

The grave: redemption and coming of age

[Life](#)



The Grave: Redemption and Coming of age Everyone has that one person that they look up to as a child. In the short story " The Grave," a young girl named Miranda grew up without a mother and is considered to be a tomboy. Her older brother, Paul, is the person she looks up to. She has a sort of epiphany after playing and digging through dirt in her grandfather's old grave with her brother and finding a gold ring which gears her into discovering her femininity. The author, Katherine Anne Porter uses symbolism to a great extent to illustrate the themes of redemption and Miranda's epiphany of deciding to accept and embrace her existence as a woman. The main form of symbolism that Porter uses in the story is Christian Symbolism. Prior to when Miranda and Paul explore the graves, Porter describes the cemetery by stating: " The cemetery had been a pleasant, small, neglected garden of tangled rose bushes and ragged cedar trees and cypress. . . " (362). The description of the grave refers to the Garden of Eden which is a Christian Biblical setting.

Grubbs acknowledges that: ". . . Something that Miranda says about a snake following their exploration of the graves makes the Biblical connection almost obvious. " We [the reader] guess that there will be a fall, however, when Miranda asks if she can ' have the first snake' in their hunt, suggesting the snake that led Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge" (Smith, Ed 3). This supports the theme of redemption to this Biblical reference. Miranda and Paul feel much like how Adam and Eve felt in The Fall of Eden; the reader can make this comparison by this quote in the short story saying: ". The cemetery was no longer theirs, and they felt like trespassers" (Porter 363). When Adam and Eve begin to feel as if they have done a forbidden act, they

start to have negative feelings such as shame and the fear of being discovered, just like Miranda and Paul, and how they do not want anyone to know that they have been playing in their grandfather's grave. Grubbs points out the meaning of the graves being, “. . . symbols of experience . . . and one of the story's many links to the fall" (2).

In the graves, Miranda found a silver dove and Paul found a gold ring, which they soon traded their findings. Considering the dove as well, Grubbs notes that " The dove's emergence from the grave suggests innocence born from experience . . . " he reports as well that " Graves and treasures represent loss and recovery; together they suggest continuity" (2). The symbolic meanings of the dove and the gold ring have a large impact on the story. The gold ring though has an even more of an impact on Miranda than it does on Paul. Following trading the ring with Paul, Miranda has an epiphany regarding her feelings about her existence as a woman and moving away from being a tomboy and move toward embracing her femininity. Once Miranda saw the ring she loved it, in the short story it states: " Miranda was smitten at the sight of the ring and wished to have it" (Porter 363). The ring becomes to have a stronger effect on her when she begins to resent her boyish clothes. " Now the ring, shining with serene purity of fine gold on her rather grubby thumb, turned her feelings against her overalls and sockless feet . . . (Porter 365). She then wanted to go home and wanted to ". . . dust herself with plenty of Maria's [her older sister] violet talcum powder" and ". . . put on the thinnest, most becoming dress she owned, with a big sash, and sit in a wicker chair under the trees . . . " (Porter 365). With this being stated the reader can observe how Miranda is realizing the reality of the true

differences between her and her brother. Cromie and Karr reason that: " This fantasy obviously works to prepare us for Miranda's acceptance of her destiny as a woman, but it is also reminiscent of the Fall" (4).

This is true because Miranda accepting herself as being a woman reflects her loss of innocence in relation to the storyline in the Fall of Eden. Porter uses many different examples of symbolism throughout the story to connect the concept of death and rebirth [redemption] and Miranda's maturing into a young woman. Grubbs comments that: " The narrator draws us into 'The Grave' through several layers of time and seemingly disjointed events, each layer revealing more than the one before" (2). Throughout the story, the reader can follow Miranda's thoughts and behaviors to conclude her significant changes from a young girl who looked up to her older brother as a role model to designating her older sister as her role model, not to mention Miranda's discovery of continuity.

Reference

1. Porter, Katherine Anne. " The Grave" The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979. 362-68.
2. Print. Rooke Constance and Bruce Wallis. " Myth and Epiphany in Porter's ' The Grave,'. Studies in short fiction 25. 3 (Summer 1978): 269-275. Rpt. In Short Story Criticism. Ed. Jenny Cromie and Justin Karr. Vol. 43. Detroit: Gale Group, 2001.
3. Literature Resource Center. Web. 26 Oct. 2012. Grubbs, M. A. " The Grave. " Masterplots II: Short Story Series, Revised Edition (2004): 1-2. Literary Reference Center. Web. 26 Oct. 2012.

4. " The Grave. " Short Stories for Student. Ed. Jennifer Smith. Vol. 11. Detroit: Gale Group, 2001. 78-93. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Web. 25 Oct. 2012.