
Supremacy of Literary Art in Shakespeare's *Not Marble Nor the Gilded Monuments* and Shelley's *Ozymandias*

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Abstract

The paper aims to analyse the supremacy of literary art in Shakespeare's sonnet *Not Marble, Nor the Gilded Monuments* and Shelley's *Ozymandias*. This is true to both of these famous sonnets that literary art is superior to anything else. The Elizabethan poet Shakespeare and the Romantic poet Shelley reflect their love for literary art and conviction in the power of rhyme. The former wishes to make his friend immortal through his powerful lines of verse. He says that he will mention all the better qualities of his friend in his poem and in this way, his friend will live forever in the lines of his verse. The very title of the poem makes it clear what the poet intends to do and what not. Similarly, Shelley in *Ozymandias* shows the futility of the statue. The image of the king, *Ozymandias* survives only in *Ozymandias*, the literary piece of writing i.e., the poem. Although, the statue of the haughty and cruel king is lying broken in the sand in the middle of the desert, yet the literary art makes it alive for good.

Introduction

Literary art is the literary creation, a skill in writing. Both Shakespeare and Shelley were great artists, wide in range and scope. Not Marble, Nor the Gilded Monuments is one of the most splendid sonnets written by William Shakespeare, the greatest poet and playwright in the English language. This sonnet is No. 55 in the sequence of the poet's sonnets and is very popular. William Shakespeare in this famous sonnet pays a tribute to the quality and power of his art which outlives great work of architecture and even gilded monuments and strongly built statues. The poet remarks that he will praise his friend, the Earl of Southampton in the lines of his poetry. Time is a great destroyer and cares for none and even takes away the beauty of all things. The poet personifies Time and uses epithet, Sluttish to qualify it. He compares it with an immoral woman, perhaps to take into consideration the quality of unfaithfulness. Time leaves one's side and is never stationary but ever changing. The poet shows his concern for the possibility of an impending disaster to hit humanity. The obvious reference is to war that can rob the glory of all others art work i.e. masonry.

However, even war cannot destroy the power of written words. Here lies the irony in the fact that paper is perishable but not the poetry which outlives stone and marble monuments. The poet Shakespeare even goes to the extent of saying that even after his beloved is dead, praise for him shall find a place in history and in this way he will live in the eyes of the coming generations. To the poet his "Fair Lord" is a pure spirit who will never be blackened on

the day of judgement and therefore his friend will remain immortal in his literary art. Wars brings with them death and destruction. But even time and war will have no effect on the living record of his rhyme. On contrary, all gold plated monuments built by kings and princes to show their power, wealth and glory will be destroyed with the passage of time. The true and beautiful words written by the poet in the memory of his friend will live eternal. Ozymandias is one of Percy Bysshe Shelley's best known poems written between December 1817 and January 1818 and was probably the result of the sonnet competition between Shelley and his friend Horace Smith. Shelley's poem takes its little from the Egyptian king Ramesses II, known to the Greeks by the name Ozymandias.

The king in Shelley's Ozymandias got his statue built to immortalize himself. He was cruel, arrogant tyrant and haughty and had no love and concern for his subjects. The sculptor created the real image of the king.

“And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command.

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read”.

The expression on the face of the statue showed how cruel and obstinate fellow the king was. He believed that no one could equal him in glory and achievements and called himself the king of kings as he might have defeated other powerful kings of the world. The irony lies in the fact that no trace of his past glory is left now. All

pride of power and half is useless. "All paths of glory lead to grave." The statue of the king is lying broken in the desert. The image of the two vast, trunkless legs of stone and massive broken stone head half sunk in the sand make it clear that towns, cities, kingdoms and countries are destroyed with the passage of the time. However, the omnipotent time cannot obliterate the living record of the poet's creation from the pages of literature. A great work of art deals with a number of themes and so does Shelley's Ozymandias. The sonnet can be interpreted at various levels. One obvious theme of the poem is the power of art in relation with the power of time. The king's statue lying broken in thousand symbolises his defeat. The sculptor's art still survives despite the wreckage of time. It suggests the power of the sculptor's art, which is at least equal to the power of nature. But now, one can argue that the sculptor's art will ultimately lose his power as the statue will continue to decay over time. But there is one more artist, the poet Shelley whose power of art is transpersonal, and transcendental and hence superior to life. Art can capture life at its best and keep it there. This is the reason that Ozymandias survives in Ozymandias and therefore, records the survival of creativity. Shelley's Ozymandias and Shakespeare's friend have long been dead but both of them survive in literary art which still exists till present time. The sonneteers-Shakespeare and Shelley through Not Marble and Ozymandias demonstrate that literary art outlasts the other legacies of power and hence superior.



“Nor mars his sword nor war’s quick fire shall burn.

The living record of your memory.”

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