CHAPTER-III

MAHMUD TAYMUR AND HIS LIFE AND WORKS
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3.1 A SHORT INTRODUCTION OF MAHMUD TAYMUR:

Mahmud Taymur, the first great Arab short story writer was born in 1894 A.D. He belonged to erudite and aristocratic family. After finishing his primary and secondary education, he took admission in the agricultural college but could not complete his studies as he fell ill with typhoid and was confined to bed for several month. After recovering from ill, he began to study under the guidance of his brother Muhammad who had just returned from Europe, being full of ideas absorbed from French literature to start a new range of activities in Arabic literature. On Muhammad's untimely death in 1921 A.D., Mahmud took over the task of his brother. His brother's imagination is reflected in all of his works. He was one of the most remarkable representatives of the 'Madrasah Hadithah', who became more famous than his brother Muhammad, who died young. Mahmud Taymur was given the same education as his slightly elder brother Muhammad and was much influenced by him. They wrote plays together in the manner of Salamah Higazi and read Arabian Nights in an expurgated (muhadhab) version, which made a deep impression upon them. At an early age Mahmud started to read translated novels, often of a dubious quality, as he himself reports, like so many of his contemporaries, romantic character. In his youth, he enthusiastically read the works of the Syro-Lebanese writers in the Mahjhar in North America, for example Gibran's collection of short stories, 'al-Ajnihah al-mutakassirah'. It was also under the influence of Gibran that he
started writing verse prose. By Mahmud's own account, it was the magazine 'al-Funun', published by the writers in the Mahjhar, that opened his eyes to Western literature.

After the death of his mother, the family moves to 'Ayn Shams, then a small village, not far from Cairo and this was Mahmud Taymur's first experience of the Egyptian countryside. It was here that he met the hero of his story "al-Sheikh Gum'ah". "During his stay in France, his brother Muhammad had got to know the stories of 'De Maupassant' and he introduced his younger brother to this admired author. Throughout his life, Mahmud retained this admiration of 'De Maupassant', perhaps partly out of loyalty toward his brother. In these years, he also became acquainted with Russian novels and short stories in translation. Particularly those by Chekov and Turgenev, on whom he thought he recognized the influence of 'De Maupassant'. Again at the instigation of his brother, he read al-Muwaylihi's "Hadith 'Isa ibn Hisham" as well as Haykal's recently published "Zaynab".2

Soon the family moved back to Cairo. For a short time, Mahmud Taymur studied at the Agricultural School but his studies were interrupted when he fell ill with typhoid. After his illness he did not return to the Agricultural School. For some time he worked at the Department of Justice and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.3 There was, however, no need for the rich young man to train for a profession or to make a career in the civil-service, after these two posts, he never held any other nor did he ever begin to pursue any particular vocation. In Cairo, he led the life of a wealthy man of letters. In 1920 A.D., he married the daughter of Dhu'l-Figar Pasha, an official to the king.

When Muhammad died (1921 A.D.), it was a heavy blow to Mahmud, who had already published some prose pieces in the style of
‘shi’r manthur’ in al-Sufur. After his brother’s death, Mahmud continued, as it were, the latter’s work. In 1922 A.D., he published the story "al-Shaykh Gum’ah", the title-story of his first collection in the same magazine ‘al-Sufur’, in which his brother had played such an important role.

In 1925 A.D., Mahmud Taymur left for Europe, where he stayed for two years, most of the time in Switzerland. By his own account, he read a great deal of European to period; he considered this stay in Europe as very important to his literary education. Outwardly, however, the influence of the European period is barely noticeable in the stories published immediately after his return, which hardly differ from "al-Shaykh Gum’ah". After his great journey, his life in Egypt developed smoothly. He gradually received the official recognition which had been withheld from him when he was still a member of avant-garde groups like the ‘Madarsah Hadithah’. In 1947 A.D., he was awarded the prestigious prize from the Academy of the Arabic Language for modern Arabic short story (for al-qissah). In 1949 A.D., he was appointed a member of this Academy, where he took the place of August Fischer; which was inaugurated by Taha Husain on January 16th 1950 A.D. In 1950 A.D., he received the Fu’ad, the First award for literature and in 1962 A.D., the State prize was conferred on him for modern Arabic literature by new Republican Government in Egypt as well. The latter showed that in spite of his monarchist origins, he was acceptable to the new Republican Government in Egypt as well. He died on August 25th, 1973 A.D.
3.2 HIS WORKS:

Mahmud Taymur is recognized as a pivotal figure in the evolution of modern short stories. As a writer, he was very accessible to influences and consequently he changed his literary principles quite a few times. Undoubtedly the greatest influence in his youth and adolescence was that of his brother Muhammad, who was two years his senior and probably also the stronger personality of the two. Mahmud writes about his brother in terms like "my teacher" (ustadi). Since the elder brother was one of the pioneers of the 'Adab Qawmi', as has been mentioned above, it is not surprising that Mahmud in his first collection, al-Sheikh Gum'ah (1925 A.D.), selected subjects from Egyptian popular life and even went as far as to write dialogues in the vernacular. In 1920 A.D. he married the daughter of Dhu'l-Fiqar pasha, an official to the king.

When Muhammad died in 1921 A.D. it was a tremendous blow to Mahmud, who had already published some prose pieces in the style of 'shīr Manthur' in al-Sufur. After his brother's death, Mahumud continued, as it were, the latter's work. In 1922 A.D., he published the story "al-Sheikh Gum'ah", the title-story of his first collection in the same magazine al-Sufur, in which his brother had played such an important role. At that time, he was obviously a firm believer in the principles of the 'Madrasah Hadithah'. As with many of his contemporaries, his belief in the adab qawmi went hand in hand with an inclination towards realism, which he himself called naturalism (Tabiya) and which he advocated in so many words in 1935 A.D.

Taymur's collections, which appeared in the following years, remained clearly realistic, as is apparent from 'al-Sheikh Gumah' (1925 A.D.), 'Amm Mitwalli (1926 A.D.), Ragab Effendi (1928 A.D.),
Al-Hagg Shalabi (1930 A.D.) and Abu ‘Ali Amil Artist (1934 A.D.). However, he soon gave up using the vernacular for dialogues: as from Ragab Effendi (1928 A.D.) he wrote his dialogues in standard Arabic. In 1927 A.D., in the preface to the second edition of al-Sheikh Gum’ah, he accounted for this change by stating that he had come to the conclusion that the use of two languages in one literary work caused a contradiction (tanafur) within the work, which diminished its value. Taymur, who often re-wrote his work anyhow, in the second edition (1927 A.D.) even, re-wrote the dialogue in al-Shaykh Gumah in standard Arabic. He did the same in ‘al-Wathabah al-ula’ (1937A.D.), as the title indicated a collection of stories from his early period.

The preface and the latter collection clearly shows that he wished to regard his first three volumes, in which he still used the vernacular, as things of the past. While in 1927 A.D., he had still argued that he had shifted to standard Arabic for dialogue or artistic grounds, he gradually developed into a purist who not only wished to ban the vernacular from literature altogether but who even tried to replace many loan words from European languages by equivalents in standard Arabic which he often thought up himself. He continued to use these with great persistence although they never really caught on. Without a doubt, it was this persistent fight for standard Arabic which made him eligible for the Academy of the Arabic Language, as he thought himself also. On the other hand, his rather pedantic purism did occasionally antagonize people too.

It was not only his purism which induced Taymur to repeatedly change his stories. He also often re-wrote them for other reasons, for instance to improve their style or the development of their plots. The title-stories of al-Hagg Shalabi and Abu ‘Ali amil artist, for example,
were reprinted as “Qatb ghaniyah”, the title story of a collection published in 1937 A.D. and “Abu ‘Ali alfannan”. In the latter his purism appears again in the fact that the popular "artist was replaced by "fannan". He also continuously re-arranged his work; several collections of short stories like Qal al-rawi (1942 A.D.), Shabad waghaniyat (1951 A.D.) and Zamir al-hayy (1953 A.D.) contain stories from other collections.

Around the mid-thirties, Mahmud Taymur’s realism took an analytical psychological turn. His early realism had occasionally been rather superficial and his interest in what was Egyptian and popular in Egyptian society with its emphasis on the picturesque, sometimes makes a rather tourist-like impression. Gradually he started to devote more attention to his characters’ motives. One of that first examples of this change is the long story-actually an novella-“al-Ajlal” (1943 A.D.), which was later re-written and re-published in Shabad waghaniyat (1951 A.D.). Even though “al-Ajlal” is not free from melodrama, his change in attitude gave Mahmud Taymur’s work more depth. His circle of protagonists, too, which at first was limited to the picturesque and very poorest, was expanded to other classes of society.

3.2 (a) LIST OF MAHMUD TAYMUR’S WORKS:

Taymur’s contribution to Arabic fiction is tremendous. He contributed immensely to the development of short story of modern Arabic literature. In some stories, he describes the national struggle and in others he depicts the village life and the simple folk burdened with superstitions and legends. In regards of literary production, Taymur excelled all his contemporaries. A few works of Taymur have been mentioned as follow:
• Al-Shaykh Gum’ah waqisas ukhra, Cairo: al-Matb al-Salafiyah, 1343 H.-1925 A.D.
• ‘Amm Mitwalli waqisas ukhra, Cairo: al-matb, al-Salafiyah, 1343 H.-1925 A.D.
• al-Shaykh al-‘Ail wa’aqasis ukhro, Cairo: al-matb. Al-Salafiyah. 1344-1926 A.D.
• Ragab effendi qissah misryah, Cairo: al-Matb. Al-Salafiyah, 1346-1928 A.D.
• Al-hagg shalabi wa’aqasis ukhra, Cairo: Lagnat al-Ta’lif wa’l-Targamah. Matb al-l timad, 1349 H.-1930 A.D.
• Ragab effendi, al-Atlal and Abu ‘Ali ‘amil artist.
• Nida’ al-maghul, Beriut: Dar al-Makshurf, 1939 A.D., according to review H 48, no 7 (May 1940 A.D.), Matb, al-ittihab, Deirut).
• Cleapatra fi Khan al-Khlili, Cairo: amkt. Al-Adab, (1946 A.D.)
• lia’l-liqa, ayyauha i-hubb, Cairo: al-Sharikah al-‘Arabiyah li’il-tiba’ah wal-nashr, 1959 A.D.
• Al-masabil al-zurq, Cairo: al-nashir al-Hadith (1960 A.D.)
• Ma ‘bud min in, Cairo: makr. Al-Adab (1969 A.D.)

3.2 (b) PLAYS:
• Arus al-Nil, Cairo: Dar mag, al-hawadit, 1941 A.D. (M 100, no3 (March 1942A.D.), p. 302); Landau, Arabic Theater, p. 254;
Muhammad hamdi; Daghir, Mu'gam al-masrahiyat, p. 404: Matb, 'Ataya.


- Abu Shushah wa'l-Mawkib, masrahiyatan bi'l-arabiyyah al-fusha, Damascus:

- Al-Munqidhah wa haflat shay, Cairo: Dar al-kutub al-Ahliyah, 1943 A.D.

- Qanabil, Cairo: lagnat al-nashr li'l-Gami iyin, Makt. Misr, 1943 A.D.

- Hawwa al-khalidah, Cairo: Dar Sa'd Misr, 1945 A.D.

- Al-Yawm khamr, Cairo: dar al-Ma'arif, 1949 A.D. Daghir, mu'gam p. 611;


- Fida', Cairo Dar Ihya, al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah, 1951 A.D.

- Al-Muzayyifun, Cairo: Makt. Al-Adab (1953 A.D.)

- Ashar min Iblis, Cairo: Dar al-Ma arif, 1952 (Iqra' 122)


- Khamsah wakhumaysah, Cairo: al-Dar al-Qawmiyah, n. d.
3.2(C) MISCELLANEOUS:

• Fann al-qasas, Cairo: matb. Al-Ragha in, 1925 A.D.
• Nushi ali-qissah watatawwuruha, Cairo: al-Matb. Al-Salafiyah, 1936 A.D.

3.3 MAHMUD TAYMUR AS A NOVELIST:

Mahmud Taymur is outstanding as a novelist in the twentieth century. He used to read and write European novels. Ragab effendi (1928 A.D.), which contains one long story and the story entitled 'Abu 'Ali'amil artist' may be considered as great novel. However, not until 1939 A.D. did Mahmud Taymur publish his first full-fledged novel 'Nida' al-maghul, which was printed separately. His ambition to write longer novels, which he gradually realized, was accompanied by a shift further away from realism and analysis. Nida al-maghul (1939 A.D.) is a fantastic adventure in the Lebanese mountains, far removed from the naturalistic description of street life in Cairo or from the fortunes of the well-to-do bourgeoisie of Cairo of the early collections. In fact it is rather romantic and even tentatively symbolic.

In Mahmud Taymur’s later stories, it is found that the theme of the fame fell often occurs remarkably, for instance in the title-story of Qabl ghaniyah (1937 A.D.), in two stories from Shifah ghalizah (1946 A.D.) and, slightly altered, in the novel Salwa fi mahabb al-rih (1947 A.D.). The last has been regarded by some critics as a social novel depicting the class distinctions in Egyptian society. Mahmud Taymur’s post-war work indeed shows an unmistakable shift towards socially committed literature. This is well illustrated by Shamrukh (1958 A.D.), also published under the title of al-Dhahab al-aswad (1965-66 A.D.),
which describes the up-to-date subject of oil in an imaginary Arab country and the social upheavals caused by its discovery.\textsuperscript{16}

Mahmud Taymur, especially during his formative years, was deeply influenced by Western literature from what he wrote about this. We know that his great model was De Maupassant rather than Zola, whom he mentioned in the first of the numerous accounts he gave of his career as a writer. In the lengthy essay on the influences he underwent, "al-Masadir allati alhamatni al-kitabah" (originally the preface to the collection fir' awn al-saghir, 1939 A.D.), he clearly regards De Maupassant as his great example. Balze too, impressed him.\textsuperscript{17}

Russian writers, like Chekhov and Turgenev, were a source of inspiration to him as they were too many of the writers of the madrasah Hadithah. The assumption that he was also influenced by Freud seems doubtful. Mahmud Taymur as an author evoked little resistance but, on the other hand, did not find a great following either. With his early books he un-short story in Egypt. His novels, which date from a later period, played a less significant perhaps in his later work Mahmud Taymur appears to have followed the literary trends of his day rather than to have set them.\textsuperscript{18}

3.4 MAHMUD TAYMUR’S WRITING-STYLE:

Mahmud Taymur’s, writing-style is mainly descriptive and avoid all the ambiguous and complex constructions. He use simple but exact vocabulary and conveys in short sentence detailed sketches of natural scenes. The open sky, morning dew, singing bird etc. are delightfully described by him. He, who belonged to the same generation as al-Hakim. He started his career as play write in the 1940
A.D. It is generally felt that, unlike al-Hakim, Mahmud Taymur (1894-1973 A.D.) is primarily an author of narrative fiction, short stories and novels, rather than a dramatist. Nevertheless, he wrote a dozen of so full-length plays and handful of one-act dramas, many of which were performed on the stage in Egypt as well as in other Arab countries. What is remarkable is that he turned to play-wrighting relatively late in life, his first plays being written in 1941 A.D. Apart from the general literary background of his distinguished family, which included several outstanding literary figures, the strongest single influence on him was that of his elder brother Muhammad, the dramatist, who advised him to read Muhammad al-Muwaylihi's Hadith Isa bin Hisham and Muhammad Husayn Haykal's Zaynab, work which attempted to create what his brother strongly advocated, namely, specifically Egyptian literature. Mahmud suffered a serious illness, which caused him to discontinue his agricultural training and to devote himself to independent literary studies at home, reading a considerable amount of classical and modern Arabic literature, together with English and French literary works in their original languages. Under his brother's guidance, he developed a particular interest in Maupassant and Chekhov, the former impressing him by his narrative skill and his simple, realistic portrayal of many aspects of life, while in Chekhov he admired the author's sense of tragedy and capacity for deep psychological analysis. For a while Mahmud held government posts in the ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs, but, having independent means, he soon gave them up, devoting his time to writing and travel. In 1925 A.D., he visited Europe, where he spent two years, mainly in Switzerland. His closer experience of European literature to have local colour; great literature must also be universal.
In other word, Mahmud was obviously outgrowing the influence of his elder brother whose main teaching (and practice) consisted in emphasizing the need to produce specifically Egyptian literature. He began to publish his literary work in 1925 A.D.; in 1947 A.D. he was awarded the first prize for fiction by Academy of the Arabic Language. In 1949 A.D., he was elected a Member of that Academy and was given the State Prize for literature in the following year.\textsuperscript{22}

3.5 MAHMUD TAYMUR'S POSITION AS A DRAMATIST:

Mahmud Taymur is also famous as a dramatist in Arabic literature. He attempted seriously to write drama. If we disregard his juvenile activity, then we see there are a number of one-act plays dealing with contemporary life in Egypt, all written in 1941 A.D. in the Egyptian colloquial, because he was convinced that in order to produce the desired effect characters, must speak on the stage as they normally do in their public and in their private life alike although to reach a wide audience, particularly outside Egypt, Taymur after rewrote his plays in classical Arabic. They were all satirical comedies, except for one play, 'Hakamat al-Mahkama' (The court Rules) which was included in his collection 'Khamsa wa Khumaysa' and therefore presumably belongs to the same early period. Despite its brevity, this is one of the most moving of his plays, even though in form it is closer to being a short story or character sketch in dialogue than a drama.\textsuperscript{23} 

A newly born girl is found drowned in the reservoir of a waterwheel with a head injury, by the Village Watchman, who also finds a peasant woman lying asleep beside it. She is arrested on a charge of murdering her baby daughter and is brought before the Deputy Prosecutor for questioning. As she stands in his office, surrounded by a number of policemen and the Watchman, answering the
questions put to her, her tragedy unfolds. She is the mother of three girls and when her husband, a butcher by trade, learns that she is pregnant, he threatens to slaughter the baby if it turns out to be yet another girl. Woman with every month that goes by, he stands before me with his bulging eyes and waves his long knife and swears that if it's a girl, he won't spare her. Eventually, she gives birth on an evening when her husband is out and to her horror, she finds that the child is a girl. She sits alone in her hut with her baby in her lap, having put the other children to bed, consumed with anxiety and frightened by the sound of the wind. Hearing a voice in the distance, she thinks it is her husband coming in with his sharp knife in his hand, so in alarm she runs off to the fields clutching her baby to her breast. She is distressed with fear and in order to save her baby from him, not knowing what she is doing, she throws it in the shaft of the waterwheel, commending it to God's protection. Throughout the interrogation, she appears dazed, to the point of being uncertain whether she is awaking or dreaming. When, however, after considerable effort the prosecutor manages to bring her to a realization that her daughter was drowned in the water, she screams curses upon her husbands for having spilt her child's blood, suddenly collapses and dies from physical exhaustion and grief. Her death sentence is, as the title of the play says, what the court rules; but which court the author does not specify. Is it the one in which she has been standing, or is it the court in Heaven? Or is it the traditions and attitudes of society that have sentenced to death this innocent honest woman? The Court rules is a memorable play, because of the grim irony of its events and the powerful portrait of the simple peasant woman, scared as if she were an animal by her brutal husband,
whose threats literally drive her to distraction: in order to save her baby from being slaughtered by him, she totally was unaware of what she is doing, causes death herself. Her predicament is presented by Taymur so convincingly and with such deep sympathy and lack of sentimentality that the play is much more than a plea for social reform and the humanizing of legal procedure, or a searing condemnation of the treatment of women in rural Egypt.27

In his other one-act plays, generally set in Cairo, Taymour satirizes the weaknesses and pretensions of the upper classes of Egyptian society. In al-Sul'luk (The Vagabond) false respectability is unmasked: an elegant unmarried society lady is idolized by one of her admirers, a reckless young man who has neither looks nor money and who spends whatever he gets on riotous living. Because he dared to declare his love for her in public she instructs her servant not to let him into her house 28. However, he manages to worm his way in, humbly begs forgiveness, and begins to entertain her by his clowning and his gossip; when she hears that he has won a thousand pounds in a lottery she suddenly becomes interested in him. He asks her if, in her opinion, a certain high-class tart would be prepared to spend a night with him for a thousand pounds, to which her reply is that any woman would, implying that even she would be prepared to sell her favours to him.29 Shocked at the realization that she falls so far short of his ideal image of her, he gets drunk and melodramatically tears to pieces the thousand pound banknotes in front of her. In her turn, enraged not only by his rude behaviour, but also by the thought of losing so much money, she tells him to go, calling him all sorts of names. The despised vagabond turns out to be the one capable of rising above money, while the respectable lady (who earlier claimed...
that a woman's attentions cannot be bought) proves unable to resist the lure of money.\textsuperscript{30}

Al-Mawkid (The Procession) is a face designed to show the hypocrisy of the higher classes. Within the framework of a slight plot, Taymur manages to portray many social types. A royal personage is returning of Cairo in a splendid procession which many would like to attend, including the family of Fad Allah sixty-year-old retired farmer in Cairo.\textsuperscript{31} Being old-fashioned in his views, he forbids his second wife, who is Cairene and considerably younger than himself, and his younger daughter to go and watch, for fear of his women old mixing with the crowd, which would include strange men. His son, a university student, is of course allowed to go, but his son-in-law and his elder daughter by his previous marriage follow the Pacha in their old-fashioned attitude and are content to listen to the radio commentary on the procession. The son manages, by plot, to get his mother (and sister) out of the house on the pretext of helping a female friend who has just started in labour. The plot is discovered by the Pacha (who suddenly decides to put on his formal dress), when the friend's husband comes in to borrow the Pacha's braces, saying that his wife has gone to see the procession. He goes off to the railway station followed by the Pacha, still wearing his night cap. Watching the Pacha's movements, the son-in-law decides to go too and tells his wife to follow him at once, but not to forget to wear her veil.\textsuperscript{32} The hypocrisy of the old-fashioned members of the family old and young like, is portrayed in an amusing manner, with entertaining scenes, such as the Pacha's and his visitor's farcical tug-of-war over the braces, which results in their being torn in two, each of them using half as a belt to support his trousers; the cheering of the delegation from
the Young Reformers Association of which the Pacha is Honorary President; and a comic clown, Sheikh Karawan, thrown in.  

In Barqiyya (A Telegram), a wealthy Cairenc couple receives a telegram which they are not to open for fear of bad news both about the possible destruction of the husband's property in Alexandria during a recent air-raid and about the wife's sister's health. Their fear is enhanced by what are regarded in popular superstition as portents of disaster, such as the twitching of the wife's eye and the howling of the dog. They work themselves up to such a state of frenzy that the husband is driven in the end to tear up the telegram without even opening it, while the wife watches him incredulously, drying the tears which she has been shedding in anticipation. Superstition and fear of the unknown are thus held to ridicule.

Abu Shusha is a more substantial play with more of a plot. The main theme is the opposition between town and country with the class structure in Egypt as a subsidiary issue. Mu'nis Bey is a thirty-year-old Cairene who, having inherited a farm from his father, together with a number of debts, moves to the effect, a hint which was immediately dismissed by Sinan. The play ends with their union. "Awali is also less tightly constructed: for instance, in Act- 2, at the session held to entertain the Caliph, the singing-girls as well as the main male characters engage in a long discussion of the early Islamic love poet Majnun Layla, which sees to impede the flow of action. However, the play is outstanding for its vivid portrayal of the character of Awali; she clearly stands for the spirited young Arab woman who seeks independence, refuses to abide by the limits of the traditional meek image of a good woman, does not blindly obey the orders given to her by the male head of the household if they seem unreasonable of
contradict what she regards as right and resolutely decides to marry only the person she chooses. It is obviously inspired by women's choice of husband: she chooses Sinan, whom she prefers to Tilal and even to the Caliph, because she admires his male heroic qualities, his dominant personality and his persistent efforts to tame her. 'A wali, therefore, is a cross between Nora in A Doll's House and Katharina in The Taming of the Shrew.36

Al-Munqidha (The Woman Saviour) is Taymur's third full-length play (consisting of one long act) centering around a female character. Once more the events take place in past period of Arab history, this time slightly more specific: Egypt during the Mamluk rule. Firihan, the daughter of the late Shaykh al-Balad (Mayor), is the only survivor of her family, all of whom were destroyed by Dawud Bey, who by an act of treachery replaced her father.37 She has been saved by Barasabay, one of her father's young retainers, in whose palace she now lives as an honoured guest. Barasabay, a brave warrior, manages to avenge her father's murder, killing Dawud in battle, in which he himself is slightly wounded. He is nursed by Firihan, who is aware of the deep love Barasabay feels for her, but, because she feels obliged to him for everything including her life, she cannot bring herself to admit to him-or to herself-that she cares for him. Without letting either of them knows his intention, the old foster-father of Barasabay, who clearly understands the situation and is anxious to bring the young couple together, stages a mock plot to kill Brasabay, making sure that Firihan gets to know about it and therefore appears at the right moment to save his life. This rescue liberates her from there paralyzing feeling of obligation to him, and thus it is made possible for her to accept his love on an equal footing, and the play ends happily with her agreeing.
to marry him. Once more Taymur has produced a romantic play, about love and chivalry, with a prominent young woman who grows to understand and accepts her feeling of love for a brave man. There is action and dramatic suspense in The Woman Saviour, but the humour is absent, except for the mild amusement provided by the character of the traditional female fortune-teller. Again Taymur has succeeded in portraying at least one interesting character, Firihan, who, however, is at times in danger of alienating our sympathy by behaving like a spoilt and ungrateful child. But what is worth nothing about all three plays are the underlying changing attitude to women: a woman is presented not as a mere chattel, but as a person in her own right, responsible for her own actions, to be treated with dignity and respect.38

In the following year (1943 A.D.), Taymur returns to modern Egypt for his themes and once more assumes the role of satirist, a role in which he is generally more successful. Both ‘Haflat Shay’ (A Tea-Party) and Qanabil (Bombs) were originally written in the Egyptian colloquial, though they were later rewritten in classical Arabic. The former a long one-act play is a spirited attack on the follies of certain sections of upper-class Egyptian society, the trivial pursuits in which they engage to fill the emptiness of their lives, their silly quarrels, their false values, their snobberies and blind copying of the superficial manifestations of western civilization, a theme, which as we have seen, has been a feature of modern Egyptian domestic comedy since the time of Ya’qub Sannu.39

Sabir Bey and Fikriyya hanim, a young Egyptian couple belonging to the upper bourgeois, are giving a tea-party in honour of the Consul of an imaginary western republic from which Sabir is about to receive a decoration, a medallion which will be presented to him by
the Consul. The reason for decorating him is that at a recent reception the Consul, who happens to be the president of a cycling association in his country, learnt from Sabir that he too is the president of a similar body in Egypt. Sabir and Fikriyya, particularly the latter, decide to take this opportunity to impress the world and to show their importance in society by inviting a large number of distinguished personalities, including politicians and foreign diplomat. When asked by their guests what to wear for the occasion, they insist upon formal evening dress, so anxious are they to appear westernized in their ways! Unfortunately things soon go wrong. To their dismay, the date they have chosen for their party turns out to clash with that of two important social function, which draw most of the important people invited, who telephone their regrets. Moreover, Sabir discovers that he has forgotten to deliver a large number of invitations. Only half a dozen people arrive and they look lost in the large drawing-room, facing a huge buffet. When the Consul rings up to say that he will be late, due to pressure of work, the servant is ordered to go out and collect as many suitable people form the street as he can, to swell the number of guests: he manages to bring from an adjacent youth club fifteen schoolchildren, who willingly oblige, tempted by the prospect of party food. Their faces are promptly scrubbed, their hair combed and they are made to look generally less untidy. While waiting for the Consul to arrive, the hosts receive a telephone message from him saying that he has just heard that his country has been hit by a severe earthquake, which will make it impossible for him to attend. Than he decides to wait no longer: Sabir makes a formal speech to his guests, announcing the honour he is about to receive and shows them a photograph of the medal. The guests, particularly the schoolchildren,
swoop on the food, demolishing most of it. Just then, when everything is in disarray, a second message is received from the Consul saying that there has been a mistake in the cable, and its is a neighboring country and not his own, which has been struck by the earthquake, and announcing that he will be coming to the party after all. At once everybody is told to stop eating and some semblance of order is hastily restored to the room. The play ends with the arrival of the Consul, who walks slowly into the room taking short dignified steps, followed by his footman carrying the decoration, visible in its splendid case, the host and hostess and all their guests respectfully bowing to him and welcoming him in unison with the words (Your Excellency)\textsuperscript{42}

On the basis of this flimsy plot, Taymur has created what is probably his most entertaining, though not his profoundest, comic work. It is certainly one of the most accomplished farces of a superior kind in modern Egyptian drama with exquisitely comic situations and convincing characters that come to life in a few masterly strokes; lively dialogue fully expressive of the speakers character and minute significant details. The author pokes fun at the hosts and their guests alike. Sabir Bey and his wife are keen to look thoroughly westernized, their drawing-room is furnished in the latest and most expensive style, with modern paintings hanging on the wall. Their latest acquisition is a surrealistic picture bought by the wife at a high price which, as neither of them understands it, they cannot hang, because they do not know which is the right way up.\textsuperscript{43} In matters of etiquette, good taste and social refinement, such as what dress to wear or how to arrange flowers, the husband who hides his ignorance and allows himself to be guided by his wife, who really does not know much better, but is the more dominant personality. She is typical of the idle rich woman with
nothing serious to occupy her mind, with the result that she becomes highly strung, petulant, restless and over-anxious about silly points of etiquette and appearance. Unable to stand still long enough for her maid-servant to button up the back of her dress, she grows impatient with her and orders her to go away, and yet a few minutes later complains that the servant has not bothered to come to help her with her dress. She severely scolds the man-servant, who is scared of her, for not arranging the flowers in the vases on the table artistically enough for her liking and her husband readily agrees with her, although he does not really see what she is complaining of. She attacks her husband for his negligence over the choice of date for the party and his failure to send the invitations and accuses him of laziness in not making an attempt to ride a bicycle himself while agreeing to be president of a cycling association. A perfect snob, she rushes to greet the guest she believes to be a titled aristocrat, while ignoring the impecunious journalist commoner.

To create excitement in his life, Sabir, his friends and even his male servant gamble on horse-races and argue incessantly about which horse is going to win. As it happens, the servant wins a large amount of money, while his master loses, which makes the peeved master find excuses to impose unjust fines on him as punishment.

The few guests they have at the party belong to the same world, since the more important persons have declined the invitation. The first to arrive is Khalil Pacha, an elderly impostor, wrongfully assuming the title Pacha and giving himself airs and graces; a scrounger who gets his host to pay his taxi fare and the price of a box of his favorite cigars, which he appropriates; a glutton who yet asserts that one does not go to a party in order to eat, while speedily gobbling
Khalil Pacha is a fraud and a cheat: he pretends to have written a book on 'The Memoirs of Sultan Abd al-hamid' for which he has collected subscriptions through newspapers, without delivering the goods.\textsuperscript{46}

Next to arrive is Mr. Farghali, a promising man of letters and a new journalist working for the same newspaper; he is out to get as much social gossip as possible and has an ear for scandal. As soon as he sees Khalil, he quarrels with him over the money he owes his newspaper for the non-existent book: he has had to pay back to impatient subscribers out of his own pocket (although at first Khalil pretends not to recognize him). The quarrel is settled by the hostess, who, anxious to avoid a scandal at her party, makes her husband pay Farghali the sum involved. Then there is Babr Bey, described as an aristocrat who pretends to be keen on sport, arriving at the party straight from the horse-races, dressed in loud, totally unsuitable sports gear and accompanied by his wife ‘Inaya, a society woman. They are in the middle of a violent domestic quarrel, because he jealously accuses her of flirting with another man, one of the socialites who frequent the races. She counterattacks by calling him uncivilized, narrow-minded and inconsistent, since he had allowed her to dance with the White Russian Prince Stefano in the night before. Badr replies saying that the Prince is a different proposition as he is a great man who belongs to the true Russian nobility.\textsuperscript{47} Anxious to impress by his knowledge of the secrets of high society. Khalil points out that the Prince is an impostor and a cheat and says he knows many scandals about him. The last to arrive before the Consul is Hafiza Hanim, an older woman referred to as the embodiment of ‘false aristocracy’ she
makes a point of mentioning the fact that she has been invited to five parties the day, and apologizes for not being able to stay with them for longer than an hour: she has to go to preside over a prize-giving at the charity school run under her auspices, at which the children sing an anthem especially composed for her and all wear a medallion bearing her picture.\(^{48}\)

Sensing a possible quarry for his gossip column, Farghali hastens to make up his quarrel with Khalil and takes him aside to ask more about the Russian Prince. Khalil promises to give him details of the scandals, but for payment, which is agreed upon in principle. In the meantime the other character are busy looking at the surrealist painting in feigned admiration and real incomprehension, still unable to tell which is the right way up and each offering a different opinion. Yet they are able to discuss the opera, Beethoven's music, the latest art exhibition and European women's fashion. The journalist make use of his presence at the party gets an interview with the Lady Bountiful, Hafiza Hanim, and even squeezes one pound out of the male servant in return for publishing the news of his winning at the races accompanied by a photograph (on which he promises to superimpose a false medallion for a small extra payment).\(^{49}\)

The play is well-constructed with events moving fast towards the climax marked by the consul's arrival; but the suspense is maintained until the end. The action being punctuated by the telephone ringing and the hostess's nervous reaction to it strengthening the suspense. The necessary information is given indirectly through the dialogue in such a cunning natural way that, while the action is never hindered, the characters are continuously
revealed. So compact is the form that much is given in a short space, with descriptive simplicity clearly visible.

Taymur does not satires against the aristocracy directly as such, but against the hypocrisies, the excesses and the stupidities of the upper classes and their greediness's. Even in the list of dramatis personalities, all the guests are described in some form or other as impostors of pretenders or false. The one character that is referred to merely as ‘aristocrat’ Badr Bey, is not free from pretense. He pretends to be keen on sports. Yet the satire is by no means vicious. While Taymur is fully aware of the silly antics of that section of society, which he presents in a series of lively situations with hilarious comic effects, the dominant spirit of the play is one of cordiality.50

Qanabil (Bombs) also written in 1943 A.D., a more thoughtful work than ‘A Tea-Party’, is perhaps Taymur’s greatest comedy. (A classical Arabic version appeared together with the colloquial one is 1952 A.D.) It is much larger in scope, since the action takes place partly in Cairo and partly in the countryside, and it has a much wider range of characters embracing a variety of types from different social classes, both in town and country.

The events take place during the Second World War, when there was fear that Cairo would be bombed by the Axis, following the seven air-raids on Alexandria. Sheikh Abul'-Yusr, a retired Muslim clergyman who is also a wealthy landowner, has just had his own air-raid shelter built at considerable cost in the basement of his family house in Cairo. He offers the use of his shelter to his friend and relation Sheikh Dirgham, who lives next door. Despite his own Islamic background, he has given his daughter Luliyya French education and sent his son Nasih to study in England, although his studies were
interrupted by the war and he had to return without obtaining a degree. Luliyya is engaged to be married to the civil servant Mahrus, the only surviving son of Dirgham; the loss of his other children has turned Dirgham into an overprotective father and an anxious and melancholy man who only sees the dark to improve the quality of life and farming irrespective of expense, and has even begun to delegate to him the responsibility for running certain aspects of his large estate— to the horror of his able but old-fashioned biliff, Hawwash. He is unaware that his son is really a playboy and a philanderer and believes him when he says that he got up at dawn in order to go to the agricultural society to learn about the most up-to-date methods in dairy farming, while in fact he had gone to the airport in an attempt to stop his artiste mistress from going on a tour abroad. Abu'l-Yusr breeds turkeys about which he is so solicitous that he has a special air-raid shelter built for them and when the air-raid siren goes off at the close of Act we find him instructing his servant not to forget to take the turkeys to the shelter. Yet he is not really seriously interested in the working of the farm: being a vain and easy-going sociable man, he is more anxious to see his tailor, while keeping his bailiff waiting. The bailiff, who has come all the way to Cairo because he is worried about the hundreds of acres of rice plantation drying up for lack of irrigation, makes several useless attempts to get his employer to take the problem to the Ministry of Agriculture, and, in desperation, finding Abu'l-Yusr easily distracted by endless trivial matters, he decides to rush to the ministry himself in the middle of the air-raid. Again, in the country Abu'l-Yusr shows more readiness to make social calls and accept invitations to meals than to do anything about the badly needed fertilizer requested by the biliff. In making improvements in his
own house Abu'l-Yusr ingenuously half-believes that he is raising the standard of living of the village, that he is turning it into 'a model village in the true sense of the word. by his modernization measures he is setting an example of the peasants to follow, as if it were at all conceivable that the semi-starving peasants could afford to buy a water filter or sterilizer oven. While waiting for the lorry to take them back to Cairo, he takes stock of the family situation, trying to justify their unseemly flight; 

ABU'L-YUSR: To tell you the truth, folk, I never really wanted to leave this village.

'UWAYS [a tailor and a hanger-on]: What? With all the epidemics, the murder and looting. Your Excellency?

ABU'L-YUSR: What epidemics and murder? I'm not one to worry about such matters. I swear to God the only reason why I am leaving for Cairo is my desire to do my duty towards my countrymen. The National Committee for Civil Defence is about to be formed in Cairo and they have been urging me for so long to agree to become a member of it. 

MAHRUS: I think you should accept, Uncle.

ABU'L-YUSR: It is a social service which one has to perform. After all one does feel for one's country; at the hour of danger one should come forward and say, 'here I am'.

NASIH: Bravo, Dad!

As for Luliyya, she gets fulsome praise from her father for constant a awareness of her duty to the community:
LUliyya: Not once have I seen a peasant woman in the field without stopping to ask her about herself and her life and my explaining to her the nature of her duties.

Mahrus: And, of course, you gave her valuable advice!

LuLiyya: I would tell the women that they must wash their eyes in disinfectant every day, spray the houses with insecticide, not step into the canals with bare feet and so on, all that in order to put an end to all disease.

Abu'l-Yusr: I must say, folk, that I am leaving this village with a clear conscience. Everyone of us has discharged his duties to the best of his abilities, praise be to God! We are leaving after having sown the seed for social reform, we have laid the foundation for a model village. Now another duty awaits us in Cairo: the duty of civil defense.

Other characters are also finely drawn. Dirgham's experience of bereavement has made him a fearful man and an over-protective father. Unlike Abu'l-Yusr, he can appreciate the bailiff's serious cast of mind, as the latter has lost all four of his children. He is alarmed to her that his son Mahrus in volunteering for civil defense, and does his utmost to get him out of the service. He enlists the help of his fiancé in hiding his firearms, to discourage him from shooting for fear of an accident. He is anxious for him to take his daily dose of medicine and when the servant's head is found to be crawling with lice he pushes his son away from the source of danger and treats in with paraffin himself. He even stands in front of him when he offers to go to the front door to see who is knocking at the time when they hear the shooting. Naturally the son rebels against being treated like a
child, tries to assert his independence, refuses to obey his father and insists upon remaining in the civil defense. Nasih is a plausible liar; he has managed to get his immediate family to take him seriously because of the false impression he has created that he is genuinely interested in, and knowledgeable about, certain aspects of agriculture. He has acquired a veneer of western manners, goes to a bal masque dressed as a peasant, catches butterflies, and has a collection of them, which the local peasants find incomprehensible. He instructs the servant to ask the milkmaid, the pretty wife of a local watchman (whom he has appointed to replace an older woman) to come to see him, on the pretext that he wishes to inspect her milking and her milk products. To make sure that her methods are efficient and hygienic; but in fact he wishes to seduce her. He is warned by Mahrus (who has taken a holiday from his job to be with the rest of the family in the country) not to have anything to do with her, as her jealous husband nearly killed someone on her account, but Nasih takes no notice. Then after the murder of her husband, she seeks refuge with the family he pleads for her to stay, on the plausible grounds that it is the only honorable thing to do and even suggests to his father that it might be a good idea to take her with them to Cairo in order that she may make cheese and butter for them! He, of course, has no illusions about his sister's well-meant but irrelevant advice to the peasant women, or about his father's claims that he is modernizing the village, that he is performing a national duty in returning to Cairo.66

Of the five main characters discussed here, perhaps Mahrus is the only one who is not a butt of Taymur's satire; but even he, despite his obviously genuine desire to serve his country by enlisting for civil defense, allows his father to persuade him to leave Cairo and join the
others in the country. The dramatist's stance is ironic throughout, exemplified not only in the characters' inability to understand themselves, but also in their even more serious limited understanding of other groups: the gap between the town and the country could not be wider than here. But Taymur's treatment is sympathetic and humane: his satire is not extreme or damning because he is not writing a social tract, but a play, a work of art. While the characters, the setting, the problems and the humour, including verbal humour, remain genuinely Egyptian, the dramatist's insight into the vagaries of human nature is such that Bombs can be described, without much exaggeration, as a lasting and universally significant comment on the human comedy.

Taymur went on to write two more plays sent in modern Egypt: (Kidhd fi Kidhb) Pack of lies, written in 1951 A.D., printed both in classical and colloquial Arabic in 1953 A.D., but performed at the Opera House a year earlier and Al-Muzayyafun (The False Ones) produced in Cairo in 1953 A.D. and printed in the same year. In A Pack of lies, a play in four act. Taymur returns to the world of A Tea-Party, the upper echelons of Egyptian society and their hangers-on: Act-1, which occupies half the play, takes place in the bar at the Cairo horse races and we even find the same racehorse, Ghalban, in both plays. The plot is extremely complicated, but the main events revolve round the character of Karim Bey, a rich, handsome young man who has squandered his fortune on races and is now facing bankruptcy, being persuaded by his elder friend Fawwaz Bey to propose to Karima, the adopted daughter and future heiress of Shafiqa Hanim, a wealthy woman of sixty. Karima, in her turn, after some hesitation accepts him because she is anxious to leave home, where she is
unhappy, and, like most people, she is under the impression that Karim is extremely rich and can therefore satisfy her expensive tastes. They are both, or rather, they think they are, in love with other people: Karim with Zahiya and Karima with Basyuni, and by a strange coincidence both Zahiya and Basyuni live in Alexandria. In the meantime, Shafiqa's husband, Nasdsar Bey, an unprincipled man of base origins who was in her employment before marrying her, has managed to have the ownership of his wife's estate secretly and illegally transferred to himself with the connivance of village headman. Nabih Bey—a newly rich man from the country, with ridiculously exaggerated westernize manners—in return for Nassar's promise to marry him to Karima. The crime, however, is discovered by the police when Shafiqa suddenly dies: the two men are given a prison sentence, but Karima is left just as penniless as Karim. When the young couple learns that they have been deceiving each other about their imaginary wealth, they break off their engagement, but they soon discover that they have in the meantime gradually grown fond of each other: what has started as pretended love has now developed into a genuine emotion. They are brought together by Fawwaz Be, in whose house they are reunited.

A Pack of Lies seems to be based upon a moral ambiguity. It is not clear whether Taymur is condemning lying or simply stating that lying is an integral part of human nature. When Karima discovers that she and Karim have not been truthful, she complains to their mutual friend Fawwaz:

KARIMA: To tell the truth I am disgusted with myself, with the world, with everything. There is no honesty, no sincerity, no frankness.
FAWWAZ: Whoever told you that the world is full of such things?....

Such is the world and such are its people. You may take it or leave it, just as you wish. But you won’t be able to change it in any way. Wise people tell us that hypocrisy is evil, but life itself teaches us that we cannot do without it. We know that lying is improper and wicked, yet we go on lying to one another... The important thing, since we are incapable of truthfulness and honesty, is that we must not indulge too much in lying and hypocrisy.

Taymur even seems to be saying that lying can sometimes be a good thing. When they realize that they are really in love, Karim says to Karima at the close of the play:

KARIMA: I now see that our lying to each other has not been a bad thing after all: look, what an excellent result it has produced.61

This final speech seems to run counter to the main tenor of the play, which emphasizes the damaging effect of the ambiguity in the author's attitude to the subject of lying. More than any other play by Taymur, A Pack of Lies lacks charity: every single character in it is held up to ridicule, mainly for hypocrisy and lying. The only two characters drawn with some sympathy (and they are minor ones) are Fawwaz Bey and 'Abd al-Hamid Bey, but the former, as he later admits, does not mind lying about Karim's financial situation in order to save him, while the latter is shown to be a foolish man devoting his energy to the ridiculous project of setting up a horse-racing museum and falling an easy prey to the flattery of Karim's ex-secretary, Nafi'.62
3.6 ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION ON HIS DRAMA:

Mahmud Taymur was most imaginative writer of Arab world. He was also a successful dramatist. In his attempt to show that lying is a universal phenomenon, the author presents inordinately large number of characters involved in dishonest or hypocritical dealings with one another. We see Karim deceiving Karima, but he is in turn deceived by Zahiya. Likewise, Karima deceives Karim and is deceived by Basyuni. Nafi', Karim’s workless secretary, is deceived by the tart he loves, Safruta, who in turn is deceived by the man she adores, Fahim, the handsome broker who makes a hobby of using his women admirers for his own material advantage. Karima’s close female companion, Mufida, deceives her friend and is in turn deceived by Fahim. Nassar and Nabih’s more serious and legally punishable dishonesty as already been pointed out. This intricate web of mutual deception has not only resulted in a damagingly complicated plot, but has led the author to resort to far too many coincidences and artificially contrived situations, more in keeping with a farce than a comedy. Gone is the realism and the subtlety of Bombs. Even the gentle humour for which Taymur is noted seems to be replaced here by a facile sardonic grin, a cynical laugh at the ludicrous activities of the Society for Happy Marriages during the Annual General Meeting at which, by another strange coincidence, practically all our characters from Cairo and Alexandria are present.

Much more serious in tone and realistic in treatment is The False Ones, the only overly political play Taymur produced. It was apparently written before the 1953 A.D. revolution and originally entitled al-Za’im (The Leader), but Taymur saw no chance of its being produced on the stage under the ancient regime, so its staging had to
wait until 1955 A.D. It is a fast-moving political drama in six scenes, each taking place two months after its predecessor, so that the entire action of the play covers a period of twelve months. Its theme is the corrupting influence of power in corrupt society. It ones with the victory of the People's Reform Party in the general election under the leadership of Kamil Pacha, an inspiring political idealist, one of whose disciples is ‘Afifi Bey, his son-in-law and secretary to the party.65 ‘Afifi is even more a man of principle than his leader and has been criticized by his colleagues for a dangerous lack of flexibility, which drives him even to try to discourage his party from agreeing to form a cabinet, on the naïve grounds that they will be more effective in oppositions than in power. However, Kamil does from a cabinet, in which ‘Afif agrees to serve.66 The action of the play shows the gradual erosion of the idealism of these politicians by pressure from powerful self-seeking professional politicians like Labib and Farid, and from feudalists like Ziftawi Pcha who for the sake of material gain, provides the party with the necessary financial banking on the one hand, and by the unscrupulous attacks of a cynical opposition represented by the nominally socialist journalist Munib on the other. Parallel with political disintegration runs individual moral decline, resulting in the break-up of the marriage of the Editor of the organ of the party, and even more importantly of ‘Afifi himself (whose happy marriage has been the envy of all), with the inevitable deception and lying, the implication being that political and public integrity cannot be separated from integrity in private life.67 What started as a minor compromise in order to say in power, so that the government could carry out its programme of reform on the principle that the end justifies the means, soon goes beyond mere evasiveness in replying to journalists' questions and
develops into a serious misuse of power to satisfy the greed of capitalists or to interfere with the course of justice. For instance, threatening to withdraw his financial backing and switch his support to the opposition party, Zifta wi Rahman, the survivor of the massacre of his family perpetrated by the Abbasids, who seized the Caliphate from them in a bloody war in the eighth century. He swam across the Euphrates, crossed the Syrian desert, traveled through Egypt and Tunisia and settled in North Africa, but only for a while, biding his time until he could cross the Mediterranean to Spain, There he swiftly managed, by diplomacy and war, to assert his authority over the entire peninsula and unite the whole of that divided country under his rule.

The play is divided into five acts, representing different stages in ‘Abd al-Rahman’s career, building up to a climax towards the close; but there is enough action and suspense in every act to render the play exciting to read and no doubt gripping to watch. In Act-1 we find the hero living with a Beber supporter and his family on the North African coast, scanning the horizon for a sail, anxiously waiting for news from his loyal follower Badr, who has gone to Spain to find out about his master’s prospects there. He has been away for several months and in the meantime ‘Abd al-Rahman, a fugitive from the Abbasids, has had a price placed on his head by the local Governor. The Governor’s men storm the house where he had been living and he has a narrow escape by hiding under the clothes of his hostess who is told to pretend to be in labour, with her maid, Rawah, helping to deliver her and the local soothsayer, Manara, standing beside her reciting prayers to facilitate a difficult birth. At one point the Police Constable grows suspicious and is about the look under the woman’s clothes but is scared away by Manara’s angry imprecations and calls on the
supernatural agencies to destroy him should he commit such a shameful act. We watch this search with bated breath, but the trick, ingenious as it may sound, not only works, but is made dramatically plausible, because earlier in the scene a joke is made about the enormous size of the lady’s belly which looks as though she is about to give birth to twins. ‘Abd al-Rahman’s second escape make him believe what the fortuneteller has been telling him, namely that he has a charmed life. Apart from giving us the necessary background information about the hero and relevant details of his appearance, such as his defective eye, Act-1 introduces us to three important characters, Rawah, Manara and Badr: Rawah, the slave girl, is so deeply in love with the Prince that when he is hunted by the police she says she wishes she could ransom him with her own life, a wish which ironically will later be fulfilled. She is one of a series of women who cannot resist the Prince’s charm and who, in different ways, help him along the road to power. Manara, the soothsayer, tells him that Fate is on his side; he gives expression to an aggressive, amoral view of life which believes in expediency and that the end justifies the means, a philosophy to which the prince at first objects, but later accepts and practices himself. Manara will join the Prince in Spain when the latter’s fortunes improve, and the Prince will grow to depend upon him more and more. At the end of the scene, Badr, his devoted follower, arrives, bringing good news for the Prince, who instantly decides to make the journey to Spain.

Act-II takes place a month later, in the castle of his supporter. ‘Abdullah ‘Uthman, in southern Spain. ‘Uthman shares with his relation Ibn Khalid, the command of the Syrian armed forces in Spain. They lend their support to ‘Abd al-Rahman against al-Fahri, the ruler of
Spain, whom they regard as a weak man, unable to control the warring feudal lords and bring to the land the unity and harmony which they believe 'Abd al-Rahman is capable of achieving. In 'Uthman's palace we meet two more women admirers of the Prince; 'Uthman's rich sister, Amirat al-Qusur, who is older than he is, but who puts her fortune entirely at his disposal to promote his cause; he flatters and promises to marry her. She brings him to good news that Fahri's forces are now so weak and disorganized that the time is ripe for 'Abd al-Rahman's final push. The other woman who will prove an invaluable help to him is the attractive slave, Duha. 'Abd al-Rahman shows his astute statesmanship when, instead of fighting the governor of Seville, Abu Sabah, he willingly accepts the harsh conditions Abu Sabah imposes on him for his support of the Prince's claim to Spain in return. The act ends with the sudden arrival of the soothsayer Manara, accompanied by the salve girl Rawah, who prevails upon him to take her with him to serve the prince.74

In Act-III we find 'Abd al-Rahman already, before the end of the year installed in power in the great place at Cordoba; Manara is there, together with the three women who adore the prince; Rawah, now dressed as a boy in his service; Duha, clearly the Prince's favorite slave girl; Amirat al-Qusur waiting for him to fulfill his promise of marriage. When the last-mentioned realizes that he has no intention of marrying her, she turns against him and, together with Abu'l-Sabah, plots his murder. The plot fails: seeing a man posing as someone with a grievance to submit to the Prince about to stab him with a dagger, Rawah rushes to shield her master with her own body and receives a mortal blow. The would-be murderer is caught and confesses that he has been suborned by Abu'l-Sabah.75 'Adb al-Rahman, however,
much to the baffled disapproval of his followers, decides for political reasons to accept at its face value Abu'l-Sabah's denial of complicity in the plot. And allows him to remain in office as Governor of Seville.76

The events of Act-IV take place twelve year later. 'Adb al-Rahman has become more autocratic in his rule, and at the same time more superstitious and more reliant upon his fortune-teller Manara, whom he consults over everything. His early supporters, including his old, devoted follower Badr, have become alienated because he has been sending them on missions to far-off places continuously. He has also become impatient with Abu'l-Sabah because of the threat he posed to his authority: he invites him to Cordoba under the pretext of marrying his eldest son to Abu'l-Sabah's daughter, as a means of putting an end to their differences and cementing their friendly relations.77 But he springs a surprise upon him and his friend when he forces Abu'l-Sabah to duel, reminding him of the unsuccessful attempt he had made on his life twelve year earlier, and declaring that he has decided that the good of the country requires that only one of them should live and rule unopposed. The duel is fought and after much suspense 'Abd al-Rahman emerges the victor (his opponent has been slain). His erstwhile helpers, 'Uthman and Ibn Khalid, are banished because of their support for Abu'l-Sabah.78

In Act-v, 'Abd al-Rahman turns his attention to his struggle with the external enemy, Charlemagne, whose soldiers have taken up positions in impregnable mountain passes.79 In order to dislodge them and knowing that they have been camping for several months, deprived of female company, he hits upon the ingenious idea of luring them out using women. In this he is helped by Duha, who for his sake makes the ultimate sacrifice; she volunteers to head a caravan of
slave girls who are manumitted and given to understand that they are being sent home. The plan works: the Christian soldiers fall into the trap, try to capture the women and are killed in the process, together with the women – including Duha, whose caravan is completely wiped out the road is now clear for 'Abd al-Rahman's forces to fight the Christians properly.\textsuperscript{80} The Admiral of the Fleet, who has been preparing to make war on the Abbasid rulers in the Eastern Mediterranean, is now instructed to join the fight against the Christians instead, a decision that proves that 'Abd al-Rahman has risen above motives of personal revenge and is now fighting for the great cause of Islam.\textsuperscript{81} The play ends with a soliloquy, in which the hero, in his lonely grandeur, takes stock of his life. He is troubled by the thoughts that he is now alone, having destroyed friends and foes alike; that he has not always used proper means to achieve his ends; that he has now shown sufficient gratitude to those who helped him to reach the top. But it is only a momentary anxiety, for he soon suppresses to voice inside him, resuming his resolution and determination to fight the war of Islam and of the Arabs, taking refuge in the idea that only God can judge him. After all, is he not, as everyone around him tells him, the man of destiny? Let fate then be responsible for his actions. In The Hawk of Quraysh, Taymur managed to create one of the most interesting and memorable characters in modern Arabic drama.\textsuperscript{82} 'Abd al-Rahman, with his single-minded determination, his obsession with power, his relentless pursuit of his goal together with his superstition, insecurity, vanity and sensitivity about his physical defects (his damaged eye and lost sense of smell), and his complex and unconscious reaction to the incalculable suffering he had to endure early in his life when he was a mere fugitive, hunted by his enemies,
is certainly a most convincing creation. The plot summary cannot do justice to this: it is in significant details that the complexity of the character reveals itself, for example, in his recurring resentment against being pursued by women admirers, while at the same time surrounding himself with beautiful women, but not for obvious sexual gratification.\textsuperscript{83} Or the extremely tender scene in Act-IV, when, shortly before the duel in which he feels he may well die, he asks Duha to play the flute and sing him the lyrics he himself composed, in which he expresses deep nostalgia for his childhood and his native land a scene in which the ruthless opportunist disappears behind the sensitive and sentimental poet.\textsuperscript{84}

The Howk of Quraysh has other interesting features as well as the remarkable character of its hero: there are subordinate character in it, of varying degrees of liveliness: the faithful, pleasure-seeking Badr, who is ruthlessly discarded by Abd al-Rahman in a cruel manner which reminds one of Prince Hal abandoning Falstaff; the mysterious soothsayer Manara; or the dwarf Hercules, who is the court clown, a brilliant chess player who cannot escape being punished by the monarch, whether he wins or loses a match; or the aristocratic lady, Amirat al-Qusur, who puts her fortune at the hero's service, but who becomes a formidable opponent when spurned by him. Because of its tight organization, the play has several examples of irony, including tragic irony.\textsuperscript{85} The action and particularly the plots are presented so skillfully that an air of mystery is created, arousing curiosity and suspense. Moreover, unlike Taymur's other historical plays it is relevant to the political preoccupation of con-temporary Egypt.\textsuperscript{86} In its emphasis on the need to curtail the power of the feudal landlord and to unify to country under the leadership of an enlightened autocratic
ruler, it expresses the mood of the Egyptian Revolution in the fifties a point which has been explained in the valuable introduction, written by Zaki Tulaymat, who both produced they play and played type leading role in it in Tunis. However, it is to the credit of Taymur the dramatist that, although in his choice of the Umayyad Prince 'Abd al-Rahman as the theme of his play he was inspired by the keenly felt need for a strong leader to emerge, to take matters in hand and end the constant squabbles between self-interested political parties and factions, he refrained from presenting a falsely idealized picture of the perfect nationalist leader.87

Indeed, despite possible propaganda pressure, Taymur would not have wished to offer a perfect portrait, convinced as this was that evil and imperfection form an integral part of human nature.88 This is clearly shown in his play Ashtar min Iblis (Clever than Satan, 1953 A.D.), a light-weight political-cum-moral fantasy, in which Satan and his demon followers set out to prove that the evil in man, which mankind, to excuse itself, wrongly ascribes to the devil, in reality comes from within man himself. They endeavor to create an absolutely good human being, whom they have stolen in infancy brought up according to the principles of virtue, away from other, corrupt human beings. Needless to say, the attempt proves a disappointing failure. It is no wonder that with his strong belief in the imperfectability of man and in the complexity of his motives, Taymur not only avoided simplistic social solutions to the problem of human misery, but was also able to present convincing characters of recognizable complexity in his plays, which, for various, mostly extra-aesthetic, reasons have been underrated by politically 'committed'
Arab critics. It is time that Mahmud Taymur the dramatist was given his due recognition.89

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