

Brad Lathrop

Professor Kozinsky

English 1102

22 September 2011

### The Lion and Cloak

The "Lion and Cloak" by Katherine Porter focuses on the last day of an elderly woman's life. Her memories come back to her as she faces death. The main character of the story has been internally disturbed by the betrayal of her first love, George, who left her standing alone at the altar on their wedding day. As she lies dying, she reflects on her long life and although she displays confidence and certainty on the outside, internally she lacks the courage to trust people. This quality was taken away from her by George on their wedding day. Because of this loss, she dies with the mistaken belief that she has been lied to not only by George but also by God.

As she lies on her death bed and reflects about her life experiences, it becomes apparent that she will die an unsatisfied woman. This is evident on page 200 where she is angrily ranting about George and abruptly states, "I have God, no there is something else besides the house and the man and the children \*\*\* something not given back" (Porter). These words demonstrate that she is still missing something despite having a husband, children and a home. In light of this, the idea is suggested that George took something away from her. Although not explicitly stated in the story, it can be inferred that what was taken from her (as her courage) was symbolized by a possession she mentions at the beginning of the story.

The symbolism that connects her material possessions to the courage she has lost is

evident at the beginning of the story ( here #ranny dis 'sses !tomorro ( & and des ribes ho ( !there ( as nothing to tro 'ble abo 't& be a 'se her ho 'sehold items are ! lean and folded a ( ay& 22063\* One of the items she mentions ( ho ( e+er% stands o 't from the rest% and that is a lion that sits on top of a bronze lo k\* #ranny states that this item re - 'ires more maintenanc e than the rest be a 'se of the !d 'st 7it8 o 'ld olle t in t ( enty5fo 'r ho 'rs9& 22063\* :ie ( ing this statement thro 'gh a metaphori al lens% the lion represents o 'rage% as a lion is often a symbol of bra+ery and o 'rage in many 'lt 'ral onte/ts\* ; en e% the lion and lo k refle t the +ery thing that #eorge took a ( ay from her on her ( edding day< her *courage*\* It is 'nderstandable that #ranny ( o 'ld ha+e a loss of tr 'st in people after being betrayed d 'ring an e+ent as important as her ( edding day\* = 'rthermore% her o 'rage is al ( ays in need of leaning . 'st as the lion is in onstant need of being d 'sted off\* The lion sits on top of the bronze lo k% dra ( ing attention to both the on ept of time 2 lo k3 and o 'rage 2the lion3\* This on ept may highlight her loss of o 'rage o+er time 5 an idea that an be e /plained by #ranny)s basi life e+ents\* Prior to her ( edding% #ranny had the o 'rage to tr 'st people% and after she ( as .ilted at the altar% this - 'ality +anished\* ; o ( e+er% it cannot be for ertain that #ranny o 'ld tr 'st people prior to her ( edding% for she may ha+e la ked this - 'ality earlier in her life\* ; en e% the idea of her !losing& o 'rage is pla 'sible b't not ertain\* >onetheless% the d 'sty lion *does* symbolize the imperfe tions in her ability to tr 'st people% and it relates to the most onfli ting and tro 'bling dilemma #ranny fa es as she appoa hes death< she has lost her faith and tr 'st in #od\*

Thro 'gho 't Porter)s story% #ranny makes ontin 'al referen es to #od by asking for ad+i e or e /pressing her gratit 'de for ; im 220?% 2113\* =rom these referen es% it is lear that she is a belie+er in #od\* =or instan e% it is e+ident that #od plays a role in her de ision5making and

reasoning processes as seen on page 210 ( here #ranny is doing some last-minute thinking before she passes away and says "Oh my dear Lord, do I have a minute?" as if she is having a conversation with God. While there are many references that illustrate #ranny's religious commitment, she makes her most important reference to faith and God on page 20. Prior to this, #ranny ponders her purpose in life, after giving it some thought, she tells a story that is very metaphorical in which dense fog rises over a valley and a man crosses the creek (allowing the trees and moving up the hill like an army of ghosts (20-23), as the fog draws closer, she tells her children that it is time to go inside and light the lamps (20-23). This symbol reveals a very important characteristic of #ranny: A ring; an'kah, those of the Jewish faith light a candle of the Menorah each of the eight days of ; an'kah to celebrate the rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem following the Jewish history over the Syrian Greeks in 168 B.C.E. (2Pelaia 4n; Hebrew; an'kah means "dedication" (2Pelaia 3). #ranny's reference to lighting the lamps with her children to save them from the ghosts symbolizes their dedication to God. This solidifies that at this instant, #ranny has a strong faith in God; her faith is further supported by the girl's statement: "I thought that my God would never have done it" she makes after telling the story about lighting the lamps (20-23). This fact is important because as the story continues, #ranny's faith progressively dwindles and weakens and ultimately dies and ends in her hand (with her).

The clearest indicator of #ranny's decline in faith and trust in God is seen by the transformation of the color blue throughout the story. The color blue is often associated with faith and loyalty. Throughout the story, the resonance of the color blue changes and fades, and that is symbolic of the decline in #ranny's faith, as Porter's story continues, the blue becomes

less vibrant and turns grey\* This transition begins during Rannys lamp-lighting story ( here her children ! ( at the flame rise and settle in a blue 'r-e& 220?3\* Rannys trust in God is strong again at this point and the color of the flame is solid blue\* ; o ( e+er% shortly thereafter% the blue color then begins to lose its color and fade\*

Later in the story% Rannys eyelids ! ( a+er and let in blue-gray light like tissue paper& 220E3 and blue light comes from CorneliaFs lampshades 22003\* Ranny clarifies the light as !no sort of light at all% . 'st frippery& 22003\* These t ( o te/t'al references suggest that Rannys faith has diminished dramatically as have the fundamental properties of the color blue\* The color blue also appears right before Rannys death% signifying that at that moment% God has come to take her to ; ea+en\* ; o ( e+er% Ranny is 'ns' essful in her confrontation ( ith the , ll5B ighty% as evidenced by the blue light that e+ent'ally !fl'tered and d ( indled& 22113\* , t this instant% Gods presence in Rannys life is taking its last breath too% . 'st as she is\*

, ll of this leads to the conclusion that% contrary to ( hat she believes% Ranny actually .lts God in the end\* Ranny does the identical thing that George once did to her so many years ago\* She believes God has !.lited& her% as suggested by her last ( ords% !there is nothing more real than this& 22113\* ; o ( e+er% Rannys denial of ( hat happened sixty years ago at the altar pre+ented her from rebuilding her ability to trust people% as symbolized by the olle-ti+e d'st atop the lion\* , s a result% she ( as 'nable to keep the light burning blue from the beginning of her life to the end\* This inability 'ltimately kills her in the end% and leaves her ( ith no other choice b't to d ( ell in her o ( n sorrow ( and !blo ( o't the light& 22113\*

Works Cited

Pelaeus, Ariela. *About Judaism*. , bo 't' \$ eb\* 10 September 2011\*

Porter, Katherine. "The Tilting of the Wagon Wheel." *Prentice Hall: Literature Portfolio*. Ed.\*

Christy Aesmet, A. , le/is ; art, Deborah Ch' r h Biller. Gpper Saddle Hi+er, >e (

"ersey Pearson Ed' ation, 4n \* 200? 2005211\* Print\*