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“Kéramos” and "Along the Nile": An Aesthetic Reading of Egyptian Heritage

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"كيراموس" و "على امتداد النيل": قراءة جمالية للتراث المصري

المستخلص: تهدف هذه الدراسة الوصفية والتحليلية الى محاولة استكشاف تجسيد مصر في قصيدتين من قصائد الشعر الأمريكي في أواخر القرن التاسع عشر وهما: قصيدة "كيراموس" (1877) للشاعر هنري ودزورث لونجفيلو (1807-1882) وقصيدة "على امتداد النيل" (1885) للشاعر هنري آبي (1842-1911). استنادا الى احتواء القصيدة الأولى على ثلاثة مقاطع شعرية ترصد الجوانب الجمالية لمصر وتجسيد القصيدة الثانية بالكامل لروعة المشاهد الطبيعية على امتداد نهر النيل واطلالاتها الساحرة، تتبنى هذه الدراسة إعادة قراءة الأبيات الشعرية التي تجسد مفاتن مصر من منظور مدرسة النقد الجمالي – احدى مدارس النقد الأدبي الحديث التي ظهرت في أواخر القرن التاسع عشر من أجل ترسيخ مبدأ التعامل مع النص الأدبي من منظور ذاتي، حيث يكون النص كافيا لإبراز جماليات الفن كقيمة سامية بعيدا عن وجود أية أهداف تعليمية أو أخلاقية أو سياسية أخرى. تستهل الدراسة سطورها بإلقاء نظرة عامة على مدرسة النقد الجمالي من خلال بيان التعريف الإصطلاحي والرؤية النقدية والفكر المؤسس للمدرسة. ثم تعكف الدراسة على تحليل كل قصيدة على مستوى تجسيد الشخصيات وانتقاء الألفاظ والتعبيرات المجازية والأطر الموسيقية والصور البلاغية والتي يمكن ربطها فكريا بمظاهر التراث المصري. وقد خلصت الدراسة الى وجود العديد من الأبيات الشعرية التي تتضمن صورا جمالية تهدف الى الجذب الحسى للمتلقى وفي نفس الوقت تعكس سمة أو أكثر من سمات التراث المصري على المستوى الزراعي أو الاجتماعي أو الثقافي أو التاريخي أو الديني أو الأثري.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مصر، تراث، النقد الجمالي، الشعر، الأمريكي

Abstract: This descriptive and analytical study attempts to explore the representation of Egypt in two nineteenth century American poems: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's (1807-1882) "Kéramos" (1877) and Henry Abbey's (1842-1911) "Along and Nile" (1885). Since the first poem includes three stanzas devoted to the depiction of the liveliness of Egypt and the second poem is wholly about the charm of the Nile, this study rereads the lines about Egypt in each poem through the lens of Aestheticism, an artistic critical approach that appeared in the late 19th century to advocate the autonomy and self-sufficiency of art as a supreme value of expressing beauty and the power of the moment away from other didactic, moral or political purposes. Methodologically, the theoretical framework of Aestheticism is introduced in terms of its epistemology, definition, basic argument and artistic perspectives. Then, the fictional world of each poem is scrutinized.

The findings of analysis have shown the poets’ respective articulation of admiration for their present moments of delight emerging from their witnessing fabulous sceneries which they intellectually connect with the impressiveness of Egyptian agricultural, social, cultural, historical, religious and monumental heritage.

Keywords: Egypt; heritage; aestheticism; American; poetry

Introduction

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) is an American poet and educator who was born in Massachusetts and was distinguished as one of “the six chief New England poets” (Kennedy 9). Among his remarkable poems stands “Kéramos” (1877) as a narrative poem that forms “a series of artistic conceptions, which are thoroughly and perfectly executed” (Stoddard 159) about the “the international styles and techniques of pottery manufacture” (Vogelius 142). The poem is magnificent in the sense that it “shows an early adoption of globalism that is clearly culturally coded. The poem describes scenes of ceramic creation in the Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, Egypt, China, and Japan...” (Vogelius 143). The lines about Egypt can be reinterpreted as initiating and developing Longfellow’s admiration for the gorgeousness of Egypt. From a lexical point of view, the term *Kéramos* is originally Greek and it refers to ‘potter’s earth’ (Oxfordreference.com) and the latter has connotation with the Egyptian clay and pottery industry since ancient times. It is also demonstrated that “Pottery is both a universal art and one whose particularities reveal the differences between the societies that produced it” (Vogelius 146). On the other hand, Henry Abbey (1842-1911) is an American poet who was born in Rondout, New York, and whose poetry is reminiscent of Romanticism. His poem “Along the Nile” can be reread as a figurative and musical celebration of Egypt’s most precious jewel, the River Nile. The poem consists of seven stanzas eight lines each and each stanza comprises four couplets. The poem portrays how human beings, natural elements and inanimate objects seem to set up a Nile festival.

Since the purpose of this paper is to explore each poet’s articulation of the glamour of Egypt as embedded in the lyrics of his poem, the researcher

focuses on analyzing each stanza individually as well as on establishing connection between the poet's spontaneous euphoria resulting from the natural views and the physical artifacts he witnesses and depicts on the one hand and the rich legacy of the Egyptians whether this legacy is tangible or intangible on the other hand. Special analysis is devoted to the poet's use of discourse, characterization, imagery, rhythm and figures of speech.

Aestheticism

Epistemologically, J. A. Cuddon demonstrates that the origin of term 'aestheticism' is derived from the Greek *aisthēta* which means in English 'things perceptible by the senses'. Cuddon adds that gradually "the term *aesthetic* has come to signify something which pertains to the criticism of the beautiful or to the theory of taste" and that the term *aesthete* is used to refer to "one who pursues and is devoted to the 'beautiful' in art, music and literature" (11).

Artistically, Aestheticism appeared in England in the late nineteenth century as an influence of the French idea of 'art for art's sake', a phrase "originated with the poet, novelist and art critic Théophile Gautier (1811-72)" (Day 243). Though the movement is generally considered "a stage in the development of Romanticism" (Childs and Fowler 2), it is specifically regarded as:

[A] cult, a mode of sensibility (a way of looking at and feeling about things) in the 19th c. Fundamentally, it entailed the point of view that art is self-sufficient and need service no other purposes than its own ends. In other words, art is an end in itself and need not be (or should not be) didactic, politically committed, propagandist, moral – or anything else but itself; and it should not be judged by any non-aesthetic criteria (e.g. whether or not it is useful). (Cuddon 11).

Thus, the spirit of the movement can be related to the advocacy of treating literature as 'autonomous', a term articulated by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), which "synthesized previous haphazard attempts toward expressing literary

autonomy or the idea that literature is ruled only by its own laws rather than by rules from other realms such as morality and education" (Habib 357). From a similar perspective, Aestheticism is assumed to be centred around the notion that, as M. H. Abrams elucidates, "French writers developed the view that a work of art is the supreme value among human products precisely because it is self-sufficient and has no use or moral aim outside its own being" (3). Abrams continues to elaborate that the forerunners of Aestheticism believe that "the end of a work of art is simply to exist in its formal perfection; that is, to be beautiful and to be contemplated as an end in itself" (3). Furthermore, Bennett and Royle promulgate that "a focus on the beauty and the power of the moment" is at the heart of Aestheticism because the approach is concerned with "the experience and expression of the intense pleasure of the present" (263). On his behalf, Terry Eagleton expounds that art, from the viewpoint of the Aestheticism, "was extricated from the material practices, social relations and ideological meanings in which it is always caught up, and raised to the status of a solitary fetish" (19). Consequently, the sovereignty of art over its distinctive context is once again recommended as a major pillar of Aestheticism. Gary Day adds that Aestheticism was not a "realm apart but deeply implicated in the formation of consumer society. Both the aesthetic critic and the consumer subscribe to the idea that pleasure is the greatest good" (253). The prime sense of such pleasure can be linked to Child and Fowler's clarification that "the life of art, or the art of life, which the Aesthete wishes to equate, is ideally a form of purified ecstasy that flourishes only when removed from the roughness of the stereotyped world of actuality and the orthodoxy of philosophical systems and fixed points of view" (2). All in all, the principal argument of the founders of Aestheticism is encapsulated in their belief in "a genuine search for beauty and a realization that the beautiful has an independent value" (Cuddon 13).

"Kéramos" and the Enchantment of Egypt

The beautiful independent values of the Nile River and the palms along its banks, the water-wheels and their dripping weeds, the sand and the domination of the yellowish colour all over Egypt, the glittering city of Cairo and its oriental bazaars, the fictional worlds of Egyptian folktales and their morals, the images of ancient Egyptian gods and associated rituals, the icon

of the scarabee and its symbolism, the fashion in Ancient Egypt and daily accessories, and the portrayal of the sleeping Cleopatra and her outstanding rule are instances of authentic manifestations of Longfellow’s inspiration by the Egyptian heritage. Therefore, the artistic representation of each value is examined according to the sequence of its occurrence in its stanza.

To start with, the representation of a panoramic view of Egypt to stimulate the human sense of vision and the intensive use of rhythm with variation to influence the human sense of hearing in the first stanza can be viewed as the major devices Henry Longfellow uses to entice the reader to get intellectually acquainted with Egypt. Longfellow writes,

And now the winds that southward blow,
And cool the hot Sicilian isle.
Bear me away. I see below
The long line of the Libyan Nile,
Flooding and feeding the parched lands
With annual ebb and overflow,
A fallen palm whose branches lie
Beneath the Abyssinian sky.
Whose roots are in Egyptian sands. (Longfellow, 331)

In these lines, the poet’s use of the adverb ‘below’ in the third line can be reinterpreted as metaphorically bringing him closer to a flying bird who documents with a camera the fascination of Egypt. The poet’s use of various musical patterns is evident in his employment of the consonance of the /w/ sound in ‘now’, ‘winds’, ‘southward’ and ‘blow’ in the first line as well as in the /l/ sound in ‘cool’, ‘Sicilian’, and ‘isle’ in the second line. There is also assonance of the /i/ sound in ‘me’ and ‘see’ in the third line. In line four, there is alliteration of the /l/ sound in ‘long’ and ‘line’. Then, the poet seems to stimulate the reader’s intellect through a number of lexicons and images. The poet refers to the ‘Lybian Nile’ and such a reference causes perplexity to the reader who starts wondering about the real identity of the Nile because the fact that the Nile runs throughout Egypt is shaken. Thereafter, the reader’s bewilderment is softened as the poet depicts the Nile in terms of its functionality with emphasis on its Egyptian originality. Longfellow

personifies the ‘flooding’ of the Nile as he compares it to a volunteer whose benevolence is evident in ‘feeding’ the thirsty or ‘parched lands’. The use of the plural noun ‘lands’ implies the worthiness of the Nile due to the expansion of its influence over the majority of lands all over Egypt. The poet goes on to associate the image of the Nile with a bizarre image of a ‘palm’. Though the palm is known for its steadiness, it is described as ‘fallen’ and, thus, the idea that the palm could not stand the rushing power of the Nile flood is implied. Hence, the power of the Nile is implicitly brought to the forefront. Moreover, the palm, whose branches are described as ‘lying’ beneath the Abyssinian sky," has its ‘roots’ "in the Egyptian sands". In this sense, Egypt, which is a downstream country, is praised for its fertility compared with Abyssinia, which is an upstream country. The combination of the image of the branches and the roots can be viewed as an emphasis on the healthy qualities of the Egyptian soil that effectively enhance the growth and productivity of Egyptian plantations. Furthermore, the plural noun ‘sands’ signifies the domination of the yellowish vision over the Egyptian landscape. Additionally, both the soil and the sand stand for the major geographical features of Egypt.

The first stanza also witnesses Longfellow’s representation of an extended image of water-wheels as he writes,

On either bank huge water-wheels,
Belted with jars and dripping weeds,
Send forth their melancholy moans,
As if, in their gray mantles hid,
Dead anchorites of the Thebaid
Knelt on the shore and told their beads.
Beating their breasts with loud appeals
And penitential tears and groans. (Longfellow, 332)

The water-wheels are described as ‘huge’ and they are found on ‘either bank’ of the Nile. Thus, the efficiency of the wheels in converting the energy of rushing water flows into power or simply lifting water for irrigation is foregrounded. Moreover, the wheels, as devices, are once described through the visual image of their being "belt with jars and dripping weeds" and once

through the auditory image of their "sending forth their melancholy moans". The poet also associates the moans with sacred groans. He metaphorically compares the 'movement' of the wheels on the banks of the Nile to the 'kneeling' of the 'dead anchorites of Thebaid' on the shore. The term 'anchorites' encapsulates the sacred duty of the wheels. Furthermore, the 'dripping weeds' of the wheels appear close in vision to 'the beads' of the anchorites. Another auditory image is evident in comparing the wheels' melancholic 'moans' to the 'loud appeals', 'penitential tears' and groans' of the anchorites. Consequently, the water of the Nile and the sound of its fall seem holy in the sense they are compared to the tears of prayers and their groans. The poet's reference to 'Thebaid', "a territory around ancient Thebes in Egypt" (Collinsdictionary.com), indicates that the image of running water-wheels is recurrent since ancient Egyptian times as well. Musically, the poet's frequent use of rhythm can be illustrated by the use of the alliteration of the /w/ sound in 'water' and 'wheels' as well as of the consonance of the /n/ sound in 'send', 'melancholy' and 'moans'.

In the second stanza, Longfellow shifts from the description of the general agricultural aspects of Egypt and their religious connotations to the elaboration of the impressiveness of the capital. Longfellow writes,

This city, walled and thickly set
With glittering mosque and minaret,
Is Cairo, in whose gay bazaars
The dreaming traveller first inhales
The perfume of Arabian gales,
And sees the fabulous earthen jars.
Huge as were those wherein the maid
Morgiana found the Forty Thieves
Concealed in midnight ambuscade;
And seeing, more than half believes
The fascinating tales that run
Through all the Thousand Nights and One,
Told by the fair Scheherezade. (Longfellow, 332)

First, the poet emphasizes the Islamic identity of Cairo through describing the capital as an area over which mosques and minarets are arranged in ‘thickly sets’ within its borders and which is also surrounded by ‘walls’ of other mosques. In this sense, the use of the adjective ‘walled’ and the adverb ‘thickly’ can symbolically signify that mosques and minarets do not only preserve the Islamic identity of Cairo but also act as protection against foreign influences that may endanger the Egyptian culture. The domination of Islamic architecture over Cairo is also implicit. Moreover, the adjective ‘glittering’ suggests that the poet depicts his panoramic view of Cairo at night. Second, Cairo is praised as a shopping centre with its ‘gay’ or unique ‘bazaars’ which excite the ‘dream traveller’ with a sense of joy and enable him to first ‘inhale’ the perfume of ‘Arabian gales’. Hence, Cairo is depicted as a leisure attraction whose irresistible scent of the past is still breathed at present. Moreover, the bazaars enable the traveller to watch ‘the fabulous earthen jars’, which are made of clay and they are bigger in size. Third, the poet establishes connection between the big jars and the similar fictional ones represented in the Egyptian folk tale "Ali Papa and the Forty Thieves" as he refers to the fictional character of Morgiana, Ali Papa’s maid, who found "the Forty Thieves / Concealed in midnight ambushade". As the tale narrates, the thieves had hidden themselves in huge jars to attack Ali Papa at midnight but they were discovered by Morgiana who took precaution and arranged with the police the handover of the thieves. Additionally, the poet goes on to refer to another worldwide source of tales, *Thousand Nights and One or Arabian Nights*, which are told by ‘Scheherezade’. Thus, Egyptian literature is not only honoured through reference to an outstanding piece of Egyptian folktale but also through connection with a Middle Eastern collection of folktales.

In the third stanza, Longfellow provides references to selected prominent figures and aspects of life in Ancient Egypt as he writes,

More strange and wonderful than these
Are the Egyptian deities,
Ammon, and Emeth, and the grand
Osiris, holding in his hand
The lotus; Isis, crowned and veiled;
The sacred Ibis, and the Sphinx;

Bracelets with blue enamelled links;
The Scarabee in emerald mailed.
Or spreading wide his funeral wings;
Lamps that perchance their night-watch kept
O'er Cleopatra while she slept,
All plundered from the tombs of kings. (Longfellow, 332)

Though the poet has expressed his fascination by numerous aspects of Egypt in the previous stanzas, he starts the above stanza with his emphasis that ‘more’ impressive facets of Egypt still need elaboration. He refers to Ammon as an instance of ‘Egyptian deities’. Ammon or Amun Ra was the ancient Egyptian god of the sun and air who was revered during the period of the New Kingdom. His name means ‘the invisible’ or ‘the mysterious of form’ and he was considered "the Lord of All who encompassed every aspect of creation" (Mark). Additionally, the visual imagery embedded in the depiction of the ‘grand’ Osiris holding in his hand ‘the lotus’ flower combines the splendid appearance of Osiris implied in the adjective ‘grand’ and the eternity of life since "the use of lotus imagery to symbolize eternal life was a standard practice in pharaonic Egypt" (McDonald 7). The goddess Isis is also represented as ‘crowned and veiled’. Both Osiris and Isis are reminders of Egyptian mythology. Moreover, there is a reference to ‘sacred Ibis’, who was venerated by the pharaohs as "a manifestation of Thoth, the moon god and god of wisdom and learning" (Houlihan 28). The Ancient Egyptian’s interest in enjoying lifetime is represented through the visual imagery of the ‘bracelets with blue-enamelled links’ that is a reminder of the accessories used for decoration as well. The monumental sites of Ancient Egypt are illustrated by the Sphinx too. Furthermore, the ‘scarabee in emerald-mailed’ gives revival of interest in uncovering the use of symbolism in ancient Egyptian arts since the scarabee was a symbol of protection from evil as well as a symbol of fashionable jewellery. The scarab was also venerated as ‘an emblem’ of the creator Khepera, the father of the gods, and thus, the scarab was associated with the notion of ‘existence, creation or becoming’ (Petrie 2). There is also a metaphor in comparing the lamps to the guards who had been keeping their eye on Cleopatra while she was asleep.

“Along the Nile” and the Celebration of Nile Festival

Thematically, "Along the Nile" is centred around Henry Abbey's representation of the natural view of the Nile at dawn from the perspective of a guest. It is also remarkable that Abbey attempts to stimulate the human being's sensuous attraction to the physical forms of beauty depicted throughout the poem. Therefore, this section of the study proposes that Abbey's description of the Nile and its surrounding environment is so sublime in the sense that it can be reinterpreted as setting up a harmonious fictional celebration of a Nile festival. To prove such a proposition, special analysis is devoted to examine the relationship between the poet's use of the discourse of beauty and cheerfulness, audio-visual imagery, and rhythm to convey his growing euphoria as a witness to this festival.

To start with, the first stanza can be viewed as a combination of the poet's reminiscences of the fictional Nile he has read about and his present delectation. Abbey writes,

We journey up the storied Nile;
The lightsome water seems to smile;
The slow and swarthy boatman sings;
The quaint dahbeyeh spreads her wings;
We catch the breeze and sail away,
Along the dawning of the day,
Along the East, wherein the morn
Of life and truth was gladly born. (Abbey 1)

The first line of the poem is marked by the poet's use of the pronoun 'we' which seems to signify that the poet's sense of admiration for the Nile is not individual but shared among the majority of his accompanying guests. Additionally, the poet's use of the verb 'journey up' conveys a tourist's sense of joy and excitement, especially while the tourist goes 'up' towards the Egyptian source of the Nile in Upper Egypt. The term 'journey' also implies pleasure and free will, two fundamentals of leisure. Moreover, the insertion of the adjective 'storied' into the description of the Nile is distinctive as it establishes connection between the greatness of the Nile and the legendry

narratives which have tried to represent one or more of its spectacular qualities.

Human beings, natural elements, and inanimate objects can be identified as participants in the Nile festival and, consequently, the Nile seems to host representatives of all forms of existence as guests on its special occasion. In addition to the poet and the other guests, there is an Egyptian ‘boatman’ characterized by his ‘slow’ movement to convey a sense of tranquility and peace of mind. The boatman is visually ‘swarthy’ or dark-skinned. Thus, a similarity is drawn between the color of the boatman’s skin and the color of the mud of the Nile and their identity is shared. Then, an auditory image follows as the boatman ‘sings’. Though the boatman is not a professional singer, he is motivated by the Nile view to give his carols spontaneously. The whole image becomes one of a carnival of simplicity and purity. Moreover, the natural elements participating in the Nile festival are represented by the water of the Nile, which is described as ‘lighsome’ to indicate its natural limberness that has been maintained for millennia. The water is also personified as it ‘seems to smile’ to reflect its cheerfulness. At the same time, the eye-catching image of a ‘smile’ that appears on the surface of the water is usually reflective of the face that looks at it. In other words, the surface of the Nile becomes the mirror that reflects the delighted faces of its visitors. Furthermore, the inanimate objects are represented by ‘dahbeyeh’, “a passenger boat used on the river Nile in Egypt. The term is normally used to describe a shallow-bottomed, barge-like vessel with two or more sails” (“Dahabeah”). The dahabeah expresses its delight as it is metaphorically compared to a bird that ‘spreads her wings’ as if it flies higher with all power derived from the surrounding rejoicing. The poet’s use of the pronoun ‘her’ turns the boat into a human being who is psychologically motivated to be a player in a marvelous audio-visual concert.

The overall image of ecstasy that dominates the first stanza is more illuminated by the poet’s conveyance of a harmonious auditory sense of exhilaration through his use of parallel consonance of the ‘s’ sound in two successive lines. In the second line, the sound is present in ‘timeless’, ‘seems’, and ‘smile’, whereas in the third line the sound appears in ‘slow’, ‘swarthy’, and ‘sings’. The sense of tenderness is also metaphorically

conveyed by the poet’s ability to ‘catch the breeze’. The breeze seems to empower the poet to continue his journey, as he is able to ‘sail away’. The verbs ‘smile’, ‘sing’, ‘spread her wings’, and ‘catch the breeze’ are all ‘action’ verbs associated with the water flow, the boatman, the dahbeyeh, and the tourists including the poet respectively. The verbs signify a gradual sense of the euphoria of travel that positively affects body and soul. Additionally, all the previous visual and auditory images are employed as a background to the poet’s celebration of the Egyptian ‘dawn’. The poet conveys that his sense of the breaking of the dawn is superior because the dawn is ‘along the East’; a region that once signaled the birth of religions and civilizations. Finally, the poet’s present sense of joy in addition to his identification of all forms of sensuous pleasure around him seem to be the real motivations for his use of the present simple tense throughout the first stanza.

The second stanza is dominated by the poet’s representation of the connection between the greatness of the Nile and the magnificence of ancient monumental sites as well as by the depiction of the Nile as a key witness to the development of Ancient Egypt. Henry Abbey writes,

We sail along the past, and see
Great Thebes with Karnak at her knee.
To Isis and Osiris rise
The prayers and smoke of sacrifice.
‘Mid rites of priests and pomp of kings
Again the seated Memnon sings.
We watch the palms along the shore,
And dream of what is here no more. (Abbey 1)

As the lines show, the poet recalls ‘Great Thebes’, which historically stood tall; and it is personified as a human being who has knees. The Karnak Temple is also personified as a human being who stands at Thebes’s knee. The two images of Thebes and Karnak symbolize that the greatness of the Karnak, which is worldwide recognized, is insignificant to the incomparable grandeur of Thebes. Moreover, the poet shows that the Nile was a witness to the development of organized religion. The portrayal of Isis and Osiris amidst the smoke of sacrifice offered to them by prayers in addition to the image of

the prayers’ ‘rising’ to Isis and Osiris bring to the mind an instance of the rituals of the pharaohs. Then, the poet states that ‘the seated Memnon sings’ amidst ‘the rites of priests’ and ‘pomp of kings’. The whole image addresses three manifestations of a powerful civilization: arts, religion, and politics. Whereas the priests perform their prayers and motivate people to turn their beliefs into practices, kings are preoccupied with the expansion of their temporal power. Meanwhile, arts are not negatively affected as sculptured statues, exemplified by Memnon, are motivated to sing. The poet’s use of ‘again’ indicates that the advancement of arts during peaceful times of prayers as well as during wartimes was alike; and that the ancient Egyptians used to adapt themselves to challenging circumstances. Moreover, the poet adds another element of an advanced civilization to the scene, agriculture. He mentions that he sees ‘the palms along the shore’. The spread of the palm trees on the banks of the Nile from the north to the south could not have been achieved unless there was an organized system of irrigation. The poet concludes with his emphasis that these images of the ancient Egyptian civilization were exclusively connected to the Nile because the Nile was the only source of life that could turn a ‘dream’ into reality. The harmony of music in the stanza can be illustrated by the alliteration of the /s/ sound in ‘sail’ and ‘see’ as well as in ‘smoke’ and ‘sacrifice’. Consonance is also evident in the /s/ sound in ‘Isis’, ‘Osiris’ and ‘rise’.

In the third stanza, Henry Abbey mixes the past with the present to form an outstanding image of the Nile.

The gliding Cleopatran Nile,
With glossy windings, mile on mile,
Suggests the asp: in coils compact
It hisses-at the cataract.
Thence on again we sail, and strand
Upon the yellow Nubian sand,
Near Aboo Simbel’s rock-hewn fane,
Which smiles at time with calm disdain. (Abbey 2)

First, the poet describes the Nile as ‘gliding’ to denote the calmness and smoothness of the movement of water waves. Second, he associates the

greatness of the Nile to that of Queen Cleopatra. Third, he represents a visual imagery of the Nile’s ‘glossy windings’ to depict the shining of the smooth water surface under the rays of the sun. Fourth, the poet compares the glossy windings of the Nile to the ‘asp’, a species of venomous snakes found in the Nile region and which is probably defined as “the Egyptian cobra” (Zug). The waves of the Nile seem tied and twisted ‘in coils’ like the asp that whispers at ‘the cataract’. The auditory image of the whispering smooth waves contribute to the overall atmosphere of mysterious quietness. Fifth, the poet sails to the south near the ‘yellow Nubian sand’. This visual image brings to the mind the unique characteristics, including the therapeutic ones, of the Egyptian sand. Furthermore, the poet expresses his admiration for ‘Abou Sambul’ temple as a ‘rock-hewn miracle’. The temple is a reminder of the advancement in architecture and sculpture of Ancient Egypt. Musically, there is the alliteration of the /k /sound in ‘coils’ and ‘compact’ in addition to onomatopoeia in ‘hisses’.

In the fourth stanza, the poet refers to the performance of building monuments during the reign of King Rameses II. The poet writes,

Who cut the stone joy none can tell;
He did his work, like Nature, well.
At one with Nature, calm and grand
The faces of Rameses stand.
'T is seemly that the noble mind
Somewhat of permanence may find,
Whereon with patience, may be wrought
A clear expression of its thought. (Abbey 2)

The poet begins the stanza with raising an exclamation about the identity of the person responsible for constructing monumental temples. Though the poet does not reveal the identity of the person, he describes the person as powerful as ‘nature’ in managing the construction of such huge rock buildings. Both the exclamation and the description imply the mysterious question about the ancient Egyptians’ unprecedented craftsmanship. For the poet, the work speaks itself and it reflects the greatness of its civilization. Therefore, it is not important to nominate the artisan because the output of

artisanshishp is worthy contemplating. Then, the poet stresses how the ‘faces’ of King Rameses are identified with nature in terms of attaining ‘calm and grand’ qualities. The plural form ‘faces’ suggests that the king had played several roles to get his monumental projects accomplished. The poet also praises the projects as outcomes of the king’s ‘noble mind’ and ‘patience’. Whereas the first implies brilliance, the second indicates persistency’. As a result, the monuments seem to be ‘expressive’ of the king’s intellect.

In the sixth stanza, the Nile is described as ‘the Nile of virtue’ and the whole stanza explains this description;

The Nile of virtue overflows
The fruitful lands through which it goes.
It little cares for smile or slight,
But in its deeds takes sole delight,
And in them puts its highest sense,
Unmindful of the recompense;
Contented calmly to pursue
Whatever work it finds to do. (Abbey 2-3)

First, the worthiness of the Nile is connected with its sacred duty of supplying Egypt with large quantities of water since it ‘overflows’. A direct consequence of this supply is its contribution to the irrigation of ‘the fruitful lands’ throughout Egypt. Second, the Nile is praised for its benevolence. The Nile does not wait for compensation or anything in return. It does not long for receiving people’s response of gratitude shown in their smiles. It does not pay attention to their sense of negligence either. Third, the Nile is personified as a human being whose ‘sole delight’ emerges from his sense of accomplishing his diverse duties. The diversity of the gifts of the Nile is indicated by its readiness to ‘pursue whatever work it finds to do’.

In the seventh stanza, the poet classifies himself as a ‘Howadji’, a traveler or a merchant because “in the East merchants were formerly the chief travelers” (“Howadji”). The poet’s dreams of the Nile combine both sweetness and alertness as he writes,

Howadji, with sweet dreams full fraught,
We trace this Nile through human thought.
Remains of ancient grandeur stand
Along the shores on either hand.
Like pyramids, against the skies
Loom up the old philosophies,
And the Greek king, who wandered long,
Smiles from uncrumbling rock of song. (Abbey 3)

The poet identifies the Nile as a subject of ‘human thought’. He associates the Nile’s greatness with the historical remains of Ancient Egypt and he compares the Nile to the Pyramids in terms of fame and impressiveness in the sense that both incarnate the outstanding philosophies of Ancient Egypt that could challenge and surpass other ‘old philosophies’. The overall harmony of the scene is also shown in the poet’s use of alliteration either in ‘full’ and ‘fraught’ or in ‘smiles’ and ‘song’. The rhyming couplets throughout the poem are other sources of internal music that accompanies the Nile festival from the beginning to the end.

Conclusion

The analysis of the representation of Egypt in Longfellow’s “Kéramos” and Henry Abbey’s “Along and Nile” from an aesthetic perspective has proved each poet’s success in articulating his admiration for Egypt. The two poets start their poems with the conveyance of a sense of euphoria that is accompanied with rhythm illustrated by frequent use of alliteration, assonance and consonance. Henry Abbey is distinguished for his employment of couplets throughout his poem. Both poets present awesome visionary sceneries of Egypt, though they differ in perspectives and details. Whereas Longfellow captures a personal panoramic view of Egypt, Henry Abbey records a collective appreciation for the natural view of the Nile at dawn. The benevolence of the Nile and the subsequent fertility of the Egyptian soil are evident in Longfellow’s representation of the expansion of Egyptian palms over the Abyssinian lands as well as in Abbey’s portrayal of the palms along the shore. The description of the duty of the Nile as sacred is present in both poems. Longfellow’s visual image of the movement of water-wheels as

compared to the prayers’ keeling on the shore of Thebes in Ancient Egypt and the auditory image of the water-wheels as brought closer to the prayers’ groans are similar to Abbey’s metaphorical comparison of the Nile to a person who pursues his sacred duty without waiting for compensation or a word of gratitude. The water-wheels in Longfellow’s poem also signify the existence of an organized system of irrigation. Like Longfellow, Abbey represents the Egyptian sand as the dominant geographical feature of Egypt.

Expressing admiration for the ancient Egyptian civilization is at the core of the two poems. The existence of organized religion is evident in Longfellow’s reference to the god Amun and Abbey’s portrayal of Isis and Osiris amidst the smoke of sacrifice during the performance of rituals. The visual imagery of Osiris holding the lotus and Isis as crowned and veiled in Longfellow’s poem is a distinctive instance of Egyptian mythology. Longfellow’s reference to the Sphinx is comparable to Abbey’s depiction of the Karnak Temple and Abu Simbel Temple in the sense that all are manifestations of advancement in sculpture. However, Abbey’s poem has the privilege of representing Great Thebes as an example of a monumental and architectural miracle. Whereas Longfellow mentions Cleopatra as an implicit reference to outstanding Egyptian queens, Abbey refers to King Ramses II to explicitly speak about male reign and associated national mega projects. The audio-visual imagery of the scarabee which is presented with its decorative function and symbolism of existence in Longfellow’s poem invites comparison to the audio-visual imagery of the whispering asp which is a symbol of mystery in Abbey’s poem. Both illustrations show how life in Ancient Egypt was vibrant and obscure at the same time. The singing Memnon in Abbey’s poem symbolizes the liveliness of Egyptian monuments as well.

Individually, “Kéramos” is distinguishable for its depiction of the symbol of Ibis who was a manifestation of Thoth, the god of wisdom and learning. It also displays daily accessories illustrated by decorative bracelets. The visual image of glittering mosques emphasizes the Islamic identity of Cairo, whereas and the shopping bazaars with their Arabian gales and earthen jars stress the entertaining privileges of the capital. Egyptian literature is introduced through the reference to the folktale of “Ali Papa and the Forty

Thieves", whereas world literature about the Arabs is exemplified by *Arabian Nights*. In contrast, "Along the Nile" is remarkable for its representation of the pomp of kings as embodiment of the temporal authority of the pharaohs. The pyramids are brought closer to the Nile in terms of fame and impressiveness. Several images can be reinterpreted as celebrations among participants in a Nile festival with special reference to the singing boatman as an example of human beings, the smiling water of the Nile as an instance of natural elements, and the cheerful boat as a representative of inhumane objects. Finally, the Nile is venerated as the sole source of Egypt that can turn a dream into reality.

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