CHAPTER – III

TAWFIQ AL-HAKIM AND HIS CONTEMPORARY DRAMATISTS

3.1. Introduction

Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898 – 1987) is considered to be the founder of Modern Arabic drama, and such a claim has been made by H.R.A. Gibb who significantly regarded him to be so; on the other hand Luwis ‘Awaḍ described him as the true founder of Egyptian drama in every serious sense; and Ghali Shukri called him ‘the first pioneer of the dramatic art in Arabic. It is indicated earlier that Modern Arabic drama was borrowed from the West independently by Marun al-Naqqash in the Lebanon in 1847 and by Ya’qub Sannu in Egypt in 1870. In fact, both of them were inspired by the example of Italian opera and influenced by French comedy. Although some indigenous types of dramas found in the period of medieval Islam, were of the representation of traditional approaches. In this connection, we may mention Abu Zayd al-Hilali and Baybars, which are closer to drama in some ways, and in this connection the drama activities relating to the massacre of al-Husain, the son of the fourth caliph Hazrat ‘Ali (R. A.), and his family in the annual cycle of passion plays (ta’ziya) for commemorating them, may be compared to that of the earlier model of Arabic drama. Of course, some scholars are of the opinion that the ta’ziya should more properly be viewed as an extension of religious ritual than a drama. In fact, such type of folk drama
was performed by Shi‘ite Muslims generally in Persian; but some have been done in Turkish and Arabic.\textsuperscript{75}

Moreover, if we consider the earlier works of Arabic drama, it appears that the shadow theatre (\textit{khiyal al-\textasciitilde{zill}}) seemed to have a continuous tradition of dramatic entertainment in the Arab lands, as early as the tenth century. The oculist Ibn Daniyal (1248 – 1311) wrote shadow plays three in number; each of the three plays has its own individual form and peculiar atmosphere and theme or themes. They demonstrate singing, music and dancing along with their suitable dialogues in the form of rhyming prose and a mixture of verses. They are like \textit{maqama} dealing with conmen, tricksters and, in general, people from the lowest strata of society. They are rich in social reality, and embody a mixture of comic and religious characters seem to go through a final act of repentance after a riotous existence devoted to the pursuit of earthly pleasure. In fact, such type of traditional dramas seems to have left their mark on the development of modern Arabic drama. Alongside, Marun al-Naqqash and Ya‘qub Sannu introduced the theatre arts of Europe that attracted people more to opera than to anything else. Following both of them a few other playwrights also endeavoured to develop the features of Arabic theatre drawing the views of people towards socio-political affairs. The ever-growing numbers of theatres showed musicals, translations and adaptations of western drama, together with serious original Arabic plays, as well as the popular farces which were a development of the crude traditional form. By and large the actors and actresses became widely famous in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75} M.M. Badawi, Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt, New York, 1999, pp. 1 – 8
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, pp. 2- 6
Here it is significant to note that the first play performed by the new National Theatre Troupe was *Ahl al-Kahf* (أهل الكهف), which was a work of Tawfiq al-Hakim. We find the good reasons for beginning a study of modern Arabic drama in Egypt with Tawfiq al-Hakim who started publishing his work in the early thirties, from that very point of time Arabic drama was slowly becoming a respectable form of literature.\(^{77}\)

Here it is imperative to know that we find a few numbers of dramatists in the realm of Modern Arabic literature, who flourished before the contemporaries of Tawfiq al-Hakim and among them the following are prominently mention worthy; they are namely ‘Uthman Jalal (1829 – 1898), Faraḥ ‘Anṭun (1874 – 1922), Ibrahim Ramzi (1884 – 1949), Muḥammad Taymur (1891 - 1921) and ‘Anṭun Yazbak.

In fact, ‘Uthman Jalal played a great role in the realm of Arabic drama and he wrote a short play entitled al-Khaddamin wa’l-Mukhaddimin (Domestic Servants and their Agencies). It is informed that he wrote this drama in the colloquial verse of Egypt known as Zajal, but this work was published after his death in 1904. It brings some social problems in the consistence of the drama in verse. Alongside, the dramatist, ‘Uthman Jalal also translated some French plays into Zajal. Secondly we find Faraḥ ‘Anṭun who was a well educated man, produced two important dramas, they are namely *Miṣr al-Jaida wa Miṣr al-Qadima* (Egypt, New and Old, 1913) and *al-Suṭṭan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa Mamlakat Urshālim* (Sultan Saladin and the kingdom of Jerusalem, 1914). The former work deals with the idea of strength of will power, work and serious application, self discipline, defence of virtue and family values; and the later work deals with a liberated and educated lady having family reputation and searching for freedom from the moral and social

\(^{77}\) Ibid, p. 6
restrictions and norms of her society. Faraḥ ‘Anṭun earnestly tried to bring the exploitation of the western imperialists to the notice of the Egyptians in respect of social and cultural affairs. Thirdly we find Ibrahim Ramzi, who started his dramatic career by writing a historical play entitled *al-Ḥakim bi ‘Amr Allah* (1915) during his sojourn in England; in fact, there he was exposed to European dramas. His other plays are namely *Abṭal al-Manṣura* (1916), *Bint al-Ikhshid* (1916), *al-Badawiyya* (1918), *Isma’il al-Fatiḥ* (1937), and *Shawir ibn Mujir* (1938). Here mention may be made that all these plays are related to historical aspects. Alongside, he wrote some serious dramas entitled *Ṣarkhat al-Ṭifl* (written in 1923 and published in 1938), *Bint al-Yawm* (written in 1931) and *al-Fajr al-Ṣadiq* (written in 1937). And his play *Dukhul al-Ḥammam mish Zayy Khuruguh* also reveals social comedy of Egypt in full-fledged manner.78 Fourthly we find Muhammad Taymur (1892 – 1921), who was recounted as a pioneer of the modern Egyptian short story; his early career bears a curious resemblance to that his slightly younger contemporary Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898 – 1987), who was later to become the Arab world’s greatest playwright to date.79

In fact, Muḥammad Taymur was basically a student of medicine and law; he was also endowed with a good literary taste, which he had inherited from his father, Aḥmad Taymur Pashaa (1817 – 1930). Having maturity in his earlier thoughts on drama and theatre, his endeavour was triggered more and more, while he went to France and there he got the first hand experience of French drama. After his return to Egypt, he wrote three plays independently and one play with the co-operation of Badi‘ Khayri. His full length plays are *al-‘Uṣfur fī al-Qafaṣ* (performed in 1918), ‘Abd al-Sattar Afandi (*‘Abd al-Sattar Effendi*,

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performed in 1918), and *al-‘Ashra al-Ṭayyiba* and *al-Hāwiya* performed on the stage in 1921 and published in 1922. Here it is imperative to know that the plays written by Muhammad Taymur are found in classical as well as colloquial languages.\(^{80}\)

Despite having related to the profession of lawyer, ‘Anṭun Yazbak took active part in the development of Arabic drama; and in this connection, he extended two plays to the field of Modern Arabic literature. His plays are namely *‘Aṣifa fī Bayt* (A Storm in House) and *al-Dhabā‘īḥ* (Sacrifices). His former drama pertains to domestic and sorrowful affairs of the society and the later deals with the Egyptian social problems.\(^{81}\)

### 3.2. Tawfiq al-Hakim’s Contemporary Dramatists

In this connection, we find a number of contemporary dramatists parallel to the life of Tawfiq al-Hakim; they are brought to discussion as follows:

**Muhammad Taymur**

In the domain of Modern Arabic literature, Muḥammad Taymur is considered as the first great short story writer; and then his reputation goes as a novelist and dramatist as well. He wrote a dozen or so full-length plays and a handful of one-act dramas, many of which were performed on the stage in Egypt as well as in other countries of the Arab World.\(^{82}\)

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\(^{81}\) Ibid, p. 115

Muḥammad Taymur belonged to an educated and aristocratic family, but the family did not have social airs. From the childhood period, Muḥammad Taymur used to mix freely with the children of the crowded area where he first lived. As the intuition went with his mental aptitude, he listened to the stories of the elders in the countryside during the period of summer vacation. In such a way, he learnt the secrets and traits of the common man which he later portrayed in his writing of short stories.

To run his education Muḥammad Taymur joined the Agricultural College but could not pursue his studies because of his infliction with typhoid and he was confined to bed for several months. Meanwhile his elder brother Muḥammad Taymur returned from Europe full of ideas absorbed from French literature to start a new range of activity in Arabic. Under the guidance of his brother Muḥammad set a plan of studies and adhered to it throughout his life. Due to illness Muḥammad had to remain at home, which became a turning point of his life and he went ahead for doing the intellectual literary works, which about he mentions: “I felt sensitive about this defect which prevented me from hearing other people. This spurred me and spurs me even today to complete by imagination what fails to reach me in reality.”83 As and when his elder brother untimely died in 1921, Mahmud took over the volunteer task of his brother. In this connection, he mentions: “I worked as if propelled by an inner urge to complete what my brother had aspired to do and I felt that in this way I was pleasing his soul.”84

Accordingly Muḥammad Taymur travelled frequently to Europe, especially in Switzerland from 1927 onwards. He absorbed the literary trends of Europe besides studying 19th century Russian literature.

84 Ibid, p. 120
Thereby he felt that the great literature is produced only when man turns his attention to the human soul. In fact, from his pen a galaxy of literary genres produced in the field of short stories, novels, and plays. His services to literature are widely recognized in the domain of Modern Arabic literature; and it made him possible to achieve the prize of language Academy (in 1947) and also the state prize for literature (in 1963).  

Here mention may be made that Muhammad Taymur advised his younger brother Muhammad Taymur to study the book entitled Ḥadith ‘Isa b. Hisham, written by Muḥammad Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi and the book namely Zaynab written by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, because these two books were attempted to portray the Egyptian literature. Alongside, under his brother’s tutelage, Muhammad Taymur developed a particular interest in Maupassant (1850 – 1893) and Chekhov (1860 – 1904), and he was impressed by the former for 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.

It is informed that he turned to play –writing in 1941. He wrote a number of one-act plays in the Egyptian colloquial, concentrating on contemporary Egyptian life. In 1942 Muḥammad Taymur’s three full-length plays namely Suhad, ‘Awali, and al-Munqidha (The Women Saviour) were published. In 1943 Muḥammad Taymur wrote two plays namely Ḥaflat Shay (A Tea Party), and Qanabil (Bombs), of which themes are based on modern Egypt. Subsequently he wrote other two plays namely Kidhb fī Kidhb (A Pack of Lies, written in 1951) and al-Muzayyafun (The False Ones). In fact, both the books were printed in the classical and colloquial Arabic in 1953. His historical dramas were of

85 Ibid, 120
literary Arabic and they are *Hawwa' al-Khalida* (Eternal Eve, 1945), *al-Yawm Khamr* (Wine Today, 1945), *Fida' Ibn Jala, Saqr Quraysh* and *Ashtar min ‘Iblis* (Cleverer than Satan, 1953) In fact, Muḥammad Taymur tried to show them as an imperfection form of human nature.  

It is aware of the fact that the portrayal of Muḥammad Taymur, whatever he inculcated in his dramas, is praise worthy in the realm of Modern Arabic literature. In this connection, we may cite some of his plays to realize his advocacy in social respect of human society. In fact, his play like *Eternal Eve* is prepared as a long play dealing with the love of the Pre-Islamic poet ‘Antara for ‘Abla, and portrays ‘Abla as a self – willed conceited young woman who knows how to play her admires off against each other and how in the end to get the man she loves. It is reported that the play *Eternal Eve* was performed in Cairo in 1945.

Muḥammad Taymur’s play *Ṣaqr Quraysh* is divided into five acts. Its theme is the rise to power of the Umayyad Prince, ‘Abd al-Raḥman (756 - 788), 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. In this connection, M.M. Badawî remarks, it is to the credit of Muḥammad Taymur the dramatist that, although in his choice of the Umayyad Prince, ‘Abd al-Raḥman 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. In short, Muḥammad Taymur avoided simplistic social solutions to the

87 Ibid, pp. 159 – 160
problem of human misery and presented convincing characters of recognizable complexity in his plays.

‘Ali Ḫāmid Bakathir

‘Ali Ḫāmid Bakathir (1910 – 1969) was one of Egypt’s most famous playwrights during the forties and fifties. He was born in Indonesia in an Arab family and brought up in Ḫaḍramawt in Southern Yemen. A large Arab community of traders from Ḫaḍramawt in South Yemen had immigrated to Indonesia and settled there for a very long time.88

It must be admitted that Bakathir established himself as a great author and poet in the realm of Arabic literature. He was born on 21st December 1910 in Surabaya city in Indonesia from two Arabic parents from Ḫaḍramawt. On 5th April 1920; when he was ten years old; his father traveled with him to Siyoon city in Ḫaḍramawt to be raised in an Arabic and Islamic way with his brothers and sisters. He got his education in The Scientific Renaissance School. He was taught Arabic and Islamic law by many great sheikhs such as his uncle the judge, poet, linguistic and grammarian like Mohammad Bakathir. Here it is imperative to know that Bakathir started writing poetry only at his age of thirteen years old. Since he was a meritorious scholar, he could find chance to teach in the same school of his Alma Mater, the Scientific Renaissance School, and he became its manager while he was in his twentieth. He married earlier, but his wife died so young. In 1931, he left Ḫaḍramawt and went to Eden, Somali, and Habersham and then went to Al Higath. He settled in Al-Higath for while, where he wrote his first poem “The borda’s order” and his first poetic play entitled “Hamam”.89

89 http://library.thinkquest.org/08aug/01091/group/4th.htm
In 1934 Bakathiır came to Egypt from Indonesia via the Hedjaz and his ancestral homeland Hadramawt to get admitted in one of the Egyptian universities. Subsequently he was admitted in Cairo University from which he eventually obtained his B.A. degree in literature. He then obtained a teacher’s diploma from the Teachers’ Higher College. Once he had completed his education, and while getting ready to return to his native country Indonesia, the Second World War erupted and he found himself unable to travel to the Far East. He remained in Egypt and worked as a teacher while authoring a number of successful historic and literary novels. Every time the Ministry of Education or one of the cultural organizations announced a competition for a novel or a play, Bakathiır participated in it. And every time he did that, he not only won the prize, but also got his work recommended for printing at no cost to him. His outstanding output reached a point where in 1947 the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a competition for six novels covering predetermined subjects and announced an appreciably high financial prize. The ministry received five hundred submissions. After it had reviewed this mountain of novels, the evaluation committee chose six out of them. When the envelopes containing the names of the winners were opened, it turned out that Bakathiır had amazingly won two of them.\(^\text{90}\)

**Literary Achievements of Bakathiır**

In 1934, he came to Egypt and Joined the Cairo University. During his study, he translated the Shakespeare’s play “Romeo and Joliet” and he wrote his poetic play “Nefertiti and Akhenaton”. In 1939, he took The License of Arts from English Department. After that he joined The Educational Institution for teachers and in 1940 he got the

\(^{90}\) http://eltaher.org/biography/english/biography_p69_en.html
diploma. In 1954, he traveled in a free scholarship to France. He lived in Egypt after he finished the scholarship where he married an Egyptian woman who had a daughter from a previous marriage; he raised the girl as his own. He liked the life in Egypt where he met the great authors such as Naguib Mahfouz, Taha Husain and Tawfiq al-Hakim. He worked in teaching for fifteen years, ten of them in al-Mansura and the rest in Cairo. Then in 1955, he moved to work in The Ministry of culture and National Guidance in Art Techniques Department. Then he moved to The Department of The Supervision on The Artistic Works where he remained working until his death. He got a free fellowship for two years from 1961 to 1963 to accomplish The Great Islamic Poetic Myth about the orthodox caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab in 19 parts. He was the first author in Egypt who ever was given the free fellowship. He took another free fellowship to accomplish three plays about Napoleon's invasion on Egypt which were: “The Larva and The Snake”, “The Dreams of Napoleon” and “Zeinab’s Tragedy”. He knew many languages such as English and French. He wrote many poetic plays such as: “The Odebic’s Tragedy” which was translated into English, “The Chain and Forgiveness”, “The River's Night”, “The Secret of the Governor Al Hakim Beamr Allah” and “The Secret of Shahrazad” and the two last plays were translated into French. He wrote many novels such as: “Wa Eslamah”, “The Pretty Night” and “The Red Rebel”. He took the Egyptian Nationality on 22nd August 1951 by a royal order. His poetry was never published in books during his life; it was left as rough copies. In 1987, the doctor Mohamed Abu Baker published Bakathir’s first collection of poems “The Flowers of Refine in the Poems of Youth” about the poems which he wrote in Haḍramawt. In 2008, the second collection of poems “Eden's Magic” about the year which he spent in Eden was published from The Library of Knowledge's Treasures in Gada.
Now his third collection of poems “Naged’s Youth” about the year which he spent in Saudi Arabia was prepared to be published. He visited many Arab countries such as: Kuwait, Lebanon and Syria. He also visited many foreign countries such as: France, Romania and Turkey where he was planning to write a poetic myth about conquering Kostantinaya but he died. He traveled to Haḍramawt a year before his death. He shared in many cultural and artistic conferences. He was chosen a member in the comity of Poetry and Story in the Great Council of Guardianship of Literature and Art Technique. He was also a member in the Story’s club. He took a prize from the Ministry of Knowledge from Egypt in 1949 on his poetic play “The Chain and Forgiveness”. He died on 10th November 1969 because of a heart attack and he was buried in his Egyptian wife’s family cemetery.⁹¹

Here it is imperative to know that as and when Bakathir was introduced with the verse drama of Aḥmad Shawqi’, it became a turning point for his life to walk through the path of working on dramas in greater way. Subsequently it led him to write a play in verse entitled ‘Human’, which about it is indicated earlier that the work was published in 1934. It appears from the history of Modern Arabic literature that ‘Ali Aḥmad Bakathir wrote more than thirty plays as well as a marathon dramatization under the title al-Malḥama al-Islamiyya al-Kubra. Then he took to writing plays in prose and produced three plays in two years’ time. They are namely al-Fir‘awn al-Maw‘ud (1945), Shayluk al-Jadid (1945), ‘Awdat al-Firdaws (1946). His drama namely Sirr al-Ḥakim bi Amrillah (1947) relates to a historical aspect for the Fatimid ruler of Egypt al-Ḥakim Abu ‘Ali al-Mansur. His next play known as al-Silsila wa’l-Ghufrān (1951) deals with a universal problem. His other plays are namely Ma’sat Udib (1949), Mismar Juḥa (1951), Sirr Shahrazad (1953),

⁹¹ http://library.thinkquest.org/08aug/01091/group/4th.htm
Uziris (1959), Dar ibn Luqman, Harut and Marut (1962), al-Fallaḥ al-Faṣiḥ (1966), al-Duda wa’l-Thu’ban (1967), Dr. Ḥazim, al-Dunya al-Fawda, Qitat wa FiraJulfadan Hanim etc. It has been observed that his works were related to social, historical, and political issues, hatred for Zionism, attack on Marxist thinking and passionate commitment to Arab nationalism and Islam are the main characteristics of his dramas.\(^92\)

**Bakathir’s contribution to Islam**

It must be admitted that ‘Ali Aḥmad Bakathir contributed immensely to the development of Arabic and Islamic literature. But despite his contributions, Bakathir has received considerably less scholarly attention than more celebrated figures such as Taha Husayn, Tawfiq al-Hakim and Nagib Mahfuz, both in the Arab-Islamic world and in the West. Bakathir was a committed Muslim who strove to portray and champion Islamic ideals through his works. He desired to illustrate the importance of following Islam as a complete way of life as a means of reforming the self and the society. He wrote his works during a long period of ideological conflict in the Arab world, when Islamic, Communist, Marxist, Liberalist and Secular ideologies were at loggerheads. In light of this, Bakathir endeavoured to show the Arab Muslims of his time – first and foremost – that following the Qur’an faithfully was the only means to achieving a moral society.

It appears from his contributions that there finds the significance and impact of Qur’anic verses on the literary works of Bākathīr, especially the plot and the protagonists. It does so by studying two of Bakathir’s prosal plays, al-Silsila wa al-Ghufran (The Chain of Sin and Forgiveness), an allegorical play, and al-Duktur Hazim (Dr. Hazim),

which is one of ten of Bakathir’s plays that dealt with contemporary social issues. Based on the findings of these two case studies, this paper also discusses the role of Qur’anic verses in Bakathir’s other novels and plays.

It has been noticed that Qur’anic verses play a major role in the novels and plays of Bakathir to a great extent. The verses, handpicked carefully by Bakathir himself, often form the basis for the whole storyline, including the plot, the characters and Bakathir’s intended message to his audience and the wider society. Bakathir always tries to convey an Islamic message via his highly ‘Islamicised’ works, and these works are but a reflection of his strong religious ideals and Qur’anic mindset through which he evaluates society. They depict a zealous commitment to work for Islam and the Arabs, as well as the ideal that remaining faithful to Islam is the only means to attaining success in this world and the Hereafter.

In fact, Bakathir displayed strong Islamic ideals and used his literary talents in order to further the cause of Islam in society, politics, education and economics. He sought to inculcate an awareness of the teachings of Islam amongst Muslims through his literature, often informing his audience of their religious obligations and drawing inspiration from the annals of Islamic history. In essence, Bākathīr sought to establish a Qur’anic mindset via his works, using Qur’anic verses and teachings as a basis for his plots, the rationale and motivation for his writings, as well as the main thrust for his ideas. However, to this end, there has been no specific study dedicated to the importance of Qur’anic verses in Bakathir’s works.93

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93 Iqbal Hassim, The Significance of Qur’anic Verses in the Literature of Ali Ahmad Bakathir, The University of Melbourne, NCEIS Research Paper Vol. 1, No. 3
It reveals from the consistence of the plays of Bakathir that he had a distinct preference for subjects drawn from history, myth and legend as well as folklore, a preference for which he tried to find an aesthetic justification. Even when he desired to make a comment on the modern world, he often found easier to use the past as a metaphor for the present. In fact, his passionate commitment to Islam made him turn naturally to Islamic and Arab history, but his treatment of myth and legend opened a wider field including ancient Egyptian and Greek themes.

In fact, Bakathir’s play entitled *Dar ibn Luqman* is a long historical play in three acts covering the period from the last days of the ailing Sultan al-Ṣalih Ayyub to the proclamation of Shajarat al-Durr as monarch of Egypt by the Mamluk princes after they had, at her instigation, assassinated her step-son, the dissolute and foolish tyrant, Sultan Turanshah. In this play, Bakathir wants to defend Islam and its tradition of tolerance against the popular prejudices held by its bigoted crusading opponents. The play *Dar ibn Luqman* bears an abstract discussion about Islam and Christianity.94

Bakathir’s last drama in the historical perspective is al-Duda wa’l- Thu‘bân deals with the Egyptian resistances to the French campaign in Egypt under Bonaparte in 1798. Bākathîr play deal with themes from history, myth or legend. In fact, some are set in the modern world and treat specifically social or political problems of contemporary Egypt and the Arab world. Because of his deeply held religious and political convictions. Bakathir avoided Colloquial Arabic altogether, but the literary Arabic he employed often sounded too literary and turgid for his modern themes and lacked the immediacy of spoken speech.95

95 Ibid, pp. 121 – 123
Fathi Riḍwan

We find another contemporary dramatist of Tawfiq al-Hakim; his name is Fathî Riḍwan who was a lawyer by profession. Alongside, he held the portfolio of Minister of National Guidance in the regime of Jamal ‘Abd al-Naṣir. He wrote only a handful of plays, but they are of considerable interest. Some of his works betrays the profound influence of al-Hakim, unlike that of Bakathir, on whom the influence of the more important playwright did not go much beyond the choice of the same subjects from the world of Ancient Egyptian and Greek mythology and Arabic heritage, such as Osiris, Oedipus and Shahrazad. Riḍwan also employed literary Arabic for his dialogue in most of his works. But in two of his later works the colloquial is used instead. He also differed from Bâkathîr in that he never attempted historical drama: from the start his interests have been confined to moral, philosophical ideas as appears in Dumu‘ ‘Iblis (Satan’s Tears, 1957) and Shuqqa li’il-‘Ijar (A Flat to Let, 1959) for expressing socio-political problems.96

Satan’s Tears (1957) is an important play, discussing man’s weakness and glory. It emphasizes the devil’s growing jealousy and feeling of impotence vis-à-vis man’s constant moral progress and the grandeur of the human spirit. Here an attempt has been made to show the following passage which is actually a summary of the said play testifies to this fact:

“In Satan’s Tears, the devil, assuming the form of a handsome dashing young man, comes to seduce a chaste young woman who is held to be the paragon of virtue. As she begins to yield to his

irresistible advances, he finds himself involuntarily falling in love with her and, fearing that she is bound to suffer when she realizes that she has sinned, he leaves her alone – but only for a while, for his nature reasserts itself and she becomes pregnant. His experience of love drives him to a momentary repentance and he begs her forgiveness, which she cannot grant him. On the contrary, she decided to avenge herself on him through the child she bears. As soon as she has given birth to her child, Satan’s son, she drowns herself in the river; but her maid takes the child to a far–off place where she brings him up without telling him about his true parentage. When he reaches manhood, he instinctively returns to his native village to preach at the very spot where his mother jumped into the river. The dead woman’s father, now blind, comes to the same spot, to hear for the first time the voice of his grandson; it is a romantic, pastoral scene, with shepherds visible in the background, and the strains of soft, dreamy, reed-pipe music can be heard. The peasants assemble, and from their conversation we learn about the marvelous things this saintly young man has done for them, and the happiness and prosperity he has brought them. Satan’s missions send him a voluptuous woman of easy virtue to tempt him with her physical charms, but in his presence she herself is converted and decides to be one of his followers, throwing away her jewelry. Realizing that there is no room in the world for both of them, Satan decides to confront his son, declare his relationship to him and then kill him, but his courage fails and instead he is filled with pity for him. However, the devils go to Satan, disgruntled and frustrated, and complain that they cannot effectively fight his son because of his father’s protection. Satan finally sends a devil to suborn an envious man to murder him, for only ‘envy’ can kill ‘love’. The play ends with the repentant prostitute lamenting the young man’s death, and Satan shedding
tears for the first and last time, moved by his solitary experience of love.”

His next play entitled *Akhlaq li’il-Bay* (Personalities for Sale, 1957) is divided into four acts. Its dialogue is less literary and lower-class characters are even allowed to use colloquial language. It lays particular emphasis on self-confidence which is the key to success in human life.

In the context of his drama, we find another play entitled ‘*Ashr Shakhsiyat yuhakimuna Mu’allifan* (Ten Characters Try an Author), which was published in one volume in 1957. The play consists of two acts. In it the characters in a very successful play entitled ‘*A Family Gone Mad*’, are called together by one of them in the author’s flat, to protest against the way they have been created and the particular destiny allotted to each of them, and to ask him, now that he is much older and more mature as a writer, to rewrite their story and show them in a better light.

An element of romanticism finds in a realistic play that gives loud call to revolution, entitled *A Flat to Let* (1959), in which, the dialogue is written in a strange kind of literary Arabic that slips easily into the colloquial. In fact, the play manages to convey the atmosphere of political and social malaise in the country on the eve of the 1952 Revolution.

In 1962, Fatḥi Riḍwan published a collection of plays; one of them is entitled *Ilah Raghma Anfih* (An Unwilling God). In fact, it bears influence of the renowned playwright Tawfiq al-Hakim; which comprises report of the newspaper pointing to how the Prime Minister of a Far Eastern state learns that a statue has made of him and placed in the temple.

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97 Ibid, pp. 168 – 169
for worship by the priests, who are convinced through their studies of signs and omens that he is the incarnation of Buddha. When he fails to disabuse the excited priests or persuade them to remove the statue, he angrily smashes his and other statues with axe. He prefers to remain human with a view to implementing his programme of social welfare for the poor and the deprived.

The second play of the collection namely *Laytahu Mata* (Would He Had Died) is less uncommon and unmasking. In its consistence we find that a dying man, regarded by all as a model of virtue, hoping to meet his Maker with a clear conscience, confesses to his family the many sins he has committed, hitherto kept secret from them, such as his marital infidelities, and he is assured by them of their forgiveness and love.

The third play of the collection entitled *al-Mayyit al-Sakhir* (The Mocking Dead Man) is the story of a gifted young progressive writer who, unable to get his work published and appreciated by the Establishment during his life time, arranges for a friendly journalist to report falsely his premature death in unhappy and deprived social conditions. The trick works and he attains in his assumed death the recognized denied him in his life. After a while his conscience compels him to tell the truth.

The fourth play of the collection namely *al-Muḥallil* (The Interim Husband), a wealthy upper-class man pronounces his wife divorced three times, an action which in Muslim law entails that, should he want her back, he would not be able to have her unless she has been married to someone else. He therefore arranges for an honest poor acquaintance to go through the marriage ceremony with his wife, as a mere formality, but he is shocked to be told by his ex-wife, that she does not wish to go back to him, preferring to stay married to her new spouse;
and, to his amazement, the poor man refuses to be bought off.  

The overall themes of this play have been referred to by one scholar as follows:

- Loss of social justice representing to exploitation and purchase of poverty.

- Mischief of purchaser among the appointed persons referring to the investigation behavior which made compulsion upon them and he takes the position of false and forgery (he reflects immorality along with the common society.)

- Conjugal betrayal in the aristocrat classes (professional representation of Latîf Bek).

- Trickery of the religious legislations; that which reflects contempt of religion and conjugal life.

- Disowning beauty; and it represents to the behavior of the brother, interim husband who immolate the last-one in the path of

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expenditure custody and he studies outside the countries (he finds chance to study in the medical college in the country and worked for earning wealth in that manner), meanwhile that very brother came out from outside of his country and settled there. He did not return for his brother and mother at any cost.

- Maltreatment of woman and dealing with social position, that represents to the behavior of Latif Bek vis-à-vis to “Riri” while he divorced her and wanted to bring her back at the point of desire.

The last play entitled *al-Jallad wa’l-Mahkum ‘Alayhi bi’l-‘Idam* (The Hangman and the Condemned Man) involves a dramatrical reversal of role, somewhat reminiscent of situations in the Theatre of the Absurd. While waiting at a railway station for the train to take them to the town where the execution is to take place, a hangman is puzzled by the fact that his charge, the condemned man, does not betray the slightest anxiety or fear of death, but instead talks to him about life in general. His conversation sets him thinking about ultimate question for the first time in his life, a thing which has an overwhelming effect upon him, to the extent of disturbing the balance of his life mind. It happens that the train does not arrive because of an accident and when it is announced that a chain is needed to save trapped passengers, he removes the handcuffs from the prisoner and sends him to help with the rescue operation. He then hangs himself.\textsuperscript{102}

Here mention may be made that the year 1971 witnessed the publication of another collection of one-act plays entitled *Mumis Tu’allifu Kitanban* (A Prostitute’s Autobiography) of the playwright Fathi Ridwan. The longest play in the book gives the collection its title. Other plays included in this collection are *al-Maw’izat Akhir al-Layl* (A Late

\textsuperscript{102} M.M. Badawi (1999), Op. cit. p. 135
Night Sermon), *al-Nahw wa’l-Mawt* (Grammar and Death), and *Ihtaris min al-Kalb* (Beware of the Dog).

Alongside his plays namely *al-Ḥa’ilrun* (The Confused Ones), and *Ya Badr* (Plus ca change) were published in 1972. Both the plays were written in spoken Arabic language. The former play relates to the Egyptian nationalistic movement and deals with the events of the First World War. Unlike much nationalistic drama of the time, it concentrates not on exaggerated or false heroism, but on weakness and failure, of which Munir (a character) with his particular temperament and complexity of character is a convincing portrait – although Munir himself attributes his own failure to his insufficient faith in the unaided Egyptian effort in the national struggle, which, in his opinion, has led to excessive reliance on the value of external assistance.\(^{103}\)

The play namely *Ya Badr* (Plus ca change) is a symbolic play. In it the dramatist has tried to convey the following message to the Egyptian populace.

“The (Egyptian) people themselves are partly to blame for their mis-management and for allowing their rulers to govern them the way they do. They should be constantly aware of their own rights, over which they should keep a vigilant watch.”\(^{104}\)

It reveals from the above mentioned works of Fatḥī Riḍwān that his works are marked with displaying his broadmindedness, sanity and sympathy with human feeling. Shortly speaking, his contribution to the field of modern Arabic drama is remarkable in the Arab world.

In fine, it needs to mention that we find the contemporary dramatists of Tawfiq al-Hakim as Muhammad Taymur, ‘Ali Aḥmad Bakathir, and Fatḥī Riḍwān and they contributed a lot of works to the

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\(^{104}\) Ibid, p. 138
field of Modern Arabic dramas, and in this connection, their plays are brought to mention in a series of order of year as far as possible.