



Exploring Hubris in Ozymandias: Mortality, Power, and the Passage of Time

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ABSTRACT: This study examines Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias" to identify examples of hubris and their wider contexts. Through an analysis of the narrative strategies Shelley used to highlight the topic and its consequences, the research seeks to pinpoint instances of hubris in the Ozymandias representation. The study also explores the relationships between hubris and more profound ideas like mortality, power, and the passage of time. Hubris is examined by the symbolic implications connected to the damaged statue and inscription. The investigation also looks at how Ozymandias's conceit affects the poem's overall meaning and moral lesson. The study uses literary analysis to improve our comprehension of Shelley's examination of human pride and its effects in the literary classic "Ozymandias."

KEYWORDS: Hubris, literary analysis, symbolism, Ozymandias, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Horsham, Sussex, was the place of Percy Bysshe Shelley's birth on August 4, 1792, and his death occurred on July 8, 1822. He was a mid-nineteenth-century English artist. He is often regarded as one of the foremost important Romantic Movement authors of English literature. His sonnets "Ozymandias" and "Ode to the West Wind" are two of the most well-known pieces of English literature. In English literature, Shelly's Ozymandias is examined and researched extensively. He wrote it at the beginning of 1817, and it was eventually published in 1818. It made a big impression on reviewers' and educators' minds. The issue is the paucity of research on the logic behind Shelly's original finding of human boasts of strength and eventual futility throughout time. These days, individuals struggle with pride and conceit, deciding what to do and what not to do, and occasionally they become apathetic to the sentiments of other people and life itself as time goes on (Hossain, 2017). Ozymandias has been converted by Shelley's poetry into a representation of self-deceptive pride, the desire to make a positive impression on future generations, and the resistance to accepting that human accomplishments would eventually deteriorate over time (Kunpht, 2023).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Shelley's poem "Ozymandias" delves deeply into the theme of hubris, as exemplified by Ozymandias, the once-mighty ruler. Hubris, which is characterized as excessive pride or arrogance, is a major subject in the poem that highlights the effects of unbridled power and the unavoidable deterioration of human accomplishments. The goal of this research is to explore the many ways that hubris is depicted in "Ozymandias," looking at how it affects the story, Ozymandias's identity, and the larger ideas around power and its transience.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To examine and pinpoint examples of hubris in Shelley's poem Ozymandias, which centers around the portrayal of Ozymandias.
2. To investigate the narrative strategies that Shelley used in the poem to illustrate hubris and its effects.
3. To analyze how hubris relates to the deeper concepts of "mortality, power", and "time passage" in Ozymandias.
4. To comprehend the inscription's and the sculpture's symbolic meaning in expressing the idea of arrogance.
5. To look at the effects of Ozymandias's conceit on the poem's overall meaning and moral lesson.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How does Shelley employ Ozymandias in "Ozymandias" to illustrate hubris?
2. What literary devices does Shelley use in the poem to illustrate the issue of hubris and its repercussions?
3. How does "Ozymandias"' hubris connect to more general themes like "mortality, power", and "the passage of time"?



4. In connection with the hubris theme, what symbolic meaning might be attached to the broken monument and the engraving?
5. In what way does Ozymandias's conceit further Shelley's main point and ethical lesson in the poem?

1.5 Significance of the study

The examination of Shelley's conceit Because it provides important insights into the human condition, the effects of unbridled pride, and the eventual fall of authoritarian rule, Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias" is very significant in academic study. Prominent Romantic author Shelley used "Ozymandias" to attack the conceit that accompanies power and the delusion of immortality using imposing architecture. "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" Ozymandias's arrogant engraving highlights the psychological complexity of hubris. This research is essential to understanding these nuances. The goal of the study is to analyze the levels of conceit included in these statements to shed light on the conceited attitude of leaders who think their legacies are unbreakable. Through an examination of hubris within the framework of Shelley's socio-political milieu, the study advances a sophisticated comprehension of power relations and the consequences of megalomania. In addition, "Ozymandias" analysis of hubris has significance today as it draws comparisons between historical and present examples of leaders who gave in to extreme arrogance. To stimulate conversation on the timeless truths found in Romantic literature, the study makes links between Shelley's critique of hubris and its expressions in modern politics and social systems. This investigation, within a larger literary framework, adds to the current discussion on Shelley's thematic concerns by demonstrating how his astute observations about the dangers of hubris endure across the ages. Finally, by examining human hubris through the prism of "Ozymandias," this study hopes to expand our understanding of the age-old themes of power, mortality, and the eventual decline of tremendous hubris.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Ozymandias

This analysis will focus on Shelley's sonnet-formatted 1818 poem "Ozymandias," which has a significant position in the poet's political beliefs. Written two years after Napoleon's second banish, this poem represents Shelley's indictment of tyranny and persecution. It is reasonable to believe that this poem is a direct political critique of authoritative figures and an outright challenge to oppressive authorities. It is about the insignificance and inadequacy of a tyrant's authority, as Benét (1968) puts it. This sonnet serves as a gentle reminder to those in positions of authority who may have a predisposition toward a totalitarian or dictatorial government that their reign is just brief and that, such as many supernatural abilities, it will expire at some point (Güngör, 2020). The poem's title contains irony, as Collins indicates:

"Ozymandias is inherently ironic. Even its title has ironic connotations. The name comes from the Greek ozium (air) and mandate (to rule). Ozymandias is a 'ruler of air' or simply a 'ruler of nothing'. Furthermore, the inscription is intended as a boast to other rulers, albeit a shortsighted one. The cruel irony is that this boast has turned into a warning. Ozymandias has turned to dust and for this, other rules should despair, because they too will one day suffer the same fate" (Collins, 2013).

According to Rodenbeck (2004), "Ozymandias is an ancient Greek name for Ramses II, the nineteenth-dynasty Egyptian pharaoh." In actuality, it is a Greek rendering of one of Ramses' Egyptian titles, "Usermaat-Re." Ozymandias is "another version of the Egyptian name Rameses," according to Keach et al. (1996). The poet refers to Rameses II, a renowned constructor of structures such as temples and palaces who governed Egypt in the thirteenth century B.C. and who left behind several sculptures of himself. In the narrative of the poem, two characters are speaking. The first speaker of the poem introduces himself and says he met a visitor from what is probably ancient Egypt. The traveler then spends the rest of the discourse talking about a monument he witnessed in this old land. (Delaney et al., 2003). Everything that is connected to art, artists, and creative inventiveness, in Shelley's opinion, is unbreakable and has greater power than any political authority. It is clear from this poetry that the artists are more effective than the rulers. Shelley suggests in the aforementioned poem that political leaders and regimes, like Ozymandias, would eventually fade, vanish, and collapse. With time, the statue—which stands for oppression and tyranny—became a heap of debris. In a similar vein, this poem serves as a severe warning against all repressive institutions, powers, and monarchs. The monarchs of England and France in particular are the target of Shelley's warnings to all kings and repressive governments. Shelley underlines that dictators and repressive rulers would eventually vanish off the face of the earth without leaving any trace, regardless of how hard they fight to maintain their glory. As an outcome, the statue—which was before it symbolized sovereignty and glorification—becomes a representation of the frailty and death of man. (Güngör, 2020).



2.2 Previous Studies

Within the academic field, Daiya's (2014) thorough analysis of Percy Bysshe Shelley is a significant addition, providing insight into the complex nature of the poet's technique and thematic interests. Shelley is described by Daiya as being more than just a poet; in fact, his name itself becomes a symbol that captures the spirit of beautiful, rhythmic writing that is richly layered with vivid images of both Nature and Man. Shelley's skill as a writer, according to Daiya, has a mystical aspect that creates a sense of otherworldly immersion for readers using his inventive use of metaphor and imagery. Daiya explores the emotional undertones of Shelley's writing, emphasizing the poet's capacity to transform personal grief into compositions that have a universal resonance that cut over borders of culture and geography. The analysis highlights Shelley's unique ability to traverse several levels and leave a literary legacy that defies categorization. Shelley's famous sonnet "Ozymandias," which emerges as a potent instrument of critique against the conceited claims of monarchs and their empires, serves as a central theme in Daiya's study. Daiya argues that the sonnet challenges the idea that temporal powers may inspire generations by praising the timeless quality of art. Daiya skillfully conveys the spirit of "Ozymandias," presenting it as a moving ode to Time's unwavering impartiality and relentlessness, which in Shelley's imagination possesses devastating power with unwavering impersonality.

Readers get a sophisticated knowledge of Shelley's literary skill, emotional resonance, and deep involvement with timeless subjects because of Daiya's perceptive investigation. Setting the scene for a more scholarly investigation into the lasting influence of one of the most significant voices of the Romantic era, Daiya's work provides an essential basis for exploring the intricate interaction between Shelley's lyrical skill and philosophical investigations. The research in Hossain (2017), extracts, from the viewpoint of contemporary individuals, the link between power and futility. It presents a fresh perspective on how to fairly and poetically assess human life. Following an analysis of the poet's imagery, it defines symbolic meanings. Connotative significance is addressed in such explanations. In conclusion, this study suggests lifestyle options that contemporary individuals might embrace in their pursuit of authentic humanity.

Using Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias" (1818) as an example, Kerler's (2019) article examines how the English Romantics appropriated poetic genres in the context of the era's profusion of archives and archival practices, particularly the growing print culture. The article makes the claim that "Ozymandias" is a philosophical discourse on cultural preoccupations with origins, originals, and (their) various archives, the latter of which also extends to its category due to the history of the sonnet has a strong connection to the past of its medium. It bases this claim on Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995). Shelley employs the sonnet form to investigate the epoch's thirst for archives as well as the unstable nature of the archiving method and that of present (material) archives, as can be seen from a close reading of the poem and a brief examination of its cultural and material circumstances.

The research conducted by Gungör (2020) centers on Percy Bysshe Shelley's resistance to various forms of authority in both his personal and literary writings. The impact of Shelley's radical life on his writings is discussed in this research. The research briefly addressed the Romantic movement and Shelley's role in it. The three poems of Shelley, "Ozymandias," "England in 1819," and "Ode to the West Wind," were the primary subjects of this study since the researcher felt that they better capture Shelley's literary identity than any of his other works.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Method

In a variety of settings, the qualitative approach is being utilized more and more to direct and assist investigations on "ergonomics and human factors" (E/HF) (Hignett & McDermott, 2015). Qualitative research was once relegated to a lower position, but in recent years, its value as a method of conducting studies that demand in-depth analysis, humanistic adaptation, and nuanced interpretation has grown. Thus, rather than concentrating on concerns of relevance and legitimacy, attention is now directed upon when it should be employed (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). Interpretive description or qualitative methodology might yield useful results while addressing difficult experience concerns. It permits the progress of information concerning the experience of learning without compromising the methodological integrity that has traditionally been offered by qualitative techniques (Burdine et al, 2021). Hence, to do this study, the researcher employed qualitative approaches. The study is predicated on a thorough reading, evaluation, and analysis of the original "Ozymandias" text.



3.2 Data Collection

There has been a usage of qualitative methodologies for data collecting. The researcher has collected data from primary and secondary sources. The poem Ozymandias (1818) itself serves as the main source of information gathered. The pertinent literature on the topic, which the researcher looked up online and in library databases, served as secondary sources for the data collection.

3.3. Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been applied to data analysis. Using literary or stylistic devices as well as narrative strategies, the researcher examined the text of P.B. Shelley's poem "Ozymandias" and came to conclusions based on the results.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Question 1

Ozymandias, the title character in Shelley's "Ozymandias," is a dramatic example of hubris, illustrating the conceit and inordinate vanity of individuals in positions of authority. The enormous monument that was built in the barren desert and served as a reminder of Ozymandias's seeming invincibility is now broken and crumbling. The pedestal's inscription, which extols the monarch's great deeds and orders observers to give up, displays the conceited notion that his accomplishments are unending. Shelley emphasizes Ozymandias's conceit by using strong imagery and sarcasm. The "sneer of cold command" that is carved on the statue's "wrinkled lip" (line 5) highlights the ruler's conceited and disdainful attitude. Dramatic irony is produced by contrasting the opulent inscription with the statue's actual condition of ruin, highlighting the contrast between Ozymandias's conceited assertions and the brutal reality of his empire's fall. This portrayal is consistent with the classic literary subject of hubris leading to destruction since Ozymandias's conceit ultimately serves as the impetus for the demise of his empire. The poem acts as a warning, alerting readers to the damaging effects of unbridled pride in the face of time's inexorable march forward (Shelley, 1853).

4.2 Research Question 2

4.2.1 Analysis of Narrative Strategies

To successfully depict the issue of hubris and its repercussions in "Ozymandias," Percy Bysshe Shelley uses a variety of storytelling techniques. The poem is told in the form of a narrative by a traveler who shares a moving story about the ruins of a once-majestic monument in the desert. Shelley uses the following storytelling techniques to illustrate hubris:

4.2.1 Third-Person Narrative

To provide an unbiased depiction of the scene, the poem takes on a third-person narrative viewpoint via the traveler. This narrative decision highlights the theme's universality and encourages readers to consider the consequences of hubris.

4.2.2 Temporal Transitions

Shelley deftly employs time changes, transitioning from Ozymandias's former splendor to his current state of decay. This narrative device highlights how fleeting power is and how the once-powerful empire has fallen victim to the passage of time.

4.2.3 Descriptive Imagery

The poem's rich and detailed imagery is employed as a narrative device to conjure up a strong mental image of the broken monument and its surrounds. In addition to depicting the physical deterioration, this artwork also represents Ozymandias's pride and authority crumbling.

4.2.4 Straight Talk and Writing

Through the use of direct speech in the pedestal inscription, Shelley creates a narrative device that lets Ozymandias express his majesty. Hubris is starkly illustrated by the triumphal proclamation, "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

4.2.5 Irony

One of the poem's main narrative devices is irony. Ozymandias exalts himself for his enduring creations, but the irony is that not much of anything is left. The narrative suspense that is created by the contrast of the inscription's bold assertion with the bleak reality highlights the concept of hubris.



4.2.6 Particularized Disclosure

Using the traveler's story, Shelley progressively reveals the scene's specifics in a literary technique known as selective revelation or particularized disclosure. This technique heightens the impact of the revelation of Ozymandias's collapse by creating tension and hooking the reader in.

4.2.7 Change in Tone

As the real status of the situation turns out evident, the narrative method involves a tone change from the initial astonishment at the statue's majesty to a more thoughtful and pensive atmosphere. This change in tone heightens the story's emotional effect and emphasizes its cautionary aspect.

4.2.8 Lack of Clarity and Vagueness

The poem's open-ended or lack of clarity and vagueness conclusion invites readers to consider the wider effects of hubris. The final line, "lone and level sands stretch far away," leaves readers wondering about the fleeting nature of power and the destiny of human hopes.

Thus, Shelley skillfully tells the tale of Ozymandias using the above narrative strategies, highlighting the fallout from unbridled pride and the unavoidable collapse of conceited civilizations. The poem is a timeless warning on the frailty of human accomplishments against the inexorable passage of time.

4.3 Analysis of Literary/Stylistic Devices

In "Ozymandias," Shelley skillfully portrays the issue of hubris and its consequences using a combination of literary strategies that provide readers with a timeless contemplation on the transience of human accomplishments and the consequences of pride. Some of the poem's most important literary devices are as follows:

4.3.1 Imagery

Shelley describes the remains of the once-majestic statue with stunning imagery. The "shattered visage," the "vast and trunkless legs of stone," and the "lone and level sands" all combine to provide a striking visual depiction of the effects of aging.

4.3.2 Metaphor

One could view the entire poem as a metaphor for the ephemeral character of power and human accomplishments. The structure, which symbolizes Ozymandias' kingdom, comes to symbolize the transience of pride and power.

4.3.3 Irony

The carving on the pedestal, "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" is one of the poem's most ironic passages. The irony is in the sharp contrast that highlights the negative effects of hubris between the haughty declaration and the desolate surroundings of the ruins.

4.3.4 Symbolism

The broken statue itself is a potent representation of Ozymandias and his empire's demise. Different facets of human hubris and its consequences are symbolized by the inscription, the sculptor's hand, and the heart that gave life to the masterpiece.

4.3.5 Alliteration

Alliteration adds rhythm and intensity, which enhances the poem's melodic quality. The phrase "The lone and level sands stretch far away," for instance, emphasizes the loneliness while adding a rhythmic element through the repetition of the "l" and "s" sounds.

4.3.6 Enjambment

Throughout the poem, Shelley employs enjambment, which is the technique of carrying a line into the next without pausing. This method helps the story flow more easily by enabling a smooth development that reflects time's unrelenting march.

4.3.7 Apostrophe

The inscription's direct reference to the "ye Mighty" makes use of an apostrophe. This rhetorical tactic highlights Ozymandias' trust in the enduring power of his works and heightens the dramatic effect of his speaking to future rulers.

4.3.8 Exaggeration

When referring to the ship as a "colossal wreck" and the "boundless and bare" dunes, hyperbole is used to highlight how massive it is. Ozymandias's arrogance has more implications because of his exaggerations.



4.3.9 Personification

Personification is evident in the account of the sculptor's comprehension of Ozymandias' emotions, implying a degree of human understanding in the statue's design.

4.3.10 Paradox

The inscription's inherent contradictory quality has a potent effect. The dichotomy that arises from contrasting Ozymandias' assertion of greatness with the statue's surrounding devastation highlights the idea of hubris and its final demise.

4.4 Research Question 3

In Shelley's "Ozymandias," the arrogance that Ozymandias personifies is closely linked to more general themes of power, mortality, and time's unrelenting march. The ruins of Ozymandias's enormous monument, which symbolize the fleeting nature of human accomplishments, break his hubristic conviction in the unwavering durability of his power (Shelley, 1853). A striking reflection on the passing of people and their legacies is made when the haughtiness of the once-mighty emperor is contrasted with the unavoidable decline of his kingdom. In addition, the poem emphasizes the idea that authority is ephemeral, with even the most powerful leaders falling prey to the passage of time. In the context of the destroyed statue, Ozymandias's declaration of kingly domination—symbolized by the line "Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!"—becomes sarcastic, highlighting the fleeting nature of material power (Shelley, 1853). Time shows itself as an unrelenting force that is unaffected by the magnificence of human achievement. Ozymandias's arrogance turns into a cautionary tale, alerting us to the death of everything and the unavoidable eroding of power. As a reflection on the state of humanity, "Ozymandias" has everlasting value because Shelley studies these issues together.

4.5 Research Question 4

The smug engraving and the crumbling monument stand for the eventual collapse of pride and the frailty of human accomplishments. Once a representation of Ozymandias's majesty, the broken statue now sits in ruins, symbolizing the fleeting nature of power (Shelley, 1853). The massive sculpture's fragmentation functions as a visual metaphor for the ruler's hubris's repercussions and the breakdown of his power. Ironically, the ruined monument's surrounding devastation contrasts with the haughty inscription on the pedestal, which declares Ozymandias's majesty and orders other powerful monarchs to despair (Shelley, 1853). The contrast between the brutal reality of mortality and human hopes for immortality is symbolized by this contradiction. The inscription, caught in time, serves as a reminder of Ozymandias' hubristic overreach and the pointlessness of pursuing permanent dominion. The inscription on the damaged monument, taken as a whole, serves as a warning against the vanity that can cause rulers to lose sight of the fleeting nature of their empires. The universal topic of arrogance leading to ruin is emphasized by Shelley's symbolism, which resonates with the wider human experience.

4.6 Research Question 5

Ozymandias's hubris, as shown in Shelley's poem, highlights the dangers of unbridled pride and the fleeting nature of power, thereby reinforcing Shelley's central argument and moral lesson. The haughty inscription of the emperor, proclaiming his unparalleled glory, turns into a clear example of hubris (Greenblatt 2018). The irony is found in the rubble that now encircles the shattered monument, symbolizing Ozymandias' inevitable decline from power and the unstoppable march of time. The poem's moral message is found in the fallout from conceit and the foolish quest for immortality through material accomplishments. The bold phrases on the pedestal, which encapsulate Ozymandias's hubris, highlight how pointless it is to strive for long-lasting dominance and renown. Therefore, the primary message of Shelley's work is a warning against the fleeting nature of human glory and the possible consequences of unbridled pride (Greenblatt, 2018). Essentially, Shelley uses Ozymandias's arrogance to illustrate his moral lesson, stressing the dangers of hubris and the necessity of humility in the face of time's inexorable passage.

5. CONCLUSION

The strong will be reduced to rubble. This is the message of the well-known poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley, in which a tired traveler notices Ozymandias' crumbling stone legs and muses on how the changing sands of the desert sometimes show and sometimes conceal his arrogance of power. This traveler is prompted by Ozymandias' ruin to perceive the fate of civilizations in the shattered statue of a ruler. (Vine 2010; Kosiba, 2017). The goal of this study is to examine Shelley's "Ozymandias" to explore the complex issue of hubris. The research aims to investigate Shelley's narrative methods and pinpoint instances of hubris in Ozymandias through a close evaluation of the character. To highlight the poem's enduring importance, the investigation goes further



to comprehend how hubris interacts with more general issues like mortality, power, and the passage of time. The inquiry gains depth from symbolic readings of the text and the shattered statue. Furthermore, analyzing how Ozymandias's conceit affects the moral lesson and ultimate meaning enhances our understanding of Shelley's complex representation. Through the examination of the research topics, this study hopes to advance our understanding of hubris and its consequences in the literary classic "Ozymandias."

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