In many great literatures, one single theme is used by a number of distinguished authors at different periods of time. All of them give it a new dimension and express through it a fresh philosophy. The tale of Oedipus is one such popular theme in Western literature. It travelled to the east and was taken up in Arabic literature. Thus, it formed one of the links between modern Arabic literature and the European literature.

Adnan M. Wazzan carries out a comparative study by concentrating on three playwrights; Sophocles, the Greek and the two modern Arab playwrights, Al-Hakim and Bakathir. He notes that none of these three writers gives a mere reproduction of the Greek myth of Oedipus as elaborated by Homer. The praise of Sophocles' tragedy by Aristotle and his consideration of it as model for the proper Greek tragedy was never based on the truth of the myth. Rather, it rested on matters related to the laws of the art of drama. Both Al-Hakim and Bakathir used the theme of Oedipus to deal with some problems of their Islamic society, a circumstance which inevitably brought into their dramas certain angles that never bothered any of the Western authors who had dealt with this theme.

Adnan M. Wazzan's Book "Oedipus Rex" is one of the three tragedies of Oedipus Rex, Oedipus in Colonus and Antigone. These tell a connected story, though written at different times about Oedipus and his family, the central figures in the cycle of legends.

The author reveals that myth in Greek tradition is a sacred tale with supernatural references to gods, demigods, spirits, supermen and holy people validating rituals. Myth in Islam, however, does not exist. It only exists in modern Arabic literature as a literary device for interpreting stories metaphorically. For example, the story of Eve's creation from the rib of Adam is taken as a myth by some nations. The interpretation of creation of Eve from the rib is a true story for a Muslim which could be narrated metaphorically rather than treated as a myth. Unlike other religions, Islamic tradition (Qur'an and Hadith) usually do not offer much details of the creative process. And the use of a narrative to express a general motion without any intention of narrating a mythical story is a universal feature in world literature. It is a literary device to express an idea.

The author attempts to show how Al-Hakim and Bakathir, at certain points in their plays, kept very close to Sophocles. At some other points, however, they differed. It seems Al-Hakim was closer to Sophocles than Bakathir. He appeared almost to have translated or rather tried to Arabicise the Greek myth and his play came to be reminiscent of Sophocles. Oedipus Rex. Al-Hakim's and Bakathir's treatment of Oedipal theme does not surpass...
Oedipus Rex of Sophocles. This is because of the mythical nature of the Greek legend which has different perspectives than that of Islamic tradition. However, the attempts of these Arab dramatists seem to successful in the sense that their reproduction of Oedipal theme has introduced a new literary form in Arabic literature. This form relates to tragedy based on a Greek theme (the Oedipus story) which is considered by Aristotle as the best model that should exist in a dramatic work and suitable to imitate in literature.

The next part of the study, The Moral Value in Oedipus Rex aims at showing the Islamic point of view in comparison with other ideologies in relation to the analysis of Al-Hakim's and Bakathir's work on the Oedipal theme. The author's analysis briefly compares critically both the dramatists with Sophocles' work especially from an Islamic point of view.

In terms of form and structure, Al-Hakim and Bakathir managed, to a great extent, to imitate Sophocles though Sophocles dealt with the tragic rather briefly. Although the structural components are of great importance, yet more significant is the actual content of the work in relation to the moral values employed in a literary work.

Dr. Adnan Wazzan chose for his present comparative study one of the richest of the literary themes as far as implications and moral values are concerned. He is very keen on showing the compatibility or otherwise of the treatment of a Greek myth by Muslim writers, and has succeeded in dealing with the topic in some depth. Dr. Adnan Wazzan has distinguished himself in several other comparative studies which he conducted during the past few years.

Ghulam Sarwar