Shelley in Italy, writing *Prometheus Unbound* near the Baths of Caracalla
The fragments of the past evoke a sense of awe, decay, and yet some feeling of the permanence of art.

A modern-day image of the Roman Baths at Caracalla, Italy.
OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.
Ruins of Ramses II, said to have inspired the poem “Ozymandias”
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Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
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Worth Noting:

- Exotic locale (like Xanadu)
- Impressive fragments
  - Like ambitious creative projects of Romantic poets (e.g. “Kubla Khan”)
- Artistic power compared to political power, which both pale in comparison to the vast, seemingly eternal power of nature.
“To Wordsworth” by Percy Shelley

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty, --
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
That having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

(NA 752)
O wild West Wind; thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
- Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who charioteest to their dark wintry bed -
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow -
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill: -
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear! -

The poem is like an epic invocation of the Muse. Shelley (the speaker) calls for the wind to hear him and he praises the Wind; later he will ask for it for inspiration.

The wild Wind is powerful and has regenerative power; it blows dormant seeds that will later sprout and bloom. (Shelley has like hopes for his words)
Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head -
Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge -
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might -
Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear! -

Loose clouds of an approaching storm are personified—they appear like the hair of a frenzied female dancing in worship at a festival for Dionysus (Bacchus), the Greek god of wine and vegetation.

The imagery is not unlike the woman wailing for her demon-lover in “Kubla Khan.”
III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams, -
Beside a pumice isle in **Baiae's bay**, 
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day, -
All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers -
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know -
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear! -

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Baiae’s bay = “West of Naples, the locale of imposing villas built in the glory days of imperial Rome.”

Shelley respects the idea that the wind has been around. It’s seen man’s greatness come and go.
(That’s a key point of Ozymandias as well.)
If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share -
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be -
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven -
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed! -
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

Wordsworth wandered lonely as a cloud; Coleridge’s Hartley shall wander like breeze;
Shelley says even when he was a boy, and he practically believed he could run like the
wind, he never would have called on it like needs to now. That’s because he, who was
once “tameless, and swift, and proud” in boyhood, is now weighted down with
the burdens of age—he falls upon the thorns of life and bleeds…
V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies -
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one! -
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse, -
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth -
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind! -

The lyre is the classic Greek instrument of
the poet—today it is a guitar. Shelley
imagines the trees as the Wind’s lyre, as the
Wind rustles their leaves.

Shelley has dark, sad, autumnal thoughts to
share (ironic for a guy in his twenties but
Romantic poets feel old fast).

Tumult is a key word in “Kubla Khan” and
Shelley, who held many radical views,
likes the idea of an uprising, which he
equates with a new birth—with Spring.