

The Colossus

Literally, this poem details the reconstruction of the colossus. This poem is mainly about the persona trying to reconstruct his or her relationship with her father.

I shall never get you put together entirely,
Pieced, glued, and properly jointed.
Mule-bray, pig-grunt and bawdy cackles
Proceed from your great lips.
It's worse than a barnyard.

Perhaps you consider yourself an oracle,
Mouthpiece of the dead, or of some god or other.
Thirty years now I have labored
To dredge the silt from your throat.
I am none the wiser.

Comment [S(1): The use of 'I' and 'you' makes the persona and what the persona is referring to seem distant. "You" literally can mean the Colossus a huge Greek statue that was in build in honor of the Greek Titan Helios, but the imagery of such grandeur and power may be interpreted as Plath's father, while the persona may be Plath herself since she is often known to be a confessional poet. The distance between the statue, which is an inanimate object which has no feelings or responses and the persona who is living with emotions and actions trying to help repair an inanimate object can be symbolic of their her relationship and understanding of her father. In addition, the use of a singular pronoun, "I" to describe such a grand task of putting back a great Greek statue together suggests a sense of isolation that the persona, or what I interpret as Plath, goes through in 'rebuilding' her father. It also suggests her helplessness in creating the past and revitalizing their relationship.

Comment [S(2): The repetition here helps creates an overlapping effect, perhaps to suggest the hard work and labor that needs to be chipped away into order to build this 'colossus'.

Comment [S(3): The use of animals- birds, pigs and mules- correspond to the phrase 'barnyard' mentioned in the next two lines. Such auditory imagery personify the statue with laughters, screams and grunts. Also the contrasts in a supposedly inorganic statue to living to the sounds of organic, living animals suggest the two-sided personality that her father has. The contrast in the noises of average farm animals compared to the wonder and magnificent aura of this statue again perhaps suggest the two sided personality of her father.

Comment [S(4): This is a simile that compares the broken pieces of the Colossus to a barnyard, which is typically characterized as a place of chaos. By characterizing the Colossus as a great 'oracle' but at the same time 'worse than a barnyard' is to suggest a sense of admiration that the persona feels but at the same time the confusion, chaos and inability to express her emotion to supposedly her father. Such duality of emotions can perhaps be interpreted as the persona's emotional state towards her family relationships.

Comment [S(5): There is a level of uncertainty in the word "perhaps"

Comment [S(6): Oracles, mouthpiecc of god is used to show the greatness of the Colossus or Plath's father , which in return makes the persona feel insignificant.

Comment [S(7): By reversing the sentence structure, the tone is created to be more reminiscent as she reflects back 30 years of time. The word 'labor' may refer to the hard, physical labor or rebuilding and reconstructing the statue, which is considered to be a menial, physically demanding task.

Comment [S(8): First, the act of dredging the silt from the throat is considered a dirty and unappeling task, but the persona still continues to do it. Again, this may be used to show the level of respect that Plath has for her father. At the same time, dredging the silt from the thorat is indicative of the persona clearing the 'barnyard' chaos and uncertainties.

Scaling little ladders with glue pots and pails of Lysol
I crawl like an ant in mourning
Over the weedy acres of your brow
To mend the immense skull-plates and clear
The bald, white tumuli of your eyes.

A blue sky out of the Oresteia
Arches above us. O father, all by yourself
You are pithy and historical as the Roman Forum.
I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress.
Your fluted bones and acanthine hair are littered

In their old anarchy to the horizon-line.
It would take more than a lightning-stroke
To create such a ruin.
Nights, I squat in the cornucopia
Of your left ear, out of the wind,

Counting the red stars and those of plum-color.
The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.
My hours are married to shadow.
No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel
On the blank stones of the landing.

Comment [S(9): The alliteration used here reinforces the little steps that the persona takes in rebuilding the colossus.

Comment [S(10): "Scaling" suggests the insignificant, small steps. Used to show that she is relatively insignificant.

Comment [S(11): The metaphor used to compare the persona's action in fixing the statue to an ant crawling. This shows her insignificance by portraying the statue or rather the image of her father as colossal whereas she is tiny and disregarded.

Comment [S(12): Here, the eyebrows are compared to acres, which again suggest the greatness of the image of Colossus. The word "weedy" also enhance the sense of easily being lost in the long, untrimmed shrubs.

Comment [S(13): The white, bald tumuli of the statue's eyes indicate the coldness

Comment [S(14): The roman forum is known to be a place of intellectual sharing and is where all decisions are made. Perhaps, this is used to suggest the wealth of knowledge, the intellectual quality of her father who was a professor at the time

Comment [S(15): The image of lunch on a hill of black cypress is an image of mourning. The "black cypress" and the trees relate to perhaps the relationship between plath and her father.

Comment [S(16): Fluted suggest the holes in the bone, which may be indicative of the weaknesses in her father. The Acanthine hair is used to suggest the curviness which may be used to indicate the wealth and greatness in plath's father.

Comment [S(17): This is to suggest that to destroy such a great statue would take great effort. Again, to suggest the father's significance in her life.

Comment [S(18): The image of the sun rising under the pillar of the statue's tongue shows the relative size of the statue, which may be used to suggest the greatness of her father in Plath's mind.

Comment [S(19): This is to suggest that plath is always in the shadow where her reputation is always covered by, perhaps, her father or to some extent her husband Ted Hughes

Comment [S(20): No more effort will be made to rebuild the structure.