CONCLUSION

In this thesis the researcher has discussed the different aspects of Arabic drama and the contribution of the Egyptian writer Ali Ahmad Bakathir to it by way of his historical dramas. The aim of this conclusion is to present a resume of the discussions in the previous chapters. The six chapters in this study are summarized below.

According to the prominent literary historians of this field, drama and theatre in Arabic are of recent origin. Drama originated in the Arab world consequent upon the literary renaissance resulted from Napoleon's invasion of the Arab world. This invasion accelerated the Arab renaissance which in turn provided the environment in which Marun al-Naqqash was able to originate the Arabic play and theatre.

Several types of public entertainment had been enjoyed by the Arabs for centuries. These included *hikaya* (story telling) which consisted of a story which is performed before an audience, *taziya* (passion play), with its plot, characters, songs and scenery, and *khayal al-zill* (shadow play) which employed satirical representations in the form of mimicry. All these forms contained elements which are characteristic of their own and also contained elements from the Western drama. Improved communications between the Arabs and Western nations caused Arab dramatists to emulate Western forms in place of the old indigenous forms of theatre.

Towards the end of 19th century as well as in the beginning of the 20th century, drama rose to a higher level of esteem in Arabic literature and developed distinctive characteristics in the work of a group of writers, prominent among them being Tawfiq al-Hakim and Ali Ahmad Bakathir. The achievements of Al-Hakim and Bakathir rest not only in the quantity but in the quality of their works, which were for most by didactic and artful.

Poetry in the traditional Arabic style was the first literary love of Bakathir. Bakathir published poems in many literary magazines but was not satisfied with writing poetry in the traditional way. Then, he was inspired by a verse play of Ahmad Shawqi and thus wrote the play *Humam aw fi Bilad al-Ahqaf.* Bakathir's study of English gave him the opportunity to know the works of such English masters of the theatre as William Shakespeare and Bernard Shaw.

At this time Bakathir's nationalistic feelings as an Arab was triggered by the prospect of a national home for the Jews in Palestine. He studied the history of the Jews both in ancient times and in the modern period. From 1940 to about 1953, Bakathir wrote many political plays, some of which were produced on the Egyptian stage and were popular. Most of these plays dealt with the Arab Israeli conflict and role of Britain and America in it. This period could be said to be the glorious period of the literary life of Bakathir.

After the revolution of 1952, Bakathir, like many other Egyptian writers, left off dealing with political and social subjects in his works in order to give the revolution a chance. With the exception of *Al-Tha'ir al-Ahmar*, Bakathir's writings from this time to the end of his life dealt with historical themes as well as themes from Egyptian, Islamic and Hellenic mythology.

Bakathir wrote plays both in prose and verse. He has also composed an epic drama on the life of second Caliph 'Umar bin al-Khattab. Bakathir 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 wished to make a comment on the modern world, he often found it easier to use the past as a metaphor for the present. His passionate commitment to Islam made him turn naturally to Islamic and Arab history, but his treatment of myths and legends embraced a wider field, including ancient Egyptian and Greek themes.

A study of Bakathir's works leads us to conclude that 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.

Bakathir wrote about sixty plays, among them twelve are purely historical based on their themes and contents. The prominent play *Ikhnatun wa Nefertiti* is marked by a clear progression of action, lively dialogue and distinct characters. It is true that at times it tends to be verbose and sentimental; nevertheless, despite these shortcomings it traces convincingly the development of the character of Ikhnatun and describes adequately the disastrous consequences for the state to which his commitment to his new religion of love and peace led. *Ikhnatun wa Nefertiti* was followed by another play in verse, *Qasr al-Hawdaj*, which he described as a musical drama. It is an extremely romantic work, dealing with the love of Salma, the daughter of a Bedouin chief, for her cousin Ibn Mayyah, whom she prefers to the Fatimid caliph al-Amir bi Ahkam Allah, who is infatuated with her. The caliph in his turn, moved by the depth of her passion and impressed by her sincerity, steadfastness and virtue, decides to overcome his own feelings and let her join the man she loves. Where love is concerned, the simple life of the Egyptian desert, we are told, is infinitely preferable to the riches and luxuries of the court. It is a pastoral play, which idealizes the desert and celebrates the happy union of lovers after the trials and tribulations of separation and the interference of authority. Although written in smooth, flowing lyrical verse, as a drama this play is of no serious significance. In fact, Bakathir soon realized that for realistic drama he had to resort to the medium of prose and became convinced that verse should be confined to the musical theatre.

Sirr al-Hakim bi Amrillah belongs to a different order of writing. Al-Hakim Abu Ali al-Mansur, the third Fatimid ruler of Egypt, was a fearful despot who in the name of Islam and morality imposed so many unreasonable restrictions on the daily life of his subjects- such as the uprooting of all vineyards, the prohibition of banquets, music and games, the forbidding of women to leave the house- that he was generally thought insane, particularly as, probably under the influence of his Shi'ite courtiers, whom he encouraged, he laid claim to divine veneration. Bakathir was by no means the first Arab dramatist to be fascinated by this enigmatic historical figure, but his portrait is certainly the most interesting. The drama is cast in the form of a chronicle play which traces the development of the characters of the protagonist during the latter part of his reign: this is therefore the most dominant character in the play. Only two other characters have any significance: his elder sister Sitt al-Mulk, who had helped to bring him up and watched over his interests when he was young, and who latter stood up to him and to his capricious extremist measures, and at the end of the play successfully plotted his death; the other significant character is the Persian Shi'ite agent Hamza who, as part of the conspiracy against his rule, encouraged Al-Hakim by insidious methods to assume divinity in order to hasten his downfall. Rejecting the view that Al-Hakim was merely an insane despot, Bakathir finds the clue to his personality in the intense mystical and religious experience, his overwhelming desire to shed all human weakness and attributes and be as near as possible to God, with whom he identified himself in a mystical union. In Bakathir's words, he was a man so far steeped in mysticism and divine love that 'he felt the urge to divest himself of his humanity in order to reach the state of God-like perfection' and became, while still in corporal existence, 'a transparent spirit in communion with God, the greater Spirit that pervades the entire universe'. To achieve that end he had to go through a set of painful

spiritual exercises to overcome all manifestations of human weakness in him, such as fear, laziness, greed, desire, pride and mercy, which, with phenomenal will-power, he managed to extirpate from himself. Hence his strange and unpredictable behaviour, his apparent contradictions, his appalling acts of cruelty and countless murders. Bakathir attaches considerable importance to the role of the cunning Hamza, without whose influence, Al-Hakim would not have gone so far as openly to declare his own divinity.

Then, Bakathir wrote *Dar ibn Luqman*, a historical drama inspired by the sixth crusade led by King Louis IX. It is a long play with too much tedious abstract discussion about Islam and Christianity, an exceedingly complicated plot, which is at times difficult to follow, having too much action, too many characters and very little characterization. *Al-Fallah al-Fasih,* which is set in a vague period of ancient Egyptian history, is a drama of intrigue leading to a people's revolution against the corrupt monarchy, consisting of a king more interested in art and poetry than in the affairs of the state, and his tyrannical minister, who unsuccessfully plots with his wife to usurp the throne. The revolution is inspired by songs of the eloquent peasant, who is hailed as the poet of the revolution. It is an insignificant play, which despite its subject, is singularly undramatic; furthermore, it is not clear what Bakathir wishes to say.

Bakathir's plays deal with themes from both history and mythology. Some are set in the modern world and treat specifically social or political problems of contemporary Egypt and the Arab world. It must be admitted, however, that despite the author's obvious commitment to his subject, on the whole these tend to be less satisfactory as drama, not least on account of the type of language he uses in his dialogue. Because of his deeply held religious and political convictions, namely, his total commitment to Islam and Arab nationalism, 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.

Despite Bakathir's expertise in providing the dialogue with dramatic characteristics, he could not express the movement of thought and meaning of the conversing characters which was divided between two trends in language and the poetical delivery, as we have seen in the works of old poetical lexicon imposing itself on the language of dialogue using foreign words.

Bakathir's partiality towards the Arabic concept in the play *Ibrahim Basha*, made him not to portray his characters with its different sides. They are sometimes the angels and sometimes they are bad people as per the behavioural position, for which and against which he becomes partial. Therefore, he failed in many a time to create from them living characters. As far as the dialogue of the play is concerned the reporting style dominates in it, narrating the events through a narrative method which does not suite the nature of theatrical dialogue, in which the emphasis and précis are considered its most important components, it also loses its dramatic nature if it does not help to move the events before us in a visible manner. Bakathir in this play continuously mixes the classicism with romanticism in its artistic construction and the greatness of the character played by the hero belongs to classic traditions and he also takes care of the unity of the general impact. Thus he does not mix the elements of laughter with the elements of sorrow and he uses the lyric to get rid of the sad feelings.

Bakathir does not differentiate between his view and character's view in the stand of drama and he did not confine to a single character speaking his views but most of the characters speak about them in a way that it makes them surpassing their human truth. The dialogue in the play of Bakathir characterize

with simplicity and true expression of the character's psychology in many places.

Bakathir portrays in his trilogy (*Al-Dudat wa al-Thu'ban, Ahlamu Nabliun*, *Ma'sat Zainab*) the struggle of the people of Egypt against the French invasion until they repelled them from the country. The basic theme in it is that the country is not defended but by its people and the defence must be through armed power and organised planning. Therefore, the nation must have an army comprising its own people to defend it.

The research work reached at the following conclusions:

1. Many aspects influenced the growth of Bakathir and his cultural formation and polished his literary talents.
2. The study reveals Bakathir attitude to western culture; it has been found that Bakathir has been positively influenced by western culture.
3. Bakathir treated history comprehensively, be it classical or modern history or mythology. He was concerned with presenting history with a modern insight where past is mixing with the present. He presented history in an artistic framework, devoid of the dullness history is associated with.
4. The immigrant life which Bakathir lived in the beginning of his life in Egypt was one of the reasons which made him resort to history, the other being religious, artistic, political, and nationalistic.
5. Arab theatre, just like western theatre started with commitment in form and content but later freed from commitment in form.
6. Bakathir was firstly committed to the Islamic concept of universe, man and life and secondly to his comprehension to the firmness of character of the Muslim litterateur. This means that commitment as far as Bakathir

was concerned was different from commitment which the western writers knew.

7. Commitment in the historical characters of Bakathir was inclined to ideological, political, social and moral issues.
8. Motivated by ideological commitment, Bakathir could save the Greek myths from its idolatry atmosphere and employ them in a new way to serve the Islamic thought and issues. This is the most distinctive feature of the historical dramas of Bakathir. Motivated by this ideological commitment he treated the religious hypocrisy and exposed the new ideologies, be it communism or secularism and encouraged people to the Islamic principles and values. By this way, he utilized the theatre for reformation and education creatively.
9. His attraction to Shakespeare was mainly for two reasons: First, he found his favourite art in Shakespeare's poetry; second, Shakespeare the playwright enabled Bakathir to discover in himself the instinct for drama.
10. The study sheds light on the social issues, be it related with social justice, social evils, family obligations or human rights.
11. It was found that there are many linguistic features in the historical plays of Bakathir like the abundance of religious lexicon, usage of examples from the literary heritage and popularization of folk expressions; he used in the dramas a language in harmony with the spirit of his period. All these features enhance the values and the liveliness of his dramas.
12. The study found that these are different kinds of dialogue in the historical plays of Bakathir. Some of the dialogues are explanatory that helped the understanding of the natural events, while some other dialogues are realistic. And some other dialogues are humorous mixed with a tone of satire.

13. Bakathir, in his historical dramas employed different types of characters. There are central characters, hostile characters, Jewish characters, spy characters and stupid characters.
14. The study found that commitment is more apparent in the theme of the historical theatres of Bakathir than in the form and content.