questions.

Regarding her artistic affiliation, Nazik al-Malaika chose to begin as a Romantic, finding in its concepts a delicacy for the emotional flow when expressing grief and disappointment caused by harsh realities and recurrent tragedies. Nevertheless, her experience remained free and unconfined by standardized formats. Perhaps the psychological depth intersecting with the existential concerns of a committed poet rendered her style—despite its varied rhythms—realistic to the point where her poetics sometimes appeared turbulent, anxious, and occasionally illogical.

Our poet played a prominent, foundational pioneering role in the trajectory of modern Arabic poetry—akin to the structural shift in form and content introduced by García Lorca to Spanish poetry. She launched her innovative project that departed from prevailing norms of unified rhymes and fixed meters with her landmark poem (*Cholera*, 1947), while maintaining prosodic rhythm as an indispensable reference framework. Arab readers could observe the early manifestation of her modernist project across her collections: *The Tragedy of Life* (1977), *Bottom of the Wave* (1957), *Lover of the Night* (1947), *Splinters and Ashes* (1949), among many others.

II. The Dialectic of Aesthetic Convergence and Existential Intersections

Studying existential and aesthetic intersections across world literatures serves as a major gateway to understanding the transition of modernism across diverse cultures and local literatures. It allows us to test the depth of our connection with the "Other" by building bridges for communication and openness. "For creativity is not the monopoly of a specific nation, but

belongs to all humanity. Thus, it naturally connects to engaging with the achievements of others who preceded us in science, literature, and critical studies".² Verifying the authenticity of intersections between literatures and cultures helps us realize that "the use of comparative approaches aids in understanding how foreign influences are received and the degree to which we rely on or imitate others. We examine shared traits alongside our self-reliance in grounding our literature on innovation, making influence a creative engagement that utilizes achievements and surpasses them through creativity"³ and innovation that preserves cultural specificity.

In this study, the intellectual and creative convergence between Spanish poet García Lorca and Arabic free-verse pioneer Nazik al-Malaika stems from their foundational references. Both combine the inquiry into existential self-awareness with rebellion against traditional poetic molds. While Lorca's roots sprang from Andalusian soil adorned with folklore and Gypsy heritage before embracing universal Surrealism in New York, Nazik al-Malaika absorbed the authenticity of the Arabic language. This endowed her with a keen critical and expressive sensitivity toward words prior to stance, leading her to rebel against traditional Khalilid prosody and establish a poetic revolution burdened with existential anxiety and human destiny. This section attempts to deconstruct these intellectual ties through points of intersection in metaphysical sensibility, existential vision, and mythological/symbolic representation. It aims to clarify why these two figures are placed in comparative critical juxtaposition despite the lack of direct historical encounter.

While there is no definitive evidence confirming that Nazik al-Malaika was directly influenced by García Lorca despite her fluency in English and extensive knowledge of American literature our premise of existing intersections is objectively supported by Lorca's prominent stature within English cultural spheres that Malaika engaged with during her education. This is further reinforced by Arabic translations of Lorca's works, allowing his artistic footprint to resonate in her intellectual environment. In our estimation, thematic convergence in their literature stems from their shared point of commitment, serving as a launchpad for building an artistic vision addressing realities burdened by wars and existential crises where humanity remains the core subject. This leads us to attribute their point of departure and convergence to their exceptional ability to establish poetic awareness grounded in immediate perception of meaning and truth, alongside their skill in converting moments of insight into aesthetic and emotional imagery primarily driven by intuition.

Intuition transforms the simplest manifestations of existence into myth. "Through mythologizing existence, poetry elevates language into meta-language. The deeper a poet immerses in myth, the higher language rises toward the meta-level, making myth one of the most vital criteria of poeticity within a poem. This linguistic level attained by the poem carries a deep philosophical and aesthetic intuition, rendering the poetic experience richer and more mature, as seen in the works of Lorca and Nazik particularly regarding image, purpose, vision, and meaning"⁴

² - Majda Hammoud, *Applied Approaches in Comparative Literature*, Arab Writers Union Publications, 2000, p. 06.

³ - Majda Hammoud, *ibid.*, p. 06.

⁴ - See Ahmed Barqawi, "Poetry and Philosophical Intuition," *Al-Jadeed Magazine*, April 1, 2021- available at: www.aljadeedmagazine.com

Myth "is not mere nostalgia for bygone eras or forgotten worlds; rather, as Paul Ricoeur suggests, it represents a revelation of unprecedented worlds and an opening toward realms transcending our actual reality, thereby reviving and renewing language within a symbolic structure built on imagination and dream"⁵, Mythological thought does not become obsolete with time or scientific advancement. Thinker Ali Harb noted that myth is a dimension of human consciousness, as humans tend to explain the natural through the supernatural in search of order behind chaos. Humans conceive a program for growth, discover intentions behind events, and read meaning into the meaningless; thus, myth generates meaning and moves masses toward change⁶ through the spark carried by an author's writing style.

III. Manifestations of Tragic Awareness and Strategies of Poetic Confrontation

Tragic awareness in poetic writing arises from a deep sense of existential crisis and the self's confrontation with its limited ability to withstand forces that seek to marginalize, erase, or deny its identity. In such moments, the self feels an imperative need to confront and defend its entity to guarantee survival and the right to exist. In response, an aesthetic impulse awakens within the creative/poetic self, searching for a way to resist the constraints of reality. Finding only the poetic cry, the poet turns the poem into a laboratory where human tragic destiny bound by death or existential nihilism is manifested, especially amidst major historical transformations and tragedies across Arab and global geographies.

To avoid remaining distant from these transformations or unable to express a vision that might alter historical consciousness particularly in an era of materialist regression toward brutality and tyrannical policies the poet adopts poetry as a vehicle for confrontation, challenge, and free expression. Freedom in poetry "is not a gift or grant, but an open and extended question across time and space; it is an existential necessity and condition for life without which both cease to exist. Hence, the true task of poetry is conceived as the search for freedom"⁷. If a poet fails to achieve freedom within text, begging for it from others is futile, as it degenerates into a mere tool rather than remaining the face of life itself. The freedom of poets begins nowhere and ends only at the thresholds of a poem aspiring toward existential freedom⁸.

In this context, several manifestations of tragic awareness can be clearly observed in Nazik al-Malaika's work (*Lover of the Night*, 1947):

I express what my life feels... and paint the strange sensation of my soul

أعبرُ عما تحسُّ حياتي... وأرسمُ إحساسَ روحي الغريب

I weep when the years strike me

فأبكي إذا صدمتني السنين

With their terrible, eternal dagger

بخنجرها الأبدى الرهيب

And I laugh at what time has decreed

وأضحك مما قضاه الزمان

⁵ - Majda Hammoud, *Applied Approaches in Comparative Literature*, op. cit., p. 09.

⁶ - See Majda Hammoud, *ibid.*, pp. 09–10.

⁷ - Mohamed El-Hamamsi, "Poetry and Freedom in the Arabic Poetic Experience," *Al-Bayan*, Feb 6, 2010.

⁸ - See *ibid*

Upon this wondrous human frame

على الهيكل الأدمي العجيب

And I grow angry when feelings are trampled

وأغضبُ حين يُداسُ الشعور

And the surge... of flames is mocked⁹

ويُسخر من فوران... اللهب

The structure of this discourse clearly demonstrates the self's collision with the absurdity of fate and the harshness of time, stemming from an internal state that perceives reality through binary contrasts and sharp oppositions (weeping, laughing, anger, playing...), This contrast does not reflect psychological schizophrenia; rather, it manifests as a pure tragic intuition regarding human helplessness before time. This dynamic feeds the tragic awareness that nourishes poetic experience for committed poets.

Her use of continuous present verbs (*I weep, I paint, I grow angry, I express*) embodies this ongoing awareness throughout her poetic stages. From our perspective, this reflects her existential involvement in absorbing shocks and confronting them through reflection and writing. This process impels the reader's imagination to perceive the reality of tragedies resulting from such crises and comprehend human vulnerability before the inevitability of time. Her anger (*And I grow angry when feelings are trampled*) signifies a moral rejection of scorning inner human emotion, which forms an integral part of nature whose appreciation is essential for existential balance. Emotion transforms pain into expressive energy, revealing aesthetic awareness and silent rebellion against harsh reality.

From the stance of modern criticism, tragic texts "stir emotions from a latent state into an active, dynamic state by invoking worthy motives. They guide these emotions toward proper ends"¹⁰, Such texts do not offer ready-made solutions, but place the recipient at the center of pure tension, transforming collective or individual experiences into unique aesthetic structures. "If a poet is gifted at transforming reflection into feeling within tragic writing, they succeed in making us feel uniqueness even in ordinary situations"¹¹

where writing becomes an anticipatory act against falling into non-existence and a symbol of resisting existential emptiness, as shown in her poem (*Rebellion Against the Sun*)

"I stood before the sun, crying out to it:

وقفت أمام الشمس صارخةً بها

O sun, my rebellious heart is like you!

يا شمس، مثلك قلبي المتمردُ

My heart, whose youth swept life away,

قلبي الذي جرف الحياة شبابه

And whose renewed light quenched the stars.

وسقى النجوم ضياؤه المتجددُ

Hold, and let not a bewildered sorrow deceive you

مهلاً، ولا يخدعك حزنٌ حائرٌ

⁹ - Nazik al-Malaika, Complete Works (Diwan), Dar Al-Awda, Beirut, Vol. 1, p. 459.

¹⁰ - Moelwyn Merchant & Clifford Leech, *Comedy and Tragedy*, trans. Ali Ahmed Mahmoud, rev. Shawqi Al-Sukkari & Ali Al-Rai, World of Knowledge Series, Kuwait, June 1979, p. 159.

¹¹ - Moelwyn Merchant & Clifford Leech, *ibid.*, p. 145.

In my eyes, nor a sighing tear,

في مقلتي، ودمعة تتنهد

For sorrow is the very image of my revolution and rebellion..."¹²

فالحن صورة ثورتي وتمردني

This poetic moment is neither a fleeting complaint to lighten loneliness nor a moment of madness rebelling against the sun. Rather, it represents an existential plea where the poetic self stands face-to-face with truth symbolized by the sun, representing life itself. Through poetic discourse, Malaika derives her conviction that she can transcend loneliness and fear into freedom and rebellion, Courage is to live and rebel against life¹³, establishing our free presence within it as confirmed in her line: (...*For sorrow is the very image of my revolution and rebellion...*)

Moving to García Lorca's poem (*The Summoned*), he writes:

"O my relentless solitude!

يا لوحدي المتواصلة

The small eyes of my body

عينا جسدي الصغيرتان

And the wide eyes of my horse

وعينا جوادي الواسعتان

Do not close in sleep as night descends,

لا يغمضها الكرى عند هبوط الليل

Nor do they gaze upon that side that recedes gently

ولا ترمق ذلك الجانب الذي ينأى عنه بهدوء

The dream of thirteen boats,

حلم ثلاثة عشر قاربا

But with clarity and rigor,

ولكن بصفاء وصرامة

Like two watchful sentinels, they stare at a point

وكحارسين يقظين تحدقان في نقطة

Of metal and rock

من المعادن والصخور

Where my veinless body

حيث جسدي الخالي من الشرايين

Reads its fortune with cold playing cards..."¹⁴

يستقرئ طالعه بأوراق اللعب الباردة

Lorca built his poetic discourse in this poem upon a deep tragic awareness transcending routine emotional expression. It manifests as an ontological reality placing the self before its fate surrounded by mute cosmic forces, The opening invocation (*O my relentless solitude!*) acts as a dramatic threshold establishing an absolute rupture with the world, turning solitude from a temporary state into a dominant fate.

¹² - Nazik al-Malaika, *Diwan*, p. 485.

¹³ - See Rollo May & Irvin Yalom, *An Introduction to Existential Psychotherapy*, trans. Adel Mustafa, rev. Ghassan Yaqoub, Ru'ya, Cairo, 4th ed., 2015, p. 08.

¹⁴ - Lorca, *Complete Works*, trans. Muhammad Khalifa Tellesi, Arab Book House, 1992, p. 57.

This semantic structure is framed visually between (*the small eyes of my body*) symbolizing human fragility and (*the wide eyes of my horse*) reflecting momentum, The negation in (*do not close in sleep as night descends*) intensifies the imagery, turning alertness into an eternal curse born of fear of the unknown.

Lorca's expressive mechanisms integrate subtle semantic shifts, such as (*nor do they gaze upon that side that recedes gently*), illustrating how truth escapes through a blind spot that the horse cannot see despite constant vigilance. The image of the horse converges symbolically with Lorca himself the rebellious youth seeking truth unconsciously identifying with the noble horse whose blind spot may bring its demise, a reality Lorca felt prior to his assassination.

The tragic scene reaches completion through dramatic condensation (*where my veinless body reads its fortune with cold playing cards*), The veinless body suggests postponed death and organic cessation of life, while fortune-telling with cold cards translates the absolute absurdity of existence.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that the responses of Federico García Lorca and Nazik al-Malaika toward the themes of death and demise are organized into three main philosophical and psychological paths reflecting their deep existential awareness:

- ❖ **Subjective Stance:** Manifested through their immersion in emotional experience and anticipation of death, viewing life as a fleeting dream or mirage encircling the individual self with shackles of loss and pain.
- ❖ **Rebellion and Tendency Toward Nihilism:** Developing the subjective stance into a refusal of social contradictions, believing in life's absurdity, and seeing death as the ultimate deliverance.
- ❖ **Philosophical Inclination:** Endowing both poets with an exceptional ability to perceive the core and fixed values of existence despite the constant passage of time.

Citations and Footnotes:

1. Amna Belaali & Abdallah El-Achi, *The Jurisprudence of Poetry: From the Question of Form to Questions of Meaning*, Maim Publishing House, Algeria, 2019, p. 78.
2. Majda Hammoud, *Applied Approaches in Comparative Literature*, Arab Writers Union Publications, 2000, p. 06.
3. Majda Hammoud, *ibid.*, p. 06.
4. See Ahmed Barqawi, "Poetry and Philosophical Intuition," *Al-Jadeed Magazine*, April 1, 2021. available at: www.aljadeedmagazine.com
5. Majda Hammoud, *Applied Approaches in Comparative Literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 09.
6. See Majda Hammoud, *ibid.*, pp. 09–10.
7. Mohamed El-Hamamsi, "Poetry and Freedom in the Arabic Poetic Experience," *Al-Bayan*, Feb 6, 2010.
8. See *ibid.*
9. Nazik al-Malaika, *Complete Works (Diwan)*, Dar Al-Awda, Beirut, Vol. 1, p. 459.
10. Moelwyn Merchant & Clifford Leech, *Comedy and Tragedy*, trans. Ali Ahmed Mahmoud,

- rev. Shawqi Al-Sukkari & Ali Al-Rai, World of Knowledge Series, Kuwait, June 1979, p. 159.
11. Moelwyn Merchant & Clifford Leech, *ibid.*, p. 145.
12. Nazik al-Malaika, *Diwan*, p. 485.
13. See Rollo May & Irvin Yalom, *An Introduction to Existential Psychotherapy*, trans. Adel Mustafa, rev. Ghassan Yaqoub, Ru'ya, Cairo, 4th ed., 2015, p. 08.
14. Lorca, *Complete Works*, trans. Muhammad Khalifa Tellesi, Arab Book House, 1992, p. 57.

Bibliography:

- Amna Belaali & Abdallah El-Achi, *The Jurisprudence of Poetry: From the Question of Form to Questions of Meaning*, Maim Publishing House, Algeria, 2019.
- Lorca, *Complete Works*, trans. Muhammad Khalifa Tellesi, Arab Book House, 1992.
- Majda Hammoud, *Applied Approaches in Comparative Literature*, Arab Writers Union Publications, 2000.
- Moelwyn Merchant & Clifford Leech, *Comedy and Tragedy*, trans. Ali Ahmed Mahmoud, rev. Shawqi Al-Sukkari & Ali Al-Rai, World of Knowledge Series, National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Kuwait, June 1979.
- Nazik al-Malaika, *Complete Works (Diwan)*, Dar Al-Awda, Beirut, Vol. 1.
- Ahmed Barqawi, "Poetry and Philosophical Intuition," *Al-Jadeed Magazine*, April 1, 2021, available at: www.aljadeedmagazine.com
- Mohamed El-Hamamsi, "Poetry and Freedom in the Arabic Poetic Experience," *Al-Bayan*, Feb 6, 2010, available at: www.albayan.ae
- Rollo May & Irvin Yalom, *An Introduction to Existential Psychotherapy*, trans. Adel Mustafa, rev. Ghassan Yaqoub, Ru'ya Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 4th ed., 2015.