

NEW VOICES IN CLASSICAL RECEPTION STUDIES
Issue 5 (2010)

THE RECEPTION OF THE *ICHNEUTAI* IN THE MODERN ARABIC WORLD*

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The relationship between Arab literature and ancient dramatic art is relatively new in many regards. Translating the ancient dramatic texts for Arab readers is a trend that dates back only to the third decade of the twentieth century. Despite the originality of Arabic poetry and the wide reputation of the ancient Arabic poets as talented in classical poetry all through history,¹ drama as a poetic form never existed in the Arab world before it was imported from western culture, arguably via Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition in Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century.² Thus the genre of drama in Arabic literature is an imported form of poetry as much as it is an imported type of performance.

The absence of the dramatic genre from Arab literature may partly explain why the early Arab translators during the eighth and ninth century, under the Abbasid caliphs, translated most of the major Greek books in applied science but neglected the works of ancient Greek literature.³

As a result of this neglect Greek literature, especially drama, remained unknown to Arabs until the early decades of the twentieth century when the *Nahda*, or the awakening movement, woke up Arab intellectuals to revive the role of the ancient Arab translators in Baghdad ten centuries earlier.⁴

Ancient drama on the Arab stage appeared first in Egypt in the work of many pioneers of the Arab theatre who provided early translations, not directly from Greek and Latin, but through the medium of modern European languages. Many of these translations were not of Greek tragedy but stage translations of the neoclassical versions of the Greek originals, like for example *Iphigenia* (1893) by Muhammad Etman Jalal (1828-1898) translated from Racine's *Iphigenia*; *Oedipus* or *The Great Secret* (1905) by Najib Al-Hadad (1867-1899) which is translated from Voltaire's *Oedipus*. However, as far as we know, the earliest Arabic translation of a Greek play, probably from a French version, is *Oedipus* (1912) by Farah Antun (1874-1922) who created this translation specifically to be staged by the theatrical group of George Abyad (1880-1959), one of the greatest classical tragedians in the history of Egyptian theatre who staged it at the old Cairo Opera house. Although Antun's translation has not been preserved, it remained in the repertoire of many theatrical groups until the early 1940s.⁵

Though a variety of indigenous, popular forms of performance, both secular and religious, had existed in Egypt as part of the popular culture prior to the French campaign and survived the introduction of European theatre, continuing to entertain the masses through the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th, it is noteworthy that the introduction of performance art in the Western style on the Arabic stage influenced Arabic intellectuals to respond to the developing theatre activities by translating dramatic texts from the western world, among them the major ancient Greek dramatic texts. In these circumstances, the process of translation played a major role in introducing the classics to the modern Arab world; a process which is enriched by the contributions of many leading Arabic intellectuals, among them for example Taha Hussein⁶ (1889-1973): one of the most influential Egyptian intellectuals in the twentieth century who since 1939 has published translations of *Electra*, *Ajax*, *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Philoctetes*.

It is important to note that this cultural communication was part of a wider renaissance of education in general. Many Arabic countries sponsored students to study abroad at university level, especially in France, Italy, and England.⁷ In addition the Egyptian state supported the publication of Arabic translations of many works of western literature⁸. This led to a new direction: the publication of Arabic adaptations. Following this stage where many examples became available for Arab readers, the literature of the Classics in Arabic was enriched by Arabic plays originally influenced by Greek myth. The myth of Oedipus was especially fruitful. It was treated first by Tawfiq Al-hakim in

1949. In the same year another adaptation was published by the Islamic intellectual Ali Ahmad Bakathir under the title of *The Tragedy of Oedipus*. Beside these two notable examples there are another three adaptations based on Oedipus: *The Comedy of Oedipus* (1970) by Ali Salim, *Oedipus* (1977) by Fawzi Fahmi, and *Oedipus* (1978) by Walid Ikhlas.⁹

These successive stages in the history of Arab drama suggest that the reception of ancient drama in Arab literature has two main directions: translation and adaptation.¹⁰ Both of these directions have had a positive influence in modern Arab literature. The translations have not only introduced the ancient text to Arab readers, but their rich introductions also played a significant role in setting a background about the ancient world for their readers.¹¹ The adaptations on the other hand, have decreased the distance between the mythical atmosphere of the ancient plays and the reality of the Arab world. The ancient plays are used as sources for new plays with themes related to the contemporary Arab world.

The continuity of the reception of classics in the Arab world and the interaction between Arab creative writing and the classic sources was enriched by a new generation of educated people who specialized in classics and employed their knowledge in creating a new cultural direction between the east and the western world.¹² Right at the start of the new millennium a new version¹³ based on a Greek play was published for Arab readers. The play was written by Ahmed Etman,¹⁴ professor of classics and comparative literature in Cairo University titled *The Goats of Albahnasa*.¹⁵ It is based on Sophocles' *Ichneutai*. This play is one of the many contributions of Etman to classics, including translation of dramatic texts and a recent translation of Homer's *Iliad* (published in 2004). Etman has also published many comparative studies in the field of classics. As creative playwright he has written plays based on ancient sources.

I have selected *The Goats of Albahnasa* to be the subject of this paper for two main reasons, first of all it is the first Arabic adaptation based on satyr-play, therefore it introduces a new dramatic genre in Arab literature; a genre which is extremely hard to introduce in a cultural context that is dominated by restricted social and religious values.¹⁶ The second reason for choosing this play is its themes which reflect the national attitude of the Arab playwright.¹⁷ In his brief introduction to the published text, Etman indicates clearly that his play, which followed the publication of Tony Harrison's *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*, aims to underline the role of Egypt in preserving one of the most important sources of knowledge about the ancient world, which is the papyrus. In this sense this play goes beyond the process of translation and even possibly initiates a cultural debate about this historical role.

This paper will investigate the novelty of Etman's version; it will argue that this adaptation indicates a sign of a new direction in the reception of classics in the Arab world, a direction which focuses on the contribution of the Middle Eastern countries in antiquity.

I will divide my paper in two parts, the first part will give a brief account of the dramatic sources of Etman's play; both *Ichneutai* and *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*. The second and main part will deal with Etman's version of *Ichneutai*.

Both Sophocles and Harrison have influenced the Arabic version although the type, degree, and effect of this influence are different. It is therefore useful to look briefly at both sources.

Ichneutai starts with the arrival of Apollo at Mount Kyllene searching for his lost cattle, and then he declares a prize for whoever can bring the cattle back to their master, the first response comes naturally from Silenus and the satyrs who decide to take up the mission for the sake of winning the prize which is now gold and freedom.

Σιληνός: ἐπεὶ θεοῦ φώνημα τὼς ἐπέκλυον
βοῶντος ὀρθίοισι σὺν κηρύγμασι,
σπουδῇ τάδ' ἢ πάρεστι πρεσβύτη [τελῶν,
σ]οί, Φοῖβ' Ἀπολλων, προσφιλὲς εὐεργέτης

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θέλων γενέσθαι τῷδ' ἐπεσσύθην δρ[ό]μω[ι],
 ἦν πῶς τὸ χρῆμα τοῦτό σοι κυνηγέσω. 50
 τ[ὸ] γὰρ γέ[ρα]ς μοι κείμενον χρ[υ]σο[σ]τεφέ[ς]
 μά[λι]στ' ἐμ[αίς] κόμ[αι]σι[ι] πι[ρο]σθέσθ[αι] χρεώ[ν].
 παῖδας δ' ἐμ[οῦ]ς ὅσσοισι[...] ... ε[.]β. [...].
 π[έ]μποιμ' ἄ[ν], εἴπερ ἐκτελεῖς ἅπερ λέγεις.

'When I heard a god's voice thus raised in loud proclamation, I hurried, fast as an aged person may, when the news came, to accomplish this, eager to be your friend and benefactor, Phoebus Apollo, running as you see, hoping to hunt this treasure down for you. For I am very eager to place upon my locks the prize of a golden wreath awaiting me. And my sons ... eyes ... I will send out, if you are going to keep your promise'

Sophocles *Ichneutai*

Soon after they start to track the cattle they find the first clue; the hoofmarks near a cave's entrance but they cannot figure out whether the cattle that entered the cave had all come out as the prints point in both directions. While they are uncertain about this clue a strange soft voice comes out of the cave and terrifies them. They jump on the ground making a noise which finally provokes the mountain nymph Kyllene to come out of the cave and ask the satyrs not to disturb Hermes the infant son of Zeus who is now six days old. The satyrs insist on knowing the source of the strange sound coming from inside the cave; the nymph answers them that this is the sound of the newly invented lyre which Hermes made from the shell of tortoise. After a series of questions the satyrs figure out that Hermes made the string of his musical instrument out of guts taken from Apollo's cattle. That makes them confident that Hermes is the thief and Kyllene must now let the cattle out of the cave. But she warns them not to abuse the son of Zeus. At this point the papyrus breaks off.

The classical sources, more precisely the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, tell us that this story ends by the exchange of the lyre with the cattle of Apollo who accepts this arrangement. But the details of how Sophocles treated the rest of this story are beyond our reach up to this day. That makes *Ichneutai* an exceptional challenge for modern dramatists not only because we possess only fragments of the text though they cover almost the first half of the play, but also because it is a satyr-play, of which we have only one complete example, Euripides' *Cyclops*.

Harrison in his version¹⁸ reconstructs the play of Sophocles using his background in classics. He uses a combination of ancient and contemporary settings to create a series of anachronisms. The opening scene is the excavation site of the British expedition at Oxyrhynchus around the end of the 19th century, led by two contemporary Oxford academics: Bernard Pyne Grenfell and Arthur Surridge Hunt.

The expedition has recovered many papyri which are now packed in crates ready to be shipped to Oxford. Grenfell is motivated by the ghost of Apollo to find the papyri of *Ichneutai*. He is possessed by Apollo himself. At this point the setting shifts to Sophocles' play. Harrison then adapted the story of *Ichneutai*. He added the predictable end of the story, as it is told in ancient sources, in which Apollo exchanges his stolen cattle with the lyre of Hermes. As Apollo feels satisfied with this arrangement he carries out his promise to the satyrs and gives them their rewards, but he also orders them not to declare their role in finding the stolen cattle and the sequences which led to his possession of the lyre. In addition he forbids them from using his instrument as it is now his exclusive art.

Apollo: I'm Apollo, inspirer, appreciator
 Of artist, musician and creator
 Tell the truth it didn't suit a god
 The cowpoke's lariat and cattle prod.
 I'm not a cowherd really. It's more me
 The sphere of music and of poetry
 This is now *my* lyre and I define
 Its music as half-human, half-divine
 And satyrs, I repeat, must not aspire
 in any way to mastering my lyre. (*The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*: 55)

Apollo finally threatens them that if they dare to use the lyre they should face the same fate as Marsyas; the satyr who according to the myth challenged Apollo in playing his flute and lost his life in cruel punishment when Apollo played him alive.

In reaction to their exclusion the satyrs recall their role in civilization, their existence and participation in the first experience of humankind, and their representation in the dramatic festival during the classical era.¹⁹ They decide to protest by destroying the papyri; the source of knowledge which they have brought to life.

The ancient setting then vanishes. The chorus is transformed into football hooligans who destroy the papyri by forming a football out of them for a six-a-side football match.

The version of Harrison, as in Sophocles' play, keeps the theme of search or tracking as the central theme of the play, but Harrison adds many ideological themes which collectively form a question about who possesses the right of keeping the knowledge for himself by excluding others from the right of shared knowledge.

Harrison underlines the role of the Fellaheen (which is the Egyptian name of the peasants) in the excavation expedition as the first people to recover the lost papyri. This corresponds to the role of the satyrs in *Ichneutai* and how they are denied their role and excluded by Apollo.

The action of Etman's play leaves the readers with curiosity and an important question: what is the relationship between Sophocles' *Ichneutai* and this contemporary play?

The first point that we have to note in Etman's version of *Ichneutai* is the dramatic structure, which in this play does not follow the classical pattern, but uses the style of epic theatre as the play is divided into six tableaux. The first tableau takes place in a university hall which hosts an official meeting to review the curriculum and to discuss the introduction of ancient Greek and Latin in the Egyptian universities. The participants in this meeting are historical figures: the head of the university, Taha Hussein, a cleric from the holy Azhar, the oldest Islamic university in Cairo, and two European orientalist: Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872-1938) from Italy and Ludwig Richard Enno Littmann (1875-1958) from Germany.

The central theme of this tableau remains about Taha Hussein's proposal to introduce ancient languages for the new generation in Egypt, it also raises the tension between conservative Islamic ideas and the introduction of new ideas from the Western world.²⁰ The cleric insists that the university curriculum must encourage the new generation to enrich their knowledge about Islamic history more than anything else. This argument between the cleric and Hussein in this scene summarizes an ideological tension between the conservative Islamic party and the intellectuals in the early decades of the twentieth century. Littmann and Nallino doubt the ability of the Egyptian Universities to provide such ancient languages before they have established the teaching of contemporary European languages.

طه حسين: يا بروفيسور .. أنت أول من يعلم أن هذا الأدب الأوربي الحديث لا يمكن فهمه فهما علميا صحيحا بدون العودة للأصول ، أي دراسة هوميروس و سوفوكليس و يوربيدس و سينيكا .. أليس كذلك. نالينو: هذا يحدث في الجامعات الأوربية ، التي أنشئت منذ مئات السنين .. و لكن هنا نحن نتحدث عن كلية حديثة (باستخفاف) إنتوا لسه في ألف .. باء.

طه حسين: و لابد من البداية الصحيحة ، ثم إن هذه الحضارة اليونانية و اللاتينية دخلت تاريخنا و أصبحت جزءا من تراثنا بفضل إسهام مصر في صنع هذا التراث و حفظه ، و الدليل الأكبر على ذلك مكتبة الإسكندرية.

ليتمان: مكتبة الإسكندرية! من في مصر يعرف مكتبة الإسكندرية؟

طه حسين: إذا كان المصريون الآن لا يعرفون ، فنحن ننشئ الجامعة لكي ننشر هذه المعرفة. لا تنس أن سليمان البستاني نشر ترجمة شعرية لإلياذة هوميروس عام 1904م ، و قد كان قضى عشرين سنة يدرس الإيطالية و اليونانية و الفرنسية ، و لا تنس أن شعرائنا و أدباءنا يتقنون بالإسهام المصري في الحضارة العالمية و بالذات في الحضارة اليونانية الرومانية.

(معيز البهنسا: 13)

Taha Hussein: (to Nallito) Professor you are the first to know that western literature cannot be understood without a full knowledge of its original roots and without the study of Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, and Seneca. Am I right?

Nallino: this is true but only for universities that have been founded centuries ago, while we are talking now about a budding college, (sniffing) you are merely learning the alphabet!

Taha Hussein: we must make the right start, Greek and Roman culture have entered our history and become part of our heritage, all as a result of Egypt's contribution in preserving this history and revealing it. One cannot deny the example of the library of Alexandria.

Littmann: the library of Alexandria! Who on earth knows anything about it here in Egypt?!

Taha Hussein: if the Egyptians today don't know, we will establish this university to teach them and they are not so far from such knowledge, in 1904 Sulaiman Al-bustani published an Arabic verse translation of the *Iliad* of Homer for which he spent twenty years learning Italian, Greek, and French. And remember that our poets have praised Egypt's contribution to many cultures in the past particularly to Greek and Roman culture.

(*The Goats of Oxyrhynchus*: 13)²¹

All these objections are raised against the proposal of Hussein but he successfully defends his proposal and convinces the majority to defer the decision for more study.

After the exit of most of the characters, the scene is shifted to a seminar held for the Royal association of Geography led by Hussein, Nallino, and Littmann. This scene introduces educational information for the audience about excavation in Egypt and the importance of historical information that might be found in papyri. It also explains that a huge number of papyri have been transferred to European museums because of the lack of local Egyptian specialists in this field. Before the end of this scene the audience are made to think about the future discovery of papyri, whether the Egyptians will take a role in this activity or whether it will still be run by foreign associations and the discoveries will then be sent abroad. But Nallino explains that henceforth excavations will be supervised by the Egyptian Council for Antiquity. He also states that the central area for the digging

will be Oxyrhynchus. The audience first show their surprise at this unfamiliar name, but soon after they recognize the city by its Egyptian name: Albahnasa.

The second tableau has a totally different setting. It is located at a traditional coffee shop in Albahnasa in front of the excavation site. This place reflects the culture and the daily life of the local farmers. The scene starts with a conversation between the coffee shop owner and one of his waiters who has been asked to make the appropriate arrangements to host the foreign expedition in the city.

In this tableau there is a dramatic tension that is initiated by the news that the city will host this expedition and the orders from the authorities to the local people to prepare themselves to host this event.

It is noteworthy that Etman in this tableau creates a contrast with the first tableau in many respects; he presents a rural peasant community where illiteracy is probably very high, even though he focuses on the smartness of this people and their passion to gain knowledge whenever they get a chance to do so.

At the beginning of the third tableau we can recognise these characters as two different groups: the local people and the foreign expedition: Grenfell, Hunt and the secretary. Each of these groups is dominated by its own motivations; while the foreigners appear busy examining the papyri, the locals put their efforts into ensuring appropriate hospitality for the guests of their city. Later the *Maghannawati* (the name of the traditional singer in the Egyptian countryside) starts to sing some folk songs.

المغنواتي: لا تسعى على فعل الخطأ
لا تقابل الشر بمثله
اجتنب جرائم القتل
و إحذر الشحناء.. لا تقرب البغضاء
ستعاني بعض الوقت... و لكنك لن تندم على ذلك قط
و اعزف لي لحن أغنيتي على الفلوت... و عندما اموت ضع فوق رأسي مزمار.. و عند قدمي قيثاره
(معيز البهنسا: 32)

Maghannawati: never commit the sin
Never return evil with the like
Avoid bloody crime
Beware of hatred
Do not bear grudges
You will suffer for it sometime
But you will never regret it at all
Take the flute and play my song
When I die, crown me with a pipe
And place the lyre next to my feet

(The Goats of Oxyrhynchus: 32)

Grenfell and the rest of the excavation expedition join them, not only because they feel attracted to this genuine local culture but also because Grenfell has noted that the song of the local people is originally found in a papyrus dated to the first century AD. While this entertaining scene continues, the news arrives that the cattle of the city sheriff have been robbed in the desert.

Harrison in his version stresses the local identity of the chorus as a group of Fellaheen; He stresses this identity by using some Egyptian colloquialisms, like 'Baksheesh' which means tip. In Etman's play the local society becomes more central and the theatrical space is not the excavation

site in the rural area of the city, but is located next to the *qahwah*; the traditional coffeehouse which gathers people from all around the city regardless of their background or social class. Harrison spotted the lack of knowledge in fellaheen society; their lack of knowledge led them to damage many papyri when they used them as manure or fertilizer for farming purposes. Etman preserves the same attitude by giving another example of abuse of papyri. He shows that the local people used the papyri for cooking purposes. However both Harrison and Etman thus show the paradox that these ordinary people, who have no clue about the historical value of these papyri, become the very people who strive to recover them.

The fourth tableau starts on a shining morning, the local farmers appear digging and searching for more papyri, whenever one is found, it is sent directly to the tent of Grenfell and Hunt. In front of the tent, Hunt and Grenfell start a discussion about the historical role of Oxyrhynchus in preserving the history of the ancient world. Grenfell then gives an account of many examples of evidence recovered from Albahnasa. He also declares his ambition to find the papyrus of Sophocles' satyric play, *Ichneutai*.

This conversation is interrupted by the arrival of new papyri, brought by the leader of the digging team. When Grenfell reads the first papyrus he explain that this papyrus is dated to the second century AD and it contains a letter from a man to his friend the priest in Tebtunis. Another papyrus is interpreted by Grenfell. This is a letter from Siryos to his lover Isidora which reflects the social relations between ancient Egypt and Greece. Grenfell then shifts the attention to the theft of the Sheriff's goats as he begins to think of this story as a local custom rather than a true story retelling the story of Apollo's cattle in ancient mythology.

جرنفل: أنا شايف إن سرقة معيز البهنسا دي تمثيلية بيمارسوها كل سنة .. و إنهم في النهاية سيحتفلون بالعثور على المعيز .. و ده بالضبط صلب الأسطورة .. و أظن إن مسرحية سوفوكليس الساتورية بتقول كده. موش إحنا درسنا في أكسفورد قصيدة يوفيناليس الشاعر اللاتيني المنفي في أسوان .. ووصف فيها معركة بين قريتين وقع فيها موتى و المنتصرين أكلو لحم الموتى و هاجم يوفيناليس وحشية المصريين فأكبر القصيدة دي؟

هنت: طبعا ودي حاجة تتنسى.

جرنفل: العلماء الآن أثبتوا إنها كانت تمثيلية دينية و يوفيناليس لم يفطن إلى ذلك.

(معيز البهنسا: 4-43)

Grenfell: I think that the theft of the goats of Oxyrhynchus is nothing but a play which they perform each year and at the end of the day they will certainly celebrate the return of the goats. This is the backbone of the myth as told in Sophocles' satyr play. At Oxford we studied a poem by Juvenal²² who was exiled in Aswan. In this poem he describes a battle that occurred between two Egyptian villages in which a number of people were killed and the victorious ate the flesh of those who died. Juvenal then condemns the savagery of the Egyptians. Do you remember this poem?

Hunt: of course I do.

Grenfell: Scholars have recently proved that this battle was actually a religious ritual but Juvenal did not realize it. (The Goats of Oxyrhynchus: 43)

The depiction of Grenfell in Etman's play is an interesting case. He is portrayed sympathetically, contrarily to his image in Harrison's play and most importantly against the stereotype of the orientalist in Arab traditions. It is interesting, however, that Grenfell can hardly be recognized as

orientalist, neither as historical figure nor as a character in Harrison's play, but the way in which Etman stresses Grenfell's passion to discover the original roots of the local traditions in Albahnasa actually contrasts with the portrait of the orientalist as villain in the opening scene. To be sure Etman does include stereotype characters of the orientalist in the first tableau when he introduces Littmann and Nallino. But at the same time Etman distinguishes Grenfell from these characters by stressing his attitude to discovering the unknown aspects of the local people as a desire held only for the sake of knowledge.

جرنفل: تعرف يا هنت كم هي جميلة هذه المدينة القديمة أوكسيرنخوس التي يسمونها الآن البهنسا!
 هنت: و ما هو الجمال الذي تراه فيها .. إنها الآن قرية فقيرة ، عبارة عن أكوام من السباخ و التلال الرملية ..
 و فلاحين و بهائم و بلهارسيا .. و ناموس.
 جرنفل: لا يا هنت.. لا .. إن جمال البهنسا في تاريخها العريق .. في أمجادها ، في كل ما قدمت للبشرية من
 خير. إنها صانعة التاريخ .. إنها مخزن بردي .. و مخزن معلومات .. و لاتنسى أن أكل عيشنا .. و رحلتنا إلى
 هنا .. كل ذلك بسبب البهنسا.
 (معيز البهنسا: 39)

Grenfell: Look Hunt, look how beautiful Oxyrhynchus is; this ancient town they now call Albahnasa.

Hunt: What on earth is beautiful about it?! It is a dirty village, nothing but heaps of dung and sandy hills...peasants, dumb beasts, bilharzias and mosquitoes!

Grenfell: No Hunt, the charm of Albahnasa lies in its history and glory, in all the good it has offered humanity it is a treasure of papyri, a treasure of knowledge, and don't forget it is our bread and butter, the reason why we came here. (*The Goats of Oxyrhynchus*: 39)

This philanthropic phase of Orientalism conforms with the concept of Orientalism that stimulates the east to reconsider the activities of Orientalism without necessarily being linked to an ideological project or new fashion of colonialism. For the lack of space I should briefly say that the portrait of the orientalist in Etman's play reflects a lively cultural debate about Orientalism and its criticism²³.

The fifth tableau starts with the arrival of the Sheriff's shepherd who expresses his deep regret for the loss of his master's cattle. The Maganwati arrives shortly afterwards to invite the attendants to join him in a folk ceremony called 'Zar and Mendel' to pray for the return of the lost cattle. After the singer starts the ceremony with a local woman a goat is brought for a sacrifice. Afterwards, its skin is worn by the participant in the ceremony. The shepherd calls for the attendants to act as the goat of the god. While the ceremony continues two of the participants step forward and address each other, they are the fathers of the Christian girl Maria and the Muslim Boy Mohammed who love each other but could not be married because of their different religions. Since this ceremony unifies them, the father of Maria agrees to give his daughter to Mohammed if he succeeds in returning the lost cattle.

The sixth tableau is set in the coffee shop and starts by the singer narrating the adventure of the boy Mohammed searching for the lost cattle and how he travelled far away, fought beasts and killed them until he brought back the lost cattle to the city. Then the arrival of Mohammed and the ceremony of his victory are simulated in the background on the stage.²⁴

المغنواتي: صلوا على النبي الزين عليه الصلاة والسلام،
 و حكايتنا إنتوا عارقينها زين،
 محمد البهنساوي صلوا على النبي الزين،
 لما خطب مارية ، أبوها قالوا مهرها ترجع للبلد فرحتها،
 و تحطم اللي سرق من البلد ثروتها،
 و ترجع لكل فلاحة في البلد معزتها،
 محمد البهنساوي سمع الكلام و غزا الصحرا،
 و جاب الأسرى
 قابل وحوش و أسود،
 و شاف ليالي سود،
 و في النهاية ربنا نصره و بالإيمان نور بصره،
 و فضل ماشي ورا الحرامي ، ووضع قدمه على أثره ،
 خطوة بخطوة لحد ما وصل لغرضه ،شاف المعيز و على الحرامي وقع بصره ،
 و قامت معركة بينهم ،
 محمد البهنساوي البطل الهمام ،
 أعزل من السلاح ،
 لكن عزيمته أقوى سلاح ،
 دخل على الحرامي بصره ، و صرخ في وجهه كما الأسد ،
 حاول الحرامي يقطعنه ،
 تفادى الطعنة و ضرب خصمه بيده في كتفه،
 وقع السيف و بسرعه خطفه البطل الهمام ،
 و حاول الحرامي يهرب ،
 و محمد البهنساوي وراه ،
 و خلص عليه ،
 و رجع لنا البطل الهمام ،
 و معاه معيز البهنسا
 و بيغني على الرماية

(معيز البهنسا: 2-61)

Maghannawati: For our beloved prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, let us all pray.

Our story is is well know to you

When Mohammad of Oxyrhynchus
 asked for Maria's hand

Her father told him her dowry was to bring back joy to the town

And destroy whoever stole its wealth

And recover for each female peasant her lost goat

Mohammad of Oxyrhynchus obeyed

He forged into the desert and brought back all the captive goats;

He defied beasts and monsters

and suffered many a black night

But At the end, God made him triumph and gave him faith to light his path

He pursued the thief following in his tracks

Step by step... until he reached his goal.

He saw the goats and spotted the thief; there was a big fight between them.

Mohammad of Oxyrhynchus,

The noble hero,

Without a weapon, but with a determination superior to any weapon,

lunged headlong at the thief and

Roared in his face like a lion.

The thief attempted to stab him

The hero avoided the thrust
and dealt a blow to his foe on the shoulder
causing him to drop the sword
which our noble hero quickly snatched.
The thief tried to flee
but Mohammad of Oxyrhynchus pursued him and put an end to his life.
Then the gallant hero came back to us
bringing the goats along
and singing to the tunes he played on his lyre.

(*The Goats of Oxyrhynchus*: 61)

After this scene Grenfell announces to a press conference the discovery of the *Ichneutai* papyrus which will improve our knowledge about the satyr-play genre. For Grenfell this discovery is based both on the papyrus and on the folklore and customs of the local people of Albahnasa.

It is hard to see a direct relationship if we consider the differences between the two plays in terms of the dramatic action and the characters of each play. In Sophocles' play the dramatic action centres on the search for the cattle of Apollo by the satyrs in Mount Kyllene; this is omitted from the early scenes in Etman's play, even though the theme of search which is dominant in Sophocles' play remains dominant from the beginning of the new play; various levels of search takes place in Etman's play: first the search for knowledge, the search for Sophocles' play, and the search for the lost cattle.

The third tableau of Etman's play seems to be the link between the contemporary setting of the first two scenes and the mythical world of Sophocles, in other words it is the link between Etman and Sophocles. This link lies in anthropological interpretation of the local people's custom by Grenfell, starting with the folk song of the local people. Grenfell notes that a song of similar meaning is found in a papyrus dated to the first century AD. Grenfell continues this relationship between the present and the ancient world by many examples. By the end of the third scene; however, the myth of Sophocles' play appears in Etman's play, this begins when the shepherd announces the robbery of the cattle of the sheriff of Albahnasa.

Grenfell suggests that this is the beginning of Sophocles' play which he concludes not by examining a papyrus but by a story brought by local people.

The search for the sheriff's cattle in Etman's play starts in the following tableau by initiating a traditional ceremony in which all those who attend become participants. The ceremony is led by a local woman and starts with a folk song accompanied by cymbals and tambours. Etman in this scene tried to combine the ancient cult with local folk custom. That explains why he replaces many of the original elements in Sophocles' play with equivalent elements from Middle East folklore. Among the omitted elements is the satyric chorus which is a fundamental element in any satyr-play. A simulation of the satyric chorus can be found in the fifth tableau but this casual chorus lacks the distinctive characteristics and the power of a dramatic role in Sophocles' play and none of these playful creatures appears in Etman's play. The only dramatic role that the chorus play in Etman's play is that they assign the person who is going to take the task of returning the lost cattle.

The treatment of *Ichneutai* by Etman is dominated by his desire to enrich his combination by folk elements, thus he gives singers the mission of forming a casual chorus who play folk songs that turn the attendants to a chorus in a particular scene. It is possible however that Etman employs his additional characters to balance the absence of the chorus. As we indicated above, he keeps Grenfell and Hunt as major characters, but adds other characters from contemporary history including the orientalist Nallino and Litman and Taha Hussein. It is important to note that these additional characters do not actually interact with the characters of Harrison or Sophocles. They appear only in the first tableau to introduce the central theme which will dominate most of the play. It is worth mentioning that some of these characters correspond to others in Harrison's version; for

instance Hussain in defending his proposal to teach the classics in Egyptian universities corresponds to the satyrs' desire to be allowed to use the lyre of Apollo who in Etman's version are represented by the orientalist.

The effect of Sophocles' fragments of *Ichneutai* remains dominant in both of the contemporary versions. Each version has its own theme, but if we look closely at these themes we recognize their origin in Sophocles' play. The modern playwright selects subsidiary themes then he localizes and develops them, making them central themes in his text to serve his own purposes.

Etman's play remains a leading experimental play that uses a genre new to Arab literature. The message of Etman remains always on the surface in this play and it can be summarized as being that Egypt and the Egyptians have preserved the human heritage of the ancient world for centuries, not only in papyri but also in the continuous culture and the heart of the local people. The desire of Etman is to assert this continuity between ancient and contemporary Egypt. This indicates a new direction in the reception of the classics in the Arab world. It urges the new generation of classicists to reread the anthropology of Middle Eastern contemporary cultures in the light of their awareness of ancient cultures and history.

The Goats of Albahnasa may not be the best of Etman's creative writing, but it is undoubtedly a genuine result of Hussein's contribution in introducing the idea of teaching the ancient Classics of Western literature in Egyptian universities.

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*This is an extended version of a paper with the same title which was given in the Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient Literature (AMPAL 2009) at the University of Birmingham on 15 Nov 2009. I would like to thank Betine Van Zyl Smit for reading and commenting upon an earlier draft of this article. Thank you also to the delegates of AMPAL 2009 at The University of Birmingham for their feedback. Special thanks to Peter Pormann who provided me with copies of his invaluable articles.

¹ Pre-Islamic poetry, the Umayyad age, and Abbasids age remain the most remarkable periods for Arabic classical poetry. For general introduction to Arabic poetry see: (Allen 2000: 65-132).

² The first theatrical activities in the Arab world are associated with the French military expedition (1798) in Egypt in which at least one performance was held to entertain the French troops in Egypt (see: (Etman 2004: 291); (Pormann 2006: 13), however the first Arabic theatrical production is widely agreed to be البخيل *Albachil* (inspired by Moliere *L'Avare*) which is written, directed, and produced in Beirut by Maurun Al-Naqqash in 1848. see: (Landau 1972: 116-122); (Landau 1958: chapter 2); (Allen 2000: 193-215); (Botintshiva 1981: 112-22); (Al-Ra'ei 1999: 69-73).

³ (Etman 2004: 285); (Leezenberg 2004: 300-2); (Pormann 2007: 28).

⁴ (Janssen 2004: 326-7); (Van Leeuwen 2004: 344-5); (Carlson 2006: 1-5).

⁵ (Carlson 2005: 2-4); (Hassan 2007: 106-7).

⁶ For recent comments about the role of Taha Hussein in shaping the early reception of Greek drama in the Arab world see: (Pormann 2006: 9-12, 17-9); See also (Etman 2008: 143-4).

⁷ The first delegations of Egyptian students were sent to Paris in 1826 during the reign of Khedive Mohammed Ali. See: (Al-Tahtawi 2004).

⁸ 'Selselat al-masrah al-alami' or 'the World Theatre's series' is one example here, this series of translated dramatic texts have been published since October 1969 every two months by The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) in Kuwait. Many ancient dramatic texts have been published in this series including: Sophocles *The Trachiniae* (vol.26), *Oedipus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Electra* (Vol.35), *Antigone*, *Ajax*, *Philoctetes* (vol.45); Euripides *Electra*, *Orestes* (vol.56), *Phoenician Women*, *The Suppliants* (vol.89), *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, *Iphigenia in Aulis* (vol.166), *Andromache*, *Trojan Women* (vol.167), *The Bacchae* (vol.180), *Ion* (vol.181), *Hippolytus* (vol.182), *Hecuba* (vol.256); Aristophanes *Clouds I* (vol.215), *Clouds II* (vol.216); Seneca *Oedipus* (vol.82), *Hercules on Oeta* (vol.138).

⁹ These adaptations, except the one by Fahmi are now available in English translation in: (Carlson 2006); see also (Etman 2004: 281-299); (Carlson 2004: 368-75); (Hardwick 2004: 376-86); (Kolk 2004: 387-98); (Decreus 2004: 406-13).

¹⁰ According to Hardwick: translation, adaptation, and version, in the context of reception studies, are differentiated from each other mainly by the degree of freedom which is used in dealing with the source. Translation aims to translate the text 'from one language to another' using 'literal and 'close' words, when free it is used mostly in the sense of grasping at 'the spirit rather than the letter' of the


original source. Adaptation and version in the other hand are free versions of the original source, more importantly they are 'insufficiently close to count as a translation'. See: (Hardwick 2003: 9-10).

¹¹ Most of these translations (e.g. n.7) are preceded by elaborate introductions aimed at setting the historical background of the translated texts and to indicate the ancient sources of the text. Some introductions focus on the cultural context in which the ancient text was written; and some introductions have approached the reception of ancient texts in later periods (e.g. neoclassicism, contemporary western drama).

¹² The second generation of Arabic classicists who followed the example of Hussein includes: Lewis Awad, Ali Hafez, Lutfi Abd-Alwahhab, Muhammad Hamdi Ibrahim, Abd-Almu'ati Sh'arawi, Ahmed Etman, Munira Karawan, Camilia Subri, Mahir Safiq Farid. For recent discussion on the reception of classics on Arab world see: (Etman 2008: 141-152); (Hassan 2007: 107-18); (Etman 2004: 292-3).

¹³ This play might be ranked as version rather than adaptation for the high degree of 'freedom' and 'selectivity' used in treating the original sources. See: (Hardwick 2003: 9).

¹⁴ Full bibliography of Etman's work is given at the end of this paper.

¹⁵ The Arabic title in the published text is *M'eiz Albahnasa* 

¹⁶ Obscenity is a very common theme in classical satyr-plays. See: (Hall 1998: 13-37); (Hedreen 1994: 65-6).

¹⁷ (Omar 2000: 401).

¹⁸ His play was first staged at Delphi in July 1988. This play was performed in revived version at the National theatre, Salt's Mill (Yorkshire), and at Carnuntum near Vienna. Both texts are published in one edition, see: (Harrison 1991).

¹⁹ It is widely agreed that satyr-plays were added to the official contest at the City Dionysia (ca.501), each poet contests by a set of three tragedies followed by a fourth play which normally must have a chorus of satyrs. See Seaford's introduction and commentary in *Cyclops*: (Seaford 1984).

²⁰ This religious and political conflict has been recently discussed in a forthcoming paper by Peter Pormann 'Classic and Islam: From Homer to al-Qa'ida'.

²¹ The translation of all passages from Etman's play is my own.

²² Juvenal: Satire XV.

²³ I have included in the bibliography two books about the criticism of Orientalism, one is *Orientalism* by Edward Said, and the second is *From Tradition to Post-Modernity* by Fadwa Multi-Douglas.

²⁴ This achievement of Mohammed calls to mind many Arabic models of Heracles, like Antarah Ibn Shaddād al-Absi: the pre-Islamic poet and warrior who is so famous in Arab literature and in folktales for his adventurous life and his struggle to marry his cousin Abla despite his social status as a half-caste slave of an Arabian father and black African mother. For more about the story of Antarah Ibn Shaddād see: (Heath 1996); (KRUK 2006: 292-305).