
The Presentation Of Power In Ozymandias And Storm On The Island

'Ozymandias' by Percy Shelley and 'Storm on the Island' by Seamus Heaney both present nature and time as powerful forces which can have an overwhelming effect on humans. In Heaney's poem, the impact is on a whole community, whereas in Shelley's poem it is affecting one man. Shelley was a socialist which means that he was against extreme powers of man, this is shown by Ozymandias' statue having fallen down which represents his loss of power. Heaney lived through the Irish civil war from 1969-1998 where men were engaged in a power struggle but he conveys that nature is ultimately more powerful than man.

Both poems demonstrate the ways in which the power of nature and time is greater than any human power. In 'Ozymandias' Shelley depicts how human power is ultimately lost over time. Ozymandias' 'trunkless legs of stone', are the only bit left of his statue which presents the destruction of man's power in time. It also emphasises the former size and stature of the incomplete statue. Ozymandias boasts about his power and describes himself as 'king of kings', which now seems foolish as no one remembers him. Ozymandias is the Greek name for the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II. The tyranny of the ruler is suggested through the aggressive language and tone. This reinforces the foolishness of Ozymandias' belief in his lasting power, which actually is diminishing in the face of nature and time. Similarly in 'Storm on the Island' Heaney contrasts the confidence of the Irish people at the start of the poem with their feelings near the end, when they start to fear the storm which they realise is more powerful than them. The Irish say 'we are prepared', which highlights their confidence that they are safe and secure. The collective pronoun 'we' also reinforces the feeling of safety. The last line 'it is a huge nothing that we fear', implies the storm is invisible and there is nothing solid there, which contrasts the solid 'rock' earlier in the poem. 'Huge nothing' is an oxymoron which implies how Protestants and Catholics in Ireland both believe in the same God yet they are fighting against each other. It suggests how two things which are close to each other are so different from each other. This makes the reader feel concerned for the people of Ireland. These examples represent that human power and conflict are temporary and that nature is the most powerful.

Furthermore, there are also many contrasting points in both poems. In 'Storm on the Island' the power of nature is a main form of power, whereas in 'Ozymandias' there is also an example of the power of man being highlighted. In 'Storm on the Island' Heaney uses a range of sound patterns in the poem to build up the storm's intensity. The description that the storm 'pummels' their houses is violent imagery and the plosive makes it sound forceful. Here the tone changes, increasing the danger. The waves 'exploding comfortably' is an oxymoron that juxtaposes the feelings of fear and safety. It conveys the speaker's mixed emotions about the power of the natural world. The assonant 'i' sounds and sibilance in lines 14-17 combine to imitate the hissing and spitting sounds of the sea. This makes the reader frightened for the safety of the people in the storm. On the other hand, in 'Ozymandias', Shelley tells us how someone else made Ozymandias' statue meaning that he doesn't have all the power if someone else creates a likeness of him and could control how it looked. Ozymandias' 'sneer of cold command' shows the sculptor understood the arrogance of the ruler he was making. Shelley depicts 'the hand that mocked them', where mock can mean to

ridicule or to create a likeness of something. Perhaps the sculptor intended his statue to make fun of Ozymandias. This could also link back to Shelley's personal life because he was frequently mocked because of his atheist, humanist, socialist and feminist views. This makes the reader feel sympathy towards Shelley because he was ridiculed for his thoughts on equality. These aspects represent different ways in which man and nature are powerful.

In both poems, the poets use a range of structure and language techniques to develop their ideas about power. 'Ozymandias' is a sonnet, with a turning point (volta) at line 9. However, it does not follow the regular sonnet rhyme scheme, reflecting the way human power can be disrupted and destroyed. It uses iambic pentameter, but this is also disrupted. The narrator 'met a traveller from an antique land', this opening sentence makes it clear the narrator hasn't even seen the statue, only heard about it, which emphasises how unimportant Ozymandias is now. The stressed syllable 'look' at the start of line 11 heightens Ozymandias' tone of command. Likewise in 'Storm on the Island' Heaney uses a lot of poetic devices and forms to create an effect. The poem is written in blank verse, which mirrors everyday speech and makes the poem sound like part of a conversation. The poem is all one stanza, showing it is compact and sturdy like the 'houses'. The first person plural 'we' illustrates a collective, communal experience. Heaney describes that the sea 'spits like a tame cat', a simile that conveys how familiar things become frightening during the storm. The use of caesura throughout helps to slow the pace of the poem. 'No trees, no natural shelter' is an example of how caesura is used to emphasise the second 'no'. This makes the reader feel pity for the people of Ireland because their homes have been destroyed by the storm and they have nowhere to go. Overall, in both poems, the structure and language help the reader to understand the poets' ideas about power.

In conclusion, Percy Shelley and Seamus Heaney both present nature and time as powerful forces which can have an overwhelming effect on humans in their poems. Shelley was a socialist and wrote the poem of Ozymandias, a powerful king, losing his power and name because he didn't believe in people having more power over other people. Heaney was opposed to people fighting the civil war in Ireland and he wrote a poem showing that nature is overall the most powerful. Both poems imply that the power of nature and time is greater than any human power, through both their language and their subject matter.